

**PY2024-  
PY2027**

*State of Iowa  
Unified State Plan  
Under the  
Workforce  
Innovation and  
Opportunity Act*



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## Overview

Under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), the Governor of each State must submit a Unified or Combined State Plan to the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Labor that outlines a four-year strategy for the State's workforce development system. The publicly funded workforce development system is a national network of Federal, State, regional, and local agencies and organizations that provide a range of employment, education, training, and related services and supports to help all job-seekers secure good jobs while providing businesses with the skilled workers they need to compete in the global economy. States must have approved Unified or Combined State Plans in place to receive funding for core programs.

WIOA reforms planning requirements, previously governed by the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA), to foster better alignment of Federal investments in job training, to integrate service delivery across programs and improve efficiency in service delivery, and to ensure that the workforce system is job-driven and matches employers with skilled individuals. One of WIOA's principal areas of reform is to require States to plan across core programs and include this planning process in the Unified or Combined State Plans. This reform promotes a shared understanding of the workforce needs within each State and fosters development of more comprehensive and integrated approaches, such as career pathways and sector strategies, for addressing the needs of businesses and workers. Successful implementation of many of these approaches called for within WIOA requires robust relationships across programs. WIOA requires States and local areas to enhance coordination and partnerships with local entities and supportive service agencies for strengthened service delivery, including through Unified or Combined State Plans.

### **Options for Submitting a State Plan**

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

- Adult program (Title I of WIOA),
- Dislocated Worker program (Title I),
- Youth program (Title I),
- Adult Education and Family Literacy Act program (Title II),

- Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service program (authorized under the Wagner- Peyser Act, as amended by title III), and
- Vocational Rehabilitation program (authorized under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by Title IV).

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

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



- Employment and training activities carried out by the Department of Housing and Urban Development
- Community Services Block Grant Program (Employment and training activities carried out under the Community Services Block Grant Act (42 U.S.C. 9901 et seq.))<sup>1</sup>

### **How State Plan Requirements Are Organized**

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

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

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

document, *Supplement to the Workforce and Innovation Act (WIOA) Unified and Combined State Plan Requirements*. The Departments are not seeking comments on these requirements).

- When responding to Unified or Combined State Plan requirements, States must identify specific strategies for coordinating programs and services for target populations.<sup>2</sup> States must develop strategies that look beyond strategies for the general population and develop approaches that also address the needs of target populations.

## I. WIOA State Plan Type and Executive Summary

### WIOA State Plan Type

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

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

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

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

- Career and technical education programs authorized under the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006, as amended by the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (Perkins V) (20 U.S.C. 2301 et seq.) **No**
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program (42 U.S.C. 601 et seq.) **No**

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

- Employment and Training programs under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (programs authorized under section 6(d)(4) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2015(d)(4)) **No**
- Work programs authorized under section 6(o) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2015(o)) **No**

## II. Strategic Planning Elements

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include a Strategic Planning Elements section that analyzes the State’s current economic environment and identifies the State’s overall vision for its workforce development system. The required elements in this section allow the State to develop data-driven goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce and to identify successful strategies for aligning workforce development programs to support economic growth. Unless otherwise noted, all Strategic Planning Elements apply to Combined State Plan partner programs included in the plan as well as to core programs.

Where requirements identify the term “populations”, these must include individuals with barriers to employment as defined at WIOA Section 3. This includes displaced homemakers; low-income individuals; Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians; individuals with disabilities, including youth who are individuals with disabilities; older individuals; ex-offenders; homeless individuals, or homeless children and youths; youth who are in or have aged out of the foster care system; individuals who are English language learners, individuals who have low levels of literacy, and individuals facing substantial cultural barriers; farmworkers (as defined at section 167(i) of WIOA and Training and Employment Guidance Letter No. 35-14); individuals within 2 years of exhausting lifetime eligibility under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program; single parents (including single pregnant women); and long-term unemployed individuals. Additional populations include veterans, unemployed workers, and youth, and others that the State may identify.

### a. Economic, Workforce, and Workforce Development Activities Analysis

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

## 1. Economic and Workforce Analysis

### *A. Economic Analysis*

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

#### *i. Existing Demand Industry Sectors and Occupations*

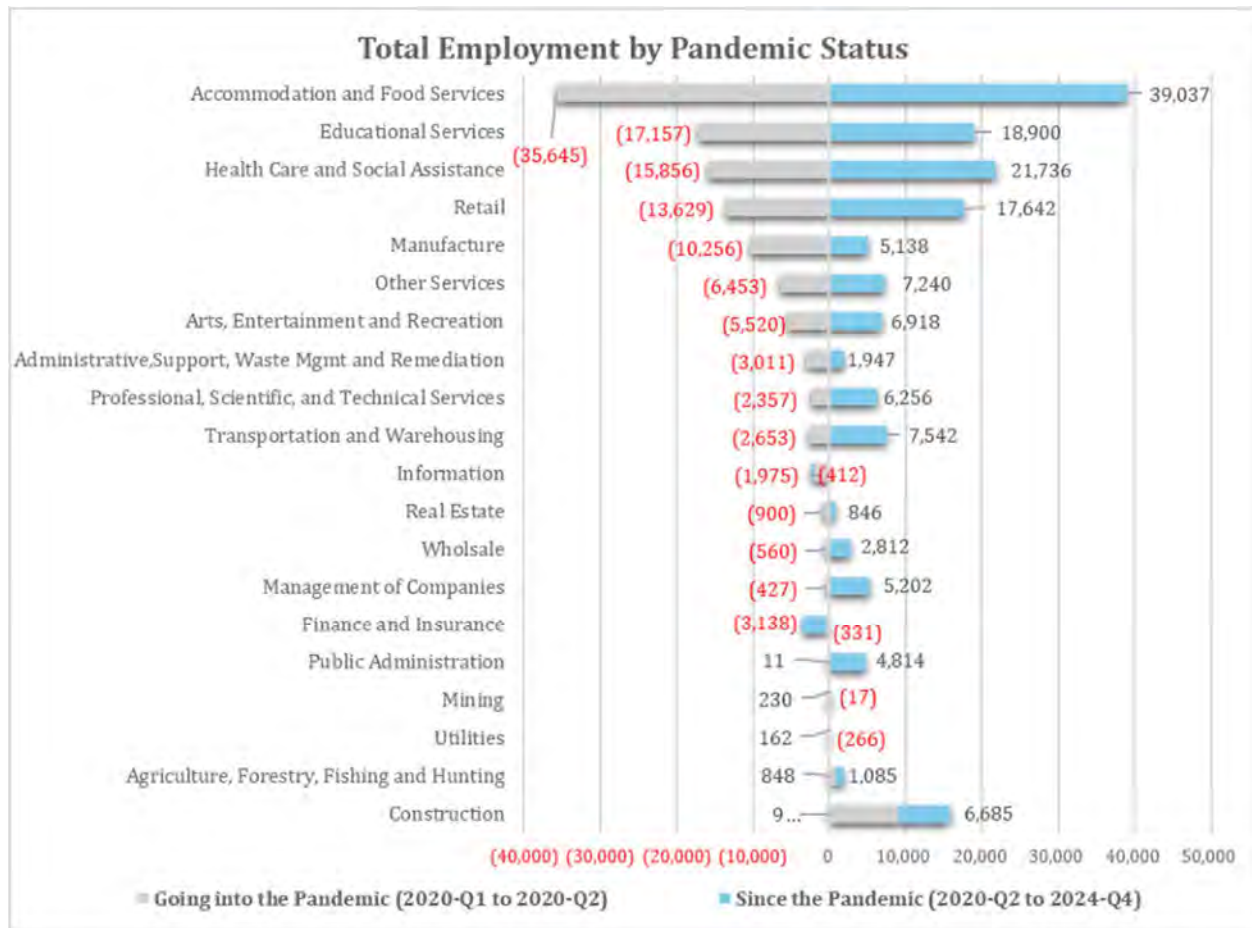
Provide an analysis of the industries and occupations for which there is existing demand.

The COVID-19 pandemic delivered a shock to Iowa's economy, mirroring the widespread disruption felt across the United States. Within a single month, over 140,000 Iowans lost their jobs as lockdowns forced many businesses to close or scale back operations.

Now, five years later, as the immediate effects of the pandemic have receded, Iowa's total employment has grown by 0.6% from 2019 to 2024—lagging behind the national growth rate of 4.6%. The primary contributors to this sluggish recovery are the Manufacturing and Finance & Insurance sectors, two of Iowa's largest industries.

Figure 1 depicts employment shifts from the onset of the pandemic through the present, highlighting sector-specific trends in job growth and decline. Notably, both Manufacturing and Finance & Insurance have experienced net job losses compared to pre-pandemic levels, indicating persistent challenges in recovery.

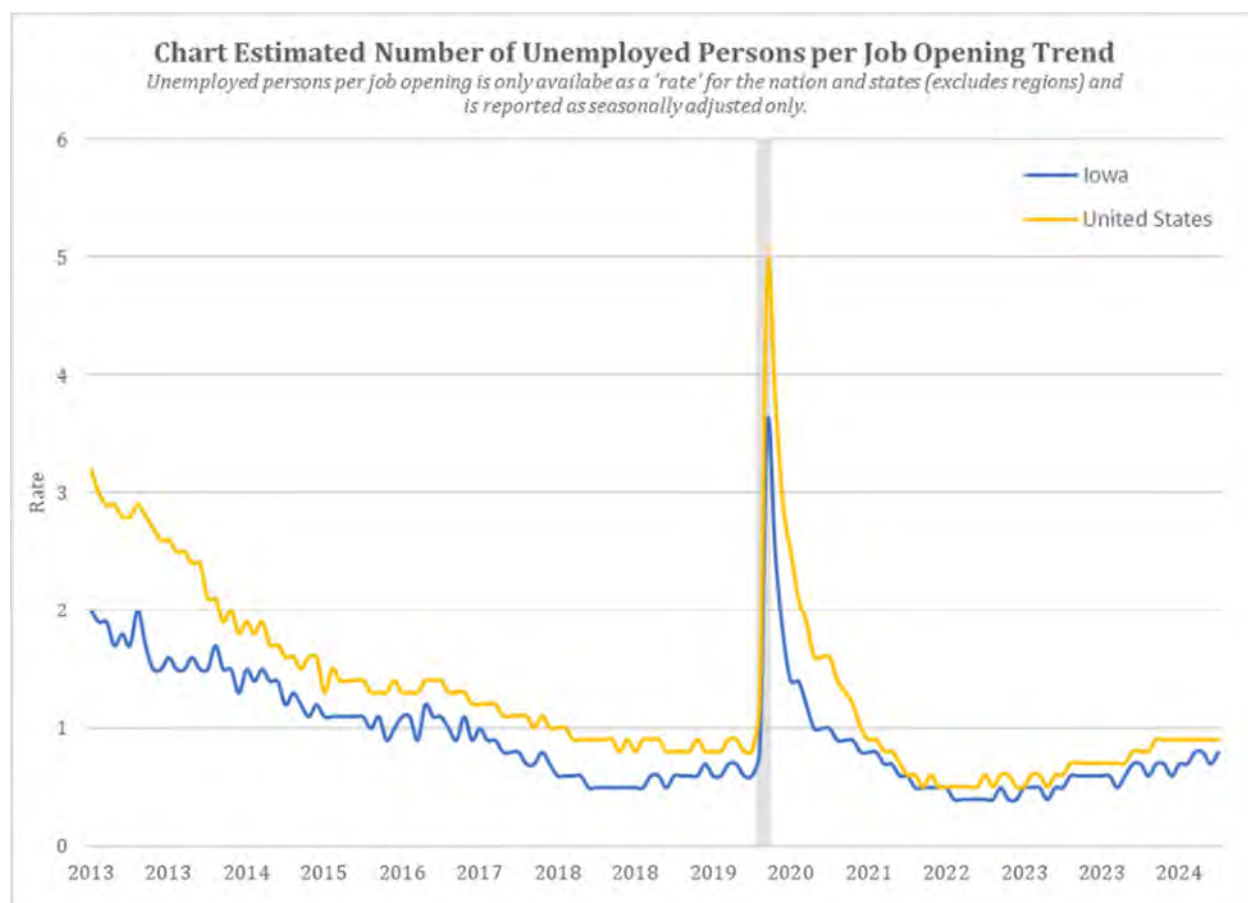
Figure 1



Source: Iowa Workforce Development, QCEW

Despite the slow employment growth rate, Iowa currently has a low ratio of unemployed workers to job openings (Figure 2). As of February 2025, the ratio was 0.8, slightly below the national average of 0.9, pointing to a tight labor market. There are more jobs to individuals, while this can signal a strong economy, it also presents challenges for employers to find skilled workers especially in a high-skilled industry such as Manufacturing and Finance & Insurance.

Figure 2



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics,, JOLTS Survey

The job openings rate (Figure 3) is another key indicator of labor demand. A high rate suggests strong demand for workers and can mean that employers find it hard to fill positions—especially in industries that require highly skilled labor. Over the past four years, Iowa’s job openings rate has averaged around 5.5%, reflecting sustained and consistent demand for workers across the state.

Regionally, the highest concentration of job openings is found in the Des Moines–West Des Moines metro area, followed by the Cedar Rapids metro area (Figure 4). The Iowa City and Dubuque metro areas have the lowest ratios of unemployed individuals per job opening—0.4 and 0.5 respectively—as of February 2025, indicating particularly tight labor markets compared to the state overall.

Among the rural counties in the state, the employment centers with high job openings are: Council Bluffs (Pottawattamie County – 2,705, Western Iowa), Mason City (Cerro Gordo County – 2,259, North Central), Ottumwa (Wapello County – 1,671, Southeast Iowa), Burlington (Des Moines County – 1,456, Southeast Iowa), Fort Dodge (Webster County – 1234, North Central Iowa),

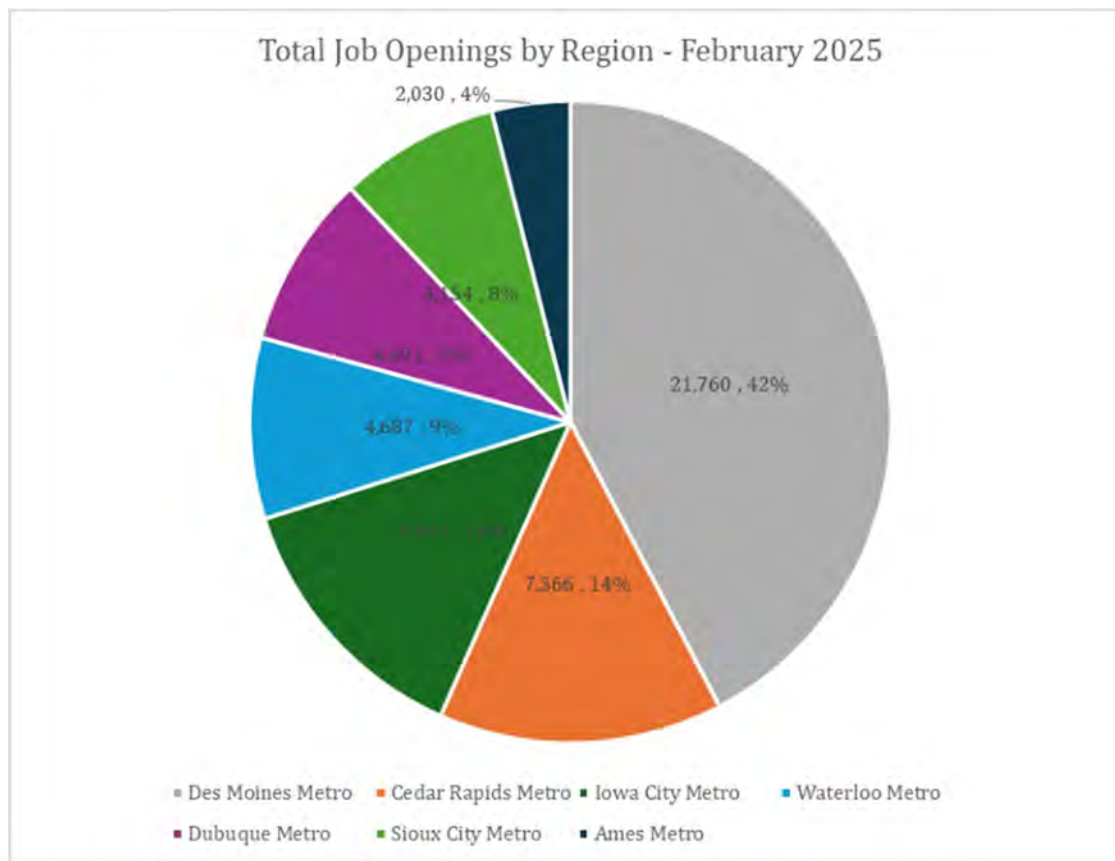
Clinton (Clinton County – 917, Mississippi Valley), Muscatine (Muscatine County – 913, Southeast Iowa) and Marshalltown (Marshall County – 780, South Central Iowa). Cerro Gordo County (0.3), Wapello County (0.4), Webster County (0.5), and several counties in the northwest counties of the state have the lowest unemployed individuals per job opening.

Figure 3



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

Figure 4



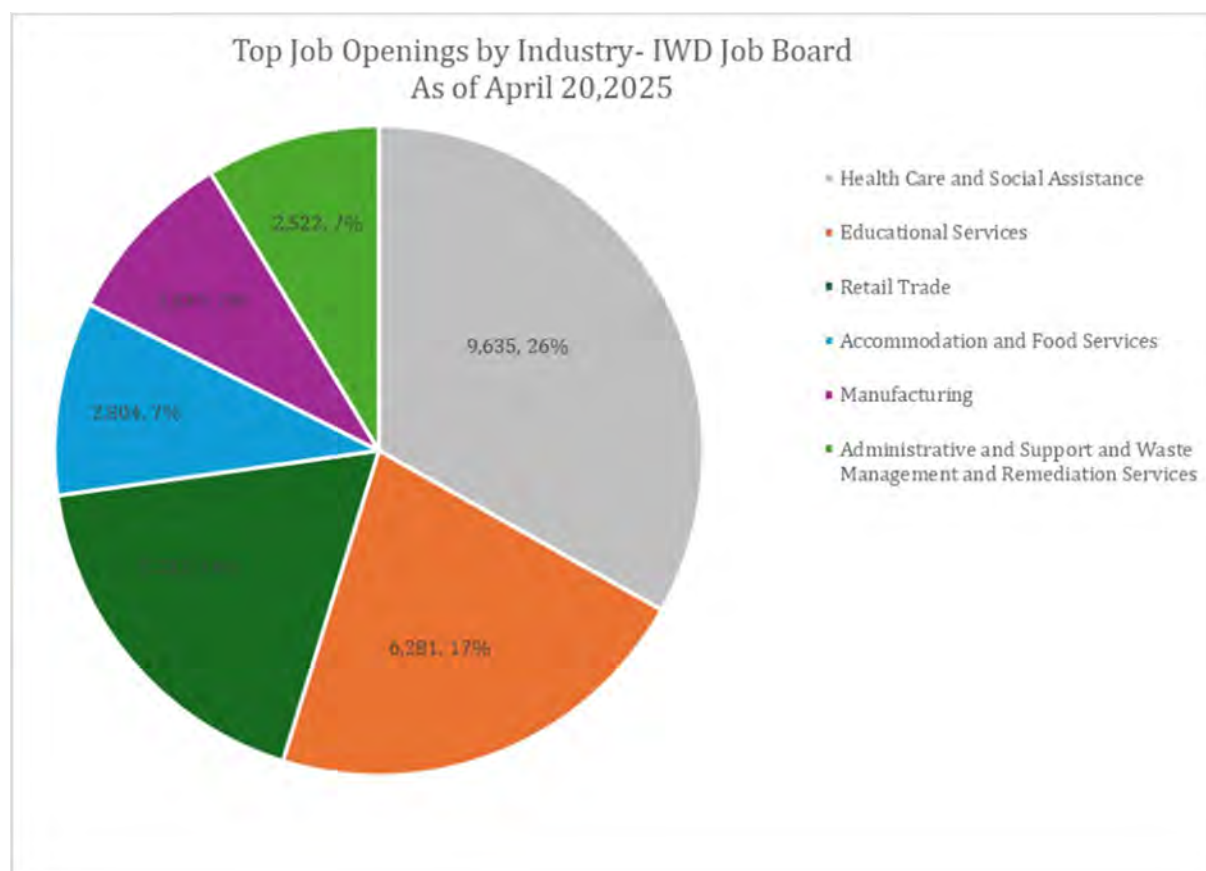
Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, JOLTS Survey

In contrast, in February 2025, counties with the highest estimated labor market slack include Madison County (3.3), Jackson County (2.9), Van Buren County (2.7), Benton County (2.6), Grundy County (2.6), Allamakee County (2.4), Butler County (2.4), and Clayton County (2.3). In the cases of Madison, Jackson, and Benton counties, this is less concerning, as they border large metro areas with strong job markets, which help absorb local labor supply and tighten labor conditions. Regionally, several counties in Northwest Iowa also show elevated slack, indicating a surplus of available workers. Notably, Allamakee County has an unemployment rate of 6.23%, Clayton County 6.03%, Butler County 4.9% and Grundy County 2.99%, reflecting higher-than-average joblessness in those areas.

Iowa Workforce Development's job board data is another source for job openings across the State. Figure 5 highlights the top industries currently hiring across the state. Of the total job postings, 3 out of 4 are within these leading sectors, with Healthcare & Social Assistance and Educational Services at the forefront.



Figure 5



Source: <https://lowaworks.gov>

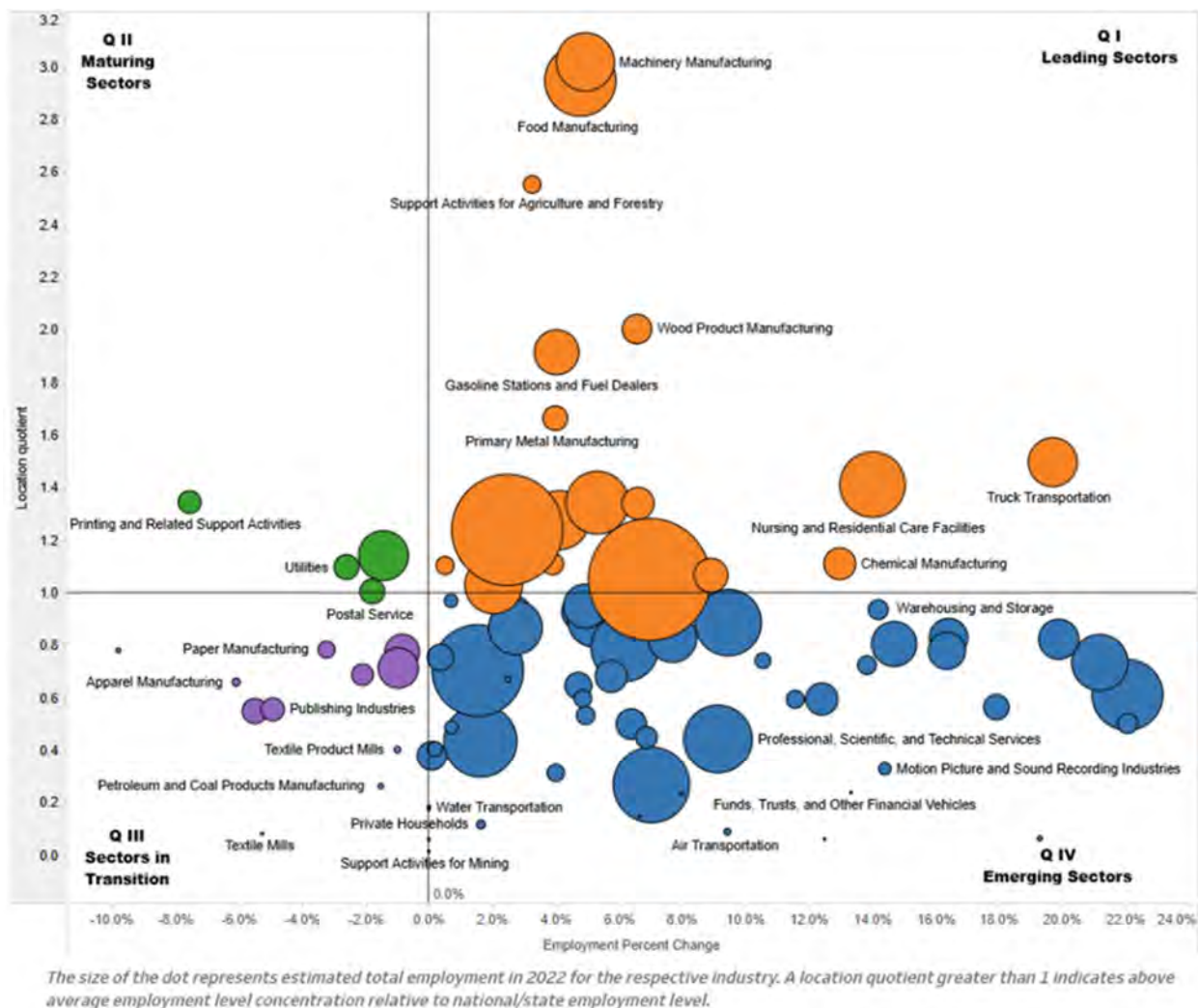
Drilling down into the specific occupations within the highest openings, Registered Nurses are by far the most advertised job on lowaworks.gov with nearly 3,400 job openings. In the distance is Retail Salesperson (724), Nursing Assistants (670), First-Line Supervisors of Food Preparation and Serving Workers (583), Physicians, All Other (551), Coaches and Scouts(518), Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses (515), Customer Service Representatives (488), Stockers and Order Fillers (487), Fast Food and Counter Workers (427). Four of the top 10 occupations with the most job openings are either Healthcare Practitioners or Healthcare Support workers. These occupations are also reflected in long-term industry and occupational projections along with opportunities in Education and Manufacturing.

### Industry Analysis

“In-demand” sectors are sectors which are considered the "Leading Sectors" (Figure 6). It highlights the industries projected to be in high demand over the next decade. Industries that show both a positive employment percent change

(x-axis) and a positive location quotient<sup>[1]</sup> (y-axis) are expected not only to grow but also to outpace national trends. Specifically, sub-sectors such as Support Activities for Agriculture and Forestry, Food Manufacturing, Wood Product Manufacturing, Machinery Manufacturing, and Gasoline Stations and Fuel Dealers are anticipated to grow at more than twice the national rate. Additionally, industries like Educational Services, Nursing and Residential Care Facilities, and Truck Transportation are expected to contribute the most new jobs in the coming ten years.

Figure 6



A location quotient (LQ) is an analytical statistic that measures Iowa's industrial specialization relative to the nation.

Table 1 presents the top five industries in Iowa for Q4 2024 (highlighted in blue). Together, these industries account for over 50% of the state's total employment.

The top five sectors have consistently ranked among the most in-demand for over a decade, reflecting long-standing historical trends.

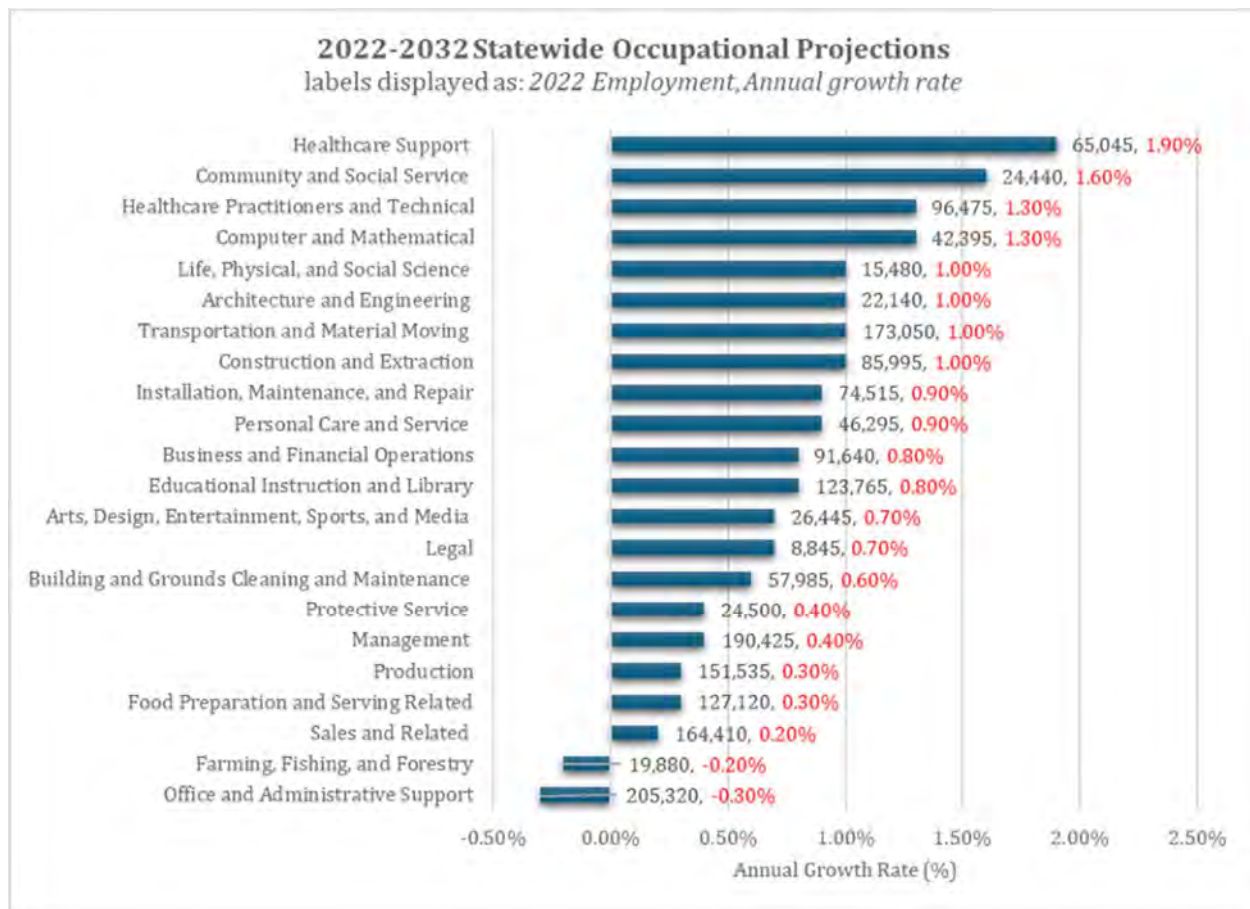
Table 1

|    | <b>Iowa Industry Employment, 2024 Quarter 4</b>                          | <b>Total Locations</b> | <b>Avg Monthly Employment</b> | <b>Avg Weekly Wage</b> |
|----|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------|
| 1  | Health Care and Social Assistance                                        | 13,229                 | 231,745                       | \$1,147                |
| 2  | Manufacturing                                                            | 4,312                  | 217,784                       | \$1,578                |
| 3  | Retail Trade                                                             | 11,120                 | 176,128                       | \$682                  |
| 4  | Educational Services                                                     | 3,150                  | 157,726                       | \$1,043                |
| 5  | Accommodation and Food Services                                          | 7,526                  | 122,664                       | \$438                  |
| 6  | Finance and Insurance                                                    | 7,557                  | 91,778                        | \$1,936                |
| 7  | Construction                                                             | 9,746                  | 86,482                        | \$1,609                |
| 8  | Transportation and Warehousing                                           | 4,979                  | 74,299                        | \$1,148                |
| 9  | Public Administration                                                    | 3,034                  | 68,766                        | \$1,272                |
| 10 | Wholesale Trade                                                          | 7,792                  | 67,556                        | \$1,751                |
| 11 | Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services | 6,418                  | 62,240                        | \$1,028                |
| 12 | Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services                         | 12,927                 | 58,336                        | \$1,988                |
| 13 | Other Services (except Public Administration)                            | 7,676                  | 41,390                        | \$965                  |
| 14 | Management of Companies and Enterprises                                  | 2,028                  | 25,796                        | \$2,331                |
| 15 | Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting                               | 2,837                  | 21,650                        | \$1,156                |
| 16 | Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation                                      | 1,578                  | 20,660                        | \$502                  |
| 17 | Information                                                              | 2,726                  | 18,513                        | \$1,615                |
| 18 | Real Estate and Rental and Leasing                                       | 3,913                  | 14,702                        | \$1,259                |
| 19 | Utilities                                                                | 482                    | 7,487                         | \$2,149                |
| 20 | Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction                            | 194                    | 2,239                         | \$1,443                |

Source: Iowa Workforce Development, QCEW

Figure 6 highlights the occupations projected to experience the most growth over the next ten years, offering insight into Iowa’s future workforce needs. In contrast, Table 2 summarizes current in-demand occupations based on job postings from the IowaWORKS job board. While many of these roles reflect the state’s top employing industries, others—identified as high-demand and high-growth—play critical support roles across multiple sectors. For example, truck driving remains one of the most consistently in-demand occupations, serving a broad range of industries across Iowa.

Figure 7



Source: Iowa Workforce Development, Occupational Projections

Table 2

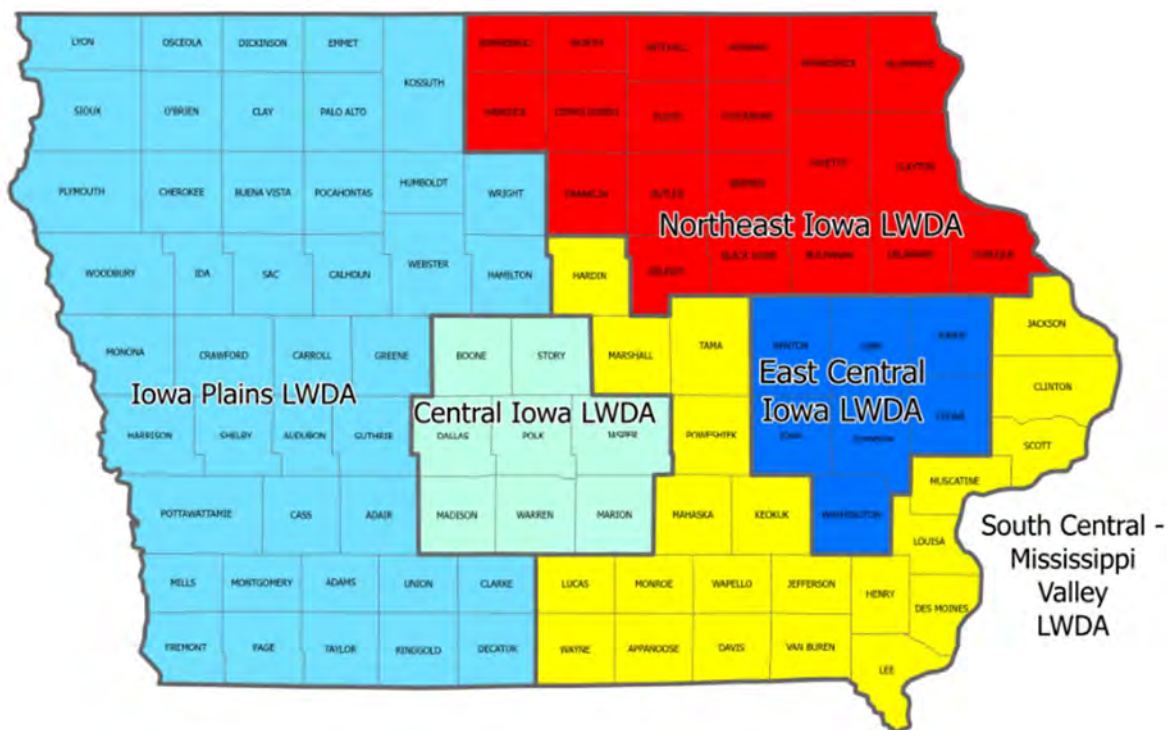
| Rank | Occupation Group                                   | Job Openings as of April 21, 2025 |
|------|----------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1    | Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations | 8,865                             |
| 2    | Management Occupations                             | 3,185                             |
| 3    | Sales and Related Occupations                      | 2,489                             |
| 4    | Educational Instruction and Library Occupations    | 2,263                             |
| 5    | Transportation and Material Moving Occupations     | 2,105                             |
| 6    | Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations   | 2,019                             |
| 7    | Office and Administrative Support Occupations      | 1,592                             |
| 8    | Healthcare Support Occupations                     | 1,491                             |

|    |                                                   |       |
|----|---------------------------------------------------|-------|
| 9  | Installation, Maintenance, and Repair Occupations | 1,449 |
| 10 | Production Occupations                            | 1,245 |

Source: <https://lowaworks.gov>

## Local Workforce Development Area Industry Projections

Effective July 1, 2026, Iowa has five Local Workforce Development Areas (LWDAs), each with unique demographics and workforce challenges. The previous Mississippi Valley and South Central Local Areas are merging to form the Eastern Iowa Local Workforce Development Area.



## Central Iowa LWDA

Central Iowa accounts for nearly one-third of all jobs in the state, serving as a microcosm of Iowa's broader economy. Health care and social assistance is the largest employer and continues to grow with more than 10,000 jobs added since the recession in 2020.

Des Moines, the economic center of Central Iowa, hosts a significant concentration of Iowa's insurance and credit intermediation jobs. However, employment in this sector has declined by approximately 5% since its peak in 2017. Fortunately, some of these job losses have been offset by growth in other Local Workforce Development Areas (LWDAs).



The Accommodation and Food Services industry suffered the most significant job losses during the pandemic. However, since the third quarter of 2020, the sector has made a strong recovery as businesses reopened and hiring resumed. Over the past five years, it has demonstrated steady growth and has now fully returned to pre-pandemic employment levels.

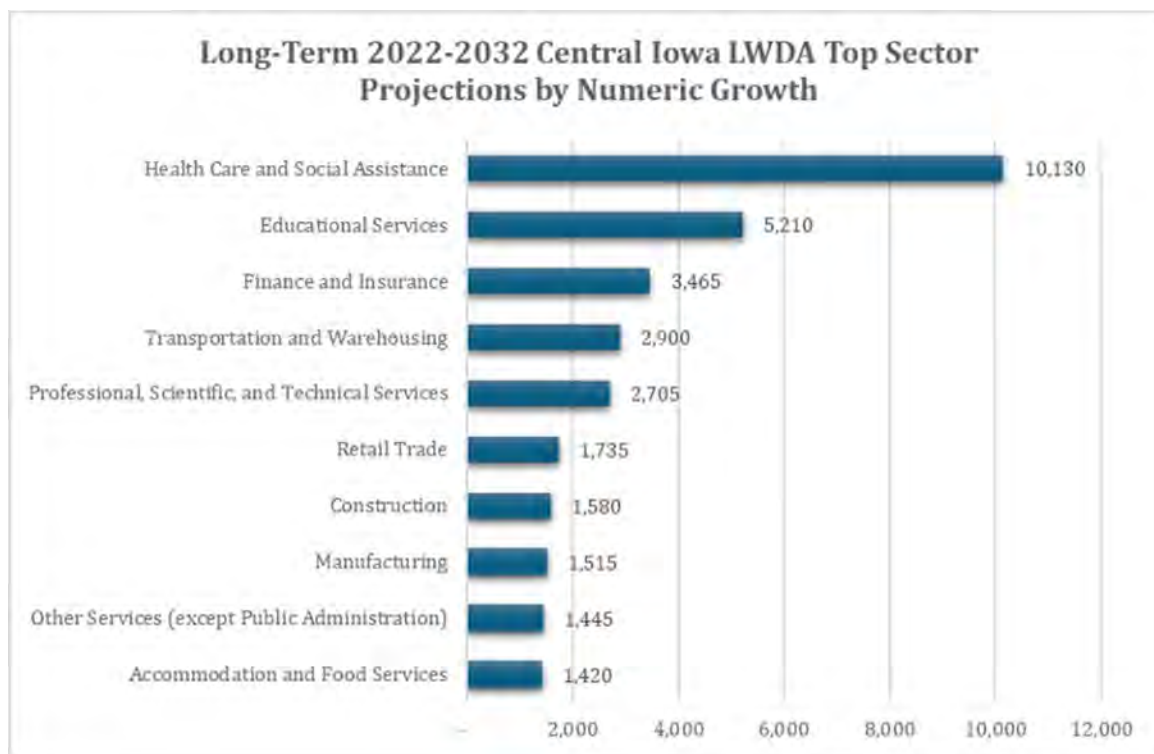
Central Iowa LWDA is projected to add approximately 39,000 non-farm jobs by 2032, increasing total employment from 508,890 to 547,740—an 8% increase. This acceleration also reflects a stronger recovery from the 2020 pandemic-induced recession compared to previous projections. The health care and social assistance sector alone is expected to add a little over 10,000 jobs, largely due to the region’s aging population. The charts below highlight key industry trends and employment projections for Central Iowa.

Table 3

|    | <b>Central Iowa LWDA Industry Employment, 2024<br/>Quarter 4</b>            | <b>Total<br/>Locations</b> | <b>Avg Monthly<br/>Employment</b> | <b>Avg<br/>Weekly<br/>Wage</b> |
|----|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1  | Health Care and Social Assistance                                           | 3,258                      | 64,038                            | \$1,116                        |
| 2  | Retail Trade                                                                | 2,727                      | 50,785                            | \$647                          |
| 3  | Finance and Insurance                                                       | 2,451                      | 50,358                            | \$1,818                        |
| 4  | Educational Services                                                        | 930                        | 41,745                            | \$975                          |
| 5  | Accommodation and Food Services                                             | 2,070                      | 37,167                            | \$404                          |
| 6  | Manufacturing                                                               | 872                        | 36,830                            | \$1,405                        |
| 7  | Construction                                                                | 2,503                      | 28,418                            | \$1,511                        |
| 8  | Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services                            | 5,105                      | 26,385                            | \$1,800                        |
| 9  | Transportation and Warehousing                                              | 851                        | 23,401                            | \$1,329                        |
| 10 | Public Administration                                                       | 559                        | 23,185                            | \$1,201                        |
| 11 | Administrative and Support and Waste Management<br>and Remediation Services | 2,072                      | 23,009                            | \$1,009                        |
| 12 | Wholesale Trade                                                             | 2,406                      | 21,418                            | \$1,728                        |
| 13 | Other Services (except Public Administration)                               | 2,354                      | 13,429                            | \$938                          |
| 14 | Management of Companies and Enterprises                                     | 844                        | 11,900                            | \$2,101                        |
| 15 | Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation                                         | 452                        | 7,811                             | \$518                          |
| 16 | Information                                                                 | 970                        | 7,121                             | \$1,497                        |
| 17 | Real Estate and Rental and Leasing                                          | 1,478                      | 6,800                             | \$1,177                        |
| 18 | Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting                                  | 262                        | 2,200                             | \$1,085                        |
| 19 | Utilities                                                                   | 91                         | 1,034                             | \$2,144                        |
| 20 | Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction                               | 25                         | 213                               | \$1,539                        |

Source: Iowa Workforce Development, QCEW

Figure 8



Source: Iowa Workforce Development, Industry Projections

### East Central Iowa LWDA

The East Central Iowa LWDA, which includes the Iowa City and Cedar Rapids MSAs, is following similar employment trends as the state overall. Health Care and Social Assistance remains the region's largest employer, followed by Manufacturing and Educational Services. While employment in Manufacturing has declined by just over 5% since its 2019 peak, the Educational Services sector has reached pre-pandemic employment levels. Manufacturing is still vital in the area, with 13 percent of all employment in the LWDA.

East Central Iowa LWDA is projected to add approximately 24,400 nonfarm jobs by 2032, increasing industry employment from 279,695 to 304,095 - a 9 percent increase. The educational services sector is expected to add 4,935 jobs. This sector is expected to benefit from a growing need for workers upskilling and reskilling, and from a greater digital economy. The healthcare and social assistance sector is projected to add 5,930 jobs in the next ten years, driven by an increase in the number of aging populations. The charts below summarize the in-demand industry sectors and projections for East Central Iowa.

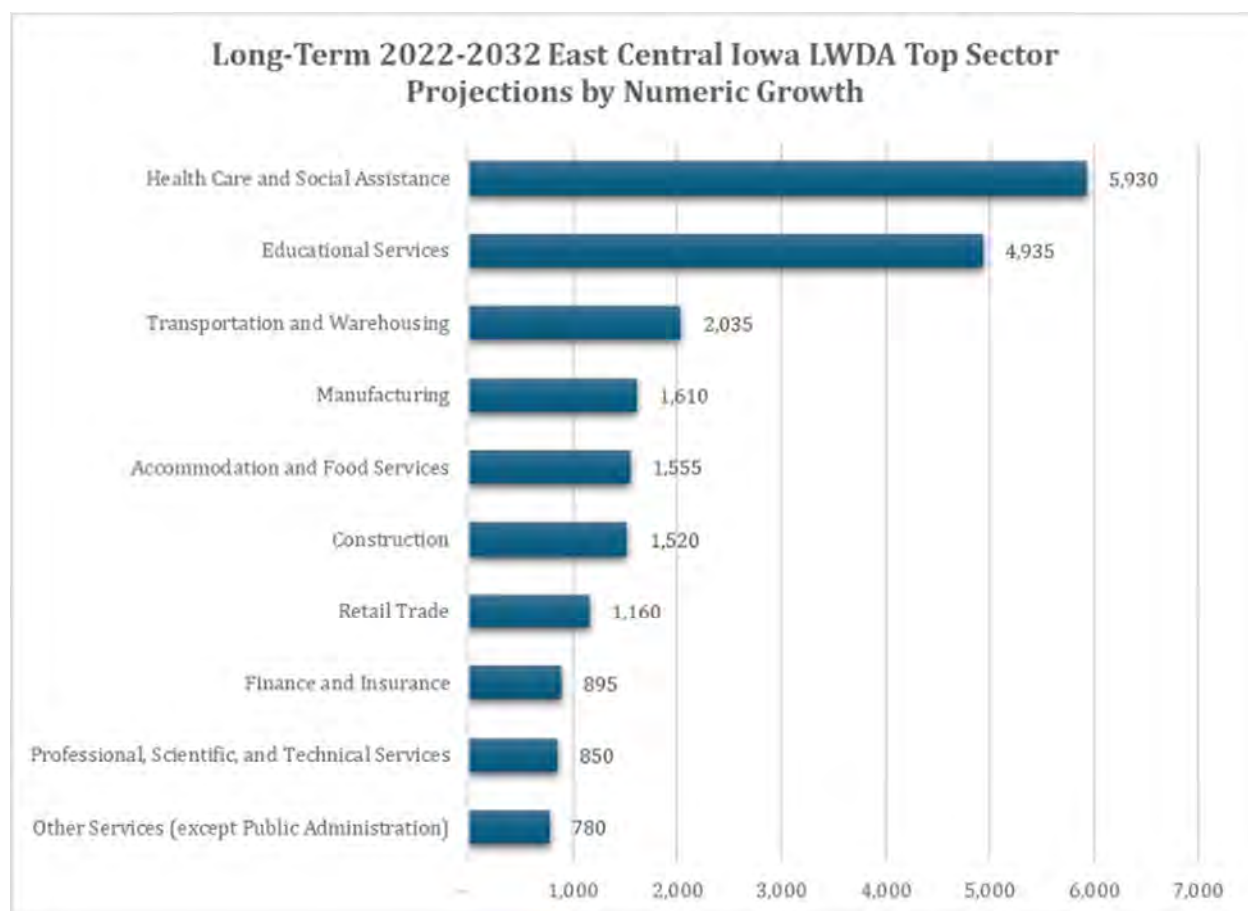
Table 4

|    | <b>East Central Iowa LWDA Industry<br/>Employment, 2024 Quarter 4</b>       | <b>Total<br/>Locations</b> | <b>Avg Monthly<br/>Employment</b> | <b>Avg<br/>Weekly<br/>Wage</b> |
|----|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1  | Health Care and Social Assistance                                           | 2,089                      | 42,679                            | \$948                          |
| 2  | Educational Services                                                        | 515                        | 33,758                            | \$992                          |
| 3  | Manufacturing                                                               | 552                        | 30,090                            | \$1,449                        |
| 4  | Retail Trade                                                                | 1,564                      | 26,264                            | \$646                          |
| 5  | Accommodation and Food Services                                             | 1,135                      | 20,461                            | \$419                          |
| 6  | Construction                                                                | 1,411                      | 13,508                            | \$1,436                        |
| 7  | Transportation and Warehousing                                              | 575                        | 11,043                            | \$1,102                        |
| 8  | Administrative and Support and Waste<br>Management and Remediation Services | 1,029                      | 10,388                            | \$937                          |
| 9  | Finance and Insurance                                                       | 964                        | 9,787                             | \$1,609                        |
| 10 | Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services                            | 2,249                      | 9,345                             | \$1,720                        |
| 11 | Public Administration                                                       | 254                        | 9,160                             | \$1,089                        |
| 12 | Wholesale Trade                                                             | 1,115                      | 8,662                             | \$1,680                        |
| 13 | Other Services (except Public Administration)                               | 1,138                      | 6,427                             | \$824                          |
| 14 | Information                                                                 | 477                        | 3,458                             | \$1,606                        |
| 15 | Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation                                         | 232                        | 2,850                             | \$430                          |
| 16 | Management of Companies and Enterprises                                     | 331                        | 2,801                             | \$1,931                        |
| 17 | Real Estate and Rental and Leasing                                          | 574                        | 2,260                             | \$811                          |
| 18 | Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting                                  | 234                        | 1,503                             | \$1,044                        |
| 19 | Utilities                                                                   | 46                         | 993                               | \$2,211                        |
| 20 | Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction                               | 31                         | 120                               | \$1,426                        |

Source: Iowa Workforce Development, QCEW



Figure 8



Source: Iowa Workforce Development, Industry Projections

### Mississippi Valley LWDA

The Mississippi Valley LWDA is most dependent on Manufacturing employment, with 18.4 percent of all jobs being in this sector. Additionally, Mississippi Valley can suffer from a tight labor market which can impede growth. Health Care and Social assistance is the second largest sector with 13.8 percent of employment. Over the past 15 years, total employment in this industry has remained relatively stable, with a slight peak of approximately 1,500 additional jobs in 2017. Overall, Mississippi Valley is expected to add about 14,775 nonfarm jobs by 2032 from 205,965 in 2022 to 220,740 in 2032 - 7 percent increase. The Transportation and Warehousing sector is projected to add 2,335 jobs and has been steadily recovering to reach pre-pandemic employment levels. The Healthcare and Social Assistance sector is projected to add 3,980 jobs in the next ten years driven by an increase in the number of ageing populations. The

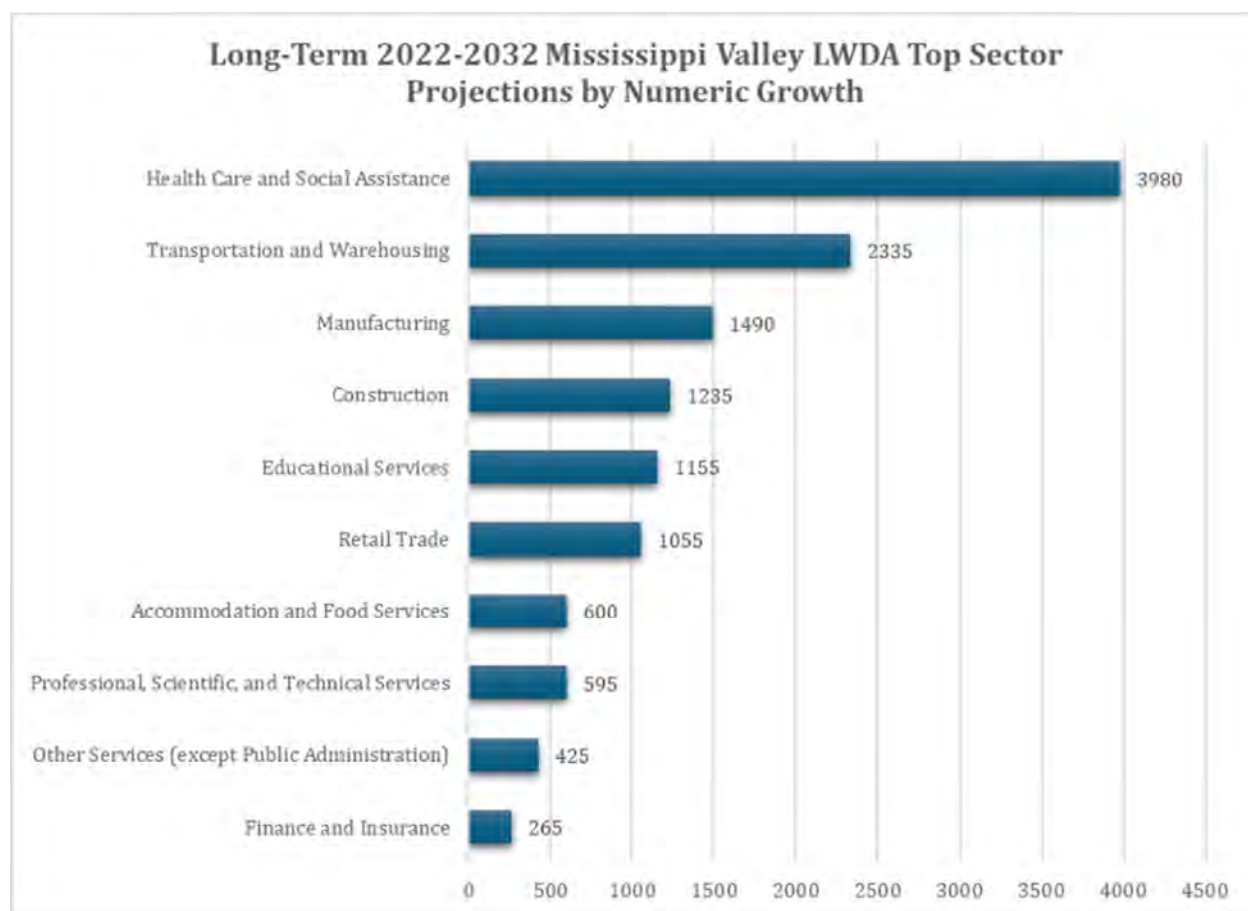
charts below summarize the –in-demand industry sectors and occupations for Mississippi Valley.

Table 5

|    | <b>Mississippi Valley LWDA Industry</b>                                  | <b>Total Locations</b> | <b>Avg Monthly Employment</b> | <b>Avg Weekly Wage</b> |
|----|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------|
| 1  | Manufacturing                                                            | 573                    | 33,313                        | \$1,473                |
| 2  | Health Care and Social Assistance                                        | 1,962                  | 25,126                        | \$1,011                |
| 3  | Retail Trade                                                             | 1,359                  | 22,283                        | \$645                  |
| 4  | Accommodation and Food Services                                          | 1,001                  | 16,223                        | \$339                  |
| 5  | Educational Services                                                     | 327                    | 15,012                        | \$855                  |
| 6  | Construction                                                             | 1,058                  | 10,648                        | \$1,364                |
| 7  | Transportation and Warehousing                                           | 532                    | 8,701                         | \$1,157                |
| 8  | Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services | 788                    | 8,172                         | \$908                  |
| 9  | Public Administration                                                    | 284                    | 7,376                         | \$1,122                |
| 10 | Wholesale Trade                                                          | 839                    | 6,704                         | \$1,509                |
| 11 | Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services                         | 1,288                  | 5,601                         | \$1,443                |
| 12 | Other Services (except Public Administration)                            | 899                    | 5,308                         | \$826                  |
| 13 | Finance and Insurance                                                    | 805                    | 5,166                         | \$1,404                |
| 14 | Management of Companies and Enterprises                                  | 231                    | 4,426                         | \$2,857                |
| 15 | Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation                                      | 172                    | 2,322                         | \$405                  |
| 16 | Real Estate and Rental and Leasing                                       | 471                    | 1,434                         | \$1,076                |
| 17 | Information                                                              | 247                    | 1,274                         | \$1,148                |
| 18 | Utilities                                                                | 53                     | 1,268                         | \$1,953                |
| 19 | Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting                               | 180                    | 1,031                         | \$1,100                |
| 20 | Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction                            | 25                     | 63                            | \$1,389                |

Source: Iowa Workforce Development, QCEW

Figure 9



Source: Iowa Workforce Development Industry Projections

### **Northeast Iowa LWDA**

The Northeast Iowa Local Workforce Development Area (LWDA) remains heavily reliant on the Manufacturing sector, which accounts for 18.3% of all covered employment. However, this sector has experienced a steady decline, shedding over 2,000 jobs since the third quarter of 2022. In contrast, the Health Care and Social Assistance sector has shown consistent growth across the state and within the region. Since 2021, it has added nearly 2,500 jobs, solidifying its position as the second-largest employment sector in the Northeast Iowa LWDA. It is also projected to become the region's largest employer over the next decade, estimated to add another 5,690 jobs, largely due to the growing aging population.

Overall, the Northeast Iowa LWDA is expected to add 19,085 nonfarm jobs between 2022 and 2032. Total industry employment is projected to grow from 281,130 to 300,215 jobs—an increase of 7%. The Educational Services sector is

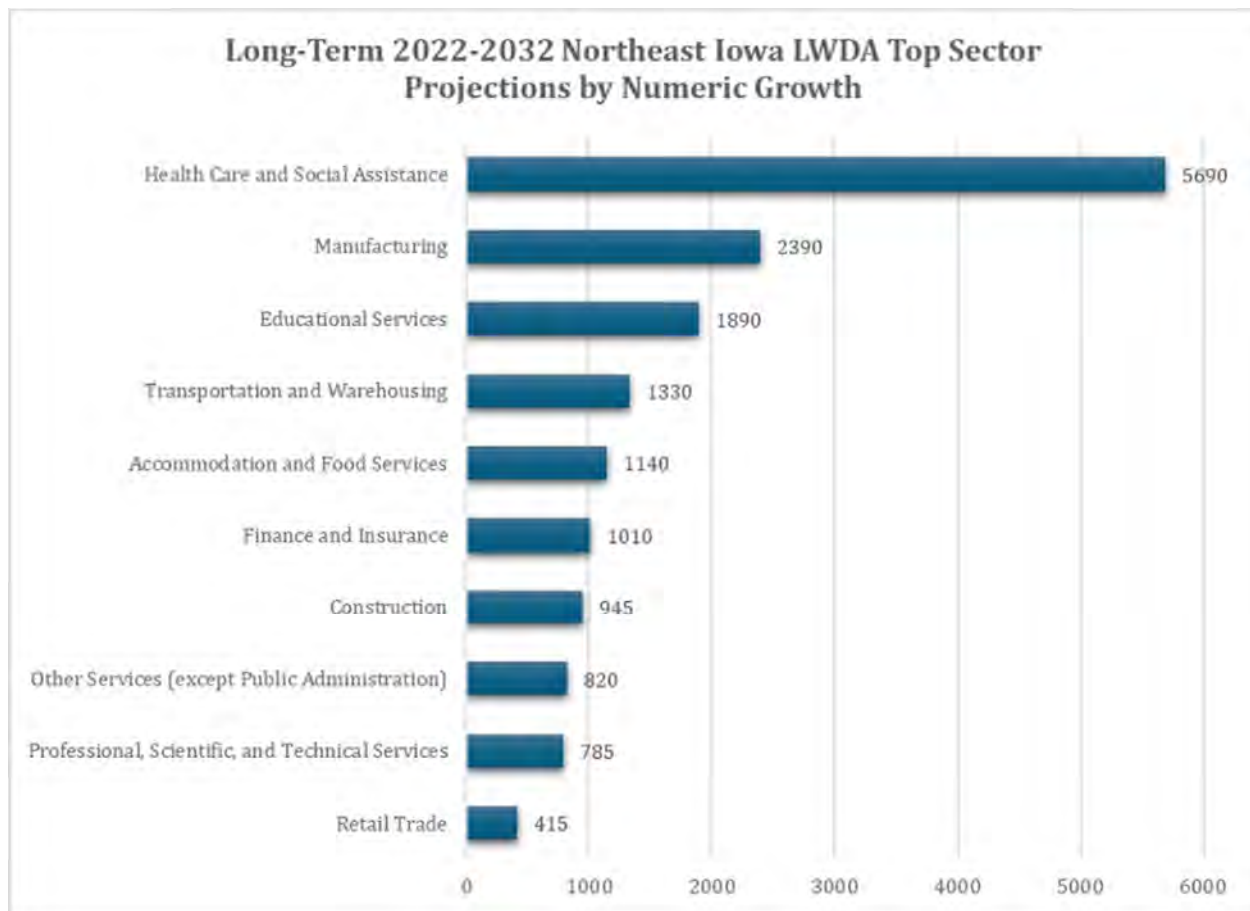
anticipated to add 1,890 jobs, driven by increased demand for workforce upskilling, reskilling, and the expansion of the digital economy. The charts below highlight the most in-demand industry sectors and occupations in Northeast Iowa.

Table 6

|    | <b>Northeast Iowa LWDA Industry<br/>Employment, 2024 Quarter 4</b>       | <b>Total<br/>Locations</b> | <b>Avg Monthly<br/>Employment</b> | <b>Avg Weekly<br/>Wage</b> |
|----|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1  | Manufacturing                                                            | 886                        | 44,706                            | \$1,328                    |
| 2  | Health Care and Social Assistance                                        | 2,227                      | 39,506                            | \$948                      |
| 3  | Retail Trade                                                             | 1,979                      | 29,010                            | \$668                      |
| 4  | Educational Services                                                     | 464                        | 25,173                            | \$836                      |
| 5  | Accommodation and Food Services                                          | 1,160                      | 17,024                            | \$303                      |
| 6  | Construction                                                             | 1,557                      | 12,307                            | \$1,405                    |
| 7  | Transportation and Warehousing                                           | 870                        | 11,403                            | \$1,185                    |
| 8  | Wholesale Trade                                                          | 1,185                      | 11,070                            | \$1,513                    |
| 9  | Finance and Insurance                                                    | 1,185                      | 10,615                            | \$1,483                    |
| 10 | Public Administration                                                    | 553                        | 9,350                             | \$970                      |
| 11 | Other Services (except Public Administration)                            | 1,195                      | 7,098                             | \$913                      |
| 12 | Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services | 900                        | 6,767                             | \$899                      |
| 13 | Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services                         | 1,544                      | 6,718                             | \$1,307                    |
| 14 | Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting                               | 568                        | 4,107                             | \$1,104                    |
| 15 | Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation                                      | 270                        | 2,922                             | \$366                      |
| 16 | Management of Companies and Enterprises                                  | 227                        | 2,460                             | \$1,937                    |
| 17 | Information                                                              | 340                        | 2,292                             | \$1,047                    |
| 18 | Real Estate and Rental and Leasing                                       | 516                        | 1,475                             | \$892                      |
| 19 | Utilities                                                                | 75                         | 655                               | \$1,875                    |
| 20 | Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction                            | 43                         | 27                                | \$1,100                    |

Source: Iowa Workforce Development, QCEW

Figure 10



Source: Iowa Workforce Development, Industry Projections

### **South Central Iowa LWDA**

The South Central LWDA contains the smallest percentage of employment compared to all other LWDAs with Manufacturing leading the pack with 20.4 percent of all covered jobs. This sector experienced a surge in employment, reaching an all-time high of about 18,800 jobs. Since 2022, the employment levels have dropped to pre-pandemic levels of about 17,200 jobs.

Like other LWDAs, Health Care and Social Assistance is the second largest industry sector in South Central Iowa, with 14.4 percent of all covered employment. However, employment has decreased in this sector, shrinking from a high of 13,421 in 2014 to 12,137 in 2024.

The South Central LWDA is expected to add 5,310 nonfarm jobs from 2022-2032. Industry employment is expected to increase to 106,825 from 101,515, a 5.2 percent increase. The Healthcare and Social Assistance sector is projected to

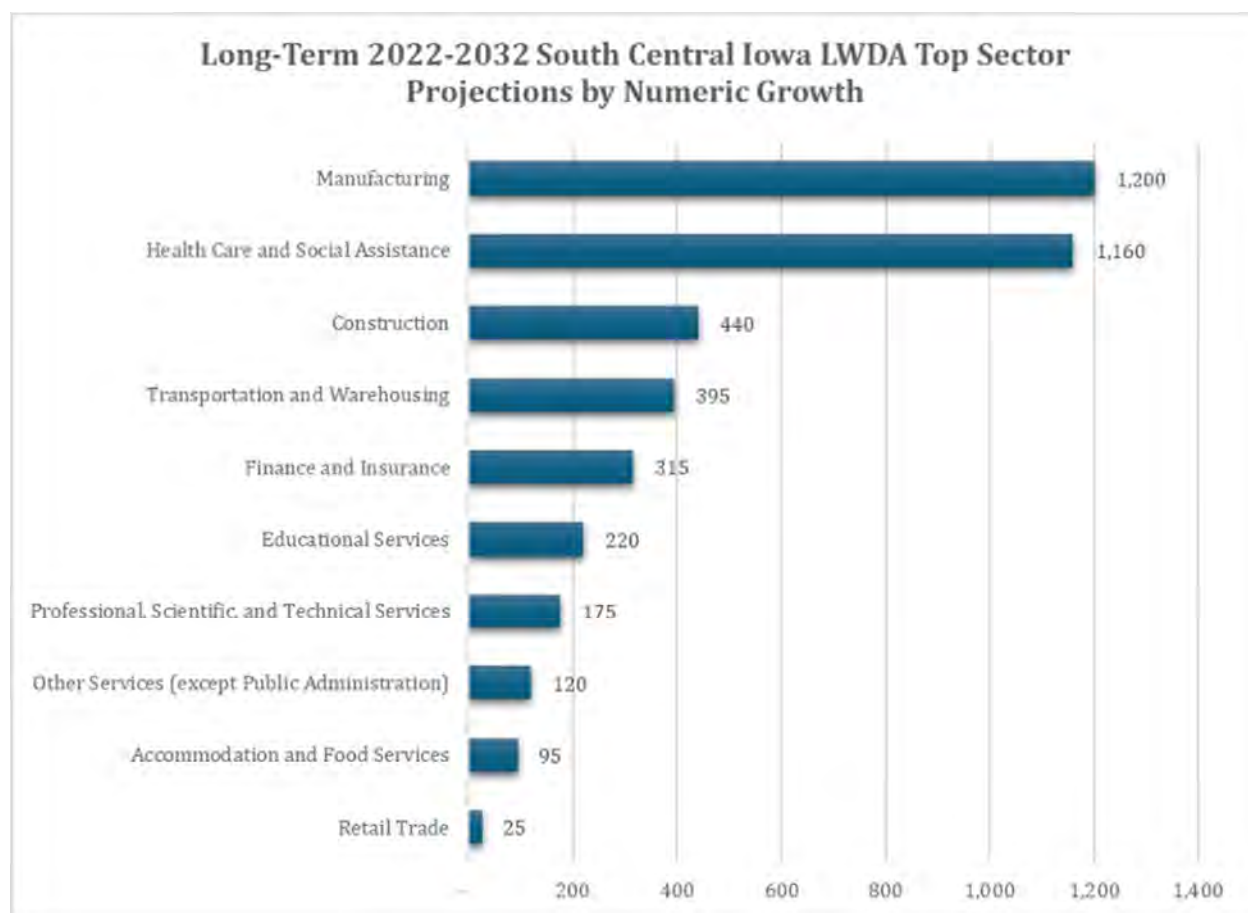
add 1,160 jobs in the next ten years driven by an increase in the number of ageing populations. The charts below summarize the –in-demand industry sectors and occupations for South Central Iowa.

Table 7

|    | <b>South Central Iowa LWDA Industry Employment, 2024 Quarter 4</b>       | <b>Total Locations</b> | <b>Avg Monthly Employment</b> | <b>Avg Weekly Wage</b> |
|----|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------|
| 1  | Manufacturing                                                            | 340                    | 17,032                        | \$1,275                |
| 2  | Health Care and Social Assistance                                        | 783                    | 12,060                        | \$1,008                |
| 3  | Retail Trade                                                             | 735                    | 10,226                        | \$598                  |
| 4  | Educational Services                                                     | 227                    | 9,228                         | \$871                  |
| 5  | Accommodation and Food Services                                          | 449                    | 5,859                         | \$360                  |
| 6  | Public Administration                                                    | 341                    | 4,533                         | \$957                  |
| 7  | Construction                                                             | 631                    | 3,743                         | \$1,233                |
| 8  | Finance and Insurance                                                    | 433                    | 3,444                         | \$1,417                |
| 9  | Wholesale Trade                                                          | 440                    | 3,237                         | \$1,498                |
| 10 | Transportation and Warehousing                                           | 413                    | 3,208                         | \$1,095                |
| 11 | Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services | 303                    | 2,198                         | \$923                  |
| 12 | Other Services (except Public Administration)                            | 446                    | 2,030                         | \$802                  |
| 13 | Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting                               | 256                    | 1,952                         | \$1,018                |
| 14 | Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services                         | 626                    | 1,902                         | \$1,313                |
| 15 | Information                                                              | 169                    | 769                           | \$1,059                |
| 16 | Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation                                      | 92                     | 665                           | \$349                  |
| 17 | Utilities                                                                | 46                     | 584                           | \$1,922                |
| 18 | Real Estate and Rental and Leasing                                       | 192                    | 437                           | \$827                  |
| 19 | Management of Companies and Enterprises                                  | 79                     | 397                           | \$1,328                |
| 20 | Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction                            | 22                     |                               |                        |

Source: Iowa Workforce Development, QCEW

Figure 11



Source: Iowa Workforce Development, Industry Projections

### **Iowa Plains LWDA**

Iowa Plains is the largest region within Iowa covering 42 of the total 99 Iowa counties. The entire western side of the state is covered by Iowa Plains. Iowa Plains region is the second largest in terms of total covered employment next to Central Iowa region. Twenty percent of the State's employment falls within this region.

One out of every three jobs are either in Manufacturing or Health Care and Social Assistance Industry. However, Health Care and Social Assistance industry is predicted to outpace Manufacturing in employment growth by 2032. It is projected to add 4,660 jobs by 2032 whereas Manufacturing is projected to add 2,735 jobs.

Iowa Plains LWDA is projected to add approximately 19,000 non-farm jobs by 2032, increasing total employment from 346,800 to 365,525—a 5% increase. The

charts below highlight key industry trends and employment projections for Central Iowa.

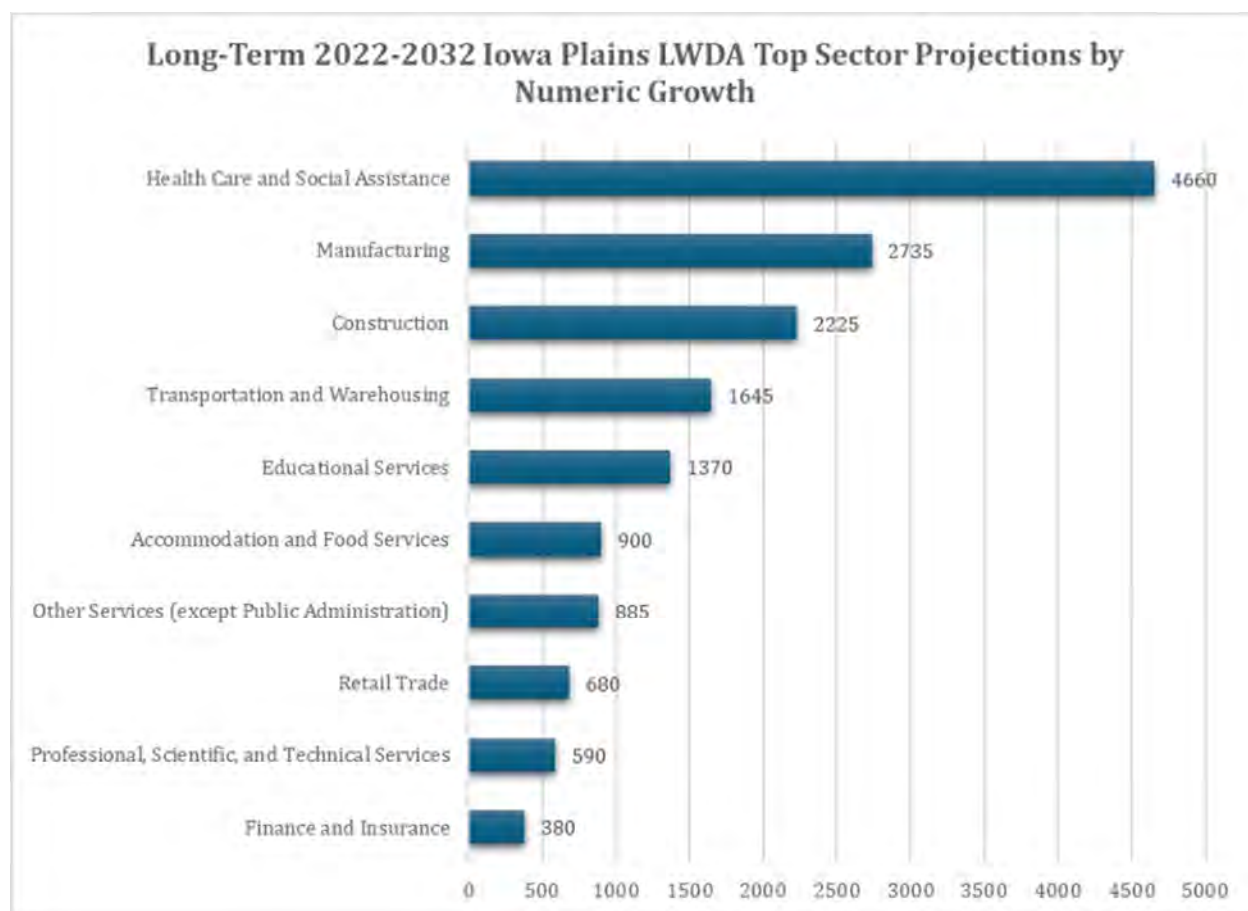
Table 8

|    | <b>Iowa Plains LWDA Industry Employment,<br/>2024 Quarter 4</b>             | <b>Total<br/>Locations</b> | <b>Avg Monthly<br/>Employment</b> | <b>Avg<br/>Weekly<br/>Wage</b> |
|----|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1  | Manufacturing                                                               | 1,039                      | 52,506                            | \$1,304                        |
| 2  | Health Care and Social Assistance                                           | 2,815                      | 47,679                            | \$1,008                        |
| 3  | Retail Trade                                                                | 2,678                      | 37,044                            | \$610                          |
| 4  | Educational Services                                                        | 663                        | 30,712                            | \$830                          |
| 5  | Accommodation and Food Services                                             | 1,629                      | 24,827                            | \$344                          |
| 6  | Construction                                                                | 2,498                      | 17,137                            | \$1,332                        |
| 7  | Wholesale Trade                                                             | 1,734                      | 15,814                            | \$1,529                        |
| 8  | Public Administration                                                       | 1,019                      | 15,079                            | \$959                          |
| 9  | Transportation and Warehousing                                              | 1,702                      | 14,790                            | \$1,101                        |
| 10 | Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting                                  | 1,308                      | 10,191                            | \$1,218                        |
| 11 | Administrative and Support and Waste<br>Management and Remediation Services | 1,226                      | 9,774                             | \$920                          |
| 12 | Finance and Insurance                                                       | 1,628                      | 9,204                             | \$1,497                        |
| 13 | Other Services (except Public Administration)                               | 1,568                      | 7,008                             | \$940                          |
| 14 | Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services                            | 1,956                      | 6,761                             | \$1,643                        |
| 15 | Information                                                                 | 486                        | 3,449                             | \$1,131                        |
| 16 | Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation                                         | 338                        | 2,724                             | \$314                          |
| 17 | Real Estate and Rental and Leasing                                          | 649                        | 2,024                             | \$821                          |
| 18 | Utilities                                                                   | 170                        | 1,725                             | \$2,027                        |
| 19 | Management of Companies and Enterprises                                     | 283                        | 1,226                             | \$2,104                        |
| 20 | Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction                               | 48                         | 145                               | \$1,247                        |

Source: Iowa Workforce Development, QCEW



Figure 12



Source: Iowa Workforce Development, Industry Projections

#### ii. Emerging Demand Industry Sectors and Occupations

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

Industry employment in Iowa is projected to add 116,720 non-farm jobs in the next 10 years: 2022-2032. Industry employment will increase to 1,853,535; that is a 7 percent increase from the current 1,736,815 base. Nationally, the U.S. is expected to add 4.7 million jobs in the same decade; employment will grow 2.8 percent and increase to 169.1 million jobs by 2032, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) 2022-2032 industry projections.

The projected employment growth in Iowa for the 2022-2032 decade is 5% lower than the forecasted growth for 2020-2030. This shift is largely due to the post-pandemic economic recovery—following the recession in 2020, businesses rebounded quickly, returning to full operations and driving a surge in job growth. However, as the economy stabilizes five years after the downturn, the pace of

job expansion has moderated, leading to a more gradual and steady employment increase across the state.

The Transportation and Warehousing sector is projected to grow by 16% between 2022 and 2032, making it the fastest-growing industry in Iowa during this decade. This growth is driven by several key factors, including the continued rise of e-commerce, significant improvements to Iowa's transportation infrastructure, and the expansion of warehouse capacity across the state. Notably, major companies like Amazon have heavily invested in Iowa post-pandemic, with Amazon alone constructing 11 warehouses since 2020. These developments underscore the sector's pivotal role in supporting the state's economic growth and logistical capabilities.

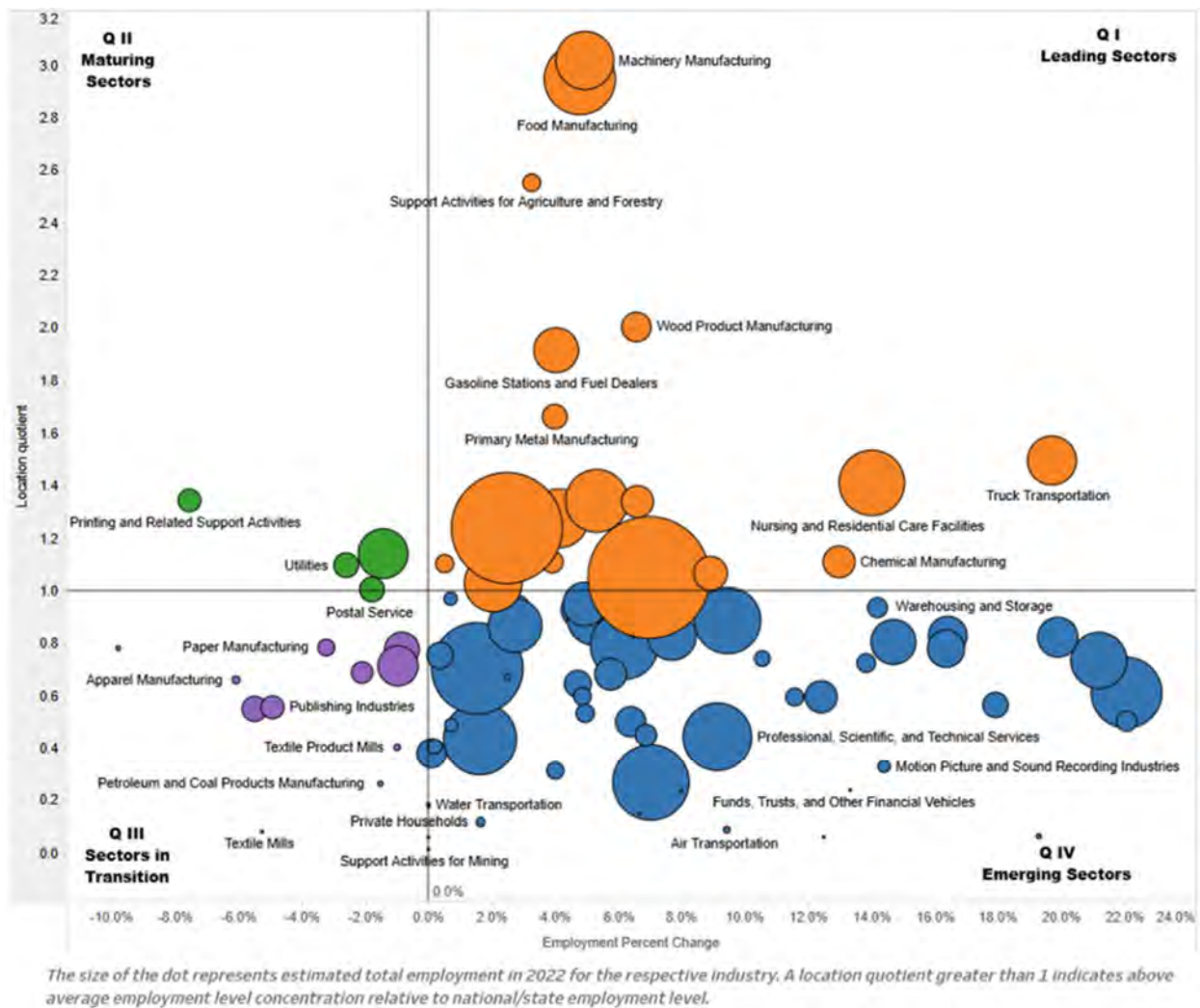
The healthcare and social assistance sector is set to experience significant growth from 2022 to 2032, making it the second fastest-growing industry during this period. This surge is primarily driven by an aging population and the increasing prevalence of chronic conditions, which continue to fuel demand for healthcare services and social support. As a result, this sector is projected to generate the highest number of new jobs, contributing 33,215 positions—representing 29 percent of the total 116,720 new jobs expected across all industries.

Both the Manufacturing and Educational Services sectors are projected to see approximately 10% employment growth over the next decade. The Educational Services sector is expected to benefit from increasing demand for upskilling and reskilling in response to a rapidly evolving digital economy. Meanwhile, the Manufacturing sector—particularly in machinery and transportation equipment—will experience job growth driven by continued demand for agricultural and industrial production across the state. The construction trades sector is projected to grow by 8% over the next decade, with much of this growth concentrated in the Metro regions due to ongoing urban development and infrastructure projects.

Figure 13 illustrates total employment estimates for 2022, with the x-axis representing the projected percentage change in employment over the next ten years and the y-axis representing location quotient. Quadrant IV highlights sub-sectors expected to experience rapid job growth, even though their overall employment levels remain lower than national benchmarks. As these sectors continue to add jobs, they are poised to become key drivers of economic development in the near future. The size of each bubble in the figure indicates

employment volume in 2022. Table 9 shows the top-20 sub-sectors in Quadrant IV.

Figure 13



Source: Iowa Workforce Development Industry Projections

Table 9

|    | <b>Top 20 Emerging sub-sectors</b>                                      | <b>Base<br/>Estimated<br/>Employment</b> | <b>Projected<br/>Employment</b> | <b>Employment<br/>Numeric<br/>Change</b> | <b>Employment<br/>Percent<br/>Change</b> |
|----|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| 1  | Support Activities for Transportation                                   | 4,780                                    | 5,835                           | 1,055                                    | 22.1%                                    |
| 2  | Ambulatory Health Care Services                                         | 59,745                                   | 72,930                          | 13,185                                   | 22.1%                                    |
| 3  | Social Assistance                                                       | 37,605                                   | 45,575                          | 7,970                                    | 21.2%                                    |
| 4  | Warehousing and Storage                                                 | 19,175                                   | 22,990                          | 3,815                                    | 19.9%                                    |
| 5  | Web Search Portals, Libraries, Archives, and Other Information Services | 285                                      | 340                             | 55                                       | 19.3%                                    |
| 6  | Couriers and Messengers                                                 | 7,670                                    | 9,045                           | 1,375                                    | 17.9%                                    |
| 7  | Accommodation, including Hotels and Motels                              | 17,665                                   | 20,565                          | 2,900                                    | 16.4%                                    |
| 8  | Construction of Buildings                                               | 16,410                                   | 19,095                          | 2,685                                    | 16.4%                                    |
| 9  | Management of Companies and Enterprises                                 | 24,115                                   | 27,660                          | 3,545                                    | 14.7%                                    |
| 10 | Motion Picture and Sound Recording Industries                           | 1,805                                    | 2,065                           | 260                                      | 14.4%                                    |
| 11 | Transit and Ground Passenger Transportation                             | 4,650                                    | 5,310                           | 660                                      | 14.2%                                    |
| 12 | Waste Management and Remediation Services                               | 4,155                                    | 4,730                           | 575                                      | 13.8%                                    |
| 13 | Funds, Trusts, and Other Financial Vehicles                             | 75                                       | 85                              | 10                                       | 13.3%                                    |
| 14 | Forestry and Logging                                                    | 40                                       | 45                              | 5                                        | 12.5%                                    |
| 15 | Transportation Equipment Manufacturing                                  | 12,365                                   | 13,900                          | 1,535                                    | 12.4%                                    |
| 16 | Rental and Leasing Services                                             | 3,800                                    | 4,240                           | 440                                      | 11.6%                                    |
| 17 | Beverage and Tobacco Product Manufacturing                              | 2,890                                    | 3,195                           | 305                                      | 10.6%                                    |
| 18 | Specialty Trade Contractors                                             | 52,545                                   | 57,515                          | 4,970                                    | 9.5%                                     |
| 19 | Air Transportation                                                      | 530                                      | 580                             | 50                                       | 9.4%                                     |
| 20 | Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services                        | 55,890                                   | 60,995                          | 5,105                                    | 9.1%                                     |

Source: Iowa Workforce Development, Industry Projections

Table 9 above shows the top 20 industries that have the largest employment growth. One might quickly conclude that all 20 are emerging industries. While many industries in the top 20 list have a strong growth rate, they do not reflect a high volume of growth making it less of an in-demand industry. The sub-sectors colored in blue show both high percentage growth and a high number

of new positions, making those industries emerging in-demand industries. Three out of four jobs predicted to grow will be in one of the blue shaded sectors.

Statewide occupational employment projections are reflective of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on the economy. For example, Food Preparation & Serving related occupations are expected to have 24,650 total annual openings; Office & Administrative Support Occupations are expected to have 22,255 total annual openings. These respective figures reflect the expected rebounds from the COVID-19 pandemic. Meanwhile, the pandemic has increased demand for some occupation groups. For example, Transportation & Material Moving related occupations are projected to have 23,580 total annual openings. Remote work arrangements and wider adaptation of e-commerce are expected to drive strong growth for transportation and material moving related occupations. That is, an increase in online shopping, and the use of delivery services is expected to benefit light truck drivers, package delivery services, stockers, and order fillers. In contrast, occupational groups in business management, healthcare related occupations and social service occupational groups are expected to grow at a healthy rate due to fundamental structural changes in the economy. The healthcare support occupational group, which includes home health and personal care aids, nursing assistants, and other health related support are expected to benefit from an aging population. Furthermore, strong employment growth is expected for computer and mathematical related occupations due to a long-term economic shift: adaptation of new technologies and greater digital economy will induce great demand for the computer and mathematical related occupations.

Table 10: Iowa 2022-2032 Employment Annual Job Openings

| <b>SOC + Occupation Title</b>                                                  | <b>Base<br/>Estimated<br/>Employment</b> | <b>Projected<br/>Estimated<br/>Employment</b> | <b>Annual<br/>Growth<br/>Rate</b> | <b>Total Annual<br/>Job Openings</b> | <b>Entry<br/>Wage</b> | <b>Median<br/>Wage</b> |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| 41-2011 Cashiers                                                               | 47,380                                   | 46,450                                        | -0.2%                             | 8,965                                | \$11.20               | \$13.70                |
| 11-9013 Farmers,<br>Ranchers, and Other<br>Agricultural Managers               | 86,365                                   | 84,390                                        | -0.2%                             | 8,610                                | \$31.14               | \$46.69                |
| 35-3023 Fast Food and<br>Counter Workers                                       | 36,610                                   | 37,345                                        | 0.2%                              | 8,515                                | \$10.59               | \$13.62                |
| 41-2031 Retail<br>Salespersons                                                 | 38,930                                   | 40,130                                        | 0.3%                              | 5,845                                | \$11.45               | \$14.43                |
| 53-3032 Heavy and<br>Tractor-Trailer Truck<br>Drivers                          | 46,205                                   | 52,250                                        | 1.3%                              | 5,715                                | \$18.45               | \$24.43                |
| 31-1120 Home Health<br>and Personal Care Aides                                 | 25,385                                   | 32,770                                        | 2.9%                              | 5,005                                | \$13.60               | \$16.52                |
| 53-7062 Laborers and<br>Freight, Stock, and<br>Material Movers, Hand           | 33,560                                   | 36,540                                        | 0.9%                              | 4,820                                | \$15.09               | \$19.46                |
| 53-7065 Stockers and<br>Order Fillers                                          | 24,105                                   | 27,230                                        | 1.3%                              | 4,425                                | \$14.10               | \$17.57                |
| 37-2011 Janitors and<br>Cleaners, Except Maids<br>and Housekeeping<br>Cleaners | 29,525                                   | 30,830                                        | 0.4%                              | 4,330                                | \$12.88               | \$16.64                |
| 43-4051 Customer<br>Service Representatives                                    | 30,250                                   | 29,390                                        | -0.3%                             | 3,920                                | \$15.00               | \$19.78                |

Source Iowa Workforce Development, Occupational Projections

Table 11: Iowa 2022-2032 Employment Annual Growth Rate

| <b>SOC + Occupation Title</b>                                         | <b>Base<br/>Estimated<br/>Employment</b> | <b>Projected<br/>Estimated<br/>Employment</b> | <b>Annual<br/>Growth<br/>Rate</b> | <b>Total<br/>Annual Job<br/>Openings</b> | <b>Entry<br/>Wage</b> | <b>Median<br/>Wage</b> |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| 31-1120 Home Health and Personal Care Aides                           | 25,385                                   | 32,770                                        | 2.9%                              | 5,005                                    | \$13.60               | \$16.52                |
| 35-2014 Cooks, Restaurant                                             | 13,185                                   | 15,835                                        | 2.0%                              | 2,440                                    | \$12.66               | \$15.43                |
| 53-7065 Stockers and Order Fillers                                    | 24,105                                   | 27,230                                        | 1.3%                              | 4,425                                    | \$14.10               | \$17.57                |
| 53-3032 Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers                       | 46,205                                   | 52,250                                        | 1.3%                              | 5,715                                    | \$18.45               | \$24.43                |
| 29-1141 Registered Nurses                                             | 35,700                                   | 39,275                                        | 1.0%                              | 2,375                                    | \$29.21               | \$34.41                |
| 31-1131 Nursing Assistants                                            | 22,405                                   | 24,690                                        | 1.0%                              | 3,560                                    | \$15.93               | \$17.95                |
| 53-7062 Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand        | 33,560                                   | 36,540                                        | 0.9%                              | 4,820                                    | \$15.09               | \$19.46                |
| 25-9045 Teaching Assistants, Except Postsecondary                     | 20,985                                   | 22,265                                        | 0.6%                              | 2,640                                    | \$11.75               | \$14.46                |
| 39-9011 Childcare Workers                                             | 12,745                                   | 13,485                                        | 0.6%                              | 2,245                                    | \$9.99                | \$12.44                |
| 37-2011 Janitors and Cleaners, Except Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners | 29,525                                   | 30,830                                        | 0.4%                              | 4,330                                    | \$12.88               | \$16.64                |

Source: Iowa Workforce Development, Occupational Projections

Table 12: Iowa 2022-2032 Annual Openings Required Post-Secondary Experience

| <b>SOC + Occupation Title</b>                                | <b>Base<br/>Estimated<br/>Employment</b> | <b>Projected<br/>Estimated<br/>Employment</b> | <b>Annual<br/>Growth<br/>Rate</b> | <b>Total<br/>Annual Job<br/>Openings</b> | <b>Entry<br/>Wage</b> | <b>Median<br/>Wage</b> |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| 53-3032 Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers              | 46,205                                   | 52,250                                        | 1.3%                              | 5,715                                    | \$18.45               | \$24.43                |
| 31-1131 Nursing Assistants                                   | 22,405                                   | 24,690                                        | 1.0%                              | 3,560                                    | \$15.93               | \$17.95                |
| 29-1141 Registered Nurses                                    | 35,700                                   | 39,275                                        | 1.0%                              | 2,375                                    | \$29.21               | \$34.41                |
| 11-1021 General and Operations Managers                      | 16,440                                   | 17,410                                        | 0.6%                              | 1,425                                    | \$21.03               | \$37.79                |
| 25-2021 Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education | 18,930                                   | 20,115                                        | 0.6%                              | 1,415                                    | \$20.66               | \$28.51                |

|                                                                                  |        |        |      |       |         |         |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|--------|------|-------|---------|---------|
| 25-3031 Substitute Teachers, Short-Term                                          | 9,675  | 10,685 | 1.0% | 1,315 | \$15.46 | \$18.58 |
| 13-2011 Accountants and Auditors                                                 | 14,080 | 15,215 | 0.8% | 1,230 | \$24.99 | \$34.34 |
| 25-2031 Secondary School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education | 14,360 | 15,310 | 0.7% | 1,005 | \$21.52 | \$28.85 |
| 11-9199 Managers, All Other                                                      | 11,415 | 12,515 | 1.0% | 975   | \$35.80 | \$57.06 |
| 13-1199 Business Operations Specialists, All Other                               | 9,730  | 10,580 | 0.9% | 950   | \$20.73 | \$32.77 |

Source: Iowa Workforce Development, Occupational Projections

### Local Workforce Development Area Emerging Sectors and Occupations

The same trends hold true in local level data, with slight variances between local areas on the order of the most in-demand sectors and occupations. Data for each of the Local Areas is shown below.

