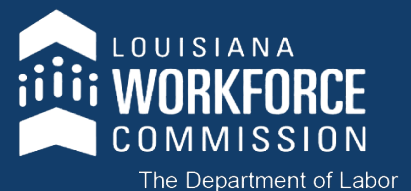




REGIONAL/LOCAL TWO-YEAR MODIFICATION PLAN *2020-2024*

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City of Shreveport
Community Development

The Local Workforce Development Boards 70 and 71 are charged with providing strategic direction and guidance over the local area's federal, state, and local workforce funds and service programs. LWDB 70 and LWDB 71, appointed by their chief elected official and/or parish mayor and certified by the Governor, includes representatives of private business/industry, education, economic development, labor, and community-based organizations. Area business partners make up most of the WDBs membership and contribute to its strategic development by maintaining a leadership role on both WDBs.

The LWDB 70 provides policy and oversight for all workforce development activities in the ten parishes throughout Northwest Louisiana: Bienville, Balance of Caddo, Bossier, Claiborne, DeSoto, Lincoln, Natchitoches, Red River, Sabine, and Webster. The LWDB 71 provides policy and oversight for all workforce development activities within the City of Shreveport in Caddo Parish in Northwest Louisiana.

Find true north and you can find your way no matter the environment you find yourself in. Region 7's true north is assisting people to develop their potential. Amid the chaos and crises of COVID-19 and social unrest, our Region's true north continues to drive us to stay on target. In our pursuit to better serve the people of Region 7, in assisting them to develop their potential through WIOA activities, we are focusing our attention on expanding our demand-driven workforce system to be more robust for its participants, and more effective for its businesses.

We continue to develop our current partnerships along with developing new ones with various agencies and businesses that will best provide training and educational opportunities for the people of our region to attain self-sufficient employment opportunities within their own region.

LWDA 70 has made significant restructuring changes to its internal operations to better serve participants and businesses within the region. These changes were made with the aim of providing more time to assist participants in developing their potential, especially the youth population, and to provide better tools for the case managers to utilize.

In 2017, Region 7 created a three-year WIOA plan, outlining goals and strategies for the workforce system over the next three years. In alignment with this plan, the Board engaged in a variety of strategic initiatives to better serve business and jobseeker customers, promote collaboration among system partners, and continuously improve organizational operations. The timing of this 2020 Region 7 strategic plan update comes was in response to the ending of the original plan's timeframe, the many changes that have occurred within the workforce development landscape in the previous three years, and the current national COVID-19 pandemic crisis, which has drastically impacted the area's economy and workforce.

In 2014, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) was enacted, replacing the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 and providing a new vision for the workforce development system. WIOA emphasizes customer-centric service design, a demand-driven system with business as the primary customer, and earn and learn opportunities, as well as reinforcing the role of the local Workforce Development Board as a strategic convener. In response to this change in federal legislation, the State of Louisiana, and the local workforce boards on in Region 7 have taken a close look at plans, policies, and procedures to align with the new law and carry out its vision. Region 7 was ahead of the curve on much of WIOA's strategic focus, which has allowed LWDA 70 and LWDA 71 to continue its work pushing toward its goals to provide the highest quality services to businesses and jobseekers.

This WIOA two-year plan modification submitted by LWDA 70 and LWDA 71 was developed with the Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDB) and in partnership with the local chief elected officials. The plan modification will be effective January 1, 2023 – December 31, 2024. The WIOA guidelines emphasize the importance of collaboration and transparency in the development and submission of the plan modification.

The two-year modification provides updates to what the original plan indicated LWDA 70 and LWDA 71 is doing in coordination with the partners to serve the populations in our local areas. During the previous two years we have gone through the pandemic COVID-19, which has primarily subsided, but its impacts are still with us relative to the local economy and how services are being provided. As we recover from the pandemic, we still are experiencing inflation and the potential for a forthcoming recession. Employers are still finding it hard to fill open positions and smaller businesses are having difficulty keeping up with wage increases offered by larger businesses.

This plan was developed through an inclusive approach that engaged stakeholders, including education partners, community organizations, staff, and local businesses, to provide insights and feedback. Local elected officials, LWDB members, core program partners, and mandatory One Stop partners are an integral part of the planning process. The plan addresses the coordination of service delivery with the core programs of Vocational Rehabilitation, Wagner Peyser, and Adult Education. The process for gathering information from stakeholders includes strategic planning, workforce board meetings, and partner engagement and feedback. LWDB 70 and LWDB 71 has also made the plan publicly available online to ensure transparency.

As required, the LWDBs revisits and recalibrates the plan in response to changing economic conditions and workforce needs. The plan modification accommodates current and future needs of the local workforce system, placing an increased emphasis on coordination and collaboration at all levels to ensure a streamlined and positive experience for employers and job seekers, including those with disabilities. The plan includes the best available information for specific service models, as well as a roadmap to enhance the effectiveness of these programs. LWDB 70 and LWDB 71 Plan Modification provides an updated view of the system-wide needs of the local workforce development areas. It also addresses how the LWDBs will foster strategic alignment, improve service integration, and ensure that the workforce system is industry-relevant by responding to the economic needs of the LWDAs and matching employers with skilled workers. The plan emphasizes continuous improvement of the local workforce system and focuses on customer service excellence, aligning with business and market driven principles.

Regional Economic and Workforce Analysis

The coronavirus pandemic cannot be overlooked in its impact on the national, state, and regional economies. Although an economic recovery from the pandemic began its momentum in 2021, there are some indications that this recovery is not complete when looking at employment for the major industry (NAICS) sectors within Region 7. The high levels of unemployment that Region 7 experienced as a result of the pandemic may have been on a consistent decline since its arrival in March 2020 but this has not been accompanied by a corresponding overall return to pre-pandemic employment levels (i.e., 2019). Before looking at the Louisiana Workforce Commission's employment projections (industry and occupation) for Region 7, this analysis will begin with a brief overview of the impact of the coronavirus pandemic.

Changes in Region 7 Industry Sector Employment and the Coronavirus Pandemic

In Chart I below, employment in each of the twenty major NAICS sectors in Region 7 is presented for the 2nd quarter of 2019, 2020, 2021, and 2022. From the 2nd quarter of 2019 (pre-pandemic) to the 2nd quarter of 2020, when the pandemic was probably at its peak, overall employment dropped by 11.3%, or a loss of a little over 25,000 employees collectively reported by the twenty industries. For the 2nd quarter of 2021, employment began to increase as more employees returned to work from temporary layoffs caused by the pandemic and increased again by only .64% for the 2nd quarter of 2022. For the 2nd quarter of 2022, total employment at 213,904 was still below its pre-pandemic level of 223,216, short of 9,312 employees or "jobs". By the 2nd quarter of 2022, employment in only two industry sectors in Region 7 had returned to, or exceeded, pre-pandemic (2019) levels: Construction and Professional & Technical Services.

Chart I - Employment in Major NAICS Sectors - Region 7, Northwest Louisiana

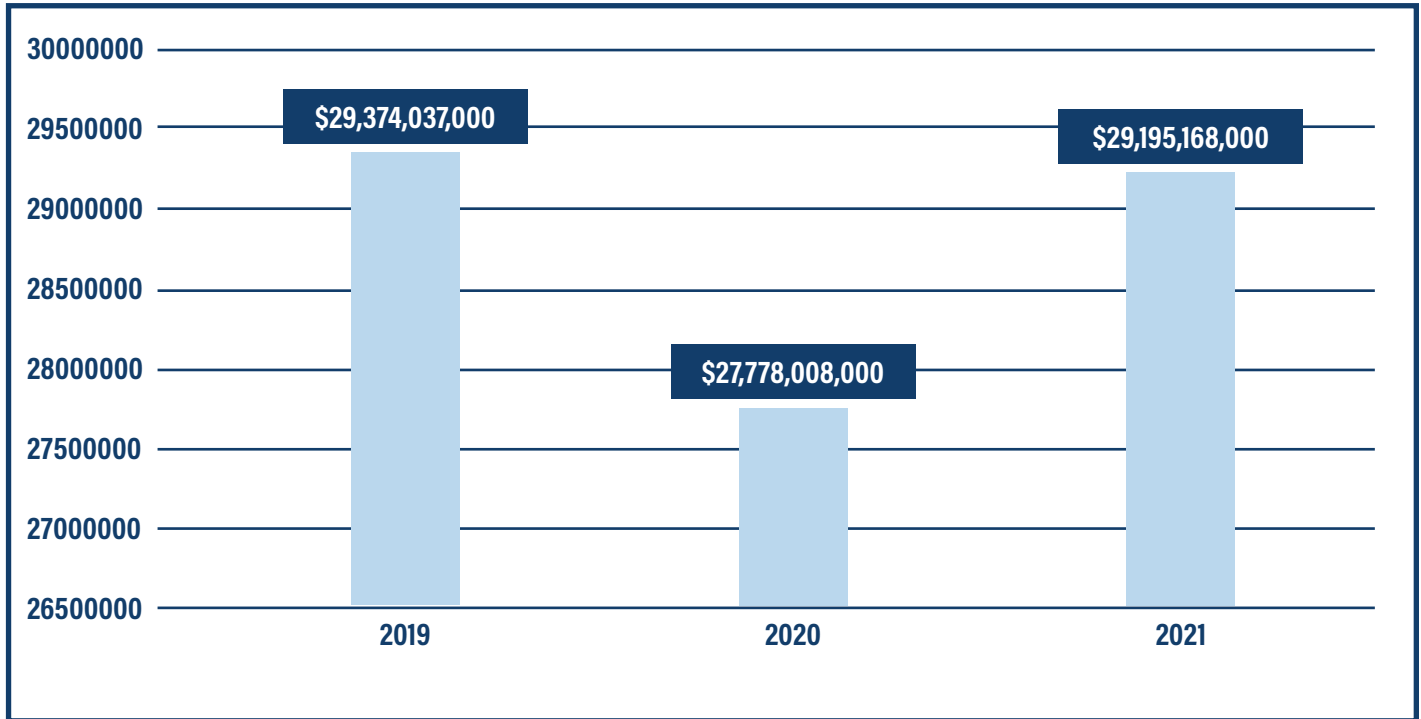
NAICS Sector	2Q 2019	2Q 2020	2Q 2021	2Q 2022
Health Care & Social Assistance 62	43,377	40,978	42,329	42,602 (98.2%)
Retail Trade 44-45	27,837	25,537	27,430	27,602 (99.2%)
Accommodation & Food Services 72	25,648	17,456	21,761	22,537 (87.9%)
Educational Services 61	21,830	20,198	20,731	20,796 (95.3%)
Manufacturing 31-33	16,734	15,157	15,224	15,613 (93.3%)
Administrative & Waste Services 56	12,262	9,880	11,306	11,817 (96.4%)
Public Administration 92	10,712	10,540	10,394	10,059 (93.9%)
Construction 23	10,222	9,714	10,480	10,762 (105.3%)
Transportation & Warehousing 48-49	7,869	7,246	7,648	7,746 (98.4%)
Wholesale Trade 42	7,795	7,218	7,100	7,248 (93.0%)
Professional & Technical Services 54	7,720	7,426	8,180	8,176 (105.9%)
Mining 21	5,658	4,596	4,570	5,414 (95.7%)
Finance & Insurance 52	5,450	5,379	5,309	5,249 (96.3%)
Other Services, Ex. Public Administration 81	4,956	4,055	4,875	4,945 (99.8%)
Arts, Entertainment, & Recreation 71	4,362	2,578	3,284	3,346 (76.7%)
Real Estate, Rental, & Leasing 53	3,825	3,644	3,697	3,710 (97.0%)
Information 51	2,643	2,238	2,306	2,388 (90.3%)
Utilities 22	1,685	1,734	1,703	1,475 (87.5%)
Management of Companies & Enterprises 55	1,479	1,257	1,362	1,348 (91.1%)
Agriculture & Forestry 11	1,152	1,186	1,169	1,071 (93.0%)
TOTAL	223,216	198,017	210,858	213,904 (95.8%)

Source: laworks.net, Labor Market Information

Estimates of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for Region 7

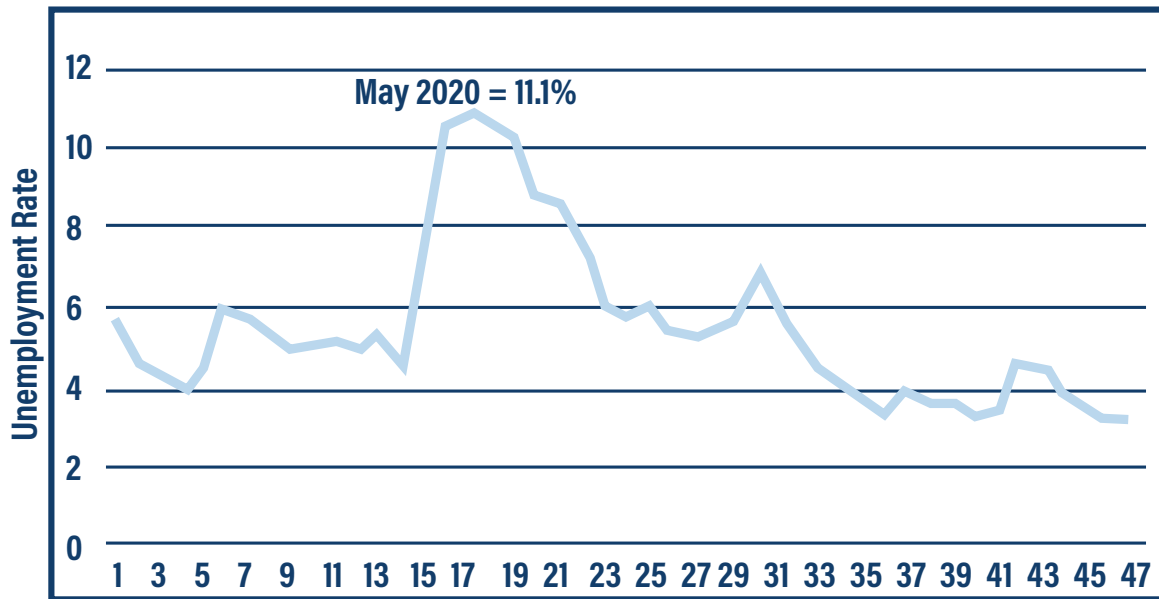
Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is another gauge of economic activity and, from estimates made by the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis for the ten parishes that comprise Region 7, GDP took a steep dive from 2019 to 2020 as it did for the national and state economies. As shown in Chart II below, Real Gross Domestic Product in Region 7 dropped by almost \$1.6 billion from 2019 (pre-pandemic) to 2020 (pandemic) but regained \$1.4 billion in 2021 as the region's economy began its steps toward recovery from the coronavirus "recession". However, Real GDP in 2021 was close to \$179 million below its 2019 level.

Chart II - Real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in Region 7



Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis (www.bea.gov)

Chart III - Region 7 Unemployment Rates, January 2019 to November 2022



Time: January 2019 to November 2022
 Source: laworks.net, Labor Market Information

Chart III above shows the trend in monthly unemployment rates for Region 7 from January 2019 to November 2022 (47 months). In 2019 (pre-pandemic), the unemployment rate averaged 5.0% but, as can be seen in the chart, began to experience a dramatic increase in March 2020 as the pandemic arrived. The unemployment rate peaked at 11.1% in May 2020 and averaged 8.1% for the year. For the year 2021, the unemployment rate dropped to an annual average of 5.1% and declined further into 2022. In fact, as of November 2022, Region 7’s unemployment rate had averaged 3.7% for the year. However, there appears to be a “disconnect” when observing the weak employment growth for Region 7 (see Chart I) and the rapid drop in the unemployment rate following the worst of the pandemic as displayed in Chart III.

Chart IV - Changes in Population 2010 to 2020 for Ten Parishes in Region 7, Northwest LA

Parish	Population 2010	Population 2020	Change
Bienville	14,546	13,391	-1,115 (-7.9%)
Bossier	113, 837	126,952	+13,115 (+11.5%)
Caddo	253,048	243,243	-9,805 (-3.9%)
Claiborne	17,160	15,854	-1,306 (-7.6%)
Desoto	26,465	27,395	+930 (+3.5%)
Lincoln	45,797	47,118	+1,321 (+2.9%)
Natchitoches	39,274	38,505	-769 (-2.0%)
Red River	9,181	8,462	-719 (-7.8%)
Sabine	24,119	23,915	-204 (-.85%)
Webster	41,238	38,813	-2,425 (-5.9%)
Total Region 7	584,665	583,648	-1,017 (-.17%)

Source: U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates

Region 7 Population Growth and Labor Force Participation Rates

As can be seen in Chart IV above, Region 7's population essentially remained "stagnant" over the past decade (2010 to 2020). Bossier was the only parish that experienced substantial population growth, adding 13,000 residents, while Caddo lost close to 10,000 residents. It should be noted that LWDA 70 provides WIOA program services for Caddo Parish residents living outside the City of Shreveport and, from Census Bureau data, it can be estimated that approximately 80% of the Caddo Parish population is located in the City of Shreveport where WIOA program services are provided by LWDA 71. The consequences of Region 7's population loss is perhaps reflected in the declining labor force participation rate of the adult population as revealed in Chart V.

Chart V below shows the population 16 years of age and over and labor force participation rates (in parentheses) for each of the ten parishes in Region 7 for the years 2010 and 2020. The population 16 years of age and over is generally the segment that is expected to be participating in the labor force (employed or unemployed and seeking employment).

Only four parishes in Region 7 saw its population 16 years of age and over increase over the decade: Bossier (+13.1%), DeSoto (+4.2%), Lincoln (+4.1%), and Sabine (+.51%). It is significant to note that, over the decade, every parish in Region 7 saw a drop in its labor force participation rate, even the four parishes that experienced growth in its population 16 years of age and over. The fact that the coronavirus pandemic made its appearance in 2020 may, to some extent, have influenced the labor force participation rates for that year, as it did for the national and state economies. By the end of 2020 (December), the national labor force participation rate stood at 61.5% with 57.6% for Louisiana. Only one parish in Region 7, Bossier, matched or exceeded this at 62.9%. The considerable drop in the labor force participation rates for Region 7's ten parishes over the past decade may have been a contributing factor to the robust decline in the post-pandemic unemployment rate (Chart III) despite weak employment growth (Chart I).

Chart V - Population 16 Years and Over 2010 and 2020. Ten Parishes in Region 7, Northwest LA

Parish	2010 Population 16+	2020 Population 16+
Bienville	11,600 (49.4%)	10,587 (45.5%)
Bossier	87,618 (68.4%)	99,125 (62.9%)
Caddo	197,481 (61.3%)	192,064 (56.9%)
Claiborne	14,080 (54.8%)	13,320 (39.8%)
DeSoto	20,634 (60.8%)	21,499 (55.7%)
Lincoln	37,400 (58.3%)	38,944 (55.6%)
Natchitoches	30,681 (57.4%)	30,373 (49.0%)
Red River	7,096 (54.7%)	6,662 (48.1%)
Sabine	18,854 (52.7%)	18,951 (46.4%)
Webster	32,670 (56.4%)	31,285 (48.0%)

The numbers in parentheses represent estimated Labor Force Participation Rates for the population 16 years of age and over. For the year 2020, the Labor Force Participation Rate for the ten parishes in Region 7 ranged from a low of 39.8% (Claiborne) to a high of 62.9% (Bossier).

Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS (File DP03)

Special Populations with Barriers to Employment in Region 7

WIOA section 3(24) identifies fourteen (14) categories of individuals with “barriers to employment” who may be most in need of WIOA program services for obtaining employment that provides for economic self-sufficiency. Data is not available for individuals who can be grouped into most of these fourteen categories in order to evaluate their presence, or “magnitude”, in Region 7. However, some data is available through the U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey and the Louisiana Workforce Commission for the following categories: low income individual, long-term unemployed, individual with a disability, veterans, single parent, and at-risk youth.

Low Income Individuals

The chart below shows the population 18 to 64 years of age with income below poverty level in each of Region 7’s ten parishes. This age group is more likely to be participating in the labor force, either employed or unemployed and seeking employment. Using this data as a “proxy” for the definition of Low Income Individual contained in the Louisiana Workforce Commission’s Policy No. OWD 2-24.3, the population 18 to 64 years of age for seven of the ten parishes has an income below the poverty level at 20% or greater (Claiborne and Lincoln Parish with the highest at 31.8% and 30.5%). 22.2% (1 out of 5 individuals) of the population 18 to 64 years of age in Region 7 have an income below poverty level. Data available from FutureWork Systems indicates the 90% or more of individuals receiving services through LWDA 70’s WIOA Adult program fall in the priority groups of recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals, and individuals who are basic skills deficient. LWDA 70 intends to continue prioritizing WIOA Adult program services for this group, especially low income individuals and recipients of public assistance.

Population 18 to 64 with Income Below Poverty Level - Ten Parishes in Region 7

Parish	Population 18 to 64	Below Poverty Level	% Below Poverty Level
Bienville	7,295	1,909	26.2%
Bossier	76,757	12,742	16.6%
Caddo	139,237	30,084	21.6%
Claiborne	7,359	2,342	31.8%
DeSoto	15,443	3,030	19.6%
Lincoln	29,685	9,057	30.5%
Natchitoches	21,483	5,868	27.3%
Red River	4,380	738	16.8%
Sabine	12,393	2,783	22.5%
Webster	20,888	5,889	28.2%
Total Region 7	334,920	74,442	22.2%

Source: Census Bureau's American Community Survey, 2021 Five Year Estimates

Unemployment Insurance Claimants and the Unemployed

There are no reasonably accurate estimates of the number of long-term unemployed individuals for Louisiana's 64 parishes. The Louisiana Workforce Commission's definition of long-term unemployed is unemployment in duration of 12 weeks (OWD Policy 2-24.4) while that of the U.S. Department of Labor is unemployment for 27 continuous weeks. Not all of the long-term unemployed may be eligible for or receiving unemployment insurance benefits. However, a case can be made that, within the category of continuing unemployment insurance claims, can be found the long-term unemployed who are also likely included in the estimates of the number of unemployed for each parish. The chart below provides data available from the Louisiana Workforce Commission on the number of continuing unemployment insurance claimants and estimates of the number of unemployed in each of Region 7's ten parishes for April 2023:

**Continuing Unemployment Insurance Claims and Number Unemployed
Ten Parishes in Region 7**

Parish	Continuing U.I. Claims Week Ending 4-29-2023	Number Unemployed April 2023	Continuing U.I. Claims as Percent of Number Unemployed
Bienville	25	201	12.4%
Bossier	206	1,642	12.5%
Caddo	572	3,618	15.8%
Claiborne	26	178	14.6%
DeSoto	39	380	10.3%
Lincoln	76	666	11.4%
Natchitoches	104	640	16.3%
Red River	15	117	12.8%
Sabine	33	311	10.6%
Webster	73	530	13.8%
Total Region 7	1,169	8,283	14.1%

Source: LWC UI Dashboard and Labor Market Information (laworks.net)

For Program Year 2022, LWDA 70 provided WIOA services to thirteen (13) Adult participants and one (1) Dislocated Worker participant classified as “Long-Term Unemployed” (source: HiRE Detailed Reports). In the above chart, an association can be seen between the number of unemployed in a parish and the number of continuing unemployment insurance claims. At the height of the coronavirus pandemic (May 2020), the number of continuing unemployment insurance claims in Region 7 reached close to 30,000. As of April 2023, this number had dropped to 1,169 with approximately 67% of continuing U.I. claims based in Bossier Parish and Caddo Parish and 64% of Region 7’s unemployed residing in these two parishes. Around 80% of the Caddo Parish population lives in the City of Shreveport where WIOA services are provided by LWDA 71. All of Region 7’s American Job Centers provide information on the availability of WIOA services to RESEA referrals, a category of customers that very likely includes the long-term unemployed.

Individuals with Disabilities – Ten Parishes in Region 7

Parish	Population 18 to 64	With Disability	Percent with Disability
Bienville	7,286	1,392	19.1%
Bossier	73,358	8,241	11.2%
Caddo	138,900	19,898	14.3%
Claiborne	7,356	872	11.9%
DeSoto	15,432	2,734	17.7%
Lincoln	31,697	3,286	10.4%
Natchitoches	22,141	2,612	11.8%
Red River	4,380	891	20.3%
Sabine	12,384	2,040	16.5%
Webster	20,852	3,172	15.2%
Total Region 7	333,786	45,138	13.5%

Source: Census Bureau’s American Community Survey, 2021 5-Year Estimates

In the above chart, data is presented on the percent of the population 18 to 64 with a disability in Region 7’s ten parishes. The Census Bureau data (American Community Survey) for 2021 indicates that an estimated 13.5% of the population in Region 7 within this age group has a “disability”. The American Community Survey also provides limited data on the nature of the disabilities (e.g., vision, cognitive, ambulatory) but does not indicate the “severity” of the disability – i.e., a disability that would require accommodations or auxiliary aides in order for the individual to participate in the labor force. Nonetheless, LWDA 70 has established a close liaison with staff from Louisiana Rehabilitation Services (LRS) whose offices are present in Region 7 for technical assistance on the provision of employment and training services for individuals with disabilities. Additionally, LWDA 70 WIOA case managers have been provided training on disability as a protected class under Section 188 of WIOA along with other sources for technical assistance on accommodations and auxiliary aides that can be made available when requested for applicants and participants with disabilities.

Veterans

LWDA 70 adheres to the policy that, under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), veterans receive priority for services. Based on data available from the Census Bureau’s American Community Survey, it can be estimated that veterans make up 6.1% of Region 7’s population (see chart below) with Bossier Parish having the highest percentage at 7.7% (within Bossier Parish is located Barksdale Air Force Base).

Veterans as Percent of Population - Ten Parishes in Region 7

Parish	Population in 2021	Veterans	Veterans as % of Population
Bienville	13,130	562	4.3%
Bossier	128,508	9,858	7.7%
Caddo	239,775	15,103	6.3%
Claiborne	14,456	708	4.9%
DeSoto	26,803	1,433	5.3%
Lincoln	48,415	2,460	5.1%
Natchitoches	37,896	1,683	4.4%
Red River	7,787	228	2.9%
Sabine	22,377	1,277	5.7%
Webster	37,356	2,129	5.7%
Total Region 7	576,503	35,441	6.1%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey 2021 5-Year Estimates (data file B21002)

Single Parent Families

Again, using data from the Census Bureau's American Community Survey (data file DP02), in 2021 single parent households comprised an estimated 9.0% of all households in Region 7:

Bienville Parish

Households = 5,236

Female householder, no spouse/partner present with children under 18 = 479 (9.1%)

Male householder, no spouse/partner present with children under 18 = 48 (.90%)

Bossier Parish

Households = 47,849

Female householder, no spouse/partner present with children under 18 = 3,081 (6.4%)

Male householder, no spouse/partner present with children under 18 = 725 (1.5%)

Caddo Parish

Households = 94,311

Female householder, no spouse/partner present with children under 18 = 7,621 (8.0%)

Male householder, no spouse/partner present with children under 18 = 1,617 (1.7%)

Claiborne Parish

Households = 5,042

Female householder, no spouse/partner present with children under 18 = 245 (4.9%)

Male householder, no spouse/partner present with children under 18 = 167 (3.3%)

DeSoto Parish

Households = 10,168

Female householder, no spouse/partner present with children under 18 = 963 (9.5%)

Male householder, no spouse/partner present with children under 18 = 129 (1.3%)

Lincoln Parish

Households = 17,729

Female householder, no spouse/partner present with children under 18 = 1,496 (8.4%)

Male householder, no spouse/partner present with children under 18 = 219 (1.2%)

Natchitoches Parish

Households = 13,765

Female householder, no spouse/partner present with children under 18 = 1,126 (8.2%)

Male householder, no spouse/partner present with children under 18 = 9 (.06%)

Red River Parish

Households = 2,800

Female householder, no spouse/partner present with children under 18 = 159 (5.7%)

Male householder, no spouse/partner present with children under 18 = 71 (2.5%)

Sabine Parish

Households = 8,361

Female householder, no spouse/partner present with children under 18 = 408 (4.9%)

Male householder, no spouse/partner present with children under 18 = 134 (1.65)

Webster Parish

Households = 14,831

Female householder, no spouse/partner present with children under 18 = 923 (6.2%)

Male householder, no spouse/partner present with children under 18 = 197 (1.3%)

Obviously, single female householders with children under the age of 18 represent the majority of single parent families in Region 7. For Program Year 2022, LWDA 70 provided WIOA services to forty-three (43) single parents who represented 40% of the total Adult program enrollment of 107 participants.

At-Risk Youth

In providing services for at-risk youth, LWDA 70 has focused on out-of-school youth (OSY) ages 18 to 24 who are dropouts – i.e., without a high school diploma or equivalency (HiSET). According to data from the Census Bureau's American Community Survey, in 2021 there were 59,031 youth between the ages of 18 to 24 in Region 7 with 8,537, or 14.5%, without a high school diploma or equivalency. Each program year LWDA 70 enrolls a number of youth who are dropouts and attending adult education programs at Louisiana Technical Colleges in Region 7. These youth are provided WIOA funded stipends and other supportive services to promote their attainment of a Louisiana high school equivalency diploma in addition to comprehensive counseling on furthering their education through vocational training or attendance at a college or university.

Projected Trends in Region 7 Employment Growth by Industry and Occupation

This regional economic and workforce analysis will turn to a review of employment projections by industry and occupation available from the Louisiana Workforce Commission (laworks.net, Labor Market Information) and the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Targeted Industries and High Impact Industry Clusters

Selecting targeted industries and high impact industry clusters may be approached by identifying those industries that are projected to generate the greatest growth in employment for the Region 7 economy from 2020 to 2030 and their employment growth rates. In Chart VI, the twenty major industry (NAICS) sectors in Region 7 are ranked by employment growth over the ten year period based on projections provided by the Louisiana Workforce Commission. Reference can be made to Chart I to see the importance of each sector to Region 7's "job base". For instance, the Health Care and Social Assistance sectors provides employment for 20% of Region 7's labor force followed by Retail Trade at 13% and Accommodation & Food Services at 10.5%. The Health Care and Social Assistance sector will add close to 4,000 employees with Accommodation & Food Services not far behind at adding 3,622 employees, despite being battered by the coronavirus pandemic (see Chart I). The Mining sector is projected to have the highest average annual growth rate in employment at 4.1%.

**Chart VI - Projected Increases in Employment 2020 to 2030
Major Industry Sectors in Region 7**

Sector	Change in Employment	Avg. Annual Growth Rate	Avg. Weekly Wage
Health Care & Social Assistance	+3,994	+1.02%	\$1,133
Accommodation & Food Services	+3,622	+1.74%	\$395
Retail Trade	+2,016	+.75%	\$620
Mining	+1,879	+4.1%	\$1,659
Educational Services	+1,595	+.77%	\$920
Administrative & Waste Services	+1,351	+1.3%	\$681
Wholesale Trade	+890	+1.2%	\$1,338
Construction	+803	+.90%	\$1,011
Arts, Entertainment & Recreation	+774	+3.01%	\$520
Information	+615	+3.5%	\$1,223
Public Administration	+604	+.39%	\$1,136
Mgt. of Companies & Enterprises	+417	+3.2%	\$1,462
Finance & Insurance	+333	+.62%	\$1,263
Utilities	+80	+.67%	\$1,324
Other Services (Except Public Admin.)	+56	+.04%	\$707
Real Estate, Rental & Leasing	-39	-.11%	\$881
Professional & Technical Services	-40	-.05%	\$1,230
Agriculture & Forestry	-110	-.90%	\$913
Transportation & Warehousing	-123	-.17%	\$1,189
Manufacturing	-774	-.53%	\$1,213

Source: laworks.net, Labor Market Information

Total employment in Region 7 is projected to increase by 17,943 “jobs”. From the numbers in Chart VI, the top three sectors, Health Care & Social Assistance, Accommodation & Food Services, and Retail Trade will contribute a little over half (54%) of this employment growth. One criterion for evaluating the “quality” of a job is the income it provides. Within the health care industry can be found a considerable variety of occupations with some requiring minimal vocational training (e.g., Certified Nursing Assistant/CNA) and some requiring a considerable investment in education (e.g., Registered Nurse, Dental Hygienist). As a “mature industry”, the Health Care & Social Assistance sector has for some time been a “high impact industry cluster” in Region 7. Within it can be found a considerable number of “in-demand” occupations. As an “industry cluster”, Accommodation and Food Services, which includes the fast-food restaurant industry, provides ample employment opportunities but, on the average, offers the lowest potential income for its employees (\$395/week/\$20,540 annual). Mining ranks fourth in projected employment growth and, as already noted, ranks first in average annual employment growth rate for Region 7 in addition to offering a high average income for its employees (\$1,659/week, \$86,268/annual). Mining, particularly oil and gas extraction and support activities, has a favorable location quotient for Region 7 and Louisiana.

Location Quotients for Region 7 Industry Sectors

Is there any industry sector in Region 7 that is more prevalent in its contribution to employment when compared to the state and national economies? One approach is to identify sectors in Region 7 whose employment as a percent of total employment exceeds that of the state and national economies. A location quotient could be viewed as favorable if employment in the sector is expected to remain stable or increase. In Chart VII each sector’s percent of total employment is displayed for Region 7, Louisiana, and the United States for the year 2021.

**Chart VII - Employment as Percent of Total Employment in 2021
Region 7, Louisiana, United States**

Sector	Region 7	Louisiana	United States
Education & Health Services	29.8%	25.8%	22.9%
Wholesale & Retail Trade	16.5%	15.7%	12.7%
Leisure & Hospitality	11.8%	11.3%	8.3%
Professional & Business Services	9.9%	12.0%	12.7%
Manufacturing	7.2%	7.1%	9.7%
Construction	5.0%	7.6%	7.4%
Public Administration	4.9%	5.1%	4.9%
Transportation & Utilities	4.5%	5.2%	6.2%
Financial Activities	4.3%	4.6%	7.0%
Other Services	2.3%	2.4%	4.7%
Mining	2.2%	1.5%	.40%
Information	1.1%	1.3%	1.8%
Agriculture & Related	.56%	.47%	1.5%

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics (bls.gov) and laworks.net, Labor Market Information

In comparing the percentages in Chart VII, Education and Health Services is especially critical to Region 7’s “job base” in providing close to 30% of total employment. Employment in this sector is projected to increase by 5,589 “jobs” from 2020 to 2030. At 11.8% of Region 7’s total employment, Leisure and Hospitality, which includes the casino and restaurant industries, greatly surpasses that of the United States (11.8% vs. 8.3%). Employment for this sector, in Region 7, is also projected to increase by 4,396 “jobs”. The Mining sector, which includes the oil and gas industry, is especially important to the Region 7 and Louisiana economy and greatly exceeds its contribution in terms of employment when compared to the national economy. As Chart VI indicates, employment in Mining is projected to have the highest average annual growth rate for Region 7. This suggests that, for Region 7, there are at least three sectors with “favorable location quotients”: Education and Health Services, Leisure and Hospitality, and Mining.

