



DUPAGE COUNTY  
**WIOA**  
LOCAL PLAN

2024-2028



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## Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act Planning Structure

The Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act (WIOA), signed into law in July 2014, outlines how the core programs of federal investment in the areas of employment and training will be coordinated. To that end, WIOA requires each state to develop four-year strategies in the form of a Unified State Plan covering all core programs. The Unified State Plan informs the regional and local plans that, in the State of Illinois, take place at the Economic Development Region (EDR) and Local Workforce Innovation Area (LWIA) levels.

DuPage County (LWIA 6) is part of the Northeast Region of Illinois (EDR 4.) The DuPage County Workforce Innovation Board ("Local Board"), in conjunction with the WIOA required partners and other workforce system stakeholders throughout the County, developed a four-year local plan following the guidance of the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO.) The local plan is aligned with the Unified State Plan and the regional plan developed by all WIOA partners in EDR 4.

The regional plan for EDR 4 contains Chapters 1-3 of the Regional & Local Planning Guide, while the local plan in the pages to follow contains Chapters 4-6.

## Overview of DuPage County<sup>1</sup>

DuPage County shares its entire north and east borders with Cook County, as well as a portion of its southern border. It is the second most populous County in the State of Illinois (919,576,934,094) behind Cook County, and the two counties combined account for nearly half of the state's population. The County also shares borders with Will County, Kane County, and Kendall County. It is densely populated (2,809 people per square mile) in comparison with the rest of Illinois (226.7 people per square mile.) The population of DuPage County has ~~remained relatively flat~~ decreased slightly since 2012.

### WIOA Demographics

The unemployment rate in DuPage County as of December 2025<sup>3</sup> was 3.71%, which is ~~among~~ the lowest in the state, lower than the Illinois rate of 4.8%, and lower than the US rate of 4.13.7%.<sup>2</sup> Within DuPage County, however, there ~~we~~are 17 census tracts with a 2023 unemployment rate between 8.5%-13.3%.<sup>3</sup> Taking into account discouraged workers (who are not actively job searching) as well as all other marginally attached to the workforce individuals, the U6 Measure of Unemployment for the State of Illinois was 8.27.6% in ~~November 2023 Q3 of 2025~~ and 8.76.8% nationally ~~as of February 2026~~.<sup>4</sup> This figure paints a more complete picture of labor force participation and unemployment ~~in the current post-COVID-environment~~. This data point also illuminates the strain on Title I Adult grant funds in DuPage County, as more individuals pursuing services do not meet Dislocated Worker criteria but may be underemployed or only marginally attached to the workforce.

Regarding residents who are WIOA-eligible based on income, 4.65.3% of families, or 11,273.0,054 families, in DuPage are living below the poverty line.<sup>5</sup> Overall, 6.41% of DuPage County residents are living below poverty level (58,853.56,249 individuals.)

<sup>1</sup> Chmura JobsEQ/Economic Overview, February 2024- all data points cited unless otherwise noted

<sup>2</sup> IDES Local Area Unemployment Statistics

<sup>3</sup> ARC/GIS DuPage County

<sup>4</sup> Federal Reserve Economic Data US-BLS Current Population Survey

<sup>5</sup> Impact DuPage/Claritas, March 2023

Although DuPage County is well known for its highly educated workforce (53.5% of the population has a Bachelor's degree or higher), there are ~~42,735,292~~ residents (~~6.65~~%) who have less than a high school diploma and ~~80,891,157,049~~ residents who do not have additional education beyond a high school diploma (~~24.63~~%) Nearly 20% of the population (182,700 people) is foreign born, and 8.9% residents indicated they speak English less than "very well" in the 2021 US Census.

Other WIOA-relevant population data for DuPage County includes:

- Individuals with a disability, Age 18-64 - 5.7% (32,442)
- With a Disability, Age 18-64, Labor Force Participation Rate and Size - 56.6% (18,368)
- Veterans Age 18-64 - 1.9% (10,951)
- Veterans Age 18-64 Labor Force Participation Rate and Size - 86.9% (9,513)
- Disconnected Youth (16-19 year olds who are (1) not in school, (2) not high school graduates, and (3) either unemployed or not in the labor force) - 0.9% (455)
- Individuals 55-64- 14.0% (130,971) *Largest single segment of the DuPage population with the exception of the Under 18 category.*

### Economy and Industry Sectors

DuPage County has a vibrant and diverse economy, with over 34,000 employer establishments<sup>6</sup> and a total GDP of \$~~148,062,699,932,000~~ in 202~~5~~2. As with the entire Northeast region, the location of DuPage is an asset that uniquely positions it as a transportation hub for the nation. In addition to its proximity to both O'Hare and Midway International Airports, it is also the place where four major interstates meet and an extensive rail freight system boosts commerce. The Northeast Chicago metro region contains an estimated 3,865 track-miles of rail, which is more mileage than nearly 40 other states and carries 50% of all US rail freight.

The Healthcare and Social Assistance industry sector continues to employ more people in DuPage than any other, with over ~~97,785,86,000~~ working at the county's eight hospitals, large physician groups, and other providers. The next-largest sectors in the region are Manufacturing (61,176) and Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services (~~58,255,60,810~~ workers.) ~~and Manufacturing (58,085 workers).~~

The industry cluster in DuPage County with the highest Location Quotient (meaning the highest concentration of interrelated occupations and industries relative to other areas of the country) is Wholesale Trade (1.98) ~~Freight Transportation (LQ 1.53)~~ This is evidenced by the 13.59% of DuPage workers employed in the Wholesale Trade and Transportation & Warehousing sectors, which combined account for ~~approximately close to~~ the same number of employees as the Healthcare and Social Assistance sector.

These characteristics of the DuPage County economy validate the industry sectors that will be the focus of the LWIA6 local plan and which also align with the target industry sectors identified in the Northeast regional plan:

- Health Care & Social Assistance (including Life Sciences)
- Advanced Manufacturing
- Transportation, Warehousing, and Utilities (including Clean Energy)
- Information Technology.

These key industry sectors not only drive employment throughout DuPage and the region as a whole, but they provide realistic on-ramps for WIOA participants into middle skill careers and quality jobs that pay

<sup>6</sup> US Census Bureau 2021

family-sustaining wages.

### Local Plan Guiding Principles

The strategies laid out in the DuPage County Local Plan provide detail on how the local workforce system will deliver on the three goals put forth in the WIOA Unified State Plan:

1. Illinois' Workforce Development System is an example of excellence in its approach to collaboration and customer service.
  - Customer-Centered Approach to Service Delivery
  - Advance ~~Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Access~~ Responsiveness, Inclusivity, and Accessibility (RIA)
  - Workforce and Education Systems Coordination and Collaboration
  - Increased Awareness of the Workforce System
  - Support of Frontline Workers
2. Illinois' Workforce Development System will enhance employers' abilities to hire and retain skilled workers that meet their emerging needs.
3. Illinois' Workforce Development System will use customer-centered and data-informed practices to improve the quality of the job seeker experience in pursuing fulfilling career pathways ~~in a manner that is equitable and accessible.~~

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

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

**A. Coordination of Planning Requirements:** The plan will incorporate the Memorandum of Understanding and Service Integration Action Plan. As part of this plan, the LWIA will complete a Service Integration Self-Assessment of its progress on service integration. A copy of the documentation associated with the self-assessment process will be submitted as an appendix to this plan. Additionally, this plan must include the following statements in this chapter:

1. The Local Workforce Innovation Area (LWIA)6 Memorandum of Understanding provides a description of the one-stop delivery system, and other information that is essential to the establishment and operation of effective local workforce development systems as required by the WIOA Rule (20 CFR Part 678.705). The Memorandum of Understanding and any subsequent modifications is incorporated by reference into this plan.

Parties to the Memorandum of Understanding in LWIA6/DuPage County, and which constitute the "local workforce partners" as referenced throughout this document, are:

- DuPage County Workforce Development Division (WDD)- Title I, TAA
- College of DuPage (COD)- Title II, Perkins
- Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES)- Title III, MSFW, Veterans, UI, TRA
- Illinois Department of Human Services/Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS)- Title IV
- Illinois Department of Human Services (DHS)- TANF
- DuPage County Community Services- CSBG
- Community Assistance Programs (CAPS)- SCSEP.

To illustrate the coordination among Federal funding streams as is the intention of the Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act (WIOA), the partners will be referenced throughout this plan by both the funding stream they administer as well as their agency name (or acronym.)

The workNet DuPage Career Center is the sole, comprehensive American Job Center in LWIA6/DuPage County at which the local workforce partners provide coordinated and integrated job seeker services. It may alternately be referred to as "the workNet DuPage Career Center," "workNet DuPage," or "the Center" throughout this plan.

The Local Workforce Innovation Board, led by and primarily composed of local business, also includes the core local workforce partners, labor representatives, and education providers. It may be referenced throughout this plan as "the Local Board."

2. The Local Workforce Innovation Area 6 Service Integration Self-Assessment Tool (*Appendix A*) provides a description of how local workforce partners will align and coordinate services as required by the State of Illinois Service Integration Policy (WIOA Policy Chapter 1, Section 13). The Service Integration Self-Assessment Tool, and any subsequent modifications, are incorporated by reference into this plan.

**B. Provide a copy of the following local policies and agreements:**

1. Chief Elected Official (CEO) Functions and Agreement Between Multiple Chief Elected Officials (WIOA Policy Chapter 1, Section 2)—Not applicable in LWIA 6/DuPage County
2. Chief Elected Official Delegation of Authority and Acknowledgement of Financial Liability(WIOA Policy

- Chapter 1, Section 3)—Submitted
3. **Local Workforce Innovation Board (LWIB) Certification and Recertification Requirements (WIOA Policy Chapter 1, Section 5)**—LWIA6/DuPage County utilizes the State policy as referenced in WIOA Policy Chapter 1, Section 5
  4. **One-Stop Operator Procurement (WIOA Policy Chapter 1, Section 7)**— Submitted
  5. **Career Planning (WIOA Policy Chapter 4, Section 2)**—LWIA6/DuPage County does not currently have a local policy and utilizes the State policy as referenced in WIOA Policy Chapter 4, Section 2. A local policy will be developed over the course of this plan.
  6. **General Follow-Up Services (WIOA Policy Chapter 4, Section 3)**— Submitted
  7. **Selective Service Registration Requirements (WIOA Policy Chapter 5, Section 1.1)**—Submitted
  8. **Youth Eligibility (WIOA Policy Chapter 5, Section 4)**— LWIA6/DuPage County utilizes the State policy as referenced in WIOA Policy Chapter 5, Section 4
  9. **Service Priorities (WIOA Policy Chapter 5, Section 6)**—Submitted
  10. **Veterans' Priority of Service Requirements (WIOA Policy Chapter 5, Section 7)**— Although LWIA6/DuPage County incorporates Veterans and eligible spouses into the overall Service Priorities policy, there is not a dedicated Veterans' Priority of Service Requirements local policy.
  11. **Individual Training Accounts (WIOA Policy Chapter 7, Section 2.1)**—Submitted
  12. **On-The-Job Training (WIOA Policy Chapter 7, Section 2.2.1)**—Submitted
  13. **Incumbent Worker Training (WIOA Policy Chapter 7, Section 2.2.3)**—Submitted
  14. **Work Experience (WEX) and Transitional Jobs (WIOA Policy Chapter 7, Section 2.5)**—Submitted
  15. **Training Provider and Training Program Eligibility (WIOA Policy Chapter 7, Section 3)**— Submitted
  16. **Supportive Services (WIOA Policy Chapter 7, Section 4)**—Submitted
  17. **Privacy and Security (Personally Identifiable Information) (WIOA Policy Chapter 8, Section 2.2)**— LWIA6/DuPage County utilizes the State policy as referenced in WIOA policy Chapter 8, Section 2.2, as well as the DuPage County Identity Protection policy found [here](#).
  18. **Property Control for Property Purchased with WIOA Funds (WIOA Policy Chapter 8, Section 3.6)**— LWIA6/DuPage County utilizes the State policy as referenced in WIOA policy Chapter 8, Section 3.6.
  19. **Complaint and Grievance Procedures (Nondiscrimination) (WIOA Policy Chapter 8, Section 5)**— Submitted

**C. Describe the use of technology and other alternative means of service delivery in the one-stop delivery system, including a description of:**

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

The workNet DuPage Career Center utilizes an integrated, technology-enabled mobile-friendly intake/application process embedded in the Center's website-[www.worknetdupage.org](http://www.worknetdupage.org). The "Get Started" system allows clients to indicate which types of assistance they are interested in, complete a full application for services, and request referrals to the local workforce partners.

Continuous improvement of this system is ~~in progress~~ongoing to implement identified enhancements aligned with customer-centered design. These improvements ~~will~~ give clients more information on service types available and what to expect when applying for different levels of service. This is intended to facilitate increased client choice while further streamlining the internal process of determining which staff are most appropriate to provide client service. Unnecessary barriers or delays for clients seeking particular types of service will be removed, and all clients' experience selecting which services they are most in need of and those which they choose to pursue will be expedited. ~~For individuals who may have difficulty processing a substantial amount of written content breaking down the services, a short video will also be provided.~~ The content is also available in Spanish.

