

Required Elements for
Submission of the
Unified or
Combined State Plan and
Plan
Modifications under the
Workforce Innovation and
Opportunity Act

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OVERVIEW

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

Options for Submitting a State Plan

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

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

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

- Career and technical education programs authorized under the Carl D. Perkins Career and

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

How State Plan Requirements Are Organized.

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

- The **Strategic Planning Elements** section includes analyses of the State's economic conditions, workforce characteristics, and workforce development activities. These analyses drive the required vision and goals for the State's workforce development system and alignment strategies for workforce development programs to support economic growth.
- The **Operational Planning Elements** section identifies the State's efforts to support the State's strategic vision and goals as identified in the Strategic Planning Elements section. This section ensures that the State has the necessary infrastructure, policies, and activities to meet its strategic goals, implement its alignment strategy, and support ongoing program development and coordination. Operational planning elements include:
 - State Strategy Implementation,
 - State Operating Systems and Policies,
 - Assurances,

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

- Program-Specific Requirements for the Core Programs, and
- Program-Specific Requirements for the Combined State Plan partner programs. (These requirements are available in a separate supplemental document, *Supplement to the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Unified and Combined State Plan Requirements*. The Departments are not seeking comments on these particular requirements).

When responding to Unified or Combined State Plan requirements, States must identify specific strategies for coordinating programs and services for target populations.² States must develop strategies that look beyond strategies for the general population and develop approaches that also address the needs of target populations. Use of links to external websites and documents is permitted within the State Plan narrative submission, if such links remain active and adhere to Section 508 accessibility requirements.

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

² Target populations include individuals with barriers to employment, as defined in WIOA Sec. 3, as well as veterans, unemployed workers, and youth.

I. WIOA STATE PLAN TYPE and EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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

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

ND is submitting a Unified Plan.

- Combined State Plan.** This plan includes the Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth, Wagner-Peyser Act, Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, and Vocational Rehabilitation programs, as well as one or more of the optional Combined State Plan partner programs identified below. Indicate which Combined State Plan partner program(s) the State is electing to include in the plan.

- Career and technical education programs authorized under the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006, as amended by the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (Perkins V) (20 U.S.C. 2301 et seq.)
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program (42 U.S.C. 601 et seq.)
- Employment and Training programs under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (programs authorized under section 6(d)(4) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2015(d)(4)))
- Work programs authorized under section 6(o) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2015(o))
- Trade Adjustment Assistance for Workers programs (activities authorized under chapter 2 of title II of the Trade Act of 1974 (19 U.S.C. 2271 et seq.))
- Jobs for Veterans State Grants program (programs authorized under 38, U.S.C. 4100 et seq.)
- Unemployment Insurance programs (programs authorized under State unemployment compensation laws in accordance with applicable Federal law)
- Senior Community Service Employment program (programs authorized under title V of the Older Americans Act of 1965 (42 U.S.C. 3056 et seq.))
- Employment and training activities carried out by the Department of Housing and Urban Development
- Community Services Block Grant (Employment and training activities carried out under the Community Services Block Grant Act (42 U.S.C. 9901 et seq.))
- Reintegration of Ex-Offenders program³ (programs authorized under section 212 of the Second Chance Act of 2007 (42 U.S.C. 17532))

(b) **Plan Introduction or Executive Summary.** The Unified or Combined State Plan may include an introduction or executive summary. This element is optional.

³ The Reentry Employment Opportunities program (REO), formerly the Reintegration of Ex-Offenders Program (RExO), is referred to by its original name (RExO) in this document. This name change is a recent decision that was not incorporated into WIOA.

North Dakota continues to experience low unemployment and a high labor participation rate. In June of 2023, labor participation reached 70.5% while unemployment remained one of the lowest in the nation at 2.3%. In fact, in September of 2023, ND set a new state record of reaching an unemployment rate of 1.3%. Despite economists predicting a slowdown in labor market activity, North Dakota has continued to experience a greater demand for talent as evidenced by the number of job openings across the state, which have consistently reflected between 14,000 to 17,000 open jobs over the last year.

Although there has been some normalization of the labor market following the pandemic, inflation and demographic shifts continue to create hiring challenges for employers. In his 2023 State of the State Address, North Dakota Governor Doug Burgum indicated that this shortage of workers is the number one barrier to economic growth, acknowledging that across the nation employers of all sectors are struggling to hire and retain talent. Governor Burgum reiterated the need to continue building a critical infrastructure including childcare, workforce training programs, and expanding educational and employment opportunities. In addition to investing in the retention of talent, he also recognized the need to recruit residents to the state.

The Workforce Development Council established the framework for addressing the state's workforce challenges in 2018. The framework continues to be relevant, and each year the council renews its commitment to addressing these challenges. Through collaborative efforts of State Agencies, North Dakota is working on a sustainable long-term, multi-faceted approach in three categories:

1. Recruiting and Retention of Workers;
2. Addressing Opportunities for Populations with Barriers to Employment; and
3. Focusing on Career Exposure and the Technical Skills Gap.

II. STRATEGIC ELEMENTS

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include a Strategic Planning Elements section that analyzes the State's current economic environment and identifies the State's overall vision for its workforce development system. The required elements in this section allow the State to develop data-driven goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce and to identify successful strategies for aligning workforce development programs to support economic growth. Unless otherwise noted, all Strategic Planning Elements apply to Combined State Plan partner programs included in the plan as well as to core programs. Where requirements identify the term "populations", these must include individuals with barriers to employment as defined at WIOA Section 3. This includes displaced homemakers; low-income individuals; Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians; individuals with disabilities, including youth who are individuals with disabilities; older individuals; ex-offenders; homeless individuals, or homeless children and youths; youth who are in or have aged out of the foster care system; individuals who are English language learners, individuals who have low levels of literacy, and individuals facing substantial cultural barriers; farmworkers (as defined at section 167(i) of WIOA and Training and Employment Guidance Letter No. 35-14); individuals within 2 years of exhausting lifetime eligibility under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program; single parents (including single pregnant women); and long-term unemployed individuals. Additional populations include veterans, unemployed workers, and youth, and others that the State may identify.

- (a) **Economic, Workforce, and Workforce Development Activities Analysis.** The Unified or Combined State Plan must include an analysis of the economic conditions,

economic development strategies, and labor market in which the State's workforce system and programs will operate.

(1) Economic and Workforce Analysis:

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

- (i) Existing Demand Industry Sectors and Occupations. Provide an analysis of the industries and occupations for which there is existing demand.

NORTH DAKOTA ONLINE JOB OPENINGS

Online job openings statistics provide a timely overview of the current supply/demand dynamic of North Dakota's labor market. Job Service North Dakota's online labor exchange system is the underlying source for the job openings and resume data produced for the state. North Dakota had a total of 13,464 open and available online job openings in November 2023, a change of -3.8 percent (-530) from the prior month and -15.9 percent (-2,537) from the same month one year ago. Newer job openings, those posted within the last 30 days, accounted for 62.0 percent of all job openings. Of those openings with a typical entry-level education assignment, 49.6 percent required either a high school diploma or equivalent or no educational credential. The remaining job openings required some sort of postsecondary education or credential.

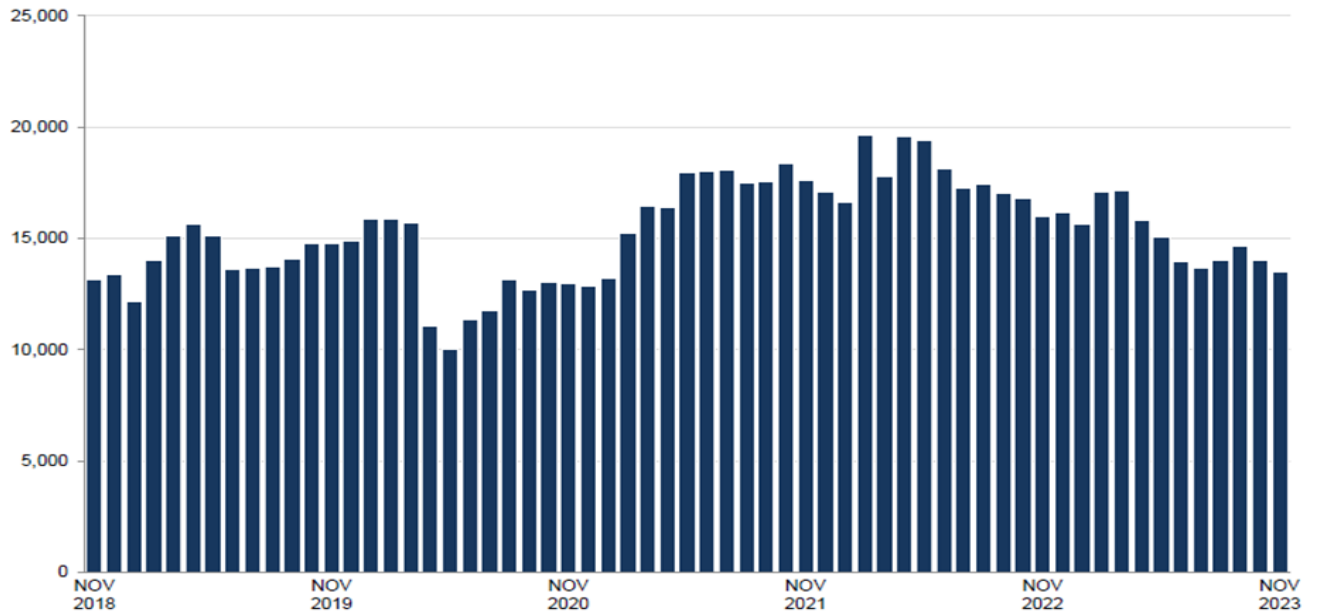
Among North Dakota's 53 counties, 18 reported an over-the-year increase in job openings, while 34 reported an over-the-year decrease. Stutsman County reported the largest over-the-year increase in job openings with a change of +112. Cass County reported the largest over-the-year decrease with a change of -1,096. Cass County reported the largest number of job openings (3,891), followed by Burleigh County (2,500) and Grand Forks County (1,545).

Total online job openings dropped to a low in May 2020 (10,027) due to the effects of the pandemic and rose back to current levels over the year. North Dakota saw a high of 19,600 online job openings in February 2022, but has since been decreasing.

NOVEMBER 2023 ONLINE JOB OPENINGS REPORT

JOB OPENINGS

[ALL JOB OPENINGS]



Source: Job Service North Dakota, Labor Market Information Center

NORTH DAKOTA JOB OPENINGS RATE (%)

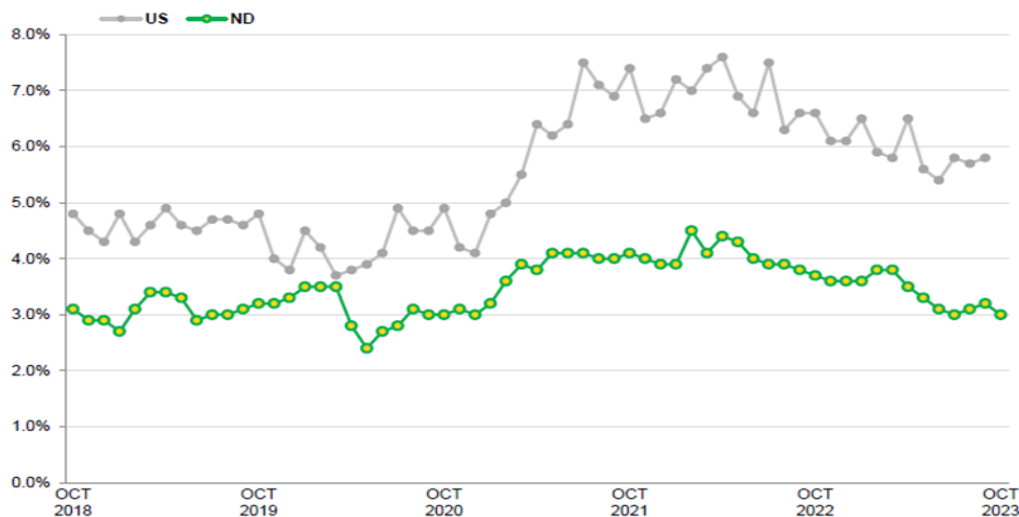
The job openings rate is the percentage of all jobs in the economy open and available. A higher rate is an indicator of increased demand from employers resulting in more opportunities for job seekers. North Dakota has experienced a steady climb in the job openings rate since the drop in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The trend follows that of the national rate, though not as significant of an increase over-the-year.

North Dakota's job openings rate was 3.0 percent in October 2023, the latest month for which North Dakota data are available. One year prior, North Dakota's rate was 3.7 percent. The U.S. job openings rate was 5.8 percent in September 2023, the latest month for which U.S. data are available. One year prior, the U.S. rate was 6.6 percent. For comparison, North Dakota's September 2023 rate was 3.2 percent.

JOB OPENINGS RATE (%)

[ALL JOB OPENINGS]

The job openings rate is the percentage of all jobs in the economy open and available. A higher rate is an indicator of increased demand from employers resulting in more opportunities for job seekers. The latest month available for North Dakota is October 2023. The latest month available for the U.S. is September 2023.



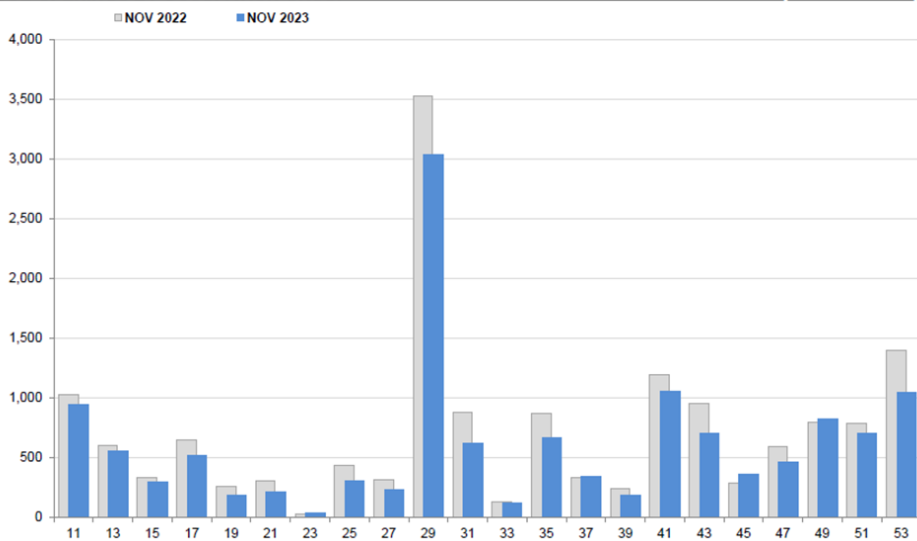
NORTH DAKOTA	
OCT 2023	3.0
LAST MONTH	3.2
LAST YEAR	3.7
UNITED STATES	
SEP 2023	5.8
LAST MONTH	5.7
LAST YEAR	6.6

Source: Job Service North Dakota, Labor Market Information Center

NORTH DAKOTA ONLINE JOB OPENINGS BY OCCUPATIONAL GROUP

Among the 22 non-military major occupational groups, Healthcare Practitioners and Technical reported the largest number of job openings (3,037), followed by Sales and Related (1,051) and Transportation and Material Moving (1,047). Four occupational groups reported an over-the-year increase in job openings, while eighteen reported an over-the-year decrease. Farming, Fishing, and Forestry reported the largest over-the-year increase in job openings with a change of +80. The occupational group reporting the largest over-the-year decrease was Healthcare Practitioners and Technical (-494).

NOVEMBER 2023 ONLINE JOB OPENINGS REPORT
JOB OPENINGS BY OCCUPATION GROUP (ALL JOB OPENINGS)



- | | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|---------------------------------------|
| 11 Management | 27 Arts, Design, Ent, Sports & Media | 43 Office & Administrative Support |
| 13 Business & Financial Operations | 29 Healthcare Practitioners & Technical | 45 Farming, Fishing & Forestry |
| 15 Computer & Mathematical | 31 Healthcare Support | 47 Construction & Extraction |
| 17 Architecture & Engineering | 33 Protective Service | 49 Installation, Maintenance & Repair |
| 19 Life, Physical & Social Science | 35 Food Prep & Serving Related | 51 Production |
| 21 Community & Social Service | 37 Bldg & Grounds Cleaning & Maint. | 53 Transportation & Material Moving |
| 23 Legal | 39 Personal Care & Service | |
| 25 Educational Instruction & Library | 41 Sales & Related | |

Source: Job Service North Dakota, Labor Market Information Center

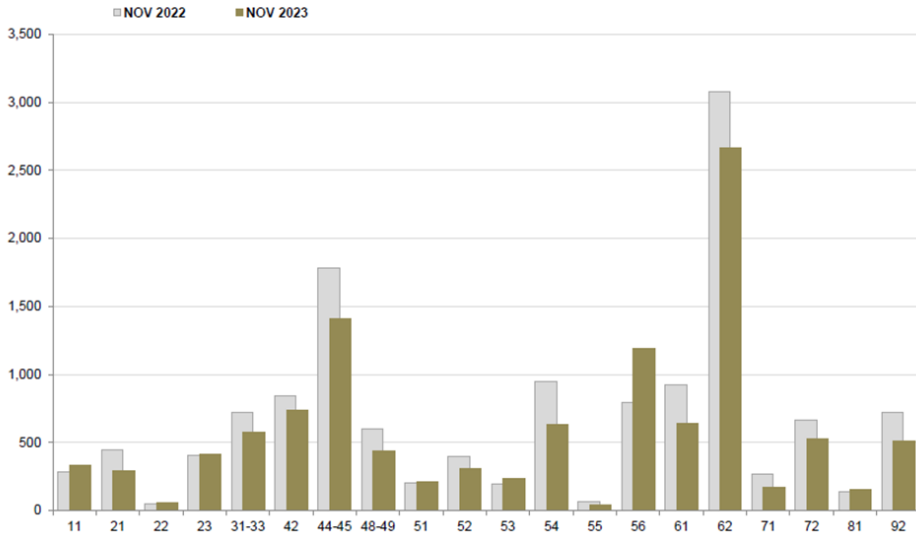
NORTH DAKOTA ONLINE JOB OPENINGS BY INDUSTRY

Health Care and Social Assistance reported the largest number of job openings (2,702) among industries, followed by Retail Trade (1,546) and Administrative and Waste Services (1,082). Most industries saw decreases over-the-year and seven industries reported increases over-the-month. Health Care and Social Assistance has consistently had the highest number of openings every month since 2015.

NOVEMBER 2023 ONLINE JOB OPENINGS REPORT

JOB OPENINGS BY INDUSTRY

[ALL JOB OPENINGS]



- | | | |
|---|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 11 Ag, Forestry, Fishing & Hunting | 48-49 Transportation & Warehousing | 61 Educational Services |
| 21 Mining, Quarrying, Oil & Gas Extract | 51 Information | 62 Health Care & Social Assistance |
| 22 Utilities | 52 Finance & Insurance | 71 Arts, Entertainment, & Recreation |
| 23 Construction | 53 Real Estate, Rental & Leasing | 72 Accommodation & Food Services |
| 31-33 Manufacturing | 54 Professional & Tech Services | 81 Other Services (except Public Adm) |
| 42 Wholesale Trade | 55 Mgmt of Companies & Enterprises | 92 Public Administration |
| 44-45 Retail Trade | 56 Admin & Waste Services | |

Source: Job Service North Dakota, Labor Market Information Center

(ii) Emerging Demand Industry Sectors and Occupations. Provide an analysis of the industries and occupations for which demand is emerging.

NORTH DAKOTA PROJECTIONS

Employment projections rankings do not necessarily reflect the fastest-growing occupations, but they provide an idea of how occupations are expected to grow or decline in the next 10 years (2021-2031). Occupations in the Office and Administrative Support occupations group rank highest in projected growth, with an expected increase of 8,754 positions, or 29 percent. Most occupation groups are projected to increase in in the same period. The average projected increase in the 10-year period was 2,188 by number and 11 by percent. The Office and Administrative Support occupations group has the highest projected growth by both number and percent. Other occupation groups that have significant projected growth are the Transportation and Material Moving occupations group (the second highest numerical growth expected: 6,519, or 16 percent) and the Personal Care and Service occupations group (the second highest percent growth expected: 1,110 or 16 percent).

NORTH DAKOTA TOP 10 INDUSTRIES PROJECTED NUMERIC & PERCENT CHANGE 2021-2031

RANK	OCCUPATION GROUP	2021 EST.	2031 PROJ.	# CHANGE	% CHANGE
1	Office and Administrative Support	29,794	38,548	8,754	29
2	Transportation and Material Moving	41,575	48,094	6,519	16
3	Sales and Related	30,558	34,415	3,857	13
4	Food Preparation and Serving Related	22,574	25,986	3,412	15
5	Construction and Extraction	32,799	35,621	2,822	9
6	Healthcare Practitioners and Technical	18,013	20,600	2,587	14
7	Educational Instruction and Library	19,646	21,798	2,152	11
8	Production	24,516	26,525	2,009	8
9	Management	23,134	24,947	1,813	8
10	Installation, Maintenance, and Repair	37,953	39,736	1,783	5

Source: Job Service North Dakota, Labor Market Information Center

Education can also play a role in predicting where employment trends are heading. Occupations that require a postsecondary nondegree award or an associate degree are expected to grow by 13.8 percent. Occupations that require a bachelor's degree are expected to grow by 11.3 percent, and occupations that require a master's, doctoral or professional degree are expected to grow by 10.3 percent. Occupations requiring short-term on-the-job training (<30 days) are projected to grow by 7.75 percent, and long-term on-the-job training (>12 months) by 15.07 percent. Apprenticeships are projected to have the highest percent growth at 21.34 percent.

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

Job Service North Dakota relies heavily on the Business Services staff in the local offices to work with employers in determining what their needs are for recruiting and retaining employees. They work closely with employers, schools, and the North Dakota University System to remain up to date on the most timely and pertinent needs and programs. This is done to develop programs designed to help job seekers and employers attain the tools and education they need to address skills needed in the workforce.

Employers have many needs when it comes to knowledge, skills, and abilities. Anecdotal conversations with employers and individuals involved in human resources have yielded surprising results. Many of these individuals indicate the largest deficiency of employees has been "soft skills" such as showing up to work, being on-time, cleanliness, etc. These skills, they claim, would be universal for nearly every occupation. If true, this would indicate a portion of the labor force is essentially unemployable in any occupation. These skills and abilities are relatively easy to improve upon and once the undesirable behaviors are corrected, gainful employment should be possible.

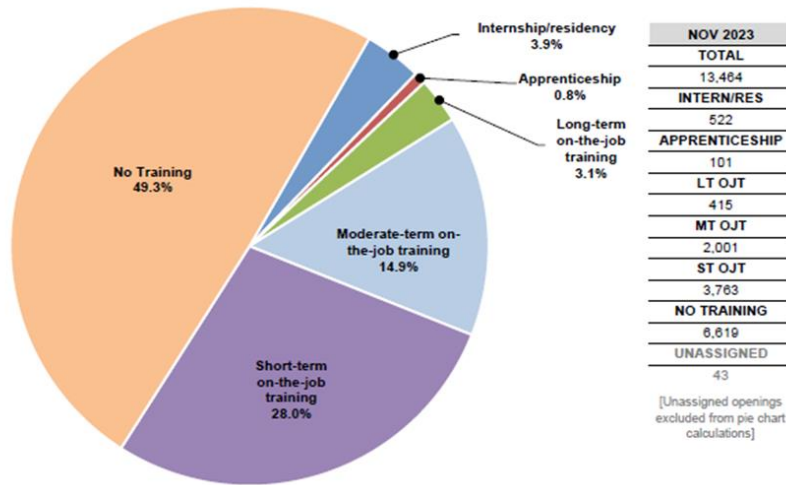
According to the most recent Online Job Openings Report, the majority of job openings require no formal training (49.3 percent) to attain competency in the skills needed in an occupation or occupational group. Short-term on-the-job training was required for 28.0 percent of those listed openings and 14.9 percent required moderate-term on-the-job training.

NORTH DAKOTA DISTRIBUTION OF ONLINE JOB OPENINGS BY TYPICAL TRAINING

DISTRIBUTION OF JOB OPENINGS BY TYPICAL TRAINING

[ALL JOB OPENINGS]

Typical training describes any additional training or preparation that is typically needed, once employed, to attain competency in the skills needed in an occupation or occupational group.



Source: Job Service North Dakota, Labor Market Information Center

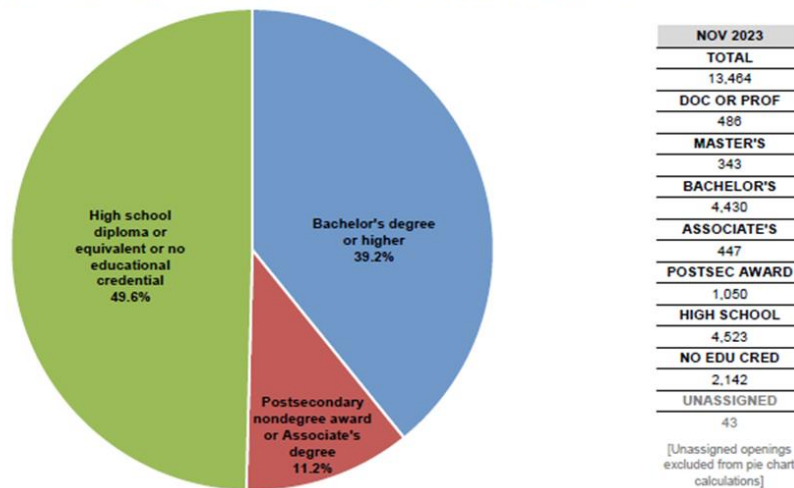
The typical entry-level education needed for the majority of online job openings was High School Diploma or equivalent, or no educational credential (69.6 percent). A Bachelor’s degree or higher was needed for 39.2 percent of openings and a Postsecondary nondegree award or Associate’s degree was needed for 11.2 percent of openings.

NORTH DAKOTA DISTRIBUTION OF ONLINE JOB OPENINGS BY TYPICAL ENTRY -LEVEL EDUCATION

DISTRIBUTION OF JOB OPENINGS BY TYPICAL ENTRY-LEVEL EDUCATION

[ALL JOB OPENINGS]

Typical entry-level education describes the level of education that most workers need to enter an occupation or occupational group, and takes into consideration advertised education requirement preferences. Keep in mind, an opening’s typical entry-level education assignment may differ from employers’ advertised education requirements, though most match. Mismatches commonly occur due to either missing education requirements from the employer’s job ad or education inflation where an employer advertises for more education than is typically needed for an occupation. Using the typical entry-level education framework provides for consistency across occupations regardless of an employer’s advertised preference.



Source: Job Service North Dakota, Labor Market Information Center

(B) *Workforce Analysis*. The Unified or Combined State Plan must include an analysis of the current workforce in the State and within various state regions. Provide key analytical conclusions in aggregate as well as disaggregated among populations to identify potential disparities in employment and educational attainment and understand labor force conditions for items (i)-(iii) below. Populations analyzed must include

individuals with barriers to employment described in the first paragraph of Section II. Analysis must include—

- (i) Employment and Unemployment. Provide an analysis of current employment and unemployment data, including labor force participation rates, and trends in the State.
- (ii) Labor Market Trends. Provide an analysis of key labor market trends, including across existing industries and occupations.
- (iii) Education and Skill Levels of the Workforce. Provide an analysis of the educational and skill levels of the workforce.
- (iv) Comparison of Economic and Workforce Analytical Conclusion. Describe areas of opportunity for meeting hiring, education, and skills needs identified in the economy compared to the assets available in the labor force in the state.

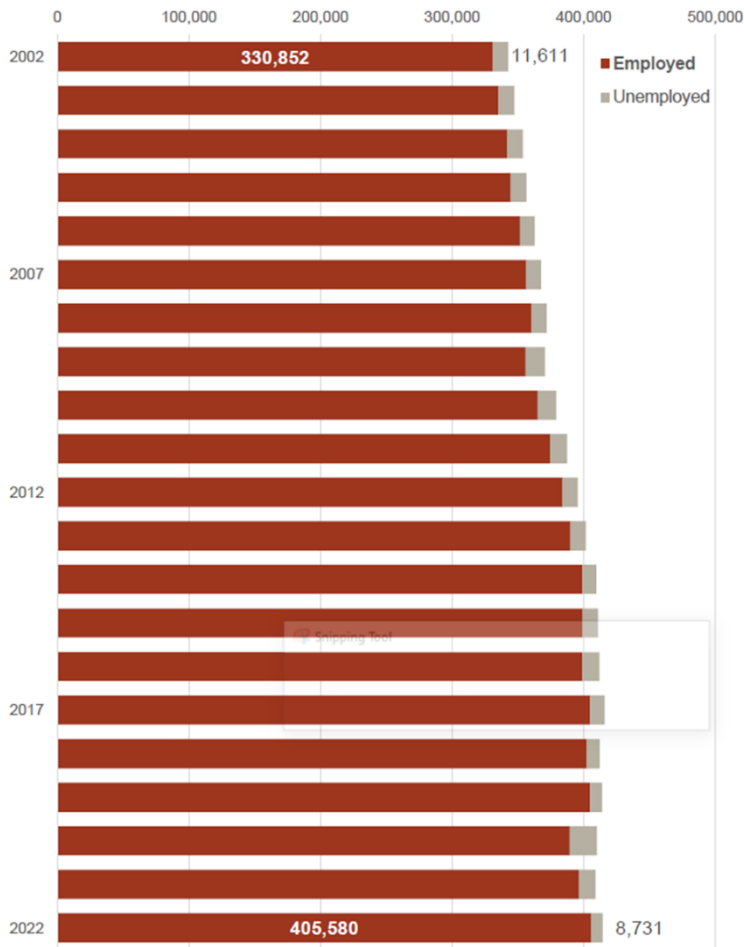
In the past 20 years, North Dakota's economy has gone through three distinct stages: flat growth (2000-2006), rapid growth (2006-2015), and sustained growth (2015-present). Following years of stagnation, the state experienced dramatic workforce fluctuations in the mid-2000s due to the Great Recession in the United States (2007-2009) and the oil boom in western North Dakota (2006-2014). Despite some downturn during the recession, the concurrent effect of the oil boom quickly drove overall economic growth to surpass pre-recession levels in the 2010s. During the oil boom, North Dakota experienced sudden population growth, an employment surge, and an increase in average wages.

Many industries in North Dakota were affected by both the upswing of the oil boom (2006-2014) and the downturn caused by lower oil prices (2015-2016). At the end of the boom, many economic figures initially declined, but employment and wage numbers for most industries remained high and steadily growing in the years prior to 2020, which was the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The COVID-19 pandemic triggered the creation of public health policies, mandates, and guidelines, which impacted the economy at every level – globally, nationally, and locally. The impact was reflected in metrics such as higher unemployment numbers, lower total employment at each industry level, and a decrease in the labor force in North Dakota in 2020. In 2022, the number of unemployed people in North Dakota was the lowest it's been in the past twenty years, and employment surpassed pre-pandemic levels. Though the current numbers indicate the state is recovering economically, the effects of the pandemic are ongoing. Such effects include inflation due to supply issues and sustained consumer demand (consumer prices increased 8.6 percent from May 2021 to May 2022 and 4.0 percent from May 2022 to May 2023).

NORTH DAKOTA LABOR FORCE

From 2002 to 2022, the labor force grew from a total of 342,463 to 414,311 (a net increase of 71,848, or 21 percent). Over the same period, North Dakota's population grew from 638,168 to 779,261 (a net increase of 141,093, or 22 percent). North Dakota's labor force has generally followed the same pattern as its population, steadily increasing during the oil boom and remaining rather flat in the years since. The COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 caused a sudden increase in the unemployed portion of the labor force, which has since decreased. North Dakota's labor force grew by 5,411, or 1 percent, from the previous year. The change primarily came from movement in the employed portion of the labor force, which grew by 9,216, or 2 percent. For comparison, the unemployed portion of the labor force fell by 3,805, or 30 percent, from the previous year.

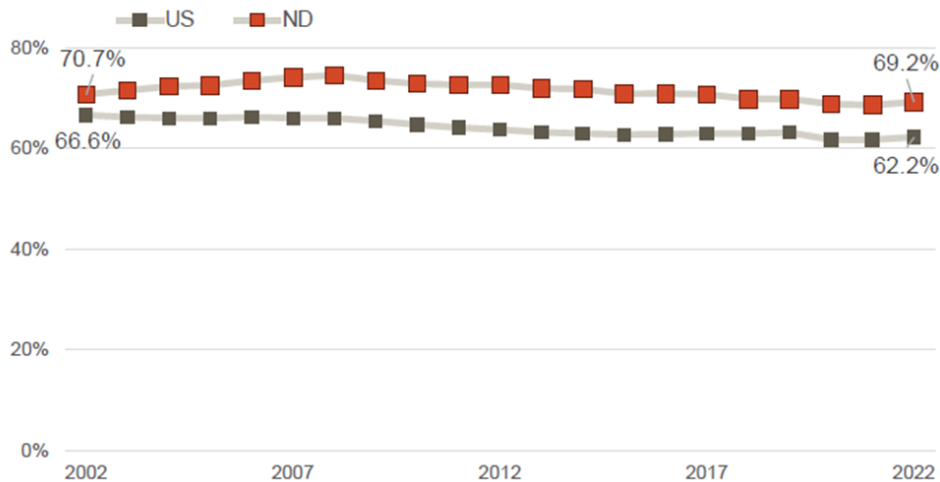


Source: Job Service North Dakota, Labor Market Information Center

NORTH DAKOTA LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATE

North Dakota had a labor force participation rate of 69.2 in 2022. By comparison, the national rate was 62.2 percent. Historically, North Dakota has had one of the highest labor force participation rates in the nation. The rate has remained relatively flat for the past 20 years, reaching a peak of 74.5 in 2008 and a low of 68.6 in 2021.

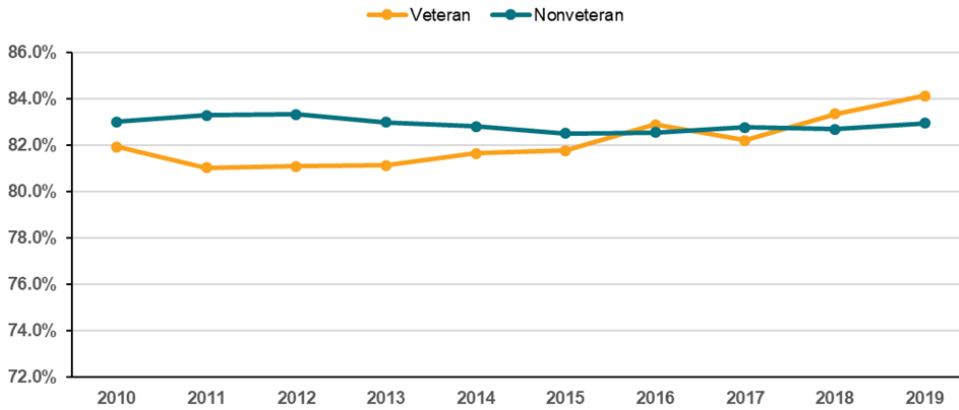
Compared to all states in 2022, North Dakota ranked second in the nation with an adjusted labor force participation rate of 69.2 percent. Nebraska ranked first among all states, with an adjusted rate of 69.7 percent. West Virginia ranked last among all states, with an adjusted rate of 54.7 percent.



Source: Job Service North Dakota, Labor Market Information Center

NORTH DAKOTA VETERAN LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATE

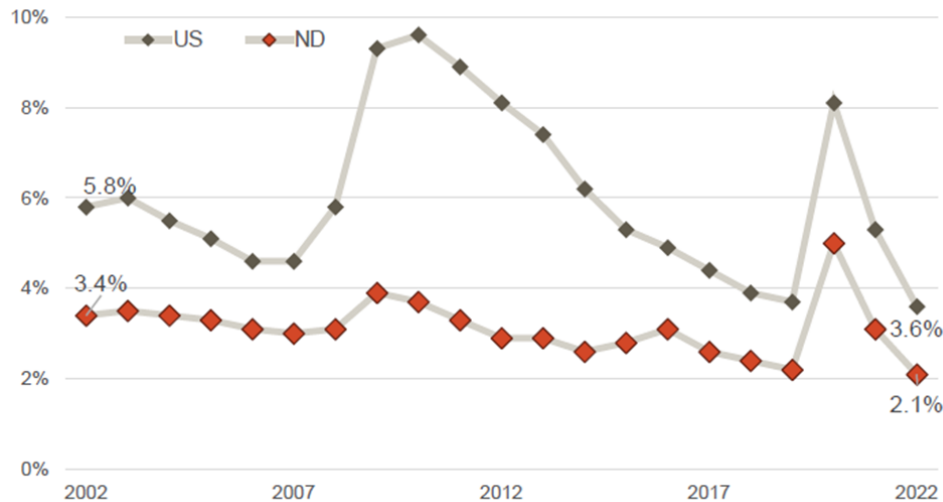
In 2021, North Dakota's labor force participation rate for veterans was 83.6 percent, a change of -1.5 percentage points from the prior year. Comparatively, the labor force participation rate for nonveterans was 82.9 percent, a change of -0.3 of a percentage point from the prior year. The United States labor force participation rate for veterans was 77.0 percent, 6.6 percentage points lower than North Dakota's rate. North Dakota's veteran labor force participation rate ranked 3rd highest in the nation.



Source: Job Service North Dakota, Labor Market Information Center

NORTH DAKOTA UNEMPLOYMENT RATE

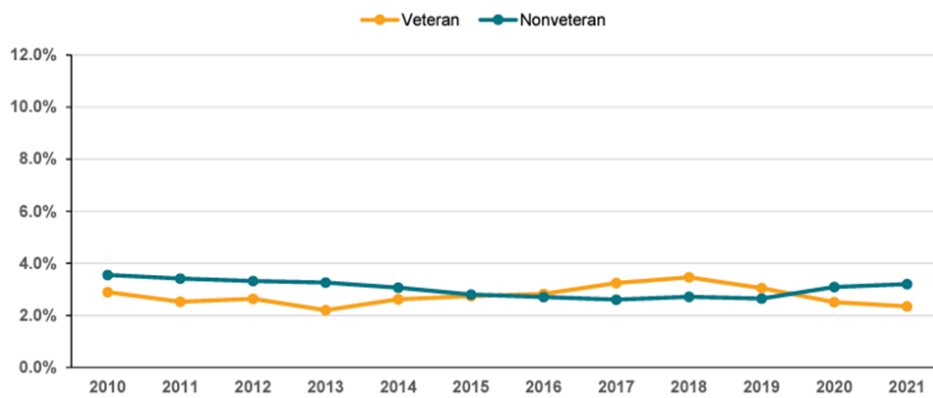
North Dakota had an unemployment rate of 2.1 in 2022. By comparison, the national unemployment rate was 3.6 percent. Historically, North Dakota has had a very low unemployment rate, reaching a low of 2.1 percent in 2022 and a peak of 5.0 percent in 2020. As with the state's labor force participation rate, North Dakota's unemployment rate has regularly outperformed the national average. The unemployment rates in all states increased in 2020 at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic but have since decreased. Compared to all states in 2022, North Dakota ranked first in the nation with an unemployment rate of 2.1 percent. South Dakota tied North Dakota for first among all states, also with an adjusted rate of 2.1. Nevada ranked last among all states, with a rate of 5.4 percent.



Source: Job Service North Dakota, Labor Market Information Center

NORTH DAKOTA VETERAN UNEMPLOYMENT RATE

In 2021, North Dakota's unemployment rate for veterans was 2.3 percent, a change of -0.2 of a percentage point from the prior year. For comparison, the unemployment rate for nonveterans was 3.2 percent, a change of +0.1 of a percentage point from the prior year. The United States unemployment rate for veterans was 4.4 percent, 2.1 percentage points higher than North Dakota's rate. North Dakota's veteran unemployment rate was the second lowest in the nation. Nebraska ranked 1st in the nation at 2.1 percent.



Source: Job Service North Dakota, Labor Market Information Center

NORTH DAKOTA OCCUPATIONS BY HIGHEST AVERAGE EMPLOYMENT

In 2022, the Office and Administrative Support occupations group had the largest number of workers belonging to it. From 2017-2022, the Office and Administrative Support occupations group had a net decrease of 10,800, or 19 percent. Most occupation groups showed net decreases in employment in the same period. The average decrease in the 5-year period was 2,699 by number and 12 by percent. The occupation groups that showed the most dramatic employment growth from 2017 to 2022 were the Transportation and Material Moving occupations group (the highest numerical change, with a net increase of 5,790, or 16 percent) and the Healthcare Support occupations group (the highest percent change, with a net increase of 4,880, or 40 percent).

RANK	OCCUPATION GROUP**	2022	2017	# CHANGE	% CHANGE
1	Office and Administrative Support	46,030	56,830	-10,800	-19
2	Transportation and Material Moving	41,730	35,940	5,790	16
3	Sales and Related	35,890	39,450	-3,560	-9
4	Food Preparation and Serving Related	32,710	34,570	-1,860	-5
5	Construction and Extraction	30,390	32,730	-2,340	-7
6	Healthcare Practitioners and Technical	28,830	25,690	3,140	12
7	Educational Instruction and Library	23,600	22,750	850	4
8	Production	23,150	22,630	520	2
9	Management	22,400	22,220	180	1
10	Installation, Maintenance, and Repair	21,240	22,650	-1,410	-6
11	Business and Financial Operations	18,760	17,230	1,530	9
12	Healthcare Support	17,110	12,230	4,880	40
13	Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance	13,590	15,310	-1,720	-11
14	Personal Care and Service	11,880	17,560	-5,680	-32
15	Computer and Mathematical	7,720	7,270	450	6
16	Protective Service	7,290	7,110	180	3
17	Architecture and Engineering	5,540	6,850	-1,310	-19
18	Community and Social Service	5,160	5,260	-100	-2
19	Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media	4,830	5,380	-550	-10
20	Life, Physical, and Social Science	4,090	3,360	730	22
21	Legal	2,210	2,570	-360	-14
22	Farming, Fishing, and Forestry	1,340	1,120	220	20

Represents largest change from 2017 to 2022 by number or percentage

Source: Job Service North Dakota, Labor Market Information Center

NORTH DAKOTA OCCUPATIONS BY HIGHEST AVERAGE ANNUAL WAGES

In 2022, the Management occupations group had the highest average annual wages. From 2017-2022, the Management occupations group had a net increase of \$2,090, or 2 percent. All occupation groups showed net increases in wages in the same period. The average wage increase in the 5-year period was \$6,004 by number and 13 by percent. The occupation groups that showed the most dramatic wage growth from 2017 to 2022 were the Architecture and Engineering occupations group (the highest numerical change, with a net increase of \$13,170, or 19 percent) and the Food Preparation and Serving Related occupations group (the highest percent change, with a net increase of \$5,610, or 23 percent).

RANK	OCCUPATION GROUP	2022	2017	# CHANGE	% CHANGE
1	Management	\$104,870	\$94,560	\$2,090	2
2	Legal	\$94,610	\$71,020	\$11,450	15
3	Architecture and Engineering	\$82,990	\$73,970	\$13,170	19
4	Healthcare Practitioners and Technical	\$81,260	\$73,890	\$5,160	7
5	Computer and Mathematical	\$76,900	\$68,080	\$6,150	9
6	Business and Financial Operations	\$73,370	\$64,260	\$7,950	13
7	Life, Physical, and Social Science	\$70,060	\$65,650	\$6,430	10
8	Construction and Extraction	\$60,340	\$53,480	\$4,430	8
9	Installation, Maintenance, and Repair	\$59,810	\$53,600	\$4,600	9
10	Community and Social Service	\$56,160	\$47,880	\$8,660	19
11	Educational Instruction and Library	\$54,610	\$50,850	\$4,550	9
12	Production	\$53,220	\$44,070	\$9,510	21
13	Protective Service	\$53,190	\$47,050	\$7,320	16
14	Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media	\$52,560	\$38,170	\$2,760	6
15	Transportation and Material Moving	\$48,910	\$44,780	\$7,280	19
16	Sales and Related	\$47,100	\$39,120	\$5,230	13
17	Office and Administrative Support	\$45,270	\$37,210	\$6,480	18
18	Farming, Fishing, and Forestry	\$42,980	\$37,260	\$2,340	6
19	Healthcare Support	\$38,480	\$33,630	\$3,750	11
20	Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance	\$36,300	\$30,190	\$5,080	17
21	Personal Care and Service	\$32,890	\$29,350	\$2,090	7
22	Food Preparation and Serving Related	\$31,730	\$24,140	\$5,610	23

Represents largest change from 2017 to 2022 by number or percentage

Source: Job Service North Dakota, Labor Market Information Center

NORTH DAKOTA INDUSTRIES BY HIGHEST AVERAGE EMPLOYMENT

In 2022, the Health Care and Social Assistance industry had the largest number of workers belonging to it. From 2017-2022, the Health Care and Social Assistance industry had a net increase of 2,735, or 4 percent. Most industries showed net decreases in employment in the same period. The average decrease in the 5-year period was 1,223 by number and 8 by percent. The Health Care and Social Assistance industry showed the most dramatic employment growth from 2017 to 2022 by numerical change. The other industries that showed the most dramatic employment growth from 2017 to 2022 were the Manufacturing industry (the second highest numerical change, with a net increase of 2,623, or 11 percent) and the Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation industry (the highest percent change, with a net increase of 1,234, or 13 percent).

RANK	INDUSTRY*	2022	2017	# CHANGE	% CHANGE
1	Health Care and Social Assistance	67,039	64,304	2,735	4
2	Retail Trade	45,096	48,005	-2,909	-6
3	Educational Services	35,595	34,070	1,525	4
4	Accommodation and Food Services	32,952	34,843	-1,891	-5
5	Manufacturing	27,540	24,917	2,623	11
6	Construction	26,478	27,798	-1,320	-5
7	Public Administration	23,574	22,538	1,036	5
8	Wholesale Trade	23,050	23,932	-882	-4
9	Transportation and Warehousing	18,969	18,501	468	3
10	Professional and Technical Services	17,455	16,628	827	5
11	Finance and Insurance	17,218	18,192	-974	-5
12	Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	16,200	17,844	-1,644	-9
13	Administrative and Waste Services	13,905	13,853	52	0
14	Other Services (except Public Administration)	11,206	12,569	-1,363	-11
15	Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	10,925	9,691	1,234	13
16	Information	6,053	6,712	-659	-10
17	Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	5,499	5,693	-194	-3
18	Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	4,777	4,554	223	5
19	Management of Companies and Enterprises	4,273	5,314	-1,041	-20
20	Utilities	3,506	4,082	-576	-14

Represents largest change from 2017 to 2022 by number or percentage

Source: Job Service North Dakota, Labor Market Information Center

NORTH DAKOTA INDUSTRIES BY HIGHEST AVERAGE ANNUAL WAGES

In 2022, the Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction industry had the highest average annual wages. From 2017-2022, the Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction industry had a net increase of \$2,090, or 2 percent. All industries showed net increases in wages in the same period. The average wage increase in the 5-year period was \$6,220 by number and 12 by percent. The industries that showed the most dramatic wage growth from 2017 to 2022 were the Management of Companies and Enterprises industry (the highest numerical change, with a net increase of \$13,170, or 19 percent) and the Public Administration industry (the highest percent change, with a net increase of \$9,510, or 21 percent).

RANK	INDUSTRY	2022	2017	# CHANGE	% CHANGE
1	Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	\$119,597	\$101,107	\$2,090	2
2	Utilities	\$118,130	\$97,500	\$11,450	15
3	Management of Companies and Enterprises	\$113,892	\$80,849	\$13,170	19
4	Information	\$81,930	\$63,963	\$5,160	7
5	Finance and Insurance	\$80,672	\$63,038	\$6,150	9
6	Wholesale Trade	\$80,518	\$65,092	\$7,950	13
7	Professional and Technical Services	\$79,672	\$70,151	\$6,430	10
8	Construction	\$70,955	\$63,105	\$4,430	8
9	Transportation and Warehousing	\$66,433	\$59,701	\$4,600	9
10	Manufacturing	\$65,769	\$52,706	\$8,660	19
11	Health Care and Social Assistance	\$62,181	\$50,883	\$4,550	9
12	Public Administration	\$60,170	\$53,154	\$9,510	21
13	Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	\$59,336	\$49,467	\$7,320	16
14	Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	\$52,133	\$44,377	\$2,760	6
15	Educational Services	\$50,927	\$45,596	\$7,280	19
16	Administrative and Waste Services	\$49,130	\$36,918	\$5,230	13
17	Other Services (except Public Administration)	\$45,363	\$34,125	\$6,480	18
18	Retail Trade	\$37,252	\$30,612	\$2,340	6
19	Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	\$24,623	\$20,516	\$3,750	11
20	Accommodation and Food Services	\$22,195	\$17,556	\$5,080	17

Represents largest change from 2017 to 2022 by number or percentage

Source: Job Service North Dakota, Labor Market Information Center

Of North Dakota's working veteran population ages 18 to 64, over half reported being employed in one of five industries: Public Administration, Construction, Health Care and Social Assistance, Retail Trade, or Manufacturing. Of these industries, veterans reported a higher concentration of employment than nonveterans in Public Administration, Construction, and Manufacturing. Over one-sixth of veterans were employed in the Public Administration industry. Other industries with a significantly higher percentage of veteran employment compared to nonveteran were: Transportation and Warehousing, Mining, Quarrying and Oil and Gas Extraction, and Utilities.

The following pages present an overview of North Dakota employment, wages, and establishments aggregated by all industries. These figures provide a general view of demographic changes and economic trends as they have developed, with special attention to 20-year and 10-year benchmarks.

AVERAGE EMPLOYMENT

In 2022, North Dakota's total employment for all industries was 411,308. From 2002 to 2022, the total average employment across all industries grew by 99,500 (32 percent). From 2012-2022, total average employment decreased by 402 (0 percent). In 2022, most employment belonged to the private sector (82 percent).

	2002	2012	2022
AVG EMP	311,808	411,710	411,308
Private	80%	84%	82%
Government	20%	16%	18%

Source: Job Service North Dakota, Labor Market Information Center

AVERAGE ANNUAL WAGE

In 2022, North Dakota's average annual wage across all industries was \$60,215. From 2002 to 2022, average annual wages across all industries grew by \$33,665 (127 percent). From 2012 to 2022, average annual wages grew by \$14,306 (31 percent). In 2022, average annual wages were \$6,487 higher in the private sector.

	2002	2012	2022
AVG WAGE	\$26,550	\$45,909	\$60,215
Private	\$26,120	\$46,823	\$61,352
Government	\$28,284	\$41,223	\$54,865

Source: Job Service North Dakota, Labor Market Information Center

TOTAL ESTABLISHMENTS

In 2022, North Dakota had 36,567 business establishments. From 2002 to 2022, the number of establishments across all industries grew by 11,641 (47 percent). From 2012 to 2022, the number of establishments grew by 4,671 (15 percent). In 2022, most establishments belonged to the private sector (94 percent).

	2002	2012	2022
TOTAL ESTAB	24,926	31,896	36,567
Private	92%	93%	94%
Government	8%	7%	6%

Source: Job Service North Dakota, Labor Market Information Center

EMPLOYMENT DEMOGRAPHICS

In 2022, employment in North Dakota was predominantly male (52 percent of all workers). The largest age group within North Dakota's workforce was 25- to 44-year-olds, which comprised 45 percent of all workers in 2022. Generally, most people in the workforce are between 25 and 64 years old. In 2022, North Dakota's workforce had approximately 315,000 workers in that age range (79 percent).

In 2022, the employment composition was 52 percent male to 48 percent female. By comparison, in 2012, the composition was 54 percent male to 46 percent female. From 2012 to 2022, male workers decreased by 2 percent (approximately 9,000 workers). In the same 10-year period, female workers increased by 2 percent (approximately 10,000 workers).

Since 2012, the proportions of each age group comprising North Dakota's workforce changed by a percentage between +2 and -3 percent. The largest shifts in proportion occurred among the 45-64 year-old age group (-3 percent) and the 25-44 year-old age group (+2 percent). In 2022, the age groups with the largest shares of North Dakota's workers were the 25-44 year-old age group (45 percent) and the 45-64 year-old age group (34 percent).

From 2012 to 2022, the largest change by number occurred in the 45-64 age group, which decreased by approximately 11,000 workers (7 percent). The largest change by percent occurred in the 65+ year-old age group, which increased by approximately 8,000 workers (47 percent). The 10-year growth among older workers suggests that North Dakotans are opting to remain in or rejoin the labor force rather than retiring.

EMPLOYMENT DISTRIBUTION BY AGE GROUPS

Over 75 percent of North Dakota workers belong to either the 25-44 year-old and 45-64 year-old age groups. A minority of workers belong to the youngest and oldest age groups because those populations tend to be in a pre- or post-career phase of life (e.g. students and retirees).

AGES 14-18

The industries with the largest shares of 14-18 year-old workers continue to be the Accommodation and Food Services industry (34 percent) and the Retail Trade industry (25 percent). These industries attract young and unskilled workers because many operate seasonally and offer part-time hours (e.g. retail stores, restaurants, hotels, etc.). The Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation industry experienced the largest growth in share of workers aged 14-18 years-old (+4 percent) in the past 10 years. Within this age group, the share of workers in other industries changed by a figure between -3 percent and +2 percent from 2012.

AGES 19-24

The industries with the largest shares of 19-24 year-old workers continue to be the Retail Trade industry (17 percent), the Health Care and Social Assistance industry (17 percent), and the Accommodation and Food Service industry (16 percent). This age group is broken out specifically to observe the effects of the oil boom on young employment, since 19-24 year-old workers tend to have some skill and work experience, and they are most flexible (e.g. willing to relocate, travel, work nontraditional hours). The Health Care and Social

Assistance industry experienced the largest growth in share of workers aged 19-24 years-old (+4 percent) in the past 10 years. Within this age group, the share of workers in other industries changed by a figure between - 4 percent and +3 percent from 2012.

AGES 25-44

The industry with the largest shares of 25-44 year-old workers is, by far, the Health Care and Social Assistance industry (17 percent). For all other industries, employment is more

evenly distributed within this age group than in others. The Health Care and Social Assistance had the largest growth in share of workers aged 25-44 years-old (+3 percent) in the past 10 years. Within this age group, the share of workers in other industries changed by a figure between -3 percent and +2 percent from 2012.

AGES 45-64

The industry with the largest shares of 45-64 year-old workers is the Health Care and Social Assistance industry (17 percent). The Educational Services industry (11 percent) also has a considerable number of workers in this age range. The Health Care and Social Assistance industry and the Professional and Technical Services industry had the largest growth in share of workers aged 45-64 years-old (+1 percent) in the past 10 years. Within this age group, the share of workers in other industries changed by a figure between -1 percent and 0 percent from 2012.

AGES 65+

The industries with the largest shares of 65+ year-old workers continue to be the Health Care and Social Assistance industry (16 percent), the Retail Trade industry (14 percent), and the Educational Services industry (12 percent). Within this age group, the share of workers in each industry changed by a figure between -1 percent and +1 percent from 2012.

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT OF NORTH DAKOTA'S POPULATION (AGES 25+)

For the 3-year period 2019-2021, 31.4 percent of North Dakota residents ages 25+ reported their highest educational attainment as at least a bachelor's degree. Of those with a bachelor's degree, 29.6 percent also reported attaining an advanced degree. As a proportion of North Dakota's 25+ population, 9.3 percent reported an advanced degree as their highest educational attainment. The proportion of North Dakota's 25+ population with a high school diploma or less is 32.1 percent. The most popular broad fields of degree for bachelor's degree holders ages 25+ are business and related at 19.4 percent and education and related at 20.2 percent. Generally, the higher one's educational attainment, the more likely they are to be employed, working full-time hours (35 hours or more per week), and reporting higher than average earnings. Median annual earnings were 47.1 percent higher for those whose highest educational attainment was reported as a bachelor's degree compared to those reporting a high school diploma or equivalent.

HIGHEST EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT (%)	%
Educational Attainment Categories	2019-21
Less than high school	6.4
High school diploma or equivalent	25.7
Some college, no degree	21.9
Associate's degree	14.7
Bachelor's degree	22.1
Master's degree	6.5
Doctorate or professional degree	2.8
At least a bachelor's degree	31.4
Advanced degrees	9.3

The most popular broad fields of degree for all North Dakota bachelor's degree holders ages 25+ were business and related at 19.4 percent and education and related at 20.2 percent. Healthcare and related was third at 12.7 percent. Together, the top three broad fields of degree account for 52 percent of all bachelor's degrees awarded. Humanities and liberal arts (6.3 percent) and engineering and architecture (4.7 percent) round out the top five. Nearly one in three of all bachelor's degree holders went on to get an advanced degree. Those with bachelor's degrees in physical sciences (64.9 percent), biology and biomedical sciences (53.2 percent), or psychology (48.7 percent) were the most likely to get an advanced degree. The least likely to get an advanced degree were in business and related (13.2 percent), communications and journalism (16.0 percent), or law, criminal justice and protective services (16.7 percent) fields. The top five most popular detail field of degree categories (nursing; business management and administration; elementary education; general education; and accounting) account for 30.5 percent of all bachelor's degree holders in North Dakota.

When narrowing the focus to terminal bachelor's degree holders (i.e. no advanced degree), the top five broad fields of degree mirror the results of all bachelor's degree holders for the most part, though agriculture and natural resources sneaks into the top five. The most popular broad fields of degree for North Dakota terminal bachelor's degree holders ages 25+ were business and related at 24.0 percent and education and related at 18.3 percent. Healthcare and related was third at 12.2 percent. Together, the top three broad fields of degree account for 54.5 percent of all terminal bachelor's degrees. Agriculture and natural resources (5.2 percent) and humanities and liberal arts (5.0 percent) and round out the top five. The top five most popular detail field of degree categories (business management and administration; nursing; elementary education; accounting; and general business) account for 34.4 percent of terminal bachelor's degree holders in North Dakota.

NORTH DAKOTA VETERANS EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Veterans reported a higher level of educational attainment than nonveterans for all categories except the "Bachelor's degree or higher" category. 94.1 percent of veterans had completed high school or an equivalency, while 93.2 percent of nonveterans had. Some college or more had been completed by 64.4 percent of veterans, 2.9 percent lower than nonveterans.

TOP INDUSTRY GROUPS BY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT AND FIELD OF DEGREE

Just under half of North Dakota's population ages 25+ reported being employed in one of five industries: healthcare and social assistance; educational services; retail trade; construction; or agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting. Healthcare and social assistance was in the top three employing industry for all educational attainment levels except for those with a high school diploma or equivalent or less. Manufacturing was the top industry for those with less than a high school diploma or equivalent. Retail trade was the top industry for high school graduates. Master's degree holders were more likely to become teachers or education administrators, so it is no surprise that 37.8 percent report working in the educational services industry. For those with a doctorate or professional degree as their highest educational attainment, 79.3 percent report working in the healthcare and social assistance; educational services; or professional, scientific, and technical services industries.

For terminal bachelor's degree holders, 42.9 percent reported working in the healthcare and social assistance, educational services, or public administration industries. For a majority of terminal bachelor's degree holders, their field of degree and top employing industry appear to be a logical fit. For example, 70.1 percent of those with a field of degree in healthcare and related were working in the healthcare and social assistance industry while 53.2 percent with a field of degree in education and related work in educational services. Just under half of the 18 fields of degree report either healthcare and social assistance, educational services, or public administration as the largest employing industry for terminal bachelor's degree holders.

TOTAL POPULATION 25+		%	Less than high school		%
1	Healthcare and Social Assistance	15.6	1	Manufacturing	13.6
2	Educational Services	10.1	2	Construction	12.9
3	Retail Trade	9.3	3	Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	10.8
4	Construction	7.8	4	Retail Trade	10.8
5	Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	7.1	5	Accommodation and Food Services	8.7
High school diploma or equivalent		%	Some college, no degree		%
1	Retail Trade	12.8	1	Healthcare and Social Assistance	13.1
2	Construction	10.7	2	Retail Trade	11.5
3	Healthcare and Social Assistance	10.7	3	Construction	9.8
4	Manufacturing	9.8	4	Accommodation and Food Services	7.7
5	Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	9.5	5	Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	7.6

Dashes (---) indicate the sample size was too small to be reliable. For more information on ACS PUMS data, refer to the 'Notes' section of this report.

Associate's degree		%	Bachelor's degree		%
1	Healthcare and Social Assistance	20.0	1	Healthcare and Social Assistance	17.6
2	Public Administration	9.2	2	Educational Services	16.4
3	Retail Trade	8.8	3	Public Administration	9.0
4	Construction	8.0	4	Finance and Insurance	8.2
5	Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	7.9	5	Retail Trade	6.8
Master's degree		%	Doctorate or professional degree		%
1	Educational Services	37.8	1	Healthcare and Social Assistance	38.5
2	Healthcare and Social Assistance	18.5	2	Educational Services	27.9
3	Public Administration	8.0	3	Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	13.0
4	Other Services (except Public Administration)	6.0	4	Other Services (except Public Administration)	4.5
5	Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	4.6	5	Public Administration	4.1
At least a bachelor's degree		%	Advanced degrees		%
1	Educational Services	21.8	1	Educational Services	34.8
2	Healthcare and Social Assistance	19.6	2	Healthcare and Social Assistance	24.6
3	Public Administration	8.3	3	Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	7.2
4	Finance and Insurance	6.9	4	Public Administration	6.8
5	Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	6.8	5	Other Services (except Public Administration)	5.5

TOP OCCUPATION GROUPS BY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT AND FIELD OF DEGREE

Just under half of North Dakota's population ages 25+ reported being employed in one of five occupation groups: management; office and administrative support; transportation

and material moving; sales and related; or healthcare practitioners and technical. Those with lower educational attainment were more likely to work in occupation groups related to construction and extraction or transportation and material moving. Management, healthcare, and education were the top employing occupation groups for those with higher educational attainment. Master's degree holders were more likely to become teachers or education administrators, so it is no surprise that 42.4 percent report working in education or management occupations. For those with a doctorate or professional degree as their highest educational attainment, 70.2 percent report working in occupations related to healthcare, education, or legal services.

For a majority of terminal bachelor's degree holders, their field of degree and top employing occupation group appear to be a logical fit. For example, 66.9 percent of those with a field of degree in healthcare were working in the healthcare practitioners and technical occupation group while 52.8 percent with a field of degree in education worked in education occupations.

For detail occupations, those with a high school education or less as their highest educational attainment tend to work as truck or sales drivers, farmers or ranchers, cooks, janitors and building cleaners, laborers and freight, stock, and material movers, or assemblers and fabricators. The top three occupations for workers with at least a bachelor's degree were elementary or middle school teacher, registered nurse, or managers.

TOTAL POPULATION 25+		%	Less than high school		%
1	Management	13.5	1	Construction and Extraction	14.8
2	Office and Administrative Support	10.5	2	Transportation and Material Moving	14.7
3	Transportation and Material Moving	8.2	3	Production	12.2
4	Sales and Related	8.1	4	Management	11.5
5	Healthcare Practitioners and Technical	7.7	5	Sales and Related	8.1
High school diploma or equivalent		%	Some college, no degree		%
1	Transportation and Material Moving	13.3	1	Office and Administrative Support	13.7
2	Management	11.0	2	Management	12.6
3	Construction and Extraction	9.9	3	Transportation and Material Moving	10.4
4	Office and Administrative Support	9.8	4	Sales and Related	10.4
5	Production	9.0	5	Construction and Extraction	7.5

Associate's degree			Bachelor's degree		
		%			%
1	Office and Administrative Support	14.2	1	Management	17.0
2	Management	13.8	2	Educational Instruction and Library	13.0
3	Healthcare Practitioners and Technical	12.7	3	Healthcare Practitioners and Technical	11.2
4	Sales and Related	7.1	4	Office and Administrative Support	9.5
5	Installation, Maintenance, and Repair	7.1	5	Business and Financial Operations	8.9

Master's degree			Doctorate or professional degree		
		%			%
1	Educational Instruction and Library	26.9	1	Healthcare Practitioners and Technical	41.7
2	Management	15.6	2	Educational Instruction and Library	19.3
3	Healthcare Practitioners and Technical	13.0	3	Legal	9.2
4	Community and Social Service	8.8	4	Life, Physical, and Social Science	8.2
5	Office and Administrative Support	6.5	5	Management	8.0

At least a bachelor's degree			Advanced degrees		
		%			%
1	Educational Instruction and Library	16.4	1	Educational Instruction and Library	24.5
2	Management	15.9	2	Healthcare Practitioners and Technical	21.8
3	Healthcare Practitioners and Technical	14.3	3	Management	13.3
4	Office and Administrative Support	8.0	4	Community and Social Service	7.5
5	Business and Financial Operations	7.6	5	Office and Administrative Support	4.6

Source: Job Service North Dakota, Labor Market Information Center

MEDIAN ANNUAL EARNINGS AND EMPLOYMENT STATUS

Generally, the higher one's educational attainment, the more likely they are to be employed, working full-time hours (35 hours or more per week), and reporting higher earnings. Median annual earnings were 47.1 percent higher for those whose highest educational attainment was reported as a bachelor's degree compared to those reporting a high school diploma or equivalent. Advanced degree holders earned 82.4 percent more than those with just a high school diploma or equivalent. Those reporting less education are more likely to be unemployed, working part-time hours, or not in the labor force. For terminal bachelor's degree holders (no advanced degree), earnings were highest for those with a field of degree in engineering and architecture. Earnings were lowest for those with a field of degree in psychology, arts, or education and related. Terminal bachelor's degree holders whose field of degree was arts were more likely to be employed less than 50 weeks a year (31.1 percent). Terminal bachelor's degree holders with a field of degree in psychology, public policy and social services, or education and related were more likely to be employed part-time hours. Terminal bachelor's degree holders with a field of degree in education and related were more likely to report being out of the labor force and not working or looking for work (33.6 percent).

HIGHEST EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT	\$	%	%	%	%	%	%
	Median Annual Earnings	Employed 50-52 Wks/Year	Employed < 50 Wks/Year	Employed Full-time Hours	Employed Part-time Hours	Unemp. Rate	Not In Labor Force
Educational Attainment Categories	2019-21	2019-21	2019-21	2019-21	2019-21	2019-21	2019-21
Less than high school	30,000	81.3	18.7	81.0	19.0	4.7	56.5
High school diploma or equivalent	34,000	83.5	16.5	79.5	20.5	3.2	38.3
Some college, no degree	37,300	82.2	17.8	81.5	18.5	3.4	31.1
Associate's degree	44,000	88.6	11.4	85.8	14.2	1.5	22.8
Bachelor's degree	50,000	85.7	14.3	85.7	14.3	1.5	21.1
Master's degree	55,000	83.2	16.8	86.5	13.5	2.5	22.8
Doctorate or professional degree	80,000	85.3	14.7	87.6	12.4	0.5	16.9
TOTAL	42,000	84.6	15.4	83.4	16.6	2.5	30.2
At least a bachelor's degree	53,000	85.2	14.8	86.1	13.9	1.6	21.1
Advanced degrees	62,000	83.9	16.1	86.9	13.1	1.9	21.0

Source: Job Service North Dakota, Labor Market Information Center

Disability employment highlights gathered from 2022 Census North Dakota data:

1. Persons with a disability are more likely to be over 65+ years of age.
2. Persons with a disability tend to be older than persons with no disability, as 66 percent of persons with a disability were age 65 and over.
3. Among the six types of disabilities identified, the highest percentage of individuals with disabilities not working but actively seeking work was for people with an independent living disability. The lowest percentage was people with a vision disability.
4. The median annual earnings of working-age people with disabilities working full-time/full-year was \$30,477.

The above discussion of the advanced and varied level of educational attainment suggests a very capable, competent, and skilled workforce. While North Dakota has a quality workforce of capable, competent, and skilled individuals, there is a shortage of available workers. North Dakota's rate of unemployed per job opening was 0.41 in October 2023, the latest month for which North Dakota data are available. One year prior, North Dakota's rate was 0.35. The U.S. rate of unemployed per job opening was 0.63 in September 2023, the latest month for which U.S. data are available. One year prior, the U.S. rate was 0.50. For comparison, North Dakota's September 2023 rate was 0.38. Among North Dakota's 53 counties, 37 reported a rate less than one in October 2023, while 14 reported a rate greater than one. A rate less than one means more job openings than available labor supply.

Likewise, North Dakota's rate of active résumés per job opening was 0.12 in November 2023. One year prior, North Dakota's rate was 0.09. Twenty-two of 22 non-military major occupational groups reported a rate of less than one, while zero occupational groups reported a rate greater than one. One year ago, twenty-two occupational groups reported a rate less than one. Among North Dakota's 53 counties, 53 reported a rate less than one, while 0 reported a rate greater than one. A rate less than one means more job openings than in-state active résumés.

All of these facts combined indicate that while there has been a leveling off period in North Dakota, there is still an abundance of jobs; more jobs than there are individuals available to work. This implies that there might not be a skill gap in the traditional sense, but rather a lack of employees. In this type of economy, employers will have to consider more flexibility in their hiring requirements in order to get employees in the door and improve their skills with on-the-job training or improve the attractiveness of their job offers with increased wages or improved benefits.

- (2) Workforce Development, Education and Training Activities Analysis. The Unified or Combined State Plan must include an analysis of the workforce development activities, including education and training in the State, to address the education and skill needs of the workforce, as identified in (a)(1)(B)(iii) above, and the employment needs of employers, as identified in (a)(1)(A)(iii) above.

This must include an analysis of—

- (A) *The State's Workforce Development Activities.* Provide an analysis of the State's workforce development activities, including education and training activities of the core programs, Combined State Plan partner

programs included in this plan, and required⁴ and optional one-stop delivery system partners.⁵

- (B) *The Strengths and Weaknesses of Workforce Development Activities.* Provide an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the workforce development activities identified in (A), directly above.
- (C) *State Workforce Development Capacity.* Provide an analysis of the capacity of State entities to provide the workforce development activities identified in (A), above.

The North Dakota Workforce System is a relationship of agencies and functions that includes those formal and informal education and training activities. The training provides current and potential workers with new or enhanced knowledge, skills and abilities necessary for successful employment for in-demand occupations being created by North Dakota employers. Focus will be placed on preparing or retraining individuals for in-demand occupations in advanced manufacturing, energy, information technology based, transportation, and health care. However, other WIOA qualifying occupations may be found in the state's in-demand occupations list found at <https://www.jobsnd.com/job-seeker/demand-occupations>. Analysis of the current and future job market using labor market information, job openings, employer reports to determine skill gaps, and ensuring the necessary training to meet those gaps will be a priority in implementing WIOA Title I programs, Wagner-Peyser, Vocational Rehabilitation, Adult Education, JVSG, Trade Act and SCSEP funds to serve North Dakota. The strong connection with UI claimants through North Dakota's flexible Reemployment Services Program will provide the impetus for serving increased numbers of individuals and for rapid reemployment results.

Low-income individuals receive a variety of services to assist them in reaching self-sufficiency. A customer-focused approach including an initial assessment of skill level, skill development, career counseling/promotion and support service needs for each individual shall be available through the Workforce Centers. Job Service ND provides the SNAP E & T Services and this allows for partner programs to provide additional services that lead to employment and dependency on social programs.

The Job Opportunities and Basic Skills (JOBS) is a program administered by Job Service ND through a contract funded with TANF funds. JOBS is provided to TANF recipients living in Cass, Ransom, Richland, Sargent, Steele, and Traill counties. The program provides case management, coaching on a variety of soft skills ranging from problem solving, working with difficult people, childcare and scheduling problems. Additionally, job retention guidance, structured status checks, self-evaluation and planning for the next step on the career ladder, job coaching, job performance are provided to the participant. All career services and referrals to training are available to TANF recipients across the state. Job Service Workforce Centers have invited additional JOBS contractor staff to the local offices to strengthen partnerships and to promote and explain all the services available to TANF

⁴ Required one-stop partners: In addition to the core programs, the following partner programs are required to provide access through the one-stops: Career and

Technical Education (Perkins), Community Services Block Grant, Indian and Native American programs, HUD Employment and Training programs, Job Corps, Local Veterans' Employment Representatives and Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program, National Farmworker Jobs program, Senior Community Service Employment program, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) (unless the Governor determines TANF will not be a required partner), Trade Adjustment Assistance programs, Unemployment Compensation programs, and YouthBuild.

