

# **Region 7 Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)**

## **Regional/Local Plan**

For the Period of July 1, 2016, through June 30, 2020

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## OVERVIEW

**Under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), the Local Workforce Development Areas (LWDAs) in the State of Louisiana must submit a Regional/Local Plan to the Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC) that outlines a four-year strategy for the Region's workforce development system. The publicly funded workforce development system is a network of Federal, State, Regional and Local agencies and organizations that provides a range of employment, education, training and related services and support to help all job-seekers secure good jobs while providing businesses with the skilled workers they need to compete in the global economy. Each Region in Louisiana must have approved Regional/Local Plans in place to receive funding for core programs. WIOA reforms planning requirements, previously governed by the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA), to foster better alignment of Federal investment in job training, integrate service delivery across programs and improve efficiency in service delivery, and ensure that the workforce system is job-driven and matches employers with skilled individuals. One of Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA's) principal areas of reform is to require Local Workforce Development Areas to plan across core programs and include this planning process in the Regional/Local Plans. This reform promotes a shared understanding of the workforce needs within each Region and fosters development of more comprehensive and integrated approaches, such as career pathways and sector strategies, for addressing the needs of businesses and workers. Successful implementation of many of these approaches called for within WIOA requires robust relationships across programs. WIOA requires States and Local areas to enhance coordination and partnerships with Local entities and supportive service agencies for strengthened service delivery, including through Regional/Local Plans.**

Region's 7 workforce system is demand driven. Its connection with business and industry allows it to understand which employers are hiring and for which positions. Region 7 and the Louisiana Technical and Community College System (LCTCS) have formed a solid partnership to better prepare high school graduates for great careers. Many agencies contribute to an environment in which the education of Region's 7 Youth is oriented to preparing them for careers in Region 7's economy. A key component to developing these pathways for Youth is the use of the State's robust industrial and occupational forecasting. Moreover, the State has created a system called Star Jobs that uses labor market intelligence to help jobseekers choose careers that are high-wages and high-demand that identify education or training required for them to matriculate into those careers, and even help applying for jobs. Similarly, LCTCS established a program called WorkReady U (WRU) that will prepare adults who lack high school diplomas for sustainable employment primarily in occupations ranked as high as 4 or 5 stars on the Louisiana Workforce Commission's (LWC's) 5-Star Jobs. The Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) has also made strides in developing the workforce by requiring Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWDs) who are Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) recipients to register for work with the Business and Career Solutions Centers (BSCSs) located throughout Region 7.

## I. REQUIREMENTS FOR SUBMITTING A REGIONAL/LOCAL PLAN

Pursuant to guidance and requirements promulgated by the United States Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration regarding State planning, Local Workforce Development Areas (LWDAs) 70 and 71 submit their PY 2016 Regional/Local Plan effective for the period of July 1, 2016, through June 30, 2020.

Successful implementation of many of these approaches called for within WIOA requires robust relationships across programs. The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) requires Local areas to enhance coordination and partnership with Local entities and supportive service agencies for strengthened service delivery, including through the Regional/Local Plan.

### Regional/Local Plan Programs

The six core programs are—

- Adult Program (Title I of WIOA),
  - Dislocated Worker Program (Title I of WIOA),
  - Youth Program (Title I of WIOA),
  - Adult Education and Family Literacy Act Program (Title II), and
  - Wagner-Peyser Act Program (Wagner-Peyser Act, as amended by title III),
  - Vocational Rehabilitation Program (Title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by Title IV).
- Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS)  
(Note) in Louisiana DCFS is a required core partner.

The Regional/Local Plan **must** also include:

- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program (TANF) (42 U.S.C. 601 et seq.)
- Employment and Training programs under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) (programs authorized under section 6(d)(4) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2015(d)(4)))
- Work programs authorized under section 6(o) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2015(o))
- Jobs for Veterans State Grants program (JSVG) (programs authorized under 38, U.S.C. 4100 et. seq.)
- Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) (Employment and training activities carried out under the Community Services Block Grant Act (42 U.S.C. 9901 et seq.))
- Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) for Workers programs (activities authorized under chapter 2 of Title II of the Trade Act of 1974 (19 U.S.C. 2271 et seq.))

The Regional/Local Plan **may** also include:

- Reintegration of Ex-Offenders program (programs authorized under section 212 of the Second Chance Act of 2007 (42 U.S.C. 17532)).
- Senior Community Service Employment program (programs authorized under title V of the Older Americans Act of 1965 (42 U.S.C. 3056 et seq.))

