





REGION 8  
 COMBINED REGIONAL PLAN  
 2020-2024

*WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD SDA-83, INC.*  
*REVISED FEBRUARY 2023*

**WDB-83**  
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**A. Coordination of Planning Requirements**

- *The Local Workforce Development Area 83 **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 in this plan.*
- *The Local Workforce Development Area 83 **Service Integration Action Plan** provides a description of how local workforce partners will align and coordinate services as required by the State of Louisiana Integrated Service delivery Policy (OWD 2-23.1). The Service Integration Action Plan and any subsequent modifications is incorporated by reference into this plan.*

LWDA-83 has established a one-stop delivery system through which core employment-related services are provided and through which access is provided to other employment and training services. Services are accessed through a physical one-stop center (American Job Center) in each parish in the area. One comprehensive center exists within this workforce development area, Morehouse Parish American Job Center.

The comprehensive AJC, is physically located at 250 Holt Street, Bastrop, LA. It is where job seekers and employer customers can access the programs, services, and activities of all required one-stop partners, and any other partners as determined by the Local WDB. WDB-83 feels the comprehensive Center exemplifies the characteristics of a high-quality AJC as described in DOL’s TEGL No. 4-15. The comprehensive one-stop center reflects a welcoming environment to all customer groups including persons with disabilities. The integrated staff of both local and state-merit employees are courteous and helpful to all job seekers, businesses, and others who interact with the Center, in person, by telephone, or online. The comprehensive Center has:

- 1) one (1) WIOA Title I and two (2) state-merit staff persons physically present, and the Center provides the career services listed in 20 CFR 678.430, 34 CFR 361.430, and 34 CFR 463.430;
- 2) access to training services;
- 3) access to employment and training activities carried out under section 134(d) of WIOA;
- 4) access to programs and activities carried out by one-stop partners; and
- 5) workforce and labor market information.

Customers have access to partner programs, services, and activities during regular business days at the comprehensive one-stop center – Monday thru Wednesday and Friday: 8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m., and on Thursday: 8:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. The WDB-83 program director may establish flexible service hours at other times to accommodate schedules of individuals who work on regular business days or who, because of life circumstances, are not able to access the Center during regular business hours. LWDB-83 staff is providing career services in the comprehensive Center. Career services are also provided through access to one-stop partner programs and activities, which are delivered in two (2) ways:

Option 1. Having a program staff member physically present at the Center at assigned days and times;  
or

Option 2. Making available a direct linkage through technology to a program staff member who can provide meaningful information or services.

All WIOA career services are available in the comprehensive Center. Most of the career services are also available at any of LWDA-83’s nine (9) affiliated sites.

LWDB-83, with the agreement of the local elected official, has developed and entered into a memorandum of understanding with one-stop partners, the designated one-stop service center operator, and conducts oversight of the partners and centers.

The six core WIOA one-stop partners are:

- WIOA Title I (Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth formula programs) administered by LWC,
- Title II-Adult Education and literacy programs administered by the Department of Education (DOE),
- Title III - Wagner-Peyser employment services administered by LWC,
- Title IV – Rehabilitation Act of 1973 programs administered by LWC.

<b>WIOA Title I</b>	<b>Adult Employment &amp; Training</b>	WIOA Adult program services include career services, training services and job placement assistance. Priority is given to recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals, veterans, and individuals who are basic skills-deficient.
	<b>Youth Employment &amp; Training</b>	WIOA Youth program services include the attainment of a high school diploma or its recognized equivalent, entry into postsecondary education, and individualized delivery of 14 types of career readiness opportunities.
	<b>Dislocated Worker Employment Training</b>	WIOA dislocated worker program services target individuals who lost jobs due to plant closures, company down-sizing, or some other significant change in market conditions. In most cases, eligible workers are unlikely to return to their occupations, and they must be eligible (or have exhausted) unemployment compensation.
<b>WIOA Title II</b>	<b>Basic Education For Adults</b>	Adult Education and Literacy services and opportunities include high school equivalency instruction and testing (HiSET/GED), resources for migrant and seasonal farmworkers, family literacy including childcare services, prep for college enrollment, integrated teaching in career pathways of Health care, Manufacturing, and Business/Retail, career guidance and decision-making, workplace skills preparation and credentialing, coaching and support, and student leadership organizations.
<b>WIOA Title III</b>	<b>Wagner-Peyser Employment Services</b>	Wagner-Peyser Employment Services, often referred to as basic labor exchange services, provide access to employment services to all job seekers including job search preparation and placement assistance services. Employers may receive general or specialized recruitment services through self-service or staff assisted job orders.
<b>WIOA Title IV</b>	<b>Vocational Rehabilitation Services</b>	Vocational Rehabilitation programs provide training services to help eligible individuals with disabilities become employed. The priority is competitive, fulltime employment. Depending on the individual’s disability and functional limitations other outcomes such as part-time employment, self-employment, or supported employment are also appropriate. Services focus both on helping high school students plan as they prepare for transition to work, as well as delivery of a range of individualized adult services.

In addition to the core partners, the following partner programs provide access through the one-stops:

- Career and Technical Education (**Carl D. Perkins [Vocational and Technical Education Act](#)**)
- Local Jobs for Veterans
- MET
- Title V of the Older Americans Act (National Association for Hispanic Elderly-Ayuda)
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Programs
- Unemployment Compensation Programs.

Additional programs also may be partners in the AJCs in LWDA-83 with the approval of LWDB-83 and the local elected official. All partners and LWDB-83 have entered into a written memorandum of understanding describing the services to be provided, how the costs of the services and operating costs of the system will be funded, methods for referral of individuals between the one-stop operators and partners for appropriate services and activities, and other matters deemed appropriate.

The Infrastructure Funding Agreement (IFA) used by WDB-83 and its mandatory partners contains the infrastructure costs budget, which is an integral component of LWDA-83's overall one-stop operating budget. The operating budget consists of additional costs, which include applicable career services, and shared operating costs and shared services. WDB-83 feels that an operating budget would be incomplete if any of these cost categories were omitted, as all components are necessary to maintain a fully functioning and successful local service delivery system. Local WDB-83, one-stop partners, and the CEO negotiated the use of the currently used IFA design, along with which additional costs to include while developing the operating budget for the local system. The overall one-stop operating budget is included in the MOU. WDB-83 continues to evaluate the process for the development and modification of MOUs with core and required partners.

The IFA includes the following elements:

- a) The period of time in which the IFA is effective; July 01, 2020 – June 30, 2023 (the MOU agreement term will be renegotiated on or before July 01, 2023);
- b) Identification of the infrastructure costs budget, which is a component of the one-stop operating budget;
- c) Identification of all one-stop partners and the CEO
- d) A description of the periodic modification and review process to ensure equitable benefit among one-stop partners;
- e) Information on the process the Local WDB, CEO(s), and one-stop partners used to reach consensus or the assurance that the local area followed the SFM process;
- f) A description of the process to be used among partners to resolve issues related to infrastructure funding during the MOU duration period when consensus cannot be reached.

The IFA also includes the signatures of individuals with authority to bind the signatories to the IFA, including all one-stop partners, CEO, and WDB-83 Chairperson.

WDB-83 and its partners were able to use the Local Funding Mechanism in order to afford the WDB and its partner programs the flexibility to design and fund a one-stop delivery system through consensus, to meet the needs of our local area. By leveraging the funds and resources available to partners, and WDB-83 to optimally provide program services to our mutual customers.

WDB-83, CEO, and all required partners negotiated and agreed to the comprehensive center budget amounts for one-stop infrastructure funding, as well as the methods of calculating these amounts. The infrastructure funding terms are included in the MOU as an IFA, and both the IFA and MOU have been signed by the appropriate parties.

The one-stop partner programs' proportionate share of funding was calculated in accordance with WIOA, its implementing regulations, and the Uniform Guidance. It was based upon a reasonable cost allocation methodology, whereby infrastructure costs are charged to each partner based on the partner's proportionate use of the dedicated comprehensive center and the relative benefits received, and is considered to be allowable, reasonable, necessary, and allocable. Partners' contributions are reviewed quarterly and reconciled against actual costs incurred, and adjusted to ensure that actual costs charged to any one partner are based on proportionate use and relative benefit received by the partner and its respective program or activities. WDB-83 believes each partners' program contribution is consistent with the program's authorizing statute and regulations, as well as with the Uniform Guidance.

Individuals who meet the respective partner's program eligibility requirements will be encouraged by WDB-83 Career Services Team members to not only participate in Adult/Dislocated Worker and Youth programs, but other partner program services as needed, concurrently. Co-enrollment offers the opportunity to access additional program services and funds to help address a participant's specific barriers to employment and/or education. Career Service Team members will determine the appropriate level and balance of services for each individual under each Title I program. WDB-83 partners will identify and track the funding streams that pay the costs of services and ensure there are no duplication of services.

## **B. Technology in the One-Stop Delivery System**

Workforce Development Board-83 clearly understands the concept of providing an experienced staff to the ten (10) American Job Centers. These centers will continue to provide excellent services to the residents and employers of Local Workforce Development Area-83. WDB-83 policies are in place that support a customer-centered, fully integrated, service delivery system that ensures customers have maximum access to the full range of education, employment, training, and supportive services available through the partner programs. Workforce Development Board-83's transition into WIOA included the updating of these policies to guarantee all partner services are made available to customers that may need them.

WDB-83 will conduct outreach to our more rural, impoverished communities where unemployment rates can be notably higher than the State average. WDB-83 will continue to explore the value and need for additional services for these remote areas.

Workforce Development Board-83's workforce system promotes accessibility for all job-seekers to the centers and in program services, and is fully compliant with accessibility requirements for individuals with disabilities. AJC staff will be trained to assist job-seekers with disabilities in all partner programs. Assistive technology is in place, and front-line staff members are trained in the use of this technology.

All Louisiana local American Job Centers use HiRE (Helping Individuals Reach Employment), which is the case management, data collection and reporting system for the State. LWC ensures that LWDB-83

develops and utilizes an integrated job seeker customer flow between WIOA Core Program Partners, which will build statewide integrated, technology-based intake and case management information system as the main entry portal into the expanded Louisiana Workforce Development System for all staff and common customers (both job seekers and employers). WDB-83 hopes all workforce partners may make use of this system in the near future through data sharing agreements with the State.

The local workforce development boards of Region 8 carry out workforce activities by partnering locally through memoranda of understanding to implement core, non-core and other partner programs.

LWDA-83 will also work to evaluate and identify opportunities to implement additional streamlined systems, when applicable. For example, the two local workforce development boards within Region 8 use the same On-the-Job Training contract with employers to further reduce redundancies and inefficiencies.

WDB-83 strategizes to increase the use of local labor market and educational data and technology to inform and guide strategic workforce development decisions. The Louisiana Workforce Commission has a duty to develop data collection and management strategies that will meet the needs of data sharing between core partners. These plans hopefully will develop as system requirement updates are realized and cybersecurity measures are enhanced to protect personally identifiable information.

The need for technology to facilitate remote access to services provided through the one-stop delivery system was quickly realized with the onset of the coronavirus pandemic in the spring of 2020. WDB-83 provided means for multiple entry methods into the WIOA-system, flexible scheduling of staff, and other innovative use of technology customized for the job readiness needs of its customers. The extent to which the eligible training providers in LWDA-83 also demonstrated the effective use of technology for their instruction to include distance education. Providers were able to expand instructional content and delivery techniques to leverage technology to enhance educational opportunities. WDB-83 effectively found uses of technology, such as DocuSign and Zoom, to improve system efficiencies, not just during the pandemic, but as a new way of conducting WDB-83 business. Recently, due mainly to the coronavirus pandemic, WDB-83 authorized the purchase, by a WIOA staff member, of prepaid data/minute card(s) to ensure participants have connectivity to the new software platforms.

### **C. WDB-83 SUPPORT FOR STRATEGIES IN THE COMBINED STATE PLAN**

A few years ago, the State launched an initiative to balance the emphasis on services between employers and job seekers. This initiative is operated in LWDA-83 out of ten (10) AJCs. The initiative's purpose is to increase the "value" of services that are provided to both employers and job seekers throughout the region. Integral to this system is an understanding of and allowance for needed services to individuals with "significant barriers to employment" and the requirement for "priority of service" under WIOA.

To comply with Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, the American Job Centers in LWDA-83 follow the priority of service provisions for veterans in accordance with the requirements of section 4215 of Title 38, United States Code.

WDB-83 Policy #200-10: Priority of Services to Veterans guarantees that Career Services Team members will ensure all veteran (and qualifying spouses) customers have a complete HiRE record. It is important to emphasize that homeless veterans meet the criterion of having a “significant barrier to employment” and are immediately referred to the regional Disabled Veteran Outreach Program (DVOP) specialist for enrollment into the appropriate AJC workforce programs.

After a customer is identified as a veteran, it is required the following are completed:

- HiRE WIOA Pre-Application, update customer information, and/or WIOA Application;
- For those identified in need of career development, Background Wizard which includes all of the following: educational history, work/employment history, and skills information; and
- Updated resume with copies given to the Veteran customer.

All services offered and provided to veteran customers are recorded in HiRE. The veteran is provided with or referred to any other needed supportive service. Documentation of these referrals via case notes are kept in the customer’s HiRE account.

In order to provide information on veterans approved for, as well as denied, Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act services, Career Services Team members will print a copy of the application completed in HiRE on all veterans and qualifying spouses. These applications will be kept in a designated folder at each parish center.

After a decision has been made on the path of service – WIOA funded, referred to other agencies, or denied services – documentation should be attached to the application and returned to the veteran’s folder.

Individuals who are underemployed and meet the definition of a low-income individual may receive career and training services under the Adult program on a priority basis. Individuals who meet the definition of an individual with a barrier to employment who are underemployed may also be served in the Adult program; however, unless they are a recipient of public assistance, a low-income individual, or are basic skills deficient, they are not eligible for service on a priority basis.