⁵ Workforce development activities may include a wide variety of programs and partners, including educational institutions, faith- and community-based organizations, and human services.

recipients. These collaborative meetings have been received well and additional co-enrollments are expected to increase with WIOA Youth services.

The Parental Responsibility Initiative for the Development of Employment (PRIDE) is a program administered by Job Service ND through a contract funded with TANF funds. The program is a partnership between Job Service ND, the district courts, and the North Dakota Department of Human Services, helps noncustodial parents find employment or better paying jobs so they can meet their child support obligations. In addition to increasing child support collections, PRIDE helps increase parent visitation time with children, while reducing court time and reliance on public assistance such as Food Stamps, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and Medicaid. Participants in the PRIDE program receive Wagner Peyser career services and referrals to WIOA training. Participants with a disability receive referrals to Vocational Rehabilitation. Participants who lack a high school diploma or equivalent, are referred to Adult Education.

Because North Dakota WIOA Adult funds are so limited, only low-income or basic skills deficient individuals are enrolled into individual career services and training. Training services are approved for in-demand occupations in North Dakota. Core programs, WIOA Adult (low-income only) and WIOA Youth have collaborated with mutual customers for many years, even before the passage of WIOA. Vocational Rehabilitation and WIOA Adult funds share training costs through co-enrollment, WIOA Adult (low-income only) and WIOA Youth funds assist with the costs of GED testing for participants enrolled in Adult Education.

Core partner staff are well informed of additional referral sources when encountering homeless individuals seeking employment. Many partner staff are members on their area homeless coalitions and referral contacts. Staff also participate in veteran stand down events to reach out to homeless veterans and offer employment assistance. FirstLink 2-1-1 with a direct link on the Job Service website, www.jobsnd.com. It connects people to community and volunteer resources online. FirstLink 2-1-1 provides appropriate information and referral of government services, behavior health, addiction, and financial resources to contacts and community members. Connecting homeless individuals with the necessary immediate services will strengthen the effect of the Workforce Center career services.

In collaboration with the North Dakota Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, JSND staff participate in a coordinated effort to assist ex-offenders find employment through the Transition from Prison to Community initiative. Services provided include resume and interview assistance explaining ex-offender status. Information is provided to promote the use of WOTC and federal bonding. During the month of June, there are special Second Chance job fairs offered in our Workforce Centers of Bismarck, Fargo, and Grand Forks. These job fairs are arranged to connect ex-offenders with employers and employment opportunities. An informational flyer has been created to assist an individual with previous criminal convictions communicate in a job interview.

As recommended by the Workforce Development Council (state board), Job Service North Dakota proposed a pilot project to connect recently or soon-to-be released ex-offenders with in-demand positions in North Dakota. This project is known as the Job Placement Pilot Project and was approved/funded during the 2023 Legislative Session. The request was supplemental to other existing services provided by Job Service North Dakota and would

provide for temporary staffing and related program costs to support individuals in meeting basic needs to prepare for entering the workforce. Through partnerships with the North Dakota Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, the North Dakota Department of Health and Human Services, and other community supportive programs, the pilot program aims to serve up to 150 participants per year.

Based on U.S. Census Bureau data for 2022, 7.1% of North Dakota's population is identified as Language other than English spoken at home. For this targeted population group, Core Partners make every attempt to ensure the needs of customers with limited English-speaking skills are met. New Americans will receive Wagner Peysner services, access to WIOA services when applicable, and are referred to Adult Learning Centers for English literacy services. To provide interpretation services in a timely manner, JSND utilizes language identification cards, CTS Language Link interpreting services, free online translation software. All interpretation services are provided free of charge to the recipient. The Virtual One Stop platform used by Job Service North Dakota for employment services and labor exchange is available in twenty-two languages. Services are provided in coordination with partners with special programs, such as, the ND State Refuge Office, Lutheran Social Services type programs, cultural diversity centers, and the Adult Learning Centers. English as a Second Language classes are provided by Adult Learning Centers. A basic skills class curriculum, funded by PY 13 WIA Incentive dollars, continues to be offered to New Americans and in the Fargo Adult Learning Center. Job Service Workforce Center staff are available as requested to participate in the class and present job search information. The class covers basic work skills to include but not limited to soft skills, basic work math, reading, writing, transportation, interviewing, application process, childcare needs and computers. The class curriculum rotates every six weeks.

On October 1, 2023, Job Service North Dakota (JSND) in partnership with the ND Department of Health and Human Services, launched The New American Employment Program (NAEP) with a projection of serving 200 Immigrants per year in the cities of Fargo and Grand Forks. This two-year state contract will enable Job Service to work with employers and community partners to offer training, employment and other support to refugees and other newly arrived individuals so they can live, work, and thrive in their new communities.

Job Service North Dakota Career Navigators (Employment Advisors) work with immigrant participants to assess strengths, navigate educational and workforce options, develop individualized plans to achieve educational goals, develop work readiness competencies, find work-based experiences, and secure and maintain gainful employment. There is an emphasis on training and education to ensure a connection to career employment opportunities for participants. This includes a direct connection to services offered by WIOA such as OJT, paid Work Experience and Classroom Training. Career Navigators tailor services to the individual and establish long term relationships with participants to see them through career and employment advances.

Career Navigators collaborate with community partners and refugee service providers to provide services at locations familiar to participants. Job Service staff are located at the Adult Learning Center four days per week to meet with NAEP participants in an environment that is well known to them. Additionally, Job Service coordinates service with the referring agency and other appropriate providers to ensure success of the participant.

Job Service's long history of strong relationships with employers allows the Career Navigators access to an established network of employers to connect NAEP participants to career pathways. Upon employment, ongoing support to employers and participants is provided as they settle in their new work environment. Career navigators work with employers to understand the skills offered and accommodations needed, to maximize immigrant employee impact over time.

In January of 2017, North Dakota began receiving Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) funds. However, after receiving these grant funds for two years, JSND did not reapply in 2019. We felt the conditions of the grant were too stringent for the ruralness of North Dakota. Instead, we have implemented our own reemployment program called Reemployment Services Program (RSP). This is a mandatory program for all unemployment claimants who are not job attached and reside in the county where one of our nine Workforce Centers are located. In 2022-23, the State's average weekly duration rate is between 11 and 12 weeks.

Additional services to UI claimants include assistance to create resumes for each type of employment that a UI claimant is seeking and techniques for improving interviewing skills for UI claimants. Online/electronic applications are prevalent with many employers and this application process is often problematic for UI claimants that lack computer literacy. Job Service Workforce Center staff are familiar with the local employer requirements and assist with this online application process.

UI claimants have a series of "How To" instructional videos to assist with the UI claims filing process and weekly certification. The videos are posted on the Job Service webpage [jobsnd.com. https://www.jobsnd.com/unemployment-individuals/unemployment-insurance-how-videos](https://www.jobsnd.com/unemployment-individuals/unemployment-insurance-how-videos). If applicable, UI claimants receive referrals to WIOA Dislocated Worker for upgrade training for in-demand occupations. Out of area job search and relocation support services are provided as needed. Referrals are also provided to core programs for partner services such as increased academic skill and GED or vocational rehabilitation services that support their job search activities.

Resources are available to UI claimants on various job seeking topics such as the importance of soft skills, quantifying and measuring occupational skills and accomplishments. For UI claimants with a criminal record and ex-offenders, guidance is provided on how to overcome this barrier to employment on applications and during interviews.

Workforce Center staff identify and refer individuals with disabilities who meet the employers' qualifications. In coordination with Vocational Rehabilitation, individuals who are not job ready may receive career services, training and supportive services, including assistive technology, necessary to enhance their marketable work skills. Core program staff are involved in a variety of community and public service clubs and will continue to promote the capabilities and employment of individuals with disabilities. During PY 22, 79.2 percent of all WIOA Youth enrollments were individuals with disabilities; Adult enrollments were 19.9 percent, and Dislocated Worker enrollments were 33.3 percent. During PY 21, 84.4 percent of all WIOA Youth enrollments were individuals with disabilities; Adult enrollments were 16.8 percent, and Dislocated Workers enrolments were 20.0 percent.

Veterans are served through coordination of efforts by Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program Specialist and Consolidated Position Specialist. Veterans are provided priority of service through the Workforce Centers. Each individual who enters or calls the workforce center are screened to quickly direct veterans to appropriate staff to address their unique needs. All Workforce Centers serve Veterans while providing priority of service in preparing this special population to meet the needs of statewide employers.

Employers/Job Fairs

Job Service North Dakota, along with workforce partners such as local Economic Development Corporations and/or Chambers of Commerce, Department of Corrections, Vocational Rehabilitation, and other stakeholders hosted 35 job fairs during PY22 in various locations throughout North Dakota. Some of the bigger job fairs were held in Fargo, Grand Forks, Bismarck, Minot, and Williston. Most of these events were multi-industry job fairs that attracted 1,402 employers and 4,653 job-seekers to include a Nationwide Virtual Job Fair that attracted individuals from 29 different states and 14 countries.

The nine Workforce Centers also held local hiring events at their locations. Hiring events are a great tool to showcase what an employer has available for job opportunities. These employers are allowed to use the conference rooms, smaller meeting rooms, and are able to talk to job seekers who are using the computer banks in the resource rooms. During PY 22, a total of 132 employers took advantage of this unique opportunity while attracting 446 job seekers.

During the job fairs, surveys are handed out to the employers during the last hour of the event. The survey consists of nine questions ranging from "were you satisfied with the number of visitors at your booth, approximately how many jobs seekers visited the booth, how many employees the employer would consider hiring, job offers made, job fair times, promotion of the event", etc. There was a total of 274 surveys returned during the job fairs this past year. All surveys are compiled and read through after the event and if the situation warrants, are acted upon.

Most of the responses were favorable and include notes like:

- I liked that it was a great turnout, applicants fit our current needs.
- The location was great!
- Less people than the past but higher quality conversations.
- It was a good way to get our name out there! It was well put on and the people running it seemed well prepared for the event!
- The attendance from schools and the younger generation was good to see.
- I liked the diverse crowd; fit demographics of hiring needs.
- I liked that the attendees were given a description of the different companies and what each company is looking for.
- The later time and having construction rolled in with it was great; Best one so far!
- Very well organized, super helpful staff-great experience. Thank you!!

But on occasion the employers make suggestions to improve the events. Items noted were: a more comfortable atmosphere (too hot/cold), too long of a job fair, run the event into the evening, run the event on a Saturday afternoon, job-seekers were not qualified, different types of food/drink available during breaks, etc.

Additionally, Job Service North Dakota has considered the three measures proposed by the USDOL for the performance indicator pilot and chose the two which best match JSND's

mission to “Meet the Workforce Needs of the State’s Employers”: Participant Retention with the Same Employer and Repeat Business Customers.

Due to North Dakota’s small population and employer numbers and the rural nature of the state, most business establishments employ fewer than ten people and may not always need staff assisted services. As a result, the Overall Employer Penetration Rate measure is not the best indicator to determine effectiveness in serving employers. Job Service Employment Services and Veteran staff received training on outreach to engage employer customers in overall workforce development goals, especially work-based learning programs such as work experiences, on-the-job trainings, and apprenticeships.

To promote partner collaboration and meet the current workforce needs and activities across the state, the Adult Education Program supports the industries in demand as determined by the WDC and directs the local programs to provide information to unemployed students/participants about those areas first, and then to the remaining list of high demand, high need career clusters determined by Labor. Additionally, each local program advisory board discusses local workforce needs and the best methods to meet those needs.

Per WIOA, in addition to offering academic instruction, all programs offer and enroll students and participants in career pathways classes according to their need and interest. This may include career exploration, skill development, career assessment, placement services in concert with partner agencies, integrated employment and training.

Adult Education in North Dakota provides basic career services by assisting participants in eligibility determinations, providing information on available programs and assistance offered, assessing skill/academic levels, sharing in-demand occupation information, access to current job openings and skills/requirements for those positions, postsecondary training information for job attainment, providing information about support services available in the area and statewide, assistance with financial aid and guidance to individuals who specialize in this area but also help assist in filling out forms such as FAFSA. Meaning assistance in the above areas is provided, but not provided in all areas as listed in 34 CFR subpart J. Some individualized career services are provided. Centers continue to provide what opportunities they are able for employment preparation. They have worked with virtual meeting options and in person if available. Directors continue to communicate with the local agencies. These would be pre-vocational services or soft skills such as communication skills, interviewing skills, acting as a professional etc., work and training experiences, workforce preparation activities, financial literacy, digital literacy, or technology based training, and English language acquisition and in some local sites, IET/IELCE programs. Follow up is conducted for students who exit Adult Education. Areas of the career services that AE does not cover are covered by one-stop partners. These services, for example, would be placement assistance, more intense labor market information, unemployment compensation claim assistance, diagnostic testing and other non-academic testing or assessment, development of more intense individualized employment plan. In addition to AEFLA funding, Adult Ed. receives state funding for displaced homemaker program, laid out in NDCC. A committee (representative in each region and two at large members) meet yearly to discuss the program’s needs, goals, and to ensure meeting the guidelines.

Efforts continue with Refugee Resettlement and welcoming newcomers. Ongoing collaboration has taken place with Adult Ed., JSND, and Office of Refugee Resettlement, under the ND

Department of Health and Human Services. A new streamlined approach was developed in North Dakota in partnership with Adult Education, Office of Refugee Resettlement-NDDHHS, and Job Service in three regions; Regions 4, 5, and 7. Voc. Rehabilitation is also a partner as needed, case by case. This community-based model consists of three parts. Co-located Services-ALCs will create easy access to services by being the one-stop-shop for all Community-Based Refugee Support Services. Refugees will attend, build relationships, and develop the skills needed to thrive. Community Connectors will provide in-person case management services through regional nonprofits. The state and refugees set following regional providers to be Community Connectors. Career Navigators will leverage JSND's expertise and employment programs to help newcomers and refugees' complete skill assessments, access training, secure the best fitted local job opportunity, and support clients to propel them towards continued career advancement. <https://www.hhs.nd.gov/cfs/refugee-resettlement-program>. A recent development is networking with DHHS on providing other language translations of the approved Student Authorization Form used at the ALC's. So far, we have five additional languages to English, three more under review, and one more on the way. NDDPI is reviewing a process for this newer development that is equitable and affordable.

One growing pain is with the rapid expansion of Refugee Resettlement, finding space and staffing to fulfill all the needs on the spot. NDDPI and partners are strategizing solutions. The English learner instruction is an area we continue to strategize, providing professional development and support where needed. Another area we are working on is credential attainment. Due to the pandemic, there is still learning loss recognized slowing this process of achieving a credential.

Adult Education received other state funding to support implementation of IET programs in addition to AEFLA funds. Four locations within North Dakota implemented programs in 2021 for in-demand jobs including Introduction to CNA, CDL drivers, and Welding. In 2022, the same programming continued as above with the addition of Intro. to Education/Para. The past Legislation approved \$500,000 additional funds to adult education to support IET programming this biennium. The work continues. Adult Ed. is looking into apprenticeship and other strategies as well to assist individuals in earning a credential and preparing them for the workforce.

Some local Adult Learning Centers hold Workforce Wednesdays on site in partnership with JSND and local employers. Local community employers come on site to meet and visit with students to conduct interviews, give experience, build confidence, and to explore job options in the region. In addition, JSND invites our participants to job fairs in the respective areas.

The state conducts a data match quarterly in a partnership with JSND and National Clearinghouse in addition to our surveying to collect outcomes.

Some discussion has been held on working professionals coming to North Dakota from another country with credentials they already earned, and work experience they had. How can we lessen or remove barriers, allow credit for experience and credentials already earned, and provide the support they need to launch into the demanded workforce?

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

- (1) **Vision.** Describe the State’s strategic vision for its workforce development system.

The strategic vision for North Dakota’s workforce development system is to create a 21st Century workforce able to maximize their self-sufficiency, and provide North Dakota employers with the workforce they need to compete in the global marketplace. As a workforce system, our overarching goal is to promote a comprehensive strategy for coordinating and enhancing state and federal resources that seek to serve the state’s workforce, the state’s private sector, and students of all ages in our goal of growing our economy through innovative workforce programs.

- (2) **Goals.** Describe the goals for achieving this vision based on the analysis in (a) above of the State’s economic conditions, workforce, and workforce development activities. This must include—
 - (A) Goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce, including preparing youth and individuals with barriers to employment⁶ and other populations.⁷
 - (B) Goals for meeting the skilled workforce needs of employers.

When Governor Doug Burgum took office on December 15, 2016, he set forth five strategic initiatives by which all state agencies, including the state workforce system align our goals. Additionally, we are united as a state government in achieving the purpose identified by Governor Burgum to empower people, improve lives, and inspire success.

Below is a brief summary of Governor Burgum’s five strategic initiatives.

- Main Street Initiative
 - The Main Street Initiative is focused on utilizing existing infrastructure to its fullest potential to reduce costs and create vibrant, healthy cities. Through this initiative, the State partners with city leaders from across the state to ensure they have the tools, programs and empowerment they need for smart, healthy growth. Governor Burgum believes that by focusing our efforts on creating vibrant main streets with smart infrastructure, we will attract and retain a skilled workforce and realize our full potential as a state.
- Behavioral Health and Addiction
 - With drug addiction and overdoses on the rise and continuing to affect North Dakota families, the state is treating addiction differently. To lead this effort Governor Burgum created the Office of Recovery Reinvented to

⁶ Individuals with barriers to employment include displaced homemakers; low-income individuals; Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians; individuals with disabilities, including youth who are individuals with disabilities; older individuals; ex-offenders; homeless individuals, or homeless children and youths; youth who are in or have aged out of the foster care system; individuals who are English language learners, individuals who have low levels of literacy, and individuals facing substantial cultural barriers; eligible migrant and seasonal farmworkers (as defined at section 167(i) of WIOA and Training and Employment Guidance Letter No. 3514); individuals within 2 years of exhausting lifetime eligibility under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program; single parents (including single pregnant women); and long-term unemployed individuals.

⁷ Veterans, unemployed workers, and youth and any other populations identified by the State.

promote efforts to eliminate the shame and stigma surrounding addiction. The work of this office have helped reshape how impacted populations, including justice-involved are treated and supported as they prepare to re-enter or move throughout the workforce.

- Transforming Education

- With nearly all of the world's information now available for free online, educators, parents, businesses, community organizations and legislators must all play a role in transforming the education system. It's not enough for students to do well on traditional measures. The challenge is how to equip them with the skills and mindsets they need to be creative problem solvers, effective communicators and informed, responsible citizens who are strong collaborators.
- During the 2023 Legislative Assembly, ND became the first state to require both computer science and cyber security standards for all K-12 students. To extend this work, workforce system partners including the Workforce Development Council, ND Department of Commerce, Job Service ND, ND Department of Public Instruction and Department of Adult Education, ND Department of Career and Technical Education, and ND Information Technology are working together to ensure every North Dakotan has access to digital skill training opportunities.

- Tribal Engagement

- Through the course of meeting with tribal leadership from every Native American tribe headquartered in the state -- the Mandan Hidatsa Arikara Nation in New Town, the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians in Belcourt, the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe in Fort Yates and Spirit Lake Nation in Fort Totten -- we continue to identify areas of opportunity for government-to-government collaboration. The issues range from water rights, taxes, emergency management and law enforcement to addiction, infrastructure, historic sites and tourism.
- New efforts are underway between tribal colleges, the private sector, and ND Building Trades Union to create pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs to support tribal workforce development.

- Reinventing Government

- Governor Burgum believes we have an opportunity to reinvent state government and embrace technology to hold down costs and build an economy and workforce for the 21st century. Work under this pillar have transformed jobs and work opportunities in state government, making the State of ND more competitive in the labor market.
- In December 2023, ND was accepted into the National Governors Association Disability Inclusive Workforce Policy Learning Collaborative. The team's goals include developing disability inclusive policy recommendations for both state government and private sector employers. The research and recommendations of the state team will be used to inform or influence the next set of ND Workforce Development Council recommendations.

The state's goal for achieving our vision for workforce is to promote a comprehensive strategy for coordinating and enhancing state and federal resources that seek to serve the state's workforce, the state's private sector, and students of all ages. By prioritizing engagement and alignment among workforce partner agencies, education, and the private sector, we are able to achieve the goals set forth by the Workforce Development Council. Metrics to measure progress and/or success of collective workforce initiatives include total employment, growth in in-demand occupations, and student retention rates.

- (1) Performance Goals. Using the table provided in Appendix 1, include the State's expected levels of performance relating to the performance accountability measures based on primary indicators of performance described in section 116(b)(2)(A) of WIOA. (This Strategic Planning element only applies to core programs.)
- (2) Assessment. Describe how the State will assess the overall effectiveness of the workforce development system in the State in relation to the strategic vision and goals stated above in sections (b)(1), (2), and (3) and how it will use the results of this assessment, which may include evaluation findings, and other feedback to make continuous or quality improvements.

The North Dakota Department of Commerce, Division of Workforce Development developed and implements a system of performance and accountability measures for the state around workforce development, workforce training and talent attraction. Each partner in the workforce development system provides the data necessary to implement these measures.

The Division of Workforce Development consults with partners in the state's system for workforce development, workforce training, and talent attraction, including the Department of Career and Technical Education, the Department of Public Instruction, Job Service North Dakota, the State Board of Higher Education, the Department of Health and Human Services, and other Divisions within the Department of Commerce.

The measures are continuously reviewed to identify and implement improvements to the State's workforce development system, workforce training, and talent attraction. Division of Workforce Development develops linkages between partners of the State's system for workforce development, workforce training, and talent attraction, to assure coordination and non-duplication of programs and services provided in the state.

The assessment, which compiles data from individual program years, in addition to data from each biennium, provides an at-a-glance image of program success and opportunities for improvement. Distributing this information across all workforce development, workforce training, and talent attraction partners allows for each to establish attainable goals that will enhance the impact of each program within the state's workforce development system.

The Performance Accountability Report is updated biannually during even numbered years in accordance with NDCC 54-60-19 and can be found here: [Performance Accountability Report](#).

Additionally, WIOA Core Partners formed a committee to develop strategies around common performance measures, best practices and how to better support each agency to maximize goal attainments.

(c) **State Strategy.** The Unified or Combined State Plan must include the State's strategies to achieve its strategic vision and goals. These strategies must take into account the State's economic, workforce, and workforce development, education and training activities and analysis provided in Section (a) above.

Include discussion of specific strategies to address the needs of populations provided in Section (a).

- (1) Describe the strategies the State will implement, including industry or sector partnerships related to in-demand industry sectors and occupations and career pathways, as required by WIOA section 101(d)(3)(B), (D). "Career pathway" is defined at WIOA section 3(7) and includes registered apprenticeship. "In-demand industry sector or occupation" is defined at WIOA section 3(23).

Since taking office, Governor Burgum has elevated the image and influence of the Workforce Development Council (WDC), which has become widely recognized for its leadership in driving comprehensive and effective strategies for addressing ND's workforce needs and ensuring we have a skilled workforce going into the future. In October 2022, the WDC and Governor Burgum hosted a special meeting and invited North Dakota lawmakers to learn about the Council's 2022 Report of Recommendations in preparation for the 2023 Legislative Assembly. Following the special meeting, Governor Burgum held a press conference to announce his ND Works Investment Plan which featured a several WDC recommendations. The Governor's ND Works Investment Plan served as a preview of the 2023-2025 Executive Budget which was released in December.

In 2022, the WDC took a new approach by developing more comprehensive workforce recommendations under the following focus areas: earlier and more diverse career exploration, addressing the technical skills gap, removing barriers to employment, recruitment and retention of workers, and occupational licensure reform. The WDC's 2022 Report of Recommendations includes 10 recommendations and 4 endorsements, and played a major role in informing successful legislation that will allow the state workforce system to execute the WDC's workforce strategy throughout the next several years as we are now poised to build on what has been established.

Below are the WDC's 2022 recommendations and endorsements which are designed to serve as the foundation of the state's workforce strategy, along with information on current status and future trajectory and goals for these initiatives.

1. The Workforce Development Council recommends \$171.3 million for funding operations and programming of new and expanding Area Career & Technology Centers and CTE programming. Also included within this recommendation is funding

to account for inflation impact experienced by Area Career & Technology Centers that received funding under the CTE Capital Investments grant program. Further, the Council recognizes the critical role Job Service North Dakota can play in connecting student and adult jobseekers alike with career opportunities in their communities.

- a. Over half of North Dakota jobs (55%) require training beyond high school, but less than a four-year degree. Career and Technical Education (CTE) is an important partner in helping students explore and start preparing for these middle skills jobs prior to graduation. Area Career and Technology Centers (ACTC) advance career exploration opportunities and provide expanded access to advanced Career and Technical Education courses for students, often serving multiple school districts throughout a geographic region. CTE programs provided at the ACTCs align with the workforce needs of their regions and the state as a whole. ACTCs also provide an excellent opportunity for adults to pursue skilled workforce training to prepare for new jobs and career advancements in their communities. Job Service North Dakota can strengthen the relationship between ACTCs and communities by co-locating in the space to bring job search services and support to students, jobseekers, and workers. In March 2022, the State Board for Career and Technical Education awarded over \$88 million in CTE capital project grants to thirteen new and expanding CTE facilities, from various areas of the state. These grants are designed to expand access to opportunities for education and training to students and adults alike; however, challenges with the federal funding source have created delays in getting the funds to local projects have impacted the timeline to build and open the ACTCs. Additionally, inflation has caused budgets to fluctuate beyond grant awards and local funds raised for these projects. For North Dakota's goal of supporting new and expanding ACTCs to be achieved, it is necessary to allocate funds to offset the impact of inflation. This recommendation is the state's commitment to the future success of the ACTCs. The Workforce Development Council prioritizes local investment and private sector buy-in as business participation is critical to the success of ACTCs in any community, therefore, the council supports local match requirements set forth by the CTE Board of Directors to build and expand ACTCs throughout North Dakota.
- b. Efforts to execute this portion of the state's strategy are led by the ND Department of Career and Technical Education. The WDC identified the following as additional partners: Local Business, Industry & Labor Partners, Economic Development, Chambers of Commerce; Department of Public Instruction; Higher Education & TrainND (workforce training arm of ND's two-year colleges); Job Service North Dakota; Local School Districts; Area

Career and Technology Center Administrators.

- c. Governor Burgum included funding for both of these initiatives in the Executive Budget for this initiative and the 68th Legislative Assembly prioritized these efforts by appropriating \$10 million to the ND Department of CTE to support new and expanding Area Career and Technology Centers across the state and \$1.5 million to CTE to support the hiring and training of Work-based Learning Coordinators.
 - d. This investment allows the WDC to develop enhanced strategies for skilled workforce exposure, exploration, and preparation as students, adult learners, jobseekers, and workers have increased access to centers that serve broad geographies statewide. Long term goals under this strategy include increasing enrollment in CTE courses, specifically in CTE programs that align with in-demand occupations list, with an increase of 25% within four years of ACTC construction or renovation completion. Additional goals will be based on increasing enrollment in community college programs aligned with in-demand occupations and increasing employment in in-demand occupations.
2. The Workforce Development Council recommends that the Department of Career and Technical Education create and train a minimum of 16 work-based learning coordinators to support students attending Area Career and Technology Centers (ACTC). Work-based Learning Coordinators will primarily be based at the ACTCs and will be employees of the district or ACTC. Additionally, to support career awareness and exploration, the Council also recommends that funding be made available to every school district to have access to a dedicated Career Advisor. These two positions will play an instrumental role in enhancing career exploration at all levels of K-12 education, and the council recommends that these professionals work with local employers to develop and implement career exploration programs in their school districts.
 - a. Career exploration and hands-on exposure with jobs in which students are expressing interest are critical components in North Dakota's workforce development and talent retention strategy. These opportunities should be made available throughout a students' education, starting in elementary school and progressing through high school upon which time, they should be choice ready and prepared to choose the path that is best suited for them. Work-based learning (WBL) coordinators and career advisors go hand in hand, and both play a crucial role in ensuring these activities are successfully implemented at all grade levels and in ACTCs. Further enhancing this effort can be achieved through the development of comprehensive career exploration programs in each school district. Utilizing virtual career

exploration through RUPReady.nd.gov and new work-based learning modules offered by the North Dakota Department of Career and Technical Education is an excellent foundation for these programs. Work-based Learning (WBL) Coordinators will engage with the business community to establish a network of industry partners to work with students and educators. They will also work closely with CTE instructors to ensure students have valuable work-based learning experiences while also collaborating with business and industry partners to build and monitor detailed training plans. They will develop relationships with students to understand career goals, conduct job training workshops, explain workplace expectations, assess outcomes, and monitor work experiences. Their role is essential in creating the framework for a statewide WBL program that provides quality experiences to all areas of the state. They will be the teacher of record for work-based learning experiences in all program areas and will have the ability to teach career management and career seminar courses.

Career advisors were created by the North Dakota legislature in 2009 (CC 15-20.1-24, CC 15-20.1-25, 15.1-06019, and 15.1-06-20). They can come from any educational background but must have a bachelor's degree. Their responsibility within the school setting is to provide sequential career development activities, current career information, and related career exploration opportunities to students in grades seven through twelve. A career advisor's work is based in a school district and supports career exploration activities for students starting in middle school; whereas a WBL coordinator's role is designed to work specifically with CTE and in ACTCs to ensure students have work-based learning experiences outside of the classroom. Both positions should be filled by individuals with industry experience.

- b. Efforts to execute this portion of the state's strategy are led by the ND Department of Career and Technical Education. Currently, thanks to grant funding appropriated by the 68th Legislative Assembly, 15 Work-based Learning Coordinators have been hired in ND; however, nearly 50 individuals have participated in the Work-based Learning Coordinator training provided by the Department of Career and Technical Education. This total exceeds the goal set by the WDC and is creating more access to meaningful work-based learning experiences for students statewide.

Exemplifying Governor Burgum's emphasis on working as one, nine Job Service North Dakota Workforce Center staff were trained as WBL coordinators by CTE staff during a week-long course of study. These nine

individuals serve as Employer Advisors and work with employers in their areas to meet their workforce needs.

- c. The WDC identified the following as additional partners: Local School Districts, Area Career and Technology Centers, Department of Public Instruction, Business, Industry, & Labor Partners, Chambers of Commerce, Economic Development. The WDC also emphasizes that industry partners that contribute matching dollars to ACTCs should be engaged in WBL experiences.
 - d. Baseline participation in work-based learning experiences is being established during the 2023-2024 school year. In addition to tracking student engagement, we are also tracking the types of career exploration activities being implemented by school districts, and the number of businesses participating in career exploration and work-based learning experiences. Goals to increase participation and outcomes will be established once numbers from the 2023-2024 school year are solidified.
3. The Workforce Development Council recommends developing a sustainable funding mechanism to support locally led workforce solutions, with an initial biennial investment of \$50 million. The council prioritizes private sector investment and recommends a 25% local match for projects that receive funding within this model.
- a. The workforce challenges facing North Dakota are decades in the making and our investment in dedicated workforce development initiatives does not reflect the emphasis we place on this issue or the demand for qualified workers in all industries throughout the state. Now is the time to invest in initiatives that balance today's immediate needs with investments that will prepare us for success tomorrow. Workforce needs vary by region throughout North Dakota, so a one size fits all approach is unrealistic and would not adequately address challenges in all parts of the state. By creating a funding mechanism to support locally led workforce solutions, we give local and regional representatives the opportunity to articulate their needs and access to funding to address them. This initiative is currently active through the Department of Commerce's Regional Workforce Impact Program. In March 2022, the Department of Commerce launched the Regional Workforce Impact Program (RWIP), which received \$15 million of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) during the 2021 Special Legislative Session. The RWIP was designed to support locally led workforce solutions that addressed workforce challenges that were caused or exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. This program awarded approximately 60 projects throughout North Dakota that addressed worker training, talent attraction, childcare, workforce housing,

career exploration, and more. The RWIP set the stage for how this type of mechanism can operate in North Dakota. By equipping communities with tools to invest heavily in workforce initiatives that are catered to the needs of their region, North Dakota will see more job vacancies filled today, and in the future, as dedicated workforce development initiatives that have previously been out of reach financially will become more accessible.

- b. Efforts to execute this portion of the state's strategy are led by the ND Department of Commerce. The WDC identified the following as additional partners: Local and Regional Workforce Partners; Business & Industry Partners; Job Service North Dakota; State Agencies.
- c. Governor Burgum included \$20 million for this initiative in the Executive Budget. The 68th Legislative Assembly appropriated \$12.5 million in general funds to the ND Department of Commerce (Commerce) to administer the Regional Workforce Impact Program. Commerce allocated a portion of this funding to each of the eight planning regions based on population. The RWIP requires 25% match from applicants to demonstrate community investment in projects. RWIP projects must fall within the following categories: talent attraction, retention, infrastructure investments, childcare center infrastructure to expand capacity, capital investments or purchases to support an applicant's proposed workforce solution. These categories are intentionally designed to be broad to foster creativity and innovation.
- d. North Dakota has demonstrated leadership by developing this funding mechanism in response to requests for support in addressing unique, localized workforce needs. Governor Burgum and the WDC recognize that the state's workforce strategy is made stronger when communities are able to develop and deploy initiatives to further extend that state's strategy at the local level. This investment and the structure of the grant are aligned with the WDC's priorities and will allow the WDC to directly influence strategic, data-driven initiatives with trackable results well into the future with the added advantage of growing the team of organizations and individuals doing this important work. Projects under the first round of the RWIP, which was funded with ARPA dollars are underway and some are coming to completion. Most notably, the RWIP supported 33 childcare centers by adding a total of 1600 new childcare slots statewide, allowing hundreds of parents and guardians to enter or move throughout the workforce in a way they were not able to before. The current, state-funded round of the RWIP is under review with grant awards set to be made in early 2024.

- 4. The Workforce Development Council recommends investing a minimum of \$15

million in talent attraction and retention initiatives to support recruiting workers to the state.

- a. With more than 30,000 open jobs in North Dakota and one of the highest labor participation rates in the nation, most of the North Dakotans who can work are doing so. This means that we must proactively recruit new residents to the state to fill our job vacancies and grow our communities, while also building stronger partnerships with college and university partners to retain students after graduation. Effective talent attraction and retention initiatives are comprehensive and may include contracted marketing and talent attraction services, partnership with local leaders and employers, grants for local talent attraction and retention programs, staff to support a robust initiative that effectively recruits new North Dakotans, and more. This multi-faceted approach requires significant investment by the state and by industry partners. Currently, the Department of Commerce is administering Find the Good Life in North Dakota, a talent attraction initiative that includes a system for generating and tracking leads and connecting them with community leaders and employers. It is critical that talent attraction initiatives are data driven and trackable to demonstrate the impact of the state's investment. Finally, to accelerate the connection between out-of-state jobseekers and employers, talent attraction initiatives should include increasing the investment in Job Service North Dakota's virtual job fairs, which have successfully created opportunities for companies to hire from a global talent pool.
- b. Efforts to execute this portion of the state's strategy are led by the ND Department of Commerce. The WDC identified the following as additional partners: Business & Industry Partners; Job Service North Dakota; State Agencies; Colleges and Universities; Economic Development Organizations; Chambers of Commerce; Local and Regional Workforce Partners.
- c. Governor Burgum included \$25 million in the Executive Budget for this initiative. The 68th Legislative Assembly appropriated \$12 million to Commerce to grow the Find the Good Life talent attraction campaign. Half of this funding is going toward dedicated talent attraction programming and services and the other half is going toward targeted marketing strategies to attract workers and their families to ND.
- d. Find the Good Life was first launched as a marketing campaign to build on the attention ND was receiving as a result of the oil boom in the early- to mid-2010s. Commerce revived this campaign with new, unique lead generation and tracking capabilities in 2022 based on a 2020 WDC recommendation to develop a comprehensive talent attraction strategy. Initially, Commerce

approached this is as a pilot program given the level of funding available at the time. Currently, market metrics are outperforming industry standards and we have nearly 2500 leads in the pipeline, 82% of which are new to ND having never lived or visited the state. 599 leads have submitted their resumes to be passed on to employers and 717 leads have been connected to more than 70 Community Champions, who are volunteers who serve as local resources and connectors for jobseekers and their families. Many Job Service ND staff from all nine workforce centers are Community Champions who play a lead role in helping jobseekers connect with employers. So far, Find the Good Life has helped nearly 30 jobseekers, plus another 30+ spouses and/or family members make their way to ND, settling in 12 different communities. Due to increases in employment, we believe others may have engaged with the campaign without seeking assistance from the programming we've built.

- e. To measure success, Commerce and the WDC are tracking job placements through Find the Good Life, total employment statewide and by high demand sector, and tracking the time between leads entering the pipeline to the point at which they accept a job and relocate to ND, with a goal of decreasing that timeline. We are also calculating the economic impact of a new worker based on their profession and location in ND. For example, our first Find the Good Life mover is a software developer who moved to Minot, ND from Washington. By calculating the direct and indirect impact through an input-output economic model software tool, we found that a software developer in Minot, ND earning the median salary of \$88,262 will add \$4,817 in state taxes and \$410,390 in economic output. Using the same economic model tool, we learned that another one of the movers we assisted who is an assembly line worker at a manufacturing facility in Wahpeton, ND making the median \$45,775 will add \$1,320 in state taxes and \$392,030 in economic output. Although we do not know the exact earnings of any of our movers, using baseline salary helps us demonstrate an approximate economic impact which creates a compelling argument for further investment by future legislative assemblies.
- f. The \$12 million investment we received for talent attraction allows us to develop strategies to attract each of the five initial personas we're targeting: boomerangs, young professionals and young families, ND graduates, veterans, and remote workers. Moving into 2024, we are also building out a strategy for foreign born workers and their families in alignment with the state's newly formed Office of Legal Immigration. We are also developing dedicated sector strategies with employers who have the willingness and resources to partner with the state for fly-in tours with out-of-state jobseekers who are most likely

to make a move. Throughout the 2023-2025 biennium, we will test this as a pilot program with the goal of expanding it to more industries and geographies throughout ND. Currently, the first industries we will target are healthcare, oil and gas, and uncrewed air systems (UAS). We selected healthcare as it has more open jobs than any other industry in ND and we need to fill critical vacancies if we are to support the influx of residents we are recruiting. We selected oil and gas due to the economic impact this industry has on the state, especially as industry leaders have stated that we could increase drilling capacity if we had more workers. Finally, we included UAS as it is a quickly growing industry in ND with hundreds of high paying jobs being added in the next few years the Grand Forks, ND and the surrounding area. The WDC has representation from all these industries, which we will leverage when expanding our reach throughout each industry to develop each sector's strategy.

5. The Workforce Development Council recommends investing \$5 million in a workforce training grant for employers and training providers that are utilizing automation as a workforce solution. To further emphasize support for automation, the Council endorses the Automation Tax Credit and efforts to expand this resource so it can be utilized by more companies in a variety of industries.
 - a. North Dakota employers across industry are investing in automation to address workforce shortages and to create better paying jobs for workers. Adapting to new technology in the workplace necessitates training and the development of new skillsets, which requires an investment in a company's own workforce. Although the Automation Tax Credit has been a resource for primary sector businesses by providing a partial credit for machinery and equipment, it does not allow for workforce upskilling which is a critical component in successfully implementing automation into a company. This training may be provided by the company that sells the equipment or by a training provider, such as TrainND. With more companies in industries such as manufacturing, agriculture, construction, and more turning to automation to address their workforce shortages, North Dakota must support the investment into workers who need to develop new skills so they can remain competitive in the workplace. In addition to the investment in upskilling incumbent workers, the North Dakota University System is working to prepare students for jobs that will require them to operate automated equipment and machinery. Both employer-led and post-secondary training opportunities should be supported by the state, along with private sector investment through a matching grant with a minimum state investment of \$5

million in the 2023-2025 biennium.

- b. Efforts to execute this portion of the state's strategy are led by Department of Commerce. The WDC identified the following as additional partners: Business & Industry Partners; Job Service North Dakota; Economic Development Organizations; Chambers of Commerce; Local and Regional Workforce Partners.
 - c. Governor Burgum included \$5 million for automation workforce transition training and \$10 million for automation grants to support investment in automated equipment in the Executive Budget. Although the 68th Legislative Assembly did not appropriate funding for this initiative, the Department of Commerce is allowing for applicants to utilize the Technical Skills Training grant to upskill workers to utilize automated equipment and to advance throughout their company. Despite the amount of funding available being significantly lower than anticipated, Commerce is still working to meeting this goal of the WDC. Success will be measured by the number of companies that take advantage of this resource to upskill their workforce, the number of workers impacted, and the number of jobs created and filled by this program.
 - d. Accelerating the implementation of automation continues to be a priority for Governor Burgum and the WDC shares the opinion that in order to compete in a global economy, and to accommodate ND's workforce shortage, we must continue to invest in and prepare workers for advancements created by automation. Directly related to this priority is the state's use of Digital Equity Act (DEA) funding as it is critical that all workers possess digital literacy skills to participate in and advance throughout the workforce, regardless of industry. Automated equipment and technology is impacting nearly every industry and the state's workforce system is committed to preparing and upskilling workers.
6. The Workforce Development Council recommends creating a Global Talent Task Force dedicated to researching the unique barriers experienced by employers seeking to employ immigrant and refugee jobseekers; understanding foreign labor laws, processes, and visas; and aligning partners and state agencies working in this space. A subject-matter expert should be contracted to effectively lead this work and produce recommendations to best support North Dakota's workforce and employers.
 - a. North Dakota has an opportunity to increase immigrant and refugee participation in our communities and in our workforce, but to do so we need to examine the systems and policies that may be slowing down or preventing this population from entering or moving throughout the workforce. Additionally, North Dakota employers recognize the opportunity to hire

foreign workers, but need resources and support in navigating complex federal foreign labor processes and programs. Questions about visa types, application timelines, and the cost of recruiting foreign workers are often raised, yet answers can be hard to find as the state lacks a central resource for employers to utilize when exploring this opportunity to address their workforce needs. To help immigrant and refugee jobseekers get connected with jobs that leverage their skillsets and to help North Dakota businesses crack the code on foreign labor laws, programs, and processes, we need to first understand the challenges that exist, populations that are affected, and identify who is working in this space, in addition to identifying the most appropriate state-supported resource to better support businesses and New North Dakotans.

- b. Efforts to execute this portion of the state's strategy are led by the Department of Commerce. The WDC identified the following as additional partners: Governor's Office; Legislators (1 House, 1 Senate); Representatives from North Dakota's Congressional Delegation; Job Service North Dakota; Department of Health and Human Services: Refugee Resettlement; Department of Labor and Human Rights; North Dakota University System; Department of Public Instruction: Adult Education; Private Business (no less than five); Organizations that serve and/or represent New American populations (no less than three); Economic Development; Housing Authority; Department of Transportation; experts in foreign labor laws.
- c. Governor Burgum did not include funding for the Global Talent Task Force in the Executive Budget; however, this initiative was addressed through legislation introduced in the ND Senate. With the passage of SB 2142, the Office of Legal Immigration was created and is now housed in the Department of Commerce, Division of Workforce Development. This bill included two FTEs to perform the daily operations of the office. The 68th Legislative Assembly appropriated \$2 million to the Office of Legal Immigration through SB 2015 and included an additional \$2 million for New American workforce training grants to the Department of Commerce in HB 1018.
- d. With the passage of SB 2142 the Department of Commerce has been tasked with developing and implementing a statewide strategy to support businesses in recruiting and retaining foreign labor, including immigrants already in the United States and the integration of immigrants into the state to promote economic opportunities for immigrant communities, in addition to advising and making recommendations to the governor, legislative assembly, and state agencies regarding immigrant integration and foreign labor issues. Commerce is also tasked with developing a pilot program to support businesses pursuing

or employing legal immigrants and to support communities developing immigration integration plans and activities. First and foremost, however, Commerce is required to conduct a study to determine immigration opportunities in the state, goals of the office of legal immigration, performance indicators to measure progress and success of immigration goals, and a structure for the pilot program that will launch later this biennium. The WDC is deeply invested in the development of the Office of Legal Immigration (OLI) and has participated in the stakeholder engagement being conducted by consultants contracted by the Department of Commerce to conduct the study required by SB 2142. Commerce and the consultants will continue to engage the WDC throughout the next two years and will include several WDC members in the Global Talent Task Force once it is formed in the spring of 2024. Once the study is complete, the WDC plans to weave the OLI strategy into ND's broader workforce strategic plan. Metrics for success are forthcoming as the study is currently underway; however, the OLI will dramatically affect the state's workforce strategy by opening new doors to recruiting and welcoming foreign-born workers to ND communities and companies. Through this office, we will have new levers to utilize in addressing ND's workforce needs.

7. The Workforce Development Council recommends creating a full-time apprenticeship coordinator to help employers navigate the process of developing apprenticeship programs in rural and urban communities throughout North Dakota; promote apprenticeship to students, adult learners, underrepresented and underserved populations in registered apprenticeship including women, youth, people of color, justice-involved individuals, and people with disabilities; identify funding opportunities; and align state and federal resources and partners. The council also recommends investing in a comprehensive online resource to direct interested parties to apprenticeship programs. To successfully expand apprenticeship opportunities in North Dakota, the council recommends that the Governor's Office work with North Dakota's Congressional Delegation to increase funding for the Department of Labor State Apprenticeship Office, to support increased volume of apprenticeship programs being built and individuals pursuing apprenticeship.
 - a. Currently, North Dakota has over 100 apprenticeship programs and just over 1,000 apprentices. Employers and jobseekers alike are realizing the benefits of registered apprenticeship programs (RAPs), which are a partnership between employer and employee that delivers a high-quality career pathway where employers can develop and prepare their future workforce, and

individuals can obtain paid work experience, classroom instruction, and a portable, nationally recognized credential from the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL). With an increased interest by North Dakota employers to train their own talent utilizing an apprenticeship program that's designed to meet their workforce needs, the state has an opportunity to serve as a liaison for businesses as they go through the process of building a program and navigating the complex federal RAP system. The state's apprenticeship coordinator will also educate stakeholders, including educators, parents, and students, adult learners, underrepresented and underserved populations in registered apprenticeship including women, youth, people of color, justice-involved individuals, and people with disabilities, about the benefits of apprenticeship and help them connect with opportunities in North Dakota. An online resource for those who are interested in apprenticeship and learning about where these opportunities exist in North Dakota is a vital component to effective promotion of RAPs in our state.

There are many benefits of RAPs; however, building and running an apprenticeship program is a lot of work for employers and includes significant reporting requirements to DOL. A dedicated coordinator will be able to guide and support employers through this process, so they remain in compliance with the DOL standards. Finally, as federal funding to support RAPs continues to be made available, this coordinator will ensure North Dakota is able to capitalize on federal grant opportunities designed to expand and promote apprenticeship, and to provide financial support to employers that are building apprenticeship programs.

- b. Efforts to execute this portion of the state's strategy are led by Department of Commerce, in close partnership with the WDC Career Exploration subcommittee. The WDC identified the following as additional partners: Department of Commerce; Business and Labor Partners; Job Service North Dakota; Department of Career and Technical Education; ND Information Technology: State Longitudinal Data System; Department of Public Instruction: Adult Education; North Dakota Congressional Delegation; North Dakota Department of Labor and Human Rights; North Dakota Department of Health & Human Services: Vocational Rehabilitation.
- c. Funding for this initiative was not included in the Executive Budget and the 68th Legislative Assembly did not appropriate any funding toward it; however, a bill containing an assessment of apprenticeship in ND did pass and the Legislative Interim Workforce Committee has been assigned this study to determine if ND should remain an Office of Apprenticeship state or if we should transition to a State Apprenticeship Agency.

- d. The WDC Career Exploration subcommittee is engaging with US DOL State Apprenticeship Director, Barry Dutton, to learn about new opportunities for growing Registered Apprenticeship Programs in ND. Through this engagement, the WDC will transition this portion of the state's workforce strategy to achieve the goals of increasing the number of apprentice leads, number of apprenticeship programs, and the number of new apprentices to successfully complete their program. The WDC has identified that the Statewide Longitudinal Data System may be a valuable tool to aid in tracking apprentice enrollments and apprenticeship program completions.
8. The Workforce Development Council recommends developing a job placement pilot program through a coordinated effort between Job Service North Dakota, Department of Corrections & Rehabilitation, local organizations that serve and support ex-offenders, and employers with a goal of placing recently or soon-to-be released individuals into in-demand jobs.
 - a. With more than 30,000 open jobs and an unemployment rate that has dropped to pre-pandemic levels, North Dakota employers must consider a variety of populations to fill job vacancies. One underutilized talent pool are ex-offenders. As of 2020, an average of 1,400 individuals exit North Dakota's prison system each year, with nearly half settling in Bismarck and Fargo after release. In addition to the lifelong impact of a criminal conviction on their record, ex-offenders experience barriers to entering the workforce. Without a steady paycheck allowing for basic needs to be met, such as housing, food, and transportation, ex-offenders are more likely to return to the prison system. North Dakota's recidivism rate is currently 40%; however, by helping ex-offenders establish stability through successful job placement, intensive case management, and wrap-around services upon release, we will see this number decrease. The Job Placement Pilot Program for recently or soon-to-be released ex-offenders will create a partnership between Job Service North Dakota (JSND), Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (DOCR), Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), local organizations that support ex-offenders, and most importantly, employers. This strategic initiative is supplemental to existing services provided by JSND through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and is designed to serve a minimum of 75 participants per year in both Fargo and Bismarck, totaling 150 participants annually. The program will also incentivize employers to hire ex-offenders by offering a wage match for the participant's salary for up to six months by utilizing WIOA federal funds.
 - b. Efforts to execute this portion of the state's strategy are led by Job Service

North Dakota and the ND Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation. The WDC identified the following as additional partners: Department of Health and Human Services; Department of Public Instruction: Adult Education; Business & Industry Partners; Organizations that serve justice-involved populations; North Dakota Department of Health & Human Services: Vocational Rehabilitation.

- c. Governor Burgum included \$640,000 in the Executive Budget for this initiative. The 68th Legislative Assembly appropriated \$660,000 to Job Service North Dakota for temporary staff salaries and support services, including rent, work clothes, telephones, etc. for program participants.
 - d. The Job Placement Pilot Program (JP3) launched approximately six months ago in two communities and has experienced significant success with 51 active cases in Fargo and 39 active cases in Bismarck. Our goal is to serve up to 150 participants each year, with a total of 300 in the first biennium. Legislative investment allows the WDC to build out a comprehensive strategy for removing barriers for justice involved individuals with the goals of helping individuals secure employment and establish stable routines post-release, filling in-demand jobs, and ultimately, reducing the recidivism rate in ND by providing ongoing wraparound support to increase success outside of prison.
9. The Workforce Development Council recommends the development of a central directory of all licensing boards to make it easier for licensed professionals to navigate the licensure system in North Dakota. The Workforce Development Council endorses policies that expedite pathway to licensure for current and new North Dakotans, as long as the health and safety of North Dakota citizens is protected.
- a. According to the Council of State Governments, the number of jobs that require a license to practice has increased to 1 in 4, which is up from 1 in 20, 60 years ago. We see this increase even more in the healthcare field with 75% of jobs requiring a license. With ramped up efforts to recruit workers to North Dakota, the state needs to increase efficiencies in the licensing process, starting with simplifying the way in which licensed professionals connect and interact with our occupational and professional licensing boards. A central directory with updated contact information, website links, and brief information related to the licenses each board oversees, will simplify the jobseekers' search and path to licensure in North Dakota.
- Additionally, North Dakota must prioritize exploring and implementing policies to refine our licensing processes, so professionals can get to work quickly. It is important to note that since last surveyed in 2020, many boards have significantly decreased their application processing timeframe. Although

many boards cite same-day approval or a one-week turnaround, there are still some that state their regular process takes up to 4-6 months. The average timeframe is approximately 18 days, while the median response was just seven days. This information suggests that the majority of North Dakota boards are prioritizing rapid, yet thorough licensure approval, but there is still room to improve as critical licensed professions continue to face significant challenges in recruiting out-of-state jobseekers due to delays in the licensure process.

- b. Efforts to execute this portion of the state's strategy are led by the Department of Commerce and the WDC Occupational Licensure Reform Subcommittee. The WDC identified the following as additional partners: Occupational & Professional Licensing Boards; Industry & Professional Associations; Business, Industry & Labor Partners.
- c. There was no funding included in the Executive Budget for this initiative; however, the 68th Legislative Assembly appropriated \$50,000 to the ND Labor and Human Rights to conduct a study of the licensing boards and commissions to understand their processes, continuing education requirements, and timelines to licensure. These topics were included in the WDC's 2020 and 2022 licensure surveys, and the WDC will utilize data from the Labor Commissioner's study to inform future recommendations for licensure reform.
- d. The WDC and Commerce have built the task of building a central directory for all licensing boards into the state's broader talent attraction strategy. The directory will be added to the Find the Good Life [website](#) as this is where all marketing efforts direct our target audience. Long-term, tracking traffic on this webpage will inform conversations and proposed reform efforts with boards as it relates to expediting the path to licensure for out-of-state professionals.

10. The Workforce Development Council recommends leveraging federal Digital Equity Act (DEA) funds to advance digital skill training opportunities for adult learners, jobseekers, and workers, to prepare them for entrance and movement throughout the workforce.

- a. The DEA, passed as part of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), aims to provide digital literacy skills and education to low-income populations, improve online accessibility, and empower rural communities to enhance broadband availability. Currently, North Dakota is in the process of finalizing a pre-Kindergarten through workforce (PK-20W) state plan for computer science and cybersecurity education to create a pipeline of future

workers who have the skills necessary to excel in a global, digital economy, regardless of industry. Equipping our students for today's jobs is important; however, it is equally important that adult workers and jobseekers do not get left behind. Given the shortage of workers we have in our state, we simply cannot afford to lose these individuals in the workforce. North Dakota is continuously working to diversify our economy and there is a mismatch in the skillsets of some of jobseekers and opportunities in a variety of industries including energy, agriculture, health care, unmanned aircraft systems (UAS), biotech, cybersecurity, manufacturing, and engineering.

According to North Dakota's digital scorecard, 32.9% of unemployed individuals lack foundational digital skills which are required for 72.7% of open jobs in the state. Job Service North Dakota (JSND) Job Center and Adult Learning Center staff reinforce this statistic with anecdotal examples of clients not knowing how to navigate the internet or not knowing how to use software such as Microsoft Word to create a resume, and struggle to understand how to apply for jobs online. This problem becomes more challenging to address in rural areas and in minority populations. To address this issue, North Dakota was one of six states that participated in the National Governors Association Workforce Innovation Network and laid the foundation for a state plan for increasing digital skills among North Dakota adult learners, jobseekers, and learners. A more comprehensive will be developed under the DEA Planning Grant, starting in the fall of 2022. Current goals for this work include:

- Improved appropriateness & consistency of digital literacy assistance delivered across agencies;
- Increase clients receiving fundamental digital skills training from agencies;
- Engaging with Tribal partners to identify digital skill gaps and training opportunities.

- b. Efforts to execute this portion of the state's strategy are led by North Dakota Information Technology, as it relates to the development and execution of the state's DEA and BEAD plans, and by North Dakota Department of Public Instruction as it relates to administration of a grant to support digital skill development for adult learners, jobseekers, and workers. The WDC identified the following as additional partners: Department of Commerce; Job Service North Dakota; Department of Public Instruction: Adult Education; North Dakota State Library; North Dakota University System; Department of Human Services + Vocational Rehabilitation; Business, Industry & Labor Partners

- c. Although funding for this initiative was not included in the Executive Budget, the 68th Legislative Assembly introduced HB 1398, which adds computer science and cybersecurity education as graduation standards for all ND students. Also included in this bill was the direction for the ND Department of Public Instruction (ND DPI) to use \$300,000 in ESSR dollars to provide grants that will support digital skill development for adult learners, jobseekers, and workers.
- d. The grant being led out of ND DPI allows ND to pilot a strategy for increasing digital literacy skills among adult learners, jobseekers, and workers to inform how Digital Equity Act (DEA) funds may be utilized in the future to prepare all workers for equitable participation and advancement in the workforce. Also informing the workforce strategy for DEA funds is the Foundational Plan for Digital Literacy that was developed through participation in the 2022 National Governors Association (NGA) Workforce Innovation Network (WIN). ND was one of six states accepted into the program and had mentorship from NGA staff and subject matter experts on digital literacy. Through WIN, the ND team, comprised of Commerce, Job Service, Adult Education, the Governor's Office, and a private sector WDC member representing IT, and a contracted researcher from the University of North Dakota to conduct research to understand skill needs, training opportunities and resources, the greatest gaps in access to broadband and/or trainings, and the financial impact of digital skill attainment. The team identified the digital skills required for all of ND's in-demand occupations using the list published by the WDC annually, and worked with Microsoft to rank the collective digital skills for each job as basic, intermediate, or advanced.

Key findings of the team's include:

- Over 95% of North Dakota households have access to broadband Internet connection,
- Digital skills required for most occupations increased over time,
- The "in-demand" jobs on the Job Service website have higher average digital skill requirements than the average for all occupations,
- Higher levels of digital skill in occupations in North Dakota are associated with higher incomes,
- Changing to an occupation requiring higher levels of digital skills can increase annual income by an average of just under \$660 per year.

We believe these findings will be valuable in shaping the DEA strategy for increasing digital skills for all North Dakotans.

The North Dakota Information Technology Department (NDIT) is leading the development and execution of both the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) and DEA state plans. Both plans have been submitted, and the BEAD plan award is set at \$130M and the DEA plan has not been awarded funding as of January 2024. The BEAD and DEA project lead, along with NDIT leadership, have stated that there is a potential that BEAD and DEA monies under IIJA could be used towards workforce, but it is subject to the completion of the Access buildout and the greatest needs identified for digital equity. Plans are being submitted and many State Agencies will be engaged during the process, including WIOA core partners and the WDC. To jumpstart this effort, the WDC Technical Skills Gap subcommittee has engaged with the BEAD and DEA team lead and is developing recommendations for how they believe DEA funds can be invested to address critical skilled workforce needs across industry. The WDC maintains the stance that every industry is a tech industry, given the diverse skill needs and opportunities related to utilization and advancements in technology.

Once training opportunities are identified and underway, the workforce system will track the number of individuals utilizing resources for digital skill development and internet affordability programs, in addition to continuing to evaluate gaps in training and skill attainment.

In addition to these WDC recommendations, there are a few initiatives being led by other committees and/or agencies that the WDC is supporting.

11. The Workforce Development Council endorses Governor Burgum's child care proposal to support working families through solutions that address affordability, availability, and quality of child care in North Dakota.
 - a. The lack of affordable, high quality child care is impacting workforce throughout the state and in every industry, thus necessitating a collective effort between businesses, state government, and communities to lead the implementation of effective solutions. To address this widespread issue, we must take a creative, multifaceted approach to make child care more affordable for working families, increase availability in communities of all sizes, and improve the quality of child care to ensure children are engaged in curriculum that will enhance their development and prepare them for school.
 - b. The Supporting Working Families child care proposal received an appropriation of nearly \$88 million to the Department of Health and Human Services. This funding is being used to provide increased training and payroll

support for child care workers, and to enhance affordability of child care for working parents through the ND3 program, which allows parents, their employers, and the state to each pay a third of a participating family's child care bill for qualifying participants. One unique aspect of this program is that unlike many state funded program, State of ND employees may be eligible to participate in this program.

12. The Workforce Development Council endorses skilled workforce training programs through the Department of Commerce Technical Skills Training Grant (TSTG) as it has been an effective tool in training workers across industry throughout North Dakota, in addition to the proposed Workforce Education Innovation Grant, designed to support degree programs at two- and four-year institutions that are addressing current and emerging workforce needs. The council supports the \$2 million request to sustain the Technical Skills Training Grant and the \$24 million request launch the Workforce Education Innovation Grant.

- a. Many North Dakota employers cite a skills gap in the talent pool and have committed to training new employees to meet the needs of their companies. This training can come at a great expense to the employer and often needs to be outsourced to other organizations, including TrainND or consultants who are brought in to provide training on-site. The Technical Skills Training Grant (TSTG) was first developed in 2020 in response to the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. During the 67th Legislative Assembly Special Session, the Department of Commerce received \$3,000,000 in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding to sustain and evolve this program. The TSTG aims to offset the cost for program providers and employers in their effort to support the development of highly trained skilled workers. Since its inception, the TSTG has supported the launch or expansion of 26 training programs in healthcare, IT, transportation, welding, and more. Currently, the TSTG is supporting eligible training providers and employers in their efforts to design and facilitate rapid, non-degree re-skilling and upskilling programs, expand capacity in existing programs, and to provide incumbent worker training and onboarding programs.
- b. The 68th Legislative Assembly appropriated \$2 million to the Department Commerce to sustain and expand this program. Currently, the program has three tracks to support training program providers and employers in upskilling and reskilling ND workers and jobseekers.
 - Track A reflects the initial intent of this grant program and is designed for new and expanding accelerated, non-degree training programs that prepare trainees for new jobs. Programs in Track A may be eligible for up

to \$200,000.

- Track B is designed for companies wishing to provide internal upskilling opportunities for their existing staff to promote movement and advancement throughout the organization, create more comprehensive onboarding and new worker training programs, and/or provide safety training for employees. Programs in Track B may be eligible for up to \$50,000 with a dollar-for-dollar match throughout the lifetime of the grant program.

- Track C is designed to support workforce automation enhancement including but not limited to training and/or upskilling existing employees related to automation that has been implemented prior to the funding period; or to new or enhanced strategies, not to include the actual purchase of automation equipment. Programs in Track C may be eligible for up to \$200,000 for training and or upskilling existing workforce related to automation. Additionally, applicants for Track C may apply for up to \$100,000 for a feasibility study, related to automation.

Career Pathways

WIOA provides an extraordinary opportunity to improve job and career options for North Dakota workers and job seekers through an integrated, job-driven, public workforce system that links diverse talent to businesses. It supports the development of strong, vibrant regional economies where businesses thrive, and people want to live and work. The workforce system includes three focus areas: the needs of business and workers drive workforce solutions; American Job Centers provide customer service to jobseekers and employers and the workforce system supports strong economies and plays an active role in community and workforce development.

Career and Technical Education, Adult education, post-secondary education, and other partners collaborate to establish career pathways systems that make it easier for all individuals to attain the skills and credentials needed for jobs in North Dakota.

Career pathway systems offer an effective approach to the development of a skilled workforce by increasing the number of workers in the North Dakota who gain industry- recognized and academic credentials necessary to work in jobs that are in-demand. Core partners will align educational offerings with business needs, career pathways systems engage business in the development of educational programs up front. Career pathways systems transform the role of employers from a customer to a partner and a co-leader and co-investor in the development of the workforce.

Employers have a high stake in the development of career pathways that lead to an increase in their pipeline of qualified workers. The North Dakota career pathways system will offer a more efficient and customer-centered approach to workforce development by structuring connections among employers, adult basic education, support service providers, occupational training, and post-secondary education programs. Career pathway programs make it easier for people to earn industry-recognized credentials through avenues that are more relevant; to provide opportunities for more flexible education and training; and to attain market identifiable skills that can transfer into work. These comprehensive education and training programs are suited to meet the needs of working learners and non-traditional students.

Career pathways programs will be designed to serve a diverse group of learners to include; adults, youth, dislocated workers, veterans, individuals with a disability, public assistance recipients, new immigrants, English language learners, and justice-involved individuals. The ND Career and Technical Education has created 16 career clusters that organize virtually all occupations around 16 broad categories. Occupations within each cluster require similar skills and knowledge. The categories include: • Agriculture, Food & Natural Resources / Energy • Architecture & Construction • Arts, A/V Technology & Communications • Business Management & Administration • Education & Training • Finance • Government & Public Administration • Health Science • Hospitality & Tourism • Human Services • Information Technology • Law & Public Safety • Manufacturing • Marketing • Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics • Transportation, Distribution & Logistics

Each career cluster has a poster created on-line that lists occupations under heading of education required; High School Diploma or Equivalent, Post-Secondary non-degree award or Associate's Degree and Bachelor's Degree or Higher. Each poster included a column that lists the ND annual openings and typical annual wage. Career cluster information is available online on the ND Career and Technical Education website under Student Resources at <https://www.cte.nd.gov/career-clusters>. The career clusters are available to all core partner programs and are used for career exploration.

The Career Outlook publication is a comprehensive resource that includes self-assessment tools, occupational research, information on financing an education, employment and education and training. The Career Outlook supports thoughtful, deliberate planning to choose a career that is personally satisfying and fulfills a critical need in local communities. The workforce of tomorrow will need the knowledge, technical skill, and attitude necessary to be globally competitive. This publication guides individual through the process of planning and preparing for a lifetime of success in North Dakota.

<https://www.cte.nd.gov/sites/www/files/documents/CRN/CareerOutlook/CareerOutlook.pdf>.

WIOA training funds support career pathways in many occupation areas such as healthcare career ladders of nurse assistant, licensed practical nurse and registered nurse. Transportation occupations offer increased wages and opportunity based on skills and endorsements held. Welding occupations require a variety of skills and certifications to work in specific areas. The ND eligible training provider list offers many certifications to expand skills for these in demand occupations in the State. [ND Workforce Connection - ETPL Approved Programs](#).

- (2) Describe the strategies the State will use to align the core programs, any Combined State Plan partner programs included in this Plan, required and optional one-stop partner programs, and any other resources available to the State to achieve fully integrated customer services consistent with the strategic vision and goals described above. Also describe strategies to strengthen workforce development activities in regard to weaknesses identified in section II(a)(2). Titles I-IV

North Dakota will continue to strive for a strong comprehensive workforce system that enables individuals to move easily between employment and skill improvement to advance their careers, achieve their occupational goals, and contribute to a growing economy. The workforce system includes partners in delivery of labor exchange services funded by Wagner-Peyser, Adult Education, Vocational Rehabilitation, Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, labor market information, workplace training, skills development and education, along with partners in business, industry and economic development.

Collaboration among partners for comprehensive delivery of services will include identification of skill needs and training gaps, and addressing training needs for in-demand occupations. The Governor's five targeted industries, as well as in-demand occupations in support industries, will be the primary focus of skill development strategies for the State. Vocational Rehabilitation, Adult education and WIOA Youth funds will be used to help targeted

youth populations access jobs and occupational training opportunities that will keep them connected with their communities and North Dakota's labor market. Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) provides services to youth which will assist them with identifying appropriate career goals and assisting with the transition from school to employment. Pre-employment transition services are offered to high school students age 14-21. Services include job exploration, work-based learning opportunities, counseling on enrollment in post-secondary education, workplace readiness and self-advocacy. Adult Education enabling youth to acquire the basic skills necessary to function in today's society so that they can benefit from the completion of secondary school, enhanced family life, attaining citizenship and participating in job training programs.

The North Dakota workforce development and training system receives Federal and State funding support, and in many cases matching funds are also provided by the private sector. WIOA Title I funds are used to help leverage other Federal fund sources such as Pell Grants and student loans. In addition, WIOA funds are used to help leverage state and private sector funds available to address workforce training needs. North Dakota has a strong collaboration among state workforce partners to increase the employment of North Dakotans with disabilities. Staff from local offices of VR, Job Service North Dakota and Adult Basic Education collaborate in joint planning and service delivery to individuals with disabilities.

Core program staff collaborate to best achieve that goal for their participants. These efforts will continue to be coordinated to support North Dakota's Talent Initiative goals to expand, attract, and retain talent to meet the state's workforce needs.

Veterans are served through coordination of efforts by Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program Specialist and Consolidated Position Specialist. However, Veterans are also served by other workforce partners such as Voc-Rehab and at times the Adult Learning Centers throughout the state.

Veterans are provided priority of service through the Workforce Centers. Each individual who enters or calls the workforce center are screened to quickly direct veterans to appropriate staff to address their unique needs. All Workforce Centers serve Veterans while providing priority of service in preparing this population to meet the needs of statewide employers.

Sector Strategies

Sector strategies will be expanded to continue enhancing and strengthening economic vitality through addressing employer and job-seeker talent requirements. Sector partnerships implement effective coordinated responses and integrate resources to develop the talent and workforce needs of key industries of a regional labor market.

Labor market information will be used as the basis to map and assess current sector activities to identify successes and challenges along with emerging market areas. This data will be used to understand the skills required for the current and future workforce and prioritize target industries.

Job Service participates in many activities that support economic development around the state. Established sector strategy groups hold manufacturing roundtables to jointly discuss industry challenges and find solutions, one challenge is recruiting workforce. Two examples of these are the Dickinson Manufacturing Roundtable located in the southwest part of the state and the Highway Two West Manufacturing Association located in the northeast part of the state. Additionally, during the last four years, the Unmanned Aerial System industry has grown at an immense pace and has added a roundtable quarterly discussion that Job Service staff are invited to. Job Service staff offer the services available to assist with labor exchange, training opportunities and labor

market information at all of these statewide strategy meetings. Additionally, Job Service Workforce Center staff participate in sector strategies with Tech Connect IT Sector and the Health Tech Trade Steering Committee.

Through the EmPower North Dakota Commission, leaders from all major energy industries in North Dakota meet regularly with one common goal: to be critical thinkers for the development of the state's energy resources. The strategic partnerships between North Dakota's long-standing and emerging energy industries enable all sectors of the industry to work together as they meet our state's and country's energy needs. North Dakota is proactive and aggressive in addressing energy development and serves as a model for America in fostering innovative, long-term energy strategies to meet our nation's growing energy demand and need for energy security in an environmentally responsible manner.

A sector strategy in North Dakota that is sort of new and might not totally fit under the description of what a "sector strategies" is commonly referred to. The collaboration of state workforce agencies and in particular Job Service North Dakota in meeting the needs of New Americans who are arriving into our great state. Through working with the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) in North Dakota, Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services (LIRS), Global Neighbors and Global Friends Coalition, we are placing the New American populations in work sectors such as manufacturing, hospitality, and healthcare. This collaboration with JSND, Adult Education and Vocational Rehabilitation continues to grow to develop processes to serve this population. with this population is taking advantage of our services more than ever. We are seeing more and more of the New American population take advantage of services in our resource rooms, and programs such as WIOA and JOBS. This population is very important in filling the 14,000 job openings in ND. North Dakota continues to see an increased population of New Americans/refugees and other English Language Learners. Since January 2022 JSND has provided services to over 500 new Americans/refugees.

Finally, the Greater North Dakota Chamber provides a license for The Manufacturing Institute's Dream It, Do It, a sector strategy to connect with high school students to provide exposure to manufacturing jobs and dispel misconceptions about the industry. Manufacturers identify young professionals within their company who engage students to inspire them to consider a career in manufacturing. This model has been shared with the Workforce Development Council and other industries in hopes to replicate the successes and provide career awareness experiences for the next generation of workers.

The Workforce Development Council has established an in-demand occupations list for North Dakota in accordance with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). The list includes occupations determined to have a current or potential impact on the state's economy. The factors used in creating the list are: Total Employment (2022), Ten-Year Numeric Job Growth (2021-2031), Annualized Job Growth Rate (2021-2031), Annual Job Openings, Average Annual Wages, and Essential and Emerging Occupations.

<https://www.jobsnd.com/job-seeker/demand-occupations>

Vocational Rehabilitation allows for exited individuals to reapply for increased skills for career advancement. Career pathway training provides new opportunities for individuals whose disability has advanced and is now requiring changes in work environment and needs new or advanced skills or for those who are ready for the next step in their career and require advanced skills.

The state of North Dakota has been proactive in development of partnerships with business and industry, education, economic development, and the workforce development system to continuously identify and address workforce challenges. The Workforce Development Council, community colleges, business and labor, the Office of Apprenticeship, and TrainND all work closely to identify workforce needs and address training solutions. VR's primary mission is to assist North Dakotans with disabilities to improve their employment opportunities and to assist North Dakota businesses in finding solutions to their disability—related issues.

Through this "dual client" approach, VR assists individuals with disabilities to achieve competitive integrated employment and increased independence. VR also assists business owners and employers through full-service business consultation on a variety of business and disability-related areas. Core program partners will collaborate with Career and Technical Education to receive professional development to build a common understanding of career pathways and how they can be used across all agencies. Career and Technical Education will, with consultation of the others involved, take the lead on professional development that will be applied across all agencies.

