

Southwestern Workforce Development Board

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act

Comprehensive Four-Year Title I Plan

July 1, 2024 - June 30, 2028

North Carolina Department of Commerce
Division of Workforce Solutions
313 Chapanoke Road, Suite 120
4316 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, NC 27699-4316

ffddfdd

Introduction and Instructions

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) requires each Local Area Workforce Development Board (WDB) to develop and submit, in partnership with the chief local elected official (CLEO), a comprehensive four-year plan.

The WIOA Comprehensive Four-Year Title I Plan is to provide current information and be effective July 1, 2024 - June 30, 2028 and will include required current local policies. The Local Area Plan will support the alignment strategy described in the 2024-2025 NC Unified State Plan in accordance with WIOA Section 102(b)(1)(E), and otherwise be consistent with the NC Unified State Plan. North Carolina Governor Roy Cooper's mission is to ensure North Carolinians are better educated, healthier, and have more money in their pockets so that they can live more abundant, purposeful lives. The cornerstone to achieving this goal is to help people get good-paying jobs to support themselves and their families. Through NC Job Ready, Governor Cooper's workforce development initiative, North Carolina is working to build a stronger and better workforce. NC Job Ready is built on three core principles: education and skills attainment are the foundation to a strong and resilient workforce; an employer-led workforce development system is key to the growth of a highly skilled and job ready workforce; and local innovation is critical to a dynamic and effective workforce system. In addition, Local Area WDBs shall comply with WIOA Section 108 in the preparation and submission of the plan.

The NCWorks Commission developed the strategic vision and mission for North Carolina's Workforce System based on Governor Cooper's NC Job Ready Initiative. This vision is to build a job-ready workforce to strengthen North Carolina companies, attract new businesses, and ensure our state can adapt to a changing economy. The mission of the state's workforce development system is to ensure North Carolina has an innovative, relevant, effective, and efficient workforce development system that develops adaptable, work-ready, skilled talent to meet the current and future needs of workers and businesses to achieve and sustain economic prosperity, and to ensure North Carolinians are ready for the jobs of today and tomorrow by increasing access to education and skills training, fostering employer leadership to prepare workers, and supporting and scaling local innovation.

Plans are reviewed by the Division of Workforce Solutions and NCWorks Commission staff. Upon completion of Plan reviews and the resolution of any concerns, as applicable, fully compliant Plans will be given Final Approval. Approval letters are distributed through Workforce Information System Enterprise (WISE). Local WDBs must have a compliant workforce board in place to receive Final Plan Approval and distribution of formula WIOA program year funding. [WIOA Section 108(e)]

Federal and State Requirements for Local Administration of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act

Local Area WDBs should reference the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, Public Law 113-128, enacted July 22, 2014. Additional information is available at the U.S. Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration website: <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/eta>.

North Carolina policy information is available at: <https://www.commerce.nc.gov/jobs-training/workforce-professionals-tools-resources/workforce-policies>. Local Area WDBs should reference the North Carolina WIOA Unified State Plan to be posted March 2024.

Local Area Plan Submission and Due Date

The Local Area Plan must be submitted through Workforce Information System Enterprise (WISE), the Division's web-based financial system.

**The Program Year 2024 - 2028 Plan is Due:
May 1, 2024**

Each attachment must be clearly labeled in either Word or PDF format. Forms requiring original signatures may use DocuSign® (or similar) and may be uploaded in WISE.

If original signatures are obtained, forms may be mailed (and must be uploaded in WISE) to the Local Area WDB's assigned Planner at:

Division of Workforce Solutions
313 Chapanoke Road, Suite 120
4316 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, NC 27699-4316

I. Local Area Workforce Development Board (WDB) Overview

The Local Area WDB Overview provides important contact information that is used throughout the Division of Workforce Solutions (DWS). It is important that this section remain current during the Program Year. Updates should be submitted to the Local Area WDB's assigned DWS Planner when changes occur.

In the first section and anywhere else in the Local Area Plan, please include the appropriate salutation along with Titles such as Dr., The Honorable, Chairperson, and Judge.

1. Provide the **Local Area WDB's** official (legal) name as it appears on the local Consortium Agreement established to administer the WIOA or, if not a Consortium, in the formal request for Local Area designation.

Southwestern Workforce Development Consortium

- If the Local Area is a Consortium, attach a copy of the current Consortium Agreement.
 - Name document: **Southwestern Consortium Agreement**
- If the Local Area is not a Consortium, attach a copy of the formal request for Local Area designation.
 - Name document: **Local Area WDB Name Local Area designation letter**
- If the Local Area WDB officially changed its name, please attach a copy of the Status of Incorporation, attorney's letter, or other document.

2. List the counties served by the Local Area WDB.

Cherokee, Clay, Graham, Haywood, Jackson, Macon, and Swain Counties.

3. Provide the name, title, organization name, address, phone number, and email address of the **Local Area WDB Director**.

Name: David Garrett

Title: Workforce Development Director
Salutation: Mr.

Organization Name: : Southwestern NC Planning & Economic Development Commission

Address: 125 Bonnie Lane Sylva, NC 28779

Phone Number: 828-586-1962

Email Address: david@regiona.org

4. Provide the name, elected title, local government affiliation, address, phone number, and email address of the **Chief Local Elected Official (CLEO)**.

Name: Jacob Nelms	Elected Title: Chair, Graham County Commissioners Salutation: The Honorable
Government Affiliation: Graham County	Address: 12 North Main St Robbinsville, NC 28771
Phone Number: 828-479-7961	Email Address: jacob.nelms@grahamcounty.org

5. Provide the name, title, business name, address, phone number, and email address of the **individual authorized to receive official mail for the Chief Local Elected Official (CLEO)**, if different than question 4.

Name: Click here to enter text.	Title & Salutation: Click here to enter text.
Business Name: Click here to enter text.	Address: Click here to enter text.
Phone Number: Click here to enter text.	Email Address: Click here to enter text.

6. Provide the name, address, phone number and email address of the **Administrative/Fiscal Agent responsible for disbursing Local Area WIOA grant funds**. This is the entity responsible for the disbursal of grant funds. [WIOA Sections 107(d)(12)(B)(i)(III) and 108(b)(15)].

Name: Ryan Scaggs	Title: Chief Financial Officer Salutation: Mr.
Organization Name: Southwestern NC Planning & Economic Development Commission	Address: 125 Bonnie Lane Sylva, NC 28779
Phone Number: 828-586-1962	Email Address: rscaggs@regiona.org

7. Provide the name, title, organization name, address, phone number and email address of the **Administrative/Fiscal Agent’s signatory official**.

Name: Russ Harris	Title: Executive Director Salutation: Mr.
Organization Name: Southwestern NC Planning & Economic Development Commission	Address: 125 Bonnie Lane Sylva, NC 28779
Phone Number: 828-586-1962	Email Address: russ@regiona.org

8. Attach a copy of the **Administrative Entity/Fiscal Agent’s organizational chart** with an ‘effective as of date’.

- Name document: **SWC Organizational Chart 2024**

9. Provide the **Administrative Entity’s Unique Entity Identifier (UEI)** number and assurance that the ‘System for Award Management’ (SAM) status is current. Administrative Entities must register at least annually on the SAM website <https://sam.gov/content/home> to receive Federal funding [required by Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) Section 4.11 and Section 52.204-7].

10. Provide the name of the **Local Area WDB's Equal Opportunity Officer** who shall be responsible for assuring that discrimination does not occur in its programs or projects. (CPS 10-2021, Change 1)

Ryan Scaggs
Chief Financial Officer
125 Bonnie Lane
Sylva, NC 28779
828-586-1962

- Composition of the Local Area WDBs shall comply with WIOA Section 107. Local Area WDB Membership Requirements have been provided as a reference at [Appendix D](#).

11. Provide each **Local Area WDB members'** name, business title, business name and address, phone number and email address on the provided form. The first block is reserved to identify the Local Area WDB chairperson (*form provided*). Indicate all required representation and indicate if vacant. [WIOA Section 107(b)(2)].

- Name document: **Southwestern-PY24 WIOA Workforce Development Board Members**
- If a Local Area WDB list is not in compliance, please provide the current list and state the expected date that a compliant list will be provided (detailing vacant positions). Do not change required category names except to clarify those representing multiple categories. When determining the total number of members, representatives serving in more than one category must be counted and listed only once on the form. Identify any names representing a dual category with an asterisk (*).

Notes:

- *Please complete the entire form. Check the block on the last page of the form certifying compliance with required WIOA Local Area WDB business nomination process.*
- *Representatives with expired terms will not be included in the counted list of Board members. Board member terms must stated in a month/date/year format.*
- *Plans that do not have a compliant workforce Board will not receive Final Approval. Formula funds will not be awarded until the Local Area WDB has a compliant workforce Board. Exceptions are allowed only when realignment is occurring in the upcoming program year.*

12. Briefly describe how the Local Area WDB works with local elected officials to ensure viable local business representatives are appointed to the Local Area WDB in compliance with WIOA Section 107.

SWDB Staff attend Southwestern Commission meetings to network with local elected officials and stay informed of local area events. The Director of the SWDB participates in orientations the COG organizes for newly elected leaders in the region.

The Chief Local Elected Official must establish by-laws consistent with applicable local procedures, state, and federal laws to include WIOA Final Rules and Regulations 679.310(g). The Local Area WDB shall submit by-laws that clearly demonstrate all WIOA and North Carolina required elements described in [Appendix A](#). Additional by-laws guidance/template and electronic meeting formats have been provided in [Appendix B](#) and [Appendix C](#).

13. Attach the Local Area WDB By-Laws including date adopted/amended. By-Laws must include the required elements found in [Appendix A](#).

- Name document: **Southwestern WDB Bylaws**

14. To demonstrate that the attached Local Area WDB By-Laws comply, complete By-Laws Required Elements – Crosswalk chart (form provided).

Sunshine Provision – The Local Area WDB shall make available to the public, on a regular basis through electronic means and open meetings, information regarding the activities of the Local Area WDB, including information regarding the Local Area Plan prior to submission of the Local Area Plan, and regarding membership, the designation and certification of one-stop operators, and the award of grants or contracts to eligible providers of youth workforce investment activities, and on request, minutes of formal meetings of the Local Area WDB. [WIOA Section 107(e)]

15. Describe how the Local Area WDB will make copies of the proposed Local Area Plan available to the public. If stating the Local Area Plan will be on the Local Area WDB website, provide link, as well as individual’s contact information for distribution of Plan. [WIOA Section 108(d) and 108(b)(20)]

SWDB will make the plan available for a 30-day public comment period through both electronic means and notification will be sent to local news media (Sylva Herald). There will be a notice posted on the Workforce Development page of the Southwestern Commission (www.regiona.org) website indicating that the plan is available for review and providing instructions on how to request the plan. Those who have comments can send them directly to the SWDB Director via email (david@regiona.org), or in-person at 125 Bonnie Lane, Sylva, NC 28779.

Public Comment – The Local Area WDB shall make copies of the proposed Local Area Plan available to the public through electronic and other means, such as public hearings and local news media; allow for public comment not later than the end of the 30-day period beginning on the date the proposed Local Area Plan is made available; and, include with submission of the Local Area Plan any comments that represent disagreement with the Local Area Plan. [WIOA Section 108(d) and 108(b)(20)]

16. Attach a copy of the Local Area WDB’s organizational chart with an ‘effective as of date.’ Include position titles, names, and contact information.

- Name document: **Southwestern WDB Organizational Chart-effective 03-1-2024**

17. Complete the following chart for the PY2024 Local Area WDB’s planned meeting schedule to include, date, time, location, and virtual link (if applicable). (Expand form as needed)

Date	Time	Location (include address, room # and virtual link)
September 11, 2024	10 am	125 Bonnie Lane, Sylva, NC 28779 and virtual option via Zoom
December 11, 2024	10 am	125 Bonnie Lane, Sylva, NC 28779 and virtual option via Zoom
March 5, 2025	10 am	125 Bonnie Lane, Sylva, NC 28779 and virtual option via Zoom
June 4, 2025	10 am	125 Bonnie Lane, Sylva, NC 28779 and virtual option via Zoom

Note: All Local Area WDB meetings shall be held in accessible facilities. All materials and discussions should be available in an accessible format upon request as indicated under North Carolina specific requirements detailed in [Appendix A](#).

The Comprehensive Four-Year Plan is developed in partnership with the chief local elected official and approved by the Local Area WDB. This approval should be reflected in the Local Area WDB meeting minutes as an Action item.

18. Provide the Month and Date of the Local Area WDB meeting that the Comprehensive Four-Year Plan was approved. Attach a copy of the Local Area WDB minutes that reflect this action item.

- Name document: **Southwestern Plan Approval Minutes.**

Note: The SWDB plans to approve the 2024 Plan at the regularly scheduled board meeting on 6/5/2024. Minutes will be submitted after that time. A 30 day public comment period will be available in April of 2024.

19. Attach a copy of the signed ‘Certification Regarding Debarment, Suspension, and other Responsibility Matters – Primary Covered Transactions’ Form (*form provided*). [Required by the Regulations implementing Executive Order 12549, Debarment and Suspension, 2 CFR 180, participants’ responsibilities.]

- Name document: **Southwestern Certification Regarding Debarment- 2024**

Document must have the original signature or DocuSign® (or similar) of the Administrative Entity signatory official. If using original signatures, mail the signed Certification form to the assigned DWS Planner at:

N.C. Division of Workforce Solutions
313 Chapanoke Road, Suite 120
4316 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, NC 27699-4316

20. Submit the original Local Area WDB and Chief Local Elected Official (CLEO) Signatory Page (*form provided*), bearing the original signatures of the CLEO(s) and the Local Area WDB Chairperson, and attach a copy of the signed document if not using DocuSign® (or similar).

- Name document: **Southwestern Signatory Page-2024**

If using original signatures, mail the Signatory Page to the assigned DWS Planner at:

N.C. Division of Workforce Solutions
313 Chapanoke Road, Suite 120
4316 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, NC 27699-4316

II. Local Area WDB Strategic Planning

*The Local Area WDB is required to keep the Local Area Plan up to date and adaptable as events and funding changes occur, which may require local area responses. Local Area Plans will require an annual modification. North Carolina has implemented integrated services delivery with an enhanced emphasis on regional planning and services. This approach is consistent with federal, state, and regional initiatives and opportunities. North Carolina's workforce development system includes businesses, organizations, agencies, employed and unemployed persons, training and educational institutions, adults, and youth. To enhance services to all constituents, aligning workforce development planning and services with regional labor markets is both effective and productive. North Carolina Governor Roy Cooper's NC Job Ready Initiative is built on three core principles: **skills and education attainment** are the foundation to a strong and resilient workforce; an **employer-led** workforce development system is key to the growth of a highly skilled and job ready workforce; and **local innovation** is critical to a dynamic and effective workforce system.*

At the local level, the Local Area WDBs are creatively working to address the new challenges of job growth and expansions. Employers in Local Area WDB areas continue to have a shortage of lower-wage, entry-level and middle-skilled level workers. As a Local Area WDB and workforce system, Local Area WDBs are leveraging resources and engaging in new partnerships that include the business community, economic developers, chambers of commerce, NCWorks Career Centers, community colleges, public schools, and community partners. Working together, Local Area WDBs are paving the way for an even stronger economy through sector partnerships and career pathways initiatives.

1. Provide a description of the Local Area WDB's strategic vision and goals for preparing an in-demand industry-driven, educated, and skilled workforce, including youth and individuals with barriers to employment. Include goals relating to the performance accountability measures based on primary indicators of performance and how it aligns with regional economic growth, industry sectors, and economic self-sufficiency. [WIOA Section 108(b)(1)(E)]

The strategic vision of the Southwestern Workforce Development Board (SWDB) is to create an integrated, seamless workforce system responsive to the changing needs of the economy for all our customers, employers, youth, adults, veterans, individuals with barriers, disabled, re-entry, recovery, and other job seekers. We reach this goal by coordinating programs among workforce partners and supporting skill and educational pathways to provide employers with the trained workers they need to support economic growth. In addition, we collaborate with partners to provide citizens in the region opportunities to become self-sufficient. The SWDB will review the indicators of performance on a regular basis to ensure success with our performance accountability measures.

2. Provide a description of how the Local Area WDB, working with the entities carrying out core programs, will expand access to employment, training, education and supportive services for eligible individuals, particularly eligible individuals with barriers to employment. Include how the Local Area WDB will facilitate the development of career pathways and co-enrollment, as appropriate, in core programs, and

improve access to activities leading to a recognized postsecondary credential including a credential that is an industry-recognized certificate or certification, portable, and stackable. Include how these strategies will be a result of regional economic and employer-driven priorities. [WIOA Section 108(b)(3)]

The Southwestern Workforce Development Board (SWDB) will continue to expand on its partnerships with the Departments of Social Services, Vocational Rehabilitation, and the Community College Adult Education & Literacy program providers to make sure eligible individuals with barriers to employment receive the training, education, and the supportive services they need for employment. This is accomplished by customer referrals through the NCWorks Career Centers to appropriate supportive service providers and vice-versa. The SWDB co-enrolls all new center customers in Wagner-Peyser and WIOA career services. NCWorks Career Center Staff assess and refer customers to appropriate core programs as well as enroll customers in short- or long-term training programs through the community college system that leads to recognized credentials and employment. As additional grant funds are available, the SWDB may establish specialized staff in the region to support either the recovery and re-entry population for the purpose of getting this vulnerable population back into the workforce and/or assisting with the development of recovery friendly workplaces. The SWDB will continue to facilitate opportunities to bring NCWorks and workforce partners together with employers to discuss training needs and create or adjust career pathways to meet the needs of employers. In addition, SWDB Staff will be engaged in the myFutureNC Local Educational Attainment Collaborative with Achieve HIGHTS, as well as ncIMPACT for Our State Our Work Opportunity Youth. Due to the closure of Pactiv Evergreen impacting over 1,000 employees, the SWDB received a National Dislocated Worker Grant in effect through mid-2025 for career services, occupational skills training, and on the job training.

3. Considering the analyses described in the Regional Strategic Planning Section III, describe strategies to work with the entities that carry out the core programs that align resources available to the Local Area to achieve the strategic vision and goals. [WIOA Section 108(b)(1)(F)]

The core strategy is to work closely with the economic development staff at the Southwestern Commission Council of Government through the Community & Economic Development Department and MountainWest Partnership focusing on sectors prevalent in the region.

An additional strategy in working with additional area partners to carry out core programs is for SWDB Staff to serve on advisory boards of the 3 community colleges and 3 small business centers as well as participate on advisory councils with County CTE programs. Likewise, higher education partners throughout our 7-county area are invited to participate in quarterly SWDB meetings. These opportunities ensure limited resources and capacity are focused and used wisely in sector planning.

4. Provide a description of strategies concerning maximizing coordination of services provided under the Wagner-Peyser Act and services provided in the Local Area through the NCWorks Career Center system. Include how this coordination of services improves service delivery and avoids duplication of services. [WIOA Section 108(b)(12)]

The NCWorks Career Centers in the SWDB region continuously partner with multiple organizations and resources throughout the service area to promote provision of services that will maximize efficiency while

minimizing duplication for both jobseekers and employers. This strategic approach is an intentional effort led by the SWDB in coordination with the NCWorks Career Centers under their purview through regular communication, policy and plan implementation and through continuous improvement efforts utilizing customer feedback to mold and develop strategies.