Central Iowa LWDA

Table 13: 2022-2032 Employment Annual Job Openings

| SOC + Occupation Title                                         | Base Estimated Employment | Projected Estimated Employment | Annual Growth Rate | Total Annual Job Openings | Entry Wage | Median Wage |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|------------|-------------|
| 35-3023 Fast Food and Counter Workers                          | 11,205                    | 11,535                         | 0.3%               | 2,630                     | \$11.25    | \$14.17     |
| 41-2011 Cashiers                                               | 12,015                    | 11,765                         | -0.2%              | 2,270                     | \$11.69    | \$13.97     |
| 41-2031 Retail Salespersons                                    | 10,920                    | 11,270                         | 0.3%               | 1,640                     | \$11.87    | \$14.88     |
| 43-4051 Customer Service Representatives                       | 10,755                    | 10,655                         | -0.1%              | 1,430                     | \$16.12    | \$22.34     |
| 35-3031 Waiters and Waitresses                                 | 6,445                     | 6,290                          | -0.2%              | 1,305                     | \$9.08     | \$13.89     |
| 31-1120 Home Health and Personal Care Aides                    | 6,505                     | 8,485                          | 3.0%               | 1,300                     | \$13.81    | \$16.46     |
| 53-7065 Stockers and Order Fillers                             | 6,125                     | 6,915                          | 1.3%               | 1,125                     | \$14.75    | \$17.43     |
| 53-3032 Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers                | 9,060                     | 10,255                         | 1.3%               | 1,125                     | \$20.20    | \$26.02     |
| 53-7062 Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand | 7,715                     | 8,355                          | 0.8%               | 1,100                     | \$15.35    | \$20.07     |



|                                   |       |       |       |       |         |         |
|-----------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|---------|---------|
| 43-9061 Office Clerks,<br>General | 9,195 | 8,960 | -0.3% | 1,060 | \$14.62 | \$20.02 |
|-----------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|---------|---------|

Source: Iowa Workforce Development, Occupational Projections

Table 14: 2022-2032 Employment Annual Growth Rate

| <b>SOC + Occupation Title</b>                        | <b>Base<br/>Estimated<br/>Employment</b> | <b>Projected<br/>Estimated<br/>Employment</b> | <b>Annual<br/>Growth<br/>Rate</b> | <b>Total Annual<br/>Job Openings</b> | <b>Entry<br/>Wage</b> | <b>Median<br/>Wage</b> |
|------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| 49-9081 Wind Turbine<br>Service Technicians          | 95                                       | 150                                           | 5.8%                              | 20                                   |                       |                        |
| 29-1171 Nurse<br>Practitioners                       | 550                                      | 865                                           | 5.6%                              | 65                                   | \$51.61               | \$62.06                |
| 31-2021 Physical<br>Therapist Assistants             | 300                                      | 425                                           | 4.2%                              | 60                                   | \$22.49               | \$29.01                |
| 15-2051 Data Scientists                              | 1,390                                    | 1,940                                         | 4.0%                              | 155                                  | \$32.70               | \$49.58                |
| 29-1071 Physician<br>Assistants                      | 235                                      | 330                                           | 4.0%                              | 25                                   | \$49.07               | \$62.35                |
| 11-9111 Medical and<br>Health Services<br>Managers   | 1,660                                    | 2,290                                         | 3.8%                              | 200                                  | \$36.08               | \$48.81                |
| 31-2011 Occupational<br>Therapy Assistants           | 105                                      | 145                                           | 3.8%                              | 20                                   | \$23.30               | \$30.61                |
| 17-2072 Electronics<br>Engineers, Except<br>Computer | 80                                       | 110                                           | 3.8%                              | 10                                   | \$31.03               | \$42.67                |
| 15-2041 Statisticians                                | 245                                      | 340                                           | 3.7%                              | 25                                   | \$21.86               | \$38.83                |
| 15-1212 Information<br>Security Analysts             | 865                                      | 1,165                                         | 3.5%                              | 90                                   | \$39.31               | \$64.18                |

Source: Iowa Workforce Development, Occupational Projections

Table 15: 2022-2032 Annual Openings Requiring Post-Secondary Experience

| <b>SOC + Occupation Title</b>                                    | <b>Base<br/>Estimated<br/>Employment</b> | <b>Projected<br/>Estimated<br/>Employment</b> | <b>Annual<br/>Growth<br/>Rate</b> | <b>Total Annual<br/>Job Openings</b> | <b>Entry<br/>Wage</b> | <b>Median<br/>Wage</b> |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| 53-3032 Heavy and<br>Tractor-Trailer Truck<br>Drivers            | 9,060                                    | 10,255                                        | 1.3%                              | 1,125                                | \$20.20               | \$26.02                |
| 31-1131 Nursing<br>Assistants                                    | 4,500                                    | 4,910                                         | 0.9%                              | 705                                  | \$16.53               | \$18.20                |
| 29-1141 Registered<br>Nurses                                     | 9,550                                    | 10,685                                        | 1.2%                              | 660                                  | \$30.01               | \$36.53                |
| 11-1021 General and<br>Operations Managers                       | 6,275                                    | 6,825                                         | 0.9%                              | 570                                  | \$22.35               | \$39.57                |
| 11-3031 Financial<br>Managers                                    | 4,880                                    | 5,935                                         | 2.2%                              | 465                                  | \$43.06               | \$65.24                |
| 15-1252 Software<br>Developers                                   | 5,195                                    | 6,625                                         | 2.8%                              | 455                                  | \$38.08               | \$53.71                |
| 13-1199 Business<br>Operations Specialists,<br>All Other         | 4,620                                    | 5,055                                         | 0.9%                              | 455                                  | \$22.24               | \$37.65                |
| 13-2011 Accountants<br>and Auditors                              | 4,935                                    | 5,385                                         | 0.9%                              | 440                                  | \$26.27               | \$36.31                |
| 13-1161 Market<br>Research Analysts and<br>Marketing Specialists | 3,695                                    | 4,345                                         | 1.8%                              | 425                                  | \$22.21               | \$32.16                |
| 13-1111 Management<br>Analysts                                   | 4,030                                    | 4,645                                         | 1.5%                              | 410                                  | \$29.34               | \$41.48                |

Source: Iowa Workforce Development, Occupational Projections

East Central Iowa LWDA

Table 16: 2022-2032 Employment Annual Job Openings

| <b>SOC + Occupation Title</b>                                         | <b>Base Estimated Employment</b> | <b>Projected Estimated Employment</b> | <b>Annual Growth Rate</b> | <b>Total Annual Job Openings</b> | <b>Entry Wage</b> | <b>Median Wage</b> |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| 35-3023 Fast Food and Counter Workers                                 | 5,760                            | 6,070                                 | 0.5%                      | 1,380                            | \$10.70           | \$13.70            |
| 41-2011 Cashiers                                                      | 6,660                            | 6,610                                 | -0.1%                     | 1,275                            | \$11.52           | \$13.84            |
| 53-3032 Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers                       | 8,365                            | 9,445                                 | 1.3%                      | 1,035                            | \$19.56           | \$24.43            |
| 41-2031 Retail Salespersons                                           | 5,475                            | 5,740                                 | 0.5%                      | 840                              | \$11.30           | \$14.15            |
| 31-1120 Home Health and Personal Care Aides                           | 3,635                            | 4,805                                 | 3.2%                      | 735                              | \$13.69           | \$16.54            |
| 53-7065 Stockers and Order Fillers                                    | 3,900                            | 4,520                                 | 1.6%                      | 735                              | \$13.95           | \$17.72            |
| 43-4051 Customer Service Representatives                              | 5,155                            | 5,170                                 | 0.0%                      | 695                              | \$14.43           | \$19.22            |
| 35-3031 Waiters and Waitresses                                        | 3,120                            | 3,150                                 | 0.1%                      | 650                              | \$8.73            | \$13.54            |
| 37-2011 Janitors and Cleaners, Except Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners | 4,090                            | 4,405                                 | 0.8%                      | 620                              | \$13.11           | \$16.62            |
| 11-9013 Farmers, Ranchers, and Other Agricultural Managers            | 5,270                            | 5,500                                 | 0.4%                      | 580                              | \$29.91           | \$40.26            |

Source: Iowa Workforce Development, Occupational Projections

Table 17: 2022-2032 Employment Annual Growth Rate

| <b>SOC + Occupation Title</b>                      | <b>Base<br/>Estimated<br/>Employment</b> | <b>Projected<br/>Estimated<br/>Employment</b> | <b>Annual<br/>Growth<br/>Rate</b> | <b>Total<br/>Annual Job<br/>Openings</b> | <b>Entry<br/>Wage</b> | <b>Median<br/>Wage</b> |
|----------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| 49-9081 Wind Turbine<br>Service Technicians        | 55                                       | 90                                            | 6.4%                              | 10                                       |                       |                        |
| 29-1171 Nurse<br>Practitioners                     | 440                                      | 660                                           | 5.0%                              | 45                                       | \$50.2                | \$60.78                |
| 31-2021 Physical<br>Therapist Assistants           | 200                                      | 285                                           | 4.0%                              | 40                                       | \$22.19               | \$28.39                |
| 31-2011 Occupational<br>Therapy Assistants         | 65                                       | 85                                            | 3.8%                              | 10                                       | \$23.27               | \$29.02                |
| 15-2051 Data Scientists                            | 245                                      | 335                                           | 3.7%                              | 25                                       | \$28.44               | \$40.61                |
| 29-1071 Physician<br>Assistants                    | 215                                      | 295                                           | 3.7%                              | 20                                       | \$52.08               | \$63.01                |
| 15-2011 Actuaries                                  | 130                                      | 175                                           | 3.5%                              | 10                                       |                       |                        |
| 15-1212 Information<br>Security Analysts           | 215                                      | 295                                           | 3.5%                              | 25                                       | \$28.33               | \$39.77                |
| 11-9111 Medical and<br>Health Services<br>Managers | 1,100                                    | 1475                                          | 3.4%                              | 125                                      | \$36.27               | \$48.85                |
| 31-1120 Home Health<br>and Personal Care Aides     | 3,635                                    | 4805                                          | 3.2%                              | 735                                      | \$13.69               | \$16.54                |

Source: Iowa Workforce Development, Occupational Projections

Table 18: 2022-2032 Annual Openings Requiring Post-Secondary Experience

| <b>SOC + Occupation Title</b>                                        | <b>Base<br/>Estimated<br/>Employment</b> | <b>Projected<br/>Estimated<br/>Employment</b> | <b>Annual<br/>Growth<br/>Rate</b> | <b>Total<br/>Annual Job<br/>Openings</b> | <b>Entry<br/>Wage</b> | <b>Median<br/>Wage</b> |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| 53-3032 Heavy and<br>Tractor-Trailer Truck<br>Drivers                | 8,365                                    | 9,445                                         | 1.3%                              | 1,035                                    | \$19.56               | \$24.43                |
| 31-1131 Nursing<br>Assistants                                        | 3,130                                    | 3,465                                         | 1.1%                              | 500                                      | \$15.96               | \$18.05                |
| 29-1141 Registered<br>Nurses                                         | 7,290                                    | 7,890                                         | 0.8%                              | 470                                      | \$30.14               | \$36.66                |
| 25-1071 Health<br>Specialties Teachers,<br>Postsecondary             | 2,450                                    | 3,185                                         | 3.0%                              | 290                                      | \$26.48               | \$50.91                |
| 11-1021 General and<br>Operations Managers                           | 2,615                                    | 2,840                                         | 0.9%                              | 235                                      | \$20.95               | \$38.29                |
| 25-2021 Elementary<br>School Teachers, Except<br>Special Education   | 2,670                                    | 2,920                                         | 0.9%                              | 210                                      | \$20.7                | \$29.25                |
| 15-1252 Software<br>Developers                                       | 2,105                                    | 2,695                                         | 2.8%                              | 185                                      | \$34.44               | \$49.21                |
| 31-9092 Medical<br>Assistants                                        | 1,100                                    | 1,350                                         | 2.3%                              | 180                                      | \$17.54               | \$20.57                |
| 13-1199 Business<br>Operations Specialists,<br>All Other             | 1,745                                    | 1,950                                         | 1.2%                              | 180                                      | \$21.56               | \$30.96                |
| 25-9099 Educational<br>Instruction and Library<br>Workers, All Other | 1,740                                    | 1,940                                         | 1.1%                              | 175                                      | \$13.83               | \$18.99                |

Source: Iowa Workforce Development, Occupational Projections

Mississippi Valley LWDA

Table 19: 2022-2032 Employment Annual Job Openings

| <b>SOC + Occupation Title</b>                                         | <b>Base<br/>Estimated<br/>Employment</b> | <b>Projected<br/>Estimated<br/>Employment</b> | <b>Annual<br/>Growth<br/>Rate</b> | <b>Total<br/>Annual Job<br/>Openings</b> | <b>Entry<br/>Wage</b> | <b>Median<br/>Wage</b> |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| 35-3023 Fast Food and Counter Workers                                 | 5,140                                    | 5,315                                         | 0.3%                              | 1,210                                    | \$10.43               | \$13.33                |
| 41-2011 Cashiers                                                      | 5,635                                    | 5,670                                         | 0.1%                              | 1,095                                    | \$11.05               | \$13.61                |
| 41-2031 Retail Salespersons                                           | 4,695                                    | 4,850                                         | 0.3%                              | 705                                      | \$11.43               | \$14.53                |
| 53-3032 Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers                       | 4,525                                    | 5,645                                         | 2.5%                              | 640                                      | \$17.01               | \$23.87                |
| 37-2011 Janitors and Cleaners, Except Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners | 3,830                                    | 3,985                                         | 0.4%                              | 560                                      | \$12.59               | \$16.16                |
| 31-1120 Home Health and Personal Care Aides                           | 2,875                                    | 3,665                                         | 2.7%                              | 560                                      | \$13.19               | \$16.29                |
| 53-7065 Stockers and Order Fillers                                    | 2,905                                    | 3,355                                         | 1.5%                              | 545                                      | \$14.07               | \$17.76                |
| 53-7062 Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand        | 3690                                     | 4,050                                         | 1.0%                              | 535                                      | \$14.47               | \$18.14                |
| 35-3031 Waiters and Waitresses                                        | 2,475                                    | 2,445                                         | -0.1%                             | 505                                      | \$8.52                | \$11.78                |
| 43-4051 Customer Service Representatives                              | 3,210                                    | 3,160                                         | -0.2%                             | 425                                      | \$14.32               | \$18.37                |

Source: Iowa Workforce Development, Occupational Projections

Table 20: 2022-2032 Employment Annual Growth Rate

| <b>SOC + Occupation Title</b>                                              | <b>Base<br/>Estimated<br/>Employment</b> | <b>Projected<br/>Estimated<br/>Employment</b> | <b>Annual<br/>Growth<br/>Rate</b> | <b>Total<br/>Annual<br/>Job<br/>Openings</b> | <b>Entry<br/>Wage</b> | <b>Median<br/>Wage</b> |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| 29-1171 Nurse Practitioners                                                | 265                                      | 430                                           | 6.0%                              | 30                                           | \$48.95               | \$59.23                |
| 31-2021 Physical Therapist Assistants                                      | 155                                      | 220                                           | 4.2%                              | 30                                           | \$23.36               | \$27.80                |
| 29-1071 Physician Assistants                                               | 110                                      | 155                                           | 4.1%                              | 10                                           | \$47.76               | \$60.45                |
| 11-9111 Medical and Health Services Managers                               | 645                                      | 890                                           | 3.8%                              | 80                                           | \$34.70               | \$46.66                |
| 31-2011 Occupational Therapy Assistants                                    | 65                                       | 90                                            | 3.1%                              | 15                                           | \$25.02               | \$28.87                |
| 15-1252 Software Developers                                                | 485                                      | 635                                           | 3.1%                              | 45                                           | \$32.70               | \$48.88                |
| 29-1127 Speech-Language Pathologists                                       | 180                                      | 230                                           | 3.1%                              | 15                                           | \$32.01               | \$37.93                |
| 21-1018 Substance Abuse, Behavioral Disorder, and Mental Health Counselors | 345                                      | 445                                           | 2.9%                              | 40                                           | \$18.06               | \$26.88                |
| 31-9011 Massage Therapists                                                 | 85                                       | 110                                           | 2.9%                              | 15                                           | \$15.54               | \$24.37                |
| 15-1212 Information Security Analysts                                      | 85                                       | 110                                           | 2.9%                              | 10                                           | \$35.95               | \$51.65                |

Source: Iowa Workforce Development, Occupational Projections

Table 21: 2022-2032 Annual Openings Requiring Post-Secondary Experience

| <b>SOC + Occupation Title</b>                                                    | <b>Base Estimated Employment</b> | <b>Projected Estimated Employment</b> | <b>Annual Growth Rate</b> | <b>Total Annual Job Openings</b> | <b>Entry Wage</b> | <b>Median Wage</b> |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| 53-3032 Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers                                  | 4,525                            | 5,645                                 | 2.5%                      | 640                              | \$17.01           | \$23.87            |
| 31-1131 Nursing Assistants                                                       | 2,420                            | 2,730                                 | 1.3%                      | 395                              | \$15.69           | \$17.63            |
| 29-1141 Registered Nurses                                                        | 3,770                            | 4,240                                 | 1.2%                      | 260                              | \$28.74           | \$32.69            |
| 11-1021 General and Operations Managers                                          | 2,505                            | 2,710                                 | 0.8%                      | 225                              | \$20.04           | \$36.81            |
| 25-2021 Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education                     | 1,810                            | 1,945                                 | 0.7%                      | 140                              | \$20.66           | \$28.51            |
| 25-2031 Secondary School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education | 1,685                            | 1,815                                 | 0.8%                      | 120                              | \$20.99           | \$27.36            |
| 13-2011 Accountants and Auditors                                                 | 1,310                            | 1,435                                 | 1.0%                      | 115                              | \$24.87           | \$35.61            |
| 31-9092 Medical Assistants                                                       | 615                              | 755                                   | 2.4%                      | 100                              | \$16.64           | \$19.58            |
| 49-3023 Automotive Service Technicians and Mechanics                             | 905                              | 980                                   | 0.8%                      | 90                               | \$15.51           | \$21.74            |
| 25-3031 Substitute Teachers, Short-Term                                          | 670                              | 745                                   | 120.0%                    | 90                               | \$14.81           | \$18.14            |

Source: Iowa Workforce Development, Occupational Projections



Northeast Iowa LWDA

Table 22: 2022-2032 Employment Annual Job Openings

| <b>SOC + Occupation Title</b>                                         | <b>Base Estimated Employment</b> | <b>Projected Estimated Employment</b> | <b>Annual Growth Rate</b> | <b>Total Annual Job Openings</b> | <b>Entry Wage</b> | <b>Median Wage</b> |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| 41-2011 Cashiers                                                      | 7,740                            | 7,555                                 | -0.2%                     | 1,455                            | \$11.37           | \$13.84            |
| 35-3023 Fast Food and Counter Workers                                 | 5,655                            | 5,875                                 | 0.4%                      | 1,340                            | \$10.38           | \$13.44            |
| 11-9013 Farmers, Ranchers, and Other Agricultural Managers            | 11,155                           | 11,135                                | 0.0%                      | 1,150                            | \$30.01           | \$46.44            |
| 53-7062 Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand        | 6,705                            | 7,295                                 | 0.9%                      | 960                              | \$15.70           | \$20.15            |
| 41-2031 Retail Salespersons                                           | 5,770                            | 5,885                                 | 0.2%                      | 855                              | \$11.22           | \$14.21            |
| 31-1120 Home Health and Personal Care Aides                           | 4,220                            | 5,540                                 | 3.1%                      | 850                              | \$13.40           | \$16.49            |
| 53-3032 Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers                       | 7,120                            | 7,635                                 | 0.7%                      | 815                              | \$18.14           | \$23.94            |
| 31-1131 Nursing Assistants                                            | 4,120                            | 4,670                                 | 1.3%                      | 675                              | \$15.93           | \$17.90            |
| 37-2011 Janitors and Cleaners, Except Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners | 4,565                            | 4,805                                 | 0.5%                      | 675                              | \$12.80           | \$17.73            |
| 35-3031 Waiters and Waitresses                                        | 3,070                            | 3,080                                 | 0.0%                      | 635                              | \$8.57            | \$12.47            |

Source: Iowa Workforce Development, Occupational Projections

Table 23: 2022-2032 Employment Annual Growth Rate

| <b>SOC + Occupation Title</b>                | <b>Base Estimated Employment</b> | <b>Projected Estimated Employment</b> | <b>Annual Growth Rate</b> | <b>Total Annual Job Openings</b> | <b>Entry Wage</b> | <b>Median Wage</b> |
|----------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| 49-9081 Wind Turbine Service Technicians     | 110                              | 175                                   | 5.9%                      | 20                               | \$24.99           | \$28.83            |
| 29-1171 Nurse Practitioners                  | 445                              | 675                                   | 5.1%                      | 45                               | \$50.90           | \$60.57            |
| 15-1212 Information Security Analysts        | 70                               | 100                                   | 3.6%                      | 10                               | \$31.18           | \$49.88            |
| 15-2051 Data Scientists                      | 165                              | 225                                   | 3.6%                      | 15                               | \$27.17           | \$39.32            |
| 11-9111 Medical and Health Services Managers | 1,080                            | 1,455                                 | 3.4%                      | 125                              | \$34.50           | \$44.80            |
| 29-1071 Physician Assistants                 | 160                              | 215                                   | 3.4%                      | 15                               | \$47.31           | \$59.08            |
| 31-1120 Home Health and Personal Care Aides  | 4,220                            | 5,540                                 | 3.1%                      | 850                              | \$13.40           | \$16.49            |
| 31-2021 Physical Therapist Assistants        | 195                              | 255                                   | 3.1%                      | 35                               | \$19.57           | \$27.88            |
| 13-2061 Financial Examiners                  | 80                               | 105                                   | 3.1%                      | 10                               | \$25.20           | \$34.14            |
| 31-9011 Massage Therapists                   | 120                              | 150                                   | 2.9%                      | 20                               | \$23.08           | \$35.12            |

Source: Iowa Workforce Development, Occupational Projections

Table 24: 2022-2032 Annual Openings Requiring Post-Secondary Experience

| <b>SOC + Occupation Title</b>                                                                | <b>Base<br/>Estimated<br/>Employment</b> | <b>Projected<br/>Estimated<br/>Employment</b> | <b>Annual<br/>Growth<br/>Rate</b> | <b>Total<br/>Annual Job<br/>Openings</b> | <b>Entry<br/>Wage</b> | <b>Median<br/>Wage</b> |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| 53-3032 Heavy and<br>Tractor-Trailer Truck<br>Drivers                                        | 7,120                                    | 7,635                                         | 0.7%                              | 815                                      | \$18.14               | \$23.94                |
| 31-1131 Nursing<br>Assistants                                                                | 4,120                                    | 4,670                                         | 1.3%                              | 675                                      | \$15.93               | \$17.90                |
| 29-1141 Registered<br>Nurses                                                                 | 5,285                                    | 5,865                                         | 1.1%                              | 360                                      | \$28.25               | \$32.59                |
| 11-1021 General and<br>Operations Managers                                                   | 3,965                                    | 4,260                                         | 0.7%                              | 355                                      | \$20.75               | \$36.87                |
| 25-2021 Elementary<br>School Teachers, Except<br>Special Education                           | 3,105                                    | 3,290                                         | 0.6%                              | 230                                      | \$20.97               | \$28.73                |
| 25-3031 Substitute<br>Teachers, Short-Term                                                   | 1,465                                    | 1,615                                         | 1.0%                              | 200                                      | \$15.28               | \$18.75                |
| 27-2022 Coaches and<br>Scouts                                                                | 1,170                                    | 1,315                                         | 1.2%                              | 170                                      | \$10.89               | \$19.97                |
| 13-2011 Accountants<br>and Auditors                                                          | 1,765                                    | 1,920                                         | 0.9%                              | 155                                      | \$24.02               | \$30.99                |
| 25-2031 Secondary<br>School Teachers, Except<br>Special and<br>Career/Technical<br>Education | 2,250                                    | 2,390                                         | 0.6%                              | 155                                      | \$21.90               | \$29.54                |
| 11-9111 Medical and<br>Health Services<br>Managers                                           | 1,080                                    | 1,455                                         | 3.4%                              | 125                                      | \$34.50               | \$44.80                |

Source: Iowa Workforce Development, Occupational Projections

South Central Iowa LWDA

Table 25: 2022-2032 Employment Annual Job Openings

| <b>SOC + Occupation Title</b>                                                  | <b>Base<br/>Estimated<br/>Employment</b> | <b>Projected<br/>Estimated<br/>Employment</b> | <b>Annual<br/>Growth<br/>Rate</b> | <b>Total<br/>Annual Job<br/>Openings</b> | <b>Entry<br/>Wage</b> | <b>Median<br/>Wage</b> |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| 11-9013 Farmers,<br>Ranchers, and Other<br>Agricultural Managers               | 5,340                                    | 5,480                                         | 0.3%                              | 570                                      |                       |                        |
| 41-2011 Cashiers                                                               | 2,765                                    | 2,635                                         | -0.5%                             | 510                                      | \$10.61               | \$13.37                |
| 35-3023 Fast Food and<br>Counter Workers                                       | 1,820                                    | 1,870                                         | 0.2%                              | 425                                      | \$10.11               | \$12.86                |
| 37-2011 Janitors and<br>Cleaners, Except Maids<br>and Housekeeping<br>Cleaners | 2,645                                    | 2,745                                         | 0.4%                              | 385                                      | \$12.70               | \$17.61                |
| 41-2031 Retail<br>Salespersons                                                 | 2,475                                    | 2,515                                         | 0.2%                              | 365                                      | \$10.96               | \$14.11                |
| 53-3032 Heavy and<br>Tractor-Trailer Truck<br>Drivers                          | 2,930                                    | 3,150                                         | 0.8%                              | 340                                      | \$16.95               | \$23.11                |
| 53-7065 Stockers and<br>Order Fillers                                          | 1,895                                    | 2,020                                         | 0.7%                              | 325                                      | \$13.81               | \$17.58                |
| 53-7062 Laborers and<br>Freight, Stock, and<br>Material Movers, Hand           | 2,345                                    | 2,490                                         | 0.6%                              | 325                                      | \$14.94               | \$19.03                |
| 43-9061 Office Clerks,<br>General                                              | 2,270                                    | 2,170                                         | -0.4%                             | 255                                      | \$13.63               | \$18.44                |
| 31-1120 Home Health<br>and Personal Care Aides                                 | 1,325                                    | 1,615                                         | 2.2%                              | 245                                      | \$13.20               | \$16.46                |

Source: Iowa Workforce Development, Occupational Projections

Table 26: 2022-2032 Employment Annual Growth Rate

| <b>SOC + Occupation Title</b>                                              | <b>Base Estimated Employment</b> | <b>Projected Estimated Employment</b> | <b>Annual Growth Rate</b> | <b>Total Annual Job Openings</b> | <b>Entry Wage</b> | <b>Median Wage</b> |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| 29-1171 Nurse Practitioners                                                | 130                              | 185                                   | 4.2%                      | 15                               | \$49.47           | \$57.31            |
| 11-9111 Medical and Health Services Managers                               | 365                              | 475                                   | 2.9%                      | 40                               | \$33.69           | \$44.95            |
| 21-1018 Substance Abuse, Behavioral Disorder, and Mental Health Counselors | 145                              | 185                                   | 2.8%                      | 20                               | \$19.34           | \$28.00            |
| 31-2021 Physical Therapist Assistants                                      | 95                               | 125                                   | 2.6%                      | 20                               | \$23.59           | \$27.88            |
| 51-9162 Computer Numerically Controlled Tool Programmers                   | 80                               | 100                                   | 2.5%                      | 10                               | \$22.66           | \$26.61            |
| 31-9096 Veterinary Assistants and Laboratory Animal Caretakers             | 85                               | 105                                   | 2.4%                      | 20                               | \$12.70           | \$14.75            |
| 15-1252 Software Developers                                                | 185                              | 230                                   | 2.4%                      | 15                               | \$34.82           | \$52.98            |
| 13-2052 Personal Financial Advisors                                        | 85                               | 105                                   | 2.4%                      | 10                               | \$23.84           | \$41.59            |
| 49-9041 Industrial Machinery Mechanics                                     | 470                              | 585                                   | 2.3%                      | 50                               | \$22.92           | \$29.20            |
| 31-1120 Home Health and Personal Care Aides                                | 1,325                            | 1,615                                 | 2.2%                      | 245                              | \$13.20           | \$16.46            |

Source: Iowa Workforce Development, Occupational Projections

Table 27: 2022-2032 Annual Openings Requiring Post-Secondary Experience

| <b>SOC + Occupation Title</b>                                                    | <b>Base Estimated Employment</b> | <b>Projected Estimated Employment</b> | <b>Annual Growth Rate</b> | <b>Total Annual Job Openings</b> | <b>Entry Wage</b> | <b>Median Wage</b> |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| 53-3032 Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers                                  | 2,930                            | 3,150                                 | 0.8%                      | 340                              | \$16.95           | \$23.11            |
| 31-1131 Nursing Assistants                                                       | 1,560                            | 1,600                                 | 0.3%                      | 230                              | \$15.23           | \$17.51            |
| 13-1199 Business Operations Specialists, All Other                               | 1,490                            | 1,545                                 | 0.3%                      | 135                              | \$15.96           | \$25.39            |
| 29-1141 Registered Nurses                                                        | 2,135                            | 2,270                                 | 0.6%                      | 130                              | \$28.11           | \$32.77            |
| 25-2021 Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education                     | 1,495                            | 1,515                                 | 0.1%                      | 100                              | \$20.51           | \$24.07            |
| 11-1021 General and Operations Managers                                          | 1,140                            | 1,215                                 | 0.7%                      | 100                              | \$20.31           | \$37.55            |
| 23-2099 Legal Support Workers, All Other                                         | 905                              | 925                                   | 0.3%                      | 100                              | \$19.74           | \$23.23            |
| 21-1029 Social Workers, All Other                                                | 780                              | 800                                   | 0.3%                      | 65                               |                   |                    |
| 13-2011 Accountants and Auditors                                                 | 675                              | 725                                   | 0.7%                      | 60                               | \$23.57           | \$31.27            |
| 25-2031 Secondary School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education | 850                              | 865                                   | 0.2%                      | 55                               | \$20.92           | \$24.74            |

Source: Iowa Workforce Development, Occupational Projections

Iowa Plains LWDA

Table 28: 2022-2032 Employment Annual Job Openings

| <b>SOC + Occupation Title</b>                                                  | <b>Base<br/>Estimated<br/>Employment</b> | <b>Projected<br/>Estimated<br/>Employment</b> | <b>Annual<br/>Growth<br/>Rate</b> | <b>Total<br/>Annual<br/>Job<br/>Openings</b> | <b>Entry<br/>Wage</b> | <b>Median<br/>Wage</b> |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| 41-2011 Cashiers                                                               | 10,940                                   | 10,685                                        | -0.2%                             | 2,060                                        | \$10.74               | \$13.34                |
| 11-9013 Farmers,<br>Ranchers, and Other<br>Agricultural Managers               | 16,085                                   | 16,380                                        | 0.2%                              | 1,705                                        | \$31.01               | \$47.75                |
| 35-3023 Fast Food and<br>Counter Workers                                       | 6,810                                    | 6,830                                         | 0.0%                              | 1,560                                        | \$10.47               | \$13.36                |
| 53-3032 Heavy and<br>Tractor-Trailer Truck<br>Drivers                          | 11,225                                   | 12,145                                        | 0.8%                              | 1,305                                        | \$17.58               | \$23.59                |
| 53-7062 Laborers and<br>Freight, Stock, and<br>Material Movers, Hand           | 8,245                                    | 8,790                                         | 0.7%                              | 1,155                                        | \$14.81               | \$19.26                |
| 41-2031 Retail<br>Salespersons                                                 | 7,440                                    | 7,695                                         | 0.3%                              | 1,120                                        | \$11.24               | \$14.18                |
| 31-1120 Home Health<br>and Personal Care Aides                                 | 5,065                                    | 6,320                                         | 2.5%                              | 960                                          | \$13.83               | \$16.70                |
| 31-1131 Nursing<br>Assistants                                                  | 5,515                                    | 5,905                                         | 0.7%                              | 850                                          | \$15.74               | \$17.75                |
| 37-2011 Janitors and<br>Cleaners, Except Maids<br>and Housekeeping<br>Cleaners | 5,690                                    | 5,905                                         | 0.4%                              | 830                                          | \$12.58               | \$16.70                |
| 53-7065 Stockers and<br>Order Fillers                                          | 4,245                                    | 4,730                                         | 1.1%                              | 765                                          | \$13.65               | \$17.68                |

Source: Iowa Workforce Development, Occupational Projections

Table 29: 2022-2032 Employment Annual Growth Rate

| <b>SOC + Occupation Title</b>                                                       | <b>Base<br/>Estimated<br/>Employment</b> | <b>Projected<br/>Estimated<br/>Employment</b> | <b>Annual<br/>Growth<br/>Rate</b> | <b>Total<br/>Annual Job<br/>Openings</b> | <b>Entry<br/>Wage</b> | <b>Median<br/>Wage</b> |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| 49-9081 Wind Turbine<br>Service Technicians                                         | 175                                      | 270                                           | 5.4%                              | 30                                       | \$24.76               | \$28.73                |
| 29-1171 Nurse<br>Practitioners                                                      | 440                                      | 660                                           | 5.0%                              | 45                                       | \$50.27               | \$61.54                |
| 29-1071 Physician<br>Assistants                                                     | 185                                      | 240                                           | 3.0%                              | 15                                       | \$48.64               | \$62.07                |
| 31-2011 Occupational<br>Therapy Assistants                                          | 70                                       | 85                                            | 2.9%                              | 15                                       | \$25.61               | \$30.09                |
| 11-9111 Medical and<br>Health Services<br>Managers                                  | 1,195                                    | 1,540                                         | 2.9%                              | 130                                      | \$34.81               | \$46.01                |
| 31-2021 Physical<br>Therapist Assistants                                            | 230                                      | 295                                           | 2.8%                              | 40                                       | \$22.20               | \$28.16                |
| 31-9011 Massage<br>Therapists                                                       | 90                                       | 115                                           | 2.8%                              | 15                                       | \$15.38               | \$24.70                |
| 21-1018 Substance<br>Abuse, Behavioral<br>Disorder, and Mental<br>Health Counselors | 615                                      | 780                                           | 2.7%                              | 75                                       | \$19.27               | \$26.03                |
| 15-1252 Software<br>Developers                                                      | 305                                      | 385                                           | 2.6%                              | 25                                       | \$33.75               | \$49.41                |
| 29-2056 Veterinary<br>Technologists and<br>Technicians                              | 175                                      | 225                                           | 2.6%                              | 25                                       | \$14.75               | \$18.32                |

Source: Iowa Workforce Development, Occupational Projections



Table 30: 2022-2032 Annual Openings Requiring Post-Secondary Experience

| SOC + Occupation Title                                                           | Base Estimated Employment | Projected Estimated Employment | Annual Growth Rate | Total Annual Job Openings | Entry Wage | Median Wage |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|------------|-------------|
| 53-3032 Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers                                  | 11,225                    | 12,145                         | 0.8%               | 1,305                     | \$17.58    | \$23.59     |
| 31-1131 Nursing Assistants                                                       | 5,515                     | 5,905                          | 0.7%               | 850                       | \$15.74    | \$17.75     |
| 29-1141 Registered Nurses                                                        | 6,900                     | 7,305                          | 0.6%               | 420                       | \$28.54    | \$32.64     |
| 11-1021 General and Operations Managers                                          | 3,855                     | 4,115                          | 0.7%               | 340                       | \$20.21    | \$36.33     |
| 25-2021 Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education                     | 4,675                     | 4,850                          | 0.4%               | 335                       | \$20.84    | \$27.53     |
| 25-3031 Substitute Teachers, Short-Term                                          | 1,415                     | 1,525                          | 0.8%               | 185                       | \$14.87    | \$18.10     |
| 13-2011 Accountants and Auditors                                                 | 1,970                     | 2,105                          | 0.7%               | 170                       | \$23.25    | \$31.37     |
| 49-3023 Automotive Service Technicians and Mechanics                             | 1,650                     | 1,770                          | 0.7%               | 155                       | \$15.65    | \$21.99     |
| 25-2031 Secondary School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education | 2,350                     | 2,445                          | 0.4%               | 155                       | \$21.05    | \$26.18     |
| 11-3031 Financial Managers                                                       | 1,485                     | 1,775                          | 2.0%               | 140                       | \$33.51    | \$51.30     |

Source: Iowa Workforce Development, Occupational Projections

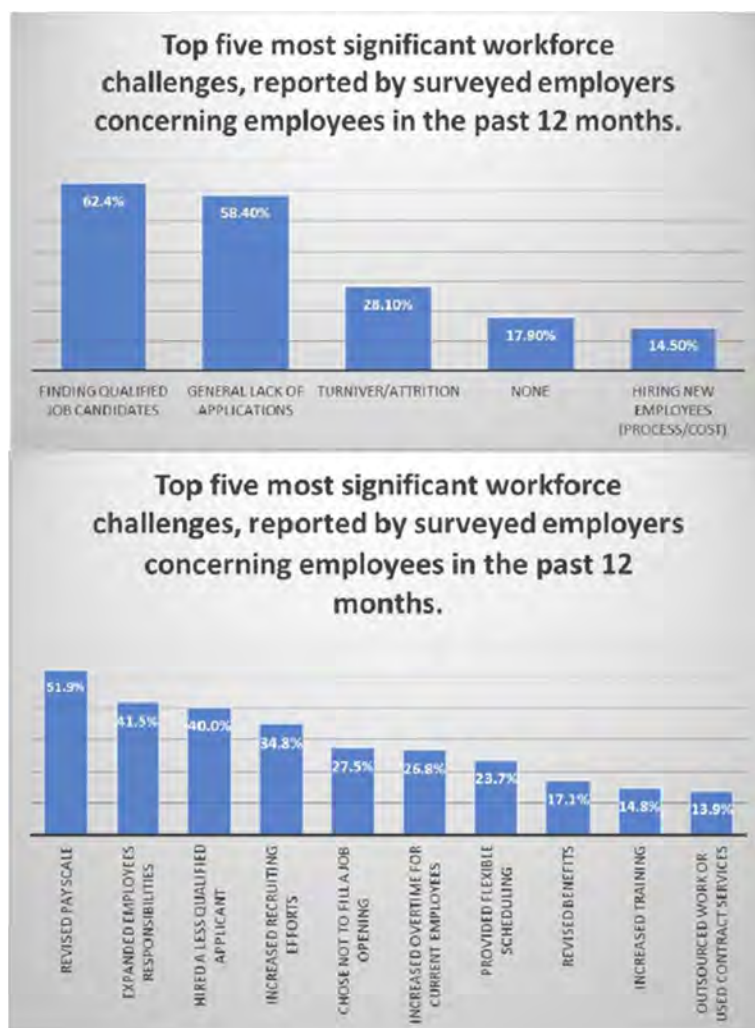
### iii. Employers' Employment Needs

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

Iowa Workforce Development (IWD) conducted the current Workforce Needs Assessment Survey during the fall of 2022 through the spring of 2023. This survey collects information from employers across the state regarding their vacancies, workforce challenges, difficulties in hiring, perceptions of applicants, advertising outlets for job openings, and upcoming retirements— among other questions.

In October of 2022, 25,160 employers operating 39,254 locations in the State of Iowa were contacted and asked to participate in the survey. By the end of the

survey period (March 2023), IWD received 11,212 responses for a response rate of 28.6% (by locations contacted). The top challenges identified by Iowa employers are summarized in the graphs below.



Employers in the following industries reported the greatest percentages of “finding qualified candidates” as a top workforce challenge:

- Education Services – 71.6%
- Healthcare and Social Assistance – 71.2%
- Construction – 68%
- Manufacturing – 68%
- Transportation & Warehousing – 67.9%

Large employers with 100 or more employees were more likely to report “finding qualified job candidates” as a top workforce challenge than mid-size employers with 11-99 employees or small employers with 10 or fewer employees.

Over half, 53%, of all surveyed employers stated that their experience filling job openings in 2022 (in terms of difficulty) was the same as it had been in 2021. However, 24.5% reported that it had been more difficult in 2022 when compared to their experience in 2021.

Over two-thirds, 71.9%, of surveyed employers either “agree” or “strongly agree” that a “lack of qualified applicants” is a problem when filling job openings. Closely followed by “a general lack of applicants” (70.5%)

When employers were asked, “what are the most difficult occupational categories to fill?” the top 5 answers were:

- Sales & Related jobs – 15.8%
- Office & Administrative Support jobs – 15.1%
- Transportation & Material Moving jobs – 12.6%
- Food Preparation & Serving Related jobs – 12.4%
- Installation, Maintenance, & Repair jobs – 12.3%

41.8% agree that applicants, in general, fulfill the necessary requirements of their job openings While less than 1/3 (32.5%) agree that applicants fulfill the hard/occupational requirements of their job openings. And just over 1/3 (34.9%) agree that applicants fulfill the soft/interpersonal skill requirements of their job openings. Overall, 95.3% of surveyed employers find that applicants lack soft/interpersonal skills and 65.0% find that they lack hard/occupational skills.

Applicants [In General](#), Fulfill Necessary Skill Requirements, by Area: State of Iowa



Applicants [Fulfill Hard/Occupational Skill Requirements](#), by Area: State of Iowa



Applicants [Fulfill Soft/Interpersonal Skill Requirements](#), by Area: State of Iowa

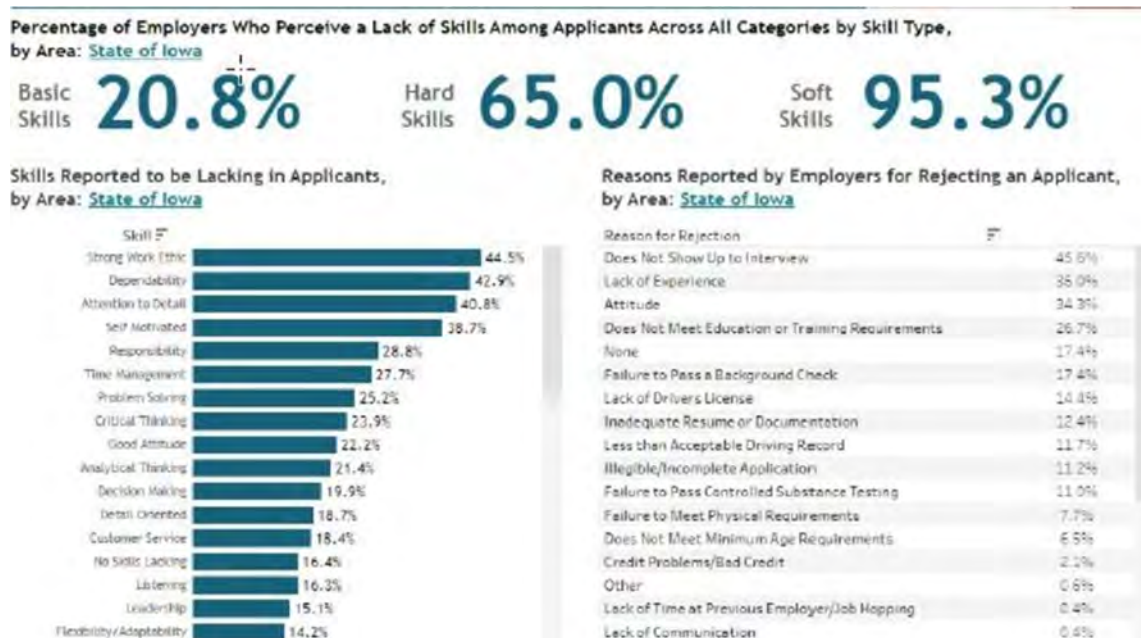


The top skills reported by employers to be lacking in applicants include:

- 44.5% - strong work ethic
- 42.9% - dependability
- 40.8% - attention to detail
- 38.7% - self-motivated
- 28.8% - responsibility

The top reasons reported by employers to reject an applicant:

- 45.6% - does not show up to interview
- 35.0% - lack of experience
- 34.3% - attitude
- 26.7% - does not meet education/training requirements



Looking at Iowa's existing in-demand sectors and occupations, in addition to the skills reported by employers outlined above from the Workforce Needs Assessment, additional skills are required throughout each in demand-sector reported in A.1.i. The charts below show the top advertised detailed job skills and the top advertised certification groups found in openings advertised in IowaWORKS for the related occupations across Iowa.

## Healthcare and Social Assistance Skills

| Rank | Advertised Detailed Job Skill    | Advertised Skill Group         |
|------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1    | Customer service                 | Customer Service Skills        |
| 2    | Discharge planning               | Registered Nurse (RN) Skills   |
| 3    | Medication administration        | Registered Nurse (RN) Skills   |
| 4    | Typing                           | Office Clerk Skills            |
| 5    | Food preparation                 | Food Preparation Worker Skills |
| 6    | Crisis intervention              | Mental Health Counselor Skills |
| 7    | Administer medications           | Pharmacists Skills             |
| 8    | Exceed customer expectations     | Loan Processor Skills          |
| 9    | Knowledge of medical terminology | Medical Coding Skills          |
| 10   | Risk management                  | Risk Analyst Skills            |

## Healthcare and Social Assistance Certifications

| Rank | Advertised Certification Group                                     | Advertised Certification Sub-Category |
|------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1    | Nursing Credentials and Certifications                             | Nursing                               |
| 2    | American Heart Association (AHA) CPR & First Aid Certifications    | Nursing                               |
| 3    | American Association of Medical Assistants (AAMA) Certifications   | Medical Professional                  |
| 4    | National Registry of Emergency Medical Technicians (NREMT)         | Fire Rescue                           |
| 5    | Social Worker Credentials & Certifications                         | Social and Human Services             |
| 6    | National Board for Respiratory Care (NBRC)                         | Medical Treatment and Therapy         |
| 7    | State Licensed Counselors                                          | Counseling                            |
| 8    | American Red Cross - First Aid Certifications                      | Nursing                               |
| 9    | American Medical Technologists (AMT) Certifications                | Medical Professional                  |
| 10   | National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN) Certifications | Nursing                               |



## Educational Services Skills

| Rank | Advertised Detailed Job Skill | Advertised Skill Group           |
|------|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1    | Customer service              | Customer Service Skills          |
| 2    | Supervise students            | Instructor or Teacher Skills     |
| 3    | Record keeping                | Bookkeeper Skills                |
| 4    | Word processing               | Office Clerk Skills              |
| 5    | Food preparation              | Food Preparation Worker Skills   |
| 6    | Discharge planning            | Registered Nurse (RN) Skills     |
| 7    | Communicate with parents      | Instructor or Teacher Skills     |
| 8    | Curriculum development        | Instructional Coordinator Skills |
| 9    | Crisis intervention           | Mental Health Counselor Skills   |
| 10   | Identify opportunities        | Account Executive Skills         |

## Educational Services Certifications

| Rank | Advertised Certification Group                                                | Advertised Certification Sub-Category |
|------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1    | American Heart Association (AHA) CPR & First Aid Certifications               | Nursing                               |
| 2    | Nursing Credentials and Certifications                                        | Nursing                               |
| 3    | Iowa (IA) Board of Educational Examiners License and Authorization            | Teaching                              |
| 4    | Commercial Drivers License (CDL)                                              | Ground Transportation                 |
| 5    | American Red Cross - First Aid Certifications                                 | Nursing                               |
| 6    | Pharmacy Technician Certification Board (PTCB)                                | Pharmaceutical                        |
| 7    | American Association of Medical Assistants (AAMA) Certifications              | Medical Professional                  |
| 8    | Council for Professional Recognition - Credentials                            | Personal Care and Service - All Other |
| 9    | International Certification and Reciprocity Consortium (IC&RC) Certifications | Counseling                            |
| 10   | Social Worker Credentials & Certifications                                    | Social and Human Services             |

## Retail Trade Skills

| Rank | Advertised Detailed Job Skill | Advertised Skill Group                |
|------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1    | Customer service              | Customer Service Skills               |
| 2    | Ensure customer satisfaction  | Customer Service Skills               |
| 3    | Inventory control             | Bill and Account Collectors Skills    |
| 4    | Inventory management          | Bill and Account Collectors Skills    |
| 5    | Fills orders for medications  | Pharmacists Skills                    |
| 6    | Cash handling                 | Cashier Skills                        |
| 7    | Administer vaccines           | Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) Skills |
| 8    | Stock merchandise             | Merchandiser Skills                   |
| 9    | Dusting                       | Housekeeper Skills                    |
| 10   | Record keeping                | Bookkeeper Skills                     |

## Retail Trade Certifications

| Rank | Advertised Certification Group                                  | Advertised Certification Sub-Category |
|------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1    | Commercial Drivers License (CDL)                                | Ground Transportation                 |
| 2    | American Heart Association (AHA) CPR & First Aid Certifications | Nursing                               |
| 3    | Pharmacy Technician Certification Board (PTCB)                  | Pharmaceutical                        |
| 4    | StateFoodSafety Certifications                                  | Food and Beverage Serving             |
| 5    | Nursing Credentials and Certifications                          | Nursing                               |
| 6    | Doctor of Dental Surgery (DDS)                                  | Dental                                |
| 7    | ASE Parts Specialist Certifications                             | Automotive                            |
| 8    | ASE Automobile & Light Truck Certifications                     | Automotive                            |
| 9    | American Institute of CPAs (AICPA) Certifications               | Financial Specialists                 |
| 10   | CompTIA Certifications                                          | Information Technology - All Other    |

## Manufacturing Skills

| Rank | Advertised Detailed Job Skill | Advertised Skill Group             |
|------|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1    | Customer service              | Customer Service Skills            |
| 2    | Welding                       | Welding Skills                     |
| 3    | Preventative maintenance      | Maintenance Technician Skills      |
| 4    | Root cause analysis           | Reliability Engineer Skills        |
| 5    | Exceed customer expectations  | Loan Processor Skills              |
| 6    | Calculate figures             | Mathematical Skills                |
| 7    | Mathematical Skills           | Mathematical Skills                |
| 8    | Effectively manage time       | Dispatcher Skills                  |
| 9    | System design                 | Information Systems Manager Skills |
| 10   | Design tools                  | Tool and Die Maker Skills          |

## Manufacturing Certifications

| Rank | Advertised Certification Group                                  | Advertised Certification Sub-Category |
|------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1    | Commercial Drivers License (CDL)                                | Ground Transportation                 |
| 2    | Board of Certified Safety Professionals (BCSP)                  | Safety and Quality                    |
| 3    | Nursing Credentials and Certifications                          | Nursing                               |
| 4    | Human Resource Certification Institute (HRCI)                   | Human Resources                       |
| 5    | Board for Global EHS Credentialing                              | Safety and Quality                    |
| 6    | American Heart Association (AHA) CPR & First Aid Certifications | Nursing                               |
| 7    | American Institute of CPAs (AICPA) Certifications               | Financial Specialists                 |
| 8    | Institute for Supply Management (ISM) Certifications            | Material Moving and Logistics         |
| 9    | National Registry of Emergency Medical Technicians (NREMT)      | Fire Rescue                           |
| 10   | Cisco Certifications                                            | Computer Network                      |



## Accommodation and Food Service Skills

| Rank | Advertised Detailed Job Skill      | Advertised Skill Group             |
|------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1    | Customer service                   | Customer Service Skills            |
| 2    | Food preparation                   | Food Preparation Worker Skills     |
| 3    | Cash handling                      | Cashier Skills                     |
| 4    | Leadership development             | Management Analyst Skills          |
| 5    | Restaurant management              | Restaurant Manager Skills          |
| 6    | Welcome patrons                    | Host/Hostess Skills                |
| 7    | Inventory management               | Bill and Account Collectors Skills |
| 8    | Achieve maximum guest satisfaction | Concierge Skills                   |
| 9    | Guest service skills               | Concierge Skills                   |
| 10   | Taking orders                      | Waitress or Waiter Skills          |

## Accommodation and Food Service Certifications

| Rank | Advertised Certification Group                                  | Advertised Certification Sub-Category |
|------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1    | Commercial Drivers License (CDL)                                | Ground Transportation                 |
| 2    | TIPS Training Program                                           | Food and Beverage Serving             |
| 3    | American Heart Association (AHA) CPR & First Aid Certifications | Nursing                               |
| 4    | ServSuccess Certifications                                      | Food Service Management               |
| 5    | Commission on Dietetic Registration (CDR) Certifications        | Nutritional                           |
| 6    | National Restaurant Association (ServSafe) Certifications       | Food and Beverage Serving             |
| 7    | State Licenses for Dietitians and Nutritionists                 | Food Service Management               |
| 8    | National Registry of Emergency Medical Technicians (NREMT)      | Fire Rescue                           |
| 9    | American Institute of CPAs (AICPA) Certifications               | Financial Specialists                 |
| 10   | Human Resource Certification Institute (HRCI)                   | Human Resources                       |

Across the 5 different industries, the top advertised detailed job skill in each sector is customer service. Additionally, across all 5 industries, 17,091 total current job listings require customer service as a needed skill. Conversely, the needed certifications across industries understandably varies. However, this directly illustrates the skills and certifications that Iowa should currently be focusing on to upskill Iowans and fill business needs in the state.

Looking at Iowa's emerging in-demand sectors and occupations, in addition to the skills reported by employers outlined above from the Workforce Needs Assessment, additional skills are required throughout each growing in demand-sector reported in A.1.ii. The charts below show the top advertised detailed job skills and the top advertised certification groups found in openings advertised in IowaWORKS for the related occupations across Iowa.

### Healthcare and Social Assistance Skills

| Rank | Advertised Detailed Job Skill    | Advertised Skill Group         |
|------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1    | Customer service                 | Customer Service Skills        |
| 2    | Discharge planning               | Registered Nurse (RN) Skills   |
| 3    | Medication administration        | Registered Nurse (RN) Skills   |
| 4    | Typing                           | Office Clerk Skills            |
| 5    | Food preparation                 | Food Preparation Worker Skills |
| 6    | Crisis intervention              | Mental Health Counselor Skills |
| 7    | Administer medications           | Pharmacists Skills             |
| 8    | Exceed customer expectations     | Loan Processor Skills          |
| 9    | Knowledge of medical terminology | Medical Coding Skills          |
| 10   | Risk management                  | Risk Analyst Skills            |

### Healthcare and Social Assistance Certifications

| Rank | Advertised Certification Group                                     | Advertised Certification Sub-Category |
|------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1    | Nursing Credentials and Certifications                             | Nursing                               |
| 2    | American Heart Association (AHA) CPR & First Aid Certifications    | Nursing                               |
| 3    | American Association of Medical Assistants (AAMA) Certifications   | Medical Professional                  |
| 4    | National Registry of Emergency Medical Technicians (NREMT)         | Fire Rescue                           |
| 5    | Social Worker Credentials & Certifications                         | Social and Human Services             |
| 6    | National Board for Respiratory Care (NBRC)                         | Medical Treatment and Therapy         |
| 7    | State Licensed Counselors                                          | Counseling                            |
| 8    | American Red Cross - First Aid Certifications                      | Nursing                               |
| 9    | American Medical Technologists (AMT) Certifications                | Medical Professional                  |
| 10   | National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN) Certifications | Nursing                               |

## Professional and Business Services Skills

| Rank | Advertised Detailed Job Skill | Advertised Skill Group             |
|------|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1    | Customer service              | Customer Service Skills            |
| 2    | Identify opportunities        | Account Executive Skills           |
| 3    | Typing                        | Office Clerk Skills                |
| 4    | Identify trends               | Market Research Analyst Skills     |
| 5    | Pricing strategies            | Chief Financial Officer Skills     |
| 6    | Financial analysis            | Financial Analyst Skills           |
| 7    | Inventory management          | Bill and Account Collectors Skills |
| 8    | Product marketing             | Marketing Manager Skills           |
| 9    | Curriculum development        | Instructional Coordinator Skills   |
| 10   | Managing relationships        | Account Manager Skills             |

## Professional and Business Services Skills Certifications

| Rank | Advertised Certification Group                                                  | Advertised Certification Sub-Category |
|------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1    | Professional Pricing Society (PPS) Certification                                | Advertising and Marketing             |
| 2    | Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) Certifications                     | Human Resources                       |
| 3    | Commercial Drivers License (CDL)                                                | Ground Transportation                 |
| 4    | Human Resource Certification Institute (HRCI)                                   | Human Resources                       |
| 5    | National Association of Qualified Intellectual Disability Professionals (QIDPs) | Social and Human Services             |
| 6    | Institute of Consumer Financial Education (ICFE) Certifications                 | Banking and Credit                    |
| 7    | American Heart Association (AHA) CPR & First Aid Certifications                 | Nursing                               |

## Transportation and Warehousing Skills

| Rank | Advertised Detailed Job Skill | Advertised Skill Group         |
|------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1    | Delivers mail                 | Mail Clerk Skills              |
| 2    | Maintains records             | Technical Writer Skills        |
| 3    | Customer service              | Customer Service Skills        |
| 4    | Communicate professionally    | Property Manager Skills        |
| 5    | Preventative maintenance      | Maintenance Technician Skills  |
| 6    | Unloading freight             | Cargo and Freight Agent Skills |
| 7    | Welding                       | Welding Skills                 |
| 8    | Transportation management     | Transportation Manager Skills  |
| 9    | Typing                        | Office Clerk Skills            |
| 10   | On-time delivery              | Delivery Driver Skills         |

## Transportation and Warehousing Certifications

| Rank | Advertised Certification Group                                                                       | Advertised Certification Sub-Category |
|------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1    | Commercial Drivers License (CDL)                                                                     | Ground Transportation                 |
| 2    | Association for Materials Protection and Performance (AMPP) - Craftworker and Coating Certifications | Safety and Quality                    |
| 3    | Refrigerating Engineers & Technicians Association (RETA)                                             | Appliances                            |
| 4    | American Heart Association (AHA) CPR & First Aid Certifications                                      | Nursing                               |
| 5    | National Association of Emergency Medical Technicians (NAEMT) Certifications                         | Medical Treatment and Therapy         |
| 6    | Six Sigma Certifications                                                                             | Business Planning                     |
| 7    | American Association of Critical-Care Nurses (AACN) Certifications                                   | Nursing                               |
| 8    | Research Administrators Certification Council (RACC)                                                 | Medical Testing                       |
| 9    | National Registry of Emergency Medical Technicians (NREMT)                                           | Fire Rescue                           |
| 10   | Nursing Credentials and Certifications                                                               | Nursing                               |

## Educational Services Skills

| Rank | Advertised Detailed Job Skill | Advertised Skill Group           |
|------|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1    | Customer service              | Customer Service Skills          |
| 2    | Supervise students            | Instructor or Teacher Skills     |
| 3    | Record keeping                | Bookkeeper Skills                |
| 4    | Word processing               | Office Clerk Skills              |
| 5    | Food preparation              | Food Preparation Worker Skills   |
| 6    | Discharge planning            | Registered Nurse (RN) Skills     |
| 7    | Communicate with parents      | Instructor or Teacher Skills     |
| 8    | Curriculum development        | Instructional Coordinator Skills |
| 9    | Crisis intervention           | Mental Health Counselor Skills   |
| 10   | Identify opportunities        | Account Executive Skills         |

## Educational Services Certifications

| Rank | Advertised Certification Group                                                | Advertised Certification Sub-Category |
|------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1    | American Heart Association (AHA) CPR & First Aid Certifications               | Nursing                               |
| 2    | Nursing Credentials and Certifications                                        | Nursing                               |
| 3    | Iowa (IA) Board of Educational Examiners License and Authorization            | Teaching                              |
| 4    | Commercial Drivers License (CDL)                                              | Ground Transportation                 |
| 5    | American Red Cross - First Aid Certifications                                 | Nursing                               |
| 6    | Pharmacy Technician Certification Board (PTCB)                                | Pharmaceutical                        |
| 7    | American Association of Medical Assistants (AAMA) Certifications              | Medical Professional                  |
| 8    | Council for Professional Recognition - Credentials                            | Personal Care and Service - All Other |
| 9    | International Certification and Reciprocity Consortium (IC&RC) Certifications | Counseling                            |
| 10   | Social Worker Credentials & Certifications                                    | Social and Human Services             |

Across the 4 different industries identified to be emerging, the top advertised detailed job skill in each sector with the exclusion of Transportation and Warehousing is customer service. However, customer service was ranked at the third most advertised detailed skill for this industry.

Additionally, across these 4 industries, 4,809 total current job listings require customer service as a needed skill. Although this is lower than in the average

number of existing in-demand industries, this is expected as the number of job openings is currently lower overall as well.

Conversely, the needed certifications across industries understandably varies. However, this directly illustrates the skills and certifications that Iowa should be planning to focus on to upskill Iowans and fill emerging business needs in the state.

Iowa is in the mid-range of total population compared to other states with 3,190,369 residents according to the 2020 Census, Iowa has a low unemployment rate reported at 2.7% in June 2023, and Iowa has an aging workforce which all contribute to a lack of available labor force in the state. At the conclusion of PY22, Iowa's labor force participation rate was 68.1%.

2. % of employers report they plan on maintaining their current size in the next 2 years. 25.9% of employers report they plan to expand their workforce in the next 2 years 1.9% of employers report they plan to downsize their workforce in the next 2 years.

Top reasons to expand:

- 64.1% - meet current market demand
- 43.8% - increased market share

Top reasons to downsize:

- 39.6% - lack of available labor
- 29.7% - expenses related to wages

Top occupational categories impacted by expansion/downsizing:

- 24.5% - Office & Administrative Support jobs
- 20.2% - Sales & Related jobs
- 17.2% - Production jobs
- 15.4% - Management jobs

Of those employers who completed the 2023 Workforce Needs Assessment, 25.9% reported that employee retirements are a concern for them within the next two years. To fill those vacant positions due to retirement, 81.9% reported they plan to hire new workers, 43.9 reported they plan to promote from within, and 10.4% reported they do not plan to refill those positions. With the lack of available labor in the state, it will be a challenge for employers to fill their retirement positions with new workers, expressly given that finding qualified candidates is their number one workforce challenge as it stands.



## B. Workforce Analysis

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

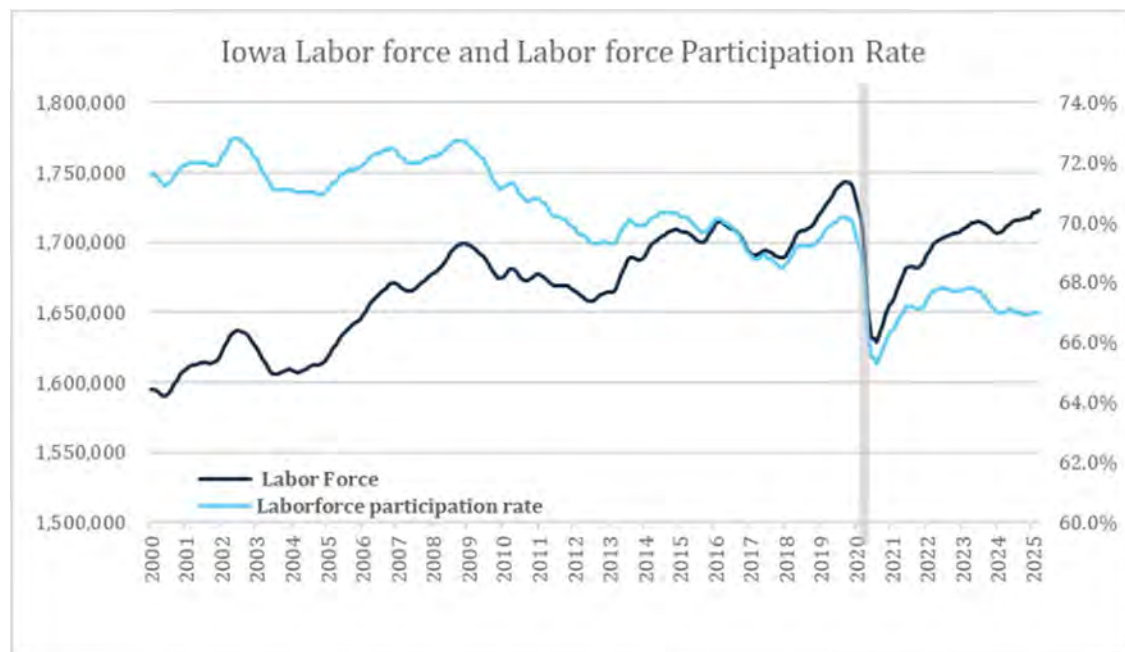
### II. Analysis must include —

#### i. Employment and Unemployment

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

Iowa's labor force (Figure 14) has been steadily growing since 2000; however, labor force participation rate has been declining. One reason for this is that the population is not growing fast enough to make up for the older Iowans who are leaving the labor force.

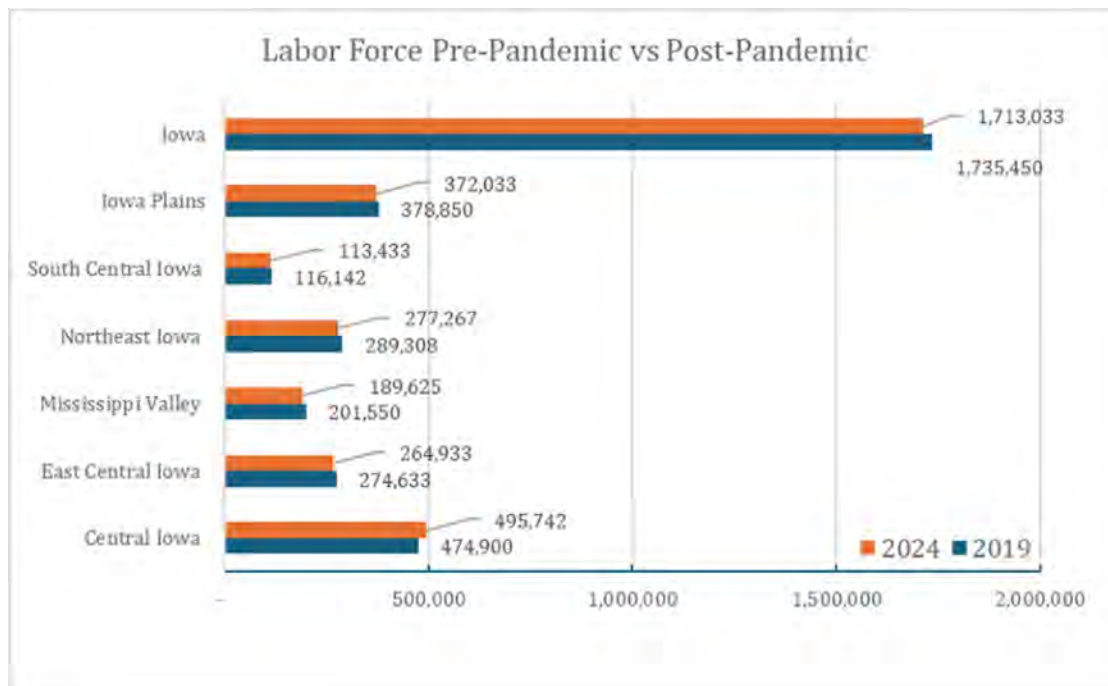
Figure 14



Source: Iowa Workforce Development, Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS)

The labor force in five of the LWDA regions has nearly rebounded to pre-pandemic levels and the Central Iowa LWDA stands out with the most growth.

Figure 15

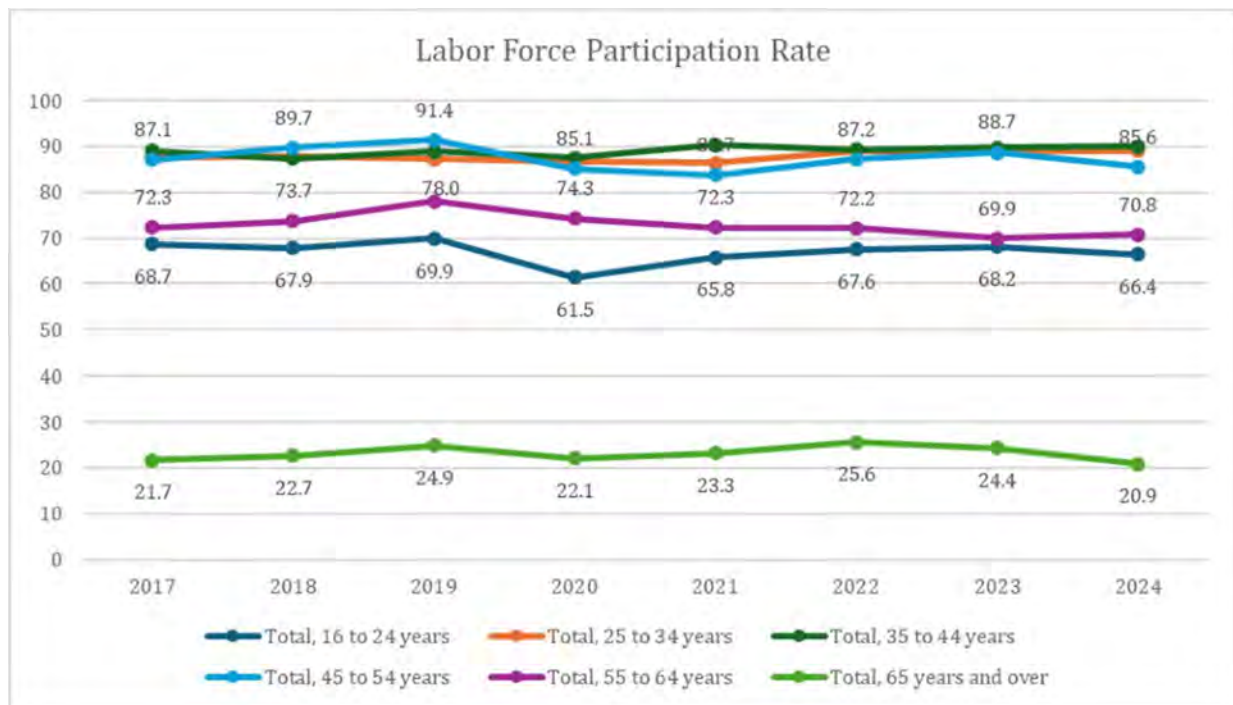


Source: Iowa Workforce Development, Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS)

The 25- to 34-year-old is the only group to increase their labor force participation rate in 2024 (89.1 percent) compared to 2019 (87.2 percent) and at the same time lower their unemployment rate.

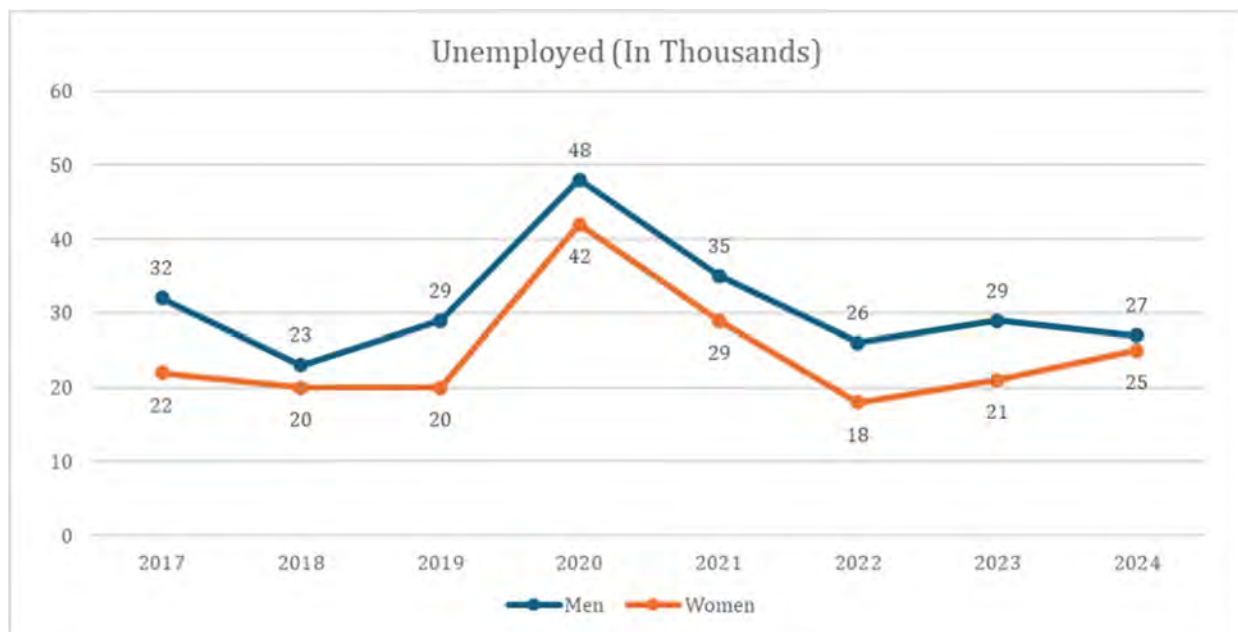


Figure 16



Source: <https://www.bls.gov/lau/ex14tables.htm>

Figure 17



Source: <https://www.bls.gov/lau/ex14tables.htm>

Table 31 below presents a comparison of labor force participation and unemployment rates across racial and ethnic groups, contrasting pre-pandemic

(2019) levels with post-pandemic (2023) data. In 2023, all racial and ethnic groups saw a decline in unemployment rates compared to 2019, indicating broad improvements in employment. While labor force participation rates in 2023 remained slightly below 2019 levels, the differences were minimal, suggesting relative stability despite economic shifts.

Table 31

| Race and Hispanic or Latino Origin               | Labor Force Participation Rate |       |            | Unemployment Rate |      |            |
|--------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------|------------|-------------------|------|------------|
|                                                  | 2019                           | 2023  | Difference | 2019              | 2023 | Difference |
| White alone                                      | 66.4%                          | 65.4% | -1.0%      | 3.3%              | 2.3% | -1.0%      |
| Black or African American alone                  | 71.9%                          | 69.9% | -2.0%      | 10.1%             | 8.3% | -1.8%      |
| American Indian and Alaska Native alone          | 54.4%                          | 69.5% | 15.1%      | 9.5%              | 2.8% | -6.7%      |
| Asian alone                                      | 72.3%                          | 70.0% | -2.3%      | 3.9%              | 2.8% | -1.1%      |
| Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone | N                              | N     | -          | N                 | N    | -          |
| Some other race alone                            | 76.6%                          | 74.0% | -2.6%      | 5.4%              | 5.1% | -0.3%      |
| Two or more races                                | 72.0%                          | 71.9% | -0.1%      | 7.0%              | 4.4% | -2.6%      |
| Hispanic or Latino origin (of any race)          | 76.9%                          | 72.6% | -4.3%      | 6.2%              | 4.6% | -1.6%      |
| White alone, not Hispanic or Latino              | 65.9%                          | 65.3% | -0.6%      | 3.2%              | 2.3% | -0.9%      |

Source: American Community Survey 1-year estimate, Table S2301

In Iowa, individuals with disabilities are much more likely to earn less than individuals without. In 2023, nearly half (46%) of individuals with a disability earn less than \$25,000 per year while 29% of their counterparts earn less. When comparing the median (50th percentile) 12-month earnings, those with a disability earned \$13,500 less. 30.5% of individuals with a disability had income less than 150% of the poverty level.

Table 32

|                                                                                            | <b>With<br/>Disability</b> | <b>No<br/>Disability</b> |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| <b>Population Age 16 and Over</b>                                                          | <b>388,506</b>             | <b>2,137,386</b>         |
| Educational services, and health care and social assistance                                | 23%                        | 24%                      |
| Retail trade                                                                               | 14%                        | 11%                      |
| Manufacturing                                                                              | 13%                        | 15%                      |
| Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services                   | 9%                         | 7%                       |
| Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services | 8%                         | 8%                       |
| Construction                                                                               | 6%                         | 7%                       |
| Transportation and warehousing, and utilities                                              | 6%                         | 5%                       |
| Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing                              | 6%                         | 7%                       |
| Other services (except public administration)                                              | 5%                         | 4%                       |
| Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining                                     | 4%                         | 4%                       |
| Public administration                                                                      | 3%                         | 4%                       |
| Wholesale trade                                                                            | 2%                         | 3%                       |
| Information                                                                                | 2%                         | 1%                       |

Source: 2023 American Community Survey 1-year estimate, Table S1811

Table 32 above provides an overview of the employed population, categorized by industry and disability status. People with disabilities are more likely to be employed in service-oriented and lower-wage sectors such as retail trade (14% vs. 11%) and accommodation and food services (9% vs. 7%), suggesting potential barriers to accessing higher-paying or more stable employment. Conversely, they are underrepresented in sectors such as finance, public administration, and wholesale trade—industries that often require higher educational credentials or offer more technical roles. However, there is near parity in fields like educational services, health care, and professional or scientific services, which may reflect more inclusive hiring practices or accessible career pathways in these sectors. Overall, the data underscores the need for targeted efforts to expand access, remove barriers, and promote equitable workforce participation for individuals with disabilities across all industries.

## ii. Labor Market Trends

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

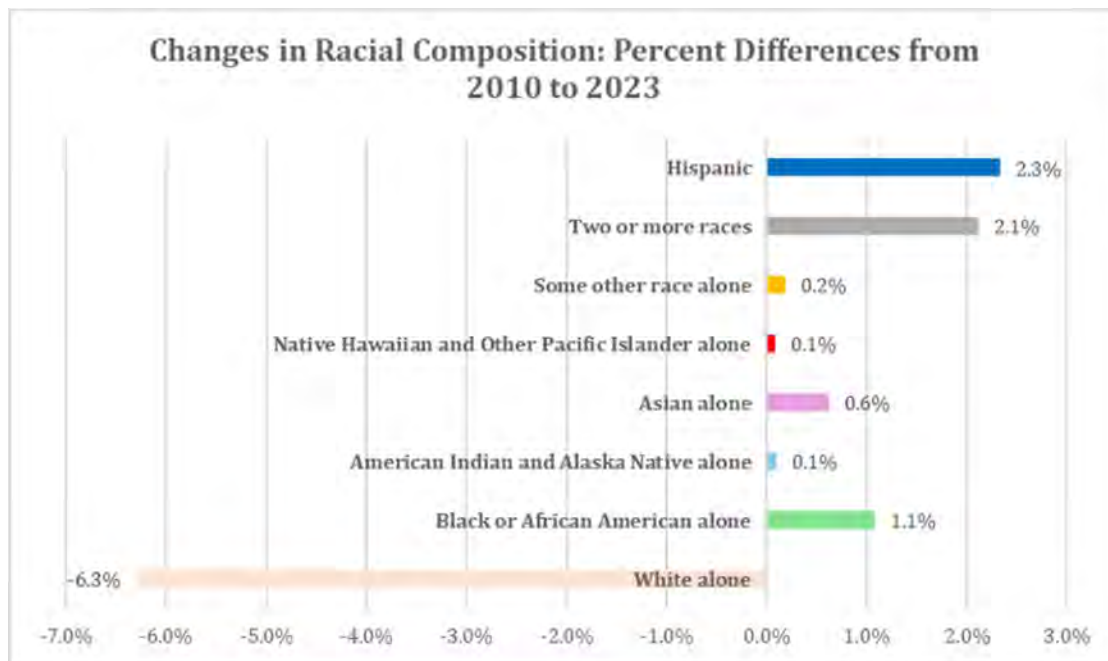
Iowa's population level remains consistent with an estimate of just over 3.2 million people. Iowa saw a 5.3% increase in population from the 2010 to the 2023

U.S. Census population count and ranked 31st nationally in total population and 30th in population growth. Overall population and population growth have been steady and middle of the pack when compared to other states, as many leave the Northeast and Midwest for states in the south and western U.S., however, Iowa is in a much better position than other Midwestern states.

While Iowa's overall population has experienced relatively modest and steady growth, its demographic composition is undergoing a significant transformation. The state remains predominantly white, with four out of five residents identifying as White Alone. However, Iowa's racial and ethnic diversity continues to expand. Between 2010 and 2023, the percentage of Iowa's White Alone population declined by 6.3 percentage points, dropping from 88.7% to 82.4%. Meanwhile, every minority racial category saw an increase in both population size and proportional representation. Hispanic or Latino individuals recorded the largest growth, rising by 82,604 people (+2.3%). The Two or More Races category followed, adding nearly 70,035 individuals (+2.1%). Black or African American residents experienced the third highest increase, growing by 39,266 people (+1.1%). Figure 18 illustrates these demographic shifts.

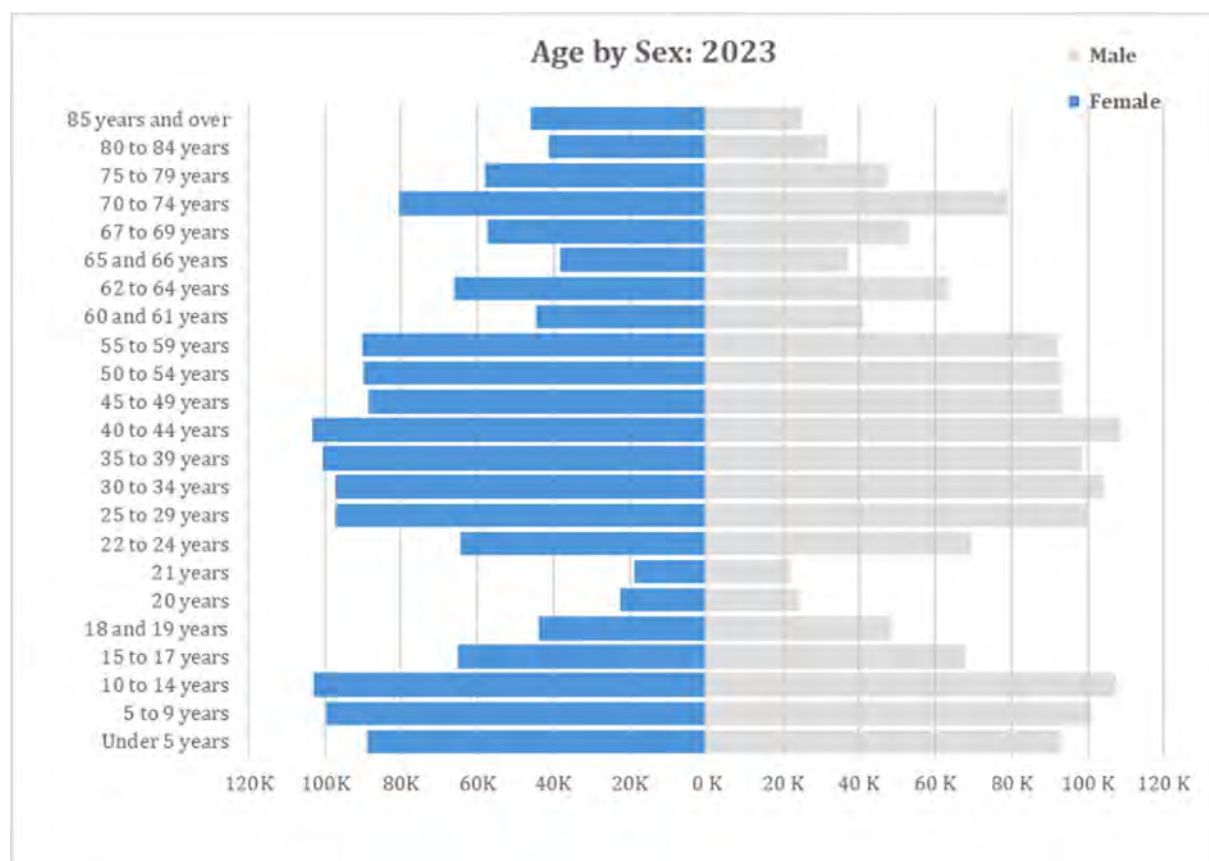
Iowa's White population is also its oldest population. When comparing the median age of individuals by race, White non-hispanic Iowans have a median age of 42.1. Iowa's minorities have a much younger median age ranging from 34.7 (Asian) to 24.3 (Two or More Races). Hispanics or Latinos have the second lowest median age at 26. Looking at the age groupings in Iowa, it can be expected that more Baby Boomer Iowans will age out of the labor force with fewer Iowans to replace them in the 40- to 54-year-old categories. Without an influx of individuals to the state, this could cause a shock to Iowa's labor market in the coming years.

Figure 18



Source: 2010 Decennial Census, Table P1; 2023 American Community Survey 1-year estimate Table B01003

Figure 19

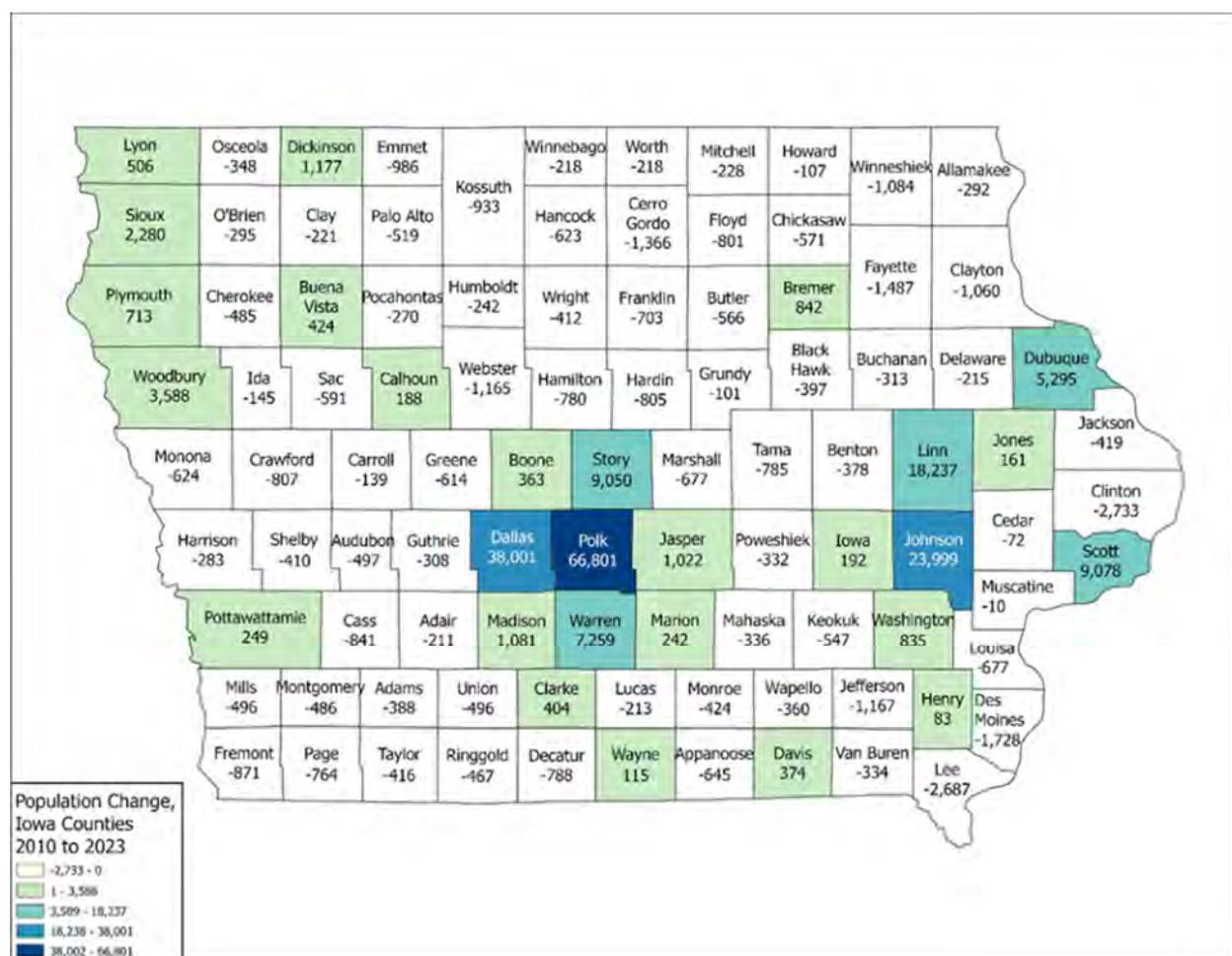


Source: 2023 American Community Survey 1-year estimate, Table B01001

Between 2010 and 2023, 90% of Iowa's population growth occurred in Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) counties, with the Des Moines-West Des Moines metro region alone accounting for 60% of that increase. The second-largest growth took place in the East Central region, primarily in Linn and Johnson counties, which together contributed 22% to the state's total population expansion.

Despite Iowa's overall population growth, most counties experienced declines. Between 2010 and 2023, 71 counties saw population losses, with most decreases ranging in the hundreds. However, nine counties recorded declines exceeding 1,000 residents, with Clinton (-2,733) and Lee (-2,687) counties seeing the largest drops. Generally, population losses were more pronounced in smaller or rural counties, although some micropolitan areas also experienced declines. Figure 20 shows the population change from 2010 to 2023. Counties with darker shades indicate a strong population growth and counties with no color indicate a population decline.

Figure 20



Source: 2010 Decennial Census, Table P1; 2023 American Community Survey 1-year estimate Table B01003

Rural areas with population decline often face higher unemployment rates, major employer closures, or economic downturns compared to urban areas. Fremont County, one of Iowa's least populated counties, saw an 11.7% decrease (-871 residents) between 2010 and 2023. Repeated flooding events during the decade severely impacted local communities, destroying homes and businesses and contributing to population decline.

Overall, Iowa is grappling with population challenges statewide, but rural counties are experiencing sharper declines. With 72% of Iowa counties losing population, the state will likely face ongoing labor force challenges, as population trends directly influence workforce availability and economic growth.

Educational attainment is closely linked to metropolitan areas, as counties with higher education levels tend to be located within metropolitan statistical areas. Notably, the top 10 counties with the highest educational levels all fall within such regions. Jefferson County, home to the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi Institute, and Dickinson County—famous for Okoboji and other scenic lakes—stand out in Iowa as desirable destinations. These counties have seen notable population growth, further expanding the labor market and attracting skilled professionals in search of new opportunities.

Earnings are tied to educational attainment. Individuals with “Some College, or Associate Degree” earned \$5,000 more over the year than high school graduates, while those with a bachelor’s degree earned nearly \$20,000 per year more and graduate degrees earned nearly \$35,000 more. These are high-level trends and aren’t absolute as it depends on fields of study and training. It can be financial rewarding if a certificate or degree leads to a high earning, in demand occupation like healthcare, finance, manufacturing, information technology for example.

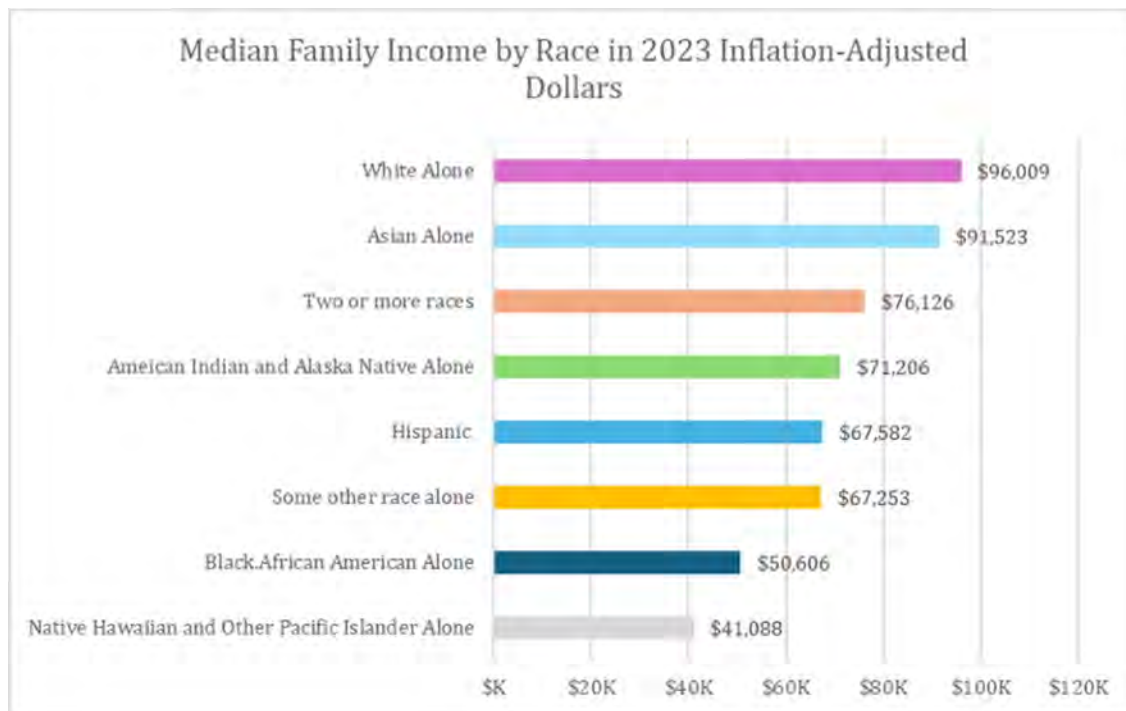
Earnings vary significantly by race (Figure 21), with educational attainment playing a key role in this disparity. For instance, half of the Asian population holds a bachelor's degree or higher, while only one-third have less than a high school diploma. Likewise, among the white population, one-third have attained a bachelor's degree or higher, whereas another third have not completed high school. Lower levels of education are often linked to employment in lower-paying industries and occupations, further influencing income disparities.

Income disparities impact access to basic necessities such as education, healthcare, and food. Groups with lower median family incomes (Figure 21) often experience higher rates of poverty (Figure 22), further limiting opportunities for upward mobility and economic stability.

The poverty levels in Iowa counties ran from a high of 20.4% to a low of 5.3% over the period of 2019 to 2023. Most counties with a higher poverty percentage were rural, while larger populated counties (MSA) areas had lower poverty rates. 13 counties in Iowa had a poverty rate of 15% to 20.4%. Story and Appanoose counties had the highest poverty rates of 20.4% and 18.6% respectively. Lyon county had the lowest poverty rate of 5.3%. Little over 40% of the counties fall within a 10% - 14.9% poverty rate.

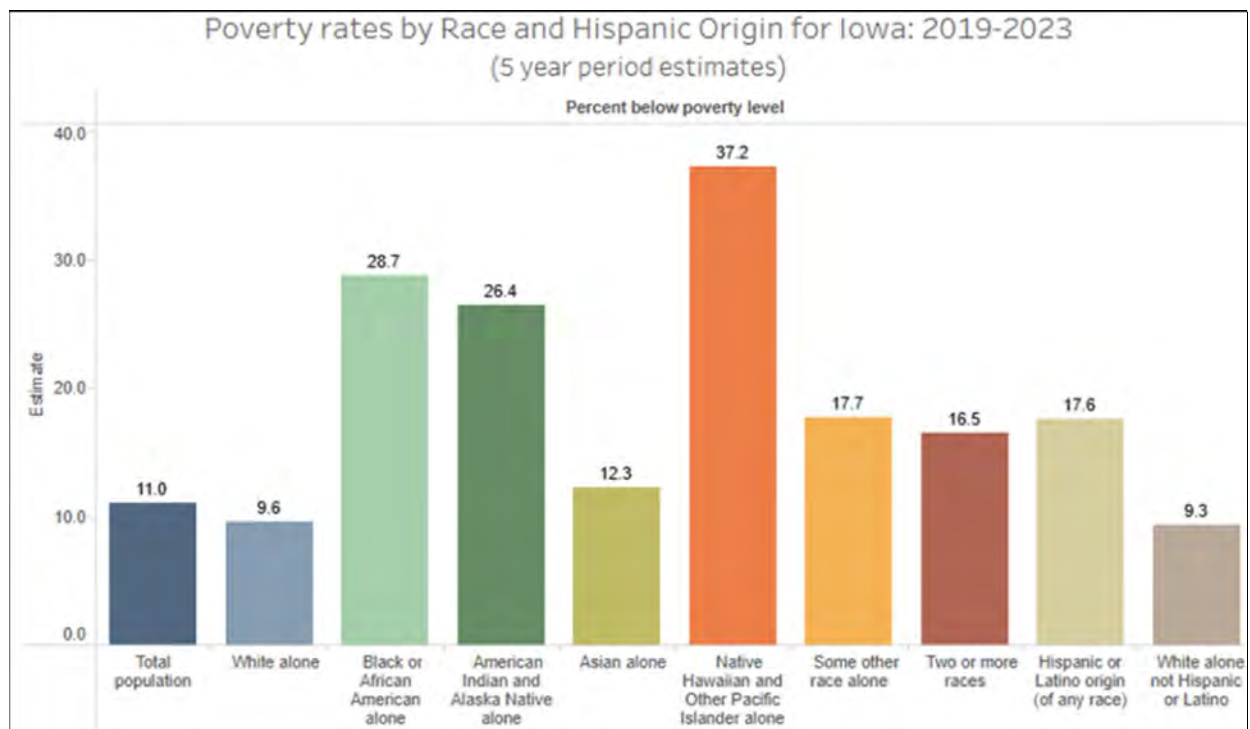


Figure 21



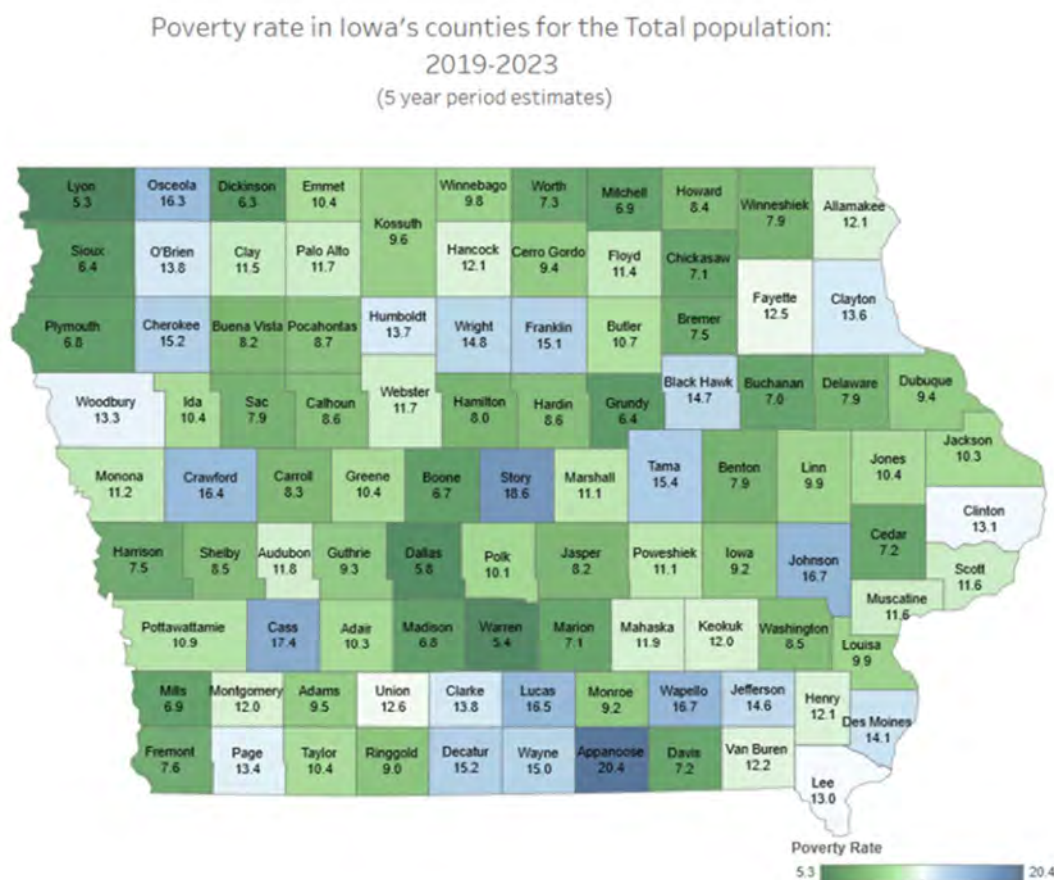
Source: 2023 American Community Survey 1-year estimate Table B19113

Figure 22



Source: <https://www.lowadatacenter.org> - Poverty by race and Hispanic or Latino origin

Figure 23



Source: <https://www.lowadatacenter.org> - Poverty by county

Poverty levels in Iowa were, primarily, highest in rural areas across the state in 2023. The counties where the state's three public universities are located had higher poverty rates, Story County (Iowa State University), (18.6%), Johnson County (University of Iowa), (16.7%) and Black Hawk County (Northern Iowa University), (14.7%). Story and Appanoose counties had the highest poverty rates, 18.6% and 20.4%, respectively. Warren County, ranking just behind Lyon, holds the lowest poverty rate at 5.4%, followed closely by Dallas County at 5.8%. The poverty levels across Iowa are concerning as poverty has a direct impact on labor market trends.

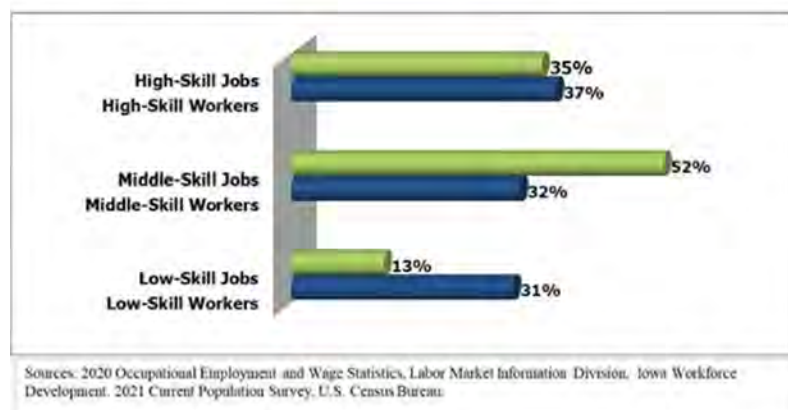
### iii. Education and Skill Levels of the Workforce

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

Iowa, like many states, has experienced a “skills gap” for a number of years. Skills gaps exist when there is a disparity between the skills required for a job and the skills workers actually possess. Although progress has been made, creating new opportunities and continuing to identify and remove barriers to education and training for Iowans will continue to help progress the state’s economic infrastructure.

In Iowa, the number of workers considered to have high skills is fairly close to the number of high-skill jobs which has remained consistent in the state. Looking at low-skill jobs, there is a considerable number of low-skill workers, but few low-skill jobs. Conversely, there are vastly more middle-skill jobs than workers who possess those skills.

**Iowa Jobs and Workers, 2020-2021**



Iowa recognizes the importance of working towards closing the skills gap. One of Iowa Workforce Development’s (IWD) strategic principles include: IWD will get the right people with the right skills in the right jobs as quickly as possible. This includes ensuring that individuals with barriers to employment who may now be in the low-skill worker category, are provided opportunities to engage in Iowa’s workforce delivery system to enhance their skills and engage in meaningful careers across the state.

Labor force participation rates increased for those with a High School Diploma or higher while the unemployment rates decreased for all education levels from 2022 to 2023.

Table 33

| Educational Attainment                      | Labor Force Participation Rate |       |            | Unemployment Rate |      |            |
|---------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------|------------|-------------------|------|------------|
|                                             | 2022                           | 2023  | Difference | 2022              | 2023 | Difference |
| Population 25 to 64 years                   | 83.6%                          | 83.6% | 0.0%       | 2.3%              | 2.2% | -0.1%      |
| Less than high school graduate              | 67.4%                          | 68.1% | 0.7%       | 4.4%              | 5.3% | 0.9%       |
| High school graduate (includes equivalency) | 78.9%                          | 76.2% | -2.7%      | 3.6%              | 3.5% | -0.1%      |
| Some college or associate's degree          | 84.3%                          | 85.8% | 1.5%       | 2.1%              | 1.9% | -0.2%      |
| Bachelor's degree or higher                 | 89.5%                          | 90.6% | 1.1%       | 1.2%              | 1.1% | -0.1%      |

Source: 2023 American Community Survey 1-year estimate Table S2301

Among the people 25 years and older, 33.7% holds at most a high school degree or equivalent; this number is 38.8% for male-only and 28.4% for female-only populations. In other words, a bigger percentage of the female population pursue a post-secondary education compared to their male counterparts in this age group, 71.6% vs 61.2%.

Table 34

| Educational Category                        | Overall 25-64 years |       | Male 25-64 |       | Female 25-64 |       |
|---------------------------------------------|---------------------|-------|------------|-------|--------------|-------|
|                                             | Total               | %     | Total      | %     | Total        | %     |
| Less than 9th grade                         | 47,864              | 3.0%  | 24,815     | 3.1%  | 23,049       | 3.0%  |
| 9th to 12th grade, no diploma               | 59,491              | 3.8%  | 35,365     | 4.5%  | 24,126       | 3.1%  |
| High school graduate (includes equivalency) | 421,744             | 26.8% | 247,812    | 31.2% | 173,932      | 22.4% |
| Some college, no degree                     | 301,647             | 19.2% | 152,684    | 19.2% | 148,963      | 19.2% |
| Associate's degree                          | 211,067             | 13.4% | 94,320     | 11.9% | 116,747      | 15.0% |
| Bachelor's degree                           | 356,400             | 22.7% | 167,586    | 21.1% | 188,814      | 24.3% |
| Graduate or professional degree             | 173,324             | 11.0% | 71,513     | 9.0%  | 101,811      | 13.1% |

Source: 2023 American Community Survey 1-year estimate Table B15001

Among the youth population, who are 24 years and younger, 45.3% hold at most a high school degree or equivalence while this number is 49.2% for male-only and 41.1% for female-only population. As expected, a smaller percentage of this age group pursue a post-secondary education compared to the older age group. Like the older age group, the percentage of the female population who pursue post-secondary education is higher than the male counterpart, 58.9% vs 50.8%

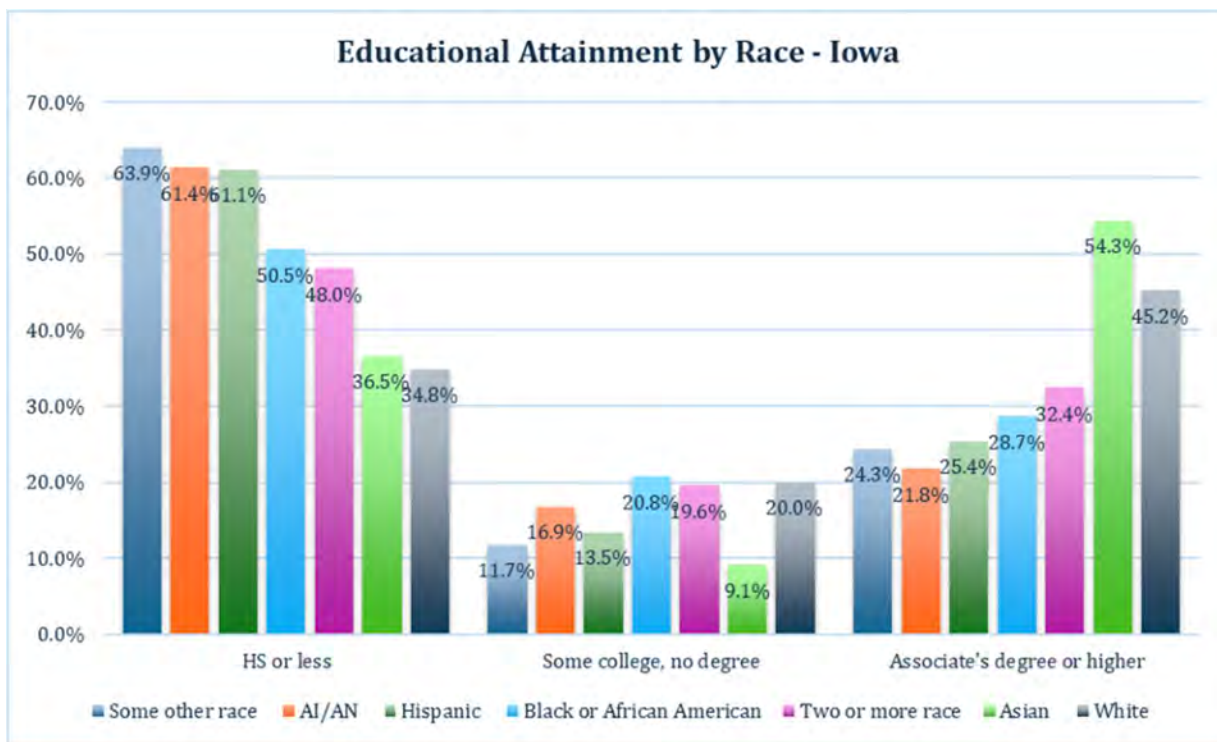
Table 35

| Educational Category                        | Overall 18-24 years |       | Male 18-24 |       | Female 18-24 |       |
|---------------------------------------------|---------------------|-------|------------|-------|--------------|-------|
|                                             | Total               | %     | Total      | %     | Total        | %     |
| Less than 9th grade                         | 6,180               | 2.0%  | 3,274      | 2.0%  | 2,906        | 1.9%  |
| 9th to 12th grade, no diploma               | 27,273              | 8.7%  | 14,647     | 8.9%  | 12,626       | 8.4%  |
| High school graduate (includes equivalency) | 109,281             | 34.7% | 63,205     | 38.3% | 46,076       | 30.7% |
| Some college, no degree                     | 108,199             | 34.3% | 55,207     | 33.5% | 52,992       | 35.3% |
| Associate's degree                          | 24,193              | 7.7%  | 10,127     | 6.1%  | 14,066       | 9.4%  |
| Bachelor's degree                           | 37,298              | 11.8% | 17,668     | 10.7% | 19,630       | 13.1% |
| Graduate or professional degree             | 2,608               | 0.8%  | 913        | 0.6%  | 1,695        | 1.1%  |

Source: 2023 American Community Survey 1-year estimate Table B15001

The chart illustrates differences in educational attainment across various racial groups. Representing as a bell curve, the left end highlights groups with the highest proportion of lower educational attainment, while the right end reflects those with the highest levels of education. The middle section suggests potential for growth. Asian, White, and individuals identifying as Two or More Races appear to have relatively higher educational attainment, whereas American Indian/Alaska Native, Hispanic, and Some Other Race groups face greater educational disparities.

Figure 25



Source: 2023 American Community Survey 1-year estimate Table B15002

Table 36

| <b>Educational Category</b>     | <b>White</b> | <b>%</b> | <b>Black/AA</b> | <b>%</b> | <b>AI/NH</b> | <b>%</b> | <b>Asian</b> | <b>%</b> | <b>Other</b> | <b>%</b> | <b>Two or more</b> | <b>%</b> | <b>Hispanic</b> | <b>%</b> |
|---------------------------------|--------------|----------|-----------------|----------|--------------|----------|--------------|----------|--------------|----------|--------------------|----------|-----------------|----------|
| Less than 9th grade             | 30,254       | 1.6%     | 4,572           | 6.7%     | 1,542        | 18.5%    | 8,001        | 15.5%    | 8,936        | 21.5%    | 8,815              | 8.6%     | 20,709          | 17.1%    |
| 9th to 12th grade, no diploma   | 58,737       | 3.1%     | 6,481           | 9.5%     | 1,222        | 14.6%    | 3,204        | 6.2%     | 4,799        | 11.5%    | 8,571              | 8.3%     | 14,872          | 12.3%    |
| Regular high school diploma     | 495,292      | 26.2%    | 18,516          | 27.2%    | 1,432        | 17.2%    | 7,272        | 14.1%    | 10,712       | 25.7%    | 23,448             | 22.8%    | 28,669          | 23.6%    |
| GED or alternative credential   | 73,900       | 3.9%     | 4,815           | 7.1%     | 925          | 11.1%    | 405          | 0.8%     | 2,158        | 5.2%     | 8,663              | 8.4%     | 9,903           | 8.2%     |
| Some college, no degree         | 378,299      | 20.0%    | 14,138          | 20.8%    | 1,407        | 16.9%    | 4,716        | 9.1%     | 4,883        | 11.7%    | 20,159             | 19.6%    | 16,339          | 13.5%    |
| Associate's degree              | 243,607      | 12.9%    | 5,664           | 8.3%     | 822          | 9.8%     | 2,013        | 3.9%     | 3,252        | 7.8%     | 9,364              | 9.1%     | 9,195           | 7.6%     |
| Bachelor's degree               | 409,875      | 21.7%    | 9,070           | 13.3%    | 693          | 8.3%     | 12,607       | 24.4%    | 4,060        | 9.8%     | 16,029             | 15.6%    | 14,402          | 11.9%    |
| Graduate or professional degree | 201,472      | 10.7%    | 4,772           | 7.0%     | 304          | 3.6%     | 13,444       | 26.0%    | 2,818        | 6.8%     | 7,976              | 7.7%     | 7,190           | 5.9%     |

Source: 2023 American Community Survey 1-year estimate Table B15002

Table 36 shows that there are apparent disparities between race and educational attainment, and thus lower earnings. This supports WIOA and Iowa's strategy of focusing on underserved populations.

An analysis of educational attainment across Iowa counties reveals a strong correlation between population size (ages 25 and older) and the percentage of residents holding an associate degree or higher. The five counties with the highest levels of higher education collectively have a population of 187,052, while the five counties with the lowest attainment levels total just 27,849 residents. This disparity is likely driven by the increased demand for highly skilled labor in more densely populated areas.