North Dakota continues to see resettlements of New Americans. Job Service Workforce Centers link Adult Education and English literacy programs. Adult Education offers programs assist English language learners in literacy activities, rights and responsibility of students, workforce training, and can include integrated education and training. The Fargo Adult Learning Center is currently the only ALC in ND offering all the above in a program called Integrated English language and civics education (IELCE). All ALCs in the State offer English language acquisition classes, a form of citizenship, and workforce training. Fargo ALC receives additional funding from WIOA to offer the IELCE program with IET. We are excited that our state was able to hold two competitions for IET grants in 2021 and 2022 with state ESSER funds. In addition, this past legislation approved additional funds to adult education for the biennium to grant out to ALC's for continued IET expansion. "An Integrated Education and Training (IET) program must meet the definition and requirements set forth in WIOA and the final regulations as established by the Department of Education on August 19, 2016, in the Federal Register. IET is a service approach that provides adult education and literacy activities concurrently and contextually with workforce preparation activities and workforce training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster for the purpose of educational and career advancement (§463.35). An IET program must include the following three components: adult education and literacy activities, workforce preparation activities, and workforce training (§463.36). In addition, as part of a career pathway (§463.37), the design of an IET program should support the local and state workforce development board plans as required under WIOA." Four sites have participated, and we were able to grant out to our local programs to implement/expand IET's. ND DOCR also has benefited from these grants. Sites were able to develop around in-demand jobs such as CNA, Paraeducators, CDL, and Heavy Equipment Operator. The dialogue continues across the state. Job Service Workforce Centers and other core partners are available and request to help in preparing participants so that unsubsidized employment in in-demand industries and occupations can occur. Also, so economic self-sufficiency can be obtained.

A growing partnership with CTE is a goal for upcoming program years. Talks have already begun about the "how". The goal is to simply allow Adult Education participants access to the machines, training, teachers that are currently being used in the CTE program. In some of our ALCs in ND, a shared physical location exists as well as a shared Director. We are pleased to report steps have taken place on meeting these two separated student populations on site. It has always been seen as two separated student populations, but it seems plausible that we can find a way to utilize this resource. ND is also going to explore opportunities of CTE in our postsecondary institutions, this could be a large factor in widening our options for IET offerings across the state. With resources that are not sufficient to provide certain workforce trainings, partnerships become key. One of the pillars in solving the workforce challenge in ND deals with tapping into historically underutilized populations, especially those with barriers. ALCs, in concert with VR and Job Service centers, are strategically planning ways in which we can make an impact in this area.

Involving interns in North Dakota businesses addresses two important challenges. Internships provide employees in a tight labor market and build connections between young people and North Dakota employers. The state funded Operation Intern program offers private businesses up to \$20,000 every two years to fund internships in their companies.

Co-enrollments of participants are encouraged to maximize the total resources available for preparation of the workforce to meet employment needs. Examples of funds leveraged with WIOA include: Title II Adult Education; Carl Perkins; Trade Act; Tribal WIOA and Tribal 477 programs; Motivation, Education and Training (MET); TANF;

Vocational Rehabilitation; SCSEP, and North Dakota New Jobs Training. WIOA funds are used to cover the cost of GED testing, dual enrollments with WIOA Dislocated Worker funds complement Trade Act enrollments, MET and WIOA co— enrollments support training and Vocational Rehabilitation referrals receive Wagner-Peyser services. JOBS clients also receive Wagner- Peyser services routinely and receive WIOA assistance as appropriate. Building on these partnerships assist in determining what funding source is best utilized to increase job seeker skills and to increase customer service. These efforts result in meeting the needs of North Dakota employers and supporting the Governor’s vision.

The Job Service Workforce Center staff include the Jobs for Veterans State Grant (JVSG). One Disabled Veteran Outreach Program specialist and four Consolidated Position Specialist (CPs) assist the needs of disabled veterans. Those veterans and eligible persons who require intensive service in order to obtain and retain employment that supports their self-sufficiency. CPs also provide outreach to employers in advocating for the hiring of Veterans. CPs are available in Fargo, Grand Forks, Bismarck, and Minot but do provide outreach to the five other Workforce Centers located across the state.

UI claims are taken only through online means. This service delivery model increases the need for assistance from Job Service Workforce Center staff. Job Service Workforce Centers have adjusted as required by WIOA and have adapted service delivery to meet the growing needs of UI claimants. UI claimants have a series of “How To” instructional videos to assist with the UI claims filing process and weekly certification. The videos are posted on the Job Service webpage jobsnd.com. <https://www.jobsnd.com/unemployment-individuals/unemployment-insurance-how-videos>

III. OPERATIONAL PLANNING ELEMENTS

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include an Operational Planning Elements section that supports the

State's strategy and the system-wide vision described in Section II(c) above. Unless otherwise noted, all Operational Planning Elements apply to Combined State Plan partner programs included in the plan as well as to core programs. This section must include—

(a) **State Strategy Implementation.** The Unified or Combined State Plan must include—

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

The North Dakota Workforce Development Council serves as the State Board under WIOA section 101(d). North Dakota is designated by the Governor as a single state local area.

The Council shall carry out the functions of a local board. The Workforce Development Council identifies, develops, and recommends workforce policy changes to programs that will improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the State's workforce development system. Targeted industry and potential labor pools are the focus of the Council meetings to provide direction for a comprehensive workforce development strategic plan. The Council identifies and develops opportunities for collaboration and partnership between education, employment and supporting workforce development policies, resources and activities in the State. The nine Workforce Centers are located regionally throughout North Dakota. The VR staff has relationships with local Workforce partners. When there is an individual who has a disability and is working with a Workforce partner, VR may be called to open a case. VR works collaboratively with individuals who are co-enrolled and provide guidance as to the necessary training, accommodations and/or adaptations that may be needed to assist an individual achieve vocational goals.

July 2017, the Workforce Development Council voted to restructure the membership to meet the WIOA section 101(b). The Council represents diverse geographic areas of the state. The chairperson was selected by the Governor and represents business, and a director and support staff are employees of the North Dakota Department of Commerce and Job Service, and assist the Council in performing its functions.

The Council, as a whole, are responsible to the Governor for: Identifying, developing and recommending workforce policy changes to federal and state programs that will improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the State's workforce development system; Reviewing and identifying the current and future economic development and workforce development needs of the state and recommending steps for meeting those needs; Providing direction for a comprehensive workforce development strategic plan; Identifying and developing recommended actions that will enhance and increase the capacity of the state's workforce development system;

Identifying and developing opportunities for collaboration and partnership between education, employment and supporting workforce development activities in the State; Reviewing and approving a Council operating budget; Performing the duties and functions of State Board as prescribed under WIOA.

The Workforce Development Council approves policies as required by WIOA and receives reports for all core programs, career technical education and Department of Commerce. The members review the law and regulations and considers the benefits to the state. The Workforce Development Council considers the service delivery for the state and the single local area designation when determining service providers. The Council enters into memorandums of understanding for providers for WIOA Youth services and Adult and Dislocated Worker career services. The Council considers the unique characteristics of North Dakota and the wishes of the Governor when making provider decisions. In order for the Council to have a better understanding of what the nine Workforce Centers across the state provide to the employers and citizens through the Title I and III programs, the Job Service Workforce Services Director (One-Stop Operator) has invited all Council members into the Workforce Centers for a tour. Additionally, each Workforce Center manager has been given a goal of connecting with their area council member(s) and to personally invite them into the Workforce Centers to understand the mission of Job Service North Dakota and what we provide to our customers. Finally, a report on Job Service North Dakota and Workforce Center activities are provided at each quarterly Workforce Development Council meeting.

In following WIOA's training emphasis for in-demand occupations, the Workforce Development Council will review LMI data annually and make adjustments as necessary. Biennially, the Council creates and submits a list of recommendations which includes several legislative initiatives to the Governor. These recommendations are utilized by entities in their legislative testimonies for policy changes and funding requests to Standing Committees. Additionally, the recommendations are also used to drive the projects taken on by the Department of Commerce Workforce Division, and other state agencies.

The Executive Committee provides for the administration, continuity and good order of the Council as a whole and performs executive management tasks as may be determined by the Council membership, including:

- a. Assist in establishing the meeting agendas for the Council.
- b. Track all outstanding actions of the Council and recommend actions that would assure successful completion of all tasks and objectives.
- c. Recommend policy positions for the Council's review and approval.
- d. Establish task groups when needed: design purpose and role, obtain and appoint members, designate task group chairs, and establish operating parameters and completion time subject to approval of the Council.

The Administrative Committee shall be responsible for:

- a. Developing a Unified State Plan.
- b. Recommend to the Council, goals for the development and continuous improvement of the

statewide workforce delivery system to include development of linkages to assure coordination and non-duplication among programs and activities. c. Provide recommendations for improvement of comprehensive State workforce delivery system, including State adjusted levels of performance as needed when the core program performance fails to meet negotiated levels. d. Recommend projects to the Council for Governor’s consideration for funding and provide recommendations to the Council on the use of the Governor’s Set Aside Funds when available. Finally, the Council has created four subcommittees which all have a specific area of focus based on the report of recommendations released by the Council in October 2018. Each subcommittee has been tasked with building strategies to accomplish the goals in one of the following areas from the original report: 1) Recruitment and retention of workers; 2) Addressing opportunities for the populations with barriers to employment; 3) Increasing earlier and more diverse career exploration and addressing technical skills gap; and 4) Occupational licensure reform. A fifth subcommittee is utilized to develop a communication plan aimed at educating citizens throughout the state on the initiatives developed by the Council. The subcommittees meet monthly and serve as the research arm of the Council.

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

(A) *Core Program Activities to Implement the State’s Strategy.* Describe the activities the entities carrying out the respective core programs will fund to implement the State’s strategies. Also, describe how such activities will be aligned across the core programs and Combined State Plan partner programs included in this plan and among the entities administering the programs, including using co-enrollment and other strategies, as appropriate.

The North Dakota workforce system gives all stakeholders including businesses, students, job seekers, researchers, and public officials access to all federally—funded workforce development programs, as well as several state—funded programs. Services provided through the Job Service AJC Workforce Centers include: • WIOA Title IB—Adults, Dislocated Workers and Youth • Wagner—Peyser • Unemployment Insurance • TANF Employment and Training (JOBS) • Labor Market Information (LMI)

1. Jobs for Veterans State Grant • Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) • Foreign Labor Certification • SNAP Employment and Training (BEST)

Job Service Workforce Center core and required partners include: • Adult Education and Family Literacy Act • Vocational Rehabilitation • Post—secondary Career and Technical Education under the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act • Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) and Job Corps. North Dakota capitalizes on the strengths each partner brings to the system while reducing or eliminating duplication of products and services. The simplicity in the structure with defined roles and responsibilities of all partners allow case managers and providers to deliver the services necessary for North Dakota’s growth and competitive edge.

Job seekers have the option to search for employment, review labor market information and a variety of other employment topics through Jobsnd.com. Links to the job listing site provides fast access to a database of thousands of jobs. Jobsnd.com utilizes Job Spidering, a powerful online tool that captures job listings from other sources including corporate web sites, online newspaper listings, and other private job boards. Spidered jobs are added to Job Service's internal job listings to provide seamless access to thousands of job openings. Employers benefit from having job openings viewed by the largest applicant pool in North Dakota and the ability to view similar listings for wage and benefit comparison. Job seekers benefit by having the largest single portal in North Dakota to access job openings for all occupations. Jobsnd.com has the largest pool of job openings in the state. Job Service provides staff assisted services. Job seekers are assessed to identify current skill levels and gaps. The assessment information is used to determine skill development opportunities within in—demand occupations. Labor market information is provided for job seekers to make informed occupational choices and execute their job search efficiently. Career services will be provided to the extent needed based on individual assessments. Support service needs will be assessed, and referrals made to partner programs or known community resources.

Informational services are provided through the FirstLink 211 Network. The FirstLink Network is a unique resource that brings together workforce development partners, community organizations and businesses. The FirstLink Network is a partnership developed to assist customers gain access to services in order to obtain, retain and advance in employment. <https://myfirstlink.org/>

Job Service Workforce Center staff providing assessment and orientation services will be knowledgeable of services of all core and required partners and will be able to explain services available and refer job seekers for those services. North Dakota has a strong history of partner collaboration and dual enrollment of mutual clients. Partner program staff, through release of information, share assessment information and employment plans. The sharing of information provides convenience for the client and also enhances the chances of success. When all employment and training resources are considered, the likelihood of success is greatly increased. ITA costs sharing with VR and WIOA has been occurring for over a decade. Students working with Adult Education to earn their GED have received support services to cover testing costs. TANF participants, especially out—of—school youth, are referred to and receive WIOA services. Job—driven workforce development will prepare workers and ensure businesses have skilled workers to be competitive. Individuals can quickly learn skills where hands—on experience in a work environment is integrated with classroom learning.

Job-driven training programs will be promoted with the aim to include work—based learning opportunities that best suit their participants. Work based learning activities include: • Work experience, paid and unpaid • Job shadows • Internships • On-the-job training and Registered apprenticeships.

Participant outcomes of employment and wages improve with work-based learning activities. Employers reduce their recruitment and training costs with work—based learning activities. It also helps them hire better—prepared employees who understand workplace expectations. WIOA Career Services includes activities on behalf of employers, including small employers, which describe the work-based learning opportunities available. Job driven training ensures that job seekers and workers are equipped with the skills needed by employers and are matched to employers with good jobs. Staff will utilize the eligible training provider list and the ND in—demand occupation list to promote individual training accounts. Classroom training and on—the—job training will support the workforce needs of employers and where available, apprenticeships. Funds will be leveraged between core and required programs whenever possible.

Co-enrollments of participants are encouraged to maximize the total resources available for preparation of the workforce to meet employment needs. Examples of funds leveraged with WIOA Title I funds include: Title II Adult Education; Carl Perkins; Trade Act; Tribal WIOA and Tribal 477 programs; Motivation, Education and Training (MET); TANF employment and training (JOBS); SNAP Basic Employment and Skills Training (BEST); Vocational Rehabilitation and SCSEP. WIOA and VR funds are used to cover the cost of GED testing, dual enrollments with WIOA Dislocated Worker funds complement Trade Act enrollments, MET and WIOA co-enrollments leverage

program training funds and Vocational Rehabilitation referrals receive Wagner-Peyser services. JOBS and BEST clients receive Wagner-Peyser services routinely and receive WIOA assistance as appropriate. These partnerships assist in determining what funding source is best utilized to increase job seeker skills. These efforts result in meeting the needs of North Dakota employers and supporting the Governor's vision.

To ensure the WIOA requirements are implemented with fidelity and to the 'spirit' of the law, the state core partner agencies will work together to increase collaboration through professional development. Regional core partners routinely meet and cover such topics as labor market information (LMI), career pathways, motivational interviewing, agency roles and partnerships. Regional training to ensure networking, common training understanding and implementation of exemplary practices. This training concept maximizes staff time, funding and participant outcomes.

In Adult Ed., an Adult Education DHP state grant has been allocated yearly to ALC sites in addition to ABE funds. Displaced Homemaker Program committee has been formed, meeting once a year to review the program and needs for those who meet the definition. The term "displaced homemaker" has been defined by law to mean an individual who: a) Has worked in the individual's home providing unpaid services for household members; b) Has been or is unemployed or underemployed; c) Has had or will have difficulty finding and maintaining employment; and (1) is widowed, divorced, separated, or abandoned; or (2) because of the disability of the individual's spouse, is displaced from the individual's former economically dependent role. The committee consists of a representation of a member from all eight regions and two members at large.

Integrated Education and Training Programs is another area we are working to increase credential rate in adult ed. These have been created locally in partnership with local employers and agencies on in-demand jobs. A few competitive state grants have allowed access to funds to provide these opportunities in ALC's with students/adults while earning a GED. Some examples include CNA, Intro. Education, welding, and CDL.

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

Core partners collaborate with community efforts and initiatives to assist North Dakotans meet their employment goals and increase earnings. Core partner staff participate in a variety of activities that promote in-demand careers, career pathways, academic achievement and employment.

Collaboration among WIOA, Wagner-Peyser, VR, Unemployment Insurance, JVSG, SCSEP, Trade Act, business and industry, the North Dakota University System, TrainND (state funded customized employee training), Career and Technical Education (Carl Perkins), Adult Basic Education, refugee services, foster care providers, the Department of Corrections, and many more partners will result in: • Expanded awareness and leverage of programs/funds designated to serving targeted populations, often served by multiple entities; • Rapid development and deployment of programs and activities unique to economic and employment needs for North Dakota's workforce; • Access to increased numbers of persons in need of assistance, including low skilled, low income, individuals with disabilities, English Language Learners, disaffected youth, veterans, dislocated workers, and individuals residing in high unemployment areas, including American Indians.

The Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) is a special program for unemployed, low income persons age 55 or older who have barriers to employment. SCSEP participants receive paid on-the-job training, annual physical examinations and job-related counseling when needed. SCSEP training stipends do not affect most social service benefits. The purpose of the SCSEP program is to:

- Foster and promote useful part-time opportunities in community service activities for eligible persons.
- Foster individual economic self-sufficiency.
- Increase the number of older persons who may enjoy the benefits of unsubsidized employment in both the public and private sectors.

In North Dakota SCSEP is a statewide program that is provided through two Federal Grants:

- Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Vocational Rehabilitation for individuals 55 and older living in the following counties: Bowman, Burleigh, Cass, Divide, Dunn, Grand Forks, McKenzie, Mountrail, Richland, Sargent, Stark, Steele, Traill, Ward, Williams.
- All other counties in the state are provided services by The National Indian Council on Aging (NICOA) (all races can seek participation through NICOA). Applications for NICOA can be found at: <https://www.nicoa.org/programs/scsep/scsep-pre-application/>

VR has begun administering SCSEP. SCSEP participants may need assistance with a disability evaluation and assessment as well as adaptation toward their employment. VR assists SCSEP with assessment of job skills and required training for employment in specific career fields.

SCSEP is progressively building partnerships with the Older Americans Act senior service providers, adult protective services, county social services, local veteran's service centers, Adult Education, Job Service Workforce Centers, homeless coalitions, and tribal colleges, to facilitate referral of services. The co-enrollment of clients provides maximum access to available resources.

The Center for Rural Health (CRH), University of North Dakota School of Medicine and Health Sciences and the Area Health Education Center (AHEC) utilize state, federal and private funding to focus on maintaining access to quality health care for North Dakota residents. A critical component to being able to provide health care services is having adequate workforce. The CRH and AHEC, in partnership with the ND Department of Commerce, and other stakeholders across the state, support student experiences fostering interest and excitement about a careers in health care. Career pathway efforts include Rural Collaborative Opportunities for Occupational Learning (R-COOL) Health Scrubs Academies and Camps; HOSA Future Health Professionals, the only statewide student organization that focuses on health careers; and AHEC Scholars program and rural clinical rotation experiences for college students in health care profession programs.

There is one Job Corps center in ND. The Burdick Job Corps Center is located in Minot, ND and partners with the Minot Workforce Center. All new job corps students have one-stop center orientation onsite and offer career services when employment and future training is appropriate. The Burdick Job Corps Center has staff co-located for admissions and placement services in the Bismarck, Dickinson, Devils Lake, and Grand Forks AJC Workforce Center. All AJC Workforce Center staff are familiar with the Burdick Job Corps and refer potential students and assist with employment and training needs to students returning to the area.

Registered Apprenticeship alignment has been strengthened within the state workforce system. Registered Apprenticeship has been incorporated into Job Service ND applicant services and business services within the

WIOA core programs with the help of the Apprenticeship Accelerator grant and Governor's Set-aside funds. Job orders in the labor exchange system are flagged as Registered Apprenticeship openings. All Job Service staff, including WIOA program case managers, have the list of current Registered Apprenticeship sponsors to become familiar of the activity in the State for employer and occupation targets for program promotion. Business service staff messages with employers will include Registered Apprenticeship benefits.

The Department of Commerce applied for and received an Apprenticeship State Expansion Grant. The intent of this grant has been to create a new Registered Apprenticeship Programs which helps statewide companies in the state's primary industries and those businesses looking for qualified jobseekers filling in-demand occupations. The program offers classroom and online training through North Dakota State College of Science (NDSCS). NDSCS has a long tradition of providing responsive, accessible, and flexible training solutions that include their current apprenticeship programs. NDSCS has curriculum currently approved with the Department of Labor and will be expanding their offerings to meet the growing needs in healthcare and manufacturing industries. This grant has been impacted by challenges caused by the pandemic and turnover in staffing, but both NDSCS and Commerce are committed to making progress toward the grant's goals. This program will upturn the current North Dakota apprenticeship usage. By working with students, parents, groups which represent underrepresented populations, and NDSCS – this approach will engage individuals to start a pipeline for industry.

Additionally, with a period of performance from 7/1/2021-7/30/2023 the North Dakota Department of Career and Technical Education (CTE) received a State Apprenticeship Expansion grant, which was administered through collaboration with Lake Region State College to utilize grant funds for purposes of capacity-building to support apprenticeship expansion in North Dakota utilizing \$437,709.

Grant activities included:

1. A strategic marketing plan for both potential industry partners (employers) and potential student/apprentices.
2. Strengthening the alignments within the educational and workforce systems in ND to ensure the correct 'fit' of an apprentice into an apprenticeship or career choice.
3. Develop and implement a database system which has processes for standardized collection, sharing and data integrity for informed decision-making of stakeholders so diversity exists in both apprenticeship programming and individual apprentices.
4. Work supported an increase in the diversity development for underserved populations.

Much of the work was done through a structure of committees involving key stakeholders. The advisory board and committee members meet bi-weekly or quarterly to review the progress of the grant initiatives. Composition of the committees includes representatives from:

- ND Department of Commerce
- ND Department of Career and Technical Education
- Lake Region State College
- Cankdeska Cikana Community College
- ND Department of Public Instruction
- Grand Forks Career and Technical Education
- ND Information Technology
- Technology Council of North Dakota
- North Dakota University System Core Technology Services
- Edu-Tech
- Job Service of North Dakota

One of the primary accomplishments of this grant project was the opportunities offered for state-level planning through the dialogs at the standing meetings. For example, NDIT coordinated the activities related to the database system for apprenticeships. These meetings (Data Up) are held on Friday mornings with additional

representation from representation from the US DOL ASE grantee, the ND Department of Commerce and Job Service routinely attended meetings which were held weekly. This meeting is currently used to provide updates on both DOL grants obtained by North Dakota. We discussed how to obtain data from the Office of Apprenticeship through their RAPIDS database and Job Service to populate a state map which would be in ND Insights. The intent is to identify all apprenticeship opportunities across the state and employer sponsors. Work continues regarding sharing the most recent data available from various databases. The group also identified a barrier to having any significant data on native American who reside and/or work in our state.

As a result of the Advisory Board and Committee meetings, North Dakota Career and Technology and Lake Region State College were introduced to a private industry partner by staff of the ND Department of Instruction. Out of years of dialog and conversation, three private industry partners who are active in the North Dakota oil and gas industry accepted a proposal by the North Dakota Tribal College System for \$14 million. The funded initiative, called the ND Tribal College Apprenticeship Program (NDTCAP) supports apprenticeship opportunities for individuals living and working on ND reservations. The five tribal colleges received funds for tuition, fees, books, and support services (housing, transportation, daycare, etc.) for those apprentices attending training/education on their campuses. Funds are also available to employer sponsors of these apprentices for wages.

The proposal was developed in partnership with Lake Region State College, who would mentor, support and assist the tribal colleges develop their apprenticeship program standards as a program sponsor utilizing the educational model in place at Lake Region State College. For this work, LRSC is also receiving funds from its industry partners.

The SAE 2020 grant provided funds to educate North Dakotans (students, unemployed, employed and employers) as well as legislators about apprenticeships. Several bills were written and passed in the legislative session because of providing input through personal conversations with legislators into the financial and policy barriers to upscale apprenticeships in our state, including youth apprenticeships. Numerous presentations were done at industry conferences as well as to targeted audiences. Website development for apprenticeships was done with a consultant on the NDCTE website with links to other state and national agencies such as the ND Department of Commerce, Job Service and the Office of Apprenticeship in Bismarck, ND.

Since the SAE 2020 grant other colleges and universities in addition to the five tribal colleges (Sitting Bull College, Turtle Mountain Community College, United Tribes Technical College, Cankdeska Cikana Community College and Nueta Hidatsa Sandish College are now participating in apprenticeships including Minot State, University of Jamestown, and Bismarck State College for non-traditional occupations.

On a national level, the work of NDCTE and this grant has resulted in recognition for the state of North Dakota as a leader in apprenticeships. First, ND is a leader in healthcare apprenticeships, specifically in nursing. We have been contacted by numerous states and presented nationally about how to collaborate with state licensing agencies and boards in occupations which have century code standards of practice such as state Boards of Nursing.

Additionally, the work of the ND Tribal College System and its apprenticeships for the Native American population is a model for the rest of the United States for capacity-building a strong workforce on and off reservations for this minority population. The NDTCAP recently added both pre-apprenticeships and youth apprenticeships to their program offerings.

Finally, in November 2021, the U.S. Department of Labor approved the "K-12 teacher" occupation as eligible for apprenticeship. The ND Department of Public Instruction had its Registered Apprenticeship Program- Teaching

(RAP-T) application approved in December 2022, and serves as the state's sponsor for all RAP-T programs. Along with state approved educator preparation programs providing related instruction and local school districts serving as employers, this team is tackling the pervasive teacher shortage affecting schools across the state. RAP-T programs provide paraprofessionals working in local school districts a pathway to become licensed teachers while they earn and learn, with no cost to the individual. Currently, four North Dakota educator preparation programs and eleven local school districts are participating in the program, funded by federal dollars.

Unemployment insurance for North Dakota is administered through Job Service ND. This allows for a strong working relationship with the Job Service Workforce Centers. Job Service Workforce Center staff receive annual training on the Unemployment Insurance Internet Claim Entry (UIICE) system from UI staff. UI staff work directly with Job Service Workforce Center staff when UI claimants have specific issues and questions. Many claimants depend on Job Service Workforce Center staff for assistance with their online claim filing and to navigate UIICE for the reemployment requirements. Job Service Workforce Center staff provide a variety of labor exchange services to UI claimants. The most common service is to assist a UI claimant with the requirement to register on the Job Service ND Virtual One-Stop (VOS). VOS is the electronic labor exchange system. Staff assist UI claimants with the online registration and provide assistance creating a resume. VOS has a virtual recruiter feature that will notify UI claimants of new job openings that meet their search criteria. Additional services to UI claimants include assistance to create resumes for each type of employment that a UI claimant is seeking and techniques for improving interviewing skills for UI claimants. Online/electronic applications are prevalent with many employers and this application process is often problematic for UI claimants that lack computer literacy. Job Service AJC Workforce Center staff are familiar with the local employer requirements and assist with this online application process. Social media is discussed as a tool to broaden a UI claimant's job search.

UI claimants receive referrals to WIOA Dislocated Worker for upgrade training for in-demand occupations. Out of area job search and relocation support services are provided as needed. Referrals are also provided to core programs for partner services such as increased academic skill and GED or vocational rehabilitation services that support their job search activities.

Employers frequently utilize the Job Service Workforce Centers for onsite hiring events and job fairs. UI claimants are provided information on upcoming hiring events and job fairs and are instructed on where to find future events on the Job Service ND website. Resources are available to UI claimants on various job seeking topics such as the importance of soft skills, quantifying and measuring occupational skills and accomplishments. For UI claimants with a criminal record, guidance is provided on how to overcome this barrier to employment on applications and during interviews.

Job Service ND is a grant recipient to provide services for the Job Opportunities and Basic Skills (JOBS) program. The agency provides the following services to TANF recipients living in Cass, Ransom, Richland, Sargent, Steele, and Traill counties; case management, coaching on a variety of soft skills ranging from problem solving, working with difficult people, child care and scheduling problems, job retention guidance includes frequent, structured status checks, self-evaluation and planning for the next step on the career ladder and ongoing job coaching can help improve job performance and avoid employment disciplinary issues. All career services and referrals to training are available to TANF recipients across the state. Job Service AJC Workforce Centers shall continue to invite additional JOBS contractor staff to the local offices to strengthen partnerships and to promote and explain all the services available to TANF recipients. Outreach will continue to create collaborative partnerships and result in additional co-enrollments particularly with WIOA Youth services.

Job Service Workforce Center staff utilize Community Action Partnership as a referral source for support services. The services include budgeting and money management, childcare, commodities, emergency assistance, energy assistance, food pantry, head start, housing, self-sufficiency, volunteer income tax assistance, and weatherization in most locations. Community Action has a financial literacy resource available online that is available for all customers.

Motivation, Education and Training Inc. (MET) operates the National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP) in eastern North Dakota. An ongoing partnership between Job Service ND and MET has existed to provide MSFWs additional opportunities for employment and training. MET maintains offices in the Red River Valley cities of Grafton and Fargo. Additionally, MET has an office in the Wahpeton, ND AJC Workforce Center. These MET offices and the Job Service AJC Workforce Centers work together to provide services to MSFW's in the respective areas. Tying the various service agencies together broadens the potential of serving the MSFWs in a one-stop concept.

North Dakota receives five Indian and Native American program awards. Job Service Workforce Center staff are familiar with the tribal colleges around the state and refer individuals who may be eligible for these grant funds. As these funds become limited, Job Service AJC Workforce Center staff are notified to provide assistance and services through WIOA Title I funds.

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

North Dakota has an established core partner working relationship. VR and Job Service Workforce Center staff participate on local Adult Education advisory boards. Job Service staff are appointed members of the State Rehabilitation Council and are on the North Dakota state and local Transition Community of Practice teams. Core partner staff have integrated business services activities and local partner collaboration meetings to further integrate services. These meetings act as a tool to educate each other on the services available under all titles which results in appropriate referrals and enhanced outcomes. State level trainings are offered to all local core program staff. Efforts to integrate service delivery and formalize referral process continue at the State level as well as between local programs.

With the WIOA increase in age eligibility and focus to spend 75 percent of WIOA youth funds on out-of-school youth, recruitment efforts are targeted toward this population. Youth Coordinators work closely with Job Service Workforce Center Resource Room staff, Adult Education, and Vocational Rehabilitation on referral and dual enrollment of out-of-school youth. In addition, Youth Coordinators utilize local networks with social service staff and/or community-based programs targeting homeless, disabled and transitioning youth. Over the last decade, Job Service North Dakota has also performed

outreach to the five Native American Reservations in ND. We have partnered with the tribal regions in setting up summer work experience opportunities for in-school youth. Job Service North Dakota is committed to diversity, equity and inclusion in the delivery of our training and employment programs.

Unemployment insurance claimants within the age eligibility are targeted for out-of-school youth recruitment. Although the focus has shifted to serving the out-of-school population, outreach continues to be provided to schools. Communication with school personnel including principals, CTE teachers and counselors is crucial to locate students who have dropped out or for those graduating and in need of assistance for occupational skills training to fill the jobs in-demand.

The strong relationship between the WIOA Youth Coordinators and VR staff has resulted in over 61% of WIOA youth participants with disabilities in PY 2021, it was a little lower at 57% during PY22. This can be attributed to collaboration on participant needs and the need to maximize funding due to North Dakota's minimum funding levels. Again, this illustrates how Job Service North Dakota is committed to diversity, equity and inclusion in the delivery of our training and employment programs.

The blend of career services and referral is provided and may vary depending on the customer needs that will be addressed. Customers may be directed to self-service only, job getting services, or skill development services based on their initial skill assessment results. Co-enrollment will be utilized as appropriate in order to provide the most appropriate funding source for those services that best meet the customer's needs in a cost-effective manner. A customer-focused approach including an initial assessment of skill level, skill development, career counseling/promotion and support service needs for each individual shall be available through the Job Service AJC Workforce Center.

This approach will be used to determine the needs of: • Individuals with disabilities • Dislocated workers, including trade impacted • Displaced homemakers • Basic Skills deficient • Individuals with multiple challenges to employment • JOBS clients • BEST clients • Non-custodial parents • Low-income individuals including recipients of public assistance • Migrants and seasonal farm workers • Minorities • New Americans and others with limited English proficiency • Older individuals • School dropouts • Veterans • Ex-offenders • Homeless individuals. Employment into in-demand occupations will be the goal for all individuals and will include non- traditional training choices.

North Dakota continues to see an increased population of New Americans/refugees and other English Language Learners. Since the beginning of 2022, 501 refugees/immigrants were served by Job Service workforce centers. Job Service works closely with Lutheran Immigration and Resettlement Services and the newly created Office of Refugee Resettlement to collaborate on services for these individuals. Job Service ND Workforce Centers link with Adult Education and English literacy programs. Adult Education has offerings that incorporate English literacy with occupational skills training that is closely aligned with local economies.

The state of North Dakota has been proactive in development of partnerships with business to assist New Americans and English language learners in acquiring additional assistance and preparation to progress in employment readiness. We believe this to be very important in looking at ways to enhance the equality, diversity,

and inclusion throughout all industries in ND. Majority of New Americans in ND are served at the Fargo Adult Learning Center (FALC). FALC also currently is the only site in ND to receive and be operating an IELCE program. An Elders program also exists to help acclimate students to a new environment and to help students feel more comfortable. Job Service AJC Workforce Center staff are available as requested to participate in the class and present job search information. The class covers basic work skills to include but not limited to soft skills, basic work math, reading, writing, transportation, interviewing, application process, childcare needs and computers. The class curriculum rotates every six weeks. In order to better serve English Language Learners, the Wagner-Peyser 10% funds will be designated to this special group of individuals.

The mission of the ND Community of Practice for Transition is to work towards building, supporting, and sustaining community partnerships. The system promotes and improves the scope, opportunity and quality of services for youth with disabilities to adequately prepare for life and career beyond high school. Communities of Practice (COP) involve people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a similar passion and who interact on a regular basis to learn from each other, and problem solve. North Dakota's Community of Practice will focus on working across groups and localities to share information, address issues, learn together, find shared goals and define shared work. The North Dakota structure is modeled on the national community of practice, of which North Dakota is a member. The group will focus on developing the community by inviting relevant state agencies and identifying groups that are involved in transition. The State and Regional Communities, as well as other state Community of Practice groups will share information and ideas through Shared Work, a website established by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act partnership.

The ND Department of Public Instruction, Special Education Unit sponsors a Statewide Interagency Community of Practice that actively engages all stakeholders that represent the roles important to secondary transition for students with disabilities in ND. In addition, the Community of Practice extends the existing state advisory into the regions. The State Transition Community of Practice Advisory Council identifies the development of Regional Interagency Transition Committees as a strategy to improve communication, knowledge and expertise among stakeholders in the transition process for youth with disabilities. An interagency transition team brings together a variety of stakeholders who are supporting youth with disabilities so they can have the best chance for success as adults. The State Community of Practice meets quarterly, and the Regional Community of Practice teams work to implement and state initiatives and best practices for the intended beneficiaries.

Recent Regional Community goals and accomplishments include: • Transition Fairs • Updated policies • Increased training opportunities • Development of timeline for services • Development of transition folders for families • Information sharing • Sharing information • Improved partnerships with the Department of Public Instruction, VR, Developmental Disabilities, Job Service, Higher Ed, Independent Living centers, Chambers of Commerce, etc., • Development of services for students with disabilities ages 18-21 • Development of programs to balance functional and academic needs • Identification of agency responsibilities • Consistency of services throughout the region.

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) offers training and employment services to assist in finding and retaining full-time employment leading to self-sufficiency. TANF families receive employment and training services by participating in the Jobs Opportunity and Basic Skills (JOBS).

JOBS program supportive services are available that help remove barriers to employment and training such as transportation allowance, assistance with childcare costs, car repairs, tools and clothing for work, work experience, on-the-job-training, job search and job readiness, community service program, vocational educational training, providing childcare services to an individual who is participating in a community service program. TANF households with increased earnings may qualify for six (6) months of Transition Assistance. Transition Assistance promotes job retention by providing an extended period of case assistance that provides a safety net of financial support and support services to assist households in attaining self-sufficiency. Post TANF supportive services may be provided to eligible individuals for up to six (6) months following the closure of their

TANF or Transition Assistance case. Post TANF recipients continue to receive supportive services. TANF Kinship Care program provides enhanced funding and support services in order to expand the options for placement of children who are in the care, custody, and control of County Social Services, Division of Juvenile Services (DJS) or Executive Director, Department of Human Services. As an alternative to Foster Care, children may be placed with relatives. Kinship care rules follow many of the same rules as foster care. Diversion Assistance was implemented to provide short-term emergency benefits and support services to families during a 'specific crisis or episode of need'. The intent of the assistance is to address current need that may prevent the family from needed assistance under TANF. Diversion benefits and support services may be received four months in a 12-month period. Parental Responsibility Initiative for the Development of Employment (PRIDE) program is a collaborative effort with Child Support, Job Service ND and the TANF Program. The program addresses non-payment of child support by the noncustodial parent. Referrals to the program are made by Child Support or by judicial order by a district court. The program assists individual find employment. Support services are offered to assist to remove barriers to employment.

Individuals with disabilities are referred to Vocational Rehabilitation to assist in finding solutions to disability-related issues to improve employment by providing:

- Assessments for services such assistive technology, availability and use of transportation, problem-solving abilities, strengths and weaknesses with social behaviors, communication skills, grooming, dealing with conflict, motivational skills, target interventional levels, identification of barriers and support options, transferable skills and abilities, interest, self-concept
- Job Development and Placement Services to assist in attaining the job and developing essential work skills.
- Job Retention services such as accommodations and follow along services directly engaging with the client and employer to assist in maintaining and retaining employment.
- Supported or Customized Employment for individuals who have traditionally been excluded from consideration for community employment. TANF is the payer of first resort for TANF recipients who are eligible to receive the same supportive services from Vocational Rehabilitation.

Children and adults without a high school education are referred to Department of Public Instruction for Adult Education. School age children (ages 4 to 18) receiving TANF are automatically eligible for the Free or Reduced School Lunch Program through the Department of Public Instruction.

Department of Public Instruction automatically enrolls the children in the School Lunch Program from a daily electronic match and exchange with the Department of Public Instruction to direct certify children for school meals. Services offered online by Job Service ND available to all TANF recipients:

1. Search for employment • Receive job postings • Apply for employment • Access current labor market information • Resume services • Find career assessment tools • Assessment tools • FirstLink 2-1-1 Network • O'Net • RUReady • Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) • Rosetta Stone • Interdisciplinary Team Case Management. In addition, Job Service ND provides TANF recipients living in Cass, Ransom, Richland, Sargent, Steele, and Traill counties the following services: • Case management • Coaching on a variety of soft skills ranging from problem solving, working with difficult people, child care problems, scheduling problems, etc. • Job retention guidance includes frequent, structured status checks, self-evaluation and planning for the next step on the career ladder and ongoing job coaching can help improve job performance and avoid disciplinary issues

The Basic Skills Employment and Training Program (BEST) is a required component of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). The primary goal of the SNAP Employment and Training program is to provide SNAP participants opportunities to gain skills, training, or experience that will improve their employment prospects and reduce their reliance on SNAP benefits. Additionally, the BEST program offers a way to allow SNAP recipients to meet work requirements.

The expansion of SNAP Employment and Training changed the program from a mandatory to a voluntary program and will include the following components: Job Search Training, Job Search, Job Retention and Education/Vocational Training. Included in these components will be an assessment, development of an

employment plan and case management. Due to the change from mandatory to voluntary, there were very few participants enrolled on a statewide.

Unemployment Insurance (UI) claimants visiting a Job Service Workforce Center receive skill assessment, career counseling, and labor market information. Job Service Workforce Center staff recommend on-site development tools to increase interview, soft or computer skills, short term industry training or degree programs through WIOA services and other core and community partner referrals. Job Service administers the UI, Wagner-Peyser and WIOA programs.

Job Service Workforce Center staff provide a variety of labor exchange services UI claimants who visit the local offices. The most common service is to assist a UI claimant with the requirement to register on the Job Service ND Virtual One-Stop (VOS). VOS is the electronic labor exchange system. Staff assist UI claimants with the online registration and provide assistance creating a resume. VOS has a virtual recruiter feature that will notify UI claimants of new job openings that meet their search criteria. Additional services to UI claimants include assistance to create resumes for each type of employment that a UI claimant is seeking and techniques for improving interviewing skills for UI claimants.

Online/electronic applications are prevalent with many employers and this application process is often problematic for UI claimants that lack computer literacy. Job Service Workforce Center staff are familiar with the local employer requirements and assist with this online application process. Social media is discussed as a means to broaden a UI claimant's job search. UI claimants receive referrals to WIOA Dislocated Worker for upgrade training for in-demand occupations. Out of area job search and relocation support services are provided as needed. Referrals are also provided to core programs for partner services such as increased academic skill and GED or vocational rehabilitation services that support their job search activities.

Employers frequently utilize the Job Service Workforce Centers for onsite hiring events and job fairs. UI claimants are provided information on upcoming hiring events and job fairs and are instructed on where to find future events on the Job Service ND website. Resources are available to UI claimants on various job seeking topics such as the importance of soft skills, quantifying and measuring occupational skills and accomplishments. For UI claimants with a criminal record, guidance is provided on how to overcome this barrier to employment on applications and during interviews.

Unemployed individuals receive skill assessment, career counseling and planning, and labor market information in Job Service Workforce Center's resource rooms. Job Service Workforce Center staff recommend on-site development tools to help improve individuals' interviewing skills, soft skills, and computer skills.

Unemployed individuals receive information regarding short-term industry training or degree programs through WIOA services and other partner referrals. Unemployed individuals receive job search assistance and referrals for work experience activities.

Online services are available to unemployed individuals via self-service 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, from anywhere internet access is available. Jobsnd.com links to the online labor exchange system for individual job search and employer job posting activities.

Unemployed job seekers can use jobsnd.com to create résumés and conduct automated job searches. Additionally, unemployed job seekers can become aware of education and training programs available and view labor market information such as high-demand occupations, current wages and training required. Unemployed job seekers can also explore career options, find direction to veteran services, and access community resources.

Under WIOA, Adult Education funds are granted to the ND Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (DOCR) to provide educational services to eligible students/inmates. The ND DOCR includes the state penitentiary, the youth correctional center, and multiple transitional facilities. The ND DOCR provides a wide range of educational

opportunities to incarcerated students. In North Dakota, if an incarcerated individual does not have a High School Equivalency, they are mandated by law to work towards earning one. Research shows that education, mixed with other rehabilitative pieces, can have a significant impact on recidivism rates. Adult Basic and Secondary Education is provided at each center along with GED testing and prep. Classes also exist for students whose language is not primarily English. Students with low literacy levels are included in a Read Right program. This is a research-based program that helps the student increase reading levels by increasing speed and understanding. Career readiness and digital literacy skills are also taught at each of the DOCR facilities. Each site also has their own “specialty” courses. For example, the NDSP (State Penitentiary) has the Last Mile (cyber security and coding) available for students. The James River Correctional Facility (JRCC) offers a construction trades program. The Missouri River Correctional Center (MRCC) offers a welding program provided by a full-time instructor. Beyond earning an HSE and working on trade skills, post-secondary options are available through a MOU with Ashland University along with correspondence options within institutions of the students’ choice. In addition, since Lutheran Social Services closed, we are happy to continue to offer services to New Americans and those needing EL services. The Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service is now overseeing and working with Adult Ed. programs to assist in New American transitions. Meetings have taken place with some local programs and the state director.

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

The Wagner-Peyser program is administered by Job Service and has historically been co-located in the Job Service Workforce Centers alongside WIOA Title I programs, the Jobs for Veterans State Grant, TANF, SNAP, Trade Act, and PRIDE (a TANF-funded noncustodial parent employment program), facilitating collaboration and seamless service delivery between all programs when providing services to employers. North Dakota employers use jobsnd.com to post job listings, search resumes for qualified candidates, review labor market information and market trends. Employers create automated candidate searches and access links to business related resources.

Jobsnd.com uses “job spidering”, a powerful online tool that captures job listings from other sources including corporate websites, online newspaper listings, and other private job boards. Spidered jobs are added to Job Service’s internal job listing which provides great efficiency advantages for employers. Employers who list job openings on a corporate website will automatically have their positions spidered to jobsnd.com and will not have to re-enter job order information.

Job Service’s Labor Market Information (LMI) Center is the premier source of labor market information in the state. The LMI department organizes and packages labor market information for use in business and economic decision-making. Regional economic profiles, job reports, unemployment rates, wage reports, informed analyses and employment projects are a few items the Job Service AJC Workforce Center staff provide to help businesses make more informed workforce decisions. Skill assessment completed by Job Service ND staff enables clear direction to employer job openings or referrals to training programs. Knowing the skills job seekers have helps match them to skills desired in employer’s job openings. When skill gaps are identified, job seeker training needs can be quickly addressed and paired with transferable skills of job seekers. Job Service ND staff showcase

agency services regarding on available self-service tools, aid with entering effective job listings, and share best practices for successful recruiting using the online system.

Job Service ND staff offer workshops for employers on such topics as recruitment and retention strategies in a very competitive employee market, interview and screening techniques, tax laws for employers, labor market information and writing quality job listings. Additionally, informational sessions have been conducted and are available with agriculture employers to provide guidance on H2A program regulation. Information includes common problems encountered, explanation of desk audits by the Department of Labor and Wage and Hour, housing inspection requirements and time allowed for question and answer. Similarly, employer groups have been organized to discuss the benefits and strategies used in hiring New Americans and English Language Learners.

Job fairs and “hiring events” for employers have proven to be a hugely successful activity. Job fairs are held throughout the state but mainly in the cities of Dickinson, Wahpeton, Williston, Minot, Bismarck, Grand Forks and Fargo. Additionally, an employer may schedule time to spend in a Job Service Workforce Center to connect directly with job seekers who are visiting the Workforce Center. During the last year, there were 127 hiring events held in the AJC Workforce Centers where 426 job-seekers took advantage of these opportunities with employers. The job fair and hiring event information is shared within the Job Service Workforce Centers, promoted on jobsnd.com website, and social media platforms such as Facebook along with other workforce partners.

Additionally, during June of each year, JSND coordinates with such workforce partners as Department of Corrections, VR, Adult Ed, local Economic Development and other entities to offer 2nd Chance Job Fairs. These job fairs are held for individuals having difficulty finding a job because of background, work history or life circumstances. Business Service staff recruit employers who are willing to provide employment opportunities to this population who often are not considered during other events.

Finally, in July of 2022 Job Service North Dakota purchased a virtual job fair platform called “EasyFair” During the last 18 months we have held sixteen virtual hiring events, one multi-industry job fair for Veterans, and have held four employer workshops while using this new tool. Job Service North Dakota also has held two multi-industry events in May of 2022 and February of 2023 where the emphasis was in attracting out-of-state jobseekers to North Dakota. Each of those job fairs attracted over 100 employers and job seekers from 20 states and six countries in 2022 and 29 states and 14 countries in 2023.

Wagner-Peyser, WIOA and JSVG staff working in the same Job Service Workforce Center allows for greater sharing of information about employers’ needs and job seekers skills. When training needs are identified, Job Service works with employers to provide work-based learning opportunities for in- demand occupations. Job seekers get updated skills to meet the changing needs of the workforce. WIOA funded work-based learning is an excellent tool for skill building and helps employers grow their workforce. Existing skills are expanded and strengthened while new abilities are developed. Job Service staff working with employers are cognizant of occupations and opportunities to refer to registered apprenticeship. On- the-job training contracts paired with registered apprenticeship opportunities provide maximum training benefits for employers.

Several core program staff and Workforce Center managers serve on advisory boards for TrainND, the state’s four regional workforce training regions. This frequently provides opportunities to collaborate when discussing training needs with employers. Job seekers and employers are referred to TrainND programs to build skills. Job Service staff may recommend future employer focused training opportunities to TrainND due to their connection and communications with employers. Job Service staff are engaged with local chambers of commerce and economic developers. LMI is frequently requested to help with decisions for prospective companies that are locating to communities within the state.

Utilizing technical assistance from the national Job Driven VR Technical Assistance Center (JD- VRTAC.), VR had developed and has been utilizing an LMI curriculum tailored to North Dakota's needs. The LMI curriculum is used to help clients set and accomplish career goals based on current business and employment needs within the state. In addition, the JD-VRTAC provided technical assistance to further enhance our methods for building and maintaining employer relations. This has resulted in improved services to employers including employer driven training and meeting their needs utilizing customized employment.

Workforce Center staff have established collaborations between core partners to share workforce intelligence, partner with job fairs, and Rapid Response events. Business service staff share information on business expansion and new employers to the area. All core partner business services will participate in the State efforts to expand apprenticeships and increase credentials utilizing the Governor Set-aside funds to meet workforce challenges and skill development.

Vocational Rehabilitation provides ADA consultation and receives many requests for disability etiquette training for employers which helps in interacting with colleagues, customers and people in the community. North Dakota Vocational Rehabilitation assists ND business owners and employers in finding solutions to disability-related issues. Services are designed to maximize the productivity and potential of new hires, to help retain an existing work force and to provide research and the latest information on disability-related issues. VR, through the work of Business Specialists and VR Counselors, meets with local businesses to inform them of the service and support available to help them maintain individuals with disabilities in their workforce. VR's promise to business is to quickly assess the rehabilitation needs of their employees and efficiently complete all necessary and required documentation to provide the required rehabilitation service.

The local adult learning centers work with both JSND and VR to consult for business services to better align services and avoid duplication with employers.

Currently, the infrastructure cost (no co-location) for Adult Education remains to be calculated for co-enrolled participants. Co-enrollment will be collected from JSND and VR. LACES added a feature to ensure documenting co-enrollment.

Adult Education partners with JSND and VR regarding support in upskilling students, providing connections to employment, and assisting with preparation for the workforce. JSND holds Job Fairs, open to Adult Education. They host smaller hiring events in the workforce centers across the state. Most of these can be found on www.jobsnd.com. They offer Federal Employment and Training Program...Adult, Youth, and Dislocated Worker; On-the-Job Training/Work Experiences. For Job Seekers, reemployment services are available; Job Search, resume assistance, interview skills, contact your local Job Service Workforce Center for an appointment. They are available for in-person or virtual appointments. VR staff in the regions collaborate with their local Adult Learning Centers (ALC.) For example, VR has staff on the ALC Advisory Boards, who attend local quarterly meetings, have been involved in presenting at open enrollment, and meet on site at the ALC with students to plan for post-secondary. They collaborate on dually enrolled participants to ensure they have the accommodations needed, allowing them to experience success with both programs and helping the participants achieve their goals. VR has referred participants to the ALC for TABE testing which has clarified academic levels and gains in preparation for higher education and career readiness and VR staff have also taken part in graduation and other events for an ALC. The VR administrator assisted with the interviews and hiring of the new Director for an ALC.

Efforts continue with Refugee Resettlement and welcoming newcomers. Ongoing collaboration has taken place with Adult Ed., JSND, and Office of Refugee Resettlement, under the ND Department of Health and Human Services. A new streamlined approach was developed in North Dakota in partnership with Adult Education, Office of Refugee Resettlement-NDDHHS, and Job Service in three regions; Regions 4, 5, and 7. Voc. Rehabilitation is also a partner as needed, case by case. This community-based model consists of three parts. Co-Located Services-ALCs will create easy access to services by being the one-stop-shop for all Community-Based Refugee Support Services. Refugees will attend, build relationships, and develop the skills needed to thrive. Community Connectors will provide in-person case management services through regional nonprofits. The state and refugees set following regional providers to be Community Connectors. Career Navigators will leverage JSND's expertise and employment programs to help newcomers and refugees' complete skill assessments, access training, secure the best fitted local job opportunity, and support clients to propel them towards continued career advancement. <https://www.hhs.nd.gov/cfs/refugee-resettlement-program>

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

In December 2020, the Workforce Development Council (the Council) produced a report of recommendations after researching needs, best practices, and opportunities in the themes identified in the Council's 2018 report of recommendations. Several recommendations included close collaboration and/or support for North Dakota's community colleges and career and technical education.

Below are the recommendations made under the "Earlier & More Diverse Career Exploration and Addressing the Technical Skills Gap" theme:

- a. The Council recommends expanding Area Career & Technology Centers (ACTC) with a total investment of \$40M to be awarded incrementally to multiple school districts through a competitive grant process to regions that demonstrate commitment to ensuring success through industry alignment and private sector match.
- b. The Council recommends that the North Dakota Department of Career and Technical Education (NDCTE) and North Dakota Department of Public Instruction (NDDPI) work collaboratively to promote and encourage increased opportunities for career explorations in our schools.
- c. The Council recommends expanding North Dakota Studies curriculum to highlight multiple industries and career opportunities.

- d. The Council recommends the development of a grant program to support the private sector in creating virtual examples of high demand careers in North Dakota for educators and students to access.
- e. The Council endorses utilizing a portion of ND Career Builders funding to promote the program to stakeholders, including businesses, employees, students, parents, and educators.

Two of these recommendations gained traction in the 67th Legislative Assembly and another is being carried out by state agencies and a subcommittee of the Workforce Development Council. First, Area Career and Technology Centers received funding both in the 2021 regular and special legislative sessions, totaling \$88 million. The North Dakota Department of Career and Technical Education (NDCTE) is managing this funding and administering to school districts in the form of grants. Next, improvements were made to the North Dakota Career Builders skilled workforce scholarship and loan repayment program, which the Council has championed since its inception in 2019. Most notably, Career Builders is now able to utilize a portion of its funding for marketing the program to students, parents, educators, businesses and employees, and the loan repayment track of this program may be utilized by employees who have been recruited from outside of the state. Finally, the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction and NDCTE are partnering to produce a resource on how to utilize House Bill 1478, which was passed by the 67th Legislative Assembly, and allows schools to award credit for educational opportunities provided by organizations and activities outside of school (i.e., internships). The recommendations described in this section that have not yet been enacted are designed to serve as a roadmap throughout the next few years as the Workforce Development Council, Governor's office, core program partners, education providers and legislature work to address diverse workforce needs in North Dakota. It is important to note that these recommendations may evolve as the state's workforce needs evolve.

Our state legislation passed HB 1398 on computer science and cybersecurity that opens up an application process to school districts, nonpublic schools, area career and technology centers, job service North Dakota workforce centers, public libraries, adult education centers and learning centers to apply for a computer operations and cybersecurity instruction grant through NDDPI in offering computer operations and cybersecurity courses for adults this biennium.

Adult Education received other state funding to support implementation of IET programs in addition to AEFLA funds. Four locations within North Dakota implemented programs in 2021 for in-demand jobs including Introduction to CNA, CDL drivers, and Welding. In 2022, the same programming continued as above with the addition of Intro. to Education/Para. The past Legislation approved \$500,000 additional funds to adult education to support IET programming this biennium. The work continues. Adult Ed. is looking into apprenticeship and other strategies as well to assist individuals in earning a credential and preparing them for the workforce.

Some local Adult Learning Centers hold Workforce Wednesdays on site in partnership with JSND and local employers. Local community employers come on site to meet and visit with students to conduct interviews, give experience, build confidence, and to explore job options in the region. In addition, JSND invites our participants to job fairs in the respective areas.

The state conducts a data match quarterly in a partnership with JSND and National Clearinghouse in addition to our surveying to collect outcomes.

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

WIOA training funds expand access to postsecondary credential by providing training opportunities to low income, New Americans, disabled individuals and dislocated workers. Occupation areas such as healthcare career ladders of nurse assistant, licensed practical nurse and registered nurse offer career pathways and credential earning opportunities.

Transportation occupations offer increased wages and opportunity based on skills and endorsements earned. Welding occupations require a variety of skills and certifications to work in specific areas. Information Technology occupations require specialized certifications to address the state's various needs for data security and maintenance. The ND eligible training provider list offers many certifications to expand skills for these in demand occupations in the State.

The ND Eligible Training provider list provides information on training program credentials and credential types. The information also includes whether the completed training further requires an industry test for credential. Program staff are knowledgeable and inform participants of the options and the steps to follow to pursue credential attainment.

The Workforce Development Council has established an in-demand occupations list for North Dakota in accordance with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). The list includes occupations determined to have a current or potential impact on the state's economy. The factors used in creating the list are: Total Employment (2022), Ten-Year Numeric Job Growth (2021-2031), Annualized Job Growth Rate (2021-2031), Annual Job Openings, Average Annual Wages, and Essential and Emerging Occupations. <https://www.jobsnd.com/job-seeker/demand-occupations>.

In July 2019, the Department of Commerce received an Apprenticeship State Expansion (ASE) grant. The original grant term was three years, but Commerce requested and received a one-year no-cost extension, which resulted in an ending date of June 30, 2023. Commerce sub-awarded this grant to North Dakota State College of Science (NDSCS) to execute the identified goals of expanding Registered Apprenticeship Programs (RAPs) and apprentices in the state.

Throughout the duration of the grant, 13 employers participated in RAPs, serving a total of 53 apprentices. New programs created and/or expanded to new employers under the grant were Emergency Medical Technician, Certified Nursing Assistant, Medical Aide, Project Manager, Construction Equipment Mechanic, Auto Technician, Diesel Mechanic, HVAC Technician, and Machine Operator I.

Although a variety of challenges occurred throughout the duration of this grant, ND is proud of the wins we achieved. Some of the challenges we faced include turnover of staff at all levels of the grant (including Commerce, NDSCS, and DOL Federal Project Officer); onset of the COVID-19 pandemic; and continual changes and modifications to DOL reporting requirements. Despite these challenges and others, the accomplishments we celebrated are increased awareness and a better understanding of RAPs amongst employers; 53 new apprentices in North Dakota; and the creation of new apprenticeships in non-traditional occupations.

Adult learning centers will continue to set goals to improve access to post-secondary programs in the following ways: A partnership is being discussed with the ND University System and the Bank of ND to ensure public and private post-secondary recruiters are present at all adult learning centers and that students attend to learn about

programs and services including financial aid; Approximately half of current adult learning centers are housed in community college settings; strategies to increase post-secondary access have included scholarships to GED recipients, discounts on books, supplies and fees, first semester scholarships and improved orientation methods to allow students to observe classroom activity, meet with staff and current program students; and, creating partnerships with employers to offset costs for credentials and certifications.

(G) *Coordinating with Economic Development Strategies.* Describe how the activities identified in (A) will be coordinated with economic development entities, strategies, and activities in the State.

Economic development entities, Job Service, Vocational Rehabilitation, and Adult Education have a long history of collaborating efforts to address workforce needs in the state. North Dakota continues to experience workforce shortages statewide across all industries throughout the state. Job Service is a valuable and willing partner for career awareness events such as regional and local career expos, job shadowing, and internship promotion events. The Adult Learning Centers across the state partner with Job Service in hosting these events for Adult Education students, as well as promoting participation in the Job Service events mentioned above.

Attracting workforce continues to be a huge need in the state and economic development partners coordinate efforts for large job fair events. Job fairs are planned jointly between Job Service AJC Workforce Center staff, chambers of commerce, and community EDC's. The recruitment of employers and promotion of the events are shared responsibilities. EDC staff assist during job fair events and greet and welcome employers and job seekers. Each region of the state holds multi-industry job fairs that target the specific needs of local employers. Job Fair events can provide opportunities for as many as 100+ employers to connect with up to 500 job seekers at a single event. Employers find these recruitment events extremely beneficial and often hire needed employees on the spot. Adult Education students are encouraged to attend the regional events. When attracting workforce is an issue, building a workforce from underutilized populations can be a solution. An underutilized population in ND that Adult Education can assist with is those citizens with no high school diploma or high school equivalency

Local EDCs throughout the state have started or continued their own recruitment campaigns in ND. The Bismarck/Mandan EDC has a campaign called "Make Your Mark" and it showcases employment opportunities in the capitol city. The website, [Make Your Mark - Bismarck Mandan Chamber EDC \(makeyourmarkbismar.com\)](http://makeyourmarkbismar.com) promotes the benefits of living in the Bismarck-Mandan area and to the top left of the website are the employment opportunities with a link to the jobsnd.com website and second are the area profiles generated by the Job Service Labor Market Information department. Not to be out done, the Grand Forks EDC has started the "Way Cooler Than You Think" campaign that shadows what the Bismarck-Mandan EDC is doing. <https://grandforksiscooler.com>. It is clear having Job Service collaborate with these initiatives adds value and increases results. North Dakota employment opportunities found on Job Service North Dakota's website are promoted through additional Economic Development websites in Grand Forks and Fargo who have links to the state job bank, the Virtual One Stop. This resulted in Job Service coordinating between Geographic Solutions and the EDC entity to make this request from the City of Grand Forks to happen. In Northeast ND, an unmanned aerial systems (UAS) feature jobs report is distributed to promote opportunities at Grand Sky, America's first business and aviation park. Grand Sky is located on the Grand Forks AFB and has been growing substantially over the three to five years by adding employers and new airframe systems and missions.

Job Service participates in many activities that support economic development around the state. Established sector groups hold manufacturing roundtables to jointly discuss industry challenges and find solutions, one challenge is recruiting workforce. Job Service staff offers the services available to assist with labor exchange, training opportunities and labor market information. Adult Learning Centers (ALC) across the state benefit from

the support of economic development supplied by Job Service. Adult education is also connected to and supportive of the economic development initiatives. The unique partnerships and communication that exist between Adult Learning Centers and business are expanding and this is creating an environment that is conducive to IET and IELCE partnerships.

A labor market study in the Greater Fargo/Moorhead area indicated the critical need for workforce in the highest populated area in North Dakota. Job Service staff assisted in conducting the survey and continues to assist in establishing and executing initiatives on three subcommittees; Attract, Build and Innovate. The study specifically included utilizing the New American population as a workforce pool. Job Service, local economic development staff and other community stakeholders in Fargo and Grand Forks areas are working together to find ways to overcome language barriers and cultural differences to meet the needs of employers. Adult Education plans a role in assisting the New American population in Grand Forks via the Grand Forks ALC and the ESL program.

Local Job Service Workforce Center and Adult Education staff engage and collaborate with many county Job Development Authorities in their localities and staff are members on their boards. All locations in North Dakota are experiencing workforce shortages and collaborating with these local entities assist with recruitment of workforce and offer training resources. One Job Service Employer Committee remains in North Dakota and has continued due to the benefits of collaboration for this value-added agriculture and manufacturing community.

Job Service Workforce Center, Adult Education, and VR staff partner with local EDC in a variety of ways. Several Workforce Center managers are members on the EDC boards. Job Service Workforce Center staff participate in EDC strategic planning meetings, workforce study planning, provide labor market information and regional employment issues such as workforce shortages and childcare. Partnerships are developed to collaborate to ensure the success of new employers who open their business. This assistance includes recruiting workforce, posting job orders and resume searches. Joint meetings are held with entrepreneurs and new employers who are looking to locate or expand their markets to the area and receive information on the workforce resources and financial incentives available. Financial incentives may include WOTC, WIOA and state tax incentives. County and city demographics are shared as well as supply and demand information.

Job Service Workforce Center staff participate in sector strategies with the following industry groups: Tech Connect IT, Health Tech Trade Steering Committee, Unmanned Aerial Systems Committee, and Manufacturers Roundtables.

Job Service Workforce Center staff partner with city EDC's to connect area students to careers. Arranging job-shadow days in February is a way to introduce industry and employers to provide career exploration. This effort includes local EDC's, area high schools, community colleges and universities to provide a 4-6 hour job shadow to area students. Job Service Workforce Center staff and EDCs partner to promote local employment and careers through the EDC sponsored Career Counselor Week. Career counselors hear presentations about local economic development, employment opportunities and labor market information to use with their students.

EDC's depend on the involvement and resources from Job Service Workforce Center and VR management and staff to conduct annual statewide Career Expos in many areas of the state. Career expos feature hands on employer exhibits and break-out sessions on career exploration and pathways. Economic development staff consider this a collaborative workforce retention strategy and educates attendees about career opportunities and related training needed. Adult Education Directors are aware of the events and strongly encourage staff and students to participate.

Throughout the state, a good number of Job Service management, Adult Education, and VR staff are members on their local chamber of commerce and subcommittees. An example is the Chamber Agriculture Committee

working with businesses to promote agriculture and agricultural related businesses in Southwest North Dakota or Military Affairs to sustain partnerships with the two Air Force Bases in the State, Young Professionals groups and Business Training committees. Job Service Workforce Center and VR staff frequently provide LMI information and participate in area Leadership courses. Core Program staff strengthen relationships with area chamber members by participating in Business after Hours events, area Human Resource committees and Downtowners Associations. Chamber of Commerce Ambassador Group membership is a strong business relationship builder through ribbon-cutting and ground-breaking ceremonies to celebrate grand openings, new locations, expansions and milestone accomplishments of Chamber members. Finally, Job Service staff exhibit at university career recruitment events making soon-to-be graduates aware of North Dakota opportunities.

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

- (1) State operating systems that support coordinated implementation of State strategies (for example labor market information systems, data systems, communication systems, case management systems, job banks, etc.).

To align communication between workforce system partners, the Department of Commerce collects information related to all workforce programs and scholarships provided by state agencies including, Commerce, Job Service, Department of Career and Technical Information, Department of Public Instruction, Department of Health and Human services, Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, North Dakota University System, Bank of North Dakota, and others. Commerce has produced a document for all partners listed to maintain awareness of which agencies own each program or service to create shared awareness and to avoid unnecessary duplication of effort. This resource has also been shared with legislators, particularly appropriators and the Senate Workforce Committee, so they can see the differences between the variety of workforce programs that exist.

With new workforce initiatives underway and in the planning stages in accordance with the Workforce Development Council's workforce strategy, more information will be added to this document on a biennial basis.

Job Service utilizes Geographic Solutions products as the operating system for labor exchange, case management and labor market information. The labor exchange function is linked from jobsnd.com to the job listing site that provides fast access to a database of thousands of jobs. Job Spidering, a powerful online tool that captures job listings from other sources including corporate web sites, online newspaper listings, and other private job boards is one of the features included. Spidered jobs are added to internal job listings to provide seamless access to thousands of job openings. Employers benefit from having job openings viewed by the largest applicant pool in North Dakota and the ability to view similar listings for wage and benefit comparison. Job seekers benefit by having the largest single portal in North Dakota to access job openings for all

occupations. Jobsnd.com has the largest pool of job openings in the state. Employers and job seekers have flexible options to connect through the Virtual One Stop online portal or mobile app. The flexibility of online options became especially valuable when the pandemic was first declared, and the Workforce Centers switched to access by the public by appointment only.

The Job Service case management system is also a Geographic Solutions product and is utilized for all registrations, enrollments and data entry for the Wagner-Peyser, WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth programs. The case management system is linked to the labor exchange system and tracks participant activities. The Trade Act program activity is incorporated into this system. The system provides ease for dual enrollment and seamless case management. Each participant has an enrollment summary that captures the activity from the multiple programs and case managers can quickly ascertain the current status and plan for future recommendations to achieve employment goals. All case notes are centralized which provides a cohesive picture of a participant's activity over multiple programs. Document imaging was incorporated into the case-management system. Documents required for monitoring and data validation are stored electronically. Case managers have a procedure manual that provides technical assistance for data entry, data validation and system Use. Case managers used online processes to continue serving WIOA customers, processing forms through online exchanges, accepting remote signatures, providing orientations, making eligibility determinations, and working remotely with clients to develop plans.

Geographic Solutions is the vendor for North Dakota's labor market information. Jobsnd.com includes the link to North Dakota's Labor Market Information website (NDLMI). NDLMI is a next generation internet application bringing together diverse stakeholders through an expanded data collection and data mining effort. NDLMI generates, compiles, disseminates and publishes the state's leading economic data and labor market information—from wages to projections to the latest employment figures—resulting in better-informed economic decisions. NDLMI has the most extensive network of economic data resources in the state, maintained by experienced research analysts meeting high statistical standards.

As a part of the UI modernization process, North Dakota recently awarded Geographic Solutions with the UI contract. The process to migrate the extensive system will occur in steps, starting with UI tax. It is estimated the process for this first piece will take approximately eighteen months to complete. Businesses and UI claimants will greatly benefit from the use of one system with one login and one account.

The North Dakota Department of Public Instruction, Adult Education program, operates a statewide student management data system known as LACES (Literacy, Adult and Community Education System) for every student served. Used since 2010, this comprehensive web-based program allows each adult learning center, as well as the ND Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, to enter standard demographic, assessment, attendance, class hours, and other

relevant related data into a real time structured system. All core program operating systems have been updated to gather required Participant Information Record Layout (PIRL) data.

North Dakota Vocational Rehabilitation utilizes the Accessible Web-based Activity and Report Environment North Dakota (AWARE ND) purchased from Alliance Enterprises. VR went live with it in March 2014. It is a case management, eligibility, and payment system for three case types: Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), Older Blind (OB) and Potentially Eligible (PE) high school students. It tracks clients' application, eligibility, service, payment, employment, and closure data. These data are submitted once a quarter to our federal agency, Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), in addition to other reports and files created by Aware. Aware also includes modules for referrals, employers, vendors, budget, refunds, staff, objectives, and interface management. Purchased separately as add-ons were the Social Security Administration (SSA) Reimbursement module and the Quality Assurance Tool module.

- (2) The State policies that will support the implementation of the State's strategies (for example, co-enrollment policies and universal intake processes where appropriate). In addition, provide the State's guidelines for State-administered one-stop partner programs' contributions to a one-stop delivery system and any additional guidance for one-stop partner contributions.

To facilitate consistency and transparency in determining costs for One-Stop services, the Title 1 Administrator will prepare the Infrastructure Funding Agreement (IFA) and provide copies to one-stop partner programs and the WIB. Questions or issues regarding the IFA will be provided to the Title 1 Administrator and Board staff for resolution, if necessary.

The IFA must address cost sharing and infrastructure costs in a fair and equitable manner consistent with all policies and procedures. A review of the IFA will be conducted with an eye toward equitable cost sharing among partners, including a consistent approach to in-kind costs.

Co-enrollment and other policies promoting and supporting the state strategies are found beginning on page 111 of this plan, under details for specific programs. and at [Governance | Job Service North Dakota \(jobsnd.com\)](#)

(3) State Program and State Board Overview.

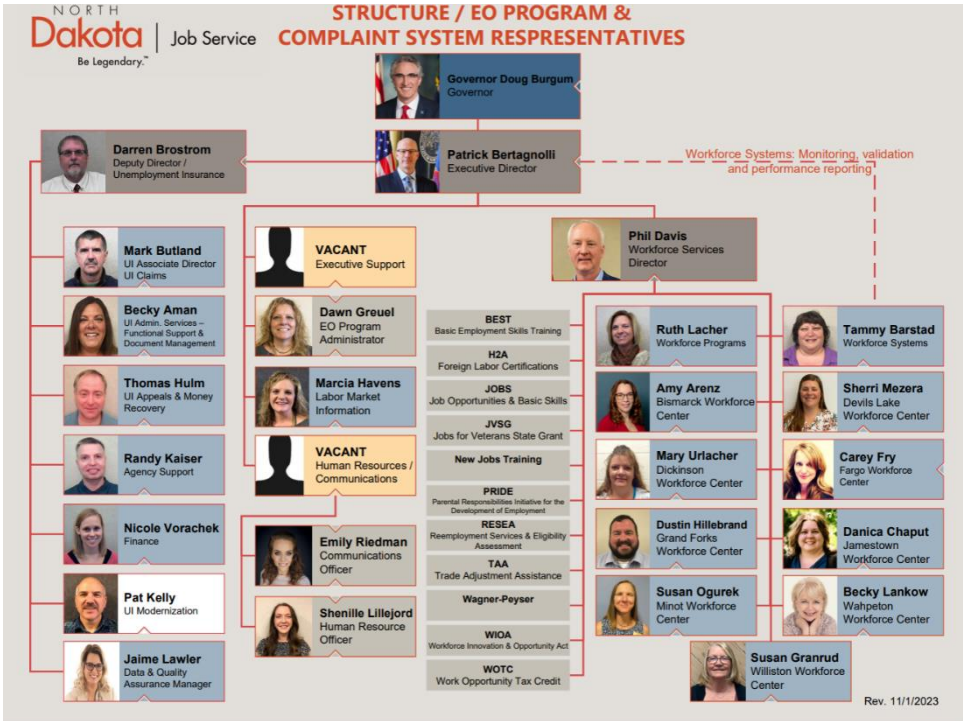
- (A) *State Agency Organization.* Describe the organization and delivery systems at the State and local levels for the programs covered in the plan, including the organizational structure. Include an organizational chart.