Primary examples of this coordination include, but are not limited to:

- Co-enrollment for dually eligible WIOA and Wagner-Peyser customers: Given that Wagner-Peyser Employment services serve as a foundational element for all jobseekers, the SWDB, NCWorks Career Centers and all applicable WIOA service provision staff insure that customers are enrolled in Wagner-Peyser services and provided individualized assessment accordingly to insure maximization of appropriate referrals, leveraging of resources and assistance that will promote jobseeker employability. This also ensures that jobseekers are aware of various opportunities for career planning, training options, and appropriate referral to other partner entities (such as Vocational Rehabilitation, local community based organizations, community service organizations, or other as appropriate). This strategy also promotes regular communication with all SWDB contracted WIOA providers and Wagner-Peyser staff to attempt to seamlessly serve customers in their career planning and goals. These efforts are further enhanced through co-location and regular interaction of WIOA and Wagner-Peyser staff to allow customers to access services accordingly.*
- Co-enrollment for TAA eligible individuals and WIOA Dislocated Worker programs/services: As per USDOL guidelines, the SWDB works in conjunction with NCWorks TAA Staff to promote dual enrollment for individuals who are eligible under a Trade Act Assistance Petition and also meet eligibility for WIOA Dislocated Worker services. This enables both the assigned TAA case manager and WIOA Dislocated Worker case manager to better partner in accessing resources available through the auspices of these programs and to minimize duplication for customers. This also means better utilization of resources to minimize duplication, efficiently leverage other resources that might be available (depending on the individual's goals and desired outcomes) and to hopefully maximize and expedite each individual in reaching their employment goals.*
- Wagner Peyser registration for individuals served through National Dislocated Worker Grant: In 2023, the SWDB was awarded funding through the USDOL to serve individuals impacted by the announced closure of Pactiv Evergreen located in the region. Wagner-Peyser staff continue to work closely with WIOA case managers and other SWDB staff to promote services and opportunities afforded through utilization of National Dislocated Worker Grant funding. This includes co-location in the NCWorks Career Centers, multiple hiring events, community information sessions, continuous partnership and collaboration and other efforts to inform the community about training and employment opportunities for all affected workers and their families. Furthermore, these services are embedded as part of the NCWorks Career Center offerings to help identify eligible individuals, explain various options and to seamlessly assist and support customers in accessing applicable services accordingly. This is also evident through partnership and collaboration to inform employers about possible candidates, applicants, and connecting them with services available through the available funding such as on the job training, hiring events and incumbent worker training. This has continued to promote partnership throughout the region with the SWDB serving as the lead entity in promoting these opportunities as a continuous part of the NCWorks Career Center system. It is the intent of the SWDB to support jobseekers and employers alike by allowing the NCWorks Career Centers to serve as a hub through which they can access services, learn about opportunities, and when applicable, be linked to appropriate resources.*

5. Describe how the Local Area WDB implements **each** of the following initiatives: incumbent worker training programs, on-the-job training programs, customized training programs, industry and sector strategies, career pathways initiatives, layoff aversion, utilization of effective business intermediaries, and other employer services and strategies, designed to meet the needs of employers in the corresponding region in support of the regional strategy to meet the needs of businesses. [WIOA Section 108 (b)(4)(B)]

SWDB focus is strengthening the partnerships in the 7-county region and providing support to workforce, economic development, small business, entrepreneurship, and education partners to include; Mountain West Partnership (county Economic Development Directors), Economic Development Partnership of NC, ARC Community Economic Development Planner, 3 Small Business Centers, Small Business Development Technology Center, Mountain BizWorks, Western Carolina University, NC State, UNC Chapel Hill, 3 Community Colleges, High School CTE Directors, ApprenticeshipNC, and myFutureNC. The purpose is to gain insight on the resources available to businesses and individuals, either through funding or training the workforce, and how partners can work collectively for the best outcomes in a diverse rural landscape.

- ***Incumbent Worker Training***, known as *Train Up*, is made available in the region through additional grant funds. *Train Up* helps to fill the gap of training not available for free through other workforce partners. As funding permits, it is available to businesses in the region that meet eligibility requirements that seek to improve processes with skills upgrades for the local workforce. The SWDB received a ARPA Small Business Grant of \$276,000 to serve businesses with under 25 employees and a Dogwood Health Trust Grant to cover employers with 2 or more employees.
- ***On the Job Training*** can be made available for eligible businesses and dislocated workers through the National Dislocated Worker Grant through May 2025. Grant funding has been obtained through the Dogwood Health Trust to expand the OJT program to new-collar or novice workers and marginalized populations (disabilities, recovery or reentry). This enables some flexibility with the OJT program without creating a negative performance reporting impact on WIOA formula funding.
- ***Customized Training Programs*** are managed through the three community colleges in our region and are primarily designed for the following industries: manufacturing; information technology; warehousing and distribution; customer support; air courier services; national headquarters; civil service employees providing technical support to US military installations located in the state.
- ***Industry and Sector strategies*** are supported by the SWDB collaborating closely with economic development partners throughout the region and pursuing grant funds as appropriate. SWDB works closely with the Southwestern Commission and MountainWest Partnership at a regional level, as well as each County Economic Development Director. Examples of regional sector strategies are *WeSpeakWNC* focused on the hospitality & tourism industry, and *EmPOWERing Mountain Food Systems* for agriculture.
- ***Career Pathway Initiatives*** are endorsed and supported by the SWDB and led by educators in the region to include university systems, community colleges, ApprenticeshipNC and Career Technical Education (CTE) in high schools. SWDB Staff and Board Members serve on Advisory Councils with regional and county education partners who have developed career pathways based on local industry needs.
- ***Layoff Aversion*** or *Business Edge* is an effort to reach out to businesses to provide critical services for the purpose of averting closure. Partners for this effort are the SBTDC, Economic Development Directors, NCWorks and may engage DWS. Layoff aversion criteria are: NC based businesses in Region A; Businesses with local and regional decision-making ability; Typically, 20+ employees; Primarily for manufacturing and related suppliers with consideration given to other sectors/industries important to the

region; Business must agree to comply with assistance through a willingness to sign Memorandum of Understanding; In good standing with the IRS (i.e. no liens, judgments); Full disclosure of business operations (i.e. P&L, other metrics)

• Other Strategies and partnerships are developed as opportunities emerge to include entrepreneurship development, serving in advisory capacities to the local area CTE Directors, supporting the development of an ecosystem for Recovery Friendly Workplaces and participating on the myFutureNC's Local Educational Attainment Collaborative as well as ncIMPACT Opportunity Youth Forums, and others as appropriate and capacity permits.

6. Provide a description of how the Local Area WDB coordinates workforce investment activities – including strategies enhancing services, promoting participation in training programs, and avoiding duplication of services – is carried out in the Local Area with the provision of Adult Education and Literacy activities. [WIOA Section 108(b)(13)]

SWDB works closely with local stakeholders, including employers, educational institutions, community organizations, and government agencies, to develop strategic plans for workforce development. These plans often identify key priorities, such as addressing skill gaps, supporting underrepresented populations, and promoting economic growth. SWDB conducts assessments to identify the workforce needs of the local area. This includes analyzing employment trends, industry demands, and the skill levels of the workforce. Based on these assessments, SWDB allocates resources to various workforce development programs, including Adult Education and Literacy activities. SWDB fosters partnerships and collaboration among different organizations involved in workforce development, including community colleges, vocational schools, and social service agencies. By working together, these organizations can leverage resources, share best practices, and provide comprehensive support to individuals seeking to improve their skills and employment prospects. SWDB actively promotes participation in training programs by raising awareness among job seekers, employers, and other stakeholders. This may involve marketing campaigns, outreach events, and collaboration with local media outlets to highlight the benefits of education and training for career advancement. SWDB coordinates with service providers to ensure that services are delivered efficiently and effectively without unnecessary duplication. This may involve conducting regular reviews of service delivery models, identifying areas of overlap, and streamlining processes to eliminate redundancy and maximize the impact of available resources.

7. Describe the Local Area's workforce development system. Identify the following: the programs that are included in the system, how the Workforce Development Board will work with the entities administering core programs and other workforce development programs to support alignment and provision of services, and the programs of study authorized under the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 (20 U.S.C. 2301 et seq.). [WIOA Section 108(b)(2)]

The SWDB plays a central role in aligning and coordinating the various programs and services offered within the local area. This involves:

• Collaborating with entities administering core programs (such as state workforce agencies and local

service providers) to ensure alignment of goals, priorities, and service delivery strategies.

- *Facilitating partnerships and coordination among different stakeholders, including employers, educational institutions, community-based organizations, and government agencies.*
- *Establishing referral mechanisms and service integration strategies to ensure seamless access to multiple programs and services for job seekers and employers.*
- *Collaborating with educational institutions, employers, and industry partners to ensure that Perkins-funded CTE programs are aligned with local labor market demands and provide students with the skills and credentials needed for success in high demand occupations.*

8. Provide a description of (a) cooperative agreements, as defined in WIOA Section 107(d)(11), between the Local Area WDB and other local entities described in Section 101(a)(11)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. 721(a)(11)(B)) with respect to efforts that will enhance the provision of service to individuals with disabilities and to other individuals, such as cross training of staff, technical assistance, use and sharing of information, cooperative efforts with employers, and other efforts to include cooperation, collaboration, and coordination. [WIOA Section 108(b)(14)]

The SWDB has informal cooperative agreements with the local entities described in WIOA Section 107(d)(11). Three local community colleges (Haywood, Southwestern, and Tri-County), two Job Corps (LBJ and Oconaluftee), local Vocational Rehabilitation units, and regional secondary schools cooperate and collaborate to provide workforce development services and training in the region.

9. Provide a brief description of the actions the Local Area WDB will take toward becoming or remaining a high-performing Local Area WDB, consistent with the factors developed by the NCWorks Commission. [WIOA Section 108(b)(18)]

The SWDB was designated as a high performing board based on the factors developed by the NCWorks Commission. SWDB will continue to remain a high performing board by retaining and building on those factors which will enable us to meet the current standards set by the NCWorks Commission to include:

- *Strategic Planning*
- *On-going assessment of community and workforce economic issues*
- *Establishing metrics for gauging progress*
- *Continued engagement with the chief elected official and other elected officials in the region*
- *Effective use of WIOA funds allocated to the region*
- *Ensuring that WIOA expenditures are on track with expected levels*
- *Maintaining certified status of the NCWorks Career Centers in our region*
- *Successfully reaching negotiated performance levels*
- *Meeting 20% Youth work experience levels*
- *Outreach and Engagement*

10. Discuss the increase and expansion of service delivery and awareness efforts to reengage individuals with barriers to include dislocated workers, opportunity youth/high school dropouts, women, people of color in hard-to-reach communities, individuals with disabilities, and justice involved individuals to help reconnect the disconnected workforce. More importantly, clarify how success is measured.

The SWDB received a National Dislocated Worker Grant (NDWG) in 2023 due to the closure of Pactive Evergreen in Canton, NC. This closure impacted 1,100 workers with an additional 900 workers affected in supporting industries. The NDWG has allowed us to advertise services broadly throughout the region. Many individuals have been introduced to the NCWorks system to gain insight on the services available to them and their families. NDWG staff are providing on the job training services to employers in our region who are beginning to understand the value of the services that we provide.

The Southwestern NC Planning & Economic Commission received a grant to be managed by SWDB to hire two Peer Support Specialists (PSS), based out of NCWorks Career Centers in Jackson and Cherokee Counties for the purpose of providing support to those deciding to the road to recovery from substance abuse and coming out of prison to obtain jobs and/or credentials/education needed for a career.

Outputs of the PSS:

- *Replicate framework for recovery ecosystem developed through ARC Inspire grant*
- *Follow operational policies, procedures, and written descriptions of ecosystem provided*
- *Establish referral process and conduct assessments to identify needed services*
- *Link clients to needed health, behavioral health, education/training and wraparound services to prepare for work*
- *Work with business partners to establish workplace opportunities*
- *Secure employment for clients ready to work*
- *Provide ongoing support to ensure job retention*
- *Work with key personnel throughout the region to provide issues-oriented workshops for employers*

11. Provide a description of how the Workforce Development Board coordinates workforce investment activities carried out in the Local Area with:

- a. statewide rapid response activities as described in WIOA Section 134(a)(2)(A).
- b. specifically describe the coordination and delivery of services to businesses to include systems that are used to determine economic trends and partners within your Early Warning Network to help identify those businesses that are expanding and/or struggling. [WIOA Section 108(b)(8)]

a. SWDB is networked through board members and partners throughout the 7-county region. In small rural communities this network provides the catalyst to learn about layoffs or closures, in some instances prior to WARN notices being issued to the State. The following agencies are represented on the local Rapid Response Team: NCWorks Career Center, Mountain Projects managing the Healthcare Navigator, Community College ConEd, County Department of Health & Human Services and NC Division of Workforce Solutions.

When a layoff or closure occurs the preferred method to deploy Rapid Response is for a member of the

local team to schedule a meeting with the employees through the human resources manager or owner of the business to physically be present to share these resources. On occasion, when the layoff happens quickly like during a pandemic or the local team is not given the opportunity to meet with the employees, a flyer with Rapid Response resources is provided to HR to share with those being impacted by the layoff. The information provided on the flyer to dislocated workers are the agencies that can assist with unemployment insurance, career counseling or job searches, health insurance, food or rental assistance, financial counseling, etc.

b. Similar to the Rapid Response process, SWDB maintains close relationships with local and regional partners to work collaboratively to identify businesses that may be expanding or struggling and then, as appropriate, provide State or local resources, as available. These partners are the Southwestern Commission, MountainWest Partnership, County Economic Development Directors, NCWorks Career Centers, SBTDC, Community Colleges, and Small Business Centers.

12. Provide an overview of how the region partners with NC Community Colleges, UNC institutions, and independent colleges in the local areas to prepare workers to succeed by using skills and education attainment with a focus on diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility.

The SWDB is committed to remaining informed and supporting the dimensions of diversity represented in our communities through awareness to embrace diversity and inclusion. This knowledge allows us to apply what we learn about diversity to create an environment where everyone feels included and respected, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, age, physical abilities/qualities, religious beliefs, political beliefs, marital status, or other ideologies, and recognizes that no one culture is intrinsically superior to another. Our organization, along with our community partners, have an open-door policy and is committed to providing equal access to all students, employees, employers, and community members.

13. Based on the history of economic development projects in the Local Area, how many projects does the Local Area WDB expect to engage in during the upcoming program year? Please indicate the type of services the Local Area WDB expects to provide.

Assistance for Dislocated Workers from Canton Paper Mill and the other closures in the surrounding area. This project is funded through the National Dislocated Worker Grant which is for regional job fairs, career counseling, occupational skills training for dislocated workers and on the job training contracts for eligible employers until the end of May 2025.

Expand workforce learning and training options into a Virtual Reality (VR) format. VR equipment and software will be obtained through a grant and used to provide youth with career exploration and area businesses virtual training options. Equipment and software will be made available through the region's NCWorks Career Centers.

Training through Train Up or incumbent worker training will be funded through a grant from the American Rescue Plan Act and will provide training funds for micro or small employers with 25 or less

workers as long as funds are available or through 2026 whichever comes first. In addition, funding has been secured through the Dogwood Health Trust to provide training funds for businesses with 26 or more workers as long as funding is available. Some of the Dogwood Health Trust funds may also be used for on the job training contracts with employers hiring new collar/novice workers or vulnerable populations.

Support for marginalized populations in our rural region. Recovery to Careers funded by Dogwood Health Trust through December 2024 provides funds needed for Peer Support Specialists to help individuals on their road to recovery obtain employment in collaboration with Mountain Area WDB's ARC Inspire Grant. After funds are utilized, SWDB will continue to support this effort changing focus to employers by facilitating WCI's efforts to train employers as Recovery Friendly Workplaces throughout WNC.

The SWDB will continue to seek out opportunities to serve on committees and provide support to partners working with marginalized populations including but not limited to Veterans, disengaged youth, senior citizens, those with disabilities, justice involved, and immigrants.

The SWDB through the Southwestern Commission will engage with partners to provide a voice to work toward solutions for critical issues or barriers negatively impacting the local workforce in regard to digital equity, childcare, public transportation, and housing.

14. Provide a description of how the WDB is employing sector strategies by creating industry-led sector partnerships to facilitate engagement of employers and better coordinate workforce development services, training, and economic development activities. Include a brief example(s) of existing industry sector initiatives / partnerships or describe the strategy to implement them for evidence-based in-demand industry sectors for the region [WIOA Section 106 (c)(1)(C), Section 107 (d)(4)(D)]

The SWDB endorses and supports multiple career pathways developed by the education partners in our region. Those partners are Career & Technical Education, Apprenticeship NC, Community Colleges and Universities. The pathways our partners develop are in response to local employer needs and student interest. Adopting this method to endorse career pathways ensures there is no duplication in efforts on behalf of the SWDB and gives the board the opportunity to request and receive documentation from educators to observe pathway patterns from K-12 to the university system.

The SWDB endorses Career and Educational Pathways developed by CTE, community colleges and universities in our region. The pathway provided in the chart below was funded through a career pathway grant and is still effect.

15. Identify the Career Pathways developed by the Local Area. Complete the chart below.

Pathway Name	Partner WDBs	Year the pathway was developed	Number of trainees (to date) who have utilized the pathway
Manufacturing	HCC	2016	3

16. In addition to facilitating the development of career pathways, also describe the review process for in-demand career pathways to determine if new pathways are needed, or if current pathways should be updated or removed based on the needs of the industry.

- a. Include plans for new career pathways.
- b. Explain how career pathways in the local area are in alignment with other partners/stakeholders' (Department of Public Instruction (DPI), community colleges, myFutureNC, universities, etc.) existing pathways or if they are duplicates.
- c. Describe the strategy to avoid duplication efforts.
- d. Describe the strategy to promote pathways and recruit participants.

a. ***The SWDB is comprised of 51% businesses making the Board a logical choice to partner with educators in the region at the university, community college and high school levels to endorse career and educational pathways.***

The SWDB will support pathways that lead to self-sufficiency and independence for our residents. This may include a work-based learning component that has the most potential for this rural region, apprenticeship. Apprenticeship is an opportunity for a motivated individual to earn while they learn and advance without debt. This gives the employers in our region what they want most, a dependable worker and as an added measure, area educators can get credit for the educational component for the same individual.

b. ***Due to lack of resources in funding and staffing, the most appropriate way for the SWDB to participate in this continued development is to support efforts in process with our educators and provide guidance to help those efforts align with the latest labor market data by county and region.***

c. ***SWDB avoids duplication of efforts because the Board does not have the funding to directly develop pathways. Instead, we closely partner with educators that develop pathways (CTE, Community Colleges & Universities) and seek resources as appropriate to support those current pathways.***

d. ***SWDB utilizes WIOA case managers to assess individuals in the Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth programs and then use WIOA funds to support those eligible participants going into current pathways to support the local workforce.***

SWDB is an advocate of the state website NCCareers.org and the NC Department of Commerce's Labor Economics Analysis Division is working on a phone app to link to this career resource. Once completed, the SWDB will publicize it to our partners as a resource for career pathways and development.

17. Provide a description of the Local Area WDB's capacity to provide workforce investment activities to address (a) education attainment and skill needs of high-demand fields (b) strategies for awareness and cultivation efforts to increase access to education and postsecondary credentials and certificates, availability of learn-and-earn opportunities (internships, apprenticeships, summer employment) and (c) supportive services for hard-to-reach communities. (d) Explain strategies that include NextGen, NCCareers.org and any awareness models for success. (e) Explain strategies to align work across the North Carolina Community College System (NCCCS) and (DPI) to increase youth apprenticeships or assist businesses in hiring youth apprentices.

- a. *SWDB staff capacity of a director, program accountability manager and business services professional is stretched over a 7-county region. Staff serve the region addressing the above in the following ways:*
- EDUCATION: The southwestern region was selected by myFutureNC for a Local Educational Attainment Collaborative due to the exceptional work of one of our youth providers, HIGHTs. This has led to the creation of Achieve HIGHTs and the cultivation of activities to provide younger generations positive engagement with the workforce. This has also provided an opportunity to participate in ncIMPACT's Our State Our Work, Opportunity Youth forums to gain an understanding of the significant barriers our youth face in educational attainment.*
- Outside funding has been secured through 2025 to support the concept of on the job training to include new collar or novice workers for placement into full-time, long-term employment.*
- b. *STRATEGIES: Through engagement opportunities listed previously, the SWDB supports service providers applying for additional financial resources to stretch thinning WIOA formula funds to be able to offer work experiences, internships or summer employment for youth*
- c. *SUPPORTIVE SERVICES: Transportation is an ongoing issue. Our existing public transportation is severely limited in rural counties and oftentimes only goes between small towns not extending past town limits to where people live. Many times our case managers and instructors will provide transportation when needed.*
- d. *NCCAREERS.ORG provides assessments for youth participants to help with career exploration as well as links to multiple websites for career exploration, educational pathways, insight on financial literacy and job searches.*
- e. *APPRENTICESHIPS: SWDB does not receive funding directly for apprenticeships, so it is important to work collaboratively with our partners, ApprenticeshipNC and community colleges, who have limited funding to advance the registered apprenticeship model. The goal from the SWDB standpoint is to help employers understand the benefits of a "registered" apprenticeship and engage the partners when there is interest. During the next planning cycle, if funding permits, SWDB will examine the possibility of combining on the job training contracts as "pre-apprenticeships" prior to apprenticeships.*

III. Regional Strategic Planning:

North Carolina is defined by an expansive geography that covers over 53,000 square miles and spans from the mountains in the west, to the piedmont region in the state's center to the coastal plain region in the east. This expansive geography contributes to the state's diverse mix of rural communities, small towns, cities, metropolitan areas, and regional economic centers, each with its own unique industrial composition. Part of North Carolina's economic development strategy includes organization of the state's 100 counties into eight multi-county regions called Prosperity Zones, which are intended to help ensure economic growth across all areas of the state, by leveraging regional economic, workforce, and educational resources. Overlaying the eight prosperity zones are

North Carolina's 20 Local Area WDBs that facilitate the delivery of workforce services to the state's citizens and employers.