Recent Economic Development Activities in Northwest Louisiana

From information available through the North Louisiana Economic Partnership’s website (<https://nlep.org>), the following identifies a select number of recent economic development events (projects) that may make a significant contribution to employment expansion (job creation) for the Region 7 economy:

Company	Location	NAICS Code	Employment Impact
Amazon Fulfillment Center	Caddo Parish	423990	1,000 direct new jobs
Advanced Call Center Technologies	Caddo Parish	56141	600 direct new jobs
Teal Jones Group Sawmill	Bossier Parish	321100	125 direct new jobs
Hunt Forest Products Sawmill	Bienville Parish	32100	130 direct new jobs
Buc-ee's Travel Center	Lincoln Parish	445120	200 direct new jobs
Alliance Compressors Expansion	Natchitoches Parish	33333	174 direct new jobs
Haynesville Shale Resurgence	Northwest LA	211130	unknown/not available
Caddo-Bossier Port	Caddo Parish	926120	100 direct new jobs
Tomakk Glass Partnership	Caddo Parish	32721	50 direct new jobs
American Electric Power	Caddo Parish	221100	80 direct new jobs

The resurgence of Haynesville Shale activity (natural gas extraction) may be behind the projected increase in Mining employment for Region 7. This project was initiated in 2008, remained “dormant” for some years, but began to see a resurgence in activity in 2021-2022 as the national economy began its recovery from the coronavirus pandemic and the demand for natural gas increased once again. However, information on the employment impact of this resurgence is not available. Likewise, oil extraction activities in several parishes located in Northwest Louisiana increased once again following the coronavirus pandemic accompanied by an increase in the demand and price of oil. The location of an Amazon Fulfillment Center in Caddo Parish should have considerable economic impact particularly in job creation. The Caddo-Bossier Port continues to thrive and will be a highly important economic driver for the region as existing businesses at the port expand and new businesses locate bringing additional jobs. The Cyber Innovation Center in Bossier Parish, with several hundred employees, and its collaboration with Barksdale Air Force Base and Louisiana Tech University, has within the last few years brought a new STEM related industry to Region 7 (an emerging industry with STEM related occupations).

Occupational Employment Projections for Region 7

Employment growth for any occupation is invariably linked to the growth in employment of the industries in which the occupation can be found. This is the basic methodology behind the occupational employment projections for Region 7 available from the Louisiana Workforce Commission. As employment for an industry sector increases as a result of an increased demand for its products or services, additional hiring may need to take place creating a “demand” for the skills, knowledge, or experience associated with specific occupations. Consequently, when looking at the total projected job openings for an occupation, a distinction must be made between openings created by “growth” and job openings available through “separations” (e.g., retirements, voluntary or involuntary terminations).

The following provides a ranking of employment by major occupational groups in Region 7 for the year 2020:

Region 7 Employment by Major Occupational Groups in 2020

Source: laworks.net, Labor Market Information

Total.....	214,942
Office and Administrative Support Occupations.....	28,070 (13.1%)
Sales and Related Occupations	24,607 (11.4%)
Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations.....	19,097 (8.9%)
Transportation and Material Moving Occupations.....	18,242 (8.5%)
Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations.....	18,006 (8.4%)
Education, Training, and Library Occupations	15,954 (7.4%)
Healthcare Support Occupations.....	12,353 (5.7%)
Production Occupations	12,189 (5.7%)
Installation, Maintenance, and Repair Occupations	10,727 (5.0%)
Management Occupations	9,621 (4.5%)
Construction and Extraction Occupations	9,180 (4.3%)
Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance Occupations.....	7,181 (3.3%)
Business and Finance Operations Occupations.....	6,828 (3.2%)
Protective Service Occupations.....	5,956 (2.8%)
Personal Care and Service Occupations.....	4,965 (2.3%)
Community and Social Service Occupations.....	3,147 (1.5%)
Computer and Mathematical Occupations	2,093 (1.0%)
Architecture and Engineering Occupations.....	1,992 (.93%)
Art, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media Occupations.....	1,533 (.71%)
Legal Occupations	1,135 (.53%)
Life, Physical, and Social Science Occupations	1,099 (.51%)
Farming, Fishing and Forestry Occupations	967 (.45%)

Of the twenty-two major occupational groups in Region 7, the top five account for half (50%) of employment for the labor force. Again, accentuating the importance of the Health Care and Social Assistance sector, Healthcare Practitioners and Support Occupations provide employment for 14% of the labor force. Within each major occupational group can be found a considerable variety of occupations with differing education, training, and skill requirements in addition to the income provided (i.e., wages, salaries). Projected job openings based on growth and separations, with both an indicator of employer demand, also vary for the twenty-two occupational groups as seen below:

Projected Annual Job Openings Based on Growth and Separations for Region 7, 2020 to 2030

Jobs	Openings	Growth	Separations
Office & Administrative Support	3,033	-27 (0%)	3,057 (100%)
Sales & Related	3,714	214 (5.8%)	3,499 (94.2%)
Food Preparation & Serving Related	3,825	280 (7.3%)	3,545 (92.7%)
Transportation & Material Moving	2,420	116 (4.8%)	2,304 (95.2%)
Healthcare Practitioners & Technical	1,262	164 (13.0%)	1,098 (87.0%)
Education, Training, & Library	1,527	132 (8.6%)	1,395 (91.4%)
Healthcare Support Occupations	1,798	191 (10.6%)	1,607 (89.4%)
Production Occupations	1,362	26 (1.9%)	1,336 (98.1%)
Installation, Maintenance & Repair	1,200	117 (10.0%)	1,083 (90.0%)
Management Occupations	906	118 (13.0%)	788 (87.0%)
Construction & Extraction	1,081	110 (10.2%)	971 (89.8%)
Building & Grounds Cleaning	1,047	70 (6.7%)	977 (93.3%)
Business & Finance Operations	639	55 (8.6%)	584 (91.40%)
Protective Service Occupations	645	64 (10.0%)	581 (90.0%)
Personal Care & Service	793	78 (9.8%)	715 (90.2%)
Community & Social Services	354	34 (9.6%)	320 (90.4%)
Computer & Mathematical	170	17 (10.0%)	153 (90.0%)
Architecture & Engineering	171	11 (6.4%)	160 (93.6%)
Art, Design, Entertainment, Sports	187	16 (8.6%)	171 (91.4%)
Legal Occupations	90	5 (5.6%)	85 (94.4%)
Life, Physical & Social Sciences	115	9 (7.8%)	106 (92.2%)
Farming, Fishing, & Forestry	130	-9 (0%)	139 (100%)

Source: laworks.net, Labor Market Information

For all of the twenty-two occupations, separations (e.g., retirements, voluntary and involuntary terminations) will contribute 90% or more of the total projected job openings over the ten year period (2020 to 2030). Assuming that the Louisiana Workforce Commission's projections are accurate, the occupational group Office and Administrative Support may rank first in providing employment for the Region 7 labor force but, of its 3,033 average annual job openings, all will be a result of separations (exits and transfers) with none attributed to growth. Also assuming that "Growth" represents "new jobs" rather than openings created by separations, the following is the occupational groups with the highest (double-digit) average annual growth rates for Region 7:

Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations = 13.0%

Management Occupations = 13.0%

Healthcare Support Occupations = 10.6%

Construction and Extraction Occupations = 10.2%

Installation, Maintenance, and Repair Occupations = 10.0%

Protective Service Occupations = 10.0%

Computer and Mathematical Occupations = 10.0%

Healthcare Practitioner and Support Occupations

Within the health care industry can be found a multitude of occupations requiring a minimal or significant investment in education. Chart VIII below identifies a selection of ten occupations, all of which can be found in Region 7’s health care sector. All ten occupations are identified as having a 3, 4, or 5 Star Rating based on the Louisiana Workforce Commission’s short-term (2021 to 2023) occupational projections which further identifies them as “demand occupations”, a criterion for the use of WIOA funds. Four occupations require an Associate or Bachelor’s Degree with six requiring post-secondary education which can be acquired at several Louisiana Technical Colleges or private vocational schools located in Region 7. The incomes that these ten occupations provide also cover a wide range with annual median earnings of \$67,410 for Registered Nurses and \$29,032 for Phlebotomists (source: Louisiana Workforce Commission).

Chart VIII - Selected Healthcare Practitioner and Support Occupations in Region 7

Jobs	LWC Star Rating	Avg. Annual Openings	Educational Requirements
Registered Nurse	5	367	Associate or Bachelor’s
Licensed Practical Nurse	4	241	Post-Secondary
Physical Therapist Asst.	5	32	Post-Secondary
Respiratory Therapist	5	43	Associate Degree
Medical Lab Technician	4	54	Bachelor’s Degree
Pharmacy Technician	4	78	Post-Secondary
Dental Hygienist	4	22	Associate or Bachelor’s
Medical Assistant	4	187	Post-Secondary
Phlebotomist	3	48	Post-Secondary
Dental Assistant	3	60	Post-Secondary

Source: laworks.net, Labor Market Information

Management Occupations

Most management occupations require a bachelor’s degree or higher as an educational foundation. In recent years, LWDA 70 has provided WIOA financial assistance (i.e., Individual Training Accounts) to a limited number of participants to pursue degrees in Accounting (Southern University at Shreveport), Business Management (Southern University at Shreveport), Business Entrepreneurship (Bossier Parish Community College), and Communication Media (Bossier Parish Community College), all of which can lead to management positions as a career path.

Construction and Extraction Occupations

Electrician falls within this broad educational group and, since 2016, both LWDA 70 and LWDA 71 have provided financial assistance to WIOA eligible first year apprentices receiving training through the Shreveport Electrical JATC/IBEW Local 194 five year electrical apprenticeship program. Within Region 7, Electrician is a 4 Star (high demand) occupation offering median annual earnings of \$45,185 (source: Louisiana Workforce Commission). The occupation of Electrician is closely related to the construction industry which, as shown in Chart I and Chart VI, exhibits an employment growth trend.

Installation, Maintenance, and Repair Occupations

Within this group are two occupations in Region 7 that are identified as “high demand” (4 Star) by the Louisiana Workforce Commission: Heating, Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration Mechanics (HVAC) and Bus and Truck Mechanics/Diesel Engine Specialists. WIOA financial assistance has been provided to a limited number of participants to attend training programs for both occupations available at Louisiana Technical Colleges and private vocational schools in Region 7. HVAC Technician is projected to have an average of 72 openings each year with 28 for Diesel Mechanics.

Protective Service Occupations

Within this group can be found law enforcement related occupations such as Police and Sheriff’s Patrol Officers and Correctional Officers, both with a 3 Star demand rating for Region 7. Although not recently requested by program applicants, Grambling State University in Lincoln Parish offers a Criminal Justice degree eligible for WIOA financial assistance as does Northwestern State University in Natchitoches.

Computer and Mathematical Occupations

Information technology and the use of computers and computer networking might be considered an “emerging industry” having rapidly developed since the commercial availability of the internet in the 1990s. Looking at occupational employment projections available from the Louisiana Workforce Commission for Region 7, there are at least ten occupations related to this field with 4 Star or 5 Star (high demand) ratings:

- Computer Systems Analysts – 5 Star Demand
- Information Security Analysts – 5 Star Demand
- Computer Network Support Specialists – 4 Star Demand
- Computer User Support Specialists – 4 Star Demand
- Computer Network Architects – 4 Star Demand
- Network and Computer Systems Administrators – 5 Star Demand
- Database Administrators and Architects – 4 Star Demand
- Computer Programmers – 5 Star Demand
- Software Developers – 5 Star Demand
- Web Developers and Digital Interface Designers – 4 Star Demand

Employees possessing education and skills related to these ten occupations are dispersed throughout just about every industry sector. However, as previously noted, the creation of the Cyber Innovation Center in Bossier Parish has been one of the most recent and highly significant economic developments within Region 7. Louisiana Tech University in Ruston (Lincoln Parish) has worked with the Center in supporting its continued development. Louisiana Tech University, in addition to several other public universities in Region 7, offer degree programs providing the knowledge and skills required for the ten occupations listed above, many eligible for WIOA financial assistance. Strong demand for IT services is expected continue for some time to come.

Truck Driving and the Class A Commercial Driver’s License

Enrolling at a truck driving school to obtain a Class A Commercial Driver’s License is one of the most frequently requested training activities among WIOA eligible applicants – for both LWDA 70 and LWDA 71. In Chart VI, the Transportation and Warehousing sector is projected to see a decline in employment. Nationally, about 40% of Tractor-Trailer Drivers are employed in this industry sector. However, individuals possessing a Class A Commercial Driver’s License can find vehicle driving jobs in other industry sectors such as Administrative and Waste Services, Wholesale Trade, and businesses providing support services for the oil and gas industry in Region 7, all three with employment growth trends (see Chart VI). There are at least three occupations included in the Louisiana Workforce Commission’s occupational projections for Region 7 requiring a Class A Commercial Driver’s License with a 3 Star or 4 Star (high demand) rating:

- Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Drivers – 361 Projected Annual Openings, 2020 to 2030
- Driver/Sales Workers – 129 Projected Annual Openings, 2020 to 2030
- Refuse and Recyclable Material Collectors – 21 Annual Openings, 2020 to 2030

Education and Skill Levels of the Region 7 Adult Population

Educational attainment is closely related to the possession of basic education and occupational specific skills that employers need for their workforce. The following presents data on the educational attainment of the adult population 25 years of age and over for each of the ten parishes in Region 7. The data is taken from the U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey for the year 2021.

Caddo Parish

- Population 25 years & over = 162,773
- Less than 9th grade = 3.4%
- 9th to 12th grade, no diploma = 10.0%
- High school grad. (or equivalency) = 32.1%
- Some college, no degree = 23.1%
- Associate’s degree = 7.4%
- Bachelor’s degree = 13.8%
- Graduate or professional degree = 10.2%

Bossier Parish

- Population 25 years & over = 85,283
- Less than 9th grade = 2.7%
- 9th to 12th grade, no diploma = 6.9%
- High school graduate (or equivalency) = 29.5%
- Some college, no degree = 25.3%
- Associate’s degree = 8.9%
- Bachelor’s degree = 17.1%
- Graduate or professional degree = 9.6%

Lincoln Parish

- Population 25 years & over = 26,493
- Less than 9th grade = 3.6%
- 9th to 12th grade, no diploma = 7.6%
- High school diploma (or equivalency) = 27.2%
- Some college, no degree = 18.5%
- Associate’s degree = 5.5%
- Bachelor’s degree = 22.4%
- Graduate or professional degree = 15.2%

Webster Parish

- Population 25 years & over = 25,846
- Less than 9th grade = 4.5%
- 9th to 12th grade, no diploma = 10.0%
- High school graduate (or equivalency) = 43.0%
- Some college, no degree = 20.4%
- Associate’s degree = 7.7%
- Bachelor’s degree = 10.3%
- Graduate or professional degree = 4.2%

Natchitoches Parish

- Population 25 years & over = 22,733
- Less than 9th grade = 3.1%
- 9th to 12th grade, no diploma = 10.0%
- High school diploma (or equivalency) = 38.0%
- Some college, no degree = 17.2%
- Associate degree = 10.1%
- Bachelor’s degree = 13.0%
- Graduate or professional degree = 8.6%

DeSoto Parish

- Population 25 years & over = 18,319
- Less than 9th grade = 5.6%
- 9th to 12th grade, no diploma = 11.9%
- High school diploma (or equivalency) = 41.7%
- Some college, no degree = 9.6%
- Associate degree = 6.8%
- Bachelor’s degree = 9.2%
- Graduate or professional degree = 5.3%

Sabine Parish

Population 25 years and over = 15,308
 Less than 9th grade = 3.8%
 9th to 12th grade, no diploma = 10.1%
 High school diploma (or equivalency) = 47.5%
 Some college, no degree = 19.7%
 Associate's degree = 6.2%
 Bachelor's degree = 8.7%
 Graduate or professional degree = 4.0%

Claiborne Parish

Population 25 years and over = 10,729
 Less than 9th grade = 5.6%
 9th to 12th grade, no diploma = 16.4%
 High school diploma (or equivalency) = 46.0%
 Some college, no degree = 15.7%
 Associate's degree = 4.0%
 Bachelor's degree = 7.7%
 Graduate or professional degree = 4.5%

Bienville Parish

Population 25 years and over = 9,232
 Less than 9th grade = 3.5%
 9th to 12th grade, no diploma = 10.0%
 High school diploma (or equivalency) = 48.0%
 Some college, no degree = 18.7%
 Associate's degree = 7.4%
 Bachelor's degree = 9.2%
 Graduate or professional degree = 3.3%

Red River Parish

Population 25 years and over = 5,255
 Less than 9th grade = 3.6%
 9th to 12th grade, no diploma = 15.0%
 High school diploma (or equivalency) = 51.2%
 Some college, no degree = 14.1%
 Associate's degree = 3.9%
 Bachelor's degree = 9.0%
 Graduate or professional degree = 3.3%

One observation of some significance is the percent of the adult population in each parish with a high school diploma or less (i.e., dropouts). This would likely be the population that has not acquired occupation specific skills through post-secondary education, unless their occupation specific skills have been acquired "on-the-job", or through work experience. The percent of the population at this educational level in each parish is ranked as follows:

- Red River Parish = 69.8%
- Claiborne Parish = 68.0%
- Bienville Parish = 61.5%
- Sabine Parish = 61.2%
- DeSoto Parish = 59.2%
- Webster Parish = 57.5%
- Natchitoches Parish = 51.1%
- Caddo Parish = 45.5%
- Bossier Parish = 39.1%
- Lincoln Parish = 38.4%

Further narrowing educational attainment to those without a high school diploma or equivalency (again, likely dropouts), the ten parishes in Region 7 rank as follows:

- Claiborne Parish = 22.0%
- Red River Parish = 18.6%
- DeSoto Parish = 17.5%
- Webster Parish = 14.5%
- Sabine Parish = 13.9%
- Bienville Parish = 13.5%
- Caddo Parish = 13.4%
- Natchitoches Parish = 13.1%
- Lincoln Parish = 11.2%
- Bossier Parish = 9.6%

Is there an association between the educational attainment of the adult population and income, poverty, and unemployment for the ten parishes in Region 7?

Median Household Income, Poverty, and Unemployment Rate in 2021 for Ten Parishes in Region 7

Parish	Median Household Income	% Population Below Poverty	Unemployment Rate
Bienville	\$32,328	29.1%	5.3%
Bossier	\$58,289	16.9%	5.9%
Caddo	\$43,153	23.0%	8.6%
Claiborne	\$29,574	33.6%	5.2%
DeSoto	\$45,364	21.1%	8.9%
Lincoln	\$38,458	28.4%	3.8%
Natchitoches	\$33,965	26.5%	13.3%
Red River	\$41,227	21.8%	3.8%
Sabine	\$39,975	21.6%	9.6%
Webster	\$31,197	26.6%	4.7%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey

In looking at the Census data in the above chart, the answer to this question is somewhat ambiguous. Claiborne Parish, with the highest percentage of the adult population without a high school diploma or equivalency (22.0%), ranks last in median household income and first in the percent of the population with income below the poverty level, but with an unemployment rate in 2021 of 5.2%. The 5.2% unemployment rate for Claiborne Parish may be related to its low labor force participation rate at 39.8% as shown in Chart V. Bossier Parish, which ranks last in the percent of the adult population without a high school diploma or equivalency (9.6%), first in median household income, and last in the percent of the population with income below the poverty level (16.9%), is shown with an unemployment rate higher than that of Claiborne Parish at 5.9%. Bossier Parish has the highest labor force participation rate at 62.9% (Chart V). Consequently, there may be an association between the levels of educational attainment of the adult population in Region 7's ten parishes with income and poverty but the association between the levels of educational attainment and unemployment is confounded, to some extent, by the labor force participation rate. Nonetheless, there is still a strong beneficial relationship between the acquisition of post-secondary education and income as seen below:

Median Annual Earnings and Poverty Rate in 2021 by Educational Attainment Level Population 25 Years and Over - Ten Parishes in Region 7

Source: U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey

Bienville Parish

- Less than high school = \$25,000, Poverty Rate = 47.0%
- High school graduate (includes equivalency) = \$26,833, Poverty Rate = 23.6%
- Some college or associate's degree = \$32,215, Poverty Rate = 13.7%
- Bachelor's degree = \$54,583, Poverty Rate = 21.7%
- Graduate or professional degree = \$57,240, Poverty Rate = N/A

Bossier Parish

Less than high school = \$24,978, Poverty Rate = 33.9%

High school graduate (includes equivalency) = \$31,934, Poverty Rate = 18.7%

Some college or associate's degree = \$37,693, Poverty Rate = 10.9%

Bachelor's degree = \$53,055, Poverty Rate = 4.9%

Graduate or professional degree = \$61,780, Poverty Rate = N/A

Caddo Parish

Less than high school = \$21,208, Poverty Rate = 38.5%

High school graduate (includes equivalency) = \$27,020, Poverty Rate = 22.2%

Some college or associate's degree = \$31,600, Poverty Rate = 16.9%

Bachelor's degree = \$49,246, Poverty Rate = 5.8%

Graduate or professional degree = \$59,742, Poverty Rate = N/A

Claiborne Parish

Less than high school = \$11,899, Poverty Rate = 50.8%

High school graduate (includes equivalency) = \$18,816, Poverty Rate = 29.1%

Some college or associate's degree = \$21,875, Poverty Rate = 15.1%

Bachelor's degree = \$40,714, Poverty Rate = 7.7%

Graduate or professional degree = \$51,688, Poverty Rate = N/A

DeSoto Parish

Less than high school = \$17,744, Poverty Rate = 24.6%

High school graduate (includes equivalency) = \$31,763, Poverty Rate = 20.8%

Some college or associate's degree = \$31,824, Poverty Rate = 14.8%

Bachelor's degree = \$53,567, Poverty Rate = 5.7%

Graduate or professional degree = \$53,113, Poverty Rate = N/A

Lincoln Parish

Less than high school = \$21,034, Poverty Rate = 36.4%

High school graduate (includes equivalency) = 24.6%

Some college or associate's degree = \$30,348, Poverty Rate = 14.5%

Bachelor's degree = \$38,760, Poverty Rate = 5.6%

Graduate or professional degree = \$53,706, Poverty Rate = N/A

Natchitoches Parish

Less than high school = \$28,174, Poverty Rate = 32.0%

High school graduate (includes equivalency) = \$26,852, Poverty Rate = 23.8%

Some college or associate's degree = \$25,483, Poverty Rate = 11.7%

Bachelor's degree = \$49,946, Poverty Rate = 5.1%

Graduate or professional degree = \$56,382, Poverty Rate = N/A

Red River Parish

Less than high school = \$13,906, Poverty Rate = 37.4%

High school graduate (includes equivalency) = \$28,333, Poverty Rate = 16.8%

Some college or associate's degree = \$43,295, Poverty Rate = 10.0%

Bachelor's degree = \$45,014, Poverty Rate = 0%

Graduate or professional degree = \$55,662, Poverty Rate = N/A

Sabine Parish

Less than high school = \$17,574, Poverty Rate = 34.5%
 High school graduate (includes equivalency) = \$33,013, Poverty Rate = 20.8%
 Some college or associate's degree = \$31,855, Poverty Rate = 13.5%
 Bachelor's degree = \$48,702, Poverty Rate = 7.0%
 Graduate or professional degree = \$56,250, Poverty Rate = N/A

Webster Parish

Less than high school = \$19,003, Poverty Rate = 38.2%
 High school graduate (includes equivalency) = \$18,708, Poverty Rate = 25.6%
 Some college or associate's degree = \$25,264, Poverty Rate = 20.4%
 Bachelor's degree = \$27,319, Poverty Rate = 6.4%
 Graduate or professional degree = \$53,800, Poverty Rate = N/A

Both LWDA 70 and LWDA 71 in Region 7 make available to WIOA eligible adults a wide range of educational and vocational training programs to assist in obtaining a high school equivalency diploma (Adult Education/HiSET) for dropouts and occupational skills training for those seeking post-secondary education in demand occupations identified through the Louisiana Workforce Commission's Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL).

Region 7 Youth

LWDA 70 has worked primarily with WIOA eligible out-of-school youth (OSY) in providing program services such as financial assistance for occupational skills training (ITAs) and guidance in acquiring a high school equivalency diploma (HiSET) for dropouts, both with the availability of supportive services and incentives.

The eligibility criteria for WIOA out-of-school youth (OSY) is based primarily on barriers and low income (poverty level) status. U.S. Census Bureau data for the ten parishes in Region 7 give a limited picture of educational level attainment and poverty status for youth in the 18 to 24 year age range which coincides with WIOA eligibility requirements.

Educational Attainment for Population 18 to 24 Years of Age in 2021 - Ten Parishes in Region 7

Source: U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey

Bienville Parish

Youth 18 to 24 = 903
 Less than high school graduate = 6.8%
 High school graduate (or equivalency) = 50.4%
 Some college or associate's degree = 37.5%
 Bachelor's degree or higher = 5.3%
 Unrelated individuals 18 to 24 % below poverty level = 54.9%

Bossier Parish

Youth 18 to 24 = 11,212
 Less than high school graduate = 14.3%
 High school graduate (or equivalency) = 36.2%
 Some college or associate's degree = 40.7%
 Bachelor's degree or higher = 8.7%
 Bossier Parish (Cont.)
 Unrelated individuals 18 to 24 % below poverty level = 44.2%

Caddo Parish

Youth 18 to 24 = 19,804

Less than high school graduate = 20.2%

High school graduate (or equivalency) = 35.9%

Some college or associate's degree = 37.9%

Bachelor's degree or higher = 6.1%

Unrelated individuals 18 to 24 % below poverty level = 56.4%

Claiborne Parish

Youth 18 to 24 = 1,158

Less than high school graduate = 17.5%

High school graduate (or equivalency) = 52.4%

Some college or associate's degree = 27.3%

Bachelor's degree or higher = 2.8%

Unrelated individuals 18 to 24 % below poverty level = 62.4%

DeSoto Parish

Youth 18 to 24 = 1,994

Less than high school graduate = 26.4%

High school graduate (or equivalency) = 35.8%

Some college or associate's degree = 34.1%

Bachelor's degree or higher = 3.7%

Unrelated individuals 18 to 24 % below poverty level = 72.5%

Lincoln Parish

Youth 18 to 24 = 12,189

Less than high school graduate = 6.5%

High school graduate (or equivalency) = 18.5%

Some college or associate's degree = 69.1%

Bachelor's degree = 5.9%

Unrelated individuals 18 to 24 % below poverty level = 71.3%

Natchitoches Parish

Youth 18 to 24 = 6,338

Less than high school graduate = 6.6%

High school graduate (or equivalency) = 57.0%

Some college or associate's degree = 30.8%

Bachelor's degree or higher = 5.6%

Unrelated individuals 18 to 24 % below poverty level = 82.0%

Red River Parish

Youth 18 to 24 = 664

Less than high school graduate = 8.0%

High school graduate (or equivalency) = 57.2%

Some college or associate's degree = 32.5%

Bachelor's degree or higher = 2.3%

Unrelated individuals 18 to 24 % below poverty level = 63.8%

Sabine Parish

Total 18 to 24 = 1,802

Less than high school graduate = 19.9%

High school graduate (or equivalency) = 51.3%

Some college or associate's degree = 25.2%

Bachelor's degree or higher = 3.6%

Unrelated individuals 18 to 24 % below poverty level = 62.1%

Webster Parish

Total 18 to 24 = 2,967

Less than high school graduate = 17.6%

High school graduate (or equivalency) = 39.4%

Some college or associate's degree = 33.9%

Bachelor's degree or higher = 9.1%

Unrelated individuals 18 to 24 % below poverty level = 62.4%

Perhaps critical to the workforce needs of employers in Region 7 is the population 18 to 24 (youth/young adults) who have not gone on to post-secondary education or those with a high school diploma or less (i.e., dropouts). The percent of the 18 to 24 population at this educational attainment level ranks for the ten parishes in Region 7 as follows:

Sabine Parish = 71.2%

Claiborne Parish = 69.9%

Red River Parish = 65.2%

Natchitoches Parish = 63.6%

DeSoto Parish = 62.2%

Bienville Parish = 57.2%

Webster Parish = 57.0%

Caddo Parish = 56.1%

Bossier Parish = 50.0%

Lincoln Parish = 25.0%

Ranking the ten parishes in Region 7 by the population 18 to 24 (youth/young adults) without a high school diploma or equivalency (i.e., dropouts) gives:

DeSoto Parish = 26.4%

Caddo Parish = 20.2%

Sabine Parish = 19.9%

Webster Parish = 17.6%

Claiborne Parish = 17.5%

Bossier Parish = 14.3%

Red River Parish = 8.0%

Bienville Parish = 6.8%

Natchitoches Parish = 6.6%

Lincoln Parish = 6.5%

The U. S. Census Bureau defines “unrelated individuals” as “people of any age who are not living with any other family members.” For all ten parishes in Region 7, unrelated individuals 18 to 24 years of age with income below the poverty level ranges from 44.2% in Bossier Parish to 82.0% in Natchitoches Parish. These high poverty rates indicate something about the eligibility of those 18 to 24 years of age for WIOA Youth program services since “low income individual” is one of several eligibility criteria. Dropouts between the ages of 18 to 24 are also eligible for the WIOA out-of-school youth program. As with the Adult and Dislocated Worker programs, both LWDA 70 and LWDA 71 offer a variety of occupational skills training degrees, certificates, and occupational licenses appearing in the Louisiana Workforce Commission’s Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) for WIOA eligible out-of-school youth. Both LWDA 70 and LWDA 71 offer programs for out-of-school youth dropouts to obtain a high school equivalency diploma (HiSET) through adult education programs available at most Louisiana Technical Colleges in Region 7 and contracts entered into with local community based organizations.

Region 7 Sector Initiatives for In-Demand Industry Sectors

At present, LWDA 70 and LWDA 71 have become involved in one industry sector initiative being coordinated with the Ochsner Clinic Foundation and Southern University at Shreveport. This health care sector initiative recruits WIOA eligible residents in Region 7 and the City of Shreveport for a sixteen week Medical Assistant training program. WIOA participants enrolled in this health care sector initiative program will receive sixteen weeks of classroom instruction made available by Southern University at Shreveport coupled with an On the Job Training/Externship facilitated by the Ochsner LSU Medical Center in Shreveport. It is anticipated that up to twenty (20) WIOA participants will enroll in this Medical Assistant training program. As shown in Chart VIII, Medical Assistant is a 4 Star (high demand) occupation in Region 7 with 187 annual job openings projected to the year 2030.

Although not strictly a sector initiative, in Program Year 2021, LWDA 70 began working with electrical contractors involved with the Shreveport JATC/IBEW Local 194 electrical apprenticeship program in developing WIOA funded on-the-job training (OJT) contracts for WIOA eligible first year apprentices. Involving electrical contractors (private employers) with the OJT program will focus on developing a skill gap analysis tied to an OJT training outline for first year apprentices through which essential skills will be learned “on-the-job” under the supervision of a highly experienced Journeyman Electrician.

LWDA 70 staff participate and collaborate with all parish chambers of commerce as an avenue to meet with local businesses, within each parish, to assist with local workforce demands. Various chambers, such as the Natchitoches Chamber, host panels with different businesses, who highlight their analysis of strengths and weaknesses. LWDA attempts to assist individual companies meet their immediate needs through WIOA Work-Based-Learning models, while, attempting to strategically create career pathways and pipelines for a stronger future by developing partnerships through secondary and post-secondary partnerships.

LWDA 70 staff are also a part of a larger regional ecosystem, comprised of post-secondary institutions, businesses, regional and local economic development groups, and industry sector coordinators from the Louisiana Workforce Commission. This group meets once a quarter to discuss regional opportunities and needs and discuss the development or setbacks to our initiatives. Region 7’s workforce boards, along with Bossier Parish Community College, members of Louisiana Workforce Commission, have been working together to identify and the companies involved with the Statewide initiative for reliable Broadband to be placed in all rural areas. This partnership ecosystem is motivated to identify and partner with these companies to build reliable and sustainable career pathways and pipelines.

LWDA 70 staff also meet with secondary and post-secondary leaders within the region, once a quarter, to discuss current and future opportunities for High School students. Regional buy-in from secondary schools regarding WIOA services, has been difficult; however, with the approved waiver from the Department of Labor in October 2022 allowing WIOA title 1 youth funds to spend 50% on In-School-Youth, opposed to the required 25%, schools are beginning to open up more.

LWDA 70 staff are also a part of regional reentry coalition groups, aimed at developing partnerships to better serve justice involved individuals coming back into the workforce, and the employers who employ them. The strategy here is to find new avenues in creating career pathways and pipelines with business leaders to tap into a large, and often, educated workforce that is overlooked and undervalued. These meetings are held once a month between law enforcement, justice involved organizations, businesses, post-secondary institutions and the workforce boards of Region 7.

This regional component of the plan must describe the regional service strategies, including use of cooperative service delivery strategies and the connection of job seekers with employers.

A. Provide an analysis of workforce development activities, including education and training, in the region. This analysis must include the strengths and weaknesses of workforce development activities and capacity to provide the workforce development activities to address the education and skill needs of the workforce, including individuals with barriers to employment, and the employment needs of employers (§ 679.560(a)(4)).

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

Region's 7 Service Delivery Model focuses on the provision of individualized career services and training services an approach that gives all partner staff in American Job Centers the flexibility to provide customer services based on an assessed need:

- ▶ Provides flexible training delivery options to meet the needs of low-income individuals.
- ▶ Conduct research to identify the individuals served, understand the strengths and the challenges they face, and identify the partnerships necessary to affect change; develop data systems to support the evaluation of programmatic outcomes, reporting outcomes, and continuous improvement.
- ▶ Identify and coordinate needed wrap-around services at all levels of career pathways by being responsive to a person's needs in real time.
- ▶ Use a career pathways model linked to industry sector strategy and high-demand occupations to provide youth, job seekers, and workers with opportunities for upward mobility and to provide a pipeline that meets employers' needs; engage industry councils to define clear career pathways.
- ▶ Allows Region 7's Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDA 70 and LWDA 71) to develop new partnerships and contract to supply career services for high-demand occupations.
- ▶ A mutual understanding of the features of our service delivery model, Region 7 through LWDAs approach the ecosystem within our region in a way that strives for a greater impact in the delivery of career services such as those provided through the WorkReady U program.
- ▶ WorkReady U (WRU) provide these services under existing funding sources, including integrated education and training and co-enrollment in the HiSET Program, and attainment of high-demand industry credentials.