Titles I and III of WIOA are administered by Job Service North Dakota.

Job Service's history is rooted in the Wagner-Peyser Act of 1933 and the Social Security Act of 1935 and is the WIOA one-stop operator providing employment and training services to workers, job seekers, youth and businesses. Job Service administers the unemployment insurance program, Jobs for Veterans State Grant,

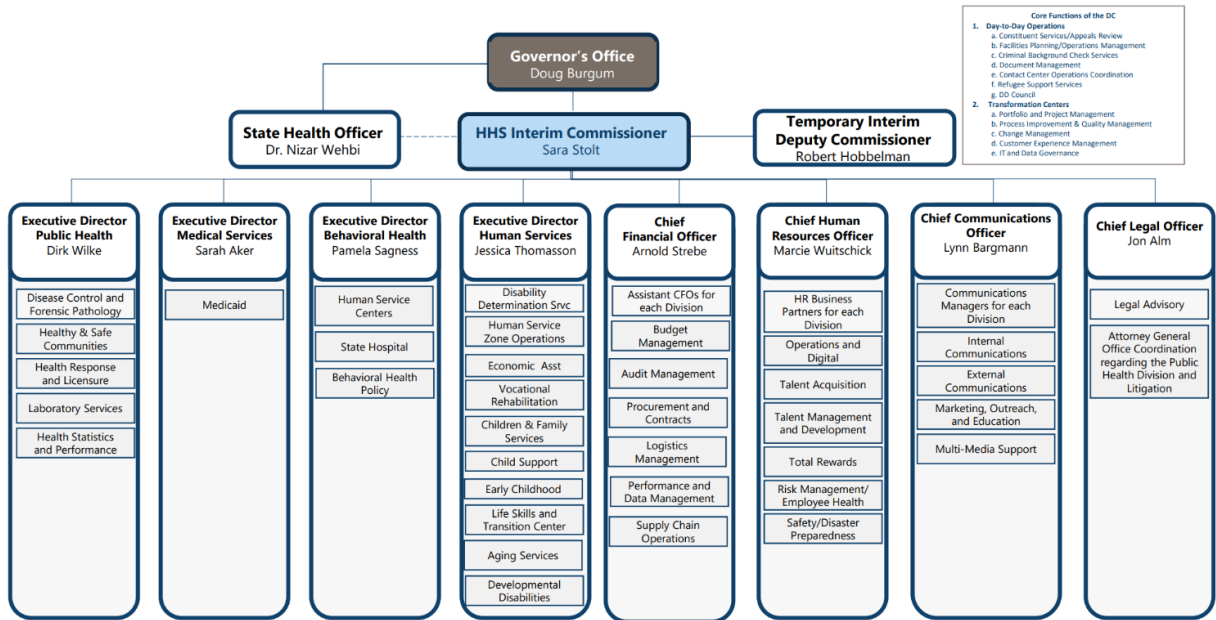
Trade Act, TANF employment and training and a TANF discretionary program, SNAP employment and training, and two state programs including incumbent worker training. Job Service houses the Labor Market Information center.

Job Service ND organizational chart:



ND VR's Designated State Agency is the ND Department of Health and Human Services. VR is located within the Human Services Division.

North Dakota Department of Health & Human Services



(B) *State Board*. Provide a description of the State Board activities that will assist State Board members and staff in carrying out State Board functions effectively. Also, provide a membership roster for the State Board consistent with 20 CFR 679.110-120, including members' organizational affiliations and position titles.

The Workforce Development Council (WDC) meets a minimum of quarterly and is briefed by the Director and core program staff of the requirements in WIOA and policy updates when applicable. Each meeting also consists of brief report-outs from all board members who share important updates related to their industry, geographic region, and/or community. Under Governor Burgum, the State Board has been given a specific responsibility for workforce strategic planning. Successful implementation of the board's current strategy is in the early stages. The WDC is reviewing progress and building out additional strategies in preparation for the 69th Legislative Assembly.

WDC Executive and Administrative committees also meet quarterly and have greater responsibilities for creating board meeting agendas, completing assignments to further move initiatives of the identified strategic plans, and to provide insight on use of Governor's Set-Aside funds. This planning will utilize data

and establish measurable outcomes to quantify success. The Council discusses recommendations and provides approval on policies concerning their responsibilities. Each meeting provides the status of each core program's outcomes towards negotiated performance levels.

Workforce Development Council Membership:

Name	Industry	Organization	Job Title
Jace Beehler	State Government	Governor's Designee	Chief of Staff
Michelle Axtman	Senate Appointment	ND Legislature	Senator
Emily O'Brien	Representative Appointment	ND Legislature	Representative
Howard Klug	Local Elected Official	City of Williston	Mayor
Lyn James	Chief Elected Official	City of Bowman	Mayor
Josh Blackaby	Business- Energy	SandPro	Co-Founder, Managing Partner
Donald (DJ) Campbell	Business- Healthcare	Sanford Health	Executive Director, Human Resources
Kellie Carlson	Business- Manufacturing	True North Steel	Vice President, Human Resources
Erik Christenson	Business- Healthcare	Heart of America Medical Center	Chief Executive Officer
Cindy Griffin, Chair	Business-Value Added Ag	Harvestone Low Carbon Partners	VP, Human Resources & Corporate Services
Tony Grindberg	Business- Energy/Power	Xcel Energy	ND Principal Manager

Dustin Jensen	Business- Food Service	Cultivate Solutions	Chief Operating Officer
Timothy Johnson	Business-Package Delivery/Supply Chain Management	Strata Corporation	Corporate Safety Director
Matt Marshall, Vice Chair	Business- Energy/Power	MinnKota Power Cooperative	Economic Development Administrator
Guy Moos	Business- Manufacturing	Baker Boy	President
Taya Spelhaug	Business-IT	Microsoft	TechSpark Manager
Becca Cruger	Business- Economic	Grand Forks Region EDC	Director, Workforce Development
Tifanie Gelinske	Business-Economic	Greater Fargo-Moorhead EDC	Senior VP, Workforce Development
Jason Ehlert	Labor	ND State Building Trades Union	State President
Landis Larson	Labor	ND AFL- CIO	President
Kasper Ziegler	Labor	United Brotherhood of Carpenters	Carpentry Instructor
Patrick Bertagnoli	WIOA-Core	Job Service ND	Executive Director
Damian Schlinger	WIOA-Core	Vocational Rehabilitation	Vocational Rehabilitation Director
Stanley Schauer	WIOA-Core	Department of Public Instruction Adult Education	Director of Assessment & GED State Administrator

Wayde Sick	CTE/Education	Career & Technical Education	State Director & Executive Officer
Erica Thunder	Barriers to Employment	Department of Corrections & Rehabilitation	Director of Diversity & Cultural Competence
Dr. Mark Hagerott	Education	North Dakota University System	Chancellor
James Upgren	Barriers to Employment	Department of Public Instruction	Assistant Director, Office of School Approval and Opportunity

Apprenticeship perspective is offered by Mr. Ehlert and Mr. Sick. Mr. Ehlert works closely with apprenticeship opportunities in the trades and has been active in promoting apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship throughout the state. In addition to receiving a previous State Apprenticeship Expansion grant, Mr. Sick promotes apprenticeship through Career and Technical Education programs, Career Advisors, and Work-based Learning Coordinators statewide. Both work closely with Mr. Barry Dutton, DOL State Apprenticeship Director.

(4) Assessment and Evaluation of Programs and One-Stop Program Partners.

- (A) *Assessment of Core and One-Stop Program Partner Programs.* Describe how the core programs will be assessed each year based on State performance accountability measures described in section 116(b) of WIOA. Describe how other one-stop delivery system partner program services and Combined State Plan partner programs included in the plan will be assessed each year. This State assessment must include the quality, effectiveness, and improvement of programs broken down by local area or provider. Such state assessments should take into account local and regional planning goals.

North Dakota is a single workforce area.

Job Service ND state level staff conducts an annual monitoring of the WIOA programs at the Job Service Workforce Centers. WIOA adult, dislocated worker, and youth files will be sampled and reviewed for compliance

with federal WIOA regulations, and Job Service WIOA policy and procedure directives. All documents required for monitoring and data validation are stored electronically within the document management module of GSI. Results and recommendations of the monitoring are reviewed with the Job Service Workforce Center managers and supervisors. A written report identifying deficiencies and recommendations for improvement is disseminated response and as warranted, corrective action. This monitoring enables WIOA case managers and supervisors to readily see how well the Job Service Workforce Centers are performing in case management and where improvements are needed.

Desk reviews include regular monitoring of participant WIOA expenditures. The process of monitoring expenditures includes pulling a sample of payments from all the quarterly payments made on behalf of WIOA participants. Documents justifying payments are uploaded into the document management module of the virtual one stop system. The results of the review are documented and compiled in a formal report and disseminated to the WIOA managers and supervisors for response and as warranted, corrective action.

Workforce Centers are encouraged to conduct peer monitoring of documentation and processes. This system allows for constant training reminders for monitoring and data validation that all Workforce Center staff can learn from.

WIOA data element validation verifies the accuracy of WIOA participant data used to generate the WIOA performance reports. ND implemented a new pilot project for the data validation process where lead WIOA local office staff became a part of the data validation process. Under guidance from the state staff validator, each region reviewed files for a different region. The state staff validator will analyze the reports, validate elements not assigned to local Workforce Center staff, and write the final official report. An official report on the results of the WIOA data element validation review is issued.

The ND Department of Public Instruction and the Adult Education program have several levels of internal assessment. A work plan is reviewed and approved by DPI management each biennium as part of the budget process; state funds are allocated to align to the work plan goals and tasks. Quarterly reviews of the work plan and accomplishments are completed between the Director and management. The review includes fiscal, program data, local program data and general program oversight.

The State Adult Education Lead/Adult Education Program Director monitors each local program, every year, formal monitoring every other year, and informal off years. Meetings are held bi-monthly with all local program directors with the State Adult Education Lead and many informal meetings take place. The onsite monitoring covers 17 areas of program and fiscal authority and involves multiple staff. Desk audits performed via LACES and GED Analytics are performed monthly and mid-year and end of the year data overview is shared with the field.

Vocational Rehabilitation maintains a comprehensive program evaluation system with various components: annual client case review on compliance as well as monthly reviews by the Regional Administrators for quality. There is also valuation of: evaluation of service providers, customer satisfaction, performance measures monitoring, and grantee oversight.

Federal performance indicators are also part of the Director annual review process and a determination of performance. Additionally, each local program is also assessed on its individual performance indicators. Data for program evaluation is collected using various methods, including surveys (telephone), public forums, site reviews, grant reports, client record reviews, client comment forms, a statistical system and program standards and performance indicators. This information is analyzed by management; if appropriate, it is shared with staff, service providers, grantees, federal funding agencies, legislature, clients and others. The analysis is used to assess unmet consumer needs, improve services and to guide the Division in planning its future focus and direction. Additionally, the information is used to assess and forecast the training needs of the Division's staff. Performance indicators have traditionally included: Change in Employment Outcomes • Percent of Employment

Outcomes • Competitive Employment Outcomes—a primary indicator • Significance of Disability—a primary indicator • Earnings Ratio—a primary indicator • Self-Support • Rehabilitation Rate

Collectively, the core partners share performance measures and annual outcomes with the Governor's Workforce Development Council.

(B) *Previous Assessment Results.* For each four-year state plan and state plan modification, provide the results of assessments of the effectiveness of the core programs and other one-stop partner programs and Combined State Plan partner programs included in the Unified or Combined State plan during the preceding 2-year period (i.e. the 2-year period of the plan modification cycle), in accordance with methods described in 4(A)

Describe how the State is adapting its strategies based on these assessments.

Each core program has different assessment methods in terms of effectiveness (as listed above), with some commonalities in overall shared quantitative goals.

Job Service North Dakota annually reviews performance results, adjusting methods to assure meeting or exceeding federal program measures. Conducting data matches with SLDS and UI wages has pushed performance to exceeding all program measures by 10 to 80% above the required targets.

(C) *Evaluation.* Describe how the State will conduct evaluations and research projects of activities carried out in the State under WIOA core programs; how such projects will be coordinated with, and designed in conjunction with, State and local boards and with State agencies responsible for the administration of all respective core programs; and, further, how the projects will be coordinated with the evaluations provided for by the Secretary of Labor and the Secretary of Education under WIOA (WIOA Section 116(e)).

In September of 2022, North Dakota conducted a study on digital skills funded by the National Governor's Association.

North Dakota possesses a once in a generation chance to transform its workforce through the enhancement of digital skills in the workforce. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the transformation of the workplace to include *remote* and *hybrid* settings making digital skills more important for many occupations and vital for some. The Digital Equity Act, passed in 2021 with bipartisan support, is an expansive initiative. The Act recognizes the necessity of digital skills in nearly all jobs and seeks to provide training and education to various population groups, improve online accessibility of social services for individuals with disabilities, and empower rural communities. In response to these opportunities and with the assistance of a National Governors' Association program the team engaged in preliminary investigation of covered populations, Internet access, digital skills and workforce, all necessary for optimal use of program dollars under the Digital Equity Act.

The realities of the new work environment led the team to craft an overarching vision for digital literacy in North Dakota:

All North Dakotans will have equitable access to opportunities to develop digital skills to meet the needs of North Dakota's 21st Century workforce.

The team gathered data related to digital skills, population, and employment in North Dakota to craft recommendations about how to develop and expand digital skills in North Dakota while making training opportunities equitable for all groups.

Using the available data, the team studied various aspects of populations in North Dakota, the issues related to internet access, digital skill gaps among adult learners and jobseekers, and the potential return on investment for increasing digital skills. After examining the data, the team arrived at the following conclusions:

- Over 95% of North Dakota households have access to broadband Internet connection,
- Digital skills required for most occupations increased over time,
- The “in-demand” jobs on the Job Service website have higher average digital skills requirements than the average for all occupations,
- Higher levels of digital skill in occupations in North Dakota are associated with higher incomes,
- Changing to an occupation requiring higher levels of digital skills can increase annual income by an average of just under \$660 per year.

The team recommends the following:

- Hiring and appointment of an individual with responsibilities for overseeing the state's digital equity efforts, aligning partners, and resulting policy including collection and analysis of data related to program effectiveness,
- Creation of a taskforce/working group to assist the Digital Equity Director,
- Providing professional development for individuals who serve adults lacking digital skills, including staff in job centers, adult learning centers, libraries, tribal colleges, and more,
- Complete an inventory of programs and state assets available to partner with the Digital Equity Director

The document contains the information used to support these recommendations. This includes an introduction, definitions of key terms used, discussions of Internet access and labor market circumstances, digital skills data, and the possible return on investment to increases in digital skills. The team then discusses the need for more and better data about the state of digital skill development in the state of North Dakota. There is a discussion of the current data and a pilot survey undertaken during the development of this recommendation. There is then a discussion of the data around the populations covered by the Digital Equity Act and how those groups fit with the recommendation of this group

The Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Plan for North Dakota was published in the fall of 2023. [5-year-bead-plan-2023.pdf \(nd.gov\)](#)

North Dakota tells a uniquely promising story of connectivity among other rural states, with 97% of the state receiving access to broadband service.¹ With the establishment of the State Broadband Program Office within the North Dakota Information Technology (NDIT) Department, the State has made great strides in its commitment to facilitate the deployment of broadband infrastructure. The expansion of broadband infrastructure statewide has supported North Dakota’s shared purpose to Empower People, Improve Lives, and Inspire Success.²

This story of broadband success does not extend to the remaining 3% of the state. Approximately ten thousand locations in North Dakota today still lack access to high-speed, reliable internet service. For these individuals, the repercussions of the digital divide extend far beyond the inability to browse the internet. Without reliable broadband access, impacted students are unable to complete online homework, participate in virtual educational opportunities, or pivot to remote learning in response to disruptions, like the most recent one imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Farms that lack connectivity are unable to embrace precision agriculture and increase soybean, corn, and wheat production, among other crops. These farmers and ranchers are also unable to quickly connect with buyers and sellers of crops and livestock across and outside of North Dakota. A resident of the Badlands region who lacks a personal device is unable to apply for and secure a remote employment opportunity with a large financial institution in Fargo. For these North Dakotans, equitable access to broadband, devices, and digital skills remains the missing link. While the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program may not address all of these challenges, it will lay the foundation for North Dakota to support broadband expansion and digital equity efforts that allow for meaningful connectivity.

With the passage of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), which authorized the BEAD Program, there is now widespread consensus that access to internet is not simply a luxury, but rather a necessity. It should be afforded to all North Dakotans alike, from the state’s urban centers to its most remote, rural regions.

In addition to these two studies, WIOA Title I-IV agencies are coordinating strategic efforts for common goals. Collaboration to increase credential attainment and recognize co-enrollments are at the forefront of these efforts. Discussions include sharing processes and best practices to more accurately reflect North Dakota’s collaboration among WIOA lead agencies.

- (5) Distribution of Funds for Core Programs. Describe the methods and factors the State will use in distributing funds under the core programs in accordance with the provisions authorizing such distributions.
 - (A) *For Title I programs*, provide a description of the written policies that establish the State's methods and factors used to distribute funds to local areas for—
 - (i) Youth activities in accordance with WIOA section 128(b)(2) or (b)(3),

For Title I programs, North Dakota is a single State local area under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity act of 2014 as designated by Governor Doug Burgum. Job Service North Dakota is designated by the Governor as the WIOA Fiscal Agent, Grant Recipient and State Administrative Entity. The Job Service ND Executive Director is designated as the WIOA Liaison. The WIOA Youth activities are provided by Job Service North Dakota through a Memorandum of Understanding between the Workforce Development Council and Job Service North Dakota.

- (ii) Adult and training activities in accordance with WIOA section 133(b)(2) or (b)(3), For Title I programs, North Dakota is a single State local area under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity act of 2014 as designated by Governor Doug Burgum. Job Service North Dakota is designated by the Governor as the WIOA Fiscal Agent, Grant Recipient and State Administrative Entity. The Job Service ND Executive Director is designated as the WIOA Liaison. The WIOA Adult and Dislocated Worker Career Services and Training are provided by Job Service North Dakota through a Memorandum of Understanding between the Governor, the Workforce Development Council and Job Service North Dakota.
- (iii) Dislocated worker employment and training activities in accordance with WIOA section 133(b)(2) and based on data and weights assigned.

For Title I programs, North Dakota is a single State local area under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity act of 2014 as designated by Governor Doug Burgum. Job Service North Dakota is designated by the Governor as the WIOA Fiscal Agent, Grant Recipient and State Administrative Entity. The Job Service ND Executive Director is designated as the WIOA Liaison. The WIOA Adult and Dislocated Worker Career Services and Training are provided by Job Service North Dakota through a Memorandum of Understanding between the Governor, the Workforce Development Council and Job Service North Dakota.

(B) *For Title II:*

- (i) Describe the methods and factors the eligible agency will use to distribute title II funds.

The North Dakota Department of Public Instruction (NDDPI) serves as the administrative/fiscal agent for Title II Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA). As administrative/fiscal agent, NDDPI ensures local service providers (adult learning centers) deliver services to eligible individuals who: 1.

are beyond the age of compulsory school attendance (16 years of age); 2. do not have the basic literacy skills necessary to function effectively in society; 3. have not reached a level of education equivalent to that required for a certificate of graduation to be issued; 4. are unable to speak, read, or write English to obtain or retain employment commensurate with their ability. All activities funded under WIOA are authorized, approved, and overseen by NDDPI. Adult basic education and English Language services are the responsibility of eight regional adult learning centers located across the state, four satellite locations, plus the North Dakota Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (DOCR). Eligible organizations applied, per AEFLA, to NDDPI for federal funds through a competition process in December-February (2016/2017) and again in December-February (2019/2020) to provide services. We are preparing for the next competition February-June (2023/2024) to begin the next four-year cycle on July 1, 2024. The NDDPI conducted a competition using a Request for Proposal (RFP) grant process under WIOA upon receiving guidance from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Career, Technical and Adult Education. Criteria was aligned with the considerations required by federal legislation. The North Dakota Governor's Workforce Development Council and WIOA partners will be part of the review process on applicants (host entities) in the new competition seeking statewide funding distribution via a regional service delivery model. Grants will be granted on a conditional four-year basis, with performance and funding standards identified for discontinuation by the NDDPI if/as warranted. In each subsequent year, all local providers will apply on an annual basis for continuing funding under Title II through an application process.

In the yearly application process, NDDPI uses the WebGrants portal. Each year sites apply, all parties sign contracts, and the local program submits a budget with those funds. We are a locally controlled state. Federal and state funds are allocated in the spring prior to the start of a fiscal year and have access to those funds at the beginning of the next fiscal year. Sites are allowed to make amendments and claims throughout that grant period. The Adult Ed. state director and NDDPI fiscal staff monitor and process requests of claims and amendments, review the allowables and unallowables, and fill out a risk assessment each year based on factors once a year as well. In addition, our WebGrants management system stores all historical documents such as contracts, activity with funds spent or not spent, and quarterly reports are submitted through this system with oversight with the state office. A WebGrants external guide and tutorials have been shared with local program leaders on how to use the management system, how to request funds, and given technical assistance as needed. Between fiscal staff and the state director, there is open communication via email and via WebGrants to request funds.

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

At NDDPI, the WebGrants system has within the applications and contracts the questions pertaining to equity and quality assurances. WebGrants houses all contract agreements, budget amendments, and budget claims. The Contracts are all shared in the same way and manner to all sites. We ensure we are timely with requests.

As a part of our RFP process applicants for all programs competing will be asked to adhere to direct and equitable provisions to award funds under WIOA sections 225: corrections; 231: eligible providers; and 243: Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education. State and local program directors collaborate and work to provide equity in our services for all students who fall under the Adult Ed. definitions. An example of this would be our recent discussion with DHHS on translating the student authorization form into different languages to ensure equity.

The review of proposals will include rating responses to the 13 considerations in Title II of WIOA. The NDDPI will continue to use the following process to distribute funds to awarded applicants: no less than 82.5 percent of grant funds were awarded as grants and contracts under Section 231 to carry out Section 225. Programs for Corrections, of which not more than 20 percent of such amount were available to carry out Section 225. Local grants were selected and funds distributed based on the ability to meet the requirements of AEFLA Purposes outlined in WIOA: 1. assist adults to become literate and obtain the knowledge and skill necessary for employment and economic self—sufficiency; 2. assist adults who are parents for family members become a full partner in the education development of their children; 3. promote transition from adult education to post—secondary education and training through career pathways; 4. assist refugees, newcomers, immigrants, and English language learners improve reading, writing, math, speaking and comprehension of the English language and acquire understanding of American government, individual freedom, and responsibilities of citizenship. This included providing adult education and literacy services to the negotiated performance levels (not less than the State) which demonstrated academia, college, and career effectiveness, and focused on research—based methods of instruction. This included alignment with the local workforce and other partnerships which created a collaborative seamless process and system for eligible students. The determination of priority services follows federal guidance. All activities must demonstrate sufficient intensity and duration. Under WIOA (Section 203), adult education and literacy activities are defined as, “programs, activities, and services that include adult education, literacy, workplace adult education, and literacy activities, family literacy activities, English language acquisition activities, integrated English literacy and civics education, workforce preparation activities, or integrated education and training.” A wide variety of program strategies are used to respond to the needs of adult learners, with a strong foundational emphasis on quality, intensity and duration of services which will result in real learning and related life changes, over placing emphasis on serving large numbers of students. The plan scope, or the ‘how’ for adult education involved implementation of a developed comprehensive professional development plan for all local adult education providers, of the WIOA required features to meet its stakeholders’ requirements, and best practice strategies for both instructional and social readiness for college and career. Partnerships with employers are emphasized during professional development and examples of existing relationships between adult learning centers and employers are shared and discussed. A (historical) formula method was used based upon region population, unemployment rates and other distinguished factors (past performance of core indicators, EFL gains).

Within the RFP process, North Dakota Adult Ed. has a section on how the state determines demonstrated effectiveness and the review team processes regarding Adult Education and Literacy

Activities. The RFP clarifies what the eligible provider must demonstrate and lays out the application process. The state determines if criteria is met on effectiveness. Areas outlined include providing performance data on its record of improving skills of eligible individuals, particularly eligible individuals who have low levels of literacy, in the content domains of reading, writing, mathematics, English language acquisition, and other subject areas relevant to the services contained in the application. A rubric, criteria process is shared with those competing. A spread sheet is kept at the state level of the application review based on previous AEFLA Funded and Not Previously AEFLA funded sites. Below is the language in the RFP.

Two ways listed in the RFP on eligible provider may meet the requirements:

1. a. Previously funded under AEFLA, as amended by WIOA must submit narrated performance data required under section 116 to demonstrate past effectiveness in Employment second quarter after exit, employment fourth quarter after exit, median earnings second quarter after exit, adult basic education MSG, ESL MSG, Percentage of NRS participants who attain a secondary school diploma or its equivalent, or number of students transitioning to postsecondary education and training. Measurement expectations are included. b. If applicant has not been previously funded under AEFLA, they must provide performance data to demonstrate its past effectiveness in service basic outcomes for participants related to employment, attainment of secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent, and transition to postsecondary education and training. Two years of past data are required to be submitted for demonstrated effectiveness, regardless of previously AEFLA funded or not previously AEFLA funded. It is highly recommended that the past data is from the previous two program years or calendar years.

Applicants are reviewed by the state agency through the RFP process. Applications for funds are submitted to the state and reviewed by the appropriate Governor's Workforce representation and WIOA core partners review team, all outlined in the RFP process. The state considers the results of the review by the local board. Rubric and explanations are included in the RFP. Competition is open and communicated to the public. Competition is posted on the North Dakota OMB website for all public to review and apply.

(C) *Vocational Rehabilitation Program:*

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

ND Vocational Rehabilitation is a combined agency. As the administrative fiscal agent, the VR Director ensures that all funds designated for the Older Individuals who are Blind program are

used solely for the OIB program. All individuals who are blind and are pursuing an employment outcome are served through the general 110 program.

(6) Program Data

(A) *Data Alignment and Integration.* Describe the plans of the lead State agencies with responsibility for the administration of the core programs, along with the State Board, to align and integrate available workforce and education data systems for the core programs, unemployment insurance programs, and education through postsecondary education, and to the extent possible, the Combined State Plan partner programs included in this plan. The description of the State's plan for integrating data systems should include the State's goals for achieving integration and any progress to date. Describe data-collection and reporting processes used for all programs and activities, including the State's process to collect and report data on co-enrollment, and for those present in the one-stop centers.

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

Adult Ed. Uses LiteracyPro (LACES) data management system collaborated with all local programs and available at NDDPI. Data match is conducted with agreement with JSND on employment status and median earnings, and an agreement with National Clearinghouse on post-secondary credentials earned one year after exit per quarter. LACES now also allows local program staff to add co-enrollment. JSND and Voc. Rehabilitation also have processes in place to track co-enrollment. MoveIT is a secure transfer portal used in share of information.

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

Job Service's vendor for workforce services, Geographic Solutions, has announced a feature available soon – VOS Connect. VOS Connect allows for individuals to complete a single multiprogram application that would feed into each agency's respective case management system. North Dakota is interested in this feature that would streamline processes for individuals.

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

North Dakota has integrated data elements and intake for WIOA Adult, Youth, Dislocated Worker and Wagner-Peyser within Job Service. The UI system in North Dakota is migrating to Geographic Solutions, the current

vendor for Title I and III programs. This integrated system serves many employed and unemployed individuals and employers.

Additionally, the Workforce Development Council and all partner programs (with the exception of Vocational Rehabilitation) utilize the State Longitudinal Data System (SLDS). SLDS adds to the shared knowledge produced by each individual partner program's data system and highlights job opportunities throughout the state. This information is beneficial to all programs and the populations they serve. Together, the Workforce Development Council and program partners are able to provide diverse, yet aligned, workforce data assessment to the governor's office through a combination data collection tools. This system works well in North Dakota given the close collaboration and partnership that exists between Job Service North Dakota, Vocational Rehabilitation, Department of Public Instruction, and Department of Commerce.

Title II and Title IV programs use other case management/data collection systems; however, representatives of all WIOA core program partner agencies serve on the state WIOA evaluation committee where strategies are created and shared for more effective collaboration to meet shared performance measure targets.

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

Every core partner system produces required federal reports. Reports are reviewed for accuracy of system data consistency and accuracy prior to submission to US DOL and Education departments.

- (B) Assessment of Participants' Post-Program Success. Describe how lead State agencies will use the workforce development system to assess the progress of participants who are exiting from core programs in entering, persisting in, and completing postsecondary education, or entering or remaining in employment. States may choose to set additional indicators of performance.

North Dakota's lead agencies will use the WIOA Primary Indicators of Performance to assess the immediate progress of participants from core programs. North Dakota's lead agencies comply with federally directed WIOA studies and on occasion conduct evaluations of longer-term outcomes for program participants. Such evaluations will include impact studies that will assess WIOA participant's employment status, earnings or educational achievement beyond the established timelines that are incorporated into the WIOA Primary Indicators of Performance.

North Dakota will utilize the Statewide Longitudinal Data System (SLDS), a series of secured data warehouses comprised of historical education and workforce training data, to help assess WIOA participant post-program success. The objective of the SLDS is to provide data on the outcomes of North Dakota education and workforce training programs. Job Service ND through a partnership with ND Information Technology Department and ND Department of Public Instruction received a federal Workforce Data Quality Initiative grant in 2010 to develop a Job Service ND warehouse (workforce) separate from the K12 warehouse. ND Information Technology Department is responsible for building and managing the warehouse on behalf of Job Service ND. SLDS data will be used to illustrate how the workforce activities affect future earnings.. SLDS data from Job Service ND wage tables, North Dakota University Systems, Department of Public Instruction and Department of Human Services provides the capability to track participants and to determine employment, education activity and credential attainment.

- (C) *Use of Unemployment Insurance (UI) Wage Record Data.* Explain how the State will meet the requirements to utilize quarterly UI wage records for performance accountability, evaluations, and as a source for workforce and labor market information, consistent with Federal and State law. (This Operational Planning element applies to core programs.)

North Dakota uses a WDQI data warehouse which is populated daily to utilize UI wage data for WIOA requirements. This data base, as well as SWIS data, are the sources for wage data for performance accountability, evaluations, and as a source for workforce and labor market information, consistent with Federal and State law.

- (D) *Privacy Safeguards.* Describe the privacy safeguards incorporated in the State's workforce development system, including safeguards required by section 444 of the General Education Provisions Act (20 U.S.C. 1232g) and other applicable Federal laws.

Job Service North Dakota, Vocational Rehabilitation, through the Department of Health and Human Services, and Adult Education, through the Department of Public Instruction have signed data sharing agreements with the State Longitudinal Data System. These agreements include the necessary safeguards as required in section 444 of the General Education Provisions Act (20 U.S.C. 1232g) and other applicable Federal laws.

(7) Priority of Service for Veterans.

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

Job Service Workforce Centers offer priority of service to all covered persons who access the workforce system. Covered persons will be identified at point of entry to allow them to take full advantage of priority of service. Customers entering a Job Service Office will be queried in the customer reception area (point of entry) to ascertain covered person status. A "quickassessment" guide will be used by staff. A customer that self-attests to be a veteran or an eligible person (covered person) will be offered the opportunity to step to the front of the line and receive services before a non-covered customer. At that time, the covered person will be made aware of their entitlement to priority of service, employment and training services available and eligibility requirements for available employment and training services. Job Service North Dakota is committed to diversity, equity and inclusion in the delivery of priority of service for veterans and the administration of all Federally funded programs."

Covered persons utilizing self- service will be made aware of entitlement to priority of service at the time of their registration in the Virtual One Stop (VOS). Once the customer identifies themselves as a covered person, a screen automatically displays information on entitlement to priority of service and programs and services that are available through Job Service North Dakota.

Job Service Workforce Center staff will conduct an intake/assessment for each Veteran/Eligible person at point of entry to a Job Service Workforce Center. Throughout the intake process, Veterans who disclose or

self-attest as a veteran with Significant Barriers to Employment (SBE) or meets other eligibility requirements for JVSG services, will be referred to a JVSG staff member. If a JVSG staff member is not available when a referral is necessary, the Veteran/Eligible person may choose to be served on a priority basis by another staff member.

Veterans not meeting the criteria for JVSG services are to be referred to appropriate non-JVSG staff to receive core, intensive, and/or training services on a priority of service basis.

(B) Describe how the State will monitor priority of service provisions for veterans.

Job Service will monitor priority of service to veterans/eligible persons to ensure that all staff are following the statutory and regulatory requirements regarding all Department of Labor programs. Priority of service will be monitored through analysis of data found in the Employment and Training Administration's Federal Reports, from observations annotated in the JVSG Staff Monthly Report on Services to Veterans and from reports completed by Job Service Systems Management Staff. These reports are reviewed by the Job Service Workforce Services Director, the State Veterans' Program Administrator and the Director of Veterans' Employment and Training and conclusions drawn regarding the extent of priority of service demonstrated by each Workforce Center. Process improvement plans are recommended for those offices needing improvement.

(C) Describe the triage and referral process for eligible veterans and other populations determined eligible to receive services from the Jobs for Veterans State Grants (JVSG) program's Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) specialist/Consolidated Position.

Workforce Center Resource Area Staff will conduct an intake/assessment process for each veteran/eligible person at point of entry to a Workforce Center. Throughout the intake process, veterans/eligible persons who disclose or self-attest to meeting one or more of the criteria for DVOP services will be referred to a DVOP. In circumstances when a referral is necessary and a DVOP is not available, the veteran/eligible person may choose to be served on a priority basis by another Resource Area Staff member. It is recommended, and encouraged, that Resource Area Staff members include as part of their services the scheduling of a follow-up appointment for the veteran/eligible person to consult with a DVOP. This same concept applies to Workforce Centers that do not have DVOPs on staff – the veteran/eligible person can choose to receive services from Resource Area Staff or make an appointment to consult with a DVOP on their next regularly scheduled outreach visit. Telephonic and video consultations with DVOPs are also recommended.

The initial determination for DVOP services will be based on self-attestation. In requesting this information, any written questionnaire used for this purpose must make it clear that the information requested is intended for use solely in connection with efforts to give priority to persons with SBEs. If no written questionnaire is used, this information must be made clear orally. Additionally, the Resource Area Staff member seeking the information must state clearly

that the information is being requested on a voluntary basis, that it will be kept confidential, that refusal to provide it will not subject the participant to any adverse treatment, and that it will be used only in accordance with the law.

Veterans/eligible persons not meeting the criteria for DVOP services will be referred to appropriate non-JVSG staff member(s) to receive core, individualized career, and/or training services on a priority of service basis.

- (8) Addressing the Accessibility of the One-Stop Delivery System for Individuals with Disabilities. Describe how the one-stop delivery system (including one-stop center operators and the one-stop delivery system partners), will comply with section 188 of WIOA (if applicable) and applicable provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12101 et seq.) regarding the physical and programmatic accessibility of facilities, programs, services, technology, and materials for individuals with disabilities. This also must include a description of compliance through providing staff training and support for addressing the needs of individuals with disabilities. Describe the State's one-stop center certification policy, particularly the accessibility criteria.

Job Service North Dakota is committed to providing equal opportunity for all persons regardless of race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, age, marital status, national origin, citizenship status, disability, veteran status, or because of any other characteristic protected by applicable laws. This commitment extends to all aspects of our work in both the employment relationship and with our clients applying to or receiving services under our programs. Job Service North Dakota is committed to diversity, equity and inclusion in the delivery of all state and federally funded programs.

Individuals with disabilities receive aid, benefits, services, and training equal to, or as effective as, those provided to others and will not receive separately unless it is needed. Should the need arise, we will ensure services are received in the most integrated setting possible.

Employees serving participants in our programs complete nondiscrimination training annually to ensure awareness and understanding of EO policies and regulations, and adherence to our internal policies with recognizing and responding to complaints of discrimination.

JSND and its core partners provide equal access to our facilities and services and discrimination against an individual, for any reason, is prohibited. We provide facilities which are accessible to all individuals by public transportation, driving, or walking. The One-Stop identifier is clearly displayed on all facility locations to ensure our buildings are clearly recognized. We operate our facilities during optimal hours to meet the needs of our customers, including both job seekers and employers. Where possible, we have co-located with our partners and to allow for additional meeting space for partner programs. JSND is committed to ensuring accessibility to our programs, services, and technology.

The JSND website (www.jobsnd.com) operates from a platform created by the North Dakota Information Technology department (NDIT), a state agency. JSND's online service is a web-based self-service system offering universal access to a broad range of employment, training, and educational services. With assistance from NDIT, we ensure our website is in compliance with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines and Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. NDIT conducts routine compliance checks of the website and takes steps to improve site performance for users with slow and limited connections.

Our online platform ensures:

- Access to specific services is available to all customers throughout the one-stop delivery system
- Access to 24/7 services to anyone with Internet access
- Access to services by clients in remote and rural areas who prefer to access services online vs. at a physical location
Access to services by clients in urban areas who are unable to access a physical location due to lack of transportation, a disability, or for other reasons

JSND provides participation in our programs and services to individuals with disabilities that are as effective as that provided to others. Qualified individuals with disabilities receive aid, benefits, training, and services which are equal to, or as effective as, that provided to others. We ensure accessibility to individuals with disabilities in employment and employment-related training, including making reasonable accommodations to our facilities, policies, practices, and/or procedures to avoid discrimination on the basis of a disability.

In furtherance of our commitment to provide services to qualified individuals with a disability and remove barriers often experienced by hearing or visually impaired individuals, or individuals with a physical disability, our resource rooms are furnished with adjustable workstations which have wider access areas, adaptive technology, and adjustable height work surfaces which can be operated either electronically or hydraulically.

Our modern adaptive technology includes a phone amplifier, ear-covering and noise-cancelling headphones, 24" monitors, and teletypewriters. As needed, we will employ additional resources or seek outside consultation, to ensure our clients have access to our services. Employees in our Workforce Centers have been trained on the use of the equipment, and training is integrated in to our process for any new adaptive technology.

In addition to the One-Stop Certification which ensures compliance with several programmatic components, JSND also has a designated Equal Opportunity Officer to ensure we, along with our Core Partners, remain in compliance with adhering to our Non-Discrimination plan, and the provisions of the ADA. Utilizing a periodic monitoring system, annual reviews for compliance are conducted to identify any disparity in services provided to individuals who are classified within a protected group.

Additional auditing of services may occur in the event of complaints received by participants within our programs.

Each of the nine one-stop locations has a certification review once every three years. This certification review includes an assessment of program effectiveness and continuous improvement including accessibility of services, equal opportunity, and employee training. The facility is also reviewed for compliance with the provisions of the American's with Disabilities Act and specifically addresses parking, entrance areas, resource rooms, restrooms, and general public spaces including an assessment of carpeting, signage, doors, controls, and elevators.

We are committed to ensuring accessibility to our facilities and services and we prohibit discrimination against individuals for any reason. To solidify our commitment, we have made written assurances on our website, in our Non-Discrimination Plan, and in written notifications to all clients, participants of specific programming, and to the general public. These assurances also extend to our partner agencies and providers. As stated above and throughout this document, Job Service North Dakota is committed to diversity, equity and inclusion in the delivery of all state and federally funded programs.

- (9) Addressing the Accessibility of the One-Stop Delivery System for Individuals who are English Language Learners. Describe how the one-stop delivery system (including one-stop center operators and the one-stop delivery system partners) will ensure that each one-stop center is able to meet the needs of English language learners, such as through established procedures, staff training, resources, and other materials. Describe how English language learners will be made aware of the opportunity to enroll and/or co-enroll in all the core programs for which they are eligible.

Job Service North Dakota makes every attempt to ensure the needs of customers with limited English - speaking skills are met. To provide interpretation services in a timely manner, JSND uses CTS Language Link interpreter services and partner agencies interpreting services. Job Service partners with the Adult Learning Centers (ALC's) to provide the needed education to the various ELL populations across the state. JSND staff refer WIOA, Wagner-Peyser, and other state program participants to the nine Adult Learning Centers located in the same cities as JSND Workforce Centers. ALC staff partner with community agencies that specifically serve New Americans like Afro American Development Association and New American Consortium for Wellness and Empowerment Center. The case managers then provide the proper follow-through to ensure our participants are provided the very best language education possible.

On a yearly basis, staff are trained to properly use the CTS Language Link and attend New American specific training. Recently, a procedure was written to provide further and consistent guidance on the use of CTS Language Link services.

In addition to the CTS Language Link, we also employ three Instant Language Assistance devices in our Grand Forks and Fargo Workforce Centers. This equipment allows our Career Navigators and other staff to instantaneously talk with program participants using this new technology.

Do we want to add anything on creating a playbook for all of our title programs that will be shared with our agencies and with public?

IV. COORDINATION WITH STATE PLAN PROGRAMS. Describe the methods used for joint planning and coordination among the core programs, and with the required one-stop partner programs and other programs and activities included in the Unified or Combined State Plan.

North Dakota core partners established an electronic file with access for all plan writing team members. The team began meeting in October of 2023 to review, modify and collectively write the Unified Plan. The team included staff from Adult Education, Vocational Rehabilitation, Department of Commerce, and Job Service ND.

- North Dakota Department of Health and Human Services, Vocational Rehabilitation - Robyn Throlson, Planning and Evaluation Administrator
- ND Department of Public Instruction, Adult Education – Sara Mitzel, Assistant Director, Adult Education Program
- ND Department of Commerce/Workforce Development Council – Katie Ralston Howe, Workforce Development Director
- Job Service North Dakota, Workforce Programs - Ruth Lacher, Manager of Workforce Programs, Tammy Barstad, Manager of Workforce Systems, and Phil Davis, Workforce Services Director. Ruth, Tammy, and Phil represented all core and partner programs administered by Job Service ND, including Title I-B, Title III, and Trade Adjustment Assistance, Labor Market Information, and JVSG.

The Governor's office was consulted regarding the State strategy for workforce. The Department of Commerce Workforce Division also provided information regarding the State strategy for workforce. The Administrative Committee of the Workforce Development Council review will occur in February 2024. The public comment period for the WIOA Unified Plan modification, the Agriculture Outreach Plan and the proposed performance measures will be completed by the end of February 2024.

V. COMMON ASSURANCES (for all core programs)

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include assurances that:	
1.	The State has established a policy identifying circumstances that may present a conflict of interest for a State Board or local board member, or the entity or class of officials that the member represents, and procedures to resolve such conflicts;
2.	The State has established a policy to provide to the public (including individuals with disabilities) access to meetings of State Boards and local boards, and information regarding activities of State Boards and local boards, such as data on board membership and minutes;
3.	The lead State agencies with optimal policy-making authority and responsibility for the administration of core programs reviewed and commented on the appropriate operational planning elements of the Unified or Combined State Plan, and approved the elements as serving the needs of the populations served by such programs;
4.	<p>(a) The State obtained input into the development of the Unified or Combined State Plan and provided an opportunity for comment on the plan by representatives of local boards and chief elected officials, businesses, labor organizations, institutions of higher education, the entities responsible for planning or administrating the core programs, required one-stop partners and the other Combined Plan programs (if included in the State Plan), other primary stakeholders, including other organizations that provide services to individuals with barriers to employment, and the general public, and that the Unified or Combined State Plan is available and accessible to the general public;</p> <p>(b) The State provided an opportunity for review and comment on the plan by the State Board, including State agency official(s) for the Unemployment Insurance Agency if such official(s) is a member of the State Board;</p>
5.	The State has established, in accordance with WIOA section 116(i), fiscal control and fund accounting procedures that may be necessary to ensure the proper disbursement of, and accounting for, funds paid to the State through allotments made for the core programs to carry out workforce development activities;
6.	The State has taken appropriate action to secure compliance with uniform administrative requirements in this Act, including that the State will annually monitor local areas to ensure compliance and otherwise take appropriate action to secure compliance with the uniform administrative requirements under WIOA section 184(a)(3);

7.	The State has taken the appropriate action to be in compliance with WIOA section 188, Nondiscrimination, as applicable;
8.	The Federal funds received to carry out a core program will not be expended for any purpose other than for activities authorized with respect to such funds under that core program;
9.	The State will pay an appropriate share (as defined by the State board) of the costs of carrying out section 116, from funds made available through each of the core programs;
10.	The State has a one-stop certification policy that ensures the physical and programmatic accessibility of all one-stop centers with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA);
11.	Service providers have a referral process in place for directing Veterans with Significant Barriers to Employment (SBE) to DVOP services, when appropriate; and
12.	Priority of service for veterans and eligible spouses is provided in accordance with 38 USC 4215 in all workforce preparation, development or delivery of programs or services funded directly, in whole or in part, by the Department of Labor.

VI. PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR CORE PROGRAMS

The State must address all program-specific requirements in this section for the WIOA core programs regardless of whether the State submits either a Unified or Combined State Plan.

Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth Activities under Title I-B. The Unified or Combined State Plan must include the following with respect to activities carried out under subtitle B—

(a) General Requirements

(1) Regions and Local Workforce Development Areas.

- (A) Identify the regions and the local workforce development areas designated in the State.
North Dakota is a single workforce area under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 as designated by Governor Doug Burgum. The North Dakota Workforce Development Council serves as both the State and local board as outlined in WIOA.
- (B) Describe the process and policy used for designating local areas, including procedures for determining whether the local area met the criteria for “performed successfully” and “sustained fiscal integrity” in accordance with 106(b)(2) and (3) of WIOA. Describe the process used for identifying regions and planning regions under section 106(a) of WIOA. This must include a description of how the State consulted with the local boards and chief elected officials in identifying the regions.
North Dakota is a single workforce area under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 as designated by Governor Doug Burgum. The North Dakota Workforce Development Council serves as both the State and local board as outlined in WIOA.
- (C) Provide the appeals process and policy referred to in section 106(b)(5) of WIOA relating to designation of local areas.
North Dakota is a single workforce area under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 as designated by Governor Doug Burgum. The North Dakota Workforce Development Council serves as both the State and local board as outlined in WIOA.
- (D) Provide the appeals process and policy referred to in section 121(h)(2)(E) of WIOA relating to determinations for infrastructure funding.

The Appeals Process is included in the MOU and the Infrastructure Agreement signed by one-stop partners.

The One-Stop Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is the recognized vehicle for the Board to implement an agreement among the one-stop partner programs regarding one-stop delivery of services in the local workforce development area. North Dakota is a single area state.

To facilitate consistency and transparency in determining costs for One-Stop services, the Title 1 Administrator will prepare the Infrastructure Funding Agreement (IFA) and provide copies to one-stop partner programs and the WIB. Questions or issues regarding the IFA will be provided to the Title 1 Administrator and Board staff for resolution, if necessary.

The IFA must address cost sharing and infrastructure costs in a fair and equitable manner consistent with all policies and procedures. A review of the IFA will be conducted with an eye toward equitable cost sharing among partners, including a consistent approach to in-kind costs.

Appeals Process

This appeals process is in accordance with section 121(h)(2)(E) of WIOA.

Step 1. As one-stop partners are negotiating the IFA, if difficulty in reaching agreement or an impasse has occurred a one-stop partner may appeal the negotiated amount for their agency by notifying the Title I Administrator in writing immediately in order to direct an appeals resolution team to provide technical assistance and finalize a solution. This notification should occur within 30 days.

This appeals resolution team will be comprised of agency-designated staff with decision-making authority from each of the partner agencies working toward a local agreement and shall include a staff member from the workforce board.

Step 2. If the appeals resolution team is unable to finalize a solution within 30 days of notification by local partners, the appeal is forwarded to the Governor who will make final determinations on the terms of the IFA for those program partners over which he has decision-making authority and will impose a cost sharing arrangement.

Job Service ND must provide the appropriate and relevant materials and documents used in the negotiations to the Governor, preferably at the time of the notification of failure to reach consensus or request for appeal resolution, but no later than ten (10) business days thereafter. At a minimum, Job Service ND must provide to the Governor:

- The Local WIOA plan,
- The cost allocation methodology or methodologies proposed by the Partners to be used in determining the proportionate share,
- The proposed amounts or budget to fund infrastructure costs,
- The amount of Partner funds included,
- The type of funds (cash, non-cash, and third-party in-kind contributions) available (including all documentation on how Partners valued non-cash and third-party in-kind contributions consistent with 2 CFR 200.306),
- Any proposed or agreed on American Job Center budgets (for individual centers or a network of centers), and
- Any partially agreed upon, proposed, or draft IFAs.

Job Service ND may also provide the Governor with additional materials that they or the Governor find to be appropriate.

(2) Statewide Activities.

- (A) Provide State policies or guidance for the statewide workforce development system and for use of State funds for workforce investment activities.

The State shall follow all applicable Federal and State regulations and guidance pertaining to the use of each individual fund source for workforce investment activities as set by North Dakota Office of Management and Budget fiscal policies.

Fiscal Policies and Guidelines | Office of Management and Budget North Dakota

INTRODUCTION

Under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), states are allowed to reserve Title I funds for purposes of statewide workforce investment activities. These activities are provided through workforce development systems to increase the employment, retention, and earnings of participants, and increase attainment of recognized postsecondary credentials by participants, which as a result, improve the quality of the workforce, reduce welfare dependency, increase economic self-sufficiency, meet the skill requirements of employers, and enhance the productivity and competitiveness of the nation.

FUNDING GUIDELINES

Each year, Job Service North Dakota (JSND), the WIOA Title I Fiscal Agent, Grant Subrecipient, and State Administrative Agency will set aside funds based on allocation methods as established under WIOA to be used to carry out statewide activities which provide relative benefit to the grant.

WIOA funds are to be used for initiatives which fit the strategy and direction of the Governor, and conform to the WIOA regulations, and the Uniform Guidance for allowable costs under 2CFR 200. To ensure the proper use of funds and application of the grant award, JSND has prepared these guidelines for use by the Governor and/or other state agencies in consideration of the use of these funds.

- Funds are considered program dollars and cannot be used for state administrative activities;
- Funds must demonstrate how the activities/services support the objectives of WIOA;

- Funds must be tied directly to services or otherwise benefit WIOA-eligible individuals (youth, adults, and dislocated workers as defined under the WIOA regulations);
- Funds must result in a measurable outcome under the WIOA performance accountability standards;
- Funds must not be used to duplicate or replace activities normally funded by another federal or state program; and
- Funds must not be used for ongoing or regular services of an organization

FUNDING STRATEGY

To ensure the funds allocated each year are spent by the third year, JSND and the Workforce Development Council (WDC) have established a funding strategy in alignment with WIOA regulations for allowable expenses. This percentage-based strategy will increase the efficiency and effectiveness of WIOA systems and services, as well as enhance the innovation of North Dakota's Workforce Development System. Some discretion may be given to the percentages listed herein should additional needs arise, if said funds are not otherwise designated.

- 60% for innovative solutions to address statewide workforce needs and strengthen North Dakota's Workforce Development System
- 20% for JSND system upgrades and enhancements to advance technology for improved services to citizens
- 10% for WIOA Research and Evaluation to strengthen the workforce system through evidence-based policy and decision making

10% for JSND as the One-Stop Operator for building and accessibility improvements to better serve the needs of citizens

FUNDING APPROVAL

Funds for WIOA research and evaluation, one-stop operator building and accessibility needs, and JSND system upgrades and enhancements are allowable expenses under the WIOA grant. During the first quarter of each year, the Executive Director and Workforce Services Director with JSND will present the agency's plan to spend these funds to the Executive Committee of the WDC.

Planning for innovative solutions to address statewide workforce needs will be considered on an annual basis and are subject to the funding guidelines and procedures as noted herein. If the innovative solution identified is

allowable under the WIOA grant, the Executive Committee with the WDC has final approval for expending the funds.

FUNDING PROCEDURES

JSND has a responsibility to administer the grant in compliance with WIOA laws and regulations, the WIOA grant agreement, and the Uniform Guidance for allowable costs. Therefore, all requests for utilizing the funds for innovative solutions must be approved by JSND's internal process prior to being submitted to the WDC for approval.

Any person or agency requesting funding under the WIOA grant for statewide activities must complete the WIOA Allowable Activities Funding Request form explaining the reasons for the funding in more detail. This form must be emailed to JSND's Workforce Services Director at: pndavis@nd.gov. Upon receipt of the information, the Workforce Services Director will share the information with the WDC Director.

JSND has established the WIOA Statewide Activities Committee (SAC) to consider requests related to WIOA statewide activities funding. This internal team has the working knowledge and understanding of the WIOA regulations, the guidelines established herein, and the authority to disperse funds under WIOA.

This committee consists of the following positions:

- Executive Director
- Workforce Services Director
- Workforce Programs Managers (2)
- Finance Manager
- Planning and Projects Manager
- WDC Director

Upon receiving the request for the use of WIOA statewide funds, JSND's WIOA SAC may convene with the requesting party to discuss the request and gather additional information as needed. If the request for distribution of funds is questionable as to its alignment with the intent of the grant and compliance with the WIOA regulations, JSND will consult with the United States Department of Labor (USDOL) for formal guidance. Upon the committee making a decision on the use of funds for the purpose of statewide activities, the Workforce Services Director for JSND will collaborate with the WDC Director.

Approvals will be presented by the WDC Director to the WDC Executive Committee for consideration and approval. The Workforce Service Director will notify all parties involved as to the approval or denial by the WDC.

PROCUREMENT

As the fiscal agent of the WIOA Title I funds, JSND is responsible for following established procurement procedures for the use of WIOA statewide activities funding. Accordingly, following approval by the WDC, JSND will act on behalf of the State and will lead the procurement process while continuously collaborating with the requesting party as to the required paperwork, status, and evaluation of vendors.

REPORTING

JSND is obligated to monitor and report to the USDOL on the use of statewide activities funding. This may require JSND involvement in the project including regular meetings or may require the requestor of the funds to submit reports throughout the duration of the project. Discretion is left to the Workforce Services Director to determine the necessity in participation to comply with the grant requirements.

- (B) Describe how the State intends to use Governor's set aside funding for mandatory and discretionary activities, including how the State will conduct evaluations of Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth activities.

To ensure the funds allocated each year are spent by the third year, JSND and the Workforce Development Council (WDC) have established a funding strategy in alignment with WIOA regulations for allowable expenses. This percentage-based strategy will increase the efficiency and effectiveness of WIOA systems and services, as well as enhance the innovation of North Dakota's Workforce Development System. Some discretion may be given to the percentages listed herein should additional needs arise, if said funds are not otherwise designated.

- 60% for innovative solutions to address statewide workforce needs and strengthen North Dakota's Workforce Development System
- 20% for JSND system upgrades and enhancements to advance technology for improved services to citizens
- 10% for WIOA Research and Evaluation to strengthen the workforce system through evidence-based policy and decision making

- (C) Describe how the State will utilize Rapid Response funds to respond to layoffs and plant closings and coordinate services to quickly aid companies and their affected workers. States also should describe any layoff aversion strategies they have implemented to address at risk companies and workers.

Dislocated Worker Office

The Dislocated Worker Office (DWO) of Job Service has been designated by the Governor as the entity responsible for providing Rapid Response services through the Job Service Workforce Centers located across the state. The Workforce Center managers provide direct supervision to business services staff responsible for Rapid Response services. WIOA funding is utilized for Rapid Response services.

When the DWO receives Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification (WARN) notices, JSND staff, including Unemployment Insurance staff, the JSND Executive Director, the Workforce Development Council Director with the ND Department of Commerce are notified immediately. Depending on the level of community impact, communication may occur between local and/or state level service providers to inform them of the potential to assist in delivering Rapid Response and in serving impacted workers. In the case of WARN notices, the community's chief elected official also receives a notice from the company. A Job Service Workforce Center representative may contact the community leader as a part of planning the response effort.

JSND efforts for WARN notices include initiating contact for Rapid Response with the employer and employee representatives if organized labor is involved. The DWO notifies and utilizes partner services as appropriate. The Job Service Workforce Center office manager or designee coordinates the response effort and works with the DWO to determine the level of involvement of the chief elected official, economic development officials, and others. In many Rapid Response scenarios, these services are delivered seamlessly by Wagner Peyser, WIOA, and UI staff members. External partners also participate and offer their perspectives and services.

The Rapid Response plan may include the following:

- Offering information on business start-up, growth and layoff aversion as a common service to all employers during regular employer visits or to anyone upon request.
- Exploring the potential for a task force which involves community leaders, company management, state leaders and representatives, organized labor, etc.
- Guiding a team in determining specific assistance to be provided at the dislocation site. ND is in the enviable position of experiencing a labor shortage, which sets the tone for directing the dislocated workers' attention to their transferable skills.
- Sharing information (in case of layoffs resulting from foreign competition) regarding petition filing, timing, and availability of TAA and Trade Readjustment Assistance.
- Meeting with impacted employees to inform them of programs and available services as well as answering questions and providing standardized dislocated worker information packets.
- Arranging reverse job fairs onsite with employers with a scheduled closure or a large layoff.

When a dislocation is reported to the DWO, the occupations and locations of these workers are listed in a management report to notify staff around the state of this talent pool. Ongoing proactive efforts exist within the various areas of the state through cooperation between Job

Service Workforce Center staff members and economic development. When a layoff is pending, opportunities to help transition those impacted workers to expanding and new North Dakota businesses are effectively coordinated in order to retain a skilled workforce.

For businesses in other stages of the economic cycle, assistance from outside resources is offered as well as information on recruitment services, unemployment insurance, workforce training, First Link 2-1-1 Network, business tax incentives, and North Dakota New Jobs Training program.

Job Service's Management Information System includes a list of all Rapid Response sessions linking individuals applying for WIOA and TAA. All WIOA and TAA participants can be properly reported as having attended Rapid Response session(s) associated with the impacted employer.

In the case of non-WARN dislocations, the contact and communication is dependent on the local area impact. Following either a permanent closure, mass layoff or a natural/other disaster resulting in a mass job dislocation, Job Service Workforce Center managers and business services staff are responsible for initiating Rapid Response in their service areas as warranted.

In the event of a natural disaster, Rapid Response would be provided following an activation from the Workforce Coordination Center (WCC). North Dakota follows WCC Standard Operating Procedures which is a joint emergency effort among Job Service ND, Human Resource Management Services, North Dakota Workforce Safety & Insurance and the North Dakota Department of Labor. The WCC is part of The North Dakota State Emergency Operations Plan of the North Dakota Department of Emergency Services, Division of Homeland Security. State agencies will be required to focus their attention on both the continuation of essential services and emergency response/recovery operations for the well-being of citizens with non-essential services likely placed on hold until the severity of conditions requiring activation of the WCC subsides. The WCC plan outlines protocols for redirecting the workforce to support delivery of essential services and emergency response/recovery operations.

- (D) Describe how the State provides early intervention (e.g., Rapid Response) and ensures the provision of appropriate career services to worker groups on whose behalf a Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) petition has been filed. (Section 134(a)(2)(A) and TAA Section 221(a)(2)(A) .) This description must include how the State disseminates benefit information to provide workers in the groups identified in the TAA petitions with an accurate understanding of the provision of TAA benefits and services in such a way that they are transparent to the dislocated worker applying for them (Trade Act Sec. 221(a)(2)(A) and Sec. 225; Governor-Secretary Agreement). Describe how the State will use funds that have been reserved for Rapid Response to provide services for every worker group that files a TAA petition and how the state will ensure the provision of appropriate career

service to workers in the groups identified in the petition (TAA Sec. 221(a)(2)(A)).

Rapid Response in North Dakota operates in essentially the same manner regardless of whether a TAA petition or certification is involved. See Section 2 (B) above for the description of Rapid Response activities. Rapid Response services are provided to all worker groups covered by a TAA petition similarly to any worker group that has been or will be permanently laid off. In most cases, the State and its local Rapid Response team are already aware of a dislocation event and Rapid Response activities are underway before a TAA petition is filed.

If a TAA petition is the first notice of a dislocation event, the State will notify the Job Service Workforce Center staff, who will contact the employer to plan and schedule the Rapid Response. When Rapid Response is extended to potentially TAA-eligible worker groups, basic TAA Program information must be shared, including the program enrollment process should certification occur. If the State does not have access to the worker group prior to layoff, the State will use UI claimant information to identify potentially affected workers. In this situation, the local Rapid Response team will be required to extend outreach to the laid off workers using contact information obtained from UI. At minimum, the outreach materials must include information about the WIOA Dislocated Worker Program, workforce system, services available at the Workforce Centers, and basic information explaining the TAA Program.

(b) Adult and Dislocated Worker Program Requirements.

- (1) Work-Based Training Models. If the State is utilizing work-based training models (e.g. on-the-job training, incumbent worker training, transitional jobs, and customized training) as part of its training strategy and these strategies are not already discussed in other sections of the plan, describe the State's strategies for how these models ensure high quality training for both the participant and the employer.

On-the-Job Training (OJT) remains a training strategy for participants who lack experience but have education or training related to the job, or whose limited experience does not qualify them for the jobs. Increased promotion and outreach have resulted in additional OJT experiences for job seekers and employers.

Employers benefit from OJT through cost savings for the expense of training a new employee. OJT gives employers the control to design a training plan that meets the needs of their business.

Supervisors assess progress over a period making it easier to identify and resolve a problem quickly. Trainees benefit from OJT by receiving an income while learning in jobs matched to their aptitude, abilities, and desired occupational goals. Trainees obtain hands-on training for new job

skills and re-enter the workforce. Trainees may develop mentoring relationships leading to greater success in their new employment.

Work Experience is a planned, structure learning experience that takes place in a workplace for a limited period of time. Work experience may be paid or unpaid. In general, the intent of work experiences are for youth or adults with opportunities for career exploration and skill development and to enhance their work readiness skills in preparation for employment. Case managers work directly with employers to implement a plan of training for each individual that includes progress reports from direct work supervisors.

Registered Apprenticeship is most often promoted with OJT. When an OJT contract is being negotiated for an apprenticeable occupation, efforts are made to encourage the employer to couple the OJT with a registered apprenticeship program. WIOA funds may be used to cover costs of related training instruction to relieve the cost to the sponsor when there is a cost for third party instruction.

- (2) Registered Apprenticeship. Describe how the State will incorporate Registered Apprenticeship into its strategy for service design and delivery (e.g., outreach to sponsors and prospective sponsors, identifying potential participants and connecting them to apprenticeship opportunities).

North Dakota apprenticeships have traditionally been used by the skilled trades industries. Additional industries are now recognizing the value the apprenticeship model provides to train and retain potential and current employees.

The state collaborates with the US DOL Office of Apprenticeship in North Dakota to coordinate information of apprenticeships in North Dakota. Entities share outreach information that enhances collaboration to result in increased WIOA and Registered Apprenticeship enrollments. Core program staff have received training from the State Director and the ETPL provides important information on utilization of Registered Apprenticeship. The state continues to strengthen partnerships between the State Director and other WIOA partners. Registered Apprenticeship has been incorporated into Job Service ND applicant services and business services within the WIOA core programs. These communications consist of establishing processes to share information that will generate a greater utilization of Registered Apprenticeships in the state. Increasing the knowledge of all parties about how WIOA can partner with Registered Apprenticeship will strengthen the promotion.

Department of Commerce and Job Service North Dakota staff will share information relating to employers inquiring about Registered Apprenticeship and are in need to fill apprenticeship openings. Job orders in the labor exchange system are flagged as Registered Apprenticeship

openings. A quick search for the flagged job openings for registered apprenticeship is available on the homepage of the state's labor exchange website.

All Job Service staff, including WIOA program case managers, have the list of current Registered Apprenticeship sponsors to become familiar with the activity in the State for employer and occupation targets for program promotion. Business service staff messaging with employers includes Registered Apprenticeship benefits. Youth case managers are promoting Registered Apprenticeship specifically for out-of-school youth and as a strategy to meet the WIOA Youth 20% expenditure rate for work experience activities. Registered Apprenticeship promotional materials are available to all Job Service ND staff, on the agency webpage and in the resource rooms.

- (3) Training Provider Eligibility Procedure. Provide the procedure, eligibility criteria, and information requirements for determining training provider initial and continued eligibility, including Registered Apprenticeship programs (WIOA Section 122).

NORTH DAKOTA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL POLICY ELIGIBLE TRAINING PROVIDERS POLICY 2-06-01 (5)

PURPOSE:

This Policy provides new information, criteria, and procedures to implement the Eligible Training Provider (ETP) requirements of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2014.

POLICY:

A. Training Providers Subject to ETP List Requirements

The following types of training providers are subject to the ETP list requirements in order to receive WIOA Title I Adult and Dislocated Worker funds to provide training services to eligible adult and dislocated worker individuals through Individual Training Accounts (ITA). ITA's may also be used for WIOA Title I Youth funds to provide training to older, out-of-school youth (ages 18-24).

1. Institutions of higher education that provide a program of training that leads to a recognized postsecondary credential;
2. Public or private training providers, including joint labor-management organizations, and occupational/technical training; and
3. Providers of adult education and literacy activities provided in combination with occupational skills training.

Postsecondary institutions located in Minnesota, Montana, and South Dakota are eligible to receive North Dakota ITA's based on reciprocal agreements. Post-secondary institutions outside

of North Dakota that offer online training/distance education may be authorized to receive ITA's as long as the training program is listed on the home state's ETP list.

B. Initial Eligibility and Application Process

Training providers may submit an application for initial eligibility, which can be granted for up to one full year.

1.) Applications for the ETP list will be completed using a link available on jobsnd.com. The following information is required:

- Training provider applications must include verification documentation that the training provider is licensed, certified, or authorized by the North Dakota Department of Higher Education, or the relevant state agency with oversight, to operate training programs in North Dakota. If a program is not in compliance with the oversight agency as required by state law, the provider will not be able to apply for inclusion on the ETP list until they meet the necessary requirements.

- If a provider is in compliance with the oversight agency, the provider can proceed to #2 in the application process.

2.) Training providers applying for initial program eligibility must provide the following with the application:

a) A description of each program of training services to be offered;

b) Information on cost of attendance, including costs of tuition and fees;

c) Whether the training program leads to an industry-recognized certificate or credential, including recognized post-secondary credentials;

d) Whether the provider has developed the training in partnership with a business (and the name of the business);

e) The in-demand industry sectors and occupations that best fit with the training program;

f) The type of credential attained by all students in the program;

g) Social security numbers (SSNs) for all students in the programs listed on the application, regardless of the funding source.

NOTE - SSNs will be used to generate the required annual WIOA wage and employment performance reports. Job Service North Dakota will access SLDS data to generate these reports for institutions in the North Dakota University System.

Social security numbers must be provided for all students by program listed in the application for the previous two program years (July 1 – June 30) regardless of the funding source. Training providers that have not been on the ETP list for at least two years will be required to provide student data for the time period available.

Once the application is submitted and the state has determined that the required information is available, the state will approve, deny, or request further information on the program within 30

days of the receipt of a complete application. The state will notify the provider of the determination.

Registered apprenticeship programs are not subject to the eligibility criteria or application requirements. Registered Apprenticeships programs that are taking applications are automatically considered in-demand occupations. RAP sponsors not currently on the ETPL will be contacted annually for an opportunity to opt-in, with the instruction to contact via email either the ETPL Coordinator or the State Director of the Office of Apprenticeship. To further minimize the burden for sponsors, JSND will obtain the minimal amount of information per TEGL 8-19 needed for ETPL placement from the State Director. National RAPs will be asked to provide the required minimum amount of information for placement on the ND ETPL. New RAPs will be added to the ETPL at least every six months for those sponsors choosing to opt in.

C. Continued Eligibility

After the initial eligibility period of one full calendar year, training providers must submit applications for continued program eligibility every two years. Applications for continued eligibility must be submitted by October 1st for the year in which eligibility expires. The continued eligibility application is required for any program that has previously been on the list.

The SLDS will be used to generate performance information for institutions in the North Dakota University System. For training institutions not participating in SLDS, the following information must be submitted to JSND.

TrainND, Private training providers, and Tribal colleges must include the following:

- a) The total number of participants enrolled in the program;
- b) The total number of participants completing the program;
- c) The total number of participants exiting the program;
- d) Information on recognized post-secondary credentials received by program participants;
- e) Information on the program completion rate for such participants;
- f) Social security numbers for all participants by program listed on the application for the two previous years, regardless of funding source, which will be used to calculate the performance measures listed in Attachment 1.

NOTE - SSNs will be used to generate the required annual WIOA wage and employment performance reports. Job Service North Dakota will access SLDS data to generate these reports for institutions in the North Dakota University System.

All training/education providers must include the following:

- g) Applications for continued eligibility must include verification documentation from the appropriate oversight agency to operate in North Dakota.
- h) Description of how the provider will ensure access to training services throughout the State, including rural areas and through the use of technology;

- i) Description of how the providers provide training services to individuals who are employed and/or individuals with barriers to employment;
- j) Information reported to State agencies on Federal and State training programs other than programs within WIOA title I-B; and

D. Performance Requirements

The performance information required is outlined in Attachment 1. Social security numbers must be provided for all students in programs included on the application in North Dakota for the previous two years regardless of the funding source. An electronic system will provide a secure means to transmit the data file. Training providers that have not been on the ETP list for at least two years will be required to provide student data for the time period available. Social security numbers for all North Dakota students will continue to be required annually and will be used to calculate the performance measures. Performance information will be published online for each training provider on the ETP list. Programs with less than 10 students enrolled will not be included in performance data.

E. Established Performance Levels

North Dakota has established an overall performance level of 15% that may be adjusted as further guidance and more accurate data becomes available. This rate allows for the maximum inclusion of programs considering the characteristics of populations served and relevant economic conditions. Eligible training providers will receive one year to improve performance prior to being removed from the ETP list.

F. Conditions for Removal

The state may remove a program or programs from the list for failing to meet the established criteria or performance levels in this policy, or for not providing all required performance information for subsequent eligibility. Removal is also appropriate if the program has failed to attain or lost the accreditation required for professional licensure. A training provider that is removed from the list for the reasons stated above may re-apply for continued eligibility when they can demonstrate that they meet all the requirements.

The state must remove from the eligibility list for a period of not less than 2 years any providers that willfully supply false performance information, misrepresent costs or services, or that substantially violate requirements of WIOA law or regulations. Providers are liable to repay all adult and dislocated worker funds received during the period of non-compliance.

No training provider debarred by the Federal Government may be permitted to be placed or remain on the ETP list.

In the case of a training provider or a program of training services that is removed from the list while WIOA participants are enrolled, the participants may complete the program unless the provider or program has lost state licensing, certification, or authorization to operate by the appropriate state oversight agency.

G. Appeal Process

Training providers can choose to appeal the rejection of their program for inclusion in the ETP list or its subsequent termination of eligibility. For any appeal by a training provider, an appeal must be submitted in writing via email within 14 days after notification of the decision. The appeal must include the justification for the appeal in their request. The training provider also has the right to request a hearing to discuss their appeal.

An ETP list appeals board will be assembled. The appeals board will schedule a hearing if requested and make a decision within 60 days of appeal. This will be a final decision and the program will be unable to reapply through the ETP list eligibility process for two years from the date of final notification by the ETP list appeals board.

REFERENCE:

(0) NDWDC minutes dated July 21, 2015

(1) NDWDC minutes dated October 13, 2015

(2) Amended by WIOA Liaison for the Governor dated December 30, 2015

(3) NDWDC Administrative Committee July 30, 2019

(4) NDWDC Executive Committee October 5, 2020

(5) NDWDC Executive Committee August 11, 2022

REVIEW: August 11, 2025

Attachment 1

REQUIRED PERFORMANCE DATA

The following information is required for all applications for continued eligibility. Outcomes will be determined based on the student Social Security Numbers provided for each program. The SSNs will be matched to North Dakota wages and WRIS II data to generate reports for each program with the following information:

1. The percentage of program participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the program
2. The percentage of program participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the fourth quarter after exit from the program
3. The median earnings of program participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the program
4. The percentage of program participants who obtain a recognized post-secondary credential, or a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent during participation in or within 1 year after exit from the program

- (4) (4) Describe how the State will implement and monitor for the Adult Priority of Service requirement in WIOA section 134 (c)(3)(E) that requires American Job Center staff, when using WIOA Adult program funds to provide individualized career services and training services, to give priority of service to recipients of

public assistance, low-income individuals, and individuals who are basic skills deficient (including English language learners).