Local Area WDBs are to continue, or begin, formal interaction based on these regional geographies. The following regional configurations will be used for submission of this Regional Plan:

- Western Region: Southwestern, Region C (Foothills), and Mountain Area WDBs;
- Northwest Region: High Country, Western Piedmont, and Region C (Foothills) WDBs;
- Piedmont Triad Region: Piedmont Triad Regional and GuilfordWorks WDBs;
- Southwest Region: Centralina, Charlotte Works, Region C (Foothills), and Gaston County WDBs;
- North Central Region: Kerr-Tar, Durham County, Turning Point, Mid-Carolina, and Capital Area WDBs;
- Sandhills Region: Cape Fear, Lumber River and Mid-Carolina WDBs;
- Northeast Region: Rivers East, Northeastern, and Turning Point WDBs; and
- Southeast Region: Eastern Carolina and Cape Fear WDBs.

1. Provide an analysis of the regional economic conditions to include: a) existing and emerging in-demand industry sectors and occupations; as well as conditions that contribute to potential layoffs and closures and, b) knowledge and skills needed to meet the employment needs of employers in those industry sectors and occupations. Include sources used and business involvement in determining needs. [WIOA Section 108 (b)(1)(A)(i)(ii) and (B)].

a.) The Southwestern region endured the closure of the paper mill in Haywood County during 2023. At the time of the announcement, data indicated 1,000+ workers would be impacted from the closure, there were well over 1,400 manufacturing jobs available in an 11-county area. A year later, workers that did not retire or relocate were reabsorbed back into the workforce. A National Dislocated Worker Grant was acquired for the region which as of April 2024 has assisted over 120 dislocated workers through occupational skills training, on the job training placements and supportive services.

b.) Through the National Dislocated Worker Grant on the job training placements have been in industries experiencing growth such as construction, maintenance and advanced manufacturing. Occupational skills training efforts have been focused on filling the need in the region in healthcare, business administration, automotive, and commercial drivers.

In partnership with 3 other WDBs, WNC Construction Career Days are held in the spring of each year in Haywood County. Over 50 employers throughout the western part of the state provide demonstration booths to engage ~1,000 high school students from 16 counties in the construction and trades industry. Moving forward, those employers can be engaged in establishing a construction career pathway for the region an effort led by Mountain Area WDB.

Additional grant funds were obtained to develop a Recovery to Work program in the Southwestern Region to help those with substance abuse get the foundational support needed to get back into the workforce. The grant funds will be depleted in 2024. While this effort was worthwhile, it shined a light on the increasing differences in resources that are not available in our remote rural areas verses the availability of resources like sober living, public transportation and recovery meetings in Asheville, NC (Buncombe County). Moving forward, the lessons learned will be carried into being good partners with nonprofits and

healthcare service providers already working in the peer support space while shifting our focus to getting employers the information needed to become recovery friendly workplaces.

Sources used to determine area needs are labor market information from NC Commerce's Labor Economics Analysis Division (LEAD), which incorporates businesses posting positions on NCWorks and input from employers as well as workforce development board members from the region.

2. Describe how the regional strategic vision aligns with the NCWorks Commission's 2023-2025 Strategic Plan.

*The regional strategic vision aligns with the goals of the NCWorks Commission's strategic plan:
Goal 1 Preparing workers to succeed in the NC economy by increasing skills and opportunities for employment and educational attainment - with a primary local focus on incumbent worker training to help employers retain and strengthen their current workforce.*

Goal 2 Create a workforce system that is responsive to the needs of the economy by fostering employer leadership - which comes through the SWDB, NCWorks, workforce partners, and engagement with local HR associations.

Goal 3 Promote replication of creative solutions to challenging workforce problems by supporting local innovation - which occurs through acquiring additional grant funds for Recovery to Work, Train Up (IWT), National Dislocated Worker Grant, and others as needed.

Goal 4 Promote system access, alignment, integration and modernization - through obtaining grant funds to adopt new VR technology for assisting employers with training specific to their needs and for engaging youth in workforce exploration.

3. Provide an analysis of the workforce in the region, including current labor force employment and unemployment data, and information on labor market trends, and the educational and skill levels of the workforce in the region, including individuals with barriers to employment. [WIOA Section 108 (b)(1)(C)].

*A current regional labor market analysis can be accessed monthly through LEAD:
<https://analytics.nccommerce.com/regional-labor-market-overviews/southwestern/>*

*A profile for the area can be accessed through:
<https://analytics.nccommerce.com/Area-Profiles/>*

At the top of the screen under Select Area Type choose Workforce Development Area and then select Southwestern WDB

4. Describe strategies, used to facilitate engagement of businesses and other employers, including small employers and in-demand industry sector occupations. Describe methods and services to support the workforce system in meeting employer needs. [WIOA Section 108 (b)(4)(A)(i)(ii)].

Facilitating engagement of businesses and employers, including small businesses and those in high-demand industry sectors, is crucial for the success of the workforce system. Here are strategies commonly employed to achieve this, along with methods and services to support the workforce system in meeting employer needs:

- Industry Partnerships and Sector-Based Strategies are formed through partnerships with employers within specific industries or sectors to understand their needs. These partnerships foster collaboration in seeking appropriate training programs and aligning workforce development efforts with industry demands.*
- Industry Advisory Boards are composed of representatives from various businesses to provide valuable input on workforce needs, industry trends, and skill requirements. These boards guide the development of training programs and ensure their relevance to the current job market.*
- Customized Training Programs are offered through community colleges and SWDB gains insight on these programs and which industries they serve. Trainings outside of customized training offered through the community colleges are possibilities for incumbent worker training grants.*
- On the Job Training (OJT) is offered allowing businesses to train individuals on-site, tailored to their specific needs and processes. This helps bridge the skills gap between a new hire's experience and employers' requirements, leading to more successful placements.*
- Recruitment and Talent Acquisition Support with Job Fairs and Hiring Events are offered and organized through the NCWorks Career Centers connecting employers directly with talent. These events provide opportunities for networking, interviews, and on-the-spot hiring, streamlining the recruitment process for employers.*
- Job Posting Platforms are maintained on the NCWorks job board allowing employers to advertise job openings to a wide audience. NCWorks can provide assistance in posting job listings and matching qualified candidates to available positions.*
- Workforce Training and Development Services are offered through an ARPA grant which was secured to help small employers have access to funds for training to strengthen their current workforce. This program is called Train Up and it is a reimbursable grant up to \$10,000 for employers with a workforce of 25 or less employees that need training due to expansion, new technology, retooling, new services/product lines, organizational structuring, leadership development, etc. The goal is to provide funding to help eligible businesses effectively train and retain existing, full-time employees by providing skills upgrades and process improvement.*
- Skills Assessments and Training Needs Analysis to conduct skills assessments and training needs analysis to help identify skill gaps among incumbent workers and potential hires to assist employers. Workforce development agencies can then design training programs to address these gaps and enhance employees' skills.*

• **Soft Skills Training** is offered through workshops and training sessions on soft skills such as communication, teamwork, and problem-solving enhances employees' employability and job performance. These skills are valuable across various industries and occupations.

• **Incentives and Support for Small Businesses** is supported through an ARPA grant which was secured to help small employers have access to funds for training to strengthen their current workforce. This program is called Train Up and it is a reimbursable grant up to \$10,000 for employers with a workforce of 25 or less employees that need training due to expansion, new technology, retooling, new services/product lines, organizational structuring, leadership development, etc. The goal is to provide funding to help eligible businesses effectively train and retain existing, full-time employees by providing skills upgrades and process improvement.

• **Tax Credits and Hiring Incentives** are provided like the Work Opportunity Tax Credit for hiring and training employees can encourage small businesses to invest in workforce development. These incentives help offset the costs associated with training and hiring new employees.

• **Labor Market Information (LMI)** is provided and access to labor market information helps employers make informed decisions about workforce planning and recruitment. LMI provides insights into industry trends, wage rates, and demographic characteristics of the workforce.

• **Performance Metrics and Evaluation** monitors performance metrics such as job placement rates, retention rates, and employer satisfaction surveys enables workforce development agencies to assess the effectiveness of their programs and make data-driven improvements.

By employing these strategies and offering a range of services to support the workforce system in meeting employer needs, workforce development can foster strong partnerships with businesses and ensure a skilled, adaptable workforce that meets the demands of in-demand industry sectors, including small employers.

5. Describe strategies and services used to coordinate workforce development programs and economic development. [WIOA Section 108 (b)(4)(A)(iii)].

Both the SWDB and Mountain West Partnership, the economic development arm for the region, are part of the Southwestern NC Planning & Economic Development Commission which is a Council of Government. Both departments are located in the same office creating a synergy for seamless integration of workforce programs to positively impact economic development projects.

6. Outline regional transportation issues related to workforce development and ways the region is/will address needs identified. Include a description and map of the regional commuting patterns. [WIOA Section 108(b)(11)].

While we are a rural mountainous region with plenty of transportation challenges, we are also fortunate to have high-mobility 4-lane US highways connecting our towns. Most of our small towns are no more than 30 minutes away from the next neighboring town. We are positioned directly on the route between

Chattanooga to Asheville and Atlanta to Asheville. We collaborate closely with our in-house regional transportation planner to ensure the transportation needs of the workforce are recognized and prioritized. The RPO works with NCDOT and local officials to conduct long-range transportation plans in each county, and we strive to fund the highest priority projects in the region. Our public transit agencies are an important partner in supplying some workforce transportation needs, but there are challenges to overcome. Area transportation partners are working to expand multimodal transportation options for workers who may not have access to a personal vehicle, including sidewalks, greenways, bike lanes, and public transportation. The commuting pattern chart below can be found through the area profile created by LEAD by selecting Southwestern WDB at <https://analytics.ncommerce.com/Area-Profiles/>



7. Briefly provide a description of how the Local Area WDB will coordinate education and workforce investment activities carried out in the local area with relevant secondary and postsecondary education programs and activities to coordinate strategies, enhance services, and avoid duplication of services. [WIOA Section 108(b)(10)].

The Southwestern Workforce Development Board (SWDB) coordinates education and workforce investment activities in the local area by collaborating closely with relevant secondary and postsecondary education programs and activities.

The SWDB engages in strategic planning efforts that involve representatives from secondary schools, community colleges, vocational training centers, and other educational institutions. Together, we identify common goals, align priorities, and develop strategies to enhance workforce development services.

SWDB establishes formal partnerships with educational institutions to facilitate collaboration and resource sharing. These partnerships may involve joint program development, co-location of services, and the exchange of data and best practices to improve service delivery.

We work to leverage resources from both education and workforce development systems to maximize impact and efficiency. This may involve accessing federal funding streams, such as the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, to support joint initiatives and expand service offerings.

8. Briefly describe how the NCWorks Career Centers serve military veterans.

NCWorks Career Centers serve military veterans through priority of service. There are two hybrid positions called DVOPs/LEVRs that cover the career centers in the region with services specifically for disabled veterans.

Customers entering the NCWorks Career Center are asked if they have served in the military. Those customers that respond “yes” are thanked for their military service and provided priority of service. Career center staff are cross trained in the Integrated Service Delivery model. Veterans that are screened and determined to have a barrier may be referred to a DVOP/LEVR for intensive services and case management. Those veterans that do not have a barrier receive seamless services through career center staff with a one-on-one meeting to assess needs and abilities as well as complete registration on NCWorks.gov. After registration is completed, referrals to jobs, educational entities, or supportive services may occur.

9. Explain the strategic plan for how the region will respond to national emergencies or weather-related disasters to serve victims (such as lay-off aversion activities) and utilize special grants efficiently throughout the recovery period.

SWDB is aligned with the Southwestern NC Planning & Economic Development Commission (also known as the Southwestern Commission) whose mission is to improve the quality of life in our seven-county service area by assisting local governments in reaching their goals. When disaster strikes, the Southwestern Commission and SWDB are poised to provide help to the local governments to acquire grant funding and/or provide services to dislocated workers through the NCWorks Career Centers. The Commission also offers disaster recovery financial training to help our small governments prepare for disasters and is a hub of communication on resources as needed.

IV. NCWorks Commission

The NCWorks Commission recommends policies and strategies which value diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility while enabling the state’s workforce to compete in the current and future global economy. The commission leads, builds partnerships, forms alliances, and is accountable for strengthening North Carolina’s innovative, inclusive, relevant, effective, and efficient workforce development system.

The Commission is designated as the state’s WDB under the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. Led by a private sector chair, the 37-member Commission includes representatives from the business community, heads of state workforce agencies, educators, and community leaders. All members are appointed by the Governor.

Mission of the NCWorks Commission: To ensure North Carolina has an innovative, relevant, effective, and efficient workforce development system that develops adaptable, work-ready, skilled talent to meet the current and future needs of workers and businesses to achieve and sustain economic prosperity; and to ensure North Carolinians are ready for the jobs of today and tomorrow by increasing access to education and skills training, fostering employer leadership to prepare workers, and supporting and scaling local innovation.

After extensive stakeholder work and programmatic reviews, the following systemwide goals and objectives were created for the workforce development system:

- *Prepare workers to succeed in the North Carolina economy by increasing skills and education attainment.*
- *Create a workforce system that is responsive to the needs of the economy by fostering employer leadership.*
- *Promote replication of creative solutions to challenging workforce problems by supporting local innovation.*
- *Promote system access, alignment, integration, and modernization.*

1. Briefly describe how the Local Area WDB engages with local employers and informs them of the wide array of business services offered. Include how the Local Area WDB (a) ensures collaboration with other employer-facing workforce program representatives, such as (b) Vocational Rehabilitation, (c) Agriculture Services, (d) Foreign Labor, (e) Re-Entry, and (f) Veterans Services, through processes and procedures for information sharing and efficient employer customer service delivery.

The SWDB facilitates four certified NCWorks Career Centers in the region that are dedicated to the following services:

(a) SWDB ensures collaboration with other workforce partners and resource agencies by engaging in regular meetings with the following groups and individuals; Haywood County Human Resource Association, Swain County Resource Group, Main Street Sylva Association, Southwestern Community College, Haywood Community College, Small Business Centers, Small Business Technology Development Center, Western Carolina University, MountainWest Partnership, County Economic Development Directors, WeSpeakWNC (focused on hospitality & tourism) and our own board meetings.

(b) Vocational Rehabilitation participates in SWDB meetings, as well conducts windmill training at NCWorks Career Centers for staff and employers. Both parties reach out to each other with referrals as appropriate.

(c) Agriculture services are shared through relationships with the NC Department of Agriculture, NC Cooperative Extension County offices in our 7-county area and nonprofits such as Empowering Mountain Food Systems.

(d) Foreign Labor is strengthened through quarterly meetings of the WNC Rural Immigrant Services Collective to understand the emerging needs of our immigrant populations as well as share possible resources needed for them to enter the workforce.

(e) Reentry is addressed through NCWorks Career Center Staff who visit local jails to assist with employment services. Re-entry also overlaps with those in recovery from substance abuse, so relationships are being developed with Judges in the 30th judicial district through Recovery Court, a pilot program designed to provide case management assistance and resources as an alternate to going to jail. These individuals will be referred to NCWorks at an appropriate time in their recovery. SWDB also, partners with

MAWDB on their ARC Inspire program and previously obtained additional funding through the Dogwood Health Trust to hire peer support specialists and currently pivot to recovery friendly workplaces.

(f) Veterans are given preference at the NCWorks Career Centers and introduced to the DVOPs/LEVRs for resources as appropriate.

2. Please provide a brief overview of the business services team within the local area. Please identify the individual staff roles the Local Area WDB utilizes to conduct business services (that is Business Services Representative (Local Area WDB staff), contractor staff, Business Engagement Coordinator, NCWorks Career Center Manager, DWS staff, Disabled Veterans Outreach Program, identify who makes regional and local employer referrals to Agricultural Services and/or Foreign Labor staff, etc.).

The Business Services Team in the region is coordinated through the SWDB which is comprised of the Workforce Development Director, Business Services Staff, NDWG Staff and includes the following partners, as appropriate, Southwestern Commission Executive Director, NCWorks Career Center Managers (2), Regional Operations Director, Veteran's Representative or DVOP/LVER, WIOA Case Managers, Mountain West Partnership and County Economic Development Directors, Community College & University Representatives, CTE Regional Director, SBTDC Staff, ARC Community Economic Development Planner, Mountain BizWorks Southwestern Regional Business Manager, and industry specific leaders.

3. Briefly describe how the Local Area WDB plans to increase NCWorks brand awareness at the local level (consult NCWorks Commission 2023-2025 Strategic Plan).

NCWorks brand awareness is increased through new signage featuring the updated logo on social media platforms, and used at job, career and resource fairs, as well as at workforce partner meetings. In 2023, grant funds were acquired to utilize billboards strategically placed throughout the region for eight cycles to promote NCWorks and direct individuals to the NCWorks Career Centers.

Communities across North Carolina are developing strong local models of workforce development. North Carolina should build on those successes and replicate them in more places to continue building and expanding innovative solutions.

4. Describe how the Local Area WDB and the partners identify, address, and provide new and innovative solutions to support the job growth and business expansions of the local workforce system while including Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility.

SWDB and staff have worked diligently to develop partnerships in our 7-county area to include NCWorks Career Centers, Economic Development Directors (organized as Mountain West Partnership), EDPNC, 3 community colleges and the small business centers, SBTDC, and numerous others. The purpose is to gain insight to the resources available to businesses, either through funding or training the workforce, and how partners can work collectively for the best outcomes in a diverse rural region.

Small businesses relying on hospitality and tourism is a primary economic driver in our rural area. The

pandemic created unique challenges and opportunities for all industries, but this particular sector was hit the hardest. Initial challenges centered around the ability to remain open to the capacity mandated by the Governor and be prepared to change those capacities depending upon the progression of the virus. Those businesses that pivoted in a manner to provide food or services in a drive thru or to go capacity have endured and continue to rise to meet new challenges.

CREATE Bridges, an acronym for Celebrating REtail, Accommodations, Tourism, and Entertainment by Building Rural Innovations and Developing Growth Economies, was a 2-year initiative led by the Mountain West Partnership, managed by NC State University, and funded by Walmart. The pandemic created economic uncertainty and this sector required more support due to being impacted by the shortage of people willing to work in lower paid positions. The initiative provided insight to develop new strategies and actions for business retention and expansion and the effort continues as WeSpeakWNC to support the hospitality and tourism sector.

It is important to stress that our rural area continues to address a workforce shortage by assisting with programs targeting vulnerable populations. NCWorks Career Centers and workforce partners started re-entry programs to assist in supplying more individuals into the workforce for those businesses that are receptive to giving the formerly incarcerated a second chance. The Southwestern Commission with the SWDB received past grant funding to develop a recovery to work program to have a positive impact with this population. With funding coming to a close in 2024, SWDB will continue to support positive outcomes for this vulnerable population by focusing on recovery friendly workplaces.

SWDB and workforce partners continue to provide recruiting assistance, training grants, loans, and business support to maneuver the complexities of federal programs and opportunities. All these efforts are in progress while addressing the disparities made glaringly apparent by the pandemic. In order for business expansion to occur, broadband and workforce housing continue to be addressed by county governments and the Southwestern Commission with the SWDB will be staunch advocates of creative solutions on these inequities moving forward.

The U.S. Departments of Commerce and Labor have jointly identified Recruitment and Hiring; Benefits; Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility; Empowerment and Representation; Job Security and Working Conditions; Organizational Culture; Pay; and Skills and Career Advancement as the eight key principles of a good job. Refer to Training and Employment Guidance Letter No. 07-22 for details.

5. Describe the Local Area WDB's strategy for:

- a. incorporating job quality principles into ongoing workforce development activities, to assist with identifying and creating long-term partnerships with employers offering good jobs;
- b. creating strategic, flexible career pathways to good jobs that respond to local labor market needs.

- a. *The SWDB is one of the lowest funded regions in the state. SWDB staff have worked diligently to acquire additional grant funding to develop business service offerings such as incumbent worker training grant, known as Train Up and on the job training while connecting to other workforce partners to expand resources and assistance. While these programs may not be new,*

how we apply them to the needs in our region have been innovative by focusing on micro and small businesses as well as expanding services to those most vulnerable (re-entry, recovery, disabled) and new-collar workers. Our businesses need these programs to utilize every opportunity available to them to increase their chances of success.

The current National Dislocated Worker Grant (NDWG) has infused funding into our region over the last year. We have been able to advertise our services, which many area employers have tapped into and learned firsthand how beneficial the SWDB can be for the growth of their business. This visibility has changed the perception of NCWorks (not the unemployment office) and the SWDB. These services funded by the NDWG will increase the demand for services available through NCWorks and SWDB for years to come.

b. Career pathways will be developed to support our local businesses. With many rural businesses facing severe labor shortages, on the job training is a great fit for many of these businesses who need people now and can be their own training provider.

6. Describe how the Local Area WDB ensures that individuals from underserved and underrepresented communities have equitable access to the services of the workforce system and the jobs created in the economic growth spurred by federal investments.