Table 37

| Top 25     | Total Pop 25-64 | Associate's degree or higher | %     | Rank |
|------------|-----------------|------------------------------|-------|------|
| Story      | 39,751          | 26,998                       | 67.9% | 1    |
| Dallas     | 55,552          | 36,590                       | 65.9% | 2    |
| Johnson    | 72,344          | 47,405                       | 65.5% | 3    |
| Bremer     | 11,675          | 6,420                        | 55.0% | 4    |
| Jefferson  | 7,730           | 4,062                        | 52.5% | 5    |
| Winneshiek | 8,892           | 4,628                        | 52.0% | 6    |
| Linn       | 117,897         | 61,360                       | 52.0% | 7    |
| Polk       | 263,564         | 136,137                      | 51.7% | 8    |
| Mills      | 7,324           | 3,743                        | 51.1% | 9    |
| Sioux      | 15,614          | 7,909                        | 50.7% | 10   |
| Scott      | 89,029          | 45,055                       | 50.6% | 11   |
| Warren     | 26,721          | 13,381                       | 50.1% | 12   |
| Dickinson  | 8,403           | 4,106                        | 48.9% | 13   |
| Marion     | 15,999          | 7,813                        | 48.8% | 14   |
| Boone      | 13,868          | 6,640                        | 47.9% | 15   |
| Adams      | 1,779           | 851                          | 47.8% | 16   |
| Dubuque    | 47,991          | 22,878                       | 47.7% | 17   |
| Grundy     | 6,021           | 2,862                        | 47.5% | 18   |
| Benton     | 12,988          | 6,125                        | 47.2% | 19   |
| Clay       | 7,787           | 3,529                        | 45.3% | 20   |
| Shelby     | 5,527           | 2,493                        | 45.1% | 21   |
| Mitchell   | 4,975           | 2,230                        | 44.8% | 22   |
| Black Hawk | 60,264          | 26,862                       | 44.6% | 23   |
| Plymouth   | 12,498          | 5,415                        | 43.3% | 24   |
| Winnebago  | 4,927           | 2,134                        | 43.3% | 25   |

Source: 2023 American Community Survey 1-year estimate Table B15001



Table 38

| Bottom 25   | Total Pop 25-64 | Associate's Degree or higher | %     | Rank |
|-------------|-----------------|------------------------------|-------|------|
| Lucas       | 4,221           | 1,145                        | 27.1% | 1    |
| Clayton     | 8,060           | 2,414                        | 30.0% | 2    |
| Crawford    | 7,676           | 2,301                        | 30.0% | 3    |
| Van Buren   | 3,383           | 1,017                        | 30.1% | 4    |
| Clarke      | 4,509           | 1,376                        | 30.5% | 5    |
| Keokuk      | 4,792           | 1,506                        | 31.4% | 6    |
| Appanoose   | 5,930           | 1,886                        | 31.8% | 7    |
| Louisa      | 5,381           | 1,713                        | 31.8% | 8    |
| Page        | 7,699           | 2,465                        | 32.0% | 9    |
| Wapello     | 17,652          | 5,746                        | 32.6% | 10   |
| Davis       | 4,084           | 1,342                        | 32.9% | 11   |
| Osceola     | 2,958           | 973                          | 32.9% | 12   |
| Franklin    | 4,678           | 1,551                        | 33.2% | 13   |
| Taylor      | 2,778           | 925                          | 33.3% | 14   |
| Jackson     | 9,563           | 3,186                        | 33.3% | 15   |
| Buena Vista | 9,755           | 3,264                        | 33.5% | 16   |
| Wayne       | 2,910           | 983                          | 33.8% | 17   |
| Monona      | 4,097           | 1,391                        | 34.0% | 18   |
| Fayette     | 9,272           | 3,196                        | 34.5% | 19   |
| Union       | 5,660           | 1,960                        | 34.6% | 20   |
| Howard      | 4,426           | 1,535                        | 34.7% | 21   |
| Emmet       | 4,401           | 1,543                        | 35.1% | 22   |
| Marshall    | 19,143          | 6,738                        | 35.2% | 23   |
| Montgomery  | 4,889           | 1,728                        | 35.3% | 24   |
| Audubon     | 2,634           | 938                          | 35.6% | 25   |

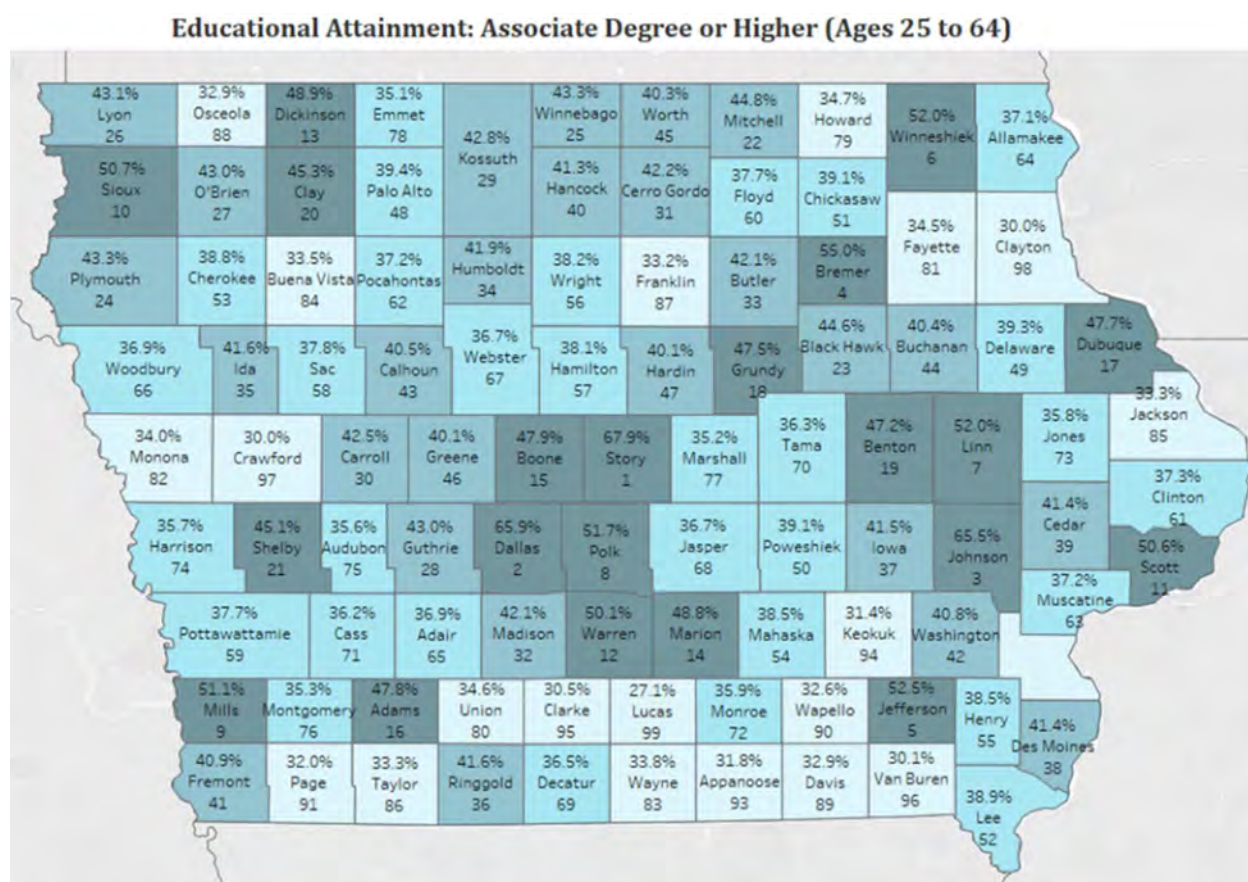
Source: 2023 American Community Survey 1-year estimate Table B15001

Regional analysis of educational attainment across Iowa counties reveals notable geographic patterns. Counties shaded in darker tones indicate a higher proportion of residents holding an associate degree or higher. A significant concentration of these higher-attainment counties is found in the metropolitan-statistical areas. For example, Story County (67.9%), Dallas County (65.9%), Polk County (51.7%), Grundy County (47.5%), and Boone County (47.9%) are located in the central region of the state. Conversely, counties with lower percentages of post-secondary education are predominantly located in the southern part of Iowa, such as Lucas County (27.1%), Clarke County (30.5%), Van Buren County (30.1%), Wayne County (33.8%), and Page County (32.0%). Additionally, pockets of lower educational attainment exist in Southern Iowa, the Northwest, and the



northeastern corner of the state. The map below includes labels showing county percentages and statewide rankings. Darker shaded counties indicate a higher concentration of people with advanced degrees and the lighter shaded counties indicate the opposite.

Figure 26



Source: 2023 American Community Survey 1-year estimate Table B15001

Individuals with disabilities face significant barriers in Iowa's labor market. Among the estimated 388,506 Iowans aged 16 and older with a disability, 63% are not part of the labor force—more than twice the rate of their non-disabled counterparts, of whom only 27% are not participating. This disparity highlights the challenges many disabled individuals encounter in seeking and maintaining employment.

One of the most critical factors influencing labor force participation is educational attainment, which often presents obstacles long before individuals enter the workforce. People with disabilities are twice as likely to have less than a high school education with 10.3% failing to complete high school or its equivalent. Meanwhile, 66.7% of individuals without disabilities have attended

college or earned a postsecondary degree (Associate, Bachelor's, Graduate/Professional), compared to just 49.1% of those with disabilities. The gap is even more pronounced in bachelor's degree attainment or higher, where a striking 17.4% disparity exists.

***C. Comparison of Economic and Workforce Analytical Conclusion. Describe areas of opportunity for meeting hiring, education, and skills needs identified in the economy compared to the assets available in the labor force in the state.***

Iowa's labor market remains tight, with relatively few unemployed individuals compared to the number of job openings. In recent years, the ratio of unemployed persons per job opening has been near historic lows. Rural areas continue to experience declines in population and labor force participation, while Iowa's metropolitan regions and their surrounding counties account for nearly all of the state's population, labor force, and job growth.

Manufacturing and agriculture remain foundational to Iowa's economy, but substantial job opportunities are found across multiple industries, particularly Healthcare & Social Assistance, Transportation and Warehousing, Manufacturing, and Educational Services. Additionally, certain labor markets are driven by specialized industries: Finance and Insurance in the Des Moines metro area, and Educational Services in the Ames and Iowa City metros.

Iowa's aging population is contributing to lower labor force participation rates while simultaneously increasing the demand for healthcare workers. Healthcare & Social Assistance is projected to add nearly 33,000 jobs by 2032—almost triple the next largest industry in numeric job growth. The most in-demand occupations include registered nurses, nursing assistants, personal care aides, childcare workers, medical assistants, and various healthcare practitioners.

The Transportation and Warehousing industry is also growing rapidly, with an estimated 12,500 additional jobs expected by 2032. The shift toward online commerce, combined with infrastructure improvements by the Iowa Department of Transportation, has created favorable conditions for long-haul trucking and logistics expansion. Large retailers such as Amazon have invested heavily in Iowa warehousing infrastructure, reinforcing this industry's long-term growth potential.

The Educational Services industry has rebounded beyond pre-pandemic levels, with demand for teachers and support staff continuing to rise. By 2032, this sector is expected to see the third-largest increase in jobs. There will be sustained demand for educators across multiple levels, including teaching

assistants, preschool, elementary, middle, and secondary school teachers, as well as vocational, technical, and special education instructors.

Manufacturing remains critical across Iowa, touching every region. As technology advances, the industry increasingly requires a workforce skilled in operating and programming complex machinery. Iowa's manufacturing sector spans food production, agricultural and construction equipment, metals, machinery, furniture, fuels, and advanced technologies.

Skill development of Iowa's existing and future workforce is a must to meet the future workforce demand of Iowa's employers not only in these four industries but across the board.

Information technology, business operations (accounting, management, human resources, customer service), construction occupations are vital to Iowa's employers. These business operations and support occupations can be found across numerous industries completing crucial functions for employers. These functions range from financial reporting, talent recruitment and improving technology for employees. The need for these support occupations will continue to grow with employer's reliance on these business functions and their overall growth.

The knowledge, skills, and abilities needed in all these industries and occupations are growing and changing. Areas of the state that are lacking the needed education or training will continue to face challenges in the labor market, the greatest of among those being: employability (skills gap), poverty, low earnings, population loss, and labor force loss. These impacts will continue to be felt in areas with lower levels of education and technical training which tend to be more prevalent in Iowa's rural areas. These areas of the state face additional challenges in gaining access to education and training due to: public transportation, broadband access, and fewer training providers/opportunities. These are hurdles that will need to be addressed to ensure equity in future growth.

Supporting these industries, job seekers, students, and communities has been a focus for the State of Iowa's workforce, education, and economic leaders. Iowa has invested resources and created new programming to support these industries and occupations through expanding work-based learning, creating non-traditional registered apprenticeship programs in healthcare, education, and IT, as well as expanding traditional registered apprenticeship programs. Iowa has created scholarships for students entering high demand occupations to respond to the need in these areas. The State will continue to partner with

employers to remove barriers and expand opportunities for populations (including formerly incarcerated individuals, individuals with disabilities, and minority populations) that have historically found entry to employment difficult with lower levels of labor force participation, higher unemployment rates, and poverty.

With an aging population and only small gains in population growth through migration into the State, Iowa must look inward to develop and increase the skilled workforce it needs to continue to grow our economy. By serving previously underserved populations, including: displaced homemakers; low-income individuals; Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians; individuals with disabilities, including youth who are individuals with disabilities; older individuals; ex-offenders; homeless individuals, or homeless children and youths; youth who are in or have aged out of the foster care system; individuals who are English language learners, individuals who have low levels of literacy, and individuals facing substantial cultural barriers; farmworkers (as defined at section 167(i) of WIOA and Training and Employment Guidance Letter No. 35-14); individuals within 2 years of exhausting lifetime eligibility under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program; single parents (including single pregnant women); and long-term unemployed individuals and increase the skills of lowans with low skills, as identified in the “Iowa Jobs and Workers” chart in section II.a.1.B.iii. Education and Skill Levels of the Workforce above, Iowa will provide our employers with the skilled and available workforce needed.

## 2. Workforce Development, Education and Training Activities Analysis

**Unified or Combined State Plan must include an analysis of the workforce development activities, including education and training in the State, to address the education and skill needs of the workforce, as identified in (a)(1)(B)(iii) (Education and Skill Level of the Workforce) above, and the employment needs of employers, as identified in (a)(1)(A)(iii) (Employers’ Employment Needs) above. This must include an analysis of –**

### *A. The State’s Workforce Development Activities*

**Provide an analysis of the State’s workforce development activities, including education and training activities of the core programs, Combined State Plan**

**partner programs included in this plan, and required<sup>3</sup> and optional one-stop delivery system partners.<sup>4</sup>**

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) is designed to help place individuals into high-quality jobs and careers and to help employers hire and retain skilled workers.

Even though all four core programs and required partner programs have different requirements – all are ultimately working toward the same goal – To provide Iowans with access to high-quality education, training and career opportunities, and to provide Iowa businesses with outstanding business services for a skilled and diverse workforce.

Iowa's labor force has recovered since the pandemic in 2020, and Iowa's labor force has been steadily growing since such time as well. However, the labor force participation rate has been declining as Iowa's population has not been seeing growth fast enough to fill positions being vacated by Iowa's older labor force. Iowa is in the mid-range of total population compared to other states with 3,190,369 residents according to the 2020 Census, Iowa has a low unemployment rate reported at 3.7% in June 2025, and Iowa has an aging workforce, all of which contribute to a lack of available labor force in the state. At the conclusion of PY24, Iowa's labor force participation rate was 67.4%.

Iowa's previous vision and goals focused on ensuring Iowa's workforce partners collaborate to build a talent pipeline of skilled workers. Thus, focus included ensuring youth and other individuals with barriers to employment receive services needed to grow and prosper in Iowa's workforce, while simultaneously ensuring we were meeting the needs of our employers.

Data from Iowa's recent laborshed studies have found that the amount of Iowans who have completed certificates or education or training beyond high school is steadily increasing. Laborshed data for 2024 showed that 79.3% of Iowans have

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<sup>3</sup> Required one-stop partners: In addition to the core programs, the following partner programs are required to provide access through the one-stops: Career and Technical Education (Perkins), Community Services Block Grant, Indian and Native American programs, HUD Employment and Training programs, Job Corps, Local Veterans' Employment Representatives and Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program, National Farmworker Jobs program, Senior Community Service Employment program, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) (unless the Governor determines TANF will not be a required partner), Trade Adjustment Assistance programs, Unemployment Compensation programs, and YouthBuild.

<sup>4</sup> Workforce development activities may include a wide variety of programs and partners, including educational institutions, faith- and community-based organizations, and human services.

completed certificates or education or training beyond high school. Just three years ago this number was 61.6%. Iowa's workforce delivery system contributed to this and will continue to build off these successes with the new vision and goals outlined in this plan.

Iowa's One-Stop Delivery System, IowaWORKS, provides customers, both job seekers and employers, a variety of in-person and virtual services. Through the IowaWORKS integrated service delivery system:

- Customers are provided career services
- Services are provided through the 14 integrated one-stop centers and three satellite offices.
- Dedicated Wagner-Peyser staff are located in each of the 14 integrated one-stop centers and three satellite offices
- Customers ready for employment after receiving career services may receive staff assisted job search and placement
- Customers in need of training services are referred to other core partners depending on customer needs
- Training services are provided through WIOA Title I, Title II, and Title IV services Virtual services include, but are not limited to:
  - Resume Builder
  - Targeted job leads
  - Career exploration and assessments
  - Identification of gaps in skills, experiences and education
  - Virtual workshops
  - Virtual one-on-one appointments with a career planner
  - Virtual job club - provides job seeking assistance with a different topic each week. Sessions are designed for any job seeker and the job seeker may ask and receive responses automatically and in real time when they attend the workshop. Topics include Business Panels, Negotiate Successful Job Offers, Who Would You Hire, LinkedIn and much more.

One-stop services aim to respond to business demand for workforce improvement by upskilling job seekers and equipping them with current, in-demand skills to help them compete in today's job market. The system provides collective access to career services to meet the diverse needs of job seekers. Career and training services, tailored to the individual needs of job seekers, form the backbone of the one-stop delivery system. All customers have immediate access to employment and skill advancement services in basic career services, with connection of the customer to additional individualized career services,

when determined appropriate for a customer to achieve their career goals and obtain or retain employment.

In addition to the services Iowans can receive in-person and virtually from IowaWORKS centers across the state, in 2024 Iowa deployed a mobile one-Stop unit. The IowaWORKS Mobile Unit offers workforce development services in a mobile capacity by providing services on-site to individuals through rapid reemployment events, job fairs, training workshops, unemployment, and reemployment activities, etc.

One goal of the IowaWORKS Mobile Unit is to meet customers where they are. The unit travels to locations throughout Iowa to connect job seekers and employers through hiring events, workshops and also supports community events. Additionally, it allows for creating and facilitating access to training and education opportunities through events that promote work based learning and higher education. The IowaWORKS Mobile Unit also provides a connection between the public, IowaWORKS and claimants. The mobile unit provides similar services to those provided in our bricks and mortar IowaWORKS Centers such as the ability to provide assistance on unemployment claims, effective job search strategies, interviewing skills, and referrals to other partners and resources.

### **Title I – Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth**

The one-stop system provides universal access to career services to meet the diverse needs of adults and dislocated workers. Through this system, adults and dislocated workers can access a continuum of services. The services are classified as career and training services. Career services include job search assistance, workforce preparation, and career development services, while training services include both classroom and work-based learning opportunities.

Iowa's WIOA Title I Youth program connects eligible youth to a continuum of services and activities, aimed at teaching the youth to navigate the appropriate educational and workforce systems based on an established career pathway. Services are based on the unique needs of each individual participant, and include, but are not limited to:

- Creating awareness of career opportunities
- Connecting a youth's skills, interests and abilities to career opportunities

- Assistance in addressing and overcoming barriers to education and training
- Connection to education, training and work-based learning opportunities
- Support in attaining career goals

## **Title II – Adult Education and Literacy**

Adult education has a rich history in Iowa of providing services that assist adults in improving their skills, achieving their educational goals, and transitioning to further education or employment. Instruction is designed for adults functioning at the lowest levels of basic skills and English language instruction to advanced levels of learning. By improving the education and skill levels of individual Iowans, the programs enhance the competitiveness of Iowa's workforce and economy. Title II assists individuals to:

- Gain employment or better their current employment; obtain a high school equivalency diploma by passing the state approved assessment;
- Attain skills necessary to enter postsecondary education and training;
- Exit public welfare and become self-sufficient;
- Learn to speak, to read, and to write the English language;
- Master basic academic skills to help their children succeed in school;
- Become U.S. citizens and participate in a democratic society;
- Gain self-esteem, personal confidence, and a sense of personal and civic responsibility.

## **Title III – Wagner-Peyser**

IowaWORKS offices are located across the state and provide critical services, in-person and virtually, for individuals and businesses in pursuit of their workforce goals. As Iowa's network of American Job Centers, each office serves as a one-stop shop created to provide universal access to employment services.

Services include:

- One-on-one career and skills assistance
- Virtual workshops and resume building
- Labor market information
- Interview prep
- Job fairs and special events
- Unemployment insurance assistance



- Connection to training and workforce programs

Additional services including career counseling, job search and academic skills development, High school equivalency testing (HiSET) preparation, college research, and much more. All Iowans, including those employed and unemployed, can receive services to support their future career paths.

#### **Title IV – Vocational Rehabilitation (General)**

Iowa's Title IV program provides a wide variety of services for individuals with disabilities that lead to the attainment of their employment, independence, and economic goals. Business and industry is also a customer to whom various services are provided to help meet workplace and workforce needs. The desired outcome is competitive integrated employment that meets the needs and interests of eligible job candidates. Services include: assessment; counseling and guidance; referral for other services; physical and mental restoration services; vocational and other training services; maintenance; transportation; vocational rehabilitation services to family members; interpreter services; reader services; job-related services including job search and placement assistance, job retention services, follow-up services, and follow-along services; supported employment services; personal assistance services; post-employment services; occupational licenses, tools, equipment, initial stocks, and supplies; rehabilitation technology; transition services; technical assistance and other consultation services to assist with self-employment or similar employment outcomes; customized employment; and other goods and services necessary to assist individuals with disabilities to achieve their employment outcome.

#### **Title IV – Vocational Rehabilitation (Blind)**

The mission of the Iowa Department for the Blind (IDB) is to empower Iowans who are blind or have low vision to be gainfully employed and live independently. The IDB Vocational Rehabilitation program provides employment services to Iowans who are blind or have low vision and are looking for a job or want to retain or advance in their current career. The Department for the Blind believes that with the right skills and opportunities a person who is blind or has low vision can and should be competitively employed and live within their community of choice. The Iowa Department for the Blind works to educate and inform businesses, family members, service providers, advocacy groups, community and service organizations, as well as the general public about the true capabilities of individuals who are blind or have low vision. IDB actively seeks ongoing communication, interaction, and collaboration with all constituencies. Iowa Department for the Blind collaborates with many

stakeholders to provide opportunities for independence and employment throughout the state.

IDB offers the following programs and services to address the education and skill needs of Iowa's workforce.

### **Trade Adjustment Assistance Act**

The Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA or Trade) Act is a federally funded reemployment program providing specialized benefits and services to workers who have experienced layoff as a result, either direct or indirect, of foreign trade. Benefits available to eligible participants include fully funded assistance up to 2½ years towards post-secondary education, up to 2 years of on- the-job training, and job search and relocation allowances for eligible activities outside the workers' commuting area.

Through case management and access to career planning, TAA participants upgrade their knowledge and experience to enhance their marketability in today's labor force and attain suitable reemployment after a trade-affected layoff. This is achieved through various methods such as evaluations, assessments, workshops, training, and more to support the career-pathway goals of impacted workers. Outcomes are most successful when a TAA participant is co-enrolled in a partner program like Title I Dislocated Worker or Adult programs, which allows eligible workers to receive additional supportive services while enrolled in TAA.

On July 1, 2022, Federal TAA Termination provisions took effect. Under termination, the Department of Labor cannot conduct new investigations or issue certifications of eligibility for new groups of workers. However, workers who were separated or threatened and covered under petitions certified on or before June 30, 2022, may still receive benefits and services. Currently enrolled participants continue with their training uninterrupted, and eligible participants can apply for TAA benefits and services as usual. The only TAA benefit affected by termination is the RTAA/ATAA wage subsidy for older workers which is now disallowed. RTAA/ATAA applications are still being accepted but cannot be approved.

### **Rapid Response Assistance and Layoff Aversion**

Rapid Response Assistance is a comprehensive, proactive program administered by Iowa Workforce Development (IWD) to provide timely and effective support to employers and workers impacted by layoffs, plant closures, or other dislocation events. The primary goal of the program is to minimize the negative

effects of job loss and facilitate rapid reemployment through coordinated service delivery. Upon receipt of a Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification (WARN), IWD initiates early engagement with the affected employer in collaboration with Local Rapid Response Teams (LRRTs) located within each of Iowa's American Job Centers (AJCs). These teams serve as the frontline coordinators of Rapid Response services. LRRTs work directly with employers to assess the scope and timing of the layoff and to develop a tailored response plan. This includes the delivery of on-site, customized information sessions for affected workers. These sessions are designed to address the specific needs of impacted workforce.

Layoff aversion is a critical component of Iowa's workforce strategy, aimed at preventing or minimizing the duration of unemployment by helping employers retain their workforce during periods of economic uncertainty or transition. Iowa Workforce Development (IWD), in partnership with Local Rapid Response Teams (LRRTs), economic development organizations, and other stakeholders, implements a range of strategies to identify at-risk businesses and provide timely interventions. Key layoff aversion activities include business outreach, connecting businesses with resources, Incumbent Worker Training, Voluntary Shared Work Program, and coordination with Economic Development Partners. Through these coordinated strategies, Iowa's layoff aversion efforts help preserve jobs, support business continuity, and strengthen the overall resilience of the state's economy.

### **National Dislocated Worker Grants**

Iowa does not have any active National Dislocated Worker Grants.

### **Unemployment Insurance**

Iowa Workforce Development (IWD) administers unemployment insurance benefits for the state of Iowa. These benefits are available to individuals who meet all eligibility requirements and have lost their jobs through no fault of their own—such as in cases of layoffs, plant closures, or similar circumstances.

Job seekers file for benefits online or in certain circumstances can be assisted over the phone through Iowa's call center or by calling any of the IowaWORKS centers. Weekly certifications are also online and benefits can be direct deposited or customers can take advantage of Iowa's debit card.

Unemployment services are blended between a central call center that customers can dial tollfree to speak to a live agent or at any of the 14 comprehensive one-stop centers and three satellite IowaWORKS offices with

cross-trained state merit staff. Iowa's case management system and online unemployment claim filing are now all in one site which captures full registration data satisfying registration requirements for all programs.

At the IowaWORKS centers, customers can utilize computer labs to file their initial or weekly claims, engage with trained staff who can answer the hard questions, adjudicate or fix issues on the spot. Customers can take advantage of IowaWORKS centers in person for claim assistance to share services, connect with programs, classes and training options all on their first visit.

Iowa's unemployment system supports IowaWORKS centers infrastructure and staffing costs, which allows services to be integrated into all functions of the workforce system.

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

The Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) is a community service and work-based training program for older Americans. SCSEP participants gain work experience in a variety of community service activities at non-profits and public facilities, called host sites.

Participants work an average of 20 hours per week and are paid the highest of federal, state, or local minimum wage. This training serves as a bridge to unsubsidized employment opportunities. Beginning January 3, 2023, Iowa's state SCSEP grant transitioned from the Iowa Department on Aging to Iowa Workforce Development. This has strengthened participants' connection to employment assistance from the IowaWORKS field offices. Participants take advantage of workshops hosted by IowaWORKS as part of their pre-employment training hours.

### **Work Opportunity Tax Credit**

The Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) program is a federal tax credit available to Iowa employers who hire and retain veterans and individuals from other target groups with barriers to employment. During Federal Fiscal Year 2025 (October 1, 2024, through September 30, 2025), IWD certified 14,503 applications. Target groups with the highest number of certifications included: Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) (6,356), Designated Community Resident (4,063) and Ex-Felon (1,449). IWD is processing applications within 30 days of receipt. IWD currently has 4 interfaces (long term, benefits, wages for veterans, and rehire) that run automatically. This greatly reduces the time staff spends manually processing applications, creating even more efficiency in processing.

IWD has begun researching 2 additional interfaces to continue to build on efficiency efforts.

## **PROMISE JOBS**

PROMISE JOBS, “Promoting Independence and Self-Sufficiency through Employment, Job Opportunities and Basic Skills,” provides case management, employment, education, training, and supportive services to recipients of the Family Investment Program (FIP), Iowa’s cash assistance program under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) block grant.

IWD provides PROMISE JOBS services on behalf of the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services (HHS); families are co-enrolled into other programs offered through the AJCs, as appropriate. PROMISE JOBS career planners help families write a Family Investment Agreement (FIA) that outlines the steps each family will complete to gain self-sufficiency. They then work with the family to achieve each step.

In fiscal year 2025, PROMISE JOBS case managers located in IowaWORKS centers statewide served an average of 2,005 families (2,300 Individual cases) per month. In addition to case assessment, major services provided included helping families with work readiness, employment, and disability related services. Iowa’s PROMISE JOBS program met or exceeded the federal reporting requirement for the “all family” and “2-parent” Work Participation Rate (WPR) in 2025. Work participation rates are the primary reporting measures for TANF employment programs.

The Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2023 (FRA) added new reporting metrics for TANF employment programs that aligned with WIOA programs. In addition, the FRA allowed states to apply for a pilot project designed to test new strategies aimed at building new evidence on whether performance metrics that promote accountability for work and self-sufficiency, rather than WPR, lead to stronger employment outcomes and reduced dependency.

In September 2025, Iowa was selected as one of five states to participate in the pilot project. Iowa’s pilot will focus on 3 steps: Assessment and Navigation, Employment and Family Focused Plan, and Job Retention and Employment

Advancement. The goals for the pilot will include: Personalized goal setting with a focus on independence, enhancing educational skills, credential attainment, participation in apprenticeships, and moving individuals into stable employment.

## **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment and Training Program (SNAP E&T)**

SNAP E&T services are a combined effort between the Iowa Departments of Health and Human Services (HHS) and Workforce Development (IWD), and community partnerships. HHS determines participant eligibility and provides oversight to IWD who is the administrative intermediary for the program. IWD contracts with eligible providers to deliver SNAP E&T services.

SNAP Employment and Training (E&T) is a voluntary program for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) recipients. The program offers recipients job seeking skills, classroom training, and structured employment search, as well as support services, such as transportation and childcare at no cost working to increase workforce skills and help reduce barriers to employment.

The SNAP Employment and Training Program has increased the number of participants served each of the last three program years.

## **Jobs for Veterans State Grant**

The Jobs for Veterans State Grant (JVSG) provides federal funding through a formula grant to State Workforce Agencies (SWA) for hiring dedicated staff to provide individualized career and training-related services to veterans and eligible persons with significant barriers to employment (SBEs), as well as helping employers fill vacancies with job-seeking veterans.

The JVSG funding supports Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) specialist staff and Local Veterans' Employment Representative (LVER) staff. Iowa refers to DVOP staff as Veteran Career Planners.

For the JVSG program in Iowa, 2023 marked a new beginning through an internal reorganization of veteran services within IWD. The JVSG program and Home Base Iowa (HBI) program were brought together and integrated to maximize their reach and impact across the state. This new work unit is referred to as the Office of Veteran Workforce Services. This reorganization has increased our capacity, communication, and consistency in the way we deliver services to veterans, service members, and employers. The JVSG program continues to serve eligible persons as defined by Department of Labor guidance, but both programs now work more closely with one another to leverage the knowledge and skillsets of all team members.

## **Veterans Services and Local Veterans' Employment Representatives and Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program**

Veteran Career Planners work with eligible veterans and eligible persons that have significant barriers to employment. These barriers may include service-connected disabilities, homelessness, long-term unemployment, low income as defined by WIOA, an offender as defined by WIOA, aged 18-24, or lacking a high school diploma or equivalent. There are also additional eligible populations as defined in guidance provided by the Department of Labor.

Veteran Career Planners provide individualized career services to these eligible veterans and eligible persons with an emphasis on assisting veterans who are economically or educationally disadvantaged. These services include but are not limited to completing comprehensive and specialized assessments of skill levels, developing an individual employment plan, career planning, individual and group counseling, referrals to other supportive service agencies, and identifying training opportunities.

LVER staff conduct outreach to employers and business associations and engage in advocacy efforts with hiring executives to increase employment opportunities for veterans and to encourage the hiring of disabled veterans. Most recently, Iowa has been approved as a third-party provider of the DoD SkillBridge program. LVERs will play an important role in working with interested businesses to join this program in hopes of attracting transitioning service members back to Iowa for internship opportunities.

LVERs explain and demonstrate why it is a good business decision to hire and retain veterans. Additionally, LVERs play a big role with the state's Home Base Iowa (HBI) program and help ensure IowaWORKS Business Engagement team members are properly trained to provide information to employers about veteran hiring initiatives. LVERs are located throughout the state in such a way as to maximize their effectiveness and collaboration with those Business Engagement teams and to serve our business customers.

## **Foreign Labor Certification**

The H-2A program allows agricultural employers, who demonstrate a shortage of domestic workers, to bring nonimmigrant, foreign workers into the U.S. to perform agricultural work of a temporary or seasonal nature. In PY24, Iowa's agricultural employers submitted 531 job orders for domestic recruitment prior to receiving foreign workers. Iowa Workforce Development not only assisted with domestic recruitment for these job orders but also inspected housing units prior

to the arrival of temporary foreign workers to ensure compliance with federal housing regulations.

The H-2B non-agricultural program permits eligible employers to temporarily hire foreign, nonimmigrant workers to perform non-agricultural work, once it is demonstrated that a lack of domestic workforce is available to fill the need. IWD's role is to assist with recruitment of domestic workers for open positions. The demand for temporary workers has increased annually over the past few years. Due to this increased demand and workload, Iowa Workforce Development hired an additional full-time staff person dedicated Foreign Labor Certification. With this staffing change, the SWA has been able to complete the extra duties associated with the trending increase.

### **Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker/Monitor Advocacy System**

As a top-20 significant state, Iowa has seen improvement in the provision of Migrant and Seasonal Farm Worker (MSFW) services during this program year; a likely contributor being pandemic recovery. During PY24, 10 offices were designated as significant offices to include: Iowa City, Burlington, Waterloo, Marshalltown, Council Bluffs, Davenport, Spencer, Denison, Des Moines, and Fort Dodge. Peak season comes in July in Iowa with the arrival of migrant workers and H2A workers, mainly from Texas, Georgia, South Africa, and Mexico, however some come from Central and South America and Ukraine.

In situations where the MSFWs are unable to visit an IowaWORKS Center, outreach workers provide services offsite. This enables MSFWs to access necessary services in a way that was most appropriate for their circumstances.

Outreach workers continue to be the primary points of contact for all scheduling events such as registrations, presentations, logging complaints, and secondary needs. Additionally, outreach workers focus on building relationships with agricultural employers and MSFWs. Outreach workers spend time marketing the Agricultural Recruitment System (ARS) and in PY24, 71 ARS job orders requesting 549 workers in total were created. Outreach workers stay in contact with farm workers and employers throughout the year, answering questions about ARS and helping them understand the benefits and processes associated. Iowa is actively promoting the ARS system in hopes to increase participation as a business strategy that also protects the interests of Iowa farm workers.

### **National Farmworker Jobs Program**

Proteus administers the National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP) in Iowa. The NFJP responds to chronic seasonal unemployment and underemployment



experienced by migrant and seasonal farmworkers. The NFJP offers assistance that strengthens the ability of farm workers and their families to achieve economic self-sufficiency. Since its inception with the passage of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, the farmworker program has been an integral part of the national workforce strategy. NFJP provides access to education services and job training, support, and additional services suited to the customer's career goals.

### **Job Corps**

Job Corps, a program administered by the U.S. Department of Labor's (DOL) Employment and Training Administration (ETA). Originally established by the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, the program currently operates under the provisions of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). Job Corps is a no-cost education and vocational training program to help young people ages 16 through 24 improve the quality of their lives through vocational and academic training. Many Job Corps participants face significant barriers to education and employment. About 25 percent of students self-reported that they had a disability, such as a cognitive or mental health disability. About 25 percent of students entered Job Corps without having progressed beyond the ninth grade, and the mean reading and math skills of students were below the eighth-grade level. Eight percent identified as English-language learners.

Job Corps students receive individualized services that are organized into four service periods:

1. Outreach and admission
2. Career preparation
3. Career development
4. Career transition services

There are two Job Corps locations in Iowa: one in Denison and one in Ottumwa.

### **Career and Technical Education (Perkins)**

The rapidly evolving skill requirements of the global economy pose challenges for young workers and businesses. Increasingly, workers of all ages must update their skills and credentials to obtain a job with family-sustaining wages, remain employable, or move ahead in a career. At the same time, businesses need a robust pipeline of qualified workers to meet the changing skill demands of their sector. Employers are generally looking for three types of skills in their entry-level employees: (1) employability or soft skills, (2) hard skills, and (3)

occupation- or industry- specific skills. The intent of Iowa's Career and Technical Education (CTE) is to provide students with the skills and knowledge necessary to excel in the global economy. Career and technical education equip students with the foundational knowledge to explore a cluster of occupations and careers. As students evolve through their educational experience, their focus is narrowed to a particular program. This process allows students to transition seamlessly while providing them with hands-on exploration, rigorous academics, and the support necessary to succeed.

### **Federal Bonding Program**

Federal bonding benefits an employer by providing free fidelity bond insurance to protect them against loss of money or property due to employee dishonesty. The advantage of the program is that the employer benefits from the worker's skills and abilities while opening up doors of opportunity to job seekers that might otherwise struggle to overcome those barriers. The bond promotes confidence in a job seeker who needs to gain re-entry into or maintain a connection to the labor market and demonstrate that he or she can be a productive worker.

### **Re-Entry**

The State of Iowa has six Reentry Career Planners at the following locations: Iowa Correctional Institution for Women in Mitchellville, Anamosa State Penitentiary in Anamosa, Newton Correctional Facility in Newton, Mount Pleasant Correctional Facility in Mount Pleasant, Fort Dodge Correctional Facility in Fort Dodge, and the Clarinda Correctional Facility in Clarinda. Additionally, one Reentry Operations Manager oversees operating procedures and the program.

The program staff partner with the Iowa Department of Corrections (IDOC) and other offender- related partners throughout Iowa, to assist in the overall goal of reducing recidivism. IDOC has nine correctional institutions that house around 8,550 individuals. Nearly 90% will return to their communities; just over 4,100 were released in PY24. Community Based Corrections (CBC) has eight judicial districts that supervise about 39,000 individuals on probation, parole, special sentence, and pretrial release. CBC also has 22 residential facilities that house and supervises around 2,100 individuals.

Nearly 50,000 individuals are currently incarcerated or on community supervision in Iowa. The average daily cost of incarceration per individual is \$107, totaling just over \$39,000 per individual per year. The IDOC reports that the

three-year recidivism rate for FY2024 is 32.8%; or 3% decrease from the previous year. The national average for state prisons is around 70%.

Reentry Career Planners in Iowa institutions are certified as an Offender Workforce Development Specialist (OWDS). This certification requires a person to utilize specific competencies and their related skills to help incarcerated individuals make informed decisions about jobs and career paths, based on knowledge of their interests, skills, abilities, and values; educational and occupational opportunities; and the realities of the world of work. In our commitment to better serve justice involved individuals, we have certified forty-six professionals in our state. Currently, eight work at IDOC and thirty-five work at IWD.

Iowa's re-entry program supports WIOA through recording registered-only individuals and program enrollment into Wagner-Peyser. The goal is to teach work-related skills, find a career pathway, job placement prior to release from the institution, and network with employers and community reentry service providers to ensure a successful transition for the returning citizen. The Reentry Career Planners help create resumes, assist with mock interviews, and proctor the National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC) and O\*NET assessments. Reentry Career Planners served over 1,800 individuals in 2024. They also act as the sponsor for IDOCs 30 Registered Apprenticeship (RA) programs. There are currently 280 incarcerated individuals in an RA program. Reentry Career Planners proctored 240 instruction tests related to training for apprentices. A total of 31 incarcerated individuals we served completed their RA program in 2025, with our staff also enrolling 24 new incarcerated individuals as apprentices.

Empowering and Motivating Ex-offenders to Reach Gainful Employment (EMERGE) is a workshop they teach that focuses on how to get back into the workforce and explain their criminal history to potential employers. Our staff host career fairs inside the institution. They also network with employers and educate them on incentives to hire returning citizens, including the Federal Bonding program, Work Opportunity Tax Credit program, and the Iowa income tax benefit. They perform individualized job referrals based on skill set and job search three weeks prior to the incarcerated individual's release, including referrals to IowaWORKS Centers in the area the individual will return to. Referrals also happen through each Local Workforce Delivery Area's electronic referral form for apprentices that need to continue in their program after release, as well as other programs they are interested in.

## **Home Base Iowa**

Home Base Iowa (HBI) is Iowa's premier veteran initiative focused on connecting Iowa businesses to skilled veterans, current and transitioning service members, and spouses looking for career opportunities. FY 2023 marked a new beginning for Home Base Iowa through an internal reorganization of veteran services within IWD. The creation and launch of the IowaWORKS for Veterans portal ([iowaworksforveterans.gov](http://iowaworksforveterans.gov)) highlighted this reorganization and offers a gateway for military job seekers to find training and education resources.

Additionally, it offers employers a pathway to improve their veteran recruitment and retention efforts. As part of the broader IowaWORKS for Veterans system, HBI is integrated with IWD's veteran services and programs maximizing its reach and impact across the state of Iowa.

Vision: Iowa is the "State of Choice" for veterans and transitioning service members for employment, education, and/or continued service; and service members are valued in communities which are welcoming, affordable, safe, and family-friendly.

HBI's three Focus Areas are:

1. Workforce Solutions and Growth
2. Quality Education and Student Access
3. Community Support

The HBI community initiative designates communities as centers of opportunity for veterans and further highlights Iowa's statewide commitment to welcoming and employing veterans, service members, and spouses.

## **Registered Apprenticeship Programs**

An employer-driven model, Registered Apprenticeships benefit both workers and employers. Employers can maximize this onboarding model by developing pipeline of workers trained to meet the specific needs of their industries; thus, leading to increased productivity and worker retention. Apprentices benefit by increasing their skills with paid employment.

Iowa Workforce Development has worked strategically and relentlessly for years to grow Registered Apprenticeship (RA) programs throughout the state. The recent establishment of the Iowa Office of Apprenticeship and securing formal recognition of being a State Apprenticeship Agency (SAA) two significant milestones the state has committed to in utilizing Registered Apprenticeship specifically to grow and develop Iowa's future workforce.

## **Key Milestones**



The Iowa Office of Apprenticeship was officially established on July 1, 2023, and codified under the Registered Apprenticeship Act (Chapter 84D of the Iowa Code). Official duties of the office include but are not limited to:

- To serve as the state registration agency
- To establish labor standards for quality pre-apprenticeship, youth apprenticeships, registered apprenticeships, and apprenticeships
- To establish rules regarding the registration of quality pre-apprenticeship programs, registered youth apprenticeship programs, registered apprenticeship programs, and apprenticeship programs in the state when the sponsor of such programs chooses to certify or register programs with the office
- To resolve disputes between parties to an apprenticeship agreement

Upon establishment of a specific team for coordinated and integrated RA efforts, Iowa Workforce Development worked throughout the FY2024 to submit and finalize a formal application with the federal Office of Apprenticeship (within Department of Labor) to file to become a State Apprenticeship Agency (SAA). On June 27, 2024, Iowa Workforce Development (and more specifically the Iowa Office of Apprenticeship) secured formal recognition from the federal Department of Labor Office of Apprenticeship (OA) to become the 30<sup>th</sup> state recognized as a State Apprenticeship Agency. This designation gives the Iowa Workforce Development (and more specifically the Iowa Office of Apprenticeship) sole responsibility for the collection, oversight, and maintenance of program information and apprentice data in the State.

## **Duties of the Iowa Office of Apprenticeship**

Iowa Office of Apprenticeship serves hundreds of RA sponsors (employers) throughout the year by providing the following services:

- one-on-one program development
- case management and technical assistance
- grants and financial supports
- compliance and monitoring
- external partnerships
- efficient systems, processes and data collection

These holistic and coordinated efforts, implemented by a team of 10 full-time staff, support the growth and expansion of Registered Apprenticeships.

At the conclusion of Fiscal Year 2025, the Iowa Office of Apprenticeship had over 918 active registered apprenticeship programs and over 2,100 employers engaged through the state. These programs focused on RA occupations in advanced manufacturing, health care, education, energy, construction, transportation, information technology and other fields; with active registration 9,100 active apprentices at the end of fiscal year 2025.

## **Funding to Support Registered Apprenticeships**

**Federal Grant Funding:** The Iowa Office of Apprenticeship leverages several federal funding sources and grants including the State Apprenticeship Expansion Fund (SAEF) (awarded through Department of Labor) as well as State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (SLFRF) (awarded through Department of Treasury) as part of the post-pandemic recovery American Rescue Plan to support growth for the apprenticeship ecosystem in Iowa.

The SAEF funding currently works to help fund the staff within the Iowa Office of Apprenticeship, helping to offset costs for the day-to-day operations and growth and development of Registered Apprenticeship opportunities. State and Local Fiscal Recovery funds have been utilized to incentivize employers to develop Registered Apprenticeship programs in non-traditional pathways of healthcare and education; two industries significant impacted by the pandemic.

As of June 30, 2025 (end of FY2025), the Iowa Office of Apprenticeship has been awarded \$766,805 in SAEF3 based award grant funds to be used between a performance period of July 1, 2025-June 30, 2028. The primary focus of these funds will be to offset salary, fringe, travel and indirect expenses of the Iowa

Office of Apprenticeship with in-kind contribution from Iowa Workforce Development to cover other operational costs not covered by this allocation.

The Iowa Office of Apprenticeship has two large SLFRF grants focuses to develop Registered Apprenticeship programs in high-demand fields.

- In 2022, State of Iowa awarded \$45.6M in funding to 19 partner districts to implement an innovative Teacher and Paraeducator Registered Apprenticeship program (TPRA), which supported the development of RA programs for K-12 teacher and paraeducator occupations. This innovative approach in a non-traditional field made Iowa an early adopter of utilizing Registered Apprenticeships in education field. In early 2025, a second iteration of Teacher and Paraeducator Registered Apprenticeship (TPRA) grants were announced; this included \$3.4M in funding to help 11 additional school districts develop RA programs. At the end of FY2025, there were 487 active apprentices with 255 completions between both programs.
- In 2022, eight school districts were awarded funding as part of the Iowa Health Careers (IHC) grant program with a total allocation of \$2.45M; supporting the development of RA programs within the healthcare industry. In early 2023, a second iteration of Iowa Health Career grants were announced; this included an additional, \$15M in funding to help 21 additional organizations develop healthcare-specific RA programs. At the end of FY2025, there were 410 active apprentices enrolled in these RA programs with 88 completions so far.

**State-Funding:** Iowa Workforce Development continues to manage two, annual allocations of state-funded grants; whose primary focus is to support employers who have Registered Apprenticeship programs in the State.

- Iowa Apprenticeship Act (84E), which is currently \$3,000,000 annual allocation supports existing RA programs that require at least 100 hours of in-person Related Training Instruction for each individual apprentice. For FY2025, \$2.94 million in grants are being awarded to 59 RA sponsors who are supporting 5,133 participating apprentices. For more information on 84E eligibility and previous awardees, please visit <https://workforce.iowa.gov/apprenticeship/funding/84e>
- Iowa Registered Apprenticeship Development Program (84F), with an annual allocation of \$760,000, supports newly established RA programs in high-demand fields. \$427,800 in grants are being awarded to 17 RA

sponsors, who have created programs in 19 new occupations. For more information on 84F eligibility and previous awardees, visit <https://workforce.iowa.gov/apprenticeship/funding/84f>

Because apprenticeships are directly linked to private sector demand, workers who participate in the programs are prepared with in-demand skills that can lead to significant increases in lifetime earnings. Per the DOL, the post-apprenticeship employment rate is more than 93 percent. The average starting salary in Iowa for apprentices after finishing Registered Apprenticeship programs is \$80,000 per year.

### **Family Development and Self-Sufficiency (FaDSS)**

This program provides intensive family development services to families receiving Family Investment Program (FIP) assistance who are identified as having multiple or severe barriers to self-sufficiency. FaDSS participants leaving FIP can continue to receive services for up to 90 consecutive days after leaving FIP.

### **Last Dollar Scholarship**

The scholarship, created as part of the Future Ready Iowa Act in 2018, pays the cost of tuition up to an associate degree for training in high-demand occupations at any community college. A total of 9,895 Iowans received a total of \$29,177,867 in scholarships in FY2023, with an average award of \$2,949.

The Iowa Legislature has appropriated \$23,927,005 for FY2024. At the same time, legislators also introduced an Expected Family Contribution (EFC), a financial need metric derived from the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Any student applying for funding in FY2024 must have an EFC at or below \$20,000 to receive an LDS award with level funding appropriated.

Use of the Last Dollar Scholarship continues to grow. Between FY2022 and FY2023, the number of program participants grew by more than 27 percent, from 7,764 to 9,895. The highest-demand occupation during this time was associate degree-nursing, which had 1,619 participants, followed by licensed practical nurse/vocational nurse with 679.

### **STEM Internship Program**

The purpose of the STEM internship program is to assist in placing Iowa undergraduate students studying in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics into internships that lead to permanent positions with Iowa employers. The intern must participate in a substantive work-based



experience in an area closely related to the student's STEM field. To encourage employer participation, eligible employers may qualify for awards up to \$50,000 per fiscal year, paid on a reimbursement basis. For every \$2 of wages earned by the student intern during the designated internship period, \$1 paid by the employer is matched by \$1 from Iowa Workforce Development (up to \$5,000 per intern).

### **Iowa Student Internship Program**

The Iowa Student Internship Program provides grants to small and medium-sized Iowa companies in the advanced manufacturing, biosciences, and information technology industries to help support internship programs with a goal of transitioning the interns to full-time employment in Iowa upon graduation. Export internships are eligible through this program to support a company's current or prospective international efforts.

### **Industrial New Jobs Training Act – 260 E**

The 260E program is a business incentive program. It shares in the cost of training employees in new jobs created by a business expansion or startup in Iowa. An eligible business must be engaged in interstate or intrastate commerce for the purpose of manufacturing, processing, or assembling products, conducting research and development, or providing services in interstate commerce. Retail, health, and professional services businesses are excluded. Businesses that substantially reduce operations in one area of the state and relocate substantially the same operations in another area of Iowa, as well as businesses involved in a strike, lockout, or other labor dispute in Iowa, are not eligible.

Community colleges enter into training agreements with eligible businesses to establish single or multiple projects to provide training to employees in new jobs. A final agreement executed between a community college and a business is a binding contract. To fund training, colleges borrow money from investors in the form of bond certificates. Like other bonds, revenues are pledged for repayment with interest to certificate purchasers. Certificates are repaid by capturing a portion of the State of Iowa tax dollars generated by the new jobs payroll and diverting these dollars into special funds controlled by the colleges.

The 260E program is a key incentive for retention of existing Iowa industries and assisting new businesses that locate in Iowa.

## **Iowa Jobs Training Act – 260 F**

The 260F program is an incentive program that assists Iowa-based businesses with training services for their existing workforce to help them remain competitive. To be eligible for 260F assistance, a business must be engaged in interstate or intrastate commerce for the purpose of manufacturing, processing or assembling products, conducting research and development, or providing services in interstate commerce. Retail, health, and professional services businesses are not eligible, nor are businesses that substantially reduce operations in one area of the state to relocate substantially the same operations to another area of Iowa, and businesses that are involved in a strike, lockout, or other labor dispute in Iowa.

A community college may enter into a training agreement with an eligible business to establish a training project for providing program services. A training plan can be no longer than two years in length. A business can request an extension up to one additional year.

## **Accelerated Career Education Program Act – 260G**

The Accelerated Career Education (ACE) Program was created to help develop a workforce pool of individuals skilled in the occupations most needed by Iowa businesses. It assists Iowa community colleges in expanding current training programs or establishing new programs for these occupations. To participate in 260G, a business must be engaged in interstate or intrastate commerce for the purpose of manufacturing, processing, or assembling products; construction; conducting research and development; or providing services in interstate or intrastate commerce. Retail businesses are not eligible.

## **Private Activity Bond Cap Allocation**

Each year, the State of Iowa receives an allocation of volume cap (state ceiling) for allocation to certain private activity bonds as set forth in Section 146 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986. Section 7C of the Iowa Code distributes the State Ceiling among these types of bonds. Iowa Finance Authority allocates the state ceiling for projects qualifying as: manufacturing, agricultural processing, solid waste facilities, multifamily housing, and private activity bonds issued by political subdivisions.

## **Weatherization Assistance Program**

Is a federal grant program established to help reduce the heating and cooling costs for low- income persons, particularly the elderly, disabled, and children,

by improving the energy efficiency of their homes. The installation of energy efficiency measures for each dwelling is based on a computerized energy audit which determines the cost effectiveness of each measure.

### **Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program**

A federally funded block grant designed to help eligible low-income Iowa households in the payment of a portion of their non-business residential heating costs for the winter heating season.

### **Community Services Block Grant**

A federal block grant program administered by the states. The purpose of the Program is to provide funding to states and local agencies for the reduction of poverty, the revitalization of low-income communities, and the empowerment of low-income families and individuals in rural and urban areas to become a fully self-sufficient.

### **Credit Union Family Partnership Individual Development Account**

This Iowa Credit Union Foundation Program offers matched savings accounts for Iowa families with limited resources who meet income-based criteria.

#### *B. The Strengths and Weaknesses of Workforce Development Activities*

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

Iowa has a longstanding history of providing exceptional services across all of the workforce activities and programs identified above, however, those programs have operated independently of each other in many cases. WIOA envisions a "one workforce system" where programs work together to wholistically serve their customers, expanding the capabilities of each program and increasing the success of its participants. One of the greatest strengths of Iowa's workforce system going forward is the alignment of the administration of the four WIOA core programs (Titles I, II, III, and IV) into one state agency, Iowa Workforce Development (IWD). Senate File 514, effective July 1, 2023, consolidated the administration of federal and state workforce programs at IWD. As this alignment continues, the commitment of the core partners to breakdown silos and design an aligned workforce system is remarkable. Iowa is truly positioned for an effective and efficient customer experience between all core partners.

The WIOA Core Partner Working Group, described more fully below in section IV of this plan, is one of the biggest strengths Iowa exudes. This has allowed us to develop stronger working relationships at the State level, and pass that down to

the local level, along with joint policy and guidance on various topics. This has strengthened partner collaboration and service delivery.

With IowaWORKS at the center of service delivery across programs, any staff is able to assist a customer walking in to the door and provide career services to individuals and initiate program referrals as needed.

A key priority of Governor Reynolds is the expansion of high-quality, in-depth Work-Based Learning opportunities; this means outcome-focused professional experiences, industry-recognized credentials earned through simulated work experiences, school-based enterprises, authentic project-based learning with employer, student-learner programs, internships, quality pre-apprenticeships (QPA) and Registered Apprenticeships (RA), which engage students in building academic, technical and soft skills. IWD, in partnership with the Department of Education is providing technical assistance to every high school in order to grow work-based learning in the state of Iowa. Iowa Office of Apprenticeship is developing a youth apprenticeship model that will be a better fit for high school implementation, across many different occupations and industries.

IWD has established a Business Engagement work-based learning plan with goals that are currently being implemented. There are five strategies: outreach, infrastructure, technical assistance, innovation, and expansion. There is a high priority working with economic development, chambers, and employer associations to strengthen infrastructure to support work-based learning as a strategy for employers.

SNAP E&T services are a combined effort between the Iowa Departments of Health and Human Services (HHS) and Workforce Development (IWD), and community partnerships. HHS determines participant eligibility and provides oversight to IWD who is the administrative intermediary for the program. IWD contracts with eligible providers to deliver SNAP E&T services.

SNAP Employment and Training (E&T) is a voluntary program for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) recipients. The program offers recipients job seeking skills, classroom training, and structured employment search, as well as support services, such as transportation and childcare at no cost working to increase workforce skills and help reduce barriers to employment.

The SNAP Employment and Training Program has increased the number of participants served each of the last three program years.

With the ever-changing needs of Iowa businesses, as well as Iowa's landscape continuing to change, continued challenges are expected to meet job seekers

where they are and fill businesses workforce needs. Changing demographics, the advancement of technology, to include significant advancements in the use of Artificial Intelligence, the vast need across business and industry creates opportunities for improvement for Iowa's workforce development activities.

Additional opportunities for improvement include enhanced system integration efforts as although collaboration between programs have improved, there are still areas for improvement. With Governor Reynolds alignment efforts, modernizing state government and transitioning similar programs to one agency, efforts to improve integration will be more streamlined and supported. The same goes for data sharing. Currently there are challenges with access to partner's program data, however with alignment and further integration of data systems, Iowa will be able to continue working on progressing in this area.

Iowa has limited financial resources to address its many workforce development challenges. Under WIOA, federal program funds are allocated to states based on population size. Within these federal funds the allowable allocation for program administration has always been capped at 5% of the total. As a result, less populous states such as Iowa have substantially lower levels of funding to cover the fixed costs, infrastructure funding and required administrative activities in order to be in compliance.

### *C. State Workforce Development Capacity*

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

Iowa is well positioned to support the enhanced capacity of its state workforce partners across workforce activities in the state. With the implementation of alignment of state agencies and programs, all Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) core programs are now housed at Iowa Workforce Development (IWD), with the exception of Title IV-Blind, which remains a separate agency. Although not required for all programs to be under one agency, the opportunities this presents for system integration is not only imminent, but exciting for the State.

Additionally, programs just as the Trade Adjustment Assistance Act (TAA), Senior Community Services Employment Program (SCSEP), the State Unemployment Compensation Program (UI), Jobs for Veterans State Grant (JVSG), Reentry, PROMISE JOBS (TANF), Reemployment Services Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) and SNAP Employment and Training programming are all administered through IWD. This alignment of other required program partners also poses an area of

opportunity to increase the capacity of workforce investment across workforce systems.

Overall, alignment has increased the total capacity of the workforce system as we share resources and work together across programs to prevent duplication of services.

The range of workforce development programs and activities provided by Iowa's workforce delivery system programs represent a significant investment of both human and capital resources into Iowa's workforce development system. Since 2014 when the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) was passed, the State has made concerted efforts to increase interagency collaboration to better coordinate federal employment services and training for adults, dislocated workers and youth, and adult education, as well as create additional access points for participants with barriers to employment. These activities resulted in a developed network of physical assets, including strategically located IowaWORKS centers.

Though the workforce system has made improvements since the passage of WIOA, we recognize the need to continue to increase integration efforts. The programs represented in this plan, in conjunction with local workforce development boards, have established referral processes from and to core and required program partners to coordinate workforce activities and increase the capacity of each partner by allowing specialized services to function optimally and assist in the elimination of the duplication of services. These local referral systems have defined how documentation is completed to show the result of a referral. With decreased funding across programs, it is imperative that services are coordinated to ensure funds are maximized across partners.

## b. State Strategic Vision and Goals

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

### 1. Vision

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

Iowa's Vision: An aligned, flexible, and streamlined workforce delivery system that meets the needs of employers and all Iowans for a skilled and diverse workforce.

The Iowa State Workforce Development Board (SWDB) recognizes the importance of the workforce system in Iowa and the need to serve both customer groups – job seekers and employers – to have a thriving workforce system and economy. The vision of this plan clearly identifies the focus of Iowa’s workforce system over the next four years, by stressing an aligned and streamlined workforce delivery system that serves both customer groups equally. The vision begins with “an aligned” system as alignment is a key focus of Governor Reynolds, the SWDB, and the system partners. The vision also calls out both customer groups of the workforce system, as neither can be successful without the other. Without a pool of skilled and available workers, employers will not have the workforce they need to grow and achieve success, and without employers offering high-paying, quality jobs, job seekers will not have career opportunities to support their families. The goals below were specifically curated by the SWDB to expand upon these concepts and allow Iowa to achieve its vision and provide the best workforce system possible.

## 2. Goals

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

**A. Goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce, including preparing youth and individuals with barriers to employment<sup>5</sup> and other populations<sup>6</sup>.**

**B. Goals for meeting the skilled workforce needs of employers**

The Iowa SWDB identified two broad goals, each with corresponding strategies designed to achieve the goals, for the PY24-PY27 planning cycle. In keeping with the design of the vision statement, Goal 1 is related to serving individuals/job seekers while Goal 2 is focused on serving employers. Each goal and its corresponding strategies will guide the core partner programs over the next four

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<sup>5</sup> Individuals with barriers to employment include displaced homemakers; low-income individuals; Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians; individuals with disabilities, including youth who are individuals with disabilities; older individuals; ex-offenders; homeless individuals, or homeless children and youths; youth who are in or have aged out of the foster care system; individuals who are English language learners, individuals who have low levels of literacy, and individuals facing substantial cultural barriers; eligible migrant and seasonal farmworkers (as defined at section 167(i) of WIOA and Training and Employment Guidance Letter No. 35-14); individuals within 2 years of exhausting lifetime eligibility under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program; single parents (including single pregnant women); and long-term unemployed individuals.

<sup>6</sup> Veterans, unemployed workers, and youth and any other populations identified by the State.

years as they work together to design and implement policies and procedures to achieve the vision and goals of this plan.

Goal 1: Increase the engagement and awareness of Iowa's current, potential, and future workforce to the continuum of high-quality education, training, and career opportunities in Iowa.

- Strategy #1: Align and implement an accessible, integrated service delivery model incorporating all workforce system partners.
- Strategy #2: Ensure all Iowa students have opportunities for meaningful work-based learning experiences.
- Strategy #3: Target services to Iowans with barriers to employment

Goal 2: Increase employer engagement and awareness of the IowaWORKS system as the premier provider of business services for a skilled and diverse workforce.

- Strategy #1: Support local workforce boards in the development and enhancement of sector partnerships.
- Strategy #2: Create and implement a unified and collaborative business engagement model.
- Strategy #3: Increase the awareness and engagement by employers in work-based learning opportunities.

### 3. Performance Goals

**Using the table provided in Appendix 1, include the State's expected levels of performance relating to the performance accountability measures based on primary indicators of performance described in section 116(b)(2)(A) of WIOA. (This Strategic Planning element only applies to core programs.)**

Please see Appendix 1.

### 4. Assessment

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

Iowa's State Workforce Development Board is engaged in a review of performance outcomes through its Systems Committee. The first priority of the committee is performance data. This includes having an accessible dashboard, with information and data that is easily able to be understood by any



stakeholder. Based on this feedback, a Tableau dashboard was created to show quarterly and annual performance outcomes, investment vs. return on investment (participant and expenditure data) and unemployment rate by local workforce development area. While the data dashboard initially included performance data for WIOA Title I and III, IWD's LMI team is currently working to integrate performance outcomes for Title II and Title IV. This data dashboard will be a one-stop shop for WIOA performance outcomes for all WIOA programs.

Iowa began evaluation activities in PY23 and has continued in PY24, with much progress being made on evaluation activities under WIOA Title I. Currently, Iowa Workforce Development (IWD) has an MOU in place with Iowa State University and Iowa's Integrated Data System for Decision Making (I2D2) to assist with WIOA Title I Evaluation in accordance with 20 CFR § 682.220. The project began with a pilot and planning effort to evaluate Iowa's WIOA Title I programs between May 1, 2023, through December 31, 2023, and continued through PY23 and PY24.

Areas of opportunity in regard to assessment include evaluating the effectiveness of alignment of core programs into Iowa Workforce Development. The Iowa Department of Management is responsible for standing up Data Dashboards across state agencies to help assess the effectiveness of the alignment of workforce programs. Additional emphasis will be placed on improvement of co-enrollment and increased data collection in this area.

The goals of implementation of the data dashboards include:

- Increase co-enrollment of WIOA core programs by 30% by December 31, 2025.
- Triple the number of PROMISE JOBS (TANF) and Title I co-enrollments by December 31, 2025.
- Increase the number of Iowan's enrolled in SNAP E&T by 50% by December 31, 2025.

The results from the dashboard data will inform gaps and areas for strategic development related cross program collaboration.

To reinforce the efforts of a "one workforce system," Iowa engaged representatives from most core partner programs in the 2023 Evaluation Peer Learning Cohort (EvalPLC). Including partners in the conversation and evaluation planning will strengthen evaluation efforts across programs and provide enhanced data collection and analysis that will benefit service provision across the workforce system. Iowa's EvalPLC team determined that the desired outcome of this project is to create an Evaluation Action Plan. WIOA Title I

evaluation is underway, however creating an action plan including workforce system partners will provide guideposts for streamlined and collaborative evaluation across programs. In the planning phase, the team identified the Evaluation Action Plan will serve as a roadmap for all partners to plan for and implement evaluation activities.

The PY24 Iowa Unified State Plan focuses on two customer groups, job seekers and employers. Post alignment, all core programs are working together to enhance program design and service delivery to improve outcomes. Our belief is that the overall effectiveness of the system will be improved due to alignment, working better together as core programs and the work of the Eval PLC will allow us to develop a roadmap to assess the effectiveness of the system.

### c. State Strategy

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

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

Sector partnerships are comprised of industries with shared needs, as well as various education, workforce, economic, and community organizations in supportive roles. These partnerships develop and continuously evaluate goals, policies, and service-delivery strategies to meet the needs of employers in a given sector. In doing so, they operate within labor market regions and are not confined to municipal, county, educational, or state boundaries. Effective sector partnerships are industry-driven, meaning industries identify needs and assume the lead role in developing strategies which address their identified needs.

IWD, in partnership with local LWDAs, work with chambers, economic development entities, etc... to further industry specific partnerships. IWD is continuing to develop strategies that will create a work-based-learning sector specific infrastructure.

Iowa Workforce Development has been implementing a Work Based Learning (WBL) strategy that focuses on working directly with businesses, economic developers and communities to drive data-based partnerships between employers and students. The overarching goal of the strategy is to create a sustainable local infrastructure that will continually expand the number of employers that utilize WBL as a workforce development strategy and help students and adults build a career in Iowa.

The following information outlines goals and strategies.

Goal: Support the creation of sustainable local infrastructures that will continually engage businesses to offer WBL programs to expand student and adult knowledge of jobs available to them in Iowa and build transportable employability skills.

#### Strategy 1: Outreach

Connect with employers throughout the state to provide WBL outreach and technical assistance.

#### Strategy 2: Infrastructure

Support the development of a sustainable local infrastructure that connects business, economic development, and local workforce regions, with a goal of continuously increasing the number of employers adopting WBL as a key workforce development strategy.

#### Strategy 3: Technical Assistance

Development of resources to address employer WBL barriers and ongoing assistance to employers to increase awareness and support program development and implementation.

#### Strategy 4: Innovation

Share and support development of WBL models that can serve as high demand sector entry points in urban and rural areas of the state.

#### Strategy 5: Expansion

Expand the number of employers offering Apprenticeships, RA, QPA and internships to high school students and adults.

In January of 2025 Iowa Healthcare Credentialing Grant was announced. The goal was to support employer-led rapid entry training to equip new or upskill current employees to meet high-demand healthcare needs. The opportunity was

for employers to expand successful existing models and/or seed implementation of new employer-designed efforts that promise to address workforce needs. The healthcare and social assistance Industry in Iowa was the largest industry sector in Iowa April-June 2024 with average total of employment of 227,989. Several healthcare occupations are consistently represented on the top 25 job openings list in Iowa, and many are positions that require two years or less of education and training and/or are apprenticeable occupations.

Awards were announced in May, 2025. The 14 awardees include employers who plan to implement programs for multiple high-demand pathways, including helping employees obtain Registered Nursing (RN) training and licensure while working and programs adding positions for health care technicians, which have become more critical in recent years. In total, awarded projects are estimated to train or upskill 399 participants across the state with a total amount awarded of \$2,940,000.

Another WBL goal in Iowa is to expand Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) high school training by encouraging adoption of models established by the Le Mars and Waukee Fire Departments in partnership with school districts and community colleges. Iowa Workforce Development (IWD) and the Iowa Department of Education (IDoE) are collaborating with the Iowa Emergency Medical Services Association and Iowa Fire Chiefs Association to encourage more communities with capacity to consider this approach and build upon training opportunities already offered by community colleges and other providers. There are at least three additional school districts in Iowa working toward implementing this initiative in 2026.

#### Scaling Innovative Models Continues in Other Career Pathways

Other Scale-Up Models Under Development: (1) IWD and IDOE are working with the Iowa Institute for Cooperatives to develop an internship program for their members, with a presentation to HR professionals scheduled for Nov. 5, 2025; (2) the Municipal Utilities Association of Iowa will invite utilities in Sumner and Fredericksburg to partner with Sumner-Fredericksburg High School to launch early career utilities pathways; and (3) the opportunity to launch community help desk partnerships where students provide scheduled IT services to residents at senior living facilities will be announced soon.

Iowa Workforce Development is working with iJAG in Western Iowa to facilitate a more streamline process for graduates of the iJAG program to enroll in title one work-based learning opportunities once they graduate from high school. The goal is to build the relationship prior to students' graduation and

be able to step in and work with the students not enrolling in postsecondary education.

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

Modernization efforts to align Iowa's state governance structure is one of the top strategies imposed by Governor Reynolds to streamline state government, improve efficiency and integrate programming. One focus of alignment included centralizing similar programs that were housed across multiple agencies into a single department to better improve services for Iowans. Thus, Iowa Workforce Development (IWD), as the designated state workforce agency, now houses all four WIOA core programs with the exception of Title IV-Blind.

Beyond the core programs now being administered by IWD, many required programs are also administered by IWD to include: Trade Adjustment Assistance Act (TAA), Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Employment and Training, PROMISE JOBS (Iowa's TANF program), Jobs for Veterans State Grant (JVSG), ReEntry Employment Opportunities, State Unemployment Compensation and Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment program (RESEA). The alignment of workforce programs supports enhanced coordination efforts across programs to improve outcomes.

Over the past few years additional focus was put on modernizing Iowa's Unemployment Insurance Benefits System. In an effort to improve customer service, eliminate labor-intensive processes, allow real time data sharing, improve security, increase data accuracy and improve maintenance and support, the new system went live in June 2025. The UI Benefits System is now fully integrated with Iowa's already established data management system, IowaWORKS. The alignment of systems supports customer service efforts and streamlines benefits and services to Iowans.

Other state initiatives that support integrated customer services include the establishment of the Business Engagement Division within IWD and the Reemployment Case Management. IWD launched the Business Engagement

Division in September 2022. The Division was created to provide a one-stop shop for Iowa's employers to help meet their workforce needs. Since its inception, the Business Engagement Division has focused on creating relationships with Iowa businesses and engaged in a 100-day visit endeavor where Business Engagement Consultants met with countless businesses to make contact and share information about valuable business resources to help support them throughout their business cycle.

The Reemployment Case Management (RCM) program is another state initiative that was implemented in January 2022 which puts more intensive focus on getting unemployed Iowans back to work more quickly. Engaging claimants more quickly in the UI process and enrolling them in Title III Wagner-Peyser services and providing a direct connection to the labor exchange system right away has proven to be a beneficial approach. Since the onset of RCM through the end of October 2023, 72,349 Iowans receiving unemployment or who were temporarily laid off completed an RCM appointment. Of those, 15,624 have reported employment. This program began and continues to be sustained by ARPA funding through December 2026.

Although historically there has been some siloing of programs, the alignment of core programs and further collaboration among multiple program partners will help to programs to be more knowledgeable about one another and foster improved working relationships. Additionally, this work will provide for a more seamless customer experience to Iowans by providing them the best services necessary for them to meet their career goals and improve job seeker placement for Iowa businesses.

### III. Operational Planning Elements

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

#### a. State Strategy Implementation

**The Unified or Combined State Plan must include—**

## 1. State Board Functions

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

The Iowa State Workforce Development Board (SWDB) implements its required functions under section 101(d) of WIOA through its authority granted by Governor Kim Reynolds and codified in Iowa Code Chapter 84A. The Iowa Workforce Development (IWD) is the designated state workforce agency which provides support to the Iowa SWDB by providing an Executive Director to the SWDB, along with other support staff from the agency. The Iowa Attorney General's office provides legal support to the SWDB, as needed.

To support the work of the SWDB, the Board has multiple standing committees, as outlined in the SWDB Bylaws. These committees provide information and assist the Board in carrying out its duties. Beginning in Program Year 2025, the SWDB completed a review of all existing Standing committees of the Board. This review resulted in an overhaul of the committee structure, ensuring the effective use of committees to assist the Board in achieving its duties. The following Standing Committees are in place for the Iowa SWDB:

**Executive Committee:** The Executive Committee is composed of the Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, and five additional voting members. This committee is responsible for coordinating and overseeing the activities of the Board and its other Committees to ensure the satisfactory performance of functions stipulated by the Governor, the Bylaws, and all relevant statutes and regulations. The Executive Committee monitors and guides the administrative management of the Board.

**Workforce System and Policy Committee:** The Workforce System and Policy Committee provides strategic guidance and recommendations on the operational, policy, and procedural aspects of Iowa's workforce development system. The committee ensures alignment between system operations and best practices and supports continuous improvement across programs and services.

**Disability Services Committee:** The Disability Services Committee provides information and assists with issues relating to services to individuals with disabilities, including compliance with state and federal nondiscrimination laws relating to the workforce development system and appropriate training for staff

regarding the provision or support, accommodations, and employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities.

**Barriers to Work Committee:** The Barriers to Work committee focuses on identifying and addressing barriers to employment by aligning state strategies to provide all Iowans better opportunities to find self-sustaining employment and ensure Iowa employers have access to the skilled workforce needed to be successful.

**Iowa Plains Local Workforce Development Area Executive Committee:** The Iowa Plains Local Workforce Development Area (LWDA) Executive Committee provides recommendations regarding the policies, procedure, operational and other issues relating to the local workforce system in the Iowa Plains LWDA. As the Iowa Plains LWDA is being run by the State via the American Job Center Division (AJC) of IWD, the State Workforce Development Board fulfills the role of Local Workforce Development Board in the Iowa Plains area. This committee consists of business members, community-based organizations, program representation, etc. Geographically located in the Iowa Plains area to ensure a local voice leads the charge for strategic decisions impacting the area.

The Iowa SWDB meets quarterly to conduct the business of the Board, hosting two virtual meetings and two in-person meetings annually, with the goal of holding the in-person meetings in a different area of the state each time. Each Standing Committee provides a report at each SWDB meeting and the information and recommendations of the Committees are discussed and voted on by the full Board, if required. All WIOA policies impacting the core partner programs (Titles I, II, III and IV), are reviewed and approved by the full SWDB, based on information and input from the Policies and Practices Committee.

## 2. Implementation of State Strategy

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

### *A. Core Program Activities to Implement the State's Strategy*

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



The most significant activity implemented to ensure true integration across programs includes Iowa's alignment strategy. Iowa Workforce Development (IWD) being the lead state agency for all core programs was the first step in working towards an aligned, flexible, and streamlined workforce delivery system that meets the needs of our customers. Although this formalized department alignment is a more current initiative implemented in July 2023, and has provided structure for enhanced partnerships, the core partners have been working together weekly for several years within what is called the Core Partner Working Group. The WIOA Core Partner Working Group is a group of senior leaders representing WIOA Titles I, II, III, and IV. All WIOA Core Partners established a charter that directs the work of the Core Partner Working Group. This charter outlines the vision and mission of the group, details the goals and outcomes and roles and responsibilities of group members.

Our vision is... Through a common commitment to WIOA, members of the WIOA Core Partner Working group work together to design and implement streamlined, integrated, and accessible policies and procedures for the WIOA core partner programs (WIOA Titles I, II, III, and IV) to ensure a robust and effective workforce system in Iowa.

Our mission is... The Iowa WIOA Core Partner Working Group supports the WIOA required functions of Iowa Workforce Development, Iowa Department for the Blind, and the Iowa State Workforce Development Board by ensuring policy leaders from the WIOA core programs work together to design a customer-focused, seamless, accessible, and integrated workforce system that provides a complete service delivery package to Iowans.

Following this charter, the Core Partner Working Group has published various joint policy, guidance and provided joint technical assistance for a multitude of WIOA requirements. Some include, but are not limited to: local planning guidance, one-stop certification and memorandum of understanding and infrastructure funding agreements.

IWD has also become the intermediary network for SNAP Employment and Training Program, which has allowed us access to additional low-income households who may have not otherwise engaged in the full workforce delivery system – another step to inclusion of integrated services. The same could be said for the Senior Community Services Employment Program (SCSEP) which was taken on by IWD in January 2023.

Since taking over SCSEP in early 2023 the number of individuals aged 55+ being enrolled by Titles I and III has increased from 5,842 in PY22 to 6,778 in PY23 and

6,926 in PY24. Further efforts to integrate SCSEP into the workforce delivery system will continue to provide more lowans age 55 and older enhanced wrap-around services through co-enrollment to support their success in today's workforce.

Another exciting opportunity for program collaboration is the Core4 Project. The Core4 Project brings together Title IV – Vocational Rehabilitation (General), Title III Wagner-Peyser Employment Services and Business Engagement Consultants to provide enhanced services to Title IV participants. Data before implementation showed that it took an estimated 274 days for Title IV customers recognized as being “job-ready” to become employed. Implementation was piloted in three IowaWORKS offices and has now rolled out to all offices throughout the state and now includes Title IV – Vocational Rehabilitation (Blind). Now that all offices have implemented Core4, the goal is for enrolled participants to be employed within 120 days.

To do this, these Title IV customers are co-enrolled in Title III, and any other applicable program, are provided career services and are connected with a business engagement consultant to participate in the job development process. The job development process includes contacting employers, who do not already have a job listed, to determine if the employer has an interest in interviewing and potentially hiring a specific participant who possesses skills required by that employer. This consists of working with a specific employer to develop a position/job for the participant. This more hands-on approach is expected to drastically reduce the number of days it takes for job-ready customers to obtain employment.

#### *B. Alignment with Activities Outside the Plan*

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

Beyond Iowa's alignment initiatives which continue to streamline services and increase coordination among core and required partners, additional priorities are being implemented to provide lowan's access to programs to increase their competitiveness in today's job market.

Iowa employers consistently identify workforce development as one of their top business priorities. To foster sustained economic growth in Iowa, it is crucial to engage employers with innovative strategies that empower them to build and maintain a strong workforce in Iowa by creating relationships with students (both high-school and adult) in their community and expanding student's awareness of career opportunities in their own backyard.

Iowa Workforce Development has been implementing a Work Based Learning (WBL) strategy that focuses on working directly with businesses, economic developers and communities to drive data-based partnerships between employers and students. The overarching goal of the strategy is to create a sustainable local infrastructure that will continually expand the number of employers that utilize WBL as a workforce development strategy and help students and adults build a career in Iowa.

SNAP Employment and Training (E&T) is a voluntary program for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) recipients. The program offers recipients job seeking skills, classroom training, and structured employment search, at no cost to participants.

SNAP E&T services are a combined effort between the Iowa Departments of Health and Human Services (HHS) and Workforce Development (IWD), and community partnerships. HHS determines participant eligibility and provides oversight to IWD who is the administrative intermediary for the program. This provides for more seamless services for customers.

NFJP: Proteus administers the National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP) in Iowa. The NFJP responds to chronic seasonal unemployment and underemployment experienced by migrant and seasonal farmworkers. The NFJP offers assistance that strengthens the ability of farm workers and their families to achieve economic self-sufficiency. Since its inception with the passage of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, the farmworker program has been an integral part of the national workforce strategy. NFJP provides access to education services and job training, support, and additional services suited to the customer's career goals.

Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA): Through case management and access to career planning, TAA participants upgrade their knowledge and experience to enhance their marketability in today's labor force and attain suitable reemployment after a trade-affected layoff. This is achieved through various methods such as evaluations, assessments, workshops, training, and more to support the career-pathway goals of impacted workers. Outcomes are most

successful when a TAA participant is co-enrolled in a partner program like Title I Dislocated Worker or Adult programs, which allows eligible workers to receive additional supportive services while enrolled in TAA.

Jobs for Veterans State Grant (JVSG): Each IowaWORKS office has a dedicated Career Planner to help Veterans prepare for the workforce and find meaningful employment. Career Planners work one-on-one to guide Veterans and eligible spouses through the job search process. An IowaWORKS Veterans portal has also launched that helps Veterans connect with job prospects in Iowa.

RESEA: The RESEA program is administered in all IowaWORKS Centers. The program assists individuals receiving unemployment benefits to return to work (RTW) and reduces the time an individual receives unemployment benefits by providing re-employment services. The RESEA theory of change holds that unemployed individuals reenter the workforce at a more rapid rate when provided reemployment services and unemployment insurance requirements are enforced. These individuals also engage in more reemployment services, are referred to more partner programs/services, receive more individualized resume assistance and have more able and available issues resolved. Iowa's RESEA program is currently structured to allow in person and virtual initial appointments and reemployment services. Program staff theorize that expanding the method to receive virtual services will increase the participation of initial appointments and reemployment services. Iowa offers additional individualized RESEA meetings to assist the customer in updating their reemployment plan, gaining additional reemployment services, obtaining more referrals to partner programs/services and troubleshooting job-seeking issues with their RESEA Career Planner.

Unemployment Insurance: Iowa Workforce Development (IWD) administers unemployment insurance benefits in the state of Iowa. Benefits are made available to workers who meet all requirements and have lost their jobs through no fault of their own, such as when a plant closes, they are laid off or in other similar circumstances. Job seekers file for benefits online or in certain circumstances can be assisted over the phone through Iowa's call center or by calling any of the IowaWORKS centers.

Youth Build: Great Oaks High School and Career Center was recently awarded \$1.5 million in U.S. Department of Labor YouthBuild Grant funds to expand educational and workforce development opportunities for youth in the central Iowa area.

YouthBuild serves individuals aged 17-21 who have previously disengaged from high school, offering a comprehensive program that integrates academic instruction, career training, and leadership development. While in the Great Oaks Youth Build program, students will work toward earning their high school diplomas while gaining industry-recognized skills in high-demand sectors such as construction and healthcare.

In partnership with Greater Des Moines Habitat for Humanity, students in the construction track will gain hands-on experience building affordable housing. The program also prepares participants for post-secondary pathways, including college, apprenticeships, and employment.

To address barriers to success, YouthBuild participants will receive wraparound services such as:

- Transportation assistance
- Childcare support
- Healthcare referrals
- Work attire and safety equipment

Graduates will also benefit from a 12-month follow-up program to support their transition into the workforce or further education.

TANF/PJ: PROMISE JOBS is Iowa's TANF Employment & Training program designed to help cash assistance recipients become self-sufficient through participation in work-ready activities. PROMISE JOBS case managers, co-located in IowaWORKS Centers, serve thousands of PROMISE JOBS families each month. Through referrals PROMISE JOBS families receive access to a wide range of workforce system programs and services.

Re-entry: IWD has six Reentry Career Planners at the following locations: Iowa Correctional Institution for Women in Mitchellville, Anamosa State Penitentiary in Anamosa, Newton Correctional Facility in Newton, Mount Pleasant Correctional Facility in Mount Pleasant, Fort Dodge Correctional Facility in Fort Dodge, and the Clarinda Correctional Facility in Clarinda. The program staff partner with the Iowa Department of Corrections (IDOC) and other offender-related partners throughout Iowa, to assist in the overall goal of reducing recidivism. Iowa's re-entry program supports WIOA through recording registered-only individuals and program enrollment into Wagner-Peyser. The goal is to teach work-related skills, find a career pathway, job placement prior to release from the institution, and network with employers and community reentry service providers to ensure a successful transition for the returning

citizen. The Reentry Career Planners help create resumes, assist with mock interviews, and proctor the National Career Readiness Certificate(NCRC) and O\*NET assessments.

CSBG: Iowa's CSBG Program is funded by the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services. The Division of Community Action Agencies distributes the CSBG funds to Iowa's 16 community action agencies, which create, coordinate, and deliver many programs and services to low-income Iowans. The CSBG Program funds the central management and core activities of these agencies. The agencies use their CSBG funds to mobilize additional public and private resources to combat the central causes of poverty in their communities and to assist low-income individuals to achieve self-sufficiency and ensure their basic needs are met.

HUD – no programs in Iowa

Native American Programs – no Iowa Grantees on DOL website

SCSEP: Beginning January 3, 2023, Iowa's state SCSEP grant transitioned from the Iowa Department on Aging to Iowa Workforce Development. This has strengthened participants' connection to employment assistance from the IowaWORKS field offices. Participants take advantage of workshops hosted by IowaWORKS as part of their pre-employment training hours.

Job Corps: Job Corps is a no-cost education and vocational training program to help young people ages 16 through 24 improve the quality of their lives through vocational and academic training. Many Job Corps participants face significant barriers to education and employment. Job Corps students receive individualized services that are organized into four service periods: (1) outreach and admission, (2) career preparation, (3) career development, and (4) career transition services. There are two Job Corps locations in Iowa; one in Denison and one in Ottumwa.

CTE: The intent of Iowa's Career and Technical Education (CTE) is to provide students with the skills and knowledge necessary to excel in the global economy. Career and technical education equips students with the foundational knowledge to explore a cluster of occupations and careers. As students evolve through their educational experience, their focus is narrowed to a particular program. This process allows students to transition seamlessly while providing them with hands- on exploration, rigorous academics and the support necessary to succeed.

RCM: IWD's Reemployment Case Management program targets jobless individuals who apply for unemployment benefits are contacted the following week after filing their initial unemployment claims. Designated RCM Career Planners then contact each unemployment claimant to connect them with local job opportunities and job-seeking services. With limited exceptions, Career Planners meet regularly with each individual receiving unemployment benefits to provide job-search guidance, refer them to specific services, and ensure that they are complying with job search requirements. This process continues until reemployment.

RA: The state of Iowa has been successful in growing its registered apprenticeships and will continue do so do under the direction and support of the Iowa Office of Apprenticeship who now oversees and manages all Registered Apprenticeship opportunities, after earning the designation of a State Apprenticeship Agency in June 2024. Iowa has expanded RA programs in healthcare, information technology, and advanced manufacturing along with increasing the traditional RA occupations within the skilled trades. Iowa's leadership also sparked an expansion into new apprenticeships in health care, education (teacher/paraeducator), and other non-traditional occupations.

### *C. Coordination, Alignment and Provision of Services to Individuals*

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

Coordination and alignment at the State level occurs in a variety of ways. Governor Reynold's alignment efforts was a key step forward in coordinating efforts across programs. Weekly Core Partner Working Group meetings occur to ensure collaboration among core partners. Integration efforts have proven successful in Iowa in the past and will continue to be a focus to better align programs and services moving forward.

At the local level, Memorandum of Understanding (MOUs) developed by Local Workforce Development Boards describe how core partner programs, and other required and optional One- Stop Partner programs will coordinate the provision of services to individuals in their local area. The Core Partner Working Group has provided local stakeholders policy, guidance, and technical assistance resources

on establishing MOUs and the Infrastructure Funding Agreement (IFA) component to ensure appropriate execution of agreements and aligned services.

At the State and local levels, an example of coordination of services and resources, is the use of [iowaworks.gov](http://iowaworks.gov) by WIOA Title I, WIOA Title III, Trade Adjustment Assistance, TANF, and Unemployment Insurance. Utilization of a common data management system for multiple programs ensures consistency, reduces duplication of services and supports career planning efforts.

The Integrated Resource Team (IRT) model has been used as a strategic approach to provide coordinated services to individuals. They are a proven customer centered approach that brings together a team of individuals representing different programs and organizations to provide coordinated wrap-around services to support a job seeker with their employment goals. At its core, the Integrated Resource Team is a microcosm of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). It is a customer-centered partnership between a jobseeker with barriers to employment and the diverse Workforce and service systems. Its goal is to coordinate services and leverage funding to give the individual comprehensive, wrap-around services tailored to their unique needs and employment goals.

Now more than ever, workforce system customers experience multiple and complex resource needs. This can often result in a “hands-off” approach in which those most in need actually receive the least assistance as they may be handed off from partner to partner without any true strategic approach to meet their employment and self-sufficiency goals. The IRT process improves coordination and communication between service and support providers within and outside of the overall system support by WIOA. This approach is effective in:

- Increasing access to intensive services for jobseekers
- Addressing multiple challenges to employment
- Improving employment outcomes

To supplement Iowa’s renewed focus on effective integration, IRTs are an essential approach to serve individuals receiving services from multiple programs by working together to support the participant in achieving their career goal and meeting shared programmatic metrics. IRTs reduce duplicative processes, provides consistency, and improve cross-provider partnering and communication, as well as empowering the jobseeker to create, lead and manage their team.



Iowa is a relatively rural state where job seekers experience barriers, such as transportation, in accessing services due to geographic and economic factors. Virtual service delivery has been implemented as an extremely viable option for individuals to access services, however some Iowans face challenges with internet availability and access to reliable broadband. With smaller budgets and ongoing staffing challenges, integration efforts and implementation of IRTs strengthen relationships among partners and community organizations and ultimately provide more streamlined services and service provision and inherently provide valuable cost savings to programs. The workforce system in Iowa is committed to serving all Iowans, including individuals with barriers to employment.

#### *D. Coordination, Alignment and Provision of Services to Employers*

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

As evidenced by the goals and strategies outlined in this State Plan, Iowa recognizes the importance of services to employers as an integral part of the workforce system and is dedicated to providing comprehensive and high-quality services to the employers of Iowa. Iowa Workforce Development established the Business Engagement (BE) Division to ensure the provision of employer services is a key priority of the workforce system in Iowa. The BE Division houses a team of Business Engagement Consultant (BEC) staff who work directly with employers. The BECs also work closely with staff of local business services team to provide outreach and services to the employers of Iowa. These teams work together to provide coordinated and effective services to employers across the state by connecting with business leaders to understand where each business is within the lifecycle of the organization and offering the appropriate corresponding services. For example, if a business is growing, the business services team will offer job posting assistance on the state's labor exchange system, design and host job fairs and hiring events, or work with core partner program staff in the AJCs to match qualified job seekers to available opportunities at the business. The BECs would also connect growing business with the Work-Based Learning (WBL) team to ensure business is aware of various WBL program opportunities. The BECs and business services team are trained

to understand the business services available across the partner programs and have the knowledge to match the service to the appropriate business need.

The leadership of the Business Engagement Division is responsible for:

- Supervision and Administration of Business Engagement Consultants and the programs within Business Engagement Division.
- Providing data-informed training and value-added strategy to employers in-line with Iowa's high-demand and growth industries.
- Providing a central Point of Contact (POC) within IWD for local economic developers and employer-facing partnerships.
- Dedicated and ongoing collaboration with the Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) and Sector Partnerships.
- Iowa Office of Apprenticeship.

The majority of the Business Engagement Division is comprised of a team of workforce professionals known as Business Engagement Consultants (BECs) working throughout the state to proactively serve employers at the speed of business. Regionally located, the BECs provide guidance, resources, and responsive workforce solutions to meet the needs of Iowa's growing economy. This consultative approach to serving employers includes addressing their specific, regional, and statewide workforce needs in relation to economic trends, introducing and providing access to employers of untapped and underrepresented labor forces (veterans, persons with disabilities, new Iowans/Americans, individuals returning from the criminal justice systems, and others), and the connection of employers to additional training and resources including economic developers, nonprofits, community colleges, and contacts within other state agencies.

In calendar year 2024, this resulted in more than 5,000 engagements with Iowa employers and is nearing contact with 3,300 employers that did not previously have a relationship with the state Workforce system. Following the state of Iowa's realignment effective July 1, 2023; Adult Education and Literacy (Title II) and the Vocational Rehabilitation (Title IV) general agency were moved under the umbrella of the state workforce agency. This strategic process has created the pathway for more seamless partnering across the core systems and services such as the Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth (Title I) programs, Wagner-Peyser (Title III), and the continued strengthening of the relationship with the Iowa Department for the Blind (Title IV). This is in addition to work with earn and learn and work-based learning models such as Registered Apprenticeships, and Sector Partnerships which connects students in the state with career

exploration opportunities. Additionally, Title II service providers work with local employers to provide integrated employment and training (IET) opportunities for adult education program participants.

Efforts to reduce and eliminate duplication of employer engagement is supported on the both the local and state level with the establishment of Business Services Teams which are aligned with the various AJC locations within the Local Workforce Development Areas and include representatives from the Titles of WIOA, as well as partners such as Local Workforce Development Boards, community based organizations, and industry groups. Further, many partners utilize a Customer Relationship Module (CRM) known as IowaWORKS. This system is designed to support relationships between Workforce system staff and employers, centralize case management activities (case notes, services, contacts, reports, etc.) and has the capacity to create and send surveys and conduct outreach campaigns. The use of the CRM is also of value-add to employers as they are able to post and manage job orders, direct targeted and large-scale recruitment events and have real-time management of their accounts which allows for a responsive system that moves at the speed of business.

*E. Partner Engagement with Educational Institutions and other Education and Training Providers.*

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

Iowa's core, required, and other workforce system partners have strong relationships with our education institutions. Historically, community colleges have been strong partners in the workforce system in Iowa and have their own relationships with local economic development entities and businesses.

Iowa Workforce Development (IWD) has partnered with Iowa Department of Education (DOE) to streamline reporting for community college programs on the state's Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL). To enact a less burdensome process, DOE provides IWD annual performance information on behalf of the community

colleges. This makes for a more streamlined process to ensure high-quality in-demand industry training programs remain on the ETPL.

DOE and IWD have also partnered to launch a teacher and paraeducator registered apprenticeship. The program began during the 2022-2023 school year and provides opportunities for current high school students to earn a paraeducator certificate and associate degree and paraeducators to earn their bachelor's degree all while learning and working in the classroom.

Through the grant program, school districts are required to partner with local community colleges or four-year colleges/universities to provide the required education and training. The DOE and IWD will provide up to \$40,500 over a three-year period for each high school student that completes the Paraeducator Certificate or Associate degree model. The DOE will provide up to \$47,000 over a two-year period for each paraeducator that completes the bachelor's degree model.

Funding supports:

- Tuition and fees up to \$7,000/year for up to three years at a community college.
- Tuition and fees up to \$17,000/ year for up to two years at a public or private four-year college/university.
- Hourly rate of \$12 for high school aides while still in school and 50% of wages that districts currently pay for aides and paraeducators for up to 30 hours per week for 36 weeks.

Aligning Iowa's four core workforce programs under a single agency strengthens coordination with educational partners across the system. This structure enhances collaboration with training providers, ensuring that job seekers and employers have access to the skills and training needed to meet workforce demands. It also fosters stronger connections between business and education, aligning training programs with high-demand occupations.

A key example of this alignment is the biannual work of the State Workforce Development Board to identify high-demand occupations. The SWDB developed list guides Iowa's community colleges in directing funding and incentives toward training programs that prepare students for in-demand careers. This ongoing coordination between the workforce system and education providers reflects Iowa's commitment to improving outcomes through strategic partnerships.

#### *F. Improving Access to Postsecondary Credentials*

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

The alignment of programs will help provide more collaborative services to Iowans, reducing the duplicative efforts. Coordination of all workforce system partners to provide effective services and meaningful opportunities for skill building, training, and work-based learning will improve outcomes across systems.

Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) are services offered through IVRS and IDB for students with disabilities. They provide an early start at career exploration services and assist with the exploration of post-secondary education and employment.

Portable and stackable credentials are essential to developing an ever-progressing workforce. Partly due to their open access admission policies, community colleges serve a heterogeneous population of students, from those in high school earning college credit through joint enrollment opportunities, to displaced workers seeking industry-recognized training to improve employment prospects. Iowa's community colleges are helping to build the state's talent pipeline by upskilling and recertifying the current workforce. The colleges accomplish this through a variety of program offerings, including arts and sciences college parallel (transfer) programs designed to transfer to four-year colleges and universities; career and technical education (CTE) programs to prepare students for industry-specific careers; training and retraining programs for Iowa's businesses and industries; and a variety of adult education and noncredit courses.

The Chips and Science Act will allocate funds to Iowa's three public universities. This opportunity will promote additional research in the areas of product development and technology, while also placing a greater emphasis on STEM careers. Iowa Workforce Development will serve as a conduit for connecting Iowa's workforce to these training opportunities, leading to portable and stackable licenses and certifications.

Iowa also offers Gap and Pathways for Academic Careers and Employment (PACE) programming to students seeking credentials through non-credit opportunities aligned with in-demand occupations. These programs provide targeted populations with financial need, a direct pipeline to employment using

employer-driven academic and skills training through community college non-credit academic, career and employment programs.

Community college pathway navigators have been the anchor to the success of the PACE and Gap program funding providing wrap-around family support funding, academic counseling along with career and employment services to ensure the academic and employment success for students as they navigate their career pathway. Working directly with local and regional employers has been key to moving these students forward in their academic and employment journey.

WIOA Title I funds help eligible Iowans access training. Approved training programs enhance skills for Iowans and help prepare them for successful career pathways. Iowans using WIOA funds can select from the list of approved programs on Iowa's Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL). Eligible Training Providers (ETPs) are providers with approved programs of study that provide training services. Under WIOA, participants who need training to enhance their skills and job readiness to advance along their career pathway may access approved programs of study, and in consultation with a career planner, participants can select programs that meet their needs.

Eligible programs are ones which leads to a credential, employment or measurable skill gain towards a credential. Iowa Workforce Development (IWD) uses Chapter 7 Eligible Training Provider List Policies to make initial and continued eligibility determinations regarding programs included on the ETPL. Training programs may be approved for initial eligibility for one year. Then, continued eligibility may be granted every two years after that. Training providers wishing to remain on the ETPL must reapply for continued inclusion prior to the end of the eligibility period.

ETPL policies can be found at: <https://epolicy.iwd.iowa.gov/Policy/Home>

Additionally, Iowa is a national leader in Registered Apprenticeship programs and will continue to utilize Registered Apprenticeship as a leading strategy to increase access to post-secondary credentials in Iowa. Iowa is working towards achieving the goal of having meaningful work-based learning opportunities in every High School in the state. These programs offer Iowa students access to alternative pathways to recognized post-secondary credentials and stackable credentials proven to lead to quality jobs and economic mobility.

### *G. Coordinating with Economic Development Strategies*

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

Iowa Workforce Development (IWD) and The Iowa Economic Development Authority (IEDA) have a longstanding history of partnering to meet the workforce needs of existing and new businesses in Iowa, and this partnership continues to grow. IEDAs mission is to strengthen economic and community vitality by building partnerships and leveraging resources to make Iowa the choice for people and business, which directly ties into the State Plan vision by ensuring we are providing an aligned, flexible, and streamlined workforce delivery system that meets the needs of employers and all Iowans for a skilled and diverse workforce.

As an awardee for the Industry-Driven Skills Training Fund Grant (IDSTF), IWD and IEDA will continue to work closely together as we leverage the IDSTF grant to support Iowa advanced manufacturing employers who are recipients of IEDA's Manufacturing 4.0 awards, a state-funded grant program assisting small to medium sized advanced manufacturing businesses to purchase advanced technology to improve or grow their business. The IDSTF grant will be available to all Manufacturing 4.0 awardees to ensure training is available to implement the new technology purchased via that grant. This is a natural partnership that is mutually beneficial and demonstrates the strong partnership between our agencies and our work.

IWD began administering three new programs in PY22 that provide customized training to Iowa business and industry. These programs were previously administered by the Iowa Economic Development Authority (IEDA). The partnership between IEDA and Iowa Workforce Development (IWD) made the transition of programs seamless.

- Industrial New Jobs Training Act – 260E: Assists businesses creating new positions with new employee training.
- Iowa Jobs Training Act – 260F: Provides job training services to current employees of eligible businesses.
- Accelerated Career Education Program Act – 260G (ACE): Assists Iowa's community colleges to either establish or expand programs that train individuals in the occupations most needed by Iowa businesses.

Another valuable piece to the partnership includes the sharing of labor market information (LMI). The LMI Division within IWD maintains a dynamic web site

<https://workforce.iowa.gov/labor-market-information> that provides data and information for individuals, workforce professionals, researchers, and economic development professionals and produces customizable query tools using Tableau. Reports are available by region and local area such as workforce analysis reports, including employment and industry/occupation projections that will enable workforce partners to plan and coordinate their efforts more effectively.

Laborshed studies are supply-side, labor availability studies. They provide community leaders, economic developers, site selectors and existing or prospective employers a flexible tool for understanding the workforce characteristics of their local labor market. These studies are done on a two-year cycle and provide stakeholders, including IEDA, insight into the availability and characteristics of Iowa's local labor force which is not captured in other traditional LMI data. Laborshed Studies are jointly funded by IEDA and IWD, and IWD's LMI Division collaborates with local economic development officials to promote data collection, determine the most effective methods of delivering the resulting information, and presenting to local stakeholders.

In 2019, Governor Reynolds announced a new marketing campaign to encourage individuals from across the United States to visit, live and work in Iowa. The "This is Iowa" campaign was designed to increase economic growth by highlighting Iowa's quality of life. Research commissioned by IEDA resulted in outcomes showing nearly two-thirds of individuals seriously consider moving to a new place after visiting. However, most people cannot relocate without having a job lined up, preferably in an industry with growth potential, and most do not associate Iowa with cutting-edge careers or quality of life attributes like recreational or cultural activities.

The campaign has continued to evolve with FY24 communication goals being:

- Increase awareness and consideration of Iowa's benefits as a place to live and work
- Increase awareness and consideration within key industries of Iowa as an ideal place to start, relocate, or expand a business
- Help support and grow businesses across the state

Communication pillars include: affordability, low cost of living, work-life balance, qualified workforce, cutting-edge careers, award-winning education and thriving communities. The target audience of the campaign include both workforce recruitment and business attraction.



#### Workforce Recruitment:

- Gen Z and Millennials (A 22-29) looking to start and/or grow careers and experiences
- Millennials and Gen X (A 30-39) with young families looking for a place to raise their families
- Gen X and Boomers (A 40-55) who may recommend Iowa to younger generations to visit, live and work

#### Skillset Targeting:

- Engineering
- Healthcare
- Advanced Manufacturing
- Transportation and Logistics
- Information Technology
- Business and Management
- Trade/Skilled
- Entrepreneurs

#### Business Attraction:

- Business Decision Makers:
  - Business Development
  - CFO
  - COO
  - R&D
- Entrepreneurs
- Site Selection consultants

The skillset targeting occupations falls in line with Iowa's LMI data related to in-demand industries, but also highlights a connection to occupations lined to the Broadband Equity Access and Deployment Program (BEAD). The BEAD program is a federal grant program that aims to get all Americans online by funding partnerships between states or territories, communities, and stakeholders to build infrastructure where we need it to and increase adoption of high-speed internet. The overshadowing concern is that by 2026 there will be large worker shortages in the occupations that support the program.

The BEAD occupation groups include:

- Equipment operators (including construction equipment, crane, and industrial equipment operators)

- Fiber and wireless technicians (including industrial aerial installers and repairers, radio and base station installers / fiber technicians, splicing and wireless technicians and foremen supervisors)
- Inspectors (including health and safety and permit inspectors)
- Laborers and material movers
- Master and stage electricians
- Network architects and coordinators
- RF & field engineers (including telecommunications hardware designers)
- Software Engineers
- Structural engineers (including civil and structural engineers, tower engineering technicians)
- Surveyors and drafters (including construction drafters, land surveyors and map makers, and surveying and map technicians)
- Trenchers
- Trucking Crew (including supervisors of crane and trucking crews)

With many of these occupations also being included in the “This is Iowa” communication plan skillset targeting, it is anticipated that individuals interested in relocating to Iowa who may have these skillsets, or would be willing to obtain them, will have jobs readily available to them.