LWDB-83 continues to develop and refine innovative and effective models for obtaining industry recognized credentials, including integrated education and training approaches, such as, career pathways, industry or sector partnerships, including those pertaining to Registered Apprenticeship programs and opportunities. Integrated Education and Training (IET) is a service approach that provides three components simultaneously, concurrently, and contextually: (1) adult education and literacy (2) workforce preparation activities, and (3) workforce training.

Youth with special challenges and issues that make it difficult for them to succeed at school often have limited workforce opportunities as adults. Youth with the most serious challenges, referred to as “disconnected”, are those between the ages of 14 and 24, are low income and either unemployed, not enrolled in or at risk of dropping out of school, involved in the justice system, homeless, or in foster care. These youth will benefit from comprehensive, integrated programs, including programs that combine education, job training and preparation, counseling, health and mental health interventions, and social services.



LWDA-83 has clearly defined its Youth program design and service strategies to ensure services provided to youth offer the individual a career pathway. Such a pathway provides a combination of education (pathway may start with adult literacy), training, and other services in a manner that accelerates the educational and career advancement of the individual. WIOA outlines a broader youth vision that supports an integrated service delivery system.

The number or proportion of Limited English Proficiency (LEP) individuals eligible to be served or encountered in LWDA-83 and the frequency of these encounters is very low. With this number being so low, it will not be required for each American Job Center in the area to post notices in commonly encountered languages notifying LEP persons of language assistance. Instead, LWDA-83 staff will be instructed to contact the Foreign Language Department of the University of Louisiana at Monroe (318-342-1525) for assistance in identifying the language spoken by the customer and to attain interpreter services as per WDB Policy 200-14: Language Assistance Plan. Google Translate is a mobile or website that can translate the written or spoken word from one language to another. Staff can use this platform to speak to LEP customers. Written Words Translation is a function that translates written words or text to a foreign language. Speech Translation is a function that instantly translates spoken language into the selected foreign language. Availability of Google Translate is made known to customers in all LWDA-83 AJCs.

In view of the fact that it is essential for the American Job Center staff to be knowledgeable about the organization's obligation to provide meaningful access to information and services for LEP persons, this Language Assistance Plan includes training to ensure staff knows the LAP policy. Language Assistance Plan training will be included as part of the orientation. (Reference: WIOA SEC. 3. Definitions. (21) English Language Learner) Workforce Development Board-83 will ensure that the AJC staff are informed about the importance of providing services to individuals who are English Language Learners and individuals who face substantial cultural barriers, including immigrants, refugees, and new Americans under WIOA.

An attempt will be made to notify LEP persons that language services are available and that they are free of charge. LWDA-83 will work with community-based organizations, including our WIOA Partner agencies, to inform LEP persons of the language assistance available. Notices in local papers in languages other than English may be used if a LEP population is identified in an area. During presentations at schools, civic, and religious organizations, our communities will be notified that the LAP Plan has been implemented.

The Language Assistance Plan will be re-evaluated for potential plan modification based on LEP populations in the service area or population encountered or affected in the area. If the frequency of encounters with LEP language groups or availability of resources increases, the plan may be modified. If the existing assistance does not seem to be meeting the needs of LEP persons or identified sources for assistance are no longer available or viable this plan may be revisited to reflect current resources. (WDB Policy #200-14: Language Assistance Plan)

WDB-83 will scale up the use of Integrated Education and Training models to help adults receive high school equivalency diplomas, work on other basic skills and English language acquisition while earning

industry-recognized credentials that lead to in-demand occupations. WDB-83 utilizes eligible training providers, in collaboration with other WIOA partners and employers, to provide adult education and literacy activities, concurrently and contextually with both workforce preparation activities and workforce training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster. The IET must be a part of a career pathway with a single set of learning objectives for a specific occupation or occupational cluster for the purpose of educational and career advancement which may be any one of the approved WIOA training services defined in section 134(c)(3)(D) of the Act.

The Louisiana Career Pathway model provides a combination of rigorous and high-quality education, training, and other services that align with the skill needs of industries in Region 8. The model prepares adults for success by organizing education, training and other services to support their particular needs including:

- counseling to accomplish goals,
- educational training and workforce preparation that is offered simultaneously, concurrently, and contextually within a specific occupation or occupational cluster;
- allowance for attaining a recognized high school equivalency credential; and
- entrance or advancement within a specific occupation or occupational cluster.

WDB-83 will work with core programs, such as Adult Education, and one-stop partners to facilitate new methods of service delivery, increase secondary credential attainment opportunities, leverage technology to enhance educational opportunities and transition to Integrated Education and Training (IET) opportunities through Louisiana Career Pathways.

Integrated education and training services of sufficient quality and intensity will be designed based on the most rigorous research available. Workforce preparation activities may include activities, programs or services designed to help an individual acquire a combination of basic academic skills, critical thinking skills, digital literacy skills, and self-management skills including competencies in utilizing resources, using information, working with others, understanding systems, and obtaining skills necessary for successful transition into postsecondary education, training, and/or employment. Performance benchmarks and performance standards are established with the expectation that LWDA-83 will maintain or exceed performance standards through effective service delivery and innovation.

Efforts will be increased by WDB-83 to apply knowledge gained from dual credit partnerships within the general education program to increase career and technical education (CTE) dual credit programming and diversify courses that are offered. Louisiana Delta Community College, with five (5) campuses in LWDA-83, partners with local high schools and home-schooled students to offer successful dual credit programs. Both LWDA-83 and LDCC work closely with employers to ensure skills and credentials attained meet the needs of business and industry. LDCC is working diligently with four-year universities to ensure credits are recognized and accepted. Working side-by-side with the local school systems, LWDB-83 and business/industry, LDCC is attempting to expand the dual credit program in all regional demand sectors such as Manufacturing, Health Science, Architecture and Construction, and a fourth cluster - Business Management. These clusters were updated in January 2023 at the Carl Perkins Regional meeting. However, this is challenging because many area secondary schools do not have the necessary facilities or qualified instructors to provide instruction within such programs. Because of the rural demography of our local area, LDCC's virtual services are being expanded to address this challenge.

WDB-83 agrees with the idea that a person's skills and learning should be valued by higher education, regardless of how those skills and learning were acquired. Prior Learning Assessments (PLA) are one way those skills can be evaluated. A person's college-level extra-institutional learning for the purposes of awarding college credit or advanced standards should be recognized. PLA policies should not discriminate against students who may have acquired their skills and knowledge through specific types of life experiences, including family background and upbringing. Native and heritage speakers of non-English languages, for example, should have the same opportunities as non-heritage speakers to demonstrate their learning and earn college credit. This is an issue not only about equity and fairness, but also about impact. WDB-83 will work with LDCC and local universities to help determine the most effective marketing methods and messages to inform their students of these assessments.

LWDA-83's mature workers provide a powerful resource for knowledge sharing and direct transmission of workplace skills, knowledge and institutional cultures to new workers. WDB-83 will work closely with its Business Services Team to develop knowledge-sharing practices that can be adopted and implemented by employers in the local workforce area. The BST will work to recruit new or recent retirees and senior workers from partner agencies to serve as mentors for adult students in training for the same or similar occupations as well as support these firms in developing mentoring efforts for newly hired workers. Although mentoring is not a major aspect of WIOA programming at WDB-83 at this time, effective models can be explored over the term of this plan and incorporated into initiatives that would be best served by the addition, such as mentoring for women who are breaking into traditionally male fields.

Louisiana has a large population of underemployed individuals working less than thirty (30) hours per week. WDB-83 will engage in a planning process that explores identifying unemployed and underemployed individuals that lack a high school diploma, basic skills, and post-secondary credentials. WDB-83 will develop additional strategies on how identified individuals will have access to the services and employment and training activities including providing access through the local American Job Centers, job readiness training provided through career coaching and working with training and service providers around stackable credentials.

Implementing regional process improvement strategies to create shared access to data between partner agencies should reduce duplicate efforts and streamline customer interactions. This will be significant, making co-enrollment in multiple programs commonplace. Co-enrollment provides the customer with the ideal service plan while allowing the workforce system to utilize its resources in an efficient manner.

Basic career services offered in LWDA-83 include the determination of whether an individual is eligible to receive assistance from the adult, dislocated worker, or youth programs, including co-enrollment among these programs. In addition to the Adult and Dislocated Worker formula grants, the Workforce Development Board-83 (WDB) of Region 8 also administers training grants intended to serve Dislocated Workers when applicable. These grants include the National Dislocated Worker Grant (NDWG)-Louisiana Severe Storms and Flooding, and, most recently, the COVID-19 Disaster Recovery NDWG. Utilizing appropriate co-enrollment service strategies, Region 8 is able to expand the capacity to serve Dislocated Workers through increased OJT and supportive services access.

LWDA-83 will encourage co-enrollment of job-seekers in one or more core programs delivering services through the centers. WIOA provides for youth through 24 years of age, which will likely create more co-enrollments across Youth and Adult programs.

LWDA-83 will work with both secondary and post-secondary education partners to facilitate the development of career pathways, especially within targeted industry sectors, as a strategy to help individuals of all skill levels complete the education and training they need to attain industry recognized credentials and occupations. In order to achieve these goals, our relationship with educational providers in the region/local area is paramount.

AJCs in LWDA-83 offer training services such as ITAs and work-based learning that lead to industry-recognized credentials in in-demand career fields as shown through LWC's LMI. Having labor market information improves workers' ability to make informed decisions about training and employment.

LWDB-83 has been commissioned by WIOA to establish procedures to identify priority occupational skills training in programs that lead to recognized post-secondary credentials that are aligned with in-demand industry sectors or occupations identified by the State. Post-secondary training that takes less than two years has been shown to have valuable returns. Post-secondary training programs that result in credentials related to technology, state licensure, and in-demand occupations are associated with particularly positive outcomes. WDB-83 will abide by these procedures in order to train a workforce highly skilled in the occupations deemed to be in-demand.

Another approach is to align sector strategies with secondary career technical education initiatives to advance career pathways for high school graduates. Louisiana Department of Education (LDE) has adopted a framework (JumpStart) to enhance its career technical education programs to prepare high school graduates for post-secondary credentialing and, ultimately, for high-skill, high-demand jobs in the state. The focus of this framework is to line up workforce needs with secondary and post-secondary student preparation. As a result, a seamless system of career education and labor market opportunities for high school students can be developed in line with sector strategy goals of the area.

#### **D. WDB-83 COORDINATION STRATEGIES TO ENHANCE SERVICES AND AVOID DUPLICATION OF ACTIVITIES**

Drawing on the improved alignment and coordination with partner programs during the past few years, WDB-83 has sought to improve the quality and accessibility of services that job seekers and employers receive at their local American Jobs Center, especially the comprehensive AJC located in Morehouse Parish. WIOA directed federal agencies to take certain actions to better align and integrate service delivery across multiple programs. WDB-83 will continue to improve the fragmentation, overlap, and potential for duplication among the core and mandated programs and identify the areas of inefficiencies. Determining whether fragmentation and overlap exist among programs is a key step in WDB-83 identifying opportunities to improve efficiency and effectiveness of programs.

A key mechanism utilized by WDB-83 to ascertain that clear and effective service delivery occurs is the development and implementation of MOUs with the core and required partners. This process reduces duplication of services for employment and training activities. The MOU:

1. describes the manner in which the WIOA program partners are legally authorized to participate in the delivery of services, under the provision WIOA, through LWDB-83, the American Job Centers and WIOA Core Program partners;
2. establishes a definition and set of shared infrastructure costs to support the partnerships and service delivery between the core program partners, AJCs, and WDB-83, in our local area as authorized by WIOA; and
3. guides the establishment on how services can be connected, integrated or enhanced by sharing staffing, resources or jointly designed services in ways that improve outcomes for “shared” customers – job seekers and businesses.

It is important to use the performance results of core and mandated programs to assess options to reduce or better manage negative effects of fragmentation, overlap, and duplication, such as inefficient use of program funds. Evaluation and other periodic reviews during the bi-monthly LWDA-83 Partner Meetings could help identify ways to address gaps in information on how partner programs are serving the employment and training needs of specific populations, such as youth and dislocated workers, or the extent to which they have implemented practices to manage unwanted effects of fragmentation and overlap and improve coordination and efficiency. However, there are still numerous efforts state level administrators could undertake to improve coordination among the programs, including exchanging more information on strategies and methods used by each program to address obstacles that impede coordination. WDB-83 is learning whether its actions to improve partner program coordination and integration is working, but must continue undertaking activities that will lead to desired results – alignment and coordination of partner agency programs in LWDA-83.

WIOA provides significant flexibility to local areas when providing services with adult and dislocated worker funds. In addition to the required career and training services, LWDA-83 may use these funds to provide additional job seeker services, business services, as well as to facilitate enhanced coordination between other partner programs and entities. These funds may be to develop new types of technical assistance, develop new intake procedures, test new procurement methods which may lead to better outcomes for job seekers, and ensure provision of robust services for businesses throughout the workforce system. Permissible activities provided by WDB-83 include:

- Customer support to enable individuals with barriers to employment (including individuals with disabilities and veterans) to navigate among multiple services and activities (e.g., WDB-83 has a dedicated staff member specializing in disability services);
- Training programs for displaced homemakers and for individuals training for nontraditional occupations (see WIOA sec. 3(37));
- Work support activities for low-wage workers, in coordination with American Job Center partners, which will provide opportunities for these workers to retain or enhance employment. Work support activities are a strategy that can be used to ensure quality services to individuals who are underemployed. This may include any activities available under the WIOA Adult and Dislocated Worker programs in coordination with the appropriate activities and resources available through partner programs. For example, an apprentice who has not yet reached the full wage-rate could be provided these services to help him/her to continue to advance in the RA;
- Employment and training activities in coordination with activities to facilitate remote access to services provided through the American Job Center network, including facilitating access through the use of technology; and

- Strengthening linkages between the American Job Center network and the unemployment insurance programs.