The SWDB actively engages with underserved and underrepresented communities through outreach efforts. This includes collaborating with community organizations, faith-based groups, ethnic associations, and other grassroots entities. By participating in community events, hosting informational sessions, and utilizing culturally relevant communication channels, SWDB ensures services are accessible and visible to these communities. The Southwestern Commission's Community and Economic Development Department as well as the Mountain West Partnership, provides access to economic developers in the region. SWDB Staff attend meetings and serve on committees throughout the region engaged with these populations to tie in WIOA services. The SWDB director, David Garrett, serves on the Nantahala Foundation (NHF) board and their goal is to address the issues of disparity of health that deeply affect our underserved and underrepresented communities.

7. Describe how the Local Area WDB is engaged in work-based learning projects with local employers.

With additional grant funding, SWDB has expanded work-based learning (WBL) projects in our region with a focus on incumbent worker and on the job training. The SWDB currently has 3 grants that promote business services in the Southwestern Region; ARPA (businesses with 25 or less employees), Dogwood Health (businesses with 26 or more employees) and a National Dislocated Worker Grant (for dislocated workers and long-term unemployed).

Incumbent Worker Training, also known in our region as Train Up, has steadily been gaining momentum and continues to favorably impact businesses in the manufacturing, trades, construction, service, healthcare, retail, and nonprofit sectors. Small and micro businesses struggle with the cost of valuable training to upskill their workforce and Train Up is a way to cover that cost when training is not available

for free or offered through the local Community College or SBTDC. Train Up also covers leadership development training which has proven to be important to smaller businesses needing to foster leaders within their employee base. To coincide with the WNC Recovery to Careers expansion for recovery and re-entry individuals, a training for working with this population base will become available to employers interested in developing skill sets to successfully provide support to work with this vulnerable population. Businesses familiar with the demands of the OJT process continue to tap this resource when dislocated workers or eligible candidates are available. Progress introducing OJT to different businesses has been moderate but continues through efforts made by NCWorks Career Centers, contracted case managers and the business services team.

SWDB Staff serve on multiple committees to gain insight and provide guidance on a variety of work-based learning initiatives managed by other workforce partners. Specifically, contractors for our youth services developing work experiences, community colleges pursuing apprenticeship and early colleges developing internship opportunities. These relationships are valuable to continuously understand multiple ways to combine WBL resources to best serve employers and collaborate with workforce partners in a supportive role.

One of the outcomes of this collaboration is for information to be developed to define WBL options clearly and easily with contact information available to employers in our region. These WBL opportunities will be promoted through our partners via E-newsletters, social media, virtual webinars, and one-on-one meetings. The WBL initiatives currently available to promote include work experience, internship, apprenticeship, on the job training, incumbent worker training, industry specific career days, and more.

8. Briefly describe how the local board will ensure the continuous improvement of eligible providers of services through the system and ensure that such providers meet the employment needs of local employers, and workers and jobseekers. [WIOA Section 108(b)(6)(A)]

SWDB ensures the continuous improvement of eligible service providers through the system by implementing several key strategies:

- Monitoring is regularly engaged by the Board on the performance of eligible service providers by tracking key performance indicators such as job placement rates, retention rates, completion rates, and participant satisfaction surveys. This ongoing evaluation process helps identify areas for improvement and ensures that providers are meeting the needs of local employers, workers, and job seekers.*
- Professional development and training opportunities are an investment the Board makes in eligible service providers to enhance their skills and expertise. This may include offering workshops, seminars, and certifications to help providers stay current with industry trends and best practices in workforce development.*
- Data-driven decision making is utilized by the Board to inform decision-making and performance improvement efforts. This includes analyzing labor market data, participant demographics, and program*

outcomes to identify trends, assess effectiveness, and make informed decisions about resource allocation and service delivery.

V. NCWorks Career Centers

North Carolina’s workforce system includes multiple agencies, programs, and funders. Collaboration, policy alignment, systemic communication, integration, and modernization of the workforce system will ensure a strong and healthy workforce system that can adapt to a changing economy.

For any documents that are missing or are unnecessary based on the response provided, please state, “No document is loaded and/or it will be loaded by a specific date”.

1. Identify PY 2024 NCWorks Career Center location(s) including Comprehensive and Affiliate Sites; On-site partners; how NCWorks Career Center operator(s) are designated; provider(s) of WIOA career services and method of selection; whether youth service provider is on-site and, if so, youth services offered. Use the PY 2024 NCWorks Career Center Chart. [WIOA Section 121(b)(1)(A) and (b)(1)(B)]

- Name document: **Southwestern PY 2024 NCWorks Career Centers.**

2. Provide the name(s) of the current One-Stop provider(s), date, and process for when the competitive procurement of the One-Stop Operator(s) occurred. Include the expected length of the contract(s) (one to four years and the current year the contract is (e.g., two of three years). [WIOA Section 108(b)(16)]

A public notice requesting a letter of intent to bid was submitted in March 2023. This is a one year contract with a possible 3 extension years. The SWDB voted to extend the One-Stop provider contract for the Division of Workforce Solutions. PY24/25 will be the 1st extension to the March 2023 contract.

Letter of Intent to Bid

Name and Address of Agency Submitting the Intent to Bid:

N.C. Division of Workforce Solutions

Date: 03/20/2023

David Garrett, Workforce Development Director

Southwestern Workforce Development Board

125 Bonnie Lane

Sylva, NC 28779

Dear Mr. Garrett:

This letter indicates our intent to bid to serve as the One-Stop Operator for the following NCWorks Career Center(s):

Haywood County NCWorks Career Center

Jackson County NCWorks Career Center (Includes Marianna Black Library in Swain County)

Macon County NCWorks Career Center

Tri-County NCWorks Career Center (Graham, Clay, Cherokee Counties)

We have checked the following box that most appropriately describes our organization.

An institution of higher education Another interested organization or entity

A community-based Organization A nonprofit Organization

A private-for-profit entity A government agency

A consortium of 3 or more one-stop partners An employment service State agency established under the Wagner-Peyser Act on behalf of the local office of the agency

We acknowledge that the One-Stop Operator must have at least one year experience serving as the One-Stop Operator of an NCWorks Career Center and certify that we meet this requirement.

We acknowledge that the period of performance is July 1, 2023 through June 30, 2024.

Sincerely,

Timothy J. Mathis

A community-based Organization A nonprofit Organization

3. Provide a brief description of how Career and Training Services are provided. [WIOA Section 121(e), 134(c)]

- a. Provide a description of how Career and Training services are provided to adults.
- b. Provide a description of how Career and Training services are provided to dislocated workers.
- c. Provide a description of how Career and Training services are provided to youth.

a. All WIOA case managers are trained in Integrated Service Delivery at the NCWorks Career Center. Adult/DW WIOA case managers are located in each career center. Case managers are cross trained on how to identify and refer youth, DWs, and Adult customers to other WIOA programs, employment counselors, vocational rehabilitation, peer support specialist, and/or the County Department of Social Services. Case managers complete assessments to determine if an individual is eligible for intensive WIOA services.

b. SWDB currently has a National Dislocated Worker Grant through May 2025 and has hired 5 project managers to provide services to dislocated workers in coordination with current Adult and DW service providers.

c. WIOA case managers and NCWorks Career Center staff are trained in identifying potential youth WIOA participants (ages 16-24). We have a working referral system to connect potential youth to our current youth service providers depending on the county of residence.

4. Describe how Local Area WDBs determine the need for enrollment in Training Services.

SWDB determines the need for enrollment in training services based on several factors. Individual assessment results including skill levels, aptitude, motivation and having the means available to complete training are a few of the determining factors. The availability and/or lack of suitable job openings are taken in account also. Local labor market information on current and projected job openings related to the training are also considered when determining the need for enrollment.

5. Describe how follow-up services are provided through the NCWorks Career Centers. [WIOA Section 134(c)(2)(xiii)]

WIOA case managers conduct monthly follow up contacts with WIOA participants and use NCWorks to record the results. Special programs conducted in the career centers such as RESEA also require follow up. Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment are designed to identify unemployment insurance claimants who are most likely to exhaust unemployment insurance (UI) benefits who may need assistance in finding employment. Activities include developing an individualized reemployment plan, providing labor market information, identifying job skills and prospects, and reviewing the claimant's continued UI benefit eligibility. After closure, case managers are required to make monthly contact with participants to make sure they are working or looking for work. The case managers will enter follow up activities and provide guidance and counseling to those who request or need it. Case notes are entered to document the follow-up efforts even if no contact is made.

6. Describe how:

- a. New NCWorks Career Center staff (DWS, service providers, and partner staff) are trained in the integrated service delivery system model (include a training timeline).
- b. How long after the initial start date does staff have full access to NCWorks.gov?
- c. The staff development activities reinforce and improve the initial training efforts.
- d. Describe the specific training that staff receive around diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility.

a. All new staff at the NCWorks Career Center receives training in the integrated services delivery system. The method of training depends on the type of training being provided and includes one-on-one, group, and web-based instruction. New staff training includes the following:

- **intake and eligibility processes of TAA, WIOA, Wagner Peyser, WIOA Youth**
- **NCWorks online**
- **veterans preference**
- **EEO training from the state**
- **labor market information**
- **customer service training**
- **cross agency training**

- b. *Training begins on the first day of employment for new staff. The training timeline varies with the individual, but it is expected that training will be completed within three to six months.*
- c. *All staff located at the center have access to NCWorks Online. Initial training was provided to all staff by “Train the Trainer Staff” prior to the implementation of NCWorks Online. Additional training sessions on NCWorks Online are provided as needed to ensure all staff are correctly using the system to capture all activities and services provided. NCWorks Career Center Partners that receive job openings from employers input the job orders into NCWorks Online so that all partners have access to the information. Staff have full access to NCWorks.gov.*
- d. *There are 6 models of DEI training through NCWorks Training Center that all staff including integrated SWDB staff are required to review.*

7. Briefly explain coordination with the Trade Adjustment Act (TAA) to maximize resources and prevent duplicative services. Please include specific details on how case managers for WIOA and TAA programs coordinate to provide seamless services to eligible participants.

When a WARN notice and/or Trade Adjustment Act (TAA) petition is filed, the State Rapid Response Coordinator contacts the local area and invites the SWDB Director to attend the state conducted Rapid Response meeting with employer officials. After the State Rapid Response meeting, the SWDB connects NCWorks integrated services by organizing a local rapid response team. The local Rapid Response team meets with the employer to set up dates and times for the initial meetings with employees. At these meetings information is provided on available transitional services for workers that have lost their jobs as a result of a layoff or facility closure. Rapid Response services to dislocated workers are provided by NCWorks, DWS, SWDB, WIOA, Mountain Projects, DSS and local community college staff. All partners participate in group employee orientation sessions to provide current and consistent information concerning services available. NCWorks Career Center staff and SWDB provide information on labor market and assistance with job searches. Community college shares programs in continuing education, basic skills, curriculum, or starting your own business. Information and literature are provided on the WIOA program to include training services. DWS staff provide information on UI and TAA benefits. Mountain Projects has Healthcare Navigators providing information on healthcare options. County Departments of Social Services have the Work First program as well as other resources like mental health, food or rental assistance, which is varied from county to county.

8. Briefly describe how the NCWorks Career Center serves persons with disabilities.

The Southwestern region has strong partnerships with County Departments of Social Services and Vocational Rehabilitation. An individual with disabilities seeking services in our local NCWorks Career Centers will have the technology available for staff to work with that individual. All of our centers are ADA compliant. We have training annually on EEO from the state. Individuals will be referred to the correct partner agency. We also provide space for our partner agencies to work with clients in our NCWorks Career Centers.

9. Briefly describe the integrated service delivery strategy for serving employers and how the Local Area WDB staff and staff within the NCWorks Career Center coordinate outreach strategies and services to maximize resources and prevent duplicative services.

All Career Center staff are cross trained in Integrated Service Delivery model. Our Career Centers close to the public at noon on Fridays allowing staff time to dedicate to employer outreach / tours of facilities / businesses to better understand their operations. These visits allow staff to provide better recruitment, screening, hosting hiring events and referring of potential employees to the businesses. All staff are trained on the NCWorks online Job Order Policy and the virtual recruiter to allow continual alerts to potential candidates.

Staff are assigned employers by alphabet that ensures no duplication of services but can assist employers in the co-worker's absence. Staff are provided reports that provide them with a list of services they have provided to businesses to follow up with the business. Staff also contact businesses when their job listings expire to provide any follow up services. All staff are trained on the NCWorks online Job Order Policy and the virtual recruiter to allow continual alerts to potential candidates. Staff also contact businesses when their job listings expire to provide any follow up services.

To ensure that we are continually engaged with our businesses and providing them with the services they need and request, in order to build relationships. Our strategy is not to provide them with all our services, but to ask them what they need and assist them accordingly. By responding to an employer's request for an avenue to find a better qualified candidate we provided information on the Aspiring Minds skill assessments, allowing the employer to choose the assessments applicable to their hiring needs. We also discussed their starting wage along with labor market information that provided the competitive wage scale in their business sector.

10. Describe Local Area WDB strategies and services that will be used to strengthen linkages between Local Area WDBs and the NCWorks Career Center system and unemployment insurance programs. [WIOA Section 108(b)(4)(A)(iv)]

The SWDB is responsible for approving the centers application for certification by the NCWorks Commission. The SWDB and NC Works Career Centers in the region collaborate to apply for Center Recertification in conjunction with NC Works Commission guidance. All centers in the Southwestern Region were recertified in 2022. SWDB reviews the applications and makes additional suggestions and comments. SWDB Staff regularly communicate with center managers and other stakeholders to ensure a continuous improvement methodology is applied to service provision through the auspices of the Career Center system. This also includes utilization of any resources provided by the NC Works Commission to support review and oversight of center operations, as they are provided. The SWDB continues on a regular basis to partner with center managers to discuss the center's progress and any enhancements necessary to improve customer service and/or the customer experience. NC Works Career Center Managers in the SWDB region provide regular updates on center operations at each SWDB meeting which occurs on a quarterly basis. This ensures that board members are involved, informed, and given the opportunity to provide feedback and support to the SWDB and the NC Works Career Center Managers in the region.

The SWDB also continues to work with the NC Division of Workforce Solutions to explore various options for customer input and feedback. Center managers regularly obtain feedback through surveys from business customers participating in job fairs, hiring events and other interactions. This information is gathered and shared with the SWDB Director and Regional Operations Director as part of the regularly scheduled meetings. The NC Works Center Managers provide regular weekly updates to regarding weekly center traffic, hiring events, specific types of programmatic interviews or testing conducted at the center and any other relevant information. The results of these surveys will be used by the SWDB, SWDB Staff and center management to make improvements to the centers. Job seekers are also contacted via NC Works to gather feedback accordingly and any pertinent data is incorporated into SWDB oversight strategies, accordingly.

Quarterly NCWorks partners meeting, to include DWS career center management, DWS regional management, and SWDB Staff, are held to discuss, strategize, and update one another on issues, policies and initiatives that are taking place throughout the Western prosperity zone. In addition, it is important to note we have been strongly advised by the NC Division of Employment Security NOT to engage in unemployment insurance programs or discussion. Despite the increased nature of performing several programs in a variety of virtual manners to better accommodate customers, we continue to have customers who prefer or need face-to-face interaction to help alleviate challenges they experience to reemployment.

11. Attach a flowchart for services – flowchart must include:

- a. initial one-on-one interviews with customers,
- b. skills assessments, and
- c. determination of the need for further services.

- Name document: **Southwestern Services Flowchart 2024**.

12. Attach the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Local Area WDB and partners concerning operation of the NCWorks Career Center system. [WIOA Section 121(c)(1)(2)(A)]

- Name document: **Southwestern WDB PY23 MOU-IFA**

13. Describe the Local Area WDB’s method for providing oversight to include:

- a. the review process and the frequency of review for the NCWorks Career Center system in the Local Area, including processes for ensuring quality customer service; and
- b. the roles and any resource contributions of the NCWorks Career Center partners. [WIOA Section 121(a)(3)] [WIOA Section 108(b)(6)(D)]

a. SWDB facilitates access to services and programs through NCWorks Career Centers by one-stop partners identified in Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth and Job Corps, Youth Build, Indian and Native American Program, National Farm Worker Jobs programs, Migrant and Seasonal Farm Worker programs, Title II Adult Education and Family Literacy program, Title III Wagner Peyser Employment Services program, Title IV Rehabilitation Act, Local

Veterans Employment Representatives and Disabled Veterans Outreach program, Senior Community Service Employment Program, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, Trade Adjustment Act program, Unemployment Compensation program, Reentry Employment Opportunities, Second Chance Act programs. The NCWorks Centers are reviewed and certified. The Division of Workforce Solutions staff review the centers each year and certify them every three years. These certifications and reviews require training such as customer service and equal opportunity. The Board provides any required training as policy states and requested training as needed such as equal opportunity, program, customer service, and diversity, equity, and inclusion.

b. SWDB has many partners with the same goals that are listed above. Additional partners are:

Achieve HIGHTS and Opportunity Youth collaborating on disconnected youth to assist them in training and careers. One resource is NCCareers.org to help youth through a variety of career choices, some that do not require degrees to help them get into the workforce quickly to help support their family.

Peer support to offer foundational support to those in recovery. Mountain Area WDB secured an ARC Inspire grant to develop an ecosystem of recovery within the 11-county area. Proposed elements for WNC Recovery to Career focus on building collaboration and resource sharing across the two regions, assuring participants are job ready and securing employment. These elements meet participant and business needs including increased service coordination across counties and communities, increased access to direct service recovery resources, addressing resource needs for wrap around services, building relationships with employers and expanding resources available to the Commission Policy Statement CPS: 01-2023 Attachment 1 Page 38 of 96 recovery ecosystem.

MyFutureNC partners with WDBs and local colleges to counsel students on credential attainment to support the educational needs of the workforce.

SWDB works closely with Mountain West Partnership (local economic development directors) on assisting employers to find trained employees and/or training funds for the current workforce.

SWDB also partners with other boards to work on community engagement to be able to assist employers and job seekers alike.

14. Describe how the Local Area WDB facilitates access to services provided through the NCWorks Career Center delivery system, including in remote areas, through the use of technology and through other means. [WIOA Section 108(b)(6)(B)]

The following is list of in person outreach activities provided through the NC Career Centers:

- Local public libraries the first Friday afternoon of every month in Jackson County and at two locations in Haywood County, as well as twice a week in Swain County.*
- Weekly at Haywood Community College, Southwestern Community College, Haywood Health & Human Services, Haywood County Justice Center and Haywood County Sheriff's Detention Center*
- Monthly at the homeless shelter, Haywood Pathways*

- *Approximately twice a month at the the Haywood County Child Support Court*
- *As needed at the Swain County Department of Probation*
- *Veteran Services are weekly at the Steve Youngdeer VFW facility in Swain County (EBCI)*

Virtual outreach activities include:

- *Use of the telephone for RESEA appointments, WP applications, jobseekers and employers.*
- *MS Teams, Zoom for communication with staff, employers, staff training and staff development.*
- *Communication with partners and employers*
- *Communication with partner organizations and employers to inform and assist jobseekers*
- *Swain County monthly community meetings*
- *Haywood County monthly interagency and HR Association*
- *Jackson County monthly chamber meetings*

Social Media outreach efforts:

- *NCWorks FaceBook and LinkedIn pages for Haywood, Jackson, Swain counties*
- *NCWorks monthly newsletter*

15. Describe how NCWorks Career Centers are using virtual technology to provide integrated, technology-enabled intake and case management information systems for programs carried out under WIOA including youth programs, and programs carried out by NCWorks Career Center partners. What software are NCWorks Career Centers using? [WIOA Section 108 (b)(21)]

NCWorks Career Center staff have been cross trained since the pandemic to use Microsoft TEAMS applications and the NCWorks online system. Career Advisors may conduct appointments virtually and are able to assist customers though the Amazon Call Center and Live Chat. WIOA continues to use the NCWorks online system and case managers utilize DocuSign for students.

Currently, the SWDB has a \$5,000 VR technology grant. Upon further research and going through the procurement process it has been determined to work with TransfVR and purchase two headsets with software for two NCWorks Career Centers for career exploration. Demonstrations can take place through area partners including the local library system and local high school CTE programs.

Once the career exploration piece is in place and has momentum, we plan to obtain additional funding to expand into skill development to assist employers with training and retraining their current workforce.

16. Describe how entities within the NCWorks Career Center system, including Career Center operators and partners, will comply with Section 188, if applicable, and provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12101 et seq.) regarding the physical and programmatic accessibility of facilities, programs and services, technology, and materials for individuals with disabilities. [WIOA Section 108(b)(6)(C)]

The Southwestern region has strong partnerships with County Departments of Social Services and Vocational Rehabilitation. An individual with disabilities seeking services in our local NCWorks Career

Centers will have the technology available for staff to work with that individual. All of our centers are ADA compliant. We have training annually on EEO from the state. Individuals will be referred to the correct partner agency. We also provide space for our partner agencies to work with clients in our NCWorks Career Centers.