- Employment and training activities carried out by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).
- Career and technical education programs authorized under the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 (20 U.S.C. 2301 et seq.)

### **How the Combined Regional/Local Plan Requirements Are Organized**

The major content areas of the Regional/Local Plan include strategic and operational planning elements. WIOA separates the strategic and operational elements to facilitate cross-program strategic planning.

The **Strategic Planning Elements** section includes analyses of the Regional economic conditions, workforce characteristics, and workforce development activities. These analyses drive the required vision and goals for the Regional workforce development system and alignment strategies for workforce development programs to support economic growth.

The **Operational Planning Elements** section identifies the Regional/Locals efforts to support the strategic vision and goals as identified in the Strategic Planning Elements section. This section ensures that the Regional/Locals have the necessary infrastructure, policies, and activities to meet strategic goals, implement alignment strategy, and support ongoing program development and coordination. Operational planning elements include:

- Regional Strategy Implementation,
- Regional/Local Operating Systems and Policies,
- Local Assurances.

In the Regional/Local Plan requirements, Regional/Locals identify specific strategies for coordinating programs and services for target populations. Target populations include individuals with barriers to employment, as defined in WIOA, Section 103, as well as Veterans, unemployed workers, and Youth.

**INDIVIDUAL WITH A BARRIER TO EMPLOYMENT** – The term individual with a barrier to employment means a member of 1 or more of the following populations:

- Displaced homemakers.
- Low-income individuals.
- Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians, as such terms are defined in WIOA Section 166.
- Individuals with disabilities, including Youth who are individuals with disabilities.
- Older individuals.
- Ex-offenders.
- Homeless individuals (as defined in section 41403(6) of the Violence Against Women Act of 1994 (42 U.S.C. 14043e-2(6))), or homeless children and Youth (as defined in section 725(2) of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 11434a(2))).

- Youth who are in or have aged out of the foster care system.
- Individuals who are English language learners, individuals who have low levels of literacy, and individuals facing substantial cultural barriers.
- Eligible migrant and seasonal farmworkers, as defined in section 167(i).
- Individuals within 2 years of exhausting lifetime eligibility under part A of title IV of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 601 et seq.).
- Single parents (including single pregnant women).
- Long-term unemployed individuals.

While discussion of and strategies for every target population are not included, the Regional/Local Plan will address as many as are applicable to the Regional/Local population.

The current draft of Region 7's WIOA Regional/Local Plan is organized based upon the Final Planning Guidance from the United States Department of Labor (USDOL). The Region 7 WIOA Regional/Local Plan will be reviewed through a public comment period in June and July of 2016.

Additional refinement of the Plan 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.

## II. STRATEGIC ELEMENTS

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.

(a) **Economic, Workforce, and Workforce Development Activities Analysis.** The Regional/Local Plan must include an analysis of the economic conditions, economic development strategies, and labor market in which the Regional/Locals workforce system and programs will operate.

### 1) Economic and Workforce Analysis

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 (LWDAs), 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).

**(A) Economic Analysis. The Plan must include an analysis of the Regional economic conditions and trends.**

**(i) Existing Demand Industry Sectors and Occupations. Provide an analysis of the industries and occupations for which there is existing demand.**

According to estimates made by the Federal Bureau of Economic Analysis, economic activity in the Shreveport-Bossier City Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) (the population center of Region 7) contributed close to 10% of Louisiana's GDP in 2014 with about 12% of the State's labor force residing in Region 7. The following analysis will show that Region 7 has not fared well in recovering from the Great Recession which many economists believe began in the last few months of 2007. From 2007 to 2015 employment growth was weak across most industrial sectors in the Region with only a few exceptions. On top of this, the recent drop in oil prices, and the halt in the brief boom in natural gas exploration and extraction brought about by the Haynesville Shale discovery, has contributed to a further drag on employment growth and economic activity for the Region.