LWDB-83's Morehouse Parish AJC designated as a Comprehensive One-Stop Center offers an all-embracing array of services for job seekers as required by WIOA. For employers, all required WIOA services are available in the comprehensive centers.

One change perceived to be helpful in program eligibility for Adult and Dislocated Worker participants, is the ability to transfer funds between Adult and Dislocated Worker programs. The WDB may transfer, if approved by the Governor, up to 100 percent of funds between Adult and Dislocated Worker activities.

WIOA continues to focus on job search and placement assistance, as well as career counselling. What is new to WIOA is the emphasis on the provision of information on in-demand industry sectors and occupations as well as provision of information on non-traditional employment.

WIOA has no sequence of service. Customers may access training immediately. LWDA-83 will meet the job-seeker where they are and move them through a series of planned courses of study while working with them to reach self-sufficiency. WIOA career services may be self-service, informational, group, staff-assisted, and/or one-on-one. Career services are not required for initiation of training services. To be considered appropriate for training, eligibility for WIOA training services requires an interview, evaluation, or assessment, and career planning, before being determined by AJC staff or a partner agency as unlikely or unable to obtain or retain employment. The training must lead to economic self-sufficiency or wages comparable to or higher than wages from previous employment.

- Outreach, intake and orientation to information and other services available through the service delivery system;
- LWDA-83 provides individuals with the opportunity to initiate an application for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) assistance, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) benefits, via the DCFS Community Partner initiative. These services have been implemented through the provision of paper application forms and links to the application web site;
- Initial assessment of skill levels, including literacy, numeracy, and English language proficiency, as well as aptitudes, abilities (including skills gaps), and supportive service needs;
- Labor exchange services, including—job search and placement assistance and career counseling
- Referrals to, and coordination of activities with, other programs and services
- Workforce and labor market employment information, including accurate information relating to local, regional, and national labor market areas, including-job vacancy listings in labor market areas; information on job skills necessary to obtain the vacant jobs listed; information relating to local occupations in-demand; and the earnings, skill requirements, and opportunities for advancement for occupations in demand;
- Provision of performance information and program cost information on eligible providers of training services by program and type of providers and workforce services by program and type of providers;
- Provision of information, in usable and understandable formats and languages, about how the local area is performing on local performance accountability measures;

- Provision of information relating to the availability of supportive services or assistance, and appropriate referrals to those services and assistance;
- Assistance in establishing eligibility for financial aid assistance for training and education programs; and
- Provision of information and assistance regarding filing claims under UI programs.

LWDA-83 uses a comprehensive assessment created locally to be accessed via Survey Monkey to assess customers on their first visit. We also use CASAS (Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System) for grade-level assessing. WDB-83 utilizes previous assessments, when possible, to reduce duplicate assessments and develop enhanced alignment across partner programs.

WDB-83 has the WorkKeys assessment installed in all centers, but have not used them to their fullest potential. With the creation of the North Louisiana Work Ready Community, we look for that to change. Five (5) parishes in LWDA-83 are participating in the North Louisiana Work Ready Community effort. Union, Richland and Jackson Parishes have met the goals necessary to be designated Certified Work Ready Communities. Morehouse Parish has met the goals to be a Certified Work Ready Community and is awaiting acknowledgement by the sponsors of the community to move to the next step of setting new goals to maintain this status. Richland Parish has not yet met the established goals to become a Certified Work Ready Community, but we see this happening in the very near future.

WIOA staff when using WIOA Adult funds to provide individualized career services, training services, or both give priority to recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals, and individuals who are basic skills deficient. Under WIOA, priority is implemented regardless of the amount of funds available to provide services in the area.

The priority established in the previous paragraph does not necessarily mean that these services may only be provided to recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals, and individuals who are basic skills deficient. However, WDB-83 has not identified any additional priority populations. For the purpose of determining eligibility of adult under WIOA, individualized career or training services will constitute a minimum of 51% of adults served meeting the priority target groups. This minimum threshold will ensure that LWDA-83 AJCs are targeting adults in most need of services beyond basic career services while developing talent pools that meet the short-term as well as long-term workforce needs of local businesses.

The local WDB has developed a policy on supportive services (WDB-83 Policy 200-28-10: Standard Operating Procedures for Provision of Supportive Services or Assistance [revised 01/17/2023]) that ensures resource and service coordination in the local area. WDB-83 Policy 200-23-03: Standard Operating Procedures for Provision of Referrals to/from Partners addresses procedures for referral to such services. These policies establish limits on the provision of supportive services, including a maximum amount of funding to be available to a participant. The supportive service policy ensures that supportive services are WIOA-funded only when these services are not available through other agencies and that the services are necessary for the individual to participate in Title I activities.

LWDA-83's supportive services include:

- Assistance with transportation;

- Assistance with child care and dependent care;
- Emergency expenses such as car registration, first month's insurance fees, or vehicle repairs;
- Temporary assistance with housing;
- Needs-related payments;
- Utilities assistance;
- Referrals to health care;
- Assistance with uniforms or other appropriate work attire and work-related tools, including such items as eye glasses and protective eye gear;
- Payments and fees for employment and training-related applications, tests, and certifications;
- Provision of prepaid data/minute card(s) to ensure the participant has connectivity to the job ready platform; and
- Fees associated with registering for classroom training.

Needs-related payments are designed to provide a participant with financial assistance for the purpose of enabling them to participate in training services. Needs-related payments can help individuals meet their non-training expenses and help them to complete training successfully. The maximum level of needs-related payments established by the WDB-83 is \$20.00 per day, not to exceed \$500.00 in one month.

While basic career services are available to all participants, individualized career services are available to participants after staff have determined that such services are required to retain or obtain employment. Generally, these services involve significant staff time and customization to each individual's needs. Individualized career services offered locally include services such as: specialized assessments, developing an individual employment plan, counseling, and work experiences (including transitional jobs), to name a few.

Follow-up services are provided, as appropriate, for Adult and Dislocated Worker program participants who are placed in unsubsidized employment, for up to 12 months after the first day of employment. WDB-83 has established a policy (WDB-83 Policy 300-02-01: Guidance on Follow-up Services) that defines what are considered to be appropriate follow-up services for the Adult and Dislocated Worker programs.

Despite numerous studies indicating a robust return on investment, reported data indicate low utilization of Registered Apprenticeship (RA) as a workforce development strategy; this stands true for WDB-83. Based on the new statutory provisions supporting Registered Apprenticeship, WDB-83 has set goals to increase training provided by Registered Apprenticeships. WDB-83 is working to create new RA opportunities as well as increase participation in established apprenticeship programs.

WDB-83 has partnered with the RA system in Region 8 and uses RA opportunities as a career pathway for job seekers and as a job-driven strategy for employers. RA programs are automatically eligible for inclusion on the Eligible Training Programs List (ETPL), if they choose to be, allowing ITAs to support participants in RA programs. WDB-83 is committed to fully integrating RA programs as an employment and training solution for its local job seekers and employers.



OJT contracts are entered into with RA program sponsors/participating employers in registered apprenticeship programs for the OJT portion of the program. With the length of the registered apprenticeship traditionally depleting the \$7,000 cap on OJT (WDB Policy 400-04-07 [revised 01/03/2023]), these funds only cover some of the duration of the registered apprenticeship.

Workforce Development Board SDA-83, Inc. has been awarded a States' Economic Development Assistance Program (SEDAP) grant funded by the Delta Regional Authority to establish the Northeast Louisiana Electrical Apprenticeship Rural Network (NELA E.A.R.N.). The project allows residents of rural communities another option for career training. Individuals in rural northeast Louisiana are faced with limited opportunities and often face the choice of leaving home for better education, training and employment, or settling for a low-wage, low-skill job in the community. The NELA E.A.R.N. Project will train and place adults from LWDA-83 through an apprenticeship program and create a new rural electrical workforce pipeline and a rural apprenticeship recruitment and outreach network. This project also offers case management and career counseling. The project will address unmet training and hiring needs while providing twenty (20) individuals with self-sustaining careers over the 24-month grant period.

It is not only educational barriers that can hinder success. There are other obstacles; these may include child care, transportation issues, and/or relationship problems. Career Service Team (CST) members will help participants identify and find solutions for pitfalls or roadblocks that might hinder them from reaching their goals.

The initial assessment of customers will calculate the participant's skill levels (including literacy, numeracy, and English language proficiency), aptitudes, abilities (including skills gaps), and supportive service needs. LWDA-83 expects WIOA initial assessment will go far beyond the "How may I help you?" of WIA. Using WorkKeys system of assessments, LWDA-83 will determine participant's specific skill levels to know which skills are particular strengths and where there are skill gaps. These assessments are assumed to be conducted in a one-on-one, staff-assisted setting.

Part of being able to accelerate learning and progress of the participants will be the ability to provide individual and flexible program elements. LWDA-83 will develop a system of case management support by taking advantage of the system partners.

Participants of LWDA-83 will meet with the Career Services Team member on a regularly scheduled basis to review their progress and plan for their future. Every decision made about the participant's career path will be made by the Career Services Team member and the participant.

A process presently exists for staff to assess customers' educational barriers and refer them to the appropriate services that address their specific educational needs. This is true of the service strategy for Youth participants who have been determined to be basic skills deficient. The process in place provides them with access to educational activities, through LDCC's Center of Adult Development program. Now that LWDA-83 has wholly transitioned into WIOA and identified the partners participating in the new workforce development system, Youth are able to access programs, activities, and supportive services to assist them in obtaining high school and postsecondary credentials and succeeding in careers.

WDB-83 will aid community partners in identifying the five (5) new program elements and ensure eligible Youth have access to them: financial literacy, entrepreneurial skills training, services that provide labor market and employment information about in-demand industry sectors or occupations available in the region (such as career awareness, career counseling, and career exploration services), education offered concurrently with workforce preparation activities and training for specific occupations or occupational clusters and activities that help youth prepare for and transition to post-secondary education and training.

Participants hold each other accountable and encourage one another to stay with the plan developed for them, by them, in their Individual Service Strategy (ISS).

LWDA-83 will create a pipeline of youth services providers who work with young people, employers, and the community colleges, to ensure young adults are career ready and can have long-term success in market-driving sectors. WDB-83 has taken a sector-specific approach to ensure the alignment of skilled workers with the needs of employers. It will be the needs of business and workers that will drive workforce solutions. WDB-83 works to make sure career pathways are leading to actual vacant jobs in Region 8, including at this time, the targeted industries of Health Care and Social Assistance, Manufacturing, Construction and Business Management. WDB-83 works to ensure alignment between training, the needs of the employers, and the community college system. With the right messaging and tools, employers can be great partners of WDB-83 in providing the kinds of training opportunities that young adults need to make the transition to being highly motivated, highly productive employees in the workforce of Region 8.

WDB-83 will continue to formulate partnerships to advance LWDA-83's Youth services. One of the responsibilities of the system's key partners and stakeholders is to take a concentrated look at the eligible youth population in LWDA-83 and identify the principal service needs of out-of-school youth.

LWDB-83 has arranged for each partner providing a program of youth workforce activities, to ensure that any eligible applicants who do not meet the enrollment requirements of their particular program or who cannot be served will be referred for further assessment, as necessary, and referred to the appropriate programs. WDB-83 ensures that those eligible youth that are not enrolled in the program are appropriately referred to alternative programs, if available.

LWDA-83 and these key partners and stakeholders will develop an on-going, collaborative approach for recruiting, referring, and providing holistic Youth services. LWDA-83 has conducted an assessment of available organizations and programs within the area that provide services to eligible populations to determine areas of strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities that are being addressed in the WIOA Youth services program design and ensuring maximum leveraging and alignment. Program activities assessed were those that may be provided with a partner program for Youth, such as tutoring, study skills training, and instruction leading to secondary school completion, including dropout prevention strategies; alternative secondary school offerings or dropout recovery services; paid and unpaid work experiences with an academic and occupational education component; occupational skill training, with a focus on recognized postsecondary credentials and in-demand occupations; leadership development activities (e.g., community service, peer-centered activities); supportive services; adult mentoring;

follow-up services for at least twelve months after program completion; comprehensive guidance and counseling, including drug and alcohol abuse counseling; integrated education and training for a specific occupation or cluster; financial literacy education; entrepreneurial skills training; services that provide labor market information about in-demand industry sectors and occupations.

Follow-up services are critical services provided following a Youth's exit from the program to help ensure the Youth is successful in employment and/or postsecondary education and training. Follow-up services include monthly contact with the Youth's employer to offer assistance in addressing work-related problems that arise. Follow-up services begin immediately following the last expected date of service in the Youth program. Follow-up services for LWDA-83 Youth may include: (1) supportive services; (2) adult mentoring; (3) financial literacy education; (4) services that provide labor market and employment information; and (5) activities that help the Youth prepare for and transition to postsecondary education and training. All youth participants are offered an opportunity to receive follow-up services. Furthermore, follow-up services are provided to all participants for a minimum of twelve (12) months unless the participant declines to receive the services or the participant cannot be located or contacted. Some youth may not be responsive to attempted contacts for follow-up, and other youth may be difficult to locate making it impossible to provide follow-up services for such individuals. LWDB-83 has policies in place to establish how to document and record when a participant cannot be located or contacted (WDB-83 Policy 300-02: Guidance on Follow-up Services). A request to opt out or discontinue follow-up services made by the Youth is documented in the case file.

WIOA also authorizes the following changes that have been addressed in policy changes:

- Out-of-school youth must be aged 16 – 24, not attending any school, and meet one or more additional conditions, which could include:
  - school dropout; within age of compulsory attendance but has not attended for at least the most recent complete school year calendar quarter; hold a secondary school diploma or recognized equivalent and is low-income and is basic skills deficient or an English language learner; subject to the juvenile or adult justice system; homeless, runaway, in foster care or aged out of the foster care system, eligible for assistance under Section 477, Social Security Act, or in out-of-home placement; pregnant or parenting; an individual with a disability; low income person who requires additional assistance to enter or complete an educational program or to secure and hold employment
- In-school youth must be aged 14 - 21, attending school, low income, and meet one or more additional conditions, which could include:
  - basic skills deficient; English language learner; an offender; homeless, runaway, in foster care or aged out of the foster care system; pregnant or parenting; an individual with a disability; person who requires additional assistance to enter or complete an educational program or to secure and hold employment.