Aside from this technology-enabled intake process, there is not currently an integrated, technology-enabled shared case management system available in the State of Illinois. The local workforce partners continue to await further guidance from the State on implementation and transition to such a system. Key Title I/DuPage

County Workforce Development Division (WDD) staff ~~are participating~~have participated in the IWDS conversion process that ~~will take place~~has been taking place over the ~~next few~~last two years. IWDS is the case management system for all Title I WIOA participants across the State. The ~~eat~~ system conversion may lead to progress toward an integrated intake and case management.

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

The workNet DuPage Career Center and Title I/DuPage County Workforce Development Division (WDD) uses multiple methods to orient customers to available services.

First, the workNet DuPage website provides asynchronous, in-depth information on services available, job search tools and resources including access to videos of full workshops, and extensive career exploration information. Customers making initial contact with the Center by phone or in-person receive a comprehensive explanation of services available from all local workforce partners as well as other partners within the community if applicable.

Title I/WDD began a series of in-person orientation sessions in 2022 titled Skill Up DuPage, and these sessions have been consistently held at the Center, at various locations within the community, and virtually. The sessions previously covered the Title I services available at workNet DuPage. Over the term of this plan, the scope of these sessions ~~will expand~~expanded to include a range of other community-based partners (including the local workforce partners, the College of DuPage Career Services department, local libraries, and non-profits such as People's Resource Center and Goodwill Workforce Connection Center) that offer similar or related job search, career planning, and employment assistance. The orientations ~~will become~~became a one-stop session at which attendees ~~can learn~~learned about all the resources available to them through the local workforce system in DuPage County and determined the best fit for their unique situation. This strategy ~~will~~ significantly increase d County-wide service integration and service accessibility for all customers. An asset map powered by Google ~~is used~~is employed as part of this initiative so that all residents can easily locate services and information and connect with the organization(s) most conveniently located for them. In early 2026, the Skill Up DuPage sessions evolved into the Job Search Blueprint. This workshop not only orients attendees to all available job search resources within the Center and the larger community, but it also serves as a comprehensive start-to-finish job search workshop including basic AI job search principles.

Title I/WDD and UI/Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES) ~~also~~ hold dislocated worker-specific orientation sessions as part of the local Rapid Response team. Sessions are held either in person or virtually. For individuals who were laid off but were not part of a mass layoff WARN event, Title I/WDD provides virtual "From Layoff To Launch" sessions that mirror traditional rapid response.

Another way customers can learn about services available at workNet DuPage is through the workNet kiosks located at select partner sites within the community. These kiosks allow customers to learn about available services, complete a full application or a basic contact form, and explore career and training options.

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

The workNet DuPage Career Center's mobile-friendly website serves as an entry-point to the one-stop delivery system for staff-assisted services, in addition to offering numerous options for self-assisted service such as:

- Access to job listings
- Career exploration and career pathway tools
- Tips and resources on resume writing, interviewing, negotiating, and job retention
- Specialized information for veterans and individuals with disabilities
- Other community resources

- Comprehensive business services information for employers.

Additionally, Title I/DuPage County Workforce Development Division (WDD) operates several workNet DuPage social media accounts to connect the community with information and services, including recorded presentations on a variety of job search related topics.

Although DuPage County does not have “remote areas” in the same sense as more rural parts of the State, adequate transportation is an issue for segments of the population. Title I/WDD staff utilize the County’s geographic information system (GIS) to gain insight into areas of the County that may be underserved or in which a higher percentage of residents lacking adequate transportation live. That data will continue to inform efforts to bring services out into the community for increased accessibility.

Initial access to Title I/WDD services can also be accomplished through the workNet DuPage kiosks located at select partner sites within the community. These kiosks allow customers to learn about available services, complete a full application that includes referrals to partner organizations, and explore career and training options. Host locations include local libraries, food pantries, non-profits, local government offices, etc.

The full Title I/WDD client process from intake to assessment/career planning to issuance of a training voucher can be accomplished through the use of technology in instances where a client cannot receive services in person. Through the use of virtual meetings, a secure file sharing platform, and electronic signature system, individuals can access the same services in an equitable manner as those who visit the Center in person.

As a result of Title I/WDD’s overall successful experience to date with remote service delivery, hybrid service offerings will continue to be offered. This allows the greatest flexibility for both staff and clients, and the blend will allow for even greater strides toward equitable service provision for all. Clients will be able to engage with staff in-person or virtually in instances where there is a barrier to their ability to reach the Center. Attention will be paid to such transportation barriers, and assessment around barrier removal will be incorporated into those clients’ service plans, as a barrier to attending in-person services would also likely impede ability to attend in-person employment.

Though technology and remote delivery of services can enable some job seekers to connect with services more easily than they would have otherwise been able, a complete switch to remote service delivery would be inequitable. Title I/WDD will move forward with service provision ~~through the lens of workforce equity~~ taking into account the multitude of differing needs and abilities of job seeker clients. While some clients may not be able to visit the Center in person due to a transportation challenge or child-care issue, others may not be able to thrive with remote service due to digital literacy levels or a preference for one-on-one in person contact. Client engagement and success over time is often dependent on relationship-building and rapport with staff, and those components can suffer when all work is conducted by computer or phone. Person-to-person interaction can also be critically important for individuals struggling with mental health issues or feelings of isolation and disconnectedness.

Title II/College of DuPage (COD) facilitates access to services through the use of technology by providing Adult Education learners access to mandated placement tests, pre-tests, and post-assessment tests through a state-supported online proctoring platform. Advising services can be delivered through virtual meeting platforms (Zoom or Teams) throughout normal business hours. Beyond Title II specifically, the College of DuPage will provide access to workshops and information sessions through the use of online meeting software like Zoom or Teams where appropriate.

Title III/Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES) currently uses both Webex and Zoom online platforms to conduct online meetings. In addition to in-person services, IDES Title III staff provide one-on-one Re-Employment Services and Eligibility Assessments (RESEA) by phone. This allows for increased just-in-time communication with unemployed individuals. Because every unemployed person’s experience and need is unique, IDES has looked at multiple ways to improve communications with a focus on those individuals who experience barriers to accessing public services. IDES has improved web-based information (making IDES

website mobile-friendly; adding information about other types of assistance; using plain language; providing information in the top six languages spoken in Illinois). The options offered are considerate of barriers that people experiencing poverty typically face—transportation, care giving, digital and language access—and are intended to reduce the time associated with receiving services; reduce the chances of not getting benefits in a timely manner; and provide information about how to find local workforce partner services and financial resources through other avenues (SNAP, TANF, utility relief, etc.)

As stated in the LWIA 6 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), all Partners are required to have staff on-site at workNet DuPage to provide services, or, in the absence of on-site staff, a direct linkage wherein no decline in customer experience is noted. Clients receiving direct linkage access to services, as described in the MOU, should experience comparable customer service and a comparable experience to connecting with a staff member on-site. Direct linkages at workNet DuPage consist of designated phone lines manned by staff of the representative agency who are prepared to provide information and access to service immediately. Direct linkages are primarily used for IDES Unemployment Insurance inquiries, Department of Human Services (TANF, SNAP) inquiries, and DuPage County Community Services (CSBG) inquiries.

All Partners have the capability of utilizing virtual meeting software and/or are offering service provision by phone in addition to in-person options.

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

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

In the most general sense, the Local Board, through the workNet DuPage Career Center, expands access to employment, training, education, and supportive services by offering a comprehensive range of services and programs in an integrated and coordinated fashion to all customers of the local workforce system. These services and programs include: professional career planning, job search workshops and job search skills enhancement, resume reviews, interviewing practice, digital literacy training, provision of laptops and technology, physical space to conduct job search and virtual interviews, grant funding for occupational training/education in high-demand areas leading to quality jobs and career paths, high school equivalency instruction, English Language Acquisition education, adult basic education, direct job lead assistance, hiring events, provision of or referral to supportive services and assistance, job coaching and supported employment, work-based learning including paid work experiences and transitional jobs, and ongoing support and guidance through case management. Despite differing specialty areas and types of programming offered by all local workforce partners within the Center, customers have a “no wrong door” experience; no matter what their original intention was in visiting the Center, they will have the opportunity to connect to all relevant services and receive all appropriate referrals. Each partner provides service to individuals with various barriers, with some partners specializing in one area and others specializing in multiple areas. By consistently informing each other’s clients about all services and through regular inter-staff communication and referrals, all eligible individuals gain expanded access to service.

More specifically, the Local Board, through the workNet DuPage Career Center, makes expanding access to employment, training, and education by unique populations and individuals with barriers a central priority. The consistent themes underpinning this work across all populations are: customer-centered design, utilizing a workforce equity lens emphasizing responsiveness, inclusivity, and access, and a focus on quality jobs and career pathways. Beyond ensuring all Federal accessibility and equal opportunity guidelines are met, as outlined and described in the Memorandum of Understanding, plans are in place to continue developing and/or expanding access for the following populations:

✦ Individuals with disabilities

Title IV/Department of Rehabilitation Services (DRS), as the local subject matter experts in this arena, provide employment and education services to individual with disabilities. Title I/DuPage County Workforce Development Division (WDD) also provides employment and training services to adults and youth with disabilities. A high percentage of youth clients served with Title I funds have documented learning, developmental, or other disabilities. This includes youth programs that are awarded Title I funds through a competitive process, notable examples of which include Parents Alliance Employment Project's Project Search and Inspired by Ability ~~and Turning Pointe's~~ work-based learning programming. ~~for young adults on the autism spectrum.~~ Hiring events for individuals with disabilities will also be organized over the term of this plan.

✦ Income-eligible Individuals

Title I/DuPage County Workforce Development Division (WDD) utilizes the bulk of Adult grant funds each program year to serve income-eligible individuals. Career planning and training services for income-eligible participants have proven highly effective in changing individual's situations and pulling households out of poverty. To use WIOA PY22 Adult wage outcomes as ~~an example measure:~~

- Food Stamp Recipients exited with employment-- average wage of \$28.75
- Low Income individuals exited with employment-- average wage of \$29.60
- TANF recipients exited with employment-- average wage of \$33.15
- Unemployed Adults exited with employment-- average wage of \$32.83

Title I/WDD staff will periodically continue to leverage CSBG funds to provide career planning and training services for income-eligible individuals. Both CSBG/DuPage County Community Services staff and Department of Human Services staff refer income-eligible individuals to the workNet DuPage Career Center for assistance, and those individuals can connect with all partners for services. Older workers who are income-eligible can receive services, including subsidized employment, through the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP.)

Over the course of this plan, Title I/WDD will expand the focus on individuals residing in Qualified Census Tracts and Disproportionately Impacted Areas of DuPage County, ~~as well as those residing in Climate & Economic Justice areas.~~ This focus will increase access to services by diverse populations of residents for whom quality jobs and strong career pathways will have significant impact.

✦ Veterans

Veterans receive priority of service at the workNet DuPage Career Center. The Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES) Veterans staff provide resources and information related to Employment Services and opportunities tailored specifically for veterans. They also establish and maintain relationships with businesses who are interested in hiring veterans, and they connect those businesses to relevant tax credit information.

The Jobs for Veterans State Grant Program has its own four-year "Stand-Alone" State Plan that is approved by the U.S. Department of Labor – Veterans Employment and Training Services. IDES manages the Jobs for Veterans State Grant ensuring that eligible Veterans and spouses receive priority of service to successfully meet their training and employment needs. The JVSG Grant supports the following: Disabled Veteran Outreach Program Representative (DVOP) also known as the Veteran Career Coach and Local Veteran Employment Representative (LVER) also known as the Veteran Business Specialist. The Veteran

Career Coach-DVOP provides individualized career services utilizing a case management framework to eligible Veterans and spouses who have self-identified as having one or more Significant Barriers to Employment (SBE) as defined by the Department of Labor. The Veteran Business Specialist-LVER provides outreach to employers in support of Veteran Programs and advocates for all Veterans seeking employment, regardless of SBE. Veterans and other eligible persons seeking employment assistance that do not meet the SBE criteria can receive services through referral to other local workforce partners. The JVSG team also provides employment services to Chapter 31 referred veterans from the USVA - Veteran Readiness and Employment.

#### ✦ Individuals with Prior Justice System Involvement

Since 2018, Title I/DuPage County Workforce Development Division (WDD) has placed an increasing emphasis on programming efforts geared toward individuals with prior justice system involvement as well as those who are currently incarcerated. WDD set a strategic goal of increasing justice-involved individual enrollments in PY22 WIOA services by 20% from the prior year (or 27 new enrollments.) This target was exceeded by enrolling 33 justice-involved individuals in services with 25 having a felony conviction. Of 18 individuals with a felony that were exited from the program during PY22, 13 entered employment (72%) with an average wage of \$27.24/hour. Of 13 individuals with misdemeanors who were exited in PY22, 10 entered employment (77%) with an average wage of \$24.86. Over the term of this plan, this population will continue to be a priority with the expectation that customer-centered design enhancements and increased access to career planning and quality jobs will continue to be highly impactful.