The data contained in Table 1 depict changes in employment for two digit North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) sectors within Region 7 in comparing two points in time: 2007 and 2015 (first three quarters) and give some idea of the existing workforce demand for each sector. Assuming that the data collected through employer unemployment insurance quarterly reports are accurate, Table 1 shows that, over this eight year period, only 6 of the 20 two digit NAICS sectors in Region 7, saw an increase in employment, or the number of employees on their payrolls. Two sectors, Manufacturing and Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation accounted for well over half (57%) of the 16,940 jobs that may have been lost while one sector alone, Accommodation and Food Services, contributed to almost 72% of the increase in employment across all sectors. Aggregate employment (all sectors combined) dropped by 4.5% over this period. By 2015, Region 7's job base was only 95% of what it was in 2007, the year before the Great Recession arrived in full force. Figure 1 also reflects a strong negative trend in nonfarm payroll employment over this same period for the Shreveport-Bossier City MSA where as much as 75% of Region 7's labor force may be concentrated.

As shown in Table 1, the Health Care and Social Assistance sector, which provides jobs for close to 20% of Region 7's labor force, was able to show a modest increase in employment. However, the Manufacturing sector lost a little over a quarter of its jobs with the closure of Shreveport's General Motors plant in August of 2012 being a significant event within the Region's economy.

Louisiana's Oil and Gas industry has recently been ravaged by the dramatic drop in the price of oil. Region 7's Mining Sector has shared this experience even though Table 1 gives something of a distorted picture when comparing the two points in time (2007 and 2015). Monthly nonfarm employment data for the Shreveport-Bossier City MSA show that, over the year 2015, employment in the MSA's Mining and Logging sector dropped by 20% - from 5,500 in January 2015 down to 4,400 in December 2015.

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**Table 1**

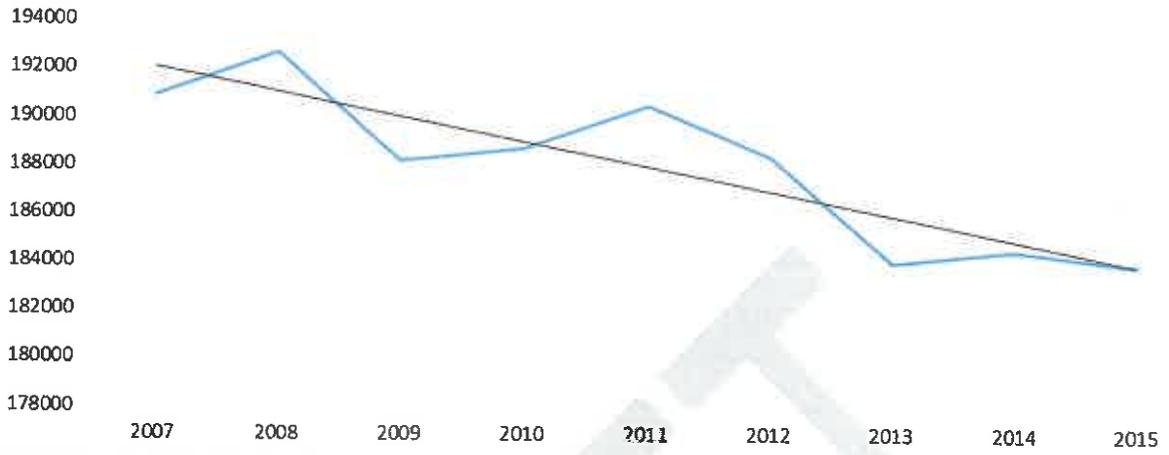
**Changes in Employment for Two Digit NAICS Sectors – Region 7, Northwest Louisiana  
2007 to 2015 (average of first three quarters)**

(Data source: Louisiana Workforce Commission LMI, [www.laworks.net](http://www.laworks.net))