Additionally, workforce and economic development goals and strategies at the state and local levels align with many of the strategies and objectives of Iowa’s Digital Equity Plan. Increased technology access and usage will allow more students and job seekers to participate in education and upskilling programs to earn post-secondary credentials, supporting efforts to reach these learning and workforce goals and create a more skilled Iowa workforce.

## b. State Operating Systems and Policies

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

The State operating systems that will support coordinated implementation of State strategies (e.g., labor market information systems, data systems, communication systems, case management systems, job banks, etc.).

Iowa’s Labor Market Information Division, housed at Iowa Workforce Development, provides extensive information on labor force data, statistics, and

research on Iowa's labor pool and economy. Information and data are easily accessible to workforce programs, researchers, economic development entities, and the general public at <https://workforce.iowa.gov/labor-market-information>. A few of the many resources available are labor market indicator information, occupation employment and wage trends, labor supply and availability studies, and industry and employer trends. The data is easily able to be viewed statewide or per local workforce development area. As the main source of information regarding the labor force in Iowa, the LMI Division is an invaluable resource for the State and local areas to identify trends and areas of focus for implementation of workforce strategies.

Iowa's data management system, [iowaworks.gov](https://iowaworks.gov), facilitates integrated case management for:

- WIOA Title I: Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth
- WIOA Title III: Wagner-Peyser Employment Service
- Dislocated Worker Grants
- Jobs for Veterans State Grant (JVSG)
- Trade Adjustment Assistance Program (TAA)
- PROMISE JOBS (Iowa's TANF Program)
- Unemployment Insurance
- Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC)
- Foreign Labor Certification
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment and Training (SNAP E&T)

The IowaWORKS system contains a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) module utilized by all WIOA Core Program business engagement staff to track and document employer engagement and services, reducing duplication of services and ensuring effective business service delivery.

As Iowa continues assessing best practices in streamlining services, evaluation of how other programs can be integrated into the system will occur for improved customer access.

Modernization efforts of Iowa's Unemployment Insurance Benefits System has been implemented to improve customer service, eliminate labor-intensive processes, allow real time data sharing, improve security, increase data accuracy, and improve maintenance and support.

IowaWORKS is also the State's labor exchange system and Iowa's largest job bank. Job seekers have virtual access to enter work registrations, resumes, and

explore careers from their homes, or by visiting an AJC. Similarly, employers can easily enter job order information virtually at their own convenience. Iowa has added the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) module which offers workforce system staff a full range of tools and resources to actively manage employer recruitment efforts. Career planners/case managers of all WIOA Core Programs utilize the IowaWORKS job bank for their participants, accessing information on available job opportunities, creating and uploading resumes, completing job referrals, etc.

While the Title II and Title IV programs utilize their own case management systems, data exchanges between core and required programs are completed through APIs between legacy data management systems and the IowaWORKS data management system share data when available, or via the use of batch requests completed by program data resource teams.

The adult education program in Iowa uses TOPSPRO Enterprise from CASAS for its data management system. The vast majority of tests used to determine educational functioning level through a pre- and post-test are conducted via computer-based testing (CASAS eTest). These test results then automatically update within the test takers record upon completion of the examination. For students where a computer-based test is not possible (some prisons, for example), a paper-based test is administered, and test scores are manually entered into the data management system. The TOPSPRO Enterprise system also provides all federal reporting required by the National Reporting System. Iowa Workforce Development uses Virtual One Stop by Geographic Solutions as its data management system for the WIOA Title I and Title III programs. While Geographic Solutions does have an adult education module available and two states are currently using it, feedback on the development and implementation of that module has not been positive. When the adult education program was administered by Iowa Department of Education, the former State Director expressed concerns with the system's ability to accurately handle the program. With the adult education program now administered by Iowa Workforce Development under new leadership, there is a renewed focus to integrate data management systems for better reporting outcomes.

The Iowa Rehabilitation Services System (IRSS) is a comprehensive, standardized system used by Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services agency and partner staff to meet the case management, financial and reporting requirements of the agency. IRSS is designed to capture basic information about each individual in the rehabilitation process, and will be used:

- For measuring the effectiveness of the rehabilitation program at national and state levels;
- To describe the operations of the program to the Congress and state legislatures;
- In estimating the cost and evaluating the effectiveness of the program to various public and private organizations interested in the vocational rehabilitation of individuals with disabilities;
- To coordinate data collection with third party contract staff; and
- To give agency staff an overview of each job candidate's present placement in the rehabilitation process.

The State of Iowa is working to implement Single Sign On (SSO)/OKTA. This initiative will simplify login processes to state resources for internal and external users by allowing all users to utilize one login to access state resources, including IowaWORKS. This change will impact staff, individuals (job seekers and claimants), employers, providers, and out-of-state entities (WOTC). Implementation of SSO will increase secure access to IowaWORKS and other state resources.

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

Iowa's co-enrollment procedure includes Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth, Title III Wagner-Peyser, Ticket to Work, Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker (MSFW), Returning Citizens, Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA), and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF).

The procedure includes 100% co-enrollment between Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) and Dislocated Workers who are TAA certified and co-enrollment with other programs when it is beneficial to the customer. The use of Integrated Resource Teams is encouraged to maximize the benefits of co-enrollment without placing a burden on the customer while ensuring all programs have met their individual program policy requirements.

Across programs, emphasis is placed on working, and supporting, individuals through their career pathway and goals. The time in which a customer may actively participate in a program differs based upon many factors. However, under common exit, the participant must complete services from all programs

in which they are co-enrolled in order to exit from the system. In Iowa, common exit applies to participants who are co-enrolled in Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth, Title III Wagner-Peyser, Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA), National Dislocated Worker Grants (NDWG) and Jobs for Veterans State Grant (JVSG).

Ensuring a robust referral system between the core and required programs of the workforce system is key to achieving the strategies of an accessible service delivery model and ensuring services are available to all Iowans. Each local area has a referral system that tracks referrals and outcomes between core and required partners.

The Core Partner Working group worked to develop guidance related to Infrastructure Funding Agreements (IFAs) throughout the majority of 2023, and published updated policy [1.4.10 Memorandum of Understanding](#) in September 2023 which incorporates IFA requirements.

Additional guidance and a corresponding template were also developed by the group and provided to the local areas to assist them in effective implementation of IFA.

The IFA process and agreement is an important and necessary step in outlining the financial plan to fund the services and operating costs described in the MOU. The goal of the one-stop operating budget is to develop a funding mechanism that:

- Establishes and maintains the local workforce system and meets the needs of all customers
- Reduces duplication and maximizes program impact through partner sharing of services and resources
- Reduces overhead costs for any one partner by streamlining and sharing costs
- Ensures costs are appropriately shared by partners by determining contributions based on proportionate use and relative benefit received

Iowa's 5 local workforce development areas have executed MOU/IFAs and are following state policy and procedure to amend, as necessary, and reconcile IFA costs as described within the MOU/IFAs.

### 3. State Program and State Board Overview

#### *A. State Agency Organization*

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

Pursuant to Senate File 514, signed into law on April 4, 2023, by Governor Kim Reynolds, the administration of the four WIOA Core Programs, Titles I, II, III, and IV, resides with the designated state workforce agency, Iowa Workforce Development.

Iowa Workforce Development (IWD) is led by Executive Director Beth Townsend, who has general oversight of all program areas within the Department. Director Townsend has two Deputy Directors, each of whom oversees separate functional areas of the Department.

Deputy Director/Chief Operating Officer, Jon Peppetti oversees the following Divisions of IWD:

Administrative Services Division - The Administrative Services Division provides a variety of services to keep the agency operating smoothly and to assist with the upkeep of the IowaWORKS offices (AJCs). Duties of this division include: human resources, building and grounds management, printing services, accounting and financial reporting.

Disability Determination Services Division - Disability Determination Services Division is responsible for determining the eligibility of Iowa residents who apply for disability benefits under the Social Security Disability Insurance and Supplemental Security Income programs.

Deputy Director Georgia VanGundy oversees the following Divisions of IWD:

American Job Centers (AJC) Division – In conjunction with local workforce partners and Local Workforce Development Boards and service providers, the AJC Division is responsible for the delivery of various state and federally funded employment and training services at the local level. The IowaWORKS offices and affiliate sites provide a variety of services to meet the workforce and workplace needs of job seekers, dislocated workers, unemployed persons, and Iowa businesses through partnerships of state and local service providers. They provide career counseling, assessments, workshops, job training, and assistance to all populations with an emphasis on special needs populations. Iowa's Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessments (RESEA) services and Re-

Entry programs, including Federal Bonding, and the Jobs for Veterans State Grant are also administered from this Division.

**Business Engagement Division** – The Business Engagement Division was launched on September 1, 2022, to provide a “one-stop shop” for the businesses and employers of Iowa to receive individualized assistance and connection to the federal and state services available to them. The BE Division utilizes Business Engagement Consultants (BECs) to help businesses navigate the available resources by serving the company through the life cycle of the business, identifying the appropriate services to assist at each point of need. These BECs proactively serve businesses throughout the state, and in conjunction with the Local Workforce Boards, working at the speed of business to provide guidance, resources, and responsive workforce solutions that meet the needs of Iowa’s growing economy.

**Labor Market Information Division** - The Labor Market Information (LMI) Division collects, analyzes and prepares a wide array of labor market data including the unemployment rate, employment levels, industry and occupational statistics, wages, projections, trends and other workforce characteristics for the State of Iowa as a whole as well as for other defined geographic areas within the State. It is the mission of this division to produce and deliver information in a reliable and timely manner in order to inform data-driven decisions for business, career, educational programming and economic development.

**Unemployment Insurance Division** – The Unemployment Insurance Division collects unemployment insurance taxes, maintains the Iowa Unemployment Compensation Trust Fund and determines eligibility for unemployment insurance to make payments to eligible jobless Iowans. In addition, the Unemployment Insurance appeals unit has administrative law judges who hear and decide administrative appeals regarding unemployment insurance benefits. Four departments comprise the Unemployment Insurance Division: UI Benefits, UI Tax, UI Integrity and UI Appeals. Each bureau serves an important role in ensuring Iowa’s unemployment insurance program is administered efficiently and with integrity.

**Workforce Services Division** – The Workforce Services Division (WFS) is responsible for the administration of the following employment and training programs:

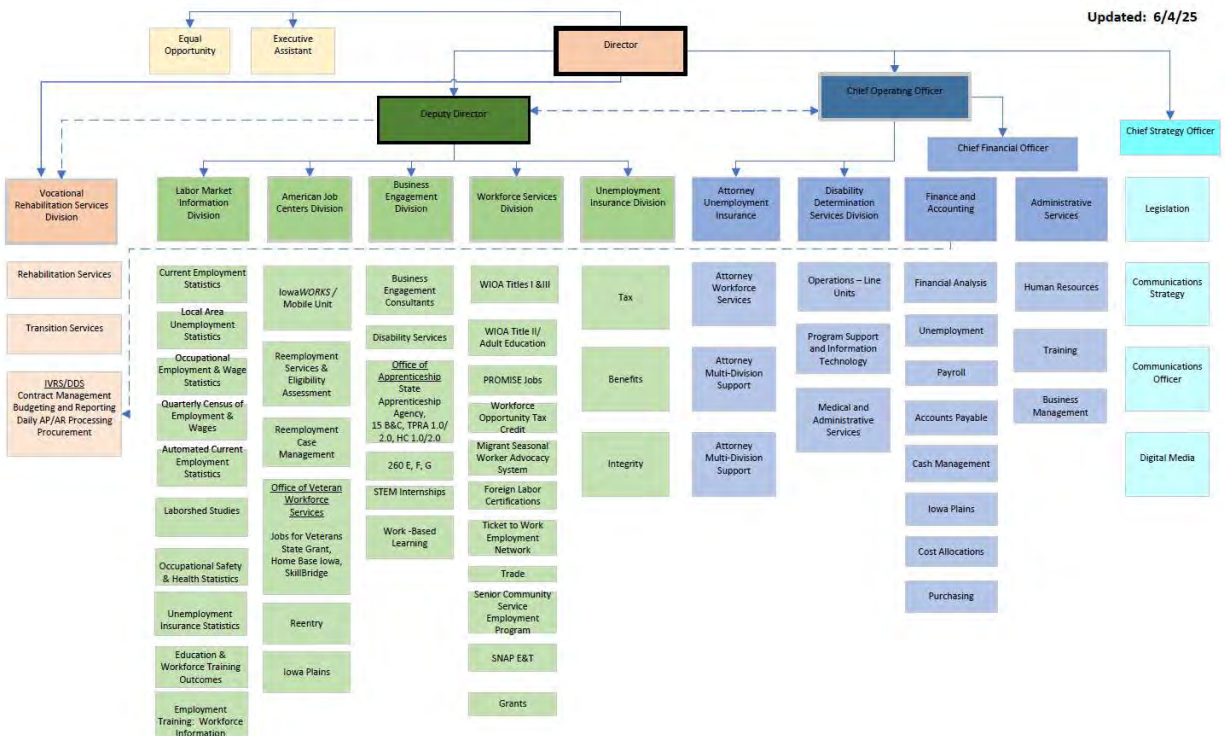
- WIOA Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs
- WIOA Title II Adult Education and Family Literacy Act
- WIOA Title III (Wagner-Peyser)



- Migrant and Seasonal Farm Worker Advocacy System
- Foreign Labor Certification (FLC)
- Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC)
- Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP)
- Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA)
- PROMISE JOBS (Iowa's TANF Employment & Training program)
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment and Training (SNAP E&T) Intermediary Network

Administration of these grants and programs includes establishing state policy and procedures for all programs, providing training and technical assistance to all stakeholders for the programs, and conducting monitoring and oversight of all grants/programs. The WFS division acts as the liaison between the state and our federal and local partners and completes and issues all required state and federal reporting for the above grants.

Agency Director, Beth Townsend is the Interim Administrator overseeing the Vocational Rehabilitation Services Division (also known as IVRS) – IVRS provides expert, individualized services to eligible Iowans with disabilities to achieve their independence through successful employment and economic support. The division has 14 area offices and 23 service units across the state, with most locations being co-located in the One-Stop Centers across Iowa. The vocational rehabilitation program in Iowa is funded with 78.7% federal funds and 21.3% state funds. The division is responsible for providing vocational rehabilitation services to potentially eligible and eligible individuals in order to prepare for, obtain, maintain and/or advance in employment. The Division Administrator is responsible for overall administration of the statewide program, including the program scope, budget and policies as well as promoting public interest and acceptance. Under the umbrella of the Division Administrator is the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC).



## **Iowa Department for the Blind**

The Iowa Department for the Blind works to educate and inform businesses, family members, service providers, advocacy groups, community and service organizations, as well as the general public about the true capabilities of individuals who are blind or have low vision. IDB actively seeks ongoing communication, interaction, and collaboration with all constituencies. The Department for the Blind believes that with the right skills and opportunities an individual who is blind, DeafBlind or has low vision can and should be competitively employed and live within their community of choice. Iowa Department for the Blind collaborates with many stakeholders to provide opportunities for independence and employment throughout the state. IDB provides employment services to lowans who are blind or have low vision who are looking for a job or want to retain or advance in their current career. Its library features one of the world's most comprehensive collections of reading materials in alternative formats (e.g., Braille and digital audio). The Department continues to utilize innovative methods and technology to provide quality services to eligible individuals. The administrative rules define the specific standards, criteria and guidelines that govern the Department's operations. The administrative rules are based on the legislation defined in the Iowa Code. The rules are created through a process of confirmation by the Department, the public and legislative rules committees.

Iowa Department for the Blind Organizational Chart is attached at Appendix 2.

#### *B. State Board*

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

Please see section III.a.1. State Board Functions above to see the committees that support the SWDB.

#### Iowa State Workforce Development Board Membership Roster

The Iowa State Workforce Development Board (SWDB) consists of 22 voting members and 1 non-voting member, as listed below.

#### Voting Members

- Kim Reynolds, State of Iowa, Governor
- Dawn Driscoll, State of Iowa, Senator appointed by President of the Senate
- Barb Kniff McCulla, State of Iowa, Representative appointed by the Speaker of the House
- Beth Townsend, Iowa Workforce Development, Executive Director
- Stacy Cervenka, Iowa Department for the Blind, Director or Designee
- Brandy McOmber, Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services, IVRS Designee
- Teresa Hovell, Vermeer, Benefits Manager (Business), Chair
- Scott Naumann, Milestone Construction Group, Director of Business Development (Business)
- John (Jack) Hasken, Jackson Manufacturing, Inc., President/CEO (Business)
- LuAnn Scholbrock, Coloff Digital, Vice President (Business), **Vice Chair**
- Jessica Dunker, Iowa Restaurant Association, President and CEO (Business)
- Brad Elliott, Podium Ink, Owner (Business)
- Ofelia Rumbo, Merrill Manufacturing, Human Resources Director (Business)
- Kelly Barrick, Security State Bank, Managing Director (Business)
- Nick Glew, Farmers State Bank (Business)
- Astra Ferris, Greater Fort Dodge Growth Alliance (Business)
- Carrie Duncan, International Association of Machinists Local 1010 (Labor)
- Charles Wishman, Iowa Federation of Labor, AFL-CIO (Labor)

- Jason Shanks, Plumbers and Steamfitters Local #33 (Joint Labor-Management Apprenticeship program)
- VACANT, Workforce CBO
- Tiffany O'Donnell, City of Cedar Rapids, Mayor (Local Elected Official – City)
- VACANT, County Elected

#### Nonvoting, Ex Officio Members

- McKenzie Snow, Iowa Department of Education (Director or Designee)

Director Townsend is the lead state official with primary responsibility of the Title I, II, III, and IV (except IV-Blind) programs and ensures adequate representation of each program under her jurisdiction. The following chart summarizes the Board composition by category of voting members, which consists of 52.6% business members and 21% workforce members. The State Director of Adult Education attends all SWDB meetings and provides input and information to the Board regarding the Title II program.

| <b>Voting Members</b>                                                                                            |              |                                                            |                                                                   |                                                                         |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Voting members are appointed by the Governor, confirmed by the Iowa Senate, and serve four-year staggered terms. |              |                                                            |                                                                   |                                                                         |
| <b>Name</b>                                                                                                      | <b>City</b>  | <b>Organization</b>                                        | <b>Affiliation</b>                                                | <b>Term End Date</b>                                                    |
| Kim Reynolds                                                                                                     | Des Moines   | State of Iowa                                              | Governor                                                          | N/A                                                                     |
| Dawn Driscoll                                                                                                    | Williamsburg | Senate Appointed by President                              | State Senator                                                     | Convening of General Assembly<br>2 Year Term<br><b>January 10, 2027</b> |
| Barb Kniff McCulla                                                                                               | Pella        | House of Representatives Appointed by Speaker of the House | State Representative                                              | Convening of General Assembly<br>2 Year Term<br><b>January 10, 2027</b> |
| Beth Townsend                                                                                                    | Des Moines   | Iowa Workforce Development                                 | Director                                                          | N/A                                                                     |
| Stacy Cervenka                                                                                                   | Des Moines   | Iowa Department for the Blind                              | Director or Designee                                              | N/A                                                                     |
| Beth Townsend<br>Interim Division Administrator                                                                  | Des Moines   | Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services                    | Division Administrator<br>IVRS or Designee                        | N/A                                                                     |
| Teresa Hovell<br><b>Chair</b>                                                                                    | Pella        | Vermeer                                                    | Business                                                          | April 30, 2028                                                          |
| Scott Naumann                                                                                                    | Bettendorf   | Milestone Construction Group                               | Business                                                          | April 30, 2026                                                          |
| Kelly Barrick                                                                                                    | Des Moines   | Security State Bank                                        | Business                                                          | April 30, 2027                                                          |
| John (Jack) Hasken                                                                                               | Dubuque      | Jackson Manufacturing, Inc.                                | Business                                                          | April 30, 2027                                                          |
| LuAnn Scholbrock                                                                                                 | Lake Mills   | Coloff Digital                                             | Business                                                          | April 30, 2027                                                          |
| Jessica Dunker                                                                                                   | Urbandale    | Iowa Restaurant Association                                | Business                                                          | April 30, 2028                                                          |
| Brad Elliott                                                                                                     | Ringgold     | Podium Ink                                                 | Business                                                          | April 30, 2029                                                          |
| Ofelia Rumbo                                                                                                     | Lakeside     | Merrill Manufacturing Company                              | Business                                                          | April 30, 2029                                                          |
| Nick Glew                                                                                                        | Marion       | Farmers State Bank                                         | Business                                                          | April 30, 2027                                                          |
| Astra Ferris                                                                                                     | Fort Dodge   | Greater Fort Dodge Growth Alliance                         | Business                                                          | April 30, 2029                                                          |
| Charles Wishman                                                                                                  | Des Moines   | Iowa Federation of Labor, AFL-CIO                          | Workforce (Labor)                                                 | April 30, 2028                                                          |
| Carrie Duncan                                                                                                    | Burlington   | International Association of Machinists<br>Local 1010      | Workforce (Labor)                                                 | April 30, 2026                                                          |
| Jason Shanks                                                                                                     | Ankeny       | Plumbers and Steamfitters Local # 33                       | Workforce (Joint Labor –<br>Management<br>Apprenticeship Program) | April 30, 2029                                                          |
| VACANT                                                                                                           |              |                                                            | Workforce (CBO)                                                   |                                                                         |
| Tiffany O'Donnell                                                                                                | Cedar Rapids | City of Cedar Rapids                                       | City Elected                                                      | April 30, 2027                                                          |
| VACANT                                                                                                           |              |                                                            | County Elected                                                    |                                                                         |

| <b>Non-Voting Members</b> |             |                              |                      |                      |
|---------------------------|-------------|------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| <b>Name</b>               | <b>City</b> | <b>Organization</b>          | <b>Affiliation</b>   | <b>Term End Date</b> |
| McKenzie Snow             | Des Moines  | Iowa Department of Education | Director or designee | N/A                  |

The non-voting members of the Board represent additional system stakeholders not required by federal regulations.

The State of Iowa uses [IAppoint](#) to fill positions on the Board as quickly as possible.



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

### *A. Assessment of Core and One-Stop Program Partners*

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

For WIOA performance accountability measures, each Core Program has a monitoring and corrective action process at the state level that assures identified deficiencies are addressed. These processes are based on annual monitoring and ongoing data analysis and integrity efforts to review data and local planning goals. If a local area shows deficiencies in their annual performance outcomes, the State will provide technical assistance to address the deficiency. If the annual targets are not met for two consecutive years, the State will require the local area to complete a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) to address the deficiency. The local area must provide regular progress updates to the applicable state partner.

Additional steps have been taken to work towards more combined and comprehensive annual monitoring. Beginning in program year 2023 and continuing into program year 2024, monitoring of WIOA Title I programs started to include both programmatic and fiscal monitoring to ensure Title I monitoring is comprehensive and that all pieces of monitoring are connected to obtain the whole picture of the local workforce development area's operations.

A programmatic and fiscal file review occurs using a random sample methodology and a File Review Checklist Tool. Each LWDB that submits a Title I drawdown request is sampled based on established sampling criteria or are automatically reviewed based on the threshold criteria. In completing the review, IWD Financial Management checks for reasonableness and accuracy of the drawdown request. Financial Management ensures the LWDB completes the drawdown request properly through the financial management system and that appropriate signatures or approvals are provided. If there are expenditures related to participants, Financial Management notifies the Title I monitoring team to review for participant eligibility and appropriateness of the expenditure. Both teams meet quarterly to review the cumulative financial information for WIOA Title I funds as reported on the ETA 9130 Report prior to submitting the

report to the USDOL. IWD analyzes the financial data to measure successful outcomes for participants, ensure sound service delivery and reporting practices, and determine whether federal funds are achieving maximum benefits.

The Adult Education program conducts an annual assessment of local program service providers to gauge the achievement of meeting negotiated performance measures and to determine overall risk of compliance issues. The risk assessment appraises numerous key performance indicators including WIOA performance measures, post-test rate, enrollment trends, grant management and reporting, financial performance, data integrity, and IET development. Upon completion of the risk assessment, a rating is assigned and appropriate technical assistance is provided in order to assist the local provider in improving their outcomes, and ultimately the services provided to program participants. Emerging trends will trigger the early detection of potential issues and development of additional professional development in the following year in order to mitigate risks of significant changes in performance outcomes.

Title IV has entered into a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with other Title partners to ensure that required performance measure data can be jointly received, discussed, and analyzed. This process includes the development of evaluative reports that can be used to determine consistency with the negotiated levels of performance. This data will also be utilized to drive training, and/or corrective action, where necessary to impact improvement. Title IV also utilizes the RSA Data Dashboards and Other Measure that Matter to evaluate the effectiveness and performance of Title IV service delivery. This information is shared with core programs to ensure Title IV's progress towards state plan goals.

The State Workforce Development Board has appointed a Systems Committee to provide information and assist with operational and other issues related to the workforce system in Iowa. The committee has identified five priorities to focus on, with the first being performance data. Based on committee feedback, a tableau dashboard was created to visually show WIOA performance outcomes for the State of Iowa and the local workforce development areas. This dashboard can be found [here](#).

Key data points include:

- Performance Measures (negotiated vs. actual)
  - Employment Rate – 2nd Quarter after Exit
  - Employment Rate – 4th Quarter after Exit

- Median Earnings – 2nd Quarter after Exit
- Credential Attainment
- Measurable Skills Gains
- Investment vs. Return on Investment
  - Participant and Expenditure Date
- Unemployment rate by local workforce development area

Data currently includes WIOA Title I programs and WIOA Title III. It can be filtered by program year and either quarterly or annual assessment outcomes. While the data dashboard initially included performance outcome data for WIOA Title I and Title III, IWDs LMI team is currently working to integrate performance outcomes for Title II and Title IV. This data dashboard will be a one-stop shop for WIOA performance outcomes for all WIOA programs. An additional state performance improvement strategy is to reestablish a Performance and Reporting Work Group to include representation from all core programs. Initial data that has been identified as to further explore is co-enrollment across core programs and analyzing trends related to barriers being addressed through programming. Iowa recognizes the importance of assessing all of the programs included in the state and each local workforce area. In PY24, the WIOA Core Partner Working Group began work to identify the performance measures of all core and required partner programs and worked with the LMI team to create a data dashboard that tracks performance for all core and required programs in one place. This data dashboard will allow the state and local areas to assess the quality, effectiveness, and improvement of programs. This dashboard will also include referral and co- enrollment data between programs to assess the effectiveness of the programs as a system. Additionally, the dashboard can be utilized by LWDBs as they develop the goals and strategies of their local plans.

In addition to Iowa's state specific dashboard, U.S. Department of Labor has a [nationwide dashboard](#) containing performance outcomes for WIOA Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth Programs.

#### *B. Previous Assessment Results*

**For each four-year state plan and state plan modification, provide the results of assessments of the effectiveness of the core programs and other one-stop partner programs and Combined State Plan partner programs included in the Unified or Combined State plan during the preceding 2- year period (i.e. the 2- year period of the plan modification cycle), in accordance with methods described in 4(A). Describe how the State is adapting its strategies based on these assessments.**



Iowa uses the results of WIOA section 116 Primary Indicators of Performance outcomes data to assess the effectiveness of the core programs in serving Iowans. These results are shared with the SWDB via the Workforce Systems Committee and are available publicly on the following dashboard: [Iowa WIOA Performance Outcomes](#)

The two most recent years of available data are Program Year 2023 and 2024. The charts below summarize the performance outcomes for each of the core programs.

|                                         | PY23            | PY23           | PY24            | PY24           |
|-----------------------------------------|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|----------------|
|                                         | Negotiated Rate | Actual Outcome | Negotiated Rate | Actual Outcome |
| <b>Title I - Adult</b>                  |                 |                |                 |                |
| Employment Rate, 2nd Quarter After Exit | 73%             | 78.6%          | 77.5%           | 80.0%          |
| Employment Rate, 4th Quarter After Exit | 67%             | 76.7%          | 76.0%           | 74.9%          |
| Median Earnings, 2nd Quarter After Exit | \$6,100         | \$8,057        | \$7,000         | \$8,650        |
| Credential Attainment                   | 66.0%           | 72.6%          | 71.0%           | 76.9%          |
| Measurable Skill Gains                  | 44%             | 65.7%          | 60.5%           | 81.5%          |

|                                         | PY23            | PY23           | PY24            | PY24           |
|-----------------------------------------|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|----------------|
|                                         | Negotiated Rate | Actual Outcome | Negotiated Rate | Actual Outcome |
| <b>Title I – Dislocated Worker</b>      |                 |                |                 |                |
| Employment Rate, 2nd Quarter After Exit | 81.5%           | 85.0%          | 82.5%           | 87.6%          |
| Employment Rate, 4th Quarter After Exit | 82.0%           | 85.2%          | 84.0%           | 86.5%          |
| Median Earnings, 2nd Quarter After Exit | \$9,000         | \$11,343       | \$10,500        | \$9,763        |
| Credential Attainment                   | 69.5%           | 73%            | 72.0%           | 82.3%          |

|                        |       |       |       |       |
|------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Measurable Skill Gains | 44.0% | 80.9% | 63.0% | 85.7% |
|------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|

|                                         |                 |                |                 |                |
|-----------------------------------------|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|----------------|
|                                         | PY23            | PY23           | PY24            | PY24           |
| <b>Title I - Youth</b>                  | Negotiated Rate | Actual Outcome | Negotiated Rate | Actual Outcome |
| Employment Rate, 2nd Quarter After Exit | 74.0%           | 72.4%          | 75.0%           | 75.5%          |
| Employment Rate, 4th Quarter After Exit | 74.0%           | 73.9%          | 75.0%           | 75.2%          |
| Median Earnings, 2nd Quarter After Exit | \$3,800         | \$4,061        | \$4,100         | \$3,999        |
| Credential Attainment                   | 57.0%           | 40.2%          | 58.0%           | 53.6%          |
| Measurable Skill Gains                  | 41.0%           | 55.6%          | 50.0%           | 62.6%          |

|                                                |                 |                |                   |                |
|------------------------------------------------|-----------------|----------------|-------------------|----------------|
|                                                | PY23            | PY23           | PY24              | PY24           |
| <b>Title II - Adult Education and Literacy</b> | Negotiated Rate | Actual Outcome | Negotiated Rate   | Actual Outcome |
| Employment Rate, 2nd Quarter After Exit        | 51%             | 43%            | 51 <u>4</u> %     | 45.8%          |
| Employment Rate, 4th Quarter After Exit        | 47%             | 44.65%         | <u>56</u> 47%     | 45.9%          |
| Median Earnings, 2nd Quarter After Exit        | \$6600          | \$7525.40      | \$6, <u>8</u> 600 | \$7,984        |
| Measurable Skill Gains                         | 47%             | 54.15%         | 47%               | 55.91%         |
| Credential Attainment                          | 49%             | 19.65%         | 74%               | 35.6%          |

|  |      |      |      |      |
|--|------|------|------|------|
|  | PY23 | PY23 | PY24 | PY24 |
|--|------|------|------|------|

|                                         | Negotiated<br>Rate | Actual<br>Outcome | Negotiated<br>Rate | Actual<br>Outcome |
|-----------------------------------------|--------------------|-------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| <b>Title III – Wagner-Peyser</b>        |                    |                   |                    |                   |
| Employment Rate, 2nd Quarter After Exit | 60.0%              | 76.5%             | 70.0%              | 75.9%             |
| Employment Rate, 4th Quarter After Exit | 67.0%              | 72.9%             | 69.0%              | 73.8%             |
| Median Earnings, 2nd Quarter After Exit | \$6,700            | \$9,046           | \$8,600            | \$9,512           |

|                                             | PY23               | PY23              | PY24               | PY24              |
|---------------------------------------------|--------------------|-------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
|                                             | Negotiated<br>Rate | Actual<br>Outcome | Negotiated<br>Rate | Actual<br>Outcome |
| <b>Title IV – Vocational Rehabilitation</b> |                    |                   |                    |                   |
| Employment Rate, 2nd Quarter After Exit     | 58%                | 58.6%             | 59.8%              | TBD               |
| Employment Rate, 4th Quarter After Exit     | 55.3%              | 55.7%             | 58.5%              | TBD               |
| Median Earnings, 2nd Quarter After Exit     | \$4,419            | \$4,778           | \$4,586            | TBD               |
| Measurable Skill Gains                      | 42.0%              | 53.8%             | 52.0%              | TBD               |
| Credential Attainment                       | 61.0%              | 51.7%             | 54.0%              | TBD               |

|                                                                                         |  |  | PY24               | PY24              |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|--|--------------------|-------------------|
|                                                                                         |  |  | Negotiated<br>Rate | Actual<br>Outcome |
| <b>Effectiveness in Serving Employers</b>                                               |  |  |                    |                   |
| Employed with the Same Employer, 2 <sup>nd</sup> and 4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter After Exit |  |  | Baseline           | 72.9%             |

With the exception of four performance outcomes in program year 2024 , Iowa met or exceeded all performance metrics for all core programs. The four areas below target goals were within 90% of the established target goal. \_Outcome data is continually reviewed to evaluate the state and local workforce area implementation of WIOA programs. Program and performance training, reports, and technical assistance delivered by the state to local programs are utilized as methods to assist in obtaining successful programmatic outcomes.

Additionally, the partners of the IowaWORKS centers use an automated surveying tool within the IowaWORKS data management system to measure customer satisfaction and analyze the effectiveness of services. The survey questions and process were developed collaboratively between state program staff, board staff, and local one-stop operators to ensure consistency across local workforce development areas. The survey is sent twice a month based on pre-determined services recorded in the IowaWORKS system in the 15 days prior to the survey date. During program year 2024, 56,740 individuals were surveyed with 80% responding they were satisfied or very satisfied with the services and assistance received. Survey data is available to state and local partners in real time and is utilized locally to make decisions on service provision.

With the creation of the Business Engagement Division at Iowa Workforce Development in Spring 2022, a renewed focus on services to employers began. Beginning in program year 2024, a similar automated survey tool was be implemented for surveying business customers of the IowaWORKS system. The survey questions and process are currently under development by a team of state and local partners from across the core programs. Previously, the effectiveness of business customers of the system was measured using the Effectiveness in Serving Employers key performance measures established by WIOA and included tracking services to business. Iowa measured the Employer Penetration Rate and Repeat Business Customer Rate to measure effectiveness in serving employers during program year 2021, 2022 and 2023. Through a shift in reporting requirements, services to business continue to recorded for internal strategic planning and process improvement efforts while reporting for Effectiveness in Service Employers beginning PY24 now utilizes participant Employment 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter and 4<sup>th</sup> quarter and employed with the same employer as a measure of effectiveness in Serving Employers. The creation of the Business Engagement Division demonstrates how Iowa has adapted strategies based on assessment of services and will ensure the continued focus and improvement of services provided by the workforce system in Iowa.

Title IV is required to develop and monitor agency performance reports. The information in the report is intended to improve decision-making and increase accountability to Iowa stakeholders and citizens. The agency performance report provides update on progress towards strategic plan goals and information on performance on core functions within the agency.

Title IV programs also conduct a Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment that is addressed within the specific VR portions of this plan.

### Effectiveness in Serving Employers

PY24 marked the first year reporting for reporting Effectiveness in Serving Employers utilizing employment with the same employer 2nd quarter and 4th quarter after Exit. This is a jointly reported measure across WIOA core program Title I, II, III and IV including the Iowa Department for the Blind.

PY24 continued to see growth in providing services to business. The WIOA core partners collected data to measure the effectiveness in serving employers across the state, strategic planning and process improvement.

Core partners at Adult Education, Vocational Rehabilitation, and the Department for the Blind provide data utilizing Iowa's data management system, IowaWORKS tool to allow WIOA partners to share data to report on effectiveness in serving employers measures. Currently three separate data management systems are utilized to collect this data. Data is then uploaded and aggregated, de-duplicated and compiled to report the Effectiveness in Serving Employers performance measures; employed 2nd and 4th quarter after exit from our IowaWORKS data management system.

In addition, the State Workforce Agency at the behest and direction of the Governor has stood-up the Business Engagement Division under which many of the efforts related to the "Effectiveness in Serving Employers" can be coordinated. This agency and statewide coordination includes not only employer penetration rate and repeat business customers from the pilot Effectiveness measure; but also emphasizes the integration and strategic service delivery to targeted populations such as persons with a disability, veterans, new Americans, and those who experience reentry from corrections among others, as well as the new measure as outlined in TEN 24-23, Employed in the 2nd and 4th quarter with the same employer. The robust service delivery model to job seekers is also aligned with a variety of recruitment and retention activities available to employers including; but not limited to career fairs, ADA and Disability-inclusion trainings, Work-based learning opportunities, tax-credits, and federal bonding.

### *C. Evaluation*

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

Research and strategic planning efforts took place throughout program year 2023 and 2024 in relation to WIOA Title I Evaluation. Iowa has routinely engaged in strategic planning on Evaluation strategies throughout the past several years. Iowa engaged in research and planning during PY23 and continued expanding in those evaluation activities PY24.

Iowa Workforce Development (IWD) had an MOU in place with Iowa State University and Iowa's Integrated Data System for Decision Making (I2D2) to assist with WIOA Title I Evaluation in accordance with 20 CFR § 682.220. The project will begin with a pilot and planning effort to evaluate Iowa's WIOA Title I programs between May 1, 2023, through December 31, 2023. IWD's Workforce Services Division is responsible for overseeing this work.

The planning phase included the following:

- A comprehensive inventory of existing administrative data systems that contain relevant information to inform study of Iowa's WIOA Title I program.
- Acquire WIOA datasets from IWD and conduct a rigorous quality exploration to inform future data collection and evaluation efforts. Secure datasets and existing data documentation, profiling dataset contents, exploring patterns within data, and developing preliminary codebooks to aid development of analytic/evaluation approaches.
- Development of an evaluation plan that includes scope of possible evaluation questions that can be addressed with IWD data and possibly with other I2D2 data holdings, datasets and elements necessary to address IWD priority questions, proposed analyses, evaluation timelines, and budget estimates for the work to address IWD's evaluation goals.

IWD WIOA Title I program leadership initiated the partnership with the intent to cultivate short term knowledge (Phase I) and use this knowledge to develop a longer-term plan for ongoing evaluation (Phase II+). Phase I comprises the continued work for the current report, and involved two components: First, the

team examined Title I datasets specifically to see what could be learned from within-program records prior to integration with other data systems. WIOA leadership expressed specific interest in several areas for this data exploration component: *Who are Title I programs serving, and are these groups representative of those who may benefit from services? What is the level of co-enrollment across programs? And What are the most reported barriers to employment.* Second, the team conducted data discovery to explore additional datasets within IWD and departments outside of IWD that would have useful information to inform evaluation efforts in the longer term (Phase II+). Iowa continues to explore phase I and II of this evaluation and plans to continue this for the next plan cycle to determine a thoughtful and progressive plan for evaluation. Additionally, Iowa conducted data analysis on Title I and III data from the PIRL dataset for PY24.

For PY24, Iowa sought to further expand evaluation activities to include analysis of data in partnership with our Labor Market Information division. Three primary focus areas were analyzed in the areas of

1. WIOA youth in work experience
2. Sector strategy outcomes
3. School status at program entry outcomes.

The results of this study can be found in attachment 3, and is planned to be further tested and expanded upon in PY25/PY26.

Title II has been an active participant in initiatives such as ADVANCE Integrated Education and Training (IET) Bootcamps. Interested local services providers, along with Title II state staff, participated in this bootcamp with the goal of increasing the understanding of IETs and the necessary steps to successfully implement them. Feedback from current local service providers is that in-depth training and conversations regarding overall program performance in Iowa was not shared in the past. The state team plans to incorporate training on program performance measures and conduct an annual review of the adult education program in Iowa, sharing that information with local service providers.

Title IV utilizes the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment requirement to provide evaluation of the vocational rehabilitation system in the state of Iowa. Currently, IVRS and IDB conduct separate needs assessments.

IDB works cooperatively with the Iowa Commission for the Blind to review and assess the vocational rehabilitation needs of Iowans who are blind, DeafBlind,

or have low vision. IDB contracted with the Interwork Institute, San Diego State University to complete the most recent comprehensive statewide needs assessment.

IVRS works cooperatively with the University of Iowa and State Rehabilitation Council to assess the needs of the state, specifically the needs of individuals with disabilities. Through this process, the CSNA identifies gaps in existing services that can be reduced through policies and programs. Extant data (e.g., secondary data such as the American Community Survey, LMI, Department of Education, etc.); IVRS data (e.g., RSA-911 data); IWD data; the Iowa Workforce Needs Assessment Survey; SRC customer satisfaction surveys; and active consumer surveys); focus groups, and internal surveys are used to evaluate the effectiveness of IVRS and the state as a whole. This information is also shared across core programs to complement other evaluative activities.

## 5. Distribution of Funds for Core Programs

**Describe the methods and factors the State will use in distributing funds under the core programs in accordance with the provisions authorizing such distributions.**

### *A. For Title I Programs*

**Provide a description of the written policies that establish the State's methods and factors used to distribute funds to local areas for—**

#### **i. Youth Activities in Accordance with WIOA Section 128(b)(2) or (b)(3)**

Following the Within State Allocations options detailed in WIOA section 128(b)(2) and C.F.R. 20 § 683.120(c)(1), Iowa will utilize the formula allocation method to distribute youth funds to the local areas. All funds not reserved by the Governor in WIOA section 128(a) will be allocated using the following federally prescribed formula:

- 33 1/3% of the funds are allocated on the basis of the number of disadvantaged youth in each local area compared to the total number of disadvantaged youth in the state;
- 33 1/3% of the funds are allocated on the basis of the excess number of unemployed individuals in each local area compared to the total excess number of unemployed individuals in the state;
- 33 1/3% of the funds are allocated on the basis of the number of unemployed individuals in areas of substantial unemployment in each local area compared to the total number of unemployed individuals in areas of substantial unemployment in the state.



Additionally, no local area shall receive an allocation percentage that is less than 90 percent of the average allocation percentage of the local area for the 2 preceding fiscal years. Any amount needed to provide increased allocation(s) to the affected local areas will be obtained by ratably reducing the allocations to the other local areas.

During this state planning period, IWD convened a group of stakeholders to include local Chief Elected Officials, Local Workforce Development Boards, IWDs Labor Market Information Division, and IWD's Financial Management Division to research and evaluate the effectiveness of the current formula and consider if it should be updated.

#### ii. Adult and Training Activities in Accordance with WIOA Section 133(b)(2) or (b)(3)

Following the Within State Allocations options detailed in WIOA section 133(b)(2) and C.F.R. 20 § 683.120(d)(1), Iowa will utilize the formula allocation method to distribute adult funds to the local areas. All funds not reserved by the Governor in WIOA section 133(a) will be allocated using the following federally prescribed formula:

- 33 1/3% of the funds are allocated on the basis of the number of disadvantaged adults in each local area compared to the total number of disadvantaged adults in the state;
- 33 1/3% of the funds are allocated on the basis of the excess number of unemployed individuals in each local area compared to the total excess number of unemployed individuals in the state;
- 33 1/3% of the funds are allocated on the basis of the number of unemployed individuals in areas of substantial unemployment in each local area compared to the total number of unemployed individuals in areas of substantial unemployment in the state.

Additionally, no local area shall receive an allocation percentage that is less than 90 percent of the average allocation percentage of the local area for the 2 preceding fiscal years. Any amount needed to provide increased allocation(s) to the affected local areas will be obtained by ratably reducing the allocations to the other local areas.

During this state planning period, IWD convened a group of stakeholders to include local Chief Elected Officials, Local Workforce Development Boards, IWDs Labor Market Information Division, and IWD's Financial Management Division to research and evaluate the effectiveness of the current formula and consider if it should be updated.

### iii. Dislocated Worker Employment and Training Activities in Accordance with WIOA Section 133(b)(2) and Based on Data and Weights Assigned

After allowing for Governor's reserve funds per WIOA section 133(a)(1) and (a)(2), state dislocated worker funds will be allocated using the following six factors and weights:

**Insured Unemployment Data:** For the most recent calendar year, the monthly average number of individuals who were receiving unemployment insurance. Weight: 20%

**Unemployment Concentrations Data:** Based on the most recent calendar year, local areas with unemployment rates above the state average. Weight: 20%

**Plant Closing and Layoff Data:** The number of employees during the most recent calendar year that were impacted by a layoff or plant closing including use of federal and state WARN data and local non-WARN event data. Weight: 15%

**Declining Industries Data:** During the most recent 24-months, the total number of jobs lost in the most recent four quarters as compared to the previous four quarters. Weight: 20%

**Farmer-Rancher Economic Hardship Data:** During the most recent calendar year, the number of farmers/ranchers who have delinquent loans as reported by U. S. Department of Agriculture. Weight: 5%

**Long-Term Unemployment Data:** For the most recent calendar year, the monthly average number of individuals who meet the definition of long-term unemployed. An individual is considered to be long-term unemployed if he/she was out of work for 15 weeks out of a continuous 26-week period of time. To be calculated based on individuals who have exhausted unemployment insurance benefits. Weight: 20%

For the dislocated worker allocation process, equal application of four of the six factors of the formula ensures that all possible economic and workforce elements that exist in each local area impact the allocation process. In this manner, factors that might favor or disadvantage certain areas are equally applied. Two of the remaining six factors, Farmer-rancher hardship loans and Mass Lay off statistics percentage allocation rate applied as outlined due to the limited volume of impacted individuals receiving farmer-rancher hard ship loans and reliability of the data.

The federal statute also requires that a minimum funding provision be applied to the WIOA Dislocated Worker funding stream. A local area must not receive an

allocation percentage for a program year that is less than 90 percent of the average allocation percentage of the local area for the two preceding program years. This minimum funding provision will also apply after any local area redesignation in Iowa. Iowa will calculate the amount of funding for each new local area by applying the funding allocation amounts from the previous two program years to the new local areas to ensure the minimum funding provision is met. Any amount needed to provide increased allocation(s) to the affected local areas will be obtained by ratably reducing the allocations to the other local areas.

During this state planning period, IWD convened a group of stakeholders to include local Chief Elected Officials, Local Workforce Development Boards, IWDs Labor Market Information Division, and IWD's Financial Management Division to research and evaluate the effectiveness of the current formula and consider if it should be updated. For Dislocated Worker, the weights and data sources outlined.

See Attachment 4 for full description of the Dislocated Worker Formula allocation review.

#### *B. For Title II*

##### **i. Describe the methods and factors the eligible agency will use to distribute title II funds.**

All organizations who meet the definition of “Eligible Provider” as provided in WIOA Title II— AEFLA Federal Requirements and described below are invited to submit bids. The Department will review all proposals to determine eligibility as defined by the requirements below. Applicants determined to be ineligible because they did not meet the eligible provider requirements will not be considered for funding. Applicants will be notified in writing that they are ineligible.

- Applicants may apply if they meet the definition of eligible provider. An “eligible provider” means an organization that has demonstrated effectiveness in two consecutive years (*state requirement*) in providing adult education and literacy activities and may include (WIOA §203(5)):
  - a local educational agency;
  - a community-based organization or faith-based organization;
  - a volunteer literacy organization;
  - an institution of higher education;
  - a public or private nonprofit agency;

- a library;
  - a public housing authority;
  - a nonprofit institution that is not described in any of subparagraphs (a) through (g) and has the ability to provide adult education and literacy activities to eligible individuals;
  - a consortium or coalition of the agencies, organizations, institutions, libraries, or authorities described in any of subparagraphs (a) through (h);
  - a partnership between an employer and an entity described in any of subparagraphs (a) through (i); and
  - any other organization type, even if not specifically listed above, to apply if they meet the demonstrated effectiveness requirement (34 CFR 463 Preamble).
- Applicants are eligible to submit bids if they have provided services to eligible individuals in the past two consecutive years (*state requirement*) in any of the areas outlined below.

An eligible provider must demonstrate past effectiveness by providing performance data on its record in improving the skills of eligible individuals, in particular, individuals who are basic skills deficient in the content domains of reading, writing, mathematics, and English language acquisition. An eligible provider must also provide information regarding its outcomes for participants related to employment, attainment of secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent, and transition to postsecondary education and training (34 CFR 463.24). Eligible Providers can demonstrate past effectiveness in two ways:

1. An eligible provider that has been previously funded under Title II of the Act must provide two consecutive years (*state requirement*) of performance data to demonstrate past effectiveness in the areas listed above.
2. An eligible provider that has not been previously funded under Title II of the Act must provide two consecutive years (*state requirement*) of performance data to demonstrate its past effectiveness in serving basic skills deficient eligible individuals, including evidence of its success in achieving outcomes listed in the WIOA Title II AEFLA Federal Requirements. (See WIOA Final Rules Subpart C, §463.24 and 29 U.S.C 3272(5)).

Grant applicants were required to describe their activities planned to support the adult education and literacy in their proposed service delivery area as well as their local workforce development area, using the previously submitted local plans which did not reflect the newly approved reduction in areas. However, applicants were asked to discuss (1) outreach efforts for attracting participants with low literacy skills to the program; (2) program design accommodations particularly focused on the needs of participants (i.e., child care, class times and locations, curriculum content, and materials); and (3) linkages established with education, workforce and community partners to facilitate the integration of services for participants. The Department has continued to consider an equitable and inclusive approach for services. These efforts have included reaching out to community, faith-based and local education agencies to share information and discuss potential partnerships or collaborations in addressing literacy and basic skill needs.

The grant application has been aligned with and awarded providers in alignment with subpart C for both sections 225 activities and 243 funds and will be monitored based on compliance and the following principles of Iowa's AEL Program Standards associated with high quality and continuous program improvement.

WIOA Sec. 231 funds will be distributed using an allocation formula based on need and performance.

WIOA Sec. 243 funds will be distributed based on the number of proposed eligible individuals to be served.

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

IWD will use internal processes to ensure that there is direct and equitable access to the grant funds. All currently funded providers and all other identified eligible agencies receive a grant or contract application notification by email. This includes all known community-based organizations, community colleges, libraries, literacy councils, public housing authorities, and any other provider that is eligible pursuant to Section 203(5). An announcement is posted on the Iowa Grants website at <http://www.iowagrants.gov/> and a press release will be issued to further reach potential interested parties. In addition, IWD provides application information at conferences, workshops, and other activities attended by potential providers. IWD requires all eligible providers for Sections 225, 231

and 243 to use the same application process. This ensures that all applications are evaluated using the same rubric and scoring criteria. Statewide leadership activities are provided through contracted service providers in compliance with state contracting requirements. IWD ensures that all eligible providers have direct and equitable access to apply for grants or contracts. It also ensures that the same grant or contract announcement, application, and proposal process is used for all eligible providers through the grant management system. During the initial period of the grant submission process, any eligible agency that contacts IWD with an interest in participating will be provided the information needed. IWD believes that these approaches meet the requirements specified in AEFLA and is satisfied that every effort is made to ensure direct and equitable access.

### *C. Vocational Rehabilitation Program*

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

Federal VR basic support state grant in Iowa is divided between Iowa Department for the Blind and Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services in the ratio of 19 percent to 81 percent. This is a historical agreement and has been in place in excess of 40 years. The total allocation of basic support dollars to the State of Iowa are granted by RSA to the two state agencies in the ratio of 19 percent to Iowa Department for the Blind and 81 percent to IVRS.

## **6. Program Data**

**Describe the plans of the lead State agencies with responsibility for the administration of the core programs, along with the State Board, to align and integrate available workforce and education data systems for the core programs, unemployment insurance programs, and education through postsecondary education, and to the extent possible, the Combined State Plan partner programs included in this plan. The description of the State's plan for integrating data systems should include the State's goals for achieving integration and any progress to date.**

**Describe data-collection and reporting processes used for all programs and activities, including the State's process to collect and report data on co-enrollment, and for those present in the one-stop centers.**

## *A. Data Alignment and Integration*

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

Iowa's core partners have long-standing data sharing agreements in place that provide the ability for partners to request data matching of the Unemployment Insurance Wage Record Data for performance reporting. The agreements facilitate cross-program access to data about common participants while minimizing duplicative systems costs.

The IowaWORKS data management system houses comprehensive modules for Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth, TAA, WOTC, SNAP E&T, PROMISE JOBS, Wagner Peyser, including JVSG, and Unemployment Insurance.

IowaWORKS incorporates a common intake system which:

1. Determines program eligibility and promotes co-enrollment;
2. Assigns a unique identifier to each program participant that is used across programs;
3. Gathers required reporting elements common across all partners;
4. Creates a common portal by which customers may access services;
5. Allows participants to self-refer to partner agencies and partner agencies to refer participants and track referral follow-up and outcomes; and
6. Creates a staff dashboard with the status of each program participant and shares data across agencies.

Iowa is currently exploring ways to integrate Titles II and IV into the system and/or pursue the development of interface system(s) that integrate data via API tools when applicable. Currently, information is batched into the system and shared with Titles that do not have IowaWORKS access. Core partners utilize UI wage records to report the Effectiveness in Serving Employers measure jointly. As Iowa continues to develop and refine data management systems, the exchange of information and common data elements will improve and expand.

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

Those core partners not currently accessing the IowaWORKS data management system are currently maintaining existing legacy data systems due to the complexity of the reporting needs and the need to conduct analysis, evaluate data, and engage service providers. Each system has the capability to mark and

track co-enrolled participants and is able to provide all of the WIOA required reports in Section 116.

While a common intake through a single data management system isn't being utilized across all core partners currently, all Titles are collecting and reporting based on the WIOA required PIRL data elements through their respective systems. This process lends itself toward co-enrollment and referrals to core partner programs and/or outside community agencies. While current field practices have included secure tracking sheets and frequent core partner meetings to track service delivery among shared co-enrolled participants, best practices are still being reviewed by the State.

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

The development and implementation of WIOA and the one-stop delivery system is facilitated by the State Workforce Development Board. Standing committees and workgroups continue to provide additional resources in many capacities including process improvement and recommendation to continue to move WIOA forward on behalf of the State WDB.

State standing committees provide direction, guidance, and technical assistance to local standing committees in order to meet the goals of the state system as a whole. Improved data collection ensures streamlined processes, increase efficiency throughout the workforce delivery system, and aids in accurate performance measurement to help improve decision-making. Iowa's WIOA compliant data management system, IowaWORKS, was implemented in June 2019 to include a common intake and reporting system among core and relevant agencies. For partners who are not currently utilizing IowaWORKS for case management, additional processes and procedures must be in place to facilitate partnership and data collection.

The WIOA core programs are an integral part of service delivery in the IowaWORKS centers and Iowa's workforce system overall. Referrals to partner programs who may not participate in the IowaWORKS case management system, are tracked at the local level between career planners and respective partner staff. Referrals among all core programs strive to include a "warm hand-off," which entails the career planner introducing the customer to the other program's case manager, and follow-up regarding the partner services provided. If a customer is co-enrolled, ongoing collaboration between program case



managers occurs. Currently, the referral is tracked in the Title II data system, , as well as IowaWORKS and the Title IV case management systems. This tracking allows for internal reporting to enhance case management and for required performance reporting.

Iowa is dedicated to developing a plan towards greater data alignment and integration. Data sharing and data integration efforts make the most sense where there is a commonality of interest, need, or purpose and a set of shared goals. Any efforts to develop data- sharing agreements or, where appropriate, move towards data- integration will proceed on the basis of value-added partnership such that all partners gain something from the partnership.

The WIOA core programs are an integral part of service delivery in the IowaWORKS centers and Iowa's workforce system overall. Referrals to partner programs who may not participate in the IowaWORKS case management system, are tracked at the local level between career planners and respective partner staff. Referrals among all core programs include a "warm hand-off," which entails the career planner introducing the customer to the other program's case manager, and follow-up regarding the partner services provided. If a customer is co-enrolled, ongoing collaboration between program case managers occurs. Additionally, the referral is tracked in the Title II data system, TOPSpro Enterprise as well as IowaWORKS and the Title IV case management systems. This tracking allows for internal reporting to enhance case management and for required performance reporting.

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

The four core partner programs currently collect all data necessary to develop and produce performance accountability reports required under Section 116(d)(2). Each partner submits quarterly and annual reports to the Departments of Labor and Education respectively to meet federal reporting requirements. These reports are reviewed with state and local program administrators to ensure Iowa continues to meet and exceed negotiated performance levels. Predictive Reports in the IowaWORKS case management system is an important tool to assist state staff to identify service gaps and areas for technical assistance.

With the inception of WIOA, Iowa created a performance and reporting workgroup consisting of performance representatives from across core programs. Unfortunately, after a period of time, the group's efforts were paused. However, there is a renewed emphasis in this area and Iowa will be resurrecting

this group to plan and outline data procedures across programs. It will be highly important to identify how independent program data can be collectively gathered, analyzed and reported to the State Workforce Development Board.

Iowa continues to participate in the Department of Labor's Quarterly Results Analysis (QRA) pilot and has done so for the past several years. The QRA addresses data expectations where logical validation cannot be applied and graphically places state results in context. Iowa participates in the QRA pilot for WIOA Adult, WIOA Dislocated Worker, WIOA Youth, and Wagner-Peyser programs. Iowa receives results quarterly from DOL and responds to identified issues, as applicable. This exercise has greatly improved Iowa's data integrity efforts across several measures. Although this is currently a voluntary pilot, it is expected this will soon become a requirement for all states.

#### *B. Assessment of Participants' Post-program Success*

**Describe how lead State agencies will use the workforce development system to assess the progress of participants who are exiting from core programs in entering, persisting in, and completing postsecondary education, or entering or remaining in employment. States may choose to set additional indicators of performance.**

The State assesses performance of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act core programs using performance outcome data established in WIOA sec. 116. The outcomes for Employment second quarter after exit and fourth quarter after exit provide valuable insight into the progress of participants exiting our programs and entering into and persisting in employment. This data is available and utilized for all core programs. The IowaWORKS data management system contains a robust reporting system that allows the state and local career planners to assess participant progress continuously, even prior to program exit. This includes participants' progress in entering and completing post-secondary education as the system tracks credential attainment and programs of study for all participants. APIs directly connect both in-state wages and out-of-state wages through the use of the SWIS agreement to the IowaWORKS data management system to provide wage data to leadership for reporting purposes. This information is utilized to assess participant post program success and the state's overall improvement year over year.

IWD maintains an MOU with the Department of Education that provides data annually on the completion rates of all students at Iowa's 15 community colleges; this includes data on students who complete their post-secondary education and those that continue their education at a 4-year university. The Adult

Education and Literacy program data is included in this work and provides robust outcomes data for all AEL participants. This [link](#) provides additional data on student outcomes.

Due to the nature of services provided under an Individualized Plan for Employment in Title IV, it is very rare that post-secondary credentials would be earned after exit from the program. RSA sub-regulatory guidance prohibits VR staff from providing services after exit from the program. As a result, any services related to support of an individual in post-secondary education occurs during program participation.

Title IV also utilizes 2nd and 4th quarter wage data to assess the progress of individuals who have exited the program. Exit surveys are sent to all individuals who exit the program, providing an opportunity to offer feedback on the quality of services received and placement, or to express a need for additional services. If additional services are required, a new case record will be opened once an individual is determined eligible to provide those services.

### *C. use of Unemployment Insurance (UI) Wage Record Data*

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

Unemployment insurance wage record data has and will continue to be matched to assist program data collection for students, apprenticeships, training participants, and TANF participants for purposes of matching it to employment, wages, and industry. Individual contracts and data sharing agreements are established between Iowa Workforce Development (IWD) and training providers. In return, IWD will provide an aggregate analysis of how their students fared economically after they left their program using wage records.

IWD has an internal-earnings transfer procedure, and contracts with other national agencies in order to use quarterly wage information to measure progress for state and local performance measures. Each quarter, earnings from Iowa employers are uploaded, and the state system performs the job match by way of Social Security Number matches. Iowa also has a contract with the state of Maryland's administration of the Federal Employment Data Exchange System (FEDES) and with the State Wage Interchange System (SWIS), a data sharing tool jointly managed by the Department of Education (ED) and the Department of Labor (DOL) which provides earnings data for out-of-state individuals who participated in Iowa's workforce programs. These systems also provide

information on individuals who, as a result of our services, obtain employment with the U.S. Department of Defense, U.S. Postal Service, and federal jobs, in general. All earnings data is secured through multiple, fire-walled systems, and access is granted only to individuals with a legitimate business need. By participating in SWIS, Iowa has a more accurate picture of the effectiveness of the workforce delivery programs, and is able to report more comprehensive outcomes against performance measures.

#### *D. Privacy Safeguards*

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

Confidential information follows each organization's internal policies - no universal release is available at this time.

The usage of TOPSpro Enterprise (TE®), the information management system of Iowa's adult education and literacy program, is in line with FERPA regulations and monitored on an ongoing basis to assure alignment. Personally identifiable information at the individual record level is protected by having all staff sign a confidentiality agreement and, when appropriate for non-departmental agencies, release of information forms signed by customers are obtained in order to release UI data to that agency. In terms of outside agencies, personally identifiable information is protected by aggregating individual records and standardized confidentiality screening. AEL public facing results are aggregated to protect the confidentiality of participants being measured. In addition, outcomes with fewer than 10 participants are suppressed for confidentiality purposes. AEL also requires each local program to sign an assurance as a part of the funding application indicating adherence to outlined GEPA requirements.

In regard to IowaWORKS, the vendor, Geographic Solutions, is subject to the security and privacy requirements of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act Administrative Simplification, and its regulations, in addition to state privacy security laws and regulations.

Security commitments are standardized and include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Security principles within the fundamental designs of Virtual OneStop application that are designed to permit system users to access the

information they need based on their role in the system while restricting them from accessing information not needed for their role

- Use of encryption technologies to protect customer data both at rest and in transit

Iowa Workforce Development utilizes data sharing agreements with the schools, agencies and training providers. The entities permit use of social security numbers through Globalscape, a secured FTP site provided by IT. The social security numbers are then matched to unemployment insurance records. IWD reports findings in aggregate and reports if we have three or more participants. If we don't have at least three participants, their information is suppressed to ensure confidentiality.

## 7. Priority of Service for Veterans

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

Iowa policy [8.3.3.3 Veterans Priority of Service](#) defines the requirements surrounding serving Veterans and eligible spouses.

Priority of service means that veterans and eligible spouses are given priority over non-covered persons for the receipt of employment, training, and placement services provided under a qualified job training program.

Depending on the type of service or resource being provided, priority of service may mean:

- The covered person receives access to the service or resource earlier in time than the non-covered person.
- If the service or resource is limited, the covered person receives access to the service or resource instead of or before the non-covered person.

Local Workforce Development Boards (WDBs) will develop and include in their local plans, policies, and procedures for implementing priority of service for the local American Job Center (AJC) and for service delivery by local workforce preparation and training providers.

Written copies of local priority of service policies are to be maintained at all service delivery points and, to the extent practicable, should be posted in a way that makes it possible for members of the general public to easily access them.

## **Qualified Job Training Programs**

Priority of service must be implemented in all programs and services for workforce preparation, development, or delivery that are directly funded, in whole or in part, by the United States Department of Labor (USDOL), to include:

- Programs and services that use technology to assist individuals in accessing workforce development programs.
- Any such program or service under the public employment service system, the AJC, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), demonstrations or other temporary programs, and programs implemented by states or local service providers based on federal block grants.
- Any such program or service that is a workforce development program targeted to specific groups.

## **Covered Persons**

Priority of service must be applied uniformly across all local systems to veterans and eligible spouses as defined below:

- Veteran - A person who served at least one day in the active military, naval, or air service and who was discharged or released under conditions other than dishonorable
  - Active service includes full-time service in the National Guard or a Reserve component
  - Active service does not include full-time duty performed strictly for training purposes (weekend or annual training), nor does it include full-time active duty performed by National Guard personnel who are mobilized by state rather than federal authorities
- Eligible Spouse - A spouse to any of the following:
  - Veteran who died of a service-connected disability
  - Member of the Armed Forces serving on active duty who, at the time of application for the priority, is listed in one or more of the following categories and has been so listed for a total of more than 90 days:
    - Missing in action
    - Captured in the line of duty by a hostile force
    - Forcibly detained or interned in the line of duty by a foreign government or power
- Veteran who has a total disability resulting from a service-connected disability, as evaluated by the Department of Veterans Affairs
- Veteran who died while a disability was in existence

## **Identifying and Informing Veterans and Eligible Spouses**

Local WDBs must develop policies and procedures to ensure that veterans and eligible spouses are identified, or able to self-identify, at the point of entry and informed of:

- Their entitlement to priority of service
- The full array of employment, training, and placement services available under priority of service
- Any applicable eligibility requirements for those programs and services

Point of entry includes reception through an AJC, the application process for a specific program, or through any other method by which covered persons may express an interest in receiving services, either in person or virtually.

## **Self-Service Tools**

Informational and service delivery websites developed with funding from a qualified job training program or grant must provide information on priority of service and how to access assistance from applicable programs or grants via the nearest AJC, beyond a mention of or referral to Local Veterans' Employment Representative and Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program specialists.

## **Verifying Status**

The processes for identifying covered persons are not required to verify the status of an individual at the point of entry unless they immediately undergo eligibility determination and enrollment in a program, or the applicable federal program rules require verification at that time. In these instances, the covered person should be enrolled, provided immediate priority, and given the opportunity to follow up with verification of status.

For programs that cannot rely on self-certification, verification only needs to occur at the point at which a decision is made to commit outside resources to one individual over another.

## **Applying Priority of Service**

Local WDBs will develop policies and procedures to ensure that priority of service is applied as outlined below:

- Universal Access Programs

- For workforce programs that operate or deliver services to the public without targeting specific groups, covered persons must receive priority of service over all other program participants
- Programs with Eligibility Criteria
  - For workforce programs with specific eligibility criteria, covered persons must meet all statutory eligibility and program requirements for participation, and priority of service must be applied as follows:
    - Covered persons who meet the eligibility requirements must receive the highest priority of service
    - Non-covered persons who meet the eligibility requirements must receive second priority
- Programs with Eligibility Criteria and Statutory Priorities
  - For workforce programs with a federal mandate that requires a priority or preference for a particular group of individuals or requires spending a certain portion of program funds on a specific group, priority of service must be applied as follows:
    - Covered persons who meet the mandatory priorities or spending requirement or limitation must receive the highest priority
    - Non-covered persons within the program's mandatory priority or spending requirement or limitation, must receive priority for the program or service over covered persons outside the program-specific mandatory priority or spending requirement or limitation
    - Covered persons outside the program-specific mandatory priority or spending requirement or limitation must receive priority for the program or service over non-covered persons outside the program-specific mandatory priority or spending requirement or limitation
- Programs with Eligibility Criteria and Discretionary Priorities
  - For workforce programs that focus on a particular group or make efforts to provide a certain level of service to such a group, but do not mandate that the favored group be served before other eligible individuals, priority of service must be applied as follows:
    - Covered persons must receive the highest priority for the program or service



- Non-covered persons within the discretionary targeting will receive priority over non-covered persons outside the discretionary targeting

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

To monitor and ensure Veterans are aware of all services, IowaWORKS operations managers run a monthly report that displays all registered individuals which allows them to identify Veterans that may have registered outside of the center. Non-JVSG Career Planners then contact those veterans, share information regarding programs and services, and invite them into the Center.

Core partner programs refer customers to JVSG and DVOP services, and DVOP's often refer customers to core partner programs, ensuring Veterans receive the services they need. Additional oversight occurs during annual monitoring through file reviews and on-site monitoring visits.

File reviews provide an opportunity to review service delivery to Veterans and on-site visits allow for a review of the process in practice.

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

All IowaWORKS team members are trained on veteran services and resources to include understanding of Priority of Service. State policies across Department of Labor funded programs contain requirements for Veterans Priority of Service, which ensures veterans and their eligible spouses receive access to services before or instead of a non-covered person. Iowa's Standard Operating Procedure is designed to identify veterans and eligible spouses at their first point of contact.

During the initial Welcoming process and completion of the the IowaWORKS system registration, a customer who self-discloses their veteran status, status as an eligible spouse, or other eligible group as determined by the DOL will be prompted to answer additional veteran-related questions regarding their service and potential barriers to employment. Non-JVSG Career Planners will refer any veteran, eligible person, or other eligible group who discloses one or more of the following barriers, as well as an additional population, and who expresses interest in receiving additional services from the Veteran Career Planner (in accordance with VPL 05-24):

**Qualifying Employment Barriers:**

- A disability may include any of the following:
  - Any VA Disability Rating
  - Any veteran who self identifies as having a disability – non-VA
- Vietnam-era veterans in which any part of whose active service was during the Vietnam Era
- Is a recently separated veteran who was discharged or released from active duty within the last three years
- Has been referred for employment services by a representative of the Department of Veteran Affairs
- Homeless person (or at risk of being homeless)
- Justice involved
- Veterans aged 18-24 at time of enrollment
- Educationally disadvantaged, meaning, lacks a high school diploma or equivalent
- Economically disadvantaged, which means any of the following:
  - Low income
  - Unemployed
  - Heads of single-parent households containing at least one dependent child

#### Additional Populations:

- Transitioning Service Members (TSM) who, at the time of enrollment have participated in any part of the Transition Assistance Program
- Wounded, ill, or injured members of the Armed Forces who are receiving treatment in military treatment facilities or warrior transition units
- Spouses of other family caregivers of those wounded, ill, or injured service members

All eligible veterans who self-attest to one or more of the qualifying employment barriers (QEB) significant barriers to employment (SBE) criteria, eligible persons who self-attest to one or more of the QEB criteria, and additional populations (who do not require a QEB), will complete a Wagner-Peyser (WP) application before his/her appointment with a Veteran Career Planner. Non-JVSG Career Planners will enroll the veteran into Wagner- Peyser, set the JVSG Eligibility date,

and refer the veteran to the Veteran Career Planner using service code 151 – Referred to VCP DVOP. If available, the Veteran Career Planner will meet with the veteran on the same day that the veteran visits the office; however, if the Veteran Career Planner is not available, the veteran will be served by IowaWORKS team members and an appointment will be scheduled with the Veteran Career Planner as soon as possible. Any services provided by non-JVSG Career Planners will be documented in the IowaWORKS system.

When customers register in IowaWORKS from outside the center and attest to having a QEB, a system-generated email is sent to the office email address and then passed along to the Veteran Career Planner so that they can reach out to the customer and offer services.

## 8. Addressing the Accessibility of the One-Stop Delivery System for Individuals with Disabilities

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

In accordance with Federal regulations, Iowa has developed One-Stop Certification Standards in three areas, all of which are in alignment with Federal requirements and guidance:

1. Physical and Programmatic Accessibility
2. Effectiveness; and
3. Continuous Improvement

The developed process sets standard expectations for a minimum level of quality and consistency of customer-focused services provided by partners in the Iowa workforce delivery system and through IowaWORKS centers across the state. The certification standards in these three areas were developed by the core partners, in consultation with local partner representatives who participated in the development process. To ensure compliance and support, the WIOA core partners and local partner representatives also developed a

certification process guide, recorded training, as well as related tools, to support the official launch of the process.

Three types of certification can be awarded from the One-Stop Center certification review team:

- Full Certification
- Provisional Certification
- Not Certified/ Decertified

A This scoring approach was developed that allows each evaluation team member to individually determine if a standard has been met. The final determination for each category will be based on the number of standards successfully achieved. The evaluation team must reach a consensus on the category decision for determination of certification status. If the recommendation is provisional certification or not certified, the team must clearly describe the specific issues identified for corrective action.

A center that has received provisional certification must be re-evaluated within six months of the initial review. At the six-month review, a decision can be made to remain provisionally certified for no more than an additional six months or to fully certify or de-certify the center. The local area is encouraged to re-evaluate a provisionally certified center as soon as the issues identified by the review team have been resolved.

If a center is not certified or is de-certified, a three-month corrective action plan to either achieve provisional certification or to close/transition services to another center location must be submitted to the State Workforce Development Board. The center must then achieve full certification within six months of being not certified/decertified. State core partners are available to consult on correction action and provide technical assistance throughout the process.

In addition to the process identified, local areas conduct accessibility and assistive technology assessments at the local level. While all standards are critical, the core partner team has made a commitment to ensuring that all future hardware/software within Centers are accessible and are a specific focus of the partners.

Partner staff are cross-trained on Windmills Disability Awareness training to ensure staff understand the culture of disability in the workplace. Additionally, partner staff are offered ADA training where they can become certified ADA trainers. All AJCs are equipped with screen reader technology, and interpretation services are available on-demand for any spoken language and sign language. As

feedback is received from customers or center staff on accessibility issues, the IWD IT and premises teams work to resolve accessibility issues as quickly and effectively as possible. The IWD Business Engagement division recently created a team of business engagement staff specifically to work with employers to identify employers that are accommodation-friendly and work with other employers to educate them on the benefits of hiring Iowans with disabilities, working with those employers to implement accommodations when needed. This team regularly communicates with career planners in the AJCs to share information on job opportunities with accommodation-friendly employers.

## 9. Addressing the Accessibility of the One-Stop Delivery System for Individuals who are English Language Learners

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

One-Stop certification standards set expectations for a minimum level of quality and consistency across three primary areas: physical and programmatic accessibility, effectiveness, and continuous improvement. Iowa's certification standards in these three areas were developed by the WIOA Titles I-IV Core Partners, in consultation with local partner representatives who participated in the development process.

The Physical and Programmatic Accessibility standards align with the One-Stop certification requirements described at 20 CFR 678.800 (as well as 34 CFR 361.800 and 34 CFR 463.800) and in USDOL-ETA's Training and Employment Guidance Letter (TEGL) No. 16-16, "One-Stop Operations Guidance for the American Job Center Network." Per these requirements, certification standards related to physical and programmatic accessibility must include evaluations of how well the center ensures equal opportunity for individuals with disabilities to participate in or benefit from center services. The Physical and Programmatic Accessibility certification standards also address center program, service, and resource accessibility for individuals whose first language is not English and individuals with lower literacy levels.

When a WARN is received, a question on the Employer Questionnaire includes if there are any language barriers of employees for which an interpreter would be needed. In these cases, or in cases where a business has a high population of

employees who are non-English speaking, interpreters are secured and documents are translated to the applicable language(s). Many times, these Worker Information Meetings are recorded so they are easily accessible to other workers who may need to receive the information in the necessary language. This includes the availability of IowaWORKS services.

The American Job Center Division has a Standard Operating Procedure specific to serving English Language Learners in the IowaWORKS centers, which includes providing applicable training or resources that may be needed. TranslateLive devices are in every AJC making it easier to communicate across multiple languages and dialects in real time with diverse, multilingual communities. TranslateLive is utilized for 1:1 conversations and in workshop settings and has increased accessibility to all WIOA programs for our English Language Learners.

The alignment of all WIOA Core programs into one agency, including Title II Adult Education and Literacy programs, will have a substantial impact on the connection of English language learners to all available programs and resources of the workforce system. Training and technical assistance on the services available under the other workforce system programs and the importance of co-enrolling participants for the Adult Education providers in the state has drastically increased in the first six months of program alignment. All policies for the Adult Education and Literacy programs are currently under review and will be updated to include making it mandatory for providers of Adult Education services to provide information on the other available programs and services. Additionally, an increased focus on referrals and co-location of adult education programs will increase the connection between programs for English language learners.

## IV. Coordination with State Plan Programs

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

The alignment of the core WIOA programs and most of the required program's administration into one agency has increased the coordination of the workforce system programs drastically. The Division Administrators of the American Job Center Division, Business Engagement Division, Vocational Rehabilitation Division, and the Workforce Services Division meet on a weekly basis to ensure program planning, design, and implementation is done as a group with the entire

system in mind. This allows leadership to provide input and feedback from different perspectives and ensure decisions are made that will not negatively impact other programs or divisions. Additionally, senior leadership as well as program team members have developed strong working relationships with their peers across divisions and agencies, allowing for collaboration and consultation whenever necessary.

The WIOA Core Partner Working Group, a functional partnership comprised of representatives from the agencies overseeing key workforce programs, continues to govern and carry out many of the key tasks and requirements required by WIOA. The Working Group is charged with collaborating to carry out the vision and strategy established by the Governor and the State Workforce Development Board by developing joint policy and an integrated approach for monitoring, program oversight/support and technical assistance for local service design and delivery. The Group contains an appointed representative, authorized with decision making authority from each of the core partner programs.

The objectives of the WIOA Core Partner Working Group are:

- Ensure policy and guidance issued to the local system is aligned across agencies and programs and advances the objectives of WIOA and the priorities outlined in the State WIOA Plan;
- Develop integrated and collaborative approaches for cross program functions that support the local system including monitoring, performance measurement, resource braiding, and the provision of technical assistance; and
- Support implementation of customer-centered approaches designed to drive continuous improvement of the workforce system to meet the needs of Iowa businesses and individuals.

## V. Common Assurance (For All Core Programs)

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include assurances that —

1. The State has established a policy identifying circumstances that may present a conflict of interest for a State Board or local board member, or the entity or class of officials that the member represents, and procedures to resolve such conflicts; **Yes**
2. The State has established a policy to provide to the public (including individuals with disabilities) access to meetings of State Boards and local

boards, and information regarding activities of State boards and local boards, such as data on board membership and minutes; **Yes**

3. The lead State agencies with optimal policy-making authority and responsibility for the administration of core programs reviewed and commented on the appropriate operational planning elements of the Unified or Combined State Plan, and approved the elements as serving the needs of the populations served by such programs; **Yes**
4. (a) The State obtained input into the development of the Unified or Combined State Plan and provided an opportunity for comment on the plan by representatives of local boards and chief elected officials, businesses, labor organizations, institutions of higher education, the entities responsible for planning or administering the core programs, required one-stop partners and the other Combined Plan programs (if included in the State Plan), other primary stakeholders, including other organizations that provide services to individuals with barriers to employment, and the general public, and that the Unified or Combined State Plan is available and accessible to the general public; **Yes**  
  
(b) The State provided an opportunity for review and comment on the plan by the State Board, including State agency official(s) for the Unemployment Insurance Agency if such official(s) is a member of the State Board; **Yes**
5. The State has established, in accordance with WIOA section 116(i), fiscal control and fund accounting procedures that may be necessary to ensure the proper disbursement of, and accounting for, funds paid to the State through allotments made for the core programs to carry out workforce development activities; **Yes**
6. The State has taken appropriate action to secure compliance with uniform administrative requirements in this Act, including that the State will annually monitor local areas to ensure compliance and otherwise take appropriate action to secure compliance with the uniform administrative requirements under WIOA section 184(a)(3); **Yes**
7. The State has taken the appropriate action to be in compliance with WIOA section 188, Nondiscrimination, as applicable; **Yes**
8. The Federal funds received to carry out a core program will not be expended for any purpose other than for activities authorized with respect to such funds under that core program; **Yes**



9. The State will pay an appropriate share (as defined by the State board) of the costs of carrying out section 116, from funds made available through each of the core programs; **Yes**
10. The State has a One-Stop certification policy that ensures the physical and programmatic accessibility of all One-Stop centers with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA); **Yes**
11. Service providers have a referral process in place for directing Veterans with Significant Barriers to Employment (SBE) to DVOP services, when appropriate; and **Yes**
12. Priority of service for veterans and eligible spouses is provided in accordance with 38 USC 4215 in all workforce preparation, development or delivery of programs or services funded directly, in whole or in part, by the Department of Labor. **Yes**

## VI. Program-Specific Requirements for Core Programs

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

### Program-specific Requirements for Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth Activities under Title I-B

**The Unified or Combined State Plan must include the following with respect to activities carried out under subtitle B--**

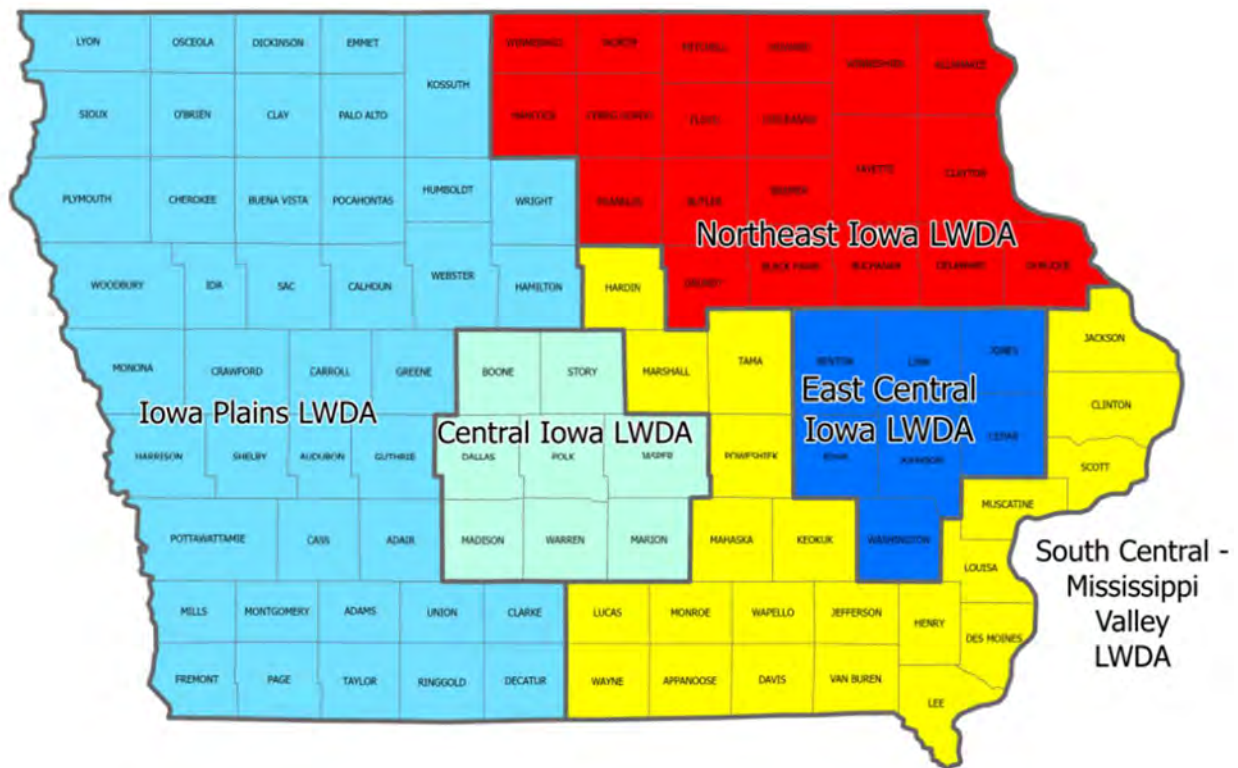
#### a. General Requirements

##### *1. Regions and Local Workforce Development Boards*

##### *A. Identify the regions and the local workforce development areas designated in the State*

Effective July 1, 2026, Iowa is transitioning from 6 Local Workforce Development Areas (LWDA) to 5. The Mississippi Valley and South Central Local Areas are merging to form the Eastern Iowa Local Workforce Development

Area.



### **Northeast Iowa LWDA**

Allamakee, Black Hawk, Bremer, Butler, Buchanan, Cerro Gordo, Chickasaw, Clayton, Delaware, Dubuque, Fayette, Floyd, Franklin, Grundy, Hancock, Howard, Mitchell, Winneshiek, Worth, and Winnebago counties.

### **Central Iowa LWDA**

Boone, Dallas, Jasper, Madison, Marion, Polk, Story, and Warren counties.

### **East Central Iowa LWDA**

Benton, Cedar, Iowa, Johnson, Jones, Linn, and Washington counties.

### **Eastern Iowa LWDA**

Appanoose, Davis, Hardin, Jefferson, Keokuk, Lucas, Mahaska, Marshall, Monroe, Poweshiek, Tama, Wapello, Van Buren, Wayne, Clinton, Des Moines, Henry, Jackson, Lee, Louisa, Muscatine, and Scott counties.

### **Iowa Plains LWDA**

Adair, Adams, Audubon, Buena Vista, Calhoun, Carroll, Cass, Cherokee, Clarke, Clay, Crawford, Decatur, Dickinson, Emmet, Fremont, Greene, Guthrie, Hamilton,

Harrison, Humboldt, Ida, Kossuth, Lyon, Mills, Monona, Montgomery, O'Brien, Osceola, Page, Palo Alto, Plymouth, Pocahontas, Pottawattamie, Ringgold, Sac, Sioux, Shelby, Taylor, Union, Webster, Woodbury, and Wright counties.

B. Describe the process and policy used for designating local areas, including procedures for determining whether the local area met the criteria for “performed successfully” and “sustained fiscal integrity” in accordance with 106(b)(2) and (3) of WIOA. Describe the process used for identifying regions and planning regions under section 106(a) of WIOA. This must include a description of how the State consulted with the local boards and chief elected officials in identifying the regions

Policy 1.1.1.2 outlines Iowa’s policy on designation of local areas and can be found on the ePolicy site: <https://epolicy.iwd.iowa.gov/Policy/Index/230>, also is included below.

The purpose of a Local Workforce Development Area, each with its own Local Workforce Development Board (WDB), is to serve as a jurisdiction for the administration of workforce development activities and execution of Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title I program funds allocated by the Governor through the State workforce agency (Iowa Workforce Development).

### **Local Workforce Development Area Designation**

WIOA at 189(i)(1) states, “A State that has enacted, not later than December 31, 1997, a State law providing for the designation of service delivery areas for the delivery of workforce investment activities, may use such areas as local areas under this title, notwithstanding section 106.” As a result of this provision, the State of Iowa follows Iowa Code Section 84B.3 to designate Local Workforce Development Areas. This Code section allows that, after consultation with applicable Local WDBs and with the approval of the State WDB, IWD may designate Local Workforce Development Areas.

### **Considerations**

IWD may designate or redesignate a Local Workforce Development Area in accordance with this policy, which includes consideration of the extent to which the proposed area:

- Is consistent with labor market areas in the State
- Is consistent with regional economic development areas in the State
- Has the Federal and non-Federal resources, including appropriate education and training institutions, to administer activities under WIOA subtitle B

- Is consistent with population centers
- Is consistent with commuting patterns that demonstrate movement of workers from their residences to their workplaces

### **Process for Designating Local Workforce Development Areas**

IWD shall consult with Local WDBs and Chief Lead Elected Officials (CLEOs). This consultation must include the opportunity for Local WDBs and CLEOs to provide input regarding the proposed designation.

IWD will consider all information gathered during the Local WDB and CLEO consultation process and provide a recommendation for Local Workforce Development Area designation to the State WDB. The State WDB will issue a decision on the designation of Local Workforce Development Areas.

### **Local Workforce Development Area Review**

IWD may review the designation of a Local Workforce Development Area at any time but must review all Local Workforce Development Area designations prior to submitting the Combined or Unified State Plan during each four-year state planning cycle. Reviews are performed to ensure the Local Workforce Development Area is meeting the requirements for redesignation as it relates to:

- Consistency with labor markets in the State
- Consistency with regional economic development areas in the State
- Whether the Local Workforce Development Area has the Federal and non-Federal resources, including appropriate education and training institutions, to administer activities under WIOA subtitle B
- Consistency with commuting patterns that demonstrate movement of workers from their residences to their workplaces
- Whether the Local Workforce Development Area, in the prior two program years, met or exceeded the adjusted levels of performance for primary indicators of performance or the common measures
- Whether the Local Workforce Development Area has the capacity to manage funds, provide oversight of programs, and provide for the proper stewardship of public funds
- Whether the Local Workforce Development Area met the local planning requirements outlined in the state and local plans
- Whether a Local Workforce Development Area in a planning region met the regional planning requirements outlined in both the state and regional plans

If IWD's review determines that a Local Workforce Development Area or areas does not meet the requirements for redesignation, IWD, following established processes for Local Workforce Development Area designation, will redesignate or realign Local Workforce Development Areas to ensure compliance with WIOA legislation and state policies.

The creation of the Eastern Iowa LWDA effective July 1, 2026, is the result of a unanimous request by the Chief Elected Officials of all 22 counties that make up the new LWDA. On August 14, 2025, the Chief Lead Elected Officials of the existing South Central LWDA and Mississippi Valley LWDA submitted a letter to the State Workforce Development Board requesting approval to merge into one LWDA effective July 1, 2026. At the August 25, 2025, SWDB meeting, the Board held a discussion on the topic, hearing directly from the CLEOs about the consultation process they used to reach their decision and request. The SWDB unanimously approved the request, creating the new LWDB effective July 1, 2026. The Eastern Iowa LWDA has been provided WIOA transition funds pursuant to 20 CFR 679.280 and is currently working to establish a LWDB for the new area, including executing a shared liability agreement, Board bylaws, and other activities that will support the efficient and effective deployment of the new LWDA on July 1, 2026.

#### C. Provide the appeals process and policy referred to in section 106(b)(5) of WIOA relating to designation of local areas

Policy 1.1.1.2 outlines Iowa's policy on appealing a designation decision found on the ePolicy site: <https://epolicy.iwd.iowa.gov/Policy/Index/230>, and is included below.

#### Appealing a Designation Decision

A Local WDB chair or CLEO may appeal a designation decision to the State WDB within 30 calendar days of the date such designation is approved by the State WDB.

Appeals must include the following information:

- Intent or notice to appeal
- Name and contact information of the Local WDB chair or CLEO filing the appeal

- Provide justification for the appeal, including the reason the Local Workforce Development Area disagrees with the decision and a proposed alternative Local Workforce Development Area designation as outlined under the Local Workforce Development Area Designation section of this policy.
- Signature and date of the Local WDB chair or CLEO

The appeal must be submitted electronically to the State WDB at: [WIOAgovernance@iwd.iowa.gov](mailto:WIOAgovernance@iwd.iowa.gov).

The State WDB will review the appeal, provide the appellant with the opportunity for a hearing at the next regularly scheduled State WDB meeting, and make a ruling on the appeal within 30 calendar days of that meeting. The State WDB shall notify the Local WDB chair or CLEO in writing of its decision.

In accordance with the WIOA regulations, in the event the State WDB denies the appeal or fails to issue a decision within 30 calendar days following the State WDB meeting that considered the appeal, the Local WDB or CLEO may further appeal the State WDBs decision, or lack thereof, to the Secretary of the United States Department of Labor (USDOL). The appeal must be filed within 30 calendar days from the receipt of the written notification of the State WDBs denial or failure to issue a decision.

The appellant must establish in its appeal to the USDOL that the appellant was not afforded procedural rights under the appeal process set forth in this policy, or that it meets the requirements for local designation provided under state Local Workforce Development Area Designation criteria.

The appeal must be submitted by certified mail, with return receipt requested, to: Secretary, U.S. Department of Labor, 200 Constitution Avenue NW, Washington, DS 20210, Attention: ASET.

A copy of the appeal must be submitted to the State WDB at: [WIOAgovernance@iwd.iowa.gov](mailto:WIOAgovernance@iwd.iowa.gov) at the same time the appellant sends the appeal to USDOL.

#### D. Provide the appeals process and policy referred to in section 121(h)(2)(E) of WIOA relating to determinations for infrastructure funding

Per state policy [1.4.10 Memorandum of Understanding](#), the appeals process is as follows:

Any Local Workforce Development Board (WDB) or One-Stop required partner may appeal for cause, within 10 business days, the Governor's determination

regarding the portion of funds (or non-cash contributions) it is to provide for One-Stop infrastructure costs.

WIOA stipulates that the State mechanism allocation determination may be appealed only if the determination is inconsistent with the requirements of WIOA sec. 121(h)(2)(E). The Final Rule further limits admissible grounds for an appeal to three possibilities. The appellant must make a case that the State's determination is inconsistent with the:

- Proportionate-share requirements
- Cost-contribution limitations
- Cost-contribution caps

To be officially received, an appeal must fully contain and evidence the following:

- An introduction identifying the appellant and designating the correspondence letter as a formal appeal.
- Full citations from WIOA or the corresponding regulations that support the appeal.
- Identify the basis for the appeal.
- Signature and date of the appellant.

The appeal must be submitted electronically to:  
[WIOAgovernance@iwd.iowa.gov](mailto:WIOAgovernance@iwd.iowa.gov).

The state shall review the appeal and documentary evidence submitted by the board or one-stop partner for the grounds that the governor's determination was inconsistent with proportionate-share requirements, cost-contribution limitations, or cost-contribution caps. Additional information may be requested, or an investigation conducted if necessary. A written response/decision will be issued within 20 business days of the receipt of the appeal.

Appellants who do not receive a decision within 20 business days or who received an adverse decision may file an appeal with the State WDB. The appeal must be filed in writing within 10 business days after the adverse decision was received or if no decision is received. Upon receiving an appeal, the State WDB will review the appeal and issue a final decision within 20 business days after the appeal was filed.



## *2. Statewide Activities*

### *A. Provide State policies or guidance for the statewide workforce development system and for use of State funds for workforce investment activities*

Policy is maintained on a public [ePolicy](#) website that includes Iowa's WIOA related policies, both administrative and programmatic. To date, policy chapters include Administration and Governance which details out guidance and requirements for the administrative pieces of the workforce development system in Iowa, Eligible Training Provider List, Title IB Programs, Title IB Programs Oversight and Monitoring, Registered Apprenticeship. With program alignment, Iowa will work towards maximizing the use of the ePolicy website by aligning WIOA policy and including additional partner policies.

Iowa also utilizes various Standard Operating Procedures to guide the provision of services under WIOA. Additional guidance is disseminated via field memos, desk aids, standard operating procedures, webinars, and technical assistance sessions.

The State of Iowa provides several sources of State funding to aid the workforce development system in the state. These funds are used in accordance with state law. If State funds are passed through to third parties, such as state funding for Intermediary Networks, IWD follows State procurement laws to ensure funding is utilized effectively and fairly.

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

Governor's set aside funding is available for a variety of activities. To prioritize projects a Special Projects Team was assembled to identify areas of need or interest where a statewide project would be beneficial. This team is responsible for project planning and implementation. All special projects are reviewed and approved by the Governor.

Beginning in PY2025, IWD will utilize Governor's reserve funds to support projects that include an Incumbent Worker Training Grant for employers to upskill current employees,

The incumbent worker training program is designed to off-set a portion of skills-based training costs for incumbent workers employed by Iowa's private sector. Funding will be provided directly to Iowa businesses in in-demand industries through a competitive funding opportunity. Grant awards may vary in amounts as determined by the scope outlined in their application. IWD will seek to



maximize grant awards to those programs which demonstrate the most significant programming and project responses, and for those whose projects indicate the possibility of the most significant community impacts.

Governor's reserve funds will also be used to fund a pilot program for youth apprenticeship activities in coordination with the WIOA Title I Youth program,

Additionally, set aside funds are used to provide Iowa's [WIOA e-Policy](#) website, a one-stop shop for state policies and procedures for WIOA Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs.

Set aside funds are also being used to support the transition of the South Central LWDA and the Mississippi Valley LWDA into one new LWDA, the Eastern Iowa LWDA, as required by 20 CFR 679.280.

In regard to evaluation, Iowa Workforce Development (IWD) has an MOU in place with Iowa State University and Iowa's Integrated Data System for Decision Making (I2D2) to assist with WIOA Title I Evaluation in accordance with 20 CFR § 682.220. The project has begun with a pilot and planning effort to evaluate Iowa's WIOA Title I programs. IWD's Workforce Services Division is responsible for overseeing this work and has dedicated \$41,023.00 of state set-aside funds to support the initial planning phase of this project.

The planning phase includes the following:

- A comprehensive inventory of existing administrative data systems that contain relevant information to inform study of Iowa's WIOA Title I programs.
- Acquire WIOA datasets from IWD and conduct a rigorous quality exploration to inform future data collection and evaluation efforts. Secure datasets and existing data documentation, profiling dataset contents, exploring patterns within data, and developing preliminary codebooks to aid development of analytic/evaluation approaches.
- Development of an evaluation plan that includes scope of possible evaluation questions that can be addressed with IWD data and possibly with other I2D2 data holdings, datasets and elements necessary to address IWD priority questions, proposed analyses, evaluation timelines, and budget estimates for the work to address IWD's evaluation goals.

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

As part of Iowa's comprehensive Rapid Response strategy, Iowa Workforce Development (IWD) ensures that Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) have access to the resources necessary to respond effectively to dislocation events. When a layoff or plant closure occurs, the need for additional funding is assessed during the development of the Rapid Response plan. If it is determined that existing resources are insufficient to meet the needs of affected workers, LWDBs may request Rapid Response Additional Assistance (RRAA) funds.

RRAA funds are event-driven and may be used to provide direct career services to dislocated workers, including basic, individualized, and follow-up services as defined in 20 CFR 678.430. These funds are intended to supplement WIOA Title I Dislocated Worker formula funds when those resources are insufficient due to:

- A natural disaster
- A mass layoff or plant closure
- A substantial increase in the number of unemployed individuals in a local area

To be eligible for RRAA, LWDBs must demonstrate that at least 70% of their current and previous program year's Dislocated Worker Title I funds have been obligated. The request process includes:

- Completion of the RRAA Request Form
- Submission of a detailed Budget Narrative
- Submission of all materials to: [Dislocated.Worker@iwd.iowa.gov](mailto:Dislocated.Worker@iwd.iowa.gov)

Approval of RRAA requests is based on the availability of state funds, the completeness of submitted documentation, and a review of past performance in the Dislocated Worker program.

IWD's Business Engagement Division plays a key role in Iowa's layoff aversion strategy. A team of regionally based Business Engagement Consultants (BECs) proactively serve employers across the state, offering guidance, resources, and workforce solutions tailored to the employer's position in the business cycle—whether they are exploring and building, surviving a slowdown, or expanding and developing.

BECs work closely with employers to identify workforce challenges early and connect them with appropriate services, including:

- Customized recruitment and retention strategies
- Access to training and upskilling programs
- Support navigating economic transitions

The Iowa Workforce System Rapid Response Process and Procedure Guide outlines layoff aversion strategies as defined in 20 CFR 682.320 and provides practical examples of how these strategies are implemented within Iowa's public workforce system.

While historically underutilized in Iowa, Incumbent Worker Training is gaining traction as a viable layoff aversion tool. Several Local Workforce Development Areas (LWDAs) have begun planning and implementing IWT initiatives to help employers retain skilled workers and remain competitive. At the state level, IWD is actively exploring broader implementation of IWT as part of its long-term workforce strategy.

#### [D. Describe the State policies and procedures to provide Rapid Responses in cases of natural disasters including coordination with FEMA and other entities.](#)

Following confirmation of a natural disaster, the State Rapid Response (RR) Coordinator will coordinate with Local Workforce Development Boards and IowaWORKS leadership to quickly begin the rapid response process for an organized, multifaceted response. The State RR Coordinator and local IowaWORKS leadership will determine if there is a need for a mobile one-stop unit. The local office or mobile one-stop will assist those affected by the natural disaster in filing an Unemployment Claim or disaster unemployment assistance claim. The State RR Coordinator will coordinate with Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) or other disaster-response organizations to assist those in the affected area.

Contact will be made with the company(s) and labor officials where applicable, affected by the natural disaster to hold an Employer Meeting. This meeting can be conducted via phone or virtually as the need arises. Information will be gathered on workforce and determine the best plan for Worker Information Meetings. The company will need to send Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification (WARN) to the employees' last known address, even if their homes were destroyed.

Worker Information Meetings are conducted in the same format as regular layoff notifications. The Dislocated Worker Survey will be given to all those attending

to gather demographic information for potential emergency grant applications. Information will be given on services available through the IowaWORKS centers including Unemployment Insurance benefits, finding new employment, career counseling, training in a new career, and the impact of the layoff with regards to health care. Other state agencies or community-based organizations are invited to participate in the meeting to help workers adjust in a time of crisis.

E. Describe how the State provides early intervention (e.g., Rapid Response) and ensures the provision of appropriate career services to worker groups on whose behalf a Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) petition has been filed. (Section 134(a)(2)(A) and TAA Section 221(a)(2)(A) .) This description must include how the State disseminates benefit information to provide workers in the groups identified in the TAA petitions with an accurate understanding of the provision of TAA benefits and services in such a way that they are transparent to the dislocated worker applying for them (Trade Act Sec. 221(a)(2)(A) and Sec. 225; Governor-Secretary Agreement). Describe how the State will use funds that have been reserved for Rapid Response to provide services for every worker group that files a TAA petition and how the state will ensure the provision of appropriate career service to workers in the groups identified in the petition (TAA Sec. 221(a)(2)(A)). NOTE: until the TAA PROGRAM is reauthorized, the requirements to provide rapid response and appropriate career services to worker groups on whose behalf a petition has been filed is not applicable.

Iowa's Rapid Response procedures are outlined in an Iowa Workforce System Rapid Response Process and Procedure guide available to all staff on an accessible SharePoint site. Although WARNs are received by the State Rapid Response Coordinator, the local area for which the layoff has occurred is generally responsible for the administration and delivery of rapid response services. This is done through the Local Rapid Response Team (LRRT).

The Local Rapid Response Team (LRRT) is comprised of individuals that provide information, resources, and services to assist affected employers and workers. The LRRT will oversees planning implementation, and tracking/reporting of Rapid Response services, including Layoff Aversion at the local level.

The LRRT must include representation from the following partner programs to include, but is not limited to:

- WIOA Title I
- Wagner Peyser – Title III
- Local Trade Coordinators
- Business Engagement representative

Additional partner programs may be added to the team based on the unique circumstances of an event and specific needs of the impacted business and workers. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- Department of Human Services
- Adult and Basic Education
- Iowa Vocation Rehabilitation Business Services representative
- Local Veterans Employment Representative (LVER)

A Local Rapid Response Team Lead (LRRTL) must be identified and responsibilities at a minimum, include:

- Engaging in regular two-way communication with the State Rapid Response Coordinator (SRRC) and local system partners.
- Coordinating business and job seeker services across partners; and
- Ensuring Rapid Response activities are reported accurately and timely in IowaWORKS and preparing accurate and timely reports for the LWDB.

Early intervention is provided to impacted worker groups through a functionally aligned and coordinated effort between state and local area staff. Providing early intervention both prior to and immediately following dislocations where TAA benefits may be available is an essential component to ensuring those affected receive information detailing the comprehensive services offered through TAA and its partner programs.

The process begins with State Rapid Response and TAA Program Coordinators reviewing WARN notices, and other layoff notifications, to make an initial determination regarding potential Trade eligible factors evident in the layoff. Trade Program Coordinators attend all initial rapid response meetings with company officials to explain the benefits of the Trade program and discuss the potential for a Trade certification based on the dislocation circumstances. As soon as evidence of Trade impact is identified and if a petition has not already been filed, the state TAA program coordinator submits a petition to DOL. While awaiting a determination, TAA program information is disseminated to impacted workers at Rapid Response Worker Information Meetings (WIMs). In addition to an overview of all benefits available to dislocated workers, these meetings provide basic Trade program information while emphasizing that these benefits will be accessible if the petition is certified. Additionally, a brochure containing information on TAA program benefits is provided to all potentially Trade eligible workers.

Upon certification of a Trade petition, Trade specific WIMs are scheduled, and targeted outreach is conducted to notify impacted workers of eligibility and disseminate program information.