Title I/WDD has staff members who are authorized to go into the County Jail, in conjunction with the Sheriff's Department, to meet with individuals regarding their employment goals and career plans post-release. Incarcerated individuals at the County Jail now have the ability to engage with WDD Career Planners as well as College of DuPage programming through virtual meeting tools. Some individuals are receiving occupational training within the jail or online through College of DuPage in areas such as horticulture, welding, and industrial cleaning. Upon release, Title I/WDD staff provide seamless transition services including further career planning, job search assistance, and funding for additional occupational training/education or work-based learning. WDD business services staff seek out and develop relationships with employers in various geographic areas of DuPage County to help facilitate job placements, including transitional jobs, and job retention.

Title I/WDD staff have developed relationships with and expanded referrals from DuPage Probation and the County's Specialty Courts (Drug Court, Veterans Court.) Through Recovery Community Centers, Probation and WDD staff will provide employability skills, job search assistance, and connections to local employers. Efforts are underway to coordinate sufficient wrap-around services with community partners to improve employment retention outcomes once job placement activities have taken place. WDD also connected Probation/Specialty Courts staff to College of DuPage's Project Hire Ed registered apprenticeship, and this partnership is projected to lead to positive education and employment outcomes over the term of this plan.

~~Title I/WDD staff are developing a partnership with The Plan B Foundation to place individuals with prior justice involvement into Transitional Jobs in the construction/trades sector.~~

Title III/IDES offers special programs for reentering individuals, as well as connections to tax credits and fidelity bonding for employers who make hires. Jobs for Veterans State Grant (JVSG) staff conduct virtual Illinois Veteran Transition Pathways (IVTP) workshops each quarter to incarcerated veterans in Correctional Centers throughout Illinois.

† Refugees/Asylum Seekers/Immigrants/Authorized to Work Migrants

~~In 2019, Title I/DuPage County Workforce Development Division (WDD) rapidly accelerated coordination with World Relief to improve the earning potential and quality of life for asylum seekers and refugees in the local area. That partnership has continued to expand over recent years and now includes a Title I-funded youth contract program as well. Title I/WDD and all workforce partners continue to provide allowable and appropriate workforce services to immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers. Title II/College of DuPage (COD) offers a wide variety of services to assist immigrants and refugees including English as a Second Language/English Acquisition courses, Bridge Programming, and Integrated Education and Training. The variety of services offered by COD for this population are designed to meet clients where they are and provide a path to self-sufficiency. College of DuPage also maintains a strong partnership with World Relief that combines the College's programming with World Relief's wraparound supports. This combination effectively enables immigrants and refugees to acclimate to a new country and culture.~~

~~Through lived experience in serving this unique population and lessons learned in customer-centered design, WDD staff were well equipped to serve a high volume of newly arrived Ukrainians in 2022 and 2023 in addition to other refugees, asylum seekers, and immigrants from various other parts of the world. A target goal for PY22 was set to enroll 48 English Language Learners, which would represent a 33% increase from the prior year. By the end of PY22, WDD had enrolled 95 English Language Learners from all over the world. Of those exited from the program in PY22, 73% entered employment with an average wage of \$28.58. Tremendous gains were made in customer-centered design for immigrants and refugees along the way. These gains will continue to enhance service provision over the term of this plan, particularly if an increasing number of authorized to work migrants from Venezuela and other Central American nations connect with the local workforce system moving forward.~~

~~Title II/College of DuPage (COD) offers a wide variety of services to assist immigrants and refugees including English as a Second Language/English Acquisition courses, Bridge Programming, and Integrated Education and Training. The variety of services offered by COD for this population are designed to meet clients where they are and provide a path to self-sufficiency. College of DuPage also maintains a strong partnership with World Relief that combines the College's programming with World Relief's wraparound supports. This combination effectively enables immigrants and refugees to acclimate to a new country and culture.~~

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

As demographics and economic changes shift toward a more diverse workforce, Title II/College of DuPage (COD) strives to meet the increasing need for Adult Education and English Language Acquisition programs that lead to in-demand occupations. The College of DuPage provides a full range of approved Adult Education programming including:

- Beginning through Advanced levels of English as a Second Language (ESL)
- Adult Basic Education Beginning through high-Intermediate Reading and Math
- High school equivalency preparation in English and Spanish
- Citizenship test preparation
- Bridge programming in Information Technology, Manufacturing and Health Care
- Integrated Education and Training (IET) models in the sectors of Information Technology, Manufacturing, and Health Care.

Curriculum are designed to create seamless pathways through the course offerings leading to institutional and industry-recognized credentials. IET programming is aligned with the local and regional plans, and continuous input is collected from partners and the local business community to determine the need for additional program tracks. Academic preparedness, job readiness, and digital literacy skills are

contextualized and embedded within the curriculum across programs.

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

The Local Board recognizes that strategic focus must be on both job seeker customers (ensuring a “supply” of highly qualified talent to meet employer demands) and employer customers (understanding, gaining access to, building relationships with, and supporting the “demand” in the local area.) Collectively as an integrated business services team, the local workforce partners provide a range of no-cost services to support, inform, and enhance local employers’ workforce strategies in a holistic manner including:

- Job posting through multiple channels including the workNet DuPage website, Illinois JobLink state labor exchange system, social media, and within the workNet DuPage Career Center
- Direct access to diverse talent pools of job seekers including recent occupational training completers, young adults, older workers, veterans, individuals with disabilities, etc.
- Support for hiring individuals with disabilities including job analysis, accommodations, and job coaching
- Hiring events
- Business workshops and events on a variety of topics
- Labor market information and local workforce data
- Connection to site selection assistance
- Assistance developing apprenticeship models and internal career pathways
- Talent Pipeline Management solutions
- Incumbent Worker Training grants to upskill existing workforce
- Work-based learning solutions including Transitional Jobs, On-The-Job Training, paid youth internships, and engagement with the DuPage County Work-Based Learning Consortium within local high schools
- Customized training solutions
- Guidance on State-administered programs such as Workshare Illinois, Work Opportunity Tax Credit, Foreign Labor Certification, and Fidelity Bonding
- Connection to local DuPage County initiatives such as Sustainable DuPage and the Connect DuPage Supplier Diversity program
- Promotion of workforce system company partners (“Business Champions”) and available employment opportunities through community event participation such as the Career Conversations series, as well as boosted social media presence and employer highlights/features
- Connection to additional resources and programs not handled directly by the integrated business service team such as grant programs offered through the Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity or other government entities, the Employer Training Investment Program, minority- or women-owned business certification assistance, Small Business Development Center assistance, etc.

Over the course of this plan, one additional area of focus will be the development of sector partnerships to discuss and address a variety of shared employer issues and challenges, including but not limited to, workforce.

A second area of focus will be consistent messaging that advocates for an “all hands on deck approach” to recruiting and hiring. Demographic shifts coupled with the residual effects that COVID-19 had on labor force participation and job/work preferences have yielded workforce shortages in multiple sectors of our economy. Informing and encouraging employers to engage with all available talent, including populations they may not traditionally have considered or do not have extensive experience hiring and onboarding, will be an ongoing activity. A part of this will also be advocating for skills-based hiring to increase the ~~diversity characteristics~~ of candidate ~~pools~~, increase access to employment opportunities for those without degrees, and increase the overall volume of candidate pools.

The Title I/DuPage County Workforce Development Division (WDD) business services team will continue to focus service provision and resources on employers who offer quality jobs and career pathway opportunities

within the key industry sectors identified in the local, regional, and state plans. Work also needs to be done to ensure that workforce shortages at business clients are not due to inequitable wage and benefit offerings.

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

The workNet DuPage Career Center and Title I/DuPage County Workforce Development Division (WDD) will continue to increase awareness of both individual job seeker services and employer services by maintaining a strong web-based presence through the website as well as multiple social media platforms. Outreach tools including email blasts for both job seeker and business audiences will continue to be employed. The workNet kiosks located at select host sites within the community boost awareness of the workforce system and services among individuals as well as community partners. Ongoing relationship development with a wide variety of entities including community-based organizations, local libraries, the training provider network, economic development partners, Chambers of Commerce, local governments, townships, food pantries, industry associations, and others will continue to successfully increase awareness and referrals to the system.

The workNet DuPage Career Center hosts a variety of activities and meetings by outside organizations, such as IMEC, Easter Seals, Chamber of Commerce meetings, etc., which serve to boost awareness and engagement. The West Suburban Jobs Council holds its quarterly meetings at the Center, and this group (consisting of 30+ community workforce organizations) provides opportunities for the wider local workforce system to share information, participate in professional development, and develop stronger linkages for referrals. Similarly, active participation, including serving as presenters, at a variety of business-led and community events increase overall awareness of the system and services available.

Success stories of the workforce system (specifically those of Title I/DuPage County Workforce Development Division) are regularly shared at monthly County Board meetings. The sharing of success stories via multiple platforms is a key element of the local strategy for increasing awareness of workforce services.

As mentioned previously in this plan, the Skill Up DuPage orientation sessions that take place within the Center, within the community, and virtually ~~will be~~ expanded to include a range of other community-based partners beyond Title I/WDD (including the College of DuPage Career Services department, local libraries, and non-profits such as People's Resource Center and Goodwill Workforce Connection Center) that offer similar or related job search, career planning, and employment assistance. The orientations ~~will become~~ are a one stop session at which attendees can learn about all the resources available to them through the local workforce system in DuPage County and determine the best fit for their unique situation. This strategy will significantly increase County-wide service integration and service accessibility for all customers.

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

The College of DuPage (COD) offers Credit by Proficiency- an opportunity to gain credit for knowledge that students have acquired in an occupation or educational environment outside of college, or through other life experience, which is related to specific College of DuPage courses. Through this process, students who demonstrate knowledge needed to complete a COD course can gain college credit without taking the course. Faculty and administrators in each academic division determine if a specific course lends itself to this method of gaining credit and how one must demonstrate their knowledge. This may include proficiency exams which

are available in the Testing Center. The Workforce Development/Student Resource Specialist shares this information to clients when appropriate. In addition, COD plans to add a direct link onto their Career and Technical Education (CTE) webpage directing students to the appropriate program area and staff.

In the COD Perkins Strategic four-year plan, key strategies will be identified and implemented to increase the awareness of COD CTE certificate and degree programs as well as increasing awareness of the demonstrated competence program.

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

Targeted marketing for younger job seekers who are unsure of their post-high school career plans takes place in conjunction with the Regional Office of Education and through relationships with individual secondary schools as well as the Technology Center of DuPage. For Title I/DuPage County Workforce Development Division (WDD) services, social media/internet, word-of-mouth referrals, community partner referrals, and learning of the programs available through a family member are the most consistently successful methods of outreach for younger job seekers. Over the course of this plan, ~~young adult led peer outreach options will be explored by WDD as well.~~ State supplemental workforce funds were utilized to pilot a young adult-led social media team focused on career exploration, employer visits and interviews, and job search topics.

Although individuals who are qualified for jobs in high-demand occupations are not a primary target of Title I/WDD marketing efforts, career services can still be beneficial or needed in some cases. To more easily facilitate responsive, short-term (or one-time) services without the burden of complete application and enrollment in the system, improvements ~~are being~~were made to the initial point of entry through the website. These modifications ~~will~~ allow the user to select short-term services such as a one-time resume review or job search consultation without unnecessary delays or unnecessary submission of complete personal information and documentation. This expedited service should lead to quicker returns to the workforce and the removal of artificial, process-driven barriers to service delivery.

~~Title I/WDD also offers a Fast Track program for individuals who do not require extensive occupational training or education to qualify for jobs in high demand areas. This program consists of intensive job search skills training, typically conducted in a group setting, along with individual consultations with both career planner and business services staff. Title I developed a Job Seeker Toolbox that allows for self-service through the workNet DuPage website for job seekers who do not require staff assistance. Resources include comprehensive guidance on implementing AI in the job search.~~

Special initiatives, such as the Back to School/Back to Work initiative for parents who took an extended career break to stay home with children, utilize targeted marketing strategies such as posting in specialized Facebook groups, program promotion through digital backpack communications handled by the school districts, etc.

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

Career pathways are a hallmark of WIOA legislation. Career pathways offer a clear sequence of education coursework and/or training credentials aligned with employer-validated work readiness standards and competencies. Several career pathways are available to job seekers, information on which is readily available at the One Stop Center as well as on Illinois workNet and the workNet DuPage website. The Career Planners at workNet DuPage are trained to understand local high demand occupations and the career pathways that exist in those occupations. This knowledge allows the Career Planners to educate job seekers on various

pathways available and the educational opportunities available to get onto a career pathway.

Co-enrollment in core programs across the system is encouraged. Title I/DuPage County Workforce Development Division (WDD) partners with Title II/College of DuPage (COD) in the administration of the Integrated Career and Academic Preparation System (ICAPS) program, and participants are co-enrolled. Additional opportunities for co-enrollment across system partners are consistently explored and implemented as appropriate.