NORTH DAKOTA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL
WIOA ADULT PROGRAM PRIORITY OF SERVICE
POLICY 2-05-01 (3)

PURPOSE

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act requires priority of service for Veterans and covered persons, Adults and Dislocated Workers with barriers to employment as defined in 20 CFR Part 1010.110 and 20 CFR 680.600 through .660.

POLICY

An individual shall be eligible to participate in the WIOA Adult Program if he or she is:

- i) Age 18 or older;
- ii) Eligible to work in the United States including a citizen of the United States, a United States national, permanent resident alien, lawfully admitted refugee, parolee, or other individual authorized to work in the United States;
- iii) In compliance with Selective Service System registration (applies to males only); and
- iv) Meets priority of service.

All WIOA eligibility must meet data validation requirements, including self-attestation, per WDC

Data Validation

Policy 2-15-01.

Priority of Service:

The Workforce Development Council supports the WIOA priority of service while under limited funding for eligibility. These categories are:

- low-income adults (WIOA Sec 3(36))
- adults who are receiving public assistance
- basic skills deficient (WIOA Sec 3(5))

The Workforce Development Council also encourages enrollment of North Dakota residents as a priority.

Veterans and eligible spouses of veterans - covered persons - will receive priority of service.

The Jobs for Veterans Act does not change the requirement that individuals, to include veterans and military spouses, must first qualify as eligible under the WIOA Adult Program before participation.

REFERENCE:

(0) NDWDC minutes dated May 12, 2015

(1) NDWDC Administrative minutes dated September 28, 2018

(2) NDWDC Administrative minutes dated October 28, 2021

(3) NDWDC Administrative minutes dated November 16, 2023
REVIEW: November 16, 2026

(5) Describe the State's criteria regarding local area transfer of funds between the adult and dislocated worker programs.

NORTH DAKOTA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL
ADULT-DISLOCATED WORKER FUNDING TRANSFER
POLICY 2-12-01 (3)

PURPOSE:

To inform all one-stop career center staff of the transfer of funds between the adult and dislocated worker programs in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title I program.

POLICY:

Job Service ND, as the fiscal agent and grant sub-recipient, may transfer up to 100% of a program year's allocation between the adult and dislocated worker programs.

This transfer must be approved by the JSND Executive Director.

20 CFR 680.130

REFERENCE:

(0) September 28, 2018
(1) October 28, 2021
(2) WDC Executive Committee August 11, 2022
(3) WDC Administrative Committee February 14, 2023
REVIEW: February 14, 2026

(6) Describe the State's policy on WIOA and TAA co-enrollment and whether and how often this policy is disseminated to the local workforce development boards and required one-stop partners Trade Act Sec. 239(f), Sec. 235, 20 CFR 618.325, 20 CFR 618.824(a)(3)(i).

NORTH DAKOTA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL
CO-ENROLLMENT POLICY AND PROCEDURES
POLICY 2-07-01 (1)

PURPOSE:

To inform all one-stop career center staff of the procedures for co-enrolling eligible customers in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title I program. The Virtual One Stop case

management module records and provides a comprehensive view of offered services and eliminates duplication.

POLICY:

The definition of co-enrollment as outlined by the North Dakota Workforce Development Council is:

The North Dakota Unified State Plan states that North Dakota will co-enroll one-stop customers in partner programs. Co-enrollment policy and process is as follows:

Co-Enrollment of Trade Act Eligible Participants

Eligibility will be determined during the certification process by the Trade Act representatives. TAA participants will be co-enrolled in the WIOA Title I Dislocated Worker program at the time of training enrollment.

Co-Enrollment of JOBS Participants

TANF E & T participants may be co-enrolled in Wagner-Peyser based on the need for career services. WIOA Adult program co-enrollment will be determined based on individual assessment and need.

Co-Enrollment of BEST Participants

SNAP E & T participants may be automatically co-enrolled in Wagner-Peyser. WIOA Adult program co-enrollment will be determined based on individual assessment and need.

Co-Enrollment of PRIDE Participants (TANF funded)

PRIDE participants may be automatically co-enrolled in Wagner-Peyser. WIOA Adult program co-enrollment will be determined based on individual assessment and need.

Co-Enrollment of UI Claimants

UI claimants, who are required to have a work search, will be automatically co-enrolled in Wagner-Peyser. WIOA Dislocated Worker program co-enrollment will be determined based on individual assessment and need.

Reemployment Services Program participants

RSP participant co-enrolled in WIOA Title I programs may be determined at the time of the assessment/orientation.

Co-Enrollment of Adult Education Participants

Adult Education participants may be co-enrolled in Wagner-Peyser and WIOA Title I based on referral information and collaborative plan between program case management staff and instructors, individual assessment and need.

Co-Enrollment of Vocational Rehabilitation Participants

Vocational Rehabilitation participants may be co-enrolled in Wagner-Peyser and WIOA Title I based on referral information and collaborative plan between program case management staff and counselors, individual assessment and need.

Co-enrollment within WIOA Title I (Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth) Programs

Participants may be co-enrolled within all WIOA Title I programs based on fund eligibility and on individual assessment and need.

REFERENCE:

(0) September 28, 2018

(1) October 28, 2021

REVIEW: October 28, 2024

In Adult Ed., co-enrollment is now tracked in LiteracyPro (LACES). When students are enrolled, they are placed in LACES. It now has a WIOA Core Program field requirement that used to auto-fill to allow local programs to select other WIOA Core programs if students enrolled in another Core program. If they aren't, they select none. They are now able to mark the other core programs if individuals are co-enrolled locally.

- (7) Describe the State's formal strategy to ensure that WIOA and TAA co-enrolled participants receive necessary funded benefits and services. Trade Act Sec. 239(f), Sec. 235, 20 CFR 618.816(c)

This requirement is included in Policy 2-07-01 (1):
NORTH DAKOTA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL
CO-ENROLLMENT POLICY AND PROCEDURES
POLICY 2-07-01 (1)

Co-Enrollment of Trade Act Eligible Participants

Eligibility will be determined during the certification process by the Trade Act representatives.

TAA participants will be co-enrolled in the WIOA Title I Dislocated Worker program at the time of training enrollment.

- (8) Describe the State's process for familiarizing one-stop staff with the TAA program.
20 CFR 618.804(j), 20 CFR 618.305

One Stop Center staff serving TAA participants complete TAA program following an approved petition to ensure awareness and understanding of TAA policies and regulations.

(c) **Youth Program Requirements.** With respect to youth workforce investment activities authorized in section 129 of WIOA, States should describe their strategies that will support the implementation of youth activities under WIOA. State's must-

- (1) Identify the State-developed criteria to be used by local boards in awarding grants or contracts for youth workforce investment activities and describe how the local boards will take into consideration the ability of the providers to meet performance accountability measures based on primary indicators of performance for the youth program as described in section 116(b)(2)(A)(ii) of WIOA.⁸ Further, include a description of how the State assists local areas in determining whether to contract for services or to provide some or all of the program elements directly.

North Dakota is a single workforce area state. The WIOA Youth activities are provided by Job Service ND through a Memorandum of Understanding between the

Workforce Development

Council and Job Service ND. Additional contracts are not awarded.

State-developed and performance criteria is included in the Youth MOU. It can be viewed here:

<https://www.jobsnd.com/workforce-development-council/governance>

- (2) Explain how the State assists local workforce boards in achieving equitable results for out-of-school and in-school youth. Describe promising practices or partnership models that local areas are implementing and the state's role in supporting and scaling those models within the state for both in-school and out-of-school youth.

Service in ND is focused on both in-school and out-of-school youth with recruitment efforts targeting both populations. Strategies to achieve equitable results include:

- Youth Coordinators leverage the Workforce Center Resource Room staff knowledge of youth seeking employment and services through utilization of the nine Workforce Centers statewide;
- Core partners, WIOA Youth, Adult Education and Vocational Rehabilitation communicate regularly for active referral and dual enrollment of youth to ensure services are not duplicated and positive outcomes achieved;
- Adult Education ELL programs frequently work collaboratively with WIOA Youth Coordinators to provide services to New Americans and immigrants;
- Front-line staff from the WIOA required partner agencies meet regularly to discuss dually enrolled participants and better align services provided;
- Youth Coordinators communicate with local networks including TANF and SNAP staff and/or community-based programs targeting homeless, disabled and transitioning youth and justice-involved youth through local at-risk youth organizations and leverage resources.

⁸ Sec. 102(b)(2)(D)(i)(V)

- Service presentations including LMI, labor exchange education and youth program outreach continues to be provided to high schools and CTE centers. Communication with school personnel including principals, vocational teachers and counselors is crucial to locate students who have dropped out or for those graduating and in need of assistance for occupational skills training to fill the jobs in-demand. These efforts have resulted in the out-of-school youth expenditure rate nearing or exceeding 75% and the Work Based Learning requirement exceeding 20%.

(3) Describe how the State assists local workforce boards in implementing innovative models for delivering youth workforce investment activities, including effective ways local workforce boards can make available the 14 program elements described in WIOA section 129(c)(2); and explain how local areas can ensure work experience, including quality pre-apprenticeship and registered apprenticeship, is prioritized as a key element within a broader career pathways strategy.

The WIOA Youth program incorporates all the requirements outlined in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, specifically, objective assessments, employment planning (individual service strategies) and referral processes. All youth services are accessible through the Job Service Workforce Centers and services are designed based on labor market information.

All youth, including youth with disabilities, entering the service delivery process receive an objective assessment. Assessment follows the guidelines in WIOA, section 129, including a review of academic and occupational skills, interests and supportive service needs.

Assessments provide the needed information and data to complete employment plans that link employment, educational and career pathway goals with the service strategies necessary to reach employment goals. Youth receive integrated services through the Job Service Workforce Centers. The assessment process identifies those with the interests necessary to pursue post-secondary educational opportunities, including non-traditional training opportunities. Youth program participants have all career services available as part of their employment strategies. Based on the assessment, youth are referred to appropriate services, including career counseling, specialized counseling, guidance and skill assessment.

Information is shared with other partners involved in the assessment to help unify and enhance the guidance and counseling process. Supportive services are provided to youth to assist them in completing their individualized employment plans. The service strategy is coordinated around the 14 Youth Program Elements, available to participants.

The 14 youth program elements are:

1. Tutoring, study skills training and dropout prevention strategies: Participants may receive tutoring services and study skills training in order to complete secondary school. The North Dakota universities, community colleges, tribal colleges and other higher education partners will assist youth making the transition into postsecondary opportunities.

2. Alternative secondary school services, or dropout recovery services, as appropriate: Providing alternative secondary school services is vital to re-engage youth who have not responded to traditional school settings. This service is provided through coordination with local school districts.

3. Paid and unpaid work experiences including summer employment and other opportunities are available throughout the year and include internships and job shadowing, and on-the-job training opportunities. These opportunities not only help provide skills and experiences, but help youth understand what is associated with the world of work and what employers require of employees. Work-based learning opportunities, including summer employment opportunities, paid and unpaid work experience, internships, job shadowing and on-the-job training are directed at preparing youth for success in employment. Summer employment opportunities are directly linked to academic and occupational learning. Activities for youth with significant barriers to employment continue to focus on pre-employment and work maturity skills. On-the-job training is an excellent tool for occupational skill building for out-of-school youth who are ready for skill development and employment. The individual plan of each youth is focused on the needs identified through the individualized assessment process. Job Service and apprenticeship partners collaborate to determine how to establish and expand out-of-school youth work experience opportunities to registered apprenticeships offered by employers. Additionally, youth have access to services provided at the Job Service Workforce Centers, including assistance with work search, resume writing, interviewing, and career exploration. They also have access to jobsnd.com to connect them with unsubsidized employment opportunities.

4. Comprehensive guidance and counseling: Through the comprehensive assessment process, a Youth Coordinator may identify that guidance and counseling services would benefit a youth as the individual proceeds through the program. If so, referral to various providers would occur. Comprehensive Guidance and Counseling services may include but are not limited to the following: 1.) Referral to drug and alcohol counseling services; 2.) Referral to mental health counseling services and 3.) Case management performed by a professional Social Worker or Vocational Rehabilitation counselor. Each of these services must be provided by an appropriately trained staff member, educational instructor, licensed counselor or social worker.

5. Activities that help youth prepare for and transition to post-secondary education and training: Services are available for youth in need of such services to prepare for and transition to post-secondary education and training. These services may include assistance with post-secondary financial aid documents, assistance to attend college tours, assistance with college entrance or program exams.

6. Occupational skills training: Occupational skills training is provided through Individual Training Accounts to out-of-school youth whose employment plan includes post-secondary school

through short term skill training or a degree program through a community college or tribal college. Focus will be placed on preparing or retraining individuals for the in-demand occupations in the state. Priority consideration is given to training programs that lead to recognized post-secondary credentials that align with the in-demand sectors and occupations in the local area.

7. Education offered concurrently with and in the same context as workforce preparation activities: Services are available for youth in need of education offered concurrently with workforce preparation activities.

8. Leadership development opportunities, including community service and peer-centered activities encouraging responsibility and other positive social and civic behaviors: Youth are provided leadership development opportunities that may include community service and peer-centered activities encouraging responsibility and other positive social and civic behaviors, decision making and teamwork.

9. Adult mentoring: Mentoring opportunities with caring adults is sought to provide consistent guidance and support. Activities and projects that provide citizenship skills, life skills training, community involvement skills, and increase positive social skills, is used to develop overall leadership qualities.

10. Financial literacy education: Youth in need of financial literacy education services have access to activities designed to educate or assist youth with the following: making informed financial decisions including budgeting and accessing checking and savings accounts; learning to effectively manage spending, credit and debt; learning the significance of credit report and credit scores. Case managers have knowledge of financial literacy resources in their local area and try to identify youth who need financial literacy assistance.

11. Entrepreneurial skills training: Resources are available for youth interested in developing their entrepreneurial skills. Resources include: • The UND Center for Innovation, a comprehensive, hands-on assistance is available to technology entrepreneurs, innovators and manufacturers interested in starting up new ventures, commercializing new products and licensing new technologies. • Entrepreneur Centers of North Dakota provide access to over 20 financing programs and a network of organizations who provide counseling, training and assistance to start-up and existing entrepreneurs. Innovate ND is a comprehensive program of entrepreneur education and follow-up assistance. The program is open to all North Dakotans, former North Dakotans or other entrepreneurs, including students, who have an innovative idea, product or business service and want to grow their venture in North Dakota. • Marketplace for Entrepreneurs is a yearly event for where economic development organizations meet at Marketplace to provide training and technical assistance to North Dakota's entrepreneurs. A comprehensive directory for ideas, contacts, and other economic development information is found on the Marketplace web site.

12. Labor market information: Labor Market Information is provided to all youth receiving WIOA services. Information is mainly centered on career awareness, career pathways, career counseling or career exploration resources and occupational training available for targeted and in-demand industries and occupations. This information along with other services is available for youth as they transition and prepare for postsecondary education and training. The resource RUMReadyND is used in public education and the Workforce Centers for a consistent approach to life after high school.

13. Support Services: Support services may be provided to WIOA youth participants when they are necessary to enable individuals to participate in authorized WIOA activities. Support services include but are not limited to the following: • Linkages to community services. • Assistance with transportation. Assistance with housing. • Referrals to medical services. • Assistance with uniforms or other appropriate work and safety-related attire, work-related tools, eyeglasses which include protective eye wear.

14. Follow-up services for not less than 12 months after the completion of participation: All youth will be provided follow-up services for at least 12 months after participation ends. The intensity and duration of follow-up services is based on individual need. Given the appropriate release of information, assessment information and employment strategies is shared with core and required partners to encourage consistent and accurate information that will foster a continuum of services. Information and referral processes will be implemented to introduce youth to the wide array of applicable services available through the workforce system.

- (4) (4) Provide the language contained in the State policy for “requiring additional assistance to enter or complete an educational program, or to secure and hold employment” criterion for out-of-school youth specified in WIOA section 129(a)(1)(B)(iii)(VIII) and for “requiring additional assistance to complete an education program, or to secure and hold employment” criterion for in-school youth specified in WIOA section 129(a)(1)(C)(iv)(VII). If the state does not have a policy, describe how the state will ensure that local areas will have a policy for these criteria.

**NORTH DAKOTA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL
OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH ELIGIBILITY
POLICY 2-03-01 (3)**

PURPOSE:

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Section 129(a)(1)(B)(iii)(VIII) and Section 129(a)(1)(C)(iv)(VII) includes the Youth eligibility category of “requires additional assistance to complete an educational program, or to secure and hold employment”. Section 681.300 advises State Boards to define this criterion.

POLICY:

“A low-income individual who requires additional assistance to complete an educational program or to secure and hold employment” is defined as:

1. Having limited employment opportunities as defined as being unable to obtain employment after a four-week employment search, or
2. Residing in a community with limited youth-related employment opportunities defined as a community with 60 or less worksites based on LMI Area Profile data on July 1st of each year, or
3. Having one or more parents incarcerated, or
4. Having a record of being unable to hold employment demonstrated by being terminated from two or more jobs in the past six months

All WIOA eligibility must meet data validation requirements, including self-attestation, per WDC Data Validation Policy 2-15-01.

This policy is effective July 1, 2015.

REFERENCE:

(0) NDWDC minutes dated May 12, 2015

(1) NDWDC Administrative minutes dated September 25, 2018

(2) NDWDC Administrative minutes dated October 28, 2021

(3) NDWDC Administrative minutes dated November 16, 2023

REVIEW: November 16, 2026

NORTH DAKOTA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

IN-SCHOOL YOUTH ELIGIBILITY

POLICY 2-02-01 (3)

PURPOSE:

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Section 129(a)(1)(B)(iii)(VIII) and Section 129(a)(1)(C)(iv)(VII) includes the Youth eligibility category of “requires additional assistance to complete an educational program, or to secure and hold employment”. Section 681.300 advises State Boards to define this criterion.

POLICY:

“A low-income individual who requires additional assistance to complete an educational program or to secure and hold employment” is defined as:

1. Having limited employment opportunities as defined as being unable to obtain employment after a four-week employment search, or
2. Residing in a community with limited youth-related employment opportunities defined as a community with 60 or less worksites based on LMI Area Profile data on July 1st of each year, or
3. Having one or more parents incarcerated, or
4. Having a record of being unable to hold employment demonstrated by being terminated from two or more jobs in the past six months, or
5. Being identified as at risk of dropping out of school as documented by school professionals.

All WIOA eligibility must meet data validation requirements, including self-attestation, per WDC Data Validation Policy 2-15-01.

This policy is effective July 1, 2015.

REFERENCE:

(0) NDWDC minutes dated May 12, 2015

- (1) NDWDC Administrative minutes dated September 28, 2018
 - (2) NDWDC Administrative minutes dated October 28, 2021
 - (3) NDWDC Administrative minutes dated November 16, 2023
- REVIEW: November 16, 2026

(d) **Single-area State requirements.** In States where there is only one local workforce investment area, the governor serves as both the State and local chief elected official. In such cases, the State must submit any information required in the local plan (WIOA section 106(d)(2)). States with a single workforce area must include—

(1) Any comments from the public comment period that represent disagreement with the Plan. (WIOA section 108(d)(3).)

(2) The entity responsible for the disbursement of grant funds, as determined by the governor, if different from that for the State. (WIOA section 108(b)(15).)

The Governor identifies the State as the entity responsible for the disbursement of grant funds.

(3) A description of the type and availability of WIOA title I Youth activities and successful models, including for youth with disabilities. (WIOA section 108(b)(9).)

Job Service is the provider of WIOA title I Youth activities. Job Service provides all fourteen WIOA Youth elements and provides these activities statewide through the nine Job Service. Adult Education, Vocational Rehabilitation, and Job Service North Dakota coordinate wrap-around services as needed for a successful outcome of educational and employment goals for youth and adult participants. Participants experience successful completions with on-the-job training and work experience often resulting in unsubsidized employment. Job Service has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with the North Dakota Workforce Development Council.

(4) A description of the roles and resource contributions of the one-stop partners. Consistent with federal law, partner agencies agree to make available to participants and employers through the One-Stop System the career and training services that are applicable to their programs. (These services and sources of funding for these services are described in Attachment I).

The majority of the federal workforce development and training programs in North Dakota are administered through the One-Stop Career Center operator, either through designation by the Governor as the grant recipient or sub-recipient or through contracts. Many program services are delivered using a case management approach. Successful case management is a result of strong connections between staff and participant. Case management is defined as, “A client-centered approach in the delivery of services designed;

- 1.) Prepare and coordinate comprehensive employment plans, such as service strategies, for participants to ensure access to necessary workforce investment activities and supportive services using, where feasible, computer-based technologies; and
- 2.) Provide job and career counseling, including information on career pathways, during program participation and after job placement.

Case managers will maintain a close, long-term relationship with participants. The balance of the mandatory One-Stop System partners have in place various arrangements with the One-Stop Career Center operator for serving clients which could include co-locating staff at the One-Stop Career Centers, having staff visit the One-Stop Career Center on an itinerant or appointment schedule or making formal and informal referrals to clients of services available at the One-Stop Career Center. Each of these arrangements is intended to maximize the resources and services being made available to mutual clients.

The applicable career services may be made available by the provision of appropriate technology at the comprehensive One-Stop Career Center, by co-locating personnel at the Workforce Centers, cross training of front-line staff within partner agencies, and the recent co-location of VR in the Devils Lake and Grand Forks Workforce Centers. Although co-location is desired wherever economically and practically feasible, with technology and electronic linkages, an efficient customer service and referral system has been developed that supports customer choice and access to the programs and services of the One-Stop System partners.

All partners will provide referrals to and coordination of activities with other programs and services, including programs and services within the One-Stop System. The primary principle of the referral process is to provide integrated and seamless delivery of services to workers, job seekers, and employers. In order to facilitate such a system, Partners agree to:

- Familiarize themselves with the basic eligibility and participation requirements, as well as with the available services and benefits offered, for each of the Partners' programs represented by the one-stop delivery system,
- Develop materials summarizing their program requirements and making them available for Partners and customers,
- Share assessment results of an appropriate interview, evaluation or vocational assessment,
- Provide substantive referrals to customers who are eligible for supplemental and complementary services and benefits under partner programs,
- Regularly evaluate ways to improve the referral process, including the use of customer satisfaction surveys,
- Commit to robust and ongoing communication required for an effective referral process, and
- Commit to actively follow up on the results of referrals and assuring that Partner resources are being leveraged at an optimal level.

The coordination of services established between partners in the One- Stop System varies depending upon the customer service needs being addressed. Each Partner commits to cross-training of staff, as appropriate, and to providing other professional learning opportunities that promote continuous quality improvement. Partners will further promote system integration to the maximum extent feasible through:

- Effective communication, information sharing, and collaboration with the one-stop operator,
- Joint planning, policy development, and system design processes,

- Commitment to the joint mission, vision, goals, strategies, and performance measures,
- Leveraging of resources, including other public agency and non-profit organization services,
- Participation in a continuous improvement process designed to boost outcomes and increase customer satisfaction, and
- Participation in regularly scheduled Partner meetings to exchange information in support of the above and encourage program and staff integration.

Data Sharing Partners agree that the use of high-quality, integrated data is essential to inform decisions made by policymakers, employers, and job seekers. Additionally, it is vital to develop and maintain an integrated case management system, as appropriate, that informs customer service throughout customers' interaction with the integrated system and allows information collected from customers at intake to be captured once. Partners further agree that the collection, use, and disclosure of customers' personally identifiable information (PII) is subject to various requirements set forth in Federal and State privacy laws. All data, including customer PII, collected, used, and disclosed by Partners will be subject to the following:

- Customer PII will be properly secured in accordance with the Local WDB's policies and procedures regarding the safeguarding of PII.
- The collection, use, and disclosure of customer education records, and the PII contained therein, as defined under FERPA, shall comply with FERPA and applicable State privacy laws.
- All confidential data contained in UI wage records must be protected in accordance with the requirements set forth in 20 CFR part 603.
- All personal information contained in VR records must be protected in accordance with the requirements set forth in 34 CFR 361.38.

Customer data may be shared with other programs, for those programs' purposes, within the workforce system only after the informed written consent of the individual has been obtained, where required. Customer data will be kept confidential, consistent with Federal and State privacy laws and regulations. All data exchange activity will be conducted in machine readable format, such as HTML or PDF, for example, and in compliance with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended (29 U.S.C. § 794 (d)). All one-stop center and Partner staff will be trained in the protection, use, and disclosure requirements governing PII and any other confidential data for all applicable programs, including FERPA-protected education records, confidential information in UI records, and personal information in VR records Confidentiality All Parties expressly agree to abide by all applicable Federal, State, and local laws and c regulations regarding confidential information, including PII from educational records, such as but not limited to 20 CFR Part 603, 45 CFR Section 205.50, 20 USC 1232g and 34 CFR part 99, and 34 CFR 361.38, as well as any applicable State and local laws and regulations.

In addition, in carrying out their respective responsibilities, each Party shall respect and abide by the confidentiality policies and legal requirements of all the other Parties. Each Party will ensure that the collection and use of any information, systems, or records that contain PII and other

personal or confidential information will be limited to purposes that support the programs and activities described in this MOU and will comply with applicable law.

Each Party will ensure that access to software systems and files under its control that contain PII or other personal or confidential information will be limited to authorized staff members who are assigned responsibilities in support of the services and activities described herein and will comply with applicable law.

Each Party expressly agrees to take measures to ensure that no PII or other personal or confidential information is accessible by unauthorized individuals. To the extent that confidential, private, or otherwise protected information needs to be shared amongst the Parties for the Parties' performance of their obligations under this MOU, and to the extent that such sharing is permitted by applicable law, the appropriate data sharing agreements will be created and required confidentiality and ethical certifications will be signed by authorized individuals. With respect to confidential unemployment insurance information, any such data sharing must comply with all of the requirements in 20 CFR Part 603, including but not limited to requirements for an agreement consistent with 20 CFR 603.10, payments of costs, and permissible disclosures.

With respect to the use and disclosure of FERPA-protected customer education records and the PII contained therein, any such data sharing agreement must comply with all requirements set forth in 20 U.S.C. § 1232g and 34 CFR Part 99. With respect to the use and disclosure of personal information contained in VR records, any such data sharing agreement must comply with all the requirements set forth in 34 CFR 361.38.

Accessibility to the services provided by Job Service ND and all Partner agencies is essential to meeting the requirements and goals of North Dakota. Job seekers and businesses must be able to access all information relevant to them via visits to physical locations as well as in virtual spaces, regardless of gender, age, race, religion, national origin, disability, veteran's status, or on the basis of any other classification protected under state or federal law.

- Physical accessibility - One-stop centers will maintain a culture of inclusiveness and the physical characteristics of the facility, both indoor and outdoor, will meet the latest standards of accessible design. Services will be available in a convenient, high traffic, and accessible location, taking into account reasonable distance from public transportation and adequate parking (including parking clearly marked for individuals with disabilities). Indoor space will be designed in an "equal and meaningful" manner providing access for individuals with disabilities.
- Virtual accessibility —Job Service ND will ensure that job seekers and employers have access to the same information online as they do in a physical facility. Information must be clearly marked and compliant with Section 508 of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services code. Partners will comply with the Plain Writing Act of 2010; the law that requires that federal agencies use "clear Government communication that the public can understand and use" and all

information kept virtually will be updated regularly to ensure dissemination of correct information.

- Communication accessibility - Communications access, for purposes of this MOU, means that individuals with sensory disabilities can communicate (and be communicated with) on an equal footing with those who do not have such disabilities. All Partners agree that they will provide accommodations for individuals who have communication challenges, including but not limited to individuals who are deaf and hard of hearing, individuals with vision impairments, and individuals with speech-language impairments.
- Programmatic accessibility - All Partners agree that they will not discriminate in their employment practices or services on the basis of gender, gender identity and/or expression, age, race, religion, national origin, disability, veteran's status, or on the basis of any other classification protected under state or federal law.

Sharing and allocation of infrastructure costs among one-stop partners is incorporated within the One-Stop MOU. Infrastructure costs are defined as non-personnel costs that are necessary for the general operation of the Workforce Center. All parties recognize that infrastructure costs are applicable to all required parties, whether they are physically located in a JSND Workforce Center or not. Each partner's contributions to these costs may vary, as these contributions are based on the proportionate use and relative benefit received, consistent with the partner programs' authorizing laws and regulation under the Uniform Guidance.

Partner programs physically located in a One-Stop Center will have square footage usage determined in the lease which factors in the infrastructure cash contributions. Partner program not physically located in a One-Stop Center will have benefits determined by co-enrollments and available tallied customer orientation.

North Dakota Agency	Program Role	Resources
Job Service North Dakota	WIOA Title I Adult	Individualized, training, support, and follow-up services, employer services
	WIOA Title I Dislocated Worker	WIOA Title I Dislocated Worker
	WIOA Title I Youth	Youth services and employer services
	WIOA Title III Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Services	Basic career services, coordinated referrals to partner programs and employer services
	Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA)	Job search allowance, relocation assistance, transportation, and subsistence assistance while in training, training services, readjustment allowance and reemployment assistance
	Jobs for Veterans State Grants (JVSG)	Career readiness services for veterans and employer services
Motivation, Education & Training	National Farmworker Jobs Programs (NFJP)	Career and training services
Quentin Burdick Job Corps Center	Job Corps	Offers secondary education, post-secondary workforce training programs, and transition services to improve employment outcomes and self-sufficiency
Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara (MHA Nation), Standing Rock Nation, Spirit Lake Nation, Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa	Native American Programs	Employment and training activities to make individuals more competitive, and promote social and economic development
Department of Public Instruction	WIOA Title II Adult Education and Literacy (AEL)	Basic skill assessments, literacy and numeracy, high school equivalency preparation, family literacy, integrated education and training, English Language acquisition, integrated English literacy and civics
Department of Human Services (DHS)	WIOA Title IV Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)	Career planning, vocational counseling, situational assessments, work-based and training services, assistive technology, transitional services, benefits specialists, disability specific, and employment services
	SCSEP	Part-time work experiences and training opportunities to enhance self-sufficiency
	Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)	Provides temporary financial assistance and employment and training services to improve economic self-sufficiency
	Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)	Financial assistance for food to help individuals meet basic dietary needs while they regain financial independence
Career & Technical Education (CTE)	Career and Technical Education Program	Educational and training programs that provide opportunities to help students prepare for work
National Indian Council on Aging (NICOA)	SCSEP	Part-time work experiences and training opportunities to enhance self-sufficiency

(5) The competitive process used to award the subgrants and contracts for title I activities.

The WIOA Adult and Dislocated Worker Career and Training Services are provided by Job Service North Dakota through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Governor, the Workforce Development Council and Job Service North Dakota.

Job Service is the provider of WIOA Title I Youth activities. Job Service provides all fourteen WIOA Youth elements and provides these activities statewide through the nine Job Service Workforce Centers. Job Service has entered into a MOU with the North Dakota Workforce Development Council to provide these services.

<https://www.jobsnd.com/sites/www/files/documents/jsnd-documents/wdcmouonestopdeliverysystem.pdf>

(6) How training services outlined in section 134 will be provided through individual training accounts and/or through contracts, and how such training approaches will

be coordinated. Describe how the State will meet informed customer choice requirements regardless of training approach.

Classroom training services are provided through individual training accounts while On-the-Job (OJT) training is provided through a contract between the One Stop WIOA program provider and the employer. Career pathway information is provided by case managers during career exploration activities. Customer choice is supported by the provision of labor market information and through the occupations included on the North Dakota In-Demand Occupations list and Eligible Training Provider list (ETPL). Both are available on the Job Service website jobsnd.com. Consumer choice is enhanced through ETPL by comparison of program length and costs, listed credentials earned upon successful completion of programs, employment rates and median wages. On-the-job training occupations are not required to be on the In-Demand Occupation list or the ETPL. These training approaches may be coordinated through a Registered Apprenticeship arrangement or when the occupations of the OJT and Classroom training overlap. Sponsors for registered apprenticeship programs may take advantage of OJT and reimbursement for Related Training Instruction reimbursement.

- (7) How the State Board, in fulfilling Local Board functions, will coordinate title I activities with those activities under title II. Describe how the State Board will carry out the review of local applications submitted under title II consistent with WIOA secs. 107(d)(11)(A) and (B)(i) and WIOA sec. 232.

The upcoming (2023-2024) adult ed. competitive grant process will begin mid-February and is for a period of four program years. There will be a cut off for questions towards the end of February 2024 and the proposals will be due to the State by mid-late March. Learning from the last two competitions that North Dakota conducted, edits were made to the process. The three separate competitions that were run with three separated RFP documents, are condensed into one RFP document. Demonstrated effectiveness has been added as an eligibility requirement and has been stated in the process. The RFP also specifically lists the approved activities that go along with Section 225 funding.

Like the previous competition, the new competition will be coordinated via a DPI fiscal officer and applications will be first screened for eligibility and then transferred to a review team consisting of members of the Governors Workforce Development Council and WIOA partners. This committee will read and score the applications and share recommendations and review feedback with the State. The announcement of selected applicants will be in mid-March 2024 and funds ready for program year 2024 by July 1. Much of the process of the competition will mirror the first two competitions.

- (8) Copies of executed cooperative agreements which define how all local service providers will carry out the requirements for integration of and access to the entire set of services available in the one-stop delivery system, including cooperative agreements with entities administering Rehabilitation Act programs and services.

The Memorandum of Understanding for the One-Stop Delivery System for the State of North Dakota for the Period of July 1, 2023 - June 30, 2026, is the cooperative agreement which defines how all local service providers will carry out the requirements of and access to the entire set of services available in the one-stop delivery system. [Governance | Job Service North Dakota \(jobsnd.com\)](https://www.jobsnd.com)

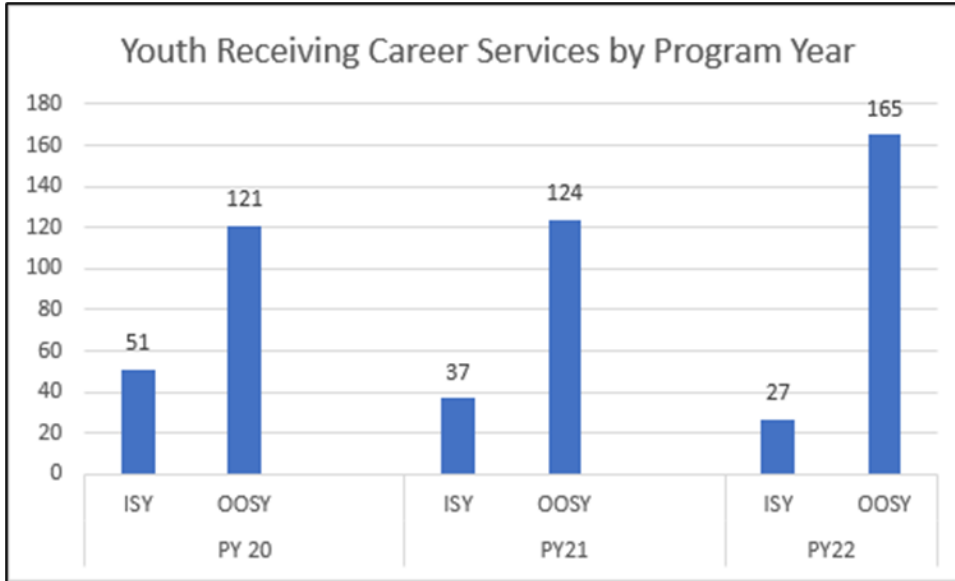
- (e) **Waiver Requests (optional)**. States wanting to request waivers as part of their title I-B Operational Plan must include a waiver plan that includes the following information for each waiver requested:
- (1) Identifies the statutory or regulatory requirements for which a waiver is requested and the goals that the State or local area, as appropriate, intends to achieve as a result of the waiver and how those goals relate to the Unified or Combined State Plan;

The state of North Dakota is requesting the following two waivers for the use with PY 22, PY 23, and PY 24 funds:

1. Section 129 (a)(4)(A) and 20 CFR 681.410, which requires not less than 75% of funds allotted to states under Section 127(b)(1)(C), reserved under Section 128(a), shall be used to provide youth workforce investment activities for Out-of-School youth. North Dakota is requesting a waiver to reduce the 75% funding requirement for out-of-school youth to 50%.

Strategies and Goals:

- Allow flexibility to provide services for In-School Youth to complete secondary education, enter post-secondary education, or enter the workforce.
- Allows ND to be responsive and agile to support all youth for access to opportunities for quality, life-long education connected to the future of work.
- Intended to benefit at-risk youth, regardless of school status, with an emphasis on youth at risk of dropping out of High School, GED, alternative, and post-secondary education programs.
- Address the talent pipeline shortages faced by many employers by ensuring the State's youth have the skills and preparation needed to enter the workforce and become contributing members of the local and State economy.
- Allow the State to expand opportunities for recruitment and enrollment of at-risk In-School Youth who could benefit from the services of the workforce system.
- Allow the State to serve Out-of-School Youth and In-School Youth in a way that best meets the needs of the local workforce areas according to populations, resources, and other labor market factors.



- Currently, North Dakota is expending PY 21 youth training funds. These waivers will ensure timely spending of WIOA Title 1 funds.
- The ND High School dropout rate of 5% or less is demonstrated by the following data. This statistic supports our request for each of the waiver requests noted above.

North Dakota

Dropout Rate

Overview

Demographics

Explanation

This graph shows the dropout rate for students in the state of North Dakota.

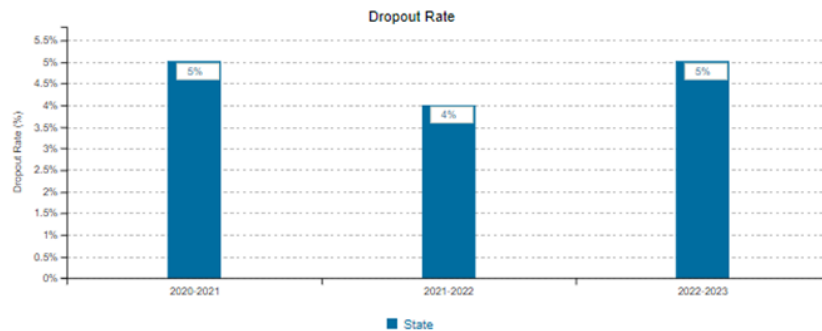
Dropouts are defined as students who:

- Were enrolled in school at some time during the school year, were not enrolled the following school year, but were expected to have returned to continue.
- Did not graduate from high school (graduates include students who received a GED without dropping out of school).
- Did not complete a state or district-approved educational program.
- Did not meet any of the following exclusionary conditions:
 - Transfer to another public school district, private school, or state- or district-approved educational program;
 - Temporary school-recognized absence due to suspension or illness;
 - Death

To protect student privacy, data for schools who have less than 10 students will not be displayed.

In some cases, when appropriate for the purpose of transparency, information involving 10 or more students may be displayed in ranges to avoid potential identification of students in small demographic populations. When utilized, ranges may be represented visually with diagonal lines or open circles in tightly shaded colors.

Please contact North Dakota's Department of Public Instruction with any questions and feedback via email to the following address: dpidashboard@nd.gov



2. 20 CFR 681.550, to allow WIOA individual training accounts for in-school youth.

Strategies and Goals:

- Increase post-secondary options to disadvantaged In-School Youth
- Increase WIOA youth program participants' access to innovative student retention strategies including dual college enrollment, occupational training, pre-apprenticeship and/or registered apprenticeship programs – During PY22, 448 In-School Youth were involved in some type of postsecondary or pre-apprenticeship training while enrolled in K12
- Ensure that at-risk In-School Youth do not fall into a regulatory gap that could prevent them from receiving the education and training necessary to secure meaningful work and economic self-sufficiency and supports WIOA's goals to expand program options, increase program flexibility and enhance customer choice
- Encouraging transition of youth to postsecondary education and supporting entry into career pathways, including those with low skill levels

- Increase the number of WIOA youth program participants that utilize an ITA to receive an industry recognized and/or some other postsecondary credential, thereby increasing both credential attainment and MSG performance accountability measures

(2) Describes the actions that the State or local area, as appropriate, has undertaken to remove State or local statutory or regulatory barriers;

North Dakota does not have statutory or regulatory barriers related to either of these waiver requests.

(3) Describes the goals of the waiver and the expected programmatic outcomes if the request is granted;

Strategies and Goals Waiver #1:

- Allow flexibility to provide services for In-School Youth to complete secondary education, enter post-secondary education, or enter the workforce.
- Allows ND to be responsive and agile to support all youth for access to opportunities for quality, life-long education connected to the future of work.
- Intended to benefit at-risk youth, regardless of school status, with an emphasis on youth at risk of dropping out of High School, GED, alternative, and post-secondary education programs.
- Address the talent pipeline shortages faced by many employers by ensuring the State's youth have the skills and preparation needed to enter the workforce and become contributing members of the local and State economy.
- Allow the State to expand opportunities for recruitment and enrollment of at-risk In-School Youth who could benefit from the services of the workforce system.
- Allow the State to serve Out-of-School Youth and In-School Youth in a way that best meets the needs of the local workforce areas according to populations, resources, and other labor market factors.

Strategies and Goals Waiver #2:

- Increase post-secondary options to disadvantaged In-School Youth
- Increase WIOA youth program participants' access to innovative student retention strategies including dual college enrollment, occupational training, pre-apprenticeship and/or registered apprenticeship programs – During PY22, 448 In-School Youth were involved in some type of postsecondary or pre-apprenticeship training while enrolled in K12
- Ensure that at-risk In-School Youth do not fall into a regulatory gap that could prevent them from receiving the education and training necessary to secure meaningful work and economic self-sufficiency and supports WIOA's goals to expand program options, increase program flexibility and enhance customer choice
- Encouraging transition of youth to postsecondary education and supporting entry into career pathways, including those with low skill levels

- Increase the number of WIOA youth program participants that utilize an ITA to receive an industry recognized and/or some other postsecondary credential, thereby increasing both credential attainment and MSG performance accountability measures

(4) Describes how the waiver will align with the Department’s policy priorities, such as:

(A) supporting employer engagement;

ND expect increases in Work Based Learning/Work Experience with local employers with the adjustment of 75% requirement for OOSY spending.

(B) connecting education and training strategies;

Occupational skills training enrollments will increase for In-School Youth. In-School Youth will have increased connections to education with the flexibility to use ITAs for postsecondary training.

(C) supporting work-based learning;

ND expects increased in Work Based Learning/Work Experience with local employer with the adjustment of 75% requirement for OOSY spending.

improving job and career results, and

The flexibility to use ITAs for In-School Youth will improve job and career opportunities due to the training this population will now receive

(D) other guidance issued by the Department.

(5) Describes the individuals affected by the waiver, including how the waiver will impact services for disadvantaged populations or individuals with multiple barriers to employment; and

The flexibility to apply additional Youth funds to the In-School Youth population, including disadvantaged and individuals with multiple barriers, will allow for additional services provided to this population. The expectation is to enroll more Youth in the In-School Youth category due to the increased funding available; from 25% to 50%. The flexibility to use ITAs for In-School Youth will result in fewer Youth using Adult funding, increasing the number of adults able to be served. Describes the processes used to:

(A) Monitor the progress in implementing the waiver;

Progress will be monitored quarterly through the PIRL, demonstrating increases in occupational skills training and resulting in increased credential attainment rates.

(B) Provide notice to any local board affected by the waiver;

The waiver requests were discussed with the Workforce Development Council during the WIOA State Plan development and review period. Both waivers were supported.

(C) Provide any local board affected by the waiver an opportunity to comment on the request;

The waiver requests were discussed with the Workforce Development Council during the WIOA State Plan development and review period. Both waivers were supported.

(D) Ensure meaningful public comment, including comment by business and organized labor, on the waiver.

Public comment will occur during the upcoming WIOA State Plan comment period.

(E) Collect and report information about waiver outcomes in the State's WIOA Annual Report.

Information related to the waiver outcomes will be reported in future WIOA Annual Reports.

(6) The most recent data available regarding the results and outcomes observed through implementation of the existing waiver, in cases where the State seeks renewal of a previously approved waiver.

North Dakota is not requesting a renewal of a waiver.

TITLE I-B ASSURANCES

The State Plan must include assurances that:	
1.	The State has implemented a policy to ensure Adult program funds provide a priority in the delivery of training services and individualized career services to individuals who are low income, public assistance recipients and basic skills deficient;
2.	The State has implemented a policy to ensure local areas have a process in place for referring veterans with significant barriers to employment to career services provided by the JVSG program's Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) specialist;
3.	The State has established a written policy and procedure that set forth criteria to be used by chief elected officials for the appointment of local workforce investment board members;
4.	The State established written policy and procedures to ensure local workforce investment boards are certified by the governor every two years in accordance with WIOA section 107(c)(2);
5.	Where an alternative entity takes the place of a State Board, the State has written policy and procedures to ensure the alternative entity meets the definition under WIOA section 101(e) and the legal requirements for membership;
6.	The State established a written policy and procedure for how the individuals and entities represented on the State Workforce Development Board help to determine the methods and factors of distribution, and how the State consults with chief elected officials in local areas throughout the State in determining the distributions;
7.	The State will not use funds received under WIOA Title I to assist, promote, or deter union organizing in accordance with WIOA section 181(b)(7);
8.	The State distributes adult and youth funds received under WIOA equitably throughout the State, and no local area suffers significant shifts in funding from year-to-year during the period covered by this plan;

9.	If a State Workforce Development Board, department, or agency administers State laws for vocational rehabilitation of persons with disabilities, that board, department, or agency cooperates with the agency that administers Wagner-Peyser services, Adult and Dislocated Worker programs and Youth Programs under Title I;
10.	The State agrees to report on the impact and outcomes of its approved waivers in its WIOA Annual Report.
11.	The State has taken appropriate action to secure compliance with the Uniform Guidance at 2 CFR 200 and 2 CFR 2900, including that the State will annually monitor local areas to ensure compliance and otherwise take appropriate action to secure compliance with the Uniform Guidance under section WIOA 184(a)(3);

WAGNER-PEYSER ACT PROGRAM (Employment Service)

(a) Employment Service Staff.

- (1) Describe how the State will staff the provision of labor exchange services under the Wagner-Peyser Act, such as through State employees, including but not limited to state merit staff employees, staff of a subrecipient, or some combination thereof.

The state will continue to utilize state merit staff employees.

- (2) Describe how the State will utilize professional development activities for Employment Service staff to ensure staff is able to provide high quality services to both jobseekers and employers.

Professional development is conducted in a variety of ways. The Job Service Labor Market Information Center presents an LMI workshop to Job Service Workforce Center employees on an annual basis. This includes a review of LMI publications and resources available online. Biennial training is provided to Business Services and WIOA program specific staff. This type of training is held in an in-person format covering such topics as Registered Apprenticeship, hosting job fairs, business consultation, VOS updates, etc. Additionally biennial training is provided to WIOA and WP staff covering such topics as case management, resume building, interview skills, services provided to WIOA participants, support services, etc.

On December 12th, 2023, Job Service North Dakota held a LMI webinar for staff, employers, Economic Development regions, Chambers, and anyone else who wanted to learn more about all the great LMI publications we produce.

Job Service employees receive information on pertinent workforce topics brought forward through Job Service and/or community partners such as Community Colleges, Society of Human Resource Management, Economic Development, Department of Commerce and Chamber of Commerce organizations, and industry specific employer boards. Most recently all Workforce Center employees heard from the North Dakota Human Trafficking Task Force agency on what is happening in ND regarding employment trafficking.

Career and Technical Education invites employment service staff to a variety of workshops scheduled each year. Workshops include Improved Career Decision Making, Career Planning, RUReady ND Training, and other career educational topics. Labor Exchange system training is held to ensure staff working with job seekers and employers are always informed of any changes to the online services.

The annual Society for Human Resource Management Workforce Summit provides the opportunity to hear national speakers and network with business representatives and other workforce professionals. Additionally, the annual Governor's Main Street Summit provides staff a chance to learn about workforce development, rural area development, local economies, updates from the ND Department of Commerce, and hearing from national experts on various workforce subjects.

Finally, all Job Service staff are highly encouraged to take Leadership Everywhere for Everyone Foundation series courses and the Leadership Everywhere for Managers courses that are provided free of charge from the state's Human Resource Management Section. These classes are part of Governor Burgum's five cultural aspirations of "Work as One, Citizen Focused, Growth Mindset, Make a Difference, and Leadership Everywhere." These classes change yearly to build upon what has been presented in the past.

- (3) Describe strategies developed to support training and awareness across core programs and the Unemployment Insurance (UI) program and the training provided for Employment Service and WIOA staff on identification of UI eligibility issues and referral to UI staff for adjudication.

Job Service administers the UI, Wagner- Peyser and WIOA programs. During peak seasonal increases in UI claims filing, UI and Workforce Center Managers and staff increase their cooperation to expedite the claims taking process. Job Service staff receive annual training on UI ICE and other procedures. This ensures staff efficiently assist claimants with their UI claim filing. Job Service Workforce Center staff connect with UI staff to resolve certain adjudication issues as identified in the established roles and responsibilities. In January of 2017, North Dakota began receiving Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) funds. In January of 2019, Job Service decided to not reapply for the RESEA grant due to a couple of reasons and has kept this practice for the last five years. North Dakota did not see a reduction in the average weekly duration and we felt the RESEA program put additional stress on rural unemployment claimants, who depending on their physical locations, had to drive 80-90 miles one-way to meet the mandatory in-person meeting obligation of the program.

In January of 2019, Job Service replaced RESEA with our state driven Reemployment Services Program (RSP) that meets the needs of our claimants. All UI claimants who are not job attached and reside in the county where one of the nine Workforce Centers are located, are required to participate in the RSP program. However, the program is not as structured as RESEA, yet meets the individual needs of the claimant. One example of meeting their needs is not requiring an in-person meeting for the claimant if the meeting can be done over the phone, computer (TEAMS, video, etc.). Another difference in the program is there is no requirement of a second meeting. If the RESEP case manager and the claimant feel they are doing well in their job-search, have met all the requirements of the UI program, have a solid resume, comfortable in their interview skills, etc., the claimant is released from the RESEP program. Items discussed with the RESEP claimant are an orientation to Job Service, employment assessment, unemployment eligibility review, enrollment in Wagner Peyser, job search planning, Labor Market Information, and WIOA. This program is being funded through the Wagner Peyser grant.

- (b) **Explain how the State will provide information and meaningful assistance to individuals requesting assistance in filing a claim for unemployment compensation through one-stop centers, as required by WIOA as a career service.**

Job Service North Dakota Workforce Center staff are knowledgeable in assisting individuals with UI claims filing. Our Workforce Center staff have a long history of aiding UI claimants. North Dakota has seasonal increase in UI activity due to the construction industry.

Workforce Centers provide assistance following roles and responsibilities guidance provided by State UI management. In North Dakota, all UI claims are filed online. The Workforce Center staff are well prepared to provide meaningful UI claims filing assistance and manage large influxes of individuals during peak claims taking periods.

The Workforce Center staff recommend on-site development tools to increase interview, soft or computer skills, short term industry training or degree programs through WIOA services and other core and community partner referrals. Career services including skill assessments, career guidance utilizing labor market information, job the search assistance and access to WIOA assistance are available to all job seekers. Skill assessment completed by Workforce Center staff enables clear direction to job openings or referrals to training programs. Knowing the skills job seekers have helps match them to skills desired in employer's job openings. When skill gaps are identified, job seeker training needs can be quickly addressed.

Workforce Center staff aid claimants in navigating the UI ICE system in the Job Service Workforce Center resource rooms on the available computers. Job Service Workforce Center staff assist in setting up a State of North Dakota Login and ID, this includes creating an email address if needed. UI ICE Reference Guides and additional UI information are made available for claimants in resource rooms. UI claimants have a series of "How To" instructional videos to assist with the UI claims filing process, and weekly certification, and ID.Me identification procedures. The videos are posted on the Job Service webpage [Unemployment Insurance "How To" Videos | Job Service North Dakota \(jobsnd.com\)](https://jobsnd.com). A few of the topics include: Creating a State of ND Login, ID.Me Verification Process, UI ICE Overview: How to File for Unemployment Insurance in North Dakota, Filing a Claim Online Using the UI ICE Website, I Filed My Claim, Now What Do I Do?, Filing A Weekly Certification Using the UI ICE Website, Helpful Tips for Job Attached Claimants, and interviewing skills.

(c) Describe the State's strategy for providing reemployment assistance to UI claimants and other unemployed individuals.

North Dakota UI claimants are required to have a resume on file with jobsnd.com. When a UI claimant files a claim online, information is interfaced to jobsnd.com and creates a partial registration. Jobsnd.com uses the partial registration data to automatically perform a job search and informs the UI claimant of suitable job openings available for application.

Employment Service staff assist with reemployment opportunities. In January of 2017, North Dakota began receiving Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) funds. However, and as described in the previous paragraph, Job Service North Dakota replaced RESEA in January 2019 with our state driven Reemployment Services Program (RSP) that truly meets the needs of our claimants. All UI claimants who are not job attached and reside in the county where one of the nine Workforce Centers are located, are required to participate in the RSP program. However, the program is not as structured as RESEA but meets the individual needs of the claimant. In the other 44 counties of the state where there is no Workforce Center located, the non-job attached claimants are required to do three job searches each week and are required to have a resume filed in our system for area employers to use to meet their hiring needs.

Additionally, we have tools on our website to assist claimants not living near a Workforce Center that will assist them in finding meaningful employment. These tools are short instructional videos on how to build a resume, conduct an interview, and to file an unemployment claim. The Workforce Center employees stand ready to assist any claimant with their employment needs. We use electronic means such as Microsoft TEAMS to conduct practice interviews or assist in any other means possible. We must also point out that ND leads the nation in rural connectivity and this assists in delivering these type of services.

Job seekers, including UI claimants, visiting a Job Service Workforce Center receive skill assessment, career counseling, and labor market information. Job Service Workforce Center staff recommend on—site development tools to increase interview, soft or computer skills, short term industry training or degree programs through WIOA services and other core and community partner referrals. Career services including skill assessments, career guidance utilizing labor market information, job search assistance and access to WIOA assistance are available to all job seekers. Skill assessment completed by Job Service Workforce Center staff enables clear direction to job openings or referrals to training programs. Knowing the skills job seekers have helps match them to skills desired in employer’s job openings. When skill gaps are identified, job seeker training needs can be quickly addressed. Job Service has invested in jobsnd.com to allow for self—service that is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, from anywhere Internet access is available. Jobsnd.com links to the online labor exchange system for individual job search activity and employers to post job listings. Job seekers can use jobsnd.com to create quality resumes and conduct automated job searches. Additionally, job seekers can access education and training programs available and view labor market information such as in demand occupations, current wages and training required. Job seekers can also explore career options, find direction to veteran services, and access community resources.

Workforce Centers provide outreach, one or two times each month, in outlying rural areas, depending on need. Each of the nine workforce centers schedule staff to be available at local libraries, county seats, and economic development corporations in the rural areas of the workforce center regions. Staff are available to assist jobseekers and UI claimants who may not be able to easily travel to the workforce center, have limited internet connectivity, or may have trouble navigating the digital world.

(d) Describe how the State will use Wagner-Peyser Act funds to support UI claimants, and the communication between the Employment Service and UI, as appropriate including the following:

- (1) Coordination of and provision of labor exchange services for UI claimants as required by the Wagner-Peyser Act;

UI claimants, visiting a Job Service Workforce Center receive skill assessment, career counseling, and labor market information. Workforce Center staff recommend on-site development tools to increase interview (Big Interview software), soft or computer skills, resume development, short term industry training or degree programs through WIOA services and other core and community partner referrals. Job Service administers the UI, Wagner- Peyser and WIOA programs. Job Service Workforce Center staff provide a variety of labor exchange services to UI claimants. The most common service is to assist a UI claimant with the requirement to register on the Job Service ND Virtual One-Stop (VOS). VOS is the electronic labor exchange system. Staff assist UI claimants with the online registration and provide assistance creating a

resume. VOS has a virtual recruiter feature that will notify UI claimants of new job openings that meet their search criteria.

- (2) Registration of UI claimants with the State's employment service if required by State law;

North Dakota's UI claimants who are not classified as "not returning to their employer" are required to register and have a resume on file with jobsnd.com. When a UI claimant files a claim online, information is interfaced to jobsnd.com and creates a partial registration. Jobsnd.com uses the partial registration data to automatically perform a job search and informs the UI claimant of suitable job openings available for application.

- (3) Administration of the work test for the State unemployment compensation system, including making eligibility assessments (for referral to UI adjudication, if needed), and providing job finding and placement services for UI claimants; and

North Dakota UI claimants complete their reemployment activities online on UI ICE. One feature of the UI ICE system is a provided list of five job openings that matches the UI claimants' last work occupation through an interface with the state job bank. A job list is provided each time a UI claimant logs into the UI ICE system to complete their reemployment activities. The reemployment activities include information on effective job search strategies, creating cover letters and resumes, an interviewing skills video and information on coping with job loss. Job Service Workforce Center staff provide career services as outlined in WIOA to UI claimants and compliment the reemployment activities provided online. To answer the question on eligibility assessment, the RSP case manager discusses the overall responsibilities with the UI claimant. If there seems to be an issue with the claim, the claimant is referred to the Unemployment Insurance claim center and/or supervisors. All the Workforce Center managers can and do discuss issues with the UI Call Center supervisors if there is some type of adjudication issue that may be needed on an individual claim.

- (4) Provision of referrals to and application assistance for training and education programs and resources.

UI claimants receive skill assessments, career guidance utilizing labor market information, job search assistance and access to WIOA assistance. Skill assessment completed by Job Service Workforce Center staff enables clear direction to job openings or referrals to training programs. Knowing the skills job seekers have helps match them to skills desired in employer's job openings. When skill gaps are identified, job seeker training needs can be quickly addressed.

WIOA case managers will provide information to training and education programs via the ETPL.

- (e) **Agricultural Outreach Plan (AOP)**. Each State agency must develop an AOP every four years as part of the Unified or Combined State Plan required under sections 102 or 103 of WIOA. The AOP must include an assessment of need.

- (1) Assessment of Need. Provide an assessment of the unique needs of farmworkers in the area based on past and projected agricultural and farmworker activity in the State. Such needs may include but are not limited to: employment, training, and housing.

Agriculture is a vital part of the economy in North Dakota (ND). The need for farmwork labor in the State increases every year and the H2A program has an enormous impact on the State. Several employers also require workers across multiple States, which makes finding and retaining American workforce a continued struggle. H2A bridges the gap in these occupations as well as the thousands of additional farm labor openings the State has each year.

Most of the agricultural activity continues to be from small family farm producers. However, ND also has many larger agricultural employers needing more than 1-2 dozen foreign labor workers each year. As such, the need for clean, safe, and habitable housing is of utmost importance to the State and the farmworkers inhabiting these dwellings.

Housing inspections are conducted by the 9 workforce centers across ND, ensuring compliance with both ETA and OSHA guidelines. Worker rights information is passed along to the employers and farmworkers (if present) at the time of inspection. Information is also given to farmworkers about the services the ND SWA provides at the workforce center nearest to them. This includes information on training and employment opportunities.

The ND SWA will continue efforts to create and strengthen relationships with farmworkers, employers, other State agencies, non-profit and private organizations to ensure compliance and continued development of the outreach plan. These efforts will provide the basis for continued outreach to farmworkers and assess and address their employment, training, and housing needs.

- (2) Provide an assessment of the agricultural activity in the State: 1) identify the top five labor-intensive crops, the months of heavy activity, and the geographic area of prime activity; 2) Summarize the agricultural employers' needs in the State (i.e. are they predominantly hiring local or foreign workers, are they expressing that there is a scarcity in the agricultural workforce); and 3) Identify any economic, natural, or other factors that are affecting agriculture in the State or any projected factors that will affect agriculture in the State.

According to the 2022 State Agriculture Overview by the National Agriculture Statistics Service (NASS) of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) showed North Dakota's 25,900 farm and ranch operations occupy 39.2 million acres of land in North Dakota.

North Dakota is a very diverse state in the number of commodities produced. In 2017, North Dakota led the nation in the production of all dry edible beans, navy beans, pinto beans, canola, flaxseed, honey, dry edible peas, Durum wheat, and spring wheat. North Dakota was the No.2 producer of lentils, black beans, great northern beans, all wheat, and sunflowers. North Dakota was in the top five for the production of several other crops as well.

North Dakota sold almost \$8.2 billion worth of agricultural products in 2017 (the most recent Agricultural Census). Of these sales, \$6.7 billion – or just over 81 percent of the total agricultural sales – came from crops. Soybeans had the largest amount of sales at \$2.1 billion, which accounted for one-fourth of all agricultural sales. North Dakota is the main producer of flaxseed and canola in the United States; the 2017 census showed that 87 percent of the country’s flaxseed was grown in the state and 81 percent of the canola.

In the Red River Valley, sugar beets and potatoes are widely grown. In 2017, North Dakota was the third largest producer of sugar beets in the country and the fourth largest producer of potatoes. Also, producers in the state are proud of the fact that North Dakota is the largest honey producing state in the nation. Approximately, 33.7 million pounds of honey was collected in North Dakota in 2017, or 23 percent of the total collected in the United States.

According to the North Dakota Department of Agriculture, there are about 1.8 million beef cattle and calves in North Dakota. That’s more than two cattle for every person in the state. Beef cattle are raised in every North Dakota county. Cattle production has traditionally ranked second only to wheat farming as the most important sector in North Dakota’s agriculture economy. Based on USDA data, North Dakota consistently ranks 15 in annual cattle and calf livestock inventory. Based on past and projected agricultural activity in North Dakota, we do not anticipate the above acreage or cattle inventories to change significantly in this plan modification period. Based on agricultural employer activity with Job Service North Dakota for federal fiscal year 2023, agricultural employers placed 1107 seasonal job orders requesting 3582 seasonal agricultural workers (3572 H2A openings and 10 non-H2A). The top five labor-intensive crops in North Dakota include wheat, corn, soybeans, barley and sunflowers. In order of need, the majority of job orders recruit for farm equipment operators, beekeepers, animal ranch workers, general farm workers and truck drivers.

Statewide labor shortages in most industries, including agriculture, have caused agriculture employers to use the H2A program to meet labor needs. This is reflected in the high proportion of H2A openings in 2023. Job Service North Dakota remains dedicated to working with agricultural employers to locate qualified farm laborers and equipment operators to assist with the spring to fall farming seasons.

Because of the North Dakota short growing season, the number of seasonal farmworkers in November through February is relatively small. In March, the numbers increase as farmers prepare to begin planting in April. In April through October, numbers reach their highest levels as crops are planted, sprayed, cultivated, harvested, and transported to storage or market. This cycle repeats every year, giving a wide variance in numbers needed by North Dakota farmers at any given point in time.

(3) Provide an assessment of the unique needs of farmworkers by summarizing

Migrant and Seasonal Farm Worker (MSFW) characteristics (including if they are predominantly from certain countries, what language(s) they speak, the approximate number of MSFWs in the State during peak season and during low season, and whether they tend to be migrant, seasonal, or year-round farmworkers). This information must take into account data supplied by WIOA Section 167 National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP) grantees, other MSFW organizations, employer organizations, and State and/or Federal agency data sources such as the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) Employment and Training Administration.

The number of migrant farm workers traveling to and within North Dakota continues to decrease. This can be attributed to farmers' use of technology and the use of modern farming practices. The transient nature of seasonal farm workers and established working relationships with agricultural employers in North Dakota makes it difficult to develop accurate demographic data and consistent estimates of MSFW's in the state.

H2A Foreign Labor Certification Agents reported the majority of the H2A workers are from the following countries: South Africa, Ukraine, Mexico, Honduras, Philippines, Bulgaria, Australia, Moldova, France, Ireland, England, Brazil, Peru, Guatemala, Dominican Republic, Haiti, Germany. The majority of H2A workers speak English, and those who do not speak English, speak Spanish.

Job Service North Dakota had 95 new MSFW in 2023. Many of the positions are given to returning workers not registered with Job Service North Dakota or to foreign workers under the H2A program. WIOA Section 167 grantee (Motivation, Education and Training Inc. (MET) reports Hispanic groups and families from southern states and North Dakota Hispanic families, who have made North Dakota their permanent home, are the majority of non-H2A MSFWs.

(4) Outreach Activities. The local offices outreach activities must be designed to meet the needs of MSFWs in the State and to locate and contact MSFWs who are not being reached through normal intake activities. Describe the State agency's proposed strategies for:

(1) Contacting farmworkers who are not being reached by the normal intake activities conducted by the employment service offices.

MSFW Outreach Staff will focus outreach efforts to known establishments where MSFW's frequent. Outreach Staff will make efforts to have a presence at events where there is a chance even a small number of MSFW's will attend. Examples include, but are not limited to, childcare orientations, parent/teacher conferences, County Social Services offices/events, in-field trainings, field visits or community gatherings. A variety of virtual efforts for outreach are also practiced.

(2) Providing technical assistance to outreach staff. Technical assistance must include trainings, conferences, additional resources, and increased collaboration with other organizations on topics such as one-stop center services (i.e. availability of referrals to training, supportive services, and career services, as well as specific employment opportunities), the

Employment Service and Employment-Related Law Complaint System (“Complaint System” described at 20 CFR 658 Subpart E), information on the other organizations serving MSFWs in the area, and a basic summary of farmworker rights, including their rights with respect to the terms and conditions of employment. (3) Increasing outreach staff training and awareness across core programs including the Unemployment Insurance (UI) program and the training on identification of UI eligibility issues.

To support the Job Service North Dakota Workforce Centers MSFW Outreach Workers, the State Workforce Agency (SWA) and State Monitor Advocate (SMA) provides the MSFW Outreach Workers with a variety of resources and assistance throughout the year: 1.) Monthly, Wagner-Peyser registration reports are distributed to Workforce Centers for review to determine if newly registered MSFW’s eligible for additional assistance; 2.) The State Monitor Advocate visits each Job Service North Dakota Workforce Center at least annually to meet with the MSFW Outreach Workers, discuss local trends, and to determine if MSFW Outreach Staff have necessary tools and resources; 3.) Workforce Center staff (including MSFW Staff) are provided training on the Complaint System; 4.) To meet equity indicators, the SMA reviews monthly and quarterly MSFW activity reports and based on these reports provides guidance as necessary to the Job Service North Dakota Workforce Centers; 5.) The SMA attends State Monitor Advocate National Training conferences. After each conference, the SMA advises the state’s MSFW Outreach Workers on any regulation changes or new requirements; 6.) Any new directives or MSFW guidance disseminated by the National Office are promptly forwarded to MSFW Outreach Workers. 7.) North Dakota has the MSFW complaint and the farmworkers rights poster posted at each Workforce Center and translated into Spanish. A complaint system is implemented and is followed by training for the complaint system contacts within each workforce center. The complaint system incorporates ETA forms and follows the law as described in 20 CFR 648 subpart E. The SMA partners with Southern Minnesota Regional Legal Services to provide training to refresh the knowledge of seasoned outreach workers and to fully inform new staff of farm worker legal rights.

(4) Providing outreach staff professional development activities to ensure they are able to provide high quality services to both jobseekers and employers. Because North Dakota MSFW Outreach Workers also perform Wagner-Peyser duties, staff assigned as outreach workers receive training and professional development in the provision of high-quality services to job seekers and employers through in-person and virtual Wagner-Peyser training sessions. In addition, the State Monitor Advocate advises the state’s MSFW Outreach Workers on regulation changes and/or new requirements. The State Monitor advocate will disseminate training materials to the outreach workers, including training on sexual harassment and human trafficking. ND partners with Southern Minnesota Regional Legal Services (SMRLS) to assist foreign workers in understanding their rights. SMRLS provides agricultural workers services in the following areas:

- Employment ▪ Wage theft (nonpayment of wages, overtime violations, unlawful deductions, contract violations, etc.) ▪ Workplace health and safety concerns (workplace injuries, lack of access to bathrooms/drinking water, pesticide exposure, break violations, etc.) ▪ Unlawful discrimination or retaliation (discriminatory termination, sexual harassment, retaliation for using workers' compensation system or complaining about working conditions, etc.) ▪ Issues related to recruitment (false promises, unlicensed farm labor contractors, etc.)

ND works closely with SMRLS on data requests pertaining to farmworker complaints or suspected violations. ND also attends meeting and presentations with SMARLS, when possible, including the Agricultural Worker Project's Annual Networking Meeting. These meetings include discussion of services and resources available to Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers as well as to other low-income individuals.

- (5) Coordinating outreach efforts with NFJP grantees as well as with public and private community service agencies and MSFW groups.

Motivation, Education and Training Inc. (MET), operator of the National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP) in eastern North Dakota, and Job Service North Dakota maintain an on-going partnership to provide MSFW's additional opportunities for employment and training. MET maintains offices in the Red River Valley cities of Grafton, Fargo, and Wahpeton, North Dakota. MET employees are co-located in the JSND Fargo Workforce Center. This collaboration continues to grow and to provide services to MSFW's in the respective areas. Tying the various service agencies together promotes a "one-stop" concept. MSFW Outreach Workers from the Red River Valley offices attend networking meetings sponsored by farm worker advocacy groups. Agencies in attendance have included: 1.) Motivation, Education and Training Inc. (MET); 2.) The Agricultural Worker Project of Southern Minnesota Legal Services; 3.) County Social Service agencies; 4.) Migrant Health Services; 5.) Migrant and Seasonal Head Start agencies; 6.) Emergency food pantries; and 7.) Salvation Army organizations. At these networking meetings, participating members provide information about the services they offer to MSFW's and their families and the efforts they make in locating MSFW's in order to promote their services.

- (5) Services provided to farmworkers and agricultural employers through the one-stop delivery system. Describe the State agency's proposed strategies for:

- (A) Providing the full range of employment and training services to the agricultural community, both farmworkers and agricultural employers, through the one-stop delivery system. This includes:
 - (i) How career and training services required under WIOA Title I will be provided to MSFWs through the one-stop centers; and
 - (ii) How the State serves agricultural employers and how it intends to improve such services.

North Dakota is not designated as a "Significant State" and does not have "Significant Bilingual" offices. However, all nine Job Service North Dakota Workforce Centers have designated Business Services Representatives and Complaint System Representatives. For the January 1, 2026 period, there will be two designated MSFW Outreach Workers to service the State; one in the East and

one in the West. The Grand Forks Workforce Center has a Spanish speaking staff member who assists with interpretation and all Workforce Centers have access to telephone interpreting services. Job Service North Dakota Workforce Centers, in coordination with other strategic partners, provide MSFW's and Limited English Proficient individuals with the full range of employment and training services including, but not limited to the following:

- Assistance with the Wagner-Peyser registration process in order to receive the full array of services
- Resume assistance
- Online job search assistance
- Provision of information on services available in the Job Service North Dakota AJCs and contact information for partner agencies
- Provision of basic information on labor rights, protections and responsibilities with respect to terms and conditions of employment
- Assistance in reviewing job orders
- Assessment and referral to agriculture and non-agricultural jobs, training, and support services
- Provision of assessments, counseling, and other job development services
- Assistance with submission of complaints to the State Monitor Advocate
- Refer any apparent violations to Federal agencies
- Referrals to local community service organizations
- Assistance to Limited English Proficient individuals encountering language barriers
- Assistance with career guidance and other job development contact strategies
- Provide follow-up services as necessary and appropriate.

Special emphasis is placed on the identification of MSFW customers. Job Service North Dakota recognizes the importance of the agricultural industry to North Dakota and the large economic contribution made to the state's economy. Therefore, Job Service North Dakota ensures agricultural employers receive all the services provided to non-agricultural employers (see WIOA/WP Plan for services to employers).