In WDB-83 Policy 100-14-02 (revised 07/01/2020), "Needs additional assistance" is defined as:

1. Has a family history of chronic unemployment (during the two years prior to application, immediate family members living in the household were unemployed longer than employed);
2. Has been referred to or is being treated by an agency for depression or a substance abuse-related problem;

3. Is a youth 16 years of age or older who has not held a job for longer than three months, has sporadic employment (has held three or more jobs within the last 12 months and is no longer employed), or is currently unemployed and was fired from a job within six months of WIOA application;
4. Child of currently incarcerated parent(s);
5. Resides in a non-traditional household setting (single parent, lives with unofficial guardian, grandparent(s), domestic partner);
6. Lives with only one or neither of his/her natural parents; or
7. Lives in public housing.

Not all the benefits of participating in a WIOA activity are quantifiable; many are intangible, such as improved participant self-esteem and morale. Moreover, trying to set a monetary value on the value of training is complex. For LWDA-83, it will be simpler to do cost-to-benefit ratio calculations when the program is serving many participants, when the program represents a sizable investment of financial resources, and when the "before" and "after" performance factors are tangible, can be quantified in some manner (i.e., with measurable indicators), and can be assigned monetary values. There are many different ways to calculate return on investment. Region 8 awaits guidance from the State on which method to use.

Incentive payments to Youth participants are used for recognition and achievement directly tied to training activities and work experiences. WDB-83 has policies and procedures in place governing the award of incentives and ensure that the incentive payments are tied to the goals of the program.

Financial literacy services are novel to WIOA services. Financial literacy services include the ability of participants to create household budgets, initiate savings plans, and make informed financial decisions about education, retirement, home ownership, wealth building, or other savings goals. Financial literacy also comprises the ability to manage spending, credit, and debt, including credit card debt, effectively. Awareness of the availability and significance of credit reports and credit scores in obtaining credit, including determining their accuracy (and how to correct inaccuracies in the reports and scores), and their effect on credit terms are also contained in financial literacy services. LWDA-83 participants will learn the ability to understand, evaluate, and compare financial products, services, and opportunities.

Region 8 establishes relationships with employers to provide Youth with work experience activities. LWDA-83 will improve its work experience activities to include a component of academic and occupational education, which may include summer employment, internships that are linked to careers, service learning, and OJT.

WDB-83 website will be used to engage employers in partnering to create programs for out-of-school youth, a partner directory will be available as a platform to focus on involved employers' commitment to young people and their employment potentials. There would be a prominent place on the website to elevate commitments that employers are making to youth in the workforce. Most of the commitments would be from companies whose names are recognizable, but since we represent rural northeast Louisiana, we would like to have commitments by smaller employers as well. In our area it's critical to get young people involved with these small and medium-sized employers. Internships and mentoring are two ways for employers to help young adults begin to develop their skills, networks, and experiences they need in order to be prepared for work.

It is essential that Youth participants are experiencing the standards and expectations within the program that they will need to comply with outside of the program. LWDA-83 brings into its Youth programs the ethics one should perform in an apprenticeship program, in college, and/or in employment. LWDA-83's Youth programs will be rigorous and challenge participants to meet very high expectations, but this will be done with support from all partners whose goal is to see the participant successful.

Adult literacy services in Region 8 are delivered through Louisiana Delta Community College's Center for Adult Development. CAD funds and administers services intended to improve the basic academic skills and English language proficiency of adults.

CAD's instructional services are intended to improve the reading, writing, listening, and math skills of individuals who are not enrolled in secondary or postsecondary education, as well as the English language proficiency of adult speakers of other languages. For the most part, adult literacy programs are aimed at bringing the learner's academic and English language skills to the level represented by completion of a secondary school education program.

In some cases, individuals have high school completion credentials but still lack the reading and math skills necessary to be successful in post-secondary education or career training programs. To address this problem, CAD offers developmental education courses that provide remedial instruction to raise the literacy skills of enrolled students to at least a beginning post-secondary level. The term developmental education is also used to describe programs of academic instruction made available for incumbent workers who may have a high school credential but need to upgrade basic literacy skills in order to improve their job performance and/or advance their careers.

The purpose of the workforce development system is to improve the quality of jobs and workers and support economic development by ensuring the availability of a skilled, competitive workforce. While adult literacy activities are not the system's main focus, they are a key priority according to WDB-83's strategies to creating a sustainable workforce system.

The relationship established with LDCC's Center for Adult Development (CAD) has included a formalized MOU and infrastructure agreement to ensure that duplication of services is eliminated and the value of services between the two partners is quantified. In addition, CAD is represented on the LWDB.

The Title II Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) program competition is run by Louisiana Department of Education, and all funding decisions are made by LDE. The local board will review applications submitted to LDE for WIOA Title II funds for alignment with the goals and strategies of this local area plan, and then provide recommendations to LDE on ways to improve alignment, if applicable. The Executive Director and WIOA Program Director of WDB-83 will review the WIOA Title II applications for alignment with the local area plan. The application will be presented with any recommendations to the Board. The application with the consented recommendations and Board signatures will then be resubmitted to LDE for improvement of alignment.

Wagner-Peyser provides employment services and career counseling to job seekers, as well as labor exchange services to job seekers and employers. LWDA-83, as does the entire State, already meets a major requirement of WIOA to co-locate Wagner-Peyser employment services and staff in the AJCs. Unemployment Insurance claimants receive the same services as all other job seekers, including job training, labor exchange, career counseling, and labor market information. The UI claimant/job seeker also receives eligibility assessments and referrals to an array of education resources and training providers.

The Employment Service focuses on providing a variety of employment related labor exchange services including, but not limited to, job search assistance, job referral, and placement assistance for job seekers, re-employment services to unemployment insurance claimants, and recruitment services to employers with job openings. Services are delivered in one of three modes including self-service, facilitated self-help services and staff assisted service delivery approaches. Depending on the needs of the labor market, other services may be available such as: job seeker assessment of skill levels, abilities and aptitudes; career guidance, when appropriate; job search workshops; and referral to training.

In LWDA-83, as in the State, the agricultural industry is characterized by a large workforce with numerous job openings, chronic unemployment and underemployment due to the cyclical nature of the work, and below average pay. Migrants and seasonal farmworkers, whose livelihood is primarily derived from agricultural employment, not only experience the chronic unemployment or underemployment inherent in the industry, but also face additional, significant barriers to employment. These include low levels of education, limited English proficiency, inferior housing, and few assets to sustain them through a period of retraining. In addition, farmworkers also experience geographical isolation and many lack transportation. Public transportation is rarely available where they live.

Migrant seasonal farmworkers are given information on services they may be eligible to receive. They are given partner contact information. Partners may schedule an appointment to come into the AJC to meet with migrant seasonal farmworkers.

The services offered to the employers in LWDA-83, in addition to the referral of job seekers to available job openings, include assistance in development of job order requirements, matching job seeker experience with job requirements, skills, and other attributes, assisting employers with special recruitment needs, arranging for job fairs, assisting employers to analyze hard-to-fill job orders, assisting with job restructuring, and helping employers deal with layoffs. Offering WOTC and other tax credit information to employers, assisting with labor market information for workforce wages, and prescreening applicants to ensure they meet employer qualifications, are all additional services available through Wagner-Peyser funding.

Job seekers who are veterans receive priority referral to jobs and training as well as special employment services and assistance. In addition, the system provides specialized attention and service to individuals with disabilities, ex-offenders, youth, minorities, and older workers.

Unemployed workers are provided information on how to file for unemployment compensation in Louisiana. Also, a phone number to call for assistance with UI claims is toll free. Computers are available in the resource area of the AJCs in LWDA-83 for the applicants' convenience. UI claimants are

asked to register in the HiRE system and can create a resume. They have the ability to conduct work searches and generate job alerts.

WDB-83 supports extensive collaboration across multiple workforce and disability service systems including Louisiana Rehabilitation Services, business leadership networks, and other community and nonprofit organizations. WDB-83 supports the workforce development system's participation in the Social Security Administration's (SSA) Ticket to Work (TTW) Program as WDB-83 is an employment network. Many Supplemental Security Income and Social Security Disability Insurance beneficiaries use the AJC system to seek employment opportunities. As an employment network, WDB-83 has expanded the capacity of the AJCs to better serve Social Security beneficiaries with disabilities.

In order to align the core programs and create additional flexibility, LWDB-83 will use funds allocated for adult and dislocated worker activities to improve coordination between employment and training programs for individuals with disabilities. This will ensure a highly coordinated service delivery in coordination with Title IV activities to ensure that individuals with disabilities receive the services they need for their career needs.

WDB-83 is committed to promoting the employment opportunities of people with disabilities. Through WIOA programs, AJC staff provide assistance so job seekers with disabilities can work. Having a Ticket-to-Work Employer Network in Region 8 enables the AJC system to provide benefits planning and job search to Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) beneficiaries. Staff of LWDA-83 works closely with program partners, with the major of these being Louisiana Rehabilitation Services, made up of government agencies, community organizations, and private sector employers, to reach our area's job seekers with disabilities.

While the workforce system's core function remains focused on employment, WIOA legislative intent was to significantly impact policies and ultimately provide more access to post-secondary credentials than occurs when workforce and post-secondary systems work independently.

LWDA-83 has an extensive history of effective alignment between workforce programs and public secondary and post-secondary institutions and agencies, particularly the community college-Louisiana Delta Community College (LDCC). Recently, a concentrated effort has begun to strengthen our partnership with the University of Louisiana at Monroe, a four-year university. LWDA-83 continues to work collaboratively with the local secondary and post-secondary education programs in the community to fully implement the strategic intent of WIOA.

LWDA-83 has placed special emphasis on the development, implementation, and expansion of three initiatives. The first initiative for LWDA-83 is the implementation of its initial sector partnership (Health Care) that began in April 2016. WDB-83 embraces strategies for meeting the needs of local employers, workers, and job seekers through sector partnerships related to in-demand industry sectors and occupations.

The second initiative for LWDA-83 is the launch of its second regional sector partnership (Manufacturing - NELA MAC) that began in October 2022. WDB-83 participates in a supporting role with WDB-81 as the support lead.

A third initiative is the Jump Start initiative with secondary education. Jump Start is Louisiana's innovative career and technical education (CTE) program. Jump Start prepares students to lead productive adult lives, capable of continuing their education after high school while earning certifications in high-wage career sectors. Students are required to attain industry-promulgated, industry-valued credentials in order to graduate with a Career Diploma. (Jump Start is an elective path for students pursuing a university-preparatory diploma.)

Regional teams – partnerships among K-12 and post-secondary educators, industry leaders and experts in workforce development and economic development – lead the local implementation of Jump Start 2.0, creating graduation pathways and collaborating to provide workplace experiences for students and teachers. WDB-83 sits on both the regional Jump Start and Super Regional Jump Start teams.

Examples of coordinated efforts include but are not limited to;

- LWDA-83 has established a referral process with secondary and post-secondary educational providers that will allow us to leverage our WIOA funds for students that are just entering training or those who are already enrolled. Through our coordination of services, we can evaluate and assess the customers' needs for financial assistance through an ITA and often times provide wrap-around supportive services and employment assistance to candidates who have already completed their training experience. WDB-83 Policy 200-23-03: Standard Operating Procedures for Provision of Referrals to/from Partners (revised July 20, 2021), addresses procedures for referral to such services. This policy ensures that services are WIOA-funded only when these services are not available through other agencies and that there is no supplantation of services among partner agencies.
- LWDA-83 program staff reviews customers' financial analysis and financial aid, and will supplement Pell grants with WIOA funds for training that leads to certification or credentialing.
- LWDA-83 staff routinely meets with educational partners to discuss WIOA programmatic eligibility/suitability requirements, application processes, and availability of funds.
- LWDA-83 program staff coordinates onsite pre-screening and recruitment events to speak directly to new or active students to discuss available services and promote the benefits of participating in WIOA.
- LWDA-83 program staff discusses career pathway options with customers and encourages utilization of online assessments to help determine this process. In addition, onsite assessment, eligibility determination, case management, ITAs, and supportive services are provided to the customers throughout the duration of training.

Louisiana Delta Community College agrees to contribute to the delivery of the following shared services:

- Program Alignment: To be assured of an adequate supply of skilled workers, the college will strive for alignment between training programs and the needs of employers.
- Outreach/Informational Services: Literature concerning occupational and academic education programs will be provided for dissemination at the local workforce centers. College staff will coordinate campus visits by WDB-83 staff to facilitate counseling and processing of potential customers.
- Professional Development and Cross Training: Cross training of staff will occur between LDCC and WDB-83 during periodic professional development activities. Programs and news from each partner will be highlighted while staff are advised of related processes and procedures.



- Process for Referral and Communication: College staff will utilize technology to engage in the referral process developed by WDB-83 to assist with identifying, connecting, and tracking participants. A partner directory of key staff will make contact information readily available.

WIOA offers new opportunities for the workforce system and TANF programs to work together. Serving TANF recipients is already being done in the centers of LWDA-83 as they are coming in to register for work as a requirement of the Department of Children and Family Services. A key partner and services will be available at the AJCs through the addition of the TANF program as a mandatory partner.

WDB-83 is building a strong working relationship between the agency that oversees the WIOA titles (LWC) and the Department of Human Services (including local Workforce Development Boards). As we seek to strengthen and enhance our practices through the implementation of this revised plan, success will require a commitment to innovation and collaboration, and a cohesive approach among partners. Recognizing that no single entity can exclusively provide *all* services to a customer, this more inclusive approach will diversify services and invest in new, integrated practices that surpass the traditional expectations of a workforce system.