	2007	2015	Change	% of Jobs Lost	% of Jobs Gained
<b>TOTAL EMPLOYMENT</b>	235,133	224,552	-10,581 (-4.5%)	-----	-----
<b>Health Care &amp; Social Assistance</b>	42,208	42,652	+444 (+1.0%)		7.0%
<b>Retail Trade</b>	29,144	28,715	-429 (-1.5%)	2.5%	
<b>Manufacturing</b>	22,715	16,693	-6,022 (-26.5%)	35.5%	
<b>Educational Services</b>	22,537	22,191	-346 (-1.5%)	2.0%	
<b>Accommodation &amp; Food Services</b>	19,091	23,636	+4,545 (+23.8%)		71.5%
<b>Construction</b>	13,004	11,589	-1,415 (-10.9%)	8.3%	
<b>Administrative &amp; Waste Services</b>	10,853	11,325	+472 (+4.3%)		7.4%
<b>Public Administration</b>	10,546	10,444	-102 (-1.0%)	.60%	
<b>Arts, Entertainment, &amp; Recreation</b>	9,782	6,051	-3,731 (-38.1%)	22.0%	
<b>Wholesale Trade</b>	9,704	8,528	-1,176 (-12.1%)	6.9%	
<b>Professional &amp; Technical Services</b>	7,872	6,955	-917 (-11.6%)	5.4%	
<b>Transportation &amp; Warehousing</b>	7,525	7,733	+208 (+2.8%)		3.3%
<b>Finance &amp; Insurance</b>	6,331	5,832	-499 (-7.9%)	2.9%	
<b>Other Services</b>	5,756	5,129	-627 (-10.9%)	3.7%	
<b>Mining</b>	5,080	5,571	+491 (+9.7%)		7.7%
<b>Information</b>	3,781	2,962	-819 (-21.7%)	4.8%	
<b>Real Estate, Rental, and Leasing</b>	3,517	3,716	+199 (+5.7%)		3.1%
<b>Management of Companies &amp; Enterprises</b>	2,033	1,580	-453 (-22.3%)	2.7%	
<b>Utilities</b>	2,023	1,991	-32 (-1.6%)	.20%	
<b>Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, &amp; Hunting</b>	1,631	1,259	-372 (-22.8%)	2.2%	

Jobs lost = 16,940  
Jobs gained = 6,359  
Net change = -10,581

Figure 1 - Trend in Total Non-Farm Payroll Employment  
Shreveport-Bossier City MSA 2007 to 2015  
(Data source: Louisiana Workforce Commission LMI, www.laworks.net)



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It cannot be determined with any degree of certainty what economic activity or trends at the Local, Regional, State, or National level may have contributed to the increases in employment shown in Table 1 for the Administrative and Waste Services, Transportation and Warehousing, and Real Estate, Rental, and Leasing sectors. However, both Local Workforce Development Areas (LWDAs) in Region 7, (LWDA 70 and LWDA 71) have used Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) funds to enroll a considerable number of WIOA participants in truck driving (CDL) schools resulting in a high placement rate in training related (truck driver) jobs. WIOA financial assistance has also been provided to a considerable extent for training in Health Care sector related occupations, especially Licensed Practical Nurses and Registered Nurses, both high-demand occupations in Region 7. It should be kept in mind that the data in Table 1 show employment in the aggregate for each of the 20 two digit NAICS sectors. It is always possible that some firms (employers) within a sector may be adding employees (hiring) while some firms within the same sector may not be hiring or even laying off employees. Job creation in some firms still goes on regardless of the overall state of the Region's economy. Two examples are the Manufacturing and the Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services sectors. The closure of Shreveport's General Motors plant in 2012 resulted in around 2,000 jobs leaving the Region but in 2014 Benteler Steel established a facility at the Red River Port in Caddo Parish which now employs 300 workers with employment possibly expanding to 600 workers over the next few years. Table 1 shows that employment in the Professional and Technical Services sector declined by 11.6% from 2007 to 2015. However, in 2014 the Computer Services Corporation (CSC) opened a facility in Bossier City which now has 200 employees with several hundred more employees expected to be added in the near future.

**(ii) Emerging Demand Industry Sectors and Occupations. Provide an analysis of the industries and occupations for which demand is emerging.**

The Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC) provides short-term (2 year) employment projections by industry (2 digit NAICS sectors) for Region 7 as shown in Table 2. Under the assumption that short-term projections would more likely be an indicator of emerging trends in employment growth and the occupations associated with particular industry sectors, the short-term (2014 to 2016) projections in Table 2 contain a number of contradictions when compared with the changes in employment that appear to have actually taken place for some sectors as represented in Table 1. Two examples are the Health Care and Social Assistance and Manufacturing sectors. Table 1 indicates that the Health Care and Social Assistance sector experienced a slight (1.0%) growth in employment over the period of 2007 to 2015 while in Table 2 this sector is projected to see a 4.1% decrease in employment over the two year period of 2014 to 2016. Likewise, Table 2 shows the Manufacturing sector in a position to see its employment expand by 6.4% from 2014 to 2016 but in Table 1 employment in Region 7's Manufacturing sector declined by almost 27% from 2007 to 2015.