Job Service North Dakota provides agricultural employers the full range of employer services and some specialized services including, but not limited to the following:

- Assistance with the online employer registration process in order to access the full array of employer services provided by Job Service North Dakota
 - Assistance with the placement of job orders
 - Access to online labor market information
 - Access to online searches for qualified candidates registered with Job Service North Dakota
 - Assistance with assessing labor needs
 - Opportunities to participate in job/career fairs
 - Recruitment activities to find and refer qualified MSFW's and other domestic candidates to fill job order positions
 - Assistance with the H2A temporary labor certification program for agricultural employers experiencing a shortage of workers
 - Provision of housing inspections
 - Provision of information for compliance with labor laws and regulations
 - Assistance with information on employment and training programs, tax incentives (WOTC), and bonding services;
- In addition, Job Service North Dakota staff identifies employers who employ MSFW's and promote the recruitment and hiring of domestic workers when they are available. Job Orders created for the H2A program are placed online in accordance with USDOL guidelines to attract and refer U.S. workers. If a job seeker is interested and meets the minimum qualifications for the opening, the Job Service ND staff member will create a referral in the system which will be sent to both the employer and USDOL.

When U.S. workers are not available, agricultural employers may utilize the H2A Labor Certification Program administered by Job Service North Dakota. The H2A program is a resource for agricultural employers to use when an employer anticipates sufficiently qualified workers will not be found in the local labor market. Job Service North Dakota's priority for all agricultural job orders is the recruitment and hiring of qualified and available U.S. workers. As North Dakota is a major agricultural state, Job Service North Dakota Workforce Centers are dedicated to the provision, and continual improvement of services provided to MSFW's and employers.

(B) Marketing the Complaint System to farmworkers and other farmworker advocacy groups.

Job Service North Dakota has nine Workforce Centers across the state. Each has a Complaint System Representative. Additionally, for the January 1, 2026 period, there will be two designated MSFW Outreach Workers to service the State; one in the East and one in the West. The Complaint System Representatives assists MSFW's to file complaints (both ES and non-ES related), file apparent violations, coordinates with 167 grantees, other MSFW services providers, and forwards any apparent violations or complaints to the State Monitor Advocate. Marketing of the Employment Service Complaint System is the responsibility of the MSFW Outreach Workers by in-person and virtual meetings with MSFW's.

(C) Marketing the Agricultural Recruitment System for U.S. Workers (ARS) to agricultural employers and how it intends to improve such publicity.

The purpose of the ARS is to meet the labor needs of agricultural employers, provide job opportunities to farm workers and protect the domestic agricultural workforce. The ARS ensures proper disclosure of the terms and conditions of employment to seasonal workers who are recruited from outside the local commuting area. Job Service North Dakota, Wagner-Peyser staff, and MSFW Outreach Workers will continue efforts to strengthen its working relationships with MSFW's and employers so each better understands how the Labor Exchange System and outreach services can be of assistance. Efforts will continue to include promoting the use of the Agricultural Recruitment System (ARS) to employers and the full range of Wagner-Peyser Labor Exchange services delivered by Job Service North Dakota.

(6) Other Requirements.

(A) *Collaboration.* Describe any collaborative agreements the State Workforce Agency (SWA) has with other MSFW service providers including NFJP grantees and other service providers. Describe how the SWA intends to build upon/increase collaboration with existing partners and establish new partners over the next four years (including any approximate timelines for establishing agreements or building upon existing agreements).

Motivation, Education and Training Inc. (MET) operates the National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP) in eastern North Dakota. Partnership with MET has proven to be key to meeting MSFW needs and providing outreach. There is a current Memorandum of Understanding in place with MET and continuation of this partnership is vital and of high priority. Ongoing efforts will be made to strengthen relations with Southern Minnesota Regional Legal Services' Agricultural Worker Project and other MSFW agencies.

(B) *Review and Public Comment.* In developing the AOP, the SWA must solicit information and suggestions from NFJP grantees, other appropriate MSFW groups, public agencies, agricultural employer organizations, and other interested organizations. In addition, at least 45 calendar days before submitting its final AOP, the SWA must provide a proposed plan to NFJP grantees, public agencies, agricultural employer organizations, and other organizations expressing an interest and allow at least 30 days for review and comment. The SWA must: 1) Consider any comments received in formulating its final proposed AOP; 2) Inform all commenting parties in writing whether their comments have been incorporated and, if not, the reasons therefore; and 3) Transmit the comments and recommendations received and its responses with the submission of the AOP.

i. The AOP must include a statement confirming NFJP grantees, other appropriate MSFW groups, public agencies, agricultural employer organizations and other interested employer organizations have been given an opportunity to comment on the AOP. Include the list of organizations from which information and suggestions were solicited, any comments received, and responses to those comments.

The following MSFW related organizations and agencies, were given the opportunity to provide information and comment on the WIOA Unified Plan modifications within the Agricultural Outreach Plan:

Motivation, Education, and Training, Inc. (MET) 45 West 6th St. Grafton, ND 58237 (WIOA Section 167 Grantee)

Tri-Valley Opportunity Council, Inc. 102 N Broadway P.O. Box 607 Crookston, MN 56716

Community Health Service, Inc. 810 4th Ave. South. Suite 101 Moorhead, MN 56560

Agricultural Worker Project - Southern Minnesota Regional Legal Services, 1015 7th Avenue North

Moorhead, MN 56560

(C) *Data Assessment.* Review the previous four years Wagner-Peyser Act data reports on performance. Note whether the State has been meeting its goals to provide MSFWs quantitatively proportionate services as compared to non-MSFWs. If it has not met these goals, explain why the State believes such goals were not met and how the State intends to improve its provision of services in order to meet such goals.

Upon review of the Wagner-Peyser data from the last four years, on average, equity ratios were met. It is challenging to meet these ratios quarter to quarter due to the low number of MSFW's accessing services at Job Service North Dakota Workforce Centers. Job Service North Dakota and the State Monitor Advocate will continue to place special emphasis on the identification of MSFW customers. Outreach efforts will continue in the future to ensure MSFW employment and training needs are met. This will be done by continuous monitoring of MSFW activity and providing

guidance and training to Job Service North Dakota Outreach Workers and other strategic partners.

- (D) *Assessment of progress.* The plan must include an explanation of what was achieved based on the previous AOP, what was not achieved and an explanation as to why the State believes the goals were not achieved, and how the State intends to remedy the gaps of achievement in the coming year.

Job Service North Dakota (JSND) provided equitable services to North Dakota’s MSFW population. A Memorandum of Understanding is in place to solidify and maintain the partnership with Motivation, Education and Training Inc. (MET). Outreach efforts continue to be conducted throughout the State of North Dakota. North Dakota is a non-significant MSFW state and North Dakota’s MSFW population primarily consists of H2A workers. New agriculture technology and farm practice changes continue to have a significant effect on the number of MSFW’s in North Dakota. A continued decline is expected, but North Dakota will strive for continuous improvement in outreach efforts to MSFW’s.

- (E) *State Monitor Advocate.* The plan must contain a statement confirming the State Monitor Advocate has reviewed and approved the AOP.

State Monitor Advocate has reviewed and approved this plan.

WAGNER-PEYSER ASSURANCES

The State Plan must include assurances that:	
1.	The Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service is co-located with one-stop centers or a plan and timeline has been developed to comply with this requirement within a reasonable amount of time. (sec 121(e)(3));
2.	If the State has significant MSFW one-stop centers, the State agency is complying with the requirements under 20 CFR 653.111, State Workforce Agency staffing requirements;
3.	If a State Workforce Development Board, department, or agency administers State laws for vocational rehabilitation of persons with disabilities, that board, department, or agency cooperates with the agency that administers Wagner-Peyser Act services, Adult and Dislocated Worker programs and Youth Programs under Title I; and

4.	<p>SWA officials:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Initiate the discontinuation of services; 2) Make the determination that services need to be discontinued; 3) Make the determination to reinstate services after the services have been discontinued; 4) Approve corrective action plans; 5) Approve the removal of an employer's clearance orders from interstate or intrastate clearance if the employer was granted conditional access to ARS and did not come into compliance within 5 calendar days; 6) Enter into agreements with State and Federal enforcement agencies for enforcement-agency staff to conduct field checks on the SWAs' behalf (if the SWA so chooses); and 7) Decide whether to consent to the withdrawal of complaints if a party who requested a hearing wishes to withdraw its request for hearing in writing before the hearing.
5.	<p>The SWA has established and maintains a self-appraisal system for ES operations to determine success in reaching goals and to correct deficiencies in performance (20 CFR 658.601).</p>

ADULT EDUCATION AND FAMILY LITERACY ACT PROGRAM

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include a description of the following as it pertains to adult education and literacy programs and activities under title II of WIOA, the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA).

- (a) **Aligning of Content Standards.** Describe how the eligible agency has aligned its content standards for adult education with State-adopted challenging academic content standards, as adopted under section 1111(b)(1) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended (20 U.S.C. 6311(b)(1)).

The North Dakota Department of Public Instruction (NDDPI) adopted the ESEA common core state standards for adult education in May 2015. Professional development for all adult education staff has been implemented using the 2014 GED as a model.

Additionally, the ND RLA, Science, Math, and Social Studies standards are used in professional development alignment with the GED and subsequent adult education services. NDDPI, along with educators and education staff from across the state, wrote the North Dakota Content Standards in Math, Reading/Language Arts, Science, and Social Studies. The Mathematics and English Language/Literacy standards came out in 2017 and the Science and Social Studies standards were released in 2019. Both have a concentration on 21st Century Skills and the 4 C's: critical thinking, creative thinking, communicating, and collaborating. Also, a part of ESSA, came the Choice Ready standards-with attention on ensuring the student is ready for multiple aspects of post high school choices. We currently do not use the same model as K-12 schools, but we strive to ensure students are participating in activities that will also enable them to be Choice Ready (College and Career Ready). The College and Career Ready standards align with the State Adopted Standards. The assessments used in Adult Education in North Dakota are based/built off of the College and Career Readiness Standards (TABE/GED). In addition, the English Language Proficiency Standards for Adult Education are used at local sites to enhance EL programming. We have discussed both these documents and standards in monitoring visits and in meetings. Our NDALL conference always touches on some of these content areas. These documents have also been placed on our NDDPI website under Adult Education Resources/Links for easy accessibility and this information has been placed in a newly developed Local Program Directors' guide for further clarity. We continue to discuss professional development needs in the field to ensure standards are a part of the instruction. The state office shares with local program directors upcoming LINC training opportunities or conferences to grow in content areas.

- (b) **Local Activities.** Describe how the eligible agency will, using the considerations specified in section 231(e) of WIOA and in accordance with 34 CFR 463 subpart C, fund each eligible provider to establish or operate programs that provide any of the following adult education and literacy activities identified in section 203 of WIOA, including programs that provide such activities

concurrently. The Unified or Combined State Plan must include at a minimum the scope, content, and organization of these local activities.

Adult Education and Literacy Activities (Section 203 of WIOA)

Adult education;

Literacy;

Workplace adult education and literacy activities;

Family literacy activities;

English language acquisition activities;

Integrated English literacy and civics education;

Workforce preparation activities; or

Integrated education and training that—

1. Provides adult education and literacy activities, concurrently and contextually with both, workforce preparation activities, and workforce training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster, and
2. Is for the purpose of educational and career advancement.

Special Rule. Each eligible agency awarding a grant or contract under this section shall not use any funds made available under this title for adult education and literacy activities for the purpose of supporting or providing programs, services, or activities for individuals who are under the age of 16 and are enrolled or required to be enrolled in secondary school under State law, except that such agency may use such funds for such purpose if such programs, services, or activities are related to family literacy activities. In providing family literacy activities under this title, an eligible provider shall attempt to coordinate with programs and services that are not assisted under this title prior to using funds for adult education and literacy activities under this title for activities other than activities for eligible individuals.

The North Dakota Department of Public Instruction (NDDPI) serves as the administrative/fiscal agent for Title II Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA). As administrative/fiscal agent, NDDPI ensures local service providers (adult learning centers) deliver services to eligible individuals who: 1. are beyond the age of compulsory school attendance (16 years of age); 2. do not have the basic literacy skills necessary to function effectively in society; 3. have not reached a level of education equivalent to that required for a certificate of graduation to be issued; 4. are unable to speak, read, or write English to obtain or retain employment commensurate with their ability. All activities funded under WIOA are authorized, approved, and overseen by NDDPI. Adult basic education and English Language services are the responsibility of eight regional adult learning centers located across the state, plus the North Dakota Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (DOCR). Eligible organizations applied, per AEFLA, to NDDPI for federal funds through a competition process in December-February (2016/2017) and again in December-February (2019/2020) to provide services. We are preparing for the next competition February-June (2023/2024) to begin the next four-year cycle on July 1, 2024. The NDDPI conducted a competition using a Request for Proposal (RFP) grant process under WIOA upon receiving

guidance from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Career, Technical and Adult Education. Criteria was aligned with the considerations required by federal legislation. The North Dakota Governor's Workforce Development Council and WIOA partners will be part of the review process on applicants (host entities) in the new competition seeking statewide funding distribution via a regional service delivery model. Grants will be granted on a conditional four-year basis, with performance and funding standards identified for discontinuation by the NDDPI if/as warranted. In each subsequent year, all local providers will apply on an annual basis for continuing funding under Title II through an application process. As a part of our RFP process applicants for all programs competing will be asked to adhere to direct and equitable provisions to award funds under WIOA sections 225: corrections; 231: eligible providers; and 243: Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education. State and local program directors collaborate and work to provide equity in our services for all students who fall under the Adult Ed. definitions. An example of this would be our recent discussion with DHHS on translating the student authorization form into different languages to ensure equity.

Our state has identified rural, tribal, and New American communities as populations to place emphasis. Local providers utilize online methods and resources to assist in reaching students in the rural communities in instruction delivery. There are also online testing options as needed. Satellite locations are available in some regional locations as well around the state. This availability prevents distance creating a large barrier. North Dakota Department of Public Instruction has resources available on SB 2304 Resources - Teachings of Our Elders under Indian Education. These resources have been shared with all directors in Adult Education. This includes the North Dakota Native American Essential Understandings "Teachings of our Elders", which includes lesson plans and other resources. In addition, free professional development is available to local programs as needed. A new community-based refugee support services model has been developed in partnership with NDDPI (adult ed.) and DHHS to ensure refugees and newcomers are able to achieve self-sufficiency in a timely manner through a statewide network of co-located services, local case managers, and career navigators. This model includes adult learning centers.

The review of proposals will include rating responses to the 13 considerations in Title II of WIOA. The NDDPI will continue to use the following process to distribute funds to awarded applicants: no less than 82.5 percent of grant funds were awarded as grants and contracts under Section 231 to carry out Section 225. Programs for Corrections, of which not more than 20 percent of such amount were available to carry out Section 225. Local grants were selected and funds distributed based on the ability to meet the requirements of AEFLA Purposes outlined in WIOA: 1. assist adults to become literate and obtain the knowledge and skill necessary for employment and economic self-sufficiency; 2. assist adults who are parents for family members become a full partner in the education development of their children; 3. promote transition from adult education to post-secondary education and training through career pathways; 4. assist refugees, newcomers, immigrants, and English language learners improve reading, writing, math, speaking and comprehension of the English language and acquire understanding of American government, individual freedom, and responsibilities of citizenship. This included providing adult education and literacy services to the negotiated performance levels (not less than the State) which demonstrated academia, college, and career effectiveness, and focused on research-based

methods of instruction. This included alignment with the local workforce and other partnerships which created a collaborative seamless process and system for eligible students. The determination of priority services follows federal guidance. All activities must demonstrate sufficient intensity and duration. Under WIOA (Section 203), adult education and literacy activities are defined as, “programs, activities, and services that include adult education, literacy, workplace adult education, and literacy activities, family literacy activities, English language acquisition activities, integrated English literacy and civics education, workforce preparation activities, or integrated education and training.” A wide variety of program strategies are used to respond to the needs of adult learners, with a strong foundational emphasis on quality, intensity and duration of services which will result in real learning and related life changes, over placing emphasis on serving large numbers of students. The plan scope, or the ‘how’ for adult education involved implementation of a developed comprehensive professional development plan for all local adult education providers, of the WIOA required features to meet its stakeholders’ requirements, and best practice strategies for both instructional and social readiness for college and career. Partnerships with employers are emphasized during professional development and examples of existing relationships between adult learning centers and employers are shared and discussed. A (historical) formula method was used based upon region population, unemployment rates and other distinguished factors (past performance of core indicators, EFL gains).

Within the RFP process, North Dakota Adult Ed. has a section on how the state determines demonstrated effectiveness and the review team processes regarding Adult Education and Literacy Activities. The RFP clarifies what the eligible provider must demonstrate and lays out the application process. The state determines if criteria is met on effectiveness. Areas outlined include providing performance data on its record of improving skills of eligible individuals, particularly eligible individuals who have low levels of literacy, in the content domains of reading, writing, mathematics, English language acquisition, and other subject areas relevant to the services contained in the application. A rubric, criteria process is shared with those competing. A spread sheet is kept at the state level of the application review based on previous AEFLA Funded and Not Previously AEFLA funded sites. Below is the language in the RFP.

Two ways listed in the RFP on eligible provider may meet the requirements:

1.
 - a. Previously funded under AEFLA, as amended by WIOA must submit narrated performance data required under section 116 to demonstrate past effectiveness in Employment second quarter after exit, employment fourth quarter after exit, median earnings second quarter after exit, adult basic education MSG, ESL MSG, Percentage of NRS participants who attain a secondary school diploma or its equivalent, or number of students transitioning to postsecondary education and training. Measurement expectations are included.
 - b. If applicant has not been previously funded under AEFLA, they must provide performance data to demonstrate its past effectiveness in service basic outcomes for participants related to employment, attainment of secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent, and transition to postsecondary education and training.

Two years of past data are required to be submitted for demonstrated effectiveness, regardless of previously AEFLA funded or not previously AEFLA funded. It is highly recommended that the past data is from the previous two program years or calendar years.

Applicants are reviewed by the state agency through the RFP process. Applications for funds are submitted to the state and reviewed by the appropriate Governor's Workforce representation and WIOA core partners review team, all outlined in the RFP process. The state considers the results of the review by the local board. Rubric and explanations are included in the RFP. Competition is open and communicated to the public.

(c) **Corrections Education and other Education of Institutionalized Individuals**. Describe how the eligible agency will, using the considerations specified in section 231(e) of WIOA and in accordance with 34 CFR 463 subpart C, fund eligible providers to establish or operate programs that provide any of the following correctional educational programs identified in section 225 of WIOA:

- Adult education and literacy activities;
- Special education, as determined by the eligible agency;
- Secondary school credit;
- Integrated education and training;
- Career pathways;
- Concurrent enrollment;
- Peer tutoring; and
- Transition to re-entry initiatives and other post release services with the goal of reducing recidivism.

Each eligible agency using funds provided under Programs for Corrections Education and Other Institutionalized Individuals to carry out a program for criminal offenders within a correctional institution must give priority to serving individuals who are likely to leave the correctional institution within 5 years of participation in the program.

The NDDPI currently allocates federal and state funds to the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (DOCR) to provide adult education and literacy services at five state correctional facilities: State Penitentiary, Missouri River Correctional Center, Heart River Correctional Center, James River Correctional Center-Thompkins Rehabilitation Correctional Center, and the Youth Correctional Center. DOCR also provides a variety of resources (technology, curriculum, professional development, and leadership/guidance) to the Dakota Women's Correctional and Rehabilitation Center. Current DOCR educational staff teach a comprehensive program which includes special education services, secondary high school diploma or GED, career pathways, peer tutoring re-entry transition, career readiness, Microsoft digital literacy and other technology courses, college level/credit courses via IVAN or correspondence, and more offerings that are Center dependent. Student Achievement in

Reading (STAR) was implemented for reading instruction at the Correctional sites. The STAR Training expands participants' knowledge of effective reading instruction and improves their ability to build local and state adult basic education systems that support reading improvement. There are now trained trainers available in our state. Funds were granted to support education programs for the correctional facilities in these areas: Adult education and literacy services; special education as determined by the eligible agency, secondary school credit, integrated education and training, career pathways, concurrent enrollment, peer tutoring, and transition to re—entry initiatives/post—release services with the goal of reducing recidivism. Each of the Centers that are granted funds provided under Programs for Corrections Education and Other Institutionalized Individuals to carry out a program for criminal offenders within a correctional institution have assured to prioritize serving individuals who are likely to leave the correctional institution within 5 years of participation in the program. All incarcerated individuals in North Dakota are mandated by law to work towards their High School Diploma or GED if they do not have one. The education program inside the ND DOCR has been recognized as being a key piece of programming in reducing recidivism. The recidivism rate is calculated by the number of offenders in the release cohort in a calendar year who returned to the NDDOCR for a new conviction or technical violation within 12, 24, and 36 months after release from the NDDOCR divided by the number of offenders in the release cohort.

Available for both adults and juveniles are industry specific programs (i.e., welding (adults), FACS (youth), computer drafting/3D printing (adults). Inmate tutoring is offered as paid employment following completion of a training program. Classes in career readiness and reentry planning are available and required by inmates within a year of parole/release. Corrections, although under one state agency, participated in the competition requirements and were scored according to criteria listed above. Funding was not provided for county or city jail inmates as the transition of services as most inmates do not stay beyond a 60-day incarceration time frame; previous data has shown minimal measurable skill gain in that environment and thus, the decision was made that it was not financially appropriate to serve at the county or city jails at this time. Our regional centers may provide resources to the county and local jail if they see it could benefit students in their Region.

Within North Dakota's Adult Ed. RFP process, there is a section on how the state determines demonstrated effectiveness and the local board reviews process regarding Corrections Education and other Education of Institutionalized Individuals. Below are sections within that RFP. Corrections education (CE) is authorized under section 225 of WIOA and the funds in this section must be used for the cost of educational programs for criminal offenders in correctional institutions and other institutionalized individuals, including academic programs for:

1. Adult education and literacy activities;
2. Special education, as determined by the eligible agency;
3. Secondary school credit;
4. Integrated education and training;
5. Career pathways;
6. Concurrent enrollment;

7. Peer tutoring; and
8. Transition to re-entry initiatives and other post-release services with the goal of reducing recidivism.

The state may award up to 20 percent of the 82.5 percent of funds made available under WIOA for CE. The money is allocated to the eligible provider from the state via the same process, competitive grant or contract application as listed in CFR Subpart C, as listed above for Adult Education and IELCE. One CE eligible provider will be selected for the state of ND. Similarly for the total amount of funding for each adult education Region, State funding and funding allowed under Section 225 make up the total yearly award for CE.

In the event a priority needs to be determined in who to serve, priority must be given to programs serving individuals who are likely to leave the correctional institution within five years of participation in the program.

Funds for CR may be used to support educational programs for transition to re-entry initiatives and other post-release services with the goal of reducing recidivism. Such use of funds may include educational counseling or casework to support incarcerated individuals to develop plans for post-release education programs and performing direct outreach to community-based program providers on behalf of re-entering students. Funds may not be used for costs for participation in post-release programs or services.

NDDOCR was awarded an additional state grant for two years to enhance Integrated Education and Training programming to increase employment upon exit; CDL and Heavy Equipment Operator Integrated. Other work preparation programs are also provided for residents at various Correctional sites. Crane Operator is an upcoming addition for training.

In addition, recently ND DOCR Education Department is working toward creating Prison Education Programs (PEP) for post-secondary options for people while incarcerated. The requirements are being finalized and an advisory board has been established and met to review and discuss applications. Both JSND and Adult Ed. representation is on this advisory board.

- (d) **Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education Program.** Describe how the eligible agency will, using the considerations specified in section 231(e) of WIOA and in accordance with 34 CFR 463 subpart C, fund eligible providers to establish or operate Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IELCE) programs under section 243 of WIOA. Describe how adult English language learners, including professionals with degrees and credentials in their native countries, are served in IELCE programs.

Describe how the Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education program under section 243(a) of WIOA will be offered in combination with integrated education and training activities found in 34 CFR section 463.36.

Describe how the Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education program under section 243(a) of WIOA will include instruction in literacy and English language acquisition and instruction on the rights and responsibilities of citizenship and civic participation.

Describe how the Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education program under section 243(a) of WIOA will be designed to prepare adults who are English language learners for, and place such adults in, unsubsidized employment in in-demand industries and occupations that lead to economic self-sufficiency.

Describe how the Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education program under section 243(a) of WIOA will be designed to integrate with the local workforce development system and its functions to carry out the activities of the program.

The Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education programs will engage students in purposeful use of the language. The current IELCE recipient offers a civics course and test that eventually ends with the student needing to pass a civics test to be finished. All local programs help and administer a civics exam if they did not take it in high school. The adult learning centers offer EL instruction and assessment. North Dakota offers, through the competition process, a federal funding grant to one regional center. Fargo Adult Learning Center was awarded the IELCE funds during the last competition. They were the only applicant and serve over fifty-six percent of the state's EL adult education population. Their IELCE program included EL instruction and a citizenship and civics course that was robust enough to meet the standards of an IELCE program. The program also included, concurrently and contextually, so an IET program included workforce preparation activities as well as workforce training. One of the pathways included a strong partnership with a healthcare provider and included CNA training. The healthcare provider was a part of the training, and standards were a part of the curriculum. This led to instant employment for those who completed it. Two other newly developed integrated education and training programs implemented at the Fargo site, with state funds, are Intro. to Education (paraeducator) and CDL, both in-demand occupations. We continue to research resources and partnerships to expand IET programming across our state. At the State level, we hope to be able to secure more funding legislatively with the evidence from the Fargo Adult Learning Center. This will accelerate the growth of IELCE possibilities in the state. We look forward to our upcoming competition to see if other sites will apply. DPI will require all eligible providers (sections 225, 231, and/or 243) to apply via the standard application process to ensure all applications are evaluated using the same rubric and scoring criteria. The agency ensures that all eligible providers have direct and equitable access to apply for grants or contracts. It also ensures that the same grant or contract announcement, application, and proposal process is used for all eligible providers through the grant management system. DPI believes these approaches meet the AELFA requirements to ensure direct and equitable access. The

agency uses the considerations specified in section 231(e) of WIOA to fund eligible providers by incorporating each of the considerations into the narrative portion of the application. The agency attaches a point-based scoring rubric weighing each of the considerations. Applicants must provide narrative details to demonstrate how they will meet each consideration. English learners are served at the IELCE site and across the state in all our ALCs. If an individual is a professional with a degree or credential in their native country, instructors work with them on English skills through conversation, classes, and instruction. Some want their High School Equivalency also and instructors work with them. In addition, sites work with students to set career/academic goals, assess their progress, and connect these individuals with the additional support they need to acclimate into the community. IET opportunities can assist also in connecting individuals to the workforce. The local programs do their best to limit or remove barriers and prepare them for the workforce or post-secondary goals. If avenues allow, they try to see if they might set goals toward their previous career goals. Some of these individuals work through the Office of Refugee Resettlement with community connectors or Job Service ND to assist alongside the ALCs. Our state has a newly developed Office of Immigration that is also working to assist in identifying individuals in this situation, providing oversight, and leveling the playing field.

North Dakota will award Section 243 funds to an eligible provider through the competitive application process outlined above. Funds will be used to support the operational expenses of the local IELCE program, including teacher salaries and benefits, classroom supplies, textbooks, and other items necessary to carry out instruction in English language acquisition, workforce preparation activities, and civics education. While the State plans to issue guidance and technical assistance to eligible providers on how to co-enroll participants in occupational training, as appropriate, some Section 243 funds may be used to offset occupational training costs as part of an integrated education and training program. It is a goal of the ND Adult Education program to strategically find partnerships and funding opportunities to advance the IELCE program. A partnership was developed with DPI (adult learning centers) and the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to enhance opportunities for refugees and newcomers in English language acquisition, workforce preparation activities, workforce training, and civics education as well.

The IELCE program that currently exists and any that develop in the future will include a career pathway that involves a career listed on the in-demand job list that is created on an annual basis. By incorporating cultural aspects into the curriculum that already includes workplace preparation and workforce training, a program can readily prepare an individual for a career that leads to economic self-sufficiency. The very nature of the program accomplishes what this section is asking if it is run effectively. Strong partnerships with employers and trainers enable a well-run program. Ensuring the adult education portion of the program is aligned with ND content standards and that the IET portion is part of a career pathway will benefit our students in gaining or advancing in employment.

The Regional Adult Learning Center is directly responsible for attaining a knowledge of the local workforce landscape and developing the relationships necessary for a successful IELCE program. Also, the Workforce Development Council and JSND create great resources that can be accessed and are

direct to the development system. Lastly, working and collaborating with state and local workforce partners will help to integrate the workforce development system and its functions into the IELCE programs.

Within North Dakota's Adult Ed. RFP process, there is a section on how the state determines demonstrated effectiveness, and the local board reviews the process regarding the Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education Program. Within the RFP process, guidance is shared on the definitions and process of applying for the Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education grant. With the amount of funding ND receives for IELCE activities, we award one Region the funding. Below is information about the RFP.

Eligible providers receiving funds through the IELCE RFP must provide services that:

1. Include instruction in literacy and English language acquisition and instruction on the rights and responsibilities of citizenship and civic participation; and
2. Are designed to:
 - a. Prepare adults who are English language learners for, and place adults in, unsubsidized employment in in-demand industries and occupations that lead to economic self-sufficiency; and
 - b. Integrate with the local workforce development system and its functions to carry out the activities of the program.

We are preparing for the next competition February-June (2023/2024) to begin the next four-year cycle on July 1, 2024. As mentioned previously, In the last cycle, NDDPI awarded one grant to one regional provider and that was the Fargo Adult Learning Center. They were the only ones to apply.

All Adult Education providers in North Dakota have been trained in the concepts of IELCE and IET. Ideally, with increased knowledge of the programs and educating stakeholders, we have secured additional resources to duplicate the work being done in Fargo. There are also conversations going on with TrainND about cost reduction and how other core partners can help alleviate the cost. One other concern is with our smaller programs to have enough participants to sustain staffing and programming. The Fargo ALC currently assists students in achieving their Pre-CNA/C.N.A. license. For the past two years, an Intro to Education IET was implemented with hands-on training experience in their Even Start program on-site. This is a 10-week class designed to help prepare students to become para educators and pass exams such as the Para-Pro. This class reviews literacy and math skills, classroom management, behavioral and academic support, school safety, and post-secondary education. It is still a state goal to grow and scale IET programs. In addition, a third option of CDL IET is growing. Reports are shared with the state office and data is reviewed.

All IET programs in the IELCE program are in-demand industry areas. All local sites in ND are aware of the in-demand occupation list and relate to the local workforce through advisory committees and work with local job service centers. There are only two or three more sites that could incorporate a solid IELCE program (serving ELL students). Fargo has agreed to mentor and share best practices,

challenges, and lessons learned from implementing their program. The hope is to less implementation time and keep costs to a minimum. Conversations and partnerships are in place, the next step or progression would include moving from meetings/conversations to action.

Outside of IELCE, the state ran three grant competitions for IET grants with outside of Adult Ed. grant funding to incentivize programming. 2021-2022 three sites applied and were granted: areas in paraeducator, Intro to Education, CNA, Intro CNA. 2022-2023 four sites applied and were granted: areas in Paraeducator/Intro. to Ed., Intro. CNA, Phlebotomy Tech, and CDL. 2023-2024 four sites applied and were granted: areas in Paraeducator/Intro. to Ed., Intro. CNA/CNA, and CDL-Driver's Literacy programs. The goals of the IET Program are to create a long-sought-after program opportunity for students that welds workforce and education that did not exist prior to this grant opportunity, have students leave with 1. GED and 2. Workforce credentials directly impact the local workforce, and if 1 and 2 are deemed a success, find a way to sustain them in the future. We continue to build on PD resources and tech. support in this area.

A quarterly report is filled out by the IELCE site. The director of the FALC is strong, experienced, and always open to constructive feedback, to brainstorm the best solutions for students. Goals, data, and enrollment are shared with the state office. In addition, they are asked to share about workforce system integration and to identify one aspect of their IELCE program that they would see as a strength and one that they would improve. We can hop on a meeting or phone call as needed.

Fargo IELCE site is seeing refugee resettlement from Cuban, Haitian, and Ukrainian populations, and more. The FALC EL teachers are grateful to have more students in class and have the capacity to serve more. The teachers are the greatest asset, and they continue to work creative schedules to meet student needs. The Office of Refugee Service has remained a partner with adult ed., in which they created a process to support learning with Refugees and newcomers in our state at the ALCs. Engen is a resource added to the learning experience utilized to assist with programming aligning adult ed. literacy skills with workforce preparation and training options.

Job Service ND Fargo collocates at the ALC officially once a week. Numerous individuals have been in contact with JSND staff at the ALC during the weekly appointments. Having JSND staff on-site eliminates barriers such as childcare, transportation, and fear of the unknown. Job Service staff have come into Parent Education classes to assist Even Start Parents with setting employment goals. Additionally, the WIOA case manager visits students on-site multiple times a week to discuss progress and find work experience opportunities and employment.

They collaborate with Vocational Rehabilitation. This was critical in providing services to EL students who were blind. The TRIO advisor has been meeting onsite with GED and EL students and supporting some students with their college enrollment for January.

(e) **State Leadership.** Describe how the State will use the funds to carry out the required State Leadership activities under section 223 of WIOA.

Funds are used for alignment of adult education and literacy activities with other core programs and one-stop partners to implement strategies identified in the unified plan. Career pathways, access to employment and training services.

Funds are used to establish or operate high quality PD programs to improve adult education instruction, reading instruction, instruction adult learner needs, instruction by volunteers and other personnel, and dissemination of models and promising practices.

In addition, a focus is placed with provision of technical assistance to local providers receiving funds including development and dissemination of instructional and programmatic practices, role of providers as one-stop partners, assistance in use of technology including staff training.

Monitoring and evaluation of the quality of and improvement in adult education and dissemination of information about models and promising practices in the state is another focus.

The most critical element of continued leadership activities focused on increasing student learning and monitoring/evaluation of local programs. On-site visits are conducted yearly with formal monitoring every other year. NDDPI representation is on the Governor's Workforce Development Council. This position promotes the collaboration and vision of workforce partners to ensure a seamless system is developed, implemented, and evaluated for effectiveness. The development of Career Pathways and IELCE/IET programs is a key initiative. Apprenticeship is another area being researched. North Dakota DPI used funds available under section 222(a)(2) to enhance the quality of programming in the adult education system. No more than 12.5 percent of the grant funds made available were used to carry out State Leadership activities under section 223. Activities supported with federal leadership funds and extended using State funding include:

- WIOA core partner programs align and coordinate services for program participants. Leadership funds were used to build the capacity of grantees to coordinate and align services by cross-training staff on intake/orientation, eligibility screening, and referral between partners, and other joint mechanisms developed through agency partnerships. In addition, the development of all components of career pathways is a priority with a focus on bridge programming and integrated education and training. Local programs connect with local JSND and Vocational Rehabilitation staff, most or many have them as a part of their local advisory boards, to meet the needs of the individuals they serve. Workforce Wednesdays have been implemented at a few of our sites in partnership with local job service to provide interviewing experience and an opportunity to meet employers of a region on site. Another recent partnership that has been valuable is the NDDHHS as we ensure newcomers and refugees have a smooth transition and opportunities available to them when settling into our state.
- Supporting statewide PD and identifying annual PD needs, determine delivery and evaluate results to ensure best practice approaches which result in collaborative partnerships, academic and career focused rigors, increases in student MSGs and teacher/program quality. These funds were used on topics to

include content standards implementation, instructional strategies and methodologies, integrated education and training, bridge programming, transition to postsecondary education, use of technology, distance education, and services to students with disabilities, and technical training with databases and assessment applications. Technical assistance is a strong component of leadership activities and funds as the State Office continues to support local programs with research/evidence-based programs, activities, and curricula to meet the individual needs of students. Technical assistance focused on data and the student data management system (LACES), assessment and instruction; additionally, the aforementioned areas of career readiness, integrated employment and training and career pathways, and core partner services were key for local programs. North Dakota Association for Lifelong Learning (NDALL) plans a conference each year. The State director is on the conference planning committee and NDALL board. They survey the field on input and work on focused topics for future conferences. Using technology to improve program effectiveness through training and technical assistance focused on preparing instructors and program administrators to identify and utilize technology to enhance instruction, programming, and distance education. The State has contracted PD in technology through activities such as face-to-face and online training in a variety of areas in the past, and included educational technology, digital literacy instruction, and distance learning as a part of delivery options. In addition, other training and technical assistance focused on effective use of the statewide data system to maintain accurate student data and continuously improve programming. The State Office supported multiple methods to ensure promising practices and models are shared with all providers to include local program TA and monitoring visits, bimonthly conference calls, electronically shared association newsletters monthly about training opportunities, high-quality resources, and promising practices for instruction and programming, an annual conference, state director shares LINCS information, and other PD activities. The State provided grantee oversight to include monthly data monitoring, annual site visits, and a program improvement monitoring process for low-performing grantees. instruction and teacher training.

- The State also evaluated integrating literacy and English language instruction with occupational skill training, including promoting linkages with employers through providing funding for basic skills and HSE preparation and partnering with local workforce programs. To identify curriculum frameworks and align rigorous content standards that specify what adult learners should know and be able to do in the areas of reading and language arts, mathematics, and English language acquisition.
- Primary indicators of performance described in section 116.
- Where appropriate, content of occupational and industry skill standards widely used by business and industry in the State. The State accomplished this WIOA provision by restructuring English Language Acquisition Content Standards to include integration of language acquisition and with workforce preparedness training. Further, professional development on integration of the College and Career Readiness Standards for adults with instruction for all students and continued implementation of Adult Ed. standards. Through participation of the State inter-agency planning initiatives with the WIOA

partners, the State's adult education providers collaborated where possible and avoid duplicating efforts to maximize the impact of the activities described above.

Describe how the State will use the funds to carry out permissible State Leadership Activities under section 223 of WIOA, if applicable.

The provision of high-quality professional development has been strong across North Dakota and expanded to career pathways, bridge programs and effective career planning to meet the state's continual employment needs. IET and digital literacy are being advanced and designed for work with ELL students as our priority. As always, technical assistance was a strong component of leadership activities and funds, as the State Office continued to support local programs with research/evidence-based programs, activities, and curricula to meet the individual needs of students. Technical assistance continued to focus on data and our associated student data management system (LACES), assessment and instruction; additionally, the aforementioned areas of career readiness, integrated employment and training and career pathways were key for local programs. North Dakota Adult Lifelong Learners (NDALL) is an organization to support all Adult Education and Alternative Education leaders, staff, and educators in professional development needs. The state director is on the NDALL board and conference committee. A conference is held each fall. The state director attends many professional development opportunities and conferences pertaining to adult education as well.

(f) **Assessing Quality**. Describe how the eligible agency will assess the quality of providers of adult education and literacy activities under title II. Describe how the eligible agency will take actions to improve such quality, including providing the activities described in section 223(a)(1)(B) of WIOA. Describe how the eligible agency will use evaluations, data analysis, program monitoring, or other methods to improve the quality of adult education activities in the State.

The adult learning centers are responsible to the State Office for meeting standards of quality for administration and instruction. The effectiveness of programs, services, and activities of local recipients of funds are assessed through systematic evaluation of programs. All activities related to ABE/ESL students are entered at least weekly into the student data management system. The State Office conducts random, but at least monthly, audits on program data for multiple indicators of quality. Secondly, the state uses both data match and personal contact to identify performance indicators. Each local program is expected to meet the state-negotiated performance measures. Lastly, as mentioned above, accountability lies in the results of onsite monitoring by the State Office as well as local program monitoring to assess their own standards and performance. The State Adult Education program evaluates programs monthly through a monthly desk audit process in which measures such as average attendance hours, educational functioning level gains, number of students post-tested, etc., are reviewed using the student data management system. These reports are shared with local program directors. Local programs fill out quarterly reports which allow them to review operational aspects such as the percentage of funds expended, completion of required professional development, data review, and

completed personnel activity reports. In addition, the State Office performs site monitoring visits for each adult education and literacy program to ensure that state and federal laws and policies are followed, reviewed program performance, and connected with sponsoring administrators. After monitoring and interviewing stakeholders, the state director sends out a thorough report/protocol on both programming and fiscal areas. A formal is written and shared on commendations, recommendations, or compliance issues. If there are compliance issues a host entity/local program would be required to submit a corrective action plan to address any report findings on compliance or recommendations within an agreed-upon timeline and follow up to the satisfaction of the State Office. An online repository and directory were created for statewide staff to have instant access to instructional and best practice resources and contact information/instant messaging to other centers. This allows local program activities to increase their access to practices that are working and a platform to share best practices. All related PD activities included an evaluation component, submitted through quarterly reports, to provide the state office with demographic data of participants, what professional development is implemented, how it is being utilized in the classroom, and what related success occurred as a result. Secondly, evaluations helped the state office determine the quality of training, relevance, and applicability of the topic. Respectively, each adult learning center director is responsible for ensuring that the PD activity or event is implemented into the classroom or instructor methods and that by classroom observations, student educational gains, or teacher interviews, the effectiveness of the PD is tracked. The State ensures student performance improvement, financial accountability, program quality, and regulatory compliance of local providers in accordance with federal laws and regulations, State statutes and rules, and the provisions of an approved grant award. The monitoring component of the Quality Assurance System is a risk assessment process used to evaluate variables associated with workforce education grants and assign a rating for the level of risk to the federal Department of Education and the agency. To complete risk assessments, certain risk factors have been identified which may affect the level of risk for each agency. A risk matrix is completed for each provider. The annual risk assessment is conducted to determine the monitoring strategy appropriate for each provider. NDDPI fiscal staff also have a Fiscal Year Risk Assessment for Federal Grants form that is filled out annually by the State director of each local program. Examples include having submitted numerous budget revisions in the past to correct errors, grantee met program performance goals in the previous year, or have had recent changes in key management or grant personnel. In addition to program improvement plans and other actions taken to improve quality, the following activities are available:

- New Director Training and Mentoring. Provided new directors with information such as federal and State guidelines, data collection and National Reporting System (NRS) reporting, and resources needed to administer their programs.
- Developed a new Local Program Director's Guide with key information and appendices to understand and learn adult education and guide in their decision-making.
- Tests of Adult Basic Education (TABE) Training. Through ongoing training, a network of trained professionals ensures the uniform administration and reporting of assessments used for determining federal-level gains.

- **Data Reporting and Program Improvement Training.** Provided training on the fundamentals of the NRS and NRS guide information. Topics include monitoring, data analysis and collection, types of data and measures, assessments, data quality, and related information.
- **Technical Assistance.** Adult education bimonthly calls inform adult educators of program changes and reporting announcements and provide opportunities to ask questions of State staff. In addition, technical assistance papers are posted on the federal Department of Education website. The State director is available for any technical assistance needed in real-time.
- **Teacher Training.** Provided information and resources to support instruction in the areas of HSE preparation, college and career readiness, career awareness and planning, career pathways, reading, and math instructional strategies. Continue to listen to the field and discuss with leadership at local programs what professional development needs there are.

ADULT EDUCATION AND FAMILY LITERACY ACT PROGRAM CERTIFICATIONS AND ASSURANCES

States must provide written and signed certifications that:	
1.	The plan is submitted by the State agency that is eligible to submit the plan; YES
2.	The State agency has authority under State law to perform the functions of the State under the program; YES
3.	The State legally may carry out each provision of the plan; YES
4.	All provisions of the plan are consistent with State law; YES
5.	A State officer, specified by title in the certification, has authority under State law to receive, hold, and disburse Federal funds made available under the plan; YES
6.	The State officer who is submitting the plan, specified by the title in the certification, has authority to submit the plan; YES
7.	The agency that is submitting the plan has adopted or otherwise formally approved the plan; and YES
8.	The plan is the basis for State operation and administration of the program; YES
The State Plan must include assurances that:	

1.	The eligible agency will expend funds appropriated to carry out title II of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) only in a manner consistent with fiscal requirements under section 241(a) of WIOA (regarding the supplement-not-supplant requirement); YES
2.	The eligible agency will ensure that there is at least one eligible provider serving each local area, as defined in section 3(32) of WIOA; YES
3.	The eligible agency will not use any funds made available under title II of WIOA for the purpose of supporting or providing programs, services, or activities for individuals who are not “eligible individuals” within the meaning of section 203(4) of WIOA, unless it is providing programs, services or activities related to family literacy activities, as defined in section 203(9) of WIOA; YES
4.	Using funds made available under title II of WIOA to carry out a program for criminal offenders within a correctional institution, the eligible agency will give priority to serving individuals who are likely to leave the correctional institution within five years of participation in the program. YES
5.	The eligible agency agrees that in expending funds made available under Title II of WIOA, the eligible agency will comply with sections 8301 through 8303 of the Buy American Act (41 U.S.C. 8301-8303). YES

Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA)

Instructions: In the text box below, describe the steps the applicant proposes to take to ensure equitable access to, and participation in, its Federally-assisted program for students, teachers, and other program beneficiaries with special needs provide the information to meet the requirements of Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA), consistent with the following instructions. [Click here to enter text.](#)

OMB Control No. 1894-0005 (Exp. 04/30/2020)

NOTICE TO ALL APPLICANTS

Review the linked document. Where “applicant” is mentioned, that refers to the State eligible agency and “application” refers to the state plan. This element does not apply to local providers for state plan purposes. State eligible agencies are required to maintain local GEPA responses separately from the state plan. The State eligible agency must provide a response to GEPA regarding use of AEFLA State Administration and State Leadership funds in the State Plan.

The purpose of this enclosure is to inform you about the following provision in the Department of Education's General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) that applies to applicants for new grant awards under Department programs. This provision is Section 427 of GEPA, enacted as part of the Improving America's Schools Act of 1994 (Public Law (P.L.) 103-382).

To Whom Does This Provision Apply?

Section 427 of GEPA affects applicants for new grant awards under this program. **ALL APPLICANTS FOR NEW AWARDS MUST INCLUDE INFORMATION IN THEIR APPLICATIONS TO ADDRESS THIS NEW PROVISION IN ORDER TO RECEIVE FUNDING UNDER THIS PROGRAM.**

(If this program is a State-formula grant program, a State needs to provide this description only for projects or activities that it carries out with funds reserved for State-level uses. In addition, local school districts or other eligible applicants that apply to the State for funding need to provide this description in their applications to the State for funding. The State would be responsible for ensuring that the school district or other local entity has submitted a sufficient section 427 statement as described below.)

What Does This Provision Require?

Section 427 requires each applicant for funds (other than an individual person) to include in its application a description of the steps the applicant proposes to take to ensure equitable access to, and participation in, its Federally-assisted program for students, teachers, and other program beneficiaries with special needs. This provision allows applicants discretion in developing the required description. The statute highlights six types of barriers that can impede equitable access or participation: gender, race, national origin, color, disability, or age. Based on local circumstances, you should determine whether these or other barriers may prevent your students, teachers, etc. from such access or participation in, the Federally-funded project or activity. The description in your application of steps to be taken to overcome these barriers need not be lengthy; you may provide a clear and succinct description of how you plan to address those barriers that are applicable to your circumstances. In addition, the information may be provided in a single narrative, or, if appropriate, may be discussed in connection with related topics in the application.

Section 427 is not intended to duplicate the requirements of civil rights statutes, but rather to ensure that, in designing their projects, applicants for Federal funds address equity concerns that may affect the ability of certain potential beneficiaries to fully participate in the project and to achieve to high standards. Consistent with program requirements and its approved application, an applicant may use the Federal funds awarded to it to eliminate barriers it identifies.

What are Examples of How an Applicant Might Satisfy the Requirement of This Provision?

The following examples may help illustrate how an applicant may comply with Section 427.

- (1) An applicant that proposes to carry out an adult literacy project serving, among others, adults with limited English proficiency, might describe in its application how it intends to distribute a brochure about the proposed project to such potential participants in their native language.
- (2) An applicant that proposes to develop instructional materials for classroom use might describe how it will make the materials available on audio tape or in braille for students who are blind.
- (3) An applicant that proposes to carry out a model science program for secondary students and is concerned that girls may be less likely than boys to enroll in the course, might indicate how it intends to conduct "outreach" efforts to girls, to encourage their enrollment.
- (4) An applicant that proposes a project to increase school safety might describe the special efforts it will take to address concern of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender students, and efforts to reach out to and involve the families of LGBT students

We recognize that many applicants may already be implementing effective steps to ensure equity of access and participation in their grant programs, and we appreciate your cooperation in responding to the requirements of this provision.

Estimated Burden Statement for GEPA Requirements

According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, no persons are required to respond to a collection of information unless such collection displays a valid OMB control number. Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1.5 hours per response, including time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. The obligation to respond to this collection is required to obtain or retain benefit (Public Law 103-382. Send comments regarding the burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to the U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Ave., SW, Washington, DC 20210-4537 or email ICDocketMgr@ed.gov and reference the OMB Control Number 1894-0005.

1. [SF424B - Assurances – Non-Construction Programs](http://www2.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/appforms/appforms.html)
(<http://www2.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/appforms/appforms.html>)
2. [Grants.gov - Certification Regarding Lobbying](http://www2.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/appforms/appforms.html)
(<http://www2.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/appforms/appforms.html>)
3. [SF LLL Form – Disclosure of Lobbying Activities \(required, only if applicable\)](http://www2.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/appforms/appforms.html)
(<http://www2.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/appforms/appforms.html>)

GEPA

ADULT EDUCATION AND FAMILY LITERACY ACT

Describe how your entity's existing mission, policies, or commitments ensure equitable access to, and equitable participation in, the proposed project or activity.

NDDPI's vision is that all students will graduate choice-ready with the knowledge, skills, and disposition to be successful. Adult Education's main office is located in NDDPI. The overall mission is that NDDPI will partner with schools (ALCs) and communities to provide a statewide system of excellent service and support to ensure a healthy school environment that fosters student success. NDDPI has three core values; Build Relationships: We value meaningful stakeholder engagement at every level. Our belief is that building relationships enables long-term, sustainable progress. Cultivate Opportunity: We value the free and open exchange of ideas. Our role is to cultivate opportunities between partners to benefit our young people. Inspire Growth: We value inspiration and support over-regulation. Our aim is to inspire and support our schools and communities as we challenge conventional standards. Also posted on the NDDPI website is the Adult Education section. The ND Adult Education mission is NDDPI promotes and supports programs at no cost that help individuals over the age of 16 obtain basic academic and educational skills to be productive workers, family members, and citizens. The ND Adult Education vision is that adult education classes provide a second opportunity for adult learners committed to improving their academic and career skills and assist adults to be contributing and successful citizens. The ND Adult Education Goals/Objectives are to maximize services to meet adult needs in all eight ND regions and five correctional sites, remove barriers prohibiting success, and prepare for post-secondary and workforce opportunities through partnerships with other agencies. Our goal is to provide services for all adults who meet the definition.

Local programs fill out a yearly application. Part of that has a needs assessment, describing how the ALC intends to improve learning, increase accessibility, enhance outreach and collaboration with local and regional economic development or employment initiatives, and promote diversity in the delivery of instruction and how the program addresses educational needs of those most at risk and those most in need within their service area. At the State level, the NDDPI requires all grantees of either state or federal funds, to sign an assurance that they have read the GEPA requirements and other grant requirements, understand the requirement parameters, and agree to oblige to the highest standard possible, to carry out the intent of GEPA. Currently, the NDDPI is not competing for funds for State Leadership. The NDDPI State Office has on file a statement from every funded program that they ensure equitable access to and participation in, federal-assisted programs for students, teachers, and other program beneficiaries with special needs. The NDDPI monitoring process of the local adult education programs includes questions about GEPA to justify compliance with Section 427. In our application platform, WebGrants, questions are embedded in the process. Examples include what barriers exist in your community that may prevent students, teachers, and other program beneficiaries from accessing or participating in the funded projects or activities listed in the application, and what steps are being taken to address or overcome these barriers. In the state of assurances section, the local providers' program directors sign this document on services, allocation, use of funds,

reporting/accountability, and participation/communication. Under the services section, it says they “adhere to guidelines for providing accommodations to students over the age of 16 with disabilities.” Under reporting/accountability section it says they “comply with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act which prohibits discrimination from participation because of race, color or national origin; Title IX of the Educational Amendment Act of 1972 which prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex; and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 which prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability.” In addition, local programs work with their local vocational rehabilitation agencies on partnerships to meet student needs as they are needed. DRC (TABE) and GED have laid out processes for requesting accommodations as needed for individuals when testing.

North Dakota Monitoring Protocol is aligned with the WIOA checklist of requirements and thoroughly reviewed with all local providers every other year; language in the intake/orientation, facilities, and program effectiveness sections. Informal visits are conducted in the off year. Several sections are included in the Program Monitoring Protocol to ensure accessibility and participation in providing equitable services to all students. In addition, our RFP has a section on Program Assurances that is laid out below.

E. The grantee assures that no qualified person 16 years of age or older with a documented disability shall, on the basis of disability, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or otherwise be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity which receives or benefits from state funds.

F. The grantee will comply with all civil rights regulations prohibiting discrimination in program benefits, participation, employment, or treatment on the basis of race, gender, color, national origin, sex, and disability.

In addition, we collect quarterly reports from our local providers (housed in the WebGrants management system) in which providers answer questions regarding annual program goals and progress/challenges, areas to improve on effectiveness to improve literacy and numeracy skills of students, instructional practices that are best practice and research-based, and strategies to meet all students. There is an area of concern section applying to students, instruction, program management, satellite sites, or others. Directors can add to these fields. Barriers are identified in the LACES management system, and we strategize how to meet all students as able.

At the state level when expending State Leadership funds, such as professional development, we work hard to ensure all individuals/organizations are treated fairly and equally. We work to address barriers that can impede equitable access or participation: gender, race, national origin, color, disability, or age. We use the same communication in all our partnerships, meetings, and work (respect to all) and use the same language as we would through a competition.

The North Dakota DPI website has information on GEPA requirements with examples for local programs and local leadership to follow. The link is here:

<https://www.nd.gov/dpi/policyguidelines/general-education-provisions-act-gepa>.

It is shared with applicants and embedded in the monitoring process through quarterly reports, the WebGrants platform, and during site visits.

Based on your proposed project or activity, what barriers may impede equitable access and participation of students, educators, or other beneficiaries?

Barriers that could impede equitable access and participation of students, educators, or other beneficiaries could include transportation, childcare, and/or disability needs beyond programming offered at a local program. Sites have access to some state funds to assist with transportation barriers with students. The Bank of North Dakota partners with local programs to cover the first and fourth GED tests, working with NDDPI. Local programs network with local agencies to address childcare and offer flexible scheduling and hybrid options to those with children. Rural areas are another area we are aware of and we continue to address it, many utilize online/hybrid options. Some local programs send staff to meet in other locations. The most current barrier we were made aware of was a language barrier. The Office of Refugee Resettlement partnership identified a form that we needed to translate into other languages that required a student signature, the Student Authorization Form. Five other languages were identified through the ORR of individuals attending ALCs. We partnered to ensure our Student Authorization Form used in ALCs was provided in other languages, so individuals had the form communicated in their native language prior to a signature. We continue to dialogue about this and any other needs. Sites have worked with individuals who are blind and have reached out to provide local support within a community to ensure an individual was able to receive the quality of services they needed. All WIOA partners are part of the competitive process, including the Office of Refugee Resettlement and Vocational Rehabilitation to ensure local providers are meeting needs. If an issue has occurred, we have a close working relationship with WIOA partners to address the issue. Local programs are asked to identify barriers in their ALC and provide ways they address them. The state office remains available to brainstorm solutions for issues that may arise.

Based on the barriers identified, what steps will you take to address such barriers to equitable access and participation in the proposed project or activity?

Please see above also. The state office offers technical support and oversight to local programs on all matters. Because we are a small state, we are able to easily visit about issues and the state director networks in bi-monthly meetings so pretty aware of issues, involving host entities in the conversation if needed. If we receive a complaint or concern, we address it with the local program, starting with the local director and/or other individuals involved, and have a dialogue to resolve the issue of barriers or other matters. This is also a part of the monitoring protocol conversations if necessary and can be added to the formal letter that a site receives after a visit if not resolved. I am not aware of any current issues.

What is your timeline, including targeted milestones, for addressing these identified barriers?

We are not aware of any specific issues or barriers that haven't been addressed at this time. We try to address things right away as issues arise. We have partnered with ORR to create the Student Authorization Form in other languages and continue to dialogue on needs at the local programs. We do our best to provide two-way communication. Forms have been shared with all local programs in other languages and posted on a shared platform for easy access. We are also discussing ways to remove barriers with the population we serve.

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

Program-Specific Requirements for State Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program

The Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Services Portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan must include the following descriptions and estimates, as required by sections 101(a) and 606 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by title IV of WIOA.

(a) Input of State Rehabilitation Council. All agencies, except for those that are independent consumer-controlled commissions, must describe the following:

- (1) input provided by the State Rehabilitation Council, including input and recommendations on the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, recommendations from the Council's report, the review and analysis of consumer satisfaction, and other Council reports that may have been developed as part of the Council's functions;*
- (2) the designated State unit's response to the Council's input and recommendations; and*
- (3) the designated State unit's explanations for rejecting any of the Council's input or recommendations.*

In accordance with Assurance 3(b), please provide information on the current composition of the Council by representative type, including the term number of the representative, as applicable, and any vacancies, as well as the beginning dates of each representative's term.

Council Representative	Current Term Number/ Vacant	Beginning Date of Term Mo./Yr.
Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC)	2	7/23
Parent Training and Information Center	Vacant	
Client Assistance Program	1	11/22

Qualified Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Counselor (Ex Officio if Employed by the VR Agency)	Vacant	
Community Rehabilitation Program Service Provider	2	7/22
Business, Industry, and Labor	2	12/22
Business, Industry, and Labor	1	7/21
Business, Industry, and Labor	2	7/22
Business, Industry, and Labor	1	8/22
Disability Advocacy Groups	2	7/22
Current or Former Applicants for, or Recipients of, VR services	2	11/22
Section 121 Project Directors in the State (as applicable)	Vacant	
State Educational Agency Responsible for Students with Disabilities Eligible to Receive Services under Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)	2	7/22
State Workforce Development Board	1	7/21
VR Agency Director (Ex Officio)	1	12/20

If the SRC is not meeting the composition requirements in section 105(b) of the Rehabilitation Act and/or is not meeting quarterly as required in section 105(f) of the Rehabilitation Act, provide the steps that the VR agency is taking to ensure it meets those requirements.

The State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) Membership Committee discusses the vacant positions and the needs for potential members. A search and outreach to potential members is conducted. Currently, applications for the Parent Training and Information Center representative and a Qualified VR Counselor representative have been submitted to the Governor's office and are pending approval. There is also a Section 121 (AIVR) representative who will be submitting their application.

In accordance with the requirements in section 101(a)(21)(A)(ii)(III) of the Rehabilitation Act, include a summary of the Council's input (including how it was obtained) into the State Plan and any State Plan revisions, including recommendations from the Council's annual reports, the review and analysis of consumer satisfaction and other Council reports.

VR continues to regularly seek the advice of the SRC on a number of issues including the state plan contents, consumer satisfaction, program goals and evaluation, policies, order of selection, public education and building relationships with the business community.

The SRC's Planning and Evaluation Committee receives quarterly reports on the client satisfaction rates. They review the information, which is then discussed at the quarterly SRC meetings. They also reviewed the results of the Gallup Survey regarding staff engagement. They have not identified any concerning trends or anomalies.

As had been identified in the Strategic Plan, VR has been reviewing and making changes to agency policies. Two policies were amended, and all revisions had been reviewed with and approved by the SRC. They approved the *Client Purchases Operational Policy* and *North Dakota Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor Positions Policy*.

Provide the VR agency's response to the Council's input and recommendations, including an explanation for the rejection of any input and recommendations.

After review, the SRC approved the amendments to the Client Purchases Operational Policy and the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor Positions Policy.

Recommendation 1:

The SRC evaluated the Competitive Integrated Employment grant applications and made recommendations for the award recipients.

Response:

VR concurs and the awards were presented accordingly.

Recommendation 2:

The SRC reviewed the Employer of the Year nominations and selected a winner.

Response:

VR concurred and presented the Employer Award to the winning business.

(b) Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA). Section 101(a)(15), (17), and (23) of the Rehabilitation Act require VR agencies to provide an assessment of:

(1) The VR services needs of individuals with disabilities residing within the State, including:

North Dakota Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) conducts a Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) every three (3) years. Together with the State Rehabilitation Council's Evaluation Committee and research analysts from the state's research team, VR began planning for the FFY 2024-2026 assessment in 2022 and conducted the activities in 2023. The state will conduct the next activities in 2026 for the 2027-2029 Statewide Assessment. The results of the CSNA will be used to develop goals, priorities, strategies, and actions for both VR's State and Strategic Plans.

To obtain and assess unmet needs, slightly different surveys geared to assess the various areas were sent to:

- consumers with disabilities,
- transition-age youth,

- community partner agencies,
- community rehabilitation programs,
- businesses, and
- North Dakota VR staff.

(A) Individuals with the most significant disabilities and their need for Supported Employment;

According to this CSNA, individuals with the most significant disabilities need transportation to the workplace, increased training to teach job skills, and more job coaches.

Using information from both data collection methods, the following themes were identified related to the needs of individuals with the most significant disabilities, including their need for supported employment.

- Supported employment is crucial to meet the needs of individuals with the most significant disabilities; VR excels in providing services for supported employment.
- The quality of employment outcomes for individuals with the most significant disabilities needs to improve overall.
- Customized Employment training has occurred for VR staff and it has been implemented, but it has not yet been sustainable.
- The employment barriers that were most frequently cited for individuals with the most significant disabilities were transportation to the workplace, training to teach job skills, and job coaches.

(B) Individuals with disabilities who are minorities and individuals with disabilities who have been unserved or underserved by the VR program;

In North Dakota, 15.5% of the population is comprised of minorities. The breakdown of minorities as of 2022 is as follows: Native American is the largest of the minority groups at 4.7%, 4.3% are Hispanic, 3.2% are Black/African American, 2.3% are Other, comprised of individuals who have identified as having more than one race, and 1.8% are Asian/Pacific Islander. 4.4% identify as being two or more races.

The largest minority groups in ND is American Indian. There are four (4) reservations in North Dakota, two (2) of which currently have American Indian VR Projects. VR collaborates with and frequently has dual cases with those programs.

The three (3) most common barriers for minorities and those who have traditionally been unserved/underserved were reported as:

- Lack of transportation to the workplace
- Mental health challenges
- Lack of natural supports

According to this CSNA, minorities and those who have traditionally been unserved/underserved need transportation to the workplace, increased mental health supports, and connections to natural supports.

The following themes emerged from both data collection methods regarding the needs of individuals from racial/ethnic minorities and other traditionally unserved/underserved population groups.

The groups that were most reported as potentially unserved/underserved include those who are racial or ethnic minorities, those who struggle with mental health challenges, and those who have a history of alcohol or drug abuse.

Individuals with disabilities who also identify as being a member of a traditionally unserved/underserved population group may face limited access to VR services and supports, especially if they live in a rural area of the state. Many partner agencies indicated that they were unaware of the most common barriers of this population, while VR staff reported lack of education as a common barrier.

The employment barriers that were most frequently cited for individuals from racial/ethnic minorities and other traditionally unserved/underserved population groups were transportation to the workplace, mental health supports, and natural supports.

- (C) Individuals with disabilities served through other components of the workforce development system; and

VR has a good relationship with and collaborates, when possible, with our Workforce partners. Overall, VR's collaboration with the North Dakota Workforce Development System is seen as positive, but increased awareness across the state is necessary.

For individuals with disabilities who also receive services through the statewide workforce development system, the most commonly identified unmet needs were: workplace relationship training, followed by assistance with finding and/or keeping a job and finally physical and mental restoration services.

- (D) Youth with disabilities, including students with disabilities and their need for pre-employment transition services. Include an assessment of the needs of individuals with disabilities for transition career services and pre-employment transition services, and the extent to which such services are coordinated with transition services provided under IDEA.

Transition-age youth/students (ages 14-21) with disabilities identified:

- transportation to the workplace,
- increased training to teach social and interpersonal skills, and
- increased mental health supports as the most strongly ranked needs.

The following themes were identified related to the needs of transition-age youth/students, including their need for Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS).

- Overall, pre-employment services for transition-age youth/students are being provided by VR or school staff across the state, including rural school districts, for job exploration counseling, work-based learning experiences, workplace readiness training, instruction in self-advocacy, and opportunities for postsecondary programs.
- Unfortunately, some parents of transition-age youth/students are unaware of the Pre-ETS and supports that their children are receiving.
- VR staff and teacher turnover, along with geographic distances between rural communities in North Dakota, create challenges in providing individualized support and maintaining consistent contact with transition-age youth/students.

Based on information from the Department of Public Instruction in 2024, there are approximately 4,785 students who are between the ages of 14-21. These individuals could potentially receive Pre-ETS, Title 1 and/or supported employment services during the next one (1) to seven (7) years. VR and North Dakota Department of Public Instruction (DPI) collaborate to provide transition planning for students with disabilities age 14 and in 9th grade to 21 years of age. Some of the major disability categories of these students include the following:

Primary Disability	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	Total
Autism	128	136	125	95	58	30	28		600
Deaf-Blindness									
Emotional Disturbance	146	166	151	129	36				628
Hearing Impairment	13		13						26
Intellectual Disability	57	74	73	65	64	33	31	14	411

Non-Categorical Delay									
Other Health Impairment	292	266	248	206	100	23			1,135
Orthopedic Impairment									
Speech or Language Impairment	33	25	17		10				85
Specific Learning Disability	505	408	429	373	172	13			1,900
Traumatic Brain Injury									
Visual Impairment									
Total	1,174	1,075	1,056	868	440	99	59	14	4,785

There is a VR counselor assigned to every school in North Dakota. But due to the large numbers, in order to provide these transition students with Pre-ETS, in addition to the services provided by VR staff, VR has entered into purchase of service agreements with many local school districts to enhance or expand services. *Attachment (j)*

(2) Identify the need to establish, develop, or improve community rehabilitation programs within the State.

As part of the 2023 - 2025 CSNA, a link to the online survey was sent to individuals and directors of institutions and agencies chosen because of their likelihood to have a connection with or interest in individuals with disabilities. This included Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRPs) who are authorized to provide employment services to VR consumers, and staff from community partner agencies/organizations that coordinate/provide services or are in an advocacy role for North Dakotans with disabilities.

Unmet Needs:

Of the services that are not readily available for the consumers with disabilities who are supported by their CRPs, providing a language translator (75%), benefits planning (75%), and teaching employers about the benefits of hiring people with disabilities (75%) were most frequently cited.

Barriers:

The professionals from the CRPs who completed the survey reported that the consumers with disabilities to whom they provide services, face a variety of barriers to getting and keeping the jobs that they want. These included their consumers not having the right job skills (75%), their consumers not having good social/interpersonal skills (75%), and employers' concerns about hiring individuals with disabilities (75%) as the three (3) most cited barriers.

VR provides interpreter services to individuals who have limited English speaking ability. There are limited interpreters in the state, so VR has found virtual options. Staff are provided information regarding Video Remote Interpreting (VRI). This is an on-demand service that provides communication between deaf or hard-of-hearing persons or other languages in which VR staff can be in the same location, utilizing an interpreter by way of computer with a webcam and internet connection or a tablet using a cellular connection. North Dakota has a contract with Language Link. Language Link has three (3) separate services (Voice Interpretation, Video Remote Interpreter (including American Sign Language), and Secure Document Translation).

VR contracts with Rehab Services, Inc. (RSI) to provide benefits planning for individuals who have a current case with VR, and those who have had a VR case in the past. All individuals who are receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) are informed of the benefits planning services at intake. The individual is asked to sign the authorization to disclose information for a referral to RSI to schedule a benefits planning meeting. It remains the individual's choice to participate in benefits planning services. VR counselors and Business Service Specialists develop relationships with employers in the community by informing employers about the resources and services available through VR, such as, but not limited to: employee recruitment and retention, accommodations and assistive technology, disability awareness training, as well as state and federal tax incentives.

In addition to developing more and improving CRPs within the state, the need to connect with other community-based service providers to better support VR consumers was also suggested. VR is also prioritizing outreach to community partners to expand awareness of and increase collaboration with VR.

Additional discussion relative to CRPs is found in *Attachment (e)*.

(c) Goals, Priorities, and Strategies. Section 101(a)(15) and (23) of the Rehabilitation Act require VR agencies to describe the goals and priorities of the State in carrying out the VR and Supported Employment programs. The goals and priorities are based on (1) the most recent CSNA, including any updates; (2) the State's performance under the performance accountability measures of section 116 of WIOA; and (3) other available information on the operation and effectiveness of the VR program,

including any reports received from the SRC and findings and recommendations from monitoring activities conducted under section 107 of the Rehabilitation Act. VR agencies must—

- (1) Describe how the SRC and the VR agency jointly developed and agreed to the goals and priorities and any revisions; and

North Dakota Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) and the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) with representation from American Indian VR programs, the client assistance program and the State Independent Living Council (SILC), have jointly discussed the development of the goals and priorities for the State VR program. The SRC meets quarterly to provide input to the VR agency on emerging needs and this input is significant in shaping the goals and priorities of the VR agency. VR and the SRC held public forums this past year and invited consumers, parents, employers, and other stakeholders to provide input on the goals and priorities of the VR program.

The goals and priorities are in alignment with Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and the Vision, Goals and Strategies in the Unified State Plan.

- (2) Identify measurable goals and priorities in carrying out the VR and Supported Employment programs and the basis for selecting the goals and priorities (e.g., CSNA, performance accountability measures, SRC recommendations, monitoring, other information). As required in section 101(a)(15)(D), (18), and (23), describe under each goal or priority, the strategies or methods used to achieve the goal or priority, including as applicable, description of strategies or methods that—
 - (A) Support innovation and expansion activities;
 - (B) Overcome barriers to accessing VR and supported employment services;
 - (C) Improve and expand VR services for students with disabilities, including the coordination of services designed to facilitate the transition of such students from school to postsecondary life (including the receipt of VR services, post secondary education, employment, and pre-employment transition services); and
 - (D) Improve the performance of the VR and Supported Employment programs in assisting individuals with disabilities to achieve quality employment outcomes.
[text box: List and number each goal/priority, noting the basis, and under each goal/priority, list and number the strategies to achieve the goal/priority]

Goal 1: In the next two (2) years VR will improve collaboration with at least three (3) of the five (5) partners to improve client outcomes.

Priority 1: To comply with State and Federal regulations.

Priority 2: To provide opportunities for people with disabilities to obtain or maintain competitive employment.

Strategy 1.1 Increase of referrals from and co-enrollments with partners.

Strategy 1.2 Establish quarterly meetings with identified partners to improve communication and increase collaboration.

Innovation/enhancement/improvement

Strategy 1.3 Identify and develop joint processes for participants to access services.

Strategy 1.4 Explore integrating Information Technology (IT) infrastructure/architecture across WIOA partner agencies to explore and identify methods to streamline processes, identify trends and improve outcomes.

Innovation/enhancement/improvement

Goal 2: VR will develop an awareness campaign to promote VR services targeting employers, partners, and communities.

Priority 1: To comply with State and Federal regulations.

Priority 2: To provide opportunities for people with disabilities to obtain or maintain competitive integrated employment.

Strategy 2.1 Research options to expand Full-time equivalents (FTEs) within the state so VR has the resources to manage the campaign.

Innovation/enhancement/improvement

Strategy 2.2 Identify outcomes to measure the success of the campaign.

Strategy 2.3 VR will update outreach materials and ensure accessibility.

Innovation/enhancement/improvement

Strategy 2.4 Expand the scope and type of our social media presence to improve communication.

Innovation/enhancement/improvement

Goal 3: In the next two (2) years, VR will explore alternate methods to increase the accessibility of those needing VR services throughout the state.

Priority 1: To comply with State and Federal regulations.

Priority 2: To provide opportunities for people with disabilities to obtain or maintain competitive integrated employment.

Strategy 3.1 Develop strategies to better reach participants in rural areas to improve accessibility.

Innovation/enhancement/improvement

Strategy 3.2 Ensure staff and participants have the training and resources to utilize virtual services such as FaceTime, TEAMS and other platforms.

Innovation/enhancement/improvement

Strategy 3.3 Educate or promote VR services to targeted populations by increasing outreach efforts.

Innovation/enhancement/improvement

Goal 4: VR will provide education and support to 2,250 businesses with a 3% growth each year.

Priority 1: To comply with Federal regulations.

Priority 2: To assist employers with meeting their labor needs.

Priority 3: To provide education and awareness to employers on the benefits of hiring and retaining individuals with disabilities.

Strategy 4.1 VR will define and enhance the business services program.