WDB-83 intends to develop work that would also be beneficial to agency goals; this would be much more successful in getting participants to work. DCFS may also begin to move towards creating an ABAWD program. Workforce Development Boards are imperative for this type of program to be successful. DCFS would like to develop a mechanism to develop the referrals to work activities that will lead to high-wage, high-demand jobs.

DHS is actively seeking ways to expand the breadth and depth of SNAP E&T statewide. Louisiana will be engaging in a rapid cycle evaluation project focused on boosting rural participation. Additional opportunities will be identified to expand access to post-secondary credentialing for SNAP recipients through recruitment and SNAP E&T reimbursements.

WDB-83 intends to build on progress from the previous WIOA Plan, which laid the groundwork for establishing effective workforce system partnerships and conceptual framework for sharing data, by actualizing data sharing agreements and building systems that enhance the workforce system's capacity to track and measure progress. To successfully increase the capacity of HiRE users, WDB-83 will focus on reemployment of UI claimants, TANF, SNAP, LRS, Adult Education, and CSBG customers; although, they are not currently HiRE users. In an ideal world, the WIOA partners would like to replace their existing multiple systems with a new system that would include imaging and workflow management, and a robust business rules engine to aid in eligibility determination and creating and managing benefit plans, as well as report performance accountability measures.

A major obstruction to making the partnership a success, is the ability to track mutual case management activity, the creation of an activity plan, documentation of participation hours, reports of possible good cause and outcomes and case notes. Each provider has their own software/systems for documenting program participation and progress, The duplication of efforts by double entering routine case notes by each agency may not be able to be avoided, but at least major milestones and irregular activity should be shared. There should also be a method to monitor/review case management activity and case notes during site visits and other program reviews.

Yet another partner WDB-83 is building a relationship with to offer more services to our customers is NextOp. NextOp is a nonprofit organization that recruits, develops and places high-performing middle enlistees (E-3 to E-7) leaders into industry careers. NextOp's Employment Coordinators will partner with AJC staff through every step of the hiring process, translating military skills to resumes, securing and prepping candidates for quality job interviews, and coaching the veteran through the hiring process, until a job is found, received, and accepted by our shared customers.

Louisiana has fourteen contracted partners which provide expanded E&T services to SNAP recipients. Those services are provided in Region 8 by New Opportunities Vision Achievement which offers services for residents in Ouachita, Richland, Morehouse, Madison, East Carroll, and West Carroll parishes. While Louisiana Delta Community College offers services for residents in Union, Jackson, Caldwell, Ouachita, Morehouse, West Carroll, Richland, Franklin, Tensas, Madison, and East Carroll parishes. The following components will be offered through the E&T Program: job search training, supervised job search, WIOA participation, work experience, job retention, and education - vocational training.

The State Grants (JVSG) program, carried out under Chapter 41 of Title 38 of the U.S. Code provides services to veterans and eligible persons according to need, and significant barriers to employment. LWC Jobs for Veterans State Grant-funded activities are co-located within Ouachita Parish American Job Center and serve the entire Region 8 area. JVSG staff referred to as Local Veteran Employment Representative (LVER) and Disabled Veteran Outreach Program (DVOP) Specialist are essential parts of and fully integrated into the workforce development network of Region 8.

Community Service Block Grants (CSBG) have been in existence since 1965, always with the same mission: to improve the causes and conditions of poverty. Initiatives have included, but are not limited to: neighborhood linkages, leverage of community resources, conduction of Volunteer Income Tax Assistance sites, building housing capacity, provision of family self-sufficiency and case management, early childhood intervention and Head Start; facilitation of Results-Oriented Management and Accountability. CAAs collaborate and coordinate employment and training activities, as well as supportive services, with WDB-83. This program funds programs that provide opportunities for participants to attain basic employability skills, occupation-specific skills, and work experience necessary to meet employer talent needs. CAAs are well-positioned to serve as lead partners in the development of "supportive service pathways" or service flow charts for vulnerable populations (low-skilled, low income, individuals with disabilities, re-entering citizens) focusing on reduction of the barriers to employment. However, no CSBG agency in our service delivery area offer employment and training grant activities which require them to share in the IFA process.

To ensure timeliness, the State's Rapid Response team, begins intervention efforts within forty-eight (48) hours of a layoff notification. LWC's Rapid Response unit provides the initial contact with employers when a lay-off of employees is to occur. This Rapid Response unit organizes an orientation session to present information about partner programs. WIOA staff initiate enrollment of eligible laid-off employees for case management at the local AJC. Enrollment involves the participant registering in HiRE and staff entering the WIOA application into the system.

The Combined Plan partner programs the State is electing to include in the plan did not include Career and Technical Education programs authorized under the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education

Act of 2006, as amended by the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (20 U.S.C. 2301 et seq.).

LWDA-83 has developed and maintains operational policies and procedures to direct issuance and coordination of transportation and other supportive services. A participant budget (Obligated Cost Agreement) is created and maintained as per allowable levels of services and availability of funds. Part of the developed procedure is monthly or quarterly review of program issuances, participant budgets, and program resources to manage overall delivery of services and maintain coordination.

Workforce Development Board-83, has adopted a Supportive Services policy (200-28-10: Standard Operating Procedures for Provision of Supportive Services or Assistance [revised 01/17/2023]) that addresses transportation needs for WIOA enrolled participants. A participant may be reimbursed, based on the individual need of the participant, travel expenses incurred during their daily commute to a classroom training site at a rate based on the actual distance travelled for educational purposes. The current mileage rate paid by the State of Louisiana will be paid by WDB-83 to a participant who incurred such travel during their daily commute to and from a classroom training site. [When the training site is temporarily outside of the classroom (e.g., clinical site, another campus) the reimbursement remains the same as the distance to the original classroom training site.] Each case will have an upper limit of \$7,200 per program year.

In addition, the LWDA-83 staff attends quarterly Northeast Louisiana Human Services Coordination meetings for Federal Transit Administration or area transportation planning.

A copy of the WDB-83 supportive services policy is attached (Attachment #1). The local Board uses the bi-monthly partners' meeting to coordinate the provision of transportation and other appropriate supportive services in the LWDA-83.

#### **E. ADULT AND DISLOCATED WORKER EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING ACTIVITIES**

The WIOA Adult program for LWDA-83 is designed to help adults receive training in demand occupations and find employment with speed and flexibility.

Career services are offered to all adults in LWDA-83 at the ten (10) AJCs. Job seekers who receive staff-assisted services will be co-enrolled in both Wagner-Peyser (WP) and WIOA Title I. This is so regardless of the presence of WP-funded staff at the enrolling service location, which is the majority of AJCs in LWDA-83.

Career services may include:

- Job search and placement assistance, including career counseling,
- Labor market information identifying job vacancies, skills necessary for occupations in demand, and relevant employment trends in the local, regional, and national economies,
- Initial assessment of skills and needs,
- Information on available services and programs, and
- Follow-up services to assist in job retention.

Individuals who qualify can also receive training services that provide industry recognized credentials in demand occupations. Following training, individuals are assisted with finding employment. Training services include:

- Occupational skills training
- Skills upgrading
- On-the-job training
- Pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship training
- Academic and career preparation for training
- In limited cases, help with transportation and child care to attend training.

There are three (3) tracks that any job seeker may take; these are “Workforce Ready, in a Demand Occupation”, “Workforce Ready, Not in a Demand Occupation” and “Case Management”. During the course of service assessments and re-evaluation the job seeker may move from one track to another.

If an initial assessment indicates that the job seeker has no significant barriers to employment and is determined to be workforce ready in a demand occupation, the job seeker will be introduced to a member of the Business Services Team for job referral. The BST member will review the job seeker’s skills comparing them to specific demand occupation job vacancies, match those skills to the job vacancies and make a staff referral.

When the initial assessment indicates the job seeker is workforce ready, but not in a demand occupation, the job seeker will be referred to self-service and offered assistance as needed with informational services. These services will include guiding the job seeker to labor market information including jobs in demand, wage rates, education requirements, work search tools, skills and interest matching assessments.

Career Services Team members will follow up with and reassess job seekers as necessary. Continued failure to achieve employment may indicate the existence of a barrier to employment that was not identified earlier in the assessment process. If the job seeker is continually unemployed, more individualized services may be needed. The job seeker will be moved to the Case Management Track if this is the situation.

Job seekers who are not ready for the workforce because of poor work history, limited skills, limited education, lack of credentials, lack of soft skills, or have any other barriers to employment will be provided Individualized Career Services, including a Comprehensive Assessment and development of an Individual Employment Plan (IEP) with the job seeker.

In addition to providing career and training services to individuals who are unemployed, a significant number of job seekers in LWDA-83 are underemployed. WDB-83 has developed local policy WDB-83 Policy 100-02-01: Definitions for serving individuals that are underemployed. WDB-83 will consider individuals to be underemployed that include:

- Individuals employed less than full-time who are seeking full-time employment;
  - Individuals who are employed in a position that is inadequate with respect to their skills and training;
  - Individuals who are employed who meet the definition of a low-income individual in WIOA sec. 3(36);
- and

- Individuals who are employed, but whose current job's earnings are not sufficient compared to their previous job's earnings from their previous employment.

In order to further clarify, the definitions of a dislocated worker, terms such as a "general announcement" of a plant closing, "unemployed as a result of general economic conditions in the community in which the individual resides or because of natural disasters," and "unlikely to return to a previous industry or occupation" are defined by the local Board. WDB-83 has a policy on standard operating procedures including determining eligibility of Dislocated Workers (WDB Policy 500-03-03), which provides the definition for "unlikely to return". WDB has amended said policy to further describe "general announcement" and "general economic conditions".

Individuals who were determined eligible for the Dislocated Worker program and who are determined to be underemployed, may still be considered eligible to receive services under the Dislocated Worker program. WDB-83 will develop a policy and procedures for determining underemployment for the dislocated worker program.

Available services for Dislocated Workers include:

- Assistance in job search and job placement
- Assessment of skills and barriers to employment
- Labor market and career information
- Skill enhancing workshops
- Referrals to community resources/partners
- HiSET training.

In LWDA-83, these services are provided through the American Job Centers or one-on-one with a WIOA Career Services Team member.

Training services may be available to individuals who are determined eligible and do not secure employment. Financial assistance may be provided for tuition, books and other support services depending on eligibility and need. Participation in a training program must lead to a profession determined to be a high-demand occupation.

BST members will review and coordinate with employers to produce complete and thorough job orders in HiRE. BSTs will also actively recruit, screen and refer job seekers to job orders, with the priority being on jobs in a demand occupation. BSTs will alert the CSTs about new job orders in demand occupations and assist with referral of job seekers who are workforce ready. BSTs daily review job orders to provide veterans' priority searches.

The BST who made the referral to a demand occupation job, will follow up with the job seeker to determine the outcome of the referral.

Rapid Response works closely with Region 8 to ensure that dislocated workers receive program information and services. Rapid Response provides core and intensive Rapid Response services at times and locations determined by LWC, the employer, and the needs of the affected workers. The Rapid Response Unit quickly and efficiently gathers the appropriate state and local resources and works with

the employer/management to provide a package of services and activities that will help the affected workers get and keep subsequent jobs.

LWDA-83 works closely with the Rapid Response Unit to provide various services and activities which will enable dislocated workers to transition to new employment as quickly as possible following either a permanent closure or mass layoff, a natural or other disaster resulting in mass job dislocation, WARN, and/or other non-WARN events. Services are typically delivered on-site in partnership with LWDA-83 and according to the needs and schedules of the workers. These services may include Worker Orientation sessions which provide workers with a comprehensive overview of dislocated worker services including assessment, job search, training, unemployment insurance, and labor market information to name a few. Other customized on-site services may include job search workshops, Worker Transition Centers, and Job Fairs. These services can range from assessment to career exploration to resume preparation to job search to educational opportunities.

#### **F. WDB-83 YOUTH ACTIVITIES**

WDB-83 understands and recognizes Governor Jon Bel Edwards' vision for serving youth under WIOA. WDB-83 has continually served youth by initiating them to a demand-driven workforce system. WDB-83 makes key investments in serving disconnected youth, as well as other vulnerable populations. WIOA prepares youth for successful employment through increasing the use of proven service models. In accordance with WIOA, LWDA-83 has increased the percentage of youth formula funds used to serve out-of-school youth to 75 percent from 30 percent as was required under the Workforce Investment Act.

Although WDB-83 plans to continue its focus on out-of-school youth, we will consider lowering the OSY expenditure amount to serve additional Youth participants where needed by applying the recently approved Youth waivers. The U.S. Department of Labor approved Louisiana's request to waive the 75%/25% OSY/ISY expenditure for formula funds. Additionally, the U.S. Department of Labor approved the request to waive the requirement that limits Individual Training Accounts (ITA) to out-of-school youth. For Program Years 2022 and 2023, the State may use ITAs for in-school youth, ages 16-21.

WDB-83 will spend at least 20 percent of youth formula funds on work experience activities such as summer jobs, pre-apprenticeship, on-the-job training, and internships so that youth are prepared for employment. Allowable expenditures that WDB-83 will count toward the work experience expenditure requirement include the following:

- Wages/stipends paid for participation in a work experience;
- Staff time working to identify and develop a work experience opportunity, including staff time spent working with employers to identify and develop the work experience;
- Staff time working with employers to ensure a successful work experience, including staff time spent managing the work experience;
- Staff time spent evaluating the work experience;
- Participant work experience orientation sessions;
- Employer work experience orientation sessions;
- Classroom training or the required academic education component directly related to the work experience;
- Incentive payments directly tied to the completion of work experience; and

- Employability skills/job readiness training to prepare youth for a work experience. Policies supporting and methods of including these efforts are being established.

LWDB-83 has decided to directly provide youth services.

In order to measure Educational Functioning Level (EFL) gains after program enrollment, WDB-83 will use an NRS approved assessment for both the EFL pre- and post-test. With the introduction of TABE 11/12, LWDB-83 selected to use another assessment to measure EFL, CASAS.