Workers are notified by various methods including mailed letters, emails, newspaper publications, and any other means necessary to reach all workers certified under the petition. State staff coordinate with the employer and local area staff to host in-person WIMs at various locations and times to ensure all workers receive the information. For example, if a manufacturing plant that runs three shifts is closing and is trade certified before the layoff occurs, WIMs are held on location at the plant at the beginning of each of the three shifts. If WIMs are unable to be held on-site at the employer, they will be held at the AJC, other community locations, or virtually if needed. These meetings provide a full presentation on all Trade benefits, including: Training (including Registered Apprenticeships and OJTs), Job Search Assistance, Relocation Assistance, RTAA, TRA, and Case Management. Eligibility requirements are reviewed, including providing workers with the information specific to their corresponding Trade petition needed to apply for benefits. Additionally, IowaWORKS Career Planners (case managers) are in attendance at the WIMs, to introduce themselves, provide contact information, and begin assisting workers with applications. This comprehensive approach provides impacted workers with all necessary information on the TAA program and a clear path forward to apply for and utilize the available benefits.

Due to the TAA termination provisions that took effect July 1, 2022, the Department of Labor cannot conduct new investigations or issue certifications of eligibility for new groups of workers. However, workers who were separated or threatened and covered under petitions certified on or before 06/30/2022, may still have benefits and services. Currently enrolled participants continue with their training uninterrupted, and eligible participants can apply for TAA benefits and services as usual.

## **b. Adult and Dislocated Workers Program Requirements**

### *1. Work-Based Training Models*

Governor Reynolds and Iowa workforce system partners are intensely focused on work-based learning as an effective training model. Beyond the work-based learning services offered through WIOA programming such as on-the-job training, incumbent worker training, customized training, etc.,

Another opportunity that has bolstered work-based learning across the state includes the Summer Youth Internship Program. Iowa's Summer Youth Internship

Grant program supports the creation of internship programs for Iowa's youth between the ages of 14 and 24 that help prepare them for high-demand careers in the workforce. Eligible grant applicants include non-profits, educational institutions, employers, and community organizations. The target audience for participants includes high school youth who are at risk of not graduating, from low-income households, from communities underrepresented in the Iowa workforce, or youth who otherwise face barriers to success and upward mobility in the labor market.

The most recent round of funding focused on supporting youth internships in high-demand careers. \$379,000 of Federal and State funding supported 8 projects and an estimated 176 program participants. Priority funding was awarded to projects that included a focus on high-demand careers and the recruitment of at-risk youth participants – including youth who face barriers to success and upward mobility in the workforce. Grant funds supported participant wages and compensation, training resources and supplies, as well as other program and administrative costs. Projects were encouraged to co-enroll participants in the WIOA Title I Youth Program in their local area, thereby ensuring coordination and connection to local resources supporting Iowa's youth.

## *2. Registered Apprenticeship*

**Describe how the State will incorporate Registered Apprenticeship into its strategy for service design and delivery (e.g., job center staff taking applications and conducting assessments).**

One key priority includes expansion of Work-Based Learning opportunities and to assist every high school in developing youth apprenticeship programs.

- Youth Apprenticeship is a new initiative out of the Iowa Office of Apprenticeship focused on a structured career exploration opportunity mimicked off the Registered Apprenticeship model for 16–18-year-old high-school students.
- This paid opportunity gives students an opportunity to grow and develop employability skills; strategic for future employment while getting “on-the-job” learning opportunities from industry leaders.

To support this, intensive registered apprenticeship outreach will be conducted to business, industry, economic development organizations, high schools, higher education entities, nonprofits, Area Education Agencies, etc. A strategic marketing campaign will accompany these efforts by promoting high school apprenticeship, quality pre-apprenticeships and internships, along with a clearly

designated location where employers, schools, students and parents can request assistance. Lastly, a Work-Based Learning Team – led by IWD and the Governor’s STEM Advisory Council has been established to set additional goals for expanding work-based learning strategies to meet those goals.

The Iowa Office of Apprenticeship was officially established on July 1, 2023, and codified under the Registered Apprenticeship Act (Chapter 84D of the Iowa Code). Official duties of the office include but are not limited to:

- To serve as the state registration agency
- To establish labor standards for quality pre-apprenticeship, youth apprenticeships, registered apprenticeships, and apprenticeships
- To establish rules regarding the registration of quality pre-apprenticeship programs, registered youth apprenticeship programs, registered apprenticeship programs, and apprenticeship programs in the state when the sponsor of such programs chooses to certify or register programs with the office
- To resolve disputes between parties to an apprenticeship agreement

Upon establishment of a specific team for coordinated and integrated RA efforts, Iowa Workforce Development worked throughout the FY2024 to submit and finalize a formal application with the federal Office of Apprenticeship (within Department of Labor) to file to become a State Apprenticeship Agency (SAA). On June 27, 2024, Iowa Workforce Development (and more specifically the Iowa Office of Apprenticeship) secured formal recognition from the federal Department of Labor Office of Apprenticeship (OA) to become the 30<sup>th</sup> SAA state. The establishment of the Iowa Office of Apprenticeship and our designation as an SAA state has been instrumental in increasing registered apprenticeships in the state.

At the conclusion of Fiscal Year 2025, the Iowa Office of Apprenticeship had over 918 active registered apprenticeship programs and over 2,100 employers engaged through the state. These programs focused on RA occupations in advanced manufacturing, health care, education, energy, construction, transportation, information technology and other fields; with active registration 9,100 active apprentices at the end of fiscal year 2025.

The state of Iowa has been successful in growing its registered apprenticeships and the number of registered apprentices, as demonstrated in the below table.



| Performance Metric                                 | FFY  | FFY  |
|----------------------------------------------------|------|------|
|                                                    | 2024 | 2025 |
| Total “New” Programs Registered during the FFY     | 100  | 109  |
| Total “Active” Programs at the end of the FFY      | 991  | 948  |
| Total “New” Apprentices enrolled during the FFY    | 4381 | 4776 |
| Total “Active” Apprentices at the end of the FFY   | 9432 | 9678 |
| Total Apprentices who “Completed” their RA Program | 1978 | 2281 |

### *3. Training Provider Eligibility Procedure*

**Provide the procedure, eligibility criteria, and information requirements for determining training provider initial and continued eligibility, including Registered Apprenticeship programs (WIOA Section 122).**

Iowa's state policies that describe the procedure, eligibility criteria, and information requirements for determining training provider eligibility, including Registered Apprenticeship programs, are provided below. Iowa understands these policies meet the minimum requirements for ETPL. We are reviewing these policies and considering updating them to include more rigorous requirements.

**Iowa policy 7.2 Training Provider Eligibility:** provided below and located at: <https://epolicy.iwd.iowa.gov/Policy/Index/108>

Providers may be eligible to receive training funds for participants who enroll in training services under WIOA Title I. Only eligible training providers and their eligible programs will be included in Iowa’s Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL).

### **Potential Eligible Training Providers**

Potential Eligible Training Providers include entities that provide a program of training services and must be one of the following types:

- Institutions of higher education that provide a program which leads to a recognized post-secondary credential
- An entity that carries out programs registered under the National Apprenticeship Act. Registered Apprenticeship programs will be included and maintained on the ETPL for as long as the program remains registered under the National Apprenticeship Act.
- Other public or private providers of training, which may include:
- Community Based Organizations (CBOs) or private organizations of demonstrated effectiveness that provide training under contract with the Local Board
- Joint labor-management organizations
- Eligible providers of adult education and literacy activities under Title II of WIOA, if such activities are provided in combination with training services described at 20 CFR § 680.350.

Training providers may be classroom based, online based, or outside of the state. Providers of all types are required to meet the same eligibility and performance criteria. A provider must be in statutory compliance with Iowa laws in relation to operation as a training education institution.

Providers of on-the-job training, customized training, incumbent worker training, internships, paid or unpaid work experience, or transitional jobs are not subject to ETPL requirements.

### **Provider Registration**

All providers who seek to be included on Iowa's ETPL must complete the registration process via the data management system located at <http://www.iowaworks.gov>. After provider registration has been completed, training program applications must also be submitted through the data management system. Please see the Initial Eligibility policy and the Iowa Eligible Training Provider User Guide for more information.

After a provider is successfully registered in the system, all changes in required information must be reported within ten days of the change through entry in the data management system. See the Iowa Eligible Training Provider User Guide for a list of required fields.

### **Iowa Policy 7.3: Training Program Eligibility:**

A program of training services is defined as one or more courses or classes, or a structured regimen that leads to:

- An industry-recognized certificate or certification, a certificate of completion of a Registered Apprenticeship, a license recognized by the State involved or the Federal government, an associate or baccalaureate degree
- A secondary school diploma or its equivalent
- Employment; or
- Measurable skill gains toward such a credential or employment

Training services may be delivered in person, online, or in a blended approach. Training programs must make every effort to provide training services that are physically and programmatically accessible for individuals who are employed and individuals with barriers to employment, including individuals with disabilities.

After a program is approved in the system, all changes in required information must be reported within ten days of the change through entry in the data management system. See the Iowa Eligible Training Provider User Guide for a list of required fields.

**Iowa Policy 7.3.1 Initial Eligibility:** provided below and located at: <https://epolicy.iwd.iowa.gov/Policy/Index/115>

In order to determine initial eligibility, a training provider is required to provide the following program specific information for each program of training services at initial application.

### **Information Submission Requirements**

After Provider Registration is complete in the data management system, an application for each education and training program must also be completed via the Iowa Workforce Development data management system located at <http://www.iowaworks.gov>.

When completing an application, the following information is required:

- Description of each program of training to be offered
- Information addressing a factor related to the indicators of performance as described in WIOA
- Description of whether the provider is in a partnership with a business
- Information which demonstrates high quality training services that leads to recognized post-secondary credentials

- Description of how the training program(s) align with in-demand industries and occupations, as identified in State or Local Plans

Completing all required fields in the application will meet the above requirements. Programs which are approved receive initial eligibility for one year. Once initial eligibility expires, these programs will be subject to the Continued Eligibility policy.

**Iowa Policy 7.10 Registered Apprenticeship:** provided below and located at: <https://epolicy.iwd.iowa.gov/Policy/Index/119>

All Registered Apprenticeship Programs registered under the National Apprenticeship Act with the U.S. Department of Labor/Office of Apprenticeship are exempt from initial eligibility procedures and are automatically eligible to be included on the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL). Although they are automatically eligible for inclusion on the ETPL, in accordance with TEGL 8-19, Change 1, Registered Apprenticeships sponsors must opt-in to be included on the State approved ETPL. Not all Registered Apprenticeship sponsors are currently hiring new apprentices and may not want to be included on the ETPL as an eligible provider.

Registered Apprenticeship sponsors that opt-in to the ETPL must be included and maintained on the list of eligible providers of training services as long as the corresponding program remains registered. All Registered Apprenticeship programs added to the State approved ETPL list, must also be added to any existing local workforce development area ETP list.

All Registered Apprenticeship programs qualify as in-demand occupations in Iowa.

### **Adding New Registered Apprenticeship Programs**

Registered Apprenticeship Sponsors who opt-in to be included on Iowa's ETPL are verified by the Iowa Office of Apprenticeship. The Iowa Office of Apprenticeship Administrative Specialist obtains the required information from the Registered Apprenticeship Sponsor and submits the program information in the provider account in the data management system. The ETPL Program Coordinator reviews the Registered Apprenticeship program submission and approves it for inclusion on Iowa's ETPL.

Prior to the expiration of the eligibility period, the Iowa Office of Apprenticeship Administrative Specialist will verify the Registered Apprenticeship program remains registered. Once verified, the Iowa Office of Apprenticeship

Administrative Specialist will renew the information in their provider account in the data management system. Subsequently, the ETPL Program Coordinator will review and approve the program for continued ETPL inclusion. If the Registered Apprenticeship program is deregistered, the program will be removed from the ETPL.

### **Termination of Registration**

Once included on the Iowa ETPL, Registered Apprenticeship Programs will remain on the list of eligible training providers until:

- They are deregistered,
- They notify Iowa Workforce Development that the program no longer wants to be on the list, or
- It is determined that they have intentionally supplied inaccurate information or have substantially violated any provision of WIOA Title I or WIOA Regulations. See the Registered Apprenticeship (RA) Programs on Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) policy for more information.
- **Iowa Policy 7.3.2 Continued Eligibility:** provided below and located at: <https://epolicy.iwd.iowa.gov/Policy/Index/114>

Prior to the end of the initial eligibility period, providers who wish to have each of their education and training programs continue to be included on the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) must complete a review of continued eligibility. After the first continued eligibility determination, programs will be reviewed for continued eligibility on a biennial basis.

### **Information Submission Requirements**

For continued eligibility of programs, the provider must submit the following information through the renewal process in the data management system located at <http://www.iowaworks.gov>:

- Program-specific performance information regarding participants, including:
  - The percentage of program participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter and fourth quarter after exit from the program
  - The median earnings of program participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the program
  - The percentage of program participants who obtain a recognized postsecondary credential, or a secondary school diploma or its

- recognized equivalent, during participation in or within one (1) year after exit from the program
  - Information on recognized post-secondary credentials received by program participants
  - Cost of attendance, including the cost of tuition and fees
  - Completion Rate
- A description of how the provider provides access to training services, including to rural areas, including the use of technology
- A description of the degree to which training program(s) align with in-demand industries and occupations in the State, as identified in State and Local Plans
- Any applicable state licensure requirements of training providers
- A description of training provider's ability to offer industry-recognized certificates and/or credentials through the program
- A description of training provider's ability to offer programs that lead to post-secondary credentials
- A description of the quality of the program of training services including a program that leads to a recognized post-secondary credential
- A description of the ability of the providers to provide training services that are physically and programmatically accessible for individuals who are employed and individuals with barriers to employment, including individuals with disabilities
- The timeliness and accuracy of the eligible training provider's performance reports
- Relevant information reported to State agencies on Federal and State training programs other than programs within WIOA Title I
- Other factors determined by the Governor

Iowa's WIOA compliant data management system, IowaWORKS, requires providers to submit the required data elements for all students in a training program including WIOA participants. Once submitted by providers, it is reviewed by the ETPL Program Coordinator and approved accordingly. Data is then shown on the customer facing side of [www.iowaworks.gov](http://www.iowaworks.gov) for each program approved on the ETPL.

*4. Describe how the State will implement and monitor for the Adult Priority of Service requirement in WIOA section 134 (c)(3)(E) that requires American Job Center staff, when using WIOA Adult program funds to provide individualized career services and training services, to give priority of service to recipients of public assistance, low-income individuals, and individuals who are basic skills deficient (including English language learners).*

### **Adult Priority of Service Implementation**

Iowa Workforce Development (IWD) ensures compliance with the WIOA Adult Priority of Service requirement under Section 134(c)(3)(E) by prioritizing individualized career and training services funded by the WIOA Adult program to recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals, and individuals who are basic skills deficient, including English language learners. This requirement is applied regardless of overall funding availability.

Priority of service is implemented in accordance with State Policy 8.3.3.2 and applied in the following order:

Veterans and eligible spouses who are also recipients of public assistance, low-income, or basic skills deficient

Non-Veterans who are recipients of public assistance, low-income, or basic skills deficient

Veterans and eligible spouses not included in the priority groups

Individuals with barriers to employment as defined in WIOA Section 3(24) and as further designated by IWD on behalf of the Governor

Non-Veterans outside the priority groups

Each LWDB must maintain their local plan, policies and procedures for determining and applying priority of service.

### **Adult Priority of Service Monitoring**

IWD ensures compliance with the Adult Priority of Service requirement through annual compliance monitoring conducted in accordance with State Policies 9.1 through 9.1.4. Monitoring includes review of participant eligibility documentation, local policies, and service delivery data to confirm that priority populations are appropriately identified and served.

IWD also monitors statewide data to ensure that at least 75 percent of participants receiving individualized career or training services in the Adult program are from at least one of the priority groups, as required by TEGL 07-20.

Through established policy, local implementation, data review, and annual monitoring, Iowa ensures that the WIOA Adult Priority of Service requirement is applied consistently and that program resources are directed to those most in need.

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

Field Information Memo: 21-01 outlines the process for the transfer of funds between Adult and Dislocated Worker programs. WIOA 683.130, and Iowa procedure accordingly, allows up to 100 percent of a program year allocation for Adult and Dislocated Worker funds to be transferred between Adult and Dislocated Worker programs. The following process must be used when initiating transfer of funds between programs.

To request a transfer of funds, the LWDB Chair is required to complete the WIOA Title IB Adult and Dislocated Worker Transfer of Funds Request Form by April 30th of the program year. The following information must be included in the request:

- Amount of funds requested to be transferred, including which program and funding allotment the funds are requested to be transferred to and from.
- Current labor market information and/or general economic conditions of the local area to assess justification for the request to transfer the funds, for example, current unemployment rates that explain the need for more or less funding in one program or information on a mass layoff event in the local area.
- Summarization of the outreach process the LWDB has used to recruit and market the availability of services for the programs.

Once this process has been completed, a program coordinator provides IWD Financial Management with a signed copy of the WIOA Title IB Adult and Dislocated Worker Transfer of Funds Request Form to initiate the transfer of funds.

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

Iowa's co-enrollment procedure includes Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth, Title III Wagner-Peyser, Ticket to Work, Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker



(MSFW), Returning Citizens, Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and Registered Apprenticeship (RA).

The procedure includes 100% co-enrollment between Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) and Dislocated Workers who are Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) certified and co-enrollment with other programs when it is beneficial to the customer. The use of Integrated Resource Teams is encouraged to maximize the benefits of co-enrollment without placing a burden on the customer while ensuring all programs have met their individual program policy requirements.

The Core Partner Working Group will conduct research on if policy is needed related to co-enrollment across programs in addition to the current procedure.

Across programs, emphasis is placed on working, and supporting, individuals through their career pathway and goals. The time in which a customer may actively participate in a program differs based upon many factors. However, under common exit, the participant must complete services from all programs in which they are co-enrolled in order to exit from the system. In Iowa, common exit applies to participants who are co-enrolled in Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth, Title III Wagner-Peyser, Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA), National Dislocated Worker Grants (NDWG) and Jobs for Veterans State Grant (JVSG).

The co-enrollment procedure is on an accessible SharePoint site that houses procedures, desk-aids, training, etc. Training on co-enrollment has been provided to all local areas within the last program year, and targeted local area training occurs on an as needed basis.

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

Rapid Response teams work with employers and any employee representative(s) to quickly maximize public and private resources to minimize disruptions associated with job loss. Rapid Response can provide customized services on-site at an affected company, accommodate any work schedules, and assist companies and workers through the painful transitions associated with job loss.

The Rapid Response process and procedure is shared jointly by Iowa Workforce Development (IWD) and the Local Workforce Development Boards. IWD is responsible for obtaining the layoff notification and monitoring of the event,

while local areas are responsible for information gathering, service delivery and tracking and reporting.

Standard Services are provided at the Worker Information Meeting. Based on the needs of the affected workers, Expanded Services may also be provided at the Worker Information Meeting. Standard services include provision of information regarding:

- Unemployment Insurance
- Training Services
- Career Services
- Insurance and retirement
  - COBRA- USDOL Employment Benefit Security Administration
- Trade Adjustment Assistance
- Adult Education- based on need
- Vocational Rehabilitation- based on need
- Outline next steps for affected workers
  - Schedule appointment with Career Planner, etc.
  - Career Planner may set up Office Hours at company location

Expanded Services includes the Standard Services plus additional activities developed and/or organized specifically for the affected workers of a specific dislocation event. Expanded Services can be delivered at the same event as the Worker Information Meeting(s) or at a different date, time, and location.

Examples of Expanded Services include, but are not limited to:

- Job Fair (can be provided in multiple formats: in-person, virtual, drive-through)
- Workshops
  - Resume writing
  - Interview Skills
  - Money Management

Rapid Response services (Standard and Expanded) are one on-ramp or entry point for an affected worker to access the myriads of services available to dislocated workers in the IowaWORKS system.

The Trade Program Coordinator provides one-on-one training and technical assistance to the remaining TAA local area staff when needed. The training and technical assistance ensures the TAA program is conducted in accordance with Federal and State policy.

Due to the TAA termination provisions that took effect on July 1, 2022, the Department of Labor cannot conduct new investigations or issue certifications of eligibility for new groups or workers. However, workers who were separated or threatened and covered under petitions certified on or before 6/30/2022, may still have benefits and services. Currently enrolled participants continue with their training uninterrupted, and eligible participants can apply for TAA benefits and services as usual.

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

Resources regarding TAA to include policy, procedure and training is available to IowaWORKS center staff posted within an accessible SharePoint site. Iowa Workforce Development Workforce Services (WFS) Division Staff provide local area staff monthly training and on various workforce system related topics, including TAA program updates. Monthly office hours are also held for local area staff to engage with Workforce Program Coordinators, including the TAA Program Coordinator. Office hours allow Workforce Program Coordinators to share information and answer questions directly to field staff. Local staff members are often asked to present programmatic best practices and processes implemented in their local area.

With Iowa's landscape, and the status of the TAA program with termination, the Trade Program Coordinator is currently providing one-on-one assistance to the case manager serving TAA eligible participants. Outside of termination, historically, TAA information and training has been more widely shared. WFS Division leadership meets monthly with local board staff, and provides updates – to include TAA updates, as applicable.

**c. Youth Program Requirements**

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

*1. Identify the State-developed criteria to be used by local boards in awarding grants or contracts for youth workforce investment activities and describe how the local boards will take into consideration the ability of the providers to meet performance accountability measures based on primary indicators of performance for the youth program as described in section 116(b)(2)(A)(ii) of WIOA.<sup>11</sup> Further, include a description of how the State assists local areas in determining whether to contract for services or to provide some or all of the program elements directly.*

Iowa policy 1.4.8.1 Service Provider Procurement and 1.4.8.2 Allowable Methods for Competitive Procurement of Service Providers outline the procurement standards in Iowa.

When selecting an entity as the service provider for youth workforce investment activities, the Local WDB must consider the entity's programmatic and fiscal integrity, compliance with public policy, record of past performance and other factors that demonstrate transparency and responsibility.

State policy requires that local boards award grants for local youth activities through a competitive procurement process in accordance with their local procurement procedures which must be in compliance with the provisions of applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations and based on recommendations of the Local Youth Committee and/or Workforce Development Board.

The procurement must be a process that provides for full and open competition and avoids even the appearance of a conflict of interest (either individually or organizationally). Procurement actions must be conducted in a manner that provides for full and open competition and prevents the existence of conflicting roles that might bias judgment and cause unfair competitive advantage. Such actions must assure separation of those who develop or issue the solicitation, or are involved in the selection process, from those who bid upon it. Supporting documentation of the history of each procurement action must be maintained. Such documentation must include a rationale for: the method of procurement, selection of contract type, contractor selection or rejection, and the basis for the contract price. Such documentation also includes evaluation criteria or rating factors to support the provider's ability to perform successfully, with consideration given to integrity, compliance with public policy, record of past performance, in addition to financial and technical resources, that follow state and federal guidelines.

Contracts must be awarded based on the vendor's:

- Ability to deliver services to the targeted population in accordance with locally established guidelines;
- Experience in working with youth in similar programs and activities; Page 182
- Past and current collaboration with other service providers
- Past performance record, including both programmatic and fiscal integrity;
- Understanding of and commitment to meeting goals and objectives; and
- Demonstration of understanding of and commitment to continuous improvement methods.

All policies supporting Iowa's WIOA Youth program can be found at: <https://epolicy.iwd.iowa.gov/Policy/Home>

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

Iowa has worked to increase awareness of the Title I youth program to outside agencies, organizations and resource. As a result, relationships have been built across several systems to better align service delivery across the state of Iowa for Youth to help provide wrap-around services to individuals and groups that weren't previously utilized.

One key State-level partnership involves the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services, Iowa Juvenile Court Services, and the Iowa Department of Education. This collaboration focuses on aligning resources, sharing data, and coordinating services to better support youth—particularly those facing barriers to education, employment, and successful transitions to adulthood.

As part of this effort, the partnership supported the Building Bridges Older Youth Convening in Program Year 2024, which brought together more than 150 youth-serving system professionals to network, share resources, and strengthen cross-system collaboration. To build on the momentum of that event and continue the Building Bridges initiative, a Youth Simulation was held in Program Year 2025, engaging over 200 system professionals and youth with lived experience from across Iowa. The simulation offered participants an immersive opportunity to understand the challenges youth face when navigating complex systems such as juvenile justice, foster care, and homelessness, fostering greater empathy and coordination among service providers statewide.

From the partnerships and collaboration formed at the State level, local areas have been able to increase awareness and strengthen relationships with community resources and agencies impacting system involved youth. The Northeast Iowa Local Workforce Development Board established a subcommittee focused specifically on justice-involved youth, which has created another pathway for outreach and engagement in their local area. As part of this effort, staff regularly conduct presentations at the local detention center in Waterloo, where they are connecting with both In-School and Out-of-School youth who are justice-involved. These sessions make young people aware of available services and assist them in addressing barriers that may prevent them from moving forward. Future work and planning to host expungement clinics at each of Northeast Iowa Local Area's comprehensive centers will provide youth and young adults with critical legal support that can remove significant employment barriers.

Iowa looks forward to continued collaboration between the State and local programming to ensure Iowa's young adults are not only receiving the services needed to be successful in the labor market, but including analysis within this collaboration to better understand our population of young people and how they can be best served to provide positive outcomes.

In addition to partnerships and collaboration, training, and technical assistance around best practices for youth and young adult populations is a strong focus within programming and occurs regularly. Topics during training and virtual youth roundtables have included work experiences, outreach and recruitment efforts, and youth voice to name a few. Additional trainings and technical assistance related to performance measures, specifically measurable skills gain, credential attainment, and the Youth 14 Program Elements have also been provided. Iowa will continue to provide training and technical assistance, with plans to address topics related to youth mental health, a youth service re-vamp 2.0, as well as continued efforts related to performance and reporting.

The State Workforce Development Board (SWDB) established the Youth Standing Committee to provide guidance and support to local workforce development boards in planning, operations, and other matters related to youth services. Over the past program year, the Youth Committee Chair has met with local area youth committees to gather input, share best practices, and strengthen coordination across regions. These discussions have helped lay the groundwork for a renewed and collaborative approach to youth programming statewide.

Currently, the Youth Committee is in a rebuild phase for Program Year 2025. The Committee is focused on revitalizing its efforts to elevate youth programming and enhance service delivery, ensuring stronger support for local workforce areas and improved outcomes for young people across the state.

Policy impacts related to serving youth and young adults continue to be evaluated as new guidance is released. Iowa Workforce Development's Workforce Services Division has established a policy team to reinvest and refocus collaborative efforts surrounding policy. The drafted process includes a stop point to determine how local consultation and collaboration will be included within the development, review, and release of policy.

As evaluation efforts in Iowa continue to expand, the youth population will undoubtedly be a target group for additional analysis. While initial efforts include youth but do not expand upon youth, future ideas for consideration in this area have been noted. Such evaluation may include, but is not limited to success rate post-exit of youth who received a work experience activity, success rate post-exit of youth who received a training activity, number of reported youth participant barriers vs. program success, etc.

In order to continue to advance equity, Iowa will continue to develop relationships among youth serving organizations, understand the ever-changing demographics of the youth population within the state, and utilize data analysis to drive policy change and service delivery.

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

Iowa policy 8.2.5 Program Elements outlines that local programs must make each of the 14 youth elements available to youth participants. Local programs may determine what services a youth participant receives based on their objective assessment results and individual service strategy. Local programs are not required to provide every element to participants and should partner with other entities to provide program elements that cannot be provided by the local program.

Work experience services to include youth job shadows, internships, work experiences, one-the-job training, and pre-apprenticeship are valuable training methods – and one that Iowa continuously highlights the importance of. Iowa

policy 8.2.6.3 Experiential Learning 20% Requirement states local youth programs must expend not less than 20 percent of the funds allocated to them to provide in-school youth (ISY) and out-of-school youth (OSY) with paid and unpaid experiential learning activities.

Iowa reviews ISY and OSY expenditures, to include the 20% work experience requirement, on an ongoing basis. The State Youth Workforce Program Coordinator conducts quarterly fiscal and programmatic technical assistance sessions for all local workforce development areas. The sessions include a review of where overall spending is at, broken down by funding category.

Sessions also include guidance on ways in which the local area may be able to appropriately spend their funds, as needed. Several local areas have implemented local processes for which to review this information, such as pulling financial reports and reviewing them with their local workforce development board financial committees.

Iowa encourages career pathway design through policy 8.1.3 Career Pathways. Career planners and participants should work together to identify appropriate career pathways by utilizing the objective assessment results. Career pathway goals, timelines, and other considerations must be established and entered in the data management system. Local Workforce Development Boards (WDBs) must include in their local plan a description of the strategies and services that will be used in the local area to implement career pathways.

Provision of youth program services is reviewed through annual monitoring and ongoing data integrity analysis. Additional procedures regarding monitoring are reviewed and updated annually and included in a Title I Monitoring Guide specific to the given program year.

Iowa provides ongoing training and technical assistance on these topics. Broad training is available to all local staff, and individual training and technical assistance in a given area is provided when requested or when the State identifies areas for improvement.

All policies referenced above can be found at:  
<https://epolicy.iwd.iowa.gov/Policy/Home>



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

Iowa policy 8.2.3.4 Additional Assistance outlines the criteria for out-of-school youth who require additional assistance to enter or complete an educational program and in-school youth requiring additional assistance to complete an education program, or to secure and hold employment. The full policy can be found at: <https://epolicy.iwd.iowa.gov/Policy/Home>, and states:

Youth who require additional assistance to complete an educational program or to secure or hold employment, includes:

- Migrant youth
- Incarcerated parent
- Behavior problems at school
- Family literacy problems
- Domestic violence
- Substance abuse
- Chronic health conditions
- One or more grade levels below appropriate for age
- Cultural barriers that may be a hindrance to employment
- American Indian, Alaska Native or Native Hawaiian
- Refugee; or
- Locally defined as needing “additional assistance” within local policy

#### **d. Single-area State Requirements**

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

1. Any comments from the public comment period that represent disagreement with the Plan. (WIOA section 108(d)(3).)
2. The entity responsible for the disbursement of grant funds, as determined by the governor, if different from that for the State. (WIOA section 108(b)(15).)
3. A description of the type and availability of WIOA title I Youth activities and successful models, including for youth with disabilities. (WIOA section 108(b)(9).)
4. A description of the roles and resource contributions of the one-stop partners.
5. The competitive process used to award the subgrants and contracts for title I activities.
6. How training services outlined in section 134 will be provided through individual training accounts and/or through contracts, and how such training approaches will be coordinated. Describe how the State will meet informed customer choice requirements regardless of training approach.
7. How the State Board, in fulfilling Local Board functions, will coordinate title I activities with those activities under title II. Describe how the State Board will carry out the review of local applications submitted under title II consistent with WIOA secs. 107(d)(11)(A) and (B)(i) and WIOA sec. 232.
8. Copies of executed cooperative agreements which define how all local service providers will carry out the requirements for integration of and access to the entire set of services available in the one-stop delivery system, including cooperative agreements with entities administering Rehabilitation Act programs and services.

This section does not apply to Iowa.

#### e. Waiver Requests (optional)

**States wanting to request waivers as part of their title I-B Operational Plan must include a waiver plan that includes the following information for each waiver requested:**

1. Identifies the statutory or regulatory requirements for which a waiver is requested and the goals that the State or local area, as appropriate, intends to achieve as a result of the waiver and how those goals relate to the Unified or Combined State Plan;

Waiver: The State of Iowa is seeking to continue a waiver from the WIOA Section 129(a)(4)(A) and 20 CFR Part 681.410, which require not less than 75 percent of funds allotted to states under Section 127(b)(1)(C), reserved under Section 128(a), and available for statewide activities under subsection (b), and not less than 75 percent of funds available to local areas under subsection (c), shall be used to provide youth workforce investment activities for Out-of-School Youth (OSY).

Iowa is again requesting to:

- Lower the minimum OSY expenditure requirement to 50 percent for formula funding at the local level; and
- Eliminate the minimum OSY expenditure requirement for WIOA Statewide Activities funding when providing direct services to youth allowed in 20 CFR 861.410(a).

Iowa has continuously met the 75% OSY requirement, and although Iowa has recognized the importance of serving the OSY population, we have also determined that a shift in being able engage more in-school youth (ISY) earlier on may help yield better results in Iowa's overall workforce strategies.

The 75% OSY requirement limits the ability of the State and local areas to:

- effectively support Governor Reynolds work-based learning initiatives
- partner with state programs such as Iowa Jobs for America's Graduates (iJAG)
- provide valuable services to Iowa's young adults who are at risk of becoming opportunity youth

Creating a system where unified services are available to at-risk young adults through State initiatives and programs are projected to strengthen long-term positive outcomes for this population.

Iowa has been operating under this waiver for PY24 and is requesting to continue this waiver into PY25 for any local areas who wish to continue with the 50/50 split.

*2. Describes the actions that the State or local area, as appropriate, has undertaken to remove State or local statutory or regulatory barriers;*

There are currently no state or local statutory or regulatory barriers to implementing the requested waiver. Current State of Iowa laws, regulations, and policies follow federal law, regulations, and guidance.

*3. Describes the goals of the waiver and the expected programmatic outcomes if the request is granted;*

This waiver request aligns with Iowa's goal outlined in the State Plan: Increase the engagement and awareness of Iowa's current, potential, and future workforce to the continuum of high- quality education, training, and career opportunities in Iowa.

Specifically, strategies:

- #2: Ensure all Iowa students have opportunities for meaningful work-based learning experiences.
- #3: Target services to underserved populations, including individuals with disabilities, minorities, returning citizens, women, rural Iowans, new citizens, veterans, etc. (to include Youth)

To ensure this waiver positively impacts the Youth program in Iowa, IWD will report on the following projected programmatic outcomes for PY2024 and PY2025:

- Increase co-enrollment of eligible WIOA Title I Youth and organizations that serves at-risk youth participants by 10%
- Enroll five new Youth participants in a Registered Apprenticeship (currently there are zero)
- Iowa anticipates to maintain or improve outcomes for all six WIOA key performance outcomes for the Title I Youth program
- Increase overall Title I Youth program enrollment by 10% at the end of PY25

*4. Describes how the waiver will align with the Department's policy priorities, such as:*

A. Supporting employer engagement,

B. Connecting education and training strategies;

C. Supporting work-based learning;

D. Improving job and career results, and

E. Other guidance issued by the department.

WIOA places an emphasis on pre-employment education and training as well as access to a continuum of work-based learning opportunities. Further, as stated in TEN 31-16, Registered Apprentices is a valuable work-based training opportunity and a proven model of job preparation that combines paid on-the-job training and related instruction to progressively increase workers' skill level and wages. The approval of this waiver will provide local boards more flexibility to utilize funding to support these strategies in their schools, connecting students to the training and education they need and providing employers with an expanded talent pipeline of available workforce. Additionally, while students who are defined as "in-school" theoretically already have supports available, many students are close to disengaging from the education system and the utilization of this waiver will allow local boards to connect with those students prior to dropping out, connecting them to different education and training

strategies that will increase their likelihood of success and improving job and career results.

*5. Describes the individuals affected by the waiver, including how the waiver will impact services for disadvantaged populations or individuals with multiple barriers to employment; and*

This waiver will provide Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) the flexibility to serve more youth and young adults in work-based learning, including apprenticeship, regardless of school status. It will facilitate the provision of the necessary funding and the ease of current regulations essential to designing programs that will aid youth and young adults in the preparation for long-term participation in Iowa's labor force. Economic growth in Iowa and its high-growth industries will be sustained with the infusion of skilled workers ready to fill current job openings and adequately trained for future openings. Additionally, this waiver supports Governor Reynolds plans to ensure all Iowa students have opportunities for meaningful work-based learning experiences. Iowa's students and eligible youth population, as well as Iowa employers who need immediate assistance to fill open positions and train their future workforce, will benefit from this waiver.

*6. Describes the processes used to:*

*A. Monitor the progress in implementing the waiver;*

*B. Provide notice to any local board affected by the waiver;*

*C. Provide any local board affected by the waiver an opportunity to comment on the request;*

*D. Ensure meaningful public comment, including comment by business and organized labor, on the waiver.*

*E. Collect and report information about waiver outcomes in the State's WIOA Annual Report.*

Iowa Workforce Development (IWD) will monitor the implementation and outcomes of this waiver through monthly tracking of youth expenditures, utilization of reporting from the statewide data management system, and through programmatic and fiscal monitoring. Notice to all six Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) was provided by IWD directly through email communication and monthly technical assistance meetings, as well as at the December 2023 State Workforce Development Board meeting. All LWDBs, business, and organized labor were provided the opportunity to comment on the waiver request through the public comment period of the PY24 WIOA Unified State Plan during December 2023 – January 2024. IWD assures all data collected and reported, including waiver outcomes, will be included in the WIOA Annual Report as required.

*7. The most recent data available regarding the results and outcomes observed through implementation of the existing waiver, in cases where the State seeks renewal of a previously approved waiver.*

### **Waiver Implementation Results and Outcomes: Out-of-School Youth (OSY) Expenditure Flexibility**

The State of Iowa was approved by the United States Department of Labor (USDOL) for a waiver providing flexibility for Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) to reduce the minimum required expenditure on Out-of-School Youth (OSY) activities from 75 percent to 50 percent, as needed, for Program Years (PY) 2024 and 2025.

#### **Implementation Summary – PY2024**

In PY2024, four of Iowa's six local workforce development areas exercised this waiver authority. Utilization of the waiver facilitated the implementation of innovative recruitment strategies, enhanced cross-agency collaboration, and a renewed emphasis on work-based learning (WBL) opportunities—including internships, job shadowing, and employer partnerships—available to both in-school and out-of-school youth participants.

This flexibility further strengthened coordination with key community partners such as Iowa Jobs for America's Graduates (iJAG) and the Area Education Agencies (AEAs), resulting in improved referral systems and increased participant engagement. These partnerships have created stronger pathways for youth to connect with career exploration, credential attainment, and employment opportunities.

#### **Performance and Outcomes**

Consistent with the goals outlined in the approved waiver, USDOL anticipated that the number of In-School Youth (ISY) served would increase, while overall WIOA Youth performance outcomes would remain stable or improve. Iowa's PY2024 results align with these expectations.

The percentage of ISY participants increased by one percentage point between PY2023 and PY2024.

Iowa observed measurable gains in key WIOA Youth performance indicators, including:

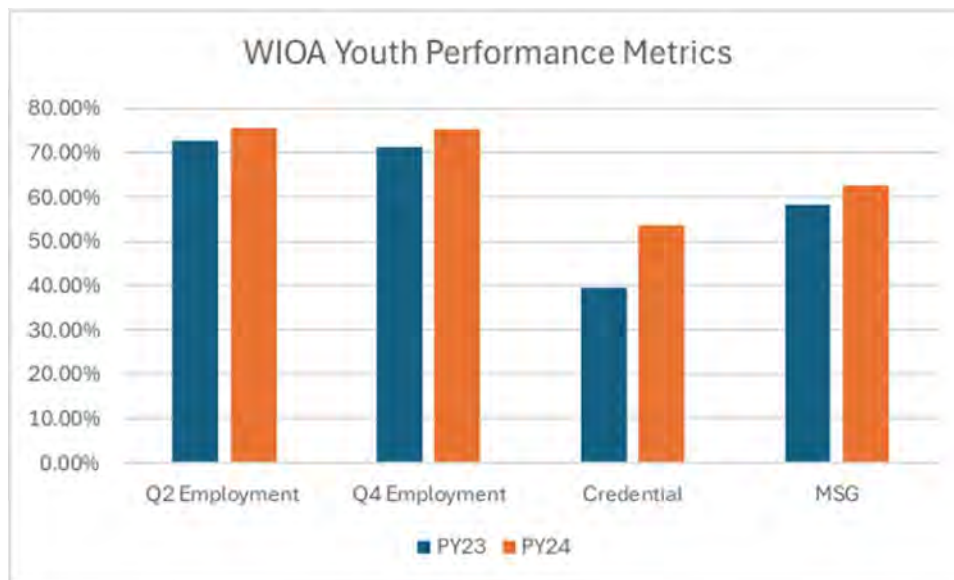
- Employment in the 2nd Quarter after Exit (Q2 Employment Rate)
- Employment in the 4th Quarter after Exit (Q4 Employment Rate)
- Credential Attainment Rate

- Measurable Skill Gains (MSG)

**Table 1. WIOA Youth Participants by Program Year**

| Category                  | PY2023 | %   | PY2024 | %   |
|---------------------------|--------|-----|--------|-----|
| Total Participants        | 594    | –   | 459    | –   |
| In-School Youth (ISY)     | 125    | 21% | 103    | 22% |
| Out-of-School Youth (OSY) | 469    | 79% | 356    | 78% |

**Table 2. WIOA Youth Participants and WIOA Youth Performance Metrics by Program Year**



While the total number of youth participants decreased slightly, proportional representation between ISY and OSY remained balanced, reflecting the flexibility afforded by the waiver and the ongoing post-pandemic enrollment recovery trends observed nationally.

### **Outlook – PY2025**

In PY2025, local workforce development areas will continue to leverage this waiver to expand awareness and participation in registered apprenticeships and other WBL initiatives. The waiver remains a critical mechanism to ensure flexibility and balance in youth programming statewide, enabling the delivery of comprehensive, locally responsive services to both ISY and OSY populations.



This flexibility continues to strengthen Iowa's capacity to:

- Provide early and meaningful exposure to career pathways;
- Promote equitable access to workforce development resources; and
- Reinforce the credibility and effectiveness of WIOA youth programming among schools, families, and community partners.

## Title I-B Assurances

The State Plan must include assurances that:

1. The State has implemented a policy to ensure Adult program funds provide a priority in the delivery of training services and individualized career services to individuals who are low income, public assistance recipients and basic skills deficient; **Yes**
2. The State has implemented a policy to ensure local areas have a process in place for referring veterans with significant barriers to employment to career services provided by the JVSG program's Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) specialist; **Yes**
3. The state established a written policy and procedure that set forth criteria to be used by chief elected officials for the appointment of local workforce investment board members; **Yes**
4. The State established written policy and procedures to ensure local workforce investment boards are certified by the governor every two years in accordance with WIOA section 107(c)(2); **Yes**
5. Where an alternative entity takes the place of a State Board, the State has written policy and procedures to ensure the alternative entity meets the definition under WIOA section 101(e) and the legal requirements for membership; **Yes**
6. The State established a written policy and procedure for how the individuals and entities represented on the State Workforce Development Board help to determine the methods and factors of distribution, and how the State consults with chief elected officials in local areas throughout the State in determining the distributions; **Yes**
7. The State will not use funds received under WIOA Title I to assist, promote, or deter union organizing in accordance with WIOA section 181(b)(7); **Yes**



8. The State distributes adult and youth funds received under WIOA equitably throughout the State, and no local area suffers significant shifts in funding from year-to-year during the period covered by this plan; **Yes**
9. If a State Workforce Development Board, department, or agency administers State laws for vocational rehabilitation of persons with disabilities, that board, department, or agency cooperates with the agency that administers Wagner-Peyser services, Adult and Dislocated Worker programs and Youth Programs under Title I; **Yes**
10. The State agrees to report on the impact and outcomes of its approved waivers in its WIOA Annual Report; **Yes**
11. The State has taken appropriate action to secure compliance with the Uniform Guidance at 2 CFR 200 and 2 CFR 2900, including that the State will annually monitor local areas to ensure compliance and otherwise take appropriate action to secure compliance with the Uniform Guidance under section WIOA 184(a)(3). **Yes**

### Adult Program Performance Indicators

|                                             | Title I – Adult Program |                  |                    |                  |
|---------------------------------------------|-------------------------|------------------|--------------------|------------------|
|                                             | Program Year: 2026      |                  | Program Year: 2027 |                  |
|                                             | Expected Level          | Negotiated Level | Expected Level     | Negotiated Level |
| Employment (Second Quarter after Exit)      | 78.0%                   | <u>TBD</u>       | 78.0%              | <u>TBD</u>       |
| Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit)      | 76.0%                   | <u>TBD</u>       | 76.0%              | <u>TBD</u>       |
| Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit) | \$7,200                 | <u>TBD</u>       | \$7,300            | <u>TBD</u>       |

|                            |       |     |       |     |
|----------------------------|-------|-----|-------|-----|
| Credential Attainment Rate | 71.0% | TBD | 71.0% | TBD |
| Measurable Skill Gains     | 62.5% | TBD | 63.0% | TBD |

### Dislocated Program Performance Indicators

|                                             | Title I – Dislocated Worker Program |                  |                    |                  |
|---------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------|--------------------|------------------|
|                                             | Program Year: 2026                  |                  | Program Year: 2027 |                  |
|                                             | Expected Level                      | Negotiated Level | Expected Level     | Negotiated Level |
| Employment (Second Quarter after Exit)      | 83.0%                               | TBD              | 83.0%              | TBD              |
| Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit)      | 83.0%                               | TBD              | 83.0%              | TBD              |
| Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit) | \$9,700                             | TBD              | \$9,800            | TBD              |
| Credential Attainment Rate                  | 73.0%                               | TBD              | 73.0%              | TBD              |
| Measurable Skill Gains                      | 64.0%                               | TBD              | 65.0%              | TBD              |

## Youth Program Performance Indicators

|                                             | Title I – Dislocated Worker Program |                  |                    |                  |
|---------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------|--------------------|------------------|
|                                             | Program Year: 2026                  |                  | Program Year: 2027 |                  |
|                                             | Expected Level                      | Negotiated Level | Expected Level     | Negotiated Level |
| Employment (Second Quarter after Exit)      | 83.0%                               | TBD              | 83.0%              | TBD              |
| Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit)      | 83.0%                               | TBD              | 83.0%              | TBD              |
| Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit) | \$9,700                             | TBD              | \$9,800            | TBD              |
| Credential Attainment Rate                  | 73.0%                               | TBD              | 73.0%              | TBD              |
| Measurable Skill Gains                      | 64.0%                               | TBD              | 65.0%              | TBD              |

## Program-Specific Requirements for Wagner-Peyser Program (Employment Services)

### a. Employment Service Staff

*1. Describe how the State will staff the provision of labor exchange services under the Wagner-Peyser Act, such as through State employees, including but not limited to state merit staff employees, staff of a subrecipient, or some combination thereof.*

Iowa will continue to utilize state merit staff to provide Wagner-Peyser services.

*2. Describe how the State will utilize professional development activities for Employment Service staff to ensure staff is able to provide high quality services to both jobseekers and employers*

Wagner-Peyser staff are afforded many opportunities for professional development throughout the year such as:

- IowaWORKS team meetings which are held every Wednesday morning for one hour. All core partner staff are invited to attend this training and topics are selected based on current needs of the team which may include: customer service, program overview or updates, Priority of Service, team building, conflict resolution, and community and partner resources.
- In-Service Trainings are held twice per year. IowaWORKS team members attend half day trainings covering topics more in-depth such as safety, procedures and policy reviews, EEO and ADA, initiatives of the state governor or state workforce development board, or other topics identified by local workforce development boards or local partners.
- Monthly trainings are conducted by IWD Workforce Services (WFS) Division including topics related to program updates and the using the case management system.

Other areas of opportunity for professional development include webinars relevant to workforce system functions and operations such as business services, job seeker services and cross- functional systems building. In addition to webinars such as this, staff have access to LinkedIn Learning modules to build their knowledge and capacity in various topic areas. Additionally, Wagner Peyser leadership receives frequent trainings on areas for continuous improvement from the WFS Team, which they pass down to staff during team meetings.

*3. Describe strategies developed to support training and awareness across core programs and the Unemployment Insurance (UI) program and the training provided for Employment Services and WIOA staff on identification of UI eligibility issues and referral to UI staff for adjudication*

Wagner-Peyser staff in the IowaWORKS centers are trained when they are hired on core and required partner programs in order to build an understanding of the additional services available to individuals and how to refer customers to those programs. Wagner-Peyser staff, at the designation by local management, attend Basic and Advanced level Unemployment Insurance training, which is conducted

virtually, allowing the provision on unemployment insurance services to be provided in local IowaWORKS centers across the state.

Sometimes individuals seeking UI benefits are not eligible, however can and should be referred to Title III, Title I or other core or required partner services. IowaWORKS center services provide individuals, including unemployed and underemployed Iowans, valuable services to help them meet their immediate and long-term employment goals.

Iowa benefits from the joint administration of the unemployment insurance program and workforce services through Iowa Workforce Development, which allows efficient coordination between programs. Since UI Modernization was completed in June 2025, UI is now administered from the IowaWORKS system, making it easier for customers to apply for unemployment benefits, register for work, and search for new employment opportunities all in the same system. Title I, Title III and various other programs are already housed in the IowaWORKS data management system.

**b. Explain how the State will provide information and meaningful assistance to individuals requesting assistance in filing a claim for unemployment compensation through one-stop centers, as required by WIOA as a career service**

All customers who visit an IowaWORKS center receive a warm welcoming and register for an IowaWORKS.gov account. Customers seeking assistance with filing an unemployment insurance claim will be provided with general information. These services are considered basic career/self-service and are provided immediately and continuously without further eligibility documentation requirements. Such services include labor exchange services, labor market information, initial skills assessments, workshops, program eligibility information, email assistance, and basic information regarding resumes and unemployment.

Through an enhanced triage process, IowaWORKS career planners ask probing questions that help guide claimants to other IowaWORKS services. Customers seeking further assistance are referred to complete a program application and, as a result of a warm handoff, meet individually with a career planner who provides specific assistance depending on the needs of the participant. At this time, the customer completes the appropriate program application and completes enrollment into the applicable program.

Career Planners encourage and facilitate access for center customers to all appropriate career services at each and every center visit to continuously engage them in the service delivery process until employed in self-sufficient employment.

Iowa's Unemployment Division is a One-Stop partner that provides a robust menu of services to UI claimants/unemployed individuals in partnership with the American Job Center Division.

These individuals receive services beyond what they could obtain on their own using self-service tools including but not limited to staff-assisted services.

All offices have dedicated phones for customer use that can be used to dial directly into the UI customer service line for assistance if a team member is not available in person. All Wagner- Peyser Career Planners have received basic UI training and can answer basic unemployment related questions. Career Planners are able to submit questions or eligibility issues to the main UI department through technology if additional assistance is needed.

All IowaWORKS Centers have dedicated phones for customer use to contact the UI customer service line for assistance if a Career Planner is not available in person. Additionally, all IowaWORKS Career Planners have the ability to call the UI line to obtain additional assistance for a customer if necessary. IowaWORKS Operations Managers also have access to the UI Benefits Managers if needed to assist a customer.

### c. Describe the State's strategy for providing reemployment assistance to UI claimants and other unemployed individuals

#### Integrated Service Delivery

The State of Iowa will provide reemployment services to UI claimants and other unemployed individuals using an integrated service delivery.

- Integrated data systems - RESEA, Rapid Response, TAA and WIOA Title I Dislocated Workers program use a common data system. This data system displays services, case notes, workshop attendance and the overall progression of the UI claimant/unemployed individual.
- Streamlining case management and assessments - Each program is able to see case notes and services provided to the UI claimant/unemployed individual. eliminates duplication of services and assessments.

- Job Search and Training Services - The One-Stop provides a variety of job search activities including but not limited to job search workshops (resume building, interviewing, career planning, mock interviews, application assistance and a variety of other workshops), hosting job fairs, employer meet and greets and assistance in filling out online/paper employment applications. The One-Stop has a direct referral process to training programs to provide short term training for high demand occupations through a variety of partner programs including but not limited to Adult Basic Education, Vocational Rehabilitation and WIOA Title I. These services are available to all UI claimants/unemployed individuals.
- Helping UI claimants access the full range of on-line and in person services delivered through the American Job Centers - All UI claimants that come in person to the American Job Center is provided information on the range of services offered by the One-Stop. UI claimants are also encouraged to visit the website and the One-Stop when call the UI ACD call center. This includes entering information into database to receive job alerts that meet their skills and abilities.
- Ensuring Claimants Meet Eligibility Requirements-
  - Iowa continues to incorporate Unemployment Insurance services in the IowaWORKS Centers. Iowa's Unemployment Insurance Division regularly provides UI training at basic and advanced levels. The trainings are conducted in person with occasional virtual sessions. Team members from field offices attend these classes as local management determines necessary and provides in-service training to IowaWORKS Center staff when appropriate. Additionally, online policy and procedure documents are available for any team member or partner staff to access if needed. The library of documents is in a keyword searchable format. This process has been very beneficial to ensure the most recent version of a procedure is available when handling UI issues. Each of the IowaWORKS Centers and satellite offices have staff trained in recognizing and referring UI eligibility issues for adjudication. During these training sessions, local staff are encouraged to proactively identify and provide assistance to identified individuals on a case by case basis. If a local office team member has a question about a claimants' situation, IWD has a direct messaging system the team member can contact a UI expert in the main IWD office in Des Moines for assistance.

- All customers that are selected to participate in an initial or sub RESEA program will complete a UI Eligibility Review to ensure the claimant is conducting appropriate work search contacts and is registered for work in the database system. The RESEA program staff have been fully trained in UI and are able to issue immediate decisions if an eligibility issue arises. There is an immediate feedback loop between UI program staff and the American Job Center for potential eligibility issues. The issue is reported via technology and then the UI program can establish a fact finding if necessary.
- Ensuring all Claimants are notified of all deadlines and eligibility requirements associated with the TAA program/seamless communication with case managers
- Working with rapid response teams
- Providing effective services for Veterans that file for UCX - Veterans that file for UCX will be profiled for the RESEA program to ensure services are offered early in the Veteran UI claim and is connected to the menu of services in the American Job Center. If these Veterans are identified as having a significant barrier, a referral to a local DVOP will be made to provide additional services.
- Undertaking strategies to promote entrepreneurship

Connecting UI claimants to career services through the RESEA (Reemployment Services & Eligibility Assessment) program

#### Initial RESEA Program

The Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessments (RESEA) program is a program to assist individuals receiving Unemployment Insurance (UI) benefits. The program connects participants with in-person or virtual assessments and reemployment services through local American Job Centers (AJC). Activities include, but are not limited to, developing an individual reemployment plan, providing labor market information, identifying job skills and prospects, and reviewing claimant's continued UI benefit eligibility.

The following items will be reviewed/discussed at the RESEA appointment:

- Discuss the purpose of the appointment
- Complete Wagner-Peyser enrollment
- Review of UI claim
- Review weekly job searches and reemployment activities submitted by the claimant
- Unemployment Eligibility Assessment



- Review of work registration and quality information entered into database
- Discussion on occupation, salary expectations and work availability
- Discussion on utilizing IowaWORKS for job searching, and reemployment services
- Labor Market Information for claimant's occupational profile will be provided
- Available community resources
- Referrals to core partner and other partner programs
- Brief review of resume
- Register in IowaWORKS Orientation and will register claimant for three weeks of reemployment activities
  - Complete a re-employment service plan

Following the RESEA initial appointment RESEA customers enter the following information into their Iowa WORKS account in order to receive quality job referrals.

- Name, mailing address, email address
- Education
- Last 10 years or 3 jobs (whichever is less) employer or experience, including internships, volunteer work or military experience
- Minimum of 20-word job description
- Six job skills selected
- Virtual Recruiter must be set up
- Resume Status must be searchable/visible to employers

#### Subsequent RESEA Program

The SUB Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessments (RESEA) program is a program to assist individuals receiving Unemployment Insurance (UI) benefits. The program connects participants with reemployment services through local American Job Centers (AJC). Activities include, but are not limited to, developing an individual re-employment plan, in depth resume assistance, business engagement meeting referral, discussion on job searching progress and job referrals and reviewing claimant's continued UI benefit eligibility.

The following items will be reviewed/discussed at the SUB RESEA appointment:

- Discuss the purpose of the appointment
- Review weekly job searches and reemployment activities submitted by claimant.
- Unemployment Eligibility Assessment
- Intense review of resume for occupation.

- Discussion on occupation, salary expectations and work availability
- Discuss additional targeted re-employment questions
  - Best method to contact you? Is your voicemail set up, is your vm inbox full, how often are you checking email & phone:
  - What skills do you offer to an employer?
  - Diploma/Degree/License/Certifications:
  - Do you speak any other languages, other than English?
  - Are you working with other recruitment agencies, if yes, who?
  - Items Making it Difficult for you to Return to Work:
  - How are you networking? Do you share that you are looking for work with friends, family, previous colleagues or acquaintances in the field you are looking for?
- Referrals to core partner and other partner programs
- Make a referral to AJC for mock interview and review for potential job development with Business Engagement team
- Register claimant for three weeks of reemployment activities

#### REEMPLOYMENT CASE MANAGEMENT STATE INITIATIVE (RCM)

The Reemployment Case Management (RCM) state initiative designed to assist individuals receiving Unemployment Insurance (UI) benefits to be connected to reemployment services and employment. The program connects participants with in-person or virtual assessments and reemployment services through local American Job Centers (AJC). Activities include, but are not limited to, developing an individual reemployment plan, identifying job skills and prospects, and reviewing claimant's continued UI benefit eligibility on a regular basis.

The following items will be reviewed/discussed at the RCM appointment:

- Discuss the purpose of the appointment
- Review weekly job searches and reemployment activities submitted by claimant.
- Referrals to core partner and other partner programs
- Virtual workshops on filing UI weekly claims, resume writing and interview skills will be assigned
- Creation of a Virtual Recruiter in IowaWORKS

In FY24, RCM completed 22,750 RCM appointments. The RCM initiative has helped impact the decline of the length of time individuals remain on unemployment and the UI duration has dropped the lowest it has been in the past 60 years. Iowa's UI duration rate in 6/30/22 was 11.8 weeks and in December of 2024 it was 9.9 weeks, which is a decline of 2.8 weeks.

d. Describe how the State will use W-P funds to support UI claimants, and the communication between W-P and UI, as appropriate including the following:

*1. Coordination of and provision of labor exchange services for UI claimants as required by the Wagner-Peyser Act;*

Iowa is committed to reducing the average amount of time a UI claimant receives benefits and getting Iowans back to work more quickly. Iowa has seen great successes through our Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessments (RESEA) program and our Reemployment Case Management (RCM) initiative. As described in VI.Wagner-Peyser Act.(c)., the RCM initiative has helped reduce the length of time individuals remain on unemployment and the UI duration has dropped the lowest it has been in the past 60 years. In February 2023, Iowa received the 2022 Full Employment Award from the American Institute for Full Employment because of the Reemployment Case Management program.

IowaWORKS career planners work together across programs to provide a range of services to reemploy Iowans. The IowaWORKS centers focus 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, job seeker assessment of skill levels, abilities and aptitudes, career guidance when appropriate, job search workshops, referrals to training 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 (both in-person and virtual) service delivery approaches. IowaWORKS career planners use a messaging system to communicate with Unemployment Insurance experts should customer questions arise that the career planner does not know or does not have enough information to answer.

*2. Registration of UI claimants with the State's employment service if required by State law;*

Claimants who are not expecting to return to work must register for work in IowaWORKS. When any claimant files an unemployment insurance claim online, the claim application will take them through a series of questions to get the claimant registered for work. When the application is submitted, the claimant is given the opportunity to create a resume and set the resume to be online and searchable by employers. If a customer is selected for the RESEA program, the claimant's information entered in the work registration is reviewed and additional information is required to be entered into the system to increase the number of job alerts.

*3. Administration of the work test for the State unemployment compensation system, including making eligibility assessments (for referral to UI adjudication, if needed), and providing job finding and placement services for UI claimants; and*

Claimants selected for RESEA or sub-RESEA will complete an eligibility review to ensure they are conducting appropriate work search contacts and are registered for work in IowaWORKS. RESEA program staff are fully trained in UI and are able to issue decisions immediately, if applicable and necessary. RESEA staff conduct these appointments both in the IowaWORKS center and virtually and connect individuals to job search activities such as job search workshops, job fairs, employer meet and greets, and assistance in filling out job applications.

Unless waived by IWD, individuals are required to make a minimum of four job contacts each calendar week. Individuals are permitted to complete one job search activity, such as attending a meeting with a career planner or attending a workshop, in place of one of the four job contacts per week. Members of a union hiring hall are required to be in good standing and must contact the union in accordance to hall rules. Individuals must be able and available for work while claiming unemployment and insurance benefits. Any reason that would prevent an individual from working, accepting work, or looking for work, must be reported to IWD.

*4. Provision of referrals to and application assistance for training and education programs and resources.*

Our integrated service delivery system provides customers assistance with employment applications, resume assistance, assessments, skills development and employment services programs. Career Planners provide information to participants on community resources, Labor Market Information, HiSET (high school equivalency program), occupational training, on-the-job training, including all types of work-based-learning, and support services.

Additionally, Career Planners share the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) with participants so they may make an informed decision on training providers. They also provide information on GAP/PACE, Title I programs, Iowa Last-Dollar Scholarship, and other grants and scholarships that they may be eligible for.

Career Planners identify participants' needs, assist with unemployment insurance, employment and reemployment assistance, trade services, workshops and training. When Career Planners identify that a customer may benefit from a referral, they facilitate a "warm handoff" to the applicable program partner. Currently, each local area tracks these referrals through their

own processes and procedures to make sure a streamlined customer experience is present and assist in the elimination of the duplication of services. Local referral systems are responsible for documenting results of referrals.

#### e. Agricultural Outreach Plan (AOP).

**Each State agency must develop an AOP every four years as part of the Unified or Combined State Plan required under sections 102 or 103 of WIOA. The AOP must include an assessment of need. An assessment need describes the unique needs of farmworkers in the area based on past and projected agricultural and farmworker activity in the State. Such needs may include but are not limited to: employment, training, and housing.**

*1. Assessment of Need. Provide an assessment of the unique needs of farmworkers in the area based on past and projected agricultural and farmworker activity in the State. Such needs may include but are not limited to: employment, training, and housing.*

The needs of farmworkers in Iowa vary depending on the specific type of farm worker. Native Iowa farmworkers tend to have a higher need for employment assistance to fill gaps during slower farm periods. Domestic migrant workers can need employment assistance, housing, medical services, legal services and education on their rights as a migrant farm worker. Temporary foreign agricultural farmworkers can need education on their rights as a worker under their contract, medical services, community resources, and legal services, specifically for tax purposes.

A review of MSFW data of individuals (~12,000) who are registered in IowaWORKS shows that just over 45% of the MSFWs in the state are between the ages of 22-44, with 65% of all MSFWs being male. 90% of the MSFWs registered in IowaWORKS reported having at least a high school diploma or its equivalent. However, during peak season, a total of 37,880 MSFWs will live and work in Iowa and the majority of those individuals lack a high school education.

*2. An assessment of the agricultural activity in the State means: 1) Identifying the top five labor-intensive crops, the months of heavy activity, and the geographic area of prime activity; 2) Summarize the agricultural employers' needs in the State (i.e. are they predominantly hiring local or foreign workers, are they expressing that there is a scarcity in the agricultural workforce); and 3) Identifying any economic, natural, or other factors that are affecting agriculture in the State or any projected factors that will affect agriculture in the State*

**Identify the top five labor-intensive crops, the months of heavy activity, and the geographic area of prime activity;**

Based on information from the United States Department of Agriculture, the Iowa Department of Agriculture, and Iowa State University - Extension & Outreach, Iowa's top five labor-intensive agricultural crops are corn, soybeans, barley, rye, milo, and oats. Major animal agricultural activities are hogs, cattle (including dairy production), lambs, alpaca, chickens (including egg production), and goats. Apple orchards, vineyards, wineries, strawberries, blueberries, nurseries and greenhouses are other significant labor-intensive agricultural products produced in Iowa. Additional agricultural products produced in Iowa include apiculture, fur-bearing animals, and turtles. Soil preparation, landscaping, and support activities for crop production are other areas for consideration in Iowa. The months of heaviest agricultural activity in Iowa are during the months of July, August, and September. Iowa has a total 35.7 million acres of land. Based on the most recent USDA Census of Agriculture, 30 million acres, or 84%, of Iowa's land is used for farming operations. Iowa has over 86,000 farms averaging roughly 346 acres in size. Given these statistics, and Iowa's overall nutrient-rich soil, the entire state is prime for farming activity.

**Summarize the agricultural employers' needs in the State (i.e. are they predominantly hiring local or foreign workers, are they expressing that there is a scarcity in the agricultural workforce); and**

Agricultural employers in Iowa primarily hire seasonal workers locally. It is becoming harder for these employers to fill their workforce needs with local workers. When workforce needs are not met domestically, employers turn to farm labor contractors to recruit workers. Additionally, employers are experiencing a decline in the number of domestic farmworkers willing to migrate for seasonal opportunities. One reason for this decline is younger populations are not interested in migrating long distances as were previous generations. Many opt to stay closer to their permanent residences in southern states where climates allow for more year-round farming opportunities. Older generations are retiring and being supported by their younger generations who are not entering the farming industry at the same rate as their predecessors. As a result, there is a shortage of available migrant workers to recruit from.

The H-2A program allows U.S. agricultural employers anticipating a shortage of domestic workers to bring non-immigrant foreign workers to the U.S. to perform agricultural labor or services of a temporary or seasonal nature. The program requires employers to prove that domestic workers are unavailable and that hiring H-2A workers will not negatively affect the wages and working conditions of U.S. agricultural workers. The H-2A visa program continues to grow in Iowa. The majority of these jobs provide labor for construction needs on farms.

Employers have expressed difficulties in communicating with non-English speaking workers and the need for either workers to be more fluent in English or additional staff who are bilingual/multilingual and can act as translators for the employer.

Employers are requiring an increased need for individuals with advanced training and skills to operate equipment on their farms. Farm applicators are in high demand and require additional training and skills. Additionally, there is a shortage of workers with driver's license and/or a CDL license for employers to hire. An increasing number of agricultural jobs are requiring the ability to perform multiple job duties, including driving farm equipment.

**Identify any economic, natural, or other factors that are affecting agriculture in the State or any projected factors that will affect agriculture in the State.**

Iowa has seen, and will likely continue to see more, intense swings in weather ranging from drought to flooding. Major drivers of weather are affected by El Niño and La Niña weather patterns, particularly during the late fall, winter, and early spring. Additionally, severe storms during summer months are also always a factor in Iowa. These climate shifts can impact farming with increased rainfall and potential flooding, decreased rainfall and drought, crop damage from strong winds, and heat waves.

A record derecho in August of 2020 caused nearly \$11 billion in damages in across the state and damaging or destroying nearly 14 million acres of corn and soybeans. According to the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, spring & summer of 2024 had above-average rainfall which led to the ending of a four-year drought. Damage impacts to the agricultural economy in Iowa is significant due to crop damages and soil erosion from both drought and derecho. Recently, Iowa has experienced hurricane-strength derecho winds and excessive rainfall, damaging crops. Despite this damaging weather, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) is forecasting a record-breaking yield for Iowa's corn crop in the fall of 2025. Additionally, Iowa has been affected by multiple avian flu outbreaks, and it is anticipated this could continue into upcoming years.

*3. An assessment of the unique needs of farmworkers means summarizing Migrant and Seasonal Farm Worker (MSFW) characteristics (including if they are predominantly from certain countries, what language(s) they speak, the approximate number of MSFWs in the State during peak season and during low season, and whether they tend to be migrant, seasonal, or year-round farmworkers). This information must take into account data supplied by WIOA Section 167 National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP) grantees, other MSFW*

*organizations, employer organizations, and State and/or Federal agency data sources such as the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) Employment and Training Administration*

The SWA received data on the numbers of MSFWs served from Proteus, Inc., Iowa's NFJP grantee, along with data from Iowa Workforce Development Labor Market Information division and MSFW outreach workers. The vast majority of Iowa's farmworkers come from Texas and Mexico and are seasonal workers. Iowa also sees farmworkers come from Costa Rica, Central and South America, South Africa, and Ukraine. The primary languages spoken by MSFWs in Iowa include: Spanish, English, Russian, French, Portuguese, Ukrainian, and Creole. Iowa typically has approximately 37,880 MSFWs during the peak season (July through September) and 7,557 during the low season. Around 30% of our farmworker population is migrant, while approximately 10% is native to Iowa and around 60% are H-2A. The use of seasonal H-2A workers in Iowa continues to increase.

#### Language Barriers

Many MSFWs lack English language skills which creates a communication barrier. This barrier makes it difficult to look and apply for employment, attend training, complete paperwork and obtain a job that will provide a livable wage. All outreach workers in Iowa are bilingual, speaking English and Spanish. Almost all of Iowa's American Job Centers (AJCs) employ individuals who speak Spanish. All AJCs have access to a language line that provides interpretation services for a variety of languages.

#### Available resources

MSFWs in Iowa have many resources available to them, however, the lack of knowledge of these resources creates a greater need - the ability to access these resources. Iowa's outreach workers meet with individuals within their communities to provide information and educate them about available local resources and how to access them.

#### Health Issues

Limited access to medical, public health, and preventive care services has consequences, especially among these isolated populations. New and older workers come unprepared to face the daunting work in the field which can lead to the need for medical care. Health needs also arise due to underlying health issues. Pregnant women need assistance as they are exposed to extreme heat and field conditions.



## Housing

The lack of affordable rental housing in rural Iowa creates a need for Iowa's MSFWs. Many, if not all, migrant workers who come with Farm Labor Contractors (FLCs) are required to pay for their own housing. These housing locations are not inspected prior to occupancy and are only inspected if the Iowa Department of Public Health receives a complaint. Other Iowa housing locations provided by FLCs are not reported or issued a housing permit. Outreach workers are only made aware of these locations when conducting outreach at worksites. MSFWs routinely complain about the lack of clean housing, overcrowding and high rent payments paid to the FLC. They are left with no other choice as they are here only for a short time and have no other accommodation options.

## Public Benefits

Iowa's MSFWs often need assistance with public benefit applications or to appeal application denials. Migrant workers often do not understand they can apply for food assistance while living in Iowa as a migrant worker. Outreach workers have contact with the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) across the state, referrals are given to MSFWs to contact HHS to assist with the completion and processing of these applications. Outreach workers refer MSFWs to the online application when needed.

Additionally, seasonal workers in Iowa may be eligible for Medicaid. This is another program for which outreach workers provide referral assistance.

## Mistreatment and lost wages

Outreach workers in Iowa conduct vigorous outreach across the state. While conducting this outreach, MSFWs are informed about their work rights and the complaint system. Many times after the outreach worker leaves, the MSFW will contact the outreach worker to file a complaint. MSFWs must be paid for all hours worked and not be mistreated by employers. The majority of complaints are against farm labor contractors operating in the state.

## Education

There is a significant need for educational resources that focus on this population. Workshops for the general public are offered in AJCs and virtually, some of which are available in Spanish. Many MSFWs do not have a resume and may not understand the importance of maintaining an update-to-date one. Many of Iowa's MSFWs have less than a high school education. Although Iowa's AJCs

market career development to everyone who walks in the door, the MSFW population is less likely to take advantage of those resources.

Because this population is less likely to visit a center, it is crucial, and required, outreach workers make available AJC services, or provide information on what services are available within a center, where they work and congregate

#### Social Isolation and Chronic Poverty

Due to the inherent isolation of this population, many issues arise such as lack of transportation and all that results from decreased mobility. Many MSFW cannot independently seek employment or supportive services even if they wanted to and/or knew how or where to go for such services. Childcare is a noted need of many MSFW families, but is difficult to secure, afford and access within the isolated MSFW communities and childcare deserts which exist across much of Iowa. Most MSFW populations live at or near the poverty line and are also considered to be underemployed. Currently, AJC efforts and resources are focused primarily on individuals who are chronically unemployed.

#### *4. Outreach Activities*

**The local offices outreach activities must be designed to meet the needs of MSFWs in the State and to locate and contact MSFWs who are not being reached through normal intake activities. Describe the State agency's proposed strategies for:**

##### *A. Contacting farmworkers who are not being reached by the normal intake activities conducted by the employment service offices*

Iowa Workforce Development (IWD) serves the agricultural community through its outreach program designed to contact MSFW who are not being reached by normal intake activities conducted at the AJC.

Iowa plans to continue strengthening cooperative partnerships with the National Farmworkers Jobs Program (NFJP), Proteus; the Iowa Department of Education; and Iowa Legal Aid to conduct outreach activities to enhance the service offerings to MSFWs.

IWD currently has five outreach workers. The outreach workers are strategically placed across the state to allow outreach to be conducted in each county without more than a two-hour drive. This allows the outreach workers to visit each local office in their area at least once each month.

## Utilizing technology

Outreach workers each carry an Apple iPad and their laptop to assist in recruitment efforts. These iPads and laptops are used to register MSFWs on location. MSFWs are able to search for jobs and make referrals to employment without traveling to an AJC. Outreach workers assist in resume writing, job search activity, and job referrals all from the MSFWs location and at times convenient for the MSFW.

## Communication

Outreach workers are assigned a state-issued cell phone which allows them to communicate timelier with MSFWs and employers. Phone calls and text messages are used, when appropriate, by outreach workers to contact MSFWs.

## Departure meetings

Iowa's outreach workers continue to attend onboarding events when the workers arrive for the season and are exploring the option of departure meetings with employers. Departure meetings will be held on the last or near last day of work with MSFWs. These meetings will focus on how the MSFW's season went with the current employer, the possibility of returning to the same employer next season, and other job opportunities available in Iowa. Departure meetings will be beneficial to both employers and MSFWs.

## Outreach Workers Schedule

A normal day for an outreach worker is 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. These work hours can make it difficult to contact MSFWs, because MSFWs often have the same work hours. As expected, employers do not like to have MSFWs away from work during peak season. In coordination with their manager, outreach workers are permitted to work outside of their normal hours to allow for more targeted outreach. This also allows outreach workers to host and attend community events where the target population gathers outside of working hours. This effort will increase Iowa's outreach contacts.

## Employer Visits

It is important for IWD to establish positive working relationships with Iowa's agriculture employers. Employers are more willing to open their doors to outreach workers if they have been contacted prior to the season and understand the benefits of working together. Outreach workers will meet with employers in the off-season to explore needs for the upcoming season. This will help open the door for them when the workers arrive. Outreach workers will

discuss the previous season and advise of any changes employers could make for the upcoming season in relation to the hiring and recruitment of workers.

## Resources

Iowa's AJCs offer materials about available resources. Materials are translated into Spanish, as necessary. AJCs review the provided material and determine what needs to be translated and submit it to the IWD Communications bureau. Material is required to be available to MSFWs in their native language.

## Unique needs

Migrant workers often arrive with only a backpack of clothes and a willingness to work in Iowa. There is a great need for personal hygiene items, as well as food items for these workers. Each year outreach workers coordinate with local AJCs to collect items to distribute to MSFWs in their communities during onboarding events and while conducting outreach. Outreach workers also connect MSFWs to local resources to meet these needs.

B. Providing technical assistance to outreach staff. Technical assistance must include trainings, conferences, additional resources, and increased collaboration with other organizations on topics such as one-stop center services (i.e. availability of referrals to training, supportive services, and career services, as well as specific employment opportunities), the Employment Service and Employment-Related Law Complaint System ("Complaint System" described at 20 CFR 658 Subpart E), information on the other organizations serving MSFWs in the area, and a basic summary of farmworker rights, including their rights with respect to the terms and conditions of employment.

Training modules were created and delivered to outreach specialists with the ability to be viewed by staff at any time. Topics for these modules are the Judge Ritchey Law, roles and responsibilities of an MSFW outreach specialist, MSFW reporting system, including how and why outreach workers need to document services they provide, the Agricultural Recruitment System, Complaint System, and role of the State Monitor Advocate.

At the beginning of 2025, we updated our training process to incorporate monthly trainings for outreach staff and the managers of significant AJC offices conducted by the IWD Wagner-Peyser/Foreign Labor Program Coordinator and SMA. Monthly trainings include demonstrations within the labor exchange system, best practices, technical assistance, policy development & implementation, process improvements, and ongoing efforts for program consistency.

Other technical assistance provided to outreach workers will include feedback from the State Monitor Advocate, Regional Monitor Advocate, and local office Operations Managers. Outreach specialists will attend as many conferences as feasible to gain additional tools and best practices to serve the MSFW population in Iowa. Examples of Iowa Agriculture conferences Outreach Specialists have attended in the past include: Practical Farmers of Iowa, Iowa State Extension, Iowa Fruit and Vegetable Growers Conference, Women in Agriculture, Agribusiness Showcase, Iowa Organic Conference, and Farming for the Future. Outreach Specialists also are afforded the opportunity to attend meetings and conferences hosted or supported by U.S. Department of Labor. Our goal is to continue to increase visibility to Iowa farmers, educate them on the Agricultural Recruitment System (ARS), and collaboratively educate all that Iowa Workforce Development and IowaWORKS has to offer for employers.

Outreach Specialists will continue to attend quarterly MSFW Coalition meetings with Proteus (National Farmworker Jobs Program & Agriculture Health), Iowa Legal Aid and Migratory Education to increase awareness of new resources available to the MSFW population and to collaborate and establish best practices for serving this population in Iowa.

#### C. Increasing outreach worker training and awareness across core programs including the Unemployment Insurance (UI) program and the training on identification of UI eligibility issues

##### Unemployment Insurance Training

Unemployment Insurance training Outreach workers will receive training from IWD's Unemployment Insurance division. Many times, migrant workers will file unemployment in Iowa prior to returning to their home state. Outreach workers will be trained to answer basic questions that may arise.

##### Weekly Training Meetings

Every Wednesday morning at each local AJC, all center staff come together for various trainings prior to opening to the public. These weekly trainings cover a wide range of topics throughout the year. Training topics typically include Title I, Registered Apprenticeship, Co-Enrollment, Self-Improvement and Mental Health, and a wide variety of others. Outreach workers may attend trainings at any of the local AJC's they cover. Trainings are always recorded so staff can listen at a later date/time if they are unable to attend in person.

#### D. Providing State merit staff outreach workers professional development activities to ensure they are able to provide high quality services to both jobseekers and employers

##### Professional Development

Iowa offers Performance and Development Solution (PDS) classes to all state employees. These classes offer a way for employees to continue professional development. Outreach workers will be offered the opportunity to attend classes.

##### Training Bureau

IWD has a training bureau to onboard new agency employees. All new outreach workers are encouraged to attend the new worker training provided by the bureau. As new training classes are created, current outreach workers will attend when the training is beneficial.

##### Workforce GPS

All outreach workers will create an account in Workforce GPS and review all current training material. Outreach workers will attend all new webinars offered by the National Monitor Advocate. Outreach workers are encouraged to attend webinars held for the NFJP as well.

##### Weekly Training Meetings

Every Wednesday morning at each local AJC, all center staff come together for various trainings prior to opening to the public. These weekly trainings cover a wide range of topics throughout the year. Training topics typically include Title I, Registered Apprenticeship, Co-Enrollment, Self-Improvement and Mental Health, and a wide variety of others. Outreach workers may attend trainings at any of the local AJC's they cover. Trainings are always recorded so staff can listen at a later date/time if they are unable to attend in person.

#### E. Coordinating outreach efforts with NFJP grantees as well as with public and private community service agencies and MSFW groups

##### National Farmworker Job Program

IWD maintains a current MOU with Proteus, the entity currently providing services under the National Farmworker Jobs Program. This MOU is important to aid in providing joint outreach, data sharing, and continued collaboration. Outreach workers attend events held by Proteus and vice versa. Outreach workers invite NFJP case managers to all outreach events they attend where MSFWs are present. Outreach workers carry NFJP brochures to give to MSFWs

and provide information about the program when case managers are unable to attend events.

Outreach workers utilize an electronic form to submit all referrals to the NFJP. This enables these referrals to be tracked between the agencies. Outreach workers are able to complete this form while conducting outreach when they determine an individual is interested in the program. The SMA, outreach workers and their AJC managers meet with the director and case managers of the NFJP quarterly to plan outreach activity and discuss upcoming events across the state.

#### Iowa Migratory Education

IWD continues to partner with Iowa's Migratory Education Program. Outreach workers continue to attend events hosted by Migratory Education Program. During the summer, Migratory Education Program holds events at schools for students enrolled in summer reading programs.

These events have assisted outreach workers in locating and identifying migratory workers. Outreach workers invite Migratory Education Program to all onboarding events where migratory workers are hired and families are present.

#### Iowa Legal Aid

IWD currently works alongside Iowa Legal Aid to conduct joint outreach to MSFWs. Iowa Legal Aid provides free legal assistance to MSFWs through the farmworker program. Legal services available include employment rights, taxes, health and safety, immigration, education, and housing. Every complain IWD receives that requests a referral to Iowa Legal Aid is referred via the complaint form. Iowa Legal Aid attends outreach events with the outreach workers and addresses questions that arise during these events.

#### MSFW Coalition

Iowa's SMA and outreach workers are part of a MSFW coalition that meets quarterly. At each meeting an organization is invited to discuss the services they offer and how these services may assist MSFWs. The coalition discusses trends across the state and any ideas that have arisen during the previous quarter. The coalition communicates regularly using a Google Group. IWD will continue to be an integral part of the coalition and participate in regular communication to ensure all participating agencies are receiving the same information.

## Business Engagement Teams

Outreach workers will continue to work alongside the business engagement teams in their local offices. They are encouraged to meet with each business engagement team on a regular basis and set up a business outreach plan regularly. This outreach plan targets new agricultural employers in the area along with employers the AJC has worked with in the past. Plans will include when employers will be contacted, who will contact the employer, and which employers will be visited that month. Outreach workers will discuss the hiring needs of the agricultural employers in the area during these periodic meetings.

## OSHA

A continued partnership with USDOL OSHA helps assist outreach workers in locating MSFWs in the event of an accident on a farm or facility. Outreach workers can be of assistance to OSHA during an investigation with both interpretation and completion of documents. This allows the outreach worker to document a complaint or apparent violation, if applicable.

## Department of Transportation

A relationship with the Iowa Department of Transportation (DOT) assists outreach workers when questions are asked about driver's licenses or CDLs. Migrant workers here on an H-2A visa often will have questions about obtaining state-issued licenses. The DOT offices in rural Iowa are not always familiar with this type of visa. This partnership provides education to DOT staff as well as education to the outreach workers.

## Latino Coalitions

Local Latino coalitions are beginning to form across the state. These coalitions consist of organizations providing services to the Latino population in their community in a unique way. Iowa's outreach workers will become members of these organizations as they are formed and attend meetings regularly. It is important that outreach workers become familiar with the services available in the communities to which they provide outreach.



*5. Services provided to farmworkers and agricultural employers through the one-stop delivery system*

A. Providing the full range of employment and training services to the agricultural community, both farmworkers and agricultural employers, through the one-stop delivery system. This includes:

*i. How career and training services required under WIOA Title I will be provided to MSFWs through the one-stop centers*

WIOA Title I partners will be trained on identifying MSFWs. Outreach workers will meet with Title I staff to review MSFW referrals as applicable. Outreach workers will utilize the referral form created at the AJC to make referrals to the Title I provider. When completing a referral to the NFJP, a dual referral will be made to the Title I provider, if applicable.

*ii. How the State serves agricultural employers and how it intends to improve such services*  
Business Engagement Division

Iowa Workforce Development has implemented a Business Engagement Division specifically designed to be a one-stop shop where Iowa employers can find workforce solutions, regardless of where they are in the business cycle. This is beneficial for Iowa's agriculture businesses as they have a direct link to someone who can assist them with their specific business needs.

Business engagement teams across the state currently write job orders for agricultural employers. They recruit for employers, offer job retention courses, and labor marketing information. Hiring events are also held in the AJC for employers and cover topics such as layoff aversion, unemployment insurance and human resource assistance. The business engagement teams receive annual training on the ARS. Training includes how to market the ARS, what benefits employers receive from utilizing it, and how workers are recruited through the system.

The Labor Market Division assists in identifying agricultural employers. Outreach workers will work with the division to assist in identifying potential agriculture employers that hire on a temporary or seasonal basis.

Practical Farmers of Iowa's mission is to equip farmers to build resilient farms and communities. Many of Iowa's farmers are part of this organization. Each year they hold field days on farms across the state. These field days offer the opportunity for AJC staff and outreach workers to get to know their agricultural community. Farmers from the area attend these fields days to engage with other farmers. This is the perfect opportunity to learn how farms operate.

## Employer's Council of Iowa

The Employer's Council of Iowa (ECI) is an advisory group that offers no-cost membership open to all Iowa businesses. Its purpose is to guide Iowa Workforce Development's business focus. ECI addresses topics of concern to employer by sponsoring training initiatives.

Additionally, ECI advises not only IWD, but also legislators, and other officials concerning its products, services and policies that affect employers, and provides opportunities for employers to exchange information and develop education programs.

Iowa would like to focus on increasing agricultural employer participation in this group and its training initiatives, to ensure agricultural employers have a voice in this organization. Increased agricultural employer participation would be beneficial to highlight needs that overlap between agricultural employers and other employers throughout Iowa.

### B. Marketing the employment service complaint system to farmworkers and other farmworker advocacy groups

Complaint system training is conducted annually for all AJC staff. It is important that staff understand the system in order to explain it to MSFWs. Each office has a designated complaint specialist along with a back-up person. These individuals receive additional training each year.

The MSFW Coalition will receive a presentation once a year on the importance of utilizing the established complaint system. This presentation will be given by the IWD SMA and outreach workers. Complaint forms will be shared with the coalition and they will be encouraged to utilize these forms.

Outreach workers will explain the complaint system during every onboarding event held with MSFWs. They will distribute business cards to each worker and ensure they know how to file a complaint if an issue arises. During every departure event the complaint system will again be explained to the MSFWs and complaints taken onsite if one needs to be filed.

Outreach workers will carry a checklist that must be completed for every onboarding event and departure meeting. This will ensure the topic of the complaint system is covered and explained to MSFWs.

IWD's complaint poster with the SMA's information is prominently displayed at every AJC. Additionally, it is posted inside every housing location that is inspected by outreach workers or IWD's designated agency. Agricultural

employers are encouraged to post the complaint poster in break rooms where MSFWs gather.

### C. Marketing the Agricultural Recruitment System for U.S. Workers (ARS) to agricultural employers and how it intends to improve such publicity.

#### Handbook

IWD currently utilizes several different marketing materials to promote the Agricultural Recruitment System (ARS) to agricultural employers and MSFWs. The current Agricultural Recruitment System Handbook is given to agricultural employers who hire seasonal labor and have had difficulty filling positions. Business engagement teams and outreach workers take the handbook with them when contacting businesses. The handbook will be updated to reflect current information.

#### Brochures

Two brochures have been created that give an overview of system benefits. One brochure targets the employer and the other provides information to the individual looking for work. The worker brochure describes the guarantees that are outlined in an ARS job order.

IWD's SMA and outreach workers will present at conferences throughout the year that agricultural employers attend to market the ARS. This platform will raise awareness of the ARS and its benefits. Additionally, Business Engagement Consultants will promote the use of ARS as they speak to agricultural employers throughout the state. We are planning to enhance visibility to employers and attend more conferences in the upcoming years, when able.

### *Other Requirements*

#### A. Collaboration

**Describe any collaborative agreements the State Workforce Agency (SWA) has with other MSFW service providers including NFJP grantees and other service providers. Describe how the SWA intends to build upon/increase collaboration with existing partners and establish new partners over the next four years (including any approximate timelines for establishing agreements or building upon existing agreements).**

The SMA renewed the MOU with Iowa's NFJP Grantee, Proteus, in July 2025. This MOU is required by DOL; however, the SMA and NFJP included additional items to enhance collaboration. The current MOU will be renewed in July 2028.

Iowa will continue to collaborate via quarterly Migrant Seasonal Farmworker Coalition meetings. These meetings bring together Iowa Workforce Development and IowaWORKS staff, Proteus, Iowa Legal Aid, Migratory Education, and additional partners relevant to the MSFW population in Iowa. During each meeting an organization is invited to discuss the services they offer and how these services may assist MSFWs. The coalition discusses trends across the state and any ideas that have arisen during the previous quarter.

Iowa will provide, at minimum, annual training to all WIOA Core Partners to educate all partners on services available to the MSFW population and to form stronger partnerships with WIOA Core Partnerships with these entities to better serve MSFWs.

#### B. Review and Public Comment

In developing the AOP, the SWA must solicit information and suggestions from NFJP grantees,<sup>7</sup> other appropriate MSFW groups, public agencies, agricultural employer organizations, and other interested organizations. In addition, at least 45 calendar days before submitting its final AOP, the SWA must provide a proposed plan to NFJP grantees, public agencies, agricultural employer organizations, and other organizations expressing an interest and allow at least 30 days for review and comment. The SWA must: the SWA must provide a proposed plan to NFJP grantees, public agencies, agricultural employer organizations, and other organizations expressing an interest and allow at least 30 days for review and comment. The SWA must: 1) Consider any comments received in formulating its final proposed AOP; 2) Inform all commenting parties in writing whether their comments have been incorporated and, if not, the reasons therefore; and 3) Transmit the comments and recommendations received and its responses with the submission of the AOP.

- i. The AOP must include a statement confirming NFJP grantees, other appropriate MSFW groups, public agencies, agricultural employer organizations and other interested employer organizations have been given an opportunity to comment on the AOP. Include the list of organizations from which information and suggestions were solicited, any comments received, and responses to those comments.

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<sup>7</sup> Where the NFJP grantee is the subrecipient, the NFJP grantee would not need to submit comments. Instead, the SWA must solicit information from other appropriate MSFW groups, public agencies, agricultural employer organizations, and other interested organizations.

The state will engage in a public comment period of over 30 days, including public consultation sessions, to solicit feedback on the Unified State Plan and the AOP. The Unified State Plan, in its entirety, will be posted on the Iowa Public Comments website at <https://comment.iowa.gov/> at which time it will be directly sent to all required partners, including the NFJP grantee, all appropriate MSFW groups, public agencies, agricultural employer organizations and other interested employer organizations. After the public comment period is over, the list of organizations solicited, all comments received, and responses to those comments will be added to this section of the plan.

The Iowa WIOA Unified State Plan was published online on the Iowa Public Comments website, <https://comment.iowa.gov/>, from December 10, 2025, through January 21, 2026. A link to the public comment site was sent directly to the following stakeholders of the AOP:

- Proteus
- Iowa Department of Education, Migratory Education Program
- Iowa Legal Aid
- U.S. DOL – Wage and Hour Division
- Iowa Department of Transportation
- U.S. DOL – OFFCP
- Centro Latino
- ISU Extension
- Iowa Department of Health and Human Services
- Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship
- U. S. Environmental Protection Agency
- University of Iowa College of Public Health

This list includes Iowa NFJP grantees, other appropriate MSFW groups, public agencies, agricultural employer organizations, and other interested parties.

\*\*Public comments received on the USP Modification will be addressed in this section and in appendices, if needed.

### C. Data Assessment

**Review the previous four years Wagner-Peyser data reports on performance. Note whether the State has been meeting its goals to provide MSFWs quantitatively proportionate services as compared to non-MSFWs. If it has not met these goals, explain why the State believes such goals were not met and how the State intends to improve its provision of services in order to meet such goals.**

| Program Year | Data Elements                                    | MSFWs |        | Non-MSFWs |        | Equity |    |
|--------------|--------------------------------------------------|-------|--------|-----------|--------|--------|----|
|              |                                                  | #     | %      | #         | %      | Yes    | No |
| PY24         | Received Basic Career Services (Staff Assisted)  | 258   | 100%   | 36522     | 98.44% | X      |    |
| PY23         | Received Basic Career Services (Staff Assisted)  | 150   | 98.04% | 32950     | 97.95% | X      |    |
| PY22         | Received Basic Career Services (Staff Assisted)  | 336   | 98.53% | 28174     | 97.16% | X      |    |
| PY21         | Received Basic Career Services (Staff Assisted)  | 345   | 95.04% | 19270     | 95.55% |        | X  |
| PY24         | Received Staff Assisted Career Guidance Services | 167   | 64.73% | 32227     | 86.87% |        | X  |
| PY23         | Received Staff Assisted Career Guidance Services | 117   | 76.47% | 28197     | 83.82% |        | X  |
| PY22         | Received Staff Assisted Career Guidance Services | 128   | 37.54% | 21558     | 74.45% |        | X  |
| PY21         | Received Staff Assisted Career Guidance Services | 981   | 27%    | 14548     | 72.13% |        | X  |

|      |                                               |     |        |       |        |   |   |
|------|-----------------------------------------------|-----|--------|-------|--------|---|---|
| PY24 | Received Staff Assisted Job Search Activities | 127 | 49.22% | 8902  | 23.99% | X |   |
| PY23 | Received Staff Assisted Job Search Activities | 59  | 38.56% | 8017  | 23.83% | X |   |
| PY22 | Received Staff Assisted Job Search Activities | 71  | 20.82% | 7197  | 24.82% |   | X |
| PY21 | Received Staff Assisted Job Search Activities | 142 | 39.12% | 5188  | 25.72% | X |   |
| PY24 | Referred to Employment                        | 99  | 38.37% | 4690  | 12.64% | X |   |
| PY23 | Referred to Employment                        | 42  | 27.45% | 3641  | 10.82% | X |   |
| PY22 | Referred to Employment                        | 60  | 17.6%  | 3177  | 10.96% | X |   |
| PY21 | Referred to Employment                        | 131 | 36.09% | 2372  | 11.76% | X |   |
| PY24 | Received Unemployment Claim Assistance        | 139 | 53.88% | 28419 | 76.60% |   | X |
| PY23 | Received Unemployment Claim Assistance        | 82  | 53.59% | 25537 | 75.91% |   | X |

|      |                                                  |     |        |       |        |   |   |
|------|--------------------------------------------------|-----|--------|-------|--------|---|---|
| PY22 | Received<br>Unemployment<br>Claim Assistance     | 158 | 46.33% | 2194  | 75.67% |   | X |
| PY21 | Received<br>Unemployment<br>Claim Assistance     | 112 | 30.85% | 14046 | 69.64% |   | X |
| PY24 | Referred to<br>Federal Training                  | 70  | 27.13% | 3349  | 9.03%  | X |   |
| PY23 | Referred to<br>Federal Training                  | 13  | 8.5%   | 3024  | 8.99%  |   | X |
| PY22 | Referred to<br>Federal Training                  | 46  | 13.49% | 46    | 0.16%  | X |   |
| PY21 | Referred to<br>Federal Training                  | 0   | 0%     | 52    | 0.26%  |   | X |
| PY24 | Referred to Other<br>Federal/State<br>Assistance | 160 | 62.02% | 5355  | 14.43% | X |   |
| PY23 | Referred to Other<br>Federal/State<br>Assistance | 25  | 16.34% | 4746  | 14.11% | X |   |
| PY22 | Referred to Other<br>Federal/State<br>Assistance | 124 | 36.36% | 4972  | 17.15% | X |   |
| PY21 | Referred to Other<br>Federal/State<br>Assistance | 125 | 34.44% | 3730  | 18.49% | X |   |



|      |                                     |     |        |       |        |  |   |
|------|-------------------------------------|-----|--------|-------|--------|--|---|
| PY24 | Received Individual Career Services | 71  | 27.52% | 22731 | 61.27% |  | X |
| PY23 | Received Individual Career Services | 85  | 55.56% | 20337 | 60.46% |  | X |
| PY22 | Received Individual Career Services | 178 | 52.2%  | 15167 | 52.31% |  | X |
| PY21 | Received Individual Career Services | 201 | 55.37% | 12232 | 60.65% |  | X |

Iowa met Received Basic Career Services in three of the previous four years. The only year not met was PY21, where the metric was only missed by .51%. Received Staff Assisted Career Guidance Services was not met. Received Staff Assisted Job Search Activities was met in all years except PY22, where the metric was missed by 4%. Referred to Employment was met in all four of the previous program years. Received Unemployment Claim Assistance did not meet in any of the previous four years. This continues to be an area of increased awareness.

It is possible that Iowa's MSFW population does not need a great deal of assistance with unemployment as the majority of the MSFW population are workers who travel from one location to another. Referred to Federal Training met in all years except PY21 which missed the measure by .26% & PY22 by .49%. Iowa saw a significant increase in the number of MSFWs referred to federal training in PY22, PY23, & PY24. We believe this is the result of increased training and awareness of opportunities with the outreach specialists. Iowa will continue to watch this metric to be sure the increased referrals continue. Referred to Other Federal/State Assistance met in all four of the previous program years. Received Individual Career Service fell short in all four of the previous four years.

Additional training will be conducted during 2024-2028 for all AJC staff on the importance of recording services provided to MSFWs and providing equitable services. Training will continue to be conducted to ensure AJC staff are able to identify MSFWs. Outreach workers will receive additional training on when it is appropriate to enroll MSFWs in Wagner Peyser based on the level of services needed. The two career service metrics that were not met during the previous

four years could be a result of Outreach Specialists enrolling MSFWs in Wagner Peyser when they really needed only basic career services. This will be an area of focus in the coming years to better understand when to enroll and ensure that services are recorded properly in the data management system, IowaWORKS.

As stated previously in this report, increased training began at the beginning of 2025. The Wagner-Peyser Program Coordinator, Data Analytics Program Coordinator, and SMA have reviewed and researched service set up in IowaWORKS. Additionally, from this researched, data integrity measures and process improvements have been implemented along with training to staff. We are anticipating higher achievements in annual data performance reports based on recent changes and trainings.

#### D. Assessment of Progress

**The plan must include an explanation of what was achieved based on the previous AOP, what was not achieved and an explanation as to why the State believes the goals were not achieved, and how the State intends to remedy the gaps of achievement in the coming year.**

Previously, Iowa had several vacancies in the outreach worker positions. Iowa needs to be fully staffed with five outreach staff to meet the demands of the workers and employers. Iowa has maintained a fully staffed outreach worker team for over 2 years. Continuing to increase coordination with our AJC partners will provide additional staff support when conducting outreach activities to workers and employers. The SMA recommends a total of six (6) Outreach workers instead of five due to the large number of counties that current outreach workers cover (average of 19).

The previous AOP stated that in PY22, the SMA and one outreach staff member attended a conference and brought back information to the remaining outreach staff. As funding allows, we will continue to attend conferences and always provide the relevant information to the outreach staff and significant office managers.

The previous AOP referenced the Agricultural Recruitment System and the 49 job orders that had been created using it from PY19-PY22. This number increased to 71 from PY23 – PY24. Iowa will increase promotion of this during the coming years to increase that number further.

Outreach workers attend monthly AJC staff meetings as stated in the prior AOP. They present on topics related to MSFWs and agriculture employers. These

presentations raise awareness with AJC staff of the needs of MSFWs and agriculture employers. As of 2024, outreach workers, along with the significant office managers, attend a monthly training meeting conducted by the Wagner-Peyser/Foreign Labor Workforce Program Coordinator & Bureau Chief; the SMA is also in attendance.

As mentioned in the last AOP, outreach workers, AJC managers, and local office staff received complaint system training each of the last four years. This training was historically conducted by the SMA. A designated complaint system specialist is assigned in each AJC as the point of contact for all MSFW complaints. Training will continue to be provided annually by the Wagner-Peyser/Foreign Labor Workforce Program Coordinator with the SMA in attendance.

IWD mentioned efforts to meet all equity indicator in the last AOP. This was not achieved across the board in the last four program years. IWD recognizes the importance of providing equitable services to MSFWs and will strive to meet all the equity indicators in the future. Great strides have been made towards meeting all measures by research on service set up, PIRL elements, and service entry. Additionally, trainings have been given regarding system updates, procedure and policy updates, service set up, and proper data input. This is positively shown in PY23 numbers vs PY24. It is anticipated additional positive measures will be met in PY25 and beyond.

#### E. State Monitoring Advocate

The State Monitor Advocate has reviewed, provided input to, and approved the Agricultural Outreach Plan in its current form.

The State agency is complying with the requirements under 20 CFR 653.111 the State has ten significant MSFW one-stop centers. Each office has an outreach worker assigned to cover the area to conduct vigorous outreach activities. Each office employs a bilingual Spanish speaking staff member.

#### Wagner-Peyser Assurances

The State Plan must include assurances that:

1. The Wagner-Peyser Employment Service is co-located with one-stop centers or a plan and timeline has been developed to comply with this requirement within a reasonable amount of time. (sec 121(e)(3)); **Yes**

2. If the state has significant MSFW one-stop centers, the state agency is complying with the requirements under 20 CFR 653.111, State Workforce Agency staffing requirements; **Yes**
3. If a State Workforce Development Board, department, or agency administers state laws for vocational rehabilitation of persons with disabilities, that board, department, or agency cooperates with the agency that administers Wagner-Peyser services, Adult and Dislocated Worker programs and Youth Programs under Title I; and **Yes**
4. If a state chooses to provide certain ES activities without merit staff, it remains incumbent upon SWA officials to carry out the following activities if they arise: **NA**
  - a. Initiate the discontinuation of services;
  - b. Make the determination that services need to be discontinued;
  - c. Make the determination to reinstate services after the services have been discontinued;
  - d. Approve corrective action plans;
  - e. Approve the removal of an employer's clearance orders from interstate or intrastate clearance if the employer was granted conditional access to ARS and did not come into compliance within 5 calendar days;
  - f. Enter into agreements with state and Federal enforcement agencies for enforcement- agency staff to conduct field checks on the SWA's behalf (if the SWA so chooses); and
  - g. Decide whether to consent to the withdrawal of complaints if a party who requested a hearing wishes to withdraw its request for hearing in writing before the hearing.
5. The SWA has established and maintains a self-appraisal system for ES operations to determine success in reaching goals and to correct deficiencies in performance (20 CFR 658.601). **Yes**

## Wagner-Peyser Program Performance Indicators

|                                                | Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service Program |                  |                    |                  |
|------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|------------------|--------------------|------------------|
|                                                | Program Year: 2026                           |                  | Program Year: 2027 |                  |
|                                                | Expected Level                               | Negotiated Level | Expected Level     | Negotiated Level |
| Employment<br>(Second Quarter after Exit)      | 70.5%                                        | TBD              | 71.0%              | TBD              |
| Employment<br>(Fourth Quarter after Exit)      | 69.5%                                        | TBD              | 70.0%              | TBD              |
| Median Earnings<br>(Second Quarter after Exit) | \$8,700                                      | TBD              | \$8,700            | TBD              |
| Credential Attainment Rate                     | Not Applicable                               | Not Applicable   | Not Applicable     | Not Applicable   |
| Measurable Skill Gains                         | Not Applicable                               | Not Applicable   | Not Applicable     | Not Applicable   |

## Program-Specific Requirements for Adult Education and Family Literacy Act Programs

### a. Aligning of Content Standards

**Describe how the eligible agency has aligned its content standards for adult education with State-adopted challenging academic content standards, as adopted under section 1111(b)(1) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended (20 U.S.C. 6311(b)(1)).**

Iowa adopted and implemented standards-based instruction to promote the quality of and improve adult education and literacy outcomes and to support learner success in adult education, postsecondary education or training, and employment. Providers facilitate participant progress by aligning curriculum and instruction with standards and by participating in relevant professional development.

In Iowa, all grantees will be required to adopt and align instruction to the College and Career Readiness Standards for Adult Education (CCR), the English Language Proficiency (ELP) Standards, Iowa's 21st Century Skills, and Adult Citizenship Standards. The curriculum utilized for programs shall adhere to these standards and be appropriate for adult learners. These standards provide the foundation for each provider's responsibility to high quality professional development as outlined in Iowa administrative rule 877-32.7 including: The development and dissemination of instructional and programmatic practices based on the most rigorous and scientifically valid research available; and Appropriate reading, writing, speaking, mathematics, English language acquisition, distance education, and staff training practices aligned with content standards for adult education. Evidenced Based Reading Instruction for adult learners shall be embedded in curriculum and instruction.