VI. Employer Services

1. Please describe the efforts of the Local Area WDB staff, Employer services staff and Career Center staff have made to deliver business services on a regional basis in the following areas:
 - a. Utilizing regional and local economic data to inform priorities [WIOA Section 108 (b)(1)(A)(i)(ii) and (B)].
 - b. Collaborating with employer-facing partners such as Agricultural Services, Foreign Labor and Veteran Services to meet employer needs and jobseeker recruitment efforts.
 - c. Providing local and regional Rapid Response services, including identifying struggling and at-risk businesses and providing services to help avert layoffs. [WIOA Section 108 (b)(8)]
 - d. Coordinating with DWS TAA and Business Services staff to provide Rapid Response assistance and appropriate career and training services to workers for whom a petition has been filed. (20 CFR 618.816)
 - e. Including Historically Underutilized Businesses (OG 20-2021)
- a. *Utilize regional and local economic data to be aware of developing needs and collaborate with workforce partners; NCWorks, WIOA service providers, Veterans Services, Vocational Rehab, Reentry, Recovery to Work, economic development directors, universities, community colleges, high school CTE directors, and other workforce development boards to support an all-inclusive approach for job seekers and employers within the rural workforce ecosystem. These collaborative efforts help us to understand available services and avoid duplication.*
 - b. *NCWorks houses DVOPs/LEVRs in the career center to provide job outreach and assistance to our veterans with focused hiring events and providing assistance to veterans in need through the annual Veterans Stand Down event in the region. NCWorks also has contacts with agricultural services and foreign labor through the state, as needed.*
 - c. *For Rapid Response sessions SWDB partners with staff from NCWorks, NC Commerce (DWS), Mountain Projects (Healthcare Navigators), County DHSS, and community colleges to offer information on local resources including job search assistance, long-term and short-term training or education, healthcare options, mortgage assistance, food assistance, mental health assistance, and more. For Business Edge, the SWDB partners with SBTDC and the state, as needed.*
 - d. *TAA has not been reauthorized as of June 2022. We have learned that talking about a program that is no longer active and funds are not available causes a great deal of confusion at Rapid Response sessions.*
 - e. *ARPA grant funds have enabled us to focus incumbent worker funds on smaller employers which have been historically underutilized, but are the backbone of our rural area.*

2. Please describe employer-focused partnership efforts in the areas of education and training and economic development in the following areas:
- a. Enhancing the use of On-the-Job Training (OJT), Incumbent Worker Training (IWT), apprenticeships, and other work-based learning opportunities to support the regional economy and individuals' career advancement.
 - b. Coordinating and promoting entrepreneurial skills training and microenterprise services. [WIOA Section 108 (b)(5)]
 - c. Participating in regional economic strategic planning and economic development recruitment, retention and expansions with employers, education partners and economic developers. [WIOA Section 108 (b)(4)(A)(iii)].

- a. ***Partnership efforts in the areas of education, training and economic development are critical to the success of the region. The SWDB and Staff work diligently to stay informed to gain insight on the evolving programs of our partners so we can assist in promoting, collaborating, or coordinating with WIOA programs***

To support the regional economy and individual career advancement the SWDB currently has National Dislocated Worker Grant funds to serve dislocated workers through May 2025 with outcomes of occupational skills training and on the job training. To expand on the job training to include new collar workers and marginalized populations the SWDB has secured outside funding to provide the flexibility needed to serve these populations without potentially reflecting poorly on performance.

Small and micro businesses successfully utilize incumbent worker training, known in our region as Train Up. SWDB shares information on this valuable training resource with workforce partners to promote opportunities for area businesses to apply for funding. The goal is to provide funding to help eligible businesses effectively train and retain, existing, employees by providing skills upgrades and process improvement.

SWDB supports the SBTDC, Community College SBCs, and regional nonprofit efforts dedicated specifically to coordinating and promoting entrepreneurial skills training and microenterprise services. SWDB support consists of staff time, expertise, and the promotion of area resources like microenterprise loans or training for entrepreneur development within Community Colleges or K-12.

The SWDB Staff are included in the process for the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy or CEDS led by the Southwestern Commission.

SWDB Staff participates in economic development recruitment, retention and expansions when invited and included by MountainWest Partnership, county economic development directors or EDPNC representative.

- b. ***SWDB supports the SBTDC, Community College SBCs, and regional nonprofit efforts dedicated specifically to coordinating and promoting entrepreneurial skills training and microenterprise services. SWDB support consists of staff time, expertise, and the promotion of area resources like microenterprise loans or training for entrepreneur development within Community Colleges or K-12.***

- c. *The SWDB Staff are included in the process for the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy or CEDS led by the Southwestern Commission. SWDB Staff participate in economic development recruitment, retention and expansions when invited and included by the MountainWest Partnership, county economic development directors or EDPNC representative.*

VII. Performance

U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL) has the following WIOA Performance Indicators:

- Employment Rate – 2nd Quarter After Exit
- Employment Rate – 4th Quarter After Exit
- Median Earnings – 2nd Quarter After Exit
- Credential Attainment Rate
- Measurable Skill Gains
- Effectiveness in Serving Employers (system-wide measure, not program specific)

1. Examine the Local Area WDB's current Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth performance on the Federal Primary Indicators of Performance for PY 2022-2023 and prior Program Years. (Reports available via FutureWorks BI.) What are some factors that have impacted performance levels both positively and negatively in the current program year?
 - a. Provide at least two examples of positive factors and two examples of negative factors with an explanation of each. Some examples to consider include:
 - unemployment rate
 - factory closures/openings
 - economic development recruitment
 - retention and expansion efforts
 - regional industry growth priorities
 - weather events and natural disasters that may have impacted the area
 - internal operational factors
 - b. Are there any factors that you anticipate will impact your performance during the upcoming program year(s) either positively or negatively?

- a. *Lack of broadband continues to be a significant issue in our region. This issue affects everyone from students to potential employees. Also, cell phone service can be unreliable throughout the mountains with many places even in small towns experiencing "dead spots."*

Travel for students doing clinicals is expensive. Many students must travel outside of our region, and this create a hardship on students without reliable transportation and the extra time for travel is a hardship on individuals raising children. Public transportation is lacking in our region and does not serve rural areas where many of our clients live and does not run 24/7. This makes it difficult for people to get to work for employers that have multiple shifts. Clinical employers were unprepared to handle the training that these students needed, from lack of PPP, COVID rules, and having COVID

themselves.

We have long-term experienced case managers, contractors, and SWDB staff who are able to solve problems and issues quickly.

Virtual options have enabled us to increase participation in local area as well as statewide conferences and meetings.

When we have significant closures like we are facing with Pactiv Evergreen in Haywood County we do not see those voids filled quickly with similar industries. This makes collaborative efforts with economic development all the more important.

b. The National Dislocated Worker Grant is significant and the largest grant we have ever managed. NDWG has enabled us to serve more dislocated workers, but it was necessary to hire and train 5 new staff as we were actively building our strategic vision for this grant. The NDWG covers an 11 county area, so SWDB staff have had to work outside our 7 county footprint with new clients and businesses. It has proven to be challenging to integrate the NDWG grant funding with the dislocated workers who are served by our WIOA service providers. We also had our longest serving board staff who oversees our finances retire. All of these factors could influence performance. We believe experienced and dedicated board staff will mitigate any potential negative factors.

2. What strategies and methods are in place to meet or exceed performance goals? Include information about tracking performance, ensuring accountability of positive performance outcomes, and training.

Consider including the following information:

- Who is responsible for tracking performance?
- Which reporting resources are used?
- Is FutureWorks BI employed? If so, how, and how often?
- How often is training provided to staff?

SWDB staff monitor case managers monthly and utilize quarterly case manager meetings for trainings and updates. Case managers utilize a tracking spreadsheet to be aware of where they stand on performance. SWDB utilizes Future Works and NCWorks online reports which are provided quarterly to board members, case managers and contractor supervisors. Laura Grindstaff, WIOA Program and Accountability Manager, is responsible for tracking performance. Training is provided quarterly and as requested

3. Discuss what corrective action steps are in place if, at any point during the program year, the Local Area WDB is not on track to meet or exceed yearly performance indicator goals.

This question is intended to be hypothetical and is seeking what plan the Local Area WDB has in place to address failing performance, if it were to occur. Answers should address how the Local Area WDB:

- monitors performance,
- communicates with staff,

- makes changes to Local Area WDB performance and training strategies based on reporting data,
- and utilizes follow-up accountability measures.

Increase internal monitoring and provide additional technical assistance to address any areas where performance is not up to standards. Talk to program supervisors to provide training and advice to their employees. Reach out and request state resources to provide additional training to supervisors and WIOA staff. Look into ways to provide better outreach materials. Look into best practices in working with partners to increase performance.

4. How is performance information shared throughout the hierarchy of staff? Please detail how the Local Area WDB addresses performance data in its relationship with its service provider(s) and how case managers are using performance data to drive Local Area WDB performance.

Consider including the following information:

- a. How is performance tracked in your organization?
- b. How is performance information communicated with staff?
- c. How are staff/contractors held accountable?
- d. How is training provided in your organization?

a. Progress of performance measures are monitored monthly by the WIOA Program and Accountability Manager. This individual will monitor current performance outcomes against negotiated performance measures using performance data and reports provided from NCWorks Online and FutureWorks.

b. The WIOA Program and Accountability Manager and Workforce Development Director review data, report outcomes to Board, contractors and case managers on a quarterly basis with reports that indicates number of participants carried forward at the beginning of the new program year, new enrollments, number served, number on waiting list, number of exits, number of total current active cases which includes participants in follow-up.

c. This report also provides contractor approved budgets, expenditures to date and percentage of budget expenditures which keeps contractors on track to insure they meet their required 80% expenditure goal. The Program and Accountability Manager and Workforce Development Director will then come up with strategies to address any gaps in performance outcomes.

d. Strategies may include technical assistance to contractor supervisors and staff in the form of additional program or NCWorks Online training, WIOA Case Manager meetings to discuss issues and best practices, as well as assistance with outreach and marketing activities.

5. Discuss the factors that contribute to the Local Area WDB's credential attainment indicator.
- a. What are the challenges that the Local Area WDB faces in achieving its credential attainment goal?
 - b. What are some of the strategies that contribute to the Local Area WDB's success in achieving its credential attainment goal?

c. How do case managers make use of NCcareers.org and the NC Workforce Credentials list?

a. Challenges are:

- **public transportation is a significant issue with no quick or easy solution.**
- **childcare is not available, affordable or accessible for many of our participants.**
- **funding levels have been cut over 40% over the last few years.**
- **Lack of short-term training options that lead to a career that offers a sustainable wage.**

b. In order to combat these challenges, we offer travel reimbursements or contract with local transit systems. If the budget permits we try to help with childcare costs.

c. NCCareers.org is utilized by case managers for career assessments.

6. When selecting an eligible training provider from the State Eligible Training Provider List to certify for local use, what is the review process the Local Area WDB uses to make this decision? How does the Local Area WDB ensure informed customer choice in the selection of training providers? In other words, how are customers advised that they have options in choosing their provider? [WIOA Section 108(b)(19)]

SWDB staff review the local community college curriculum lists annually looking for new programs to update our allowable training programs list and then send it out to the case managers. In addition, we periodically review college websites and research jobs in the area to determine if we need to make additions or changes.

7. Indicate whether the Local Area WDB has additional requirements for training providers above and beyond those requirements stated in the State ETPL policy. Does the Local Area WDB make use of USDOL's trainingproviderresults.gov website in its evaluation of which training providers to certify for local area use? If so, how?

N/A we try to make informed decisions based on the needs of the employer

- Name Document: **Southwestern ETPL Policy**

VIII. Equal Opportunity

1. Describe processes to ensure individuals are not discriminated against based on age, disability, sex, race, color, or national origin. [WIOA Section 188]

A complaint procedure is in place for any individual who believes that he/she has been or is being discriminated against on the basis of age, disability, sex, race, color, or national origin. All NCWorks Career Center Staff, partners, and WIOA staff have received training on the EEO procedures and policies. Refresher training is conducted for all staff and partners annually by the NC Department of Commerce, Division of Workforce Solutions.

2. Attach the Local Area WDB's current Equal Opportunity (EO) Complaint Grievance Procedure to address EO requirements [29 CFR 38.35].

- Name document: **Southwestern LA EO Complaint Grievance Procedure**

3. Describe the methods used to ensure local Equal Opportunity procedures are updated.

We are monitored yearly for EEO compliance. We conduct EEO training in person with state representatives annually (or virtually if state training can't be in person) to stay current on EEO. We have started reviewing EEO classes virtually from the NCWorks training site.

IX. Adult and Dislocated Worker Services

1. Provide an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of existing Adult and Dislocated Worker education and training services.

- a. Include how services are provided and the capacity to address the identified education and skill needs of the workforce and the employment needs of employers.
- b. Describe plans to address any weaknesses identified. [WIOA Section 108(b)(1)(D)]

a. The SWDB vision and goals for serving WIOA eligible adults and dislocated workers is to provide quality services to participants to increase their job and career options enabling them in finding gainful employment with employers that lead to a sustainable living wage. The expected outcome is that adults and dislocated workers will be prepared to meet the needs of local employers so that employers are provided with trained, and qualified workers. In order to achieve these outcomes, the NCWorks Career Centers, WIOA service providers and workforce partners offer services to include assessments, job seeking skills, career counseling, and enrollment in training programs with follow-up services being provided for one year after placement into unsubsidized employment.

The experience of our WIOA Adult and DW service providers and case managers provides the advantage needed to increase the success of WIOA participants as well as meet regional performance goals.

b. Southwestern NC is a remote and rural region facing challenges with: broadband in an expansive mountainous area; gaps in public transportation in small towns; access to childcare or intergenerational care; limited housing inventory not only for workforce, but housing needed for young families, sober living, youth villages and an aging population; coupled with an aging workforce and the individuals who are able to find and afford to purchase from the limited housing inventory being retirees or remote workers

For all of these weaknesses and challenges, the SWDB and staff are a part of the regional Council of Government working closely with Southwestern Commission Staff, local elected leaders, and area partners to seek short-term and long-term solutions to improve the quality of life for our residents. SWDB Staff take the challenges of our region seriously and on top of the expectations of being successful with WIOA funding, make time to be a part of and stay informed on multiple initiatives addressing these major workforce issues impacting our mountain home.

2. Provide a description and assessment of the type and availability of adult and dislocated worker employment and training activities in the local area. [WIOA Section 108(b)(7)]

The following is a list of Employment and Training Activities available to adult & dislocated workers:

- *Job Search Assistance is available through NCWorks to individuals seeking employment. This includes services like resume writing workshops, interview preparation, job matching, and access to job listings.*
- *Skills Assessments and Career Counseling so customers can receive skills assessments and career counseling to identify their strengths, interests, and training needs for the purpose of exploring career options and developing personalized career plans.*
- *Training Programs are available to help individuals acquire new skills or upgrade existing ones. This may include vocational training, certificate programs, apprenticeships, or on the job training opportunities.*
- *Education Services including basic literacy, GED preparation, and English as a Second Language (ESL) classes, are often offered to improve educational attainment and workforce readiness.*
- *Supportive Services are available with some programs such as transportation assistance, childcare, and financial counseling to remove barriers to employment and training participation for adults.*
- *Dislocated Worker Employment and Training Activities are currently supported through a National Dislocated Worker Grant focused on career services, occupational skills training, on the job training, and supportive services specifically for dislocated workers in the area.*
- *Rapid Response Services are coordinated with partners and the employer when a mass layoff or plant closure occurs to provide information to dislocated workers on unemployment benefits, job search assistance, reemployment services, healthcare options, continuing education and training opportunities, etc.*
- *Career Transition Assistance for dislocated workers to include skills assessments, career counseling, and job search workshops, to help them transition to new employment opportunities.*
- *Training Programs are available to retool or upgrade skills for new career paths. These programs may be funded through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) or other federal and state resources.*
- *Job Placement Services: to receive assistance with placement, including job matching, resume writing, and interview preparation support.*

The availability of adult and dislocated worker employment and training activities varies depending on the resources and funding allocated to workforce development programs in the local area. Availability may be influenced by factors such as economic conditions, workforce needs, and funding priorities.

Accessibility to these activities may depend on factors such as geographic location, transportation options, and program eligibility criteria. Efforts to improve accessibility, such as offering services at multiple locations or providing transportation assistance, can enhance participation rates.

The effectiveness of these activities can be assessed based on outcomes such as job placement rates, earnings gains, and participant satisfaction. Monitoring and evaluating program performance allows for continuous improvement and ensures that services meet the needs of adult and dislocated worker populations.

3. Provide the date and process for the competitive procurement of the Adult and Dislocated Worker Programs that ensures an arm's-length relationship between the Local Area WDB and service delivery. Include the expected length of the contract(s) (one to three years and the current year status of the contract (e.g., two of three years). Identify any service provider contract extensions. [WIOA Section 108(b)(16), CPS 04-2022]

Request for Proposals for the Adult and Dislocated Worker WIOA Programs in Haywood County were released March 6, 2024. Email notification was sent to our current Bidder's List. A public notice ran in the Asheville Citizen Times on March 6, 7, 8, 2024. The SWDB's competitive procurement policy was followed. All current contractors will only be required to submit a "statement of work" and updated budget. A Bidder's Conference was scheduled on March 20, 2024 in person at the Southwestern Commission office at 125 Bonnie Lane in Sylva, NC. RFP packages are due by April 18, 2024.

- *Haywood Schools for Youth programs in Haywood County a full RFP PY 24-25*
- *Mountain Projects Inc. for Adult/DW programs in Haywood County a full RFP PY 24-25*
- *Macon Program for Progress for Adult/DW programs were combined in Cherokee, Clay, Graham, Jackson, Macon, and Swain Counties a 1st extension was granted via board vote.*
- *HIGHTS for Youth programs were combined in Cherokee, Clay, Graham, Jackson, Macon, and Swain Counties an RFP went out on March 6, 2024, a 1st extension was granted via board vote.*

Note: While Final Regulations Section 679.410 (b) and (c) provide exceptions to the competitive procurement process, Local Area WDBs must have an arm's-length relationship to the delivery of services.

4. Attach the Local Area WDB's Adult/Dislocated Worker Service Provider list effective July 1, 2024 using the PY 2024 Adult/Dislocated Worker Service Provider List provided.

- Name document: **Southwestern PY24 WIOA Adult-Dislocated Worker Service Provider List**

5. Describe the Local Area WDB's vision for serving the WIOA eligible Adults and Dislocated Workers to include (a) high level goals, (b) outreach strategies, (c) services delivery, and (d) expected outcomes.

(a) High Level Goals: The Southwestern Workforce Development Board will attempt to meet or exceed all federal and state Adult and Dislocated Worker Performance Measures. The SWDB understands that some

things are beyond its ability to control such as human behavior, federal and state policies, and economic conditions. However, the SWDB has strategies in place to assist it in achieving all performance outcomes and goals.

In addition to the scheduled program and financial monitoring, the Program and Accountability Manager reviews all WIOA participant cases prior to enrollment to determine compliance for eligibility and that proper documentation is maintained. After enrollment, case notes are examined periodically to ensure they are thorough. Also, the case is reviewed to see if the participant is entered into the correct activities. Records in NCWorks are used to ensure the participant is enrolled in intensive services prior to any expenditure of funds. The service provider's monthly expenditures are also reviewed. The review of this data ensures SWDB is on track with its overall performance and training expenditure rates.

The SWDB's focus on case management programmatic and financial practices should prove to be beneficial in ensuring that WIOA program eligibility requirements are met, all program costs incurred are allowable costs, and that employment outcomes are reported and recorded in a timely and correct manner.

(b) Outreach Strategies: Aside from monitoring the case management aspect of the region's case managers the SWDB will hold regional WIOA case manager meetings in order to update case managers on federal, state, and local area policy changes and procedures. In this meeting, program recruiting issues and successes are discussed by and strategies are devised to assist the case managers in meeting their performance goals. SWDB staff, NCWorks Career Center staff, and case managers initiate or participate in outreach activities that will promote the WIOA Adult and Dislocated Worker training programs. This may take the form of recruiting events at local community colleges. Other outreach activity may include the printing of customized WIOA program literature and brochures to be distributed that reference the Adult and Dislocated Worker programs along with other resources. Also, SWDB staff, WIOA case managers, and NCWorks Career Center staff promote Adult and Dislocated Worker programs as speakers at local workforce partner meetings or events, government meetings, and at local non-profit agency meetings.