LWDA-83's American Job Centers actively participate in a wide variety of youth career development endeavors. When addressing the youth population considered, or categorized as "Out-of-School Youth" (OSY), we focus on the age group between 16-24 years old, and who are not participating in secondary or post-secondary education at the time of enrollment.

The focus of Youth services under WIOA supports the attainment of a secondary school diploma or HiSET which provides out-of-school youth and adults with the best opportunity to demonstrate their high school-level proficiency and their readiness for higher education or the workplace. Attention in the Youth program will provide for entry into post-secondary education and career readiness.

In the spirit of WIOA, Workforce Development Board-83 has shifted focus and resources to OSY, to ensure that this cohort of participants is engaged, despite the difficulties in doing so. The main focus for this age group is the offering of adult education and literacy activities through programs such as LDCC CAD, an education program for these specific participants as a mechanism to introduce, or re-introduce them to basic skills advances.

As recently as the month of September 2020, WDB-83 began the planning stage to co-enroll students attending Jobs for America's Graduates (JAG) programs in LWDA-83 sponsored by LDCC CAD. JAG is dedicated to supporting young people of great promise. JAG is currently delivering the best results in its 40-year history, while serving youth who face significant challenges, to help them reach economic and academic success. WDB-83 plans to offer work experience activities, incentives and stipends to eligible Youth who are enrolled in the adult education classroom, JAG program and the local Youth project called HIP (Helping Individuals Progress). This will allow WDB-83 to offer pieces from the required fourteen (14) Youth elements that are not traditionally available in our rural areas, while also serving Youth to the fullest of ability of three (3) programs.

The process of recruiting youth to any of the partner programs will involve "casting a very wide net". LWDA-83 will work within a system of cohorts where there will be a lot of cross-referral. LWDA-83 will identify organizations that work with the targeted youth population and actively communicate with them and make sure they know about the Youth program eligibility, admission dates, etc. and understand how to refer young people to the WIOA Youth program. If it is determined that WIOA is not the best provider for an individual young person, AJC staff will make all effort to be sure the customer receives a "soft landing" to the partner agency.

LWDA-83 has varied its Youth recruitment strategies. Utilizing multiple methods to reach out-of-school youth ensures that as many OSY as possible are contacted. One strategy is street recruitment which

should demonstrate the highest percentage of enrollments. A Youth staff person will go into neighborhoods where the out-of-school youths can be found. LWDA-83 Youth staff have demonstrated dedication to the success of young people serving as mentors, and the young people see, and feel, that staff are genuine to their success.

In addition, many TANF participants may be eligible for the WIOA youth program given the OSY age increased under WIOA. American Job Centers in LWDA-83 partner with TANF in order to reach the TANF population.

Another strategy is friend and family referrals. This is generated by participants and family members of participants, past and present, who have seen the success of the program.

Prescreened and “vouched-for” referrals are yet another strategy. These come from system partners as well as other community agencies with whom an MOU has been negotiated. The MOU includes the process for an electronic referral (WDB-83 Policy # 200-23-03 [revised 01/07/2023]). The referral comes directly to a staff member and that person follows up through phone or outreach to the young person. There is an agreement between agencies to provide feedback on whether or not the individual enrolled into a program or decided not to participate at that time.

The last strategy for recruitment is the use of social media. Eventually a Youth advisory group, along with a staff member, will monitor the media outlets to promote activities, events and services. With the use of social networking sites, such as Skype, Twitter, Facebook, etc., youth will be able to keep abreast of services and events offered in the local areas.

LWDA-83 will continue to grow its social media community as a way of communicating with young people, attend events specific to young people, as well as promote Youth programs in a variety of venues. However, the “experts” on out-of-school youth are the youth themselves. LWDA-83 will make the Youth participants actively involved in designing outreach and recruitment strategies and implementing program design. For example, the Youth will assist in the designing of what they deem appropriate language for prospective enrollees, assist with the way LWDA-83 frames the Youth program making sure it is effective in communicating to out-of-school youth, and they will tell LWDA-83 staff where to find out-of-school youths in our communities.

LWDA-83’s Youth programs are designed to provide disconnected youth access to career pathways and sector strategies to increase credential attainment and long-term career success.

WIOA affirms LWDA-83’s commitment to providing high quality services for youth and young adults beginning with career exploration and guidance, continued support for educational attainment, opportunities for skills training in in-demand industries and occupations, and culminating with a good job along a career pathway or enrollment in post-secondary education. LWDA-83 will make sure everything the participants do in the program is relevant to them and that they understand the connection between the activity they are in and how it will impact their future.

LWDA-83 sees three categories key to the engagement and retention of out-of-school youth. First is immediate immersion in career planning to reinforce the chosen career pathway. Secondly, supportive



services. A large percentage of youth that LWDA-83 serves is economically disadvantaged and depends highly on the supportive services payments. Finally, employment opportunities that will go beyond what the Youth would normally have. The concept is not to just get the young person a job, but to identify a career pathway in a demand occupation that the young person will be able to continue on to earn a livable wage. All of LWDA-83's employment development efforts will be tied to career pathways.

LWDA-83's Youth program design will continue to incorporate assessment tools, such as *the* objective assessments of academic levels (CASAS), skill levels (WorkKeys), and service needs of each participant in order to link their service strategy to career pathways, leading to recognized post-secondary credentials. Career Service Team members who work with employers use the assessment results to develop work experiences. WDB-83 Policy 600-02-04: Youth Workforce Investment Activities Standard Operating Procedures (revised 07/01/2020) assures assessment instruments are valid and appropriate for the youth population, and provide reasonable accommodations in the assessment process, if necessary, for individuals with disabilities.

LWDA-83 has a strong history of meeting the minimum expenditure rate (75% of program expenditures) for out-of-school youth and is committed to continuing to do so. However, should the need arise to meet the needs of additional Youth participants, WDB-83 will utilize the Youth Waiver of minimum expenditure rate of 50% program expenditures. Local areas are required to track youth formula-fund expenditures on the Monthly Expenditure Report. These reports are reviewed and evaluated each month by the Executive Director, WIOA Program Director and the Accounting Supervisor to ensure adequate expenditure levels. Service strategies are developed with the WIOA Program Director, the Executive Director and the One-Stop Operator to ensure adequate program participation is achieved to reach or exceed the minimum expenditure rate. Corrective action is taken when necessary, to increase expenditure levels by evaluating worksites and attendance.

Assessment, guidance and counseling, and work-based learning activities are at the forefront of LWDA-83's high-impact program priorities for Youth, who may also access ITAs for occupational training in accordance with State and local policies. LWDA-83 recognizes that out-of-school youth represents a large talent pipeline and an opportunity to invest in the future workforce generation. The Board will continue to advocate for programming that promotes workforce development of youth with barriers to employment which will incorporate the following:

- Occupational skills training, with a focus on career pathways and stackable credentials to facilitate achievable goals for youth
- Support services
- Remedial/prevocational training
- Work experience/Internships/On-the-Job training
- Assisting youth in achieving a Hi-SET

#### **G. INDIVIDUALS WITH BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT**

WIOA emphasizes serving those individuals with barriers to employment and individuals more at-risk of not connecting to the labor market. LWDB-83 serves individuals with barriers to employment who often need higher levels of service to achieve a positive outcome. WDB-83's purpose is to provide individuals, including Youth participants with barriers to employment, with workforce investment activities, education, and support services to enter or retain employment. WIOA's definition of barriers to

employment include: a) displaced homemakers, b) low-income individuals, c) Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians, d) individuals with disabilities, including youth who are individuals with disabilities, e) older individuals, f) ex-offenders, g) homeless individuals or homeless children and youths, h) youth who are in or have aged out of the foster care system, i) individuals who are English language learners, individuals who have low levels of literacy, and individuals facing substantial cultural barriers, j) eligible migrant and seasonal farm works, k) individuals within two years of exhausting lifetime eligibility for TANF, l) single parents including single pregnant women, m) long-term unemployed individuals, and n) such other groups as the Governor determines to have barriers to employment.

Individuals with disabilities are identified as individuals with barriers to employment under WIOA, and receive any and all American Job Center services that would normally be provided to any other job seeker. Staff of LWDA-83 AJCs will advise and inform clients and other individuals with disabilities of all the available services and benefits under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by WIOA. WIOA provides new opportunities for coordination and referrals for the Title I Adult and Dislocated Worker programs to partner and enhance service delivery to individuals with disabilities, including those served under Title IV of WIOA.

WDB-83 will provide quality services to all customers including priority populations listed below that are outlined in the State Combined plan. Policy 100-15-01: Priority of Services for Adults and Dislocated Workers has been approved by the Board, with amendments on October 08, 2019. One-Stop Partners will work cooperatively to serve these and all priority populations. WDB-83 will run reports in HiRE to examine the data related to these special populations recurrently. Priority Populations include:

- Low Income Individuals
- Basic Skills Deficient
- Veterans (WDB-83 Policy 200-10: Priority of Services to Veterans)
- Persons with Disabilities

LWDA-83 will continue to ensure that policies and programs in the local workforce system are accessible, regardless of racial, gender, or socioeconomic background. The One-Stop Operator and or the WIOA Program Director will publish quarterly reports to partners of the local area which will provide a detailed breakdown of clients by residential parish, race/ethnicity, education level, age, gender, basic needs, and job search needs in order to identify gaps in access to workforce and educational services. Where gaps are identified, partners will work to strategize solutions.

WDB-83 will review any existing equity goals from the area's community college (Louisiana Delta Community College) and identify alignment between the institution's equity goals. WDB-83 will incorporate those aligned goals as its own and develop strategies that will achieve its proposed outcomes.

Continual improvement and monitoring will be the responsibility of the Board. LWDB-83 will, in particular, focus on improving technology skills for all workers, but especially for minorities who consistently lag behind the general population in IT skills acquisition and needed workplace skills such as coding and basic computer literacy.

WDB-83 will work to explore mentoring programs by convening participants, staff, local board, and employers' input and come up with a plan on how we can expand mentoring programs to adults. Identifying mentors from those who have successfully completed the program while living with some of these barriers to employment would be an avenue to explore. Utilizing the Board members as mentors or developing a program with the service providers would be another way to ensure success with our adult participants. These are areas to examine and look to expand upon.

As part of LMI training that is provided to new staff and as refresher training to existing staff, trainings on the labor equity gaps, customer demographics and program placement outcomes and how efforts can work to bridge those gaps will be included. Quarterly reports from LA Performs will provide insight into which populations are being served and their outcomes which will be beneficial to identifying gaps in equity, if applicable. The plan will include providing technical assistance opportunities from LWC to train staff on data-driven approaches to address equity gaps.

WDB-83 has an American Job Center located in the parish seat of each of the ten (10) parishes it serves. Most are located near prominent landmarks, such as the parish court house, Walmart, community college campus, hospital, police jury office, etc., that are easily acceptable to customers and participants.

#### **H. WDB-83 TRAINING POLICIES AND ACTIVITIES**

Workforce Development Board-83 is following current guidance from WIOA Title I for all Adult, Youth and Dislocated Worker funds. LWDA-83 is working to deploy new strategies including enhancing collaboration with the local community college, apprenticeship programs and other initiatives to ensure that we meet the training expenditure requirements. The Executive Director reports to the Strategic Planning Committee of the Board quarterly expenditure benchmarks for budget to actual expenditure to ensure adequate training levels are met.

Fiscal staff report to the Board with expenditure benchmarks data, and program staff is notified monthly if adjustments or modifications are required to meet annual benchmark goals. Local emphasis on collaborating more closely with employers and working with other business groups to access the smaller employers that are predominant in our rural area will support informed customer choice in the selection of Individual Training Account-funded occupational training. (Attachment #2 - WDB-83 POLICY 200-05-08: Limitations on Individual Training Accounts) These activities may also result in the identification of training gaps, which may be addressed through customized training available to LWDA-83 employers. LWDA-83 also looks to increase its investment in On-the-Job Training programs, which reimburses employers for wages during a new employee's training period and skill upgrades for underemployed workers.

Policies, practices and processes that define WDB-83 and the way it conducts business include, the procedure of routinely and periodically evaluating its budget, resource allocations, and expenditures. LWC requires local boards to specifically report on expenditures for career and training services and on the number of participants who received career and training services. This requirement is specifically designed to make planning and funding decisions more transparent, and to provide better opportunities for public oversight. WDB-83 adheres to the uniform administrative requirements set forth in Title 2 CFR Part 200 and Title 29 CFR Parts 95 and 97. WDB-83 consistently meets the federally-mandated

responsibilities for more than the required two previous program years, including timely reporting of participant and expenditure data, timely completion and submission of the required annual single audit and not having been placed on cash hold for longer than 30 days. (WIOA Section 106(e)(2)).

WDB-83 will maximize work-based training program models as part of its training strategy. Closely tied to the solutions sought by businesses is the expanded use of work-based learning (Registered Apprenticeships, Pre-Apprenticeships, Work Experience, Transitional Jobs, On-the-Job Training, and Incumbent Worker Training). The work-based training model has as its goal to meet job seekers as well as employer needs. Work-based training is beneficial because it's an "earn while you learn" environment. Employers like this process because it is a plus for their business.

WDB-83 will use structured work-based learning, such as paid and unpaid work experiences and career exploration that lead to gainful employment, as a strategy in serving Youth. Work-based learning strategies are essential for young people to acquire work experience. WDB-83, as the local area Youth provider, is required to spend at least twenty (20) percent of its contract funding on work-based learning. Youth customers are being linked to work-based learning opportunities based on employer need and commitment, and interest among job seekers.

Work-based training allows employers to train their employees while continuing to be productive members of the workforce. WIOA provides for a workforce system that is job driven.

Registered Apprenticeship (RA): RA is an important component of potential training and employment services that WDB-83 provides to its customers. WIOA provides an overall emphasis on registered apprenticeship programs throughout the one-stop delivery system. WDB-83 has partnered with the RA system and uses RA opportunities as a career pathway for job seekers and as a job-driven strategy for employers.