The CCR standards are designed to prepare all adult education participants for postsecondary education and training, career advancement, and economic self-sufficiency. Iowa's English language acquisition programs are designed to support English language learners (ELLs) in becoming skilled in reading, writing, and comprehension of English, obtaining a high school credential, and supporting them as they move toward further education, training, or employment. The ELP standards for adult education ensure that ELLs receive the instruction they need to access Iowa's academic content standards. Program instructors participate in professional development in the ELP standards to address the need for educational equity, access, and rigor for adult ELL students.

Local programs will continue to provide standards-based curriculum, instruction, and assessment focusing on skills that enable adult learners to participate more fully in their communities as citizens, workers, and family members, including components of financial and digital literacy. The State will continue to deliver technical assistance and professional development related to intentional, standards-based instruction.

## b. Local Activities

### *Adult Education and Literacy Activities (Section 203 of WIOA)*

**Adult Education and Literacy Activities (Section 203 of WIOA).** Adult education; Literacy; Workplace adult education and literacy activities; Family literacy activities; English language acquisition activities; Integrated English literacy and civics education; Workforce preparation activities; or Integrated education and training that— 1.) Provides adult education and literacy activities, concurrently and contextually with both, workforce preparation activities, and workforce training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster, and 2.) Is for the purpose of educational and career advancement.

**Special Rule.** Each eligible agency awarding a grant or contract under this section shall not use any funds made available under this title for adult education and literacy activities for the purpose of supporting or providing programs, services, or activities for individuals who are under the age of 16 and are enrolled or required to be enrolled in secondary school under State law, except that such agency may use such funds for such purpose if such programs, services, or activities are related to family literacy activities. In providing family literacy activities under this title, an eligible provider shall attempt to coordinate with programs and services that are not assisted under this title prior to using funds for adult education and literacy activities under this title for activities other than activities for eligible individuals.

Effective July 1, 2023, Iowa Workforce Development (IWD) serves as the State's Eligible Agency for the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) funds. IWD administers grants and provides program and performance oversight to ensure accountability and continuous improvement of adult education services statewide. A new two-year competitive grant cycle began July 1, 2025. Funding is based on demonstrated effectiveness and fulfillment of grant expectations verified through annual status updates, financial and performance reports, and risk-based monitoring.

All applications are evaluated under WIOA Section 231(e) considerations and 34 CFR 463 Subpart C, with additional state priorities emphasizing equity, accountability, and alignment to high-demand industries. Applications are submitted and managed through the State Grant Management System, which streamlines review, scoring, award processing, and report approvals.

## *Adult Education and Literacy*

Eligible providers are required to be full-service adult-education programs that offer instruction for all Educational Functioning Levels (EFLs) based on the identified needs of learners and their regions. The EFLs include five Adult Basic Education (ABE) levels and six English as a Second Language (ESL) levels. Funded providers are also responsible for preparing adult learners for—and supporting them in—achieving successful transitions to employment, training or postsecondary education.

The goal of Adult Basic Education (ABE) activities is to strengthen participants' reading, writing, and mathematics skills to support a highly educated and competitive workforce. ABE instruction is standards-based, performance-oriented, and designed to facilitate, measure, and certify learning outcomes leading to high-school-level proficiency and family-sustaining employment.

Adult-education services include literacy and computational-skills instruction comparable to the competencies required for completion of a high-school equivalency diploma. Courses may provide remediation or serve adults who speak but do not read English. Instruction is anchored in Iowa's Adult Education and Literacy Standards—College and Career Readiness (CCR), 21st-Century Skills, Evidence-Based Reading Instruction (EBRI), and English Language Proficiency (ELP)—and prepares learners for employment, training, or postsecondary transition.

All funded providers must collect and report participant data in TOPSpro Enterprise (TE®) and meet post-test and Measurable Skill Gain (MSG) targets defined in Iowa's Assessment Policy. Performance data are reviewed quarterly and inform technical assistance, monitoring, and funding decisions. A new competitive grant cycle began July 1, 2025, for multi-year awards based on demonstrated effectiveness, fiscal accountability, and compliance with WIOA §231(e) and 34 CFR 463 Subpart C. The next competitive grant cycle will begin on July 1, 2027.

## *Workplace Adult Education and Literacy Activities*

Workplace AEL activities are delivered by adult-education providers in collaboration with employers or labor organizations—either on-site or off-site—to improve employee productivity, safety, and advancement potential. Programs respond to documented business and industry skill demands and may generate measurable skill gains under state and federal accountability guidelines.



Providers are encouraged to align workplace instruction with regional sector-partnership priorities and industry-recognized credential pathways that strengthen Iowa's workforce pipeline. IWD supports these partnerships through targeted technical assistance and professional-development initiatives.

### *Family Literacy*

Family literacy programs provide parents and family members with foundational skills that boost their knowledge and confidence to support the educational development of, and to become educational advocates for, their children. Parents and family members are able to improve their skills to achieve readiness for postsecondary education or training, job advancement, and economic self-sufficiency. Programs are designed to make sustainable improvements in the economic prospects for a family and to better enable the family to support their children's learning needs.

English language acquisition activities assist adults in becoming literate and obtaining the knowledge and skills necessary for employment and self-sufficiency; assist adults who are parents in obtaining the educational skills necessary to become full partners in the educational development of their children; and assist adults in completing a secondary school education. To prepare the English Language Learner (ELL) population for unsubsidized employment in in-demand industries and integrate them into the workforce system, IWD will support extending the existing ELA activities with employability skills and integrating digital literacy skills. The ELA activities are required to align to the English Language Proficiency Standards.

### *Workforce Preparation and Literacy*

With the increased awareness of the need for a workforce to be able to function in a highly technical environment, more emphasis is being placed on education. The adult education and literacy program has responded to this focus by supplying their services either in business and industry or in the classroom. Collaboration, coordination, and cooperation have been the mainstays of the services offered by AEFLA funded providers from the beginning including effective referrals, comprehensive assessment, tracking participant goals and progress, and data-informed decisions driving planned services for the participant. Providers collaborate with federal employment training programs to help adults prepare for the workforce and become self-sufficient. Adult education and literacy programs, in their local communities, seek out working agreements with Iowa Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, Iowa Department of

Human Services, Iowa Department of Workforce Development, adult and juvenile court officials, and other service agencies.

Definition under 34 CFR 463.34:

Workforce preparation activities 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:

- (a) Utilizing resources;
- (b) Using information;
- (c) Working with others;
- (d) Understanding systems;
- (e) Skills necessary for successful transition into and completion of postsecondary education or training, or employment; and
- (f) Other employability skills that increase an individual's preparation for the workforce.

#### *Integrated Education and Training (IET)*

Integrated Education and Training (IET) provides adult-education and literacy instruction concurrently and contextually with workforce-preparation and occupational training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster. IET programs lead to industry-recognized credentials and align with Iowa's sector-partnership efforts to address high-demand industries.

Beginning with the 2025 grant cycle, each funded provider must implement at least one IET or IELCE program aligned to local labor-market demand in sectors such as healthcare, advanced manufacturing, information technology, transportation, and education & training. Programs are also required to spend a minimum of 5% of their funds on IET.

IWD supports program design through technical assistance, professional development, and peer learning to share promising practices. Providers engage core partners and employers to blend academic content with workforce training. All IET instruction and training must meet industry standards as referenced in WIOA Section 134(c)(3)(D).

Performance for all adult-education activities—including IET—is tracked in TOPSpro Enterprise (TE®). Programs must meet state-defined post-test and

MSG targets outlined in Iowa's Assessment Policy; results inform continuous improvement, technical assistance, and funding decisions.

#### c. Corrections Education and other Education of Institutionalized Individuals

**Describe how the eligible agency will, using the considerations specified in section 231(e) of WIOA and in accordance with 34 CFR 463 subpart C, fund eligible providers to establish or operate programs that provide any of the following correctional educational programs identified in section 225 of WIOA: Adult education and literacy activities; Special education, as determined by the eligible agency; Secondary school credit; Integrated education and training; Career pathways; Concurrent enrollment; Peer tutoring; and Transition to re-entry initiatives and other post release services with the goal of reducing recidivism. Each eligible agency using funds provided under Programs for Corrections Education and Other Institutionalized Individuals to carry out a program for criminal offenders within a correctional institution must give priority to serving individuals who are likely to leave the correctional institution within 5 years of participation in the program.**

#### d. Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education Program

Entities must provide narrative details to demonstrate how they will meet each consideration along with alignment of English language acquisition with the CCRS. In addition, each program will demonstrate their connection to a career pathway and whether access to career advising is embedded in the activity. The review of proposals will include rating responses to each of the 13 considerations. To determine if an applicant is an entity of demonstrated effectiveness, all applicants will be required to provide data demonstrating their ability to improve English language acquisition and civics education concurrently and contextually with workplace skills, along with access to work-based learning through an integrated education and training model of instruction. Each application will be reviewed to determine whether it meets the standard of demonstrated effectiveness.

IELCE programs serve adult English language learners, including professionals with degrees and credentials in their native countries, by providing a comprehensive set of educational services. These services are designed to help these adults achieve competency in the English language and acquire the basic and more advanced skills needed to function effectively as parents, workers, and citizens in the United States.

The IELCE program includes instruction in literacy and English language acquisition, as well as instruction on the rights and responsibilities of citizenship and civic participation. It may also include workforce training to prepare adults for unsubsidized employment in in-demand industries and occupations that lead to economic self-sufficiency.

The program is structured to integrate with the local workforce development system and its functions, ensuring that the services provided are aligned with the goals of economic self-sufficiency and integration into U.S. society.

Iowa Adult Education programs continue to leverage bridge programs with integrated instruction of English language and technical skills offerings eligible immigrants the opportunity to improve language skills while obtaining useful career and technical skills and accessing job-readiness supports. This type of interdisciplinary approach to adult education for immigrants and English Learners currently occurs with the Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IELCE) program under WIOA Title II. These programs assist eligible immigrants with preparation for citizenship and full participation in the civic life of their community. Through partnerships with community colleges, local community providers and employers, we can apply this interdisciplinary instructional model to workforce development. We want to encourage more of our AE providers to offer this type of instructional approach for all eligible English Learners, immigrants, and refugees to allow these individuals to acquire English, learn our culture, and gain employable skills to assist local employer needs.

Iowa Workforce Development (IWD) will continue to leverage past experiences with providing English literacy and civics education in meeting the new requirements for Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IELCE) under WIOA. Programs will be established through an application for Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IECLE) and will follow subpart C and Section 243 to require applicants to provide a narrative describing plans to provide English language acquisition (ELA) that is aligned with the English Proficiency Standards and civics education along with program access to integrated education and training services.

Programs are asked to describe the rights and responsibilities of citizenship and civic participation instruction that will be offered in their IELCE program. Programs are also asked to provide the strategy or design for preparing ELL participants for, and placing them in, unsubsidized employment in in-demand industries and occupations that lead to economic self-sufficiency.

The application process uses the same protocols and reviews for the 231 and 225 funding and follows the same requirements as in the IET grant application process. programs to fully provide including narratives outlining all IET activities including language and civics acquisition for regionally recognized in-demand industry including industry recognized certifications along with OJT's, incumbent worker and employer customized trainings.

IWD Adult Education programs must describe how the applicant plans to continually align its services with Core Partners and Community Based Organizations. Especially important is the relationship with the one-stop partners in the communities where it is applying for funding and how the applicant organization intends to work with one-stop partners to ensure the efficient delivery of adult education and literacy services to eligible individuals must be addressed. This includes plans for co-enrollment, referral services, and infrastructure costs. All IECLE's will be required to provide the same approach and consistency for progress and reporting as with the 231 and 225 funding.

#### e. State Leadership

##### *1. Describe how the State will use the funds to carry out the required State Leadership activities under section 223 of WIOA*

Iowa's adult education and literacy team is committed to the required state leadership activities and has identified a number of areas in which services are being provided through technical assistance or through targeted training. Funds under section 222(a)(2) will not exceed more than 12.5 percent of the AEFLA funds. Activities that support the required leadership activities include:

- Alignment of adult education and literacy activities with other core partner programs and one-stop partners: Funds will be used to build the capacity of local programs to coordinate and align services which will include cross-training core partner staff on intake/orientation, eligibility screening, and a common referral process. In addition, the development of sector partnerships and subsequent career pathway development will continue to be a priority with a focus on aligning services as a participant transition from adult education through integrated education and training to further their education and employment opportunities. A state advisory board for career pathways and sector boards has been formed to guide further discussion and development of unified definitions, an approval process and performance measures for evaluating effectiveness.
- The establishment or operation of high-quality professional development: The state adult education and literacy program supports high quality

professional development as outlined in Iowa Administrative Code 871-76.7(1) which defines the responsibility of the programs for providing professional development opportunities for professional and volunteer staff, including:

- Proper procedures for administration and reporting;
- The development and dissemination of instructional and programmatic practices based on the most rigorous and scientifically valid research available; and
- Appropriate reading, writing, speaking, mathematics, English language acquisition, distance education, and staff training practices aligned with content standards for adult education.

Professional development standards incorporated in Iowa administrative code outline the minimum annual hours of instructor training, individual professional development plans, and monitoring of staff qualification and high-quality professional development. A professional development procedure has been established to request the pre-approval of professional development activities, create individual professional activity plans, and to report the annual professional development hours by professional and volunteer staff in the adult education and literacy programs.

State leadership funds are targeted to support high quality professional development activities. A data-driven planning process that includes monitoring, individual and local plans, and classroom observation, is used to identify professional development needs and to set priorities for each program year. Professional development activities include content in alignment with the AEL Professional Development Standards detailed in 871-76.7(3). Additionally, the state of Iowa has adopted the “Adult Education and Literacy Instructor Standards” which establish the standards, indicators, and examples for AEL instructor competency and professional growth in accordance with the standards for Professional Development. The evidence-based tactics and best practices are integrated into the Instructor Observation and Individual Professional Development processes across the state’s AEFLA-funded programs and providers. High Quality Professional Development opportunities are made available to professional and volunteer staff and contain a variety of subject matters including but not limited to the specific needs of adult learners, the essential components of evidence-based reading instruction, as well as information on effective models under AEL and promising practices.

- The provision of technical assistance to eligible providers: Technical assistance will be provided to local programs for:

- The development and dissemination of instructional and programmatic practices based on best available research in reading, writing, speaking, mathematics, English language acquisition, distance education, and staff training.
- Role of local providers as one-stop partners.
- Assistance in the use of technology including staff training and improving efficiencies.

Opportunities for technical assistance to the local AEL providers occurs throughout the year during the state-facilitated meetings and trainings provided to the local AEL Coordinators and local program leadership, professional and volunteer staff, the local program Data Specialists, as well as statewide trainings and opportunities during the summer AEL conference.

Monitoring and evaluation of the quality and improvement in activities and dissemination of information: Iowa's adult education and literacy team use a variety of methods to ensure that information about proven practices is disseminated to sub-recipients.

These methods may include the following:

- Local program site visits to assess programs and to highlight core partner areas related to partnerships, shared governance and collaboration;
- Technical assistance.
- Routine meetings for sub-recipients related to data, compliance, performance, and overall program coordination. These opportunities will also allow for professional development and continuous improvement.
- Review of job descriptions and time and effort documentation to ensure appropriate alignment with instructional and administrative expenses including professional development activities based on the adopted Iowa administrative code;
- Dissemination of standards, policies, and interpretations of rules and regulations; and

Subrecipients are evaluated for effectiveness by the department through their status updates, data integrity, fiscal accountability, and monitoring. For programs with reported findings as a result of monitoring or non-compliance with state or federal rules and regulations, a corrective action plan is developed and approved by the state to track continuous improvement related to compliance findings.

Iowa Workforce Development (IWD) assesses the quality of Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) funded providers on an ongoing basis, including professional development evaluations and reports; on site and desktop monitoring; program status updates; monthly performance reviews; and quarterly financial reviews. The results of these assessments provide the basis for program improvement actions and plans

### *Monitoring*

The Iowa adult education and literacy monitoring process examines the alignment of program policies, processes, and capacity with state and federal rules and regulations, program standards, and WIOA. IWD also uses a risk-based quality assurance system to ensure student performance improvement, financial accountability, program quality, and compliance with federal laws and regulations. IWD completes an assessment annually to determine the appropriate monitoring strategy for each sub-recipient. All sub-recipients may be monitored annually, regardless of risk, on Program Standard Framework 4, Accountability due to its relationship to NRS reporting and financial regulations.

The outcome of the annual risk analysis identifies programs at high, moderate, or low risk of noncompliance and determines the strategy appropriate for each provider, including virtual monitoring, improvement plans, or sharing promising practices and a continuous improvement plan. While virtual monitoring involves a targeted review of select standards, the on-site reviews may address all six Program Standards Framework. The Program Standards Framework establish standards, indicators, and criteria for making informed decisions regarding resource allocation, professional development activities, compliance, and program capacity. These standards set clear expectations to ensure programs are high-performing and capable of meeting the needs of adult learners.

This monitoring framework assures continuous improvement as low-risk sub-recipients develop continuous improvement plans that address and promote increased opportunity in recruitment, service design, implementation, and support services that aim to provide universal access and improved outcomes to individuals seeking access to AEL services.

**Actions to Improve Quality:** When the state monitoring team identifies findings of noncompliance, programs must implement corrective action based on a Corrective Action Plan (CAP) submitted within 45 days of receipt of the monitoring report. The CAP must identify specific strategies the local entity will implement to ensure that findings have been resolved. Any recommendations should be implemented during the upcoming program year.



Iowa Workforce Development (IWD) assesses the quality of Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) funded providers on an annual and ongoing basis, including professional development evaluations, monitoring program status reports, performance reviews and financial reviews.

### *Professional Development Evaluation*

Iowa administrative code defines the professional development standards for AEL providers. These standards drive the state's evaluation and continuous improvement process for staff development, including decisions informed by local program personnel. IWD identifies priorities, analyzes effectiveness, and sustains continuous improvement of professional learning activities. The department oversees the High-Quality Professional Development opportunities across the state and aligns all PD activities with the outlined standards as described in the state code. Local program personnel document instructor self-assessments and instructor observations via processes detailed and monitored by the state of Iowa AEL Team.

The content included during statewide trainings is informed from priorities established at the state-level which addresses local and federal guidance, updates, and needs; as well as the priorities which are based on identified subject matter derived from the local AEL providers. Examples of trainings and priority areas include:

- New Coordinator Training. Provides new coordinators with information such as federal and state guidelines, data collection and National Reporting System (NRS) requirements, and resources needed to administer programs.
- Data Reporting and Program Improvement Training. Provides coordinators and data personnel with training on the fundamentals of the NRS, including monitoring, data analysis and collection, types of data and measures, assessments, data quality, and related information.
- Fiscal Accountability Training. Includes information and resources on financial management policies and practices for compliance with state and federal financial rules and regulations, including federal Uniform Cost Principles, factors affecting allowability of costs, documentation of expenditures, time and effort reports, cost sharing, and maintenance of effort.

Actions to Improve Quality: IWD uses participant survey data, attendance hours, individual professional development plans and classroom observations, to make data-driven decisions about state-sponsored professional development,

including revisions to future trainings. This allows the department to establish priorities based on issues in common among local providers. Challenges that are isolated to a local area must be addressed in the annual status update and, if persistent, require an improvement plan.

#### *Program Status Update*

Subrecipients report strategies implemented during the program year to address goal and performance metrics. Specific targets that must be updated may include enrollment, post-testing rates, measurable skill gains, transition services, and integrated education and training participation. Programs must also provide evidence of implementation for the previous year, which may be qualitative or quantitative, as well as improvement plans that address unmet performance targets with actions to improve quality. Subrecipients complete and upload related documentation in the state grant management system. IWD uses this information to track continuous quality improvement of programs across the state.

**Actions to Improve Quality:** Status updates are reviewed by department personnel. Updates that lack sufficient documentation or continuous improvement are negotiated back to providers through the online grant management system with a request for additional information. Technical assistance is provided as needed and may include goal setting strategies, examples of documentation, or clarifying definitions.

#### *Monthly Performance Review*

Iowa's AEL Assessment Policy requires programs to conduct monthly reporting on data integrity and student records. This data is pulled from an online data management system and reviewed for validity. The following data elements are reviewed: participant educational levels; attendance; number of participants exiting services after 90 days and with no scheduled services; and a unique identification number. Each funded provider is also assessed for post-test percentage and progress toward the state negotiated educational functioning level benchmarks among participants served. While this data is available to each provider at any time through the data management system, the state's review is conducted at least monthly.

**Actions to Improve Quality:** IWD allocates funds to providers based on performance. In addition, the department ties program performance reports to continuous improvement plans with required actions for data elements that are not updated on a monthly basis. Providers that do not report data on a monthly

basis are out of compliance with Iowa's Assessment Policy and they limit the department's ability to make data-driven decisions. In order to assist programs in developing improvement plans, the department provides technical assistance on data reporting, NRS guidelines, implementation of Iowa's Assessment Policy Guidelines, best practices, and recommendations.

### *Financial Reviews*

IWD examines claims submitted by subrecipients to confirm the allowable and compliant use of AEFLA funds. Subrecipients upload requests for reimbursement and documentation of expenditures to the grant management system. Three levels of approval within IWD ensures claims are allowable, reasonable, and necessary and include pertinent documentation.

Actions to Improve Quality: Claims that are out of compliance with state and federal financial rules and regulations and policies are negotiated back to providers for correction. These negotiations include outreach for technical assistance to the program coordinator/point of contact. Each level of review has the ability to negotiate back for correction or additional documentation.

Budget amendments must be submitted 30 days prior to a claim due date as a subrecipient contract amendment and reviewed by IWD. Any approved amendment creates a new budget; however, each previous version of the budget is retained in the grant management system for tracking purposes. Changes in the budget and submission of claims are time stamped to ensure timely response and processing.

Any subrecipient that has continued issues and negotiations on claims may be required to submit claims monthly, attend required technical assistance, or have their claims rejected and not paid.

Any claims submitted after the due date may be rejected and not paid, unless IWD has approved a late submission.

### *Professional Development to Improve the Programs Across the State*

Iowa will use Professional Development Evaluation, Monitoring, Program Status Reports, Monthly Performance Reviews, and Quarterly Financial Reviews to inform the development and delivery of high-quality professional development programs to improve the instruction provided across the state. Key performance indicators will be monitored for emerging trends to identify targeted subject areas. Appropriate professional development content will be developed or procured by the Professional Development Workforce Program Coordinator and

delivered via Microsoft Teams training sessions or during in-person conferences such as the summer Adult Education Conference.

*2. Describe how the State will use the funds to carry out permissible State Leadership Activities under section 223 of WIOA, if applicable.*

Iowa's adult education and literacy team uses funds made available under section 222 (a)(2) to provide activities such as the operation of professional development programs; the provision of technology assistance; program improvement and support; alignment studies with standards and competencies, incorporating 21st century skills; and promoting workplace adult education and literacy activities. Additional supported activities include coordination with other agencies to increase enrollment and successful completion in adult education programs and linkages with post-secondary institutions.

Online professional development offered through video conferencing and on-demand webinar recordings, make it possible for Iowa's adult education and literacy team to disseminate best practices in areas such as new instructor training, aligning academic standards with course content, developing models of integrated education and training, and accessibility to career pathways without disrupting local programs' services for adults. Online professional development improves consistency of instruction while reducing travel costs for trainers and participants. The state team, with the assistance of community partners, local AEL providers, and professional development facilitators will continue to develop online training opportunities that can be accessed at the convenience of the educator. These interactive professional development courses will include, learning management systems 101, motivating the adult learner, blended learning models, integration of English language instruction with workplace education, and a continued focus on alignment of adult education activities with academic standards of reading, language arts, mathematics, and English language acquisition.

Iowa has established professional development standards that detail professional development expectations and effective teaching strategies. Professional Development standards will assist programs in providing state approved targeted training that is aimed at improving quality instruction to adult learners. Adult education and literacy leadership activities will also include:

- Develop and disseminate guidance, documents, and models to align state policy with the qualification of staff and implement instructional standards for classroom management and high-quality instructional practices

- Diversify the online professional development services

Activities supported by state leadership funds are evaluated by the following criteria:

- Statewide implementation, adoption, and diffusion into adult literacy instructional strategies, methodologies and curriculum infusion
- Programs' alignment of professional development to Iowa's Adult Education and Literacy Professional Development Standards
- Alignment with Iowa Administrative Code (IAC): 871-76
- Implementation of standards-based instruction: lead standards approach; designing coherent units of instruction; conducting lesson studies; participating in peer groups; and engaging in classroom observations for continuous quality improvement
- Long-term improvement in program outcomes measured by the state and local program's ability to continually meet the state negotiated benchmark levels; and
- Adult learner assistance to effectively meet personal and program literacy goals.

Surveys were conducted to establish a baseline of current practices and levels of integration for the one-stop centers. Based on this information, guiding documents were developed and disseminated to assist eligible funded programs in their roles and responsibilities associated with partnering with the one-stop centers. Training was developed to accompany these documents to assist with implementation and to help address barriers to ensure seamless delivery for the participant. The Department will continue to assess current practices and integration with the one-stop centers to maximize the impact of the adult education activities.

#### f. Assessing Quality

Iowa Workforce Development (IWD) assesses the quality of Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) funded providers on an annual and ongoing basis, including: professional development evaluations and reports; on site and desktop monitoring; program status updates; monthly performance reviews; and quarterly financial reviews. The results of these assessments provide the basis for program improvement actions and plans.

##### *Professional Development Evaluation*

Iowa administrative code delineates the professional development standards for adult education and literacy providers. These standards drive the state's

evaluation and continuous improvement process for staff development, including decisions informed by local program personnel. IWD identifies priorities, analyzes effectiveness, and sustains continuous improvement of professional learning. The department tracks participant hours of engagement, and monitors individual professional development plans. Local program personnel likewise document self-assessments and classroom observations in the platform, thereby providing a full cycle of data from self-appraisal to the eventual impact of staff learning on instruction.

Opportunities for Professional Development include:

- Preservice: All professional staff new to adult education are to receive six clock hours of preservice Professional Development prior to, but no later than, one month after starting employment with an adult education program. Preservice professional development may apply toward the annual professional development clock hours.
- New Coordinator Training. Provides new coordinators with information such as federal and state guidelines, data collection and National Reporting System (NRS) requirements, and resources needed to administer programs.
- Data Reporting and Program Improvement Training. Provides coordinators and data personnel with training on the fundamentals of the NRS, including monitoring, data analysis and collection, types of data and measures, assessments, data quality, and related information.
- Instructor Training. Provides information and resources to support instruction in the areas of high school equivalency preparation, evidence-based reading instruction, math, college and career readiness, career awareness and planning, career pathways instructional strategies, and such standards as the English Language Proficiency (ELP) Standards.
- Fiscal Accountability Training. Provides information and resources on financial management policies and practices for compliance with state and federal financial rules and regulations, including federal Uniform Cost Principles, factors affecting allowability of costs, documentation of expenditures, time and effort reports, cost sharing, and maintenance of effort. The IWD requires AEFLA-funded providers to offer local personnel opportunities for professional development and it allocates state leadership funds to support efforts that focus on established priorities.

Actions to Improve Quality: IWD uses participant survey data, attendance hours, individual professional development plans and classroom observations, to make data-driven decisions about state-sponsored professional development,

including revisions to future trainings. This allows the department to establish priorities based on issues in common among local providers. Challenges that are isolated to a local area must be addressed in the annual status update and, if persistent, require an improvement plan.

### *Monitoring*

The Iowa adult education and literacy monitoring process examines the alignment of program policies, processes, and capacity with state and federal rules and regulations, program standards, and WIOA. IWD also uses a risk-based quality assurance system to ensure student performance improvement, financial accountability, program quality, and compliance with federal laws and regulations. IWD completes an assessment annually to determine the appropriate monitoring strategy for each sub-recipient. All sub-recipients may be monitored annually, regardless of risk, on Program Standard Framework 4, Accountability due to its relationship to NRS reporting and financial regulations.

The outcome of the annual risk analysis identifies programs at high, moderate, or low risk of noncompliance and determines the strategy appropriate for each provider, including virtual monitoring, improvement plans, or sharing promising practices and a continuous improvement plan. While virtual monitoring involves a targeted review of select standards, the on-site reviews may address all six Program Standards Framework.

The Program Standards Framework establish standards, indicators, and criteria for making informed decisions regarding resource allocation, professional development activities, compliance, and program capacity. These standards set clear expectations to ensure programs are high-performing and capable of meeting the needs of adult learners.

This monitoring framework assures continuous improvement as low risk sub-recipients develop continuous improvement plans that address and promote increased opportunity in recruitment, service design, implementation, and support services that aim to provide universal access and improved outcomes to individuals seeking access to AEL services.

**Actions to Improve Quality:** When the state monitoring team identifies findings of noncompliance, programs must implement corrective action based on a Corrective Action Plan (CAP) submitted within 45 days of receipt of the monitoring report. The CAP must identify specific strategies the local entity will implement to ensure that findings have been resolved. Any recommendations should be implemented during the upcoming program year.

Iowa Workforce Development (IWD) assesses the quality of Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) funded providers on an annual and ongoing basis, including professional development evaluations, monitoring, program status reports, performance reviews and financial reviews.

#### *Program Status Update*

Subrecipients report strategies implemented during the program year to address goal and performance metrics. Specific targets that must be updated may include enrollment, post-testing rates, measurable skill gains, transition services, and integrated education and training participation. Programs must also provide evidence of implementation for the previous year, which may be qualitative or quantitative, as well as improvement plans that address unmet performance targets with actions to improve quality. Subrecipients complete and upload related documentation in the state grant management system. IWD uses this information to track continuous quality improvement of programs across the state.

**Actions to Improve Quality:** Status updates are reviewed by department personnel. Updates that lack sufficient documentation or continuous improvement are negotiated back to providers through the online grant management system with a request for additional information. Technical assistance is provided as needed and may include goal setting strategies, examples of documentation, or clarifying definitions.

#### *Monthly Performance Review*

Iowa's AEL Assessment Policy requires programs to conduct monthly reporting on data integrity and student records. This data is pulled from an online data management system and reviewed for validity. The following data elements are reviewed: participant educational levels; attendance; number of participants exiting services after 90 days and with no scheduled services; and a unique identification number. Key data elements are posted on the department's website for tracking local AEFLA-funded providers' progress toward targets, including NRS enrollment and High School Equivalency Diplomas awarded. Each funded provider is also assessed for post-test percentage and progress toward the state negotiated educational functioning level benchmarks among participants served. While this data is available to each provider at any time through the data management system, the state's review is conducted at least monthly.



**Actions to Improve Quality:** The IWD allocates funds to providers based on performance. In addition, the department ties program performance reports to continuous improvement plans with required actions for data elements that are not updated on a monthly basis. Providers that do not report data on a monthly basis are out of compliance with Iowa's Assessment Policy and they limit the department's ability to make data-driven decisions. In order to assist programs in developing improvement plans, the department provides technical assistance on data reporting, NRS guidelines, implementation of Iowa's Assessment Policy Guidelines, best practices, and recommendations.

#### *Financial Reviews*

IWD examines claims submitted by subrecipients to confirm the allowable and compliant use of AEFLA funds. Subrecipients upload requests for reimbursement and documentation of expenditures to the grant management system. Three levels of approval within IWD ensures claims are allowable, reasonable, and necessary and include pertinent documentation.

**Actions to Improve Quality:** Claims that are out of compliance with state and federal financial rules and regulations and policies are negotiated back to providers for correction. These negotiations include outreach for technical assistance to the program coordinator/point of contact. Each level of review has the ability to negotiate back for correction or additional documentation.

Budget amendments must be submitted 30 days prior to a claim due date as a subrecipient contract amendment and reviewed by IWD. Any approved amendment creates a new budget; however, each previous version of the budget is retained in the grant management system for tracking purposes. Changes in the budget and submission of claims are time stamped to ensure timely response and processing.

Any subrecipient that has continued issues and negotiations on claims may be required to submit claims monthly, attend required technical assistance, or have their claims rejected and not paid.

#### *Professional Development to Improve the Programs Across the State*

Iowa will use Professional Development Evaluation, Monitoring, Program Status Reports, Monthly Performance Reviews, and Quarterly Financial Reviews to inform the development and delivery of high-quality professional development opportunities to improve the instruction provided across the state. Key performance indicators will be monitored for emerging trends to identify targeted subject areas

## Adult Education and Family Literacy Act Program Certifications

| The State Plan must include                                                                                                                                            | Include |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|
| 1. The plan is submitted by the State agency that is eligible to submit the plan;                                                                                      | Yes     |
| 2. The State agency has authority under State law to perform the functions of the State under the program;                                                             | Yes     |
| 3. The State legally may carry out each provision of the plan;                                                                                                         | Yes     |
| 4. All provisions of the plan are consistent with State law;                                                                                                           | Yes     |
| 5. A State officer, specified by title in the certification, has authority under State law to receive, hold, and disburse Federal funds made available under the plan; | Yes     |
| 6. The State officer who is submitting the plan, specified by the title in the certification, has authority to submit the plan;                                        | Yes     |
| 7. The agency that is submitting the plan has adopted or otherwise formally approved the plan; and                                                                     | Yes     |
| 8. The plan is the basis for State operation and administration of the program;                                                                                        | Yes     |

## Adult Education and Family Literacy Act Program Assurances

| The State Plan must include                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Include |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|
| 1. The eligible agency will expend funds appropriated to carry out title II of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) only in a manner consistent with fiscal requirements under section 241(a) of WIOA (regarding the supplement-not-supplant requirement); | Yes     |
| 2. The eligible agency will ensure that there is at least one eligible provider serving each local area, as defined in section 3(32) of WIOA;                                                                                                                             | Yes     |

3. The eligible agency will not use any funds made available under title II of WIOA for the purpose of supporting or providing programs, services, or activities for individuals who are not “eligible individuals” within the meaning of section 203(4) of WIOA, unless it is providing programs, services or activities related to family literacy activities, as defined in section 203(9) of WIOA; Yes
4. Using funds made available under title II of WIOA to carry out a program for criminal offenders within a correctional institution, the eligible agency will give priority to serving individuals who are likely to leave the correctional institution within five years of participation in the program. Yes
5. The eligible agency agrees that in expending funds made available under Title II of WIOA, the eligible agency will comply with sections 8301 through 8303 of the Buy American Act (41 U.S.C. 8301-8303). Yes

## Authorizing or Certifying Representative

### Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA)

*1. Describe how your entity’s existing mission, policies, or commitments ensure equitable access to, and equitable participation in, the proposed project or activity.*

Iowa Workforce Development (IWD) ensures that no barriers exist that could impede equitable access to or participation in the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA), Title II of WIOA. IWD works in partnership with Iowa’s Department of Human Rights and other key stakeholders to ensure equitable access specific to AEFLA at the state and local level.

IWD pledges to operate the AEFLA, Title II, WIOA activities as described above, to ensure equitable access and. Furthermore, IWD will ensure that providers will address recruitment, intake, participation, and hiring practices, in compliance with GEPA, in the following manner:

- Recruitment: Funded providers will ensure that AEFLA staff will recruit ALL eligible participants. The local administrator will ensure any promotional material is not bias and is available in alternative formats as regionally necessary and available to all individuals. Providers of AEFLA services will ensure that their social media accounts are produced and

maintained by their respective organization's policy and while IWD does not regularly review content posted, it shall have the right to request the removal of any content that is not aligned with these GEPA standards, a violation of intellectual property rights or privacy laws, off-topic, commercial or promotion of organizations or programs not related to or affiliated with WIOA services. Staff outreach to participants with barriers to employment that includes presentations, providing program material and one-on-one meetings should ensure a supportive climate and barrier-free environment. If individuals are in need of assistance to complete an application, staff will provide assistance and if needed, make arrangements for accommodations.

- Intake: The eligible provider will involve staff personnel in the intake process for eligible individuals to provide a human-centered design process. Interviews, advising and assessments will be conducted with all eligible individuals to discuss and assess the educational needs and goals while addressing any questions about the services provided. The eligible provider will use information gained during the intake process to place eligible individuals in appropriate AEFLA activities).
- Participation: All eligible providers will ensure that the physical facilities are totally accessible to individuals with disabilities to ensure their equal access to the program.
- Hiring Process of Eligible Provider Staff: IWD promotes equal employment opportunities and the fair treatment of employees in compliance with federal, state, and local laws. All eligible providers are required to be an equal opportunity employer. In adhering to this, providers will ensure equal opportunity hiring guidelines to ensure equal access in employment to all who apply for a position using AEFLA funds.

IWD is committed to adhering to and monitoring these standards and practices and will make all provisions necessary to ensure that this plan is in compliance with the General Education and Provisions Act (GEPA).

*2. Based on your proposed project or activity, what barriers may impede equitable access and participation of students, educators, or other beneficiaries?*

IWD ensures that no barriers exist that could impede equitable access or participation of students, educators, or other beneficiaries. IWD staff do not discriminate in the provision services, nor condone or engage in any prejudicial treatment of an individual or a group.

3. *Based on the barriers identified, what steps will you take to address such barriers to equitable access and participation in the proposed project or activity?*

IWD ensures that no barriers exist that could impede equitable access to, or participation in, services. IWD leadership and program staff monitors, coordinates, and recommends action to ensure compliance with federal and state law and policy.

4. *What is your timeline, including targeted milestones, for addressing these identified barriers?*

IWD ensures that no barriers exist that could impede equitable access to, or participation in, services.

## Adult Education and Literacy Program Performance Indicators

### Program-Specific Requirements for State Vocational Rehabilitation (Combined or General)

#### a. State Rehabilitation Council

1. *All VR agencies, except for those that have an independent consumer-controlled commission, must have a State Rehabilitation Council (Council or SRC) that meets the criteria in Section 105 of the Rehabilitation Act. The designated State agency or designated State unit, as applicable, has:*

- ☐ is an independent State commission
- ☒ has established a State Rehabilitation Council

2. *In accordance with Assurance (a)(1)(B), if selected, please provide information on the current composition of the Council by representative type, including the term number of the representative, as applicable, and any vacancies, as well as the beginning dates of each representative's term.*

| <b>Council Representative</b>               | <b>Current Term Number/<br/>Vacant</b> | <b>Beginning Date of Term Mo./Yr.</b> |
|---------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) | 1                                      | 07/2023                               |
| Parent Training and Information Center      | 1                                      | 07/2024                               |
| Client Assistance Program                   | 2                                      | 07/2025                               |

|                                                                                                                                                                                  |        |         |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|---------|
| Qualified Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Counselor<br>(Ex Officio if Employed by the VR Agency)                                                                                  | 1      | 07/2024 |
| Community Rehabilitation Program Service Provider                                                                                                                                | 1      | 07/2024 |
| Business, Industry, and Labor                                                                                                                                                    | 1      | 07/2025 |
| Business, Industry, and Labor                                                                                                                                                    | 1      | 07/2025 |
| Business, Industry, and Labor                                                                                                                                                    | 1      | 07/2023 |
| Business, Industry, and Labor                                                                                                                                                    | Vacant | Vacant  |
| Disability Advocacy Groups                                                                                                                                                       | 2      | 07/2025 |
|                                                                                                                                                                                  | 1      | 07/2023 |
|                                                                                                                                                                                  | 1      | 07/2023 |
| Current or Former Applicants for, or Recipients of,<br>VR services                                                                                                               | 1      | 07/2024 |
|                                                                                                                                                                                  | 1      | 07/2024 |
| Section 121 Project Directors in the State (as<br>applicable)                                                                                                                    | N/A    | N/A     |
| State Educational Agency Responsible for Students<br>with Disabilities Eligible to Receive Services under<br>Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education<br>Act (IDEA) | 1      | 07/2023 |
| State Workforce Development Board                                                                                                                                                | 1      | 07/2023 |
| VR Agency Director (Ex Officio)                                                                                                                                                  | Vacant | Vacant  |

*3. If the SRC is not meeting the composition requirements in Section 105(b) of the Rehabilitation Act and/or is not meeting quarterly as required in Section 105(f) of the Rehabilitation Act, provide the steps that the VR agency is taking to ensure it meets those requirements.*

In accordance with Section 105(b) of the Rehabilitation Act, the SRC is responsible for conducting outreach to recruit members that meet specific composition requirements. However, the Council is currently not in full compliance with these requirements.

SRC members are appointed by the Governor each year on July 1 to serve three-year terms or to complete the remainder of a vacated term. This annual appointment structure presents challenges in maintaining compliance with federal composition requirements when vacancies occur mid-term, as new appointments cannot be made until the next cycle.

Recruitment efforts are currently underway for SRC positions with expiring terms. IVRS is working collaboratively with the SRC and the Governor's Office to ensure all vacancies are filled in a timely manner.

To promote transparency and accessibility, IVRS maintains a dedicated webpage for the State Rehabilitation Council. This resource serves as a central hub of information for individuals interested in the work of the SRC and includes:

- Meeting dates and agendas
- Meeting minutes and handouts
- Legislative newsletters
- Council membership list
- Committee assignments
- Annual SRC reports
- Member resources
- A customer satisfaction survey for job candidates

The webpage also features a link to the Iowa Talent Bank, a tool used by the State of Iowa for board and commission appointments. Interested individuals can create an account and apply online or submit completed application forms via fax to the Governor's Office for consideration.

Historically, the SRC has recruited based on the minimum membership required under federal regulations. To strengthen recruitment and broaden engagement, the SRC Outreach Committee has enhanced its efforts by developing informational materials and proactively identifying candidates who meet the statutory qualifications for council membership. The committee also encourages prospective members to attend the public comment portion of SRC meetings, fostering a pipeline of potential appointees and minimizing membership gaps when terms expire.

Outreach remains a standing agenda item at SRC meetings, with regular updates and discussions held both in subcommittee and full Council sessions. All SRC members are encouraged to participate in recruitment by sharing information about SRC membership opportunities and promoting the application process. Additionally, IVRS shares SRC information with job candidates as a means of

broadening awareness and encouraging future participation in Council activities.

Additionally, the IVRS Division Administrator and Deputy Division Administrator receive notifications of new SRC applicants submitted through the Iowa Talent Bank. These applicant lists are shared with the SRC Chair, who works in collaboration with IVRS to identify qualified candidates. Recommendations for membership are then forwarded to the Governor's Office for consideration.

IVRS also collaborates with the State Rehabilitation Council and maintains ongoing communication with the Director of Iowa Workforce Development (IWD), the designated state agency for IVRS. These discussions focus on strategies to enhance SRC membership and ensure continued compliance with the composition requirements outlined in Section 105(b) of the Rehabilitation Act.

*4. In accordance with the requirements in Section 101(a)(21)(A)(ii)(III) of the Rehabilitation Act, include a summary of the Council's input (including how it was obtained) into the State Plan and any State Plan revisions, including recommendations from the Council's annual reports, the review and analysis of consumer satisfaction and other Council reports.*

The SRC has a standing agenda for the following topics:

- Administrator's Report
- Business Engagement Subcommittee Report
- Client Assistance Program (CAP) Report
- Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA)/State Plan Discussion
- Financial Overview
- Legal
- Outreach Subcommittee Report
- Policy
- Rehabilitation Services Bureau (RSB) Report
- VR Service Delivery Subcommittee

The Rehabilitation Services Bureau Report is presented by the Bureau Chiefs and highlights the programmatic initiatives and strategic priorities of the Bureau. The Bureau is primarily focused on delivering high-quality vocational rehabilitation services that support individuals with disabilities in achieving competitive integrated employment outcomes.

IVRS allocates time during each SRC meeting for discussion of the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) and the State Plan. Input provided by Council members during these discussions is documented in the



meeting minutes and incorporated into the development and ongoing refinement of the State Plan.

The State Rehabilitation Council maintains three standing subcommittees, each with defined responsibilities that contribute to the development and implementation of the State Plan:

**Outreach Committee:** Responsible for planning and hosting the SRC Legislative Reception in coordination with IVRS staff; developing and submitting the SRC Annual Report; reviewing customer satisfaction survey results to ensure integration into the State Plan; and leading recruitment efforts for Council membership. Activities and updates from this subcommittee are reported back to the full Council for discussion.

**VR Service Delivery Committee:** Charged with reviewing and providing input on the CSNA; evaluating IVRS policies and procedures; reviewing and making recommendations on the State Plan; and offering guidance on priority areas impacting service delivery. Activities and updates from this subcommittee are reported back to the full Council for discussion.

**Business Engagement Committee:** Focused on strengthening partnerships with employers to promote competitive integrated employment and work-based learning opportunities for individuals with disabilities. This committee also leads outreach efforts to recruit Council representatives from the business, industry, and labor sectors. Activities and updates from this subcommittee are reported back to the full Council for discussion.

Each of these committees plays an integral role in informing the content and direction of the State Plan and its revisions, ensuring that the perspectives of stakeholders are meaningfully represented.

SRC members reviewed the OMB Approved State Plan ICR, the prior Vocational Rehabilitation portion of the Unified State Plan, and the most current Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment. Based on this information, the SRC identified areas they would like IVRS to continue to focus on over the next several years. SRC members shared the following updated focus areas for IVRS moving forward:

**Focus Area 1:** Increase efforts to move individuals from subminimum wage to competitive integrated employment, including involvement of the individual's support network (e.g., family, guardian, case manager, CRP representative, etc.) and addressing barriers that arise. Include education, training, and opportunities for individuals with disabilities.

Focus Area 2: Increase visibility of services for individuals with disabilities and the public regarding available IVRS services, including appropriate times to make contact with IVRS. Increase collaboration with partners (e.g. CRPs, etc.) to cross train and ensure seamless services for individuals with disabilities and co-enrollment opportunities.

Focus Area 3: IVRS should encourage partners to utilize the IVRS online referral system to ensure there is a common process for receiving referrals in a timely manner. Ensure all applicants receive information and referral to other resources, as needed.

Focus Area 4: Focus on staff turnover and create an employee retention program to address issues. Review data available to help support decision making. Consider “stay interviews” and other innovative practices to address retention.

*5. Provide the VR agency’s response to the Council’s input and recommendations, including an explanation for the rejection of any input and recommendations.*

Based on the focus areas identified by the SRC, the VR agency has responded in the following manner:

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Focus Area 1: Increase efforts to move individuals from subminimum wage to competitive integrated employment, including involvement of the individual’s support network (e.g., family, guardian, case manager, CRP representative, etc.) and addressing barriers that arise. Include education, training, and opportunities for individuals with disabilities.

VR Agency Response: IVRS provides career counseling, information, and referral to individuals considering subminimum wage employment, in accordance with federal regulations. These conversations are handled through an IVRS CRP staff member who has received training and has thorough knowledge of the subminimum wage requirements.

The CRP staff member tracks subminimum wage earners and associated timeframes and provides required information. At this time, Iowa only has one individual in subminimum wage employment.

IVRS was awarded a Disability Innovation Fund (DIF): Subminimum Wage to Competitive Integrated Employment (SWTCIE) grant that began on October 1, 2022. The intent of the grant is to assist states in supporting innovative activities aimed at increasing competitive integrated employment for youth and adults

with disabilities. Titled the Iowa Blueprint for Change (IBC), the IVRS DIF-SWTCIE grant advances and improves statewide systems so that Iowans with disabilities have access to competitive integrated employment opportunities that lead to economic security. The project focuses on system-level interventions to promote state policies, funding, and practices that support competitive integrated employment within the state as the first and preferred outcome for all Iowans with disabilities. The IBC team utilizes participant-level interventions to increase individual readiness for, and access to, competitive integrated employment.

The IBC project utilizes a Collective, which is a stakeholder group consisting of over 100 members. This Collective utilizes the Collective Impact framework for project implementation and ensures all interested stakeholders have a voice in the system-level work throughout the state. Membership includes Iowa 14(c) certificate holders to build or enhance competitive integrated employment models of service and provide technical assistance related to provider transformation. By the end of the five-year project, IVRS hopes to ensure adequate resources and support are available within the state so that individuals with disabilities have the information necessary to make informed decisions regarding competitive integrated employment. All of the objectives and activities within the IBC grant are focused on the population identified by the SRC focus area.

Focus Area 2: Increase visibility of services for individuals with disabilities and the public regarding available IVRS services, including appropriate times to make contact with IVRS. Increase collaboration with partners (e.g. CRPs, etc.) to cross train and ensure seamless services for individuals with disabilities and co-enrollment opportunities.

VR Agency Response: As a result of the statewide realignment, IVRS is supported by the IWD Communications team. The intent of this team is to increase the visibility of all divisions, including IVRS, with the public through various social media outlets. In addition, IVRS's website has been integrated into IWD's website to demonstrate to the public that IVRS is a division of IWD and that the state of Iowa operates an integrated and cohesive state workforce system. The website contains the guiding statements of the mission and vision of the agency; the services IVRS provides (including the agency brochure); as well as other agency initiatives and pertinent information for individuals with disabilities and the public. Contact information is included on the agency's website as well. The IVRS application is available online and is also available to download. Paper copies are available as well at core partner sites. The SRC will also be

encouraged to work with IVRS to identify additional resources or information that should be developed.

The Integrated Resource Team is a multifaceted and collaborative methodology to service delivery, co-enrollment and case management. Initially identified as a promising practice under the U.S. Department of Labor's Disability Program Navigator initiative (DPN) and ultimately formalized under the latter-Disability Employment Initiative (DEI). The Integrated Resource Team (IRT) involves the coordination of diversified service systems and leveraging funding in order to meet the needs of an individual job seeker with a disability. IRTs provide the opportunity for comprehensive, wrap-around services for individuals with significant barriers to employment (such as experiencing a disability, homelessness, etc.,) by bringing together a variety of programs and services that meet the needs of a particular job candidate. The strategic and customer-centered approach of the IRT model aligns ideally with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). IVRS is a key stakeholder in this integrated practice. The deeper integration of the IRT collaborative approach creates cross-training, knowledge and sharing and a seamless and holistic service delivery for program participants across all partners.

Focus Area 3: IVRS should encourage partners to utilize the IVRS online referral system to ensure there is a common process for receiving referrals in a timely manner. Ensure all applicants receive information and referral to other resources, as needed.

VR Agency Response: IVRS will share the link to the online application on the IVRS website with community partners. IVRS also provides paper applications to core partner programs. Per the Federal regulations, IVRS staff provide information and referral throughout the service delivery process. In addition, IVRS has contracted with Libera to implement a new case management system. A main focus of the new system is to improve the process for providers to make referrals to IVRS and to improve communication and coordination of services.

The system will be implemented through the Subminimum Wage to Competitive Integrated Employment (SWTCIE) DIF grant and utilized with partners to serve individuals who are participants in the grant initiatives with an intent to expand its use for all individuals served by IVRS at the conclusion of the grant. The system will be integrated with IWD's case management system IowaWORKS to improve the efficiency of making and receiving referrals among WIOA core partners.

This new case management system presents an opportunity to allow the sharing of data between core partner programs in Iowa, increasing the visibility of program outcomes. One of the focuses for IVRS is to review performance measures across core partner programs to determine the outcome of co-enrollment. Data metrics such as job placement, credential attainment, and earnings growth will help to evaluate the effectiveness of the programs, ensuring a consistent set of metrics and determining if Iowa is achieving positive labor market outcomes. This will assist IVRS in making informed programmatic and operational decisions in the future.

Focus Area 4: Focus on staff turnover and create an employee retention program to address issues. Review data available to help support decision making. Consider “stay interviews” and other innovative practices to address retention.

VR Agency Response: As part of our recruitment efforts, IVRS maintains an internal policy related to professional development, credentialing, and further education. IVRS has assisted employees with tuition and associated costs to ensure staff can receive the training necessary to perform the necessary functions of their positions, as well as to ensure there is a pipeline for internal promotions. IVRS remains flexible to support employees interested in pursuing advanced degrees to ensure they have time to complete their studies. These opportunities have been open to all full-time IVRS employees who meet the guidelines.

IVRS works with the Iowa Department of Administrative Services to make performance development courses available for staff. These courses vary based on need, but some include:

- Creative Thinking
- Crucial Conversations
- Customer Experience
- Dimensions of Leadership
- Emotional Intelligence
- Getting Things Done
- Listening Skills
- Managing Stress & Workplace Accountability
- Mental Health First Aid
- Workplace Ethics

IVRS leadership also holds regular meetings with employees focused on improving job satisfaction and reducing turnover. The frequency of the meetings

varies based on the needs of the supervisor and staff. These meetings provide opportunities for employees to be heard and to work directly with their supervisor to address any employment concerns before they lead to issues with turnover.

On October 10, 2024, IVRS held a public meeting to share information regarding changes to the minimum qualifications for counselors. This meeting was posted on social media as well as the agency website. It was also sent out via email to all contact lists. IVRS lowered the minimum qualifications to match the minimum qualifications outlined in 34 CFR 361. This change ensured that current Rehabilitation Associates with vast experience could be retained as Rehabilitation Counselors. It also provided IVRS with a broader range of applicants for employment.

IVRS has accepted all suggestions from the SRC in these areas, and no recommendations were rejected. IVRS also regularly consults with the SRC regarding the development, implementation, and revision of the RSB policies and procedures. Input and recommendations on policy are accepted unless they are out of compliance with federal or state regulatory guidance. If this situation occurs, an explanation of that guidance is provided to the SRC.

#### **b. Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA).**

##### **Section 101(a)(15), (17), and (23) of the Rehabilitation Act require VR agencies to provide an assessment of:**

###### *1. The VR services needs of individuals with disabilities residing within the State, including:*

###### **A. Individuals with the most significant disabilities and their need for Supported Employment;**

Based on the focus areas identified by the SRC, the VR agency has responded in the following manner:

Focus Area 1: Increase efforts to move individuals from subminimum wage to competitive integrated employment, including involvement of the individual's support network (e.g., family, guardian, case manager, CRP representative, etc.) and addressing barriers that arise. Include education, training, and opportunities for individuals with disabilities.

VR Agency Response: IVRS provides career counseling, information, and referral to individuals considering subminimum wage employment, in accordance with federal regulations. These conversations are handled through an IVRS CRP staff

member who has received training and has thorough knowledge of the subminimum wage requirements.

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The IBC project utilizes a Collective, which is a stakeholder group consisting of over 100 members. This Collective utilizes the Collective Impact framework for project implementation and ensures all interested stakeholders have a voice in the system-level work throughout the state. Membership includes Iowa 14(c) certificate holders to build or enhance competitive integrated employment models of service and provide technical assistance related to provider transformation. By the end of the five-year project, IVRS hopes to ensure adequate resources and support are available within the state so that individuals with disabilities have the information necessary to make informed decisions regarding competitive integrated employment. All of the objectives and activities within the IBC grant are focused on the population identified by the SRC focus area.

Focus Area 2: Increase visibility of services for individuals with disabilities and the public regarding available IVRS services, including appropriate times to make contact with IVRS. Increase collaboration with partners (e.g. CRPs, etc.) to cross train and ensure seamless services for individuals with disabilities and co-enrollment opportunities.

VR Agency Response: As a result of the statewide realignment, IVRS is supported by the IWD Communications team. The intent of this team is to increase the

visibility of all divisions, including IVRS, with the public through various social media outlets. In addition, IVRS's website has been integrated into IWD's website to demonstrate to the public that IVRS is a division of IWD and that the state of Iowa operates an integrated and cohesive state workforce system. The website contains the guiding statements of the mission and vision of the agency; the services IVRS provides (including the agency brochure); as well as other agency initiatives and pertinent information for individuals with disabilities and the public. Contact information is included on the agency's website as well. The IVRS application is available online and is also available to download. Paper copies are available as well at core partner sites. The SRC will also be encouraged to work with IVRS to identify additional resources or information that should be developed.

The Integrated Resource Team is a multifaceted and collaborative methodology to service delivery, co-enrollment and case management. Initially identified as a promising practice under the U.S. Department of Labor's Disability Program Navigator initiative (DPN) and ultimately formalized under the latter-Disability Employment Initiative (DEI). The Integrated Resource Team (IRT) involves the coordination of diversified service systems and leveraging funding in order to meet the needs of an individual job seeker with a disability. IRTs provide the opportunity for comprehensive, wrap-around services for individuals with significant barriers to employment (such as experiencing a disability, homelessness, etc.,) by bringing together a variety of programs and services that meet the needs of a particular job candidate. The strategic and customer-centered approach of the IRT model aligns ideally with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). IVRS is a key stakeholder in this integrated practice. The deeper integration of the IRT collaborative approach creates cross-training, knowledge and sharing and a seamless and holistic service delivery for program participants across all partners.

Focus Area 3: IVRS should encourage partners to utilize the IVRS online referral system to ensure there is a common process for receiving referrals in a timely manner. Ensure all applicants receive information and referral to other resources, as needed.

VR Agency Response: IVRS will share the link to the online application on the IVRS website with community partners. IVRS also provides paper applications to core partner programs. Per the Federal regulations, IVRS staff provide information and referral throughout the service delivery process. In addition, IVRS has contracted with Libera to implement a new case management system. A main focus of the new system is to improve the process for providers



to make referrals to IVRS and to improve communication and coordination of services.

The system will be implemented through the Subminimum Wage to Competitive Integrated Employment (SWTCIE) DIF grant and utilized with partners to serve individuals who are participants in the grant initiatives with an intent to expand its use for all individuals served by IVRS at the conclusion of the grant. The system will be integrated with IWD's case management system IowaWORKS to improve the efficiency of making and receiving referrals among WIOA core partners.

This new case management system presents an opportunity to allow the sharing of data between core partner programs in Iowa, increasing the visibility of program outcomes. One of the focuses for IVRS is to review performance measures across core partner programs to determine the outcome of co-enrollment. Data metrics such as job placement, credential attainment, and earnings growth will help to evaluate the effectiveness of the programs, ensuring a consistent set of metrics and determining if Iowa is achieving positive labor market outcomes. This will assist IVRS in making informed programmatic and operational decisions in the future.

Focus Area 4: Focus on staff turnover and create an employee retention program to address issues. Review data available to help support decision making. Consider "stay interviews" and other innovative practices to address retention.

VR Agency Response: As part of our recruitment efforts, IVRS maintains an internal policy related to professional development, credentialing, and further education. IVRS has assisted employees with tuition and associated costs to ensure staff can receive the training necessary to perform the necessary functions of their positions, as well as to ensure there is a pipeline for internal promotions. IVRS remains flexible to support employees interested in pursuing advanced degrees to ensure they have time to complete their studies. These opportunities have been open to all full-time IVRS employees who meet the guidelines.

IVRS works with the Iowa Department of Administrative Services to make performance development courses available for staff. These courses vary based on need, but some include:

- Creative Thinking
- Crucial Conversations
- Customer Experience

- Dimensions of Leadership
- Emotional Intelligence
- Getting Things Done
- Listening Skills
- Managing Stress & Workplace Accountability
- Mental Health First Aid
- Workplace Ethics

IVRS leadership also holds regular meetings with employees focused on improving job satisfaction and reducing turnover. The frequency of the meetings varies based on the needs of the supervisor and staff. These meetings provide opportunities for employees to be heard and to work directly with their supervisor to address any employment concerns before they lead to issues with turnover.

On October 10, 2024, IVRS held a public meeting to share information regarding changes to the minimum qualifications for counselors. This meeting was posted on social media as well as the agency website. It was also sent out via email to all contact lists. IVRS lowered the minimum qualifications to match the minimum qualifications outlined in 34 CFR 361. This change ensured that current Rehabilitation Associates with vast experience could be retained as Rehabilitation Counselors. It also provided IVRS with a broader range of applicants for employment.

IVRS has accepted all suggestions from the SRC in these areas, and no recommendations were rejected. IVRS also regularly consults with the SRC regarding the development, implementation, and revision of the RSB policies and procedures. Input and recommendations on policy are accepted unless they are out of compliance with federal or state regulatory guidance. If this situation occurs, an explanation of that guidance is provided to the SRC.

#### **B. Individuals with disabilities who are minorities and individuals with disabilities who have been unserved or underserved by the VR program;**

The demographics of the consumers served by IVRS mirror the demographics of the state of Iowa. That is, there is little racial diversity among IVRS consumers, with the majority of consumers being identified as white, with additional racial groups such as Black/African American, Asian, and Multiracial far behind. The proportion of people with disabilities within these racial groups remains around the 10% mark, however the proportion of the American Indian and Alaskan Native population with disabilities is higher, at 16%.

When asked about specific minority and underrepresented groups, IVRS staff and partners indicated that those in rural communities had the most unmet needs and needs that were distinctly unique from those of general consumers. Over half of all participants (91; 61%) agreed that barriers to achieving employment goals for consumers from racial or ethnically diverse groups were different from the overall population.

No partner indicated that accessing IVRS services was different for consumers from racial or ethnically diverse groups.

Those surveyed agreed that barriers to achieving employment goals for people who are living in rural communities differed from other disability populations (19; 70.3%). The most reported barriers included Disability-related transportation issues (11; 18.3%), Not enough jobs available (13; 21.6%), and other transportation issues (14; 23.2%). However, most partners did not indicate that the accessibility of IVRS services was markedly different for consumers in rural communities as compared to consumers generally.

#### C. Individuals with disabilities served through other components of the workforce development system; and

Among those consumers who had experience with the One-Stop Centers, the open-ended feedback provided indicated that they experienced inaccessibility while at the center (e.g., no interpreters, screen-reading technology, disability-trained staff), as well as within the job listings provided (i.e., jobs or employers that would be accommodation-friendly not listed). Consumer perceptions align with staff recommendations that One-Stop employees receive training for working with people with disabilities, and to partner more effectively with IVRS.

Participants were asked to report how frequently they work with the Iowa Job Centers also known as One-Stops or Career Centers). 30 respondents reported working “very frequently” with these centers (23.3%), 51 reported working “somewhat frequently” with these centers (39.5%), 34 (26.4%) reported “infrequently”, and the remaining 14 participants reported not working at all with these centers (10.8%). Among the IVRS staff surveyed, over half reported that Iowa Job Centers do not effectively serve individuals with disabilities (71; 55%).

When asked to suggest changes to the Iowa Job Centers to improve services to people with disabilities participants selected answers including train their staff on how to work with individuals with disabilities (75;32%), Partner more effectively with IVRS (62;26.5%). IVRS staff were asked to share changes that vendors and service providers could make to support consumers in Iowa. Overwhelmingly, staff mentioned changes to or increases in hiring practices to

improve services overall (i.e., hire more staff so services can be provided more quickly; hire better trained staff to provide improved services to consumers). Coverage of rural areas in the state was also a primary concern, and finally, effective collaboration with IVRS and understanding IVRS' policies and procedures came across strongly in the responses.

Most consumers reported not having used the IowaWORKS/One-Stop centers (48.93%), while some indicated they had (36.6%), and a smaller proportion reported being unsure about whether they had or not (14.47%).

Most consumers reported that they did not experience difficulties with the accessibility of the building, but of those who did, some reported issues with location(s), parking, an emphasis on having to navigate the technology independently, and limited options for seating. About a third (32%) of those who reported that they had used the Centers reported going to a Center for training. Most (81%) indicated they went to the Center to find a job, and approximately 60% of those consumers reported that the Center did help them to find a job. Most consumers, overall, indicated that they had no opinion about how effective the Centers were at providing services to consumers with disabilities (32.2%). Many did indicate they believed the centers to be effective, with 31% indicating they believed the Centers were highly effective at serving consumers with disabilities.

**D. Youth with disabilities, including students with disabilities and their need for pre-employment transition services. Include an assessment of the needs of individuals with disabilities for transition career services and pre-employment transition services, and the extent to which such services are coordinated with transition services provided under IDEA.**

The available data demonstrate that IVRS is providing robust transition services. Primary areas of need identified by the data include improving relationships between VR and schools and by extension, training for VR staff to develop partnerships between schools and other community partners. Stakeholders in transition-age youth indicated that more information about IVRS services, processes, etc. should be better provided to parents and students. Partners also indicated that schools themselves often create barriers by way of funding or lack thereof.

The partners agreed that barriers to achieving employment goals for transition-aged youth differed from other disability populations (16; 59%). The most reported barriers included Little or no work experience (12; 26%), poor social skills (8; 17.39%), or limited work skills (6; 13%). No partners indicated that mental health issues, childcare, housing, or language barriers were barriers to

employment among this population. Partners overwhelmingly did not believe that transition-aged youth had different needs in accessing IVRS services as compared to consumers from all groups.

Most of those surveyed agreed that barriers to achieving employment goals for transition-age youth differed from the general populations (107; 71.3%). The most reported barriers included Poor social skills (49; 13.7%), Not enough jobs available (60; 16.8%), and Little or no work experience (74; 20.7%).

## *2. Identify the need to establish, develop, or improve community rehabilitation programs within the State.*

Across all stakeholder groups there was a consistent concern about services and community rehabilitation programs available to people with disabilities in rural and less populated areas. Staffing issues were prevalent in the findings, ranging from lack of personnel to shortcomings in actual personnel hired in terms of their services and skills.

These concerns were greater than any concerns about other communities and sub-populations. However, based on the increased prevalence among people from Native American and Alaskan Native communities in Iowa, additional considerations should be made regarding community rehabilitation programs that are accessible to the Indigenous tribes in the state.

### *c. Goals, Priorities, and Strategies*

**Section 101(a)(15) and (23) of the Rehabilitation Act require VR agencies to describe the goals and priorities of the State in carrying out the VR and Supported Employment programs. The goals and priorities are based on (1) the most recent CSNA, including any updates; (2) the State's performance under the performance accountability measures of section 116 of WIOA; and (3) other available information on the operation and effectiveness of the VR program, including any reports received from the SRC and findings and recommendations from monitoring activities conducted under section 107 of the Rehabilitation Act. VR agencies must—**

#### *1. Describe how the SRC and the VR agency jointly developed and agreed to the goals and priorities and any revisions; and*

IVRS collaborates closely with the State Rehabilitation Council to review and discuss the findings of the most recent Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA). Based on these discussions, the SRC identifies key focus areas to guide strategic planning. These focus areas are reflected in the Vocational Rehabilitation section of the current Unified State Plan.

In support of this collaborative process, IVRS has provided the SRC with detailed presentations on the results of the previous Section 107 monitoring review, agency performance data, and progress toward federal performance accountability measures. This information has informed the development of the two primary agency goals, each accompanied by targeted strategies.

The SRC is also provided with additional data to support informed decision-making, including performance indicators, monitoring audit findings/recommendations, Customer Satisfaction Survey results, internal agency data, and budgetary information. This comprehensive approach ensures that goals and priorities are data-driven and aligned with stakeholder input.

The SRC Service Delivery Subcommittee plays a critical role in this process, conducting in-depth reviews of IVRS data and documentation to support the development of goals, priorities, and strategic initiatives. These proposed strategies are developed in coordination with the SRC, refined through subcommittee review, and presented to the full Council to ensure member feedback is incorporated into final recommendations. The full VR portion of the Unified State Plan was reviewed with the SRC on October 28, 2025.

*2. Identify measurable goals and priorities in carrying out the VR and Supported Employment programs and the basis for selecting the goals and priorities (e.g., CSNA, performance accountability measures, SRC recommendations, monitoring, other information). As required in Section 101(a)(15)(D), (18), and (23), describe under each goal or priority, the strategies or methods used to achieve the goal or priority, including as applicable, description of strategies or methods that—*

GOAL I: Increase engagement in the workforce system to facilitate appropriate referrals and increase co-enrollment in workforce programs throughout the VR process.

STRATEGY I: Compare referral source and co-enrollment information to determine correlations to successful outcomes.

- Identify process improvement activities that result in workforce partners and job candidates referred to VR being better informed and aware of expectations for competitive integrated employment.
- Staff engage job candidates from application through closure by addressing their needs and proactively working to motivate the job candidate through the process and making referrals to appropriate workforce partners to meet the individualized service needs of the job candidate.

- Quality services are delivered and demonstrated in case reviews. Participate in QI research/review processes consistently utilizing data in a decision-making model.

STRATEGY II: Engage Workforce staff in training opportunities to learn more about Workforce programs and services available within each program and to develop mutually beneficial relationships.

- Leverage existing training opportunities to educate staff from all four core programs to gain a better understanding of the services and supports available under each program.
- Collaborate and share strategies across systems, demonstrating effective partnership, alignment of roles and responsibilities and efforts to increase capacity through reduced duplication.
- Engage professional development and training, identifying activities to address local needs/barriers, any identified accessibility issues within centers, and developing local solutions addressing problem areas.
- Actively participate in the local workforce development areas including the Local Workforce Development Board and committees, identifying key actions to improve capacity and ensure alignment of services with core partners in areas of Outreach and Intake, Assessments, Career Services, Case Management, Follow-Along Services, and Business Engagement.

STRATEGY III: Utilize the Core 4 pilot project to expand co-enrollment to provide job search, job seeking skills, and job placement services to VR job-ready job candidates.

- Identify IVRS job candidates who are employment-ready and are in need of job placement for referral to the Iowa Workforce Development Core 4 team.
- Identify barriers to employment and accommodation needs to identify additional support needed and referral opportunities.
- Participate in cross-collaborative teams to maximize resources and improve employment outcomes for job candidates who are job-ready.

STRATEGY IV: Leverage funding opportunities across core partner programs to maximize training opportunities for VR job candidates.

- Leverage existing training opportunities to educate staff from all four core programs on the services and funding opportunities that exist under the core programs.
- Collaborate and share strategies across systems, demonstrating effective partnership, to maximize funding sources to support post-secondary and employment-related training opportunities for job candidates.

GOAL II: Educate, train, and provide technical assistance to business partners to reduce the number of days from job ready to job placement for individuals with disabilities.

STRATEGY I: Utilize the Core 4 pilot project to increase employer partnerships. The purpose of this project is to establish a collaborative, cross-agency approach among core workforce partners to help Iowa job seekers achieve meaningful and sustainable employment more efficiently. This innovative model is designed to benefit both job seekers and Iowa's business and industry sections by aligning resources and expertise across systems.

- Utilize the Integrated Resource Team (IRT), which brings together workforce career planners and vocational rehabilitation counselors to deliver coordinated, individualized services.
- Engage business partners as active collaborators in the employment process—leveraging the state's workforce programs to attract and prepare qualified candidates.
- Prepare job candidates through tailored services to ensure job readiness.
- Support job seekers in effective job search and placement activities.
- Identify and implement appropriate workplace accommodations.
- Provide ongoing follow-up services to support job retention and success.

STRATEGY II: Utilize the Windmills training to promote inclusive work settings and increase placements.

- Develop a train-the-trainer for Windmills to all interested staff. The intent is for staff to become competent trainers for business and industry across the state.



- Increase the ability of businesses to offer a welcoming environment to individuals with disabilities.
- Review business placements to determine if there is an increase in placement and retention at the businesses that have gone through the training.

STRATEGY III: Offer ADA training and certification to VR staff to ensure competency in ADA for purposes of physical and programmatic accessibility to employers.

- Increase the number of certified ADA trainers across the state to Conduct ADA assessments for businesses throughout the state.
- Provide support and guidance to businesses seeking general ADA information and share relevant resources based on the specific needs presented by the business.

STRATEGY IV: Expand the capacity of business engagement through effective use of the National Employment Team (NET), business services team, individual staff and collaborative efforts across teams.

- Utilize the business engagement team to work with local area offices to develop business liaisons.
- Utilize the process to increase job candidate placements in competitive integrated employment.
- Partner with the NET to deliver services to national customers with a footprint in Iowa, reporting progress to the NET.
- Provide guidance and training to IVRS staff on the dual customer approach.

#### A. Support innovation and expansion activities;

The goals and strategies identified above are based on innovative approaches that assist in the expansion and improvement of the provision of vocational rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities, including those with the most significant disabilities. Goal I focuses on increased collaboration and integration of services within the Workforce system. The Governor's Realignment bill has moved IVRS' designated State agency to Iowa Workforce Development Services. This realignment has provided IVRS with the opportunity to take advantage of all innovative and expansive services available within the entire system. Goal II focuses on providing services to businesses that assist job

candidates with competitive integrated employment. The Workforce system specializes in services for businesses. IVRS is an integral part of the business services within the system. As a result, both goals are innovative and expand activities for all Iowans with disabilities.

IVRS is also the recipient of the Iowa Blueprint for Change project, funded under the Disability Innovation Fund-Subminimum Wage to Competitive Integrated Employment grant. The intent of the DIF grant is to support innovative activities aimed at improving the lives of individuals with disabilities. The DIF grant supports the efforts of the VR program by providing contract staff and a tiered internal level of support within VR to provide technical assistance and training to businesses and VR staff to support the efforts of the grant and of services in general, especially for the most significantly disabled population.

IVRS does not track a separate line item for funding Innovation and Expansion activities. IVRS has not set a percentage dedicated to that line item. IVRS dollars are allocated through a budget forecasting system based upon a general funding account, Supported Employment allocations and Pre-Employment Transition Services set aside. Through strategic planning, the IVRS Planning and Development Team, and the Executive Leadership Team, identify new opportunities to expand service delivery and improve quality that are in alignment with the state plan goals and strategies identified. Specifically, IVRS utilizes Innovation and Expansion funds to support the activities of the State Rehabilitation Council, as well as various transition contracts, (e.g., JReS, TAP, etc. outlined in other areas of this plan). IVRS supports the activities of the SRC by offsetting participation of costs for meeting attendance; and to attend learning activities and the national and state levels. IVRS is also utilizing such funds to develop training materials for new members.

#### **B. Overcome barriers to accessing VR and supported employment services;**

The online application system has provided an initial start to ensuring VR services are more readily available. Goal I focuses on increasing referrals and co-enrollment, which will ensure that additional services within all core programs are available and coordinated. Additionally, as rental agreements expire, IVRS is focused on combining offices with other core partners to create additional American Job Centers across the State to allow for more seamless service delivery.

Lack of CRP availability has been identified as a barrier to job candidates accessing supported employment services. The Iowa Blueprint for Change grant assists in identifying innovative practices that assist with capacity building for

CRPs, including apprenticeships to create a pipeline into careers in the field and incorporating practices to meet the needs of the MSD population. Waiver waiting list and changes within the state Medicaid system are creating barriers to fund supported employment services and extended supports, creating potential barriers for individuals with the most significant disabilities. IVRS is working on developing a new MOA and requesting joint meetings with Iowa Health and Human Services to address these barriers and avoid disruption in employment for job candidates.

C. Improve and expand VR services for students with disabilities, including the coordination of services designed to facilitate the transition of such students from school to postsecondary life (including the receipt of VR services, post-secondary education, employment, and pre-employment transition services); and

The strategies identified under Goal 1 will assist IVRS in exploring and identifying opportunities to collaborate with WIOA core programs to coordinate and expand services to students with disabilities. The Local School Plan also assists with identifying gaps in service delivery in order to improve transition services for students with disabilities across the state. As gaps are identified for each school district, discussions occur on how to meet these needs so students with disabilities are receiving the support and services needed to be successful. These discussions include representatives from WIOA core programs.

D. Improve the performance of the VR and Supported Employment programs in assisting individuals with disabilities to achieve quality employment outcomes.

When job candidates, including those with the most significant disabilities, receive comprehensive services and support delivered by an integrated team that address their individual needs, successful outcomes are likely to increase. By utilizing a team approach identified in the strategies identified above in both Goals 1 and 2, IVRS staff are able to focus on providing quality vocational rehabilitation services and increase performance. Through increased awareness of program services and funding options, partners will be able to leverage funding for training services. This will reduce economic barriers that many job candidates face and provide more support services to assist them in successfully completing the training and lead to better outcomes and earnings. Strategies identified under Goal 2, will increase IVRS staff expertise in providing quality services to employers focused on addressing disability issues within the recruiting, hiring and retention of employees with disabilities. When these issues are addressed, employees with disabilities, including those who receive Supported Employment services are more successful in maintaining employment.

Innovative services, such as Customized Employment and Individual Placement and Supports currently offered through the Iowa Blueprint for Change project allow sustainable options for individuals with disabilities that lead to quality employment outcomes. These innovative practices are evidence-based and/or evolving as evidence-based practices; and ensure that services are provided to fidelity. Working with employers that offer services to individuals with disabilities ties back to both Goal I and Goal II and the strategies IVRS will utilize.

#### d. Evaluation and Reports of Progress: VR and Supported Employment Goals

**For the most recently completed program year, provide an evaluation and report of progress for the goals or priorities, including progress on the strategies under each goal or priority, applicable to that program year. Sections 101(a)(15) and 101(a)(23) of the Rehabilitation Act require VR agencies to describe—**

##### *1. Progress in achieving the goals and priorities identified for the VR and Supported Employment Programs;*

GOAL I: Increase engagement in the workforce system to facilitate appropriate referrals and increase co-enrollment in workforce programs throughout the VR process.

STRATEGY I: Compare referral source and co-enrollment information to determine correlations to successful outcomes.

- Identify process improvement activities that result in workforce partners and job candidates referred to VR being better informed and aware of expectations for competitive integrated employment.
- Staff engage job candidates from application through closure by addressing their needs and proactively work to motivate the job candidate through the process and make referrals to appropriate workforce partners to meet the individualized service needs of the job candidate.
- Quality services are delivered and demonstrated in case reviews. Participate in the QI research/review processes consistently utilizing data in a decision-making model.

PROGRESS I: IVRS has made substantial progress in this area from prior state plans. The agency has seen an 111% increase in referrals over the past program year. This is due, in part, to the implementation of the strategies listed above. IVRS has eliminated the waiting list, so it is necessary to implement such strategies to work collaboratively with WIOA partners to assure Iowans with disabilities receive seamless service delivery. We have done this by educating

staff across WIOA programs on the services and supports that can be accessed from each program and making referrals, when necessary, to assure individuals with disabilities achieve outcomes in competitive integrated employment.

STRATEGY II: Engage Workforce staff in training opportunities to learn more about Workforce programs and services available within each program and to develop mutually beneficial relationships.

- Leverage existing training opportunities to educate staff from all four core programs to gain a better understanding of the services and supports available under each program.
- Collaborate and share strategies across systems, demonstrating effective partnership, alignment of roles and responsibilities and efforts to increase capacity through reduced duplication.
- Engage professional development and training, identifying activities to address local needs/barriers, and developing local solutions addressing problem areas.
- Actively participate in the local workforce development areas including the Local Workforce Development Board and committees, identifying key actions to improve capacity and ensure alignment of services with core partners in areas of Outreach and Intake, Assessments, Career Services, Case Management, Follow-Along Services, and Business Engagement.

PROGRESS II: IVRS collaborates with other Title partners to deliver statewide training initiatives. These opportunities provide cross-training for staff across all Title programs, enhancing their understanding of workforce services and resources available within each program. A dedicated workgroup, consisting of representatives from all core programs, meets regularly to identify training topics based on staff input and emerging needs. An example of recent topics include:

- Communication and Team Building
- ADA Forms
- Financial Literacy
- Labor Market Information
- Business Services
- Dual Diagnosis and Substance Abuse
- Disability Etiquette
- Overview of WIOA

IVRS participates as a partner in the One-Stop Certification process, per regulations. The One-Stop Center Certification Standards require a regular system for continuing staff professional development. These standards are adhered to and IVRS staff cross-train locally with core partners.

STRATEGY III: Utilize the Core 4 pilot project to expand co-enrollment to provide job search, job seeking skills, and job placement services to VR job-ready job candidates.

- Identify IVRS job candidates who are employment ready and are in need of job placement for referral to the Iowa Workforce Development Core 4 team.
- Identify barriers to employment and accommodation needs to identify additional support needed and referral opportunities.
- Participate in cross-collaborative teams to maximize resources and improve employment outcomes for job candidates who are job-ready.

PROGRESS III: IVRS collaborated with other divisions of Iowa Workforce Development to design and implement a streamlined referral process, ensuring that all job-ready candidates are directed to the Core 4 pilot project, which launched statewide on July 1, 2025. This initiative utilizes an Integrated Resource Team (IRT) approach to comprehensively address barriers to employment, accommodations, and other individualized needs, while aligning services toward measurable employment outcomes.

Since the statewide rollout, the program has already achieved four successful case closures, with expectations for significantly increased outcomes in the coming year. IVRS has also adopted this strategy as a key performance indicator within the Iowa Workforce Development strategic plan.

STRATEGY IV: Leverage funding opportunities across core partner programs to maximize training opportunities for VR job candidates.

- Leverage existing training opportunities to educate staff from all four core programs on the services and funding opportunities that exist under the core programs.
- Collaborate and share strategies across systems, demonstrating effective partnership, to maximize funding sources to support post-secondary and employment related training opportunities for job candidates.

PROGRESS IV: IVRS staff refer job candidates to workshops and other resources available through the American Job Centers, including resume development, interview preparation, financial literacy, and soft skills training opportunities. IVRS also facilitates access to additional support services and secondary funding available through other Title programs, when eligibility criteria are met. This includes connections to Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs, as well as Adult Education and Literacy services, which can assist with the cost of post-secondary training.

GOAL II: Educate, train, and provide technical assistance to business partners on the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act, including accessible and adaptive technology, assistive technology, reasonable accommodation, reasonable modification, program access, and universal design.

STRATEGY I: Utilize Core 4 pilot project to increase employer partnerships. The purpose of this project is to establish a collaborative, integrated approach among core partners to help Iowa job seekers with disabilities achieve meaningful and sustainable employment more efficiently. This innovative strategy benefits both job seekers and Iowa's business and industry sectors by leveraging the combined expertise of Workforce Career Planners and Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors through an IRT model.

The IRT works closely with business partners to promote Iowa's workforce programs as a source of qualified candidates. The team ensures job seekers are job-ready by coordinating services, supporting job search and placement activities, identifying necessary accommodations, and providing ongoing follow-up to ensure successful employment outcomes. This comprehensive approach is designed to meet the needs of both employers and job candidates effectively.

PROGRESS I: The Core 4 program was initially implemented as a pilot in select local areas. As of July 1, 2025, the program has expanded statewide. IVRS now refers all job-ready candidates who meet the criteria to the Core 4 program, utilizing an integrated team approach to service delivery.

As the statewide implementation is still in its early stages, data will be collected and analyzed to evaluate the program's overall effectiveness across Iowa.

STRATEGY II: Utilize the Windmills training to promote inclusive work settings and increase placements.

IVRS has partnered with the Iowa Workforce Business Engagement and Training team to implement a Train-the-Trainer model for the Windmills program,

available to all interested staff. The goal is to equip staff with the skills and knowledge necessary to deliver Windmills training to businesses and industry partners across Iowa.

This initiative is designed to enhance employers' capacity to create welcoming workplaces for individuals with disabilities. A key objective of the program is to increase both job placement and retention rates at businesses that participate in the training.

PROGRESS II: IVRS, in collaboration with other core partners, has participated in training on the Windmills curriculum and now serves as facilitators of the program. These trained facilitators have launched Windmills training sessions for business customers across the state.

The Windmills curriculum equips employers with a deeper understanding of disability culture in the workplace, helping to foster more supportive environments. The training has demonstrated positive outcomes with businesses who have received the training.

STRATEGY III: Offer ADA training and certification to VR staff to ensure competency in ADA for purposes of physical and programmatic accessibility to employers.

IVRS currently has staff certified as ADA trainers, with additional staff awaiting certification. Future plans include adding an additional cohort of ADA certified trainers. These individuals work with business and industry to ensure a safe and accessible (programmatic and physical) environment. As part of services to businesses, staff are also conducting ADA safety analyses to increase the participation and retention of individuals with disabilities in the workplace.

PROGRESS III: IVRS continues to focus on ADA training and certification. Most recently, IVRS has initiated conversations with certification centers to determine if group certifications can occur on site, to allow for the broadest training possible for IVRS staff. The Business Engagement team conducts ADA assessments of businesses to ensure compliance with the ADA.

STRATEGY IV: Expand the capacity of business engagement through effective use of the National Employment Team (NET), business services team, individual staff and collaborative efforts across teams.

IVRS employs a Business Engagement staff member who serves as a representative on the National Employment Team (NET). This individual collaborates with local IVRS offices to develop business liaisons, fostering a



network of employer partnerships that enhance job candidate placements in competitive, integrated employment settings.

Through the NET, the Business Engagement staff member also supports national employers with a presence in Iowa, ensuring coordinated service delivery and reporting progress directly to the NET. Additionally, this staff member holds an integrated role within the broader Iowa Workforce Development Business Engagement Team, further expanding IVRS's capacity to engage with employers.

By identifying and addressing workforce barriers, this collaboration strengthens employers' readiness to hire and retain individuals with disabilities. The IWD Business Engagement Team also provides guidance and training to IVRS staff on implementing a dual-customer approach, supporting both job seekers and employers in achieving successful employment outcomes.

PROGRESS IV: The IVRS Business Engagement staff member is an active member of the NET activities. This includes participation in all NET activities. Information received through the NET is returned to IVRS leadership and shared with the IWD Business Engagement Team, to enhance services provided.

*2. Performance on the performance accountability indicators under Section 116 of WIOA for the most recently completed program year, reflecting actual and negotiated levels of performance. Explain any discrepancies in the actual and negotiated levels; and*

The primary performance indicators include combined data from IVRS and the Iowa Department for the Blind:

| <b>Title IV – Vocational Rehabilitation</b> | PY22<br>Negotiated<br>Rate | PY22<br>Actual<br>Outcome | PY23<br>Negotiated<br>Rate | PY23<br>Actual<br>Outcome | PY24<br>Negotiated<br>Rate | PY24<br>Actual<br>Outcome |
|---------------------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|
| Employment Rate, 2nd Quarter After Exit     | 57.0%                      | 59.6%                     | 58.0%                      | 58.6%                     | 59.8%                      | 55.3%                     |
| Employment Rate, 4th Quarter After Exit     | 54.3%                      | 58.3%                     | 55.3%                      | 55.7%                     | 58.5%                      | 56.1%                     |
| Median Earnings, 2nd                        | \$4,256                    | \$4,541                   | \$4,419                    | \$4,778                   | \$4,586                    | \$4,452                   |

|                        |       |       |       |       |       |       |
|------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Quarter After Exit     |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| Measurable Skill Gains | 40.0% | 51.8% | 42.0% | 53.8% | 52.0% | 56.7% |
| Credential Attainment  | 60.0% | 53.3% | 61.0% | 51.7% | 54.0% | 51.7% |

Employment (Second Quarter after Exit): During this reporting period, performance measures were not met due to a variety of economic and regional factors. In July 2024 the UI rate was 3.1% and in August 2025 it had risen to 3.8%. As a result, we've had a .7% increase in unemployment in the state. Through the Core 4 collaboration, IVRS hopes to achieve this measure in the next Unified State Plan.

Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit): Like the second quarter, this performance measure was not met because of economic and regional factors. The Core 4 collaboration is designed to achieve sustainable jobs that will hopefully be demonstrated in fourth quarter data.

Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit): There was a slight decrease in median earnings. It appears that PY2023 was an anomaly, and the current rate is reflective of past years. IVRS provides financial literacy to job candidates and maintains a focus on earning growth. Iowa's minimum wage matches the federal wage at \$7.25 and is surrounded by states with a higher minimum wage. This can lead to issues with increasing median earnings in Iowa.

Credential Attainment Rate: IVRS did not obtain the negotiated rate by 2.3%. IVRS recently changed our post-secondary policy and provided additional training to VR counselors on the importance of conducting assessments to determine a career path, including a financial literacy discussion on whether the job candidate can afford to attend college. Through these retraining efforts, IVRS anticipates a reduction in the number of job candidates who attempt post-secondary training that historically has not been a good fit and resulted in dropouts. A continuing challenge in meeting this number is staff's ability to obtain documentation – credential can't be recorded until supporting documentation is obtained and this is sometimes difficult to obtain.

Measurable Skill Gains: No discrepancies; negotiated rate achieved.

Effectiveness in Serving Employers: This performance indicator is measured as a shared outcome across all six core programs within the State of Iowa and is designed to gauge three critical workforce needs of the business community. Effectiveness in Serving Employers reports on Employed by the Same Employer in 2nd quarter and 4th quarter after Exit beginning PY2024. States were not required to submit an expected level of performance through initial reporting time periods where baseline data was gathered and reported.

|                                             | PY 2026<br>Expected<br>Level | PY 2026<br>Negotiated<br>Level | PY 2027<br>Expected<br>Level | PY 2027<br>Negotiated<br>Level |
|---------------------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Employment (Second Quarter after Exit)      | 59.9%                        |                                | 60.0%                        |                                |
| Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit)      | 58.8%                        |                                | 58.9%                        |                                |
| Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit) | \$4,575                      |                                | \$4,590                      |                                |
| Credential Attainment Rate                  | 54.4%                        |                                | 54.6%                        |                                |
| Measurable Skills Gain                      | 56.0%                        |                                | 57.0%                        |                                |

*3. The use of funds reserved for innovation and expansion activities (Sections 101(a)(18) and 101(a)(23) of the Rehabilitation Act) (e.g., SRC, SILC).*

IVRS is currently engaged in a comprehensive review and redesign of its organizational structure and staff functions to enhance collaboration with WIOA core partners and ensure the highest quality of services are provided to job candidates. This process is being conducted with input and guidance from the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC).

At this time, IVRS does not track a separate line item specifically for Innovation and Expansion (I&E) activities, nor has a designated percentage been allocated for such initiatives. Instead, IVRS utilizes a budget forecasting model based on the general fund account, supported employment allocations, and the Pre-Employment Services (Pre-ETS) set-aside to distribute available funds.

Through strategic planning efforts led by the IVRS leadership team, and in coordination with the Executive and Budget teams, IVRS continues to identify and implement strategies that expand service delivery and improve program quality.

Examples of recent innovation and expansion efforts include:

Expansion of the Transition Alliance Program (TAP) to strengthen connections with students with disabilities and improve collaboration with local school districts. Current funds spent on all TAP contracts total \$4,508,738.75.

Expansion of the Juvenile Reentry System (JReS) contract with the Iowa Department of Human Rights to improve outreach to transition-age youth involved in the juvenile court system - contracts total \$419,661.07.

Continued support for the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) activities, with \$3,280 paid in FFY 2024.

IVRS remains committed to identifying and pursuing additional opportunities for innovation and expansion to strengthen its service delivery system and better meet the needs of individuals with disabilities across Iowa.

#### e. Supported Employment Services, Distribution of Title VI Funds, and Arrangements and Cooperative Agreements for the Provision of Supported Employment Services.

##### 1. Acceptance of title VI funds:

- ☒ VR agency requests to receive title VI funds.
- ☐ VR agency does NOT elect to receive title VI funds and understands that supported employment services must still be provided under title I.

*2. If the VR agency has elected to receive title VI funds, Section 606(b)(3) of the Rehabilitation Act requires VR agencies to include specific goals and priorities with respect to the distribution of Title VI funds received under Section 603 of the Rehabilitation Act for the provision of supported employment services. Describe the use of Title VI funds and how they will be used in meeting the goals and priorities of the Supported Employment program.*

IVRS funded supported employment services for 1,092 individuals in FFY2023 and FFY2024, using both Part B Title VI funds and Part B Title I funds. Total Supported Employment expenditures were \$2,823,907 of which \$581,206 came from Part B Title VI funds. IVRS estimates that it will serve approximately 1,300 job candidates in Supported Employment during FFY2025 and FFY2026.

Funds are utilized in accordance with all applicable federal regulations. IVRS utilizes a Menu of Services Manual (MOS), which outlines the established fee schedule and service rates for employment-related services, including Supported Employment. This manual also clearly defines the roles and responsibilities of all key stakeholders, including Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs), IVRS staff, and job candidates. Service delivery is guided by a person-centered approach, ensuring that the job candidate's needs and goals drive the planning process.

To address workforce shortages in various parts of the state, IVRS has expanded partnerships with independent providers to deliver specific employment services, including those available through the Consumer Choice Option. All providers must meet established agency standards to be approved to offer services under the MOS, including those related to Supported Employment.

The MOS, along with the goals and priorities of the Supported Employment program, are regularly reviewed and discussed in collaboration with the SRC. This partnership ensures transparency, stakeholder input, and alignment with both the state and federal priorities to enhance service quality and effectiveness across Iowa.

*3. Supported employment services may be provided with Title 1 or Title VI funds following placement of individuals with the most significant disabilities in employment. In accordance with Section 101(a)(22) and Section 606(b)(3) of the Rehabilitation Act, describe the quality, scope, and extent of supported employment services to be provided to individuals with the most significant disabilities, including youth with the most significant disabilities; and the timing of transition to extended services.*

Supported Employment Services (SES) are designed exclusively for individuals with the most significant disabilities (MSD) who require ongoing support and extended services to maintain competitive integrated employment (CIE). SES may include customized employment and are typically provided for up to 24 months, unless a longer duration is justified based on the individual's specific needs.

The SES process begins with a collaborative team meeting to plan and coordinate service delivery. As part of this process, the IVRS counselor must identify a funding source for the long-term support needed to sustain employment once the IVRS case is closed.

SES and Individuals Under Age 24:

For individuals under age 24 who are not students but receive services through a Medicaid waiver, SES may be funded by IVRS. If a Supported Employment outcome is not achieved by the time the individual turns 24, any remaining IVRS authorizations are canceled, and Waiver funding must be utilized. However, IVRS funding may continue briefly during the transition, provided a clear, documented plan ensures a seamless handoff of services.

#### SES and Individuals Not on a Waiver (Under Age 25):

Individuals under age 25 who are not receiving Waiver services—or who are on a waiting list at the time they become eligible for IVRS—may receive IVRS-funded long-term job coaching following job stabilization. In these cases, IVRS may authorize up to 8 units (2 hours) per month of job coaching for a period not to exceed four years, or until the individual turns 25 or begins receiving Waiver services, whichever occurs first. Any need for additional hours of coaching beyond the 8 units per month requires an approved exception.

#### SES and Individuals Aged 24 and Older:

For individuals age 24 or older who are not receiving Waiver services and are served solely by IVRS, SES continues to be funded by IVRS. In all SES cases, long-term supports must be clearly identified to ensure continuity of services after case closure. These supports may include funding from regional (county) sources, Social Security Work Incentives, self-pay, or natural supports.

*4. Sections 101(a)(22) and 606(b)(4) of the Rehabilitation Act require the VR agency to describe efforts to identify and arrange, including entering into cooperative agreements, with other State agencies and other appropriate entities in order to provide supported employment services. The description must include extended services, as applicable, to individuals with the most significant disabilities, including the provision of extended services to youth with the most significant disabilities in accordance with 34 C.F.R. § 363.4(a) and 34 C.F.R. § 361.5(c)(19)(v).*

Memorandums of Agreement (MOAs) have been established between IVRS and both the Iowa Department of Education (DE) and Iowa Health and Human Services (HHS) to clearly define the roles and responsibilities of each entity and to support coordinated service delivery. These agreements are designed to complement and enhance the provision of services to individuals with the most significant disabilities.

IVRS provides funding for SES through a shared arrangement with the Iowa Medicaid Enterprise (IME) under HHS. When an adult requires SES, the MOA with HHS is activated to ensure appropriate funding. In contrast, when the individual

is a student, IVRS delivers SES in accordance with the MOA established with the DE.

To ensure uninterrupted service delivery, IVRS does not allow delays in the provision of services. If services are temporarily unavailable through HHS, IVRS will provide them in accordance with agency policy to meet the individual's needs.

IVRS also collaborates with several related programs to enhance service coordination, including:

- Mental Health and Disability Services (MDHS) Regions
- Managed Care Organizations (MCOs)
- Money Follows the Person (MFP)
- Integrated Health Homes (IHH)
- Intermediate Care Facilities (ICFs)

Additionally, IVRS maintains individual contracts with each provider wishing to offer services under the MOS manual. These contracts define the roles and responsibilities of the CRPs, the specific services to be delivered, and the counties in which they operate.

For youth with the most significant disabilities who achieve a supported employment outcome in a competitive integrated setting but remain on a Medicaid Waiver waiting list, IVRS may fund extended supports on a time-limited basis. If the youth has graduated, the job is stable, and it aligns with the goals outlined in their Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE), IVRS may provide these services at a rate established in coordination with IME. These extended supports may not exceed four years or extend beyond the youth's 25<sup>th</sup> birthday, whichever occurs first.

## f. Annual Estimates

### 1. Estimates for next Federal fiscal year—

#### A. VR Program; and

| Priority Category (if applicable) | No. of Individuals Eligible for Services | No. of Eligible Individuals Expected to Receive Services under VR Program | Costs of Services using Title I Funds | No. of Eligible Individuals Not Receiving Services (if applicable) |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|
| MSD                               | 5,875                                    | 5,875                                                                     | \$3,377,702                           | 0                                                                  |

|    |       |       |             |   |
|----|-------|-------|-------------|---|
| SD | 5,315 | 5,315 | \$5,860,056 | 0 |
| OE | 330   | 330   | \$214,666   | 0 |

#### B. Supported Employment Program.

| Priority Category (if applicable) | No. of Individuals Eligible for Services | No. of Eligible Individuals Expected to Receive Services under Supported Employment Program | Costs of Services using Title I and Title VI Funds                       | No. of Eligible Individuals Not Receiving Services (if applicable) |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|
| MSD                               | 1,180                                    | 1,180                                                                                       | Title IV-<br>Basic<br><br>\$1,760,123;<br><br>Title IV SE -<br>\$267,839 | 0                                                                  |

#### g. Order of Selection

☒ The VR agency is not implementing an order of selection and all eligible individuals will be served.

☐ The VR agency is implementing an order of selection with one or more categories closed.

\* VR agencies may maintain an order of selection policy and priority of eligible individuals without implementing or continuing to implement an order of selection.

*1. Pursuant to Section 101(a)(5) of the Rehabilitation Act, this description must be amended when the VR agency determines, based on the annual estimates described in description (f), that VR services cannot be provided to all eligible individuals with disabilities in the State who apply for and are determined eligible for services.*

*2. For VR agencies that have defined priority categories describe—*

#### A. The justification for the order

IVRS removed the Order of Selection in its entirety by September 1, 2024. To accomplish this, IVRS engaged in the following plan of action:

- MSD: All individuals in the MSD category were released on July 1, 2024.



- SD: All individuals in the SD category were released on August 1, 2024.
- OE: All individuals in the OE category were released on September 1, 2024.

This was a planned approach, designed to ensure the elimination of Order of Selection did not overwhelm the agency field staff. Upon completion of this release, IVRS is no longer in an Order of Selection.

B. The order (priority categories) to be followed in selecting eligible individuals to be provided VR services ensuring that individuals with the most significant disabilities are selected for services before all other individuals with disabilities; and

All IVRS job candidates are served upon eligibility determination.

C. The VR agency's goals for serving individuals in each priority category, including how the agency will assist eligible individuals assigned to closed priority categories with information and referral, the method in which the VR agency will manage waiting lists, and the projected timelines for opening priority categories. NOTE: Priority categories are considered open when all individuals in the priority category may be served.

All IVRS job candidates are served upon eligibility determination.

*3. Has the VR agency elected to serve eligible individuals outside of the order of selection who require specific services or equipment to maintain employment?*

☒ Yes

All IVRS job candidates are served upon eligibility determination.

#### h. Waiver of Statewideness

**The State plan shall be in effect in all political subdivisions of the State, however, the Commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration (Commissioner) may waive compliance with this requirement in accordance with section 101(a)(4) of the Rehabilitation Act and the implementing regulations in 34 CFR 361.26. If the VR agency is requesting a waiver of statewideness or has a previously approved waiver of statewideness, describe the types of services and the local entities providing such services under the waiver of statewideness and how the agency has complied with the requirements in 34 CFR 361.26. If the VR agency is not requesting or does not have an approved waiver of statewideness, please indicate "not applicable."**

Not applicable.

## i. Comprehensive System of Personnel Development

**In accordance with the requirements in section 101(a)(7) of the Rehabilitation Act, the VR agency must develop and maintain annually a description (consistent with the purposes of the Rehabilitation Act) of the VR agency's comprehensive system of personnel development, which shall include a description of the procedures and activities the VR agency will undertake to ensure it has an adequate supply of qualified State rehabilitation professionals and paraprofessionals that provides the following:**

### *1. Analysis of current personnel and projected personnel needs including—*

A. The number of personnel currently needed by the VR agency to provide VR services, broken down by personnel category; and

B. The number and type of personnel that are employed by the VR agency in the provision of vocational rehabilitation services, including ratios of qualified vocational rehabilitation counselors to clients;

C. Projections of the number of personnel, broken down by personnel category, who will be needed by the VR agency to provide VR services in 5 years based on projections of the number of individuals to be served, including individuals with significant disabilities, the number of personnel expected to retire or leave the field, and other relevant factors.

| Personnel Category        | No. of Personnel Employed | No. of Personnel Currently Needed | Projected No. of Personnel Needed in 5 Years |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| Rehabilitation Supervisor | 13                        | 13                                | 13                                           |
| Rehabilitation Counselor  | 127                       | 129                               | 129                                          |
| Rehabilitation Assistant  | 58                        | 59                                | 59                                           |

### D. Ratio of qualified VR counselors to clients:

IVRS currently has 127 qualified VR counselors. The ratio of qualified VR counselors to job candidates is 1:140.

### E. Projected number of individuals to be served in 5 years:

The current caseload, without Potentially Eligible students, is 10,823. VR counselors also serve 6,504 Potentially Eligible students, for a total count of 17,735.

Since IVRS has removed the waiting list, the caseload has grown by 437 cases. If this trend continues over the next five years, it will result in an increase of 2,185 cases. Therefore, the projected number of individuals to be served, including Potentially Eligible students, in five years is 19,920. IVRS is in the process of implementing a new workforce model that utilizes the Rehabilitation Assistants in serving the Potentially Eligible population. This will keep the ratio of qualified VR counselors to job candidates manageable.

*2. Data and information on personnel preparation and development, recruitment and retention, and staff development, including the following:*

A. A list of the institutions of higher education in the State that are preparing VR professionals, by type of program; the number of students enrolled at each of those institutions, broken down by type of program; and the number of students who graduated during the prior year from each of those institutions with certification or licensure, or with the credentials for certification or licensure, broken down by the personnel category for which they have received, or have the credentials to receive, certification or licensure.

| Institute of Higher Education | Type of Program              | No. of Students Enrolled | No. of Prior Year Graduates |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|
| University of Iowa            | Rehabilitation Counseling MA | 13                       | 9                           |
| Drake University              | Rehabilitation Counseling MA | 20                       | 3                           |

B. The VR agency's plan for recruitment, preparation and retention of qualified personnel, which addresses the current and projected needs for qualified personnel; and the coordination and facilitation of efforts between the VR agency and institutions of higher education and professional associations to recruit, prepare, and retain personnel who are qualified, including personnel from minority backgrounds and personnel who are individuals with disabilities.

IVRS actively collaborates with the two Rehabilitation Counselor graduate programs in Iowa and recruits from additional programs in a variety of states, including Minnesota, Illinois, South Dakota, and Wisconsin. The number of participants in the practicum and internship programs with IVRS varies annual based on student numbers, agency budget, and agency needs. To attract future professionals to the field, IVRS offers paid internship opportunities, allowing students to gain hands-on experience in the vocational rehabilitation process.

IVRS field staff work closely with interns to provide a comprehensive understanding of IVRS services. IVRS staff also present annually at both the University of Iowa and Drake University to introduce students to the agency and potential career paths. A streamlined process allows interns to apply for permanent positions prior to public posting, facilitating a smoother transition from internship to employment.

IVRS reviews data to set goals and develop strategies for state employment, in accordance with all federal and state laws, regulations, and executive orders. IVRS recruits through multiple channels, including: the State of Iowa hiring system; Iowa Workforce Development; employee referrals; and community publications.

The hiring process is equitable and based on a numerical scoring system. Applicants with the highest scores are interviewed, and veterans receive interview priority. From those interviewed, hiring preference is given to individuals with disabilities, individuals from minority backgrounds, and veterans. Iowa workforce composition data has remained stable and continues to be monitored.