The College of DuPage (COD) will continue to play a pivotal role in career pathway work moving forward. To date, COD has collaborated on and developed programs of study with district high schools to provide students a clear pathway that best prepares them for a postsecondary certificate, degree, or industry credential. As federally defined, a "program of study" is a coordinated, nonduplicative sequence of academic and technical content at the secondary and postsecondary level that: incorporates challenging State academic standards; addresses both academic and technical knowledge and skills including employability skills; is aligned with the needs of industries; progresses in specificity beginning with all aspects of an industry or career cluster and leading to more occupational specific instruction; has multiple entry and exit points that incorporate credentialing; and culminates in the attainment of a recognized postsecondary credential. The program of study incorporates career exploration, work-based learning opportunities and dual credit coursework where appropriate. The College of DuPage Career and Technical programs are actively engaged with high school partners and the Technology Center of DuPage in facilitating effective Programs of Study where high school students have opportunities for career exploration and can begin their career studies through dual credit options. To date, COD has received ICCB approval for 26 Programs of Study and plan on developing additional over the next few years. The Perkins four-year plan includes strategies to develop new programs of study as well as to improve and enhance existing programs.

The Local Board is committed to exploring robust development of career pathways options for high school students in conjunction with the Regional Office of Education, the secondary education system in the County, the College of DuPage (COD), private business, and area Chambers of Commerce or other business-oriented stakeholders. ~~These partners have regularly convened to undertake work in the development of a Leadership Community. The DuPage County Work-Based Learning Consortium provides This regional ecosystem of partners focuses on career pathways,~~ career exploration, and work-based learning experiences for high school students throughout the County. Following graduation from high school, students ~~participants~~ may go on to four-year institutions ~~or may~~ bridge into College of DuPage's registered apprenticeship programs ~~and/or receive assistance through WDD for short-term occupational training funding or paid work-based learning.- Project Hire Ed. The employers of those apprenticeships can use Incumbent Worker Training Grants through Title I/DuPage County Workforce Development Division (WDD) as support for this additional education. Both College of DuPage and WDD are active participants in this consortium.-~~

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

All training services funded through Title I dollars lead to recognized post-secondary credentials such as certificates, industry-recognized certification, licensure (e.g. CDL), etc. Methods and activities around improving access are described throughout this plan.

The College of DuPage Career and Technical Education Programs of Study all culminate with providing students the opportunity for a postsecondary credential which may be an Associate of Applied Science (AAS) degree, certificate, or an industry-recognized credential. In many cases, students have the option to obtain multiple credentials, many of which are stackable and indicate students are prepared for immediate employment. These students can continue to progress in their career pathways for additional skills, knowledge, and competencies.

**E. Describe how local strategies will be coordinated with the state (including the Illinois WIOA State Plan),**

**regional and local partners to enhance services and avoid duplication of activities, including a description of the following:**

The collaborative nature of the local workforce partners at the workNet DuPage Career Center, along with the presence of the core partners on the Local Board and the oversight of all partners by the One-Stop Operator, provides for coordination of services and reduced duplication/redundancy of efforts. All local workforce partners are actively engaged in participating in monthly meetings and discussions regarding service coordination, enhanced service provision, and avoidance of duplicate activities. The One Stop Operator tracks all referral activity and the service outcomes of those referrals, and this information is shared with the local workforce partners monthly. Ongoing integration of services is a priority of the partners group, and the service integration self-assessment is included in this plan (*Appendix A*.) Specific service areas of focus are outlined further here.

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

Title I/DuPage County Workforce Development Division (WDD) is responsible for provision of WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs and services for all of DuPage (LWIA 6.) All services are provided at the workNet DuPage Career Center, as well as accessible virtually as outlined earlier in this plan. The Title I/WDD Director makes regular reports to the Local Workforce Board as well as the Economic Development Committee of the County Board. Additionally, both the Title I/WDD Director and the Local Workforce Board Manager are members and regular participants in both the Workforce Boards of Metropolitan Chicago (WPMC) regional and the Illinois Workforce Partnership (IWP) statewide workforce development groups. Both these organizations allow for collaboration on service provision, increased understanding and enactment of WIOA provisions, and sharing of best practices. The Title I/WDD Director is also a board member of Choose DuPage, the economic development alliance for DuPage County, [and the Downers Grove Economic Development Corporation](#). This, coupled with participation in area Chambers of Commerce, enhances business service delivery and coordination of workforce and economic development activities locally. Title I/WDD staff also participate in local consortiums such as the West Suburban Jobs Council and the Community Connections Network, both of which tie in Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth services to the broader community of social service organizations.

Title I is the primary provider in DuPage County for Adults, Dislocated Workers, and Youth in need of:

- ✦ Career planning and training/employment plan development
- ✦ Funding assistance for occupational training programs
- ✦ Work-based learning
- ✦ Comprehensive job search skills training including resume assistance, interviewing techniques and strategies, online job search skills, etc.
- ✦ Job search assistance.

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

The College of DuPage is responsible for provision of adult education and literacy activities under WIOA Title II. Staff from the College of DuPage provide service at the workNet DuPage Career Center, as well as at various locations throughout the County.

Title II is the primary provider for individuals in need of:

- ✦ Adult Basic Education (ABE) to build reading, writing, and math skills
- ✦ High School Equivalency (GED) classes, including those that are part of an Integrated Career and Academic Preparation System (ICAPS) model and are pursuing in-demand occupational certification concurrently
- ✦ English Language Acquisition (ELA) classes and assistance

- ✦ TABE testing.

All annual ICCB Title II grant Request for Proposals and Continuation Plans are submitted to the DuPage County Workforce Board for review and approval prior to acceptance and the awarding of Title II funding at the state level.

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

The Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES) is responsible for provision of Title III Wagner-Peyser employment services for DuPage County. IDES staff provide service daily at the workNet DuPage Career Center, and they are the primary provider for individuals in need of:

- ✦ Labor exchange services and job matching/job search assistance through Illinois JobLink
- ✦ Reemployment services
- ✦ Specialized assistance for Veterans.

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

The Department of Human Services/Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) is responsible for provision of vocational rehabilitation services under WIOA Title IV in DuPage County. DRS staff provide service daily at the workNet DuPage Career Center, and their primary office is located in nearby Downers Grove.

Title IV is the primary provider for individuals with disabilities in need of:

- ✦ Supported Employment including job analysis, job development and placement, and job coaching
- ✦ Occupational training for individuals with disabilities
- ✦ Planning for post-high school transition, Fast Track Transition, and STEP programs
- ✦ Work incentive planning and assistance to understand how working will affect SSDI/SSI and other benefits.

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

DuPage County has over 20 secondary schools and a multitude of post-secondary institutions, including 19 locations of accredited colleges and universities. The College of DuPage (COD) is a local workforce partner and has two representatives on the Local Workforce Board. ~~Universal Technical Institute is represented on the Local Workforce Board, as is the~~ Superintendent of Lake Park District 108 ~~is also a member of the local board.~~ These relationships have led to increased efforts to tie together the local business community with the school system by increasing college and career readiness efforts. These partnerships also help inform apprentice expansion efforts in DuPage County, identify gaps in existing training options for WIOA job seeker clients, and support efforts to increase career awareness.

~~The DuPage County Work-Based Learning Consortium provides career exploration and work-based learning experiences for high school students throughout the County. The consortium is led by the leadership community being developed by the DuPage Area Occupational Education System, the Regional Office of Education, and GPS Education Partners, and core members include Title I/DuPage County Workforce Development Division (WDD), College of DuPage/Project Hire Ed Apprenticeship, the Technology Center of DuPage (TCD), Choose DuPage, and local businesses and area school district leadership collaborate on career readiness, career exploration, work-based learning, and other meaningful ways to ensure postsecondary success of all students. Participating students can do a work-based learning experience or pre-apprenticeship as part of their standard school day and curriculum, and the current tracks available are manufacturing and information technology. Following graduation from high school, student participants may go on to four-year institutions, may bridge into College of DuPage's registered apprenticeship program Project Hire Ed, and/or may work full time at their host employer.~~

The College of DuPage currently supports and maintains 26 formal Programs of Study in a variety of Career and Technical programs in collaboration with local high schools and the Technology Center of DuPage (TCD.) These programs provide high school students with a coordinated, nonduplicative sequence of academic and technical content at the secondary and postsecondary level. As outlined in the ICCB Program of Study application, approved programs provide documented evidence in support of nine separate quality components including the following two criteria: Employer Informed Competencies and Skills - Alignment with employer-informed technical and essential employability competencies that lead to a high-skill, high-wage, and high demand occupation; and Work-based Learning – which require a secondary to postsecondary continuum of work-based learning and related authentic learning experiences that may include career exploration, internships, course and lab work that mirrors industry standards and practice; simulation labs, clinical experiences, apprenticeships and capstone projects.

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

The College of DuPage conducts a Career and Technical Education Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment (CLNA) every two years in accordance with the Perkins V mandate. Emphasis is placed on collaboration with all stakeholders and support of partner engagement in collecting feedback from local communities. The College implements a Committee-Based structure (including representatives from key stakeholders and the Local Workforce Board) to outline the overall CLNA process and to review and access multiple data sets and information on CTE Program and Student Success.

The process includes a review of:

- + Student and program performance;
- + How programs are aligned to labor market needs;
- + Whether they are of sufficient size, scope and quality to meet all students' needs;
- + Progress on implementing and improving Programs of Study;
- + Efforts to improve recruitment, retention and faculty training; and
- + Progress toward improving access and [fairness/equity](#).

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

The Local Board's Title I Support Service policy was submitted in conjunction with this plan as referenced in Section B (16.)

Title I/DuPage County Workforce Development Division (WDD) offers transportation assistance for individuals in training or active job search in the form of gas cards or bus passes. Lyft gift cards will also be made available over the course of this plan. Transportation has also been reported as a barrier for TANF clients, and the Department of Human Services (DHS) provides assistance with public transportation, car insurance, and car repairs. All partners can work with Pace to utilize RideShare programs and commuting options for clients. Clients can also be referred to DuPage County Community Services for gas cards or to the Cares for Cars program through Loaves & Fishes/People's Resource Center.

Title I/WDD loans laptops to job seekers who would otherwise not be able to access job training and/or successfully job search. Laptop loans also include associated equipment as necessary. The College of DuPage is also able to provide laptops and hotspots to students in need.

The Department of Human Services (DHS) has a supportive service policy in place for the clients they serve. Some TANF clients report an inability to work due to barriers preventing them from finding and retaining employment. Lack of childcare or inability to afford childcare is considered a barrier. As a part of receiving TANF, the client can receive financial assistance for childcare, including having the first month paid for when they find employment.

To address some of the barriers to Career and Technical Education (CTE) special populations students, Perkins/College of DuPage (COD) provides direct support services through a CTE Laptop and Hot Spot Loan Program (over 100 laptops are available for checkout); CTE Textbook support through a \$250 bookstore voucher; and the CTE Transportation support which provides \$50 monthly gas cards to students meeting special populations criteria and need. The College of DuPage is further exploring providing support for Child Care Services through local YMCA programs.

Referrals are made by all staff to outside entities as needed, including DHS, DuPage County Community Services, YWCA (child care assistance), People's Resource Center, Prairie Legal Services, Poised For Success, Loaves & Fishes, food pantries, DuPage Pads, DuPage Health Department, NAMI DuPage, Bridge Communities, Naperville 360, Catholic Charities, Goodwill Workforce Connection Center, DONKA, etc. Clients can also access the 211 DuPage system online ([www.211.dupage.gov](http://www.211.dupage.gov)) at all computer terminals in the Resource Room at the workNet DuPage Career Center as well as by phone. 211 is an online directory of all available programs and services in DuPage County. IDES also has access to a Statewide Resource Guide updated weekly that describes supportive services resources available to job seekers.

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

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

The workNet DuPage Career Center offers a wide range of services designed to help job seekers on their path to employment. The Center has a comprehensive job search community space that provides internet access and other technology including that needed for virtual interviews, a variety of job search resources, community services information, and physical space to conduct in-person or virtual job interviews. Title III/Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES) staff provide assistance with Illinois JobLink and filing of online UI claims. Assistive technology is available, and staff are knowledgeable on its use. The College of DuPage (COD) has a section of career exploration and materials related to certification and degree programs. A variety of supportive services information is available, and the DuPage 211 system can be accessed on all computer terminals. Job listings are available on the workNet DuPage website and Illinois JobLink.

The Center also hosts a variety of job search programming including: ~~a comprehensive Job Search Blueprint seminar, AI-focused resume and interview courses, and walk-in resume reviews, interviewing practice meetings, Building Blocks to A Successful Job Search two-day seminars, the Let's Talk Job Search networking and job search support group, Introduction to the NorthStar Digital Literacy platform, and special events such as Career Conversations.~~ Orientation sessions such as Skill Up DuPage and From Layoff to Launch are also provided in the local area both in-person and virtually. Information and orientation sessions for older workers interested in SCSEP services are offered by Community Assistance Programs (CAPS) staff periodically. Small-scale recruiting events hosted at the Center focus solely on employers who offer quality, full-time, non-temporary jobs that pay family-sustaining wages and are in high-growth occupational areas or career pathways.