Each American Job Center in Region 7 that is also a Comprehensive American Job Center offers an extensive array of services which include for job seekers:

- ▶ Outreach, common intake and assessment, orientation to services, informational services, and referral to other services as necessary based on assessment.

- ▶ Initial and Comprehensive Assessment of skills, aptitudes, interests, and abilities, both in a self-service and staff assisted service context, based on specific needs of the job seeker. WRU can provide comprehensive assessment through use of the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE). This is one of four fundamental fundable instructional services provided by WRU.
- ▶ Career counseling, job search, and placement assistance.
- ▶ Provision of Labor Market Information (LMI) by location, Region, and National areas, job vacancy listings, information on skills relating to Local occupations in demand, and the earnings and requirements for those occupations.
- ▶ Provisions of performance information and program cost information on eligible training providers. Provision of information relating to the availability of supportive services such as childcare and transportation.

For employers, Comprehensive American Job Centers offer:

- ▶ A demand-driven model for workforce development
- ▶ Efficient and effective screening and referral of qualified job candidates.
- ▶ Active outreach and assistance in developing effective recruiting job orders.
- ▶ Assisting with searching the State's talent bank.
- ▶ Job fairs and recruitment events.
- ▶ Connection with community service organizations and tax credit opportunities.
- ▶ Training for Incumbent Workers.
- ▶ Connections to Apprenticeship programs.
- ▶ Provision of information regarding the availability of On-the-Job Training and Customized Training, including referral of employers to sources of funding for worker training.
- ▶ Coordination with economic development and other programs that assist business.
- ▶ Assistance with layoff aversion programs and services.

The Region 7 Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) will explore opportunities to use a portion of Local funds to fund pay-for-performance contracts as a form of training delivery under Title I, with continuous evaluation of how target populations are chosen, to fairly serve individuals who face barriers to employment and economic success.

Region 7 LWDBs will permit their One-Stop operators in the Region to consider the full cost of participating in training services, including expenses related to dependent care, transportation, and other essential needs for individuals who are unable to obtain Pell Grant assistance or who need additional assistance beyond Pell Grants.

Region 7 uses a broad range of training programs as part of its workforce development strategy. These programs involve collaborating with its LWDBs, companies, and education/training providers to improve training.

LWDBs within Region 7 will prepare reports on expenditures for career and training services and on the number of participants who received career and training services as required by the Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC). This requirement is specifically designed to make planning and funding decisions more transparent, and to provide better opportunities for public oversight.

LWC also requires that eligible training providers report results for all of their students for common measures for each program of study, not just participants whose training costs were paid for through the use of WIOA funds in order to improve transparency after results for programs and for disadvantaged persons.

Representatives of Regions 7's Business Service Team may consist of the following: Directors, Local Area Coordinator, WIOA Program Manager, Business Services Representative(s), Youth Program Specialist(s)/Coordinator(s), Rapid Response Representative, Incumbent Worker Representative, WFD Specialists located at Region 7 American Job Centers, and any other workforce development colleagues within Region 7.

Region 7 is working to improve the capacity of the workforce system relative to incorporating Registered Apprenticeship in service design and delivery, as well as to support emphasis on career pathways. There are still challenges with in the Region's rural parishes and metropolitan areas. These are difficult to serve consistently, due to varying location and size of firms and industry concentrations.

In the context of waning budgets and moving industry targets, the Region's Local Workforce Development Areas (LWDAs) face a series of strategic challenges to the workforce system both in services to job seekers and employers. These challenges are high, but the opportunities to address these challenges are even greater. The Region is building a coalition of partner programs and shall effectively address the next stage of the workforce development system through strategic realignment, simplified navigation, and an integrated approach to serving all its customers.

Region 7 has realigned staffing and its operational strategy to provide effective guidance and support its two Local Workforce Development Areas (LWDAs) identified in this Plan, along with supporting of Regional business engagement strategies. Human Resources has been identified as one of the greatest challenges in meeting the requirements of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). This is due, largely, to current vacancies and attrition. Region 7's Service Delivery Model is a solid foundation for striking the critical balance between serving individuals and employers in a manner that will produce strategies that in the long run are good for both.

Strengths And Weaknesses Of Workforce Development

Strengths:

- ▶ In order to comply with WIOA's expectations, Region 7 has adopted and implemented numerous policies. LWC has developed policy, vision, certification criteria and contracts to assist LWDBs in complying with WIOA's expectations. LWC requires development of a regional plan by respective LWDBs including performance targets.
- ▶ Since the implementation of WIOA Region 7 has created a strong foundation on which to build true partnerships through implementation of the new basic Service Delivery Model and the Continuous Improvement Process as support strategies to LWDA operations.
- ▶ This Plan has allowed Region 7's Boards to operate affiliate American Job Centers with any subset of partners, including two comprehensive One-Stop Centers in the Region.
- ▶ The Plan drives the realignment of funding streams to improve accountability across core programs, support Career Pathways and sector strategies, and create continuous opportunities and measure performance and identify areas for improvement, resulting in an effective and efficient operation.
- ▶ Adult Education in Region 7 has adopted and implemented the College and Career Readiness Standards (CCRS) for Adult Education. Standard alignment with K-12 partners provides rigorous standards that specify what learners should know at each level.
- ▶ Provide professional development activities/training that aligns CCRS with evidenced-based practices.
- ▶ Developed and mandated teacher certification course to improve teacher quality and understanding of WIOA requirements.

- ▶ Data driven teacher quality evaluation process
- ▶ As a result of Louisiana Rehabilitation Services (LRS), and the Vocational Rehabilitation Program being within Louisiana Workforce Commission's (LWC's) organizational structure in Louisiana, integration of Vocational Rehabilitation into the Local One-Stop infrastructure has already begun. LRS counselors work within the Caddo, Lincoln, Natchitoches, and Webster American Job Centers.
- ▶ An array of services is provided by each component of the American Job Centers, including LRS/ VR.
- ▶ LRS has Employment Development Specialists available in each Region. These individuals are specialized in working with individuals with disabilities, including job placement.

Weaknesses:

- ▶ LWDA leadership across Region 7 has experienced, in many instances, challenges developing viable Regional workforce partnerships with economic development and educational entities. Vast improvement has been seen in this area through the development of a two-year updated Regional/ Local Plan that aligns with the Governor's vision on workforce and the sharing of resources and ideas for Regional implementation, as scarcity of resources, and the true need to partner are becoming drivers. The loss of the youth waiver to spend 50/50 funds on In-School-Youth (ISY) and Out-of-School-Youth (OSY), from July – December 2022, created significant setbacks between LWDA 70 and the local school districts. In order to help reach OSY, school districts wanted the benefits of the ISY program to incentivize the youth to stay in-school; rather than, being enticed to drop out to benefit from the OSY program.
- ▶ While a number of AJC partners utilize referrals, not all AJC partners are actively referral customers.
- ▶ Budgetary realities and restrictions, combined with the refocus and expansion of services under WIOA, require Region 7 to take a comprehensive look at how it provides support to service partners.
- ▶ While the State's Local American Job Centers effectively became integrated with Local WIOA and State Wagner-Peyser staff as early as 2005, there are currently American Job Centers in Region 7 with limited presence of both Local and State-funded staff providing staff assisted services to employers and job-seekers.
- ▶ LWDA staff needs more training opportunities and cross-training within our partners programs.
- ▶ To overcome this weakness Region 7 must become more strategic and effective in managing formula-fund dollars. This will provide an opportunity to move towards a more proactive, strategic, and engaged approach.
- ▶ Streamline assessment mandates and reporting results for students. Adult Education has the capability to provide assessment services throughout the workforce training system for American Job Centers, including services to OSY under WIOA, as well as post-secondary educational institutions, TANF and SNAP programs.
- ▶ Employer engagement and involvement on program design and curriculum to ensure valid education/training meet Regional labor market demands.
- ▶ Develop procedure to evaluate programs and activities to ensure continuous improvement and expansion.
- ▶ Must ensure ABE teachers evaluations include analysis of education services provided to WIOA OSY to ensure WIOA Common Measures are understood and met or exceeded.
- ▶ Expand the integration of Vocational Rehabilitation services within American Job Centers. Proactively address physical and programmatic accessibility; space and logistics, including funding/cost allocation agreements.

- ▶ Integrate VR into the One-Stop Service Delivery Model. Eliminate duplication of effort/ services where possible. Cross-train staff and clarify services available. This includes those responsible for providing said services.
- ▶ To enhance employer outreach and collaboration with American Job Centers efforts in employer engagement.
- ▶ With the influx of Federal and State grants since the national Covid-19 pandemic, partner cooperation has become an even greater challenge. With funds targeting the same population as WIOA, but often with fewer restrictions, schools and other organizations are diverting from regional cooperation. Different grants are now requiring local workforce board partnership, but instead of seeking to develop a strategic and coordinated plan, organizations are just wanting a signature of approval to do “their own thing”. The “silo” mentality has become rampant with each entity seeking to be the “leader” in what is characterized as finding the solution to Good Jobs.

Economic, Workforce, and Workforce Development Activities Analysis

The Regional/Local Plan includes an analysis of the economic conditions, economic development strategies, and labor market in which the Regional/Locals workforce system and programs will operate. Region 7's economic and workforce analysis serves to provide strategic economic and demographic information for Region 7 to better focus on multiple facets of workforce development across the Region. These include providing information for better business decisions for industries, aligning industry demand with workforce supply that originates in Region 7's schools and college system, and helping job seekers, students, and parents make better career choices. The analysis also aims to develop opportunities to increase workforce participation in Region 7's economy, and how all agencies can contribute to mitigate challenges through collective efforts of providing services to all job seekers to fill high demand occupations in the Region.

Region 7's economic development has historically relied on natural resource extraction and processing and with the low cost of land and favorable wage rates to attract manufacturing plants. Its large oil and gas extraction and refining industries have provided some insulation from the economic hardship faced by the rest of the country during the most recent recession period. Due to a recent large number of layoffs in Region 7, the Region's traditional economic sectors such as timber, manufacturing, and oil and gas extraction, have been the most affected by the decline in the global economy. Region 7 has focused its economic development efforts on bringing in and attracting new employers in professional and technical services sectors. These efforts will hopefully diversify the labor market and add high wage and skilled workers to the economy. Recent declines in oil prices have caused some unemployment in the Region's workforce, but increased collaboration with employers, community colleges, and other training providers has helped to develop transferable skills to address this challenge. The Local Workforce Development Areas (LWDAs) in Region 7 (LWDA 70 and LWDA 71), under the guidance of the Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs), continue to monitor business expansion that should increase demand for a skilled workforce.

To better understand demand for workforce, Region 7 reviews Louisiana Workforce Commission's (LWC's) statistical models of short-term and long-term industry demand with inputs from business and industry, economic development partners, and Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs).

COVID-19: As of late 2020, over 100,621 Louisianans have filled unemployment insurance claims according to the U.S. Department of Labor. While it is believed that many of these individuals will eventually return to their jobs, it is also clear that a number of job seekers in Region 7 will grow substantially as a result of current and future business closures. While states are opening venues including personal services, dining, and retail, some business owners are realizing and publicizing

that they cannot turn a profit and will just stay closed if they are forced to reduce capacity to 50% of pre-pandemic capacity. More alarming, other business owners, realizing the same profit dynamics, are choosing to close permanently.

A 27 April-4 May 2020 Washington Post-Ipsos national poll found 77% of furloughed workers expect to be rehired by their previous employer once the stay-at-home orders in their area are lifted. First, many companies are going bankrupt or shutting down permanently, so they won't need employees. Second, even after parts of the economy reopen, many people will be hesitant to shop, travel, and go out to eat as they did before. Businesses operating at one-half capacity or switching to online or takeout don't need nearly as many workers. Unemployment benefits that provide an extra \$600.00 a week through a federal pandemic stimulus package expire the end of July. While some economist expects economic growth to return, no one expects the job market to reach the same lofty levels of the first months of 2020.

Complicating this from a workforce development standpoint, a cohort of these dislocated workers—e.g. small business owners, healthcare employees, airlines employees, and business services workers—are highly skilled and may have difficulty finding fulfilling work that pays comparable wages. Too, the workforce development service delivery network may be strained—in human and financial capacities— to serve the expected rise in job seekers, customers seeking training or re-training, and employers seeking workers as business and industry return to full employment.

The current cessation due to COVID-19 of workforce development services through the bricks and mortar American Job Center model lays bare weaknesses in the delivery of workforce services across the state and in the Region 7. A lack of tools to successfully intersect with virtual online learning has prohibited existing customers from continuing their education, while new customers—both job seekers and businesses -- have been unable to be determined eligible for WIOA services or utilize the human resource function of the American Job Center, respectively.

A number of Federal, state, and local organizations have increased the provision of resources to businesses and individuals during the novel coronavirus and COVID-19 infections. Since then, LWDA 70 has also been researching and working with different entities, such as mayors, businesses, and non-profit organizations to name a few, to explore different grants, such as DRA, to provide further opportunities to rural communities.

Community Colleges participate in our board meetings, the non-credit and credit side have pathways to improving employment needs of local industry. Members of secondary and post-secondary schools are involved in workforce boards which include business, such as ACT WorkKeys and other initiatives.

A Youth with low-income, or other unique challenges that prohibit them from completing their educational goals may receive additional assistance to complete their education. Appropriate and reasonable financial records and other documentation must be gathered and maintained in the case file. Individuals will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

Region 7 is quickly building capacity in Business Services through the use of a combination of a Regional Industry Sector Coordinators and local Business Service Representatives to provide activities to address the needs of employers. One of the main focuses will be on specific industries (Manufacturing, Healthcare, Services, and Transportation) while the other focuses on providing services to specific employers within an industry. Together they connect with program partners who are enrolling, assessing, and providing career and individualized services to jobseekers in order to anticipate and meet labor market demands in a timely manner.

Region 7's Business Service Team which works with business and industry to identify their workforce needs and provides oversight for training programs and contractors. The Business Services Team works closely with businesses to provide tailored talent solutions including labor market information, recruitment, job readiness training, pre-screening, specialized training, On-the-Job-Training (OJT), human resource services, and retention services. The Business Services Team develops strategies to address short and long-term requirements for skills; makes recommendations to the Local Area Workforce Directors regarding funding and service priorities; and directs strategies for building a comprehensive, regional system for occupational advancement, career ladders and work retraining.

Regions 7's existing training programs in the local areas prepare job seekers to enter and retain employment with regional businesses are based on the needs of individuals and funding availability.

Region 7 may adopt a Career Pathway approach to address efficiency issues related to how timely and responsive it is in developing plans and entering jobseekers into training with the focus on Industry Based Certifications (IBCs). This will allow employers and jobseekers to focus on a stepped approach to earning education and training.

Region 7 is determined to meet the need of market connection by identifying and providing working learners, with greater flexibility and broader opportunities in education and training in order to overcome limited funding. Region 7's goal is to develop capacity to assist job-seekers, who find training and education with making a family sustaining wage. This can be accomplished through closely managed and leveraged resources.

Region 7 has seen a growth in the region with area partners building pathways to self-sufficient employment with local businesses. A couple examples such as the Tech 20 which is a collaboration between cities, businesses, and schools along the I-20 corridor to skill residents in in-demand occupations and with the goal of attracting new businesses on this corridor. Region 7 has seen the growth of pathways between General Dynamics and Bossier Parish Community College in their IT programs. Also, the collaboration between Louisiana Tech and Bossier Parish Community College to bring employers onto the BPCC campus and engage students in Allied Health and other sectors.

The Region 7 Plan partners have defined capacity in three categories of service: efficiency, connectivity, and funding. Region 7 continues to improve its methodology in providing efficient employer and job-seeker services, through the implementation and operation of a continuous process improvement strategy.

With the addition of new partners contributing to the Comprehensive One-Stop Centers infrastructure costs, there remains more opportunity for stronger coordination and consistency between partner programs, through the use of a Common Intake Process and Co-enrollment strategy that will improve efficiencies across the board for all partners. This any door approach will enable any job seeker to enter the system with a consistent approach, which will result in seamless transition among partner programs and supportive services providers.

The addition of new partners to American Job Centers (AJCs) should help to alleviate the problem of the Centers being supported primarily by Wagner-Peyser (WP) and Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Adult; Youth, and Dislocated Worker program services. The Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC) will guide Region 7 in leveraging additional partner program funding in order to overcome any shortfall in AJC Services.

Commitments of each program partner to implement the selected strategies.

Region 7's partners have committed to implementing the strategies in the local area. Major priorities in the Region will consist of communication across partners which includes improving and expanding technological capabilities that can facilitate referrals, joint case management involving the coordination of services for the individuals and cohorts who comprise the entire regional case management system, coordinated employer services, and shared performance reporting and management.

The core partner programs consisting of WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth, Adult Basic Education, Wagner-Peyser and Vocational Rehabilitation, work in concert to effectively serve job seekers and employers. While each program has clearly defined activities to carry out, as defined by law, it is through coordination and cooperation that optimum outcomes can be achieved. Region 7's alignment of core programs includes establishing effective sector strategies that combine guidance, education, training, and support services to prepare individuals for careers. Given their needs and career goals, the system helps to guide individuals to appropriate programs and services. Region 7 promotes co-enrollment when appropriate to align services and works closely with partners to prevent duplication of services among the core programs.

Partners will promote system integration to the maximum extent feasible through:

- ▶ Effective communication, information sharing, and collaboration with the One-Stop Operator;
- ▶ Active involvement in joint planning, policy development, and system design processes;
- ▶ Commitment to and active involvement in the development of a joint mission, vision, goals, strategies, and performance measures;
- ▶ The design and use of common intake, assessment, referral, and case management processes;
- ▶ The use of common and/or linked data management systems and data sharing methods, as appropriate;
- ▶ Leveraging of resources, including other public agency and non-profit organization services;
- ▶ Participation in a continuous improvement process designed to boost outcomes and increase customer satisfaction;
- ▶ Establishing a point-of-contact(s) to serve as a liaison between each Partner program, and
- ▶ Participation in regularly scheduled Partner meetings to exchange information in support of the above and encourage program and staff integration.

The LWDA's identified goals for service integration in their action plan. The following is the compiled list of the goals in order of priority across the Region:

Communication across partners:

- ▶ Use technology to share information via Unite Us, HiRE, social media and websites
- ▶ Develop/improve communication vehicles such as newsletters, meetings, calendars,
- ▶ Partner meetings
- ▶ Improve the partner referral form; finalize the process and share information
- ▶ Create a work group to review referral system and develop a feedback process
- ▶ Create detailed handbook of partners services
- ▶ Increase knowledge of Career Pathways using common language across partners

Cross-training provided to staff:

- ▶ Create work group and set schedule meetings for cross-training
- ▶ Create onboarding/cross-training program, supported with training materials
- ▶ Establish shared vision for customer service
- ▶ Encourage staff contribution for continuous improvement

Business services:

- ▶ Create a Region 7 Business Service Team (BST) with a focus on capacity and partner representation
- ▶ Develop a script for BST staff to follow up on employer visits/contact protocol
- ▶ Identify partnerships and increase engagement with small and medium employers requiring specialized attention
- ▶ Increase frequency of BST meetings
- ▶ Host coordinated hiring events with all system partners
- ▶ Obtain information from the community needs assessment
- ▶ Create employer list by sector
- ▶ Use business customer input to design and deliver services
- ▶ Continue to use/revise/update existing customer satisfaction tools
- ▶ Use a universal intake form
- ▶ Create FAQ on partner programs

Job expectations communicated to staff:

- ▶ Establish core staff competencies
- ▶ Continue/increase frequency of partner meetings for updates, share feedback
- ▶ Update staff procedures manual
- ▶ Establish a vision for customer service

Access to services is timely and coordinated:

- ▶ Identify/implement common electronic referral system for partners
- ▶ Review referral outcomes monthly
- ▶ Increase partner presence at AJCs
- ▶ Inventory marketing/social media resources and communicate to customers
- ▶ Produce AJC orientation video
- ▶ Improve TANF referral outcomes
- ▶ Create master calendar of workshops/sessions throughout region

Customer information is shared:

- ▶ Create AJC manual of all partner services
- ▶ Develop shared database/case management system
- ▶ Hold quarterly BST/employer roundtables
- ▶ Review customer satisfaction survey to represent all programs/services

Partners share an understanding of Career Pathways:

- ▶ Provide training for all staff
- ▶ Develop Career Pathways training for frontline staff
- ▶ Host industry representatives to inform staff of career pathways
- ▶ Provide info from WIOA regional plan survey and Perkins needs assessments to front line staff

All staff valued and respected:

- ▶ Solicit frontline staff input into policy at the local or regional level
- ▶ Include frontline staff at center-level AJC meetings
- ▶ Ensure staff provided with time to discuss customer service
- ▶ Working relationships that promote service integration

Services delivered by function:

- ▶ Map flow of all customers and services
- ▶ Review services by function for each title and identify opportunities for collaboration
- ▶ Create Business Services Team and client organizational charts and reevaluate the referral process

Board expectations drive One-Stop expectations:

- ▶ Conduct anonymous survey of LWDBs and partner staff
- ▶ Provide WIOA 101 for all staff
- ▶ Program Services Team invites LWDBs to quarterly meeting

Staff collaborate on customer assessment:

- ▶ Share assessment information at Partners Meetings
- ▶ Develop collaboration tools for jobseekers
- ▶ Create matrix of assessments currently in use across partners
- ▶ Share workforce data more frequently to build bridges across partners agencies

B. Describe how transportation and other supportive services are coordinated within the region.

Region 7's Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) are committed to providing resources and fostering partnerships in low-income communities that enable low-income individuals to achieve self-sufficiency enhance family stability and revitalize their community.

Region's 7 LWDBs will coordinate workforce development activities in the Region with the provision of transportation, including public transportation, and other appropriate supportive services in the Region 7.

As partners in the Regional Plan, Community Services Block Grant (CSBG), Louisiana Rehabilitation Services (LRS), and Department of Children's and Family Services (DCFS) carry out programs that assist low-income populations with public transportation, housing, childcare and other supportive services.

Most of the urban areas in the region have public transportation systems that provide the general public with affordable transportation options. Some locations, including most rural areas, lack efficient, dependable transportation systems.

There is more demand for transportation than supply of providers. Lack of transportation is a significant and often identified barrier for participants in attending training or commuting to/from work, and transportation barriers limit customers' employment opportunities. The LWDBs coordinates with core partners to effectively use limited resources to help alleviate transportation barriers. Programs typically offer transportation assistance in the form of stipends, bus passes, or gas cards for participants attending training programs. Service providers are utilizing shared ride services, such as Uber and Lyft, in rural areas. Participants can connect with transportation via websites or mobile apps on smartphones and payment arrangements can be made through service providers.

Regions 7 is committed to providing a comprehensive approach to supportive services to give participants in the workforce system greater opportunity for success.

Supportive service payments—whether for adult, dislocated worker, or youth participants are intended to enable WIOA-enrolled customers to participate in workforce funded programs and activities to secure and retain employment. Based on individual assessment and availability of funds, supportive services, such as transportation and needs-related payments, may be awarded to eligible participants on an as-needed basis. To enhance the provision of transportation and other supportive services, LWDB 70 and LWDB 71 will ensure the sharing of best practices for possible replication among the two LWDAAs.

Additionally, Region 7 continues to maximize funding available for supportive services by coordinating services through partner and community programs. Through collaboration with other organizations offering supportive services, the region maximizes customers' access to services not available through the AJC. These ongoing conversations include DCFS, Adult Education, Vocational Rehabilitation, and other agencies that serve populations with barriers in order to identify, promote, and replicate common strategies, streamline funding, reduce unnecessary duplication of efforts, and foster clear data reporting that advances predictive analysis. For example, LWDA 70 and LWDA 71 partners with agencies offering transportation or childcare services on behalf of customers in need to coordinate schedules, arrange services, or to potentially fund such services for both individuals and groups. Each local area maintains policies and procedures for administering and coordinating supportive services to ensure funds are spent in a manner that avoids redundancy. The LWDBs continue to provide oversight and guidance regarding the need for additional support services, policies, and procedures.

C. Describe the coordination of services with regional economic development services and WIOA service.

Each Local Area Board is made up of at least 51% private sector representatives from local businesses representing a variety of sectors, including the region's top industry sectors. These sector representatives give continual feedback on strategy development. Economic development representatives have been invited to and have actively participated in local and regional planning to provide meaningful and strategic input into the development of sector strategies.

Business Services Team representatives stay active in our communities by participating in Regional Meetings, Chamber events, speaking at workforce community meetings, making in-person employer site visits, and connecting via email and phone. All of this engagement has produced regular feedback from employers.

To ensure an open forum for all stakeholders to offer feedback, we provided an opportunity for them to specifically address our comprehensive four-year plan's two-year modification. Feedback is provided back through various outreach efforts, including our local partnerships with economic development, education and local municipalities. The Local Area Workforce Boards has the opportunity to read and approve the plan every two years and vote on approving the plan in a Board meeting. The updated plan is presented to the Board for comment as well as being posted publicly on the each LWDAAs webpage and noticed in local newspapers throughout the ten-parish region for two weeks for public comment as well.

Economic development organizations, WIOA service providers and businesses that actively engaged in regional planning:

- Job Corps – Shreveport Job Corps
- Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC) Wagner-Peyser (includes MSFW)
- Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA)
- Jobs for Veterans (JSVG)
- Rapid Response
- Labor Programs
- Office of Administration
- Incumbent Worker Training Program (IWTP) Unemployment Insurance (UI)
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (STEP)
- Reentry Employment Opportunities
- Vocational Rehabilitation Services
- National Association for Hispanic Elderly (AYUDA) - Senior Employment
- The Coordinating & Development Corporation - WIOA Title 1 (Adult, Dislocated Worker & Youth
- Community Development/City of Shreveport - WIOA Title 1 (Adult, Dislocated Worker & Youth
- Bossier Parish Community College (BPCC) - Adult Education (BPCC)
- Motivation Education & Training, Inc. (MET) - National Farm Worker Job Programs (NFJP)
- Northwest Louisiana Technical Community College (NLTCC) - Adult Education
- North Louisiana Economic Partnership
- Community Foundation of North Louisiana
- No organization that was invited to participate in the planning process declined.

D. Describe the coordination of administrative cost arrangements, including the pooling of funds for administrative costs, as appropriate.

Coordination of administrative cost arrangements, including pooling of funds for administrative costs, are agreed upon through the Infrastructure Funding Agreements and Memoranda of Understanding among AJC partners/MOU. IFAs are developed with onsite partners in the AJCs in order to establish methods of cost sharing. IFAs are updated quarterly and reviewed by partner leadership for accuracy and monitoring of shared costs and expenditures.

The fiscal staff for the local board invoices partners quarterly ensure timely payment of shared costs.

Memorandums of Understandings are developed to provide staff training beyond what their individual budgets would allow. AJC partners enter into a revised Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) in order to leverage resources, eliminate duplication of services, and improve effectiveness, thereby decreasing administrative and program costs. Current MOUs and IFAs reflect the sharing of infrastructure costs among partner programs, based on proportionate use of the AJCs and relative benefit received.

This section will outline how the Local Board(s) will coordinate the regional workforce, education and economic development activities with regional activities that are carried out in the local areas. The responses must ensure alignment with other plans as well as illustrate that businesses, education, and workforce development stakeholders have provided input and are involved in the development of the strategies.

A. Describe the local strategic vision to support state and regional economic growth.

Region 7's workforce Strategic Vision is to increase the competitive position of Northwest Louisiana businesses through the development of a highly skilled Workforce. We envision a regional system that:

- ▶ Is employer-centric and built on the collective efforts of economic development partners with strong industry partnerships
- ▶ Is holistically focused on the industry sectors that are recognized as regional sector strategies
- ▶ Uses current, available labor market data to understand both the supply and demand sides of the regional economy, including the talent needs and qualifications of employers and the effectiveness of the education and training systems in meeting those needs.
- ▶ Builds on educational opportunities throughout the region to identify and create career pathways for all on ramps within targeted industry sectors and associated occupations.
- ▶ Advances opportunities for all job seekers including low skilled adults, youth, individuals with disabilities, veterans, returning talent, and other individuals with multiple barriers.
- ▶ Creates a system of workforce, education, and economic development partners to meet the needs of businesses and individuals while growing a vibrant and robust regional economy.

Region 7 WIOA partners will work collaboratively to deliver a workforce development system that provides opportunities for career growth for the Region's jobseekers and workers as well as ensures a skilled workforce to meet the needs of businesses.

The Region's workforce development system will be responsive to changes in the economy, including changes in dominant industry sectors, technology-based impacts and changes, and changes in the skills and education needed for jobs. The workforce development system will assist the Region's workers and jobseekers to advance along career pathways and will effectively collaborate with educators and economic development agencies to provide an aligned system for the Region's stakeholders. Specifically, the One-Stop delivery system shall provide a true "One-Stop" experience, at which any employer, worker or job seeker can access the programs and resources they need, whether in-person or electronically.

B. Describe the local goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce (including youth and individuals with barriers to employment) and goals relating to the performance accountability measures based on performance indicators.

These goals include:

(Goal 1) Establish Career Pathways as a model for skill, credential and degree attainment for Region 7's citizens to secure jobs that provide opportunities for economic independence and family stability. This goal will be accomplished by executing the following objectives:

- ▶ Workforce development system partners will develop a shared vision and strategy for industry sector-based Career Pathways for Youth and Adults. Career Pathways must be diverse, with multiple entry and exit points allowing individuals of varying abilities, including low-skilled Adults and Youth with multiple barriers to employment, to have realistic access to Career Pathways.
- ▶ Engage employers and integrate sector strategy principles to ensure multiple employers, business associations and organized labor are partners in creating demand-driven Career Pathways.
- ▶ Increase the identification, prioritization and leverage of workforce system partner resources to provide supportive services and reduce barriers for low-skilled Youth and Adults.
- ▶ Strengthen the alignment of Jump Start, WorkReady U (WRU), STEP Forward, and other viable initiatives as entry and exit points in the Career Pathways model for In and Out-of-School Youth.
- ▶ Expand utilization of Registered Apprenticeship, and Pre-Apprenticeships, by industry sector employers to train workers and meet occupational demands.
- ▶ Support and grow learning opportunities for jobseekers and workers by improving processes for transfer credits through postsecondary, Apprenticeships and college course-work.

(Goal 2) Expand career services and opportunities for populations facing multiple barriers to close the gap in educational attainment and economic advancement through Career Pathways and improved career services and the expansion of bridge programs.

- ▶ Expand and incentivize the utilization of evidenced-based workforce strategies that support targeted populations (e.g., the long-term unemployed, individuals with disabilities, Veterans, Out-of-School Youth) into sector-based Career Pathway initiatives to achieve similar outcomes relative to other populations.
- ▶ Create new pathways for success by preparing very low-skill Adults to take advantage of sector based bridge programs that link foundation skills and Adult Basic Education.
- ▶ Enhance and expand the delivery of integrated re-entry and employment strategies, and meet the skill and workforce needs of business and industry.
- ▶ Promote the efficient alignment and utilization of supportive resources for populations facing multiple barriers to employment at the Regional and Local service delivery levels.
- ▶ LWDA 70's creation of Youth Program Specialist puts focus and attention on services for Youth with barriers, in overcoming their barriers and actualizing their potential.

(Goal 3) Increase the participation and utilization of the workforce system by employers and job-seekers.

- ▶ Foster the improvement and expansion of employer-driven Regional Sector Partnerships to meet occupational demands as supported by Regional Labor Market Information (LMI).
- ▶ Increase the use of labor market and educational data and technology, in coordination with Local data, to inform and guide strategic workforce development decisions.
- ▶ Develop focused, Regional workforce initiatives that blend partner resources (co-investment) to educate and train workers for jobs within the workforce Region.
- ▶ Increase the alignment and efficacy of formula, discretionary and competitive workforce funding in efforts to support Regional and Local workforce initiatives.
- ▶ Promote meaningful, portable industry credentials supported throughout the workforce delivery system that align to workforce demand.

- ▶ Institute a system of accountability for the workforce development system that supports and promotes the evaluation of the effectiveness of the Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) in meeting the workforce demands of both business and the workforce.
- ▶ Region 7 implemented creation of a Business Service Team which covers the region in developing workforce needs and provide oversight for training programs and contractors to businesses.

The Region's Local Workforce Development Areas (LWDAs) performance levels have been negotiated with the Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC). In addition to the Common Performance Measures described in Section 116(b)(2)(A), LWDAs will use business-focused metrics to assess outcomes.

Business Metrics for Region 7

Employer Penetration Rate

The denominator is the number of unique businesses employing 20 or more people in the parishes contained within a given Local Workforce Development Area (LWDA).

The numerator includes the number of unique businesses with 10 or more employees, registered in Helping Individuals Reach Employment (HiRE), which independently, or with American Job Center (AJC) staff assistance, are engaged with the HiRE system by:

- ▶ Posting a job in HiRE.
- ▶ Providing Employer-Based Training.
- ▶ Conducting a resume search.
- ▶ Utilizing customized Labor Market Information (LMI) services for a specific industry or occupation.
- ▶ Receiving Incumbent Worker Training Program (IWTP) funding.
- ▶ Attending seminars and/or workshops.

The primary source of information for this measure is data recorded in the Management Information System (MIS) system of the Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC), HiRE. Services to employers are automatically recorded by HiRE and manually entered into HiRE by AJC staff. The HiRE system has the capability to have service codes added to indicate business market penetration activity.

Repeat Business Customers

The numerator of this measure is a count of unique employers who received at least one American Job Center (AJC)/ Helping Individuals Reach Employment (HiRE) service in the baseline year.

The denominator is a count of the unique employers who received at least one AJC/HiRE service in the prior year, such as:

- ▶ Posted a job in HiRE.
- ▶ Provided Employer-Based Training.
- ▶ Conducted a resume search.
- ▶ Utilized customized Labor Market Information (LMI) services for a specific industry or occupation.
- ▶ Received Incumbent Worker Training Program (IWTP) funding.
- ▶ Attended seminars and/or workshops.

The primary source of information for this measure is data recorded in the Management Information System (MIS) of the LWC, HiRE. Staff records employer services in the HiRE system. The HiRE

system automatically indicates the activities performed by employers without staff assistance. The Region may establish a scorecard that incorporates the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) common measures, State-established business service metrics and other relevant data that measures progress toward meeting the goals and objectives set forth in this plan.