(c) Service Delivery: Progress of performance measures will be monitored by the SWDB Program and Accountability Manager. This individual will monitor current performance outcomes against negotiated performance measures using performance data provided from NCWorks Online and FutureWorks. The WIOA Program and Accountability Manager and Workforce Development Director will review data, report outcomes to Board and contractors, and will then come up with strategies to address any gaps in performance outcomes. Strategies may include technical assistance to the contractor supervisors and staff in the form of additional NCWorks Online training, WIOA case manager meetings to discuss issues or share best practices, and assistance with outreach and marketing activities. Due to the pandemic, there continues to be a disruption in the workforce with a surge in dislocated workers over the past year.

(d) Expected Outcomes: The SWDB Staff work with the contracted case managers and NCWorks Career Center staff to target this group of potentially eligible adults and dislocated workers to determine individual needs. Many still have difficulty entering back into the workforce due to hardships that started during the pandemic such as childcare, remote learning, or caregiving for an elder relative. For those who are unable to return to their previous jobs, a virtual environment has been adopted and we continue to communicate

the benefits of WIOA programs to individuals as well as local employers through one-on-one virtual discussions, promotional opportunities with workforce partners, virtual networking and the NCWorks Career Centers social media platforms.

It is important to note that outcomes are impacted by access to additional funding sources like the National Dislocated Worker Grant. While managing this significantly large grant has challenges, it is having a favorable impact on our region for workers displaced by the closure of Pactive Evergreen and smaller businesses impacted by this mass layoff. This funding source has enabled the SWDB to hire 5 additional staff and as of April 2024 enroll 124 dislocated workers in occupational skills or on the job training with 60 receiving supportive services.

Substance abuse is a terrible drain on our local area and in some instances lead to incarceration. SWDB partnered with the Mountain Area WDB to obtain additional outside funding to develop the Recovery to Work ecosystem providing foundational support for those in recovery to get back into the workforce. These additional funds enabled SWDB to invest in peer support specialists and to learn more about the needs of this population. Moving forward, SWDB plans to partner and engage in developing Recovery Friendly Workplaces.

6. Describe the Local Area WDB's method for ensuring that a sufficient number of adults receiving individualized career and training services in the Local Area are from one of the following priority of services categories: public assistance, low-income individuals and individuals who are basic skills deficient. [134(c)(3)(E), 3(24)]

Adult participants are eligible to receive career and intensive services. When it is determined that an individual is in need of training services, the Priority of Service system will be utilized. Veterans and eligible spouses will receive the first level of priority of service in universal access programs and services delivered through NC Career Centers for all USDOL funded programs, including the Wagner-Peyser and WIOA programs. The second priority will be recipients of public assistance and other low-income individuals who are not veterans. Priority of services does not preclude service to individuals who are not low-income, not receiving public assistance or not a veteran, but rather establishes the order of precedence for service as provided in Section 663.600(d) of the Federal Register. On a case-by-case basis, permission may be granted by the SWDB Director to enroll adults in training who exceed the 70% income guidelines.

7. Describe follow-up services provided to Adults and Dislocated Workers. [WIOA Section 134(c)(2)(xiii)]

As a part of the WIOA Adult and Dislocated Worker Contract, WIOA service providers must ensure that comprehensive career guidance and follow-up services are integrated into the overall Adult and Dislocated Worker program design. Service providers are responsible for conducting follow-up services on a monthly basis for all participants for a minimum of twelve months after exit. The Program and Accountability Manager reviews participant files to ensure that follow-up is being provided and recorded properly.

Per Training and Employment Guidance Letter (TEGL) 19-16 and Section 134(C)(2)(A), funds described shall be used to provide career services, which shall be available to individuals who are adults or dislocated workers through the one-stop delivery system and shall, at a minimum, include - (xiii) follow-up services, including counseling regarding the workplace, for participants in workforce investment activities authorized under this subtitle who are placed in unsubsidized employment, for not less than 12 months after the first day of the employment, as appropriate.

8. Please describe the process for monitoring the service provider(s) in the Local Area WDB. Include details such as how it is conducted, who is involved, and how often.

Financial Monitoring is conducted by Laura Grindstaff the WIOA Program and Accountability Manager. To determine compliance with provisions of the act, and other applicable laws and regulations, internal and external systems are monitored. A monitoring schedule is developed annually for periodic review of all contracts. Program, fiscal, personnel, and management activities under each contract are monitored to assure that programmatic performance goals are being met; that appropriate administrative procedure, controls, and records are maintained; that contract terms and conditions are being fulfilled, and that personnel and equal employment opportunity requirements are being met. Desk review for compliance and performance of contractor activity is conducted throughout the year. The reviews allow the identification of potential performance issues, as well as to monitor its internal processes such as eligibility determination, documentation, and certification. On-site visits with contractors are conducted once a year for financial monitoring along with desk reviews conducted each quarter. Desk review consists of examining participant files for receipts for purchases, supportive services costs, ITA vouchers, training schedules, along with any other participant expenditures incurred. On-site reviews consist of examining payroll records, invoices and checks, receipts for purchases, and, if necessary, bank account reconciliation. On-site review of all equipment purchased under contract with the SWDB is done annually.

Programmatic monitoring is ongoing throughout the year. Programmatic monitoring is conducted by Laura Grindstaff. Programmatic monitoring is an internal review of participants on a WIOA case load. Each case manager is monitored. After monitoring a email consisting of the findings is emailed to the case manager and the contractor. If the finding is correctable the case manager will correct it and send a email with corrections made back to the monitor.

During programmatic monitoring the following is reviewed:

- Eligibility***
- Participation and dates of services***
- CSS activities to check for provider and if one is being completed for each supportive service provided***
- Pell and Financial Award Analysis***
- Case notes and if a service has been provided with in the 90 days***
- Check for system closed activities***
- Review ITA's and cost authorizations***
- Review supportive service invoices***
- Review IEP's***
- Go over documentation scanned into NCWorks to check to see all documentation is there***
- Check to see if follow-up is being provided***
- Check for measurable skills gain***

- *Work experience*
- *Check for 2nd and 4th quarter wages during follow-up*
- *Monitor reports to the Workforce Development Director*

X. Youth Services

USDOL provides funds to states who in turn provide local workforce areas resources to deliver a comprehensive array of youth services that focus on assisting out-of-school youth and in-school youth with one or more barriers to employment, prepare for post-secondary education and employment opportunities, attain educational and/or skills training credentials, and secure employment with career/promotional opportunities. USDOL and North Carolina's priorities are:

- *Out-of-School Youth (OSY) – A minimum of 75% of the Youth funds allocated to Local Area WDBs, except for the Local Area WDB expenditures for administration, must be used to provide services to OSY;*
- *Work Experience – Not less than 20% of Youth funds allocated to the Local Area WDB, except for the Local Area WDB expenditures for administration, must be used to provide paid and unpaid work experiences; and a*
- *Focus on Partnering – Co-enrollment encouraged where appropriate with Title II and IV.*

1. Provide a general overview of the local current total population (within five years) of the Title I WIOA eligible youth by Local Workforce Development Board area. Include the following general information:

In-School Youth Analysis

- a. Approximately, what number of the Youth are ages 14-21?
- b. Approximately, what percentage of these youth are low-income (eligible for WIOA In-school program)?

- c. Approximately, what number of these Youth are in the current school dropout statistics?

Out-of-School Analysis

- a. Approximately what number of Youth ages 16-24 of the current total population (within five years) make up the population?
b. Youth ages 16-24 represent what % of the population?
c. What are the general educational levels of this age group?
d. What is the general employment status of this age group?

In-School Youth Analysis-

N/A we only serve in-school youth

Out-of-School Analysis

- a. **Approximately what number of Youth ages 16-24 of the current total population (within five years) make up the population?**

There were 60 youth, ages 16-24, who were not attending schools.

- b. **Youth ages 16-24 represent what % of the population?**

Out-of-school youth ages 16-24 make up approximately 100% of total 16-24 youth in the area.

- c. **What are the general educational levels of this age group?**

The general educational level of this age group is 10th grade.

- d. **What is the general employment status of this age group?**

The general employment status of this age group is unemployed.

**NC Division of Labor and Economic Analysis Division (LEAD) is a data resource.*

2. Based on the analysis in question 1, does the local Workforce Development Board plan to serve In-School Youth?

SWDB seeks ways to serve and engage all youth in the region. However, with a cut of over 40% to our WIOA funding, we contract with service providers focused on serving out of school youth. There is a significant population of youth who fit into this category and it is the most pressing need. Should funding increase, it could be utilized to help youth who have not left the school system overcome barriers that could lead to dropping out.

3. Provide a description and assessment of the type and availability of youth workforce activities in the Local Area WDB, including activities for youth who are individuals with disabilities. Include identification of

successful models of such youth workforce investment activities being used and/or planned. [WIOA Section 108 (b)(9)]			
Youth Workforce Activity	Activities For Persons with Disabilities?	Brief Assessment/Model Used	Success Rating
WEX, short-term training, High School equivalency, High School diploma.	Yes	Virtual Job Shadow, TABE	Credential attainment for short term training, High School equivalency, High School diploma. WEX is evaluated at midterm and final evaluations with the employer, supervisor and case manager. 2nd and 4th quarter wages after exit.

4. Describe how the Local Area WDB’s Young Adult (NextGen) Program design is unique to include:
- a. providing objective assessments;
 - b. supportive services needed; and
 - c. developmental needs of each participant, for the purpose of identifying appropriate services and career pathways for participants. [WIOA Section 129(c)(1)(A)]
- a. TABE and Casas are the objective assessments used to measure basic skills. If a participant needs a basic skills gain they are retested to determine a measurable skills gain. Virtual job shadow is available for career exploration.*
- b. Case managers have close referral relationships with the NCWorks Career Centers, Vocational Rehabilitation, and Department of Social Services to refer participants to services that might be needed for their success. An Individual Service Strategy (ISS) is developed with each young adult based on their needs, interests, and barriers to identify what supportive services are needed.*
- c. Incentive bonuses are offered for credential attainment and measurable skills gains.*

5. How does the Local Area WDB ensure the Individual Service Strategy (ISS) identifies appropriate services based on the objective assessment and is linked to youth performance indicators, career pathways, and program elements? [WIOA Section 129(c)(1)(B)] How does the provider ensure the ISS is unique to the individual?

WIOA requires that all youth participants have an Individual Service Strategy (ISS) which identifies the participant's educational goals, employment goals including, when appropriate, non-traditional employment, suitable achievement objectives, and needs. Case managers meet with youth one-on-one to develop individual plans based on the needs and goals of the participant. ISS is an ongoing process used to track achievements, update goals and record goals that are achieved.

6. Describe the Local Area WDB's strategy to ensure Youth (NextGen) Program activities lead to a high school diploma or its equivalent or a recognized post-secondary credential and post-secondary education and training opportunities. [WIOA Section 129(c)(1)(C)]

Once a youth is enrolled in an academic program, a work experience is offered in a field they are interested in. Case managers work with youth towards career and college goals by creating an ISS reflecting those goals and objectives. If a participant is basic skills deficient or struggling with a subject, tutoring is provided. We work with partners, local employers, and the career center to help the youth with employment and work experience sites.

7. Describe how follow-up services will be provided for (NextGen) youth. [WIOA Section 134(c)(2)(xiii)]

As a part of the WIOA Youth Contract, WIOA service providers must ensure that comprehensive career guidance and follow-up services are integrated into the overall youth program design. Youth service providers are responsible for conducting follow-up services for all youth for a minimum of twelve months to ensure continued success.

Note: All youth participants must receive some form of follow-up for a minimum duration of 12 months.

8. Where does the Local Area WDB plan to serve the young adults (NextGen): NCWorks Career Centers Specialized Centers, Services Provider Offices, or Hybrid situations? Explain if it is both NCWorks Career Centers and Provider Offices or some other option.

Youth are served at NCWorks Career Centers, local community colleges and local learning centers.

9. Attach the Local Area WDB Youth Service Provider's chart, effective July 1, 2024, using the PY 2024 Youth Service Provider List provided. Complete each column to include specifying where Youth Services are provided.

- Name the document: ***Southwestern PY24 WIOA Youth Service Provider List***

10. Provide the date and process for the competitive procurement of the Youth Programs that ensures an arm's-length relationship between the Local Area WDB and service delivery. Include the expected length of the contract(s) (one to three years and the current year status of the contract (e.g., two of three years). Identify any service provider contract extensions. [WIOA Section 108(b)(16), CPS 04-2022]

The Request for Proposal for the Youth WIOA Programs in Haywood County was advertised in the Asheville Citizen Times and the Cherokee Scout on March 7, 8, and 9, 2024. The SWDB's competitive procurement policy was followed.

HIGHTS Inc was approved by board vote to run youth programs in Cherokee, Clay, Graham, Jackson, Macon, and Swain counties for PY24-25 with 1st extension to original PY23-24 RFP.

USDOL granted North Carolina a waiver for Program Years 2022 and 2023, which reduced the minimum Title I Youth expenditure rate requirement for OSY from 75% to 50% and allowed the maximum expenditure rate for in-school youth (ISY) to be increased from 25% to up to 50%. NC is requesting the same waiver for Program Year 2024.

11. Provide the Local Area WDB's approach to meeting the required 75% minimum (NextGen) youth expenditures on out-of-school youth and include special outreach efforts and highlight planned program design.

- a) State how the WDB will achieve the 75% OSY expenditure rate and describe the steps that will be taken to comply with the WDB's programmatic goals and outcomes.
- b) Describe why there is a need to serve additional ISY in the local area region and state how the WDB will achieve the 25% ISY expenditure rate.
- c) Describe how the local area region will be able to meet the demand for youth services by using the waiver.

[WIOA Section 129(a)(4)(A)] (CPS 09-2021, Change 1) (OG 07-2022, Change 1)

a. Years of previous experience in offering services to out-of-school and disconnected youth will enable SWDB to meet this goal. Thorough review of relevant research, and the consideration of data collected from past and present youth participants has produced a set of data points to contribute to the reasoning why some program elements are more successful than others. This offers valuable insight to build on best practices on ways to increase youth engagement, which is the most critical factor to success in our rural area. First, we do recognize that there is a noted difference to serving out-of-school youth as opposed to in-school youth; the most noted is the fact that in-school youth promote a "captive audience" in that they are easily found within the walls of their assigned school. Out-of-school youth offer a different challenge; to serve them, first you must locate them. Our efforts to locate and serve out-of-school youth will be enhanced by the implementation of a youth referral policy; recognized and adopted for use by local schools, service agencies, and social support networks; which advertise and promote available service activities and how they are secured. This referral model is a vital addition to our outreach plan. However, once engagement has been established, the next challenge is to maintain it on a consistent basis. To facilitate increased

engagement, we will implement enhancements to the following:

Program Operations: recruiting youth by marketing the benefits of participation; motivating youth to enroll in programs and commit to personal development. Youth programs need to be viewed as valuable by young people; through service delivery which they easily respond, such as opportunities to belong to a community, build their skills, hold paid jobs, receive paid hands-on training in high-growth occupations, have contact with caring adults, and express themselves through the arts and sports. Therefore, the programs must offer components related to jobs, training, computer and financial literacy, the arts, and recreation to recruit young people. “Playing school” is not enough and is often the primary reason youth become disengaged in the first place.

Outreach: will include all referral sources in reaching disconnected youth — who typically do not enroll in education and training programs. As a priority, we will implement new forms of outreach and sources of referrals to capture the interest of young people who are outside the mainstream and may not be motivated solely by pragmatic goals like attaining an education credential, learning new skills related to employment, or even getting a job. Establishing a brand different from schools and service networks which, may have in the past, alienated disconnected youth. Research proves they may respond more positively to community-based organizations.

Program design: which promotes environments that provide structure and limits while also facilitating personal growth and responsibility, self-expression, and mutual respect

Flexibility: Hours and location are important factors: the programs will be in accessible locations;

providing services: at “off-track” learning times such as afternoons, evenings, and weekends.

Resource sharing: providing effective use of scarce resources and often unique talents to serve all youth; dual enrollment to achieve results.

Reinforcement of family engagement as appropriate and/or engagement with caring adults

Transitional services; promoting movement from one training component to another.

b. We are currently serving only out-of-school youth

c. N/A

12. How does the Local Area WDB ensure that the minimum of 20% of funds is spent on work experience and is the Local Area WDB expending the 20% minimum on work experience, to include an estimate of expenditures that will be paid wages to youth? If the Local Area WDB has not been meeting the minimum of 20% of funds, please explain additional measures to be taken this year. [WIOA Section 129(c)(4)] (CPS 09-2021, Change 1)

Work based learning, or student work experiences, will be offered within a comprehensive package of opportunities. These opportunities include guidance from skilled and caring adults, education with computer literacy, mental health, and drug abuse services; and are offered as an incentive to remain productively engaged and avoid (or make progress in avoiding) at risk behaviors. Local and regional

partnerships have been formed to provide work sites committed to the development of positive skills and attitudes. Financial gains will be promoted as an offset to the perception of lost wages while in academic training and at other times as a method of self sustainability. Work based learning is a component which is written into each participants' individual service strategy and is used when appropriate. The SWDB has developed and implemented a systemic method to accurately track employee and participant time spent on work based activities to meet the requirements of the law.

13. Does the Local Area WDB have a dedicated full-time Youth Business Services Representative (or similar title) at the Local Area WDB level or at the Provider level. If so, state at which level, how many representatives, and how this impacts the Youth Program Design?

SWDB does not have a dedicated full-time Youth Business Services Representative. Two WIOA Youth providers have 3 WIOA Youth Specialists or case managers serving the 7 county area having a positive impact on the youth program.

14. Does the Local Area WDB have special programs for young adults that are Justice-Involved or have a substance use disorder? If yes, please briefly describe them.

Youth service provider, HIGHTS works diligently to maintain relationships with county agencies and nonprofits to make youth referrals within the restorative justice or substance abuse disorder space as needed. Those agencies and nonprofits also make referrals to HIGHTS for the WIOA Youth program.

Currently, SWDB has 2 peer support specialists on staff that work directly with individuals at any age dealing with substance use disorder. Our peer supports work closely with our NCWorks Centers for referrals. This program has been funded by the Dogwood Health Trust and will end in 2024.

15. Describe how the Local Area WDB partners, aligns, and leverages, as appropriate with:

- a. Title II Adult Education and Family Literacy Act program resources and policies.
- b. Title IV Vocational Rehabilitation program resources and policies.
- c. Integrates adult education with occupational education and training and workforce preparation, as Local Area WDB's and the creation of career pathways for youth. [USDOL TEGE 8-15]

a. SWDB works closely with community colleges in the region through its NCWorks Career Centers to promote Adult Education and Family Literacy programs. The NCWorks Career Centers assess the job readiness of customers and refers them to the appropriate partners to include the community college Adult Education and Literacy programs, Adult High School Diploma, High School Equivalency, and (HRD) Human Resources Development. Staff are mindful of the importance HRD instruction plays in the hiring and training needs of businesses and promotes the value of customized HRD programs. Local community college staff may also refer their students to the NCWorks Career Centers for assistance with supportive services.

WIOA Youth Specialists also work closely with local high schools and local community colleges to promote WIOA Youth Program services and supportive services. Youth qualifying for WIOA participation are

enrolled into the WIOA Youth program and are assisted with supportive services while attending high school credit recovery, High School Equivalency Test instruction or the Adult High School Diploma Program.

b. SWDB works with the Vocational Rehabilitation Unit Offices through its NCWorks Career Centers to promote Vocational Rehabilitation programs and services. All customers are assessed for job readiness and then referred to the appropriate agency staff for information and services. Vocational Rehabilitation staff may also refer clients to the NCWorks Career Centers for job search assistance or other services. Vocational Rehabilitation staff regularly visit the NCWorks Career Centers to meet with clients who may also request employment information and assistance from center staff.

c. SWDB understands the importance of integrating the components of adult education, occupational education, training and workforce preparation and the creation of youth career pathways in order to provide youth with the most comprehensive approach to career and workforce readiness. Our WIOA Youth programs are focused on serving out-of-school youth throughout the region as they participate in high school credit recovery activities, high school equivalency test instruction or the adult high school diploma program. The youth educational experience is enhanced through the availability of paid work experiences or WEX. With this in mind WIOA Youth Specialists work with youth to provide career exploration activities to include the use of Virtual Job Shadow software and a discussion of the local labor market. From that point soft skills are addressed via HRD classes that may be taught in-house or through local community colleges. Once a youth is considered job ready, he or she applies for work, interviews with the employer, and then begins training. Currently, workforce and education partners are sharing career pathways to provide guidance for youth in postsecondary training pertaining to jobs in high demand sectors of the regional economy.

16. Specify if the Local Area WDB plans to offer incentives for (NextGen) youth. If yes, attach the Youth Incentive Policy, which should include:

- a. criteria to be used to award incentives;
- b. type(s) of incentive awards to be made available;
- c. whether WIOA funds will be used; and
- d. the Local Area WDB's internal controls to safeguard cash/gift cards.