Each local workforce partner offers individualized career services that typically begin with an intake (eligibility determination) and the gathering of assessment information. Referrals are made among all partners as

needed, and assistance or input is provided on shared client cases from intake through program completion. An individualized plan for the customer is developed based upon their needs and the scope of services provided by the different partner agencies. Employment and training activities that fall under these scopes of service include: career exploration and planning, labor market research, referrals to supportive services, training plan development, funding assistance for training through Title I as well as other financial aid, basic skills assessment, adult basic education, digital literacy, job development for individuals with disabilities, labor exchange services, internship development, work-based learning, job search skills training, job placement assistance, and follow up/retention services. Follow up services are offered to all Title I/WDD WIOA clients and can include periodic contacts regarding employment retention, removal of barriers that are threatening employment retention, periodic newsletters outlining resources/retention tips/workplace skills/career development, etc. The majority of WIOA clients receive follow-up services, the degree of which vary depending on the client's level of need and personal preference.

Training services provided through Title I/DuPage County Workforce Development Division (WDD) to Adults and Dislocated Workers primarily involve Individual Training Accounts for occupational programs in high-growth sectors. Such programs result in credentials that are in-demand among the regional employer base. An emphasis is placed on short-term training programs that are part of a career pathway and that will lead to credential attainment and reemployment in as short a time frame as feasible. The below shows the percentage of training dollars spent by primary occupational/industry groupings over the previous ~~five~~<sup>three</sup> full program years:

	PY20	PY21	PY22
<b>Occupation Training Category</b>	<b>% of ITA Training Dollars Spent</b>		
CDL-TDL	19%	36%	43%
Healthcare	13%	16%	15%
IT & Business Management/Analyst	42%	24%	17%
Manufacturing & Trades	12%	14%	13%
Other Professional (Admin, Graphic Design, Accting, etc.)	12%	4%	9%
Basic Skills/Remedial	2%	6%	2%

	PY24	PY23
<b>Occupation Training Category</b>	<b>% of ITA Training Dollars Spent</b>	
CDL-TDL	22%	27%
Healthcare	21%	26%
IT & Technical Management	30%	22%
Manufacturing & Trades	20%	17%
Other Professional & Administrative	8%	8%
Remedial/Basic Skills	0%	1%

On-The-Job Training (OJT) wage reimbursements are available to employers who hire WIOA eligible Adults and Dislocated Workers who are not fully qualified at the time of hire. OJT is intended to bridge the skills gap over the course of up to the first six months of employment and can be used as part of a package of services supporting apprenticeship models. Transitional jobs are a service option for Adult clients with a significant barrier to employment.

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

Title I/DuPage County Workforce Development Division staff coordinate with Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity (DCEO), Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES), and Department of Labor (DOL) Employee Benefits Security Administration (EBSA) to assist DuPage County area employers with their workforce reductions and assist the affected workers with their transition plans. This team approach deals with three very important needs dislocated workers have: information on unemployment insurance benefits, health insurance options, and becoming re-employed. The Rapid Response team coordinates with the employer to offer both pre-layoff and post-layoff services that connect the affected workers with employment & training services funded through WIOA. Depending on the business' needs and preference, these meetings can be in person or virtual. They are sometimes offered in additional languages beyond English as well. Title I/WDD staff, in conjunction with the local partner from Department of Labor, will continue offering the From Layoff to Launch rapid response sessions to those individuals who were not offered traditional Rapid Response service through their employer or who were not part of a WARN event.

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

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

The workNet DuPage Career Center offers a range of youth workforce investment activities for WIOA-eligible young adults, including those with disabilities. Title I/DuPage County Workforce Development Division (WDD) young adult services focus primarily on career planning/exploration and the associated occupational training or work-based learning needed to facilitate those goals. ~~At this point in the economic recovery post-COVID, higher starting wages are possible for young adults in a wide range of jobs including fast food restaurants and retail. Some young adults gravitate toward short-term, low-commitment, quick-payoff set-ups like gig work, "side hustles", and freelance arrangements. Though workers are needed in those sectors and positions,~~ WIOA programming focuses on demand occupations that meet select criteria (including earning potential and economic mobility over time) and that build the workforce needed to support and enhance the local economy. As reflected in this plan as well as the Regional and State plans, the key industry sectors for LWIA6/DuPage County (and Economic Development Region 4) are Healthcare, Advanced Manufacturing, Transportation/Distribution/Utilities, and Information Technology. Outreach efforts and career counseling attempt to sell young adults on the importance of a career path over other alternatives, including how career paths offer benefits, increasing economic mobility over time, future financial stability, e.g. retirement benefits, and more. ~~This is framed as "Careers, Not Jobs."~~

WDD young adult staff take a creative approach to youth activities. For young adults who are unsure what path they want to take or who lack the insight needed to make that decision, informational interviews with partner businesses or Local Board members to learn more about potential career paths of interest are made available. Acknowledging disparities in the amount of social capital and connections some young adults have, there is an intentional effort to make available opportunities for building that capital which is needed to network. Job shadows can also be arranged to provide career exploration and workplace readiness.

WDD young adult staff and the WDD business services team consistently strive for increased volume of youth internships and work-based learning experiences for young adults with barriers to employment. A wide variety of opportunities ranging from digital file management to warehouse to social media specialist to fingerprinting technician, administrative roles, and more are available. By increasing wages for internships to align with market rates/entry-level position rates, these work-based learning opportunities can compete with the other alternatives at young adults' disposal.

In particular, the team has had success with internship and employment placement for youth with documented disabilities, and a concerted effort to continue directing training dollar investment in that way has

been made. To strengthen these work-based learning efforts for youth with disabilities even further, Title I collaborates with Parents Alliance Employment Project to provide job analysis and job coaching for select participants. This successful model will continue to be used to ensure positive outcomes for these participants.

In addition to utilizing direct training dollars to support youth with disabilities in-house at workNet DuPage, Title I/WDD also awards contracts for youth training services, through a competitive procurement process, to programming that expands access for this population. workNet DuPage has contracted with Parents Alliance Employment Project since 2014 to serve in-school youth with disabilities via the Project SEARCH Program. Project SEARCH is a national model whose primary objective is to secure competitive employment for people with disabilities. Project SEARCH programming is held at Northwestern Medicine Central DuPage Hospital where youth receive classroom instruction, work-based learning opportunities and exposure to the world of work. Since PY 2019, 89% of Project Search participants have been employed in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter after program exit.

Due to the success of Project SEARCH, Parents Alliance Employment Project also administers a similar program for out-of-school youth called Inspired By Ability. Inspired By Ability is modeled after ~~PROJECT-Project SEARCH~~ and provides out of school youth with job coaching and work experience opportunities which lead to unsubsidized employment within the community. Since PY 2019, 82% of participants have been employed in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter after program exit.

Other current youth contracts include those with ~~Turning Pointe Autism Foundation and World Relief. These programs provide valuable job readiness, work-based learning, career and employment services for young adults on the autism spectrum and immigrant and refugee youth respectively. District 200 and LITE Leaders which provide valuable job readiness, work-based learning, and career and employment services for low-income young adults and those with barriers to employment.~~

The competitive Request For Proposal process ~~over the term of this plan will continue~~continues to look for programs that successfully serve vulnerable youth populations, ~~such as those described above,~~ and which offer strong career pathway orientations.

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

A combination of contracted youth services and in-house service provision is used by Title I/DuPage County Workforce Development Division (WDD.) Expenditures made on Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) and work-based learning for WIOA-eligible youth are ~~typically exclusively~~primarily for out-of-school youth. Contracts awarded for youth training services are also primarily focused on out-of-school youth, with a small percentage being awarded to in-school programs. The Local Board and DuPage County staff (including Finance staff) regularly monitor all expenditures to ensure all minimum expenditure rates are being met/exceeded.

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

The young adult design framework has been developed keeping the unique challenges faced by opportunity youth in mind. Each young adult client faces barriers unique to their situation; therefore, it is critical that staff meet them where they are during the provision of services. Title I/DuPage County Workforce Development Division (WDD) Career Planners conduct an intensive assessment to identify each individual's skills, interests, barriers/challenges, and services required for them to meet their education and employment goals. The assessment is not static but is a living document that is updated as appropriate.

After the initial assessment is complete, the Career Planner works closely with the young adult as a range of services and activities take place to assist them in achieving their goals. The Career Planner works to ensure

the 14 elements of the service delivery plan are addressed. Title I/WDD staff provide several elements directly including: labor market information, paid work experience, occupational skills training, supportive services, adult mentoring, employability and job search skills coaching, and follow-up services. For those elements that are not offered directly by Title I/WDD, young adults are connected to outside partner organizations that provide that needed element. Examples include: Regional Office of Education (dropout prevention), high school transition programs (post-secondary preparation and transition activities), College of DuPage (dropout recovery services), NAMI DuPage and the DuPage County Health Department (counseling), HOME DuPage (financial literacy), and DuPage County Community Services (supportive services.)

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

The term "individual with barrier to employment" means one or more of the following populations: displaced homemakers, low-income individuals, Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians, individuals with disabilities including youth who are individuals with disabilities, older individuals, ex-offenders, homeless individuals or homeless children and youths, youth who are in or have aged out of the foster care system, individuals who are English language learners, individuals who have low levels of literacy, and individuals facing substantial cultural barriers, eligible migrant and seasonal farmworkers, individuals within 2 years of exhausting lifetime eligibility under Part A of Title IV of the Social Security Act, single parents including pregnant single women, long-term unemployed individuals, and such other groups as the Governor determines to have barriers to employment (WIOA Sec. 3(24)).

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

The local Priority of Service policy was submitted in conjunction with this plan as referenced in Section B (9).

This policy was developed in conjunction with the Local Board and Title I/DuPage County Workforce Development Division (WDD) staff to ensure that priority usage of funds is in accordance with the WIOA statute. The policy is designed to provide priority of career and training services to Veterans and their spouses, Low Income Individuals, and those who are Basic Skills Deficient. The policy helps ensure that career services and training funds are centered on clients who are most in need of help developing an employment and training plan, obtaining marketable skills and credentials that lead to self-sufficient employment/quality jobs, conducting an effective job search, and retaining employment.

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

The identification and mitigation of barriers ("challenges") is a central component of the work performed by all partners at the workNet DuPage Career Center. These challenges may prevent an individual from initiating contact with the workforce system, or, upon doing so, limit their ability to successfully receive assistance, complete training, and secure/retain employment.

Taking a customer-centered design approach to the creation of marketing materials and public communications, how and where community outreach is conducted, and the process individuals go through to pursue services is an ongoing focus. Keeping in mind that individuals cannot benefit from a system that they do not know exists or cannot navigate successfully, continuous improvements are consistently identified and implemented. Standard operating procedures are modified as necessary, and staff are encouraged to think flexibly and creatively.

Language accessibility is a particularly challenging issue. The Center partners with the Language Access

Resource Center (LARC) to provide translation services of forms and marketing materials, as well as interpretation services during group or one-on-one meetings. ~~A notable success of this partnership has been providing customized orientation/TABE testing sessions leading to occupational training and employment of a high volume of newly arrived Ukrainians throughout 2022-2023.~~

Once an individual has engaged with the Center and their specific challenges have been identified, actions are taken to mitigate those issues. As stated in the local Supportive Service policy (Section B(16)), Title I funds can be used for transportation assistance, laptop/technology provisions, or to handle other costs associated with completing a training program or securing employment. Basic computer skill deficits are addressed through use of the NorthStar Digital Literacy platform.

In addition, DuPage County is fortunate to have a robust network of community service providers and partners, and referrals to mitigate challenges are made to a host of organizations such as YWCA (Child Care Assistance Program), NAMI DuPage, DuPage County Health Department, Prairie State Legal, Community Housing Advocacy and Development, etc. The County's 211 DuPage allows staff and clients to review all available programs and services and incorporate those options into individual employment and training plans.

When serving individuals with disabilities, Title I/WDD staff assist with aligning appropriate accommodations with the selected training provider and serve as an advocate when needed. On-site monitoring is conducted at potential work experience host locations as needed to ensure equal opportunity compliance ahead of placement.

Work-based learning programs such as Transitional Jobs are offered for those with specific barriers, including prior criminal justice involvement. The policy for this program was submitted in conjunction with this plan as referenced in Section B (14.) Developing employment opportunities within the business community as well as advocating for special populations and identifying business champions is also a strategy utilized to mitigate specific barriers to employment.

**3. How the local workforce areas will ensure equitable access to workforce and educational services through the following actions:**

**a. Disaggregating data by race, gender and target population to reveal where disparities and inequities exist in policies and programs.**

Title I/DuPage County Workforce Development Division (WDD) staff use IWDS Target Population reports in conjunction with additional in-house report and data collection to track enrolled program participant volume and characteristics. Disparities and inequities identified through this ongoing data collection and analysis informs adjustments to outreach, processes, and programs accordingly.