C. Provide a description of the regional and local strategies that will achieve the vision and principles.

The Business Engagement Initiative is focused on garnering and utilizing input from businesses to build a package of services and strategies to meet business needs today and into the future. There will be special effort to foster relationships with small businesses and targeted industry sectors in order to develop a custom package of services for these customers.

Business Engagement will increase overall business utilization and value received from the workforce system, reduce employer costs to recruit and hire qualified workers and decrease the time required to fill vacancies.

Regional Business Service strategy will transform Region's 7's workforce development service delivery, creating a positive long-term economic impact. This Regional approach is appropriate for the following reasons:

- ▶ A sector (also termed industry cluster) builds strategic partnerships among businesses, training providers, community organizations and other key stakeholders in a labor market Region to bolster the Region's economic competitiveness and promote systemic change.
- ▶ A sector approach is more responsive to labor demand than traditional job-matching and training services because it is problem oriented versus program oriented, addresses needs interdependently, and works to understand the specific needs of businesses within a particular sector.

Reasons a Regional approach is preferred include:

- ▶ This approach allows Business Services to provide a coordinated plan ensuring adequate service delivery to employers who maintain locations in a wider geographic area than the previous, basically parish-oriented model. The implantation creation of a Regional Business Services Team which coordinates different workforce agencies, such as: Rapid Response, Incumbent Worker Representatives, and Business Service Representatives, to name a few to better serve regional business.
- ▶ Expanded areas of delivery capture more job-seekers for employers to choose from.
- ▶ Economically less-developed areas are able to recruit, train, and retain workers
- ▶ Business Engagement Initiatives meet the skill, recruitment and retention needs of employers and the training, employment and career advancement needs of workers. They address the needs of employers by focusing intensively on the workforce needs of a specific industry sector over a sustained period, often concentrating on a specific occupation or set of occupations within that industry.
- ▶ Creating formal career paths to good jobs, reducing barriers to employment and sustaining or increasing middle-class jobs.
- ▶ Regional economic competitiveness is bolstered by engaging economic development experts in workforce issues and aligning education, economic and workforce development planning.

- ▶ A broader array of key stakeholders is engaged through partnerships organized by workforce intermediaries. This promotes systemic change that achieves ongoing benefits for industry, workers and the community.
- ▶ LWDA 70's creation of Youth Program Specialist (YPS) serve as recruiters, case managers, and work experience placement coordinators. This approach allows the YPS to develop an effective relationship of trust with their youth participants.

This Regional sector strategy helps promote and support the development of Regional sector initiatives.

Implementation of a Regional industry sector-based approach is a partnership of the Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC), Local Workforce Development Boards, (LWDBs) core programs and other partners in each Region to create and develop the Regional Business Services Team (RBST) (in another section or chapter it is called BST without the R) structure. A RBST within the Region consists of the following programs:

- ▶ Wagner-Peyser.
- ▶ Veterans/LVER.
- ▶ Adult/Dislocated Worker/Youth Programs.
- ▶ Louisiana Rehabilitation Services/REDS.
- ▶ Incumbent Worker Training Program (State).
- ▶ Rapid Response Team.
- ▶ Other stakeholders that engage employers.

This supports and aligns American Job Center (AJC) Business Services to small business and industries within each Region.

In Region 7, we have also made an effort to house as many programs that serve businesses as possible. Our Bossier American Job Center currently houses Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA), Business Service Representative (BSR), Incumbent Worker Training Program (IWTP), Rapid Response (RR), and Disabled Veterans Outreach Program (DVOP). WIOP referrals, Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessments (RESEA), Louisiana Rehabilitation Services (LRS), Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Adult, Youth, and Dislocated Worker, Shreveport Job Corps, Strategies to Empower People (STEP).

This allows communication between partner programs on a daily basis. This also facilitates strong relationships between programs. Several of these partners also have programs that extend outside of our Region. This adds the ability to work not only in our Region, but knowledge of our neighboring Regions. Working across these lines adds credibility to our Business Services, as businesses do not have these borders.

To better coordinate workforce development programs and economic development Region 7 will research the Regional Labor Market Area for Northwest Louisiana contains Regional and Local Economic Development Organizations (EDOs) that have a history of partnering with each other, higher education institutions, industry associations, and Local and State government to achieve shared workforce goals that will advance their Regional economies, along the lines of the activities identified in this Plan. Partnership with Regional and Local EDOs will be most beneficial in achieving these strategic goals of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Regional/Local Plan.

1. Establish Career Pathways as a model for skill, credential, and degree attainment for Louisiana citizens to secure jobs that provide opportunities for economic independence and family stability.
2. Increase the participation and utilization of the workforce system by employers and jobseekers. In particular, Regional and Local EDOs have agreed to:
 - ▶ Use their strategic plans, industry targets, and priority programs to work with the WIOA Regional Planning Team to develop common goals and priorities for workforce development.
 - ▶ Provide feedback on priority status of top industries for this Region based on data and emerging trends learned from existing, new, and prospective employers.
 - o For example, the North Louisiana Economic Partnership (NLEP) conducted a 5-year strategic plan that identifies target industries for business development based on our Regional strengths and assets, and target talent clusters that should be prioritized to ensure a skilled workforce for our economic driver industries. These talent clusters (skilled trades, healthcare, and information technology) line up well with the Star Jobs and Tiered Job analysis done by the State.
 - ▶ Assist in development of sector partnerships by:
 - o Providing guidance on priority target sectors (see above)
 - o Identifying employers in priority target sectors
 - o Identifying existing industry associations to leverage in development of sector partnerships (e.g. Manufacturing Managers Council, TECHBY20, Louisiana Associated General Contractors)
 - o Invite new employers in target sectors to join sector partnership
 - ▶ Serve on Regional Business Services Team, including attending regular Team meetings and providing feedback from employers on employment needs, existing and emerging, as well as skills gaps.
 - ▶ Assist in development of Career Pathways and stackable credentials based on employer feedback.
 - o Based on strong existing relationships with higher education institutions in developing or updating certification programs to meet the needs of employers (e.g. Advisory Board participation, scheduling intensive interviews/tours of employers' facilities and critical skill needs), EDOs can convene industry-education-training work sessions to develop detailed Career Pathways with relevant industry valued credentials.
 - ▶ Assist in alignment of sector training between K-12 (Jump Start) and post-secondary to ensure there are not gaps and that students can easily transition from industry training under Jump Start to related industry training at a post-secondary institution within their Region.
 - ▶ Identify employers that could form consortia for training (Incumbent Worker Training, in particular) or Apprenticeship programs.
 - ▶ Solicit feedback from employers about Star Jobs identified for this Region (are they relevant for Regional employers, what jobs are missing). Assist in creation and dissemination of target sector employer skill surveys.
 - ▶ Market workforce solutions offered by the Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC), American Job Centers (AJCs), and Louisiana Economic Development (LED) Fast Start to existing and new employers.

As part of existing business outreach efforts, as well as business development proposals, it is critical that EDOs fully understand all workforce training and recruitment programs and services available to assist employers and can relay the information to employers and assist in any follow-up.

- ▶ Assist in development and implementation of public marketing strategies to highlight Star Jobs and training programs that support them to all segments of the community (parents, elected officials, non-profits organizations, other government agencies, etc).
 - o Northwest Louisiana Manufacturing Week is one way the North Louisiana Economic Partnership is starting this process, by coordinating tours of manufacturing plants and manufacturing training programs for high school students in Northwest Louisiana. Each student receives a take home booklet of information on manufacturing occupations, average salaries, and Regional training programs.
 - o The NLEP hosted its first Workforce Summit in March 2015, featuring three industry panels with representatives from the 3 priority talent clusters identified in their strategic plan. The public was invited to attend but particular emphasis was placed on K-12 and higher education representatives to allow them to hear from employers in target industries what current and emerging skills they are looking for in employees. The NLEP is open to partnering on similar events in the future, and ideally, they would be marketed to the public and highlight Star Jobs and training for them.
- ▶ Assist in identifying alternate funding (private sector, Federal government, non-profit) for critical training programs or services that support Star Jobs.
 - o This could include organizing employer consortia for Apprenticeship programs, soliciting private, public, and foundation dollars for support of Jump Start implementation and marketing, and bringing together collaborators on Federal or National foundation grant opportunities.

Region 7 will strengthen linkages between the one-stop delivery system and unemployment insurance programs. Louisiana is one of the few states to operate the Re-employment and Services Eligibility Assessment Grant (RESEA) statewide due to its integrated service delivery system. Louisiana's system is demand-driven and operated under a continuous improvement process. Therefore, the system is able to respond quickly to immediate and long-term credentials in demand occupations. Louisiana's integrated service-delivery process was redesigned as a foundation for establishing operations that support the key principles found in the new Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) law and to initiate expanding partnerships and services.

All of the Region's American Job Centers (AJCs) staff members are trained in the program overview, case management, and all key aspects of job-specific functions. Administrative and managerial staff members at all levels provide operational oversight and technical support for programs.

Functional Supervisors through their Local managerial structure and in cooperation with Local Workforce Development Area (LWDA) leadership are responsible for ensuring a seamless process in AJCs through coordinating staff training, providing technical support, maintaining program documentation and continuous communication and dissemination of information. These leaders work in coordination with Management Information Systems (MIS) technicians and Unemployment Insurance (UI) technical support teams on all issues relating to UI eligibility, disqualifications and requalification.

State management, with support from Local management, also provides fiscal and programmatic monitoring and functions as a liaison between workforce and UI, and UI staff (the claim center, adjudication, appeals and the technical support unit) and provides technical support for external customers (job-seekers/claimants) and internal staff (Workforce Development Specialists (WFDS), and workforce management). The UI technical support unit provides training to all WIOA and Wagner-Peyser (WP) staff concerning Federal and State UI regulations, eligibility reviews, adjudications services, appeal processes and all other related UI services for jobseekers/claimants.

MIS also provides technical assistance for State and Local staff using Louisiana Workforce Commission's (LWC's) integrated case-management system, Helping Individuals Reach Employment (HiRE). This system is used to record and track all re-employment service-delivery activities. Staff training is provided quarterly via localized Statewide training, web-based courses and conferences and meetings.

Subject-matter experts in workforce services and UI facilitate initial, recurring and specialized training as part of the Continuous Improvement Plan (CIP) and as necessary to ensure all service-delivery methods and program-specific goals are being met.

After the jobseeker/claimant files an initial UI claim and is determined monetarily eligible, he/she is profiled. Jobseekers/claimants that meet specific variables for RESEA as set in the State's statistical model and receive a factor score of greater than 2.4 are placed in the RESEA selection pool. Once he/ she has claimed their 2nd week within their claim series, they are selected to participate in the RESEA program and participation becomes mandatory.

All UI for Ex-servicemembers (UCX) jobseekers/claimants who are determined monetarily eligible will be required to participate in the RESEA program. Their factor score will not be used to determine participation, but rather determine job readiness.

Description of a RESEA

Group and/or Individual RESEA Orientation: Provides general information concerning Unemployment Insurance (UI) benefit eligibility, available re-employment services, guidance on the use of self-assisted services, provision of Labor Market Information (LMI) and other services available through Helping Individuals Reach Employment (HiRE) and workforce partners.

Eligibility Review: Provides immediate feedback on UI eligibility of each jobseeker/claimant by reviewing work-search activities, ensuring job-seeker/claimant is actively seeking employment and is able and available for work. Any issues discovered, such as able and available, are immediately referred to the adjudication unit to be investigated and eligibility determination assigned.

Labor Market Information: Provides information on labor market and career information that addresses the jobseeker/claimant's specific employment needs.

Employment Strategy Plan: Face-to-face interviews conducted by Workforce Development Specialist (WFDS) staff to assist in the development and review of the jobseeker/claimant's plan. Once a job-seeker/claimant registers in HiRE, a general plan is automatically created in HiRE, with populated information such as the last occupation, information on job-search activities and online courses taken in HiRE. Staff discusses strategies to create job alerts and suggests trainings and other re-employment services. Staff assists the job-seeker/claimant to build their Plan and explore career and educational goals.

Individual Employment Plan (IEP): Face-to-face interaction conducted by WFDS staff to assist in evaluating the needs of the jobseeker/claimant including a structured assessment identifying barriers to employment and establishment of employment and/or educational goals with attainable objectives and outcomes. Plans are developed, updated, and tracked using the State's web-based case management system HiRE.

Referral to Re-employment Services and Appropriate Training: Through identified barriers, employment challenges, and career goals during the face-to-face interview session, referrals to reemployment services which include, but are not limited to, workshops and/or appropriate training will be provided to each jobseeker/claimant in order to meet the expected objective of the plan and documented in HiRE. The plan will be amended as needed through career counseling.

Re-employment Services: Job-seekers/claimants will be provided an array of re-employment services that include, but are not limited to, workshops (resume writing, interviewing techniques, and job readiness), and job clubs that support peer-to-peer networking, computer literacy, and financial literacy.

Once the jobseeker/claimant has filed their second week of a monetarily eligible claim within their claim series and has met profiling criteria, he/she is selected for participation in RESEA and notified via a letter generated through an automated process. Letters provide notice of their RESEA appointment with a WFDS and the requirements and date the service must be completed in order to maintain UI eligibility. Jobseekers/claimants have two weeks (14 days) to comply with the service requirement from the date on their notification letter.

Initial notification letters mailed to selected jobseekers/claimants scheduling their RESEA appointment, failure to keep this appointment may result in a denial of UI benefits.

Jobseekers/claimants who fail to report for their scheduled RESEA with no contact with the WFDS or UI Claim Center are considered a Failure to Report and are in jeopardy of losing benefits for one (1) week. Subsequent RESEA non-compliance determinations will result in an indefinite disqualification until the jobseeker/claimant complies. A non-monetary determination is issued to the job-seeker/claimant explaining the reason for their disqualification resulting in a stoppage of benefits. Notification is mailed to the jobseeker/claimant and a copy is sent to their personal message center in the HiRE system. The UI Claim Center number is provided for assistance on all correspondence.

The Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC) has taken an aggressive approach in developing more comprehensive integrated systems throughout the agency. True integration and collaborative processes have been established through building stronger links among Office of Workforce Development (OWD), UI, and IT working together to provide a full array of services to our customer base. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is currently in place with all partners.

Any person filing a UI claim in Louisiana is automatically registered in HiRE, subsequent to the completion of any UI claim and prior to determination of monetary eligibility all claimants are enrolled in Wagner-Peyser (WP) services and are then profiled and placed on a standardized service delivery track as delineated in the State's Integrated Service Delivery policy.

Region 7 has Regional Industry Coordinators and Business Consultants to promote entrepreneurial skills training and microenterprise services. Their primary roles are to engage business and industry to identify short and long-term workforce needs, and assist the Region's LWDBs and AJCs, with developing goals, objectives, and strategies to address these needs.

Region 7 has identified the top industries within the Region Healthcare, Manufacturing, Transportation, and IT industries that have the need to fill vacancies in high-demand occupations. Star Jobs (3-5 stars) are the targets. These industries are identified through the use of Labor Market information (LMI) and engagement with Regional EDOs.

Business Metrics have been created to provide a mechanism in which to measure the effectiveness of services provided to businesses in the Region. These Metrics include overall market penetration and repeat business customers.

To implement initiatives such as incumbent worker training programs, on-the-job training programs, customized training programs, industry and sector strategies, career pathways initiatives, utilization of effective business intermediaries, and other business services and strategies designed to meet the needs of regional employers.

Incumbent Worker Training Program

The Incumbent Worker Training Program (IWTP) is a partnership between the Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC), business and industry, and training providers.

It is designed to benefit business and industry by assisting in the skill development of existing employees and thereby increasing employee productivity and the growth of the company.

These improvements are expected to result in the creation of new jobs, the retention of jobs that otherwise may have been eliminated, and an increase in wages for trained workers. The program is funded by a charge assessed on employers that is paid along with Unemployment Insurance (UI) tax contributions.

On-the-Job Training/Customized Training

Region 7's Local Workforce Development Areas (LWDAs) utilize On-the-Job Training (OJT) program in conjunction with the Louisiana Workforce Commission's (LWC's) Business Service Representative, and Industry Sector Coordinators as a coordination of service delivery to Local businesses. LWDA 70's and LWDA 71's Business Services Representative work to assist businesses with demand-driven workforce needs, including On-the-Job-Training (OJT) contracts.

The Region 7 LWDAs also offer Customized Training tailored to specific industry requirements. The Business Service Representatives (BSR) are in contact with Local businesses and are very familiar with the services offered through Region 7s LWDAs. The BSR's are an excellent source of referral for Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) clients for the OJT or Customized Training components.

In 2017-2018 a cross-regional collaboration formed under the name – North Louisiana Ready 2 Work – in an effort to increase the number of WorkKeys certificates earned by residents of our region. The global Pandemic slowed the momentum of the groups efforts to recruit and certify businesses to functionally utilize the WorkKeys assessments in hiring and retention efforts. Over the past several years, school boards have been testing students through the ACT WorkKeys as a means to further their career chances; however, the majority of employers in the region were unaware of the value this test could have. The Regional Boards believe there is potential for the WorkKeys assessments to play a valuable role in the development of OJT and Customized Training plans.

The BSR's works with each employer to develop a suitable assessment to determine the skills-gap analysis for each WIOA participants in OJT. These assessments are driven by the employer to test the knowledge and skill level: to determine the plan of action to train to the gap, and to set the length of training time.

OJT assists an employee that does not possess the skills needed for a job with a chance to learn a new job while earning an income. It also allows an employer a chance to train an employee with less expense to the employer. The employer can be in the public, private non-profit, or private sector. The employer can be reimbursed up to 50 percent of the wage rate of the individual for the extraordinary cost of providing the training and increased supervision related to the training.

OJT is limited in duration, based upon the target occupation for which the participant is being trained, the participant's prior work experience, and the service strategy. After trainees have been certified as eligible for the OJT program and hired by the employer, reimbursement begins, and continues until the allotted training time expires.

The following represents companies in Region 7 that benefited from OJT contracts.

Caddo Parish

Camus
Electric Feazel
Electric Module X Solutions

Bossier Parish

Bossier Family Medicine
Zaxbys Restaurants

Desoto Parish

DeSoto Healthcare
International Paper

Lincoln Parish

Green Clinic Management

Red River Parish

RR Police Jury

Sabine Parish

Boise Cascade Company

Webster Parish

Hicks Manufacturing

Customized Training is designed to meet the special occupational requirements of an employer or group of employers; is conducted with a commitment by the employer to employ or retain an individual on successful completion of the training.

Participants acquire additional skills with new technology, workplace literacy or new procedure. In addition, it allows individual(s) to gain employment opportunities or job advancements and maintain unsubsidized employment.

Sector Strategies and Career Pathways

To create sector strategies, the Region's Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) and Chief Elected Officials (CEOs) will collaborate in a Regional planning process, establish a Regional service strategy, and develop sector initiatives for in-demand sectors or occupations in the Region. Along with a sector strategy, the LWDBs in the Region, with representatives from secondary and post-secondary education programs, shall lead efforts in the Regional/Local area to develop Career Pathways by aligning employment, training, education, and supportive services.

Engaging industry will lead to the development of Career Pathways, growing the pipeline of qualified job candidates to fill existing skill gaps in targeted industries. Two existing within the education system are Jump Start and WorkReady U (WRU).

The implementation of a Regional sector strategy does not follow a cookie-cutter approach, but does reflect the common principles outlined above.

The Region will create and implement the best overall approach for its Local economy. To date, Region 7 has accomplished a number of initiatives in the implementation of the Jump Start Program.

Successful Regional Sector Strategies will share the following common principles:

- ▶ Serve the dual purpose of aligning education, training, and support services to the needs of employers in an industry sector, while ensuring that those services are accessible to a range of workers.
- ▶ Require a strong intermediary organization that sustains energy, coordinates dialogue and brokers relationships among service providers and employers in carrying out the partnership's agenda.
- ▶ Be employer-driven, wherein employers recognize their self-interest in and need for the partnership.
- ▶ Promote systemic change benefiting workers of all wage and skill levels, the industry and the community at large.
- ▶ Include the workforce system as a central player in any number of roles, such as the neutral intermediary body, the manager of operations and funding, and/or the source of Labor Market Information (LMI).

Jump Start is Louisiana's innovative career and technical education (CTE) program. Jump Start prepares students to lead productive adult lives, capable of continuing their education after high school while earning certifications in high-wage, high-skill, in-demand career sectors.

Students are required to attain industry-promulgated, industry-valued credentials in order to graduate with a Career Diploma.

Schools receive the same accountability grade credit for preparing students for careers in high-demand job sectors as they do for students who achieve top academic honors. The Regional Industry Coordinator with the Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC) has been an integral part of this Northwest Louisiana Jump Start Team.

Local Workforce Development Board Directors dutifully attended many meetings to supply needed input and support at the early Jump Start meetings, and now with the expanded Perkins Region 7 Leadership Team. Each area of the State could implement parts of the Jump Start Model as soon as it was possible, but the full implementation occurred in the Fall of 2017. Spring 2020, the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) approved 11 Jump Start 2.0 pathways, along with a waiver process for facilitating changes late in students' progressions. As a condition of approving the pathways, the board commissioned a panel that includes CTE directors to bring back to BESE further adjustments to Jump Start 2.0, including further universal courses.

We are fortunate that we have note one, but two schools dedicated to the goals of the Jump Start Initiative: Caddo Career and Technology Center and the Bossier Parish School for Technology and Innovative Learning. The Caddo Career and Technology Center has received national awards in the past, and the Bossier Parish School for Technology and Innovative Learning has the newest and latest in many training areas, for example, they have a machine in their Automotive Repair Shop that only three high schools in the nation have. These two facilitates will enable this area to move forward quickly in the Jump Start Initiative, and students, parents, and business have benefited because of it.

Jump Start 2.0 Northwest Louisiana offers promise of a better future for many student's man businesses.

WorkReady U, (WRU) supports the mission of educating Region 7's Adult population and moving them beyond a high school equivalency diploma through credit-earning coursework for postsecondary certificates, degrees and family-supporting jobs. Louisiana colleges and WRU providers have implemented Career Pathways in the following industries:

- ▶ Health Sciences
- ▶ Information Technology
- ▶ Skilled Crafts
- ▶ Manufacturing
- ▶ Business Office Technology
- ▶ Transportation
- ▶ Industrial Technology

Region 7 Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC) representatives work with many entities in order to facilitate solutions to employer's needs and issues. One example is our involvement with the Jump Start Initiative. Both Local Workforce Development Board (LWDB) Directors, both Program Manager/Local Area Coordinators (LACs), and the Regional Industry Coordinator have been involved in this initiative since its inception a couple of years ago. Jump Start has proposed a four-year implementation timetable. The goal was to work with and through Regional Teams so that Local experts (from the business community, economic development officials, school representatives, workforce development officials, etc.) could collaborate and create the graduation pathways, courses, internship and work-based experiences necessary to help Louisiana students attain high-value industry credentials. Due to the dedicated work of many involved, Jump Start is now over one year ahead of its implementation timetable.

Another example is our involvement with the STEP Forward Initiative. Step Forward an initiative of the Community Foundation of North Louisiana (CFNLA) convenes community leaders and uses data to illuminate obstacles faced by children of color and those living in poverty. Through a shared community vision, Step Forward and its partners use evidence-based decision making and collaborative action to make positive changes for North Louisiana children. CFNLA seeks success for every child in North Louisiana with the goal of all children obtaining a sustainable, living-wage job by age 25.

Step Forward collaborates with the Business Community, Non-Profit Organizations, Workforce Development Officials, Education Representatives, Economic Development Officials and Chamber of Commerce Leaders.

Medical Assistant (MA) Training Program A CAREER PATH IN HEALTHCARE The “MA NOW” Training Program is a tuition free program for eligible candidates. If accepted into the program, you will be on a solid career track into healthcare.

Ochsner Health System, Southern University of Shreveport, LWDA 70 and LWDA 71 have partnered to offer this program. The MA program covers a four-month period in which students receive classroom and clinical instruction. Students will receive hands on training through rotations in a wide range of departments. Additionally, the program also includes training for students to be certified in CPR, HIPPA and OSHA.

Medical Assistants provide direct patient care under the supervision of a licensed healthcare provider. Duties include scheduling and receiving patients, preparing and maintaining medical records, serving as a liaison between physicians and other healthcare professionals, taking patient histories and vital signs, collecting and processing specimens, assisting the licensed healthcare provider with examinations and treatments. Medical assistants are trained to operate various equipment, screen patients, recognize and respond to emergencies.

After successfully completing the program and hiring requirements, participants will be placed into a Medical Assistant position at one of Ochsner’s area neighborhood health centers.

Apprenti - To address the tech workforce challenge in northwest Louisiana, Region 7 looks to partnered with Apprenti to bring a nationally recognized, USDOL approved, registered IT apprenticeship program to the region.

At a national level, as of 2019, Apprenti has close to 800 apprentices that are either currently in, or have completed, programs in 13 states with expansions forthcoming. Specifically focused on diversifying the current talent pool in tech, apprentices with Apprenti have a wide variety of backgrounds and levels of education. Currently, 57 percent of apprentices are people of color, 23 percent are women, and 61 percent are veterans, which are all above the national average. In addition, 56 percent of the candidates of a four-year degree. Coupled with an 80 percent retention rate, Apprenti is proving to be a viable talent solution for industries struggling to meet demand.

D. Describe regional strategies that will increase apprenticeship and other work-based learning opportunities.

Through a collaborative effort and coordination of services with Louisiana Workforce Commission an emphasis on apprenticeship programs and Work-Based Learning programs. Region 7 is hopeful to have more programs available and to ensure the following:

- ▶ Recruit more employers as sponsors of work-based learning opportunities,
- ▶ Expand access to Registered Apprenticeship programs and assist employers in creating new programs,
- ▶ Connect Career/Technical Education (CTE) students to apprenticeship programs with higher education partners and employers,
- ▶ Promote to employers the wide range of work-based learning options that are available for

them to address skill gaps – apprenticeship, on-the-job training (OJT), and part-time jobs for students,

- ▶ Promote the message of work-based learning as affordable approach for acquiring higher education without debt, and
- ▶ Ensure that the state’s Eligible Training Provider List includes access to apprenticeship and other work-based learning options.

E. Describe initiatives to shorten the time from credential to employment and address how the area will work with the education system to begin putting training opportunities in place to meet this strategy.

LCTCS started an initiative that they are kicking off called “Reboot Your Career”. It is a short-term training opportunity at the community and technical colleges across the state for those affected by the pandemic. They will be using funding from the CARES Act to support the tuition. The Governor and Legislature approved \$10 million of Cares Act funding to skill and upskill 5,000 individuals across the state. Each of the 14 participating colleges (all 12 LCTCS campuses plus SUSLA and LSU-E) will be able to seek reimbursement for credentials individuals earn through their workforce prep programs.

Each college determines the “deal” they can offer to students. The certifications will focus on those skill sets most in need in their respective regions, such as industrial technology, health care, transportation and logistics, manufacturing and information technology. Opportunities to incentivize enrollment may include rebates upon earning the credential, sponsored exam fees, reduced/low/free tuition depending on the program and college, etc. Course delivery may be in person, online, or hybrid.

F. Describe the steps that will be taken to support the state’s efforts to align and integrate education, workforce and economic development.

Region 7 will work with education, workforce and economic development in establishing and managing partnerships to achieve and promote economic growth and economic advancement, especially in rural parishes and disadvantaged communities. Future strategy development will be employer-driven and will promote systemic change that benefits workers of all wage and skill levels, the industry, and the community at large. The impact of technological, demographic and socioeconomic changes will impact the employment landscape and skills requirements. Also, the current National crisis will result in uncertain future labor demands. The region will identify sectors using economic, industry, and labor market data collection and analysis. The use of traditional and real-time LMI and workforce planning information will identify specific skill needs, level of demand, and area education and training program gaps within target industries.

Over the long term, labor demand decisions by employers will be critical to the workforce system and its ability to meet local and regional skill needs. Future sector strategies must be defined by regional business and industry in order for workforce development agencies to provide employment and training programs that will improve employment opportunities for job seekers and the competitiveness of industries.

Region 7 will continue to improve and expanded regional sector partnerships, which will increase the focus on critical in-demand occupations in key sectors.

Collaboration across partners and Region 7 will continue to focus strategies around Regional partners engaging with small employers and employers in in-demand industry sectors and occupations. Work with community colleges will continue to focus around industry sector talent development especially where industry-recognized credential attainment is necessary.

Region 7 will continue to analyze and incorporate LMI, and partnerships to further develop strategy development for future sectors. This strategy development includes, but is not limited to:

- ▶ Expanding Career Pathways focused on the primary targeted industry sectors. Pathway creation for the secondary targeted industry sector will also be explored. These pathways will contain multiple entry and exit points to connect individuals of varying abilities with realistic and meaningful opportunities.
- ▶ Expanding Apprenticeships, and Pre-Apprenticeships, and & Earn and Learn Work-based learning opportunities by leveraging the relationships between economic development partners and employers in the targeted industry sectors. Integrated business services will be developed so that employers can access training resources from all relevant partners.

Region 7 will continue to expand workforce opportunities for populations facing multiple barriers to career advancement through improved career services, career pathway programs and expansion of bridge programs.

Region will continue to expand information for employers and job seekers to access services to support the alignment and integration of economic development, workforce development and education initiatives for supporting sector partnerships and career pathways.

This chapter provides an overview of all the operating systems and policies within the Local Workforce Development Areas (LWDAs). LWDAs must incorporate key documents into the plan that describe the one-stop delivery system and the services provided by the workforce partners.

A. Coordination of Planning Requirements

Coordination of Planning Requirements: The plan will incorporate the Memorandum of Understanding and Service Integration Action Plan and include the following statements in this chapter:

Local Workforce Development Area 70 and Local Workforce Development Area 71 **Memorandum of Understanding** provides a description of the one-stop delivery system, and other information that is essential to the establishment and operation of effective local workforce development systems as required by the WIOA Rule (20 CFR Part 678.705). The Memorandum of Understanding and any subsequent modifications is incorporated by reference into this plan.

LWDA 70 and LWDA 71 each has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the organizations managing each federal program at the local level. Access to each partner program is available at Region 7s American Job Center locations either directly or indirectly through referrals.

Each LWBDs MOU provides a description of the one-stop delivery system, and other information that is essential to the establishment and operation of effective local workforce development systems as required by the WIOA Rule (20 CFR Part 678.705). Each MOU outlines the roles and responsibilities of the One-Stop Center Partners, including the four Core Partners under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 for Title I (Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth programs), Adult Education and Literacy Act, Rehabilitation Act, Title I, and Wagner Peyser Act; in addition to the roles of the One-Stop Operator. It is understood by all partners to the MOU that the development and implementation of a successful One-Stop System will require time, planning, mutual trust and cooperation of all partners acting as a team, in good faith. The MOU partners continue to implement and improve various aspects of the shared vision to ensure collaboration among education, workforce, economic development and required partners as program participants have access to services and programs to successfully move along a chosen career pathway, leading to high paying jobs in growing sectors of the economy that offer long-term opportunities for stable employment. The Memorandum of Understanding and any subsequent modifications is incorporated by reference into this plan.

Staff of LWDA 70 and LWDA 71 work with MOU partners to expand access to employment, training, education, and supportive services for eligible individuals, with a particular emphasis on those with barriers to employment. Through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with its AJC partners, the local workforce development system works in coordination with all required WIOA partners and other local key partners.

Through the MOU, Region 7 partners are also committed to cross-training of staff, as appropriate, and to providing other professional learning opportunities that promote continuous improvement that outlines the roles and contributions of partners in the one-stop system, as well as how services will be coordinated among the programs.

Both LWDBs meet with AJC partners on a quarterly basis where each partner has a chance to discuss the previous quarterly's experience, suggest logistical changes to improve services, and promote any organizational updates. This allows partners to share information and cross promote essential services. LWDA 70's One Stop Operator manages a shared social media facebook webpage where events and news are distributed for Partners to be informed.

AJC Partners are invited to and often participate in Region 7 Business Service Meetings to become familiar with the services available. These meeting are led by LWC staff. The group discusses business engagement efforts in the Region, shares best practices, and provides updates on outreach efforts to local businesses. AJC Partners are allocated time, typically 5-15 minutes to promote their individual organization and services. The ultimate goal is to have co-enrollment, or at minimum allow our prospective clients to understand each partner’s services so that they may utilize those services in the future.

LWDB’s One-Stop Operators will continue to play an integral role in coordination and collaboration through a series of regular partner meetings. These meetings will include the Career Service providers as the required WIOA partners and other important system stakeholders, sharing a common vision and mission for the system. These meetings will provide an opportunity for partners providing direct services to develop a referral system

Per the terms of the WIOA MOUs, the Bossier Parish Comprehensive American Job Center (LWDA 70) located at 4000 Viking Driver, Suite B1, Bossier City, LA 71111 and Caddo Parish Comprehensive American Job Center (LWDA 71) located at 2121 Fairfield Ave #100, Shreveport, LA 71104 has a designated office area for all the partners. These facilities are in compliance with all applicable provisions of the ADA including wheelchair access, services for the hearing impaired, accessible water fountains, and signage for Nondiscrimination and Equal Opportunity Procedures prominently displayed. As part of each LWDB’s annual monitoring process, a site visit is conducted in person to ensure that these provisions are being met.

A narrative that follows describes coordination with the WIOA core and other required program partners as prescribed by the WIOA.