- Name document: **Southwestern Youth Incentive Policy.**

Note: Federal funds may not be spent on entertainment costs. Youth Incentive Policies should include: compliance with the Cost Principles in 2 CFR part 200; identify types of items that may be awarded (gift cards, plaques, certificates, checks); identify types of achievements/completion of activities (an inclusive list is required); practices for internal controls for safeguarding incentives, and provide a sample list of required documentation for reimbursement (diploma, evaluations).

17. If the Local Area WDB does not offer incentives for (NextGen) youth, please explain why.

N/A

18. Describe the local strategy to prepare the youth (NextGen) for unsubsidized employment, including with small employers, specifically those that include in-demand industry sectors and occupations of the local and/or regional labor markets. [WIOA Section 129(c)(1)(C)(v)]

The primary strategy to prepare youth for employment is through youth work experience, which is:

- an opportunity for young adults to develop good work habits and basic employment skills with local area employers.*
- provides an opportunity to explore occupations firsthand and gain limited job experience with industry that is prevalent in our region.*
- a chance to develop and reinforce soft skills.*
- opportunity to build responsibility and confidence.*
- a means of promoting a stronger workforce and a chance for local employers to develop future talent.*

In addition, SWDB staff work with regional Career and Technical Education (CTE) Directors and educators to make connections to employers to host workshops with tours for industries that are in demand in our region.

19. Please complete the Youth Program Elements chart provided to demonstrate how the Local Area WDB ensures each of the 14 youth program elements is made available to youth participants. Be certain to complete both columns of the chart to demonstrate partnerships and potential use of shared funding. Please specify partners. [WIOA Section 129(c)(2)(A)]

- Name document: *Southwestern PY24 WIOA Youth Program Elements Chart.*

20. Does the Local Area WDB have a standing committee to provide information to assist with planning, operational, and other issues relating to the provision of services to youth? [WIOA Section 107(b)(4)(A)(ii)]

a. If no, describe how oversight to planning, operational, and other issues relating to the provision of services to youth will be provided.

Request for Proposals and Statements of Work are reviewed by the executive committee of the SWDB and recommendations are made to the entire Board. Performance levels are constantly reviewed and presented at quarterly Board meetings. Internal programmatic monitoring is conducted by SWDB staff monthly. Quarterly financial meetings are conducted with each contractor to monitor budgets throughout the year. SWDB staff are active in area CTE meetings and utilize these meetings to stay informed about local youth issues. We are in the process of creating groups tied to our Title II partners (Tri-County CC, Southwestern CC, and Haywood CC) for local area youth planning.

b. If yes, please provide a response to the following

- a) Provide the committee's purpose/vision.

Not applicable

b) Provide the youth committee’s top three goals or objectives for PY 2024.

Not applicable

c) Provide a list of youth committee members to include members’ agency/organization, one of which must be a community-based organization with a demonstrated record of success in serving eligible youth. Provide the Committee’s Chair information in the first block (*who must be a Local Area WDB member*).

- Name document: **Local Area WDB Name Youth Committee Members** [WIOA Section 107(b)(4)(A)(ii)]

c. Complete the following chart for the PY 2024 Youth Committee’s planned meeting schedule to include dates, time, and location. (Expand form as needed or mark Not Applicable.)

Date	Time	Location (include address and room #)
Not applicable	Click here to enter time.	Click here to enter location.

XI. Local Area WDB Innovations

1. List all additional funding received by the Local Area WDB (for example, to include but not limited to, special grants, NC Job Ready Workforce Investment Grants, Business Services funds, National Dislocated Worker Grants (NDWG) (disaster), YouthBuild, Foundations, American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), Partners for Reentry Opportunities in Workforce Development (PROWD), NCWorks Commission Local Innovation Fund Grant, and/or outside funding to include a brief description of the source and the amount received).

Grant Name/Kind	Brief Description	Beginning and End date	Source and Amount	Partner Organization (if applicable)
<i>Homegrown Talent: SWC Advancing Work Based Learning Initiatives</i>	<i>Small Business Grant, IWT for 25 or less employees</i>	<i>January 2023 to December 2025</i>	<i>DOL - ARPA \$276,000</i>	<i>Not applicable</i>
<i>Recovery to Work</i>	<i>Recovery to Work development of peer support specialists in region to serve those with SUD</i>	<i>June 2022 to September 2024</i>	<i>Dogwood Health Trust \$429,515.00</i>	<i>Not applicable</i>
<i>National Dislocated Worker Grant</i>	<i>Due to closure of Pactive Evergreen</i>	<i>May 2023 to May 2025</i>	<i>DOL \$6,000,000</i>	<i>MAWDB also received funding</i>
<i>Homegrown Talent: SWC Advancing</i>	<i>For IWT employers with 26+ employees</i>	<i>June 2023 to June 2025</i>	<i>Dogwood Health Trust</i>	<i>Not applicable</i>

Grant Name/Kind	Brief Description	Beginning and End date	Source and Amount	Partner Organization (if applicable)
<i>Work Based Learning Initiatives</i>	<i>and OJT for new collar workers</i>		<i>\$150,000</i>	

2. Provide a clear and detailed example of the Local Area WDB’s best or promising **Adult/Dislocated Worker** program practice that has yielded positive results with evidence, which affirms this practice is effective.

In 2023 the significant closure of the paper mill in Canton was the catalyst for us work with the state to obtain a National Dislocated Worker Grant. This grant is focused on dislocated workers with outcomes of career services, occupational skills training and on the job training. This grant is effective and has yielded positive results by enabling our region to assist 120+ dislocated workers to date that we would not have been able to serve otherwise.

3. Provide a clear and detailed example of the Local Area WDB’s best or promising **Youth** program practice that has yielded positive results with evidence, which affirms this practice is effective.

Out of school youth are the focus in our region with WIOA funds. WIOA Youth Service Providers with support from SWDB Staff are encouraged to apply for additional grant funding and participate in statewide forums such as myFutureNC and ncIMPACT's Opportunity Youth Forums. Engagement in these statewide opportunities lend a voice to our rural region to the share difficulties that exist for out of school youth with barriers and open dialogue to understanding how critical these issues are to preventing credential attainment or entering the workforce.

For in school youth, the SWDB Staff work with the Western Region CTE Director to develop Career Development Workshops. These day-long information sessions target CTE Directors, school counselors, principals and superintendents with the purpose of providing information and networking with various workforce partners in the region to learn about resources for students. The goal has been to share knowledge and information with educators highlighting a viable industry in the region followed by a tour of a local employer. This initiative is effective and yields positive results because it has been replicated with other workforce boards in the prosperity zone.

4. Provide a clear and detailed example of the Local Area WDB’s best or promising **regional strategy** that has yielded positive results with evidence, which affirms this practice is effective.

WNC Construction Career Day (CCD) is a regional effort engaging 4 workforce boards. The idea started as a statewide concept in 2001 with the NC Department of Transportation to teach students about rewarding opportunities in the industry. After its first 10 years 34,000 youth from all 100 counties across NC were introduced to this viable industry with hands-on experiences. NCDOT, the Western Region CTE Director and the Haywood County CTE Director were the leaders who brought this concept to life in the west. From 2006 to 2018 CCD was scheduled every other year in Haywood County and during that time impacted around 4,000 students in the west. In 2018 and 2019, the Mountain Area Workforce Development Board held smaller CCDs, in a neighboring county. After 2019, it was determined that it would have more of an

impact for CCD to be focused on one major event covering multiple counties with the location remaining at the Haywood County fairgrounds. This enabled multiple partners to move forward together on employer outreach and an opportunity to raise sponsorship dollars to pay for the growth and expansion of this career day. During 2020 to 2022, CCD like many school activities, had to take a hiatus due to the pandemic. This provided the chance to plan and shift CCD from what was typically known as a significant fall event to the spring. Making this change would provide the opportunity for graduating high school seniors to consider careers with the employers in attendance. In the Spring of 2023 \$30,000 in sponsorship dollars were raised with 47 employers attending to highlight the trades to 850 students.

This year, plans are to feature ~60 construction & trades employers who will create hands-on demonstrations for approximately 1,000 students from a 16-county region with a sponsorship goal of \$45,000 to support this event.

Future considerations for CCD are to hold it twice a year with a fall event to engage middle school students and the spring event focused on high school students.

Should workforce board staff capacity permit, there is a possibility to work collectively with the employers engaged in CCD to develop a regional career pathway with local community colleges for the construction and trades industry.

5. Provide a clear and detailed example of the Local Area WDB's best or promising **virtual services strategy** that has yielded positive results with evidence, which affirms this practice is effective.

A grant has been obtained for SWDB to acquiring VR equipment and software through TransfrVR. Plans are to make this VR available through the NCWorks Career Centers and assign a career counselor to learn how to use the software, do outreach to promote this virtual learning tool and assist users for the best outcomes. This will be available to employers from multiple industries to be able to virtually train staff. We will also make this available to K-12 systems in our region for career exploration.

6. Provide a clear and detailed example of the Local Area WDB's innovative **business services strategies** and engagement practices that demonstrated employers taking charge and driving the agenda that has yielded positive results with evidence, which affirms this practice is effective.

A successful business services strategy in our region is Train Up also known as incumbent worker training. This program has been consistently funded since 2019 through additional grant funds. Currently, this program is funded by an ARPA grant focused on micro employers that have 25 or less employees. SWDB also acquired an additional grant to be able to serve employers with over 25 employees. This reimbursable grant up to \$10,000 gives employers the opportunity to drive the agenda on offsetting the cost of the training they need to strengthen their business, product line or services. SWDB meets with partners in the region including but not limited to community college small business centers, chambers, SBTDC, and Main Street Associations to offer presentations and information for outreach to the employers and small businesses they serve.

XII. Program Year 2024 Local Area WDB Plan Required Policy Attachments

1. The following policies are *required* to be attached as separate documents in WISE as part of the PY 2024 Local Area Plan. The Local Area Plan is not complete without these documents.

- Name Each Document: Local Area WDB Name

- In the first column, state if the policy is attached or why it is missing and when it can be expected. If two of the policies have been combined, please make a notation.
- In the second column mark “Yes” **only** if the policy has been changed/revised for the PY 2024 Plan and has not been previously submitted to the DWS.
- Revised policies should be submitted with a highlight or summary of the changes made to the local policy.
- Do not add an empty document in WISE as a “placeholder”.

Required Local Area WDB Policies	Attached (Yes/No). If no, why?	Revised for PY 2024 (Yes/No) and needs review
1. Adult/Dislocated Worker Experience Policy	No, we only conduct OJT’s with our adult/dw	No
2. Competitive Procurement Policy	Yes	No
3. Conflict of Interest Policy	Yes	No
4. Nondiscrimination/Equal Opportunity Standards and Complaint Procedures	Yes	No
5. Financial Management Policy for Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Title I	Yes	No
6. Individualized Training Account Policy	Yes	No
7. On-the-Job Training Policy	Yes	Yes, revised for NDWG
8. Oversight Monitoring Policy, Tool and Schedule	Yes	No
9. Priority of Service Policy	Yes	No
10. Youth Work Experience Policy	Yes	No
11. Supportive Services Policy	Yes	No
12. Local Area WDB WIOA and TAA Co-enrollment Policy	Yes	No
13. Eligible Training Provider Policy	Yes.	No
14. Non-Criminal Complaint Procedures	Yes	No

2. Designate whether the following local *Optional Policy* is included and used at the Local Area WDB and is included in the Local Area Plan or write “N/A” implying “Not Applicable”, if the Local Area WDB does not have this policy and; therefore, does not use these services.

In the second column mark “Yes” *only* if the policy has been changed for PY 2024 and has not been previously submitted to the DWS.

- Do not add a blank document in WISE as a “placeholder”.
- These policies are required to operate/offer these services
- If “Yes”, load the policy as a separate document.
- Name document: *Local Area WDB Name, Policy Name*. (Example: IWT Policy – Yes. Attached as *Board Name IWT Policy*.)

Optional Local Area WDB Policies	Yes- the Local Area WDB has a policy or N/A (Not Applicable)	Revised for PY 2024 (Add Yes or N/A for this column)
1. Local Area WDB Guidance for Local Incumbent Worker Grants	Yes	Yes. ARPA
2. Local Area WDB Needs-Related Policy	N/A	N/A
3. Local Area WDB Transitional Jobs Policy	N/A	N/A
4. Local Area WDB Youth Incentive Policy	Yes	N/A

3. Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) are required [Regulations Section 680.300] to pay the cost of training provided with Adult and Dislocated Worker funds and limitations on duration and amount may be included [Regulations Section 680.320]. Please provide the following ITA elements in summary:

Individual Training Accounts (ITA) Summary	
Dollar Amounts	\$3,500 per year \$10,500 per lifetime
Time Limits	N/A
Degree or Certificates allowed (Associate, Bachelor’s, other)	Certificate, Diploma, Associate Degree
Procedures for determining case-by-case exceptions for training that may be allowed	Request must be made to the Director
Period for which ITAs are issued (semester, school year, short-term, etc.)	Semester, short-term

Individual Training Accounts (ITA) Summary

Supportive Services covered by ITA (provide examples such as uniforms, tools, physical exams, etc.)

N/A, there is a separate policy to cover supportive services

4. Provide a description of how training services under chapter 3 of subtitle B will be provided in accordance with section 134(c)(3)(G), including if contracts for the training services will be used, how the use of such contracts will be coordinated with the use of individual training accounts under that chapter and how the local board will ensure informed customer choice in the selection of training programs regardless of how the training services are to be provided. [WIOA Section 108(b)(19)]

SWDB training services are provided in accordance with the aforementioned section, addressing the use of contracts, coordination with individual training accounts, and ensures informed customer choice. The Board identifies eligible training providers based on the criteria specified in WIOA. These providers include educational institutions and community-based organizations. The Board follows the competitive procurement process. This involves soliciting proposals from eligible training providers and selecting those that best meet the needs of participants and the local workforce. SWDB uses Individual Training Accounts to access training services. ITAs provide participants with the flexibility to choose training programs that align with their career goals. The use of ITAs are aligned with WIOA requirements, ensuring that participants have access to a variety of training options that are responsive to the needs of the local labor market. This process involves consultation with career counselors or case managers to guide participants in making informed choices. SWDB provides comprehensive career counseling and guidance services to participants. This includes informing them about available training options, potential career pathways, and the labor market demand for specific occupations. They will have access to information about various training providers, programs, and credentials from NCWorks and NCCareers.gov. This information is transparent, easily accessible, and regularly updated to reflect current offerings. SWDB conducts orientation sessions or workshops to familiarize participants with the available training options, the benefits of different credentials, and the potential career paths associated with various training programs. Ongoing support is provided to participants throughout the training process. This includes monitoring progress, addressing challenges, and ensuring that participants have the necessary resources to successfully complete their training. By implementing these strategies, the SWDB provides effective training services under Chapter 3 of Subtitle B in accordance with WIOA Section 108(b)(19). The emphasis is on ensuring informed customer choice, aligning training options with local labor market demands, and promoting transparency and accountability in the delivery of training services.

5. Please specify the supportive services provided by the Local Area WDB Supportive Services Policy. List specific items under Supplies, Emergency, and Other, as identified in the Local Area WDB policy. (Expand form as needed.)

Transportation	Childcare	Supplies <i>(include examples)</i>	Emergency <i>(include examples)</i>	Other <i>(include examples)</i>
Yes	Yes	Yes - required materials	Yes - tires	

Note: *The Local Area WDB must adequately safeguard all forms of supportive services payments (i.e., gas cards, cash, gift cards, etc.) and assure that they are used solely for authorized purposes. The Supportive Services Policy must include the Local Area WDB’s internal controls to safeguard supportive services. The internal controls must address issuance, storage, and reconciliation of supportive services throughout the area and be clearly stated within the policy.*

Attachment Checklist from Local Area Plan Instructions

- Local Area WDB Signed copy of Consortium Agreement (if applicable)
- Local Area WDB Administrative Entity Organizational Chart
- Local Area WDB Board Members (*form provided*)
- Local Area WDB By-Laws
- Local Area WDB By-Laws Required Elements Crosswalk (*form provided*)
- Local Area WDB Organizational Chart
- Local Area WDB Administrative Entity Certification Regarding Debarment* (*form provided*)
- Local Area WDB Workforce Development Area Signatory Form* (*form provided*)
- Local Area WDB NCWorks Career Centers (*form provided*)
- Local Area WDB Adult and Dislocated Worker Service Provider (*form provided*)
- Local Area WDB Eligible Training Provider Policy
- Local Area WDB 14 Youth Program Elements Chart (*form provided*)
- Local Area WDB Youth Committee Meeting Schedule (*optional*)
- Local Area WDB Youth Committee Members (*optional*)
- Local Area WDB Youth Service Provider (*form provided*)
- Local Area WDB Youth Incentive Policy (*optional*)
- Local Area WDB WIOA and TAA Co-enrollment Policy (*required*)
- Local Area Adult/Dislocated Worker Work Experience Policy
- Competitive Procurement Policy
- Conflict of Interest Policy
- Nondiscrimination/Equal Opportunity Standards and Complaint Procedures
- Financial Management Policy for Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Title I
- Local Area WDB Individualized Training Account Policy
- On-the-Job Training Policy
- Local Area WDB Oversight Monitoring Policy, Tool, and Schedule
- Priority of Service Policy
- Youth Work Experience Policy
- Local Area WDB Supportive Services Policy
- Local Area WDB Incumbent Worker Training Policy (*optional*)
- Local Area WDB Needs-Related Policy (*optional*)
- Non-Criminal Complaint Procedures
- Local Area WDB Transitional Jobs Policy (*optional*)
- Memorandum of Understanding
- Customer Flow Chart

*Mail signed and unfolded originals to assigned DWS Planner at:

N.C. Division of Workforce Solutions
313 Chapanoke Road, Suite 120
4316 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, NC 27699-4316

DocuSign® (or similar) signature pages may be uploaded in WISE.

Appendices

NC Local Area WDB By-Laws Required Elements

[Appendix A](#)

By-Laws Guidance

[Appendix B](#)

Guidance Regarding Meetings and Conferencing via Electronic Means

[Appendix C](#)

Local Area WDB Membership Requirements

[Appendix D](#)

NC Local Area WDB By-Laws Required Elements

At a minimum the Local Area WDB by-laws must include the following items for DWS approval. When submitting the Local Area WDB by-laws, please specify the section (provide a clear crosswalk) where the following required elements are located within the submitted by-laws.

Elements 1-7 are the *required* elements designated at WIOA Final Rule 679.310(g).

1. The nomination process used by the Chief Local Elected Officials (CLEOs) to elect the Local Area Board Chair and members.
2. The term limitations and how the term appointments will be staggered to ensure only a portion of membership expire in a given year.
3. The process to notify the Chief Local Elected Officials (CLEOs) of a Board member vacancy to ensure a prompt nominee within ninety (90) days of the vacancy.
4. The proxy and alternative designee process that will be used when a Board member is unable to attend a meeting and assigns a designee as per the requirements of 20 CFR 679.110(d)(4).
5. The use of technology such as phone and web-based meetings, that will be used to promote Board member participation (20 CFR 679.110(d)(5)).
6. The process to ensure Board members actively participate in convening the workforce development system's stakeholders, brokering relationship with a diverse range of employers, and leveraging support for workforce development activities.
7. A description of any other conditions governing appointment or membership on the Board as deemed appropriate by the Chief Local Elected Officials (CLEOs); (20 CFR 679.310(g)(1-7)).

North Carolina specific requirements that must be specified within the by-laws:

1. The adopted generally accepted parliamentary procedure, such as Robert's Rules of Order, chosen by the Board.
2. Whether an appointee filling a vacancy will serve the remainder of the unexpired term or be appointed for a new full term.
3. The Board's policy assuring attendance and participation of its members.
4. Quorum requirements to be not less than 51% constituting 51% of the total filled Board positions.
5. Any standing committees the Board has established shall be included in the by-laws.
6. The Board's conflict of interest policy, which may not be any less stringent than the requirements of the DWS's Policy, shall be referenced in the by-laws.
7. The process the Board will take when expedient action is warranted between Board meetings, such as calling a special meeting or allowing the Executive Committee to act on behalf of the Board.
8. Board meetings will be held in accessible facilities with accessible materials available upon prior request.
9. The Board will meet no less than four times per program year.

By-Laws Guidance

This template is provided for guidance purposes only. It contains sample language that may be used in by-laws development. It is not required that Boards utilize this template or language within. This template reflects multiple counties within a Consortium. Single-county Boards and non-Consortia will need to adjust their by-laws accordingly.

Article 1

Name and Purpose

Section 1. Name

The name of this organization shall be the **Click Here to Enter WDB Name. Board** (hereinafter referred to as the “Board”).