For example, in PY19 and PY20 (the time period of 2019-2021), WDD noted that the percentage of program enrollees who identify as Hispanic lagged behind the overall percentage of DuPage County residents that identified as such. In contrast, the percentages of program enrollees who identified as Black or Asian significantly exceeded those groups' overall percentage of the total DuPage population.

To use PY20 as an example, out of a total of 384 newly enrolled participants in all grants:

- 54%- White (73% total DuPage population)<sup>7</sup>
- 20% Black (5.2% total DuPage population)
- 19% Asian (13% total DuPage population)
- 12.2% Hispanic (15.2% total DuPage population)**
- 1% American Indian/Alaskan Native (0.3% total DuPage population)

<sup>7</sup> Impact DuPage/Claritas

3.6% Prefer not to answer  
40.4% identified as Female (50.9% total DuPage population)  
59.4% identified as Male (49.1% total DuPage population)  
7% identified as having a disability (4.8% total DuPage population).

In response, WDD began a series of actions to increase language accessibility, develop relationships in specific areas of the County with community partners, and develop outreach materials using a ~~workforce-equity-lens-n approach centered on responsiveness, inclusivity, and accessibility~~ approach.

In PY21 and PY22 (the time period of 2021-2023), an increase of enrollees who identified as Hispanic took place- 16.7% (PY21) and 16.3% (PY22) respectively.

An additional example has been WDD's response to noting an imbalance in the number of male versus female enrollees. Where historically those numbers would show a near 50%/50% split, the years post-COVID showed a heavy tilt toward male enrollees (PY20- 59% Male, PY21- 65% Male, PY22- 62% Male.)

Increased attention has been paid toward supporting women as they decide to return to work post-pandemic. These efforts have included the well-received Back to School, Back to Work initiative led by WDD, College of DuPage, and Choose DuPage. Although slight improvements have been noted in the data, additional attention will need to be paid to this disparity over the course of this plan.

Another way in which WDD uses disaggregated data to identify disparities and inequities is by compiling Occupational and Industry Diversity reports for DuPage County through the Chmura/JobsEQ platform. This data shows employment trends among racial/ethnic groups that help strengthen career counseling techniques and build awareness and sensitivity among staff. These reports are periodically shared in Center-wide All Staff meetings. Armed with these insights, Career Planners and other frontline staff can help ensure that all career pathway options are being considered and covered with all job seeker clients, particularly in cases where individuals do not have a marketable skill set or defined career path.

As an example, the following data was shared with All Staff in a 2023 Center-wide meeting pertaining to Asian, Black, and Hispanic workers in DuPage County<sup>8</sup>:

5 Occupational Groups with the Highest % of Asian Workers in DuPage County

1. Computer & Mathematical Occupations
  2. Architecture & Engineering Occupations
  3. Life, Physical, and Social Science Occupations
  4. Healthcare Practitioners & Technical Occupations
  5. Business & Financial Operations Occupations
- Average Annual Wage of those Occupational Groupings- \$89,640  
Average Unemployment Rate of those Occupational Groupings- 2.1%

5 Occupational Groups with the Highest % of Black Workers in DuPage County

1. Healthcare Support Occupations
  2. Protective Service Occupations
  3. Transportation & Material Moving Occupations
  4. Community & Social Service Occupations
  5. Building and Grounds Cleaning & Maintenance Occupations
- Average Annual Wage of those Occupational Groupings- \$44,660  
Average Unemployment Rate of those Occupational Groupings- 4.4%

<sup>8</sup> Data as of Q1 2022- JobsEQ Chmura (Quarterly Census of Employment & Wages, BLS)

#### 5 Occupational Groups with the Highest % of Hispanic Workers in DuPage County

1. Construction & Extraction Occupations
2. Building and Grounds Cleaning & Maintenance Occupations
3. Production Occupations
4. Food Preparation & Serving Related Occupations
5. Transportation & Material Moving Occupations

Average Annual Wage of those Occupational Groupings- \$45,640

Average Unemployment Rate of those Occupational Groupings- 5.9%

Similar attention has been paid to differences among male and female participants, and that data has informed non-traditional career counseling efforts.

WDD staff also regularly evaluate average wage of employment at exit data pertaining to different groupings of job seekers to identify trends, potential disparities that require attention, etc. An example of such a data set contains average wage of employment at exit for 1A and 1D program participants, PY22:

Male- \$34.42/hour

Female- \$30.56/hour

White- \$33.41/hour

Black- \$32.44/hour

Asian- \$36.01/hour

Hispanic- \$26.79/hour

Low Income Qualified Individuals- \$31.39/hour

English Language Learners- \$30.17/hour

Older Workers- \$31.58/hour.

By regularly compiling and analyzing disaggregated data, WDD staff will continue to identify areas where underrepresentation among various groups exists, make sure all job seekers are considering the variety of career pathways available and the differing earning potential among those options, and develop training and employment plans that provide opportunities for increased diversity among occupational groups, etc.

In addition to the efforts of Title I/DuPage County Workforce Development Division, the Illinois Department of Employment Security provides labor market information for Economic Development Region 4 and LWIA6/DuPage County specifically. This data includes specific demographic information that helps round out the picture for DuPage. IDES also has three Unemployment Insurance Advocates who reach out to marginalized communities statewide to notify them of the programs and services available by the local workforce partners in DuPage.

Perkins/College of DuPage also routinely reviews and assesses student data disaggregated by race, gender and special populations to determine whether or not there are disparities in access and performance. These activities are part of the College Program Review and Annual Update, Program of Study Application, and the Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment.

For Title II/College of DuPage programs, eligibility for adult education services is specific to English proficiency and Reading/Math levels of participants. Systems and processes are designed to address a broad range of reading levels and language proficiencies and target all non-English Language Background students as well as students lacking a high school diploma or its equivalent. Data is used to target communities of greatest need based on these criteria.

CSBG/DuPage County Community Services will continue ensuring outreach is directed at low-income

census tracts, as well as reviewing demographic intake data to ensure all sectors of the population are being reached.

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

~~The DuPage Work-Based Learning Consortium DuPage leadership community, in conjunction with local school districts, focuses on career readiness, provides career exposure, and work experience for high school students throughout the County. Students enrolled in the program can do paid internships or apprenticeships with local business partners. They also have opportunities to tour companies, job shadow, and participate in other work-based learning activities that help them align their personal interests with possible careers. The Consortium works with 21 high schools and over 50 business partners that offer manufacturing and information technology work experiences for students.~~

The Technology Center of DuPage (TCD) sponsors a Women in Construction event every other year with Northern Michigan University. Participating school districts send groups of female students to participate in various construction projects and urban planning activities with local unions. Additionally, TCD hosts various events for the community to foster interest in their career and technical education programs. These events include TCD Open Houses, Explore Days, 8th Grade Career Day, and Manufacturing Family Night.

The College of DuPage (COD) provides a variety of STEM-based activities for district schools and community residents to offer enhanced, experiential learning opportunities for K-12 and the community at large including: Annual STEMCON event; STEM Career Night; STEMinars; DuPage County Science Fair; Science Olympiad; STEM Spotlights; and Women in STEM events.

COD Career and Technical Education (CTE) faculty and staff that are involved with Programs of Study are mindful and intent on increasing awareness of CTE programs within high schools, especially for programs that prepare students for nontraditional occupations. Program Faculty make sure they address barriers to access as well as providing resources and environments that are welcoming. Support services are also available including career exploration and work-based learning opportunities. Efforts are made to share the opportunities and benefits of pursuing nontraditional programs including STEM careers. The College actively participates in Career Fairs that provide labor market information and hands-on experiences to high school students to demystify career programs. Manufacturing and Welding summer camps geared toward young women are also offered.

DuPage County is home to two of the 17 national labs, and both engage with high school students, as well as younger students, to provide exposure to STEM careers. Argonne participates in virtual and in-person career days and Hour of Code activities at local schools, in addition to hosting STEM events and youth conferences. FermiLab's Science Accelerating Girls' Engagement in STEM (SAGE) program is designed for female and non-binary high school students who are interested in exploring STEM careers, meeting female scientists from FermiLab and other national labs, and connecting with STEM professionals.

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

Over the course of this plan, the Title I/DuPage County Workforce Development Division (WDD) business services team will be expanding the strategy of utilizing employer connections as sounding boards/mentors/advisers/teachers for adult job seekers. Connecting individuals directly with professionals working in the field is beneficial toward learning more about industry trends, best employment fits, skills to study or focus on, other companies to pursue employment with, job search tips, and potential networking

connections. WDD has found that many employers enjoy giving back to the community by assisting job seekers through workshops or events as well as one-on-one through informational interviews or resume reviews. A consistent theme of business services communications moving forward will be encouraging employers to get involved and give back, and this message also resonates with employers that value community involvement and social responsibility.

Through the Skill Up DuPage orientation sessions referenced earlier in the plan, adult job seekers will be introduced to partner organizations that offer job coach/mentoring programs such as People's Resource Center and Loaves & Fishes. These organizations often use volunteers in such roles, and Title I/WDD is also exploring the use of volunteers to serve as mentors, review resumes, etc.

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

Title I/DuPage County Workforce Development Division (WDD) uses the County's geographic information system (GIS) to gain insight into areas of the County that have a higher volume of residents who are most in need. By selecting specific factors to map, such as percentage of residents who do not have a high school diploma, volume of SNAP benefit recipients, areas with lower average household income, areas with high unemployment, percentage of households with no personal vehicle, etc., WDD is able to target specific locations with outreach materials and social media ads as well as on-site orientations or service provision. Through deliberate relationship development with community partners and local libraries in such areas, WDD has an extensive network of locations at which to provide Skill Up DuPage orientations and deliver service information.

All incoming applications for service are being cross-checked with the Illinois workNet Qualified Census Tract and Disproportionately Impacted Area tool to gather data on the volume of applicants residing in these geographic areas of need.

The workNet kiosks are also strategically located in areas identified through the GIS maps, and their placement in food pantries, social service organizations, and libraries in those areas bring service access directly to residents most in need.

The workNet DuPage Career Center is centrally located within the County, is accessible by multiple highways, and has a Pace bus stop directly outside.

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

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

The partners in LWIA6 remain committed to serving immigrants and migrants through appropriate and allowable workforce services. Title I/DuPage County Workforce Development Division (WDD) oversees open-to-the-public, universal career services such as job search workshops and resource room. In addition, individuals with authorization to work utilize funding for short-term occupational training and/or work-based learning experiences as appropriate based on a comprehensive assessment. Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES) administers the Migrant Seasonal Farmworker program, as well as providing employment services such as access to Illinois JobLink as appropriate. Title II/College of DuPage provides English Language Acquisition programming. All partners interact with and coordinate services with community-based partners such as World Relief to assist this population.

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

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

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All partners coordinate referrals and services with Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) on behalf of SNAP program recipients. Title I/WDD provides part-time job resources as well as the local Giving DuPage volunteer opportunity database to SNAP program recipients seeking to meet new program requirements. Title I Adult funds serve a significant number of SNAP program recipients with both funding for short-term occupational training as well as potential work-based learning opportunities. Career services such as job search workshops and resource room are available for all SNAP program recipients.

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

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

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Partners are prepared to implement Workforce Pell Grants in an integrated fashion when final rules have been established. Other WIOA funds will be leveraged to supplement Workforce Pell Grants as appropriate and in the sequence defined through the final rules.

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

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

Title I/DuPage County Workforce Development Division (WDD) has made a tremendous amount of progress over the past several years in integrating a customer-centered approach to all aspects of the operation (communications, outreach, marketing, visitor experience, WIOA process elements, web presence and usability, career planning techniques, service delivery options, etc.) An ongoing commitment to this principle by the leadership team and an organization-wide commitment to the shared value of empathy have led to these gains. By consistently identifying with the experience of the client in an empathic manner, opportunities for improvements and enhancements are recognized and suggested by all team members.

Direct feedback from clients is gathered through multiple means including communications with staff, customer feedback surveys, online reviews, etc. As part of the local service integration assessment (*Appendix A*), the partners will be conducting shared client focus groups over the course of this plan to gather information on the client experience, and these will support continuous customer-centered design improvements moving forward.

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

The workNet DuPage kiosks, located at select partner sites within the community, allow customers to learn about available services, complete a full application or a basic contact form, and explore career and training options. Multiple other local workforce areas in Economic Development Region 4 have adopted this strategy with DuPage County Workforce Development Division's assistance. Over the course of this plan, Title I/WDD plans to explore expanding the content available on the kiosks, localizing content toward where the kiosk is currently being hosted, and providing linkages to other community partners that provide similar or related services.