### **Retention and Workforce Development**

IVRS has implemented several initiatives to support staff retention and satisfaction, including:

- Enhanced onboarding and mentorship program
- Scheduling options, including telework and alternate work hours
- Periodic staff surveys to assess job satisfaction and employee engagement
- Ongoing review of performance measures and accountability standards to ensure fairness and consistency across the agency

These efforts reflect IVRS's commitment to building a supportive workplace that meets the evolving needs of both staff and individuals served.

The academic degree requirements for IVRS Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors were updated during this Unified State Plan period. The requirements were revised to align with the federal standards outlined in 34 CFR 361.18(c). The updated qualifications allow candidates to meet the minimum requirements with a baccalaureate degree in a field reasonably related to vocational rehabilitation, along with at least one year of relevant experience.

Prior to implementing this change, IVRS conducted a thorough analysis to evaluate the potential impact on service quality and recruitment. The decision to revise the qualification standards was driven by the need to broaden the pool of qualified applicants for counselor positions across the state. While the agency has adopted this expanded eligibility, preference continues to be given to individuals who hold a master's degree in vocational rehabilitation or a closely related field.

To ensure transparency and public engagement, IVRS held a public meeting on October 10, 2024, to present and discuss the proposed changes. Notice of the meeting was shared widely through the IVRS website, social media platforms, and via email to stakeholders and contact lists.

Following the meeting, a summary of the feedback and agency responses was compiled and posted publicly on the IVRS website to keep stakeholders informed and maintain open communication regarding the policy change.

C. Description of staff development policies, procedures, and activities that ensure all personnel employed by the VR agency receive appropriate and adequate training and continuing education for professionals and paraprofessionals:

- i. Particularly with respect to assessment, vocational counseling, job placement, and rehabilitation technology, including training implemented in coordination with entities carrying out State programs under section 4 of the Assistive Technology Act of 1998; and*
- ii. Procedures for the acquisition and dissemination of significant knowledge from research and other sources to VR agency professionals and paraprofessionals and for providing training regarding the amendments to the Rehabilitation Act made by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.*

#### IVRS Professional Development and Staff Training

IVRS is committed to fostering continuous learning and professional development. The division provides and supports a variety of ongoing training opportunities, both internally and externally, designed to strengthen staff competencies and enhance service delivery. IVRS is certified by the Commission of Rehabilitation Counselor Certification (CRCC) to offer approved continuing education hours for applicable coursework.

Training initiatives are centered on improving knowledge in key areas such as vocational rehabilitation, customer service, ethics, disability-specific service delivery, and strategies that support positive employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities. IVRS staff regularly participate in targeted

workshops, seminars, and specialized trainings aimed at developing expertise in working with specific populations.

All IVRS staff received comprehensive training on Autism in 2022, and the agency has since earned the designation of an “Autism Friendly Destination.”

### Onboarding and Learning Platforms

New employees participate in a structured onboarding process, which includes mandatory agency-wide and role-specific training. Each new hire meets agency leadership and learns about the various divisions and programs within Iowa Workforce Development.

New hires are assigned a mentor to support them during their initial transition. In addition, a wide array of training courses is available through the State of Iowa Learning Management System, which includes both required and elective courses based on job classification.

To increase training flexibility, IVRS implemented YesLMS, a cloud-based learning management system that enables leadership to develop and assign training content to agency staff. This system also provides access to a robust library of content shared among other vocational rehabilitation agencies, particularly in the areas of federally mandated requirements for professional and paraprofessional roles. Through the system, IVRS developed on-demand training modules that can be accessed at staff convenience.

All employees are required to review and sign off on the Iowa Workforce Development and State of Iowa employee manuals to ensure understanding of professional expectations and conduct. IVRS utilizes PowerDMS to house programmatic and operational policies and internal controls. All IVRS staff are expected to sign off on policies to ensure adherence to division expectations.

### Statewide and Ongoing Training

IVRS hosts an annual statewide conference for internal and contracted staff. This conference focuses on training topics identified by field staff and leadership and features presentations by subject matter experts in areas such as vocational counseling, business engagement, and transition services.

The agency holds monthly statewide meetings to provide ongoing professional development, policy training, and consistent communication. Additionally, IVRS hosts a monthly Title Partner Training session with representatives from all four WIOA core programs to promote cross-agency collaboration and shared learning.

In collaboration with Easterseals Iowa, IVRS has strengthened its focus on Assistive Technology (AT). AT training is provided to field offices by the agency AT staff member. This staff member coordinates training based on staff needs and policy. Training is recorded and made available for future access.

## Evidence-Based Practices and Innovation

IVRS integrates the latest research and evidence-based practices into its professional development offerings. YesLMS assists with the availability of such training and practices.

IVRS serves as the lead on Iowa's Employment First initiative, supporting statewide initiatives focused on employment as the preferred option for all individuals with disabilities.

As part of the Iowa Blueprint for Change (IBC) Disability Innovation Fund Grant, the division was able to integrate Employment First language into an NDEAM proclamation for the first time in Iowa.

IVRS has launched evidence-based and evidence-informed projects statewide, including Customized Employment (CE) services and Individual Placement and Support (IPS) services. The division is currently scaling promising practices across multiple service areas. IVRS has also implemented Motivational Interviewing (MI) training, with one staff member MINT-certified. This staff member has assisted with the division expansion of MI training statewide.

IVRS uses internal agency committees to distribute critical updates and reinforce best practices across specialized service areas. These committees support knowledge transfer and foster consistency in service delivery.

The division also participates in the annual Data Summit, which focuses on data integrity, performance metrics, and internal controls. Findings from the summit are shared with IVRS leadership to inform improvements in service delivery and operational practices. RSA Data Dashboards and Other Measures that Matter are reviewed regularly to identify training needs and align efforts with performance expectations.

IVRS actively participates in national and regional training, conferences, and technical assistance, including events hosted by the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR). These engagements

facilitate knowledge-sharing benchmarking, and the adoption of innovative practices in vocational rehabilitation.

Agency committees exist to help disseminate information on a regular basis in the identified areas. These committees help to keep field staff informed of best practices and preferred methods for service delivery.

IVRS is actively involved in a yearly Data Summit focusing on internal controls, performance measures, and data validation. These practices are shared with the IVRS leadership team, with promising practices incorporated into the VR service delivery processes. IVRS will utilize the quarterly RSA Data Dashboards and Other Measures That Matter to identify areas of need for targeted staff training. IVRS actively seeks national conferences that lead to the development of innovative practices for the agency. IVRS also participates in CSAVR conferences, committees, and regional meetings to discuss best practices with other VR agencies.

*3. Description of VR agency policies and procedures for the establishment and maintenance of personnel standards consistent with section 101(a)(7)(B) to ensure that VR agency professional and paraprofessional personnel are adequately trained and prepared, including—*

A. Standards that are consistent with any national or State-approved or -recognized certification, licensing, registration, or other comparable requirements that apply to the profession or discipline in which such personnel are providing VR services; and

B. The establishment and maintenance of education and experience requirements, in accordance with section 101(a)(7)(B)(ii) of the Rehabilitation Act, to ensure that the personnel have a 21st century understanding of the evolving labor force and the needs of individuals with disabilities.

IVRS has established personnel standards that align with state guidelines and are subject to review by the Iowa Department of Administrative Services (DAS). During this Unified State Plan period, IVRS updated the academic degree requirements for Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors to align with the federal personnel standard outlined in 34 CFR 361.18(c). These revised qualifications allow candidates to meet minimum eligibility with a bachelor's degree in a field reasonably related to vocational rehabilitation, coupled with at least one year of relevant experience.

In evaluating candidates, IVRS considers not only academic credentials but also an applicant's demonstrated ability to successfully perform the duties associated with the position. IVRS remains committed to the professional



development of all staff, emphasizing continued education and training aligned with current labor market demands and the evolving needs of individuals with disabilities. For staff holding the Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC) credential, IVRS offers certified continuing education opportunities to maintain licensure and ensure ongoing professional growth.

The reorganization of state government provides an opportunity to better integrate the expertise of Iowa's workforce development programs with that of IVRS. This alignment allows the State to leverage a deeper understanding of the 21st century labor market trends in combination with the specialized knowledge of vocational rehabilitation professionals. Through this braiding of services, IVRS aims to enhance both the capacity and quality of service delivery for individuals with disabilities across Iowa's workforce system.

IVRS operates under a strategic plan that emphasizes business engagement and cross-agency collaboration. The plan supports a unified approach to service integration among WIOA core partners and reinforces IVRS's commitment to aligning personnel expertise with current and future workforce needs. These efforts support the development of a workforce system responsive to the needs of both job candidates and employers.

*4. Method(s) the VR agency uses to ensure that personnel are able to communicate in appropriate modes of communication with or in the native language of applicants or eligible individuals who have limited English speaking ability.*

IVRS ensures effective communication with all individuals, including personnel and job candidates, by contracting with qualified interpreters. IVRS staff arrange for sign language and other language interpreters when serving an employee or job candidate who requires this accommodation. These services are secured through a variety of sources, including state agencies, private organizations, and service providers with existing master agreements through the State of Iowa.

To further promote accessibility, IVRS offers a wide range of brochures, forms, and informational handouts in Spanish, which is the second most commonly spoken language in Iowa. The agency also has access to state-contracted vendors for document translation and transcription services to meet additional language needs. The division provides staff who interact with job candidates with state-issued cell phones. These phones include apps designed to provide communication accommodation based on job candidate need.

All division materials are developed and reviewed to ensure compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessibility standards, guaranteeing that information is accessible to both staff and job candidates.

*5. As appropriate, describe the procedures and activities to coordinate the designated State unit's comprehensive system of personnel development with personnel development under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.*

IVRS and the Iowa Department of Education (DE) maintain a formal Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) to ensure the delivery of joint training opportunities for staff. These trainings are designed to promote shared knowledge and skill development necessary to effectively support students with disabilities during their transition from school to post-secondary education or employment.

IVRS staff, along with representatives from the State Education Agency (SEA), Local Education Agencies (LEAs) and the Area Education Agencies (AEAs), engage in ongoing collaboration to strengthen service delivery. These joint discussions focus on identifying and developing staff core competencies, expanding staff capacity, and implementing strategies aimed at achieving and improved student outcomes. As a result of the collaboration, IVRS and the DE have jointly developed and provided statewide training sessions and shared resources.

Training and personnel development needs are also identified through Local School Plan meetings, which occur at least annually. During these meetings, local teams—including IVRS, LEA, AEA, and other state and local stakeholders—discuss service gaps and training needs. These needs are documented in the Local School Plan and reviewed by the IVRS Area Office Supervisor to determine appropriate strategies for coordinated training and service delivery.

To enhance data-drive decision-making, IVRS has implemented a Local School Plan survey that collects input from staff from the LEAs, AEAs, IVRS, and other partners. The survey is used to identify specific training needs both at the local and statewide levels.

Additionally, IVRS employs Transition staff members who provide targeted training and technical assistance to both internal staff and external partners. Staff members meet with an RSB Bureau Chief regularly to assess training needs and ensure alignment with guidance provided by the DE. Transition training is offered and provided to IVRS field staff to ensure consistent communication and the delivery of best practices in transition services for students with disabilities.

## j. Coordination with Education Officials.

*1. Describe plans, policies, and procedures for coordination between the designated State agency and education officials responsible for the public education of students with disabilities, that are designed to facilitate the transition of the students with disabilities from the receipt of educational services in school to the receipt of vocational rehabilitation services, including pre-employment transition services.*

IVRS collaborates closely with local school staff, Area Education Agency (AEA) personnel, IVRS-contracted programs, and community partners to support students with disabilities in exploring career pathways, work-based learning opportunities, identifying post-secondary training options, and determining the supports necessary for success in both post-secondary education and competitive integrated employment.

To formalize and guide these collaborative efforts, IVRS has established a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the Iowa Department of Education (DE). This agreement, along with established Local School Plans, internal policies, procedures and controls, ensures consistent and effective delivery of both Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) and vocational rehabilitation services to eligible students with disabilities.

IVRS partners with every public school district in Iowa annually to develop a Local School Plan that outlines, among other requirements:

- The services the school district will provide to students with disabilities;
- The new or expanded IVRS services to be delivered to the district;
- The roles of community partners and contracted providers; and
- Identified gaps in service delivery

Local School Plans are also developed with private accredited high schools and select alternative education settings across the state. IVRS staff are assigned to all public and private accredited districts in Iowa and are responsible for delivering services—including Pre-ETS—outlined in the Local School Plans. When gaps in service are identified, IVRS works collaboratively with school districts and partners to adjust service delivery or develop new programming to address student needs.

To facilitate the sharing of educational records, students must have a signed “Consent to Release Information to and from IVRS” form on file. This form authorizes LEAs and AEAs to share educational records with IVRS for the purposes of:

- Determining a student's eligibility and potential participation in IVRS programs; and
- Identifying appropriate IVRS services from which the student may benefit

The consent applies to all formats of educational records, including:

- Special education records (e.g., IEPs, eligibility determinations, evaluation reports);
- Section 504 records (e.g., 504 Plans, evaluation documentation);
- Academic records (e.g., transcripts, assessment results, progress monitoring data); and
- Any other education-related records within a student's cumulative file

The consent also permits IVRS to share information back with the LEA or AEA, including details related to services provided under Pre-ETS and the student's IPE.

*2. Describe the current status and scope of the formal interagency agreement between the VR agency and the State educational agency. Consistent with the requirements of the formal interagency agreement pursuant to 34 C.F.R. § 361.22(b), provide, at a minimum, the following information about the agreement:*

A. Consultation and technical assistance, which may be provided using alternative means for meeting participation (such as video conferences and conference calls), to assist educational agencies in planning for the transition of students with disabilities from school to post-school activities, including pre-employment transition services and other vocational rehabilitation services;

IVRS staff provide consultation and technical assistance to LEAs and AEAs to support students and youth with disabilities in their transition from school to post-secondary life, with a focus on achieving competitive integrated outcomes. These services are designed to assist school personnel in establishing a seamless and coordinated system of transition for all students with disabilities.

Vocational rehabilitation staff collaborate with educational agencies identified by the DE to deliver services to:

- Students with disabilities receiving special education under an Individualized Education Program (IEP);
- Students receiving accommodation and support under Section 504; and

- Students who are Potentially Eligible (PE) for IVRS and qualify for Pre-ETS

Pre-ETS may include, but are not limited to:

- Job exploitation counseling;
- Workplace readiness training;
- Work-based learning experiences;
- Counseling on post-secondary education or training opportunities; and
- Instruction in self-advocacy

These services are designed to benefit groups of students and youth with disabilities and are tailored to meet the unique needs of each school district.

All services provided through this partnership are outlined in an annually developed Local School Plan, which is customized for each LEA. The plan is developed collaboratively to ensure alignment of services and coordination of resources.

Educators may request additional consultation or technical assistance from IVRS as needed to support individual student transition planning, including assistance with:

- Developing a student's course of study
- Identifying and addressing barriers to employment
- Aligning school services with IVRS transition services

With appropriate consent, educators will share relevant student information with IVRS to ensure coordinated planning. Alternative meeting formats, such as video conferencing or phone calls, may be used to facilitate collaboration and participation in the transition planning process.

**B. Transition planning by personnel of the designated State agency and educational agency personnel for students with disabilities that facilitates the development and implementation of their individualized education programs (IEPs) under Section 614(d) of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act;**

In the State of Iowa, transition planning must be initiated no later than the first IEP that is in effect when the student turns 14, or earlier if determined appropriate by the IEP team. Eligibility for special education services continues through the school year in which the student turns 21, or to the maximum age allowed under Iowa Code section 256B.8.

To facilitate effective collaboration, a Consent to Release Information to and from IVRS form is required for LEAs and AEAs to share educational records with IVRS. This information supports IVRS in determining a student's potential eligibility for services and identifying appropriate IVRS supports that may benefit a student.

### Shared Responsibility in Transition Planning

Transition planning is a joint responsibility of both IVRS and educators for students with disabilities served by IVRS. The involvement of IVRS in the development and implementation of the IEP is guided by individual student needs, rather than by age or grade level. To determine when employment preparation should begin and what level of intensity is required, IEP teams and IVRS staff consider the following four factors:

- The student's current knowledge and skill level
- The student's learning characteristics, including responsiveness to accommodations and accessibility
- The complexity of the student's support needs
- The number and types of environments impacted by those needs

Students with more complex service needs should begin employment preparation earlier and receive support from professionals with specialized knowledge, such as work experience coordinators and IVRS staff. These supports may be delivered as Pre-ETS, often in a group setting, and are tailored through collaboration with the LEA to meet the specific needs of students in that setting.

### Individualized Support and Eligibility for IVRS

Students who require more intensive services to fully engage with and benefit from Pre-ETS are encouraged to submit an application for IVRS services. These enhanced, individualized services are only available once a student has been determined eligible and an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) has been developed.

When a student applies for IVRS, IVRS staff review educational and other relevant records shared by the LEA and AEA to support the eligibility determination process. If additional assessments are required, these are scheduled collaboratively among IVRS, LEA, and AEA staff.

Once a student's eligibility has been determined, the decision is shared with the LEA and AEA staff (with appropriate consent). This information is incorporated

into the student's transition planning within the IEP to ensure alignment of goals and services.

#### Development of the IPE

IVRS counselors develop an IPE within 90 days of the student being found eligible. The IPE is created in collaboration with the students, parents or guardians, educators, and IVRS counselors to ensure consistency with the goals and objectives of the IEP. This unified planning process helps promote seamless support for students as they transition to post-secondary education, training, or competitive integrated employment.

C. The roles and responsibilities, including financial responsibilities, of each agency, including provisions for determining State lead agencies and qualified personnel responsible for transition services and pre-employment transition services;

IVRS and the DE share joint responsibility for preparing students with disabilities for successful transition into community-based, competitive integrated employment. A Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) has been established to define the roles, responsibilities, and financial obligations of each agency. This MOA is reviewed every two years and serves to:

- Define the responsibilities of both entities within a tiered system of support;
- Provide for efficient and effective utilization of resources;
- Minimize duplication; and
- Delineate a basis for continuous, effective working relationships between the two entities.

#### IVRS Responsibilities under the MOA

IVRS fulfills the following roles and financial obligations:

- Collaborate with LEAs, AEAs, and community partners to develop Local School Plans.
- Obtain a signed Consent to Release Information to and from IVRS for each student identified for services through IVRS.
- Obtain PE documentation and completed Pre-ETS Agreements.
- Provide Pre-ETS in collaboration and coordination with LEAs, ensuring services are not duplicative and do not supplant existing LEA services.
- Utilize assessment information provided by education to determine eligibility and services. Secure and finance additional assessments only when necessary for the purposes of IVRS services.

- Offer consultation and technical assistance to educational personnel.
- Participate in the development of employment and related components of the Individualized Education Program (IEP), based on the student's individual needs.
- Develop an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) within 90 days of the student's IVRS eligibility date, unless an extension is warranted and approved.
- Ensure IPE goals align with IEP employment goals.
- Provide or fund services required by the IPE goal, including assistive technology devices, when the student has been determined eligible for IVRS services and has an individualized employment plan where the services are needed for the student's specific employment outcome. Provide assistance in the purchase of tools, supplies, and other job-related personal expenses for IVRS eligible students who have demonstrated success in a 4+ career and technical program as it relates to the IPE goal.
- Fund and coordinate a short-term, supported paid work experience for students identified as most significantly disabled (MSD) who require this service.
- Fund job development and job coaching services for MSD students requiring supported employment. When long-term supports are needed post-graduation, IVRS assists LEAs in coordinating these services for their final career.

#### Iowa Department of Education Responsibilities under the MOA

The DE will fulfill the following roles and financial obligations:

- Develop the Local School Plan in collaboration with partners. Participants may include, but are not limited to, administration, special education teachers, school counselors, and/or CTE teachers.
- Assist in identifying students appropriate for IVRS services.
- Obtain a signed Consent to Release Information to and from IVRS for each student identified for services through IVRS.
- Assist in securing PE documentation and a completed Pre-ETS Agreement.
- Share all existing educational assessment and performance information relevant to IVRS eligibility determination and service planning.



- Request consultation and technical assistance from IVRS as needed for planning and implementing transition services.
- Consult with IVRS staff to identify each student's vocational needs and the services necessary to meet them.
- Develop and document the employment component of the IEP, aligned with the student's needs.
- Ensure consistency between IEP and IPE goals.
- Collaborate with IVRS to assess referral appropriateness and support students through the application process.
- Fund all services listed on the IEP, including assistive technology, unless another entity agrees to assume financial responsibility.
- Provide and/or fund job coaching when it is part of the instructional component of the IEP. The LEA will also deliver instructional content when it is for the student to learn job skills, learn about the world of work, and explore occupations to make an informed decision about a future work goal.
- Provide and/or pay for extended school year supports, as needed.

D. Procedures for outreach to and identification of students with disabilities who need transition services and pre-employment transition services. Outreach to these students should occur as early as possible during the transition planning process and must include, at a minimum, a description of the purpose of the vocational rehabilitation program, eligibility requirements, application procedures, and scope of services that may be provided to eligible individuals;

Outreach efforts are identified in the Local School Plan for each LEA. Some of these activities could include but are not limited to attending an IEP meeting, participating in transition fairs or back to school nights, and other transition planning meetings. Additional outreach efforts include meeting and becoming known to LEA/AEA staff (teachers, school nurse, school counselor, administration, etc.) so LEA/AEA staff can identify students who need services through IVRS, as appropriate.

For Potentially Eligible (PE) students in need of Pre-ETS, PE documentation and a completed Pre-ETS Agreement are needed for participation in these activities. For students with more intensive needs, who would benefit from individualized VR services, an application for IVRS would be completed to determine eligibility for services. In order for information to be shared between IVRS and the LEA/AEA

regarding these services, a signed Consent to Release Information to and from IVRS form must be obtained for each student identified for services.

The determination of eligibility requires that a qualified Rehabilitation Counselor employed by IVRS perform a comprehensive analysis of the disabling conditions, impediments to employment and justification of why the student requires services from IVRS to be successfully employed. For students who have a signed Consent to Release Information to and from IVRS form, IVRS will inform LEA/AEA staff on eligibility determination.

As appropriate to the vocational needs of each student and consistent with each students' informed choice, IVRS must ensure that the appropriate rehabilitation services are available to assist the student with the disability to prepare for, secure, retain, regain or advance employment. These services should be identified on the IPE and consistent with the student's unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests and informed choices.

E. Coordination necessary to satisfy documentation requirements set forth in 34 C.F.R. part 397 regarding students and youth with disabilities who are seeking subminimum wage employment; and

Under Section 511 of the Rehabilitation Act, as amended, 14(c) businesses referred to as "employers" are prohibited from employing any individual with a disability who is 24 years of age or younger at subminimum wage, unless the individual has received documentation from IVRS upon completion of the activities. Coordination between the LEAs, AEAs, DE, and IVRS is needed to meet documentation requirements under Section 511 for students and youth with disabilities seeking subminimum wage employment. These entities must document the completion of the following activities:

- Pre-ETS that are available to a student with a disability or transition services under the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA)
- Apply for vocational rehabilitation services and the individual was determined:
  - Ineligible for vocational rehabilitation services; or
  - Eligible for vocational rehabilitation services, and
- The youth with a disability had an approved Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE)

- The youth with a disability was unable to achieve the employment outcome specified in the IPE
- The youth with a disability's case record is closed
- Career counseling and information and referral services to federal and state programs to help the individual discover, experience and attain competitive integrated employment. The counseling and information cannot be for employment at subminimum wage and should be provided within 30 calendar days.

The DE will encourage each LEA to obtain consent and provide IVRS documentation that the student has completed transition services or received Pre-ETS when seeking subminimum wage employment. Documentation can include the student's IEP, transition assessment results, work-based learning data, summary of performance and any other specific data/documentation around transition experiences, assessment and instruction. Documentation should be provided by the LEA to the IVRS staff assigned to the LEA no later than 30 calendar days after the determination of sub minimum wage has been made.

These sub-minimum wage requirements and documentation requirements should be shared by IVRS and DE with LEA, AEA, parents/guardians and students. IVRS will maintain the documentation and provide a copy to the student within 45 days after the completion of services. Any of the services identified above that the LEA provided must be documented by the LEA and provided to IVRS and the student.

F. Assurance that, in accordance with 34 C.F.R. § 397.31, neither the SEA nor the local educational agency will enter into a contract or other arrangement with an entity, as defined in 34 C.F.R. § 397.5(d), for the purpose of operating a program under which youth with a disability is engaged in work compensated at a subminimum wage.

The DE and LEAs will not enter into a contract or other arrangement with an entity for the purpose of operating a program under which a youth with a disability is engaged in work compensated at a subminimum wage.

#### k. Coordination with Employers

**In accordance with the requirements in section 101(a)(11)(E) of the Rehabilitation Act, describe how the VR agency will work with employers to identify competitive integrated employment and career exploration opportunities in order to facilitate the provision of VR services; and transition**

**services for youth and students with disabilities, including pre-employment transition services for students with disabilities.**

IVRS is committed to the *dual customer* approach, recognizing the importance of serving both individuals with disabilities and the business community. To support this mission, IVRS employs a full-time Business Engagement staff member dedicated to engaging with employers across Iowa. This individual is a key member of the Iowa Workforce Development Business Engagement Team, fostering cross-agency collaboration to support workforce development initiatives.

IVRS also actively partners with the National Employment Team (NET) through the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR), leveraging national resources to expand employer relationships and promote competitive integrated employment (CIE) opportunities statewide.

**Services Provided to Employers**

IVRS provides a range of services to employers to promote inclusive hiring practices and create meaningful career exploration and employment opportunities for students and youth with disabilities. These services include:

- Disability awareness and sensitivity training (e.g., Windmills curriculum)
- ADA and reasonable accommodation training, including workplace accessibility guidance
- Employee retention strategies
- Job task and safety analyses
- Development of talent pipelines into specific career sectors
- Recommendations for updates to employer policies and procedures
- Exploration and implementation of assistive technology solutions
- Customer Service Academies to train potential hires in soft skills and workplace expectations
- Development of pre-screening checklists for employer use
- Introduction of progressive employment strategies, including internships, job shadows, and trial work experiences

**Preparing Job Seekers for Employment**

To enhance job readiness, IVRS developed the *Ready, Set, Hire* curriculum. This resource supports job seekers in crafting personalized resumes and professional newsletters designed to showcase their skills to potential employers.

In addition, IVRS created and delivers a *Customer Service Academy* to train job seekers in customer service skills and workplace expectations. This academy is offered to adult job seekers with disabilities as well as to youth and students with disabilities.

### National and State-Level Engagement

IVRS regularly presents its business engagement strategies and employment initiatives at local, state, and national conferences. The division was also invited by the Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) to contribute to the development of a national toolkit designed to help small businesses improve hiring practices.

### Collaboration to Build Capacity and Improve Outcomes

To build internal capacity and improve alignment with Iowa's business needs, IVRS refers job-ready candidates to Iowa Workforce Development programs and actively collaborates with Business Engagement Consultants (BECs). These consultants bring expertise in business engagement and disability employment initiatives and help connect employers with qualified candidates referred by IVRS.

As part of ongoing innovation, IVRS participates in the Core 4 program, which includes IVRS staff, Wagner-Peyser career planners, and BECs. The Core 4 model aims to streamline employment placements by efficiently connecting job seekers with disabilities to qualified employment opportunities through Integrated Resource Teams. Additionally, the partnership helps improve shared performance measures and outcomes through integrated service delivery.

### [I. Interagency Cooperation with Other Agencies](#)

**In accordance with the requirements in section 101(a)(11)(C) and (K), describe interagency cooperation with and utilization of the services and facilities of agencies and programs that are not carrying out activities through the statewide workforce development system to develop opportunities for community-based employment in integrated settings, to the greatest extent practicable for the following:**

*1. State programs (designate lead agency(ies) and implementing entity(ies)) carried out under Section 4 of the Assistive Technology Act of 1998;*

IVRS maintains a joint statement of cooperation agreement with Easterseals Iowa Assistive Technology Center and the University of Iowa Centers for Disabilities and Development. Through this collaboration:

- Easterseals serves as the implementing agency for the Assistive Technology Act of 1998 activities in Iowa.
- The University of Iowa Center for Disabilities and Development serves as the lead agency responsible for oversight and coordination of statewide AT efforts.

Through this partnership, Easterseals Iowa provides a comprehensive range of technology devices and services, including, but not limited to:

- Demonstrations and trial loans of AT devices through a robust lending library
- Training, technical assistance, and educational resources to promote awareness and effective use of assistive technology

IVRS and these entities work collaboratively to:

- Share information and resources
- Facilitate mutual referrals
- Coordinate services to ensure individuals with disabilities have access to the AT and supports necessary to achieve their employment goals.

This cooperative relationship enhances the ability of all partners to promote access, inclusion and independence for individuals with disabilities across Iowa.

*2. Programs carried out by the Under Secretary for Rural Development of the Department of Agriculture;*

In Iowa, Easterseals Iowa Rural Solutions Program provides education, assistance and support to farmers with disabilities and individuals with disabilities residing in rural communities. IVRS, Easterseals Assistive Technology Center and Easterseals Rural Solutions program collaborate to provide assistive technology solutions for farmers with disabilities and meet the needs of the rural population. IVRS does not currently have a formal agreement with programs carried out through the USDA.

### *3. Non-educational agencies serving out-of-school youth;*

The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Division of Strategic Operations, Human Rights and Equity, Criminal and Juvenile Justice Planning oversee the Juvenile Re-entry Task Force (JRTF) which is responsible for the development and implementation of the Juvenile Re-entry System (JReS). The goal of JReS is to reduce recidivism rates and to improve outcomes for youth by implementing comprehensive system-wide reforms to juvenile reentry policies and processes.

IVRS collaborates with the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Division of Strategic Operations, Human Rights and Equity, Criminal and Juvenile Justice Planning to provide services to youth with disabilities (both in-school and out-of-school), who are involved in the juvenile justice system. At identified sites within Iowa, IVRS has placed JReS Navigators—specialized staff responsible for developing and delivering Pre-ETS tailored to this population.

In addition to Pre-ETS, JReS Navigators focus on:

- Enhancing transition planning and promoting successful community reintegration for youth with disabilities returning from juvenile facilities;
- Connecting youth to local career pathways and community-based support systems; and
- Reducing recidivism among youth with disabilities by facilitating access to competitive integrated employment and promoting financial independence.

IVRS also offers access to multiple customized employment and occupational skills programs available to out-of-school youth statewide. While these programs are not exclusively designed for this population, out-of-school youth are eligible to participate. IVRS also refers youth with disabilities to IWD programs and initiatives specifically targeted to out-of-school youth for the purposes of gaining employment skills and achieving long-term success.

### *4. State use contracting programs;*

IVRS maintains compliance with state contracting programs and follows the Iowa Department of Administrative Services (DAS) rules for financial bidding and contracting.

*5. State agency responsible for administering the State Medicaid plan under title XIX of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1396 et seq.);*

IVRS and the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) maintain a memorandum of agreement (MOA) that outlines collaborative efforts to provide coordinated, cost-effective employment services for individuals with developmental disabilities. The purpose of the MOA is to maximize the utilization of available resources, eliminate service duplication, and establish a statewide system of integrated service delivery between IVRS and HHS.

Key provisions of the MOA include:

- A clear description of the financial responsibilities of the state Medicaid program in providing employment-related services;
- Defined terms, conditions, and procedures for how mutual job candidates will be served by both IVRS and HHS;
- Established procedures for resolving interagency disputes arising under the agreement; and
- Detailed policies and procedures for each agency to determine and implement their respective interagency coordination responsibilities to promote the timely and effective delivery of employment services.

The MOA also clarifies the roles and responsibilities of both IVRS and HHS in serving individuals with shared eligibility, ensuring streamlined service planning and delivery. Collaborative planning efforts between IVRS and the Iowa Medicaid Enterprise (IME) are ongoing to support the implementation of Employment First principles. Regular meetings between IVRS, IME, and additional stakeholders help to promote and facilitate successful competitive integrated employment (CIE) outcomes for individuals with disabilities.

*6. State agency responsible for providing services for individuals with developmental disabilities;*

An IVRS Rehabilitation Services Bureau (RSB) Bureau Chief serves as the agency's representative on the Iowa Developmental Disabilities (DD) Council, which is funded through the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act. In this role, the RSB Bureau Chief shares information on IVRS initiatives—such as customized employment services for individuals with developmental and intellectual disabilities, including those on the autism spectrum—and brings back legislative updates and feedback from the Council to inform and enhance IVRS service delivery for job candidates with these specific disabilities.



The Executive Director of the DD Council also serves on the Employment First Taskforce, coordinated by IVRS. To support consistent communication and alignment of priorities, a monthly meeting is held between the IVRS Administrator and Executive Director of the Council.

Ongoing collaborative efforts between IVRS and the Council include:

- The Make your Mark! Conference: A statewide event focused on empowering individuals with disabilities and educating attendees on employment and life skill needs for individuals with developmental disabilities.
- Take your Legislator to Work Day: An initiative that highlights the capabilities of individuals with disabilities in the workforce and promotes public policy efforts aligned with Employment First principles.

IVRS maintains a collaborative partnership with the University of Iowa's Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD). This partnership supports the development and delivery of programs, resources, and services that enhance opportunities, promote independence, and improve outcomes for individuals with developmental disabilities across the state.

These partnerships foster greater awareness, resource alignment, and advocacy to improve employment outcomes and community inclusion for Iowans with developmental disabilities.

#### *7. State agency responsible for providing mental health services; and*

An IVRS CRP staff member serves as the agency's representative on the Iowa Mental Health Planning and Advisory Council, administered by the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Mental Health and Disability Services (HMDS) division. This representation strengthens collaboration between IVRS and HHS in delivering coordinated services to mutual job candidates experiencing barriers related to mental illness. In addition to council participation, the IVRS CRP staff member serves on the Council's Membership Committee to support and promote diverse representation across the group.

IVRS employs a Special Programming staff member certified in Adult Mental Health First Aid. As a certified instructor, this staff member is trained to provide initial assistance to individuals experiencing mental health or substance use challenges, ensuring informed support is available throughout service delivery.

IVRS partners with HHS and the University of Iowa Center for Behavioral Health to implement the Individual Placement and Support (IPS) model. IPS is an

evidence-based approach to supported employment that emphasizes rapid job placement and ongoing support for individuals with mental health conditions, including those with co-occurring (dual) diagnoses. This collaboration expands access to integrated services that support competitive integrated employment for individuals with complex support needs.

#### *8. Other Federal, State, and local agencies and programs outside the workforce development system.*

IVRS designates a staff representative to serve on the Iowa Transportation Coordination Council. This involvement ensures that the transportation needs of IVRS job candidates are effectively represented and considered during the planning, development, and implementation of state and local public transportation systems and programs across Iowa.

#### *9. Other private nonprofit organizations*

IVRS collaborates with a variety of private nonprofit organizations and programs to enhance service delivery and support for individuals with disabilities. These partnerships expand access to resources, promote innovative practices, and strengthen the continuum of vocational and employment services provided throughout the state. Some examples of these partnerships include:

- Iowa Association of People Supporting Employment 1st (IA APSE)
- Iowa Association of Community Providers (IACP)
- Able UP Iowa
- ASK Resources

Through the Iowa Blueprint for Change (DIF-SWTCIE) grant, IVRS partners with over 135 individuals/entities, including a variety of nonprofit organizations.

### **Assurances**

#### **Vocational Rehabilitation (Combined or General) Certifications**

Name of designated State agency: **Iowa Workforce Development, Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services Division**

Full Name of Authorized Representative: **Beth Townsend**

Title of Authorized Representative: **Interim Administrator**

1. The **Iowa Workforce Development, Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services Division** is authorized to submit the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan under title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Rehabilitation Act), as amended by title IV of WIOA[1], and its State Plan supplement under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act;

**Iowa Workforce Development, Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services Division**

2. In the event the designated State agency is not primarily concerned with vocational and other rehabilitation of individuals with disabilities, the designated State agency must include a designated State unit for the VR program (Section 101(a)(2)(B)(ii) of the Rehabilitation Act). As a condition for the receipt of Federal funds under title I of the Rehabilitation Act for the provision of VR services, the (designated State agency or the designated State unit when the designated State agency has a designated State unit)[2] agrees to operate and is responsible for the administration of the State VR Services Program in accordance with the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan[3], the Rehabilitation Act, 34 CFR 361.13(b) and (c), and all applicable regulations[4], policies, and procedures established by the Secretary of Education. Funds made available to States under section 111(a) of the Rehabilitation Act are used solely for the provision of VR services and the administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan;

**Iowa Workforce Development, Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services Division**

3. As a condition for the receipt of Federal funds under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act for supported employment services, the designated State agency, or the designated State unit when the designated State agency has a designated State unit, agrees to operate and is responsible for the administration of the State Supported Employment Services Program in accordance with the supplement to the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan[5], the Rehabilitation Act, and all applicable regulations[6], policies, and procedures established by the Secretary of Education. Funds made available under title VI are used solely for the provision of supported employment services and the administration of the supplement to the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan;

4. The designated State unit or, if not applicable, the designated State agency has the authority under State law to perform the functions of the State regarding the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement and is responsible for the administration of the VR program in accordance with 34 CFR 361.13(b) and (c);

5. The State legally may carry out each provision of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement.

6. All provisions of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement are consistent with State law.

7. *The (enter the name of authorized representative below) has the authority under State law to receive, hold, and disburse Federal funds made available under the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement;*

**Beth Townsend**

8. *The (enter the title of authorized representative below) has the authority to submit the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and the supplement for Supported Employment services;*

**Interim Administrator**

9. *The agency that submits the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement has adopted or otherwise formally approved the plan and its supplement.*

*Footnotes*

*Certification Signature*

## Vocational Rehabilitation Program Performance Indicators

### GEPA 427 Form Instructions for Application Package - Vocational Rehabilitation

- 1. Describe how your entity's existing mission, policies, or commitments ensure equitable access to, and equitable participation in, the proposed project or activity.*
- 2. Based on your proposed project or activity, what barriers may impede equitable access and participation of students, educators, or other beneficiaries?*
- 3. Based on the barriers identified, what steps will you take to address such barriers to equitable access and participation in the proposed project or activity?*
- 4. What is your timeline, including targeted milestones, for addressing these identified barriers?*

### GEPA 427 Form Instructions for Application Package - Supported Employment

- 1. Describe how your entity's existing mission, policies, or commitments ensure equitable access to, and equitable participation in, the proposed project or activity.*
- 2. Based on your proposed project or activity, what barriers may impede equitable access and participation of students, educators, or other beneficiaries?*
- 3. Based on the barriers identified, what steps will you take to address such barriers to equitable access and participation in the proposed project or activity?*
- 4. What is your timeline, including targeted milestones, for addressing these identified barriers?*

## Program-Specific Requirements for State Vocational Rehabilitation (Blind)

**The Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Services Portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan must include the following descriptions and estimates, as required by sections 101(a) and 606 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by title IV of WIOA.**

### a. State Rehabilitation Council

*1. All VR agencies, except for those that have an independent consumer-controlled commission, must have a State Rehabilitation Council (Council or SRC) that meets the criteria in Section 105 of the Rehabilitation Act. The designated State agency or designated State unit, as applicable, has:*

☒ is an independent State commission.

The Iowa Department for the Blind is an independent consumer-controlled commission; there is no State Rehabilitation Council.

☐ has established a State Rehabilitation Council.

In accordance with Assurance 3(b), please provide information on the current composition of the Council by representative type, including the term number of the representative, as applicable, and any vacancies, as well as the beginning dates of each representative's term.

*2. In accordance with Assurance (a)(1)(B), if selected, please provide information on the current composition of the Council by representative type, including the term number of the representative, as applicable, and any vacancies, as well as the beginning dates of each representative's term.*

Not Applicable

*3. If the SRC is not meeting the composition requirements in Section 105(b) of the Rehabilitation Act and/or is not meeting quarterly as required in Section 105(f) of the Rehabilitation Act, provide the steps that the VR agency is taking to ensure it meets those requirements.*

Not Applicable

*4. In accordance with the requirements in Section 101(a)(21)(A)(ii)(III) of the Rehabilitation Act, include a summary of the Council's input (including how it was obtained) into the State Plan and any State Plan revisions, including recommendations from the Council's annual reports, the review and analysis of consumer satisfaction and other Council reports.*

Not Applicable

*5. Provide the VR agency's response to the Council's input and recommendations, including an explanation for the rejection of any input and recommendations.*

Not Applicable

**b. Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA).**

*1. The VR services needs of individuals with disabilities residing within the State, including:*

**A. Individuals with the most significant disabilities and their need for Supported Employment;**

The Iowa Department for the Blind (IDB) works cooperatively with the Iowa Commission for the Blind to review and assess the vocational rehabilitation needs of Iowans who are blind, DeafBlind, or have low vision. IDB contracted with the Interwork Institute, San Diego State University to complete the most recent comprehensive statewide needs assessment. The data collected in the assessment covers the period of PY 2018-PY 2020. The conclusions and recommendations from the most recent assessment are included in IDB's goals and priorities.

The assessment indicates that individuals who are blind continue to be the largest percentage, of individuals who are applying for and receiving services through IDB. Approximately two thirds of IDB's clients are blind as compared to individuals who have low vision (approximately 33%) or are DeafBlind (1-1.5%). The percent of all clients served by disability type remained relatively steady for each group from 2018 to 2020. The employment rate at exit for individuals who are blind exceeded the employment rate for individuals who have low vision by more than 13% in PY 2020; during this year, individuals who are blind had higher median wages and higher employment rates in the second quarter after exit as compared to individuals with low vision.

The needs assessment identified that there continues to be a need to provide education to employers regarding the abilities of individuals who are blind. Employers in Iowa are hesitant to hire blind Iowans due to fear, lack of belief in their ability to do the job and lack of awareness about accommodations. Strong advocates are needed to ensure that employers are educated and made aware of the abilities and capabilities of blind Iowans and to help dispel any myths and misconceptions about the ability of blind people to work independently.

Individuals who are blind, DeafBlind or have low vision require a variety of rehabilitation services including, independent living skills training, assistive technology training and transportation services. Transportation has been a common theme for individuals with disabilities throughout Iowa, specifically in

more rural areas where there are limited options. In addition, blind Iowans need access to technology, including the necessary equipment and training to be able to function in the digital world. IDB needs to have qualified staff able to train clients in the use of rehabilitation technology and nonvisual skills to be able to fully access education, training and employment opportunities.

IDB staff and partners reported that a significant number of clients have secondary disabilities, most common include mental health impairments, followed by autism and complications related to disabilities. IDB identified that there needs to be improved coordination with mental health service providers, increased capacity of IDB counselors to effectively serve individuals with multiple disabilities, a need for more community resources to serve individuals with mental health impairments, especially those in crisis; the development of service providers that are able to effectively serve individuals with multiple disabilities; and the need to develop customized employment as a service option for IDB clients. Multiple clients have indicated that there is a long waiting list for Medicaid waiver services in Iowa which significantly impacts the ability of IDB to identify and extended services providers for individuals that need supported employment services.

IDB has identified that over the last several years, there has been a decrease in the number of providers able to provide employment-related services. In addition, there are a number of community rehabilitation providers who are experiencing turnover of job placement specialists and job coaches. Also identified is a need for community rehabilitation providers to better understand the needs of individuals who are blind or have low vision. In addition, IDB has identified a need for community rehabilitation providers to understand assistive technology, nonvisual skills and transportation options for individuals who are blind or have low vision, including individuals who have additional disabilities. IDB has continued to recognize the need for disability related skills in the area of nonvisual techniques and assistive technology and the need for self-advocacy skills for individuals with the most significant disabilities. IDB has been able to partner with community providers to ensure that these providers are also provided training to support clients in residential and employment settings.

IDB partnered with the VR Technical Assistance Center - Quality Employment to provide training to both IDB staff and community partners in efforts to address the needs identified above, in addition to joint trainings in the areas of customized training, customized employment and supported employment services to IDB clients.



**B. Individuals with disabilities who are minorities and individuals with disabilities who have been unserved or underserved by the VR program;**

During the most recent assessment, the rehabilitation needs of individuals with blindness and low vision that are minorities identified several areas. Individuals who are DeafBlind were the most commonly identified underserved group. Individuals in rural areas of Iowa were also identified as an underserved group due to the lack of services available in these areas and limited number of available qualified rehabilitation teachers. Overall, the rehabilitation needs of individuals with blindness and low vision that are minorities did not differ from the needs of other individuals with blindness and low vision except for language interpreter needs. There were participants in the most recent needs assessment who indicated that it may be difficult to find culturally competent staff to serve individuals who are blind or have low vision in Iowa. The Department continues to review its processes and materials to more effectively reach persons with diverse backgrounds who might be eligible for services. The efforts to date have been focused on increasing outcomes to all Iowans who are blind or have vision loss. These efforts will continue, along with a continued review of barriers that inhibit participation in services.

**C. Individuals with disabilities served through other components of the workforce development system; and**

The most recent statewide needs assessment identified themes related to the services of individuals who are blind or have low vision being served through other components of the statewide workforce development system. Currently, stakeholders indicated that the IowaWORKS Centers are not effectively meeting the service needs of individuals with blindness and low vision throughout the state. There is limited availability of assistive technology that would allow the programs and services to be accessible. Often, the assistive technology that may be provided is not functional or does not meet the needs of an individual client. The relationship between IDB and the IowaWORKS Centers remains primarily one of referral rather than one of joint planning and braided funding. While the use of Integrated Resource Teams (IRTs) has been identified as a strategy, there continues to be a need for the development and use of the IRTs to serve IDB clients that are co-enrolled at the AJCs. IDB staff have worked with partners at the state and local level and are involved in disability access committees across the state to address this need. IDB staff have provided assistive technology



training to partner program staff and meet regularly with workforce partners to identify accessibility issues, potential solutions and identify additional training needs. Partner programs continue to request information and training on how to most effectively serve individuals who are blind or have low vision. IDB will continue working with partner programs to develop and implement programs that will assist in meeting the needs of blind Iowans.

D. Youth with disabilities, including students with disabilities and their need for pre-employment transition services. Include an assessment of the needs of individuals with disabilities for transition career services and pre-employment transition services, and the extent to which such services are coordinated with transition services provided under IDEA.

Increasing and expanding outreach and services to students and youth who are blind or have low vision was identified as one of the areas of need. All of the five pre-employment transition services were also identified as a need for students with disabilities in Iowa. Work-based learning experiences were cited as the most beneficial activity but is least frequently provided.

There is a significant need to increase work-based learning opportunities to ensure that students with disabilities can develop hard and soft skills, and to ensure that they are aware of their workplace technology needs and accommodations that are required to be successful at work. The most frequently provided pre-employment transition services are work readiness training and instruction in self-advocacy; a majority of these services are provided directly by IDB staff or through a limited number of contracted vendors.

The rehabilitation needs of youth in transition are similar to the general population of IDB clients. Transportation, assistive technology, overcoming employer perceptions about the abilities of blind individuals, and independent living skills are rehabilitation needs for blind and low vision youth and students with disabilities in Iowa. IDB offers the LEAP (Leadership Education and Advocacy Program) summer program and youth weekend retreats that help prepare students and youth who are blind or have low vision to learn independent living and soft skills that directly impact their ability to have high expectations for their future.

Independent living and self-advocacy training for students in high school as part of a schoolyear-based program for high school students who have met their academic requirements. Transition-age youth who are blind need to have high expectations for their future. These young people need to have a support system that believes in their ability and encourages them to become independent and

self-supporting. Youth who are blind or have low vision often have additional or multiple disabilities. These individuals need to have additional support in order to maximize their chance to be successful in employment once they transition out of the secondary school system.

*2. Identify the need to establish, develop, or improve community rehabilitation programs within the State.*

As was identified at the last assessment, there is a need to develop the number and capacity of community rehabilitation providers (CRPs) to be able to work effectively with Iowans who are blind or have low vision in all service areas. IDB provides a majority of services through in-house staff, however there are a limited number of positions in critical service need areas that could be provided by CRPs if they had the experience and skill. There is a need to develop supported employment vendors for all areas of the state. There is also a need to develop CRPs that have the capacity to provide customized employment to individuals who are blind or have low vision in Iowa.

**c. Goals, Priorities, and Strategies**

**Section 101(a)(15) and (23) of the Rehabilitation Act require VR agencies to describe the goals and priorities of the State in carrying out the VR and Supported Employment programs. The goals and priorities are based on (1) the most recent CSNA, including any updates; (2) the State's performance under the performance accountability measures of section 116 of WIOA; and (3) other available information on the operation and effectiveness of the VR program, including any reports received from the SRC and findings and recommendations from monitoring activities conducted under section 107 of the Rehabilitation Act. VR agencies must—**

*1. Describe how the SRC and the VR agency jointly developed and agreed to the goals and priorities and any revisions; and*

Through participation in workgroups related to the development of the Unified State Plan, the Iowa Department for the Blind has collaborated with other core partners to jointly develop the State's vision and goals. Iowa's Unified State Plan Vision is to be an aligned, flexible, and streamlined workforce delivery system that meets the needs of employers and all Iowans for a skilled and diverse workforce. This vision was jointly developed by Iowa's WIOA core partners and approved by the State Workforce Board. The goals developed by Iowa's core partners and approved by the State Workforce Board are as follows: Goal 1: Increase the engagement and awareness of Iowa's current, potential, and future workforce to the continuum of high-quality education, training, and career

opportunities in Iowa. Goal II – Increase employer engagement and awareness of the IowaWORKS system as the premier provider of business services for a skilled and diverse workforce.

The Iowa Department for the Blind (IDB) is an independent consumer-controlled commission; there is no State Rehabilitation Council. A Board of Commissioners governs IDB and works together with the agency Director to develop and agree to annual goals and priorities based on the work of the agency, feedback from clients and stakeholders and the results of the comprehensive statewide needs assessment. The mission of IDB is to empower blind Iowans to be gainfully employed and live independently. The Department recognizes the need to improve services to Iowans who are blind and have low vision across all agencies and organizations in the state. The responsibility of the Department's vocational rehabilitation program is to assist individuals who are blind or have low vision, including those with the most significant disabilities, to achieve high quality, competitive integrated employment.

*2. Identify measurable goals and priorities in carrying out the VR and Supported Employment programs and the basis for selecting the goals and priorities (e.g., CSNA, performance accountability measures, SRC recommendations, monitoring, other information). As required in Section 101(a)(15)(D), (18), and (23), describe under each goal or priority, the strategies or methods used to achieve the goal or priority, including as applicable, description of strategies or methods that—*

**A. Support innovation and expansion activities;**

The Department will use the following strategies in the development and implementation of innovative approaches to expand and improve VR services to Iowans who are blind or have low vision under the State Plan.

In PY-2022, IDB supported innovation and expansion activities by providing funding to the Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC). This funding was necessary to assist the Council to carry out its functions. The purpose of the SILC is to strengthen the voice of Iowans with disabilities on issues affecting their lives, to build a statewide network of centers for independent living, and to collaborate with our partners in advancing independence, productivity, and full inclusion of Iowans with disabilities. Overall, we continue to collaborate to promote advocacy, independent living, and changing systems that negatively impact people with any kind of disability, including individuals who are blind or have low vision.

The Iowa Self Employment program for Persons with Disabilities is a collaborative effort between IVRS and the Department. The Iowa Self-

Employment program exists to provide quality, expert, client-centered services to lowans with disabilities that embrace diversity, promote successful business ownership and result in self-sufficiency and economic development. This program partners with the Iowa Department for the Blind and its clients to offer entrepreneurial assessment, market feasibility assessment, business plan development, business financial and technical consultation as well as business augmentation support. While self-employment is not for everyone, for those who have an entrepreneurial spirit, ability to analyze markets and make good decisions, and where needed financial stability in order to access financing if that is necessary, this program is one to consider as a source to facilitating an individual from under or unemployment to gainful employment.

IDB supports innovation and expansion activities through its commitment to improve the supported employment opportunities for individuals who are blind or have low vision. IDB staff have worked with the Vocational Rehabilitation Technical Assistance Center on Quality Employment to provide training, new ideas and strategies to create innovative ways in serving blind lowans who require supported employment services. In addition, the team continues to provide and identify ways to build capacity within Iowa's CRPs to provide quality training to blind individuals. IDB continues to explore training opportunities and assistive technology supports for these providers as they work with IDB.

IDB is also utilizing innovation and expansion funds to explore activities to support self-advocacy skills training, including peer mentoring for students with disabilities. IDB also supports innovation and expansion by providing training to local workforce and education providers by providing information, training on universal design and technical assistance to meet the needs of these students.

Over the next two years, innovation and expansion funds will continue to be used on the integration of the case management system and to provide training on a new data management system. Data management collected will assist IDB to analyze the effectiveness of our programs, services and progress toward achieving goals, while also assisting in identifying potential barriers and challenges so that we can overcome them as we work to provide quality services to lowans who are blind or have low vision.

#### B. Overcome barriers to accessing VR and supported employment services;

The Iowa Department for the Blind works to increase the number and percentage of clients achieving competitive integrated employment outcomes; build awareness of IDB services; and to improve the quality assurance system. IDB maintains one state office and uses telework methods, allowing counseling staff to work in regions across the state. Vocational Rehabilitation staff work in teams and travel their assigned regions to meet with referrals and clients, to educate the general public, including employers, and to reach out to individuals who may need services.

IDB is implementing a new case management system which went live in 2024. With this new case management system, IDB plans to incorporate the ability to add signatures in an effort to allow applications and other documents to be processed more efficiently. IDB also plans to implement an online application process for individuals to be able to submit applications electronically.

IDB continues to advocate for accessibility of programs provided by our partners. IDB provides blindness awareness training to stakeholders, has provided accessibility training to partners, educators and employers. IDB has also provided consultation and technical assistance to programs and employers regarding document and website accessibility in efforts to improve access for individuals participating in vocational rehabilitation and supported employment services. IDB plans to continue providing these services to stakeholders to assist in overcoming barriers blind Iowans have in accessing services.

#### C. Improve and expand VR services for students with disabilities, including the coordination of services designed to facilitate the transition of such students from school to postsecondary life (including the receipt of VR services, post-secondary education, employment, and pre-employment transition services); and

The Iowa Department for the Blind continues to work with school districts and the Iowa Educational Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired (IESBVI) to increase and expand services for students. The Department is working with the IESBVI to increase referrals of students at the age of 14. Ninety days prior to the transition IEP (no later than age 14) students are informed about Vocational Rehabilitation services available through the IDB by an IESBVI representative. Releases to share information are also gathered. The Department receives the referral and begins attempting to contact the family and student to assist them in the application process. The emphasis to serve youth and students with disabilities increases the need to collaborate with community rehabilitation

providers in the provision of pre-employment transition services in order to increase the competitive integrated employment outcomes.

Ongoing collaboration and communication amongst IDB, IESBVI, local educators, parents, and students are important to the overall transition efforts in Iowa. IDB staff and program administrators will continue a process of training educators and service providers about the services the Department provides to students who are blind or have low vision. One area of need often identified with students is a lack of understanding and ability to use assistive technologies. In effort to meet this need, the IDB offers a wide range and expanding menu of assistive technology services to students with disabilities and educators of transition age youth. IDB technology specialists provide technology assessments and one-on-one assistive technology training at school or at home. IDB staff attend IEP meetings and consult with special education teachers to help them come up with solutions to classroom access barriers.

The Department continues to work to build relationships within communities across the state in efforts to connect students in high school with VR services. IDB counseling staff works with Regional Workforce Investment Boards and Transition Advisory Committees to inform them of the program and to develop work experience and career exploration opportunities for the transition students in integrated settings. IDB has developed several programs to expand the delivery of vocational rehabilitation services, including pre-employment transition services, to students who are blind or have low vision.

Over the next four years, IDB will continue to grow the participation in pre-employment transition services and events to serve Iowa's secondary students. Through provision of pre-employment transition services and other services, these programs will work with local school districts to assist students with disabilities to develop skills needed for post-secondary environments. IDB plans to improve and expand services to students with disabilities by creating a welcoming space for students and adding additional training events and programs not only in Des Moines but taking place across the state as well in order to more equitably serve students in Iowa.

IDB plans to continue expanding opportunities for work-based learning experiences and workplace readiness activities, including group trainings and opportunities provided throughout the year to students who are blind or have low vision. These programs will be offered by our in-house staff and through partner agencies.

D. Improve the performance of the VR and Supported Employment programs in assisting individuals with disabilities to achieve quality employment outcomes.

Goal: Promote awareness of IDB programs and services for blind Iowans.

Strategies:

1. Develop and implement a marketing plan to promote awareness of IDB services, including the services of the Iowa Blindness Empowerment and Independence Center. Include a review and development of materials in additional languages and formats.
2. Provide training to partner agencies, including workforce development partners and education agencies about the increased services to students and youth with disabilities.
3. Expand employer engagement activities to increase employer awareness of IDB services, including assistance with recruiting, hiring, retaining and promoting individuals who are blind or have low vision.

Goal: Improve employment outcomes to enhance economic self-sufficiency for clients exiting the VR program.

Strategies:

1. Monitor closed cases in competitive integrated employment for one year after closure.
2. Expand partnerships with IowaWORKS offices in addition to other core partners to increase access to services needed by IDB clients.
3. Support and promote the modernization of the Business Enterprise Program in order to increase employment opportunities for blind Iowans.
4. Counselor employment team identified with goal of exploring strategies to increase successful employment outcomes. The team is encouraged to share information, improve performance, consult on cases that appear “stuck” and to move employment strategies forward. This group will be led by VR counselors; the VR counselor lead worker and VR program administrator are available for feedback and consultation.

Goal: Increase the total number of individuals receiving pre-employment transition services. Strategies:

1. Expand the use of work-based learning experiences to students with disabilities.

2. Expand outreach to families and students who are blind or have low vision, especially in areas that are rural and have smaller populations. .
3. Explore the development and implementation of a youth council to provide guidance and feedback to IDB staff regarding program development and implementation of services.

Goal: IDB clients move quickly through rehabilitation process.

1. Develop an internal team to review current processes and procedures and minimize time between referrals and service delivery.
2. Continue employee continuing education activities to ensure IDB staff continue expanding and keeping up with changes in technology, service delivery models and the needs of blind Iowans.
3. Explore the use of connectivity assessments for clients engaged in the comprehensive assessment process for plan development. Ensure clients participating in programs have the necessary equipment and services to participate in training activities.
4. Expand IDB's online presence and develop online forms; including the ability to use electronic signatures.

#### d. Evaluation and Reports of Progress: VR and Supported Employment Goals

**For the most recently completed program year, provide an evaluation and report of progress for the goals or priorities, including progress on the strategies under each goal or priority, applicable to that program year. Sections 101(a)(15) and 101(a)(23) of the Rehabilitation Act require VR agencies to describe—**

##### *1. Progress in achieving the goals and priorities identified for the VR and Supported Employment Programs;*

The goals and progress in achieving the goals from the 2022 Unified State Plan modification are listed below:

Goal 1: Iowa employers will become more aware of the Iowa Department for the Blind and the pool of advanced, skilled, diverse, and future ready workers the department can provide access to.

Progress: IDB worked to develop mutually beneficial partnerships with Iowa businesses by participating in business services teams, providing trainings to employers and engaging with WIOA partners to provide technical assistance and consultation to employers. IDB also hired a careers instructor for the Iowa Blindness Empowerment and Independence Center to engage in career



development activities with IDB clients, which includes the development of employer engagement with local, state and federal businesses. IDB also hired a Supported Employment Specialist to provide training and support to employers and community providers hiring Iowans who are blind or have low vision.

Goal 2: All Iowans who are blind or have vision loss and require VR services to obtain, maintain, or advance in employment receive them.

Progress: IDB conducts marketing and outreach to increase awareness of and referrals to the Department. The Iowa Department for the Blind hosts events that provide information about services offered by the Department. These events included the annual Braille Challenge, the legislative open house, and technology fairs, and community-based training events. The Department emphasized the vocational rehabilitation program and the youth transition programs at these events, ensuring individuals are aware of the importance of early involvement in vocational rehabilitation services and the programs offered through the Department. At these events, feedback was sought from attendees for follow-up and possible referrals. Department staff continued to welcome potential clients, interested professionals, and the general public to the IDB for tours that highlight available services. IDB also completed outreach to potentially eligible students and their support systems to enhance awareness of, and the opportunities to receive IDB services. IDB participates in Vision Discipline Teams with staff from Iowa Educational Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired, in which referrals are reviewed and followed up on; this has assisted IDB counselors in getting in front of parents of students who are blind or have low vision to discuss IDB services. IDB has also worked to ensure eligible individuals have well-developed and supported individualized plans for employment that provide them with the education and training plans needed to achieve their career goal. IDB staff advocate that all eligible or potentially eligible students have well-developed individualized education plans that aligned with their career goals. IDB staff provide pre-employment transition services including paid work experience to students in high school. IDB provided work-based learning experiences and job seeking seminars designed specifically for clients attending post-secondary school.

The Department exceeded its goal to have 75% of students with disabilities participate in work experiences prior to graduation. The Department firmly believes that access to work-based learning experiences increases an individual's likelihood of success in reaching his or her employment goals.

IDB Goal 3: All individuals who are successfully closed employed will have found employment that aligns with their knowledge, skills, and abilities, and places them on their desired career pathway.

Progress: IDB worked to ensure IPE goals reflect the clients' knowledge, skills, abilities, and interests and that the activities they engaged in align with a career pathway. IDB promotes participation in career pathways to meet business sector and consumer employment needs. IDB has seen an increase in the number of individuals achieving measurable skills gains and continues to work with staff to address this goal. IDB also partnered with other agencies to develop relationships with employers to increase opportunities for individuals to become employed in integrated and competitive environments. IDB provided a longer period for job stabilization before closure in cases where a client is working toward achieving more hours, and requires additional documentation for cases closing in employment at less than twenty hours per week. IDB worked with clients who are in employment to increase knowledge and skills so that they can pursue careers along their chosen career paths.

IDB Goal 4: The Iowa Department for the Blind will collaborate with Iowa's workforce delivery system to identify and reduce barriers to accessible, seamless and integrated services for individuals who are blind or have low vision.

Progress: IDB worked with core partners to collect surveys and conduct focus groups to measure satisfaction in receiving services through Iowa's workforce delivery system as part of the most recent comprehensive statewide needs assessment. IDB partnered with other agencies to develop relationships with employers to increase opportunities for individuals to become employed in integrated and competitive environments. IDB continues to use the "Hello. Is Anybody Here?" training series to engage service professionals in discussions that support improving customer service to individuals who are blind. This training continues to be used in regions across the state in an effort to increase the comfort and ability of our colleagues in fully including individuals who are blind in the career services and career pathway models of American Job Centers. In practice, each of the four vignettes have been presented "live" in staff training sessions with a Department for the Blind staff member facilitator. IDB also developed a Facilitator's Guide to use with the videos so that others could host similar discussions at their own offices. The objectives of the discussions and videos are as follows: 1. Recognize the customer service experiences in American Job Centers for blind customers; 2. Promote service design that achieves full inclusion; 3. Increase understanding of what "program access" really means; 4.

Build the comfort level of American Job Center staff in working with blind consumers; and 5. Increase staff understanding of some of the particular challenges faced by blind job seekers. IDB continues to get requests for this training. IDB also collaborated to provide training on Integrated Resource Teams to core partners. IDB has found success in using this strategy to identify and provide services to clients. IDB and core partners continue to work together to address system, programmatic and physical barriers to individuals who are blind and have low vision.

IDB Goal 5: Build mutually beneficial partnerships with entities in the community that provide or could provide services to lowans who are blind or have low vision.

Progress: IDB conducted outreach to community rehabilitation providers and provided trainings to these providers in the provision of services to individuals who are blind or have low vision.

IDB has used the "Hello. Is Anybody Here?" series, in addition to providing hands-on training with individual providers, based on the needs of clients. IDB continues to look for way to increase capacity of community providers to provide services to lowans who are blind or have low vision.

IDB's goals are being revised to reflect information gathered through the most current comprehensive statewide needs assessment.

*2. Performance on the performance accountability indicators under Section 116 of WIOA for the most recently completed program year, reflecting actual and negotiated levels of performance. Explain any discrepancies in the actual and negotiated levels; and*

#### PY2024 Performance Accountability Measures

| Performance Indicator               | Negotiated Level | National Level | State Level (IA-G & IA-B) | IDB Rate |
|-------------------------------------|------------------|----------------|---------------------------|----------|
| Employment (2nd Quarter after Exit) | 59.8%            | 53.8%          | 55.3%                     | 40%      |
| Employment (4th Quarter After Exit) | 58.5%            | 51.9%          | 56.1%                     | 35.2%    |

|                                             |        |         |        |        |
|---------------------------------------------|--------|---------|--------|--------|
| Median Earnings<br>(2nd Quarter After Exit) | \$4586 | \$5,331 | \$4452 | \$5919 |
| Credential Attainment                       | 54%    | 38%     | 51.7%  | 34%    |
| Measurable Skills Gain                      | 52%    | 52.2%   | 56.7%  | 70.6%  |
| Effectiveness in Serving Employers          | N/A    | N/A     | N/A    | N/A    |

The state level information combines both IVRS and IDB data. IDB also included IDB specific information to identify areas of excellence and improvement.

Individually, IDB did not achieve the employment after exit rate in either the 2nd or 4th quarters. IDB closed a number of participants in the program year with unsuccessful outcomes which are included in this rate. In addition, IDB has identified difficulties in gathering appropriate documentation to support these measures. IDB did not achieve the credential attainment rate and is reviewing internal reporting processes to identify data and reporting issues for this performance measure. IDB implemented a new case management system in 2024 and continues to work with the development team to improve accuracy of data and examine data trends.

IDB exceeded negotiated levels for the state in Median Earnings in the 2nd Quarter after Exit and Measurable Skills Gains.

*3. The use of funds reserved for innovation and expansion activities (Sections 101(a)(18) and 101(a)(23) of the Rehabilitation Act) (e.g., SRC, SILC).*

IDB supports innovation and expansion activities by providing funding to the Regional Independent Living Centers. This funding was necessary to assist the Centers to carry out their functions. The purpose of the Centers is to strengthen the voice of Iowans with disabilities on issues affecting their lives, to collaborate with our partners in advancing the independence, productivity, and full inclusion of Iowans with disabilities to secure employment and/or living independently. Overall, Centers promote advocacy, independent living, and changing systems that negatively impact people with any kind of disability, including individuals who are blind or have low vision.

e. Supported Employment Services, Distribution of Title VI Funds, and Arrangements and Cooperative Agreements for the Provision of Supported Employment Services.

*1. Acceptance of title VI funds:*

- ☒ VR agency requests to receive title VI funds.
- ☐ VR agency does NOT elect to receive title VI funds and understands that supported employment services must still be provided under title I.

*2. If the VR agency has elected to receive title VI funds, Section 606(b)(3) of the Rehabilitation Act requires VR agencies to include specific goals and priorities with respect to the distribution of Title VI funds received under Section 603 of the Rehabilitation Act for the provision of supported employment services. Describe the use of Title VI funds and how they will be used in meeting the goals and priorities of the Supported Employment program.*

The Department's goal is that all Iowans who are blind or have low vision and require supported employment services to obtain or retain competitive employment receive them. Individuals the IDB closed who were receiving supported employment IDB collaborated with the VR Technical Assistance Center on Quality Employment to review current supported employment policies and to develop strategies to improve services to individuals requiring supported employment services. New policies to guide supported employment services were implemented in 2025.

*3. Supported employment services may be provided with Title 1 or Title VI funds following placement of individuals with the most significant disabilities in employment. In accordance with Section 101(a)(22) and Section 606(b)(3) of the Rehabilitation Act, describe the quality, scope, and extent of supported employment services to be provided to individuals with the most significant disabilities, including youth with the most significant disabilities; and the timing of transition to extended services.*

Individuals with the most significant disabilities, including youth with the most significant disabilities, are given full opportunity to prepare for, obtain, maintain, advance in, or re-enter competitive integrated employment, including supported employment. IDB provides supported employment services following job placement to individuals and youth who require supported employment services, for a period of time that will not exceed twenty-four (24) months, except for special circumstances when the counselor and the eligible individual jointly agree to extend the time to achieve the employment outcome identified in the Individualized Plan for Employment. Vocational rehabilitation counselors closely monitor the quality of services throughout the duration of their provision

to insure that services are appropriate, timely, cost- effective, and of the same quality as those services provided under Title I.

IDB provides ongoing support services using funds under the Supported Employment program and/or the VR program from the time of job placement until the transition to extended services. When a client is ready to transition to extended services, IDB partners with clients, community rehabilitation providers, and in most cases, the Medicaid Waiver program for a seamless transfer. IDB continues to work with partners to improve this transition through trainings and discussions in efforts to improve this process.

IDB may provide extended services to youth with a most significant disability for a period not to exceed four years, or at such time that a youth reaches age 25 and no longer meets the definition of a youth with a disability, whichever occurs first. IDB is not able to provide extended services to an individual with a most significant disability who is not a youth with a most significant disability. IDB will work with the individual to identify other sources of extended services to ensure that there is no interruption of services.

*4. Sections 101(a)(22) and 606(b)(4) of the Rehabilitation Act require the VR agency to describe efforts to identify and arrange, including entering into cooperative agreements, with other State agencies and other appropriate entities in order to provide supported employment services. The description must include extended services, as applicable, to individuals with the most significant disabilities, including the provision of extended services to youth with the most significant disabilities in accordance with 34 C.F.R. § 363.4(a) and 34 C.F.R. § 361.5(c)(19)(v).*

Because the number of blind and low vision Iowans who use services from Community Rehabilitation Programs is both small and widely dispersed, the Department collaborates with Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services (IVRS) to define supported employment services, outcomes, and costs. The Department enters into agreements with providers of supported employment when specific clients are identified as needing those services. When appropriate, supported employment services and extended services are paid for through county services under the Medicaid Waiver programs. The Department may also make arrangements with other private entities to provide supported employment and extended services as the need arises. Other private entities may include employers, family members, and individuals contracted to provide these services. Natural supports and county services are the most often used services for extended support services.

The Department's service delivery system is to allocate 50 percent of the supported employment grant allotment for the provision of pre-employment transition services to youth with the most significant disabilities. In addition, these funds may be used to provide extended services to youth with the most significant disabilities for a period of up to four years.

IDB partnered with the VR Technical Assistance Center on Quality Employment (VRTAC- QE) to review supported employment services policies and processes. IDB also worked the the VRTAC-QE to develop new partnerships with CRPs and to provide training to CRP staff in the provision of supported employment services, including the provision of these services to individuals who are blind or have low vision. Through this partnership, IDB is exploring other partners and will explore the need for formal cooperative agreements.

## f. Annual Estimates

### 1. Estimates for next Federal fiscal year—

#### A. VR Program; and

| Priority Category (if applicable) | No. of Individuals Eligible for Services | No. of Eligible Individuals Expected to Receive Services under VR Program | Costs of Services using Title I Funds | No. of Eligible Individuals Not Receiving Services (if applicable) |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Not Applicable                    | 409                                      | 409                                                                       | 4,147,225                             | 0                                                                  |

#### B. Supported Employment Program

| Priority Category (if applicable) | No. of Individuals Eligible for Services | No. of Eligible Individuals Expected to Receive Services under Supported Employment Program | Costs of Services using Title I and Title VI Funds | No. of Eligible Individuals Not Receiving Services (if applicable) |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Not Applicable                    | 16                                       | 16                                                                                          | 392,895                                            | 0                                                                  |

### g. Order of Selection

- ☒ The VR agency is not implementing an order of selection and all eligible individuals will be served.
- ☐ The VR agency is implementing an order of selection with one or more categories closed.

\* VR agencies may maintain an order of selection policy and priority of eligible individuals without implementing or continuing to implement an order of selection.

*1. Pursuant to Section 101(a)(5) of the Rehabilitation Act, this description must be amended when the VR agency determines, based on the annual estimates described in description (f), that VR services cannot be provided to all eligible individuals with disabilities in the State who apply for and are determined eligible for services.*

*2. For VR agencies that have defined priority categories describe—*

A. The justification for the order

The Iowa Department for the Blind is not implementing an Order of Selection.

B. The order (priority categories) to be followed in selecting eligible individuals to be provided VR services ensuring that individuals with the most significant disabilities are selected for services before all other individuals with disabilities; and

The Iowa Department for the Blind is not implementing an Order of Selection.

C. The VR agency's goals for serving individuals in each priority category, including how the agency will assist eligible individuals assigned to closed priority categories with information and referral, the method in which the VR agency will manage waiting lists, and the projected timelines for opening priority categories. NOTE: Priority categories are considered open when all individuals in the priority category may be served.

The Iowa Department for the Blind is not implementing an order of Selection.

*3. Has the VR agency elected to serve eligible individuals outside of the order of selection who require specific services or equipment to maintain employment?*

No

### h. Waiver of Statewideness.

Not applicable



i. Comprehensive System of Personnel Development.

1. Analysis of current personnel and projected personnel needs including—

A. The number of personnel currently needed by the VR agency to provide VR services, broken down by personnel category; and

B. The number and type of personnel that are employed by the VR agency in the provision of vocational rehabilitation services, including ratios of qualified vocational rehabilitation counselors to clients;

C. Projections of the number of personnel, broken down by personnel category, who will be needed by the VR agency to provide VR services in 5 years based on projections of the number of individuals to be served, including individuals with significant disabilities, the number of personnel expected to retire or leave the field, and other relevant factors.

| Personnel Category                   | No. of Personnel Employed | No. of Personnel Currently Needed | Projected No. of Personnel Needed in 5 Years |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| Program Administrators               | 5                         | 5                                 | 5                                            |
| Chief Information Officer            | 1                         | 1                                 | 1                                            |
| Management Analyst 3                 | 1                         | 1                                 | 1                                            |
| Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors | 9                         | 12                                | 12                                           |
| Supported Employment Specialist      | 0                         | 1                                 | 1                                            |
| DeafBlind Specialist                 | 1                         | 1                                 | 1                                            |
| Secretary 2                          | 1                         | 1                                 | 1                                            |
| Secretary 1                          | 3                         | 4                                 | 4                                            |
| Executive Officer 1 (BEP)            | 1                         | 1                                 | 1                                            |
| BEP Business Counselors              | 2                         | 2                                 | 2                                            |
| Rehabilitation Technology Specialist | 3                         | 4                                 | 4                                            |
| Center Instructors                   | 3                         | 4                                 | 4                                            |
| Center Generalist                    | 0                         | 1                                 | 1                                            |

|                                  |    |    |    |
|----------------------------------|----|----|----|
| Rehabilitation Teachers          | 12 | 13 | 13 |
| Temporary Youth Workers (summer) | 3  | 16 | 16 |
| Technology Specialist            | 1  | 1  | 1  |
| Activities Coordinator           | 1  | 1  | 1  |
| Young Adult Counselor            | 0  | 3  | 3  |
| Young Adult Retreat Instructor   | 2  | 3  | 3  |
| Young Adult Retreat Coach        | 1  | 2  | 2  |
| Data Analyst                     | 1  | 1  | 1  |

**D. Ratio of qualified VR counselors to clients:**

1:50

**E. Projected number of individuals to be served in 5 years:**

IDB projects to serve 550 individuals in the next five years. Projections of staff needs in five years based upon current client trends would require the continued employment of ten vocational rehabilitation counselors to maintain the present ratio of one counselor for every 50 to 65 clients. IDB will maintain the present ratio of one counselor for every 50 to 65 cases to assure optimum services to clients. IDB serves all clients that are referred for services, and it is not anticipated that there will be significant increases in the number of clients receiving services.

**2. Data and information on personnel preparation and development, recruitment and retention, and staff development, including the following:**

A. A list of the institutions of higher education in the State that are preparing VR professionals, by type of program; the number of students enrolled at each of those institutions, broken down by type of program; and the number of students who graduated during the prior year from each of those institutions with certification or licensure, or with the credentials for certification or licensure, broken down by the personnel category for which they have received, or have the credentials to receive, certification or licensure.

| Institute of Higher Education | Type of Program | No. of Students Enrolled | No. of Prior Year Graduates |
|-------------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|
|-------------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|

|                    |                              |    |   |
|--------------------|------------------------------|----|---|
| Drake University   | Rehabilitation Counseling MA | 18 | 3 |
| University of Iowa | Rehabilitation Counseling MA | 18 | 9 |

The University of Iowa identified that the State made the strategic unilateral decision not to fulfill the obligations of the RSA Long Term Training Grant in 2024 and 2025. Due to certain training opportunities no longer being provided through some state partners, they have ended the Long-Term Training Grant to train Qualified Rehabilitation Counselors for employment in State Services. The future program curricula will reflect clinical careers rather than careers in employment services.

B. The VR agency’s plan for recruitment, preparation and retention of qualified personnel, which addresses the current and projected needs for qualified personnel; and the coordination and facilitation of efforts between the VR agency and institutions of higher education and professional associations to recruit, prepare, and retain personnel who are qualified, including personnel from minority backgrounds and personnel who are individuals with disabilities.

The Department’s plan for recruitment and training of qualified personnel is based on the highest standards in the state for VR counselors serving individuals who are blind or have low vision.

The Department actively recruits individuals who are blind or have a disability, and persons from minority backgrounds. Recruitment efforts include employment announcements posted on Iowa’s state employment opportunities web site; promotion of experienced and qualified personnel from within the agency, including personnel who are blind; and participation in internship opportunities for students of rehabilitation counseling and placement.

IDB identified a critical need in hiring rehabilitation technology specialists, rehabilitation instructors and a DeafBlind specialist. IDB plans to explore the apprenticeship model as a strategy to address the critical hiring need of rehabilitation technology specialists, rehabilitation instructors, counselors and other key positions. Through this strategy, IDB will explore opportunities with state postsecondary programs to develop the necessary training and curriculum to prepare individuals to work in key IDB positions. IDB will also explore a “Grow our Own” strategy. Through this strategy, we plan to encourage and support existing clients to pursue a master’s degree in Rehabilitation Teaching,

Rehabilitation Counseling, Assistive Technology Instruction and other key areas with an intent to be able to fill critical positions at IDB.

The Department's plan for retention of qualified personnel includes ongoing training opportunities for all staff; provision and support of assistive technology for staff who are blind or have disabilities; encouragement and support for personnel desiring advanced degrees; and opportunities for advancement within the department. The Department does not discriminate in any way in its recruitment and hiring practices or in its administration and supervision practices against individuals who are from minority backgrounds or who have disabilities.

C. Description of staff development policies, procedures, and activities that ensure all personnel employed by the VR agency receive appropriate and adequate training and continuing education for professionals and paraprofessionals:

- i. Particularly with respect to assessment, vocational counseling, job placement, and rehabilitation technology, including training implemented in coordination with entities carrying out State programs under section 4 of the Assistive Technology Act of 1998; and*
- ii. Procedures for the acquisition and dissemination of significant knowledge from research and other sources to VR agency professionals and paraprofessionals and for providing training regarding the amendments to the Rehabilitation Act made by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.*

#### Staff Training & Continuing Education Policy (Updated and Approved 9/2023)

Because providing quality services to blind Iowans is a priority of the Iowa Department for the Blind, we are committed to staff training and continuing education. IDB provides staff with additional education and training opportunities to ensure that they can work effectively with individuals who are blind and to assist them in their goals to achieve competitive integrated employment. All IDB staff participate in an immersion training through the Iowa Blindness Empowerment and Independence Center in which staff can learn alternative skills of blindness in addition to developing an awareness and confidence in the nonvisual skills and assistive technology available to clients. In addition to nonvisual skills training, staff participate in philosophy training to assist them in understanding the needs of individuals who are blind or have low vision. This training assists staff in understanding the training needs of clients who are blind, have low vision, are DeafBlind, in addition to clients who experience barriers or limitations due to additional disabilities.

All IDB staff will participate in staff training that consists of blindness skills and philosophy training as outlined in section 1, a new staff seminar and shadowing

of staff in different work units as outlined in section 2, and continuing education as outlined in section 3.

Staff members who do not successfully complete these requirements will not be retained beyond their probationary period. Continuing education requirements will be included in staff member's IPPE and completion of continuing education requirements will be required to meet expectations.

### Section 1: Blindness Skills & Philosophy Training

All new, permanent full-time staff hired by IDB will complete adjustment to blindness immersion training in our Blindness Empowerment and Independence Center. base Requirements for this training are as follows:

#### Indirect Staff

- Actively participate in 20 business classes.
- Actively participate in 1 confidence building activity.
- Make a very small project in Industrial Arts such as a pen holder, phone stand, cutting board, picture frame, etc.
- Achieve other milestones as specified in individual goal document.

#### Direct Staff

- Actively participate in a minimum of 55 business classes.
- Actively participate in 3 confidence building activities.
- Complete a small Industrial arts project such as an end table, spice rack, etc.
- Achieve other milestones as specified in individual goal document.

At the start of staff training, the staff member, supervisor, and Center Program Administrator will meet and create an individualized goal document based on the staff member's experience and job duties. Goals may be altered by the group as needed. It is expected that an indirect staff member will complete this training in approximately four weeks and a direct staff person will take approximately 12-16 weeks to achieve the needed level of competency to be successful in their jobs.

Some examples of goals that may be included in the goal document for an indirect staff member include but are not limited to:

- Write the braille alphabet on a braille writer.
- Complete a solo travel assignment that contains at least two crossings of a lighted intersection.

- Independently prepare French toast or grilled cheese on a stove top, a baked item or casserole in the oven, thoroughly clean their kitchen including washing dishes and cleaning the floor, and prepare a soup or pasta that requires chopping meat and/or vegetables.
- Send an email using Voiceover on an iPhone.

Examples of goals that may be included on a direct staff member's goal document may include but are not limited to:

- Write one page of contracted braille with 90% accuracy using a slate and stylus.
- Type and edit a one-page document using a computer with a screen reader.
- Complete a solo bus travel route.
- Prepare and serve a three-course meal for at least 6 guests.

The Director may alter, defer, or waive this requirement based on previous structured discovery training, experience, or operational needs.

Performance during staff training will be evaluated as follows:

1. How has this staff member demonstrated a positive attitude toward blindness? Give concrete examples.
2. Has the staff member treated blind students and colleagues as equals? Give examples.
3. Has the staff member overcome misconceptions regarding the capabilities of blind people and the hierarchy of sight? Give examples.
4. Has the staff member met goals and achieved milestones that they were proud of under learning shades? Give examples.

## Section 2: New Staff Seminar & Shadowing of Staff

New Staff Seminar will consist of 30 hours of small group classes covering the following topics:

- Agency history
- Consumer organizations
- Discussion of agency mission and philosophy
- Agency structure and purposes of each division

All new staff must spend at least one-half day with each of the following staff members as part of their new staff training:

- Library staff
- VR counselor
- VR teacher
- IL teacher
- Rehabilitation technology specialist

In addition, each new employee is expected to do each of the following before the completion of the probationary period:

- Attend at least one meeting of a local chapter of each of the consumer organizations
- Attend one meeting of the Iowa Commission for the Blind Board Section 3: Continuing Education Requirements

All IDB staff will, as part of their annual evaluation and IPPE development, meet with their supervisor to discuss their particular training needs for the coming year. The staff member and their supervisor will jointly create training completion expectations and those expectations will be written into the IPPE goals and evaluated in the next annual evaluation.

#### Indirect Staff Requirements

All IDB staff will complete the following trainings annually:

- Cyber security training
- Sexual harassment and violence free workplace training

All IDB staff will complete the following trainings during their probationary period and maintain certifications:

- Mandatory reporter training
- Mental health first aid training

At least one volunteer from each work unit will obtain and maintain first aid certification.

At least two volunteers who work on each floor of the building will participate in quarterly evacuation chair training.

All indirect service staff will be required to complete the following continuing education requirements each year:

- Attend and actively participate in at least 5 business classes or all Agency Philosophy Discussions.

## Direct Service Staff and Supervisors Requirements

All direct service staff will be required to complete the following continuing education requirements each year:

- Attend and actively participate in at least 5 business classes or all Agency Philosophy Discussions.
- Attend at least one meeting of each consumer group. This can be a local chapter or state convention.
- Attend at least one meeting of a local support group.

## Instructor Requirements

All instructors will be required to complete continuing education training every five years. They will attend center classes for up to one month until they are able to demonstrate the tasks below while wearing learning shades.

- Write one page of contracted braille with 90% accuracy using a slate and stylus.
- Orally recall or write all characters in the contracted braille code with 95% accuracy.
- Type and edit a one-page document using a computer with a screen reader.
- Complete a solo bus travel route.
- Complete one drop off of at least one-mile distance.
- Complete a small industrial arts project requiring the use of at least 3 different stationary machines.
- Prepare and serve a three-course meal for at least 6 guests.

Instructors may test out of class participation if they can complete the requirements without any additional training.

IDB also participates in additional collaborations such as the Brain Injury Advisory Council, the Iowa Coalition for Integration and Employment, and the DeafBlind Advisory Team to further understand the functional limitations and vocational implications of the functional limitations on employment. Counselors attend the Iowa Workforce Development business engagement meetings at least monthly to learn about employer needs in that specific territory. Counselors maintain a professional relationship with their local partners such as IVRS and IWD which has resulted in learning about employer needs and labor market in their area as well. IDB is committed to providing staff with training opportunities to support the Department's mission and goals to assist clients with achieving



successful competitive integrated employment. To continue to offer these opportunities and in effort to increase the knowledge and skills of our IDB staff, IDB has committed to partner with the Vocational Rehabilitation Technical Assistance Center for Quality Employment. Through this partnership, counselors and other IDB staff and community rehabilitation partners receive training and technical assistance for a variety of areas to include employer outreach, employer support, serving Veterans, work-based learning and on- the-job training, customized training, customized employment, self-employment and supported employment services. IDB began this partnership in 2022.

The Department actively assesses the training needs of all employees. The employee performance evaluation document is used to review an employee's performance and to identify training needs. In addition to annual individual performance reviews, the Department surveys the staff annually to determine the training or resources they require to perform their duties more efficiently and effectively. Vocational rehabilitation employees have participated in the following training activities: Quarterly in-service training activities focus on improving knowledge and understanding of rehabilitation topics, development and demonstration of new skill levels and organizational change projects that enhance achievement of employment outcomes for blind individuals. Performance and Development Solutions (PDS) courses are provided by the Iowa Department of Administrative Services / Human Resources Enterprise on a wide range of general topics and transferable job skills. In-house training in classroom settings and one-on-one training is made available to all employees depending upon the need.

Retention of qualified personnel is addressed through CEU credit for staff training, as well as opportunities for expanding skills and knowledge in a variety of areas. Leadership development and capacity-building opportunities are offered through personnel development seminars available to staff including management certifications and continuous quality improvement certification courses. Some management employees have attended the National Rehabilitation Leadership Institute. Employees are encouraged to participate in professional organizations such as the National Rehabilitation Association and National Council of State Agencies for the Blind in leadership roles.

Employees acquire information about current research by participating in professional conferences, attending training on a variety of topics, and through professional publications, such as the Journal of Rehabilitation, the Journal of Visual Impairments and Blindness, and Institute on Rehabilitation Issues (IRI) publications. Employees are asked to submit reports on conference findings to

the Department's training grant administrator and their supervisor. These reports include summaries of significant issues or findings, assessments of the conference's information to their work, and an evaluation of the value of conference to other staff. Further, employees who have attended conferences or training sessions provide updates on results of research or new information to others at the in-service meetings.

*3. Description of VR agency policies and procedures for the establishment and maintenance of personnel standards consistent with section 101(a)(7)(B) to ensure that VR agency professional and paraprofessional personnel are adequately trained and prepared, including—*

A. Standards that are consistent with any national or State-approved or -recognized certification, licensing, registration, or other comparable requirements that apply to the profession or discipline in which such personnel are providing VR services; and

B. The establishment and maintenance of education and experience requirements, in accordance with section 101(a)(7)(B)(ii) of the Rehabilitation Act, to ensure that the personnel have a 21st century understanding of the evolving labor force and the needs of individuals with disabilities.

The Department for the Blind has defined and implemented personnel standards for vocational rehabilitation counselors based on state approved and recognized certification requirements promulgated under the Iowa Administrative Procedure Act. The following standards for VR counselors are based on the highest entry-level degree needed under the existing state certification requirements codified in subrule 111-21, Iowa Administrative Code: 2.1(2) service specialist for the blind 2 and senior service specialist for the blind 1 (vocational rehabilitation counselor). Certification shall be required of all vocational rehabilitation counselors employed by the Department:

- a. At the time of hire into the position, an individual holding at least a bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university and one year of work experience shall be granted provisional certification. Exceptions regarding education and experience can only be made by the Commission for the Blind upon the recommendation of the director. Provisional certification shall be recognized for a maximum period of 18 months.
- b. An individual may obtain full certification as a vocational rehabilitation counselor by demonstrating competency in the following areas: 1. Knowledge, understanding, and implementation of the Department's positive philosophy of blindness. 2. Knowledge of the Department's programs. 3. Skills in career planning and development. 4. Knowledge of

placement techniques and practices. 5. Knowledge of occupational information, job site evaluation, and job analysis. 6. Knowledge and development of alternative techniques of blindness. 7. Knowledge of rehabilitation technology services. 8. Knowledge of disability and related issues. 9. Advocacy. 10. Case management. 11. Adjustment to blindness counseling. 12. Assessment of consumer needs. 13. Public education and outreach. 14. Teamwork and problem solving.

- c. An individual holding at least a bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university, who has been employed by the Department as a service specialist for the blind 2 or senior service specialist for the blind 1 (vocational rehabilitation counselor) for a minimum of six months on the date this rule is finalized, shall be considered to be a fully certified vocational rehabilitation counselor, as long as the individual maintains unbroken employment with the Department in that classification.

These standards, ensure that the professional personnel needed within the Department to carry out the vocational rehabilitation program are appropriately and adequately prepared and trained. Professional staff at the Department meet, or are working toward meeting, these standards. To maintain standards, personnel must participate in ongoing training through the Department.

Evaluation of recruitment practices is based on the Department's ability to hire and train qualified personnel. These practices will continue to be evaluated as additional hiring becomes necessary. As a general practice, the Department does not hire individuals who do not meet the established personnel standards for the services specialist for the blind 2 or senior service specialist for the blind 1 (vocational rehabilitation counselor) positions. In the event an individual is hired who does not meet the Department's personnel standards that individual would be expected to meet those standards within an established timeframe. The Department would devise a schedule by which the individual must report on progress and by which time he or she must meet the standards. Failure to meet the standards within the established timeframe would result in termination or reassignment.

*4. Method(s) the VR agency uses to ensure that personnel are able to communicate in appropriate modes of communication with or in the native language of applicants or eligible individuals who have limited English speaking ability.*

The Department contracts with qualified interpreters for individuals who are not proficient in English or who use sign language. Employees are routinely counseled on how to locate qualified interpreters. Independent contracts are

established as needed to obtain services from individuals who can communicate in the native language of applicants or eligible individuals who have limited English speaking ability or in appropriate modes of communication with applicants or eligible individuals. Contracts have included but are not limited to the following languages: American Sign Language, including Tactile Signing for DeafBlind individuals, Spanish, Vietnamese, Burmese, Swahili and others according to the needs of applicants and eligible individuals. IDB, through the work of our vocational rehabilitation program administrator and the Iowa Client Assistance Program, has made available an orientation video for outreach purposes which is completed in American Sign Language.

The Department's Instructional Materials Center staff provide individuals, educators, partners, employers and businesses with information and resources to meet accessibility needs through trainings and accessible materials. Training materials are provided in the eligible individual's preferred means of communication, including Braille, large print, or electronic formats. Braille is an integral part of the training that all IDB's professional personnel receive.

*5. As appropriate, describe the procedures and activities to coordinate the designated State unit's comprehensive system of personnel development with personnel development under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.*

IDB does not have formal procedures relating to the coordination of comprehensive system of personnel development activities with IDEA personnel. The Department pursues the following activities to coordinate the system of personnel development with personnel development activities under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA):

Maintains an interagency agreement with the Iowa Department of Education (DE) which defines the roles and responsibilities of both agencies regarding transition activities. Through this agreement, the agencies provide technical assistance and training for staff providing services to students who are blind or have low vision.

The Iowa Department for the Blind (IDB), the Iowa Educational Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired (IESBVI), and the Iowa Department of Education (DE) work collaboratively under the Statewide System for Vision Services. This system ensures collaboration in service delivery to children and youth who are blind or have low vision. Under this system, employees exchange information about their services and approaches to create effective working relationships. A standard referral procedure was developed because of this collaboration.

Area education agencies (AEAs) personnel and local school district personnel participate in developing individual education plans (IEPs) for students with disabilities and in providing the specialized services those students require. Itinerant teachers of the visually impaired (TVI) provide vision-related IEP services to those students who are blind or have low vision. The TVI must refer all students who are receiving vision-related services to one of two statewide vision system's regional directors prior to the development of the student's transition IEP or no later than age fourteen. Through this collaborative effort and referral system, the Department can effectively coordinate its services with IESBVI and the AEAs to provide seamless transition from school, where all services are provided by the educational agencies (AEAs and local school districts), to vocational rehabilitation. IDB's VR counselors participate in IEP meetings. Pre- Employment Transition Services are made available to potentially eligible students and eligible students with disabilities. IESBVI and IDB collaborate on several programs throughout the year to meet the needs of students who are blind or have low vision.

#### **j. Coordination with Education Officials.**

*1. Describe plans, policies, and procedures for coordination between the designated State agency and education officials responsible for the public education of students with disabilities, that are designed to facilitate the transition of the students with disabilities from the receipt of educational services in school to the receipt of vocational rehabilitation services, including pre-employment transition services.*

The Iowa Department for the Blind (IDB), the Iowa Braille School (Iowa Educational Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired — IESBVI), and the Iowa Department of Education (DE) have worked collaboratively through the Statewide System for Vision Services. This system ensures collaboration in service delivery to students who are blind, DeafBlind or have low vision, including students with the most significant disabilities. Through this system, staff can exchange information about their services and approaches to create effective working relationships which will enhance educational and transition outcomes.

The IDB collaborates with the DE, local education agencies, and area education agencies, in addition to IESBVI to provide the five pre-employment transition services required activities to students with documented disabilities (ages 14-21) as defined under §361.5(c)(51), based on individual need, once a student requests or is recommended for one or more pre-employment transition services. In the state of Iowa, pre-employment transition services are provided to a student with a disability who meets all of the following criteria: 1) is at least

14 years old but no more than 21 years of age (has not yet reached 22nd birthday); has a disability that would make them eligible or potentially eligible for IDB's vocational rehabilitation services and has submitted the required qualifying medical documentation signed by a medical provider or a copy of an IEP or 504 plan; and has documentation confirming enrollment as a student in an educational program. Section j.2 outlines the scope of the interagency agreement between IDB and the Department of Education.

IDB maintains a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services (IVRS). Through this MOU, IDB and IVRS strive to minimize duplication of effort and maximize the use of both agencies' resources and facilities in serving individuals with disabilities. The MOU states that Vocational Rehabilitation (Title IV) serves individuals with disabilities who have an impediment to employment, including students who are considered potentially eligible. IDB serves those individuals who have a visual disability that may constitute to that individual a substantial impediment to employment. IVRS serves all other individuals with disabling conditions that meet the eligibility criteria. In cases where substantial impediments to employment are caused by both the visual impairment and any other presenting disability, then the case is served by IDB. Whereas IVRS serves individuals who are deaf, IDB serves those who are determined to be deafblind. If a person is found to have a visual impairment or has a condition that will lead to progressive and/or rapid vision deterioration, that person is served by IDB. If an individual being served by IVRS experiences vision loss that constitutes visual impairment, IVRS will refer that individual to IDB. IVRS and IDB staff will coordinate a warm hand off, if applicable, and smooth transition of the case and ensure no interruption in services.

The MOU with IVRS further states that when an individual applying for services from IVRS has a visual impairment, IVR staff will contact the IDB Intake Specialist or complete the online referral form within five business days. IDB staff will meet with the individual to determine eligibility. When the individual applying for services from IDB does not have a qualifying visual impairment but has other impairments that may make the individual eligible for vocational rehabilitation services, IDB staff will contact the local IVRS office or complete the online application form with the individual within five business days after which IVRS staff will meet with the individual to determine eligibility.

Within the MOU, IDB and IVRS have agreed that IDB is able to submit referrals to programs contracted through IVRS when the individual meets the requirements defined within the specific contract. When IDB determines that an

IDB client would benefit from participation in an IVRS contracted program, IDB will compensate IVRS for services provided. IVRS will invoice IDB for all costs incurred for each individual participating and will provide generated reports to IDB outlining services rendered by contracted staff. IDB provides IVRS with demographic information, eligibility documentation, and Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) Agreement and/or a copy of the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) for each individual prior to enrollment in the contracted program. If services are not identified on the Pre-ETS Agreement and/or IPE, the individual is not able to participate as IDB is required to direct the allowable services for each individual. IDB then works with the contracted staff to provide services to the participating student. For these contracted programs for high school students, IDB clients must be enrolled in the identified school district in order to be eligible to participate in the program. Any accommodations required for the student to participate in the Pre-ETS activities are provided or funded by IDB. Both agencies provide a copy of the MOU on their websites and per request.

IDB collaborates with stakeholders such as educators, parents, and other service providers on an ongoing basis, to assure that students receive high quality education and rehabilitation services. IDB assists stakeholders in the transition process to coordinate and improve transition services and to increase pre-employment transition services throughout Iowa, especially in unserved and underserved areas of the state. IDB collaborates with individuals and entities statewide to provide services that meet the transition needs of students who are blind, DeafBlind, or have low vision with and without additional disabilities. IDB connects with the IESBVI administrators; the Iowa Department of Education; the ASK Family Resource Center; the Special Education Advisory Panel; the DeafBlind Advisory Committee; teachers of the visually impaired (TVI); orientation and mobility specialists (OMS); educators in local school districts and area education agencies; Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services (IVRS) and students and their families or guardians. Finally, the IDB plans to work closely with local education agencies throughout Iowa to improve and increase the delivery of pre-employment transition services to students with disabilities. This will be accomplished primarily through VR counselors who serve the LEAs within their service territories.

The IDB Vocational Rehabilitation program administrator is a member of the State of Iowa's Special Education Advisory Panel and the DeafBlind Advisory Committee which informs Iowa's DeafBlind Project. Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors and Rehabilitation Teachers, Rehabilitation Technology Specialists,

Instructional Materials Center staff and other IDB employees reach out to Teachers of the Visually Impaired (TVIs), Orientation and Mobility Specialists (OMS), and other teachers and school personnel with a focus of building partnerships and collaboration. IDB staff connect with TVIs and OMS in group settings, present at IESBVI training events, and communicate on an individual basis with educators.

In addition, IDB employees are active team members at Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings at school districts throughout Iowa. IDB staff attend IEP meetings at the request of the team and consult with special education teachers to help them come up with solutions to classroom access barriers. They provide information about the IDB so that students and their families understand the vocational rehabilitation process and can make informed choices when applying for vocational rehabilitation services and making decisions about training and career options following high school completion. They also provide information about IDB programs and resources that can benefit students' learning both during high school and after. IDB vocational rehabilitation counselors and teachers also support potentially eligible students and eligible students with disabilities and their IEP teams with consultation and training services.

IDB staff participate regularly with Vision Discipline meetings in each area education agency region. At these meetings stakeholders review common caseloads, discuss common potentially eligible and eligible students with disabilities and coordinate services. Ongoing collaboration and communication amongst IDB, IESBVI, local educators, parents, and students are important strengths to the overall transition efforts in Iowa. IDB staff and administrators will continue a process of training educators and service providers about the services the Department provides to students who are blind or have low vision.

Referrals. The commitment to collaboration and partnership resulted in the development of a standard statewide referral procedure. In Iowa, Area Education Agencies (AEAs) coordinate services for students with disabilities. AEA personnel and local school district personnel participate in developing Individual Education Plans (IEPs) for students with disabilities and in providing the specialized services those students require. Itinerant Teachers of the Visually Impaired (TVI) provide vision-related IEP services to those students who are blind or low vision. TVIs submit completed statewide referral forms for all students, starting as early as age 14 and who are receiving vision-related services. Upon the receipt of a referral form, the IDB intake specialist will follow up with the student and his/her family to gather additional information and will then assign the student to a VR counselor.



IDB staff encourage transition-age youth and their families to apply for services as early as age 14 as established by IDEA and the Rehabilitation Act. Once an application is complete, eligibility must be determined by the VR Counselor within 60 days. The next step is to partner with the eligible student to determine his/her goals and develop a plan (IPE — Individual Plan for Employment) identifying the services needed to reach those goals. The plan is developed within 90 days of eligibility determination for VR services. The Department coordinates its services with the Iowa Educational Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired (IESBVI), AEAs and LEAs to provide seamless transition from school, where all services are provided by the educational agencies (AEAs and local school districts), to vocational rehabilitation.

VR counselors coordinate with other members of the IEP team to ensure that students participate in work-based learning experiences and paid work experiences prior to high school graduation. Experiences take place in integrated settings in the community; settings that are in segregated environments are discouraged and avoided.

IDB offers a wide range and expanding menu of assistive technology services to transition age youth and educators of transition age youth. IDB technology specialists provide technology assessments and one-on-one and small group assistive technology training to transition age youth at school or at home. VR counselors and teachers consult with families and educators on strategies for helping students increase their independence and take a more active role in their education. VR teachers provide one-on-one and small-group instruction in areas including braille, orientation and mobility and independent living skills. VR counselors and teachers also provide instruction in job readiness skills such as interview techniques and money management. IDB counseling staff works with Regional Workforce Investment Boards and Transition Advisory Committees to inform them of the program and to develop work experience and career exploration opportunities for the transition students in integrated settings.

IDB's Instructional Materials Center (IMC) within the Iowa Library for the Blind and Print Disabled serves students who require accessible educational materials by providing students from pre- kindergarten through college educational materials in alternative formats. As an Authorized Media Producer (AMP) in Iowa for braille, large print, audio and electronic text formats, the IMC has resources to provide timely, quality, and cost-effective materials to students and schools. Itinerant vision teachers or other school personnel contact the IMC with requests for materials for students in grades Pre-K-12 and post-secondary programs. Both students and educational staff have access to the library's

collection. The IMC and library has created an online portal for schools to order. This interface makes searching for existing accessible learning materials faster and easier. It also encourages teachers to incorporate universal design principals into lesson planning to better include blind and low vision students in classroom activities. Library staff work with teachers, TVIs, paras and LEA staff to improve access to learning management systems for students.

Library staff partner with agencies such as the Governor's STEM Council to create opportunities for blind and low vision youth to actively engage in STEM learning and consider STEM related occupations. Many blind and low vision youth are passively and/or actively discouraged from considering STEM related professions, however, blind people can and do successfully work in these high demand fields. Exposure to accessible STEM curricula and activities will help blind youth build self-confidence and expand their view of what careers are possible. Because of this, STEM activities have been integrated into the youth library space we have created and are continually refreshed and updated. The youth library encourages braille literacy and inspires a passion for reading and learning. A recent study has shown that daily use of braille is one of the three significant factors that lead to employment success in blind adults. IDB's Youth Services Librarian creates programming that helps blind and low vision youth to build this crucial competency as well as increase access and inclusion of blind and low vision youth in library programming in their local libraries. These programs have included a monthly STEM Makerspace program, Braille Babies for children birth to 4 years, an afterschool program, and summer reading programs.