Strategy 4.2 Identify agency needs to determine gaps in services and the need for additional positions.

Innovation/enhancement/improvement

Strategy 4.3 Improve collaboration with partners to coordinate business outreach efforts.

Innovation/enhancement/improvement

Strategy 4.4 Provide education to businesses about VR services and how VR can support them.

Innovation/enhancement/improvement

(d) Evaluation and Reports of Progress: VR and Supported Employment Goals. For the most recently completed program year, provide an evaluation and report of progress for the goals or priorities, including progress on the strategies under each goal or priority, applicable to that program year. Sections 101(a)(15) and 101(a)(23) of the Rehabilitation Act require VR agencies to describe—

(1) Progress in achieving the goals and priorities identified for the VR and Supported Employment Programs;

[text box: List the goals/priorities and discuss the progress or completion of each goal/priority and related strategies]

Goal 1: VR will assist 1,100 individuals with disabilities obtain or maintain competitive integrated employment during PY 22-23.

Priority 1: To comply with State and Federal regulations.

Priority 2: To provide opportunities for people with disabilities to obtain or maintain competitive integrated employment.

This goal was met for PY22 as we had over 50% at 691 successful rehabilitations and we are on track to meet the goal in PY23.

Strategies that impacted the outcome:

- VR worked on improving relationships with partners. Those strengthened relationships have resulted in an increase in applicants and a higher rate of placement.
- VR has implemented procedures to expedite eligibility and work to quickly to development of the IPE. The purpose of these new procedures is to keep participants engaged throughout the VR process and moving towards goal attainment.
- VR has partnered with the Bis-Man Prison Re-entry Coalition to assist individuals who are being released from the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (DOCR) and or are otherwise justice involved to pilot a program for individuals with disabilities who will be released to the criminal justice system to assist them with employment.
- Implemented premium payments to Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRPs) to encourage providers to assist individuals who have the most significant disabilities with additional barriers to find competitive integrated employment.

Goal 2: VR will provide 5,000 services to employers throughout PY 22-23.

Priority 1: To comply with Federal regulations.

Priority 2: To assist employers with meeting their labor needs.

Priority 3: To provide education and awareness to employers on the benefits of hiring and retaining individuals with disabilities.

This goal was met for PY22, and we are on track to meet the goal in PY23. 3,383 services were provided to 2,065 employers in PY22.

Strategies that impacted the outcome:

- VR has Business Service Specialists (BSS) as well as Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) coordinators who are able to provide recommendations and education regarding ADA to businesses and their employees.
- VR staff attended a variety of virtual and in person job fairs as part of their outreach to businesses.
- VR has a representative to the Council of Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) National Employment Team (NET) to better understand the needs and expectations of businesses.
- VR had selected staff attend training such as: Innovative Guided Rehabilitation Employer Engagement Training Series, the WINDMILLS training, as well as the ADA Coordinator Training Certification Program (ACTCP).

Goal 3: VR will strive to decrease staff turnover rate to less than 15% during PY 22-23.

Priority 1: To assist staff with their professional development.

Priority 2: To provide more consistent and stable service to

This goal was met as the turnover rate for PY 2022 was at 10%.

Strategies that impacted the outcome:

- Staff wages were increased to help with staff retention,
- Staff completed the GALLUP survey, and each office developed a plan to increase staff engagement.
- Qualified Rehabilitation Professional (QRP) credential requirements were changed, and specific training was provided to develop competencies while still supporting counselors who wanted to obtain their CRC.
- Hybrid work sites have been implemented allowing more flexibility in work site location.
- A workgroup created a career wheel to outline opportunities for staff advancement.

(2) Performance on the performance accountability indicators under section 116 of WIOA for the most recently completed program year, reflecting actual and negotiated levels of performance. Explain any discrepancies in the actual and negotiated levels; and

Performance Indicators	PY 2022 Negotiated Level	PY 2022 Achieved Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	60.0	69.6
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	59.0	62.0

Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	\$4141	\$5204
Credential Attainment Rate	52.6	68.8
Measurable Skill Gains	68.1 Not measured in 2022	67.5
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable	Not Applicable

(3) The use of funds reserved for innovation and expansion activities (sections 101(a)(18) and 101(a)(23) of the Rehabilitation Act) (e.g., SRC, SILC).

During PY 2022, innovation and expansion funds were spent on the following activities:

ADA:

VR continues to participate with on-going education and seven (7) staff attended the ACTCP. In addition, nine (9) staff attended the ADA National Conference virtually. VR’s regional offices have staff who are trained to support referrals and provide resources to employers and businesses in the community.

Business Services:

Funds were used to pay for business, technical, and professional service organization memberships, including Chamber of Commerce, Society of Human Resource Management (SHRM), and Rotary Clubs for regional and state VR staff. This results in higher visibility of VR within the business community and by our individuals. Funds were also used for booth registration at high-profile regional and state conferences and events. They enabled us to develop long-term partnerships with business owners and employers based on common goals, which should enhance recruitment and retention practices benefiting individuals with disabilities. In addition, funds were used to expand the scope and type of our social media presence as well as to redesign the web page. This resulted in improved communication by providing more detailed information, clarity, and accessibility.

Community Rehabilitation Providers:

VR has developed a practice of conducting monthly and quarterly meetings with CRPs to improve overall communication with providers. VR has also begun onboarding new CRP staff and developed a provider track at the annual conference to expand participation/involvement. In addition, VR has tried to keep the reimbursement rate competitive and has also added the addition for premium payments to offset costs for individuals who have traditionally been more difficult for providers to successfully place and train, thereby providing an incentive for providers to accept these individuals. These new practices will impact services at both a case and system level.

Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (DOCR)

VR has worked to expand their relationship with DOCR, by assigning staff to the correctional facilities and attending local Justice Involved meetings, VR has become involved with individuals who are preparing to re-enter the community, assisting with their transition into employment. This project has resulted in improved relationships with DOCR and has had experienced success at both the case and system level.

Transition:

VR has transition contracts with local education units where students received pre-employment transition services (Pre-ETS) and as a result were able to participate in various work experiences, including job shadows, as well as developing resumes and practicing interviewing skills.

State Rehabilitation Council:

Funds were used to provide travel and per diem to SRC members.

Statewide Independent Living Council:

Funds were used to provide travel and per diem to SILC members. Several SILC members were also sent to the Dakota's Conference with travel and per diem reimbursed.

(e) Supported Employment Services, Distribution of Title VI Funds, and Arrangements and Cooperative Agreements for the Provision of Supported Employment Services.

(1) Acceptance of title VI funds:

- (A) [] VR agency requests to receive title VI funds.
- (B) VR agency does NOT elect to receive title VI funds and understands that supported employment services must still be provided under title I.

(2) If the VR agency has elected to receive title VI funds, Section 606(b)(3) of the Rehabilitation Act requires VR agencies to include specific goals and priorities with respect to the distribution of title VI funds received under section 603 of the Rehabilitation Act for the provision of supported employment services. Describe the use of title VI funds and how they will be used in meeting the goals and priorities of the Supported Employment program.

Vocational Rehabilitation's (VR) primary goal for the utilization of Title VI-B funds is to provide training and stabilization for individuals with the most severe disabilities per year. It's projected that during FFY 2025, 460 individuals will be designated as eligible for supported employment (SE) as well as customized employment (CE), and 96 will be expected to become employed. During FFY 2023, 386 individuals were designated as eligible for SE and 81 became employed. The breakdown by disability of those employed is expected to be similar to that of

FFY 2023: cognitive impairments – 62%; psychosocial impairments – 29%; physical impairments – 7%; and communicative impairments – 2%.

VR will ensure a minimum of 50% will be spent on youth and that those funds are met with a 10% match. Based on previous patterns, VR is confident that achieving this set aside will not be a concern. The latest data indicates that 50% of the SEP funds were spent on youth.

VR purchases services from 23 Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRPs), for the provision of SE and extended services.

In the fall of 2021 VR went on a tour across the state to meet individually with providers to discuss issues and concerns faced by providers. One area discussed was placing difficult clients and the current VR reimbursement rate for services. In January 2023, VR introduced a new system of premium payments for successfully rehabilitated cases across various employment services, including Job Development and Placement, On-the-Job Supports, Short-Term, Supported, and Customized Employment. Furthermore, the agency continued Outcome payments for Supported and Customized Employment, while extending them to Job Development and Placement and On-the-Job Supports, Short-term cases. This decision was based on a comprehensive review of payment structures from other VR state agencies and a thorough fiscal analysis of VR dollars. The aim was to ensure that the payment amounts aligned with the needs of providers while maintaining fiscal responsibility for the agency.

Successful premium payments were created for the following six categories:

- Criminal background (felony and misdemeanors if relevant to employment and based on counselor judgement).
- Any client who desires to obtain or maintain employment in the community where they live, excluding the eight (8) regional cities, Valley City or Wahpeton.
- Professional placement (any client with an associate degree or higher and being placed in a position requiring this level of education).
- Brain injury.
- Substance use disorder.
- Autism and intellectual disability.

The following requirements must be satisfied before VR can successfully close a case:

- The individual has maintained employment and achieved stability in the work setting for a minimum of 90 days after transitioning to extended services.
- The job must meet the definition of competitive integrated employment (CIE) (as outlined in the Supported Employment policy) consistent with the strengths, abilities, interests, and informed choice of the individual.
- The VR counselor must have received and reviewed the final progress report and invoice prior to releasing the final payment.

If successful closure criteria are not met, no outcome or premium payments will be released.

Another outcome of the fall of 2021 provider tours occurred in April 2023, VR and CRP staff began meeting on a monthly or quarterly basis to ensure coordination of services and to improve communication. These meetings provide a structured platform for both agencies to share information, address challenges, and collectively work towards improving vocational outcomes for individuals with disabilities. Regular communication and collaboration are crucial for creating a supportive partnership.

Finally, the last outcome of the fall of 2021 tour included the implementation of a provider service and planning meeting to be held before beginning employment services. This collaborative meeting is a person center process to include the individual, parents, guardian, and others who provide support services to an individual, so everyone understands their role, the goal and the supports the individual may need to be successful in employment. This process is intended to ensure open communication and address obstacles that might affect the person being successfully employed.

In the 2023-2025 legislative session, House Bill 1244, related to an income tax credit for the employment of individuals with developmental disability or severe mental illness, was passed. The bill took away the sunset clause and no longer limits the number of approved tax credits for individuals that meet the criteria of the bill. The removal of the sunset clause and the absence of limits on approved tax credits for eligible individuals could be a positive step in encouraging employers to hire individuals facing significant barriers to employment. North Dakota and the North Dakota Office of State Tax Commissioner will jointly administer this program which may encourage employers to hire individuals who have consistently faced significant barriers to employment.

The Customized Employment/Supported Employment (CE/SE) Tax Credit Program provides a ND income tax credit to employers for hiring an individual in one of the following target groups:

- Individuals with a developmental disability
- Individuals with a severe mental illness

VR is responsible for determining if an individual meets the targeted group criteria and meets the following:

- has a most significant developmental or mental disability,
- is eligible for VR services, and
- requires CE in order to obtain CIE.

(3) Supported employment services may be provided with title 1 or title VI funds following placement of individuals with the most significant disabilities in employment. In accordance with section

101(a)(22) and section 606(b)(3) of the Rehabilitation Act, describe the quality, scope, and extent of supported employment services to be provided to individuals with the most significant disabilities, including youth with the most significant disabilities; and the timing of transition to extended services.

SE/CE services are available to individuals with the most significant disabilities in all disability categories including developmental disabilities, severe mental illness, brain injury, and physical disabilities. Services are provided by 23 CRPs. VR projects to serve 460 individuals with the most significant disabilities, in CIE placements.

Youth, with the most significant disabilities who require SE to obtain and maintain CIE, will receive training and stabilization through Title VI or general VR federal funds. If funding for extended services is not available for maintenance, extended services will be provided with state/federal VR funds for a period not to exceed four (4) years.

VR is exploring virtual job coaching as a means of supporting individuals with disabilities in employment settings. The potential advantages:

- **Accessibility:** Virtual job coaching can reach individuals in remote or rural areas where traditional in-person services might be limited. This improves access to support for people who may face geographical barriers.
- **Flexibility:** Virtual job coaching provides flexibility in scheduling and engagement. It allows individuals to access support when it's convenient for them, promoting a more personalized and adaptable approach.
- **Cost-Effective:** Implementing virtual job coaching can be cost-effective compared to traditional in-person coaching. It reduces expenses related to travel and accommodations for coaches, making the service more scalable.
- **Customization:** Virtual platforms can facilitate personalized coaching experiences, tailoring support to individual needs. This customization can enhance the effectiveness of the coaching process.
- **Technology Integration:** Utilizing technology allows for the integration of various tools and resources. Virtual platforms can incorporate multimedia content, interactive exercises, and assessments to enhance the learning and coaching experience.
- **Increased Independence:** Virtual job coaching can empower individuals to take charge of their own learning and development. It encourages self-directed problem-solving and decision-making, fostering a sense of independence.
- **Reduced Stigma:** Virtual job coaching may reduce the stigma associated with seeking assistance, as individuals can access support from the privacy of their homes. This can contribute to a more inclusive and supportive environment.
- **Broader Reach:** Virtual platforms enable the coaching service to reach a larger audience. This broader reach can positively impact more individuals with disabilities who may benefit from job coaching support.

- Real-Time Feedback: Virtual job coaching can provide real-time feedback, allowing for immediate adjustments and improvements. This real-time interaction can enhance the learning process and contribute to more effective coaching outcomes.
- Integration with Work Environment: Virtual job coaching can be seamlessly integrated into the work environment, allowing coaches to understand the specific challenges and opportunities within a particular job setting.

As VR explores virtual job coaching options, these benefits can contribute to a more inclusive and supportive approach to assisting individuals with disabilities in their employment journey.

Individuals with the most significant disabilities will be served and outcomes achieved through the implementation of the following activities:

- Continued education and awareness activities for the business community, lawmakers, service providers, educators, family members, and the general public.
- Targeting SE or CE as an outcome for students with the most severe disabilities transitioning from school to work through regional transition services. Ensuring that VR staff, providers, and school personnel have a clear understanding of these services is crucial and can start well before graduation. This proactive approach aims to facilitate a seamless transition for high school students into the world of work. By enhancing client engagement through comprehensive awareness, we can contribute to better success for participants in the VR process.
- Coordination of the departments, agencies, divisions, organizations, and programs whose activities have a direct impact on SE or CE services.
- Identification of training and technical assistance needs based on provider outcome data.
- Continue to require licensing for all SE and CE providers which will include accreditation by a national accrediting body.
- Continue to have semi-annual meetings with providers to provide technical assistance and training.
- Regional offices will continue to meet quarterly with providers in their communities to address concerns, share information, etc.
- Enhance the provider track at the VR annual conference to elevate staff training and foster networking opportunities between VR and provider staff. This initiative aims to create a more robust platform for professional development, knowledge exchange, and collaboration within the VR community.
- Continue to work with extended services funding sources to ensure individuals can utilize SE and access supports once the VR case is closed.

SE training is provided up to 24 months unless more time is necessary for the client. To ensure continuity and a smooth transition, documentation must demonstrate that the individual meets the criteria for transitioning to extended services.

Individuals, once employed, begin the training piece of SE through the assistance of the individual's job coach. The job coach will provide training to the employer and the individual on job tasks, reasonable accommodations, and how to ensure the individual has the skills necessary to perform the work tasks, as independently as possible. The VR counselor must visit the individual at the employment site within 30 days of the individual becoming employed. The visit is coordinated with the CRP. Further visits will occur based on individual or employer needs.

Stabilization is the expected point of transition to extended services. Individuals are considered stabilized in employment if:

- all support needs have been addressed and necessary modifications or accommodations have been made at the worksite.
- the individual is satisfied with the type of work.
- the individual is satisfied with the overall number of hours worked per week.
- the individual is working to one's maximum ability, as independently as possible.
- the individual and employer agree that the person is performing the job, and meeting expectations of employment; and
- the individual has reached a consistent intervention rate.

Transfer to extended services.

- Prior to transitioning to extended services the VR counselor will schedule a team meeting. The team, which includes the extended services funder, must concur that the individual is stable in the job.
- The VR counselor and extended services funder will identify the date the case will be transferred from VR to extended services.
- The VR counselor will notify the individual and CRP with the projected date the individual will be ready to transfer to extended services.
- The VR counselor will review the CRP progress report until the case can be closed to ensure the individual remains stable in a job and address any concerns that may arise.
- The individual must be in extended services for a minimum of 90 days prior to case closure.

(4) Sections 101(a)(22) and 606(b)(4) of the Rehabilitation Act require the VR agency to describe efforts to identify and arrange, including entering into cooperative agreements, with other State agencies and other appropriate entities in order to provide supported employment services. The

description must include extended services, as applicable, to individuals with the most significant disabilities, including the provision of extended services to youth with the most significant disabilities in accordance with 34 CFR 363.4(a) and 34 CFR 361.5(c)(19)(v).

VR purchases services from two (2) for-profit, one (1) partnership and 20 non-profit CRPs, for the provision of SE and extended services. VR developed three (3) new providers in 2022/2023.

VR will continue agreements with the current 23 CRPs to provide training and stabilization throughout the state. Extended services will also be provided by the CRPs with state general funds, and Medicaid waived services for individuals who qualify for services through the Developmental Disabilities (DD) Division and are eligible for Medicaid services. Collaboratively, VR and DD are actively working together to establish a person-centered approach for individuals receiving VR or DD services, aiming to enhance CIE opportunities for individuals with intellectual disabilities.

Extended Services, also known as follow-along support services, become accessible to individuals once they secure employment. These services are provided periodically to address emerging work-related issues. The primary objective of follow-up support services is to proactively identify and resolve any problems or concerns early on, thereby maximizing the potential for long-lasting work opportunities. These services can be accessed either through a contract administered by the Behavioral Health Division with Rocky Mountain Rehab or via 1915 (i), a program coordinated through Medical Services and the Behavioral Health Division. Rocky Mountain Rehab offers extended services tailored for individuals with behavioral health diagnoses, autism, or physical limitations. It's important to note that slots for these specialized services are limited, and funding is provided through state general fund dollars. If a 1915(i) eligible member is receiving SE services through VR, and the plan involves transitioning to ongoing follow-along supports through the 1915(i) SE service, it is essential for the VR Supported Employment provider to keep both the 1915(i) Care Coordinator and the VR Counselor informed in preparation for the client's shift from VR-funded SE to 1915(i) SE. Service delivery must align with the individual's preferences, including scheduling, choice of provider, and work direction, while also considering common courtesies such as timeliness and reliability.

For youth who qualify for and require SE but will not immediately be able to access extended services funded through state general funds or Medicaid waived services, VR will cover the cost of extended services, as outlined in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. Services are paid at the extended services rate. The VR counselor will provide the individual and family with the necessary information and referral so they may apply for or consider alternate extended services funding for those individuals who are receiving extended services youth, through the VR agency.

VR will continue to work with the Behavioral Health division, DD division, Division of Aging Services, County TBI Waiver Services and service providers to coordinate funding and services.

(f) Annual Estimates. Sections 101(a)(15) and 101(a)(23) of the Rehabilitation Act require all VR agencies to annually conduct a full assessment of their resources and ability to serve all eligible individuals before the start of the Federal fiscal year. In accordance with 34 CFR § 361.29(b), annual estimates must include the following projections:

(1) Estimates for next Federal fiscal year—

(A) VR Program; and

Priority Category (if applicable)	No. of Individuals Eligible for Services	No. of Eligible Individuals Expected to Receive Services under VR Program	Costs of Services using Title I Funds	No. of Eligible Individuals Not Receiving Services (if applicable)
NA	2,100	4,736	\$3,514,000	NA

(B) Supported Employment Program.

Priority Category (if applicable)	No. of Individuals Eligible for Services	No. of Eligible Individuals Expected to Receive Services under Supported Employment Program	Costs of Services using Title I and Title VI Funds	No. of Eligible Individuals Not Receiving Services (if applicable)
NA	460	414	\$991,000	NA

(g) Order of Selection.

[X] The VR agency is **not** implementing an order of selection and all eligible individuals will be served.

[check box] The VR agency is implementing an order of selection with one or more categories closed.

* VR agencies may maintain an order of selection policy and priority of eligible individuals without implementing or continuing to implement an order of selection.

Pursuant to section 101(a)(5) of the Rehabilitation Act, this description must be amended when the VR agency determines, based on the annual estimates described in description (f), that VR services cannot be provided to all eligible individuals with disabilities in the State who apply for and are determined eligible for services.

(1) For VR agencies that have defined priority categories describe—

(A) The justification for the order;

NA

(B) The order (priority categories) to be followed in selecting eligible individuals to be provided VR services ensuring that individuals with the most significant disabilities are selected for services before all other individuals with disabilities; and

NA

(C) The VR agency's goals for serving individuals in each priority category, including how the agency will assist eligible individuals assigned to closed priority categories with information and referral, the method in which the VR agency will manage waiting lists, and the projected timelines for opening priority categories. NOTE: Priority categories are considered open when all individuals in the priority category may be served.

NA

(2) Has the VR agency elected to serve eligible individuals outside of the order of selection who require specific services or equipment to maintain employment?

NA

(h) Waiver of Statewideness. The State plan shall be in effect in all political subdivisions of the State, however, the Commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration (Commissioner) may waive compliance with this requirement in accordance with section 101(a)(4) of the Rehabilitation Act and the

implementing regulations in 34 CFR 361.26. If the VR agency is requesting a waiver of statewidness or has a previously approved waiver of statewidness, describe the types of services and the local entities providing such services under the waiver of statewidness and how the agency has complied with the requirements in 34 CFR 361.26. If the VR agency is not requesting or does not have an approved waiver of statewidness, please indicate “not applicable.”

Not applicable.

(i) Comprehensive System of Personnel Development. In accordance with the requirements in section 101(a)(7) of the Rehabilitation Act, the VR agency must develop and maintain annually a description (consistent with the purposes of the Rehabilitation Act) of the VR agency’s comprehensive system of personnel development, which shall include a description of the procedures and activities the VR agency will undertake to ensure it has an adequate supply of qualified State rehabilitation professionals and paraprofessionals that provides the following:

(1) Analysis of current personnel and projected personnel needs including—

- (A) The number and type of personnel that are employed by the VR agency in the provision of vocational rehabilitation services, including ratios of qualified vocational rehabilitation counselors to clients;
- (B) The number of personnel currently needed by the VR agency to provide VR services, broken down by personnel category; and
- (C) Projections of the number of personnel, broken down by personnel category, who will be needed by the VR agency to provide VR services in 5 years based on projections of the number of individuals to be served, including individuals with significant disabilities, the number of personnel expected to retire or leave the field, and other relevant factors.

Personnel Category	No. of Personnel Employed	No. of Personnel Currently Needed	Projected No. of Personnel Needed in 5 Years
Director	1	0	1
Assistant Director	1	0	1
State Office Program Administrators and Support Staff	8	0	6
Regional Administrators	8	0	4
Business Services Specialists	3	1	3
Career Assessment Specialists	2	0	2

Vision Rehabilitation Specialists	7	0	6
VR Counselor	39	2	8
Rehab Tech	3	0	0
Regional Support Staff	10	0	6

(D) Ratio of qualified VR counselors to clients: The current counselor to client ratio is 1 to 110.

(E) Projected number of individuals to be served in 5 years: VR is projecting that 7,800 will be served in five (5) years.

(2) Data and information on personnel preparation and development, recruitment and retention, and staff development, including the following:

(A) A list of the institutions of higher education in the State that are preparing VR professionals, by type of program; the number of students enrolled at each of those institutions, broken down by type of program; and the number of students who graduated during the prior year from each of those institutions with certification or licensure, or with the credentials for certification or licensure, broken down by the personnel category for which they have received, or have the credentials to receive, certification or licensure.

Institute of Higher Education	Type of Program	No. of Students Enrolled	No. of Prior Year Graduates
University of North Dakota	Counselor Education/School Counseling And Guidance	239	65
	Forensic Psychology	127	77
	Human Resources Management/Personnel Administration	27	17
	Psychology, General	444	105
	Rehabilitation Science	104	14
	Social Work	257	136
	Sociology	16	14
	Special Education	202	99
North Dakota State University	Counselor Education/School	239	174

	Counseling And Guidance		
	Human Development And Family Studies	450	148
	Psychology, General	429	103
	Psychometrics And Quantitative Psychology.	2	0
	Sociology	27	24
Minot State University	Disability Studies	5	3
	Psychology, General	83	18
	Rehabilitation Science	19	2
	Social Work	82	43
	Sociology	5	4
	Special Education	111	48
	Substance Abuse/Addiction Counseling	26	9
Dickinson State University	Human Resources Management/Personnel Administration	18	9
	Psychology, General	39	8
Mayville State University	Applied Psychology	26	7
	Special Education	19	9
Valley City State University	Human Services, General	39	20
	Psychology, General	28	5

- (B) The VR agency’s plan for recruitment, preparation and retention of qualified personnel, which addresses the current and projected needs for qualified personnel; and the coordination and facilitation of efforts between the VR agency and institutions of higher education and professional associations to recruit, prepare, and retain personnel who are qualified, including personnel from minority backgrounds and personnel who are individuals with disabilities.

North Dakota Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) lists all counselor job openings with Job Service North Dakota, various universities, and the North Dakota State Government website. The agency preference is to hire individuals with a master’s degree in rehabilitation counseling with credentials to qualify for certification. North Dakota VR will also consider the possibility of paid internships as an incentive to attract master’s level interns with the intention of retaining them

for counselor openings. For hard to fill counselor positions, the agency has considered offering a sign-on bonus when advertising for counselor positions. The Director and Assistant Director have been working with the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Human Resource Department to improve job announcements for VR positions.

To be considered as a VR Counselor you must have a bachelor's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling, Counseling, Social Work, Psychology, Rehabilitation Administration/Services, Psychometrics, Behavioral Health, Behavioral Science, Disability Studies, Human Relations, Human Services, Marriage and Family Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Special Education, Vocational Assessment/Evaluation or Human Development & Family Science; AND one (1) of the following: two (2) years of direct service experience working with persons with disabilities OR one (1) year of experience as a VR counselor OR a master's degree in one (1) of the above disciplines.

Individuals selected for any VR counselor position will be required to meet the North Dakota Qualified Rehabilitation Professional (QRP) standards within five (5) years from the date of appointment. Tuition assistance is available through VR.

Position may be filled as a Senior VR Counselor. To be considered as a Senior VR Counselor you must have a master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling, Counseling, Social Work, Psychology, Rehabilitation Administration/Services, Psychometrics, Behavioral Health, Behavioral Science, Disability Studies, Human Relations, Human Services, Marriage and Family Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Special Education or Vocational Assessment/Evaluation, AND two (2) years of experience as a VR, AND Certified Rehabilitation Counselor certification.

Currently, universities in North Dakota do not offer a master's degree in rehabilitation counseling. Therefore, the agency is required to recruit graduate-level counselors from out-of-state. We are often unsuccessful in this effort because in most instances, our salaries are not competitive at the graduate level. If we are successful in recruiting graduate level counselors, we often find it difficult to retain them for the same reason. The University of North Dakota does offer a master's degree in counseling with an emphasis on rehabilitation and they have reached out to VR to determine what they can do to expand their program. Through our discussions, they developed necessary courses to meet the program requirements as well as making the program available through their distance learning platform. In addition, VR has started sending job announcements to them to post on their student site; as well as universities that offer a master's degree in rehabilitation counseling.

In December of 2022 the agency, through the legislative process, revised the definition of QRP, from requiring an individual to be a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor to a bachelor's

degree with training and field experience. The agency made this change, due to limited applicants, retention of existing staff and positions remaining open for an extended period.

In North Dakota a counselor will meet the QRP standard upon completing training, field experience and evaluation of competency areas by their regional administrator (RA) and members of the subject matter expert (SME) team for QRP obtainment. To ensure counselors have a 21st-century understanding of the evolving labor force and the needs of individuals with disabilities specialized training and field experience enable them to develop the necessary skills to work effectively with individuals and businesses. The RA is the primary person responsible for ensuring counselor have the skills to meet the QRP competency standards, according to the minimum Requirements of a Qualified Rehabilitation Professional (§361.18(c)(2)(ii)).

The Training Administrator will meet with the RA and counselor to review the training areas and assigned training modules through the Yes/LMS training platform and through other training resources. Focus training areas outlined in the North Dakota Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Training Areas, Tools, and Field Experience Activities Counselor – Qualified Rehabilitation Professional (QRP) Document will guide the RA and counselor through the training areas which include:

1. Intake/Vocational Diagnostic Interview (VDI)
2. Client Engagement/Counseling & Guidance
3. Comprehensive Assessment and Assessment Tools
4. Eligibility and Functional Limitations
5. Case Management
6. Community Partners
7. Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) & Services
8. Case Documentation
9. Case Closure

The RA will train/guide the individuals through each of the modules. Once the RA feels the individual is competent in a section, they will send the required documentation for the SME team to review and provide feedback. The only section not required to be reviewed by the SME team is the Community Partners Section. The Case Documentation and Client Engagement sections will be the last piece reviewed by the SME team. Should a RA assign a senior counselor to carry out training responsibilities, a mentorship agreement will be completed. This will ensure the mentor, mentee and supervisor are aware of their roles and responsibilities.

North Dakota VR recruits individuals with disabilities and provides reasonable accommodations needed to perform essential job functions. In addition, reasonable accommodation requests from current staff are addressed as they arise.

- (C) Description of staff development policies, procedures, and activities that ensure all personnel employed by the VR agency receive appropriate and adequate training and continuing education for professionals and paraprofessionals:
- i. Particularly with respect to assessment, vocational counseling, job placement, and rehabilitation technology, including training implemented in coordination with entities carrying out State programs under section 4 of the Assistive Technology Act of 1998; and
 - ii. Procedures for the acquisition and dissemination of significant knowledge from research and other sources to VR agency professionals and paraprofessionals and for providing training regarding the amendments to the Rehabilitation Act made by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.

VR assesses training needs of current staff at all levels – administrative, counselor, vision rehabilitation specialists (VRS), career assessment specialists, business services specialists (BSS), rehabilitation techs and support staff, at least annually. Staff are provided with the following statement to help them identify training needs: training that enhances staff's ability to perform their job and meet the needs of clients. The agency recognizes that training needs are different throughout regions, caseloads, and individuals. Staff are provided with areas to consider for training, regardless of their position within the agency to include training related to the Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act (WIOA) implementation, Federal Regulations, Diversity topics, Business Engagement, Client Engagement, Career Exploration, Labor Market Information, Self-care, Assistive Technology, Job Placements, Assessments, Leadership, Professional Development, Counseling skills, your job duties outlined in your Job Description Questionnaire (JDQ), and/or QRP Standards (for counselors and RAs). The training needs assessment occurs in the summer, this allows planning for the next year's training agenda. The results of the training needs assessment focuses on two levels of training: 1) Statewide training topics that are consistent with the State Plan, WIOA Regulations, Rehabilitation Services Administration's Case Service Report (RSA-911) requirements and Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) priorities through Policy Directives (PDs) and Technical Assistance Circulars (TACs); and 2) Regional training that addresses issues identified through case reviews, performance appraisals and other training that will assist staff in progressing towards their career goals.

In 2023, VR was able to send one (1) individual to the University of Washington's Emerging Leaders program. The agency will continue to develop leadership within the organization. In

addition, the agency is working towards further developing clinical supervision skills for managers so they can better support and develop staff to improve services for individuals served by the agency.

VR receives and distributes information, such as rehabilitation journals, PDs and TACs from RSA, training tools developed through the Technical Assistance Centers (TAC-QM, TAC-QE and NTACTION), TrainVR.org, the National Clearinghouse of Rehabilitation Research Materials, etc. North Dakota VR supports participation in professional organizations by encouraging attendance and providing registration and travel expenses for professional organization meetings and conferences.

Dollars are allocated to staff to attend workshops, webinars, conferences, formal course work training in rehabilitation counseling, medical assessments, ethics, job placement, rehabilitation technology, ADA and other rehabilitation related trainings. All employees have access to these professional development opportunities. The agency's continuing education program also allows reimbursement for the cost of tuition and books for classes that are related to job duties, to ensure employee skill development. This includes supporting counselors to obtain their Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC), when RSA long-term training grants are not available, the Low Vision certification for VRS, assessment course work for the Career Assessment specialist and training for BSS (Windmills training and ADA coursework to obtain their ADA Coordinator Training Certification Program (ACTPC) certification.

ND VR recently finalized a contract with YES/LMS management system in January 2024. This system will allow the agency to develop training tracks for positions and track professional development of VR staff. The system will allow ND VR to share training developed by our agency, as well as acquire additional training options developed by other state VR agencies.

(3) Description of VR agency policies and procedures for the establishment and maintenance of personnel standards consistent with section 101(a)(7)(B) to ensure that VR agency professional and paraprofessional personnel are adequately trained and prepared, including—

- (A) Standards that are consistent with any national or State-approved or -recognized certification, licensing, registration, or other comparable requirements that apply to the profession or discipline in which such personnel are providing VR services; and
- (B) The establishment and maintenance of education and experience requirements, in accordance with section 101(a)(7)(B)(ii) of the Rehabilitation Act, to ensure that the personnel have a 21st century understanding of the evolving labor force and the needs of individuals with disabilities.

VR Staff with their CRCs are: 19 counselors, seven (7) RAs and four (4) state office staff. For a counselor to become a senior counselor they must pursue their CRC. VR values the CRC

and supports counselors who are interested in pursuing this opportunity through finding schools that offer the RSA long-term training grant, or providing financial support through tuition, books, and travel for micro classes on campus. VRS are also supported in securing a Low Vision Certification, so they can better serve their clients. Currently, 58% of field staff meet the QRP standards. The VR agency anticipates six (6) additional staff will be eligible to take the CRC exam in the next two (2) years.

North Dakota VR is an approved continuing education provider through Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification (CRCC), and the Human Resource Development (HRD) administrator coordinates and notifies staff of various training opportunities throughout the year. In addition, monthly training opportunities occur through video conferencing; as well as in-person training at the VR annual conference. In 2021 the agency developed a contract with the World of Work Inventory (WOWI) for assessment training for all staff. The contract will continue, so new counselors can participate in this training moving forward. In, 2023/2024 counselors, RAs and state office staff will receive in person training on case documentation. VR also supports staff with attending in person and virtual conferences and participating in online training through the TAC QE and QM. ADA Coordinators attend the National ADA symposium virtually each year. Each region can send one or two people to the in-person transition conference, behavioral health conference and the Society for Human Resources Management (SHRM). In January 2024, ND VR finalized a contract with Yes/LMS, which will assist the agency and outline training paths for various positions to include counselors working towards their QRP, as well as support staff, VRS, BSS, etc.

The RAs review counselor's progress in reaching QRP standards at least annually during the counselor's performance review. North Dakota does not have any institutions that prepare rehabilitation professionals. Staff from the state office did work with the University of North Dakota to coordinate with CRCC so the university can offer a self-paced module and medical aspects of disability and case management.

VR assesses the training needs of the current staff at all levels - administrative, counselor, VRS, career assessment specialists, BSS, and support staff. The needs assessment focuses on two (2) levels of training: 1) Statewide training topics that are consistent with the State Plan, WIOA Regulations, RSA 911 requirements, and RSA priorities; and (2) Regional training that addresses issues identified through case reviews, performance appraisals and other training that will assist staff in progressing toward their career goals.

Dollars are allocated for staff to attend workshops, webinars, conferences, formal course work training in rehabilitation counseling, medical assessment, ethics, job placement, rehabilitation technology, ADA, reauthorization, and other rehabilitation related training. All employees have access to these training opportunities. The agency's continuing education program also allows

reimbursement for the cost of tuition and books for classes that are related to job duties and will increase the employee's skills in specific areas.

- (4) Method(s) the VR agency uses to ensure that personnel are able to communicate in appropriate modes of communication with or in the native language of applicants or eligible individuals who have limited English speaking ability.

North Dakota VR provides interpreter services to individuals who have limited English speaking ability. Staff are provided information regarding Video Remote Interpreting (VRI). This is an on-demand service that provides communication between deaf or hard-of hearing persons or other languages in which VR staff can be in the same location, utilizing an interpreter by way of computer with a webcam and internet connection or a tablet using a cellular connection. North Dakota has a contract with Language Link. Language Link has three (3) separate services (Voice Interpretation, Video Remote Interpreter (including American Sign Language), and Secure Document Translation).

In several regions where minority populations are more predominant, VR staff have attended training on the customs and culture of minority groups. These materials are available to all VR staff. VR has partnered with the HHS Office Refugee's to train VR staff and build a collaborative partnership to serve individuals.

North Dakota VR provides personnel or obtains services to accommodate clients in need of appropriate modes of communication. Agency staff members who have an interest are encouraged to take sign language classes. In regions that do not have personnel trained in alternate modes of communication, this service is purchased.

- (5) As appropriate, describe the procedures and activities to coordinate the designated State unit's comprehensive system of personnel development with personnel development under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

North Dakota VR coordinates Comprehensive Systems of Personnel Development (CSPD) efforts with the CSPD requirements under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The Department of Public Instruction (DPI) is represented on the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) where information on training conferences is shared, and invitations extended to attend each other's conferences and other training activities. VR is also a member of the statewide Community of Practice (CoP) that has broad-based representation of agencies involved in various aspects of transition. Members of the CoP, including VR staff, were also part of a multi-agency team that participated in the Annual Capacity Building Institute to identify ways to improve transition services in the state. In addition, VR has one (1) staff on

the planning committee for the upcoming North Dakota DPI Secondary Transition Interagency Conference. VR will support staff attendance for the transition conference.

Due to COVID, North Dakota's Teacher Internship Program was put on hold but will occur in the summer of 2024. The program was expanded to include other community partners alongside teachers. The Internship Program is designed to provide teachers and partners with an opportunity to work closely with their local VR office and transition/general counselors. The teachers/partners participate in a three-week internship, beginning with an in-depth orientation to the VR process. The project provides participants with information regarding the VR program and process, adult agencies, employers' needs, labor market information, disability legislation, and has enhanced relationships between teachers and VR staff.

North Dakota VR has and will continue to provide information to our staff and partners on our implementation of the WIOA and pre-employment transition services through our cyber chats, provider meetings, counselor outreach activities, and regional transition CoP groups, and written communication (email).

COOPERATION, COLLABORATION, AND COORDINATION (Section 101(a)(11) of the Rehabilitation Act)

(j) Coordination with Education Officials. In accordance with the requirements in section 101(a)(11)(D) of the Rehabilitation Act—

- (1) Describe plans, policies, and procedures for coordination between the designated State agency and education officials responsible for the public education of students with disabilities, that are designed to facilitate the transition of the students with disabilities from the receipt of educational services in school to the receipt of vocational rehabilitation services, including pre-employment transition services.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) ensures that all children and youth with disabilities have available to them a free appropriate public education that emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs and prepare them for further education, employment, and independent living. North Dakota Department of Public Instruction (DPI) provides oversight of the special education programs within North Dakota. DPI designs and implements policies and procedures for carrying out the requirements of the IDEA and ensures compliance with those policies and procedures.

Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) is the agency responsible to provide VR services to students with disabilities. VR has defined a student with a disability as an individual with a disability in a secondary, post-secondary, or other recognized education program, who is between the ages of 14-21, is eligible for, and receiving, special education or related services under Part B of the

IDEA, is an individual with a disability under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, or students with disabilities including but not limited to: physical, sensory, intellectual, mental health, and communication.

The Department of Career & Technical Education (CTE) works to provide all North Dakota citizens with the technical skills, knowledge, and aptitudes necessary for successful performance in a globally competitive workplace. It is the responsibility of CTE, to the extent possible, to provide access to career and technical programs for high school and post-secondary students with disabilities across the state, as well as provide career awareness, work readiness skills, occupational preparation, and training of workers throughout the state.

The Governor of the State of North Dakota has designated VR offices be in each of the eight (8) regions. Each region serves a designated multi-county area, to provide VR services. Each VR regional office has staff assigned to every local school district to partner in providing transition services. Every Regional Administrator (RA) and rehabilitation counselor have a responsibility to coordinate with local school districts, cultivate relationships, and provide education and information. VR staff develop a regular schedule with school personnel to perform intakes, meet with VR eligible students, and potentially eligible students at the school.

VR and North Dakota Vision Services/School for the Blind have co-sponsored a weekend retreat when able with the purpose of providing intensive pre-employment career services to youth with visual impairments. Due to the success of this retreat, plans are to continue sponsoring this event.

North Dakota is involved with the National Deaf Center on Postsecondary Outcomes. A VR administrator, along with educators at a state and local level attend the virtual meetings. The partners have also joined the state and local communities of practice, so there is a smooth transition for students who are deaf.

VR is also involved with the ND Dual Sensory Project in which strategies are found to work with individuals with a combined vision and hearing impairment. There are several partners dedicated to this project such as VR, Helen Keller National Center, ND Vision Services/School for the Blind, ND School for the Deaf, and Minot State University.

Additional Collaborative Efforts:

VR is part of the Think College advisory committee and provides some financial assistance to the Think College programs across the state.

VR has a representative on the ND IDEA State Advisory Committee (SAC) on the Education of Children with Disabilities. VR represents the vocational organization concerned with the provision of transition services to children with disabilities. The IDEA SAC: advises the state education agency (SEA) of the unmet needs within the state in the education of children with disabilities.

VR coordinates with DPI to host a semi-annual Secondary Transition Conference. The event brings transition stakeholders together to collaborate and learn about best practices for transition students with disabilities. Stakeholders include teachers, VR counselors, students with disabilities, parents, community rehabilitation providers (CRPs), etc.

VR participates in the State Secondary Transition Community of Practice (CoP). The mission is to work towards building, supporting, and sustaining community partnerships and systems that promote and improve the scope, opportunity, and quality for youth with disabilities to adequately prepare for life and career beyond high school with the individualized necessary supports identified and in place before graduation/exit.

This is an advisory council with the intent and purpose of giving and receiving information between policies and practices as to what works and what doesn't work (best practices). This is done by:

1. Networking – between council members and agencies.
2. Capacity building and problem solving – identify the issues and determine recommendations and solutions.
3. Filling in the gaps and bringing issues to the table.

(2) Describe the current status and scope of the formal interagency agreement between the VR agency and the State educational agency. Consistent with the requirements of the formal interagency agreement pursuant to 34 CFR 361.22(b), provide, at a minimum, the following information about the agreement:

The memorandum of understanding (MOU) between VR and NDDPI was renewed in February 2023. It outlines Consultation and Technical Assistance, Transition Planning, roles and responsibilities, outreach, coordination of services, and sub-minimum wage.

- (A) Consultation and technical assistance, which may be provided using alternative means for meeting participation (such as video conferences and conference calls), to assist educational agencies in planning for the transition of students with disabilities from school to post-school activities, including pre-employment transition services and other vocational rehabilitation services;

It is the joint responsibility of VR and DPI to:

- Provide consultation and technical assistance to local VRs and local education agencies (LEA) on transition, career planning, community resources, employment, and post-secondary education.
- Provide consultation and technical assistance to local VRs and LEAs either in person or through alternative means, such as conference calls and video conferences.

- Utilize a common message when sharing information to local VR offices and LEA.
 - Encourage LEA and VR staff to collaborate through their local Transition CoP in planning and implementing efforts that are focused on the transition of students with disabilities from school to post-school activities, including pre-employment transition services (Pre-ETS) and other VR services.
 - Identify and disseminate information about transition services, employment services, effective practices, training, and funding strategies that create positive employment outcomes to agency staff, partners, families, individuals, and public and private stakeholders.
 - Inform each other and the LEA and VR field staff about policies or procedural changes that may impact transition services.
 - Provide technical assistance to identify potentially eligible and VR eligible students.
- (B) Transition planning by personnel of the designated State agency and educational agency personnel for students with disabilities that facilitates the development and implementation of their individualized education programs (IEPs) under section 614(d) of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act;

It is the joint responsibility of VR and DPI to:

- Facilitate and coordinate the smooth transition of students with disabilities from school to post-school activities, including the receipt of Pre-ETS, transition services, and other VR services.
- Provide training to LEA and VR counselors to assure transition and pre-employment services training will include activities, such as the development and implementation of their Individualized Education Plan (IEP) under Section 614(d) of the IDEA, coordination on Pre-Employment Services under Section 113, Accommodations under Section 504, and those related to Limitations on Sub-Minimum Wages under Section 511 of Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).
- Share current research findings and exchange professional literature on an ongoing basis.
- Collaborate on the provision of ongoing joint staff training and cross training of staff to ensure operational activities continue to meet the needs of the parties involved.
- Encourage work experience opportunities for competitive integrated employment (CIE).
- Facilitate the local level engagement of potential employers to provide job shadows, work experience, etc. for students with disabilities.
- Provide training to local level LEAs and VRs to assure that the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) that VR develops for a student with a disability who is receiving special education services is coordinated with the IEP the LEA develops in terms of the goals, objectives, and services identified.

- Provide training and oversight to assure transition plans demonstrate a coordinated set of activities that prevent a break in services for students as they transition.
- Provide information that will inform students and their parents of the availability of the Client Assistance Program, a dispute resolutions program available to VR clients and participants in rehabilitation programs receiving federal funding.
- Coordinate with non-educational agencies for out-of-school youth which may include the following:
 - Job Service
 - Department of Corrections and Juvenile Justice
 - Child Welfare, including foster care.
 - Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)
 - Behavioral Health
 - Developmental Disabilities
 - Children's Special Health
 - Parent Training Center
 - Family Advocacy Organizations
 - Tribal 121
 - Independent Living Centers
 - School for the Deaf
 - ND Vision Services
 - Assistive Technology
 - Autism Waiver Services
 - Community Rehabilitation

It is VR's responsibility to:

- Ensure VR staff are available to serve students attending the LEA.
- Determine eligibility for VR service and provide rehabilitation services to school-aged students with disabilities when referred by the LEA.
- Ensure plans, policies, and procedures provide for the development and approval of an IEP for employment in accordance with 34 CFR § 361.45; as early as possible, and no longer than 90 days from eligibility determination, during the transition planning process (ideally two years from exiting school to allow for a smooth transition process), and not later than the time a student with a disability determined to be eligible for VR leaves the school setting.
- Provide guidance to local LEAs and local VRs regarding the definition of a student with a disability, which is: an individual with a disability:
 - in a secondary, post-secondary, or other recognized education program,
 - who is between the ages of 14-21 (in accordance with DPI's stated age range),
 - is eligible for, and receiving, special education or related services under Part B of the IDEA; and

- is an individual with a disability under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, or students with disabilities, including, but not limited to, physical, sensory, intellectual, mental health, and communication.

Because the definition of a "student" with a disability for the VR program includes an individual with a disability for purposes of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, however, it is broader than the definition under IDEA. VR agencies are authorized to provide transition services to this broader population of students with disabilities than LEAs are authorized to provide under IDEA. Since the VR program serves many students with a variety of disabilities, including those individuals with a disability for purposes of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, it is possible these students may not have an IEP under IDEA, and therefore would not be eligible for or receiving special education or related services under IDEA. Not all VR eligible students will have a formal educational plan outlining accommodations.

It is DPI's responsibility to:

- Age for transition planning:
 - According to the IDEA, transition planning for the movement from high school to adult living is required for all students receiving special education services. IEP teams must include transition planning in the first IEP that will be in effect when the child is 16 years of age, or younger if deemed appropriate by the IEP team. [34 CFR 300.320(b) and (c); 20 U.S.C. 1414(d)(1)(A)(i)(VIII)].
 - "A child with a disability remains eligible for special education until it is determined that a disability no longer exists and/or that the child no longer needs special education services, until the child exits services due to graduation with a diploma, or until he or she has attained 21 years of age or has not reached the age of 21 before August first of the year in which the individual turns 21."
- DPI will provide training and oversight to the LEAs to assure the following transition requirements of IDEA are followed:
 - DPI will encourage inviting VR to IEP meetings and other team meetings so VR can provide information, technical assistance, case consultation, and information/referral as needed for eligible or potentially eligible students.
 - Provide IEP team-determined transition services. **Transition services** means a coordinated set of activities for a student with a disability that:
 1. Is designed to be within a results-oriented process, that is focused on improving the academic and functional achievement of the child with a disability to facilitate the child's movement from school to post-school activities, including post-secondary education, vocational education, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation.
 2. Is based on the individual child's needs, considering the child's strengths, preferences, and interests, and includes:

- Community experiences.
- Development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives; and
- Acquisition of daily living skills and provision of a functional vocational evaluation.

(C) The roles and responsibilities, including financial responsibilities, of each agency, including provisions for determining State lead agencies and qualified personnel responsible for transition services and pre-employment transition services;

Joint Responsibility of VR and DPI:

- Parties to this MOU commit to the implementation of complementary programs to assist with the provision of transition and Pre-ETS to students with disabilities in the state, including students with the most significant disabilities, to enable them to achieve an employment outcome in CIE.
- DPI and VR are financially responsible for the services they provide under their own laws and rules; and,
- DPI and LEA are financially responsible for the cost of services it is mandated to provide under IDEA, Part B.

There may be times when either the school or VR could provide a service. In those cases, the team should consider the following factors when determining who is responsible:

- Purpose - Is the service related to an employment outcome or educational attainment?
- Eligibility - Is the student with a disability eligible for special education or related services under IDEA?
- Customary - Is the service one customarily provided under IDEA or the Rehabilitation Act?
- Is it reasonable for the school to provide a portion of the service, and VR another portion? For example, if a student needs workplace readiness training and work experience, and the school is only able to provide workplace readiness training, perhaps the school does the readiness training and VR provides the work experience.
- Is the education team mindful of what is in the best interest of the student in terms of providing services?
- Would the student's needs be met through a Pre-ETS contract (a collaboration VR has with schools)?
- Comparable benefits - Are there other agencies that can provide the service?

VR Responsibility:

- Provide outreach to all students with disabilities to make available Pre-ETS, to include:

- Job exploration counseling.
- Work-based learning experiences, which may include in-school or after-school opportunities, experiences outside of the traditional school setting, and/or internships.
- Counseling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive transition or post-secondary educational programs.
- Workplace readiness training to develop social skills and independent living.
- Instruction in self-advocacy.

DPI Responsibility:

- Nothing under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act shall be construed as reducing a LEA's obligation under the IDEA to provide or pay for transition services that are also considered special education or related services and that are necessary for ensuring a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) to children with disabilities.
- Schools are responsible to provide the necessary services the student needs, in each domain of the IEP. They are academics, communicative status, adaptive characteristics, ecological factors, jobs and job training, recreation and leisure, home/independent living, community participation, Post-Secondary Training and Learning Opportunities, and related services.

VR provides Pre-ETS in addition to technical assistance and consultation, to students ages 14 to 21. VR has many pre-employment transition purchase of service agreements across the state to expand on the pre-employment services formerly provided solely by the local schools and NDDPI is kept up to date on those activities.

VR expended \$2.55 million or approximately 22% of the FFY 2022 federal grant to fund statewide Pre-ETS. VR will continue to commit at least 15% of the federal grant per year for these services. Required activities include job exploration counseling, work-based learning experiences, training on self-advocacy, counseling on post-secondary opportunities, and workplace readiness training. In addition to services purchased based on approved IPEs for students, VR staff are providing services which includes tracking time spent for travel to rural areas. Under IDEA, the local school districts are required to provide transition services, however VR has entered into purchase of service agreements with local school districts to enhance or expand services.

- (D) Procedures for outreach to and identification of students with disabilities who need transition services and pre-employment transition services. Outreach to these students should occur as early as possible during the transition planning process and must include, at a minimum, a description of the purpose of the vocational rehabilitation program, eligibility requirements, application procedures, and scope of services that may be provided to eligible individuals;

It is the joint responsibility of VR and DPI to:

- Develop procedures for identification of and outreach to students with disabilities who need transition services and pre-ETS (those eligible and potentially eligible for the program), such as information sharing at:
 - IPE meetings
 - Transition planning meetings
 - Back-to-School Nights
 - Transition and Career Fairs
 - Presentations
 - Orientations

It is VR's responsibility to:

- Inform applicants and eligible students with disabilities who are making the transition from programs under the responsibility of an educational agency to programs under the responsibility of VR, through appropriate modes of communication, about the availability of and opportunities to exercise informed choice; including the availability of support services for individuals with cognitive or other disabilities who require assistance in exercising informed choice throughout the VR process.
- Promote outreach to and identification of students with disabilities who need transition services as early as possible during the transition planning process. Outreach to these students will include, at a minimum, a description of the purpose of the VR program, eligibility requirement, application procedures, and scope of services that may be provided to eligible individuals. Outreach activities can include the use of brochures, social media, attendance at back-to-school nights, transition events, etc.
- Provide training to all VR counselors and qualified staff on their role in providing outreach activities to students with disabilities to include those served in special education, served under Section 504, and those served in general education.
- Provide outreach activities that are not exclusive to students with disabilities in special education but should include those students with disabilities for purposes of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, students with disabilities receiving school psychological, health, nursing, or social work services, and students with disabilities enrolled in an educational program and not in special education. VR agencies may also provide outreach to youth with disabilities who have dropped out of an education program or students who are at risk of dropping out of high school.
- Require every supervisor and rehabilitation counselor to liaison with the local school districts, cultivate relationships, and provide education and information to partners. VR maintains specific staff to function as liaisons with each school in the state and are responsible for the provision of Pre-ETS.

It is DPI's responsibility to:

- Work with VR to identify students with disabilities for referral to VR.
- Work with VR to identify referrals and encourage an application for VR services at least two years before students exit secondary education.

VR is working with DPI and local school districts to identify students with disabilities on an IEP. Transitioning students who are identified through the education unit's Section 504 coordinator are also referred to VR, and contacts are made with the guidance counselors to ensure students with special needs are aware of services through VR. Referrals are also received from independent living centers, human service centers, and CRPs working with transition age students.

VR contacts potentially eligible students as early as age 14, thus when students do become VR eligible, relationships and trust have already been established. We also provide consultation and guidance which will help the potentially eligible students and their team with designing a roadmap for what should happen prior to VR eligibility so all team members are collaborating early on and facilitating a smooth transition.

VR counselors' outreach to schools on a regular basis. At the start of every school year counselors contact each of their respective schools to see who may benefit from VR services. That contact may be with special education teachers, school counselors, school social workers, through presentations to groups of students, individual students, parents etc. Many of our regions have "transition fairs" where outreach to students and parents happen. We also have "teen night out" where vendors and service providers are brought together so students and parents can visit with partners in the transition process. The state DPI and state VR not only highly support and promote these activities but also provide fiscal support.

- (E) Coordination necessary to satisfy documentation requirements set forth in 34 CFR part 397 regarding students and youth with disabilities who are seeking subminimum wage employment; and

Youth with disabilities must complete several required activities that promote the consideration of CIE before they can enter employment that pays less than federal minimum wage.

Under Section 511 of WIOA, employers are prohibited from compensating any individual with a disability who is 24 years of age or younger at subminimum wage, unless the individual has documentation from VR of the following:

1. Pre-ETS through VR or transition services under IDEA.
2. The individual was determined:
 - a. Ineligible for VR services, or

- b. Eligible for VR services, had an approved IPE, and the individual was unable to achieve an employment outcome in competitive integrated employment and the case is closed, disability too severe and unable to benefit.
3. Career counseling, along with information and referral to federal and state programs to help the individual explore competitive integrated employment.

It is the joint responsibility of VR and DPI to:

- Coordinate services for students with disabilities.
- Design and deliver cross-training sessions to the staff of both parties regarding CIE as the preferred vocational outcome for students and youth with disabilities.
- Promote and disseminate information that gives individuals and families resources to envision a future that includes CIE.
- Meet regularly with one another and representatives of LEAs at the North Dakota Secondary Transition CoP to address systems, policies, practices, and funding issues that facilitate or negatively impact the transition of youth with disabilities from school to work or post-secondary education.
- Align policy to facilitate the seamless transition of youth with disabilities from school to work or post-secondary education, minimize redundant services, and maximize resources in both systems.

It is VR's responsibility to:

- Ensure services are available statewide, including the provision of Pre-ETS for students who are eligible or potentially eligible for VR services.
- Assist in the achievement of employment goals for individuals who have applied and been found eligible for VR services.
- Promote interagency coordination and timely delivery of services.

It is DPI's responsibility to:

- Request consultation and technical assistance from VR when needed for planning and implementation of transition services.
- Provide existing educational, medical, psychological, and career assessments through a release of information as necessary for a determination of eligibility by the VR agency.
- Provide special education and related services as developed and documented for students with disabilities in an IEP.
- Provide VR with documentation of completion of transition services or Pre-ETS for students with disabilities.

- Provide representation on the VR State Rehabilitation Council and relevant committee participation.

Encourage LEA to identify points of contact for field staff from VR.

- (F) Assurance that, in accordance with 34 CFR 397.31, neither the SEA nor the local educational agency will enter into a contract or other arrangement with an entity, as defined in 34 CFR 397.5(d), for the purpose of operating a program under which youth with a disability is engaged in work compensated at a subminimum wage.

VR, in collaboration with the State Educational Agency (SEA) and LEA, has coordinated a process to ensure that, in accordance with 34 C.F.R § 397.31, neither the SEA nor the LEA will enter into contract or other arrangement with an entity, as defined in 34 C.F.R. § 397.S(d), for the purpose of operating a program under which a youth with a disability is engaged in work compensated at a subminimum wage.

(k) Coordination with Employers. In accordance with the requirements in section 101(a)(11)(E) of the Rehabilitation Act, describe how the VR agency will work with employers to identify competitive integrated employment and career exploration opportunities in order to facilitate the provision of VR services; and transition services for youth and students with disabilities, including pre-employment transition services for students with disabilities.

(1) VR Services:

North Dakota Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) is committed to building strong, long-term relationships with businesses. The agency has a dual client approach with businesses being a key consumer of VR service. Services provided to businesses include consultation, technical assistance and information that serves to build awareness of business to an available source of qualified employees. Long term engagement with businesses will result in incorporating the workforce needs of businesses when assisting consumers of VR to develop goals that are consistent with in-demand occupations.

VR has developed a team of Business Service Specialists (BSS) within the state. Full time BSS are employed in the division's larger offices which include Fargo, Minot, Grand Forks, and Bismarck. Each cover one quadrant of the state ensuring a statewide program.

In order to foster collaboration with businesses, VR:

1. Has training for staff to increase staff skill in assessing business needs.
2. Provides outreach to businesses by staff to include BSS and rehabilitation counselors.

3. Participates as a member organization in business-led organizations.
4. Attends the Workforce Development Council meetings and disseminates information to VR staff on the business needs as expressed during council meetings.
5. Participates in the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation's National Employment Team (NET) to share referrals and best practices.
6. Recognizes business partners annually to celebrate the businesses that support the VR mission to promote, develop and inspire people with disabilities to achieve their full potential. The VR Business Award honors a business that strives toward the highest level by devoting time and energy to work with ND VR with their community in a meaningful way.
7. Collaborates with the Business and Labor representatives on the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC).

VR invests in specialized training specific to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and define the roles of staff that have received this training.

- a. ADA Liaison – To provide the best services to our clients, employers, and communities having ADA knowledge is essential. Each regional office will designate at least one individual as an “ADA Liaison” and will require they complete specific training courses. This will ensure they have general knowledge of the ADA and the ability to answer general questions for clients and employers.
- b. ADA Specialist and ADA Compliance Coordinator – The ADA Specialist and ADA Compliance Coordinator (state office) will need to complete the ADA Coordinator Training Certificate Program (ACTCP) which is a professional certificate administered by Great Plains ADA Center. VR staff with this distinction will be seen as “ADA Specialists.” This certification will enhance their knowledge base of the ADA and will enable them to effectively support employers and clients. BSS, the VR ADA Compliance Coordinator, and others that have an interest (will be certified as an ADA Coordinator (ADAC). For the BSS, this would be a requirement of their job.

Increasing the use of labor market information to align consumer goals with workforce needs, VR:

1. Provides information to participants regarding state specific labor market information to assist with making decisions related to their vocational goals.
2. Trains VR staff to use labor market information in all interactions with participants to reinforce the need for training for jobs that are in-demand in the local labor market.
3. Collaborates and coordinates with state workforce partners regarding workforce needs which may include activities such as visiting with new employers and touring businesses.

4. Utilizes job shadows and informational interviews to assist participants with understanding the various positions available in their communities.

(2) Transition services, including pre-employment transition services, for students and youth with disabilities.

In addition, VR staff, teachers, and community rehabilitation providers (CRPs) are working with employers to place transition students in work experiences which will lead to competitive integrated employment. During the student's school year, the VR staff, CRPs, and teachers collaborate to provide work experience that is beneficial to the student. The team provides outreach to potential employers in order to promote opportunities for placement. When an employer sees the success of a student in work experience, they often offer them permanent positions.

ND also provides year-round work experience through our pre-employment transition service purchase of service contracts with local education agencies, CRPs, and employers. The team may consist of the contract staff, teachers, and VR counselors, collaborating to share their business contacts and outreach to potential employers in order to provide opportunities for placement.

(I) Interagency Cooperation with Other Agencies. In accordance with the requirements in section 101(a)(11)(C) and (K), describe interagency cooperation with and utilization of the services and facilities of agencies and programs that are **not** carrying out activities through the statewide workforce development system to develop opportunities for community-based employment in integrated settings, to the greatest extent practicable for the following:

- (1) State programs (designate lead agency(ies) and implementing entity(ies)) carried out under section 4 of the Assistive Technology Act of 1998;

ND Assistive – ND Assistive is North Dakota's Assistive Technology Act program. ND Assistive serves as North Dakota's federally funded assistive technology (AT) project through a sub-contract with North Dakota Vocational Rehabilitation (VR). ND Assistive offers services to North Dakotans with disabilities to help them bridge the gap between ability and disability using assistive technology. ND Assistive is a statewide program designed to increase access to, and acquisition of, AT. The VR Director or designee is a voting member on their advisory council and participates in a collaborative partnership with ND Assistive.

- (2) Programs carried out by the Under Secretary for Rural Development of the Department of Agriculture;

North Dakota VR works cooperatively with rural business development programs, and other programs to deliver specialized programs and services to assist in enhancing the workforce of North Dakota. The strength of North Dakota's economy is the farmers and ranchers who lead the nation in the production of crops. This high level of production creates economic development and opportunities for expanded employment in rural communities across North Dakota. VR assigns staff working in rural communities as liaisons to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) activities that serve to benefit individuals with disabilities. VR also maintains a permanent seat on the North Dakota Workforce Development Council. North Dakota VR's role is to advocate and provide technical assistance that enhances opportunities for employment in rural North Dakota.

North Dakota VR has an agreement with the North Dakota Department of Agriculture (NDDA) to determine the financial viability of farmers and ranchers with disabilities applying for and receiving VR services. Both agencies collaborate to support the farmer and rancher to determine the financial viability of their agricultural business. With a determination that the farm or ranch business is financially viable, VR provides disability related solutions to the farmer or rancher's continued employment while the staff from Mediation Service assists with any continued credit and financial matters.

(3) Non-educational agencies serving out-of-school youth;

- **Police Youth Bureau** – Is intended to divert youth from the juvenile justice system, prevent delinquency and intervene in crisis situations.
- **Division of Juvenile Services** – The administrative agency directed to take custody of delinquent and at-risk youth.
- **ND Youth Correctional Center** – The state youth correctional center that provides therapeutic treatment to juvenile offenders.
- **Behavioral Health Division** – Provides leadership for the planning, development, and oversight of a system of care for children, adults, and families with severe emotional disorders, mental illness, and/or substance abuse issues.
- **Centers for Independent Living** – Eliminates barriers and assist individuals with disabilities so they can live and work more independently in their homes and communities.
- **Human Service Zones** – Provides Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Medicaid, children's health services, childcare assistance, home, and community-based services and supports individuals with disabilities, personal care assistance, child welfare (foster care, child protection services, and related services), and referrals to other local resources and programs.

- **Children’s Special Health Services** – Provides services to children with special health care needs and their families and promote family-centered, community-based, coordinated services and systems of health care.
- **ND Vision Services/School for the Blind (NDVS/SB)** – Offers services to ND residents who are blind or have a visual impairment.
- **ND School for the Deaf/Resource Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing** – Offers services to ND residents who are deaf or have a hearing impairment.
- **Pathfinder** – Statewide, federally-funded (Office of Special Education Programs) parent training and information center. The purpose is to support parents and assist students with increasing independent living, self-determination, and self-advocacy skills.
- **Nexus PATH Family Healing** - Serves children, teens, and families through outpatient and community mental health services, foster care and adoption and residential care.
- **Family Voices** – Is a national, nonprofit, family-led organization which aims to achieve family-centered care for all children and youth through age 26 with special health care needs and/or disabilities.
- **ND State Council on Developmental Disabilities** – Advocates for policy changes that promote choice, independence, productivity, and inclusion for all North Dakotans with developmental disabilities.
- **Anne Carlsen Center** – Offers community-based care for those of all ages with autism and a wide variety of other intellectual and developmental disabilities through assistance with learning social skills and vocational skills training.
- **Federation of Families** – Provides leadership in the field of children’s mental health; addresses the unique needs of children and youth, to ensure rights, support access to community-based services and to provide information and engage in advocacy.
- **ND Brain Injury Network** – Helps people with brain injury, their families, and providers find answers to questions, receive ongoing support, and gain access to services.
- **ND Brain Injury Advisory Council** – The mission of the ND Brain Injury Council is to improve the quality of life for all individuals with brain injury and their families through brain injury identification, awareness, prevention, research, education, collaboration, support services, and advocacy.
- **HHS Children and Family Services Chafee Foster Care Transition Program** – Services and supports are available through the Chafee Program for foster youth, age 16+, who have been identified as "likely to age out of foster care", and for youth who have aged out of the system and have not yet reached their 23rd birthday.
- **YouthWorks** – A private, nonprofit agency whose focus is working with teens, parents, and young adults. They have programs for runaway, homeless and street youth; juvenile offenders; youth failing in school; youth suspended or expelled from school; young parents and pregnant moms (under 22); youth arrested and unable to immediately return home; youth needing emergency care: youth needing peer support

or cross-age mentoring; and youth with anger issues. They provide family counseling and activity programs.

- **The Youth Homeless Demonstration Program** – Funded through the ND Continuum of Care, supporting communities across North Dakota, with the development and implementation of a coordinated community approach to preventing and ending youth homelessness.

(4) State use contracting programs;

VR does not have any.

(5) State agency responsible for administering the State Medicaid plan under title XIX of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1396 et seq.);

VR is organized within State government with the ND Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as the designated state agency. Medicaid, Aging Services, the Developmental Disabilities (DD) and the Behavioral Health are all part of HHS. The placement of the VR program within HHS provides significant opportunities to develop informal and formal working relationships.

VR has historically collaborated with the State Medicaid agency. Examples of historical and more recent collaborative efforts between HHS Medical Services and VR include:

- Informing participants about Medicaid's Workers with Disabilities Coverage which allows individuals with disabilities in the workforce to maintain Medicaid coverage.
- Partnering with staff from Medicaid's Autism Unit to identify youth with disabilities who have the potential to benefit from the State Autism Waiver services. Staff from the Autism Unit have provided technical assistance to VR staff that is related specifically to the effective service and supports to assist individuals with symptoms associated with autism spectrum disorder.
- Utilizing Medicaid to fund extended services for participants who have successfully secured employment through the provision of the VR supported and customized employment program.
- VR is an active stakeholder to the Medical Services Division's Money Follows the Person Program.
- VR continues to collaborate with Medical Services and Behavioral Health on developing policies and practices related to employment and the 1915(i) ND State Plan Amendment to ensure continuity of services for individuals with disabilities across programs. To expedite the process, VR staff began administering the World Health Organization Disability Assessment Schedule (WHODAS) as part of the eligibility process for 1915(i) employment and other support services. In addition, VR and

behavioral health are partnering together to develop new providers to serve dual enrolled clients.

(6) State agency responsible for providing services for individuals with developmental disabilities;

VR has a memorandum of understanding (MOU) and high level of collaboration with the HHS divisions in the delivery of supported and customized employment to participants who experience an intellectual or developmental disability. VR policies and procedures instruct counselors to open a case for participants with an intellectual or developmental disability who may require long-term services. The partnership between VR and DD utilizes VR funding to provide the initial training and job stabilization with DD using Medicaid Waiver funding to provide long term support.

VR, DD, and Community Rehabilitation Provider (CRP) staff developed and are currently using a checklist to expedite eligibility determination for individuals applying for VR services. A counselor can expedite eligibility determination and develop the individualized plan for employment with current and completed documentation through the utilization of this tool.

(7) State agency responsible for providing mental health services;

VR has a high level of collaboration with Behavioral Health in the delivery of employment services to participants who experience behavioral health issues. VR provides employment services including supported and customized employment for individuals who require extended services provided with funding available through Behavioral Health. The Behavioral Health division manages a contract with Rocky Mountain Rehab for the provision of extended services for individuals with a serious mental illness, those with a brain injury, and others with diagnosis that are not able to access Medicaid services for extended services.

During the 2019 legislative session, North Dakota lawmakers authorized the Department of Human Services to create a Medicaid 1915(i) state plan amendment, which allows North Dakota Medicaid to pay for additional home and community-based services to support individuals with specific behavioral health conditions like mental illness, addiction, or a brain injury. The 1915(i) ND state plan amendment was approved by Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) in February 2021. 1915(i) services cannot be provided to an individual at the same time as another service that is the same in nature and scope regardless of source including federal, state, local, and private entities. For the 1915(i) Supported Employment/Ongoing Support Service to be entered, the Care Coordinator must first verify that services are not duplicated. VR is working collaboratively with Medical Services and the Behavioral Health Division to find ways to braid the process of providing employment services across agencies, and to develop mutual providers for VR and 1915(i) employment services. VR and Behavioral Health meet monthly to communicate ways to improve services for mutual

clients. The program administrator for 1915(i) has provide statewide training for VR staff at our annual conference, and individual regional office trainings to help staff better understand the multiple of services available for individuals under 1915(i) that can augment VR services, such as peer mentors, supported housing, non-medical transportation etc. VR counselors are also encouraged to assist individuals served by VR through the process of eligibility for 1915(i) services.

(8) Other Federal, State, and local agencies and programs outside the workforce development system ;
and

VR continues to work with multiple agencies and entities throughout the state. A number of these are related to cooperative ventures with the HHS that facilitate employment of persons with significant disabilities. Listed below are the primary businesses, agencies, and groups with whom we are currently working. The only groups in this attachment, with whom we have a formal written agreement, are the NDDA and Department of Veterans Affairs Veteran Readiness and Employment.

Department of Veterans Affairs Veteran Readiness and Employment Program – Cooperative agreement with Veteran Readiness and Employment is to ‘ensure seamless, coordinated, and effective VR services to North Dakota’s veterans with disabilities and their dependents with disabilities; to improve cooperation and collaboration between the two agencies; to avoid duplication of services; and to improve interagency communication.

While we do not have formal written agreements with the following entities; state and regional VR staff work cooperatively with them based on individual consumer needs.

Business Information Centers (BIC) – Located in Fargo, the BICs provide consultation and resources for VR participants on various aspects of establishing and maintaining a business.

Small Business Administration (SBA) – Ongoing coordination of shared training and education programs between SBA staff and VR staff.

Department of Commerce and local economic development groups – Offers resources for funding and business development for VR participants.

Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE) – Provides mentoring and consultation to VR participants who are developing business plans.

Lewis and Clark Development Group – Processes revolving loan fund applications for VR participants pursuing self-employment.

ND State Council on Developmental Disabilities (NDSCDD) – The council advocates for policy changes that promote choice, independence, productivity, and inclusion for all North Dakotans with developmental disabilities. The council supports and provides funding for projects and activities that maximize opportunities for individuals and families. The NDSCDD serves in a planning and advisory capacity to state policymakers and agencies relative to services for persons with developmental disabilities. Areas of emphasis include individual employment opportunities, integration and inclusion, and empowerment and promotion.

North Dakota Association for the Disabled (NDAD) – Occasionally provides monies to VR participants for non-employment related expenses.

The Greater North Dakota Chamber – Cooperative training and information exchange. Regional VR staff are also members of their local chambers and participate on various chamber committees. This enables VR to develop relationships with the business community.