PARTNER NAME	PROGRAM	PROGRAM AUTHORITY
Bossier Parish Community College (BPCC) Northwest Louisiana Technical Community College (NLTCC)	Adult Education and Literacy	Adult Education and literacy (WIOA 121(b)(1)(B)(iii) - Title II
Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC)	Community Services Block Grant	Community Services Block Grant Employment & Training Programs (42 USC 9901 et seq.)
Bossier Parish Community College (BPCC) Northwest Louisiana Technical Community College (NLTCC)	Post-Secondary Vocational Education	Carl D. Perkins Career & Technical Education Improvement Act 2006 (20 USC 2301)
Louisiana Rehabilitation Services Or Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC)	Vocational Rehabilitation	Rehabilitation Act, Title I, Parts A & B - Rehabilitation Services Commission (29 USC 720)
Department of Children and Family Services	TANF/SNAP/STEP	Social Security Act - Parts A, Title IV (TANF) (42 U.S.C. 601 et seq.), subject to subparagraph (C)

PARTNER NAME	PROGRAM	PROGRAM AUTHORITY
A.N.P.P.M Project Ayuda Or Association National Pro Personas Mayores/National Association for Hispanic Elderly (AYDUA)	Senior Community Service Employment Program	Older Americans Act Title V – Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) (42 USC 3056)
Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC)	Trade Adjustment Act	Trade Act Title II, Chapter 2 – Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) (19 USC 2271)
Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC)	Unemployment Insurance	Unemployment Insurance (UI) – (5 USC 85) (ORC Chapter 4141)
Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC)	Wagner-Peyser	WIOA Title III – Wagner-Peyser Act Programs (29 USC 49)
Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC)	Jobs for Veteran’s Programs	Veteran’s Workforce Programs – Chapter 41 of title 38, US Code; WIOA 121(b)(1)(B) (viii)
Motivation Education & Training, Inc. (MET)	National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP)/Migrant & Seasonal Farmworkers	WIOA Title I – Migrant and Seasonal Farm Worker Programs (29 USC 2912, 29 USC 2919)
The Coordinating & Development Corporation (LWDA 70) The City of Shreveport (LWDA 71)	WIOA Title I – Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth Programs	WIOA Title I – Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth Programs
Shreveport Job Corps Center (Human Learning System)	Job Corps	WIOA Title I – Job Corps (29 USC 2881-2900, 29 USC 2901)
Housing Authority of the City of Shreveport (HACS) (LWDA 71)	YouthBuild	
Institute for Indian Development	Native American Program	WIOA Title I – Native American Programs (29 USC 2911, 29 USC 2919)

ADDITIONAL PARTNERS INCLUDE	
Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC)	Rapid Response Services
Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC)	Incumbent Worker Training Program (IWTP)
Goodwill Industries, Inc. (LWDA 71)	ReEntry
Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC)	Labor Programs
Division of Administration	Office of Technology Services

The following information summarizes the ways in which Region 7 and the local workforce system collaborate with organizations managing the federally mandated One-Stop partner programs.

WIOA Title I – Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth Programs: The three (3) formula funded programs are administered by LWDB 70 and LWDB 71. LWDB 70 services are delivered at one comprehensive and seven (7) affiliate America’s Job Centers, and LWDB 71 services are delivered at one comprehensive America’s Job Centers.

WIOA Title II – Adult Education and Literacy: Provide WIOA Title II adult education and literacy services in the local areas. Referrals are regularly made between the Title I and Title II programs and many participants are co-enrolled.

WIOA Title III – Wagner-Peyser: Wagner-Peyser staff are co-located in the LWDA 70 and LWDA 71 AJC Centers in Region 7. In addition, LWDA and AJC staff work with LWC to coordinate marketing and outreach to Unemployment Insurance claimants, ensuring full access to all available WIOA services. LWC and LWDA staff also collaborate on Rapid Response orientations for laid off workers.

WIOA Title IV – Vocational Rehabilitation: WIOA Title IV staff is co-located at the American Job Center. LRS staff is available to provide technical assistance and training to AJC and partner staff in the areas of disability awareness and the use of competitive integrated employment.

Carl Perkins Career Technical Education: The Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 (Perkins IV) is a principal source of federal funding to states and discretionary grantees for the improvement of secondary and postsecondary career and technical education programs across the nation. The purpose of the Act is to develop more fully the academic, career, and technical skills of secondary and postsecondary students who elect to enroll in career and technical education programs.

The community colleges, which as the primary recipients of Perkins funding in Region 7, regularly make referrals to and receive referrals from staff of the AJCs.

Title V Older Americans Act: Senior Community Services Employment Programs (SCSEP) that serve Region 7 Residents. The program enrolls eligible seniors who are 55+, low income, and have barriers to employment; and provides part-time, temporary on the job training through community service assignments at local nonprofits and government agencies to enrolled participants.

Job Corps: Program representatives conduct eligibility determination for Job Corps services. Their principal activity at the AJC is to promote the Job Corps program to potential applicants who are youth and young adults ages 18 to 24.

Native American Programs: LWC and WIOA program staff collaborates with AJC staff to provide referrals and co-enrollment opportunities to provide Indian and Native American job seekers access to all WIOA and partner services in available through Regions 7’s local network of AJCs.

Migrant Seasonal Farmworker Program: LWC and WIOA program staff works with MSFW staff to provide referrals and co-enrollment opportunities to ensure MSFW programs services are available for eligible agricultural participants.

Veterans Services: LWC administers this program and designated Disabled Veterans’ Outreach Program (DVOP) and Local Veterans’ Employment Representatives (LVER) Specialists are stationed at the comprehensive center to assist veterans seeking employment.

Trade Adjustment Assistance Act: Trade Adjustment Assistance Act (TAA) is a federal program that provides aid to workers who lose their jobs or whose hours of work and wages are reduced as a result of increased imports. The TAA program offers a variety of benefits and reemployment services to help unemployed workers prepare for and obtain suitable employment. Workers may be eligible for training, job search and other reemployment services. Coordination with TAA generally includes co-enrollment into WIOA, which provides multiple benefits, including TAA funds being used to cover all training costs.

Community Services Block Grant: Supports AJC staff in accepting referrals, depending on identified needs and eligibility requirements. CSBG staff may also make referrals to any AJC location in the region for employment and training services.

Unemployment Compensation: The Unemployment Insurance program is generally represented in the AJCs by LWC's Wagner-Peyser staff. AJC staff work with LWC staff to coordinate marketing and outreach to UI claimants, ensuring full access to all available WIOA services.

Department of Child and Family Service: Supports AJC staff in accepting referrals, depending on identified needs and eligibility requirements. DCFS staff may also make referrals to any AJC location in the region for employment and training services.

The parties in the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) agree that all required Partners and co-located additional Partners have a joint responsibility to support and maintain an effective local integrated service delivery system. In addition, all parties to the LWDA's MOU recognize that shared and infrastructure costs are applicable to all the required Partners. The MOU outlines the local vision for program alignment, Partner roles and responsibilities, and accountability for a coordinated service delivery system.

Costs of Services (WIOA Regulations 678.700, USDOL December 27, 2016: Infrastructure Funding Guidance): WDBs and Workforce Development Partners "Infrastructure Funding Agreements" (IFA) contains the effective time period, infrastructure and shared services budget, identifies all one-stop partners/CEOs/local Boards participating, and describes the periodic review and reconciliation process to ensure equitable benefit among partners. The infrastructure funding agreement (IFA) may have a different effective time period from the duration of the MOU.

The IFA and budget establish a plan to fund the services and operating costs of the center and Parties to each LWDA MOU agree that joint funding is an essential foundation for an integrated service delivery system and necessary to maintain the One-stop network. Cost allocation among Parties shall meet WIOA regulations, Federal Uniform Guidance, including the partner program's authorizing law and implementing regulations, and state rules, policies, and guidelines.

The shared LWDBs operating costs, the projected cost amounts, and each party's method of funding its fair share of those costs is identified in their Budget Planning and Reconciliation Document. The methodologies that will be used to determine and allocate each party's fair share of operating costs are as follows:

- ▶ Resource sharing may include contributions of staff time in addition to equipment and other material resources needed for the operation of any AJC location in the region.

Shared resources and services provided at the American Job Centers will be defined in each of the LWDA's Memorandums of Understanding Addendum Resource Sharing Agreement.

Development of the Local Workforce Development Areas (LWDAs) Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), with assistance from The Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC), will be fundamental to alignment of Region 7's partner programs, required and optional partners programs, and other resources. The MOU will:

1. Articulate the coordinate vision, goals, and objectives for the Region's workforce system and the combined Regional/Local Plan;
2. Establish agreement at the Regional level for service delivery systems, co-enrollment, and define framework of key strategies and other key functions of Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) core partners;
3. Provide guidance for partnerships at the Regional and LWDA level.

Integrating the services available from program partners was hampered during most of 2020 and the initial months of 2021 due largely to the coronavirus pandemic. Previously, quarterly MOU partner meetings were held to discuss effective customer referral procedures and for all partners to gain a better understanding of the range of services available to the residents of Region 7. MOU partners have adapted to COVID-19 with their approach to meeting the strategies identified by transitioning the services into hybrid or remote, so individuals still had the opportunities for services. Communication between partners continued electronically and the vision of integrated services continued on a remote basis. A number of very valuable service strategies were learned and will continue to be used in the coming years.

MOU partners increase collaboration, communication and shared resources during the regular mandatory partner meetings that are offered in person or virtual which strengthens the linkage between the American Job Centers and MOU partners. All core partners will continue to connect quarterly to collaborate and support one another's programs.

LWDA 70 and LWDA 71 Workforce Development Board meetings are another means for developing effective service integration among the required partners who attend such meetings. The Workforce Development Board chairmen and members fulfill a leadership role with LWDA 70 and 71 staff providing ongoing support and technical assistance. New program activities or projects are presented for discussion, which may result in collaborative efforts among program partners. Additionally, joint meetings, including the chairmen and members of both Workforce Development Boards in Region 7 may be held to facilitate an even more comprehensive regional approach to service integration. A past example has been LWDA 70 and LWDA 71 working together to provide on-the-job training (OJT) opportunities for recent graduates of Shreveport's Job Corps Center, meeting the hiring needs of a local employer. As a program partner, Louisiana Rehabilitation Services (LRS) has taken the lead in service integration by making available for its staff at Region 7's American Job Centers.

The AJCs will continue to convene cross training for all partners and will hold quarterly meetings onsite to engage all partners that are on-site and serve customers via direct linkage. The one stop operator will also focus on increasing the knowledge regarding career pathways. Through this process, team members will be better trained and able to share consistent information and partners will better see the value of integrated services. Partners will also be more knowledgeable about in-demand career options.

In developing the regional plan, all program partners are provided the opportunity to contribute ideas related to the coordination of services (i.e., service integration). In doing this, the objective is to promote a strategy that aligns program partner services with the development of Region 7's economy along with sustained efforts to contribute to the skill needs of the businesses and industries within the region. There is considerable commonality in the populations that program partners provide services to. Recognizing this, effective and efficient service integration between program partners in Region 7 is considered a priority.

The State's WIOA Lead Team has begun to develop the MOU framework and recognizes that the fidelity of the State leadership to the collaborative process will have significant impact on Regional and Local implementation.

LWC shall create and provide opportunities and leadership to encourage and facilitate Regional collaborative efforts by workforce system leaders LWDBs and WIOA required partner programs to align workforce policies and services with Regional economies and supportive service delivery strategies. LWC shall lead in the analysis of Regional labor markets, establishment of Regional service strategies, development and implementation of sector initiatives for in-demand industry sectors or occupations for the Region and coordination of services. These efforts are expected to enhance capacity and performance of the integrated workforce system.

LWC has developed policy, vision, certification criteria, and contracts to assist the Region's LWDBs in complying with WIOA's expectations. LWC requires development of a Regional/Local Plan by respective Local boards which must include performance targets.

It is the intent of LWC to provide guidance, and support to Local leadership, while allowing Local and Regional leadership, the flexibility to develop and implement innovative workforce strategies and solutions necessary to meet the needs of employers, job seekers, and the emerging workforce.

LWC shall monitor and support the Region's LWDBs efforts in the strategic integration of workforce programs, services and initiatives in order to operate in the most efficient and cost effective manner possible, while remaining flexible, adaptable, market-based, and customer-focused. LWC has adopted, and is committed to, a Continuous Improvement Process (CPI) approach in refining the structure and alignment of programs under WIOA with additional resources to support achievement of State vision and goals.

B. Provide information regarding the use of technology in the one-stop delivery system, including a description of:

In order to continue adapting operations over the next two years as we deal with the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have implemented lessons learned about remote delivery into our plan. Some elements of remote delivery will continue beyond the pandemic, as they have assisted individuals with transportation barriers in accessing services. The opportunity to have virtual appointments for those who have technology will continue, as well as the opportunity for electronic signatures and other tool that enhance the ability to connect to the system. These tools will be used in conjunction with digital skills training, access to tools and resources, and in person services so that the best method for the individual is chosen.

Region 7 remains committed to expanding its efforts to make sure its staff is educated and equipped in becoming agents of collaborative change within their communities. We have and continue to make significant changes to our service model, policies, procedures and staffing to become leaders within the State to model a strong in-demand Workforce System.

Region 7 continuously works to make the AJC delivery system as accessible as possible, including in remote areas. LWDA 70 and LWDA 71 prescreening applications and HiRE is available online, and customers without computers or smart phones can access computers at public libraries throughout the parish, local area schools for youth/students, and local non-profits with computers for their clients. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, LWDA 70 and LWDA 71 and partners worked throughout 2020 to ensure that customers could continue to access services remotely. Most trainings and orientations have been converted to a virtual format, including all of technical college's courses. For business customers, rapid response information and materials were provided electronically via the internet as well as video meetings.

Region 7 continuously looks continues to look for new ways implementing Integrated Education and Training models, such as pre-apprenticeships, postsecondary education opportunities and Youth activities which engage participants with their community and education aspirations.

Region 7 is committed to working with all sectors of the public to assist in their goals of self-sufficiency. Our case managers are encouraged to stay abreast with Workforce GPS to learn about successful trends in workforce development under WIOA. In the future, Region 7 will focus on segments, such as the mature workforce and the underemployed, to learn how to better serve these populations within our region. It is Region 7's goal to investigate into targeted marketing within its Business Service Team which comprises of its Business Service Representatives, Youth Program Specialists/ Coordinators, key management leaders within Workforce Development and employers to better reach and serve our community members.

Region 7 continues to partner with area colleges looking for career pathways to better serve our participants, such as the Carl Perkins collaboration and other inactivates listed in the plan. (Louisiana Career Pathways is listed right after this statement). Region 7 is improving its communication with partnering agencies and looking for ways to improve co-enrollment. Currently we are exploring new opportunities with LRS with a training provider to provide greater services to our participants.

LWDA 70 utilizes a coordinated navigation process embedded in their website - www.cdconline.org. Job seeker customers can gain entry to the Center in one of three ways- in person, by phone, or online. In all cases, whether staff-assisted or independently accessed, all customers complete the navigation questionnaire located on the website, and their responses are recorded on the backend of the platform. The Navigators on staff guide each customer to the proper referrals and identify the next steps for the customer to take based on their responses.

Louisiana Workforce Commission - www.laworks.net - mobile-friendly website serves as an entry-point to the one-stop delivery system for staff-assisted services, as well as offering numerous options for self-assisted service including:

- ▶ Access to job listings
- ▶ Career exploration and career pathway tools
- ▶ Profiles of local employer partners who are hiring
- ▶ Tips and resources on resume writing, interviewing, negotiating, and job retention
- ▶ Specialized information for veterans and individuals with disabilities
- ▶ Comprehensive business services information for employers
- ▶ Needs assessment tool for employers

Additionally, www.laworks.net HiRE operates several ways to connect the community with information and services.

This mobile workforce center allows community members to connect with services within their communities without having to travel to the American Job Centers. To increase services to job seekers and provide more accessibility and equity in delivery of employment and training services, Louisiana Workforce Commission has implemented the mobile and remote job center. This technology will allow for better connection with employers to provide access to a broader audience with virtual job fairs and hiring events as well as a much-needed way to provide skills training and job search workshops to additional communities and community groups.

Louisiana Workforce Commission offers a state-of-the-art Mobile Workforce Center equipped with broadband satellite, 4G LTE WiFi, 13 computer stations, and printing/scanning capabilities. The Mobile Workforce Center can travel across Louisiana to different job fairs and community centers for large-scale hiring, Career Day at schools and universities and other community events. The Mobile Workforce Center delivers workforce resources and services to individuals and businesses throughout the state. The Mobile Workforce Center serves employers who have a training or hiring need, jobseekers in rural areas who may have challenges accessing workforce services, and partners who could use additional resources.

Lastly, all Partners are required to have staff onsite at LWDA 70 and LWDA 71 AJCs to provide services, or, in the absence of onsite staff, a direct linkage wherein no decline in customer experience is noted. Partners providing direct linkage access to services, as described in the MOU, should experience comparable customer service and experience to having a staff member onsite. Direct linkages at LWDA 70 and LWDA 71 consist of direct phone lines manned by staff of the representative agency who are prepared to provide information and access to service immediately via phone.

C. Describe how the Local Board will support the strategies identified in the Combined State Plan and work with entities carrying out core programs.

Throughout the pandemic, Region 7 has worked to provide services in a person-centered care approach, ensuring that we are providing the tools and resources most in need for our customers and communities. While many services went digital, Region 7 quickly saw the need for digital literacy and access to tools, including Chromebooks, and other basic needs. Region 7 provided and continues to provide services in a way that works for the customer; at times, this is by phone, in person, through zoom, FaceTime, or another mechanism. Many times, it includes assisting with the technology and teaching technology as we provide services. As Region 7 continues serving, we will maintain this practice of providing services in the best way for the customer.

Region 7 Staff uses their Board Policies for determination of need for support services which are documented in HiRE in case notes to clearly reflects the need for the support service. The procedure includes the following:

- ▶ Financial need for support service
- ▶ Lack of community resource to meet the need
- ▶ Budget worksheet to reflect current financial situation
- ▶ Justification of service (ensuring support service is reasonable and consistent with board, state and federal regulations). Documentation of resource exploration and rationale for approval, disapproval, or termination of support services will be entered in HiRE case notes.

Region 7 continues to upscale their use of Integrated Education and Training models to help adults get their HiSET and work on other basic skills and English language acquisition while earning credential and industry-recognized credentials that lead to in-demand occupations.

Region 7's Local Workforce Development Areas (LWDAs) will ensure compliance with all Federal and State regulations, and upon request, each office offers Language Line Services who can assist with service delivery for job seekers of Limited English Proficiency (LEP).

The Region's LWDAs continue to ensure all materials and delivery methods are appropriate to diverse cultures, languages, and education. This program accommodation includes, as appropriate upon request, the provision of interpreters, through Language Line Services, and for those individuals that have hearing and visual impairment, referral to the appropriate partner agency. Region 7's Equal Opportunity (EO) Coordinators will provide technical assistance to the American Job Centers if necessary and monitor the system for compliance.

Dual Credit Program is an opportunity for qualified high school students to enroll in a college-level course and, upon successful course completion, earn both college and high school credit. The college courses are taught at the high school during the regular school day by high school teachers who are credentialed as adjunct faculty at select LCTCS. This coursework plays a pivotal role in the integrated programs of study with district high schools that aim to expand career pathways opportunities and to align course work to ensure smoother transitions between education and the workforce.

The Colleges will increase meaningful and intentional CTE dual credit offerings where appropriate to reduce college costs, speed time to completion, and further enhance high school to college transitions. Efforts and strategies will be implemented to ensure certificate and degree attainment for underserved populations.

Region 7 will encourage Adults and Dislocated Workers with an extensive career history to ask the training provider of their choice to take a Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) to determine if the amount of education can be reduced. The Region 7 will encourage its training providers to see this as a positive step toward recovery from the pandemic crises.

Career pathways are a hallmark of WIOA legislation. Career pathways offer a clear sequence, or pathway, of education coursework and/or training credentials aligned with employer validated work readiness standards and competencies. A number of career pathways are available to job seekers, with a recent focus on Manufacturing, IT and Healthcare occupations. Information on career pathways is readily available at the One-Stop Center as well as on Louisiana Works. Region 7 Staff are trained to understand the local high demand occupations and the career pathways that exist in those occupations. This knowledge allows the Region 7 Staff to educate job seekers on various pathways available and the educational opportunities available to get onto a career pathway. Co-enrollment in core programs across the system is encouraged.

The Local Boards are committed to exploring robust development of career pathways options for high school students in conjunction with the secondary education system in Region 7, private business, and area Chambers of Commerce or other business-oriented stakeholders. Over the term of this plan, it is expected that growth in the amount and awareness of available career pathway options in high schools will increase significantly.

Investigating how targeted marketing can identify segments of the labor force, such as mature workers and the underemployed, who may not require extensive education or training to qualify for jobs in high demand occupations.

Efforts at targeted marketing for segments of the labor forces such as mature workers and the underemployed are approached through the following activities and services:

Mature workers (those 55 years of age and over) constitute part of the baby boom generation which, during the 1970s, began their entry into the labor force. With many now starting to leave the labor force through retirement, the economy loses their experience, knowledge, and skills. However, there is a trend showing more mature workers delaying retirement and maintaining their labor force participation past the age of 65 due to a variety of reasons. Some, after retirement, decide to reenter the labor force and this is where marketing the services available through Region 7's American Job Centers and its program partner, the Senior Community Service Employment Program (Project Ayuda), makes an important contribution. A liaison representing this program partner will be available at two of Region 7's American Job Centers with plans to possibly extend this to two additional AJCs. Arrangements can be made for customers visiting Region 7's American Job Centers, who are 55 years of age and over, unemployed and seeking employment, to meet with a liaison from the Senior Community Service Employment Program to discuss services available, depending on their eligibility for such services. Mature workers visiting Region 7's American Job Centers, who are unemployed (or underemployed) will also have access to Wagner Peyser services, which includes job search assistance and referrals to WIOA program training services to upgrade their skills, if needed, to enhance their employability for reentering the labor force.

The Louisiana Workforce Commission's Rapid Response Coordinator for Region 7 provides another avenue for marketing American Job Center TAA and WIOA program services for mature workers. Workers 55 years of age and over impacted by a mass layoff or business/plant closure face a number of challenges – they are not ready to retire but need assistance in finding other employment opportunities that match their education, experience, and skills or consider the possibility of retraining for a new career in a high demand occupation. Their age can present a barrier in finding employment after losing a job they may have held for years. Information on AJC services (Wagner Peyser, TAA, WIOA) available to mature workers impacted by a layoff is provided by Region 7's Rapid Response Coordinator at rapid response meetings.

In deciding when WIOA training services are needed, LWDA 70 and LWDA 71 follow the policy principles contained in the U.S. Department of Labor's TEGL 19-16. If the customer is unemployed or underemployed, an assessment is completed by an AJC staff member to evaluate what the customer may be lacking in education or specific vocational skills that limits their ability to obtain employment providing for economic self-sufficiency which can be remedied through referrals to adult education or training services available through the WIOA program. In some cases, if the customer is employed but not employed in a job that makes use of their education and skills (underemployed), career services are offered, which may correspond with On-The-Job Training Services.

Regions 7 AJCs target mature workers by having information booths at job fairs as well as flyers at a variety of agencies within the region. Recruitment efforts for all services offered by core partners occur on a variety of platforms to ensure the services offered reach a variety of individuals, including the underemployed. Recruitment is done on a variety of social media platforms, including Facebook and LinkedIn.

Flyers of upcoming job fairs and events are located in the AJC's and on Region 7's facebook webpage, as are weekly and monthly events. These paper flyers are shared throughout the communities and via email with a variety of social service and non-profit agencies in the region that assist individuals who are looking to improve their job readiness skills and who are looking for employment.

Louisiana Career Pathways

Region 7 Higher Education community college schools are working to streamline the processes for community stakeholders who are transitioning from unemployment, high school graduation, and high dropout status. These community college institutions include Northwest Louisiana Technical Community College, Bossier Parish Community College, Louisiana Delta Community College, Central Louisiana Technical Community College, and Southern University Shreveport. In working together these colleges have developed extensive crosswalks that will map out a career to employment starting in Secondary Education through Employment. Based on feedback and labor market analysis the high demand high wage focus will include Health Sciences, Information Technology, and Manufacturing.

The crosswalks include Industry Based Credentials so that an individual will have knowledge of progress toward employment along their selected career path.

The above-mentioned institutions are striving to partner with Region 7 businesses to further develop internships and work-based learning opportunities. Region 7 Industry partners are working with the institutions work force divisions to develop short term Industry Based Credentials that will also help the community stakeholders who maybe underemployed transition into a high demand high wage job. Crosswalks have been developed as well for these individuals.

Through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) planning process, the State's education and workforce partners developed a vision and framework for Louisiana Career Pathways. The following describes their approach in creating a vision and framework for the implementation of a Career Pathway strategy that aligns within demand occupations.

Vision: Louisiana Career Pathways are designed to improve lives and the economy. Through integrated Career Pathways, all citizens of Louisiana will have the opportunity to access progressive levels of education and training leading to high-value, high-demand careers.

The Career Pathways approach meets learners where they are, by spanning high school, Adult Education, post-secondary education and beyond, leading to sustainable employment.

Louisiana Career Pathways connect education and training programs and support services that enable individuals to secure employment within a specific industry or occupational sector, and to advance, over time, to successively higher levels of education and employment in that sector. Each step on the Career Pathway is designed explicitly to prepare workers and students for the next level of employment and education.

Minimally, all Louisiana Career Pathways must:

- ▶ Be designed in partnership with business and industry as well as Regional economic development entities (in order to meet both current and future sector needs).
- ▶ Have multiple entry points, including for those with limited basic skills and those with prior educational and work experience.
- ▶ Incorporate multiple exit points (off-ramps, stop-out points) connected to the attainment of industry-recognized stackable credentials and/or academic credentials.
 - o First stop-out point must be aligned with a viable career opportunity.
 - o Exit points must be embedded in a longer pathway that ultimately leads to high-wage, high-demand careers.

- ▶ Pathways include opportunities, where appropriate, for acceleration, contextualization, work- based learning and co- or dual-enrollment.
- ▶ Include a logical progression/sequence of courses that are applicable to the target credential.
 - o Could define this as blocks of courses tied to defined entry/exit points.
 - o Course sequence provides a clear plan for what students take and when.
- ▶ Integrate student (participant) supports, including academic supports, non-academic/ general support, transitional support, up-front career exploration and ongoing career development, as well as job-placement assistance.
- ▶ Provide the opportunity to earn college credit.
 - o Can include noncredit programs leading to Industry-Based Credentials (IBC's) but need consistent State policy on how to award college credit for IBC's.
 - o Noncredit Pathways are aligned with credit Pathways so that students can continue into credit-bearing Pathways with transcript credit and without repeating course-work.

Through guidance from The Louisiana Workforce Investment Council (WIC), Region 7 recognizes the need for an education and training system that addresses the Region's economic and workforce challenges. The State's Planning Team will continue to provide leadership in developing Career Pathway initiatives with a focus on targeted populations with significant barriers to employment (e.g., individuals receiving public assistance, long-term unemployed, basic skills deficient Adults and Youth).

- ▶ Improving access to activities leading to a recognized post-secondary credential.

D. Provide information regarding the local coordination strategies with state (including the Combined State Plan), regional and local partners to enhance services and avoid duplication of activities.

Adult

Region 7 recognizes that for many low skilled and disadvantaged adults, improved economic opportunity depends on their ability to access education and training necessary to prepare them for college and career success. Evaluation of job training programs for Adults finds that postsecondary education, in particular a degree or industry-recognized credential related to in-demand jobs, is the primary determinant of lifetime earnings. Education and training provide opportunities for increasing a family's financial resources, helps parents stay employed, and establishes a solid foundation for the next generation.

Region 7 continues its pursuit toward a knowledge-based economy driven by the demand and opportunities of its industry partners. Employers in this sector increasingly require post-secondary credentials when hiring workers for good jobs that provide family-supporting wages and career advancement opportunities. Region 7 continues to see an increase in the number of jobs requiring post-secondary education of some kind. Over the past two years, the ecosystem of Region 7 has labored in creating new apprenticeship opportunities and is gaining ground. The local boards are involved in the creation, development, and continuous support of apprenticeships within the region.

Region 7 operates its Adult training program to identify workers who currently need, or will need, higher levels of education to fare better in the labor market to reduce incidences and shorten durations of unemployment, while supporting higher earnings and job stability. Participants who have successfully completed their training, and have secured self-sufficient employment through it, continue to provide enough promotion of the program that our centers end up with waiting lists well before the end of the fiscal year ends.

Region 7 will honor the Title 1, Priority of Service requirement, by leveraging all available funding streams and partnerships, regardless of State or Local funding availability in providing priority access to higher-intensity career services and training to:

- ▶ Public assistance recipients
- ▶ Other low-income individuals
- ▶ Individuals who are basic skills deficient
- ▶ Individuals with barriers to employment

Adult services are custom-tailored to meet an individual worker's specific needs.

Working one-on-one with a case manager, workers are guided through the process of developing an Individualized Employment Plan (IEP) that includes as a minimum:

- ▶ Career planning and counseling
- ▶ Job search and placement
- ▶ Approved training, such as On-the-Job-Training (OJT)
- ▶ Other needed support services

LWC requires Region 7's local boards to:

- ▶ Report the number of individuals with barriers to employment that are served by each core program, with specific break downs by subpopulation.
- ▶ Report on the number of individuals with barriers to employment that are served by the Adult and Dislocated Worker program, with specific breakdowns by subpopulation, race, ethnicity, gender, and age.

Dislocated Worker

Layoffs are always challenging for workers and employers. The Region 7 Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) work with other partners (training and supportive service providers) to assist both.

The State provides direct services to employers facing a plant shutdown or large-scale lay-off and are designed to help them proceed in an orderly and legal way by guiding them through the process and providing on-site services for their workers by means of a Rapid Response Team. The local boards continue to work with Rapid Response to develop innovative ways to provide meaningful services and outreach to companies and their employees.

Region 7 offers services to workers who have been laid off (or notified that a layoff is coming) through no fault of their own, at no cost. These services focus on preparing workers to find a suitable new job, credential attainment, apprenticeships, and On-the-Job-Training (OJT) opportunities. The primary design and goal of these services are to get workers back to work as quickly as possible by helping them overcome such difficult barriers to employment as:

- ▶ Transferring specialized skills to other occupations or industries.
- ▶ A decline in the market demand for certain skills.
- ▶ Age or length of work experience.
- ▶ Need for formal training or education.
- ▶ Lack of jobs with earnings at a level comparable to their previous positions.

Like the rest of the Nation, Region 7 is experiencing a high disruption in the labor market due to COVID-19, and the dislocation of thousands of workers. The local boards are aggressively pursuing all possible avenues to assist our partners and industries to better serve the Dislocated Worker population.

Like the Adult program, Dislocated Worker services are custom-tailored to meet an individual worker's specific needs. Working one-on-one with a case manager, workers are guided through the process of developing an Individualized Employment Plan (IEP) that includes as a minimum:

- ▶ Career planning and counseling.
- ▶ Job search and placement.
- ▶ Approved training.
- ▶ Other needed support services.

Youth

Because there is no single specific system designed to meet the specific development needs of In and Out-of-School Youth (14 to 24), Region 7 with its core partners, and partner programs are committed to better targeting their programming for this population. This Youth population could be served as part of the Adult workforce system; however, doing so would inevitably result in some developmental needs going unmet. Local boards support the implementation of Career Pathways that support post-secondary education and address the needs of low-income youth and support pre-apprenticeship to Registered Apprenticeship opportunities. Local boards will offer and provide all fourteen of the youth program services elements. The Region 7 Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) through aggressive outreach will work to identify at risk Youth by developing specific interventions within their Youth Programs.

Region 7 Youth Programs for both In-School and Out-of-School youth will continue to provide and improve upon providing high quality services, beginning with career exploration and guidance, continued support for educational attainment, opportunities for skills training leading to a career-pathway placement opportunities and/or enrollment in post-secondary education. The following fourteen program elements will be integrated within the Individual Service Strategy of each youth participant.

Program Element		Service Provided
1	Tutoring / Study Skills Training	This element is provided by LWDA youth staff by using the either the Workkeys Curriculum and/or the Conover curriculum that meets and supports this element through helping individuals build the essential career-relevant skills needed for learning, personal development and effective job performance. Referrals to local schools or community- based programs, or through contracted professionals, depending on specific needs of the participant.
2	Alternative Secondary School Services or Dropout Recovery	This element will be provided by the LWDA staff utilizing Conover curriculum which supports this element through video courses, end of course exams, etc. LWDA staff maintain partnerships and referral process to and from organizations, training providers, and local school board systems such as the Red River Parish School Board. Coordination with alternative school(s) and credit recovery programs such as Natchitoches Parish Technical and Career Center. Northwest Louisiana Technical Community College (NLTC) provides adult education and opportunities through the WorkReady U and Bossier Parish Community College (BPCC) providing adult education opportunities for secondary education include; HiSET, Secondary Credential Preparation, Basic Skills Remediation and English as a second language.
3	Work Experiences	This element is provided in-house by the LWDA staff providing training and providing help in resume creation, job applications, work ethics, etc. Staff, in collaboration with area partners and employers, develop paid and/or unpaid work experience positions for eligible youth participants throughout each program year that could include but not limited to; summer employment, pre-apprenticeship programs, internships and job shadowing, or On-the-Job training. Conover curriculum may be offered in support of this element.
4	Occupational Skills Training	This element is provided by the LWDA staff utilizing the ETPL and through referral to an eligible training provider to enroll youth for training for accredited postsecondary and occupational accredited programs for demand occupations. Tuition/fees and supportive services may be provided to eligible participants. Also, Conover curriculum may be utilized to support this element to provide virtual training to eligible youth participants.
5	Career Pathways	This element is provided by the LWDA staff in partnership with Caddo Career and Technology Center and the Bossier Parish School for Technology and Innovative Learning with the Jump Start Initiative, and by participating in regional events such as: youth job fairs and Fast Forward Technical Assistance Meetings. Also, staff use Conover curriculum to administer and support this element. Conover provides training and workforce preparation courses such as: Positive Mindset, Dress for Success, and Time Management and other mandatory and optional classes.

Program Element		Service Provided
5	Career Pathways (Continued)	LWDA staff, through comprehensive case management and assessment, provide an effective approach to the development of a skilled workforce through the organization of education, training, and other services to meet the particular needs of an individual in a manner that accelerates the educational and career advancement of the individual to the extent practicable.
6	Leadership Development	This element is provided by the LWDA staff using the Conover curriculum that meets and supports this element. Conover curriculum contains in- depth training courses that encourage responsibility, confidence, employability, self-determination, and other positive social behaviors that aid in Leadership Development. Local and online vendors, chamber of commerce's provide leadership skills development through workshop and group discussion open to the public, or in association with the youth's Work Experience.
7	Supportive Services	This element is provided in-house by LWDA staff utilizing WIOA Youth program funds when the youth participant is unable to obtain financial assistance for services. Some of the supportive services provided to eligible participants include; Tuition assistance, school supplies, books, work and interview clothes, transportation assistance, rent, food, utilities, etc. LWDA Staff determine needs based on assessment and are stated in ISS. LWDA staff refers to community agencies when other resources are available, as WIOA is the last resort.
8	Adult Mentoring	This element is provided in-house by LWDA staff to include structured activities where the youth case manager offers guidance, support, and encouragement to help develop the competence and character of the youth participant. Conover curriculum meets and supports this element via National Online Mentorship Programs where youth are connected to Adult Mentors and courses on topics that include: Mentorship, Cultivating Relationships, Transparency, Establishing Trust, Communication, and more. This element is provided by youth staff until services are no longer needed. LWDA staff refers to worksite supervisors, in Work Experience, as mentors in development of work habits and skills.
9	Follow-up Services	This element is provided in-house by LWDA staff for not less than 12 months after completion of participation and may include the following program elements: vocational guidance, employment services, and supportive services such as; assisting with Pell Grants, completing FAFSA application, job searches and matching, etc.
10	Comprehensive Guidance and Counseling	This element is provided in-house by LWDA youth workforce professionals or by referral to an outside agency per the needs of the participant. Conover course curriculum, which supports this element, will be used to enhance the learning experience of the participant. Conover offers Workforce Readiness Courses including; Interviewing skills, Job Retention and Personal Maintenance.