~~Title I/WDD is currently providing services on a regular basis within the County Jail, as is Title II/College of DuPage. WDD plans to explore the establishment of standing service windows at select local libraries as an~~

~~extension of the strong relationships already in place throughout that network.~~

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

The local partners group reviews the referral process on a regular basis to determine strengths, weaknesses, and potential areas for improvement. The current system overseen by the One Stop Operator is yielding positive outcomes, with customers being contacted by all partners they've requested referrals to within the agreed upon timeframe and feedback from customer surveys generally falling within the "Satisfied" to "Very Satisfied" range. The referral management system utilizes shared technology among the local workforce partners as well as automated referral delivery. The referral process and the technology that supports it was modified so that each client receives a single email when they request more than one referral rather than receiving separate emails for each one. This has significantly reduced the number of emails clients receive following the initial point of contact, making the process easier to understand and less cumbersome.

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

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

Four of the Partners operating out of the workNet DuPage Career Center use work-based learning strategies and programs to benefit job seekers and businesses throughout DuPage County. These strategies are actively promoted among both job seekers and the business community as a valuable means of skills and career development as well as a workforce solution.

Title I/DuPage County Workforce Development Division (WDD) offers a wide range of work-based learning programs and strategies, including:

- ✦ Incumbent Worker Training (IWT)—Local businesses can apply for a training grant that will reimburse up to \$25,000 of the costs of training existing workers. Emphasis is placed on training projects that lead to pay increases, promotions, and industry-recognized credentials for workers and/or that are part of an apprenticeship model.
- ✦ Apprenticeships—As mentioned above, a focus on apprenticeships is utilized when considering IWT grant applications for approval. WDD also actively promotes apprenticeship as a workforce strategy among the business community and is equipped to navigate interested employers to existing registered apprenticeships, resources for registering a proprietary apprenticeship, and other tools and information.
- ✦ Internships/Work Experience—Title I/WDD primarily utilizes this tool in the form of paid internships to help young adults gain work experience and/or to explore a career path or workplace.
- ✦ Transitional Jobs—Local employers can enter an agreement for a period of subsidized employment when hiring an eligible job candidate (as outlined in the local policy submitted in conjunction with this plan as referenced in Section B(14)) in order to assist the candidate in overcoming substantial barriers to employment and ensure successful job retention.

Goals for each work-based learning program are discussed quarterly among the management team. All work-based learning metrics as established by WIOA mandate or State guidance are observed and achieved annually.

In addition to Title I/WDD work-based learning, the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) can be accessed through the workNet DuPage Career Center. This program provides income-eligible older workers with part-time, paid community service positions and work-based training at local nonprofits.

Title II/College of DuPage (COD) offers Integrated Education and Training models (IETs) in targeted sectors where students receive hands-on learning opportunities within the classroom. Job readiness activities are embedded throughout the Adult Education curriculum across programs. Currently, COD is offering contextualized English Language Acquisition (ELA) courses on-site at more than ten businesses in the service district. Employers can provide input to make the learning activities relevant to current and future positions within their company.

The College of DuPage also offers students a variety of work-based learning opportunities through its Continuing Education, Career and Technical Education (CTE) degree and certificate programs. Rigorous internships play a key role in many CTE degree/certificate programs providing students authentic work-based learning experiences. Each internship has a Learning Agreement that outlines a specific Learning Plan and Evaluation Rubric for each identified Learning Goal. The agreement also outlines the specific role and expectations of the employer, faculty advisor, and student. Many of the College's programs include coursework that requires practice in a clinical or simulated lab environment. In addition, students in the Automotive, Cosmetology, Culinary Arts, Hospitality, and Dental Hygiene programs provide students further opportunities to hone and develop their work-based and customer service skills through services offered to the public at reduced costs.

The College of DuPage also has a registered apprenticeship program called Project Hire-Ed. This program features a variety of registered apprenticeship tracks including: CNC Operator and Programmer, Electromechanical Technician, Electronic Industrial Control Mechanic, Industrial Maintenance Mechanic, Machinist, Precision Assembler, Welding, Computer Support Specialist – Desktop Support Technician, Computer Programmer, Early Childhood Educator, and Medical Assistant. COD also supports non-registered apprentices in the areas of Human Resources Generalist and Landscape Design and Maintenance. Title I/WDD actively supports Project Hire Ed by connecting interested businesses to the COD team, as well as by promoting opportunities among job seekers. [Title I/WDD also leads the DuPage Apprenticeship Team consisting of a wide range of community stakeholders and with the stated purpose of expanding registered apprenticeship opportunities within DuPage County. Additionally, WDD recently connected the DuPage County Probation/Specialty Courts staff with Project Hire Ed, and opportunities for horticulture and other apprenticeships are in process.](#)

Lastly, the Title IV/Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) offers their Supported Employment Program to job seekers with disabilities and employers. DRS provides job analysis, job development, and job coaching assistance to job seekers, while offering employers wage reimbursements through periods of On-The-Job Evaluations (OJE) and On-The-Job Training (OJT.)

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

Staff have a variety of professional development opportunities through ICSPS Workforce Webinars, Workforce GPS webinars, and other partners including the Chicago Jobs Council and the West Suburban Jobs Council. The local partners group is committed to the cross-training and professional development of staff, and this will be an ongoing action item as determined through the service integration self-assessment.

Title I/DuPage County Workforce Development Division leadership facilitates a monthly All Staff meeting, as well as an annual meeting identifying areas of interest for professional development, ~~and areas of focus pertaining to equity and access improvements.~~ Those topics are interwoven throughout the monthly meetings for the year including the coordination of outside speakers on topics such as mental health, homelessness resources, cultural competencies, etc.

**3. How training services outlined in WIOA Sec. 134 will be provided through the use of individual training accounts, including, if contracts for training services will be used, how the use of such contracts will be**

**coordinated with the use of individual training accounts under that chapter, and how the Local Board will ensure informed customer choice in the selection of training programs regardless of how the training services are to be provided (§ 679.560(b)(18)):**

The local Policy on Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) has been submitted in conjunction with this plan as referenced in Section B (11.)

Eligible adults, dislocated workers, and youth who are assessed as in need of occupational training to obtain self-sufficient employment can be approved for an Individual Training Account (ITA) of up to \$10,000. Clients have customer choice in the selection of their training program from the statewide Eligible Training Providers List. During the assessment process, clients are typically asked to research and compare multiple providers. As part of that research, Title I/WDD Career Planners encourage clients to ask each provider specific questions about course content, schedule, training delivery methods, industry-recognized credentials resulting from the program, as well as the provider's job placement and successful completion rates. This helps to ensure that clients are making well-informed decisions about the training program and provider they choose. Career Planners assist in the selection process by helping confirm that the training program and provider will successfully prepare the individual for their education and employment goals. Career Planners also share program feedback provided by other clients, as well as program outcome information. Training provider performance data is available through Illinois workNet, which pulls the participant outcome information that entered in the IWDS case management system. Title I/WDD staff also request updated outcome data from the training providers to give them the opportunity to submit and verify the successful completion, employment, and credential attainment numbers for all students.

Emphasis for ITA-funded occupational skills training is placed on short-term training programs that lead to marketable skills/credentials in high-demand occupations/career pathways. Occupational skills training programs should result in opportunities for quality jobs leading to family self-sufficiency as well as increasing earning potential, financial stability, and career growth over time.

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

The local Training Provider and Training Program Eligibility policy has been submitted in conjunction with this plan as referenced in Section B (15.)

The Local Board ensures the continuous improvement of services provided by eligible providers in several ways. First, Title I/WDD staff consistently monitor program outcomes and respond to any client concerns and issues to determine if a particular program or provider may need to be removed from the Eligible Training Provider List for the purposes of customer protection. The successful completion, credential attainment, and training-related employment rates of the providers are reviewed at least annually by Title I/WDD staff. If a training provider does not appear to be meeting adequate levels of performance, this is addressed with the provider. Potential causes and solutions are discussed to help the provider improve their level of service and performance.

Next, by consistently reviewing local labor market data, the Local Board and Title I/WDD Staff compare the training programs being offered by providers with the occupations that are in demand in the surrounding area. WDD also consults regularly with Local Board members who represent a range of industries to gain feedback on employment trends in the area. The Local Board, along with the Title I/WDD Business Services Unit, also communicate and collaborate with employers across several sectors to help identify and meet their employment needs and the skills required of their employees. These efforts help to ensure that gaps in types of training being offered are addressed so that the demands of employers are aligned with the training investments being made in the education of WIOA clients.

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

All job seeker visitors to the workNet DuPage Career Center complete a workNet Access Form containing basic contact information that allows them to be entered into the IWDS case management system. Each visitor is also logged into the electronic sign-in sheet along with the purpose for their visit. Once entered into IWDS, Core A Local Services are selected for each visit in addition to entry on the electronic sign-in sheet. Both methods are used because idiosyncrasies with the IWDS reporting system of local services have been experienced. The data on non-enrolling basic services is tracked and monitored monthly by Title I/WDD leadership. ~~In PY22, the workNet DuPage Career Center set a goal of increasing in-person check ins by 50% over the preceding year by restarting a range of in-person workshops and programs and reemphasizing the availability of in-person appointments and service options. The Center exceeded that goal by increasing the volume of in-person services over the previous year by 75%. A goal was set for PY23 of achieving another increase of 25%, and year-over-year increases in non-enrolled service provision will be planned for and monitored over the course of this plan.~~

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

**1. To transfer funds between the adult and dislocated worker funding streams.**

Funds will be transferred between Adult and Dislocated Worker streams on an as needed basis during the program year. Up to 100% of Adult funds may be transferred into Dislocated Worker or vice versa. This determination will be made based on the amount of WARN activity and overall volume of layoffs in the local area. Over the past two years, demand for Adult funding has significantly outweighed demand for Dislocated Worker funding.

**2. To use funds for incumbent worker training as outlined in WIOA Sec. 134(d)(4)(A)(i).**

Up to 20% of Adult and/or Dislocated Worker funds may be used on Incumbent Worker Training. The amount diverted for this purpose will be based on the overall budget, with priority being given to ITAs and work-based learning for job seekers in times of moderate to high unemployment. Preference will be given to IWT projects that demonstrate any/all of the following: a clear avenue toward layoff aversion, demonstrable position and/or pay upgrades for trainees, the use of an apprenticeship model, attainment of industry-recognized credentials, significant impact on the company's competitiveness.

**3. To use funds for transitional jobs as outlined in WIOA Sec. 134(d)(5).**

Up to 10% of combined Adult and Dislocated Worker allocations may be used on Transitional Jobs for eligible clients. Target populations for transitional jobs include, but are not limited to: individuals with prior criminal justice involvement, long-term unemployed, chronically unemployed, individuals with inconsistent work histories, older workers, individuals experiencing homelessness, and individuals with disabilities.

**4. To use funds for pay for performance contracts as outlined in WIOA Sec. 133(b)(2-3).**

No funds will be expended on performance contracts.

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

~~Beyond all the content previously covered in this plan regarded the various ways in which a workforce equity~~

lens has been or is being incorporated into operations and policies, the local workforce partners may collectively utilize the definition of workforce equity lens as laid out in the Economic Development Region 4 Regional plan (Chapter 2, Section E): “We actively work to expand access and eliminate disparities people experience, especially those from marginalized communities, by providing a customized service approach to all clients.” Periodic All Staff meetings may provide cross-training opportunities regarding how to implement this approach collectively.

Specific examples of how Title I/DuPage County Workforce Development Division (WDD) has been applying, and will continue to incorporate, a workforce equity lens to the development, design, and execution of employment and training services include: careful consideration of literacy levels when drafting forms and documents, increased accessibility for English Language Learners, the adoption of the NorthStar digital literacy platform, mindfulness of the customer's experience when accessing services and increased flexibility in individualized client service, consideration of potentially retraumatizing language used within federal legislation and how to reframe/reword when necessary, ongoing professional development, staff-wide discussion and identification of equity-oriented topics, addition of technology-based access points within the community via kiosks, strategic outreach efforts using a detailed GIS mapping system, inclusion of diverse partners within operations and programming, etc. The incorporation of an equity lens has permeated our entire organization and informed our daily work. Best practices have been recognized as they have organically developed over time. The operating systems and policies in place in LWIA6 are developed with a focus on responsiveness, inclusivity, and accessibility. A customer-centered design approach is taken when providing services to both job seeker and business customers.