Rocky Mountain ADA Center – Provides technical assistance, resources, education, and training on disability issues including the ADA.

North Dakota Center for Technology and Business – Provides technical assistance to VR participants in developing business and marketing plans.

North Dakota Center for People with Disabilities (NDCPD) – A statewide organization that serves the disability community and works with community providers and state and local government agencies to provide training, technical assistance, service, research, and information dissemination. NDCPD faculty and staff have extensive experience in topics such as transition, person-centered planning, self-determination, employment, aging and health and they have cultivated numerous state and national collaborations over the years. Minot State University (MSU) serves as NDCPD's host institution.

ND Small Business Development Center (NDSBDC) – Helps North Dakotans to start, manage, and grow their businesses. Credentialed business advisors provide customized guidance and resources that help owners and entrepreneurs achieve their goals at every stage of their business life cycle.

Refugee Resettlement Program – ND collaborates with refugee services to provide resources to strengthen and guide newcomers as they become contributors to the economy. They provide a wide array of resources such as English as a second language, health and dental insurance, support groups, etc.

(9) Other private nonprofit organizations.

VR purchases services from two (2) for-profit, one (1) partnership and 20 nonprofit CRPs, for the provision of supported employment and extended services. VR developed three (3) new providers in 2022/2023

In October 2022 VR initiated a Provider Onboarding workgroup. Members included a VR counselor, regional administrators, and a state office representative. The group has explored how other VR agencies onboard new providers and new provider staff. The workgroup will revamp the Community Rehab Provider Guidebook, develop training power points, and develop a provider title on the VR programs website. The project is expected to be completed in January 2024. VR continues to offer VR 101 virtually, twice a year for provider staff. If a provider would prefer the training in person, the CRP Liaison will travel to provider agencies to conduct VR 101. In addition to VR 101, a provider track at the VR annual conference was developed, so provider staff can receive in person training on a variety of topics to improve service delivery.

In the fall of 2021 VR went on a tour across the state to meet individually with providers to discuss issues and concerns faced by providers. One area discussed was placing difficult clients and the current VR reimbursement rate for services. Based on this discussion VR reviewed their current rates and explored how other state VR agencies have their provider rates structured. In addition to the hourly rate change, providers will be eligible for premium and outcome payments for successful closures.

Outcome and premium payments are paid to providers to compensate them for their additional efforts on more challenging cases. These payments depend on an individual's specific vocational needs and barriers to employment. Multiple premiums may be associated with the outcome payment, up to a total of five (5).

The VR counselor will identify which premium payments (if any) the individual qualifies for prior to beginning services and will be identified on the authorization sent to the provider for services. Successful premium payments will be approved for the following six categories:

- Criminal background (felony and misdemeanors if relevant to employment and based on counselor judgement).
- Any client who desires to obtain or maintain employment in the community where they live, excluding the eight (8) large regional cities, Valley City, or Wahpeton.
- Professional placement (any client with an associate degree or higher and being placed in position requiring this level of education).
- Brain injury.
- Substance use disorder.
- Autism and intellectual disability.

The following requirements must be satisfied before a VR can successfully close a case:

- The individual has maintained employment and achieved stability in the work setting for a minimum of 90 days after transitioning to extended services.
- The job must meet the definition of competitive integrated employment (as outlined in the Supported Employment policy) consistent with the strengths, abilities, interests, and informed choice of the individual.
- The VR counselor must have received and reviewed the final progress report and invoice prior to releasing the final payment.

If successful closure criteria are not met, no outcome or premium payments will be released.

Another outcome of the fall of 2021 provider tours occurred in April 2023, VR and CRP staff began meeting on a monthly or quarterly basis to ensure coordination of services and to improve communication. These meetings provide a structured platform for both agencies to share information, address challenges, and collectively work towards improving vocational outcomes for individuals with disabilities. Regular communication and collaboration are crucial for creating a supportive partnership.

Finally, the last outcome of the fall of 2021 tour included the implementation of a provider service and planning meeting to be held before beginning employment services. This collaborative meeting is a person center process to include the individual, parents, guardian, and others who provide support services to an individual, so everyone understands their role, the goal and the supports the individual may need to be successful in employment. This process is intended to ensure open communication and address obstacles that might affect the person being successfully employed.

CRP agencies must be certified either by Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF), The Council of Quality and Leadership for People with Disabilities (CQL) or VR will explore other recognized credentials. Medical service providers must be approved by the State Licensing Board through its agreement with the HHS. All educational and vocational technical programs must be recognized by the State Board of Higher Education.

In 2011, the department established CRP agreements. The department has, as part of the provider agreements, language that addresses accessibility of facilities, affirmative action plans, special communication needs, and fraud, waste, and abuse. Within the agreements, the providers identify the scope of service they will provide to clients. The CRP agreements are effective for two (2) years.

In 2020 and 2021, VR State office staff worked with Ticket to Work Employment Network Business Development Specialists to draft ND's Partnership Plus agreements and to offer training for potential employment networks within ND. Three (3) CRPs expressed interest in either becoming an Employment Network (EN) or signing a Partnership Plus agreement. Of

the three (3) agencies, only one (1) entered into a Partnership Plus agreement. VR developed a standardized procedure and provided training to staff on Ticket to Work and Partnership plus.

A work group was established in the fall of 2021 to outline VR's next steps on how to improve provider services in North Dakota. The work group is comprised of the eight (8) regional administrators, Director, Assistant Director, and CRP program administrator. ND VR identified the following key provider areas to explore and develop action steps for implementation:

- The Work group developed a standardized meeting agenda. The Regional offices established regular practices of communication to include email and regular meetings with VR and CRP staff. Each region meets with the providers on a monthly or quarterly basis. Topics of discussion include billing, client services, training, sharing information about employers and finding ways to work together on community events. The meetings are intended to improve communication between VR and provider staff. The Director, Assistant Director and CRP Liaison review these meeting minutes on a quarterly basis.
- ND VR reviewed current payment practices and established a standard for authorization and billing providers. VR also explored options related to premium payments for successful closure for individuals that might have barriers to employment. Premium payments were implemented in January 2023.
- ND VR will review and revamp the current VR provider application to include options for smaller providers and make the process easier for agencies to become VR providers. The final application will be sent to providers in June 2024.
- ND VR reviewed the current referral process to make improvements and to define what information to include as a default, and to outline expectations for VR staff to provide in-person handoff for new provider services. Once an individual selects a provider for services, VR will schedule a provider service planning meeting to ensure everyone involved has a clear understanding of roles and responsibilities as it relates to support the individual to be successful in finding and maintaining employment.
- ND VR identified strategies and best practices to improve work readiness of VR participants prior to referring individuals to providers for employment services. These practices were embedded in a procedure for staff. This area will be further explored to include a service for "soft skills" or durable skills.
- ND VR will continue to work with providers to identify key challenges, such as staffing, retention, onboarding of new provider staff, training, etc.

All units that purchase extended services fall under the administrative control of the North Dakota HHS. A MOU has been in place for many years, which included Medicaid and the DD Division. In 2021, the MOU was reviewed and updated to include the VR, Aging Services,

Medical Services, and DD Divisions. In the spring of 2023, VR and DD began holding meetings to see how the agencies can better blend services to ensure a person center approach for supported employment and the transition to extended services. A process document and training for VR, DD and Provider staff will be held in 2024.

VR continues to utilize information gathered from public hearings, input from providers and organizations; such as, the North Dakota Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) to work more closely together. The agency will continue to make every effort to improve services to individuals when a problem is identified in a region. To ensure ongoing dialogue, CRPs and SILC are represented on the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) where issues are discussed whenever appropriate.

As a major player on the North Dakota Workforce Development Council, VR continues to be an active partner as opportunities arise.

VR continues to be involved in the quarterly statewide Brain Injury Advisory Council, Behavioral Health Planning Council, Money Follows the Person, Aging and Disability Resource Link and systems committees.

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION CERTIFICATIONS AND ASSURANCES

CERTIFICATIONS

States must provide written and signed certifications that:	
1.	The (enter the name of designated State agency or designated State unit, as appropriate,) is authorized to submit the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan under title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Rehabilitation Act), as amended by title IV of WIOA, ⁹ and its State Plan supplement under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act;
	North Dakota Vocational Rehabilitation
2.	In the event the designated State agency is not primarily concerned with vocational and other rehabilitation of individuals with disabilities, the designated State agency must include a designated State unit for the VR program (Section 101(a)(2)(B)(ii) of the Rehabilitation Act). As a condition for the receipt of Federal funds under title I of the Rehabilitation Act for the provision of VR services, the (enter the name of designated State agency or the designated State unit when the designated State agency has a designated State unit) ¹⁰ agrees to operate and is responsible for the administration of the State VR Services Program in accordance with the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan ¹¹ , the Rehabilitation Act, 34 CFR 361.13(b) and (c), and all applicable regulations ¹² , policies, and procedures established by the Secretary of Education. Funds made available to States under section 111(a) of the Rehabilitation Act are used solely for the provision of VR services and the administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan;
3.	As a condition for the receipt of Federal funds under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act for supported employment services, the designated State agency or the designated State unit when the designated State agency has a designated State unit, agrees to operate and is responsible for the administration of the State Supported Employment Services Program in accordance with the supplement to the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan ¹³ , the Rehabilitation Act, and all applicable regulations ¹⁴ , policies, and procedures established by the Secretary of Education. Funds made available under title VI are used solely for the provision of supported employment services and the administration of the supplement to the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan;

⁹ Public Law 113-128.

¹⁰ All references in this plan to "designated State agency" or to "the State agency" relate to the agency identified in this paragraph.

¹¹ No funds under title I of the Rehabilitation Act may be awarded without an approved VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan in accordance with section 101(a) of the Rehabilitation Act.

¹² Applicable regulations, in part, include the Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) in 34 CFR parts 76, 77, 79, 81, and 82; 2 CFR part 200 as adopted by 2 CFR part 3474; and the State VR Services program regulations at 34 CFR part 361.

¹³ No funds under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act may be awarded without an approved supported employment supplement to the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan in accordance with section 606(a) of the Rehabilitation Act.

¹⁴ Applicable regulations, in part, include the citations in footnote 4, as well as Supported Employment program regulations at 34 CFR part 363.

States must provide written and signed certifications that:	
4.	The designated State unit, or if not applicable, the designated State agency has the authority under State law to perform the functions of the State regarding the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement, and is responsible for the administration of the VR program in accordance with 34 CFR 361.13(b) and (c);
5.	The State legally may carry out each provision of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement.
6.	All provisions of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement are consistent with State law.
7.	The (enter title of State officer below) has the authority under State law to receive, hold, and disburse Federal funds made available under the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement;
	Damian Schlinger, Director, Vocational Rehabilitation
8.	The (enter title of State officer below) has the authority to submit the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and the supplement for Supported Employment services;
	Robyn Throlson, Administrator, Vocational Rehabilitation
9.	The agency that submits the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement has adopted or otherwise formally approved the plan and its supplement.

ASSURANCES

The designated State agency or designated State unit, as appropriate and identified in the State certifications included with this VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement, through signature of the authorized individual, assures the Commissioner, that it will comply with all of the requirements of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement, as set forth in sections 101(a) and 606 of the Rehabilitation Act. The individual authorized to submit the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement makes the following assurances:

The State Plan must provide assurances that:	
1.	Public Comment on Policies and Procedures: The designated State agency assures it will comply with all statutory and regulatory requirements for public participation in the VR Services Portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, as required by section 101(a)(16)(A) of the Rehabilitation Act.

The State Plan must provide assurances that:	
2.	<p>Submission of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and Its Supplement: The designated State unit assures it will comply with all requirements pertaining to the submission and revisions of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement for the State Supported Employment Services program, as required by sections 101(a)(1), (22), (23), and 606(a) of the Rehabilitation Act; section 102 of WIOA in the case of the submission of a Unified State plan; section 103 of WIOA in the case of a submission of a Combined State Plan; 34 C.F.R. 76.140.</p>
3.	<p>Administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan: The designated State agency or designated State unit, as appropriate, assures it will comply with the requirements related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) the establishment of the designated State agency and designated State unit, as required by section 101(a)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act. (b) either a State independent commission or State Rehabilitation Council, as required by section 101(a)(21) of the Rehabilitation Act. (c) consultations regarding the administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, in accordance with section 101(a)(16)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act. (d) the financial participation by the State, or if the State so elects, by the State and local agencies, to provide the amount of the non-Federal share of the cost of carrying out the VR program in accordance with section 101(a)(3). (e) as applicable, the local administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, in accordance with section 101(a)(2)(A) of the Rehabilitation Act. (f) as applicable, the shared funding and administration of joint programs, in accordance with section 101(a)(2)(A)(ii) of the Rehabilitation Act. (g) statewideness and waivers of statewideness requirements, as set forth in section 101(a)(4) of the Rehabilitation Act. (h) the requirements for cooperation, collaboration, and coordination, as required by sections 101(a)(11) and (24)(B); and 606(b) of the Rehabilitation Act. (i) all required methods of administration, as required by section 101(a)(6) of the Rehabilitation Act. (j) the requirements for the comprehensive system of personnel development, as set forth in section 101(a)(7) of the Rehabilitation Act.

The State Plan must provide assurances that:	
	<p>(k) the compilation and submission to the Commissioner of statewide assessments, estimates, State goals and priorities, strategies, and progress reports, as appropriate, and as required by sections 101(a)(15), 105(c)(2), and 606(b)(8) of the Rehabilitation Act.</p> <p>(l) the reservation and use of a portion of the funds allotted to the State under section 110 of the Rehabilitation Act for the development and implementation of innovative approaches to expand and improve the provision of VR services to individuals with disabilities, particularly individuals with the most significant disabilities as set forth in section 101(a)(18)(A).</p> <p>(m) the submission of reports as required by section 101(a)(10) of the Rehabilitation Act.</p>
4.	<p>Administration of the Provision of VR Services: The designated State agency, or designated State unit, as appropriate, assures that it will:</p> <p>(a) comply with all requirements regarding information and referral services in accordance with sections 101(a)(5)(E) and (20) of the Rehabilitation Act.</p> <p>(b) impose no duration of residence requirement as part of determining an individual's eligibility for VR services or that excludes from services under the plan any individual who is present in the State in accordance with section 101(a)(12) of the Rehabilitation Act.</p> <p>(c) provide the full range of services listed in section 103(a) of the Rehabilitation Act, as appropriate, to all eligible individuals with disabilities in the State who apply for services or, if implementing an order of selection, in accordance with criteria established by the State for the order of selection as set out in section 101(a)(5) of the Rehabilitation Act.</p> <p>(d) determine whether comparable services and benefits are available to the individual in accordance with section 101(a)(8) of the Rehabilitation Act.</p> <p>(e) comply with the requirements for the development of an individualized plan for employment in accordance with section 102(b) of the Rehabilitation Act.</p> <p>(f) comply with requirements regarding the provisions of informed choice for all applicants and eligible individuals in accordance with section 102(d) of the Rehabilitation Act.</p> <p>(g) provide vocational rehabilitation services to American Indians who are individuals with disabilities residing in the State, in accordance with section 101(a)(13) of the Rehabilitation Act.</p> <p>(h) comply with the requirements for the conduct of semiannual or annual reviews, as appropriate, for individuals employed either in an extended employment setting in a</p>

The State Plan must provide assurances that:	
	<p>community rehabilitation program or any other employment under section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, as required by sections 101(a)(14) and 511 of the Rehabilitation Act.</p> <p>(i) meet the requirements in sections 101(a)(17) and 103(b)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act if the State elects to construct, under special circumstances, facilities for community rehabilitation programs.</p> <p>(j) with respect to students with disabilities, the State:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) has developed and will implement, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (A) strategies to address the needs identified in the assessments; and (B) strategies to achieve the goals and priorities identified by the State, to improve and expand vocational rehabilitation services for students with disabilities on a statewide basis; and (ii) has developed and will implement strategies to provide pre-employment transition services (sections 101(a)(15), 101(a)(25), and 113). (iii) shall reserve not less than 15 percent of the allocated funds for the provision of pre-employment transition services; such funds shall not be used to pay for the administrative costs of providing pre-employment transition services.
5.	<p>Program Administration for the Supported Employment Title VI Supplement to the State plan:</p> <p>(a) The designated State unit assures that it will include in the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan all information required by section 606 of the Rehabilitation Act.</p> <p>(b) The designated State agency assures that it will submit reports in such form and in accordance with such procedures as the Commissioner may require and collects the information required by section 101(a)(10) of the Rehabilitation Act separately for individuals receiving supported employment services under title I and individuals receiving supported employment services under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act.</p>
6.	<p>Financial Administration of the Supported Employment Program (Title VI):</p> <p>(a) The designated State agency assures that it will expend no more than 2.5 percent of the State's allotment under title VI for administrative costs of carrying out this program; and, the designated State agency or agencies will provide, directly or indirectly through public or private entities, non-Federal contributions in an amount that is not less than 10 percent of the costs of carrying out supported employment services provided to youth</p>

The State Plan must provide assurances that:	
	<p>with the most significant disabilities with the funds reserved for such purpose under section 603(d) of the Rehabilitation Act, in accordance with section 606(b)(7)(H) and (I) of the Rehabilitation Act.</p> <p>(b) The designated State agency assures that it will use funds made available under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act only to provide supported employment services to individuals with the most significant disabilities, including extended services to youth with the most significant disabilities, who are eligible to receive such services; and, that such funds are used only to supplement and not supplant the funds provided under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act, when providing supported employment services specified in the individualized plan for employment, in accordance with section 606(b)(7)(A) and (D), of the Rehabilitation Act.</p>
7.	<p>Provision of Supported Employment Services:</p> <p>(a) The designated State agency assures that it will provide supported employment services as defined in section 7(39) of the Rehabilitation Act.</p> <p>(b) The designated State agency assures that</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">the comprehensive assessment of individuals with significant disabilities conducted under section 102(b)(1) of the Rehabilitation Act and funded under title I of the Rehabilitation Act includes consideration of supported employment as an appropriate employment outcome, in accordance with the requirements of section 606(b)(7)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act an individualized plan for employment that meets the requirements of section 102(b) of the Rehabilitation Act , which is developed and updated with title I funds, in accordance with sections 102(b)(3)(F) and 606(b)(7)(C) and (E) of the Rehabilitation Act.</p>

GEPA 427 Form Instructions for Application Package - Vocational Rehabilitation

Describe how your entity's existing mission, policies, or commitments ensure equitable access to, and equitable participation in, the proposed project or activity.

Vocational Rehabilitation's (VR) guiding principles are: Effective partnerships are critical in achieving results for consumers. All people have value regardless of age, race, creed, color, gender, or disability. Change is inevitable and provides opportunities for innovation and creativity. Serving our consumers is the primary focus of everything we do. Collaborative partnerships with employees are essential to our success. Good communication is essential when delivering quality rehabilitation services. Quality outcomes are a result of the commitment of consumers and qualified staff working together towards mutually agreed upon goals. Informed choice is central to sound decision-making and allows decisions to be based on all relevant information, options, and consequences. When all things are equal, legal, and based on good rehabilitation counseling, decisions will be made in favor of the consumer. In addition, VR's purpose is to assist individuals with disabilities to improve their employment opportunities and help businesses to solve their disability related issues. We strive to provide opportunities for eligible individuals with disabilities to achieve competitive integrated employment and increase their independence and self-sufficiency.

VR conducts a comprehensive assessment of rehabilitation needs to identify those who are unserved or underserved. The assessment also identifies the primary needs and employment barriers. VR analyzes the results of these assessments and develops goals and strategies to meet those individual needs and provide accommodations to help remove the barriers to assist as many individuals as possible to achieve their vocational goals.

Based on your proposed project or activity, what barriers may impede equitable access and participation of students, educators, or other beneficiaries?

According to our most recent needs assessment, individuals who live in rural areas have limited if any, service providers available. Participants also need transportation to the workplace, increased mental health supports, increased training to teach social and interpersonal skills, and workplace relationship training.

Based on the barriers identified, what steps will you take to address such barriers to equitable access and participation in the proposed project or activity?

To provide service to individuals in rural communities, VR counselors provide outreach and travel to remote locations. They also use various methods to maintain contact in between

visits. Depending on the unique individual needs and abilities, they may use phone calls, text messages, email, FaceTime or TEAMS meetings.

To ensure the participant is able to understand, make an informed choice, and participate, the counselor shall: use the client preferred mode of communication and supplement written information as needed; provide accommodations to address language/communication barriers, i.e., providing an interpreter; use a qualified interpreter for the deaf for a client who uses sign language; and provide support and assistance needed by a client with communication barriers related to their disability or client with limited experience in making decisions for themselves. North Dakota VR provides interpreter services to individuals who have limited English speaking ability. There are limited interpreters in the state, so VR has found virtual options. Staff are provided information regarding Video Remote Interpreting (VRI). This is an on-demand service that provides communication between deaf or hard-of-hearing persons or other languages in which VR staff can be in the same location, utilizing an interpreter by way of computer with a webcam and internet connection or a tablet using a cellular connection. North Dakota has a contract with Language Link. Language Link has three (3) separate services (Voice Interpretation, Video Remote Interpreter (including American Sign Language), and Secure Document Translation).

The state is also using telehealth to improve access to mental health services to participants.

What is your timeline, including targeted milestones, for addressing these identified barriers?

Barrier removal is an on-going process depending on the unique needs of the individual participants.

GEPA 427 Form Instructions for Application Package - Supported Employment

Describe how your entity's existing mission, policies, or commitments ensure equitable access to, and equitable participation in, the proposed project or activity.

VR's guiding principles are: Effective partnerships are critical in achieving results for consumers. All people have value regardless of age, race, creed, color, gender, or disability. Change is inevitable and provides opportunities for innovation and creativity. Serving our consumers is the primary focus of everything we do. Collaborative partnerships with employees are essential to our success. Good communication is essential when delivering quality rehabilitation services. Quality outcomes are a result of the commitment of consumers and qualified staff working together towards mutually agreed upon goals. Informed choice is central to sound decision-making and allows decisions to be based on all relevant information, options, and consequences. When all things are equal, legal, and based on good

rehabilitation counseling, decisions will be made in favor of the consumer. In addition, VR's purpose is to assist individuals with disabilities to improve their employment opportunities and help businesses to solve their disability related issues. We strive to provide opportunities for eligible individuals with disabilities to achieve competitive integrated employment and increase their independence and self-sufficiency.

Based on your proposed project or activity, what barriers may impede equitable access and participation of students, educators, or other beneficiaries?

The employment barriers that were most frequently cited for individuals with the most significant disabilities were transportation to the workplace, lack of job skills, and need job coaches.

Based on the barriers identified, what steps will you take to address such barriers to equitable access and participation in the proposed project or activity?

VR is exploring virtual job coaching options. These benefits can contribute to a more inclusive and supportive approach to assisting individuals with disabilities in their employment journey.

VR is working to develop and increase Community Rehabilitation Provider (CRP) capacity. VR has increased the current payment rate to CRPs, and has added premium payments as an incentive to CRPs to accept more complex cases. VR is also exploring virtual job coaching to help meet the needs of individuals living in more rural areas.

Individuals with the most significant disabilities will be served and outcomes achieved through the implementation of the following activities:

- Continued education and awareness activities for the business community, lawmakers, service providers, educators, family members, and the general public.
- Targeting supported employment (SE) or customized employment (CE) as an outcome for students with the most severe disabilities transitioning from school to work through regional transition services. Ensuring that VR staff, providers, and school personnel have a clear understanding of these services is crucial and can start well before graduation. This proactive approach aims to facilitate a seamless transition for high school students into the world of work. By enhancing client engagement through comprehensive awareness, we can contribute to better success for participants in the VR process.
- Coordination of the departments, agencies, divisions, organizations, and programs whose activities have a direct impact on SE or CE services.

- Identification of training and technical assistance needs based on provider outcome data.
- Continue to require licensing for all SE and CE providers which will include accreditation by a national accrediting body.
- Continue to have semi-annual meetings with providers to provide technical assistance and training.
- Regional offices will continue to meet quarterly with providers in their communities to address concerns, share information, etc.
- Enhance the provider track at the VR annual conference to elevate staff training and foster networking opportunities between VR and provider staff. This initiative aims to create a more robust platform for professional development, knowledge exchange, and collaboration within the VR community.
- Continue to work with extended services funding sources to ensure individuals can utilize SE and access supports once the VR case is closed.

What is your timeline, including targeted milestones, for addressing these identified barriers?

VR attempts to provide services and reduce barriers on an individual basis as the needs arise. VR is currently exploring virtual job coaching as an option and hope to have something in place in the next two (2) years.

Barrier removal is an on-going process depending on the unique needs of the individual participants.

Appendix 1: Performance Goals for the Core Programs

Each state submitting a Unified or Combined State Plan is required to identify expected levels of performance for each of the primary indicators of performance for the first two years covered by the plan. The state is required to reach agreement with the Secretary of Labor, in conjunction with the Secretary of Education, on state-negotiated levels of performance for the indicators for each of the first two years of the plan.

Include the state's expected levels of performance relating to the performance accountability indicators based on primary indicators of performance described in section 116(b)(2)(A) of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).

	Title I – Adult Program	
	Program Year: 2024	Program Year: 2025

	Expected Level	Negotiated Level	Expected Level	Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter after Exit)	78.2%		78.2%	
Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit)	73.5%		73.5%	
Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit)	\$9,000		\$9,000	
Credential Attainment Rate	73.8%		73.8%	
Measurable Skill Gains	62.1%		62.1%	

	Title I – Dislocated Worker Program			
	Program Year: 2024		Program Year: 2025	
	Expected Level	Negotiated Level	Expected Level	Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter after Exit)	82.3%		82.3%	
Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit)	87.5%		87.5%	

Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit)	\$13,000		\$13,000	
Credential Attainment Rate	87.0%		87.0%	
Measurable Skill Gains	86.0%		86.0%	

	Title I – Youth Program			
	Program Year: 2024		Program Year: 2025	
	Expected Level	Negotiated Level	Expected Level	Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter after Exit) ¹⁵	80.0%		80.0%	
Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit) ¹⁶	75.0%		75.0%	
Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit)	\$7,000		\$7,000	
Credential Attainment Rate	56.0%		56.0%	
Measurable Skill Gains	60.0%		60.0%	

¹⁵ For Title I Youth programs, employment, education or training.

¹⁶ For Title I Youth programs, employment, education or training.

	Title II – Adult Education and Family Literacy Act Program			
	Program Year: 2024		Program Year: 2025	
	Expected Level	Negotiated Level	Expected Level	Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter after Exit)	59%		59%	
Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit)	56%		56%	
Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit)	\$5300		\$5300	
Credential Attainment Rate	56%		56%	
Measurable Skill Gains	48%		48%	

	Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service Program			
	Program Year: 2024		Program Year: 2025	
	Expected Level	Negotiated Level	Expected Level	Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter after Exit)	66.0%		66.0%	
Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit)	65.0%		65.0%	
Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit)	\$7,500		\$7,500	
Credential Attainment Rate	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Measurable Skill Gains	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable

	Vocational Rehabilitation Program			
	Program Year: 2024		Program Year: 2025	
	Expected Level	Negotiated Level	Expected Level	Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter after Exit) ²²	59.0%		59.0%	
Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit) ²²	52.6%		52.6%	
Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit) ¹⁷	\$5204		\$5204	
Credential Attainment Rate	52.6%		52.6%	
Measurable Skill Gains	57.1%		57.1%	

	All WIOA Core Programs			
	Program Year: PY24		Program Year: PY25	
	Expected Level	Negotiated Level	Expected Level	Negotiated Level
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	58.0%		58.0%	

Additional Indicators of Performance
1.
2.
3.
4.

VII. PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR COMBINED STATE PLAN PARTNER PROGRAM

States choosing to submit a Combined State Plan must provide information concerning the six core programs—the Adult program, Dislocated Worker program, Youth program, Wagner-Peyser Act program, Adult Education and Family Literacy Act program, and the Vocational Rehabilitation program— and also submit relevant information for any of the eleven partner programs it elects to include in its Combined State Plan. When a State includes a Combined State Plan partner program in its Combined State Plan, it need not submit a separate plan or application for that particular program.²⁴ If included, Combined State Plan partner programs are subject to the “common planning elements” in Sections II-IV of this document, where specified, as well as the program-specific requirements for that program.

Career and technical education programs authorized under Perkins V (20 U.S.C. 2301 et seq.).

Please see *Guide for Submission of State Plans* (Guide) for full guidance on Perkins V planning requirements. [https://s3.amazonaws.com/PCRN/docs/1830-0029-Perkins V State Plan Guide Revised 9-12-19-Expires 4-30-22.pdf](https://s3.amazonaws.com/PCRN/docs/1830-0029-Perkins_V_State_Plan_Guide_Revised_9-12-19-Expires_4-30-22.pdf) . If including Perkins V in a WIOA Combined State Plan, the State must address the requirements listed below from Section II of the aforementioned Guide in the Combined State Plan. All “Text Box” references below are located in the Guide.

(a) Plan Development and Consultation

- (1) Describe how the State plan was developed in consultation with the stakeholders and in accordance with the procedures in section 122(c)(2) of Perkins V. See Text Box 1 for the statutory requirements for State plan consultation under section 122(c)(1) of Perkins V.
- (2) Consistent with section 122(e)(1) of Perkins V, each eligible agency must develop the portion of the State plan relating to the amount and uses of any funds proposed to be reserved for adult career and technical education, postsecondary career and technical education, and secondary career and technical education after consultation with the State agencies identified in section 122(e)(1)(A)-(C) of the Act. If a State agency, other than the eligible agency, finds a portion of the final State plan objectionable, the eligible agency must provide a copy of such objections and a description of its response in the final plan submitted to the Secretary. (Section 122(e)(2) of Perkins V)
- (3) Describe opportunities for the public to comment in person and in writing on the State plan. (Section 122(d)(14) of Perkins V)

(b) Program Administration and Implementation

- (1) State’s Vision for Education and Workforce Development
 - (A) Provide a summary of State-supported workforce development

activities (including education and training) in the State, including the degree to which the State's career and

²⁴ States that elect to include employment and training activities carried out under the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) Act (42 U.S.C. 9901 et seq.) under a Combined State Plan would submit all other required elements of a complete CSBG State Plan directly to the Federal agency that administers the program. Similarly, States that elect to include employment and training activities carried by the Department of Housing and Urban Development would submit all other required elements of a complete State Plan for those programs directly to the Federal agency that administers the program.

technical education programs and programs of study are aligned with and address the education and skill needs of the employers in the State identified by the State workforce development board. (Section 122(d)(1) of Perkins V)

- (B) Describe the State's strategic vision and set of goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce (including special populations) and for meeting the skilled workforce needs of employers, including in existing and emerging in-demand industry sectors and occupations as identified by the State, and how the State's career and technical education programs will help to meet these goals. (Section 122(d)(2) of Perkins V)
 - (C) Describe the State's strategy for any joint planning, alignment, coordination, and leveraging of funds between the State's career and technical education programs and programs of study with the State's workforce development system, to achieve the strategic vision and goals described in section 122(d)(2) of Perkins V, including the core programs defined in section 3 of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (29 U.S.C. 3102) and the elements related to system alignment under section 102(b)(2)(B) of such Act (29 U.S.C. 3112(b)(2)(B)); and for programs carried out under this title with other Federal programs, which may include programs funded 1965. (Section 122(d)(3) of Perkins V)
 - (D) Describe how the eligible agency will use State leadership funds made available under section 112(a)(2) of Perkins V for each of the purposes under section 124(a) of the Act. See Text Box 2 for the required uses of State leadership funds under section 124(a) of Perkins V. (Section 122(d)(7) of Perkins V)
- (2) Implementing Career and Technical Education Programs and Programs of Study
- (A) Describe the career and technical education programs or programs of study that will be supported, developed, or improved at the State level, including descriptions of the programs of study to be developed at the State level and made available for adoption by eligible recipients. (Section 122(d)(4)(A) of Perkins V)
 - (B) Describe the process and criteria to be used for approving locally developed programs of study or career pathways (see Text Box 3 for the statutory definition of career pathways under section 3(8) of Perkins V), including how such programs address State workforce development and education needs and the criteria to assess the extent to which the local application under section 13225 will—
 - (i) promote continuous improvement in academic achievement and technical skill attainment;
 - (ii) expand access to career and technical education for special populations; and
 - (iii) support the inclusion of employability skills in programs of study and career pathways. (Section 122(d)(4)(B) of Perkins V)
 - (C) Describe how the eligible agency will—
-

²⁵ Based on the context of this requirement, the reference to the local application process under “section 132” appears to be a typographical error in the Perkins V statute. The correct section for local applications in Perkins V is section 134. Therefore, eligible agencies should respond to this item using the provisions in section 134 of Perkins V.

- (i) make information on approved programs of study and career pathways (including career exploration, work-based learning opportunities, early college high schools, and dual or concurrent enrollment program opportunities) and guidance and advisement resources, available to students (and parents, as appropriate), representatives of secondary and postsecondary education, and special populations, and to the extent practicable, provide that information and those resources in a language students, parents, and educators can understand;
 - (ii) facilitate collaboration among eligible recipients in the development and coordination of career and technical education programs and programs of study and career pathways that include multiple entry and exit points;
 - (iii) use State, regional, or local labor market data to determine alignment of eligible recipients' programs of study to the needs of the State, regional, or local economy, including in-demand industry sectors and occupations identified by the State board, and to align career and technical education with such needs, as appropriate;
 - (iv) ensure equal access to approved career and technical education programs of study and activities assisted under this Act for special populations;
 - (v) coordinate with the State board to support the local development of career pathways and articulate processes by which career pathways will be developed by local workforce development boards, as appropriate;
 - (vi) support effective and meaningful collaboration between secondary schools, postsecondary institutions, and employers to provide students with experience in, and understanding of, all aspects of an industry, which may include work-based learning such as internships, mentorships, simulated work environments, and other hands-on or inquiry-based learning activities; and
 - (vii) improve outcomes and reduce performance gaps for CTE concentrators, including those who are members of special populations. (Section 122(d)(4)(C) of Perkins V)
- (D) Describe how the eligible agency, if it opts to do so, will include the opportunity for secondary school students to participate in dual or concurrent enrollment programs, early college high school, or competency-based education. (Section 122(d)(4)(D) of Perkins V)
- (E) Describe how the eligible agency will involve parents, academic and career and technical education teachers, administrators, faculty, career guidance and academic counselors, local business (including small businesses), labor organizations, and representatives of Indian Tribes and Tribal organizations, as appropriate, in the planning, development, implementation, and evaluation of its career and technical education programs. (Section 122(d)(12) of Perkins V)
- (F) Include a copy of the local application template that the eligible agency will require eligible recipients to submit pursuant to section 134(b) of Perkins V. See Text Box 4 for the statutory requirements for local applications under section 134(b) of Perkins V.
- (G) Include a copy of the comprehensive local needs assessment template and/or guidelines that the eligible agency will require of eligible recipients to meet the requirements of section 134(c) of Perkins V. See Text Box 5 for the requirements for the comprehensive local needs

assessment under section 134(c) of Perkins V.

(H) Provide the eligible agency's definition for "size, scope, and quality" that will be used to make funds available to eligible recipients pursuant to section 135(b) of Perkins V

(I) Meeting the Needs of Special Populations

- (1) Describe the eligible agency's program strategies for special populations, including a description of how individuals who are members of special populations—
- (i) will be provided with equal access to activities assisted under this Act;
 - (ii) will not be discriminated against on the basis of status as a member of a special population;
 - (iii) will be provided with programs designed to enable individuals who are members of special populations to meet or exceed State determined levels of performance described in section 113, and prepare special populations for further learning and for high-skill, high-wage, or in-demand industry sectors or occupations;
 - (iv) will be provided with appropriate accommodations; and
 - (v) will be provided instruction and work-based learning opportunities in integrated settings that support competitive, integrated employment. (Section 122(d)(9) of Perkins V)

(J) Preparing Teachers and Faculty

- (i) Describe how the eligible agency will support the recruitment and preparation of teachers, including special education teachers, faculty, school principals, administrators, specialized instructional support personnel, and paraprofessionals to provide career and technical education instruction, leadership, and support, including professional development that provides the knowledge and skills needed to work with and improve instruction for special populations. (Section 122(d)(6) of Perkins V)

(c) Fiscal Responsibility

- (1) Describe the criteria and process for how the eligible agency will approve eligible recipients for funds under this Act, including how—
- (A) each eligible recipient will promote academic achievement;
 - (B) each eligible recipient will promote skill attainment, including skill attainment that leads to a recognized postsecondary credential; and
 - (C) each eligible recipient will ensure the local needs assessment under section 134 takes into consideration local economic and education needs, including, where appropriate, in-demand industry sectors and occupations. (Section 122(d)(5) of Perkins V)
- (2) Describe how funds received by the eligible agency through the allotment made under section 111 of the Act will be distributed—
- (A) among career and technical education at the secondary level, or career and technical education at the postsecondary and adult level, or both, including how such distribution will most effectively provide students with the skills needed to succeed in the workplace; and
 - (B) among any consortia that may be formed among secondary schools and eligible institutions, and how funds will be distributed among the members of the consortia,

including the rationale for such distribution and how it will most effectively provide

students with the skills needed to succeed in the workplace. (Section 122(d)(8) of Perkins V)

- (3) For the upcoming program year, provide the specific dollar allocations for each eligible recipient made available by the eligible agency for career and technical education programs and programs of study under section 131(a)-(e) of the Act and describe how these allocations are distributed to local educational agencies, areas career and technical education schools and educational service agencies within the State. (Section 131(g) of Perkins V)
- (4) For the upcoming program year, provide the specific dollar allocations for each eligible recipient made available by the eligible agency for career and technical education programs and programs of study under section 132(a) of the Act and describe how these allocations are distributed to eligible institutions and consortia of eligible institutions within the State.
- (5) Describe how the eligible agency will adjust the data used to make the allocations to reflect any changes in school district boundaries that may have occurred since the population and/or enrollment data was collected, and include local education agencies without geographical boundaries, such as charter schools and secondary schools funded by the Bureau of Indian Education. (Section 131(a)(3) of Perkins V)
- (6) If the eligible agency will submit an application for a waiver to the secondary allocation formula described in section 131(a)—
 - (A) include a proposal for such an alternative formula; and
 - (B) describe how the waiver demonstrates that a proposed alternative formula more effectively targets funds on the basis of poverty (as defined by the Office of Management and Budget and revised annually in accordance with section 673(2) of the Community Services Block Grant Act (42 U.S.C. 9902(2)) to local educational agencies with the State. (Section 131(b) of Perkins V)
 - (C) Also indicate if this is a waiver request for which you received approval under the prior Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 (Perkins IV).
- (7) If the eligible agency will submit an application for a waiver to the postsecondary allocation formula described in section 132(a)—
 - (A) include a proposal for such an alternative formula; and
 - (B) describe how the formula does not result in a distribution of funds to the eligible institutions or consortia with the State that have the highest numbers of economically disadvantaged individuals and that an alternative formula will result in such a distribution. (Section 132(b) of Perkins V) Also indicate if this is a waiver request for which you received approval under the prior Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 (Perkins IV).
- (8) If the eligible agency will award reserve funds to eligible recipients under section 112(c) of Perkins V, describe the process and criteria for awarding those funds.
- (9) Provide the State's fiscal effort per student, or aggregate expenditures for the State, that will establish the baseline for the Secretary's annual determination on whether the State has maintained its fiscal effort, and indicate whether the baseline is a continuing level or new level. If the baseline is new, please provide the fiscal effort per student, or aggregate expenditures for the

State, for the preceding fiscal year. (Section 211(b)(1)(D) of Perkins V)

(d) Accountability for Results

- (1) Identify and include at least one (1) of the following indicators of career and technical education program quality—
 - (A) the percentage of CTE concentrators (see Text Box 6 for the statutory definition of a CTE concentrator under section 3(12) of Perkins V) graduating from high school having attained a recognized postsecondary credential;
 - (B) the percentage of CTE concentrators graduating high school having attained postsecondary credits in relevant career and technical education programs and programs of study earned through a dual or concurrent enrollment program or another credit transfer agreement; and/or
 - (C) the percentage of CTE concentrators graduating from high school having participated in work-based learning. (Section 113(b)(2)(A)(iv)(I) of Perkins V)
- (2) Include any other measure(s) of student success in career and technical education that are statewide, valid, and reliable, and comparable across the State. (Section 113(b)(2)(A)(iv)(II) of Perkins V) Please note that inclusion of “other” program quality measure(s) is optional for States.
- (3) Provide the eligible agency’s measurement definition with a numerator and denominator for each of the quality indicator(s) the eligible agency selects to use.
- (4) Provide on the form in Section V.B, for each year covered by the State plan beginning in FY 2020, State determined performance levels or each of the secondary and postsecondary core indicators, with the levels of performance being the same for all CTE concentrators in the State. (Section 113(b)(3)(A)(i)(I) of Perkins V)
- (5) Describe the procedure the eligible agency adopted for determining State determined levels of performance described in section 113 of Perkins V, which at a minimum shall include—
 - (A) a description of the process for public comment under section 113(b)(3)(B) of Perkins V as part of the development of the State determined levels of performance (see Text Box 7 for the statutory requirements for consultation on State determined performance levels under section 113(b)(3)(B) of Perkins V);
 - (B) an explanation for the State determined levels of performance that meet each of the statutory requirements in Text Box 8; and
 - (C) a description of how the State determined levels of performance set by the eligible agency align with the levels, goals and objectives other Federal and State laws, (Section 122(d)(10) of Perkins V).
- (6) As part of the procedures for determining State determined levels of performance, describe the process that will be used to establish a baseline for those levels.
- (7) Provide a written response to the comments regarding State determined performance levels received during the public comment period pursuant to section 113(b)(3)(B) of Perkins V. (Section 113(b)(3)(B)(iii) of Perkins V). As part of the written response, include a description of any the changes made to the State determined performance levels as a result of stakeholder feedback.
- (8) Describe how the eligible agency will address disparities or gaps in performance as described in

section 113(b)(3)(C)(ii)(II) of Perkins V in each of the plan years, and if no meaningful progress has been achieved prior to the third program year, a description of the additional actions the eligible agency will take to eliminate these disparities or gaps. (Section 122(d)(11) of Perkins V)

As part of the written response, and pursuant to the Report of the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP),²⁶ the eligible agency could indicate that it will analyze data on the core indicators of performance to identify gaps in performance, explain how they will use evidence-based research to develop a plan to provide support and technical assistance to eligible recipients to address and close such gaps, and how they will implement this plan. The eligible agency is not required to submit a new State plan prior to the third program year in order to address this requirement.

²⁶ See page 11 of Committee Report at <https://www.congress.gov/115/crpt/srpt434/CRPT-115srpt434.pdf>.

TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE FOR NEEDY FAMILIES PROGRAM (TANF)

(OMB Control Number: 0970-0145)

States that include TANF in the Combined State Plan must outline how the State will meet the requirements of section 402 of the Social Security Act including how it will:

- (a) Conduct a program designed to serve all political subdivisions in the State (not necessarily in a uniform manner) that provides assistance to needy families with (or expecting) children and provides parents with job preparation, work, and support services to enable them to leave the program, specifically cash assistance, and become self-sufficient (section 402(a)(1)(A)(i) of the Social Security Act).
- (b) Require a parent or caretaker receiving assistance to engage in work (defined by the State) once the State determines the parent or caretaker is ready to engage in work, or once he or she has received 24 months of assistance, whichever is earlier, consistent with the child care exception at 407(e)(2) (section 402(a)(1)(A)(ii) of the Social Security Act).
- (c) Ensure that parents and caretakers receiving assistance engage in work in accordance with section 407 (section 402(a)(1)(A)(iii) of the Social Security Act). Consistent with the required strategic elements discussed in section II (a)(2) herein, provide a specific analysis of how the State's workforce development activities are addressing employment and training services for parents or caretakers receiving assistance.
- (d) Take such reasonable steps as the State deems necessary to restrict the use and disclosure of information about individuals and families receiving assistance under the program attributable to funds provided by the Federal Government (section 402(a)(1)(A)(iv) of the Social Security Act).
- (e) Establish goals and take action to prevent and reduce out-of-wedlock pregnancies, with special emphasis on teenage pregnancies (section 402(a)(1)(A)(v) of the Social Security Act).
- (f) Conduct a program designed to reach State and local law enforcement officials, the education system, and relevant counseling services, that provides education and training on the problem of statutory rape so that teenage pregnancy prevention programs may be expanded to include men (section 402(a)(1)(A)(vi) of the Social Security Act.)
- (g) Implement policies and procedures as necessary to prevent access to assistance provided under the State program funded under this part through any electronic fund transaction in an automated teller machine or point-of-sale device located in a place described in section 408(a)(12), including a plan to ensure that recipients of the assistance have adequate access to their cash assistance (section 402(a)(1)(A)(vii) of the Social Security Act).
- (h) Ensure that recipients of assistance provided under the State program funded under this part have the ability to use or withdraw assistance with minimal fees or charges, including an opportunity to access assistance with no fee or charges, and are provided information on applicable fees and surcharges that apply to electronic fund transactions involving the assistance, and that such information is made publicly available (section 402(a)(1)(A)(viii) of the Social Security Act).
- (i) Indicate whether it intends to treat families moving from another State differently from other families under the program, and if so how (section 402(a)(1)(B)(i) of the Social Security Act)
- (j) Indicate whether it intends to provide assistance to non-citizens, and if so include an

overview of the assistance (section 402(a)(1)(B)(ii) of the Social Security Act). .

- (k) Set forth objective criteria for the delivery of benefits and the determination of eligibility and for fair and equitable treatment, including an explanation of how it will provide opportunities for recipients who have been adversely affected to be heard in a State administrative or appeal process (section 402(a)(1)(B)(iii) of the Social Security Act).
- (l) Indicate whether the State intends to assist individuals to train for, seek, and maintain employment (Section 402(a)(1)(B)(v) of the Social Security Act)—
 - (1) providing direct care in a long-term care facility (as such terms are defined under section 1397j of this title); or
 - (2) in other occupations related to elder care, high-demand occupations, or occupations expected to experience labor shortages as, determined appropriate by the State for which the State identifies an unmet need for service personnel, and, if so, shall include an overview of such assistance.
- (m) Provide for all MOE-funded services the following information: the name of the program benefit or service, and the financial eligibility criteria that families must meet in order to receive that benefit or service. In addition, for TANF MOE-funded services (co-mingled or segregated MOE) describe the program benefit provided to eligible families (SSP services do not have to include a description but the Department of Health and Human Services encourages it) (§263.2(b)(3) & §263.2(c) preamble pages 17826-7).

A. TANF CERTIFICATIONS

States that include TANF in the Combined State Plan must provide a certification by the chief executive officer of that State, that during the fiscal year, the State will:	
1.	Operate a child support enforcement program under the State Plan approved under part D. (section 402(a)(2) of the Social Security Act);
2.	Operate a foster care and adoption assistance program under the State Plan approved under part E, and that the State will take such actions as are necessary to ensure that children receiving assistance under such part are eligible for medical assistance under the State Plan under title XIX. (section 402(a)(3) of the Social Security Act);
3.	Specify which State agency or agencies will administer and supervise the program referred to in paragraph (1) for the fiscal year, which shall include assurances that local governments and private sector organizations (section 402(a)(4) of the Social Security Act)— <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (A) have been consulted regarding the plan and design of welfare services in the State so that services are provided in a manner appropriate to local populations; and (B) have had at least 45 days to submit comments on the plan and the design of such services;
4.	Provide each member of an Indian tribe, who is domiciled in the State and is not eligible for assistance under a tribal family assistance plan approved under section 412, with equitable access to assistance under the State program funded under this part attributable to funds provided by the Federal Government. (section 402(a)(5) of the Social Security Act);

5.	Establish and enforce standards and procedures to ensure against program fraud and abuse, including standards and procedures concerning nepotism, conflicts of interest among individuals responsible for the administration and supervision of the State program, kickbacks, and the use of political patronage. (section 402(a)(6) of the Social Security Act);
6.	(optional) Establish and Enforcing standards and procedures to (section 402(a)(7) of the Social Security Act).— (i) screen and identify individuals receiving assistance under this part with a history of domestic violence while maintaining the confidentiality of such individuals; (ii) refer such individuals to counseling and supportive services; and (iii) waive, pursuant to a determination of good cause, other program requirements such as time limits (for so long as necessary) for individuals receiving assistance, residency requirements, child support cooperation requirements, and family cap provisions, in cases where compliance with such requirements would make it more difficult for individuals receiving assistance under this part to escape domestic violence or unfairly penalize such individuals who are or have been victimized by such violence, or individuals who are at risk of further domestic violence.

SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM, EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING (SNAP E & T) and WORK PROGRAMS AUTHORIZED UNDER SECTIONS 6(d)(4) and 6 6(o) OF THE FOOD AND NUTRITION ACT OF 2008

(OMB Control Number: 0584-0083)

(a) General Requirements²⁷: The State agency must prepare and submit an Employment and Training (E&T) Plan to its appropriate Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) Regional Office. The E&T Plan must be available for public inspection at the State agency headquarters. A State agency may include its plan for the SNAP E&T program in a Combined Plan under WIOA but will require FNS approval prior to implementation and must continue to make a copy of the plan available for public inspection. If a State includes SNAP E&T in a Combined Plan under WIOA, the State agency will detail the following for each year covered by the Combined Plan:

- (1) The nature of the E&T components the State agency plans to offer and the reasons for such components, including cost information. The methodology for State agency reimbursement for education components must be specifically addressed;
- (2) An operating budget for the Federal fiscal year with an estimate of the cost of operation for each Federal fiscal year covered by the Combined Plan. Any State agency that requests 50 percent Federal reimbursement for State agency E&T administrative costs, other than for participant reimbursements, must include in its plan, or amendments to its plan, an itemized list of all activities and costs for which those Federal funds will be claimed, including the costs for case management and casework to facilitate the transition from economic dependency to self-sufficiency through work. Costs in excess of the Federal grant will be allowed only with the prior approval of FNS and must be adequately documented to assure that they are necessary, reasonable and properly allocated. A State must submit a plan amendment to request budget adjustments at least 30 days prior to planned implementation;
- (3) The categories and types of individuals the State agency intends to exempt from E&T participation, the estimated percentage of work registrants the State agency plans to exempt, and the frequency with which the State agency plans to reevaluate the validity of its exemptions;
- (4) The characteristics of the population the State agency intends to place in E&T;
- (5) The estimated number of volunteers the State agency expects to place in E&T;
- (6) The geographic areas covered and not covered by the E&T Plan and why, and the type and location of services to be offered;
- (7) The method the State agency uses to count all work registrants as of the first day of the new fiscal year;
- (8) The method the State agency uses to report work registrant information on the quarterly Form FNS-583;

²⁷ 7 CFR § 273.7(c)(6).

- (9) The method the State agency uses to prevent work registrants from being counted twice within a Federal fiscal year. If the State agency universally work registers all SNAP applicants, this method must specify how the State agency excludes those exempt from work registration under 7 C.F.R. §273.7(b)(1). If the State agency work registers nonexempt participants whenever a new application is submitted, this method must also specify how the State agency excludes those participants who may have already been registered within the past 12 months as specified under 7 C.F.R. §273.7(a)(1)(i);
- (10) The organizational relationship between the units responsible for certification and the units operating the E&T components, including units of the Statewide workforce development system, if available. FNS is specifically concerned that the lines of communication be efficient and that noncompliance by the participant be reported to the certification unit within 10 working days after the noncompliance occurs;
- (11) The relationship between the State agency and other organizations it plans to coordinate with for the provision of services, including organizations in the Statewide workforce development system, if available. Copies of contracts must be available for inspection;
- (12) The availability, if appropriate, of E&T programs for Indians living on reservations after the State agency has consulted in good faith with appropriate tribal organizations;
- (13) If a conciliation process is planned, the procedures that will be used when an individual fails to comply with an E&T program requirement. Include the length of the conciliation period; and
- (14) The payment rates for child care established in accordance with the Child Care and Development Block Grant provisions of 45 CFR 98.43, and based on local market rate surveys.
- (15) The combined (Federal/State) State agency reimbursement rate for transportation costs and other expenses reasonably necessary and directly related to participation incurred by E&T participants. If the State agency proposes to provide different reimbursement amounts to account for varying levels of expenses, for instance for greater or lesser costs of transportation in different areas of the State, it must include them here.
- (16) Information about expenses the State agency proposes to reimburse. FNS must be afforded the opportunity to review and comment on the proposed reimbursements before they are implemented.

(b) Able-bodied Adults without Dependents (ABAWD)²⁸: A State agency interested in receiving additional funding for serving able-bodied adults without dependents (ABAWDs) subject to the 3-month time limit, in accordance with 7 C.F.R. §273.7(d)(3), must include the following for each Federal fiscal year covered by the Combined Plan under WIOA:

- (1) Its pledge to offer a qualifying activity to all at-risk ABAWD applicants and recipients;
 - (2) Estimated costs of fulfilling its pledge;
 - (3) A description of management controls in place to meet pledge requirements;
 - (4) A discussion of its capacity and ability to serve at-risk ABAWDs;
- Information about the size and special needs of its ABAWD population; and

²⁸ 7 CFR § 273.7(c)(7)

(5) Information about the education, training, and workfare components it will offer to meet the ABAWD work requirement.

(c) Optional Workfare²⁹: State agencies or other political subdivisions must describe in detail in the plan how the political subdivision, working with the State agency and any other cooperating agencies that may be involved in the program, will fulfill the provisions of 7 C.F.R. §273.7(m). If a State opts to operate an optional workfare program or modify an existing optional workfare program, through a Combined Plan under WIOA, it must provide the following:

(1) State agencies or political subdivisions submitting a workfare plan must submit with the plan an operating budget covering the period from the initiation of the workfare program's implementation schedule to the close of the Federal fiscal year for each year covered by the Combined Plan. In addition, an estimate of the cost for one full year of operation must be submitted together with the workfare plan for each Federal fiscal year covered by the Combined Plan.

(2) If workfare plans are submitted by more than one political subdivision, each representing the same population (such as a city within a county), FNS will determine which political subdivision will have its plan approved. Under no circumstances will a SNAP recipient be subject to more than one SNAP workfare program. If a political subdivision chooses to operate a workfare program and represents a population which is already, at least in part, subject to a SNAP workfare program administered by another political subdivision, it must establish in its workfare plan how SNAP recipients will not be subject to more than one SNAP workfare program.

(d) Voluntary Workfare³⁰: State agencies and political subdivisions may operate workfare programs whereby participation by SNAP recipients is voluntary. In such a program, the penalties for failure to comply, as provided in 7 C.F.R. §273.7(f), will not apply for noncompliance. The number of hours to be worked will be negotiated between the household and the operating agency, though not to exceed the limits provided under 7 C.F.R. §273.7(m)(5)(ii). In addition, all protections provided under 7 C.F.R. §273.7(m)(6)(i) shall continue to apply. Those State agencies and political subdivisions choosing to operate such a program shall indicate in their workfare plan how their staffing will adapt to anticipated and unanticipated levels of participation for each Federal fiscal year covered by the Combined Plan under WIOA. FNS will not approve plans which do not show that the benefits of the workfare program, in terms of hours worked by participants and reduced SNAP allotments due to successful job attainment, are expected to exceed the costs of such a program. In addition, if FNS finds that an approved voluntary program does not meet this criterion, FNS reserves the right to withdraw approval.

²⁹ 7 CFR § 273.7(m)

³⁰ 7 CFR § 273.7(m)(8)

- (e) Comparable Workfare³¹: The State agency or political subdivision must provide a description of its program, including a methodology for ensuring compliance with 7 C.F.R §273.7(m)(9)(ii) for each Federal fiscal year covered by the Combined Plan under WIOA.
- (f) Process³²: The State agency must submit amendments to the SNAP E&T segment of the Combined Plan for FNS approval at least 30 days prior to the planned implementation in order to receive federal SNAP E&T funding for the activities not covered by the approved Combined Plan.
- (g) Plan Modifications³³: If FNS determines that the performance of a State agency with respect to employment and training outcomes is inadequate, FNS may require the State agency to make modifications to the State E&T plan to improve the outcomes.

Funding Disclaimer: Funds may not be available when SNAP E&T portions of a Combined State Plan under WIOA are approved. FNS's obligation after approving a SNAP E&T plan submitted as part of a Combined State Plan is contingent upon the availability of an appropriation from which payment can be made. Any FNS funding resulting from an approval of a SNAP E&T plan submitted as part of a Combined State Plan is subject to FNS receiving sufficient funds (in the Program Financial Control System for FNS) to fund this and all prior approved SNAP E&T plans submitted as part of a Combined State Plan in their entirety in the time and date order received. Federal reimbursement to States for 50 percent of State administrative expenditures and for participant reimbursements is subject to the above conditions.

²⁹ 7 U.S.C. 2025(h)(5)(E) as amended by Agricultural Act of 2014.

³¹ 7 CFR § 273.7(m)(9)

³² 7 CFR § 273.7(c)(8)

TRADE ADJUSTMENT ASSISTANCE

There are no program-specific state planning requirements for TAA. If the state includes TAA in a Combined State Plan, the state must incorporate TAA in its responses to the common planning elements in sections II, III, IV, and V of the WIOA State Plan requirements instrument.

JOBS FOR VETERANS STATE GRANTS

(OMB Control Number: 1225-0086)

The Jobs for Veterans' State Grants (JVSG) are mandatory, formula-based staffing grants to States (including DC, PR, VI and Guam). The JVSG is funded annually in accordance with a funding formula defined in the statute (38 U.S.C. 4102A (c) (2) (B) and regulation and operates on a fiscal year (not program year) basis, however, performance metrics are collected and reported quarterly on a Program Year basis (as with the ETA-9002 Series). Currently, VETS JVSG operates on a multi-year grant approval cycle modified and funded annually.

In accordance with 38 U.S.C. § 4102A(b)(5) and § 4102A(c), the Assistant Secretary for Veterans' Employment and Training (ASVET) makes grant funds available for use in each State to support Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) specialists and Local Veterans' Employment Representatives (LVER) staff. As a condition to receive funding, 38 U.S.C. § 4102A(c)(2) requires States to submit an application for a grant that contains a State Plan narrative, which includes:

- (a) How the State intends to provide employment, training and job placement services to veterans and eligible persons under the JVSG;
- (b) The duties assigned to DVOP specialists and LVER staff by the State; specifically implementing DVOP and LVER duties or roles and responsibilities as outlined in 38 U.S.C. § 4103A and 4104. These duties must be consistent with current guidance;
- (c) The manner in which DVOP specialists and LVER staff are integrated into the State's employment service delivery system or American Job Center;
- (d) The Incentive Award program implemented using the 1% grant allocation set aside for this purpose, as applicable;
- (e) The populations of eligible veterans to be served, including any additional populations designated by the Secretary as eligible for services, and any additional populations specifically targeted by the State Workforce Agency for services from one-stop delivery system partners (e.g., Native American veterans; veterans in remote rural counties or parishes);
- (f) How the State implements and monitors the administration of priority of service to covered persons;
- (g) How the State provides or intends to provide and measure, through both the DVOP and American Job Center staff: (1) job and job training individualized career services, (2) employment placement services, and (3) job-driven training and subsequent placement service program for eligible veterans and eligible persons;
- (h) The hire date along with mandatory training completion dates for all DVOP specialists and LVER staff; and,
- (i) Such additional information as the Secretary may require.

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

(OMB Control Number: 1205-0132)

The Unemployment Insurance (UI) program requires a State Quality Service Plan (SQSP) on a 2-year planning cycle that is a condition of receipt of administrative funding to administer the program. The SQSP is the State's UI performance management and planning process that allows for an exchange of information between Federal and State partners to enhance the UI program's ability to reflect their joint commitment to performance excellence and client-centered services. A formal two-year SQSP is submitted biennially. On the off years, States may be required to modify the SQSP with additional corrective action plans and narrative if they are failing any new performance measures, and they are required to provide updated budget documents, certifications, and assurances. ETA Handbook No. 336, 18th Edition provides detailed guidance for the preparation and submittal of the SQSP and supplemental guidance is provided in an annual UIPL, issued as UIPL 15-19 for the FY 2020 SQSP. The Social Security Act (SSA) sections 302 and 303 authorize the Secretary of Labor to provide funds to administer the UI program and govern the expenditure of those funds. States that choose the option to include UI in a WIOA Combined State Plan will be required to submit their SQSP through the Combined State Plan process. The SQSP must be prepared in accordance to the instructions in ET Handbook 336, 18th Edition and there are no changes to the established SQSP cycle if a State chose to submit their SQSP through the Combined State Plan process.

(a) Contents of a complete UI SQSP package: A complete UI SQSP package includes the following documents, as described in Chapter 1, ETA Handbook 336, 18th Edition:

- (1) *Transmittal Letter*: A cover letter to the appropriate Regional Office (RO) transmitting all the required SQSP documents.
- (2) *Budget Worksheets/Forms*: Budget worksheets/forms and plan for program administration based on projected allocations received from the Federal partner. These forms include Worksheet UI-1 and SF 424, SF 424A and SF 424B. The SF 424A is only required if the State vary the quarterly distribution of base claims activity staff years.
- (3) *The State Plan Narrative*: The State Plan Narrative is a vital element of the SQSP that provides a vehicle for sharing with the Federal partner State-specific efforts that affect the administration of the UI Program. The State Plan Narrative allows the State to describe in a single narrative:
 - a) State performance in comparison to the Government Performance Review Act goals;
 - b) actions planned to correct deficiencies regarding UI programs, UI program reviews and reporting requirements; and
 - c) results of customer satisfaction surveys (optional).
- (4) *Corrective Action Plans (CAPs)*: CAPs are expected as a part of the SQSP when State's annual performance does not meet the established criteria for core measures, Secretary's Standards, UI program, assurances, and other program deficiencies identified in the annual SQSP guidance provided by the Department. The CAP must list both specific milestones for key corrective actions or improvement activities, and the completion date for each milestone.
- (5) *UI Program Integrity Action Plan (UI IAP)*: The UI IAP outlines the strategies the State will undertake during the planning period regarding the prevention reduction and recovery of UI improper payments.
- (6) *Organizational Chart*: The organization chart must conform to the requirement for delivery of

service through public employment offices, or such other designated providers as the Secretary may authorize; show the State's configuration from the Governor of the State down to the point of Employment Service and UI customer service delivery; and provide sufficient detail to show each organizational unit involved and the title of the unit manager.

- (7) *SQSP Signature Page*. The State administrator must sign and date the SQSP Signature Page. By signing the Signature Page, the State administrator certifies that the State will comply with all the assurances and activities contained in the SQSP guidelines.

Though a State needs to submit the complete SQSP package on a 2-year cycle, there are certain documents contained in the SQSP package which are required to be submitted by States annually as part of the off-year submission. The documents which are required to be submitted annually are considered a modification to the complete SQSP submitted the previous year. Since funds for State UI operations are appropriated each year, each State is required to annually submit the transmittal letter, budget worksheets, organizational chart and the signature page. The modification may also include CAPs for new identified performance deficiencies, and any required modifications to existing CAPs.

Since the UI program is a required one-stop partner, States have the option of including UI in the Combined State Plan authorized by WIOA sec. 103.

(b) Requirements for States electing to include UI in the Combined State Plan: States that elect to include UI in the Combined State Plan must:

- (1) Submit an SQSP in the following manner depending on their timing in the SQSP cycle:
 - (A) If a State is in the first year of their 2-year cycle, the State is required to submit the most recently approved complete SQSP package. A complete SQSP package will include the Transmittal Letter, Budget Worksheets/Forms, State Plan Narrative, CAPs (including the milestones and the completion date for each milestone), the UI IAP, Organizational Chart, and the SQSP Signature Page. One of the key goals for the UI program is to ensure that claimants are able to successfully return to work. As such, the SQSP State Plan Narrative must provide a discussion of the plan coordination with other WIOA Combined Plan programs to ensure a coordinated effort and integrated service delivery.
 - (B) If a State is in the second year of the 2-year cycle, the State is required to submit the most recently approved complete SQSP package with a modification that must include the Transmittal Letter, Budget Worksheets/Forms, Organizational Chart, and the SQSP Signature page. The modification may also include CAPs for new identified performance deficiencies, and any required modifications to existing CAPs. The CAP must list both specific milestones for key corrective actions or improvement activities, and the completion date for each milestone.
- (2) Submit the required off-year SQSP components as a modification to the Combined State Plan on the same cycle as the regular SQSP process which must be approved by September 30th each year.

SENIOR COMMUNITY SERVICE EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM (SCSEP)

(OMB Control No. 1205-0040)

(a) Economic Projections and Impact

- (1) Discuss long-term projections for jobs in industries and occupations in the State that may provide employment opportunities for older workers. (20 CFR 641.302(d))(May alternatively be discussed in the economic analysis section of strategic plan.)
- (2) Discuss how the long-term job projections discussed in the economic analysis section of strategic plan relate to the types of unsubsidized jobs for which SCSEP participants will be trained and the types of skill training to be provided. (20 CFR 641.302(d))
- (3) Discuss current and projected employment opportunities in the State (such as by providing information available under §15 of the Wagner-Peyser Act (29 U.S.C. 491-2) by occupation), and the types of skills possessed by eligible individuals. (20 CFR 641.325(c))

(b) Service Delivery and Coordination

- (1) A description of actions to coordinate SCSEP with other programs. This may alternatively be discussed in the State strategies section of the strategic plan, but regardless of placement in document, must include:
 - (A) Planned actions to coordinate activities of SCSEP grantees with WIOA title I programs, including plans for using the WIOA one-stop delivery system and its partners to serve individuals aged 55 and older. (20 CFR 641.302(g), 641.325(e))
 - (B) Planned actions to coordinate activities of SCSEP grantees with the activities being carried out in the State under the other titles of the Older Americans Act (OAA). (20 CFR 641.302(h))
 - (C) Planned actions to coordinate SCSEP with other private and public entities and programs that provide services to older Americans, such as community and faith-based organizations, transportation programs, and programs for those with special needs or disabilities. (20 CFR 641.302(i))
 - (D) Planned actions to coordinate SCSEP with other labor market and job training initiatives. (20 CFR 641.302(j))
 - (E) Actions to ensure that SCSEP is an active partner in the one-stop delivery system and the steps the State will take to encourage and improve coordination with the one-stop delivery system. (20 CFR 641.335)
 - (F) Efforts to work with local economic development offices in rural locations.
- (2) The State's long-term strategy for engaging employers to develop and promote opportunities for the placement of SCSEP participants in unsubsidized employment. (20 CFR 641.302(e)) (May alternatively be discussed in the State strategies section of strategic plan.)
- (3) The State's long-term strategy for serving minority older individuals under SCSEP. (20 CFR 641.302 (c))
- (4) A list of community services that are needed and the places where these services are most needed. Specifically, the plan must address the needs and location of those individuals

most in need of community services and the groups working to meet their needs. (20 CFR 641.330)

- (5) The State's long-term strategy to improve SCSEP services, including planned long-term changes to the design of the program within the State, and planned changes in the use of SCSEP grantees and program operators to better achieve the goals of the program. This may include recommendations to the Department as appropriate. (20 CFR 641.302(k))
- (6) The State's strategy for continuous improvement in the level of performance for SCSEP participants' entry into unsubsidized employment, and to achieve, at a minimum, the levels specified in OAA Section 513(a)(2)(E)(ii). (20 CFR 641.302(f))

(c) Location and Population Served, including Equitable Distribution

- (1) A description of the localities and populations for which projects of the type authorized by title V are most needed. (20 CFR 641.325 (d))
- (2) List the cities and counties where the project will be conducted. Include the number of SCSEP authorized positions and indicate where the positions changed from the prior year.
- (3) Describe current slot imbalances and proposed steps to correct inequities to achieve equitable distribution.
- (4) The State's long-term strategy for achieving an equitable distribution of SCSEP positions within the State that:
 - (A) Moves positions from over-served to underserved locations within the State in compliance with 20 CFR 641.365.
 - (B) Equitably serves rural and urban areas.
 - (C) Serves individuals afforded priority for service under 20 CFR 641.520. (20 CFR 641.302(a), 641.365, 641.520)
- (5) The ratio of eligible individuals in each service area to the total eligible population in the State. (20 CFR 641.325(a))
- (6) The relative distribution of eligible individuals who:
 - (A) Reside in urban and rural areas within the State
 - (B) Have the greatest economic need
 - (C) Are minorities
 - (D) Are limited English proficient.
 - (E) Have the greatest social need. (20 CFR 641.325(b))
- (7) A description of the steps taken to avoid disruptions to the greatest extent possible, when positions are redistributed, as provided in 20 CFR 641.365; when new Census or other reliable data become available; or when there is over-enrollment for any other reason. (20 CFR 641.325(i), 641.302(b))

HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT (HUD) EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING ACTIVITIES

There are no program-specific state planning requirements for HUD employment and training programs. If the state includes HUD employment and training programs in a Combined State Plan, the state must incorporate such HUD programs in its responses to the common planning elements in sections II, III and IV of the WIOA State Plan requirements instrument.

HUD considers such employment and training activities to include the following: Community Development Block Grant program, Continuum of Care, Family Self-Sufficiency program, Jobs Plus program, and Resident Opportunities and Self-Sufficiency program.

B. COMMUNITY SERVICES BLOCK GRANT

(OMB Control Number: 0970-0382)

Note: Below is information about the employment and training activities carried out under the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) (42 U.S.C. 9901 et seq.) that is included in the WIOA Combined State Plan. The complete CSBG State Plan is submitted directly to the Federal agency that administers that program and is collected under OMB Control Number: 0970-0382.

Where CSBG is included in the Combined State Plan, the State CSBG Lead Agency (as designated by the chief executive of the State under the requirements of section 676(a) of the CSBG Act (42 U.S.C. 9908(a)) will coordinate plans for employment and training activities under CSBG as part of a larger antipoverty and workforce development strategy.

As part of the Combined State Plan, the State CSBG Lead Agency must:

- (a) Describe how the State and the eligible entities will coordinate the provision of employment and training activities through Statewide and local WIOA workforce development systems; and may
- (b) Provide examples of innovative employment and training programs and activities conducted by eligible entities or other neighborhood-based organizations as part of a community antipoverty strategy.

PRA BURDENS TABLE

Please note that the burden calculations for this table have been calculated differently depending on the referenced ICRs. The burdens included below are the same burdens that exist for these programs regardless of whether a state chooses to submit a Combined State Plan.

OMB Control Number	Topic	Estimated Total Burden	Citation for Requirement to Respond
Common Form Elements			
1205-0522	Common Requirements and Program-Specific requirements for: The Adult Program, the Dislocated Worker Program, the Youth Program, the Wagner-Peyser Act Program, the Adult Education and Literacy Program, and the Vocational Rehabilitation Program	3,268 hours	WIOA sec. 102 and 103
Supplemental Collections for Combined Plan Partners' Program-Specific Elements			
1830-0029	Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Improvement Act of 2006 (P.L. 109-270) State Plan Guide	2,240 hours	Sections 122(a)(1) and 201(c) of the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 (Act), 20 U.S.C. 2301 et seq. as amended by P.L. 109-270, and WIOA sec. 103
0970-0145	Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) State Plan Guidance	594 hours	42 U.S.C. 602, and WIOA sec. 103
0584-0083	Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Operating Guidelines, Forms, and Waivers, Program and Budget Summary Statement	1431 hours ³⁰	7 CFR 271-274.1, and WIOA sec. 103
1225-0086	Grant Application Requirements for the Jobs for Veterans State Grants Program	1620 hours	38 U.S.C. § 4102A(c), and WIOA sec. 103.
1205-0132	Unemployment Insurance State Quality Service Plan Planning and Reporting Guidelines	1530 hours	29 CFR 97.40 ET Handbook No. 336 18 th Edition, and WIOA sec. 103.
1205-0040	Senior Community Service Employment Program Performance Measurement System	406 hours	20 CFR Part 641, and WIOA sec. 103
0970-0382	Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) Model Plan Applications	112 hours ³¹	Section 676(b) of the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) Act (42 U.S.C. 9908(b)), and WIOA sec. 103.

OMB Control Number 1205-0522

³⁰ This number represents estimated average burden for the portion of the SNAP plan that covers programs authorized under section 6(d)(4) and section 6(o) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 only.

³¹ This number represents estimated average burden for the portion of t