Program Element		Service Provided
10	Comprehensive Guidance and Counseling (Continued)	Staff referrals to appropriate community resources such as health department, mental health or substance abuse counseling providers, school counselors, etc.
11	Financial Literacy	Financial Literacy is provided in-house by LWDA staff, utilizing Conover curriculum courses that include financial literacy classes, budget, checking and saving accounts, managing spending and debt, etc. Aneca Federal Credit Union provides monthly financial Literacy workshops at our Bossier Parish American Job Center, as a free resource to the public. Referral(s) could be made to an outside agency per the needs of the participant.
12	Entrepreneurial Skills Training	This element is provided in-house by LWDA staff through Conover curriculum to deliver and/or support this element. Referrals to employers who will provide job shadowing in demand jobs that align with the participants skills and capabilities. Entrepreneurial skills training could also include workshops and referral to small business services.
13	Provision of Labor Market and Career Awareness Information	Region 7 American Job Center regularly provide all job seekers with information on jobs currently available and projected job openings, to guide them to training choices. This is required of all youth enrolled in the WIOA Youth program. Labor Market Information is provided by LWDA youth staff by utilizing LMI resources available at www.laworks.net .
14	Post-Secondary Preparation Activities	Activities that aid or help to prepare youth participants for and to transition to postsecondary education and training is provided in- house by LWDA staff. The staff assists youth participants with program elements could include; postsecondary transition, budgeting assistance, housing search assistance, assistance completing school applications, program area of study, Pell grants, and the FAFSA. In support of this training, LWDA staff might also offer coursework through the Conover curriculum.

Region 7’s Local Workforce Boards will work to ensure they:

- ▶ Will not require Out-of-School Youth in high-risk categories to prove low-income status to receive services.
- ▶ Will provide services to individuals who have dropped out of high school, have not attended school for at least one calendar quarter of the most recent school year, or are subject to the juvenile or Adult justice systems under the Out-of-School Youth program.
- ▶ Will target and provide services to homeless individuals, runaways, current or former foster care Youth, and individuals who or are pregnant or parenting.
- ▶ Will provide services to Youth who are not attending school, hold a secondary credential, and are either basic-skills deficient or an English language learner.
- ▶ Will consider Youth living in a high-poverty area to meet the low-income criterion for Youth activities funding and services.

A minimum of 75% of Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Youth funds will be spent on workforce development services for Out-of-School Youth.

October 2021, USDOL approved the waiver submitted by the state for the following:

1) authorizing the state to lower the expenditure requirement for Governor's reserve and local areas for PY 2020 and PY 2021 from 75 percent to 50 percent for OSY (out-of-school youth, ages 16-24),

and

2) approving the use of individual training accounts (ITAs) for ISY (in-school youth, ages 16 - 21) through June 30, 2022. LWDA 70 had very minimal performance outcomes due to the short duration of time. In October 2022, the state received a continuation of this waiver for program years 22-23. LWDA 70 anticipates an increase in youth enrollments for program years 22-23.

Adult education and literacy activities under WIOA Title II.

The Louisiana Community and Technical College System (LCTCS) currently operates Louisiana's Comprehensive Adult Education System, WorkReady U (WRU) and partners through co-enrollment with the Louisiana Workforce Commission's (LWC's) American Job Centers (AJCs), offering services at nearly 200 Adult Education instructional sites around Louisiana.

In 2010, The Louisiana Legislature finalized the transference of responsibility of Louisiana's Adult Education Delivery System from the Department of Education (DOE) to Louisiana Community and Technical College System (LCTCS). This effort was not simply about moving a program's administration from one agency to another. It was about reconsidering completely the goals, outcomes, and direction of Adult Basic Education in Louisiana.

LCTCS developed a new policy framework whose primary focus is putting Louisiana Adults to work by providing high-quality basic skills instruction, in addition to wrap-around student services that lead to a seamless transition to post-secondary enrollment, technical skill training, credentialing, and sustainable employment. The LCTCS, Moving Adult Education Forward, A Pro Forma Business Plan, was a milestone in redefining the vision for Adult Education, focusing on new performance goals, including high school equivalency diplomas, post-secondary enrollments, post-secondary completers, and placement in sustainable employment at family-supporting wages.

As a symbol of the new vision, the Louisiana Adult Education program was renamed WRU, to reflect Louisiana's Comprehensive Adult Education Delivery System. Since the 2010 renewed set of expectations and vastly different philosophy in Louisiana with regards to Adult Education, Adult Education programs have progressively adjusted educational service and delivery, and are well-positioned to provide, deliver, and coordinate the required activities under Title II of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).

Adult Education connects into the One-Stop System through the intake and assessment process to identify Adults with limited basic skills, and then to use innovative instructional models as necessary to prepare Adult learners for post-secondary education within the context of serving learners at the lowest skill levels. The LCTCS Adult Education and Family Literacy Program, WRU, administers and provides program performance oversight to eligible Local entities that provide Adult Education services. These services include academic instruction and education services that increase the individual's ability to:

- ▶ Read, write, and speak English and perform mathematics or other activities necessary for attainment of a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent.

- ▶ Transition to post-secondary education and training (Train to Attain) is a program of WRU and allows for the earning of an Industry Based Certification (IBC) while enrolled in HiSET courses.
- ▶ Obtain employment.

Wagner-Peyser Act (29 U.S.C. 49 et seq.) services

Region 7 already meets a major requirement of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) with the co-location of Wagner-Peyser (WP) Employment Services in the Region's American Job Centers (AJCs). The intent is to ensure that unemployment insurance claimants receive the same services as all other jobseekers, including job training, labor exchange, career counseling, and labor market intelligence. The Unemployment Insurance (UI) claimant/jobseeker will also receive eligibility assessments and referrals to an array of education resources and training through the WP Employment Service Program. The Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC) currently operates fifty-nine (59) AJCs around the State that offer skills assessment services, job search assistance, and referrals to Adult Education programs seeking to connect individuals with meaningful and sustainable employment.

Region 7 has nine American Job Centers dispersed throughout the ten-parish area. There are seven affiliated Centers in Region 7. The Region has two comprehensive One-Stop Centers in Caddo and Bossier Parishes.

Region 7's leadership utilizes weekly professional staff development activities for staff members located at the AJCs to ensure that high quality services are provided to both job seekers and employers.

The structure is a combination of training for the whole staff in a joint session as well as for individual team members, such as the Recruitment and Placement Team, Membership Team, and Regional Business Services Team.

The Louisiana Workforce Commission, Office of Workforce Development (OWD), has developed and implemented the following internal training program for employment service staff, which includes:

- ▶ Standardized performance ratings for individual staff members with technical competencies based on Federal and State laws, regulations, statutes, and standardized operating procedures were developed for use statewide with behavioral competencies required for effective case management and provision of service.
- ▶ Standardized performance monitoring of case management and career services.
- ▶ A streamlined and effective Service Delivery Model that fit within the requirements of WIOA and WP, with the nuances required under other programs, and training to board leadership.

Many of the funded employment and training programs under the umbrella of the Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC), such as Wagner-Peyser (WP), Veterans Program, Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) and Rapid Response, WIOP, RESEA, IWTP, STEP, LRS, have long standing working relationships with the local Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) program. The operators of these programs have demonstrated over the years their knowledge of the sponsored activities and how these activities complement each other. Some of the sponsors of these programs serve as representatives on the Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs). They have input on the kinds of activities that are implemented through the WIOA program. They will sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that describes the scope of each program and values shared by each entity for the American Job Center (AJC) system. The MOU also addresses how partner programs can utilize a common client referral process.

Several cross-training sessions have been held with Local partners to acquaint each other with their services, and how services can be improved for our customers, and the integrity of the system.

Finally, as stated in other parts of this document, the goal in Region 7 has been to better coordinate the delivery of employment and training services by LWC's WP funded program staff and the staff under the authority of the LWDB. This required the alignment of workforce services functions across WP and WIOA programs.

The staff of the LWDBs have long-standing working relationships in employment and training programs. They have engaged in combined activities such as coordinating Employer-Based Training activities with employers, Rapid Response, the Region's Business Services Team, and training.

In fact, the two (2) LWDBs in Region 7 have several of the same members participating on each Board. They are knowledgeable of what's happening with the two (2) LWDBs in the Region and can convey such information to other Board members.

The staff of the LWDBs have come together on the writing of the program plan. The staff have also discussed ways of combining Employer-Based Training activities under one contract with specific employers.

The Directors are members of the State Director's Association and are in constant communication concerning State, Local, and Regional issues. They have the pulse of their respective LWDBs and can draft policies and procedures that facilitate necessary collaboration on the part of the LWDBs.

Vocational rehabilitation service activities under WIOA Title IV

Louisiana Rehabilitation Services (LRS) continues its collaboration efforts in identifying effect ways to integrate services in the American Job Centers (AJCs) located within Region 7. LRS has a good working relationship with the AJCs in Region 7 and continues to share resources with those Centers.

LRS provides access to services in the comprehensive One-Stop Centers in the Region and in affiliate locations as necessary to assure effective services to individuals with disabilities through participant's skills training which enhances participant ability to obtain employment in their desired field, in particular, high demand jobs.

To improve knowledge regarding assistive technology and address other accessibility issues, the LRS Program Coordinator for Rehabilitation Technology continues to provide consultation to the AJCs in Region 7.

In addition, the agency's Rehabilitation Employment Development Specialist (REDS) serves as the LRS liaison for all AJCs in Region 7 which includes providing LRS Public Awareness as well as services to consumers such as building job seeking skills and employment development. LRS is committed to the success of the AJCs and works collaboratively to serve individuals with disabilities at assigned Centers. To improve knowledge regarding assistive technology and address other accessibility issues. LRS Program Coordinator for Rehabilitation Technology continues to provide consultation to the AJCs.

LRS will continue to uphold the achievement of competitive integrated employment of individuals with disabilities. Our Vocational Rehabilitation Program sets out to accomplish this task by building relationships with employers in the communities and various cities in the State of Louisiana. In order

to form these connections, LRS REDS begin to build these relations by first gaining an understanding of what the business and workforce needs are in each area of the State. This is done by expanding our outreach to the business community and then by referring or recommending those clients that will fit their workforce needs.

LRS REDS are involved with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Board meetings and have formed relationships with the Louisiana Workforce Commission's (LWC's) Regional Industry Coordinator which helps to identify workforce needs in Region 7.

Industry Coordinators are Region specific and have knowledge related to the needs of the businesses, the qualifications needed to obtain employment in a given industry, and resources, such as Apprenticeship programs, that may be available to help our consumers achieve competitive integrated employment. The Program Coordinator over employment initiatives provides further technical assistance to the REDs to assist them in outreach efforts to businesses and their Human Resource Management Teams. Outreach efforts include attendance at Local and Regional job fairs, Chamber of Commerce meetings, and the Society of Human Resource Management monthly meetings. REDs also contact hundreds of employers every month in an effort to identify workforce needs and determine if we have consumers that are job ready and meet the qualifications for positions available.

When REDs place the consumers in competitive and integrated employment, they continue to work with the business and the consumer, ensuring the employment opportunity is a good fit for both. LRS continues to renew and revise existing Local cooperative agreements, as applicable, with school districts and Charter Schools in Region 7.

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The Louisiana Rehabilitation Council (LRC), which is the State's rehabilitation council, meets with LRS quarterly as a part of the council meeting. During these meetings, LRS provides quarterly updates, and LRC provides input and recommendations to LRS. The LRC incorporates public forums, consumer/ counselor interviews, etc., to ensure the services provided by LRS meet the needs of Louisiana's citizens with disabilities.

As part of the State Transition Plan, the Department of Education (DOE) and LRS continue to work together to establish Regional Core Teams. The LRS Transition Program Coordinator continues to collaborate and partner with DOE, Office for Citizens with Developmental Disabilities (OCDD), Work Incentive Planning Program, Office of Community Services, LWC, and the Office of Youth Development in an effort to network, share information, and utilize comparable benefits to enhance Vocational Rehabilitation services to transition students.

The primary focus of LRS collaboration is to identify and address barriers, (e.g. policies, eligibility process, resource allocation), assure effective service provision through the support of Local inter-agency core teams, provide cross-agency training, outreach, engage in capacity building of young Adults and family outreach efforts, provide continued support of innovative models and practices related to transition, and provide information and technical assistance.

LRS has appropriate cooperative arrangements with, and uses the services and facilities of, various Federal, State, and Local agencies and programs. LRS coordinates with other agencies and programs to ensure individuals with disabilities receive appropriate services. These agencies and programs include:

- ▶ Department of Education, Division of Special Populations (DOE)
- ▶ Department of Health and Hospitals, Office of Behavioral Health (DDH)
- ▶ Department of Veteran Affairs (VA)
- ▶ Louisiana Workforce Commission, Office of Workforce Development (OWD) Louisiana Workforce Commission, Work Opportunity Tax Credit Program (WOTC)
- ▶ Office for Citizens with Developmental Disabilities (OCDD)
- ▶ Office of Disability Affairs
- ▶ Department of Children and Family Services, Office of Disability Determination (DCFS)
- ▶ Department of Children and Family Services, Office of Family Support, Family Independence Temporary Assistance Program (FITAP)
- ▶ Social Security Administration
- ▶ Social Security – Bendex (2002)
- ▶ Central Louisiana Intertribal Vocational Rehabilitation Program (Title 121)
- ▶ United Houma Nation (Title 121)
- ▶ U. S. Department of Labor, Office of Worker’s Compensation Program.

Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA)

The State continues to administer the Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) program, which is available to workers who lose their jobs or experience reduced hours or income as a result of increased foreign trade activity.

Region 7 will actively reach out to affected workers to provide Trade funded training with the same goals as provided for Dislocated Workers.

TAA services are considered an integral part of the American Job Centers (AJCs) service delivery and may involve any and all partners based on the particular needs of individual clients. As such trade-affected workers may be eligible for:

- ▶ Training Services
- ▶ Job-Search Allowances
- ▶ Relocation Allowances
- ▶ Re-Employment Services
- ▶ Funded Training
- ▶ On-The-Job Training

Like Dislocated Worker, TAA-funded training helps trade-impacted workers obtain the skills necessary to gain suitable employment. TAA will pay 100 percent of tuition, course fees, books and required supplies and equipment, transportation, and other items or services deemed necessary for completion of an approved occupational skills training program.

Jobs for Veterans State Grant (JVSG)

Louisiana provides employment, training and placement services to all Veterans through a network of strategically located in the American Job Centers (AJC) and supported by Helping Individuals Reach Employment (HiRE). Jobs for Veterans State Grant (JVSG) provides services to Veterans and eligible persons according to need and significant barriers to employment. The Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC) JSVG funded activities are co-located within the State’s American Job Centers.

Local Veteran Employment Representative (LVER) and a Disabled Veteran Outreach Program (DVOP) Specialist are essential parts of and fully integrated into the workforce development network. The LVER staff member in Region 7 is located at the Caddo American Job Center.

There are four DVOP staff members in Region 7, and one located in Region 8 that covers Lincoln Parish. There are two DVOP staff members at the Caddo AJC that cover Caddo Parish, there is one DVOP located in the Bossier AJC that covers Bossier, Bienville, Claiborne, and Webster Parishes. There is one DVOP located in the Natchitoches AJC that covers DeSoto, Natchitoches, Red River, and Sabine Parishes.

Region 7's Local Workforce Development Areas (LWDAs) provide employment training and placement services to all Veterans through a network of strategically located American Job Centers (AJCs) and supported by Helping Individuals Reach Employment (HiRE). Services are provided to Veterans and eligible persons according to need, and significant barriers to employment. Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC) Jobs for Veterans State Grant (JVSG) funded activities are co-located within the State's AJCs. JVSG staff referred to as Local Veteran Employment Representative (LVER) and Disabled Veteran Outreach Program (DVOP) Specialist, are essential parts of and fully integrated into the workforce development network. Further, the Veterans program is operating a fully functional re-entry program for returning citizens that is acting as a pilot program for non-Veteran returning citizens.

The Region provides priority of service in accordance with TEG-05-03. When a Veteran is identified as having barriers to employment, they are fast tracked on a priority basis to ensure that those barriers are resolved as expeditiously as possible. The State has Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with U. S. Department of Labor-funded programs covered by Section 4215 on Veteran's priority and refers Veterans to training and supportive services within that network on a priority basis. The Region's partners with educational entities within the area and the Vocational Technical Institutions, which also provide priority service for Veterans and assists them with their educational and literacy needs.

Veterans receive priority for employment and job training opportunities available through Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) funding, On-the-Job Training (OJT), skills development training, and Youth training contracts.

Veterans can locate training opportunities through use of the Helping Individuals Reach Employment (HiRE) database and receive training at private facilities, which have been approved through the Statewide Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL). Should Veterans meet the eligibility criteria, their training cost are paid by the WIOA program or through Individual Training Accounts (ITAs). Veterans take priority in instances of training fund shortages. Local LVER staff and other AJC staff identify jobs and training opportunities specifically tailored for Veterans, as they promote Veterans as potential employees. These priority services are made available and provided to Veterans, transitioning service members, Chapter 31 Veterans, Native American Veterans, and other groups targeted for special consideration, including difficult-to-serve Veterans and Veterans with barriers to employment.

JVSG management and the Region's Local Area Coordinators with both LWDAs shall periodically conduct site checks to ensure all required priority of service signs are present and properly displayed, and that AJC staff understand both the requirement of priority of service and its proper implementation.

During these site visits, monitors pay particular attention to the implementation of priority of service beyond core services, particularly in the allocation of training funds. The State shall consider an indicated referral rate in any one of these areas being lower for Veterans and other eligible persons than for non-Veterans to be evidence of a potential priority-of-implementation problem.

The State shall immediately place the affected Region under examination and take corrective action measures to include, but not be limited to, additional training.

The Regional JVSG staff shall provide priority of service for Veterans in accordance with 38 U.S.C. § 4215(b). The term priority of service means, with respect to any qualified job training program, that a covered person shall be given priority over non-Veterans for the receipt of employment, training, and placement services provided under that program, notwithstanding any other provision of law. Such priority includes giving access services to a covered person before a non-covered person, or, if resources are limited, giving access to such services to a covered person instead of a non-covered person.

Priority starts with the first AJC member that comes in contact with the Veteran or eligible person. During the reception process, a series of questions identifies Veteran or eligibility status. Qualified Veterans and/or qualified spouses are provided services prior to other customers and an initial assessment is completed by the first available BSCS staff member. If during the initial assessment it is determined that the Veteran is a member of another special category, the Veteran is immediately referred to a DVOP specialist.

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)

The Louisiana Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) issues TANF cash assistance through the Family Independence Temporary Assistance Program (FITAP). The overall goal of FITAP is to decrease long-term dependency on public assistance by promoting job preparation and work opportunities. Public assistance is no longer a lifetime benefit but an opportunity to become independent after a financial crisis.

FITAP promotes career development and financial independence in addition to the commitment of providing cash assistance and supportive services to needy families which is in alignment with the goals and purposes of Section 401 of the Social Security Act (42 USC 601):

- ▶ provide assistance to needy families so that children may be cared for in their own homes or in the homes of relatives;
- ▶ end the dependence of needy parents on government benefits by promoting job preparation, work, and marriage;
- ▶ prevent and reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies and establish annual numerical goals for preventing and reducing the incidence of these pregnancies, and;
- ▶ encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families.

DCFS Workforce Development (WD)/ TANF Section

DCFS operates a WD/TANF Section that supports the work of DCFS employment and training programs; STEP, SNAP, and CSE E&T. The DCFS WD/TANF Section is committed to entering into contracts with Community Based Organizations to provide case management and supportive wrap-around support services to our WD/TANF program participants to bring them to a place of self-sufficiency with high-demand jobs that produce a livable wage. WD/TANF wants to strengthen our relationship with Region 7 and we hope to include our program participants in WIOA services.

DCFS -Strategies to Empower People (STEP)

The goal of the STEP program is to provide opportunities for work-eligible FITAP recipients to receive job training, employment and supportive services to enable them to become self-sufficient. STEP is the result of the Personal Responsibility and Universal Engagement Act of 2003 passed by the Louisiana Legislature.

All work-eligible FITAP recipients must participate in the STEP Program. DCFS defines work-eligible as FITAP adults under age 60 and FITAP teen heads of household, excluding those FITAP adults and teen heads of household who are disabled or caring for a family member who is disabled. STEP operates statewide.

DCFS -Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment and Training (SNAP E&T)

The SNAP E&T program offers SNAP recipients in Louisiana the opportunity to participate in training and employment programs in order to improve their employment prospects and reduce their reliance on SNAP benefits.

SNAP E&T services include job search assistance and training, basic and vocational education, essential skills training, job retention services. SNAP E&T also provides wrap-around supportive services including transportation and childcare assistance to facilitate successful program completion. SNAP E&T operates statewide.

DCFS -Child Support Enforcement Employment and Training (CSE E&T)

CSE E&T is the newest DCFS employment and training program and is for parents with open child support cases within the DCFS, Child Support Enforcement (CSE) caseload. Both noncustodial and custodial parents have access to the services. The parent cannot receive services from other DCFS employment and training programs including the STEP and SNAP E&T programs. CPs must meet an income threshold to be eligible.

CSE E&T helps parents with employment barriers gain skills, education, and training that will lead to successful, long-term employment. The goals are to reduce poverty, increase money flow into the households, and provide NCPs and CPs with the ability to sufficiently support their families. CSE E&T offers wrap-around supportive services and operates a pilot program in Caddo and Bossier parishes. CSE E&T is working on expansion plans to serve all parishes in Louisiana.

Unemployment Insurance Programs- Louisiana Incumbent Worker Training Programs (IWTP)

The Louisiana Employment Security Administration Fund is also known as the Incumbent Worker Training (IWTP) Account.

Amounts from this account are pledged and dedicated exclusively to fund training for businesses operating in Louisiana that incur a State Unemployment Insurance (UI) tax liability. The purpose of this program is to upgrade job skills through training.

Additional emphasis is placed on preventing job loss caused by obsolete skills, technological change, or national or global competition; retaining jobs; and creating jobs in labor demand occupations. The IWTP is a partnership between the Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC), business and industry, and training providers. The IWTP is designed to benefit business and industry by assisting in the skill development of existing employees and thereby increasing employee productivity and the growth of the company.

These improvements are expected to result in the creation of new jobs, the retention of jobs that otherwise may have been eliminated, and an increase in wages for trained workers. The IWTP staff member in Region 7 is located at the Bossier American Job Center.

The Louisiana Incumbent Worker Training Account funds are dedicated to support the following types of training:

- ▶ Customized Training. Designed to meet the special need and skill requirements of business and industry, customized training programs may include specialized curriculums, instructional materials, training delivery methods, and training locations. Customized Training may also include standardized courses.
- ▶ Small Business Employee Training. This type of training is individual standardized (off-the-shelf) training and is available to businesses having fifty or fewer employees.
- ▶ Pre-employment Training. This type of training is provided for non-incumbent workers for expanding businesses. This training may include screening, skills assessment, testing, remediation, and occupational and technical training, via WorkReady U (WRU) or their higher education partners.

Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP)

Region 7 is committed to bringing together diverse stakeholders (including its Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) and One-Stop Operators) in the development of employment and training opportunities for the senior citizens of the Region. Senior citizens are an integral part of Region 7 and should be afforded the opportunity to provide useful contributions to the Region's workforce. This plan is designed to take a long-term, strategic view of the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) in Region 7 and help develop workforce strategies. The Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) is a community service and work-based training program for older workers.

Authorized by the Older Americans Act, the program provides subsidized, service-based training for low-income persons 55 or older who are unemployed and have poor employment prospects. Participants have access to both SCSEP services and other employment assistance through One-Stop Centers.

SCSEP program staff coordinate referrals with other Partner programs, co-enroll participants as appropriate, provide staffing assistance for basic career services and the resource and intake areas of the facility, and participate in staff capacity building activities with other Partner programs.

Job Corps

The Job Corps Program in Region 7 has a residential and non-residential training center in Shreveport. Job Corps maintains offices in the Caddo and Bossier American Job Centers to provide counseling services. Under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), Job Corps is linked to the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (Title II), and the State Vocational and Rehabilitation Programs.

Region 7 is committed to partnering with Job Corps in its purpose of assisting eligible Youth to connect to the labor force by providing them with:

- ▶ Social, academic, career and technical education, and service-learning opportunities.
- ▶ Obtaining secondary school diplomas or recognized post-secondary credentials leading to successful careers in in-demand industry sectors or occupations.
- ▶ Achieving economic self-sufficiency and opportunities for advancement, or enrollment in post-secondary education, including an Apprenticeship program.
- ▶ Provide ongoing transitional assistance to aide youth in becoming working class citizens.

Shreveport Job Corps and the Caddo American Job Center are currently operating in partnership, placing an emphasis on the Region's goals and mission. The Region's goals are strategically aligned to support Job Corps determination for:

- ▶ Placing new emphasis on credentials, post-secondary education, and training for in-demand industry sectors and occupations.
- ▶ Improving connections with the workforce system.
- ▶ Establishing consistent elements Job Corps will consider when making contracting decisions.
- ▶ Implementing new performance indicators and requiring their use in decision-making.

Community Services Block Grant (CSBG)

Region 7 is committed to providing resources and fostering partnerships in low-income communities in order to enable low-income individuals to achieve self-sufficiency enhance family stability and revitalize their community.

The Community Action Agency network through the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) will form a partnership with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) system in the coordination support services to low-income individuals and families through the American Job Centers (AJCs); thereby, contributing to the self-sufficiency and stability of individuals and families in the prevention and reduction of poverty.

Services provided by each community action agency may vary; however, services include assistance with utility bills through the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). Other services provided by the agencies include emergency rental and housing assistance, housing counseling, Home Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP), food and clothing pantry, and transportation.

Early Head Start is for children under the age of 3, infants, and pregnant mothers. The other option is Head Start, which is for children that range in age from 3-5. Bossier Office of Community Services program provides children with early education services, health and mental care, free food, and other social services. Teachers and social workers that are part of Early Head Start are also coordinating with organizations providing early intervention for infants and toddlers with disabilities. Additionally, the Shreveport Water Assistance Program (SWAP) assists residents of Shreveport only.

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) coordinates activities and services in order to achieve four goals:

- ▶ Administer the CSBG program in accordance with the statutory purpose and in compliance with all other applicable statutes, rules, regulations, policies, and procedures set forth by Federal and State government in a manner which will increase management efficiency and program effectiveness.
- ▶ Support organizational best practices and strengthen organizational capacity, management efficiency, and program effectiveness.
- ▶ Advocate for the continuation of funds, community involvement and support, and the expansion of programs to provide services and activities having a measurable impact on the causes and conditions of poverty.
- ▶ Develop and expand partnerships with other State departments and agencies to support the coordination of resources that support and empower low income individuals to move towards self-sufficiency.

Reintegration of Ex-Offenders Program

Region 7, LWC, and its Local workforce partners have allied with the Northwest Louisiana Re-Entry Coalition to support initiatives that assist ex-offenders and their families with a vast array of services that engender an upgraded lifestyle. These include workforce development related sources such as employment services provided by Region 7, LWC, Goodwill, and similar organizations in accessing resources connected with training programs, both subsidized and non-subsidized, and community resources that provide medical, educational, housing, military Veteran, and law enforcement/correctional information, and services that are often crucial.

The Coalition consists of representatives from Local and Regional agencies and service providers that offer the services and conducts monthly meetings, usually held at the Goodwill facility at 800 W. 70th St. in Shreveport to provide a forum to share valuable information with participating members and seek to actually make these services and this information available at the grassroots level. The coalition consist of over 100 members and monthly meetings average 40 members. As the efforts of the Coalition and the awareness of its work expand, the potential positive contributions of a reenergized and redirected returning citizen community will benefit our Region and beyond in many ways.

In addition to the partnership with the local coalition Region 7 and LWC serves an active member of the Northwest Louisiana Prisoner Reentry Initiative (LaPRI) Reentry Steering Team and participate in several Work Groups. The LaPRI Steering Team is a group of specific community leaders who help influence and lead system change within the local community and state. Work groups consist of people who work on the front line helping returning citizens and are divided into six focus areas. The focus areas are employment, education, housing, health (mental and physical), legal and pro-social/faith.

Work groups help identify gaps and barriers in service for returning citizens in our community. Work groups work directly with the Steering Team to educate the Louisiana Department of Corrections and local community officials to help fill service gaps and stimulate system change.

Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education

The Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (Perkins V) was signed into law July 31, 2018. This Act, which became Public Law 115-224, reauthorizes the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 (Perkins IV). It was approved unanimously by both chambers of Congress, reflecting broad bipartisan support for career and technical education (CTE) programs. Perkins V is largely based on the structure and content of current law but makes some key changes that will impact the implementation of CTE programs and administrative processes around the country. As the new law was making its way through the reauthorization process, a key area of debate was "Secretarial authority" or the role of the U.S. Secretary of Education (Secretary) in the process of state and local planning and accountability. In Perkins V, we see evidence of the compromise on this issue, with enhanced prohibition language that limits the Secretary's role and the elimination of the negotiation process between the Secretary and states on performance measure targets. In turn, we also see more specific requirements for setting these targets, including additional stakeholder engagement and expanded definitions.

The new law went into effect on July 1, 2019, and the first year of implementation was considered a "transition year." Louisiana's Perkins V State Perkins Plan was approved by the Secretary of Education on June 12, 2020.

The State Plan focuses on improving efforts in Career and Technical Education (CTE), academic and technical skills training delivered to youth and adults through the dedicated efforts of talented literate, numerate and qualified teachers, faculty and administrators at geographical and charter Local Education Agencies (LEAs) and postsecondary institutions. Louisiana's program completer's will acquire the core academic and technical learning skills they need to be lifelong learners, readily adapting to the changing needs of the workplace. They will possess specific technical (or occupational) skills in the career field for which they are prepared. Just as important, program completer's will understand the value that employers place on essential employability skills such as the ability to:

- ▶ Communicate
- ▶ Manage Information Responsibly;
- ▶ Think and Solve Problems;
- ▶ Demonstrate a Positive Attitude;
- ▶ Work with Others;
- ▶ Assume Personal Responsibility; and
- ▶ Portray Resiliency.

This Louisiana Perkins V State Plan for CTE is designed to:

- ▶ Ensure students are provided academic skills such as literacy and numeracy, technical skills and knowledge, and essential employability skills via all Perkins Eligible CTE Programs of Study;
- ▶ Give individuals the best opportunity for workplace success in high-skill, high-wage, in-demand or emerging occupations; and
- ▶ Partner with business and industry to strengthen and expand existing businesses as well as attract new employers to Louisiana with a highly skilled workforce. To reach these outcomes, Louisiana is working to improve the quality of every CTE course and program, to align secondary and postsecondary programs, to ensure a seamless transition from one level to the next, to provide sequenced and non-duplicative coursework, and articulated, dual, and prior learning, where possible. All Perkins funded programs will meet the definition of a Perkins Eligible CTE Program of Study.

Region 7 LWDAs will work with the Perkins Region 7 Leadership Team, Small Business Development Centers and Biz Camps in Northwest Louisiana to provide entrepreneurial training and advising services. Information on these programs and referrals will be made to WIOA customers as determined appropriate in the Individual Service Strategy.

The Perkins Region 7 Leadership Team consists of Secondary, Adult, and Post-Secondary Education Partners, Workforce Development and One Stop Shops, Youth and Adult Corrections, Industry representatives, and Community Service Organizations (including students and parents). This team facilitates the recruitment and participation of larger stakeholder groups in the creation and evaluation of a Regional Comprehensive Needs Assessment. The Regional Perkins Region 7 Large Stakeholders Team evaluates and makes recommendations on the topics of:

- ▶ Student Performance in CTE Programs;
- ▶ Program Size, Scope, and Quality;
- ▶ Alignment of Programs to Labor Market Needs;
- ▶ Progress Toward Implementing CTE Programs and Programs of Study;
- ▶ Recruitment, Retention, and Training of CTE Educators; and
- ▶ Progress Toward Improving Equity and Access.

Higher education is not a mandated partner in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), however, the Region 7 Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) consist of adult education leadership and higher education leadership, which includes the Louisiana Community and Technical College System and universities in the region. The region's LWDBs provide policy leadership, guidance, and support for the innovation of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).

Region 7 will follow Louisiana's developed definition and framework for career pathways as the model for the alignment of education, training, and work-based learning (apprenticeships, internships) and support services that enable individuals and students to be better prepared to achieve economic independence and family stability.

The region's WIOA partners are embarking on a new concept to organize resources (staff, supports, etc.) around target job-seeker populations and business development using a pathway model that will encourage separate agencies to wrap resources, staff, and supports around the customer base.

Regional business and sector strategies, and the educational partners, particularly the Louisiana Community and Technical College System institutions, are key partners in the regional and sector strategies, providing workforce skill training and integrated work-based training to meet regional employer and economic development needs.

State partners will work with the region's LWDBs and partners to define and build pathways appropriate to the region. Region 7's LWDBs are charged with aligning education and training resources in their region to provide maximum opportunities for job-seekers to attain skills and experiences needed to obtain employment.

Region 7's LWDBs has been a catalyst for the leveraging of federal, state, and local investments to expand access to workforce development programs in education and training institutions. The region's LWDBs will continue to work closely with post-secondary education partners, including all Perkins post-secondary recipients, to leverage federal, state, and local resources to coordinate strategies, enhance services, and avoid duplication of services.

The basic education skills acquired through a high school diploma (or its equivalent) are the foundation needed to pursue additional education or vocational training to obtain the skills required for the job opportunities being created by the employers that make up Region 7's economy. With close to 20% of the adult working age population possibly lacking a high school diploma, adult education programs offered through Louisiana Technical Colleges in Region 7 will be an essential component of workforce development activities.

Staff involved in the administration of adult education programs located at Louisiana Technical Colleges are members of both Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) in Region 7. This will provide the opportunity to better coordinate the provision of adult education services to the customers of Region 7's American Job Centers (AJCs) who are in need of increasing their basic education and literacy skills in order to enhance their employability or to pursue vocational training to qualify for most demand occupations.

Through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) program, both LWDBs in Region 7 have already undertaken the support of older youth dropouts enrolled in HiSET (Adult Education) programs operated at Louisiana Technical Colleges. Some of these Youth have also been placed in WIOA funded work experience positions with public and private employers as part of their Individual Service Strategies (ISS). The cooperation of staff (administrative and instructional) involved in the operation of adult education programs at Region 7's Louisiana Technical Colleges has been essential to the successful implementation of this program initiative.