Pre-Apprenticeship: Pre-apprenticeship is a program designed to prepare individuals to enter and succeed in a registered apprenticeship program, which includes:

- training and curriculum that aligns with the skill needs of employers in the economy of the State or region,
- access to educational and career counseling and other supportive services,
- hands-on, meaningful learning activities that are connected to education and training activities, such as exploring career options, understanding how skills acquired through coursework can be applied to a future career,
- opportunities to attain at least one industry-recognized credential, and
- a partnership with one or more registered apprenticeship programs that assists in placing individuals who complete the pre-apprenticeship into a registered apprenticeship program.

The target populations for pre-apprenticeship are youth and adults with barriers to employment who are identified to need certain skills or credentials in order to successfully enter into a registered apprenticeship program, dislocated workers transitioning to new industries or occupations in need of new skills, other eligible individuals identified by CST members as likely to succeed and have an interest in registered apprenticeship programs.

Work Experience (WE): A work experience is a planned, structured learning experience that takes place in a workplace for a limited period of time. WDB-83 limits WE activities to sixteen (16)-week intervals and for no more than thirty (30) hours per week. A WE activity can only be extended beyond the original sixteen (16) weeks if justification for such an extension exists and is recorded in the participant's case notes.

Transitional Jobs (TJ): Transitional jobs are a type of work-experience and are considered an individualized career service. Transitional jobs are time-limited and wage-paid work experiences that will be subsidized at 100 percent. WDB-83 may not use more than 10 percent of its allocated funds to provide transitional jobs. Transitional jobs are limited to ninety (90)-days and require not more than 30 hours of work per week. These jobs are in the public, private, or nonprofit sectors. Transitional jobs are designed to help participants establish a work history, demonstrate success in the workplace, and develop the skills that lead to entry into and retention in unsubsidized employment. There is no expectation that the employer providing the transitional job placement will hire the participant permanently. Transitional jobs must be combined with comprehensive career services and/or supportive services.

On-the-Job Training (OJT): OJT opportunities provide structured training for participants to gain the knowledge and skills to be competent in the job for which they are hired and lead to stable employment. It is also designed to assist employers with a wage subsidy during the training period, as an incentive to the employer to hire individuals who lack marketable skills for the current job market.

Incumbent Worker Training: (WDB-83 Policy 400-05-01) Incumbent Worker training is designed to meet the needs of an employer or group of employers to retain a skilled workforce or avert layoffs. Incumbent Worker training can be used to either:

- Help avert potential layoffs of employees; or
- Obtain the skills necessary to retain employment, such as increasing the skill levels of employees so they can be promoted within the company and create backfill opportunities for new or less-skilled employees.

Workforce Development Board-83 will continue to support WIOA customer training through Individual Training Accounts in accordance with the law and applicable local policies. Eligible program participants who seek training services may, in consultation with AJC staff, select a training vendor from the list of eligible training providers. (Attachment #3 – WDB-83 Policy #200-26: Standard Operating Procedures for Provision of Performance and Program Cost Information on Eligible Training Provider Services)

For the Title I Adult and Dislocated Worker Programs, ITAs are the primary method for funding participants' training services. The Title I Youth Program also uses ITAs to fund training services for Out-of-School Youth. Training funded through an ITA must be selected from Louisiana's Eligible Training Programs List (ETPL). Louisiana's ETPL is published online and provides detailed information about programs eligible for ITAs, including cost information and aggregated performance metrics related to students' program completion and their employment and earnings outcomes.

The approved ETPL serves as an important tool for participants seeking training to identify appropriate providers, and relevant information such as cost and program outcomes. Using the ETPL, career

coordinators in LWDA-83's AJCs can assist participants in identifying training and training providers in high-demand industries that result in positive outcomes and recognized credentials. The local Board works with LWC to ensure that there are sufficient numbers and types of providers of career services and training services (including eligible providers with expertise in assisting individuals with disabilities and eligible providers with expertise in assisting adults in need of adult education and literacy activities) serving the local area and providing the services involved in a manner that maximizes consumer choice and leads to competitive integrated employment for individuals with disabilities.

Upon selection, in accordance with local policies and available funding, the AJC staff will refer the participant to the eligible provider and arrange for payment through an ITA.

WDB-83 believes ITAs, which allow workers to choose their training and training provider, result in more positive outcomes when workers received structured guidance and information compared to workers who received the ITA and selected training options on their own. This belief will be reflected in the process of services offered to AJC customers.

WDB-83 considers the full cost of participating in training services, including expenses related to dependent care, transportation and other essential needs for individuals who need additional assistance. WDB-83 uses a broad range of training programs as part of its workforce development strategy. These programs collaborate with the local workforce development board, companies and education/training providers to improve training.

Providers of on-the-job training, customized training, incumbent worker training, internships, paid or unpaid work experience, or transitional employment are not subject to the ETP requirements of WIOA. WDB-83 has established a procedure for training providers to petition a denial of training funds which explains the appeals process for denial or termination of their training services.

Workforce Development Board-83 is committed to continuous improvement of service delivery. WDB-83 considers continuous improvement to be a critical factor in the negotiations process for annual performance levels. Continuous improvement may reflect an increase in the level of performance, a change in service strategy and delivery, or a change in the customers served. The customers served by Local Workforce Development Area-83 (LWDA-83) has a significant impact on the outcomes depending on factors unique to the population.

The continuous improvement of service delivery is one of the reasons WDB-83 applied for and was awarded two additional grants:

- 318 Rural Industry Supplemental Enhancement Project (318 R.I.S.E.) - is a States' Economic Development Assistance Program (SEDAP) funded by Delta Regional Authority. This 12-month project will provide thirty (30) eligible individuals (new entrants to the workforce, dislocated workers, incumbent workers) with opportunities to obtain educational and occupational training for high-growth and high-demand green-skilled trades. Many companies, such as industry partner RailCar Co., require specialized training and are experiencing difficulty in finding individuals with the skill set to fulfill the labor needs for green industries especially in our rural area. 318 R.I.S.E. Project will help train and place adults from East Carroll, Franklin, Madison, Richland, Tensas, and West Carroll parishes as well as Warren and Issaquena counties and Chicot and Ashley counties in Louisiana, Mississippi and southeast Arkansas, respectively, in hard to fill green jobs within the

transportation industry in northeast Louisiana. The project will recruit and identify eligible participants, perform assessments, guide development of service strategies to assist with the promotion of green careers, and provide a hybrid model of training for these new-to-the-region positions.

- Northeast Louisiana Healthcare Opportunities Providing Education Project (NELA HOPE Project) - Workforce Opportunity for Rural Communities (WORC) grant funded by Delta Regional authority/U.S. Department of Labor. - This 3-year demonstration project will provide 150 eligible individuals (New Workforce Entrants, Dislocated Workers, and Incumbent Workers) with opportunities to obtain multi-level educational training for careers in the high-growth and high-demand healthcare sector, while benefitting from the provision of needed support to overcome barriers. NELA HOPE will recruit and identify eligible participants, perform assessments, guide development of service strategies to provide education and training for careers in the healthcare sector leading to living wages.

Utilizing educational providers, NELA HOPE will provide healthcare sector education and training that will yield employer- and industry-recognized certificates or degrees combined with intense case management and supportive services. Namely, program participants will be assisted with academic supports, child care, transportation assistance, tuition assistance and other financial support, work readiness and job placement. Occupational training will be provided for the following in-demand positions: Registered Nurse, Licensed Practical Nurse, Medical and Clinical Lab Tech, Occupational Therapy Aide, and Nursing Assistant/ Personal Care Aide, Medication Aide, among others.

#### **I. WDB-83 TRANSFER OF WIOA TITLE 1B WORKFORCE FUNDS**

WIOA sec.133(b)(4) provides the authority for Workforce Development Board-83 to expend up to 100 percent of the Adult activities funds on DW activities, and up to 100 percent of DW activities funds on Adult activities. LWC's State Combined Plan outlines the policy to evaluate transfer requests from local workforce areas. Expenditures of monies transferred between local DW and Adult programs are reported on the ETA-9130 reports. ETA notes when considering such transfers that career and training services must continue to be made available to both Adult and DW participants in the AJCs. However, State policy will limit the maximum allowable transfer to 75 percent. WDB-83 may send written notice requesting a transfer of funds between adult and dislocated worker funds up to a maximum amount of 50 percent in the first year in which funds are made available. In the second year, the Board may send written notification requesting up to an additional 25 percent.

One service strategy newly implemented by WDB-83 is that of Incumbent Worker Training (IWT). Sessions with local employers are planned to introduce this training concept. WDB-83 has adopted an upskill/backfill strategy which involves filling jobs vacated by workers who are moving into more advanced positions in a company with other WIOA participants. WDB-83 has developed its IWT contract such that once incumbent workers advance with the employer, the employer then provides an opportunity to fill this now vacant position with a local WIOA participant.

Individuals receiving incumbent worker training are not considered to be participants for the purpose of inclusion in WIOA performance indicator calculations. The required participant and performance data elements reported for incumbent worker individuals are limited to basic information and the elements needed to calculate incumbent worker training performance indicators for employment in the 2nd and 4th quarters after exit, Median earnings in the 2nd quarter after exit, Measurable Skill Gains, and Credential Attainment. For the purposes of calculating these metrics, the exit date for an individual who

only has received incumbent worker training will be the last date of training, as indicated in the training contract. Unlike other types of training, incumbent worker eligibility is determined at the employer level.

WDB-83 may use up to twenty (20) percent of its Adult and Dislocated Worker allocations to provide for the cost of IW training. WDB-83 has identified Louisiana Delta Community College and Training Logic Inc. as potential training providers for procurement by employers.

WDB-83 Policy 400-05-01: Guidance on Incumbent Worker Training Program is used to determine an employer's eligibility for participating in IWT based on:

- The relationship of the training to the competitiveness of the individual and employer;
- The number of employees participating in the training;
- The employee's advancement opportunities along with wages and benefits;
- Skills gained as a result of the training;
- Layoffs averted as result of the training;
- Utilization as part of a larger sector and/or career pathway strategy; and
- Employer size.

For an employer to receive WDB-83's IWT funds, individuals receiving the training must be:

- Employed;
- Meet the FLS Act requirements;
- Have an established history with the employer for six (6) months or longer; and
- If the majority of employees being trained meets these requirements, a cohort of employees may participate.

WDB has established a policy regarding the non-federal share of the cost of IWT. The employers will pay for a significant cost of the training through either, or both, cash payments and/or in-kind contributions, with the wages paid to the employees while in training used as matching funds.

WDB-83 will consider the number of employees participating in the training, the wage and benefit levels of the employees, the relationship of the training to the competitiveness of the employer and employees. Using the chart below, WDB-83 will base the minimum amount of employer share on the size of the company.

<b>EMPLOYER SHARE</b>	<b>SIZE OF EMPLOYER</b>
At least 10% of the cost	50 or fewer employees
At least 25% of the cost	51 – 100 employees
At least 50% of the cost	More than 100 employees

WDB-83 may use up to 10 percent of its combined total of adult and dislocated worker funds to provide transitional jobs to local individuals. WDB-83, to this point in time, has no plans to use funds to pay for performance contracts.



LWDA-83 will continue those practices and processes that have resulted in a high-performing board that is business led, market responsive, results-oriented and integrated with other workforce development system partners. The current Board seeks to foster customer service excellence, seeks continuous improvement and demonstrates value by enhancing employment opportunities for all individuals.

Policies, practices and processes that define this board and the way it conducts business include, but are not limited to the following:

- The LWDA-83 Board monitors the implementation of strategies established and performance achieved.
- The LWDA-83 Board routinely and periodically evaluates its budget, resource allocations, and expenditures.
- The LWDA Board’s agenda includes financial, strategic, governance, operational and other key workforce issues that provides the structural framework for the Board’s oversight.
- The LWDA-83 Board solicits and considers input from the community and customers.
- The LWDA-83 Board maintains a governance structure/framework that is responsive to its stakeholders.
- The LWDA-83 Board, although it operates in a very rural environment, strives to practice pro-active governance, especially related to board member recruitment and reappointment.
- The LWDA-83 Board oversees the quality of leadership and management.
- The LWDA-83 Board maintains a constant communication with key stakeholders on the organization’s achievements and plans.
- The LWDA-83 Board has an extensive history of effectively securing discretionary grants to strengthen financial resources to reinvest in the devastatingly high poverty area that we serve.

### A. WDB-83’S LEVELS OF NEGOTIATED PERFORMANCE

For this revision of the plan (February 2023), WDB-83’s Title I programs performance measures are to be negotiated with the Louisiana Workforce Commission on February 24, 2023. The indicators for PY20 and PY23 are the following:

- Employment (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit);
- Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Credential Attainment Rate; and
- Measurable Skill Gains

Workforce Development Board SDA-83, Inc. and LWC negotiated and reached agreement on local levels of performance based on the State negotiated levels of performance for PY20 on September 23, 2020. [Negotiations for PY22 and PY23 have been set for February 24, 2023.] In negotiating the local levels of performance, especially those due to the coronavirus pandemic, WDB-83 made adjustments for the expected economic conditions and expected characteristics of participants whom we serve in our area.