IDB has a contract with the Iowa Department of Education to assist Iowa in meeting the NIMAS (National Instructional Materials Accessibility Standards) requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. The library and Instructional Materials Center (IMC) is an authorized media producer (AMP) in Iowa. Staff produces and acquires educational materials in alternative formats for students and school districts.

IDB also provides accessible educational materials directly to school districts through MoUs. The MoU outlines the roles and responsibilities of the school and the library/IMC as well as the cost assistance that IDB is able to provide to school districts when materials are needed. The library/IMC fulfill material requests from schools by using materials from the library collection, requesting quotes and assigning work within its large network of transcription vendors or producing materials in-house by staff who are certified braille transcribers.

Library staff also provides training to educators and other school personnel regarding accessible formats, Braille and use of accessible technology for reading. Through its Braille Transcriber Course and other trainings it provides resources and instruction in braille transcription, universal design and accessibility with a focus on braille literacy.

IDB has an intergovernmental agreement with Iowa Health and Human Services (HHS) for the use of services provided by IDB in order to take reasonable steps to provide materials in accessible formats to clients with disabilities. HHS can request materials to be produced for clients in accessible formats through the library and Instructional Materials Center (IMC). The IMC will provide and/or produce materials for clients with print disabilities.

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act requires IDB and other vocational rehabilitation agencies to provide five Pre-Employment Transition Services. The services include job exploration-counseling, work-based learning and work experiences in competitive integrated employment, counseling on post-secondary educational opportunities, workplace readiness training, and instruction in self-advocacy. The expected outcome of all IDB sponsored programs is employment in integrated competitive employment.

IDB-Sponsored Programs. The Iowa Department for the Blind LEAP Program provides meaningful and high-quality vocational rehabilitation services to blind and low vision transition-age youth from across the state. The Program provides many opportunities for blind and low vision Iowa youth to develop the confidence and skills necessary for seamless transitions to life after high school. The focus of LEAP is to motivate and assist youth to learn skills for independence and workplace readiness; explore careers and educational opportunities; and learn to advocate and take charge of their future.

The Summer LEAP Academy is a nine-week residential program that provides training to blind and low vision youth in independent living skills and non-visual techniques in the areas of technology, cane travel, Braille, home and personal management, career exploration and money management. There is a focus on self-advocacy and other life skills as well as job readiness and career-related topics. In addition to the classes, students participate in fun and challenging activities to develop positive attitudes about blindness and equip them with the confidence to believe in themselves and their abilities. These activities take place around the state in order to better give students opportunities to try new activities, learn new skills, and self-advocate in new environments.

IDB LEAP Weekend Retreats (Friday evenings through Sunday afternoons) are held six times per school year around the state of Iowa. Blind and low vision high school students from across Iowa participate in the theme-based retreats and work on building disability-related skills as well as skills in areas such as job readiness, job interviewing, communication, orientation and mobility, technology, teamwork, time-management, social behavior, advocacy, peer interaction, problem solving, etc. The retreats also provide a means for students to step out of their comfort zones to increase confidence and positive attitudes about blindness.

The Iowa Regional Braille Challenge is an annual event sponsored the Braille Institute of America and hosted by the IDB. It provides opportunities for students in grades 1 to 12+ to test their Braille skills in reading, writing, spelling and comprehension. Top finishers in the various age brackets may have the opportunity to advance to a national competition. The Challenge brings students and families together from across the state of Iowa where new connections and friends are made every year. The competition inspires many blind and low vision students to work to improve their Braille skills. Program staff take this opportunity to provide outreach and training to parents, students, and support systems about the importance of students developing workplace readiness, self-advocacy and blindness skills.

*2. Describe the current status and scope of the formal interagency agreement between the VR agency and the State educational agency. Consistent with the requirements of the formal interagency agreement pursuant to 34 C.F.R. § 361.22(b), provide, at a minimum, the following information about the agreement:*

A. Consultation and technical assistance, which may be provided using alternative means for meeting participation (such as video conferences and conference calls), to assist educational agencies in planning for the transition of students with disabilities from school to post-school activities, including pre-employment transition services and other vocational rehabilitation services;

B. Transition planning by personnel of the designated State agency and educational agency personnel for students with disabilities that facilitates the development and implementation of their individualized education programs (IEPs) under Section 614(d) of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act;

C. The roles and responsibilities, including financial responsibilities, of each agency, including provisions for determining State lead agencies and qualified personnel responsible for transition services and pre-employment transition services;

D. The roles and responsibilities, including financial responsibilities, of each agency, including provisions for determining State lead agencies and qualified personnel responsible for transition services and pre-employment transition services;

E. Coordination necessary to satisfy documentation requirements set forth in 34 C.F.R. part 397 regarding students and youth with disabilities who are seeking subminimum wage employment; and

F. Assurance that, in accordance with 34 C.F.R. § 397.31, neither the SEA nor the local educational agency will enter into a contract or other arrangement with an entity, as defined in 34 C.F.R. § 397.5(d), for the purpose of operating a program under which youth with a disability is engaged in work compensated at a subminimum wage.

The Department has a formal interagency agreement with the Iowa Department of Education (DE). Both agencies collaborated to develop the interagency agreement and provide training to staff. Within the agreement, IDB outlines the provision of consultation and technical assistance to assist in planning for the transition of students with disabilities from school to post-school activities in the following ways:

- Providing consultation and technical assistance to assist local education agencies (LEAs) and area education agencies (AEAs) in planning for the transition of students with disabilities from school to post-school

activities, including vocational rehabilitation services, IDB, along with the DE and local school districts assist in planning for the transition of students who are blind or have vision loss from school to post-school employment-related activities, pre-employment transitions services, competitive, integrated employment. IDB provide consultation and technical assistance to the DE and AEA's to assist in transition planning for students who are blind or have vision loss from school to post-secondary employment or education-related activities, pre-employment transition services, and competitive, integrated employment. The consultations and technical assistance provided by the IDB can be provided through alternative means, such as conference calls, video conferences as well as shared in-person training opportunities. Examples include sharing conference opportunities, being strong partners in delivery of technical assistance through recognized partnerships.

- IDB staff attend and participate in regularly scheduled vision discipline meetings in each of the area education agencies, transition planning meetings, and department meetings when invited and as resources are available. Students, clients and other stakeholders are also encouraged to contact the IDB staff person they are working with to directly request consultation or technical assistance services.
- Upon request from school district staff, and with the parent's, guardian's or adult student's written consent, IDB staff are able to distribute general information related to services, provide consultation and TA, attend transition fairs and other forums to provide information about Pre-ETS and VR services to parents and school personnel, attend IEP meetings, provide pre-employment transition services, and provide referrals to VR services.
- IDB staff provide support for transition planning to LEAs, AEAs, and stakeholders for students with disabilities including the development and completion of their individualized education programs (IEPs) under section 614(d) of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, IDB staff work with individuals to develop an individualized plan for employment (IPE) for each IDB eligible individual prior to the individual's graduation. The individual, parents, educators and IDB staff collaborate so that the goals of the IEP and the IPE will be consistent with each other. The individual's preferences, interests and skills serve as the basis of employment goals.

- Coordination to ensure that transition services are provided by qualified personnel as defined in Iowa Administrative Code 281-41.8(256B, 34 CFR 300), Iowa Administrative Code 111-2.1(216(B)), and other relevant state requirements.
- IDB provides support for early outreach to an identification of students with disabilities who are in need of transition services. Outreach efforts include a description of the purpose of the vocational rehabilitation program, eligibility requirements, application procedures, and the scope of services that may be provided to eligible individuals. The DE, LEA, IESBVI and other stakeholders all assist in the dissemination of written materials developed by IDB. Outreach to students who are blind or have low vision occurs as early as possible during the transition planning process. The Department continues to review and revise agreements with the Iowa Department of Education to develop procedures and mechanisms to meet the needs of students who are blind or have low vision.

All of the Iowa Department for the Blind's programs for students who are blind or have low vision, including students who are DeafBlind and those who have the most significant disabilities, continue to be reviewed in efforts to meet the needs of current clients and potentially eligible individuals. Programs are designed so that all youth who want to attend are able to attend, including providing necessary supports to allow equal opportunity and engagement in activities.

Transition Planning: School personnel make every effort to provide adequate notice to IDB VR counselors regarding upcoming IEP meetings for potentially eligible and eligible students with disabilities. VR counselors make every effort to attend all IEP meetings for their clients and potentially eligible students. At the IEP meetings, VR counselors and school personnel work together to identify necessary services that will both help the student with a disability complete their secondary education goals and also prepare the students for post-secondary work or school. As a result of these coordination efforts, IDB develops, aligns or revises an Individualized Plan for Employment to address the needs of each transition student. VR counselors coordinate with other members of the IEP team to ensure that students participate in work-based learning experiences and paid work experiences prior to high school graduation. Experiences take place in integrated settings in the community; settings that are in segregated environments are discouraged and avoided.

Roles and Responsibilities: IDB and the Iowa Department of Education both share responsibility to prepare students with disabilities for successful community employment. A Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) defines the responsibilities of both departments. This MoA is designed to facilitate the integration and coordination of transition services from school to post-secondary education and/or employment for individuals with disabilities who are enrolled in secondary education, and are eligible or potentially eligible to receive vocational rehabilitation services.

Both departments collaborate in providing consultation and technical assistance to local education agencies and area education agencies in planning for the transition of students with disabilities from school to post-school activities, including vocational rehabilitation services. The departments collaborate to support transition planning efforts for students with disabilities and ensure that the transition services provided are done by qualified personnel. Both entities are responsible for the costs they occur in carrying out the agreement.

The MoA defines the Roles & Responsibilities of both agencies in the following way: The IDB- VR and the DE agree on the following roles and responsibilities of each agency, including provisions for determining State lead agencies and qualified personnel responsible for transition and pre-employment transition services: IDB-VR-Vocational Rehabilitation will serve as the lead agency in Iowa for carrying out Federal and State policies related to the program under the Rehabilitation Act, including:

- Upon request from school district staff, and with the parent's, guardian's or adult student's written consent, distribution of general information related to services, consultation and TA, attend transition fairs and other forums to provide information about pre-employment transition services and VR services to parents and school personnel, attend IEP meetings, provide Pre-employment transition services, provide referrals to VR for services, eligibility determination, IPE development and VR services, pursuant to 34 C.F.R. §300.321(b)(3).
- Accepting referrals of students who are blind or have vision loss during the transition planning process for the provision of pre-employment transition services.
- IDB-VR will consult with school district staff on transition planning to prepare a student who is blind or has vision loss to move from school to work or post-secondary education in accordance with the student's unique needs, strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, capabilities,



interests and abilities and informed choice as determined through the IEP process and provision of pre-employment transition services.

- IDB-VR will provide students who are eligible for vocational rehabilitation with the services necessary and appropriate in order to obtain a successful employment outcome. These services may include assessment, disability related skills training, educational and vocational training, rehabilitation technology, and job seeking skills training and job placement services.
- IDB-VR will use an assessment process to assist a client in developing an individualized plan for employment (IPE) which will prepare the student for competitive integrated employment within 90 days of IDB-VR eligibility determination, unless an appropriate extension is agreed upon by the student, counselor and parent or legal guardian.
- IDB-VR will provide consultation to the LEAs to assist in the identification of eligible and potentially eligible students who are blind or have vision loss and assessment of their individual needs for pre-employment transition services.
- IDB-VR will provide or arrange for the provision of pre-employment transition services to potentially eligible students, and for services required by the IPE goal, when the student has been determined eligible for VR and the services are specific to his/her employment outcome, and are not services customarily provided to the student by the LEA under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).
- IDB-VR will provide information and outreach to parents and/or guardian(s), student/clients regarding VR eligibility, vocational assessment for employment and postsecondary planning and Client Assistance Program (CAP).
- IDB-VR will obtain written consent for the release of confidential information, pursuant to VR policy and procedures, federal and state laws and regulations regarding confidentiality.
- IDB-VR will provide contact information to the schools of VR staff including counselors, employment specialists, rehabilitation technology specialists and rehabilitation teachers.
- IDB-VR will identify a single point of contact who will coordinate transition services for students. This point of contact will be the IDB-VR counselor assigned to the school district.

- IDB-VR will share information to the DE on referrals and employment outcomes of students who are blind or have vision loss as requested and as the law and IDB-VR policies allow.
- IDB-VR will engage with employers to assist in the development of work-based learning opportunities for students who are blind or have vision loss.
- IDB-VR will participate with the DE on joint training of LEAs and VR staff regarding new federal requirements or state identified initiatives as resources allow and mutually agreed upon by entities involved.
- IDB-VR will participate with the DE to provide joint training regarding the role of VR and new regulations/procedures for students with disabilities exiting school to be referred to VR prior to entering subminimum wage work with a 14c certificate holder as resources allow and mutually agreed upon by entities involved.
- IDB-VR will provide auxiliary aids or services for a student with a disability if the device or service is required for the student to access or participate in any of the pre-employment transition services specified in section 113(b) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 CFR 361.48(a)(2) of its implementing regulations, if no other public entity is required to provide such aid or service.

The Iowa Department of Education (DE) serves as the lead agency responsible for assuring that eligible students with disabilities, including students who are blind or have vision loss, receive a free and appropriate public education (FAPE). The DE will provide technical assistance, training, training reference materials regarding WIOA to school districts or AEAs and other stakeholders identified by the DE including parents, families, guardians and students relating to the provision of pre-employment transition services and other transition services to address needs as determined by the DE.

- The DE will share this MoA with DE, AEA, and LEA practitioners in secondary special education.
- Through coordination with the FEP, ASK, and AEA contacts, ongoing outreach, training, and communication will be shared with parents about transition services and opportunities.
- The DE collects data related to Secondary Transition on Indicators 1 (graduation rates), 2 (dropout rates), 13 (IEP components) and 14

(outcomes in education/training and employment). These data, along with tools and resources for continuous improvement, are shared with districts through the IDEA Differentiated Accountability process.

- The DE will collaborate with IDB to provide joint training as needed to ensure AEAs and LEAs understand their responsibilities in serving students who are blind or have vision loss.
- The Department of Education will collaborate with IDB to provide joint training to provide all existing educational assessment and performance information relevant for the determination of eligibility for IDB-VR services.
- For purposes related to section 511, neither the DE nor LEAs will enter into an arrangement with an entity holding a special wage certificate under section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act for the purpose of operating a program under which a youth with a disability, including a youth who is blind or has vision loss, is engaged in work at a subminimum wage.

Outreach: The Department of Education and IDB collaborate to support early outreach to and identification of students with disabilities who are in need of transition services. Outreach efforts include a description of the purpose of the vocational rehabilitation program, eligibility requirements, application procedures, and the scope of services that may be provided to eligible individuals. The DE assists in the dissemination of written materials developed by IDB. Outreach to students who are blind or have low vision occurs as early as possible during the transition planning process.

#### k. Coordination with Employers

In accordance with the requirements in section 101(a)(11)(E) of the Rehabilitation Act, describe how the VR agency will work with employers to identify competitive integrated employment and career exploration opportunities in order to facilitate the provision of VR services; and transition services for youth and students with disabilities, including pre-employment transition services for students with disabilities.

IDB has established a Business Relations and Services Initiative which focuses on engaging with the business community to enable the development of work-based learning for students and youth with disabilities and employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities, including those with the most significant disabilities. As a part of this initiative, IDB policy was created to ensure that IDB staff engage with business and provide our business partners

with services that include but are not limited to: training that communicates the capabilities of individuals who are blind or have low vision; accessibility and accommodation related technical assistance; assistive technology consultation; and quality candidates to meet business hiring needs.

As all IDB staff participate in business engagement, the implementation of this initiative is inclusive of all IDB work units. All IDB staff are expected to use established procedures for documenting business services provided. It is IDB's goal to have an expansive number of employer relationships throughout the state of Iowa in order to increase our ability to provide quality career development, job search and job placement services to our clients. Through the successful development and management of employer relationships, IDB is better able to meet the employment needs of our clients. IDB focuses attention on strategic employer development in order to provide services and benefit to both employers and IDB clients.

IDB recognizes that high quality relationships will increase effectiveness at assisting clients in reaching their employment goals while at the same time meet the needs of employers. IDB VR counselors, rehabilitation technology specialists and other team members develop and deliver services that are based upon the various identified needs of businesses including: applicant screening and assessment, job analyses, job accommodations, on-the-job training plans, and onboarding/training/and follow-up assistance as needed. In addition, delivering diversity awareness trainings and interpreting and explaining policies, rules, regulations, and laws. VR staff are engaged with the WIOA state and local boards, are members of employer groups, and participate in business networking and human resource organizations as available in their area.

The Department Rehabilitation Technology Specialists provide systems accessibility evaluation and equipment setup services for various employers and organizations across the state, such as Nationwide Insurance, Unity Point, State of Iowa agencies, and CenturyLink. We work with clients on the job site and assist during onboarding training sessions. Specialists are able to demonstrate assistive technology, answer questions related to blindness and accommodations, and provide resources and information to assist the employer in meeting their business needs.

The IDB Library provides services to employers by producing accessible materials needed by employers for current staff, onboarding new employees, and the public. Library staff provide employers and businesses with information and resources to assist in meeting their accessibility needs through trainings

and accessible materials. Youth and adults have the opportunity for career exploration through the library's programming focusing on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) careers provides employers and individuals a way to connect and discuss careers in STEM fields. The Library collaborates with the State Library of Iowa to provide training to community public libraries and other stakeholders to assist in serving those within their communities who need accessible materials and information. The Library also provides trainings and self-paced courses on accessible materials, accessible programming, accessible educational materials, and accessible formats to public, educators, school districts and other agencies throughout the state.

IDB connects with employers on a national level through involvement in the National Employment Team (NET). Participation in the NET allows IDB staff to learn about employment opportunities and career development resources, in addition to addressing employer hiring needs, providing information regarding disability awareness, retention assistance, accommodations, and other support services.

Employers and hiring staff are invited to tour the Iowa Department for the Blind; having the opportunity to learn about the resources available, understand the capabilities of persons who are blind, and see demonstrations of potential accommodations and techniques a person who is blind may use in an employment setting. The Orientation Center for the Blind provides prevocational, nonvisual adjustment-to-blindness training to vocational rehabilitation clients. Students participating in this training learn nonvisual techniques, develop a positive attitude about blindness, and build self-confidence. Through tours given by center students, employers see the techniques blind people use for traveling with the long, white cane, taking and reading Braille notes, using computers with speech, cooking, and operating power tools, in addition to being able to ask questions about blindness. Students also participate in a jobs class where they work toward their chosen careers, which can include informational interviewing, job shadowing, submitting applications for employment, determining accommodations for a job and networking with employers in the community.

The Center has added a Specific Skills Track where students who are enrolled in this track will choose the classes that are best for their needs. This means that if a student who has a job and needs to brush up on specific skills may attend the classes that fit their needs and goals. Some students who are working may be able to take a leave of absence such as FMLA for some training in the Center, which may mean they have a very specific timeframe that we will and are happy to accommodate. With guidance requested from the student, the

Center Director, student, and VR Counselor will work together to determine what classes will best fit the needs of the student.

The Business Enterprise Program (BEP) works with eligible individuals who are interested in self-employment to manage their own businesses--operating vending machines, road-side vending sites, and/or snack bars/catering services. Entrepreneurs are provided with a considerable amount of training before they manage a business. This is supplemented by ongoing training to promote independent entrepreneurship in all business areas including hiring and managing employees, inventory control, ordering, pricing, scheduling, maintaining and repairing equipment, payroll, and business accounting.

IDB provides pre-employment transition services to students and youth with disabilities. In addition to working directly with VR counselors, students are able to access these services through summer programs, the Young Adult Transition Programs, weekend retreats, and contracted programs. VR counselors, staff and contracted individuals work with employers across the state to establish work-based learning opportunities, provide career exploration activities, and assist in providing additional employment skills to youth preparing to transition to postsecondary education or employment. IDB staff work with these employers to provide information, training and technical assistance on assistive technology, accommodations additional supports that the students will need to ensure a successful outcome.

The IDB partners with Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services (IVRS) on the Iowa Self Employment program which is available to clients of both agencies. The program assists individuals to explore the option of becoming self-sufficient through the self-employment. Business Development Specialists provide technical assistance to clients to assist them in reaching this goal if determined appropriate. IDB also partners with Iowa Economic Development, Iowa Small Business Development Centers, Iowa Job Centers and the Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE) and the Iowa Workforce Development to provide clients with additional training or assistance in developing their business plans. The Department encourages and assists clients to develop connections and mentors with other individuals, including individuals who are blind or have low vision, who have established successful businesses.

#### **I. Interagency Cooperation with Other Agencies**

**In accordance with the requirements in section 101(a)(11)(C) and (K), describe interagency cooperation with and utilization of the services and facilities of agencies and programs that are not carrying out activities through the**

**statewide workforce development system to develop opportunities for community-based employment in integrated settings, to the greatest extent practicable for the following:**

*1. State programs (designate lead agency(ies) and implementing entity(ies)) carried out under Section 4 of the Assistive Technology Act of 1998;*

IDB has developed a cooperative agreement with state programs carried out under the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Assistive Technology Act. The University of Iowa's Center for Disabilities and Development is the Lead Agency and Easterseals Iowa is the Implementing Entity which operates the statewide assistive technology program for Iowans. This program provides information, referral, short-term and long-term assistive technology loans, assistive technology evaluations, assessments, and demonstrations, along with training and technical assistance for Iowans with disabilities, including Iowan's who are blind or have low vision. IDB will continue to refer individuals to the Easterseals Iowa Assistive Technology Center when services needed are outside of the scope of services IDB can provide. IDB will also continue to collaborate with Easterseals Iowa Assistive Technology Center to provide devices for individuals, including students, with disabilities to try when participating in IDB programs. IDB will continue to collaborate with these programs to provide assistive technology services to clients.

The Iowa Department for the Blind maintains a team of rehabilitation technology specialists who are trained in blindness and low vision assistive technology and provide training, assessment, and purchasing recommendations. The Iowa Department for the Blind also has a team of rehabilitation teachers who provide training in the use of blindness and low vision rehabilitation technology as well as other types of disability related skills training to vocational rehabilitation clients across the state. In addition, IDB has independent living rehabilitation teachers who are trained in assistive technology to assist an individual to meet their independent living needs. IDB does collaborate to provide trainings and events about assistive technology to Iowans who are blind or have low vision, employers, and to trainers of assistive technology devices. The IDB partners with IVRS to ensure clients being served have access to information and training on assistive technologies.

*2. Programs carried out by the Under Secretary for Rural Development of the Department of Agriculture;*

The USDA Rural Development office in Iowa administers business-cooperative, housing, and community programs. These programs provide grants, loans, and technical assistance to rural residents and businesses targeting rural

communities. These programs are aimed at creating or preserving jobs; promoting a clean rural environment; improving access to decent housing and community facilities; and ensuring essential community facilities are available to rural residents, such as health care clinics, fire and rescue facilities, and more. As part of their technical assistance efforts, the Iowa Rural Development office provides information to disabled Iowans.

Iowa does partner with Easterseals Iowa's Rural Solutions program to support individuals who are blind or have low vision to access resources, technology consultations, and additional services to allow the individual to continue or return to farming in their communities.

While IDB does not have a cooperative agreement with the USDA Rural Development office or Easterseals Iowa's Rural Solutions program, we will collaborate and provide technical assistance to the Rural Development staff and Easterseals Iowa as necessary to ensure Iowans who are blind or have low vision in rural communities are able to access necessary supports and services to reach their employment goals.

### *3. Non-educational agencies serving out-of-school youth;*

The Iowa Department for the Blind is working with Iowa's Regional Workforce Development Boards and the Iowa Workforce Development Board in the provision of services to out-of-school youth. The IDB refers individuals to Iowa Workforce Development for information regarding benefits planning, labor market information, assessment information, in addition to trainings, assistance with job search activities and a variety of other services available through the local one-stop centers. IDB is working with each region to provide information, training, and technical assistance to our one-stop partners to become accessible to individuals who are blind or have low vision. IDB will continue to partner with each local one-stop to ensure out-of-school youth who are blind or have low vision are able to access their services. The IDB is participating in the development and implementation of local and state level agreements with our workforce partners who are serving out-of-school youth.

IDB contracts with Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs) to provide services to out-of-school youth including job development, job search assistance, skills training, and supported employment services. These CRPs also provide work-based learning assistance and job coaching for clients.

### *4. State use contracting programs;*

IDB maintains compliance with state contracting programs and follows the Iowa Department of Administrative rules for financial bidding and contracting.



*5. State agency responsible for administering the State Medicaid plan under title XIX of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1396 et seq.);*

The Iowa Department for the Blind collaborates with the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to develop opportunities for competitive integrated employment. In addition, the Department works with HHS to identify resources and financial responsibilities, opportunities for collaboration and cross-training, develop procedures for clients served by both programs, as well as identifying additional collaborative efforts in an effort to best meet the needs of the individuals we jointly serve. The Department for the Blind will continue to participate in activities with other partner agencies as well as involve community partners, families and education in implementing an Employment First approach.

*6. State agency responsible for providing services for individuals with developmental disabilities;*

The Department collaborates with stakeholders to identify potential clients, coordinate service plans and share funding for those individuals with developmental disabilities who are described as blind and low vision. While the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and IDB have not developed a separate formal agreement, IDB has taken steps to begin this process to establish collaborative efforts and to reduce duplication of services and better meet the needs of individuals with developmental disabilities. The Center for Disabilities and Development (CDD) in Iowa is part of the University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities network.

IDB's VR program administrator represents IDB on the CDD's Community Partnership Advisory Council (UCEDD CPAC). The CPAC is engaged in addressing priority issues affecting the lives of individuals with disabilities and identifying opportunities to increase the independence, productivity and community participation for persons with disabilities. The IDB has also worked with Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services to develop an agreement to identify collaborative efforts and to reduce duplication of services. Both agencies agree to share resources, discuss strategies, provide training and technical assistance and provide referral and information services.

*7. State agency responsible for providing mental health services; and*

The Department collaborates to identify potential clients, coordinate service plans and share funding for those individuals who are described as blind and low vision and require mental health services. Mental health services are provided statewide by various entities. Department counselors cooperate with

those providers to ensure that mutual clients, or persons who may need both VR and mental health services, are adequately and appropriately served. IDB has a intergovernmental agreement with Iowa Health and Human Services (HHS) for the use of services provided by IDB in order to take reasonable steps to provide materials in accessible formats to clients with disabilities. HHS can request materials to be produced for clients in accessible formats through the library and Instructional Materials Center (IMC). The IMC will provide and/or produce materials for clients with print disabilities. The IDB has also worked with Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services to develop an agreement to identify collaborative efforts and to reduce duplication of services. Both agencies agree to share resources, discuss strategies, provide training and technical assistance and provide referral and information services, while also coordinating cases that are shared between the two agencies.

#### *8. Other Federal, State, and local agencies and programs outside the workforce development system.*

IDB currently maintains five contracts with vendors to provide pre-employment transition services to students who are blind, DeafBlind or have low vision. These contracts provide students access to work-based learning experiences, exploration of employment and college opportunities, training in self-advocacy and independent living skills, leadership development and workplace readiness training. These services allow students the opportunity to develop independence skills and raise expectations for their future career goals.

IDB contracts with the Helen Keller National Center (HKNC) in New York to provide comprehensive vocational rehabilitation services to individuals who are DeafBlind. In addition, IDB partners with HKNC staff in Iowa to provide individualized job placement services, job search assistance and other vocational rehabilitation services needed to assist the individual in reaching their employment goal.

IDB partners with the Iowa Self Employment program and Small Business Development programs throughout Iowa to provide technical assistance and support to individuals who are interested in small business development. These programs assist with the development of business plans, assistance with feasibility studies and consultation in the development and implementation of the client's small business or self-employment goals.

#### *9. Other private nonprofit organizations.*

Cooperative agreements: The Department does not have long-term cooperative agreements in place with private nonprofit VR service providers. However, the

Department has utilized such entities on a case-by-case basis. For instance, BLIND, Inc. in Minneapolis, MN, the Colorado Center for the Blind in Littleton, CO and the Helen Keller National Center (HKNC) in New York have provided orientation and adjustment training and job search services to clients. While the Department has its own Orientation Center, the needs of some clients may be better addressed at an alternative center; this decision is based on client informed choice.

IDB partners with the ASK Family Resource Center, Iowa's Parent Training and Information Center to provide resources and information to families, clients and IDB staff. IDB partners with the Iowa Coalition for Integrated Employment (ICIE) to improve state systems so that Iowans with disabilities have access to fully integrated, competitive work opportunities in the community.

Because the number of blind and low vision Iowans who utilize services from Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs) is both small and widely dispersed, the Department collaborates with Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services (IVRS) to define potential services, outcomes, and costs. By working together, the Department and IVRS ensure that CRPs receive consistent information and direction from the VR agencies in Iowa. IDB works collaboratively with CRPs when the service is necessary for the client to meet their training and employment goals. Agreements entered into with any organization will require that assessment and career development activities occur in integrated work settings in the community.

In these cases, agreements are developed with the identified CRP to deliver the necessary service. The client and VR Counselor may identify a private provider that best addresses his or her specific VR needs. In these instances, the Counselor issues an authorization for the services. The provider is required to submit periodic reports on progress to the Counselor. The Counselor may continue to authorize for services until the services have been completed, the provider demonstrates progress is not being made, or the client finds that services are not addressing needs.

**Supported Employment:** Because the number of blind and low vision Iowans who utilize services from Community Rehabilitation Programs is both small and widely dispersed, the Department collaborates with Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services (IVRS) to define supported employment services, outcomes, and costs. The Department enters into agreements with providers of supported employment when specific clients are identified as needing those services. When appropriate, supported employment services and extended

services are paid for through county services under the Medicaid Waiver programs. By working together, the Department and IVRS ensure that CRPs receive consistent information and direction from the VR agencies in Iowa.

The Department may also make arrangements with other private entities to provide supported employment and extended services as the need arises. Other private entities may include employers, family members, and individuals contracted to provide these services. Natural supports and county services are the most often used services for extended support services.

## Assurances

The designated State agency or designated State unit, as appropriate and identified in the State certifications included with this VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement, through signature of the authorized individual, assures the Commissioner, that it will comply with all of the requirements of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement, as set forth in sections 101(a) and 606 of the Rehabilitation Act. The individual authorized to submit the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement makes the following assurances:

The State Plan must provide assurances that:

1. **Public Comment on Policies and Procedures:** The designated State agency assures it will comply with all statutory and regulatory requirements for public participation in the VR Services Portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, as required by section 101(a)(16)(A) of the Rehabilitation Act.  
**Yes**
2. **Submission of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and Its Supplement:** The designated State unit assures it will comply with all requirements pertaining to the submission and revisions of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement for the State Supported Employment Services program, as required by sections 101(a)(1), (22), (23), and 606(a) of the Rehabilitation Act; section 102 of WIOA in the case of the submission of a Unified State plan; section 103 of WIOA in the case of a submission of a Combined State Plan; 34 C.F.R. 76.140. **Yes**
3. **Administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan:** The designated State agency or designated State unit, as appropriate, assures it will comply with the requirements related to:

- a. the establishment of the designated State agency and designated State unit, as required by section 101(a)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act. **Yes**
- b. either a State independent commission or State Rehabilitation Council, as required by section 101(a)(21) or the Rehabilitation Act. **Yes**
- c. consultations regarding the administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, in accordance with section 101(a)(16)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act. **Yes**
- d. the financial participation by the State, or if the State so elects, by the State and local agencies, to provide the amount of the non-Federal share of the cost of carrying out the VR program in accordance with section 101(a)(3). **Yes**
- e. as applicable, the local administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, in accordance with section 101(a)(2)(A) of the Rehabilitation Act. **Yes**
- f. as applicable, the shared funding and administration of joint programs, in accordance with section 101(a)(2)(A)(ii) of the Rehabilitation Act. **Yes**
- g. statewideness and waivers of statewideness requirements, as set forth in section 101(a)(4) of the Rehabilitation Act. **Yes**
- h. the requirements for cooperation, collaboration, and coordination, as required by sections 101(a)(11) and (24)(B); and 606(b) of the Rehabilitation Act. **Yes**
- i. all required methods of administration, as required by section 101(a)(6) of the Rehabilitation Act. **Yes**
- j. the requirements for the comprehensive system of personnel development, as set forth in section 101(a)(7) of the Rehabilitation Act. **Yes**
- k. the compilation and submission to the Commissioner of statewide assessments, estimates, State goals and priorities, strategies, and progress reports, as appropriate, and as required by sections 101(a)(15), 105(c)(2), and 606(b)(8) of the Rehabilitation Act. **Yes**
- l. the reservation and use of a portion of the funds allotted to the State under section 110 of the Rehabilitation Act for the development and implementation of innovative approaches to expand and improve the provision of VR services to individuals with disabilities, particularly

individuals with the most significant disabilities as set forth in section 101(a)(18)(A). **Yes**

m. the submission of reports as required by section 101(a)(10) of the Rehabilitation Act. **Yes**

4. **Administration of the Provision of VR Services:** The designated State agency, or designated State unit, as appropriate, assures that it will:

a. comply with all requirements regarding information and referral services in accordance with sections 101(a)(5)(D) and (20) of the Rehabilitation Act.

**Yes**

b. impose no duration of residence requirement as part of determining an individual's eligibility for VR services or that excludes from services under the plan any individual who is present in the State in accordance with section 101(a)(12) of the Rehabilitation Act. **Yes**

c. provide the full range of services listed in section 103(a) of the Rehabilitation Act, as appropriate, to all eligible individuals with disabilities in the State who apply for services or, if implementing an order of selection, in accordance with criteria established by the State for the order of selection as set out in section 101(a)(5) of the Rehabilitation Act.

**Yes**

d. determine whether comparable services and benefits are available to the individual in accordance with section 101(a)(8) of the Rehabilitation Act.

**Yes**

e. comply with the requirements for the development of an individualized plan for employment in accordance with section 102(b) of the Rehabilitation Act. **Yes**

f. comply with requirements regarding the provisions of informed choice for all applicants and eligible individuals in accordance with section 102(d) of the Rehabilitation Act. **Yes**

g. provide vocational rehabilitation services to American Indians who are individuals with disabilities residing in the State, in accordance with section 101(a)(13) of the Rehabilitation Act. **Yes**

h. comply with the requirements for the conduct of semiannual or annual reviews, as appropriate, for individuals employed either in an extended employment setting in a community rehabilitation program or any other

employment under section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, as required by section 101(a)(14) of the Rehabilitation Act. **Yes**

i. meet the requirements in sections 101(a)(17) and 103(b)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act if the State elects to construct, under special circumstances, facilities for community rehabilitation programs. **Yes**

j. with respect to students with disabilities, the State,

i. has developed and will implement, **Yes**

1. strategies to address the needs identified in the assessments; and

2. strategies to achieve the goals and priorities identified by the State, to improve and expand vocational rehabilitation services for students with disabilities on a statewide basis; and **Yes**

ii. has developed and will implement strategies to provide pre- employment transition services (sections 101(a)(15), 101(a)(25) and

113). **Yes**

iii. Shall reserve not less than 15 percent of the allocated funds for the provision of pre-employment transition services; such funds shall not be used to pay for the administrative costs of providing pre- employment transition services. **Yes**

#### **5. Program Administration for the Supported Employment Title VI Supplement:**

a. The designated State unit assures that it will include in the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan all information required by section 606 of the Rehabilitation Act. **Yes**

b. The designated State agency assures that it will submit reports in such form and in accordance with such procedures as the Commissioner may require and collects the information required by section 101(a)(10) of the Rehabilitation Act separately for individuals receiving supported employment services under title I and individuals receiving supported employment services under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act. **Yes**

#### **6. Financial Administration of the Supported Employment Program:**

a. The designated State agency assures that it will expend no more than 2.5 percent of the State's allotment under title VI for administrative costs of carrying out this program; and, the designated State agency or agencies

will provide, directly or indirectly through public or private entities, non-Federal contributions in an amount that is not less than 10 percent of the costs of carrying out supported employment services provided to youth with the most significant disabilities with the funds reserved for such purpose under section 603(d) of the Rehabilitation Act, in accordance with section 606(b)(7)(G) and

(H) of the Rehabilitation Act. **Yes**

- b. The designated State agency assures that it will use funds made available under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act only to provide supported employment services to individuals with the most significant disabilities, including extended services to youth with the most significant disabilities, who are eligible to receive such services; and, that such funds are used only to supplement and not supplant the funds provided under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act, when providing supported employment services specified in the individualized plan for employment, in accordance with section 606(b)(7)(A) and (D), of the Rehabilitation Act. **Yes**

#### **7. Provision of Supported Employment Services:**

- a. The designated State agency assures that it will provide supported employment services as defined in section 7(39) of the Rehabilitation Act. **Yes**
- b. The designated State agency assures that the comprehensive assessment of individuals with significant disabilities conducted under section 102(b)(1) of the Rehabilitation Act and funded under title I of the Rehabilitation Act includes consideration of supported employment as an appropriate employment outcome, in accordance with the requirements of section 606(b)(7)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act an individualized plan for employment that meets the requirements of section 102(b) of the Rehabilitation Act , which is developed and updated with title I funds, in accordance with sections 102(b)(3)(F) and 606(b)(7)(C) and (E) of the Rehabilitation Act. **Yes**



## Vocational Rehabilitation (Blind) Certifications

*1. The Iowa Department for the Blind is authorized to submit the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan under title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Rehabilitation Act), as amended by title IV of WIOA[1], and its State Plan supplement under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act;*

Iowa Department for the Blind

*2. In the event the designated State agency is not primarily concerned with vocational and other rehabilitation of individuals with disabilities, the designated State agency must include a designated State unit for the VR program (Section 101(a)(2)(B)(ii) of the Rehabilitation Act). As a condition for the receipt of Federal funds under title I of the Rehabilitation Act for the provision of VR services, the (designated State agency or the designated State unit when the designated State agency has a designated State unit)[2] agrees to operate and is responsible for the administration of the State VR Services Program in accordance with the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan[3], the Rehabilitation Act, 34 CFR 361.13(b) and (c), and all applicable regulations[4], policies, and procedures established by the Secretary of Education. Funds made available to States under section 111(a) of the Rehabilitation Act are used solely for the provision of VR services and the administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan;*

Iowa Department for the Blind

*3. As a condition for the receipt of Federal funds under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act for supported employment services, the designated State agency, or the designated State unit when the designated State agency has a designated State unit, agrees to operate and is responsible for the administration of the State Supported Employment Services Program in accordance with the supplement to the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan[5], the Rehabilitation Act, and all applicable regulations[6], policies, and procedures established by the Secretary of Education. Funds made available under title VI are used solely for the provision of supported employment services and the administration of the supplement to the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan;*

*4. The designated State unit or, if not applicable, the designated State agency has the authority under State law to perform the functions of the State regarding the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement and is responsible for the administration of the VR program in accordance with 34 CFR 361.13(b) and (c);*

*5. The State legally may carry out each provision of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement.*

*6. All provisions of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement are consistent with State law.*

*7. The Iowa Department for the Blind Director (listed below) has the authority under State law to receive, hold, and disburse Federal funds made available under the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement;*

Stacy Cervenka

*8. The Iowa Department for the Blind Director (listed below) has the authority to submit the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and the supplement for Supported Employment services;*

Stacy Cervenka

*9. The agency that submits the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement has adopted or otherwise formally approved the plan and its supplement.*

*[1] Public Law 113-128. [2] All references in this plan to "designated State agency" or to "the State agency" relate to the agency identified in this paragraph. [3] No funds under title I of the Rehabilitation Act may be awarded without an approved VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan in accordance with section 101(a) of the Rehabilitation Act. [4] Applicable regulations, in part, include the Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) in 34 CFR parts 76, 77, 79, 81, and 82; 2 CFR part 200 as adopted by 2 CFR part 3474; and the State VR Services program regulations at 34 C.F.R. part 361. [5] No funds under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act may be awarded without an approved supported employment supplement to the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan in accordance with section 606(a) of the Rehabilitation Act. [6] Applicable regulations, in part, include the citations in footnote 4, as well as Supported Employment program regulations at 34 C.F.R. part 363.*

*Certification Signature*

## Vocational Rehabilitation Program Performance Indicators

### GEPA 427 Form Instructions for Application Package - Vocational Rehabilitation

*1. Describe how your entity's existing mission, policies, or commitments ensure equitable access to, and equitable participation in, the proposed project or activity.*

The Iowa Department for the Blind ensures equitable access and opportunities to all stakeholders, most especially blind Iowans, including blind students. Our commitment is to prepare every client to reach their potential for education and employment. Our mission is to empower blind Iowans to be gainfully employed and live independently.

IDB is committed to furthering the ability of persons who are blind or have low vision to be able to function competently, independently, and successfully not only in their own environments, but also as fully integrated and participating citizens in the broader society. To this end, all staff provide the best possible services which can be offered based upon the most current techniques and training principles available at the time. IDB professional conduct rules state IDB staff will not withhold or limit services to any client or patron based on race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, gender, gender identification, disability, political affiliation, or consumer group membership.

*2. Based on your proposed project or activity, what barriers may impede equitable access and participation of students, educators, or other beneficiaries?*

IDB strives to remove barriers to ensure clients are provided quality services, access to education and professional learning opportunities, and access to employment opportunities. Potential barriers which may impede equitable access and participation of students, educators and other beneficiaries when participating in vocational rehabilitation services may include economic barriers, transportation, access to assistive technology and accessible programming.

Although economic barriers may exist for IDB clients, IDB works to ensure that financial barriers are removed so that IDB clients are able to participate fully in IDB programs. Additionally, IDB provides access to transportation, including providing training to clients in identifying transportation resources.

IDB has identified that some programs and providers are not fully accessible to IDB clients. To address this concern, IDB provides access to assistive technology and other accommodations for individuals who require this service to access programming. IDB partners with service providers and employers to address accessibility issues and concerns, including providing technical assistance and consultation regarding making materials and programs accessible to persons with disabilities. IDB partners with clients to identify reasonable accommodations, provide training on advocating for accessibility, and advocating on behalf of clients who are not provided with access to necessary services. IDB ensures that all materials given to IDB clients are provided in the format required for the individual to access the materials. IDB partners with local area workforce offices to address the physical and programmatic barriers in these locations. IDB ensures that when barriers are identified for clients, it is of utmost importance to eliminate the barrier to ensure clients have access to programs and services.

*3. Based on the barriers identified, what steps will you take to address such barriers to equitable access and participation in the proposed project or activity?*

Barriers are identified and removed to provide equity across Iowa to ensure IDB clients receive access to services and programs that will enable them to reach their highest potential. IDB partnered with the VR Technical Assistance Center on Quality Employment to address issues related to transportation, including transportation for individuals in rural areas, accessing transportation throughout the state and assisting blind Iowans to access transportation resources, including the hiring of drivers to access services and employment. IDB is recruiting rehabilitation technology specialists and hired a deafblind specialist to address accessibility, accommodations and access for clients participating in VR programs. IDB has developed training programs for partner agencies and education entities on the topics of accessibility and universal design in order to assist our partners in being able to provide the services blind Iowans need in order to reach their career goals.

*4. What is your timeline, including targeted milestones, for addressing these identified barriers?*

IDB is able to provide in-house services to clients once identified, these services are provided same day or within two weeks depending on the type of service requested. When additional time is needed, IDB staff will work with the individual or provider to identify an acceptable timeframe that will meet the individual's needs. IDB is hiring for a rehabilitation technology specialist to address accessibility issues, assist with identifying appropriate accommodations and assisting clients to access programs that will support them in reaching their VR goals. These individuals will be trained and able to provide services to clients and employers by July 1, 2026. IDB will be identifying and developing additional programs through our rehabilitation technology programs based on the results of a review and plans to begin implementing new program offerings by March 1, 2025. IDB is hiring and filling current rehabilitation teacher positions. Once hired, these rehabilitation teachers will be trained and able to serve clients in the field by May 30, 2026. These rehabilitation teachers will address training needs for VR clients, including addressing training needs in the area of transportation and nonvisual access as related to their employment goals. IDB partnered with the VR Technical Assistance Center on Quality Employment to explore solutions related to individual's ability to access transportation in rural areas and other areas throughout the state and is working to improve resources to clients to access transportation services. IDB's DeafBlind specialist is reviewing national programming and state needs to develop programming to meet the needs of

individuals who have combined vision and hearing loss and who are DeafBlind; the expected start date of program delivery is by June 30, 2026. IDB provides technical assistance, training and consultation as capacity allows and provides resources and information as requested.

## GEPA 427 Form Instructions for Application Package - Supported Employment

*1. Describe how your entity's existing mission, policies, or commitments ensure equitable access to, and equitable participation in, the proposed project or activity.*

The Iowa Department for the Blind ensures equitable access and opportunities to all stakeholders, most especially blind Iowans, including blind students. Our commitment is to prepare every client to reach their potential for education and employment. Our mission is to empower blind Iowans to be gainfully employed and live independently.

IDB is committed to furthering the ability of persons who are blind or have low vision to be able to function competently, independently, and successfully not only in their own environments, but also as fully integrated and participating citizens in the broader society. To this end, all staff provide the best possible services which can be offered based upon the most current techniques and training principles available at the time. IDB professional conduct rules state IDB staff will not withhold or limit services to any client or patron based on race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, gender, gender identification, disability, political affiliation, or consumer group membership.

*2. Based on your proposed project or activity, what barriers may impede equitable access and participation of students, educators, or other beneficiaries?*

IDB strives to remove barriers to ensure clients are provided quality services, access to education and professional learning opportunities, and access to employment opportunities. Potential barriers which may impede equitable access and participation of students, educators and other beneficiaries when participating in vocational rehabilitation services may include economic barriers, transportation, access to assistive technology and accessible programming.

Although economic barriers may exist for IDB clients, IDB works to ensure that financial barriers are removed so that IDB clients are able to participate fully in IDB programs. Additionally, IDB provides access to transportation, including providing training to clients in identifying transportation resources.

IDB has identified that some programs and providers are not fully accessible to IDB clients. To address this concern, IDB provides access to assistive technology

and other accommodations for individuals who require this service to access programming. IDB partners with service providers and employers to address accessibility issues and concerns, including providing technical assistance and consultation regarding making materials and programs accessible to persons with disabilities. IDB partners with clients to identify reasonable accommodations, provide training on advocating for accessibility, and advocating on behalf of clients who are not provided with access to necessary services. IDB ensures that all materials given to IDB clients are provided in the format required for the individual to access the materials. IDB partners with local area workforce offices to address the physical and programmatic barriers in these locations. IDB ensures that when barriers are identified for clients, it is of utmost importance to eliminate the barrier to ensure clients have access to programs and services.

*3. Based on the barriers identified, what steps will you take to address such barriers to equitable access and participation in the proposed project or activity?*

Barriers are identified and removed to provide equity across Iowa to ensure IDB clients receive access to services and programs that will enable them to reach their highest potential. IDB partnered with the VR Technical Assistance Center on Quality Employment to address issues related to transportation, including transportation for individuals in rural areas, accessing transportation throughout the state and assisting blind Iowans to access transportation resources, including the hiring of drivers to access services and employment. IDB is recruiting rehabilitation technology specialists and hired a deafblind specialist to address accessibility, accommodations and access for clients participating in VR programs. IDB has developed training programs for partner agencies and education entities on the topics of accessibility and universal design in order to assist our partners in being able to provide the services blind Iowans need in order to reach their career goals.

*4. What is your timeline, including targeted milestones, for addressing these identified barriers?*

IDB is able to provide in-house services to clients once identified, these services are provided same day or within two weeks depending on the type of service requested. When additional time is needed, IDB staff will work with the individual or provider to identify an acceptable timeframe that will meet the individual's needs. IDB is hiring for a rehabilitation technology specialist to address accessibility issues, assist with identifying appropriate accommodations and assisting clients to access programs that will support them in reaching their VR goals. These individuals will be trained and able to provide services to clients



and employers by July 1, 2026. IDB will be identifying and developing additional programs through our rehabilitation technology programs based on the results of a review and plans to begin implementing new program offerings by March 1, 2025. IDB is hiring and filling current rehabilitation teacher positions. Once hired, these rehabilitation teachers will be trained and able to serve clients in the field by May 30, 2026. These rehabilitation teachers will address training needs for VR clients, including addressing training needs in the area of transportation and nonvisual access as related to their employment goals. IDB partnered with the VR Technical Assistance Center on Quality Employment to explore solutions related to individual's ability to access transportation in rural areas and other areas throughout the state and is working to improve resources to clients to access transportation services. IDB's DeafBlind specialist is reviewing national programming and state needs to develop programming to meet the needs of individuals who have combined vision and hearing loss and who are DeafBlind; the expected start date of program delivery is by June 30, 2026. IDB provides technical assistance, training and consultation as capacity allows and provides resources and information as requested.

## VII. Program-Specific Requirements for Combined State Plan Partner Programs

**States choosing to submit a Combined State Plan must provide information concerning the six core programs—the Adult program, Dislocated Worker program, Youth program, Wagner- Peyser Act program, Adult Education and Family Literacy Act program, and the Vocational Rehabilitation program— and also submit relevant information for any of the eleven partner programs it elects to include in its Combined State Plan. When a State includes a Combined State Plan partner program in its Combined State Plan, it need not submit a separate plan or application for that particular program. If included, Combined State Plan partner programs are subject to the “common planning elements” in Sections II-IV of this document, where specified, as well as the program-specific requirements for that program.**

Not applicable to Iowa, which has submitted a Unified State Plan.

# Performance Indicator Appendix

## Appendix 1: All WIOA Core Partner Programs

### Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth Activities - Adult Program Performance Indicators

|                                             | Title I – Adult Program |                  |                    |                  |
|---------------------------------------------|-------------------------|------------------|--------------------|------------------|
|                                             | Program Year: 2026      |                  | Program Year: 2027 |                  |
|                                             | Expected Level          | Negotiated Level | Expected Level     | Negotiated Level |
| Employment (Second Quarter after Exit)      | 78.0%                   | <u>TBD</u>       | 78.0%              | <u>TBD</u>       |
| Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit)      | 76.0%                   | <u>TBD</u>       | 76.0%              | <u>TBD</u>       |
| Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit) | \$7,200                 | <u>TBD</u>       | \$7,300            | <u>TBD</u>       |
| Credential Attainment Rate                  | 71.0%                   | <u>TBD</u>       | 71.0%              | <u>TBD</u>       |
| Measurable Skill Gains                      | 62.5%                   | <u>TBD</u>       | 63.0%              | <u>TBD</u>       |

### Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth Activities - Dislocated Program Performance Indicators

|  | Title I – Dislocated Worker Program |                    |
|--|-------------------------------------|--------------------|
|  | Program Year: 2026                  | Program Year: 2027 |



|                                             | Expected Level | Negotiated Level | Expected Level | Negotiated Level |
|---------------------------------------------|----------------|------------------|----------------|------------------|
| Employment (Second Quarter after Exit)      | 83.0%          | <u>TBD</u>       | 83.0%          | <u>TBD</u>       |
| Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit)      | 83.0%          | <u>TBD</u>       | 83.0%          | <u>TBD</u>       |
| Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit) | \$9,700        | <u>TBD</u>       | \$9,800        | <u>TBD</u>       |
| Credential Attainment Rate                  | 73.0%          | <u>TBD</u>       | 73.0%          | <u>TBD</u>       |
| Measurable Skill Gains                      | 64.0%          | <u>TBD</u>       | 65.0%          | <u>TBD</u>       |

### Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth Activities - Youth Program Performance Indicators

|                                        | Title I – Youth Program |                  |                    |                  |
|----------------------------------------|-------------------------|------------------|--------------------|------------------|
|                                        | Program Year: 2026      |                  | Program Year: 2027 |                  |
|                                        | Expected Level          | Negotiated Level | Expected Level     | Negotiated Level |
| Employment (Second Quarter after Exit) | 75.0%                   | <u>TBD</u>       | 75.0%              | <u>TBD</u>       |

|                                             |         |            |         |            |
|---------------------------------------------|---------|------------|---------|------------|
| Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit)      | 75.0%   | <u>TBD</u> | 75.0%   | <u>TBD</u> |
| Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit) | \$4,000 | <u>TBD</u> | \$4,000 | <u>TBD</u> |
| Credential Attainment Rate                  | 58.5%   | <u>TBD</u> | 58.5%   | <u>TBD</u> |
| Measurable Skill Gains                      | 52.0%   | <u>TBD</u> | 52.5%   | <u>TBD</u> |

### Wagner-Peyser Act - Wagner Peyser Program Performance Indicators

|                                             | Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service Program |                  |                    |                  |
|---------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|------------------|--------------------|------------------|
|                                             | Program Year: 2026                           |                  | Program Year: 2027 |                  |
|                                             | Expected Level                               | Negotiated Level | Expected Level     | Negotiated Level |
| Employment (Second Quarter after Exit)      | 70.5%                                        | <u>TBD</u>       | 71.0%              | <u>TBD</u>       |
| Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit)      | 69.5%                                        | <u>TBD</u>       | 70.0%              | <u>TBD</u>       |
| Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit) | \$8,700                                      | <u>TBD</u>       | \$8,700            | <u>TBD</u>       |
| Credential Attainment Rate                  | Not Applicable                               | Not Applicable   | Not Applicable     | Not Applicable   |
| Measurable Skill Gains                      | Not Applicable                               | Not Applicable   | Not Applicable     | Not Applicable   |

## Adult Education and Family Literacy Act Program - Adult Education and Literacy Program Performance Indicators

|                                             | Title II – Adult Education and Family Literacy Act Program |                  |                    |                  |
|---------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|--------------------|------------------|
|                                             | Program Year: 2026                                         |                  | Program Year: 2027 |                  |
|                                             | Expected Level                                             | Negotiated Level | Expected Level     | Negotiated Level |
| Employment (Second Quarter after Exit)      | 48.0%                                                      | TBD              | 49.0%              | TBD              |
| Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit)      | 49.0%                                                      | TBD              | 50.0%              | TBD              |
| Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit) | \$7,100                                                    | TBD              | \$7,200            | TBD              |
| Credential Attainment Rate                  | 32.0%                                                      | TBD              | 33.0%              | TBD              |
| Measurable Skill Gains                      | 49.0%                                                      | TBD              | 50.0%              | TBD              |

## Vocational Rehabilitation Program (Combined or General) - Vocational Rehabilitation Program Performance Indicators

|  | Vocational Rehabilitation Program |  |                    |  |
|--|-----------------------------------|--|--------------------|--|
|  | Program Year: 2026                |  | Program Year: 2027 |  |
|  |                                   |  |                    |  |

|                                                | Expected Level | Negotiated Level | Expected Level | Negotiated Level |
|------------------------------------------------|----------------|------------------|----------------|------------------|
| Employment<br>(Second Quarter after Exit) 22   | 59.7%          | 59.8%            | 59.8%          | 59.9%            |
| Employment<br>(Fourth Quarter after Exit) 22   | 58.5%          | 58.5%            | 58.7%          | 58.7%            |
| Median Earnings<br>(Second Quarter after Exit) | \$4,545        | \$4,586          | \$4,560        | \$4,632          |
| Credential Attainment Rate                     | 54.0%          | 54.0%            | 54.2%          | 54.2%            |
| Measurable Skill Gains                         | 52.0%          | 52.0%            | 55.0%          | 55.0%            |

### Vocational Rehabilitation Program (Blind) - Vocational Rehabilitation Program Performance Indicators

|                                              | Vocational Rehabilitation Program |                  |                    |                  |
|----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------|--------------------|------------------|
|                                              | Program Year: 2026                |                  | Program Year: 2027 |                  |
|                                              | Expected Level                    | Negotiated Level | Expected Level     | Negotiated Level |
| Employment<br>(Second Quarter after Exit) 22 | 59.7%                             | 59.8%            | 59.8%              | 59.9%            |
| Employment<br>(Fourth Quarter after Exit) 22 | 58.5%                             | 58.5%            | 58.7%              | 58.7%            |

|                                                  |         |         |         |         |
|--------------------------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Median Earnings<br>(Second<br>Quarter after Exit | \$4,545 | \$4,586 | \$4,560 | \$4,632 |
| Credential<br>Attainment Rate                    | 54.0%   | 54.0%   | 54.2%   | 54.2%   |
| Measurable Skill<br>Gains                        | 52.0%   | 52.0%   | 55.0%   | 55.0%   |

## Additional Indicators of Performance

| Additional Indicators of Performance |
|--------------------------------------|
| 1.                                   |
| 2.                                   |
| 3.                                   |
| 4.                                   |

## Other Appendices

### Appendix 2: Iowa Department for the Blind Organizational Chart

#### **Appendix 2. Iowa Department for the Blind Organizational Chart**

Updated 11/25

#### **Iowa Commission for the Blind**

- Vacant (term ends 4/30/27)
- Michael Hoenig (appointed 5/1/23 term ends 4/30/26)
- Sara Coleman (term ends 4/30/28)

#### **Key Responsibilities:**

- Approve agency policies
- Approve Gifts & Bequests requests as outlined in [G&B Guidelines] (<https://idbpoliciesandprocedures.blot.im/gifts-and-bequests-guidelines>)

- Receive and share stakeholder feedback
- Direct Reports: None

### **Stacy Cervenka, Director**

Time in Current Position: since 7/25

[stacy.cervenka@blind.state.ia.us](mailto:stacy.cervenka@blind.state.ia.us)

Appointed by Governor of the State of Iowa

#### **Functional Responsibilities:**

- Appointing authority
- Strategic Planning
- Daily management and operations

#### **Key Responsibilities:**

- Lead agency to fulfillment of mission and achievement of vision
- Allocate resources in alignment with agency goals and values
- Provide clear communication and promote collaboration with and among staff, partners, and consumers
- Oversee all agency financial operations and ensure compliance with all state and federal laws and regulations

#### **Direct Reports:**

- 1 Executive Secretary
- 1 Public Service Manager 2 (Deputy Director/Library Director)
- 4 Program Administrators
- 1 Chief Information Officer
- 1 Information Specialist 1

### **Sarah Willeford, Library Director, Deputy Director**

Time in Current Position: since 2/14

[Sarah.Willeford@blind.state.ia.us](mailto:Sarah.Willeford@blind.state.ia.us)

#### **Functional Responsibilities:**

- Instructional Materials Center
- Library Circulation
- Building Maintenance
- Backup for Director

#### **Key Responsibilities:**

- Ensure the provision of high quality, timely instructional materials to blind youth
- Ensure the provision of books, newspapers, and magazines in alternative formats to blind Iowans as a regional library for the National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled Promote braille literacy and inspire a love of reading in blind and low vision youth to promote educational and career success
- Serve as building manager and provide supervision to maintenance staff

**Direct Reports:**

- 1 Access Services Librarian
- 1 Special Services Librarian
- 1 Youth Services Librarian
- 1 Digital Recording Specialist
- 1 Technical Services Librarian
- 1 Braille Coordinator
- 1 Instructional Materials Center Librarian
- 1 Instructional Material Center Service Specialist
- 1 Braille Transcriber
- 1 Library Resources Technician
- 1 Receptionist
- 1 Information Technology Specialist 3
- 1 Facilities Engineer
- 1 Maintenance Repairer
- 1 Custodians

**Kim Walford, Independent Living Program Administrator**

Time in Current Position: since 9/13

[Kim.walford@blind.state.ia.us](mailto:Kim.walford@blind.state.ia.us)

**Functional Responsibilities:**

- Independent Living services
- Vocational Rehabilitation Field Teaching

**Key Responsibilities:**

- Provide individual and small group independent living skills training to older Iowans that will allow them to remain in their homes and continue to be active in their communities
- Provide assistive devices to enable older individuals who are experiencing extensive vision loss to continue to perform essential life functions
- Provide information and training to service providers to build their capacity to serve blind Iowans
- Ensure the provision of high quality and timely field training services to vocational rehabilitation clients throughout the state
- Administer the ACL Part B grant and RSA OIB grant

#### **Direct Reports:**

- 1 Administrative Support Assistant 2
- 2 Rehabilitation Teachers – Team Leaders (SSSB1)
- 11 Rehabilitation Teachers (SSSB1)

#### **Keri Osterhaus, Vocational Rehabilitation Program Administrator**

Time in Current Position: since 1/14

[Keri.Osterhaus@blind.state.ia.us](mailto:Keri.Osterhaus@blind.state.ia.us)

#### **Functional Responsibilities:**

- Vocational Rehabilitation Services
- Rehabilitation Technology Services
- Business Enterprise Program
- Unified State Plan

#### **Key Responsibilities:**

- Ensure that high quality and timely vocational rehabilitation services are provided to clients which empower them to achieve their employment goals
- Collaborate with core and required partners to ensure compliance with the Workforce Innovation & Opportunities Act (WIOA)
- Assist employers to break down stereotypes regarding the capabilities of blind workers and take advantage of this underutilized source of talent
- Promote self-employment for blind Iowans within the Business enterprise Program (BEP) and other programs



- Improve accessibility and increase awareness of access technology and its use among clients, partners, and employers

**Direct Reports:**

- 1 Executive Officer 1 (Business Enterprise Program)
- 2 BEP Business Counselors (SSB2)
- 1 Management Analyst 3
- 1 Data Analyst
- 3 Rehabilitation Technology Specialists
- 9 Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors (SSSB1)
- 1 Supported Employment Specialist (SSSB1)
- 1 Employment Counselor/VR Counselor (SSSB1)
- 1 Intake Counselor/VR Counselor (SSSB1)
- 1 Deaf-Blind Specialist (SSSB1)
- 1 Administrative Support Assistant 2
- 2 Administrative Support Assistant 1

**Ambrose Ball-Harney, Education & Training Program Administrator**

Time in Current Position: since 11/23

[Ambrose.ballharney@blind.state.ia.us](mailto:Ambrose.ballharney@blind.state.ia.us)

**Functional Responsibilities:**

- Pre-ETS service development and expansion
- Youth Weekend Retreats
- LEAP Summer Youth Program
- Statewide Skills Retreats

**Key Responsibilities:**

- Oversee Youth Programming, Skills Retreat Programming, LEAP youth summer camp and weekend retreats
- Expand IDB's youth and Pre-ETS programs and services
- Build partnerships with local education agencies and educators

**Direct Reports:**

- 3 Vocational Rehabilitation Teachers Retreat Team (SSSB1)
- 1 Retreat Team Coordinator (SSB2)
- 3 Vocational Rehabilitation Youth Counselor – Retreat Team (SSB1)
- 2 Retreat Team Coach - (SSB2)

- 15 Temporary Youth Workers (summer)

**Karly Prinds, Training Center Program Administrator**

Time in Current Position: since 9/3/21

[Karly.Prinds@blind.state.ia.us](mailto:Karly.Prinds@blind.state.ia.us)

**Functional Responsibilities:**

- Adjustment to Blindness Training Center Programs

**Key Responsibilities:**

- Provide world class adjustment to blindness training to clients attending the Orientation Center for the Blind
- Provide training to new staff to facilitate a positive attitude toward blindness

**Direct Reports:**

- 1 Rehabilitation Technology Specialist
- 4 Center Instructors (SSSB1)
- 1 Center generalist (SSB2)

**Connie Mendenhall, Chief Information Officer (CIO)**

Time in Current Position: since 9/22

[connie.mendenhall@blind.state.ia.us](mailto:connie.mendenhall@blind.state.ia.us)

**Functional Responsibilities:**

- Agency technology and information systems
- Website
- Social media
- Outreach

**Key Responsibilities:**

- Conduct and improve internal and external agency communications
- Track and expand agency outreach
- Organize and improve agency documentation
- Serve as agency CTO/CIO and ensure that agency has secure, efficient, and accessible technology with which to do their jobs

## Appendix 3: Studies for Research and Program Evaluation

### Evaluation on activities under WIOA Title I

Iowa Workforce Development (IWD) and Iowa State University's Iowa's Integrated Data System for Decision-Making (I2D2) team partnered together to conduct a preliminary evaluation of the WIOA Title I programs. The I2D2 team was recruited for this project because of their experience with integrated data and prior work conducting needs assessments and program evaluations for other state departments.

IWD WIOA Title I program leadership initiated the partnership with the intent to cultivate short term knowledge (Phase I) and use this knowledge to develop a longer-term plan for ongoing evaluation (Phase II+). Phase I comprises the continued work for the current report, and involved two components: First, the team examined Title I datasets specifically to see what could be learned from within-program records prior to integration with other data systems. WIOA leadership expressed specific interest in several areas for this data exploration component: *Who are Title I programs serving, and are these groups representative of those who may benefit from services? What is the level of co-enrollment across programs? And What are the most reported barriers to employment.* Second, the team conducted data discovery to explore additional datasets within IWD and departments outside of IWD that would have useful information to inform evaluation efforts in the longer term (Phase II+).

#### **Part I. WIOA Title I Pilot Evaluation**

This pilot evaluation focused primarily on Program Year 2022 and continued with Program Year 2023, but continued to also included a preliminary look at longitudinal records to explore potential for additional future evaluation work. The following summary highlights key findings from three areas of analysis that sought to (a) describe program participants, (b) examine co-enrollment between WIOA Title I programs and other IWD programs, and (c) study the 13 barriers to employment. See Program Evaluation activities from PY23 annual report for results.

Iowa continued to examine results output, adding additional data in PY24, and strategizing next steps for longitudinal evaluation activity planning in the future.

#### **Part II: Data System Discovery**

The data discovery process with the PIRL and related workforce data revealed some important patterns and considerations for future evaluation work.

#### Participant Information Record Layout (PIRL)

The Participant Information Record Layout (PIRL) is the administrative system used by IWD to track WIOA Title I programming. It includes a unique PIRL Identifier for each participant that can be used to connect participants across other programs contained in the same system. It contains relatively comprehensive data about some elements of program participants, including demographics, program information, program start and end dates, and outcome data.

The PIRL is divided into program year files that contain information about participants who received services during that program year as well as outcomes from program participants in previous year(s). While helpful for federal reporting requirements that mandate annual fiscal year accountability, this annual file presented some challenges for an evaluation that seeks to look at individual participant success and outcomes across time (rather than just reporting who received services in any given year). Given that participants could join the program at any point during the year, as we look to examine outcomes the timing of enrollment will become more important than the specific PY in which someone was enrolled. Similarly, outcome data is provided annually rather than in an ongoing longitudinal record. For the current report, the I2D2 team connected individuals with their own outcome data to pilot a longitudinal examination. However, at the time of the analysis, the entirety of PY23 data had not been released. This meant that not all of the outcome data was available for PY22.

#### Other data systems that could inform WIOA Title I evaluation

Throughout this project and simultaneous with participation in other national learning community efforts related to WIOA evaluations, the I2D2 team continued to explore potential additional data systems that could be combined to enhance future evaluations. The goal was to find helpful data that could inform prioritized analytic questions about whether WIOA programs are serving the intended audiences and what short and long term outcomes are being advanced. Through participation in national learning communities with other states who are conducting WIOA evaluations, and discussions with other Iowa state agency leaders we explored several useful systems and their potential benefits:

##### **1. Unemployment and Wages data (IWD)**

Unemployment and Wages data provide much more extensive information about employment and earnings beyond the information contained in the PIRL. Specifically, the earnings information available in the PIRL cover three quarters prior to program entry and four quarters following program entry. While these earnings measures allow for examination of earnings gains after program completion, in comparison to earnings prior to entry,

the assessment window is rather small. In addition, earnings are typically negatively impacted in the period immediately prior to program entry and also may take some time to stabilize after program exit. With the addition of unemployment and wage data, longer periods of pre-program wages could be examined and compared to longer periods of post-program earnings to examine associations between program participation and increase wages net of short-term instability surrounding program entry and exit. With the further addition of unemployment information, variability in pre-program and/or post-program wage trajectories could be reduced to the extent that such variability resulted from serial bouts of unemployment. Inclusion of UIWages data from non participants in a comparison study would also be helpful to determine the relative impact of the WIOA programs in supporting intended program outcomes.

## **2. Post-secondary enrollment records (Iowa Department of Education)**

While post-program earnings is certainly an important metric, many aspects of WIOA programming involve upskilling that often corresponds with degree or certification completion. Although the PIRL contains some data related to apprenticeship participation and credential attainment during participation periods, addition of post-secondary enrollment records could augment PIRL information in important ways. For example, wage earnings might appear somewhat lower after program exit, compared to pre-program earnings for those who are changing occupational fields. Individuals may be leaving their current field at an earnings level that is relatively high for that field to enter a new field with eventual higher earning potential that take longer to manifest due to entry-level employment in the new field shortly after credential attainment. Similarly, ongoing post-secondary enrollment might also manifest as low post-program earnings to the degree that an individual enters longer-term full-time educational programming that extends beyond WIOA programming exit.

## **3. TANF, SNAP, and other public benefits programs (mostly Iowa Department of Health and Human Services)**

Inclusion of granular data regarding enrollment spells and specific benefits/services received from other programs such as TANF, SNAP, and Promise JOBS would augment PIRL data by allowing for the inclusion of co-enrollment in non-WIOA service programs as a potentially important factor contributing to the successful outcomes of WIOA program participants. Similar investigation of TANF participants who were simultaneously co-enrolled in WIOA Adult programming from other states suggests better outcomes among those receiving multiple services, relative to those only receiving TANF supports. Members of the current

study team were able to participate in two national learning community efforts this year and gathered examples from states that could be used in future work in Iowa. To the extent that data from multiple additional service/benefit programs could be integrated with PIRL data, future evaluation efforts could explore what specific co-enrollment clusters (parallel) or sequences result in optimal outcomes among different participants participating in WIOA's Title I programs.

### ***Recommendations for Ongoing Evaluation & Program Improvement Efforts***

There are two sets of recommendations that would enhance the program evaluation work of the WIOA Title I in the future.

**First, we recommend continuing to build a longitudinal person-level file to facilitate more refined and specific analyses.** While the outcomes metrics contained in the PIRL during any given program year are important for gauging program success in the year following completion, the program-year structure of the PIRL files complicates the connection between a participant and that participant's specific outcomes, as they are currently reported in different calendar years (e.g., outcomes in PY 2023 file for PY 2022 participants). In addition to allowing for a more temporal analysis of outcomes for a particular set of program participants, a longitudinally connected file would allow for analyses of larger groups of participants, as timing is no longer tied to a program year. For example, program cohorts can be defined by their entry into programming and followed vs. being defined by exit timing that limits following each year only to those who have exited. By defining cohorts by entry, multiple cohorts can be examined at the same time to gauge programming impacts that occur on standardized timing (e.g., at entry, during programming, 1 year after exit, etc.). Finally, maintaining a longitudinal person-level file or keying system opens avenues for examining sequential processes such as co-enrollment across programs over time, as well as serial re-enrollment in certain programming over time. The current evaluation was not able to examine sequential co-enrollment or re-enrollment because of the focus on one PY and the format of the PY outcomes data. Identifying such patterns longitudinally using a more refined datafile would allow for deeper examination into programming and support experiences that result in the best outcomes for different groups of program participants.

**Second, we recommend enhancing partnerships with additional data system owners to add relevant data to the ongoing evaluation.** As mentioned above, there are several other datasets that could provide useful information to expand quality improvement efforts through evaluation with WIOA Title I data in the future. These recommendations include:

1. Amend existing data sharing agreements with IWD to include the UI Wages data, unemployment records, and additional WIOA program data. With legal permissions already in place establishing the approved relationship between IWD and I2D2 and related security protocols in place, the extension to include UI Wages (and possibly unemployment records) it would not be a heavy lift to add these new data systems to the project. With these records, future longitudinal evaluation could really explore outcomes for individuals across time, examining what fields of work they enter, how long they stay, if their earnings continue to increase over time, and myriad of other patterns in employment and wages that could help inform our current work in the WIOA Title I programs. Population-level unemployment data would also allow analysis of unduplicated person-level data to better understand participants served and those that are not served (but could be potentially eligible and benefit from program participation). Finally, additional WIOA program data would allow the evaluation to examine co-enrollment more broadly, and better examine sequential co-enrollment over time.
2. Continue to explore data sharing agreement amendments with other systems that are also already part of the I2D2 partnership to provide additional datasets that would support the evaluation. Iowa Department of Health and Human Services, for example, already provides data for I2D2 to support health and childcare work. These agreements could be amended to include program information for TANF, SNAP, WIC, and Promise JOBS. Given the intended participant population for the WIOA programs, and the potential pipeline and/or service networking possibility with these other state programs, integration of these records could provide useful insights. Understanding how WIOA participants engage with these other public services before, during, or after WIOA programs could be helpful for recruitment and retention efforts. Long-term evaluations could also explore the potential cost savings afforded to the state when our WIOA programs effectively help support gainful employment of Iowa citizens who then may not need to rely on other public supports subsequently. These types of evaluations would require additional integrated data.

For PY24, Iowa sought to further expand evaluation activities to include analysis of data in partnership with our Labor Market Information division. Three primary focus areas were analyzed in the areas of

1. WIOA youth in work experience
2. Sector strategy outcomes

3. School status at program entry outcomes.

## WIOA Title I Youth in work experience analysis and outcomes

### Evaluation Questions:

1. Youth who had **work experience** - Does it lead to better employment and wage outcomes after exit?
2. Youth who received **training** through WIOA Title I - Does it lead to better employment and wage outcomes after exit?
3. Youth who received **neither work experience nor training service** - Does it lead to better employment and wage outcomes after exit?

This analysis was conducted at the state level for program year 2024. Analyses at the individual board level did not yield statistically significant results, due to small sample sizes within each board.

### Employed in the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter after exit

Analysis of statewide data for Youth participants shows that receiving **Work Experience (WEX)** was significantly associated with higher employment in the 2nd quarter after exit. Youth who participated in WEX were employed at a higher rate (82%) than those who did not (71%), and the association was statistically significant ( $\chi^2=5.24$ ,  $p=0.022$ ). The effect size was small ( $\Phi=0.126$ ), meaning, the difference is real but the size of that difference is small.

Youth participants who received Work Experience (WEX) are **1.9 times** more likely to be employed in the second quarter after program exit compared to those who did not receive WEX. In contrast, participation in **training services alone** did not show a meaningful relationship with 2nd-quarter employment outcomes. Employment rates for those with and without training services were nearly identical, and the chi-square test was not significant ( $p=0.664$ ), suggesting that training on its own did not influence short-term employment outcomes for youth at the statewide level.

Youth who **did not receive both Work Experience and Training together** had lower employment outcomes in the 2nd quarter after exit. Their employment rate was **70%**, compared to **80%** among youth who received the combined services. This difference was statistically significant ( $\chi^2=4.44$ ,  $p=0.035$ ), meaning the lower employment rate among those who *did not* receive both services is unlikely to be due to chance. Although the effect size was small ( $\Phi=0.116$ ), it still reflects a real—though modest—difference in outcomes. In practical terms, youth who **missed out on both services** had only about **60% of the odds** of being employed compared to those who received the combined service package (the



inverse of the 1.7 odds ratio). Overall, the data indicate that **not receiving both Work Experience and Training put youth at a short-term disadvantage** in securing employment after exit. This reinforces the idea that the combination of hands-on work experience and training creates a more supportive pathway to early employment—one that youth without both services were less likely to achieve.

### **Employed in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter after exit**

Statewide 4th-quarter results show that **Work Experience (WEX)** on its own was *not* associated with improved long-term employment outcomes for Youth participants. Employment rates were similar for those who received WEX (78%) and those who did not (74%). The difference was not statistically significant ( $\chi^2=0.48$ ,  $p=0.49$ ). The effect size was extremely small ( $\Phi=0.039$ ), meaning the relationship between WEX and employment was **so small that, in practical terms, it made almost no difference** in predicting whether someone would be employed in the 4th quarter. In simple terms: **work experience didn't hurt, but it also didn't show a meaningful long-term benefit.**

The pattern was similar for **Training Services**. Youth who received training had a slightly higher employment rate (82%) than those who did not (74%), but the difference was not statistically significant ( $\chi^2=1.85$ ,  $p=0.17$ ). The effect size was still very small ( $\Phi=0.078$ ). An effect size this small means that **training explained almost none of the difference in who became employed**, and that the higher percentage among trained youth could easily be due to normal variation rather than a real effect. In plain language: **training alone was not a strong driver of long-term employment.**

However, when looking at the **combined service group (Work Experience + Training)**, the data show that youth who did **not** receive both services together were *not* at a disadvantage in the long term. Employment rates were close—72% without both services vs. 78% with both—and the difference was not statistically significant ( $\chi^2=1.34$ ,  $p=0.25$ ). The effect size was still very small ( $\Phi=0.066$ ), meaning the combined services had **almost no measurable influence** on 4th-quarter employment. In practical terms: **not receiving both services together did not harm a youth's chances of being employed by the 4th quarter**, and the service combination did not create a meaningful long-term advantage.

### **Wages in the 2nd quarter after exit**

Youth who received Work Experience had slightly *lower* average wages in the 2nd quarter after exit compared to those who did not receive Work Experience

(\$4,695 vs. \$5,643). However, this difference was **not statistically significant** ( $p \approx 0.07-0.08$ ), meaning it is very likely due to normal random variation rather than a real effect of the service. The effect size was **small** (Cohen's  $d \approx -0.23$ ), which in lay terms means that even if a difference does exist, it is **weak and not practically meaningful**. Overall, the data suggest that receiving Work Experience **did not make a measurable difference in wages** during the 2nd quarter after exit.

Training Services show a very different pattern. Youth who received training earned **much higher wages** in the 2nd quarter after exit, averaging \$7,290 compared to \$4,832 among those without training. This wage difference of about **\$2,458** was **statistically significant** ( $p < 0.001$ ), meaning the likelihood of this difference happening by chance is extremely low. The effect size was **moderate** (Cohen's  $d \approx 0.57$ ), which means the difference is **meaningful in real-world terms**, not just statistically. In plain language: **Training services were associated with substantially higher short-term wages**, and the size of the difference is large enough to matter for program outcomes.

When looking at youth who received both Work Experience and Training together, wages were **nearly identical** to those who did not receive both services (\$5,271 vs. \$5,228). The difference was extremely small and **nowhere near statistically significant** ( $p \approx 0.94$ ). The effect size was essentially zero (Cohen's  $d \approx 0.01$ ), meaning there is **no real difference at all** between the two groups. Put simply, receiving both Work Experience and Training together **did not increase wages** for youth in the 2nd quarter after exit. Any advantages seen with training alone did **not** carry over when combined with Work Experience.

## Overall Summary

Statewide analysis of Youth outcomes shows that **Work Experience (WEX)** was the most consistent driver of improved **short-term employment**. Youth who received WEX were significantly more likely to be employed in the 2nd quarter after exit compared to those who did not, although the effect size was small (difference small in practical terms). Training services on their own did not improve 2nd-quarter employment; however, when training and WEX were combined, the likelihood of being employed increased again, suggesting that training is most effective when paired with hands-on work experience. By contrast, **none of the services—WEX, training, or the combined package—showed a meaningful effect on 4th-quarter employment**. All differences were statistically non-significant with very small effect sizes, indicating that any advantages associated with these services faded by the longer-term follow-up period. **In practical terms, short-term employment gains from WEX did not**

**translate into sustained long-term employment benefits.** Longitudinal studies on youth receiving services earlier in their career pathway planning may yield different results.

Wage outcomes show a different pattern. **Work Experience did not improve wages** in the 2nd quarter after exit, and the small wage difference between groups was not statistically meaningful. The strongest wage impact came from **Training Services**, where youth who received training earned substantially higher wages—about \$2,400 more—than those who did not, and this difference was both statistically significant and moderate in size, indicating a real and meaningful economic benefit. However, these wage gains did **not** persist when training was combined with work experience. Youth who received both services earned nearly the same wages as those who did not, with virtually no difference between the groups. Taken together, the findings suggest that for wages, **training alone provides the strongest benefit**, while for employment, **work experience drives short-term gains**, and for long-term employment, youth ended up with similar results whether they received work experience, training, both, or neither.

## Sector Strategy outcomes

### ***Q1 Participation in training vs no training – does it have an impact on placement in employment in the 2nd quarter after exit in a high demand industry.***

The analysis was done for the whole state due to small Board samples. The CIP to NAICS connection was done by connecting CIP codes to SOC codes and then connect SOC codes to NAICS codes. There is no direct relation with CIP to NAICS.

Treatment variable: Received Training.

Other covariates tested used are (1)ELL status (2) Below Basic Skills (3)Cultural Barriers (4) Displaced Homemaker (5) Low Income status (6) Migrant Seasonal Farm Worker (7)Employment Status at Program Entry (8)Retained with the same Employer (9)Single Parent Status (10) NAICS code in the quarter one prior to program entry and was that NAICS code in a high-demand industry

A **high-demand industry** was defined using projected employment growth from 2022 to 2032. For each local workforce board, the three industries with the largest expected job growth (based on 3-digit NAICS codes) were identified as that board's high-demand sectors. To assess whether participants were being placed into these priority industries, each participant's employment in the **2nd quarter after exit** was examined. If the participant had a job during that quarter, the 3-digit NAICS code of their employer was compared with the board's list of top three high-demand industries. This allowed us to determine whether the

participant entered employment aligned with the industries projected to have the strongest future job opportunities in their local area.

### **Adult Program**

To understand whether training helps adults get a job in a **high-demand industry** two quarters after program exit, we ran a statistical model (logistic regression) using several participant characteristics. After testing all available factors, only three variables added meaningful information to the model: **training**, **prior work in a high-demand industry**, and **cultural barriers**. All other variables were removed because they did not improve the model's ability to predict outcomes. The results show that **training did not have a statistically significant effect** on whether a participant entered a high-demand industry (Wald  $\chi^2 = 1.07$ ,  $p = 0.30$ ). The odds ratio of 1.27 means that trained participants were only slightly more likely to enter a high-demand sector than those without training, but this difference was small and could have happened by chance. The factor that mattered most was whether the participant had **already worked in a high-demand industry before entering the program**. Those with prior high-demand experience were **6.37 times more likely** to be in a high-demand job after exit ( $p < .0001$ ). Cultural barriers showed a possible relationship but were not statistically strong ( $p = 0.11$ ). Overall, the analysis indicates that, for Adult program participants, **training by itself did not meaningfully increase the likelihood of entering a high-demand occupation**, and prior industry experience remains the strongest predictor of high-demand employment.

### **Dislocated Worker Program**

To evaluate whether **training helps Dislocated Workers secure a job in a high-demand industry** two quarters after exit, we ran a logistic regression model. Initially, several participant characteristics were considered, but through a stepwise selection process, many variables were removed because they **did not meaningfully improve the model's ability to predict outcomes**. These included are low income status, single-parent status, homemaker status, cultural barriers, below-basic skills, program entry employment status and migrant Seasonal Farm Worker

The final model retained four key variables: **training**, **English language learner status**, **prior work in a high-demand industry**, and sustaining employment with the same employer 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter and 4<sup>th</sup> quarter after exit. Importantly, while training was included in the model due to its central role in the evaluation question, it was **not statistically significant** (Wald  $\chi^2 = 0.011$ ,  $p = 0.915$ ), indicating

that participation in training **did not meaningfully affect the likelihood** of entering a high-demand industry.

The strongest predictors were prior work in a high-demand industry and English language learner status. Participants who had previously worked in a high-demand industry were **6 times more likely** to be in a high-demand job after exit (95% CI: 2.86–13.58,  $p < 0.0001$ ), and English language learners were **4 times more likely** (95% CI: 1.41–14.36,  $p = 0.011$ ). Additionally, sustaining employment with the same employer 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter and 4<sup>th</sup> quarter after exit increased the likelihood of high-demand employment by **2 times** (95% CI: 1.13–4.41,  $p = 0.021$ ).

Overall, these findings suggest that for Dislocated Workers, **prior experience in high-demand industries, language skills, and maintaining employer connections** are much stronger determinants of high-demand employment than training participation itself. Including training in the model allowed us to directly evaluate its effect, showing that, in this dataset, it **did not independently improve outcomes**.

### **Key Takeaways Across Both Programs**

1. **Training participation, while central to the evaluation question, did not independently increase the likelihood of entering a high-demand industry** in either population.
2. **Prior experience in a high-demand industry** was the strongest predictor of post-exit high-demand employment for both Adults and Dislocated Workers.
3. Additional factors such as **cultural barriers** (Adults) and **English proficiency or sustaining employment with the same employer 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter and 4<sup>th</sup> quarter after exit** (Dislocated Workers) also contributed but were secondary to prior experience.

***Q2: Among those who received training, which factors influence whether they are placed in a similar industry as their training?***

### **Adult Program**

We analyzed data from Adult participants who received training to understand what factors influence whether they are employed in an industry similar to the one they trained for in the second quarter after program exit. The model initially considered several characteristics, but through stepwise selection, only three variables remained in the final model: prior work in a high-demand industry, above-basic skill level, and sustaining employment with the same employer 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter and 4<sup>th</sup> quarter after exit. Other variables did not meaningfully improve the model and were therefore excluded.

The results suggest that **none of the three selected factors reached strong statistical significance**, meaning we cannot confidently say they independently predict similar-industry placement. However, the estimates show the following trends: participants who had prior experience in a high-demand industry were almost **twice** as likely to work in a similar industry as their training (odds ratio = 1.93, 95% CI: 0.91–4.12,  $p = 0.088$ ). Participants who sustaining employment with the same employer 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter and 4<sup>th</sup> quarter after exit were somewhat **more likely** to stay in a similar industry (odds ratio = 1.36, 95% CI: 0.87–2.14,  $p = 0.18$ ), while those with above basic skills tended to be almost **1.5 times likely** to work in a similar industry (odds ratio = 1.47, 95% CI: 0.83–2.6,  $p = 0.18$ ).

Overall, these findings indicate that for Adults who received training, **prior experience in a high-demand industry and sustaining employment with the same employer 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter and 4<sup>th</sup> quarter after exit may influence placement in a similar industry**, although the evidence is not strong enough to draw definitive conclusions. Including only these variables helps focus on factors that could matter, while simplifying the model for clearer interpretation.

### **Dislocated Worker Program**

We analyzed data from Dislocated Worker participants who received training to understand what factors influence whether they are employed in an industry similar to the one they trained for in the second quarter after program exit. The results indicate that **none of the variables had a statistically significant association with placement in a similar industry**. For example, participants who sustaining employment with the same employer 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter and 4<sup>th</sup> quarter after exit had slightly higher odds of being in a similar industry (odds ratio = 1.15, 95% CI: 0.64–2.06,  $p = 0.64$ ), while those with prior experience in a high-demand industry had an odds ratio of 1.71 (95% CI: 0.55–5.33,  $p = 0.36$ ). The rest of the factors; ELL status, Below Basic Skills, Cultural Barriers, Displaced Homemaker, Low Income status, Migrant Seasonal Farm Worker, Employment Status at Program Entry and Single Parent Status showed no meaningful predictive effect.

Overall, these findings suggest that, within this dataset, **none of the characteristics we examined clearly predict whether Dislocated Workers are placed in an industry similar to their training**. This may be due to small sample size ( $N=239$ ) and hence less robust dataset.

***Q3 Participation in training vs no training – does it have an impact on placement in employment in the 2nd quarter after exit***

### **Adult Program and Dislocated Worker Program**

We compared participants who received training with those who did not to see whether training was associated with better employment outcomes in the 2nd quarter after exit. The results show **no meaningful difference** between the two groups.

- Adults: Participants who completed training had an employment rate of 81%, compared to 79% for those who did not receive training.
- Dislocated Workers: Participants who completed training had an employment rate of 87%, compared to 89% for those who did not receive training.

This small difference was **not statistically significant**, meaning it is likely due to chance rather than the true effect of training. The training effect was extremely small, and the odds ratio suggests no clear advantage to either group. Based on this analysis, **receiving training did not have a measurable impact on whether participants were employed in the 2nd quarter after exit**. Employment outcomes were essentially the same for those who trained and those who did not.

#### ***Q4 Participation in training vs no training – does it have an impact on employment in the 4th quarter after exit***

Participants in the **Adult** program had significant improvements in employment in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter after exit if they got some sort of training. Adults who completed training had an employment rate of 80%, compared to 67% for those without training. Statistical tests confirm this is a **real difference** (and not random chance) and training clearly helped participants secure jobs longer-term. The odds of a participant in the Adult program to secure a job in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter after exit doubled when they received training as opposed to not. However, the story was different for participants in the **Dislocated Worker** program. There was no significant relationship between getting trained and being employed in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter after exit. In fact, both trained and untrained participants had high employment rates (87% vs 84% respectively), and hence the difference was minimum.

#### ***Q5 Participation in training vs no training – is there a difference in 2nd quarter wages***

Among **Adult** participants, training had a clear impact on wages in the 2nd quarter after exit. Adults who completed training earned an average of **\$11,653**, compared to **\$7,291** for those who did not participate in training—a difference

of **\$4,362**. In other words, training participants on average earned **60%** more than their non-training participants. Statistical tests confirm this difference is highly significant, and the effect is substantial. These results suggest that training not only helps adults find jobs but also helps them secure **higher-paying employment** shortly after leaving the program.

Among **Dislocated Worker** participants, training did **not affect wages** in the 2nd quarter after exit. Participants who completed training earned an average of **\$10,661**, while those who did not earn **\$10,520**—a difference of only **\$141**, which is not statistically significant. These results suggest that, unlike for Adult participants, training for Dislocated Workers **did not lead to higher early post-exit earnings**.

***Q6 Participation in Wagner-Peyser program (Not in Title I Adult or DW program) – does it have an impact on placement in employment in the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter after exit in a high demand industry.***

We examined whether participation in the Wagner-Peyser program (exclusive of Adult or Dislocated Worker programs) influenced the likelihood of being employed in a high-demand industry in the second quarter after exit. The model controlled for participant characteristics including English language proficiency (ELL), basic skill level, cultural barriers, homemaker status, low-income status, seasonal/migrant farm worker status, program entry employment status, prior employment in a high-demand industry, retention with the same employer, and single parent status.

Results indicated that **Non-Wagner-Peyser participants had higher odds of placement in a high-demand industry**. Specifically, individuals **not in Wagner-Peyser were 1.6 times more likely** of being employed in a high-demand industry compared to Wagner-Peyser participants, after accounting for other factors in the model. **Prior employment in a high-demand industry** during the first quarter before program entry was the strongest predictor of post-exit placement. Participants with such prior experience were over **10 times** more likely to be employed in a high-demand industry after exit compared to those without prior high-demand industry experience.

Other participant characteristics were also significant predictors:

- Participants who were **English Language Learners (ELL)** had lower odds of placement, suggesting language barriers may limit access to high-demand occupations.



- **Cultural barriers** were associated with higher odds of placement (OR = 1.63), potentially reflecting targeted support or specialized programs addressing these participants' needs.
- **Retention with the same employer** and **being a single parent** also modestly increased the odds of placement (OR = 1.16 and 1.30, respectively).

Overall, prior high-demand industry experience, non-participation in the Wagner-Peyser program, and select participant characteristics emerged as key predictors of post-exit placement outcomes.

## School Status at Program entry outcomes

**Evaluation Question:** HS Diploma VS No HS Diploma – Does it lead to better employment and wage outcomes after exit?

This analysis was conducted at the state level for program year 2024. Analyses at the individual board level did not yield statistically significant results, due to small sample sizes within each board.

## WIOA Title I Adult Cohort

### Employed in the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter after exit

Most participants in the program had a high school diploma (330 out of 355), while a small number did not (25 participants). The results show that 79% of participants with a diploma were employed in the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter after exit, compared with 88% of those without a diploma. While it may seem surprising that those without a diploma had slightly higher employment, the difference was small.

To test whether this difference was meaningful, we used a chi-square test, which checks whether there is a statistically significant association between two categorical variables. The test gave a chi-square value of 1.08 with a p-value of 0.30. Because the p-value is greater than 0.05, we conclude that there is no statistically significant association between having a high school diploma and being employed in the second quarter after exit.

We also calculated odds ratios, which describe the odds of being employed. The odds ratio of 1.90 suggests that participants with a diploma had slightly higher odds of not being employed compared with those without a diploma.

In plain language, these results suggest that having a high school diploma at entry did not clearly affect employment outcomes in this sample. The small

number of participants without a diploma makes it harder to detect differences, and the findings indicate that other factors may play a larger role in determining employment after program exit.

### **Employed in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter after exit**

This analysis examined whether having a high school diploma at program entry affected participants' employment in the fourth quarter after exiting the program. Most participants had a high school diploma (390 out of 422), while a small number did not (32 participants). Overall, 74% of participants with a diploma were employed, compared with 81% of those without a diploma.

Statistical tests, including a chi-square test ( $\chi^2(1, N=422) = 0.75, p = 0.39$ ) and Fisher's Exact Test ( $p = 0.53$ ), show that this difference is not statistically significant. Odds ratios and relative risks also indicate only a small, non-significant difference between the groups.

In plain language, having a high school diploma at program entry did not clearly influence employment outcomes in the fourth quarter after exit. The small number of participants without a diploma makes it difficult to draw strong conclusions, and these findings suggest that other factors may play a larger role in determining employment after program exit.

### **Wages in the 2nd quarter after exit**

This analysis examined whether having a high school diploma at program entry affected participants' wages in the second quarter after exiting the program. Participants with a diploma had a higher average wage (\$10,052) compared with those without a diploma (\$7,323).

A t-test that accounts for unequal variances (Satterthwaite method) showed that this difference is **statistically significant** ( $p = 0.0245$ ). The difference in wages is approximately \$2,729, with a confidence interval ranging from \$372 to \$5,085. The effect size (Cohen's  $d = 0.39$ ) indicates a small-to-moderate practical difference.

In plain language, participants with a high school diploma at program entry **tended to earn more** in the second quarter after exit, and this difference is meaningful despite variability in wages.

### **Overall Summary for Adult:**

Most participants in the program had a high school diploma, while a small number did not. Employment outcomes in the second and fourth quarters after

leaving the program were similar for both groups: 79% of participants with a diploma and 88% of those without were employed in the second quarter, and 74% versus 81% in the fourth quarter. Statistical tests show that these differences are **not significant**, meaning having a diploma at entry did **not clearly affect employment**. However, wages in the second quarter were higher for participants with a diploma, averaging \$10,052 compared with \$7,323 for those without. This difference of about \$2,729 was **statistically significant** ( $p = 0.0245$ ) with a small-to-moderate effect, indicating that participants with a diploma tended to earn more, even though individual wages varied widely. Overall, education level at program entry did **not strongly affect employment**, but it **did have an impact on earnings**.

## Dislocated Worker Cohort

### Employed in the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter after exit

For the **Dislocated Worker program cohort**, most participants had a high school diploma, while only a few did not. In the second quarter after leaving the program, 87% of participants with a diploma were employed, compared with 100% of those without a diploma. Statistical tests, including Fisher's Exact Test ( $p = 0.60$ ), indicate that this difference is **not statistically significant**. The very small number of participants without a diploma makes it difficult to draw strong conclusions. Overall, having a high school diploma at entry did **not clearly affect employment outcomes** in the second quarter after exit for the Dislocated Worker cohort.

### Employed in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter after exit

Most participants had a high school diploma, while only a few did not. In the fourth quarter after leaving the program, 87% of participants with a diploma were employed, compared with 85% of those without a diploma. Statistical tests, including Fisher's Exact Test ( $p = 0.69$ ), indicate that this difference is **not statistically significant**. Odds ratios and relative risks also show **no meaningful difference** between groups. Overall, having a high school diploma at entry did **not affect employment outcomes** in the fourth quarter for the Dislocated Worker cohort.

### Wages in the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter after exit

Participants with a high school diploma had slightly higher average wages in the second quarter after leaving the program (\$10,668) compared with those without a diploma (\$9,355). Statistical tests show that this difference is **not statistically significant** ( $p = 0.53$ ), and the effect size is small (Cohen's  $d = 0.22$ ). This

suggests that, for this cohort, having a high school diploma at entry **did not meaningfully affect wages** in the second quarter, though participants with a diploma tended to earn a little more on average.

### **Overall Summary for Dislocated Worker:**

For the **Dislocated Worker program cohort**, most participants had a high school diploma, while only a few did not. Employment outcomes in the second and fourth quarters after leaving the program were similar for both groups: 87% of participants with a diploma and 100% of those without were employed in the second quarter, and 87% versus 85% in the fourth quarter. Statistical tests show that these differences are **not significant**, meaning having a diploma at entry did **not clearly affect employment**. Wages in the second quarter were slightly higher for participants with a diploma (\$10,668) compared with those without (\$9,355), but this difference was **not statistically significant** ( $p = 0.53$ ) and the effect size was small (Cohen's  $d = 0.22$ ). Overall, for this cohort, having a high school diploma at program entry **did not meaningfully influence employment or earnings**, although participants with a diploma tended to earn a little more on average.

### Wagner-Peyser Cohort

For the **Wagner-Peyser program cohort**, most participants had a high school diploma (28,485 people), while a smaller number did not (2,719 people). In the second quarter after leaving the program, **76% of participants with a diploma were employed** (21,702 people), compared with **73% of those without a diploma** (1,993 people). The difference in employment did not occur by random chance. However, statistical tests show that while the difference is real, the size of that difference is small. In other words, the practical impact is limited. The **odds of being employed for someone without a diploma are 0.86 times the odds for someone with a diploma** — in other words, participants with a diploma have a slightly higher chance of employment.

The same narrative holds true for employment in the fourth quarter after exit. most participants had a high school diploma (25,875 people), while a smaller number did not (2,397 people). In the fourth quarter after leaving the program, about 74% of participants with a diploma were employed (19,192 people), compared with 70% of those without a diploma (1,676 people). Statistical tests show this difference is **unlikely to have occurred by chance** (chi-square  $< 0.0001$ ), meaning there is a real association between having a diploma and employment, mainly because of the large sample size. Similar to the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter employment results, the size of that difference is small.

In everyday terms, this means having a high school diploma is associated with a **small but measurable increase in employment in both 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> quarter**, but most participants in both groups were employed. So while education helps a little, most participants find jobs whether or not they have a diploma.

In regard to wages, in the second quarter after leaving the program, participants with a diploma earned an average of **\$10,899**, compared with **\$10,294** for those without a diploma. Statistical testing shows that this difference is **statistically significant** ( $t = 2.93$ ,  $p = 0.0034$  for pooled test;  $t = 2.42$ ,  $p = 0.0156$  for unequal variances), which means the observed difference is unlikely to be due to chance, largely because the sample is very large. However, the **effect size, Cohen's  $d = 0.062$** , is extremely small. In plain language, this means that although participants with a diploma earned slightly more on average, the **real-world difference in wages is minimal** — the typical person with a diploma does not earn noticeably more than someone without a diploma based on this analysis of PY24 WIOA in Iowa.

The **standard deviation** is also large (over \$8,600 for diploma holders and over \$10,800 for non-diploma participants), meaning there is a lot of variability in wages within each group. Some participants earn much more or much less than the average, so individual outcomes vary widely.

In summary, having a high school diploma is associated with a **slight increase in wages** in the second quarter after exit, but the practical impact is very small and many participants earn similar amounts regardless of diploma status.

## Conclusion

Across the Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Wagner-Peyser program cohorts, most participants had a high school diploma at program entry, while a smaller number did not. Employment rates in both the second and fourth quarters after exit were generally high for all participants, and having a diploma made little difference—most participants found jobs regardless of education level. Wages in the second quarter after exit tended to be slightly higher for diploma holders, but the differences were modest and the practical impact was small, with substantial variation among individual earnings.

Overall, these findings suggest that while a high school diploma may provide a small advantage in employment and earnings, other factors—such as work experience, program participation, or local labor market conditions—may also influence participants' outcomes after program exit.

## Appendix 4: DW Formula Allocation Review

### DW Formula Allocation Review Summary and Recommendations for Update

Program Year 2024 (PY24) marked a significant year of system transformation and UI modernization in Iowa. These efforts led to upgraded technology, increased efficiency, enhanced data collection, improved security, and more robust reporting within IowaWORKS. As a result, Iowa initiated a review of the Dislocated Worker (DW) formula allocation to align with these system improvements.

#### Formula Review Background

The review began with an evaluation of the six factors used to allocate DW funds annually, as required by WIOA. After accounting for the Governor's reserve (WIOA §133(a)(1) and (a)(2)), the remaining funds are distributed equally across the following six factors:

1. Insured Unemployment Data – For the most recent calendar year, the monthly average number of individuals who were receiving unemployment insurance.
2. Unemployment Concentrations Data – Based on the most recent calendar year, local areas with unemployment rates above the state average.
3. Plant Closings & Mass Layoff Data – The number of employees during the most recent calendar year that were impacted by a mass layoff or plant closing.
4. Declining Industries Data – During the most recent 24-months, the total number of jobs lost in the most recent four quarters as compared to the previous four quarters.
5. Farmer-Rancher Economic Hardship Data – During the most recent calendar year, the number of farmers/ranchers who have delinquent loans as reported by U. S. Department of Agriculture.
6. Long-Term Unemployment Data – For the most recent calendar year, the monthly average number of individuals who meet the definition of long-term unemployed. An individual is considered to be long-term unemployed if he/she was out of work for 15 weeks out of a continuous 26-week period of time.

Several modernization efforts and policy changes prompted the review:

- Legislative changes effective July 3, 2022, reduced the maximum UI benefit duration from 26 to 16 weeks and introduced new work search and wage suitability requirements.
- UI system updates affected the availability of data used in the long-term unemployment factor.
- Farmer-Rancher Hardship data, while important, impacts a small population and introduces high variability due to low counts and weather-related events (e.g., floods, tornadoes, high winds). This raised concerns about its weight in the formula.

Given these developments, Iowa determined it was an appropriate time to reassess the formula's structure and data sources to ensure continued accuracy, fairness, and alignment with current conditions.

#### Stakeholder Engagement and Review Process

To explore opportunities for modernization and better alignment with current data availability, Iowa convened four stakeholder meetings. These sessions focused on:

- Reviewing existing formula factors and weights
- Assessing data availability and reliability
- Exploring alternative or proxy data sources

Stakeholder input was instrumental in shaping proposed updates to the formula.

#### Summary of Formula Factor Review and Adjustments

1. Insured Unemployment - A reliable, standard data source across states, based on county-level UI claims.

Action: Retain at 20% weight.

2. Unemployment Concentrations - Also a reliable, standard measure reflecting areas with above-average unemployment.

Action: Retain at 20% weight.

3. Plant Closings and Mass Layoffs - Federal mass layoff data is no longer available. Iowa uses proxy data from WARN and non-WARN Rapid Response events reported by local areas.

- Federal WARNs: 50+ employees or 500/33% of workforce laid off

- State WARNs: 25+ employees
- Non-WARNs: Smaller events still triggering Rapid Response services  
Action: Adjust weight to 15% due to moderate reliability (due to reliance on reporting by business) of proxy data.

4. Declining Industries - Based on QCEW data, which tracks job losses using employer-reported data and targeted surveys. Reliable and available at the county level.

Action: Retain at 20% weight.

5. Farmer-Rancher Economic Hardship - Important in Iowa's rural economy but affects a small population and introduces high variability.

Action: Reduce weight to 5% to better reflect actual engagement with workforce services.

6. Long-Term Unemployment - Original data source is no longer available. Iowa will use UI benefit exhaustee (final payment) data as a proxy. Testing shows minimal impact on formula outcomes.

Action: Retain at 20% weight using proxy data.

Consideration of a 7th Factor: Dislocated Worker Enrollments

Iowa explored adding a new factor based on prior-year DW enrollments to encourage appropriate use of DW funds and increase enrollments. A 5% weight showed promising results. However, after stakeholder discussions, Iowa opted to revisit this idea in the future. For now, enrollment trends will be addressed through monitoring and oversight rather than formula changes.