The local boards support the state strategies by carrying out core programs and other workforce development programs, including programs of study and career pathway programs under the Strengthening Career and Technical Education to support service alignment and needs identified in regional or local level assessments including the Perkins Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment.

The Local workforce system is delivering employment and training services that must be proactive by responding to economic drivers in moving to a service delivery system that:

- ▶ Ensure that the business needs of hiring, retention, training, and advancement of workers is the driving force.
- ▶ Connect businesses that are looking for qualified workers and individuals seeking employment.
- ▶ Eliminate duplication of services and reduce administrative overhead through integration of Local programs.

A Comprehensive Labor Market Information System that includes four components:

- ▶ A consumer information component on employment and training,
- ▶ A report card on training programs,
- ▶ Information on projected workforce and job growth and demand, and
- ▶ An automated job-matching information system. The third component includes an occupational forecasting system that forecasts new and replacement needs of occupations. This fourth component is accessible to employers, job seekers, and other users via the Internet based system in Louisiana, Helping Individuals Reach Employment, (HiRE).

Region 7's Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) will work with core program partners along with One-Stop partner programs in the Region to coordinate activities and resources in carrying out core programs. Workforce development programs support alignment of the core and One-Stop partners to provide coordinated activities and resources that are designed to provide comprehensive, high-quality services to jobseekers and to the employer to meet their current and projected workforce needs. This Regional approach is appropriate for the following reasons:

- ▶ It builds strategic partnerships among core and One-Stop partner programs, and other key stakeholders in a labor market Region that is designed to bolster the Region's economic competitiveness and promote systemic change to achieve ongoing benefits.
- ▶ This approach is more responsive to labor demand than solely traditional job matching and training services because it is problem-oriented and works to understand the collective workforce needs in the Region.

Higher Education is not a mandated partner in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), however, the Region's LWDB membership consists of the leadership of all of the Region's educational institutions, including the Louisiana Community and Technical College System, under the Carl D. Perkins Act of 2006.

The State has developed a shared definition and framework for Career Pathways as the model for the alignment of education, training, and work-based learning (Apprenticeships, Internships) and support services that enable individuals and students to be better prepared to achieve economic independence and family stability.

The Region's WIOA partners are embarking on a new concept to organize resources (staff, support, etc.) around target job-seeker populations and business development using a pathway model that will encourage separate agencies to wrap resources, staff, and support around the customer base.

Educational partners, particularly the Louisiana Community and Technical College System institutions, are key partners in Regional sector strategies, providing workforce skill training and integrated work-based training to meet Regional employer and economic development needs. State partners will work with Region 7's LWDBs and partners to define and build pathways appropriate to the Region.

Championed by the Governor's Workforce Cabinet, with the support of Labor Market Information (LMI) and Occupational Forecasting Conference, the Louisiana Workforce Commission's (LWC's) Star Jobs ratings system was developed.

The Star Jobs ratings system provides a ranking of the highest-demand, highest-wage jobs in Louisiana, based on factors such as forecasted employment growth (long-term and short-term), jobs available in the previous year, and wages. Star Jobs ratings are developed and dynamically updated in collaboration with leading Louisiana academic, economic development, workforce development, and industry experts. Since the inception and implementation of Star Jobs ratings, this ranking system has been utilized by educators across Louisiana at all levels. Below are a few examples:

- ▶ The Louisiana Board of Regents incorporates the Star Jobs ratings as part of its cost formula, upon which the funding formula distribution is based.
- ▶ The Louisiana Community and Technical College System uses Star Jobs ratings to guide decisions about program eliminations, modifications and additions, to direct its Federal Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education funds to grant applications that will increase the supply of high-wage jobs that meet projected State workforce needs and to direct the Workforce Training Rapid Response Grant Program.
- ▶ The Department of Education indicates the Star Jobs ratings related to all Jump Start industry credentials, enabling school counselors to guide students to careers that promise both interesting work and well-compensated career opportunities aligned with their interests and capabilities.

The region is committed to providing a comprehensive approach to supportive services to give participants in the workforce system greater opportunity for success. LWDA 70 and LWDA 71 will expand their partnerships with transportation, housing, childcare, and mental health providers to develop sustainable solutions for customers. Most of the urban areas in the region have public transportation systems that provide the general public with affordable transportation options. Some locations, including most rural areas, lack efficient, dependable transportation systems.

There is more demand for transportation than supply of providers. Lack of transportation is a significant and often identified barrier for participants in attending training or commuting to/from work, and transportation barriers limit customers' employment opportunities. Region 7 Staff coordinates with core partners to effectively use limited resources to help alleviate transportation barriers.

Programs typically offer transportation assistance in the form of stipends, bus passes, or gas cards for participants attending training programs. Service providers are utilizing shared ride services, such as Uber and Lyft, in rural areas. Participants can connect with transportation via websites or mobile apps on smartphones and payment arrangements can be made through service providers.

Supportive service payments whether for adult, dislocated worker, or youth participants are intended to enable WIOA-enrolled customers to participate in workforce funded programs and activities to secure and retain employment. Based on individual assessment and availability of funds, supportive services, such as transportation and needs-related payments, may be awarded to eligible participants on an as needed basis. To enhance the provision of transportation and other supportive services, the regional planning council will ensure the sharing of best practices for possible replication among the two LWDAs.

Additionally, Region 7 continues to maximize funding available for supportive services by coordinating services through partner and community programs. Through collaboration with other organizations offering supportive services, the region maximizes customers' access to services not available through the AJC. Each local area maintains policies and procedures for administering and coordinating support services to ensure funds are spent in a manner that avoids redundancy. Each local board continues to provide oversight and guidance regarding the need for additional support services, policies, and procedures.

E. Provide a description of how the local area will provide adult and dislocated worker employment and training activities including:

Region 7 operates its Adult training program to identify workers who currently need or will need higher levels of education to fare better in the labor market to reduce the incidence and duration of unemployment while supporting higher earnings and job stability. Region 7 honors the Title I Priority of Service requirement by leveraging all available funding streams and partnerships, regardless of Local funding availability, in providing priority access to higher-intensity career services and training to:

- ▶ Public assistance recipients.
- ▶ Other low-income individuals.
- ▶ Individuals who are deficient in basic skills.

Region 7 Dislocated Worker services are custom tailored to meet an individual worker's specific needs. Working one-on-one with a case manager, workers are guided through the process of developing an Individualized Employment Plan (IEP) that includes as a minimum:

- ▶ Career planning and counseling.
- ▶ Job search and placement.
- ▶ Approved training.
- ▶ Other needed support services.

Assessment may include the use of tools and processes that shall be modified by Local leadership to be most effective based on the demographics of their specific location, customer-based, staffing levels, program availability, and access to supportive services.

The American Job Centers (AJCs) staff shall provide services without regard for their status as State or Local Workforce Development Area (LWDA) employees. Minimally, job-seeker services must include initial registration, Wagner-Peyser (WP) and (when applicable) Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) enrollment with the appropriate staff-assisted first service.

Career services shall include both basic career and individualized career services as appropriate, based on jobseeker and employer need. These services may include, but are not limited to, assisted job search activities, evaluation of skills, interests, preferences, career counseling, training options, matching skills to current job openings, individualized career services, case management, and follow-up.

The Three Tracks for a Jobseeker

In the revised service delivery process, there are three tracks that any jobseeker may take. These are defined as workforce-ready in a demand occupation, workforce ready not in a demand occupation, and case management.

It is important to note that one of these tracks will apply to all job-seekers regardless of their reason for entering our staff-assisted service, and that during the course of service assessments and reevaluation the job-seeker may move from one track to another.

Entry may begin as a self-service electronic registration in or out of a American Job Centers (AJCs), an outreach contact (regardless of reason for outreach), an automatic registration created by an application for Unemployment Compensation (UI) benefits and the subsequent required service points requiring a visit to a Center, a staff-assisted registration and enrollment for a job-seeker who is a walk in to a Center, or an individual who is registered by any means while receiving Rapid Response services.

Jobseekers who are also UI claimants

Required service entry for Unemployment Insurance (UI) beneficiaries takes one of two forms based on worker profiling. They are profiled as least likely to exhaust their benefits (workforce ready) or most likely to exhaust their benefits (not workforce ready.)

These jobseekers must report to the American Job Centers (AJCs) at specified service points as a requirement of continued eligibility to receive UI benefits (following the most current U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL) and State guidance for grant specific requirements). Any jobseeker who is also a UI recipient entering a Center for service shall receive an orientation (e.g. provision of labor market information and career information, information on assessment tools, and orientation to services available through the Center and partner organizations). Orientation is optional but is encouraged for all non-UI recipient jobseekers as well.

Workforce Ready, in a Demand Occupation

Jobseekers who are not Unemployment Insurance (UI) recipients may arrive at the American Job Centers (AJCs) for a variety of reasons, and they may be unemployed by choice or seeking a career change. If the initial assessment indicates they have no significant barriers to employment and are workforce ready in a demand occupation, they will be considered workforce ready in a demand occupation.

When an initial assessment indicates no significant barriers to employment, and the job-seeker has skills, credentials, certification, education, soft skills, previous experience, or a combination of these factors that qualifies them in a demand occupation, they will be sent to career specialists performing business services or other career specialists by Local management for job referral.

AJC Staff shall review the job-seeker's skills comparing them to specific demand occupation job vacancies, match those skills to job vacancies, and make a staff referral. The career specialist who made the referral, or who is case managing the jobseeker, should plan for a formalized follow-up process, such as a 30, 60, or 90-day cycle, developed locally with documented reassessment. Follow-up does not necessarily require a contact call. Alerts and electronic messaging available in HiRE may be utilized.

Workforce Ready, Not in a Demand Occupation

When the initial assessment indicates a job-seeker is workforce ready, but not in a demand occupation (including Unemployment Insurance (UI) recipients determined to be least likely to exhaust their UI benefits), that job-seeker shall be referred to self-service and offered assistance as needed with informational services.

Informational services will include guiding the jobseeker to Labor Market Information (LMI), including jobs in demand, wage rates, education requirements, work search tools, skills, and interest-matching assessments.

AJC Staff should plan for effective follow-up, reassessing as necessary. This is critical because continued failure to achieve employment may indicate the existence of a barrier to employment that was not identified earlier in the assessment process.

Should follow-up for any jobseeker on the workforce ready track show continued unemployment, more individualized career services may be indicated. These jobseekers shall be moved to a case management track.

Case Management Track

Job-seekers who have poor or large gaps in their work history, limited, obsolete, or unknown skills, limited education, lack credentials, lack soft skills, have significant barriers to employment, or a combination of any of these factors, as well as, any job-seeker determined most likely to exhaust all their Unemployment Insurance (UI) benefits, shall be considered not workforce ready.

Jobseekers who are not workforce ready shall be provided individualized career services, consisting of a minimum of a Comprehensive Assessment and development of an Individualized Employment Plan (IEP) in the context of case management.

Comprehensive Assessment is vital to collecting information on job-seeker barriers to employment, employment goals, knowledge skills and abilities, and proficiency in occupational knowledge. This Assessment shall be done as a client-centered approach to evaluating the needs of a participant without regard to services or training program availability. The purpose is not to match the jobseeker to what is available, rather to determine job-seeker needs.

This Comprehensive Assessment is best defined operatively as an intensive interviewing process, which includes behavioral observations, and may also require the use of structured assessment tools. Other information gathered may include detailed work history, family support available, social services affiliations, offender status, and a detailed education history.

Comprehensive Assessment must be documented via case note(s), with regard for privacy and Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) rules. It is the responsibility of Local management to ensure staff is cognizant of HIPAA rules.

The Comprehensive Assessment is the foundation for development of an IEP, and no IEP shall be created without completing a Comprehensive Assessment. In many cases the Comprehensive Assessment will then be an ongoing process that may result in changes to the goals and objectives of the IEP.

The IEP is developed with a jobseeker to identify or create employment goals, appropriate achievement objectives, and the right combination of services to assist in achieving goals and objectives.

The IEP must include goals and objectives that are SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and time bound). A case note must accompany the IEP and must justify the Plan based on the identified barrier(s) to employment.

Case management requires a regular follow-up and review or revision of the IEP until such time as the jobseeker becomes workforce ready or enters a training program. In either case, follow-up is critical, using a 30-day cycle until the jobseeker attains employment or complete training.

All IEPs will be entered into Helping Individuals Reach Employment (HiRE), using the HiRE Wizard.

The local LWDBs will coordinate workforce development activities in the local area with rapid response services for the workers and employers that are facing challenging times due to layoffs. The Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC) provides Rapid Response Services designed to help employers proceed in an orderly and legal way by guiding them through the process. LWC works with Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) and other partners (training and supportive service providers) to help both.

Direct services to workers facing a plant shutdown or large-scale lay-off, are focused on preparing them to find suitable new employment, and get them back to work as quickly as possible by helping them overcome such difficult barriers to employment as:

- ▶ Transferring specialized skills to other occupations or industries.
- ▶ A decline in the market demand for certain skills.
- ▶ Age or length of work experience.
- ▶ Need for formal training or education.
- ▶ Lack of jobs at a level comparable to their previous positions.

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, many industries and businesses were forced to close down or lay-off workers. In response, Region 7 has continued to provide Rapid Response activities and LWDA 71 applied for a National Dislocated Worker grant to ensure those dislocated workers within the Shreveport City Limits are appropriately serviced with their employment changes.

F. Provide a description of how the local area will provide youth activities including:

Region 7 has the autonomy to develop its own Youth service delivery model for Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Youth services. This model must support the implementation of Career Pathways that support post-secondary education and address the needs of low-income In-School Youth as well as Out-of-School Youth. Region 7's Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) will procure and provide all fourteen of the Youth Program Elements under WIOA. Region 7 is committed to developing and providing appropriate models for Out-of-School Youth.

Region 7's Local Workforce Development Areas (LWDAs) will work to ensure that they:

- ▶ Will not require out-of-school Youth in high-risk categories to prove low-income status to receive services.
- ▶ Will provide services to individuals who have dropped out of high school, have not attended school for at least one calendar quarter of the most recent school year, or are subject to the juvenile or Adult justice systems under the Out-of-School Youth program.
- ▶ Will target and provide services to homeless individuals, runaways, current or former foster care Youth, and individuals who are pregnant or parenting.
- ▶ Will provide services to Youth who are not attending school, hold a secondary credential, and are either basic-skills deficient or an English language learner.
- ▶ Will consider Youth living in a high-poverty area to meet the low-income criterion for Youth activities, funding, and services.

Both the State and LWDAs in Region 7 will continually monitor financial operations for compliance with the 75% expenditure rate for out-of-school youth services. In October 2022, LWC received a continuation for the wavier submitted by the state for the following: 1) authorizing the state to lower the expenditure requirement for Governor's reserve and local areas for PY 2020 and PY 2021 from 75 percent to 50 percent for OSY (out-of-school youth, ages 16-24), and 2) approving the use of individual training accounts (ITAs) for ISY (in-school youth, ages 16 - 21).

Region 7's partnership with Louisiana Rehabilitation Services (LRS) will be utilized to provide services to Youth with disabilities requiring accommodations or assistive technology in order to participate in program activities, such as, tutoring and study skills training, attainment of the HiSET, work experience, summer employment, and where appropriate, vocational training.

A combination of contracted youth services (LWDA 71) and in-house services (LWDA 70) provision is used by Region 7. Expenditures made on Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) and work-based learning for WIOA-eligible youth are typically exclusively for out-of-school youth. Contracts awarded for youth training services are also primarily focused on out-of-school youth, with a small percentage being awarded to in-school programs.

Other Youth Program Initiatives will include:

Pre-Employment Training Services (PETS)

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act requires VR agencies to make Pre-Employment Transition Services available to all students with disabilities. Students with disabilities include individuals still enrolled in secondary education (high school) or post-secondary education who have a disability (receives services under an IEP, 504 plan/IAP, or has a documented disability that meets the definition of disability per Section 504) and are at least 16 years old but less than 22 years old.

Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) are coordinated activities for a student with a disability designed within an outcome-oriented process that promotes movement from school to post-school activities leading to competitive integrated employment. Counselors must make these services available to students with disabilities receiving services under an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or is an individual with a disability for purposes of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (IAP).

Pre-ETS includes five “required” activities that, in collaboration with local education agencies, VR shall provide or arrange for the provision of these services for all potentially eligible and eligible students with disabilities. Services provided by VR enhance transition services but do not reduce the responsibility of local educational Appropriate Public Education (FAPE).

Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) required by WIOA include:

- ▶ Job Exploration Counseling
- ▶ Work-Based Learning Experiences
- ▶ Counseling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive transition or postsecondary educational programs at institutions of higher education
- ▶ Workplace Readiness Training
- ▶ Instruction in Self-Advocacy

STEP Forward Initiative

Step Forward an initiative of the Community Foundation of North Louisiana (CFNLA) convenes community leaders and uses data to illuminate obstacles faced by children of color and those living in poverty. Through a shared community vision, Step Forward and its partners use evidence-based decision making and collaborative action to make positive changes for North Louisiana children. CFNLA seeks success for every child in North Louisiana with the goal of all children obtaining a sustainable, living-wage job by age 25.

Step Forward achieves its mission through its three Networks:

- ▶ Building Resilience – addresses trauma and strengthens mental health.
- ▶ Building Foundations – addresses early childhood education and kindergarten readiness.
- ▶ Building Futures – addresses college preparedness and workforce development.

Step Forward collaborates with the Business Community, Non-Profit Organizations, Workforce Development Officials, Education Representatives, Economic Development Officials and Chamber of Commerce Leaders.

Jump Start Initiative

Jump Start is Louisiana’s innovative career and technical education (CTE) program. Jump Start prepares students to lead productive adult lives, capable of continuing their education after high school while earning certifications in high-wage, high-skill, in-demand career sectors.

Students are required to attain industry-promulgated, industry-valued credentials in order to graduate with a Career Diploma.

Schools receive the same accountability grade credit for preparing students for careers in high-demand job sectors as they do for students who achieve top academic honors. The Regional Industry Coordinator with the Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC) has been an integral part of this Northwest Louisiana Jump Start Team.

Local Workforce Development Board Directors have dutifully attended many meetings to supply needed input and support at the early Jump Start meetings, and now with the expanded Perkins Region 7 Leadership Team.

Each area of the State could implement parts of the Jump Start Model as soon as it was possible, but the full implementation occurred in the Fall of 2017. Spring 2020, the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) approved 11 Jump Start 2.0 pathways, along with a waiver process for facilitating changes late in students' progressions. As a condition of approving the pathways, the board commissioned a panel that includes CTE directors to bring back to BESE further adjustments to Jump Start 2.0, including further universal courses.

We are fortunate that we have not one, but two schools dedicated to the goals of the Jump Start Initiative: Caddo Career and Technology Center and the Bossier Parish School for Technology and Innovative Learning. The Caddo Career and Technology Center has received national awards in the past, and the Bossier Parish School for Technology and Innovative Learning has the newest and latest in many training areas, for example, they have a machine in their Automotive Repair Shop that only three high schools in the nation have. These two facilities will enable this area to move forward quickly in the Jump Start Initiative, and students, parents, and business have benefited because of it. Jump Start 2.0 Northwest Louisiana offers promise of a better future for many students and many businesses.

Fast Forward

The Board of Regents (BoR) and Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) have a joint goal that beginning with the freshman class of 2025 all Louisiana public high school graduates will complete high school with college credit (academic and/or career-technical), a postsecondary credential of value or both.

Associate's degree opportunities for high school students have been underutilized in Louisiana. While the number of school systems offering an associate's degree program in high school has increased, the number of students taking advantage of this opportunity remains small. Graduation cohort data from 2019 shows that only 159 out of 42,650 graduates earned both a high school diploma and an associate's degree upon graduation from high school.

The Fast Forward Program will prepare students for current and emerging professions that expose students to high-skill, high-wage and in-demand occupations. It will assist with establishing state-wide industry or sector partnerships among local educational agencies and institutions of higher education, and facilitate the establishment, expansion and integration of opportunities for students to successfully complete coursework that integrates rigorous and challenging technical and academic instruction.

Students in the Fast Forward Program will have the option to participate in one of three pathways:

Fast Forward Jump Start 2.0 Pathway

This pathway encompasses a vast array of careers or postsecondary pathways students may enter after earning a technical associate degree on a postsecondary campus or Board of Regents approved satellite campus and dually earning a Jump Start TOPS Tech Career Diploma. Students will spend grades 9 and 10 on the high school campus earning required diploma coursework. During grades 11 and 12 the majority of time will be spent on the postsecondary campus or Board of Regents approved satellite campus earning the 9 courses required to earn a Jump Start TOPS Tech Career Diploma in addition to finishing the required coursework and electives to earn an associate degree.

Fast Forward Tops University Pathway

This pathway allows students to earn a universal transfer degree or technical associate degree from a postsecondary campus while dually earning a TOPS University Diploma. The curriculum for the transfer associate degrees are consistent at all LCTCS campuses and allow students to seamlessly transfer to a four year institution upon earning the degree. Students will spend grades 9 and 10 on the high school campus earning required diploma coursework. During grades 11 and 12 the majority of time will be spent on the postsecondary campus or a Board of Regents approved satellite campus earning the equivalent dual enrollment courses required to earn a TOPS University Diploma in addition to finishing required dual enrollment coursework and electives to earn a transfer or technical associate degree.

Fast Forward High-Demand Apprenticeship Pathway

This pathway encompasses a vast array of careers or postsecondary pathways students may enter after participating in a Louisiana Workforce Commission approved pre-apprenticeship/apprenticeship program and dually earning a Jump Start TOPS Tech Career Diploma or a TOPS University Diploma. Students will spend grades 9 and 10 on the high school campus earning required diploma coursework. During grades 11 and 12 the majority of time will be spent in a state approved pre-apprenticeship/apprenticeship earning the 9 courses required to earn a Jump Start TOPS Tech Career Diploma or the coursework for a TOPS University Diploma in addition to finishing the required coursework and electives to complete a full pre-apprenticeship/apprenticeship experience.

G. Provide a description of how the local area will provide services to individuals with barriers to employment as outlined in the Combined State Plan:

The Region's Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) working in conjunction with entities carrying out core programs place special emphasis on serving the needs of special applicant groups in order to expand access to employment, training, education, and supportive services for eligible individuals, particularly individuals with barriers to employment.

The American Job Centers (AJCs) in the Region in coordination with the system partners, will develop service strategies designed to meet the specific needs of these groups. Helping Individuals Reach Employment (HiRE) gathers information on placement and retention of special applicant groups to determine the best service strategies.

Local Veterans' Employment Representatives (LVER) and Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) staff are maximized to provide all-inclusive case management services to Veterans. To the extent feasible, services will be given to Migrant Seasonal Farm Workers (MSFWs). Faith-Based and Community-Based Organizations (CBO's) are involved in the process, both as a provider of services and as a skills resource for special applicant groups.

The following populations with special needs have been identified:

- ▶ Low-Income Individuals (recipients receiving public assistance, including those individuals that are basic skills deficient)
- ▶ Disabled Individuals
- ▶ Veterans
- ▶ Unemployment Claimants and Long-Term Unemployed
- ▶ Individuals with Limited English Proficiency
- ▶ Migrant and Seasonal Farm Workers

- ▶ Homeless
- ▶ Individuals with Multiple Barriers to Employment
- ▶ Individuals Training for Nontraditional Employment
- ▶ Displaced Homemakers
- ▶ Ex-Offenders
- ▶ Older Workers
- ▶ Youth

The employment and training needs of all job seekers met through the provision of career services accessible through the AJC system. It is the policy of the Region's Local Workforce Areas (LWDAs) to prohibit all forms of unlawful discrimination in employment and in the delivery, provision of and access to any LWDA service, program, resource, or opportunity.

To ensure that special populations are appropriately served and that non-traditional career opportunities are presented, the LWDBs provide professional development training to all front-line personnel.

The LWDBs includes service providers that serve special populations on the LWDBs, or its groups and subcommittees.

The LWDBs has developed Local policy regarding priority of service for the provision of career and training services to Adults and Dislocated Workers under Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).

The Adult priority of service policy provides priority to low-income individuals receiving public assistance and/or are basic skills deficient, and clearly define how the needs of displaced workers, displaced homemakers, low-income individuals, public assistance recipients, women, minorities, individuals training for non-traditional employment, Veterans, and individuals with multiple barriers to employment including older workers, individuals with limited English-speaking abilities, and individuals with disabilities, will be met.

In the event of WIOA funding limitations, LWDA 70 and LWDA 71 will give priority of Adult employment and training activities to veteran who are recipients of public assistance and low-income veterans. Next, in the priority are other non-veterans who are recipients of public assistance and low-income non-veterans.

In the event that funding is available and Adult customer's income exceeds certain defined thresholds, the local boards will follow guidance from the Department of Labor (TEGL 19-16).

Underlying the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act in Section 188 which mandates nondiscrimination in the provision of WIOA program services, both LWDA 70 and LWDA 71 are committed to the goal of equity in the provision of program services through the following activities:

- ▶ Region 7 collects data on race, gender and disability status of all persons registering for services. The review of the race and gender of WIOA participants and their representation among the region's population and labor force is conducted periodically. Data from the Louisiana Workforce Commission's publication Louisiana Labor Force Diversity Data is analyzed to ensure that there are no underserved populations in having access to WIOA program services within Region 7.

- ▶ Using local media sources, information on WIOA program services is made available to the public with the objective being to increase the availability of program services to all population groups. For WIOA partnerships this development on the IEP/ISS utilizing LMI tools.
- ▶ Region 7 makes efforts towards ensuring that potential eligible youth have access to services by contacting public, private and nonprofit organizations in a career pathway of: science, technology engineering, and mathematics. Ongoing training provided to WIOA program staff concerning the nondiscrimination requirements of the WIOA program (i.e., Section 188) and the importance of equal access to program services.
- ▶ The location of American Job Centers within the ten parishes that comprise Region 7 strives to ensure that the residents of all parishes have convenient and reasonable access to WIOA program services and the services of program partners. IEP goals and objectives are included in WIOA participate follow up. Also, staff continue to receive training to help instill into the participants' perspective the value of mentorship, which shows up in the process of developing the IEP.
- ▶ American Job Center Staff are taking steps to see that all customers, regardless of their race or gender, have access to information on the full range of educational and training activities available to them as contained in the Louisiana Workforce Commission's Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL). During the IEP/ISS development, LMI and other data-driven tools are used to provide as full of a picture as possible to the participant. Goals and objectives are developed to help the participant manage steps to overcome when necessary.
- ▶ Region 7's Workforce system continually evaluates economic/workforce data, with our ecosystem to provide strategic services. Services are marketed to areas that have been identified via Census data as populations most in need.

Region 7 supports new approaches to training, such as a regional work-based learning summit for workforce agencies, organizations and employers, determine the gaps in training across the region and develop a regional strategy to fill the gaps, develop career pathways on a regional basis, as well as apprenticeships, work-based learning and other new methods, including delivery of training via technology.

H. Provide a description of training policies and activities in the local area, including:

With limited exceptions, the Individual Training Account (ITA) will be the primary method for accessing training services, except for Work-Based Training. Training services will be directly linked to occupations that are in-demand on Louisiana's Statewide Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL). ITAs will be provided to eligible individuals through the One-Stop Delivery System. Training services may be available to individuals including who:

- ▶ Have met the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) eligibility requirements;
- ▶ Have been determined, after an interview, evaluation and/or assessment, and case management, to be in need of training services;
- ▶ Achieve a minimum passing grade to be eligible for continued funding under the ITA system;
- ▶ Any participant who discontinues the training activity prior to completion may be ineligible for further ITA services. However, the re-enrollment of any participant will be reviewed for continued funding on a case-by-case basis.

Region 7 strives to ensure that training funds are invested in programs linked to in-demand industries and occupations. Funds for individual training accounts, on-the-job training, customized training, and incumbent worker training are focused on programs that provide training in occupations In-Demand.

Region 7's staff works with business services staff at LWC and with industry partnerships to continuously engage employers in key industries, assessing their hiring needs and coordinating a variety of training opportunities (on-the-job training, incumbent workers training, etc.) to meet those needs. Information and feedback obtained from employers helps to ensure workforce and training services successfully prepare individuals and connect them to the credentials needed for jobs in high demand industries.

LWDA 70 and LWDA 71 exclusively utilizes the State's Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) as its source for access to skills training for WIOA eligible participants. LWDA 70 and LWDA 71 will notify training providers in the local area of the opportunity to apply for status as an approved training provider on the statewide ETPL. The Boards will advocate for entry level training that meets the needs of local employers and provide career pathways in high demand/high growth industries.

LWDA 70 and LWDA 71 will continuously monitor the completion rate, employment rate, and wages of individuals placed in training to ensure that training providers receiving WIOA funding assist job seekers with obtaining employment that leads to family supporting wages and provides opportunities for career advancement.

Staff will ensure all of the following requirements are met before approving the provider for local funds:

- ▶ The program is listed on the Louisiana ETPL.
- ▶ Training-related job placements of past graduates equal the entered employment, retention and wage performance rate required of Region 7 for the current Program Year. This requires the training provider to collect job placement data on its graduates (if applicable).
- ▶ Staff will check local in-house logs to see if individuals with similar training/credentials are coming into the Job Center due to their inability to earn a living wage with that training or credential (To ensure we are not paying to train individuals for occupations that do not move them out of poverty).
- ▶ Local WIOA staff will keep data of the number of participants starting each program versus the number of participants completing the program.
- ▶ Staff will compare the cost to complete the program to ensure it is not higher than twice the amount of completing the equivalent program at other local training providers on the State ETPL within a reasonable distance.
- ▶ These steps are taken by WIOA staff to ensure participants are receiving a in demand education to gain self-sufficient employment.

Local Workforce Development Boards 70 and 71 ensure they will:

1. Collaborate with the State to ensure sufficient numbers and types of providers of training services are accessible in each local area, including eligible providers with expertise in assisting individuals with disabilities and adults in need of adult education and literacy activities described under WIOA sec. 107(d)(10)(E), sec.122, 134;

2. Work with their local and regional employers and education providers to ensure there are training programs that provide credentials, certificates and/or skills that are valued by employers within priority industry sectors identified in the local strategic plan.

3. In partnership with the state, make available through Region 7 American Job Centers the list of eligible providers of training services and accompanying information.

To determine subsequent eligibility, the Local Workforce Development Boards, Region 7's Staff and LWC will verify that the training provider continues to meet or exceed the negotiated state-level Title I Adult performance goals for Employment Rate – 2nd Quarter, Credential Attainment, and Measurable Skill Gains.

Local Boards follow the performance calculations for each program are based on WIOA-funded participants only and is verified using the federal ETP report published by the state.

Local Workforce Development Boards 70 and 71 may choose to not support ETPs that fail to meet local performance standards (if applicable), in accordance with state and local policies and procedures. This process must allow for appeals in accordance with the state's appeals procedure for providers of training to appeal a denial of eligibility from the local list of eligible training providers. LWDB procedures are outlined in each local areas Individual Training Account policy. 20 CFR 680.482(e), 683.630(b).

The Local Boards within Region 7 will comply with the State Training Expenditure Requirements on training-related services and activities as outlined in the State policy. This requirement will be met by providing a combination of the calculable services in that policy, with a majority of expenditures anticipated in the areas of occupational skills training (Individual Training Accounts-ITAs) and work-based learning (Incumbent Worker Training- IWT, On-the-Job Training- OJT, Apprenticeships, Work Experience/Internships.) Funds will be transferred between Adult and Dislocated Worker streams on an as needed basis during the program year.

Each LWDB provided a copy of their approved Individual Training Account (ITA) Policy in the Appendix. ITAs will pay for training services for skills in-demand occupations (which include all registered apprenticeship programs) as defined by each Board from training providers on the approved ETPL. All participants must apply for PELL/Federal Student Aid (FASFA) and any other appropriate grant assistance and provide proof of application for this aid. The Pell grant funding received by a participant must be applied toward the participant's tuition and other education-related expenses.

For approved programs, WIOA will also pay the reasonable cost of participants' required books and special supplies, including uniforms and tools. Supportive Services for participants in ITA eligible training programs will be determined on an individual basis and based on participants' needs. The participant and his/her WIOA career specialist must jointly develop a plan for a participant to complete the training (including prerequisite courses) within a reasonable time frame. WIOA Title I-B funds are not available for participants to retake classes. The Training and Training-related costs covered under an ITA may include Tuition, Fees, Books, Supplies, Tools, Uniforms, anything necessary for the training that is on the class syllabus, or credentialing exam fees and license fees.

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

- ▶ **To transfer funds between the adult and dislocated worker funding streams.**
Funds will be transferred between Adult and Dislocated Worker streams on an as needed basis during the program year. State policy will limit the maximum allowable transfer to 75 percent. A local board may send written notice requesting a transfer of funds between adult and dislocated worker funds up to a maximum amount of 50 percent in the first year in which funds are made available. In the second year, local boards may send written notification requesting up to an additional 25 percent.
- ▶ **To use funds for incumbent worker training as outlined in WIOA Sec. 134(d)(4)(A)(i).**
Up to 20% of Adult and/or Dislocated Worker funds may be used on Incumbent Worker Training. The amount diverted for this purpose will be based on the overall budget, with priority being given to ITAs and OJTs in times of moderate to high unemployment. Preference will be given to IWT projects that demonstrate any/all of the following: a clear avenue toward layoff aversion, demonstrable position and/ or pay upgrades for trainees, the use of an apprenticeship model, attainment of industry-recognized credentials, significant impact on the company's competitiveness.
- ▶ **To use funds for transitional jobs as outlined in WIOA Sec. 134(d)(5).**
Up to 10% of combined Adult and Dislocated Worker allotments may be used on transitional jobs for Adult clients. Target populations for transitional jobs include, but are not limited to, ex-offenders, long- term unemployed, and individuals with disabilities.
- ▶ **To use funds for pay for performance contracts as outlined in WIOA Sec. 33(b)(2-3).**
No funds will be expended on performance contracts, without Board approval.

The plan must include information on the actions the Local Board will take toward becoming or remaining a high performing board, consistent with the factors developed by the State Board (WIOA Sec.101(d)(6)) and (§ 679.560(b)(17)).

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

LWDA 70 and LWDA 71 continuously strives to provide high quality services to business and individuals in the local area. Quarterly performance reporting is provided on state and local levels for all aspects of the local board, including Service Provider, One-Stop Operations and Fiscal Services. Any deficiencies noted are researched for cause and training is provided to necessary staff to improve measures. Each LWDB maintains an open-door policy for communication with all LWDA staff and One-Stop Staff to enable feedback from the field to be available at all times. The concept of team approach is emphasized in relationships not only among the local staff but with local partners to continue to provide a high level of services to the local area. Guidance provided from federal and state levels are shared with all local staff and local training provided to ensure understanding and to outline the best process for implementation.