Section 2. Purpose and Responsibilities

The purpose for which the Board is organized is to perform all functions of a WDB and Local Workforce Development Area as set forth in the Federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 (“WIOA”), or the corresponding provision of any applicable federal or state laws of related purpose and the rules and regulations promulgated thereunder, and Section 143B-438.11 of the North Carolina General Statutes and to perform such functions with the **Click Here to Enter WDB Name. WDB.**

The Board services area shall encompass the counties of **Click Here to Enter WDB Name..**

The Board responsibilities shall include:

1. Develop and submit Local Area Plan annually to the Governor, a comprehensive 4-year Local Area Plan, in partnership with the Chief Local Elected Official.
2. Perform workforce research and regional market analysis.
3. Convene local workforce development system stakeholders to assist in the development of the Local Area Plan and identify non-federal expertise and resources to leverage support for workforce development activities.
4. Lead efforts to engage with a diverse range of employers and with entities in the region involved.
5. Lead efforts with representatives of secondary and postsecondary education programs in the Local Area to develop and implement career pathways within the Local Area by aligning the employment, training, education, and supportive services that are needed by adults and youth, particularly individuals with barriers.

By-Laws Guidance

6. Lead efforts in the Local Area to identify proven and promising strategies and initiatives for meeting the needs of employers, and workers and jobseekers in the local workforce system, and to identify and disseminate information on promising practices carried out in other local areas.
7. Develop strategies for using technology to maximize the accessibility and effectiveness of the local workforce development system for employers, workers, and jobseekers.
8. Conduct program oversight.
9. Negotiate and reach agreement on local performance accountability measures.
10. Designate or certify one-stop operators, contractors, and service providers and, in appropriate circumstances, terminate for cause the eligibility of such operators.
11. Coordinate activities with education and training providers in the local area.
12. Develop a budget for the activities of the Local Area WDB consistent with the Local Area Plan and the duties of the Local Area Board and subject to the approval of the Chief Local Elected Official.
13. Annually review the physical and programmatic accessibility provisions of all one-stop centers, as well as locations for contractors and service providers, in the local area, in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.

Article 2

Board Members

Section 1. Appointment

There shall be a Board of no more than **Click Here to Enter Number**. Board members. Members of this organization shall be appointed by the following procedure: The Chief Local Elected Official (of the **Click Here to Enter Name**. County Board of Commissioners, hereinafter referred to as the CLEO) shall appoint members based on nominations from the following: local business organizations; local education agencies; vocational education institutions, community-based organizations, and higher educational institutions; and private and proprietary schools; state or local labor organizations and other interested organizations.

The number of business sector nominees shall be at least 51% of the number of individuals to be appointed and are appointed from amongst individuals nominated by local business organizations and business trade associations. The nominated candidate or company must be a member of the nominating organization. A majority of the Members shall be representatives of businesses in the local area (including small businesses or organizations representing businesses that, at a minimum, include high-quality, work-relevant training and development in in-demand industry sectors or occupations in the local area) and are owners, chief executives or

By-Laws Guidance

operating officers, or other business executives or employers with optimum policy making or hiring authority. The members of the local Board shall represent diverse geographic areas within the local area.

Section 2. Composition

Organized Labor and Community Based Organizations: Not less than 20% of the Members shall be representatives of the workforce within the local area, who:

- i. shall include representatives of labor organizations, who have been nominated by local labor federations, or other representatives of employees;
- ii. shall include a representative, who shall be a member of a labor organization or a training director, from a joint labor-management apprenticeship program, or if no such program exists in the area, such a representative of an apprenticeship program in the area, if such a program exists.
- iii. may include representatives of community-based organizations that have demonstrated experience and expertise in addressing the employment needs of individuals with barriers to employment, including organizations that serve veterans or that provide or support competitive integrated employment for individuals with disabilities; and
- iv. may include representatives of organizations that have demonstrated experience and expertise in addressing the employment, training, or education needs of eligible youth, including representatives of organizations that serve out-of-school youth;

Education and training activities: The Board shall include representatives of entities administering education and training activities in the local area, who:

- i. shall include a representative of eligible providers administering adult education and literacy activities under Title II of the WIOA;
- ii. shall include a representative of institutions of higher education providing workforce investment activities (including community colleges);
- iii. may include representatives of local educational agencies, and of community-based organizations with demonstrated experience and expertise in addressing the education or training needs of individuals with barriers to training;

The Board shall include representatives of governmental and economic and community development entities serving the local area, who:

- i. shall include a representative of economic and community development entities;
- ii. shall include an appropriate representative from the State Employment Service Office under the Wagner-Peyser Act serving the local area;
- iii. shall include an appropriate representative of the programs carried out under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, serving the local area;

By-Laws Guidance

- iv. may include representatives of agencies or entities administering programs serving the local area relating to transportation, housing, and public assistance, and
- v. may include representatives of philanthropic organizations serving the local area; and

This Board may include such other individuals or representatives of entities as the Chief Local Elected Official determines appropriate.

Section 3. Tenure

All appointments will be for a two-year term to expire on June 30 of each respective term. No member shall serve more than three consecutive terms (6 years) or a total of five terms (10 years) in any one appointed position. An individual whose initial appointment is to fill an unexpired term or an initial staggered term of less than two years, shall be eligible to serve the number of full-length terms other members are eligible to serve, unless, prior to the time for reappointment that individual has already served six consecutive years. Members may be re-appointed at the discretion of the Chief Local Elected Official subject to the term limitations outlined in this section.

Terms shall be staggered to ensure that at any given time a percentage of the members are experienced in WDB functions.

The Board shall advise the Consortium Counties of potential Board member vacancies prior to the end of the term. In the case of a midterm vacancy, an immediate replacement shall be requested of the Consortium County represented by the departing Board member. The appointed Board member shall fill the remaining term of office.

The Board shall not compensate Board Members for their services, but by resolution of the Board, a fixed sum and expenses, if any, may be allowed for attendance at each regular or special meeting of the Board.

Section 4. Termination for Cause

By two-thirds majority vote of the membership or by action of the Chief Local Elected Official, a member may be removed for cause from the Board. Cause would be for such actions as malfeasance, misconduct, or any action which would be deemed not in the best interest of the Board; or three unexcused absences from regular scheduled meetings within the preceding twelve calendar months. Notice that a removal vote that may be taken for cause must be included on the agenda of said meeting. The Chair shall send a precautionary letter to the said Board member upon two unexcused absences within the preceding twelve calendar months prior to the next meeting.

Section 5. Resignation

Letters of resignation must be submitted to the [Click Here to Enter WDB Name](#). Chair. Three consecutive absences without justification and no response to the above referenced letter from the chair will be considered acceptable terms for resignation. Justification must be submitted in writing. The Board Chair has the authority to accept or deny justification.

By-Laws Guidance

Section 6. Vacancies

Upon vacancy of any position on this Board, the procedure in Article II, Section 1, will be followed to provide replacement representation to complete the remainder of that term of appointment.

Article 3 Meetings

Section 1. Regular Meetings

The Board shall meet at a public location at such time and place as determined by the Chairperson. All meetings must be held in an accessible facility, in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements. All materials must be in an accessible format (i.e., large print, Braille, interpreter, etc.), as needed or indicated.

The Board will meet no less than four times per program year. Regular Board meetings are face to face; however, Board members may attend meetings via conference call, video communications and other alternative methods.

Five working days' notice shall be delivered to each member stating a reasonable time, date and place of the meeting and the meeting's purpose unless deemed an emergency by the Chair or Executive Committee calling for said special meeting.

Section 2. Special Meetings

The Chair of the Board and Committee Chair may, when deemed necessary, call a special meeting of the Board via conference call, video communications, or alternative media sources for transacting any business designated in the call.

Section 3. Quorum

At all meetings (regular or special) of the Board, a majority of the Board members present constitutes a quorum for transacting business. A quorum shall require the participation of Board members constituting 51% of the total filled Board positions. Proxy representatives who are unable to cast votes shall not count toward meeting the quorum requirement. Votes may be cast via electronic medium for remote attendees. The act of the majority of the Board members present at a meeting at which a quorum is present shall be the act of the Board. However, a two-thirds vote of those present shall be required to amend any provision of these by-laws.

Section 4. Conduct of Meetings

All meetings of this Board shall be conducted in accordance with the latest edition of Robert's Rules of Order.

By-Laws Guidance

Section 5. Open Meetings

Local Area Board Conducts Business Openly: The Local Area Board must conduct its business in an open manner as required by WIOA sec. 107(e), by making available to the public, on a regular basis through electronic means and open meetings, information about the activities of the local Board. (20 CFR 679.390) This includes:

- a. Information about the Local Area Plan, or modification to the Local Area Plan, before submission of the Local Area Plan;
- b. List and affiliation of Local Area WDB members;
- c. Selection of one-stop operators;
- d. Award of grants or contracts to eligible training providers of workforce investment activities including providers of youth workforce investment activities;
- e. Minutes of formal meetings of the Local Area Board; and
- f. Local Area Board by-laws, consistent with § 679.310(g).

Section 6. Proxy Representation and Voting

A member may designate a representative to attend a meeting of the Board in his/her absence. The proxy must meet the membership criteria for the member's affiliation type. The proxy will count toward the appointed member's attendance. The representative may participate in discussions and may vote so long as the member provides written voting instructions to the Chair allowing his/her proxy representative to cast votes in accordance with the written voting instructions.

Each Board member present shall be entitled to one vote on each matter for which a vote is taken. Votes may be cast telephonically or via electronic medium.

Section 7. Conflict of Interest and Voting

No WDB member (whether compensated or not) shall engage in any activity, including participation in the selection, award or administration of a sub-grant or contract supported by WIOA funds if a conflict of interest, real or apparent would be involved. Such a conflict would arise when:

- i. The individual,
- ii. any member of the individual 's immediate family,
- iii. the individual's partner, or
- iv. an organization which employs, or is about to employ any of the above, has a financial interest in the firm or organization selected for the award.

No WDB member, member of his/her immediate family, officers, employees, or agents of the WDB member's agency or business, shall neither solicit nor accept gratuities, favors, or anything of value from contractors, potential contractors, or parties to sub agreements.

By-Laws Guidance

A WDB member shall not cast a vote on, or participate in, any decision-making capacity on the provision of services by such member (or any organization which that member directly represents), nor on any matter which would provide any direct financial benefit to that member.

No WDB members shall participate in a governmental decision including voting on a matter (including recommendations, appointments, obligating or committing the WDB to a course of action) when such action influences a decision or exercises judgement in making a decision. Any member with a potential or actual conflict of interest shall comply with requirements for public disclosure and recusal.

Article 4

Organization

Section 1. Officers

The officers of this Board shall be a Chair, a Vice-Chair, and a Secretary.

Section 2. Election of Officers

Officers of this Board shall be elected in June for two-year terms. The Chair and Vice-Chair will be elected from among the members who are representatives of the business sector. The secretary will be elected from among all members.

The Chair shall appoint a nominating committee to recommend officers who shall be elected from the Board's business sector membership and shall begin their term at the beginning of the new program year effective July 1. These officers shall serve until their successors are elected and qualified or until they are no longer Board members. If an officer is unable to complete his/her term the Board shall elect a successor to complete the remaining portion of the original term. The Vice-Chair shall not be required to succeed the Chair at the end of the Chair's term of office.

Section 3. Chair

The Chair shall preside at Board meetings, designate standing and ad hoc committees deemed appropriate and appoint their Chair and members. The Chair shall not vote except in the case of a tie, in which event he/she shall cast the deciding vote.

Section 4. Vice-Chair

The Vice-Chair shall assume all duties and responsibilities of the Chair in his/her absence from meetings. In the event that the office of Chair is vacated before the end of the term, the Vice-Chair shall assume the office in an acting capacity until such time as the Board elects a new Chair.

By-Laws Guidance

Section 5. Secretary

The Secretary shall be responsible for proper notification of meetings, review, and submission of the minutes to the Board, and shall carry out any other duties deemed appropriate by the Chair. Local Area staff will serve as support personnel in performing these duties.

Section 6. Executive Committee

The Executive Committee shall consist of the Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary (from a sector other than business), and the previous Chair or Vice-Chair. As determined by the Chair of the Board, chairs of Board committees will attend Executive Committee meetings. Responsibilities of the Executive Committee are as follows: make standing committee assignments and coordination among committees, prepare recommendations to Board on state and national issues, act as needed between regularly scheduled Board meetings, and develop immediate and long-range goals for Board concurrence.

Section 7. Vacancy

If an office becomes vacant, the Board shall elect a successor at its next meeting.

Article 5 Committees

Section 1.

The Chair of the Board shall have the power, except as otherwise provided in this Article, to appoint the members of any Committee for a term of two (2) years. No Committee, except as elsewhere provided in this Article, shall take any action or position on behalf of the Board, bind the Board, or exercise the authority of the Board in the management of the Corporation. The Chair of all the Committees shall be members of the Board. The Executive Committee of the Board shall meet at the call of the Chair of the Board or the written request of any two (2) members of the committee. The Board's other Committees shall meet at the call of their respective Chair or the Chair of the Board.

Section 2.

Electronic meetings shall be permissible in lieu of face-to-face committee meetings at the discretion of the Committee Chair. An electronic meeting of the Committee occurs when Board members are in different locations, connected by electronic means, through audio, video, or both. All votes taken during an electronic meeting shall be by roll call. All scheduled electronic meetings shall be held in such a way that all members participating can hear each other at the same time. When speaking, each member will be asked to clearly identify himself, so that proper recognition is given and recorded. All Board policies, administrative practices, and by-laws shall apply equally to electronic meetings.

By-Laws Guidance

Section 3.

The Local Area WDB may establish standing committees to provide information and assist the Board in carrying out its responsibilities (20 CFR 679.360).

Article 6

Amendments

Section 1. Amendment Procedure

Board by-laws can be amended at any regular Board meeting provided the proposed amendment(s) has been submitted in writing to the Board members at least two weeks prior to the meeting.

Section 2. Vote Needed

The by-laws shall be amended upon affirmative vote by a two-thirds majority of the Board.

Article 7

Severability

In the event that any of the rules, regulations, restrictions, covenants, or conditions of these by-laws are held to be partially or wholly invalid or unenforceable for any reason, such holding shall not affect, alter, modify, or impair in any manner any of the other terms, provisions, rules, regulations, restrictions, covenants, or conditions contained herein.

Adopted This NUMBER DATE Day of MONTH, YEAR.

Board Director, Printed Name and Signature

Date

Chief Local Elected Official Printed Name and Signature

Date

Board Chair, Printed Name and Signature

Date

Guidance Regarding Meetings and Conferencing via Electronic Means

All public WDB meetings and Committee meetings will be held at specified times and places which are convenient and open to the public.

The Board believes it is in the best interest of its members, systems, and customers that the fullest participation and attendance in all meetings be achieved whenever possible. Furthermore, it recognizes that the use of electronic, audio or video conferencing for meeting attendance and voting requirements is permissible so long as the meeting is conducted in accordance with the Sunshine Provision.

The Board in all of its regular and special, standing committee, and ad hoc committee meetings complies with and intends to comply with the provisions of the Sunshine Provision. Therefore, the Board hereby adopts this policy, to be used when needed, to make use of the capabilities for conferencing by electronic means or any other type of audio or video conferencing for its meetings *or* any of the standing committee and ad hoc committee meetings as set forth and adopted according to the following rules as applicable:

- A. All pertinent provisions of the Sunshine Provision must be complied with, including specifically the proper notice of any regular or special meeting, the proper record keeping or minutes of each meeting, the appropriate agenda preparation for each meeting, which in addition shall be posted along with the notice of the meeting; and, in particular, any use of closed sessions shall be in compliance with the provisions of WIOA.
- B. All Board and Committee members attending meetings by electronic conferencing shall be entitled to vote as if they were personally and physically present at the meeting site so long as a quorum is, in total, present and accounted for, and their votes shall be recorded by the Board Director.
- C. A Board or Committee member who attends a meeting by electronic, video, or audio conference must provide notice to the Board Director at least 24 hours prior to the meeting unless such advance notice is impracticable.
- D. The location of the meeting included on the notice shall be equipped with a suitable transmission system (e.g., a speakerphone) in order that the public audience, the members in attendance and any staff in attendance will be able to hear any input, vote, or discussion of the conference and that the member attending by electronic means shall have a similar capability of hearing and participating in such input, vote, or discussion.
- E. As the Board or its committees begin each new matter of business, the Chair will check with all remote locations(s) where members are to ensure that each such connection is active.

Guidance Regarding Meetings and Conferencing via Electronic Means

- F. When a motion is made, and seconded, and discussion regarding the motion begins, the Chair will check that the connection with remote location(s) where members are present is active. Prior to closing discussion and taking any vote, the Chair will ask all remote location(s) where member(s) is(are) present whether there are any additional comments, questions, or information to be added to the discussion.

- G. All decisions will be made using majority rule except when a higher vote is required. There will be no muting of any connections with remote location(s) where members are present at any time. There will be no sidebar discussions.

- H. The procedures outlined above shall also apply to each Board and its Committee members.

Local Area WDB Membership Requirements

Representative of Business (WIOA Section 107(b) (2)(A))

Who May Satisfy the Requirements:

The majority of the members of the Local Area WDB must be representatives of private sector business in the local area. At a minimum, two members must represent small business as defined by the U.S. Small Business Administration. Business representatives serving on Local Area WDBs may also serve on the State Board. Each business representative must meet the following criteria:

- be an owner, chief executive officer, chief operating officer, or other individual with optimum policy making and hiring authority;
- provide employment opportunities in **in-demand** industry sectors or occupations, as those terms are defined in WIOA section 3(23); and provide high-quality, work-relevant training and development opportunities to its workforce or the workforce of others (in the case of organizations representing business as per WIOA Sec. 107(b)(2)(A)(ii); and
- are appointed from among individuals nominated by local business organizations and business trade associations.

In North Carolina, examples of allowable business organizations may include chambers of commerce, trade organizations, large non-profit organizations, such as Rex Hospital, and for-profit organizations, such as Duke Hospital, depending on the specific circumstances. Examples of unallowable business organizations include the N.C. Department of Public Safety or other state or municipal agencies.

Representative of Workforce (WIOA Section 107(b)(2)(B))

Who May Satisfy the Requirements:

Not less than 20% of the members of the Local Area WDB **must** be workforce representatives. These representatives:

- **must include two or more representatives of labor organizations**, where such organizations exist in the local area. Where labor organizations do not exist, representatives must be selected from other employee representatives;

Employee representatives must come from organizations that advocate, enhance, or protect the rights of a group of employees. In North Carolina, such examples include the North Carolina Association of Educators (NCAE), the State Employees Association of North Carolina (SEANC), and the National Guard Association). The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) is an example of an organization that is not allowable as a labor organization.

Local Area WDB Membership Requirements

- **must** include **one or more representatives of a joint labor management, or union affiliated, registered apprenticeship** program within the area who must be a training director or a member of a labor organization. If no union affiliated registered apprenticeship programs exist in the area, a representative of a registered apprenticeship program with no union affiliation must be appointed, if one exists.

In addition to the representatives enumerated above, the Local Area WDB **may** include the following to contribute to the 20% requirement:

- one or more representatives of community-based organizations that have demonstrated experience and expertise in addressing the employment, training, or education needs of individuals with barriers to employment, including organizations that serve veterans or provide or support competitive integrated employment for individuals with disabilities; and

In North Carolina, examples of allowable community-based organizations include organizations such as Goodwill and community action agencies.

- one or more representatives of organizations that demonstrated experience or expertise in addressing the employment, training, or education needs of eligible youth, including representatives of organizations that serve out-of-school youth.

Community College representatives would not be appropriate for this category.

Representatives of Education and Training (WIOA Section 107(b) (2)(C))

Who May Satisfy the Requirements:

The balance of Local Area WDB membership **must include**:

- **At least one** eligible provider administering **adult education and literacy** activities under WIOA Title II;
- **At least one** representative from an **institution of higher education** providing workforce investments activities, including community colleges; and
- **At least one representative** from each of the following governmental and economic and community development entities:
 - **Economic and community development** entities;
 - The **State Employment Service Office** under the Wagner-Peyser Act (29 U.S. C. 49 et seq.) serving the local area; and
 - The programs carried out under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, other than Sec. 112 or part C of that title.

Local Area WDB Membership Requirements

In addition to the representatives enumerated above, the Chief Local Elected Official (CLEO) **may** appoint other appropriate entities in the local area, including:

- Entities administering education and training activities who represent local educational agencies or community-based organizations with demonstrated expertise in addressing the education and training needs for individuals with barriers to employment;
- Governmental and economic and community development entities who represent transportation, housing, and public assistance programs;
- Philanthropic organizations serving the local area;
- and Other appropriate individuals as determined by the Chief Local Elected Official (CLEO).
- The board chair shall be elected among the business representatives.

The Division of Workforce Solutions may request additional information from Local Area WDBs on representatives and the organizations they represent at any time in order to determine compliance with these requirements. The final determination on whether requirements are met is made by the Division of Workforce Solutions.