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

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

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

**1. WIOA Performance Measures**

The Local Board will comply with Title I WIOA performance measures, as determined through negotiations with the Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity, for Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth funding, those being: Employment Rate-2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter after Exit, Employment Rate-4<sup>th</sup> Quarter after Exit, Median Earnings, Credential Attainment, and Measurable Skills Gain. Negotiations for PY2024/2025 have not taken place yet. The goals for the previous local plan term are included below:

Performance Measures	PY 2020/2021 Performance Goals	PY 2022/2023 Performance Goals
<b>ADULT</b>		
Employment Rate- 2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter after Exit	74%	72%
Employment Rate- 4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter after Exit	73%	70%
Median Earnings	\$8,000	\$9,200
Credential Attainment	79%	76%
Measurable Skills Gain	50%	61%
<b>DISLOCATED WORKERS</b>		
Employment Rate- 2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter after Exit	78%	76%
Employment Rate- 4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter after Exit	78%	75%
Median Earnings	\$12,500	\$15,500
Credential Attainment	75%	76%
Measurable Skills Gain	55%	70%
<b>YOUTH</b>		
Employment/Placement in Education Rate- 2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter after Exit	70%	72%
Employment/Placement in Education Rate- 4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter after Exit	69.5%	70%
Median Earnings	\$3,500	\$4,250
Credential Attainment	70%	70%
Measurable Skills Gain	42%	58%

Title II/College of DuPage has a WIOA Measurable Skills Gain performance measure, which shows Educational Functioning Level gains based on mandated Federal assessments. For FY23, the State target was 37%, and College of DuPage had 46.7% of students achieve a measurable skills gain.

Title III/Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES) tracks performance for three of the five WIOA performance measures:

- Employment Rate- 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter After Exit
- Employment Rate- 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter After Exit
- Median Earnings.

Perkins/College of DuPage (COD) is performance-based and requires program recipients to meet State goals on the following three measures:

- Postsecondary Retention and Placement
- Earned Recognized Postsecondary Credential
- Nontraditional Program Enrollment.

## 2. Additional State Performance Measures

The Local Board will comply with any additional State performance measures as directed. The local area's WIOA performance contributes in a positive manner to the State achieving its performance goals overall, and the Local Board plans to continue this success over the course of this plan.

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

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

The primary service delivery strategy for Title I/DuPage County Workforce Development Division (WDD) will continue to be the use of Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) to assist WIOA clients in returning to work and/or boosting their earning potential and/or beginning or continuing upon an in-demand career pathway. The success and return on investment of this strategy can be seen in historical outcomes<sup>9</sup> such as:

- PY16-PY18 Title I Exiters (1,212 individuals) earned total wages four quarters post-exit of over \$48,894,702.79. A basic calculation of return-on-investment (total post-program wages divided by total allocation for those three program years) shows a return of \$3.11 for every single WIOA dollar expended. That calculation does not factor in multiplier effects, impact on State and Federal taxes, effects on SNAP and TANF costs, etc.
- For 2,204 Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth Exiters from 7/1/2019 through 6/30/2023, the average wage when entering the program was \$22.66 and the average wage at employment/exit was \$73.55, representing a 224% increase.
- The average annual wage of all Title I Exiters in the post-COVID program years of 2021-2023 for DuPage County is \$67,234, which outpaces the State of Illinois average of approximately \$55,000.

The use of multiple virtual and remote client services strategies has increased flexibility and accessibility. With that said, Title I/WDD has also observed, and been informed by clients of, a strong desire for in-person

<sup>9</sup> IWDS Exiter Wage Review and Participant Wage Analysis

services. Providing coordinated and integrated service at a single One-Stop centrally located in DuPage County continues to be an effective delivery strategy with year-over-year growth in the number of individuals visiting the Center for services post-COVID.

Utilizing Incumbent Worker Training (IWT) grants to serve local businesses, primarily in targeted industry sectors, continues to be an effective service delivery strategy. The relatively lower cost per trainee that is typical in IWT projects makes it a cost-effective strategy for helping workers boost their marketability while employed and potentially negating the need for occupational training services in the event of a future layoff. The availability of funds for the IWT program fluctuates, however, depending on the volume of unemployed/underemployed job seekers in need of assistance. Priority is given to those populations so that reentry to the workforce in self-sufficient employment can be achieved.

Other more specific service delivery strategies that are expected to yield strong returns on investment and which will continue being emphasized moving forward, are:

- ~~Increased short-term services/career services only "Fast Track" for individuals not needing extensive occupational training~~ Centering job search workshops around utilization of AI as this both boosts success in job search and also builds familiarity with generative AI
- Community-wide workforce system and employment/job search services via the previously mentioned Skill Up DuPage campaign that will leverage the efforts and resources of all DuPage County-wide partners, reduce duplicative efforts, increase accessibility, and expedite service-provision.

Title III/Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES) plans to continue using one-on-one appointment scheduling to assist job seekers. This has provided a more personal experience for the job seeker, as they have their own appointment time during which their unique needs can be met. This improves the job seeker experience based upon customer-centered design concepts.

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

workNet DuPage has curtailed hosting job fairs at the Center. The return on investment for these events has been minimal, and the time and resources spent organizing them is difficult to justify when looking at the amount of hires that are made as a result. It has historically been very difficult obtaining interviewing/hiring results following a large-scale job fair. Title I/DuPage County Workforce Development Division (WDD) has instead developed a series of events titled Career Conversations which feature a panel of 3-4 employer guest speakers that share job search advice and tips with the attendees. Following the panel discussion, the employers then meet-and-greet/recruit with those in attendance, and this portion of the event is open to walk-ins as well. These events have been very well-received by both employer participants and job seekers, and they represent a less significant time investment for businesses.

Title I/DuPage County Workforce Development Division (WDD) piloted usage of Transfr VR technology as well as the EnGen language learning platform over the course of the prior local plan. It was hoped that Transfr VR, which consists of virtual reality headsets that allow the user to attempt different job activities, would be a way to draw more interest from young adults and engage them in career exploration. There was limited interest, and the process of setting up the headsets safely for use by a single customer was both time-consuming and somewhat challenging. The EnGen platform is an innovative, mobile-friendly way for English Language Learners to build their English skills in a way that is contextualized to the type of industry or job they are pursuing. Although several users were set up with the tool, it was not heavily utilized by any of them. It is possible that, with continual oversight and encouragement or assistance by Career Planners, users may have made more progress with the tool, but time is always a resource in limited supply. The return on investment for both tools did not justify continuing usage.

Title I/WDD has reduced the number of participants who *begin* Associate's degree programs with WIOA grant dollars. The length of such programs (often over 2 years), the burden that length places on the capacity/caseload volume of WDD staff, the burden placed on the participant to maintain regular

communication for a period of multiple years, the impact these programs have on credential attainment rates, and the delay of reentry to the workforce all negatively affect return on investment. The focus placed primarily on short-term occupational training leading to marketable credentials in high-demand industry sectors and job areas has yielded stronger return on investment and outcomes.

Title III/Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES) has discontinued group workshop sessions to avoid replication of activities of other local workforce partners. IDES has shifted to one-on-one appointments for Reemployment Services & Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) clients.

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

As a region, Economic Development Region (EDR) 4-Northeast Illinois will continually work to identify promising service strategies that can be implemented across the Chicago metro area. Over the course of this plan, those may include strategies for boosting the renewable energy/clean jobs workforce, ~~providing workforce services to migrants with authorization to work~~ expanding the adoption of registered apprenticeship by area employers and registered apprenticeship opportunities for job seekers, and broad-based partnerships with the network of local libraries to leverage the tools and resources they have available for serving job seekers.

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

As the State works toward a more cohesive system for tracking performance and outcome data of providers on the WIOA Eligible Training Providers List, it will be easier to decipher which programs yield the greatest return on investment. Regarding barriers to enrollment, ~~it in the form of equity gaps~~, the Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment being conducted for Perkins V will help identify gaps and uncover specific barriers to enrollment. Additional examples of how data on return on investment and various other elements are collected and used in the local area have been cited throughout this plan.

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

The Local Board is aware that the common barriers of transportation and child-care are significant impediments to employment attainment and retention for a segment of community residents. Partnerships with other community organizations will continue to be developed to leverage other available resources designed to address those barriers. The use of barrier reduction funds when possible will be explored over the course of this plan. Expansion of registered apprenticeships is another aspect of local strategy that helps residents overcome barriers as participants are earning income while learning new skills and enhancing their earning potential.

**C. Describe how responsiveness, inclusivity, and accessibility (RIA) ~~a workforce equity lens~~ is or will be incorporated in the analysis of performance goals and implementation of evaluation activities.**

Currently, WIOA Performance Goals do not take into account categories such as race, ethnicity, disability, gender, specific barriers, etc. when setting levels of expected performance. The Statistical Adjustment Model (SAM) in development is intended to account for existing barriers of job seekers served and modify performance outcomes accordingly. It is hoped that the SAM will not penalize local workforce areas who place a heavy emphasis on serving populations with barriers who may not traditionally yield equally strong performance outcomes as individuals without those barriers. Evaluating disaggregated outcome data will illuminate future areas of focus regarding underrepresentation in specific occupations.

As part of the COD/Perkins CLNA, regional and local occupational data is reviewed and analyzed to identify

occupations and programs where there is a ~~n-equity~~ discrepancy. Program faculty identify enrollment and completion strategies to lessen those ~~equity~~ gaps. Target goals will be set with assessments occurring on an annual basis.

## CHAPTER 6: TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS AND ASSURANCES – LOCAL COMPONENT

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

### A. Fiscal Management

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

The DuPage County Finance Department is responsible for the disbursement of grant funds.

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

The competitive process used to award subgrants and contracts in LWIA 6 for WIOA Title I activities are pursuant to the DuPage County Procurement Ordinance and can be viewed through the [DuPage County Procurement Services](#) webpage.

### B. Physical and Programmatic Accessibility

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

The local one-stop system, including the one-stop operator and the one-stop partners, will comply with all Federal and State physical inclusiveness and accessibility requirements, including the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, Section 188 of WIOA, the Illinois Accessibility Code, the most recent ADA standards for Accessible Design and the Uniform Federal Accessibility Standards, and all other applicable statutory and regulatory requirements. workNet DuPage maintains a culture of inclusiveness for all clients and staff. The physical characteristics of the facility, both indoor and outdoor, are in compliance with CFR Part 37, the 2010 or most recent ADA standards for Accessible Design, and the Uniform Federal Accessibility Standards including a handicapped entrance door to the building. The Center is located in a convenient, high traffic, and accessible location with public transportation stops on both sides of the building and adequate parking which is clearly marked for individuals with disabilities. Indoor space is designed in an "equal and meaningful" manner providing access for individuals with disabilities. Technology, assistive devices, and materials for individuals with disabilities are readily available and accessible. Staff training for utilizing those materials, as well as for how best to serve individuals with disabilities or other barriers to employment, are held on an ongoing basis. These trainings typically take place at One-Stop all-staff meetings. The schedule for those meetings is set at the beginning of each calendar year.

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

As required under WIOA and related State policies, all WIOA Required Partners develop, amend as necessary, and adhere to an umbrella Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that provides the framework for: integration of and access to the entire set of services available within the local one-stop system, accessibility of services to individuals with disabilities, agreements on cross-training of staff, service delivery methods and staffing, sharing of information, cooperative efforts with employers, shared costs for operating the Center, etc. The MOU and any subsequent modifications are incorporated by reference into this plan.

**C. Plan Development and Public Comment**

1. Describe the process used by the Local Board to provide a public comment period prior to submission of the plan, including an opportunity to have input into the development of the local plan, particularly for representatives of business, education, and labor organizations (§ 679.560(b)(19)).

Legal notice regarding the required 30-day Public Comment period was published in the Daily Herald, DuPage County's primary newspaper. The draft plan was available on the workNet DuPage website ([www.worknetdupage.org](http://www.worknetdupage.org)) for viewing and public comment for a period of 30 days. There was opportunity to provide input into the development of the local plan, particularly for representatives of businesses, education, and labor organizations. The development of the plan coincided and aligned with the development of the DuPage County strategic plan and the Choose DuPage strategic plan. It was made available to the DuPage Workforce Innovation Board which includes representation from business, education, and labor organizations. The Board was invited to submit any pertinent feedback to the draft plan.

Any comments posted during the 30-day Public Comment period are forwarded to the Local Board, Partners, and the Chief Elected Official. Necessary changes are made to the Plan prior to final submission.

The draft of the modification to this local plan was available on the workNet DuPage website for viewing and public comment for a period of two weeks.

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

The draft Local Plan was made available to the public on February 14, 2024. A public notice was published in the Daily Herald newspaper on February 14, 2024 and an email was provided for comments. The Plan was also available on the workNet DuPage website ([www.worknetdupage.org](http://www.worknetdupage.org)) as well as for viewing on-site at the workNet DuPage Career Center, 2525 Cabot Drive, Suite 302, Lisle, IL 60532. No public comments were received.

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

Any modifications needed or requested over the term of this Plan will be brought to the local workforce partner group and Local Board for consideration and approval.

**D. Describe how responsiveness, inclusivity, and accessibility (RIA) ~~a workforce equity lens~~ is or will be incorporated in with meeting the administrative requirement of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act programs.**

The Local Board and all partners that are party to the MOU will continue to comply with all Federal and State physical inclusiveness and accessibility requirements, including the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, Section 188 of WIOA, the Illinois Accessibility Code, the most recent ADA standards for Accessible

Design and the Uniform Federal Accessibility Standards, and all other applicable statutory and regulatory requirements, as well as all Equal Opportunity policies and standards including those adhered to by each Partner agency when hiring. Abiding by all laws and statutes helps ensure responsiveness, inclusivity, accessibility and compliance with all administrative requirements.