The Region’s Local Workforce Development Areas (LWDAs) performance levels for PY 22-23 have been negotiated with the Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC).

LWDA 70 and 71 utilizes Helping Individuals Reach Employment (HiRE) and FutureWorks to ensure that performance measures are being met. Both of these online software systems allows us to monitor the progress in order to meet performance. LWDA 70 and LWDA 71’s negotiated performance measures for PY 22-23 and actual performance measures for PY 21-22 are listed below.

LWDA 70 AND LWDA 71 WIOA PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Adult	LWDA 70 PY 21-22 Actual	LWDA 70 PY 22-23 Negotiation Levels	LWDA 71 PY 21-22 Actual	LWDA 71 PY 22-23 Negotiation Levels
Entered Employment Rate, Q2 After Exit	73.2%	72.0%	81.6%	79.6%
Entered Employment Rate, Q4 After Exit	72.4%	70.0%	70.5%	68.5%
Median Earnings, Q2 After Exit	\$6,491	\$6,250	\$6,022	\$6,000
Credential Attainment	68.3%	66.3%	50.0%	52.5%
Measurable Skills Gain	84.9%	82.9%	75.2%	63.5%

Dislocated Worker	LWDA 70 PY 21-22 Actual	LWDA 70 PY 22-23 Negotiation Levels	LWDA 71 PY 21-22 Actual	LWDA 71 PY 22-23 Negotiation Levels
Entered Employment Rate, Q2 After Exit	70.4%	68.4%	76.2%	70.0%
Entered Employment Rate, Q4 After Exit	68.2%	68.8%	55.9%	67.0%
Median Earnings, Q2 After Exit	\$9,900	\$7,500	\$8,455	\$7,500
Credential Attainment	79.5%	77.5%	100%	85.5%
Measurable Skills Gain	85.7%	74.5%	77.3%	72.5%

Youth	LWDA 70 PY 21-22 Actual	LWDA 70 PY 22-23 Negotiation Levels	LWDA 71 PY 21-22 Actual	LWDA 71 PY 22-23 Negotiation Levels
Entered Employment Rate, Q2 After Exit	64.0%	62.0 %	73.9%	71.9%
Entered Employment Rate, Q4 After Exit	62.7%	60.7%	78.9%	78.0%
Median Earnings, Q2 After Exit	\$3,127	\$2,800	\$3,175	\$2,900
Credential Attainment	53.3%	52.3%	66.7%	64.4%
Measurable Skills Gain	60.6%	50.0%	57.3%	50%

Wagner-Peyser	LWDA 70 PY 21-22 Actual	State PY 22-23 Negotiation Levels	LWDA 71 PY 21-22 Actual	State PY 22-23 Negotiation Levels
Entered Education/Employment Rate Q2 After Exit	58.4%	56.0%	57.7%	56.0%
Entered Education/Employment Rate Q4 After Exit	57.7%	57.0%	58.8%	57.0%
Median Earnings, Q2 After Exit	\$5,029	\$5,000	\$4,796	\$5,000

B. Provide a description of the current and planned evaluation activities and how this information will be provided to the local board and program administrators as appropriate.

The Region 7 Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) through their administrative staff will conduct continuous oversight, monitoring, and evaluation of the One-Stop Delivery System to ensure that the following services are being provided:

- Provide the career services described in Section 134 of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA);
- Provide access to training services, including serving as the point of access to training services for participants described in Section 134;
- Provide access to the employment and training activities described in Section 134;
- Provide access to programs and activities carried out by One-Stop partners described in Section 134;
- Provide access to the data, information, and analysis described in Section 15(a) of the Wagner-Peyser (WP) Act, and all job search, placement, recruitment, and other labor exchange services authorized under the WP Act (29).

LWDA 70 and LWDA 71 will continue to monitor the performance of all approved training providers and programs to ensure programs lead to certifications or degrees that employers in our area are looking for and are reflected as high growth/in demand in our region.

LWDA 70 staff and LWDA 71 staff will also continue to research training programs that are not currently approved locally but are operated by approved training providers in Louisiana that are cost effective, show measurable outcomes in terms of completion, certification, and employment outcomes. These types of training programs will include short term training programs in high growth in demand fields which will allow individuals to work during the week and take their training on the weekend or nights as well as online training programs that allow participants similar flexibility in continuing to work and obtaining industry recognized certifications in a timely manner. The local workforce boards (LWDA 70 and LWDA 71) will recommend these types of training programs for the training providers to get approved for the eligible training provider list.

The local workforce boards will measure the training, placement, and wages available for participants to ensure all programming is resulting in jobs that lead to self-sufficient wages. The local workforce boards will also begin reviewing whether these individuals are retaining employment once they are hired.

The local workforce board will review OJT agreements with employers and measure their effectiveness and the retention rates of participants with these companies. The local workforce boards will use these reviews to measure return on investments (ROI) with regional employers to ensure programmatic goals are meeting the needs of regional employers.

The local workforce boards will review demographics available in the HiRE's to assess and evaluate the population being served by our programs and services. We will also review data to determine the demographics of individuals in need of our education and training services in our area. These demographics include age, race, and gender and poverty data. By comparing the demographic and income data available in HiRE for individuals enrolled in our programs, the local workforce boards can determine return on investment for all individuals receiving services and assess if those in most need of our services are receiving the training and education they need.

The evaluation of ROI for education and training programs will include completion rates, certification attainment rates, placement rates, and an analysis of average hourly wage. Programs and services that are producing a high return on investment will be supported by the local workforce boards and programs that have no return on investment will be reevaluated by the local workforce boards on a case-by-case basis.

LWDA 70 and LWDA 71 will continue to work with all partners to determine the barriers that exist for residents in the area and work on solutions to remove as many barriers to providing services as possible in a cost-effective manner. Some of these methods include:

- Ensuring the registration process for programs does not require numerous visits to the AJC so residents do not get frustrated by the length and complexity of the registration process.
- Ensuring all information regarding training and education programs is available online so residents can access the information from their homes and/or their phones.
- Continue to research and support high quality training programs that are available online so residents who have transportation challenges can still complete trainings and earn industry recognized certifications.
- Through our one-stop MOU, continue to work with partners to ensure individuals have access to all services they might need at the AJC by having representatives from various agencies available. These agencies include WP, LRS, DCFS, local employers, and local post-secondary institutions.

LWDA 70 and LWDA 71 will continue to monitor data to ensure that the efforts we have been making over recent years are proving to be effective in addressing the regional workforce needs.

This section includes the technical requirements and assurances that are required by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA Sec. 121 (c)(2)(iv)).

A. Fiscal Management

The Region 7 Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) are established in accordance with Section 101 of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). The mission of the Region 7 LWDBs is to support the development of an employer-led, demand-driven workforce development system based on occupational forecasts in which training, education, and services for jobseekers prepare residents for high-wage, high-demand career opportunities.

The Regional Boards achieve this mission by:

- ▶ Recommending policy actions to public and private institutions and creating coalitions to achieve their implementation.
- ▶ Working with workforce development system partners to integrate workforce development into the decision-making of businesspeople, economic developers, educators, and human resource professionals.
- ▶ Raising public awareness of the importance of workforce development for Region 7's economic future.
- ▶ Ensuring public accountability by evaluating the effectiveness of the overall workforce development system.

Region 7's Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) operate with a high degree of flexibility for service delivery design and partner with Local training and educational institutions to ensure employment and training opportunities meet area employment needs.

In Region 7 there are two comprehensive American Job Centers (AJCs), and seven satellite Centers. AJCs provide a variety of online, in-house, and on-site services, including employer services, job search resources, labor market information, and referrals for Customized Training.

In addition to traditional brick-and-mortar offices, in Region 7, the State has mobile workforce units that are available to each Region in the State which offer on-site Rapid Response assistance to area employers and communities.

The Coordinating & Development Corporation is responsible for the disbursement of grant funds for LWDA 70. The City of Shreveport Finance Department is responsible for the disbursement of grant funds for LWDA 71.

The competitive process used to award subgrants and contracts in Regions 7 for WIOA Title I activities are pursuant to each LWDB's Procurement Policy.

The competitive process that will be used at the local level to award grants and contracts for activities under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) includes:

- ▶ Adequate financial resources or the ability to obtain them;
- ▶ The ability to meet the program design specifications at a reasonable cost, as well as the ability to meet performance standards;
- ▶ A satisfactory record of past performance (in job training, basic skills training, or related activities), including demonstrated quality of training; reasonable drop-out rates from past programs, the ability to provide or arrange for appropriate support services as specified in the ISS, retention in employment and earning rates of participants;

- ▶ A satisfactory record of integrity, business ethics, and fiscal accountability;
- ▶ The necessary organization, experience, accounting, and operational controls;
- ▶ The technical skills to perform the work.

The Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) may form a Standing Committee to assist in the selection of Youth Service Providers.

Potential bidders are made aware of the availability of contracts through public notice on the appropriate websites of the Region's Local Workforce Development Areas (LWDAs). LWDA's 70 and 71 may hold a pre-bidder's conference to discuss elements of the Request for Proposal (RFP).

The selection of Youth Service Providers may be done by the LWDBs and may be based upon the recommendations of the Standing Committee. Potential service providers of projects will be required to submit an RFP, and in the RFP will include certification of targeted industry advice, input on training design, and training based on industry standards where applicable.

This certification will provide the LWDBs with business and industry input into the training curriculum. Each proposal is reviewed and is given a numerical ranking by the staff based on the following criteria:

- ▶ Adequate financial resources or the ability to obtain them;
- ▶ The ability to meet the program design specifications at a reasonable cost, as well as the ability to meet youth performance standards;
- ▶ A satisfactory record of past performance (in job training, basic skills training, or related activities), including demonstrated quality of training; reasonable drop-out rates from past programs, the ability to provide or arrange for appropriate support services as specified in the ISS, retention in employment and earning rates of participants;
- ▶ A satisfactory record of integrity, business ethics, and fiscal accountability;
- ▶ The necessary organization, experience, accounting, and operational controls; and
- ▶ The technical skills to perform the work.

B. Physical and Programmatic Accessibility

Recognizing the high unemployment rate among this population, and the qualified-employee shortage businesses are facing, Region 7 is committed to providing reasonable accommodations and access to all programs, services and facilities. The American Job Centers (AJCs) utilize the One-Stop Disability Access Checklist to self-evaluate its current level of accessibility.

LWDA 70 and LWDA 70 MOU's clearly defines how the entities within the one-stop delivery system, including the one-stop operator and the one-stop partners will comply with WIOA Sec. 188 and applicable provisions of the Americans with Disability Act of 1990 regarding the physical and programmatic accessibility of facilities, programs and services, technology and materials for individuals with disabilities.

- ▶ Region 7 American Job Centers are reviewed for facility and programmatic accessibility by an EO Officer from EOCD-LWC on a routine basis (e.g. annually or semi-annually).
- ▶ LWDA 70 and LWDA 71 has a trained EO Officer who reviews the Region 7's American Job Centers as well as external partner sites where services are provided such as at Youth Program contractor locations (LWDA 71), and training providers in Region 7 accepting ITAs.
- ▶ Region 7's two comprehensive American Job Centers, Bossier Parish Comprehensive American Job Center's and Caddo American Job Center's layout supports a culture of

inclusiveness in compliance with Section 188 of WIOA, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 and all other applicable statutory and regulatory requirements.

- ▶ Both American Job Centers are recognizable in a high-traffic area; and is accessible through public transportation and a reasonable walking distance.
- ▶ They have accessible on-street parking with spaces closest to the door marked for individuals with disabilities as well as dedicated parking spaces marked for individuals with disabilities. The American Job Centers have assistive technology equipment available.

All MOU Partners are committed to ensure all individuals seeking services at the American Job Centers will be given access to services on site and the opportunity to explore occupations to understand the technical and physical requirements. Accommodations will be made for individuals when necessary. All partners agree that they will not discriminate in their employment practices or services on the basis of gender, age, race, color, creed, religion, national origin, disability or veteran's status, or on the basis of any other classification protected under state or federal law. The partners assure that they have in place policies and procedures to address these issues, and that such policies and procedures have been disseminated to their employees and otherwise posted as required by law. The partners further assure that they are currently in compliance with all applicable state and federal laws and regulations regarding these issues.

Partners, co-located at the American Job Centers, cooperate with compliance monitoring that is conducted to ensure that all comprehensive American job center, programs, services, technology and materials are accessible and available to all.

The Region's American Job Centers (AJCs) are designed to provide a full range of assistance to job-seekers under one roof. Established under the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) and further refined by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), these Centers offer training referrals, career counseling, job listings, and similar employment-related services. Customers can visit a Center in person or connect to the Center's information through PC remote access. Budgetary realities and restrictions combined with the refocus and expansion of services under WIOA require Region 7 to take a comprehensive look at the way it conducts business in providing support to its service partners.

For the purposes of operation under this Plan regarding services provided in the Comprehensive AJCs, each member of the partnership shall agree to core hours, core services, individualized services, supportive services, data sharing, of costs for business operations.

The following will be taken into consideration in determining each One-Stop partner's contributions:

- ▶ Who will be physically present in the Center full or part-time.
- ▶ When not physically present will Center staff be required to supply support and provide customer guidance when using an Online tool, etc.
- ▶ What services will be offered, and how do those services support a Career Pathway.
- ▶ Defined interface with partner programs to provide seamless services.
- ▶ Method of supervision and guidance provided to staff.
- ▶ Defined administrative or other support required to be successful.
- ▶ Facility costs.
- ▶ Operational delivery, how services are delivered, by whom and when.

The presence and increased use of desktop computers with Internet connections located at all of Region 7's American Job Centers (AJCs) is one of the primary means by which services are provided to customers (job seekers). The development and continual addition of the capabilities and features of Helping Individuals Reach Employment (HiRE) under the direction of the Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC) will be the primary means by which intake and case management activities will be undertaken at all of Region 7's AJCs. Through HiRE, progress will be made in implementing a paperless intake and case management system for AJCs customers with the ultimate objective being their placement in employment or enrollment in Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) funded training activities that will lead to their employment in demand occupations.

The two LWDAs in the Region have developed MOU's that are in compliance with the new Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).

In the past, with support of the Disability Employment Initiative (DEI) Grant (2012-2015) Region 7's LWDAs worked to ensure the physical, communication, and programmatic accessibility of all AJCs by conducting staff training for all Center staff on topics including accessibility for all, disability etiquette, awareness, and identifying and assisting job-seekers with hidden disabilities. Region 7's LWDAs continue to maintain these investments in staff training and technology to make certain AJC staff serve job-seekers with disabilities effectively.

Region 7's LWDAs will incorporate accessibility criteria as part of the One-Stop certification criteria in collaboration with its disability partners and advocacy groups. Additionally, all AJCs will be monitored onsite annually to ensure compliance with this requirement.

Region 7's Local Workforce Development Areas (LWDAs) will ensure compliance with all Federal and State regulations, and upon request, each office offers Language Line Services who can assist with service delivery for job seekers of Limited English Proficiency (LEP).

The Region's LWDAs continue to ensure all materials and delivery methods are appropriate to diverse cultures, languages, and education. This program accommodation includes, as appropriate upon request, the provision of interpreters, through Language Line Services, and for those individuals that have hearing and visual impairment, referral to the appropriate partner agency. Region 7's Equal Opportunity (EO) Coordinators will provide technical assistance to the American Job Centers if necessary and monitor the system for compliance.

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

At this time, Region 7 currently does not have any cooperative agreements.

C. Plan Development and Public Comment

Local Workforce Development Areas (LWDAs) 70 and 71 will provide the thirty (30) day opportunity for public comment by advertising a legal notice in a variety of (6) official parish newspapers with Region 7. The notices will indicate the availability of the draft plan for review and how to access the document. A draft of the 2020-2024 Regional/Local Two-Year Modification Plan will be placed on the respective websites of Local Workforce Development Areas (LWDAs) 70 and 71. The websites will provide an opportunity for public comment and input into the development of the Plan.

LWDA 70 - <https://cdconline.org/wioa-bod-70>

LWDA 71 - <https://shreveportla.gov/240/community-development>

These measures will allow for formal comments on the Plan with modifications from the public, representatives of business and regional labor organizations required Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) core and partner agencies, educators, community organizations, Regional economic development agencies, colleges, universities, and technical schools, social service agencies, and faith-based organizations.

Draft copies will also be provided to the Region's two Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) for comment and final approval.

Following the conclusion of the public comment period, any comments collected during the public comment period will be presented to the board for review and consideration. Disagreements or concerns received during the public comment period will be addressed following the Board's review of said concerns. Those concerns will also be included in the attachments of this plan with modifications.

The Region 7 WIOA Regional/Local Two-Year Modification Plan will be reviewed through a 30-day public comment period in February 27 of 2023 through March 28 of 2023.

Additional refinement of the Plan with modifications will continue through the public comment period. This includes a final review by each core partner in Region 7 engaged in the planning process to ensure that the Plan complies with the final Federal regulations issued by Federal partner agencies including: the US Department of Labor; US Department of Education's Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education and Rehabilitation Services Administration, and the Administration of Children and Families, Community Service Block Grant.

- ▶ Provide summary of the public comments received and how this information was addressed by the CEO, partners and the Local Boards in the final final Regional/Local Two-Year Modification Plan.

We received no public comments that expressed disagreements with the regional/local plan. A summary of comments will be included if received during the public comment period for the Regional/Local Two-Year Modification Plan.

- ▶ Provide information regarding the regional and local plan modification procedures.

Each WBD will obtain approval from the board of directors and, if required, the chief elected officials, and obtain required signatures, then submit the plan(s) to the Governor for review and approval. Any modifications needed or requested over the term of this Plan will be made available for public comment and be brought to the Partners and Local Boards for consideration and approval.

COORDINATION WITH REGIONAL/LOCAL PLAN PROGRAMS

Region 7's Regional/Local Two-Year Plan Modification 2020-2024 was disseminated to all partners for input, feedback, and participation in the modification of the plan. LWDA 70 staff, LWDA 71 staff, and the Core Programs that include the Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs, Wagner-Peyser, Vocational Rehabilitation, and Adult Education and Family Literacy came together to formalize the Regional/Local Two-Year Modification Plan. Each partner will provide input and recommendations to the plan modification before public comments. Core partner agencies reviewed and provided relevant and essential updates as needed to the local plan. Next, the plan will be distributed to LWDB 70 and LWDB 71s Local Elected Officials and LWDB 70 and LWDB 71 board members for input and feedback. Lastly, the plan will be out for a public comment period of thirty days.

Each of the core programs that included the WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth programs, Vocational Rehabilitation, Wagner Peyser, and Adult Education and Family Literacy programs were allowed to participate in the development of the Regional/Local Two-Year Plan Modification. Local Community partners also worked on the Regional/Local Two-Year Plan Modification simultaneously through the process and provided input and collaboration in the modifications of the plan. After the plan with modification was developed, it was sent to the required partners and LWDB 70 and LWDB 71 board members for review, input, and suggestions. The plan was sent to the local chief elected officials for feedback, input, and suggestions before the release for public comments. The tentative plan is for the Local Boards to approve the Regional/Local Two-Year Modification Plan prior to April 18, 2023.

The plan was sent to the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) core partners, and One-Stop partner programs for comment and review. Through collaboration between these agencies a draft of the 2020-2024 Regional/Local Modification Plan was developed and included the following components:

- ▶ A method to use forecasting information, labor market information, and employer surveys to identify demand occupations, identify academic/workplace competencies needed, and jointly prioritize or rank training needs in Region 7.
- ▶ A commitment to focus all publicly funded education, employment, and training programs on educating and training clients for jobs with career advancement pathways and higher levels of compensation.
- ▶ The negotiation of Regional performance measures will be part of the required Regional/Local planning process and documented in the Regional/Local Plan developed by representatives of LWDA 70 and 71.
- ▶ A process for the coordination of multiple American Job Centers (AJCs) within Region 7.
- ▶ A commitment to align training programs and examine program consolidation.
- ▶ A plan for working with other agencies and organizations to coordinate transportation, childcare, and other support services.
- ▶ A Regional leadership strategy to identify emerging issues, develops Regional support strategies as needed, and keeps pace with Federal and State regulations on changes.
- ▶ A plan for developing uniform criteria, performance standards, and application procedures in Region 7 to insure easy access to programs by business.

STATEMENT OF ASSURANCES CERTIFICATION FOR LWDA 70

BOARD ACTIVITIES

- ☑ Consistent with WIOA Section 108(d) the Local Board has submitted a local plan to the Governor, held at least one public comment period of no less than 30 days to obtain input into the development of the Local Plan; and, the final Local Plan is available and accessible to the general public. **20 CFR § 679.550**

- ☑ The Local Board has established policies/procedures to ensure public access (including persons with disabilities) to board activities, such as board membership, meetings and minutes. **20 CFR § 679.390**

- ☑ The Local Board complies with restrictions governing the use of federal funds for political activities (**29 CFR § 93.100**) and the applicable board certifications, conflict of interest and disclosure requirements. **§ 200.112**

SELECTION OF OPERATIONS AND PROVIDERS

- ☑ The Local Board has copies of Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Local Board and each American Job Center partner and has provided the State with the latest versions of their MOU. **20 CFR § 678.715(a)**

- ☑ The Local Board ensures it completes quarterly reconciliations of the MOU with its partners. **OWD 1117-04**

INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING AGREEMENTS

- ☑ The Local Board has procurement policies and procedures for selecting One-Stop operators, awarding contracts under WIOA Title I Adult and Dislocated Worker funding provisions, and awarding contracts for Youth services under WIOA Title I in accordance with applicable state and local laws, statutes, rules, and regulations. **20 CFR § 678.605**

- ☑ The Local Board has established at least one comprehensive, full-service American Job Center and has a written process for the local Chief Elected Official and Local Board to determine that the center conforms to the definition therein. **20 CFR § 678.305**

PRIORITY OF SERVICE, EOC, ADA

- ☑ The Local Board has a written policy for priority of service at its American Job Centers and, as applicable, affiliate sites and for local workforce providers that ensures veterans and eligible spouses are identified at the point of entry, made aware of their entitlement to priority of service, and provided information on the array of employment, training and placement services and eligibility requirements for those programs or services. **20 CFR § 680.650**

- ☑ The Local Board has written procedures for resolving grievances and complaints alleging violations of WIOA Title I regulations, grants, or other agreements under WIOA; and written policies or procedures for assisting customers who express interest in filing complaints at any point of service. **20 CFR § 683.600**

☑ The Local Board complies with the nondiscrimination provisions of Section 188, and assures that Supportive Methods of Administration are developed and implemented. **29 CFR Part 38**

☑ The Local Board implements universal access to programs and activities to individuals through reasonable recruitment targeting, outreach efforts, assessments, service delivery, partner development, and numeric goals. **29 CFR Subpart B**

☑ The Local Board ensures that American Job Center staff, along with the Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker (MSFW) program partner agency, will continue to provide services to agricultural employers and MSFWs. **20 CFR § 685.300**

☑ The Local Board follows confidentiality requirements for wage and education records and has policies and procedures in place for ensuring personally identifiable information is protected including, but not limited to, 20 CFR 603, the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974, as amended, WIOA, and applicable State laws, Statutes and Departmental regulations and policies. **TEGL 39-11**

FISCAL ACCOUNTABILITY

☑ The Local Board has accounting systems that follow current Generally Accepted Accounting Principles and written fiscal-controls and fund-accounting procedures that ensures such procedures are followed to make certain funds received to carry out a core program will not be expended for any purpose other than for activities authorized with respect to such funds under that core program. **20 CFR § 683.220**

☑ The Local Board has a written policy and procedures for ensuring proper management and inventory of all equipment obtained using WIOA funds in accordance with WIOA law and state and local rules/regulations. **2 CFR § 200.313**

MONITORING

☑ The Local Board ensures compliance with WIOA uniform administrative requirements through local continuous monitoring of compliance with WIOA laws, regulation and Statutes, State policy, and local policies and procedures. **20 CFR § 667.400(c)(1)**

ELIGIBILITY AND SERVICES

☑ The Local Board conducts oversight of local youth workforce investment activities, local employment and training and the one-stop delivery system in the local area; and ensures the appropriate use, management and investment of funds in activities that maximize performance outcomes. **20 CFR Subpart A, 20 CFR § 679.370**

☑ Local Board have youth policies defining “attending school” and “not attending school”; including the 5% exception stating all other barriers must be met, and “requires additional assistance” barrier. **20 CFR § 681.230, 20 CFR § 681.250(c), 20 CFR § 681.300**

☑ The Local Board ensures that all 14 elements for Youth are made available and provided. **20 CFR § 681.420**

The Local Board has written policy and procedures that ensure adequate and correct determinations of eligibility and funding of training and supportive services, with limits and in coordination with other community resources, for enrollment of Adults, Dislocated Workers, and Youth in WIOA- funded individualized career and training services, consistent with state policy on eligibility and priority of service. **20 CFR Part 681, 20 CFR Part 663, 20 CFR § 680.650, OWD 2-21.2, OWD 2-24.1**

LEVERAGING WIOA

The Local Board analyzes regional labor market information, partners with local workforce development system stakeholders to assist in the development of the local plan and engages employers to assist with the development and implementation of programs that meet their workforce needs. **20 CFR § 679.130**

The Seventh Planning District Consortium Workforce Development Board (LWDA name) certifies that it has compiled all of the required components of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. The workforce development area also assures that funds will be spent in accordance with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act and its regulations, written U. S. Department of Labor guidance implementing this Act, and all other federal and state laws and regulations.

 _____ Tray Murray Chief Elected Official or CEO Chair	4-12-23 _____ Date
 _____ Matt Wheeler Workforce Development Board Chair	3/29/23 _____ Date
 _____ Candle Sattler Workforce Development Board Director	3-29-23 _____ Date

STATEMENT OF ASSURANCES CERTIFICATION FOR LWDA 71

BOARD ACTIVITIES

Consistent with WIOA Section 108(d) the Local Board has submitted a local plan to the Governor, held at least one public comment period of no less than 30 days to obtain input into the development of the Local Plan; and, the final Local Plan is available and accessible to the general public. **20 CFR § 679.550**

The Local Board has established policies/procedures to ensure public access (including persons with disabilities) to board activities, such as board membership, meetings and minutes. **20 CFR § 679.390**

The Local Board complies with restrictions governing the use of federal funds for political activities (29 CFR § 93.100) and the applicable board certifications, conflict of interest and disclosure requirements. **§ 200.112**

SELECTION OF OPERATIONS AND PROVIDERS

The Local Board has copies of Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) between the Local Board and each American Job Center partner and has provided the State with the latest versions of their MOU. **20 CFR § 678.715(a)**

The Local Board ensures it completes quarterly reconciliations of the MOU with its partners. **OWD 1117-04**

INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING AGREEMENTS

The Local Board has procurement policies and procedures for selecting One-Stop operators, awarding contracts under WIOA Title I Adult and Dislocated Worker funding provisions, and awarding contracts for Youth services under WIOA Title I in accordance with applicable state and local laws, statutes, rules, and regulations. **20 CFR § 678.605**

The Local Board has established at least one comprehensive, full-service American Job Center and has a written process for the local Chief Elected Official and Local Board to determine that the center conforms to the definition therein. **20 CFR § 678.305**

PRIORITY OF SERVICE, EOC, ADA

The Local Board has a written policy for priority of service at its American Job Centers and, as applicable, affiliate sites and for local workforce providers that ensures veterans and eligible spouses are identified at the point of entry, made aware of their entitlement to priority of service, and provided information on the array of employment, training and placement services and eligibility requirements for those programs or services. **20 CFR § 680.650**

The Local Board has written procedures for resolving grievances and complaints alleging violations of WIOA Title I regulations, grants, or other agreements under WIOA; and written policies or procedures for assisting customers who express interest in filing complaints at any point of service. **20 CFR § 683.600**

- ☑ The Local Board complies with the nondiscrimination provisions of Section 188, and assures that Supportive Methods of Administration are developed and implemented. **29 CFR Part 38**
- ☑ The Local Board implements universal access to programs and activities to individuals through reasonable recruitment targeting, outreach efforts, assessments, service delivery, partner development, and numeric goals. **29 CFR Subpart B**
- ☑ The Local Board ensures that American Job Center staff, along with the Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker (MSFW) program partner agency, will continue to provide services to agricultural employers and MSFWs. **20 CFR § 685.300**
- ☑ The Local Board follows confidentiality requirements for wage and education records and has policies and procedures in place for ensuring personally identifiable information is protected including, but not limited to, 20 CFR 603, the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974, as amended, WIOA, and applicable State laws, Statutes and Departmental regulations and policies. **TEGL 39-11**

FISCAL ACCOUNTABILITY

- ☑ The Local Board has accounting systems that follow current Generally Accepted Accounting Principles and written fiscal-controls and fund-accounting procedures that ensures such procedures are followed to make certain funds received to carry out a core program will not be expended for any purpose other than for activities authorized with respect to such funds under that core program. **20 CFR § 683.220**
- ☑ The Local Board has a written policy and procedures for ensuring proper management and inventory of all equipment obtained using WIOA funds in accordance with WIOA law and state and local rules/regulations. **2 CFR § 200.313**

MONITORING

- ☑ The Local Board ensures compliance with WIOA uniform administrative requirements through local continuous monitoring of compliance with WIOA laws, regulation and Statutes, State policy, and local policies and procedures. **20 CFR § 667.400(c)(1)**

ELIGIBILITY AND SERVICES

- ☑ The Local Board conducts oversight of local youth workforce investment activities, local employment and training and the one-stop delivery system in the local area; and ensures the appropriate use, management and investment of funds in activities that maximize performance outcomes. **20 CFR Subpart A, 20 CFR § 679.370**
- ☑ Local Board have youth policies defining “attending school” and “not attending school”; including the 5% exception stating all other barriers must be met, and “requires additional assistance” barrier. **20 CFR § 681.230, 20 CFR § 681.250(c), 20 CFR § 681.300**
- ☑ The Local Board ensures that all 14 elements for Youth are made available and provided. **20 CFR § 681.420**

The Local Board has written policy and procedures that ensure adequate and correct determinations of eligibility and funding of training and supportive services, with limits and in coordination with other community resources, for enrollment of Adults, Dislocated Workers, and Youth in WIOA- funded individualized career and training services, consistent with state policy on eligibility and priority of service. **20 CFR Part 681, 20 CFR Part 663, 20 CFR § 680.650, OWD 2-21.2, OWD 2-24.1**

LEVERAGING WIOA

The Local Board analyzes regional labor market information, partners with local workforce development system stakeholders to assist in the development of the local plan and engages employers to assist with the development and implementation of programs that meet their workforce needs. **20 CFR § 679.130**

The LWDA 71 City of Shreveport Community Development certifies that it has compiled all of the required components of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. The workforce development area also assures that funds will be spent in accordance with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act and its regulations, written U. S. Department of Labor guidance implementing this Act, and all other federal and state laws and regulations.



Mayor Tom Arceneaux
 Chief Elected Official or CEO Chair


4/2/23

 Date



Katrina Early
 Workforce Development Board Chair

 Date



Lenard Adams
 Bureau Chief of Workforce Development

 Date

**APPENDIX ITEM I
LOCAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PERFORMANCE GOALS**

Performance Goals for the Core Programs

LWDA 70 and LWDA 71 expected levels of performance relating to the performance accountability indicators of performance described in Section 116(b)(2)(A) of WIOA.

*LWDA 70 - Coordinating & Development Corporation
LWDA 71 - City of Shreveport*

Adult	LWDA 70 Program Year 2022-2023	LWDA 71 Program Year 2022-2023
Entered Employment Rate, 2nd Quarter After Exit	72.0%	79.6%
Entered Employment Rate, 4th Quarter After Exit	70.0%	68.5%
Median Earnings, 2nd Quarter After Exit	\$6,250	\$6,000
Credential Attainment	66.3%	52.5%
Measurable Skills Gain	82.9%	63.5%
Dislocated Worker		
Entered Employment Rate, 2nd Quarter After Exit	68.4%	70.0%
Entered Employment Rate, 4th Quarter After Exit	68.8%	67.0%
Median Earnings, 2nd Quarter After Exit	\$7,500	\$7,500
Credential Attainment	77.5%	85.5%
Measurable Skills Gain	74.5%	72.5%
Youth		
Entered Employment Rate, 2nd Quarter After Exit	62.0%	70.0%
Entered Employment Rate, 4th Quarter After Exit	60.7%	67.0%
Median Earnings, 2nd Quarter After Exit	\$2,800	\$7,500
Credential Attainment	52.3%	85.5%
Measurable Skills Gain	50.0%	72.5%

Signature Page

Seventh Planning District Consortium Workforce Development Board Chairman

Mr. Matt Wheeler

Signature and Date:  3/29/2023
Matt Wheeler Date

Address: 1202 Louisiana Avenue
Shreveport, LA 71101

Telephone Number: 318-212-8299

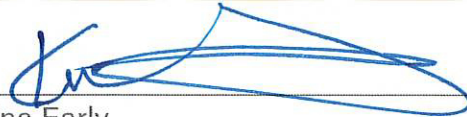
Facsimile Number: 318-349-3652

E-Mail Address: mwheeler@wkhs.com

Signature Page

City of Shreveport's Local Workforce Development Board Chairperson

Ms. Katrina Early

Signature and Date:  _____
Katrina Early Date

Address: 8216 Jewella Avenue

Telephone Number: 318-688-8312

Facsimile Number: 318-300-1450

E-Mail Address: katrina.early.192r@statefarm.com

Signature Page

City of Shreveport's Local Workforce Development Board #71 Chief Elected Official

The Honorable Tom Arceneaux, Mayor of the City of Shreveport

Signature and Date: Tom Arceneaux 6/2/23
Tom Arceneaux Date

Address: 505 Travis Street
Shreveport, LA 71101

Telephone Number: 318-673-5050

Facsimile Number: 318-673-5099

E-Mail Address: tom.arceneaux@shreveportla.gov

Signature Page

Seventh Planning District Consortium Local Workforce Development Board #70
Chief Elected Official

**The Honorable Tray Muray, President of the
Red River Parish Police Jury for LWDA 70**

Signature and Date: _____

Tray Murray



Date

4-12-23

Address:

615 East Carrol Street
P.O. Drawer 709 (Mailing)
Coushatta, LA 71019

Telephone Number: (318) 932-5719

FAX Number: (318) 932-5080

E-Mail Address: tray.murray.pocn@statefarm.com