<b>PERFORMANCE INDICATORS</b>	<b>LWDA-83 Negotiated Local Performance</b>	<b>PERFORMANCE INDICATORS</b>	<b>LWDA-83 Negotiated Local Performance</b>
<b><u>ADULT</u></b>		<b><u>DISLOCATED WORKER</u></b>	
Entered Employment Rate, 2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter After Exit	<b>75.6%</b>	Entered Employment Rate, 2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter After Exit	<b>72.0%</b>
Entered Employment Rate, 4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter After Exit	<b>66.1%</b>	Entered Employment Rate, 4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter After Exit	<b>66.8%</b>
Median Earnings	<b>\$6,600</b>	Median Earnings	<b>\$7,000</b>
Credential Attainment	<b>68.3%</b>	Credential Attainment	<b>83.7%</b>
Measurable Skills Gains	<b>76.3%</b>	Measurable Skills Gains	<b>82.7%</b>
<b><u>YOUTH</u></b>			
Entered Employment Rate, 2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter After Exit	<b>72.0%</b>		
Entered Employment Rate, 4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter After Exit	<b>71.7%</b>		
Median Earnings	<b>\$3,500</b>		
Credential Attainment	<b>62.3%</b>		
Measurable Skills Gains	<b>50.0%</b>		

In addition to the common performance measures described in Section 116(b)(2)(A), WDB-83 asks that LWC track business-focused metrics as USDOL identifies standardized indicators for measuring Effectiveness in Serving Employers (EISE). LWC reports annual count data, housed in the HiRE MIS system, of employer services. Further, LWC chose two EISE pilot performance measures to report to USDOL annually—Employer Penetration and Repeat Business Customers Rate.

- Employer Penetration Rate (Percentage of employers using services out of all employers in the State) - This approach tracks the percentage of employers with twenty (20) or more employees who are using the core program services out of all employers represented in LWDA-83.
- Repeat Business Customers (Percentage of repeat employers using services within the previous three (3) years) - This approach tracks the percentage of employers who receive services that use

core program services more than once. This approach is useful in determining whether employers who receive services from the core programs are satisfied with those services and become repeat customers. This approach also assesses the LWDA-83's workforce system's ability to develop and maintain strong relationships with employers over extended periods of time.

WDB-83 opted not to participate in the negotiation of the state-level Wagner-Peyser measures.

#### **B. WDB-83'S CURRENT AND PLANNED EVALUATION ACTIVITIES**

Currently, reports on successful strategies occurring within LWDA-83 are reported at each quarterly Board meeting. The primary service delivery strategy for LWDA-83 continues to be the use of ITAs to assist WIOA participants in returning to work, boosting their earning potential, and/or beginning or continuing on an in-demand career pathway. The success and return on investment of this strategy can be seen in WDB-83's Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth performance outcomes, where all measures were met or exceeded in PY21.

All of WDB-83's investments must generate an acceptable return on investment. These returns will be measured in terms of outcomes most meaningful to LWDA-83 residents – such as jobs, earnings, and long-term career prospects – not just in dollars spent or number of participants. WDB-83 feels we must be accountable for how we invest our scarce public resources and the initiatives in which we ask our partners to co-invest.

LWDA-83 will continue to align new service strategies to address educational and training needs locally by addressing these common barriers:

1. Transportation and child care issues
2. Basic skills deficiencies
3. Identification of the proper agency to isolate the barriers the participants are facing - food, shelter, health care and other basic needs.

The One-Stop partners in LWDA-83 have always collectively helped customers with the above barriers, but additional training for front line staff and partner agency staff, will help to develop more knowledge about these services.

At this time our local area will not eliminate any programs based on no or minimum return on investment. However, we will focus on taking a more data-driven approach in starting new programs. During meetings with staff and partners, discussion will take place on a plan for tracking programs using data. This will in turn allow our local area to ensure we are receiving the best return on our investment.

The area will work to collect more extensive data on the industries and occupations that are seeing greatest success in job placement, wages at placement, and the specific occupational training programs that are resulting in placement into well-paying jobs. The Board's Strategic Planning Committee and Business Services Team will leverage improved employer and industry information to target particular trainings as well as insights on major barriers to employment and retention and work to build new solutions.

Some key strategies that have shown promise, many with low investment and high ROI, which will be pursued include:

- Expanding contextualized basic skills education such as bridge programs delivered in conjunction with industry.
- Educating employers on the benefits of apprenticeship programs (whether formally registered or other apprenticeship-like training options that can be implemented).
- Promoting to employers a range of work-based learning and training methods in conjunction with education/training, which can incentivize workers and build career pathways.
- Expanding technology and basic computer skills training for all customers, given the presence of information technology activities.

Another strategy for which the area does not have ready solutions, but recognizes a need and will work to advocate with other local and regional institutions include:

- A need for improved access to technology including the presence of major gaps in high-bandwidth internet access within the region and lack of computer skills for many workers. This presents barriers to workers in terms of applying for jobs (almost all job applications are now online) as well as for succeeding workplaces in which technology and computer skills are ever more required.

## Chapter 6: TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS AND ASSURANCES – WDB-83

### A. FISCAL MANAGEMENT

By mutual agreement of the duly-elected legislative bodies of the ten (10) parishes of LWDA-83, the Union Parish Police Jury is designated as the local grant recipient and held liable for the grant funds allocated to the local area for Youth, Adult, and Dislocated Worker activities. Chief Elected Official for Workforce Development Board 83 has appointed the Workforce Development Board SDA-83, Inc. Administrative staff as the fiscal agent for LWDB-83 grant funds.

All subgrants and contracts will be procured through WDB-83's formal procurement policy processes (Attachment #4 - WDB-83 Policy 100-06-02: Procurement [Revised 01/19/2021]), such as Request for Proposal (RFP). WDB-83 has established procurement policies and procedures in compliance with Federal and State laws and regulations and they meet the procurement standards specified in Uniform Guidance and the DOL Exceptions. These policies and procedures are audited by independent CPAs in the conduct of our annual single audit and are monitored by state staff during the conduct of their administrative monitoring process.

The competitive process used by LWDA-83 to award subgrants and contracts for WIOA funded activities adheres to the RFP. The competitive process begins with a public notification of interested parties and a legal public notification in order to ensure as many proposals as possible are received. Proposals are received and reviewed by the LWDB staff and the Executive Committee of the Board. Submissions are reviewed, procedure is taken to ensure any responding companies are not on the excluded list or that any conflicts of interest exist. A rating matrix is used to evaluate proposals for responsiveness to the RFP. The committee then makes a recommendation to the full board for discussion and final approval. The contract is drafted between the LWDA-83 and the winning bidder; that includes requirements of federal and state regulations.

WIOA does not allow for the "designation" or "certification" of any entity as an Operator without a competitive process. The one-stop operator that coordinates the service delivery of the required one-stop partners and service providers in LWDA-83 was selected by WDB-83 through a competitive process. The selected provider is Alberta Green, ABG Professional Development Solutions. As the Joint WIOA Final Rule requires that a competitive process be conducted at least once every four years, the local Board has decided to follow this timeline pending satisfactory performance review completed annually to ensure accountability and compliance.

### B. PHYSICAL AND PROGRAMMATIC ACCESSIBILITY

Recognizing the high unemployment rate among individuals with disabilities and the qualified-employee shortage businesses are facing, LWDA-83, as is LWC, is committed to providing reasonable accommodations and access to all programs, services and facilities. With support of the Disability Employment Initiative (DEI) grant (2012 -2015), LWC worked to ensure the physical, communication, and programmatic accessibility of all American Job Centers by conducting specialized training for all center staff on topics including accessibility for all, disability etiquette and awareness, and identifying and assisting job seekers with hidden disabilities.

WDB-83's one-stop certification process assures effective services for individuals with disabilities are present in the comprehensive one-stop center and in its affiliate locations through skills training which enhances the ability to obtain, in particular, "high-demand jobs". LWDA-83 is committed to complying with Section 188 and the American Disabilities Act (ADA) regarding physical and programmatic accessibility. As part of compliance, LWDA-83 will conduct an annual review of all One-Stop centers throughout the local area, to ensure compliance.

LWDA-83 operates WIOA programs and activities in a manner that makes services readily accessible to qualified individuals with disabilities. These efforts include, when appropriate:

- Advertising so various target populations become aware of programs and/or activities:
  - Marketing materials state WDB-83 is an equal opportunity employer/program operator, Universal Access, and auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities. Materials also include contact phone number, TRS #711, and email ([wib83@bayou.com](mailto:wib83@bayou.com)).
- WDB-83 is committed to complying with Section 508 of the National Rehabilitation Act.
- WDB-83 is an Employment Networks in Social Security's Ticket to Work Program.

WDB-83 uses evidenced-based workforce strategies that places individuals with disabilities into sector-based career pathways leading to gainful employment.

WDB-83 continues to be committed to the development and continued growth of professional staff members. In an effort to meet the current and projected needs for qualified personnel, WDB-83 encourages the hiring of staff members from minority backgrounds and individuals with disabilities.

WDB-83 will continue to collaborate with other key workforce partners serving individuals with disabilities to determine improvements that can be achieved through collaboration and partnerships.

Title IV of WIOA makes a number of significant changes to the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 in order to improve and align core programs towards the goal of empowering individuals with disabilities to maximize employment, economic self-sufficiency, independence, and inclusion in and integration into society.

Effective partnering with the core and mandated programs is essential in order to ensure individuals with disabilities seeking employment and training services receive the services they need for employment. In order to better align the core programs and create additional flexibility for the purposes of achieving WDB-83 goals, funds allocated to LWDA-83 for Adult and Dislocated Worker activities are used to improve coordination between employment and training programs carried out in the local area for individuals with disabilities through the American Job Center network. WDB-83 utilizes this flexibility to ensure a highly coordinated service delivery that ensures individuals with disabilities receive the services they need for their career needs, regardless which partner agency the services are provided by. Additionally, ETA encourages local areas to coordinate with programs carried out by State agencies relating to intellectual and developmental disabilities, as well as local agencies and organizations serving individuals with significant disabilities, including the local network of centers for independent living in each State.

**C. PLAN DEVELOPMENT AND PUBLIC COMMENT**

Local Boards must provide the opportunity for public comment and input, which allows interested stakeholders to participate actively, effectively, and transparently in the development of the plan. WDB-83 will submit a draft of its local plan to the Louisiana Workforce Commission on or before April 18, 2023. At that time an electronic copy of the draft plan will be sent to each member of the Workforce Development Board, as well as to all partner agencies for review and comment.

The full membership of LWDB-83 will have an opportunity for review and comments beginning February 28, 2023 and at the April 2023 annual meeting.

Additionally, a copy of the Draft plan will be posted on LWDB-83’s website ([www.wdb83.com](http://www.wdb83.com)) with directions for submission of public comments and e-mailed to its partners on February 28, 2023. These comments will be reviewed and recorded into the development of the final plan document before submission on or before April 18, 2023.

To ensure public access for those that may not be familiar with the Workforce Development Board website, LWDB-83 will place the following public notice in the regional paper, Monroe News Star, to run for a period of one week. The comment period to allow public and shareholder feedback will be open for a period of 30 days beginning February 28, 2023.

*LEGAL NOTICE*

*LWDA-83 is submitting an amended Four-Year Plan for PY20-PY24  
Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act*

*Any comments concerning this Plan should be addressed to the Workforce Development Board SDA-83, Inc., P.O. Box 14269, Monroe, LA 71207. The complete plan is available for review at the Workforce Development Board SDA-83, Inc. office, located at 1504 Stubbs Avenue, Monroe, Louisiana, at [www.wdb83.com](http://www.wdb83.com), or your local American Job Center, between the hours of 8:00 A.M. and 4:30 P.M*

**Workforce Development Board SDA-83, Inc.  
Regional/Local Plan PY20-PY24 Timeline**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Date</b>
Requested Regional data from LWC Research and Statistics Division	July 28, 2020
Received Regional LMI data	August 17, 2020
Committee Work Group Zoom Planning Meeting 81 & 83	August 19, 2020
Regional and Local Planning Guide issued by LWC	August 21, 2020
Committee Work Group Zoom Planning Meeting 81 & 83	September 9, 2020
WDB-83 Partner Zoom Meeting to discuss and review plan	September 17, 2020
Committee Work Group Zoom Planning Meeting 81 & 83	September 30, 2020
Regional and Local DRAFT Plan posted to <a href="http://www.wdb83.com">www.wdb83.com</a>	October 2, 2020
Regional and Local DRAFT Plan emailed to WDB-83 Board Members for review	October 2, 2020

Regional and Local DRAFT Plan emailed to WDB-83 Partners for review	October 2, 2020
Regional/Local Plan presented and approved pending comment modifications	October 20, 2020
No public comments were received for the regional (Region 8) nor the local (WDB-83) plan	October 02 – November 02, 2020
Regional/Local Plan submitted to LWC/Governor	December 18, 2020

*The Workforce Development Board SDA-83, Inc. is an Equal Opportunity Employer/Program. "Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities."*

The local modification process mirrors the opportunity for public comment and input on the unreviewed draft of the plan. WDB-83 will submit a revised draft of its local plan to the Louisiana Workforce Commission on or before the date required by the State. At that time an electronic copy of the revised plan will be sent to each member of the Workforce Development Board, as well as to all partner agencies for review and comment.

The Executive Committee of LWDB-83 will have an opportunity for review and comments beginning on the first day that all modifications are completed and at the next scheduled board meeting.

Additionally, a copy of the revised draft plan will be posted on LWDB-83's website ([www.wdb83.com](http://www.wdb83.com)) for a period of thirty (30) days with directions for submission of public comments and e-mailed to its partners on the same date. These comments will be reviewed and recorded into the development of the final plan document before submission on or before the date required by the State or at such time as modification is needed.

To ensure public access for those that may not be familiar with the Workforce Development Board website, LWDB-83 will place the following public notice in the regional paper, Monroe News Star, to run for a period of one week. The comment period to allow public and shareholder feedback will be open for a period of thirty (30) days.

#### LEGAL NOTICE

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*The Workforce Development Board SDA-83, Inc. is an Equal Opportunity Employer/Program. "Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities."*



### Amended Regional/Local Plan TIMELINE

ACTIVITY	TARGET DATE
Regional and Local Planning Guide issued	January 19, 2023
Regional and local plan posted for 30-day public comment period	February 28, 2023
Regional and local teams update plans based on public comments	March 28, 2023
Regional and local plan finalized (approved by Local Board and submitted to the Governor)	April 18, 2023
State review period completed	May 23, 2023
Technical assistance provided for plans that are not compliant (as needed)	May 29, 2023

Any modifications needed or requested over the term of this Plan will be brought to the local Boards for consideration and approval.