With the assumptions behind the Louisiana Workforce Commission's short-term projections (Table 2) unknown, more consideration will be placed on the long-term projections for both industry sectors and occupations as contained in Table 3 and Table 4.

**Table 2**

**Projected Short Term (2014 to 2016) Employment Growth  
for Two Digit NAICS Sectors – Region 7, Northwest Louisiana  
(Source: Louisiana Workforce Commission LMI, [www.laworks.net](http://www.laworks.net))**

	<b>Employment Change 2014 to 2016</b>	<b>Employment Growth Rate 2014 to 2016</b>
<b>Total, All Industries</b>	+5,179	+2.1%
<b>Accommodation &amp; Food Services</b>	+1,717	+7.7%
<b>Construction</b>	+1,258	+11.7%
<b>Manufacturing</b>	+1,059	+6.4%
<b>Professional, Scientific, &amp; Technical Services</b>	+1,052	+16.4%
<b>Educational Services</b>	+716	+3.2%
<b>Transportation &amp; Warehousing</b>	+587	+7.3%
<b>Arts, Entertainment, &amp; Recreation</b>	+446	+8.2%
<b>Wholesale Trade</b>	+422	+4.8%
<b>Management of Companies &amp; Enterprises</b>	+180	+10.5%
<b>Mining</b>	+155	+2.4%
<b>Retail Trade</b>	+144	+5%
<b>Finance &amp; Insurance</b>	+124	+2.0%
<b>Real Estate &amp; Rental &amp; Leasing</b>	+91	+2.7%
<b>Information</b>	+79	+2.9%
<b>Agriculture, Fishing, Forestry, &amp; Hunting</b>	+75	+2.1%
<b>Utilities</b>	-91	-6.3%
<b>Administrative &amp; Waste Services</b>	-128	-1.1%
<b>Government</b>	-405	-2.5%
<b>Other Services, Except Public Administration</b>	-585	-3.0%
<b>Health Care &amp; Social Assistance</b>	-1,717	-4.1%

**Table 3**

**Projected Long Term (2012 to 2022) Employment Growth  
for Two Digit NAICS Sectors – Region 7, Northwest Louisiana  
(Source: Louisiana Workforce Commission LMI, www.laworks.net)**

	<b>Employment Change 2012 to 2022</b>	<b>Employment Growth Rate 2012 to 2022</b>
<b>Total, All Industries</b>	+32,087	+13.2%
<b>Health Care &amp; Social Assistance</b>	+7,554	+18.0%
<b>Accommodation &amp; Food Services</b>	+4,326	+19.3%
<b>Professional, Scientific, &amp; Technical Services</b>	+2,821	+43.9%
<b>Manufacturing</b>	+2,269	+13.6%
<b>Mining</b>	+2,208	+34.8%
<b>Retail Trade</b>	+2,173	+7.6%
<b>Administrative &amp; Waste Services</b>	+1,711	+14.0%
<b>Educational Services</b>	+1,511	+6.7%
<b>Government</b>	+1,403	+8.6%
<b>Construction</b>	+1,389	+12.9%
<b>Transportation &amp; Warehousing</b>	+1,279	+15.9%
<b>Other Services, Except Public Administration</b>	+1,188	+6.1%
<b>Wholesale Trade</b>	+1,102	+12.4%
<b>Management of Companies &amp; Enterprises</b>	+373	+21.7%
<b>Real Estate &amp; Rental &amp; Leasing</b>	+287	+8.5%
<b>Utilities</b>	+221	+15.4%
<b>Information</b>	+178	+6.6%
<b>Arts, Entertainment, &amp; Recreation</b>	+117	+2.2%
<b>Finance &amp; Insurance</b>	+115	+1.9%
<b>Agriculture, Fishing, Forestry, &amp; Hunting</b>	-138	-5.4%

- (iii) Employers' Employment Needs. With regard to the industry sectors and occupations, provide an assessment of the employment needs of employers, including a description of the knowledge, skills and abilities required, including credentials and licenses.**

Changes in employment for industry sectors can result in changes in the occupational structure for any economy's labor market – the education and skill level required for jobs being created and the compensation (wages, salaries, benefits) that these jobs offer the labor force. Table 3 contains the Louisiana Workforce Commission's (LWC's) long-term (2012 to 2022) employment projections for industry sectors in Region 7. Looking to the year 2022, the Health Care and Social Assistance sector can be expected to provide the greatest number of employment opportunities for Region 7's labor force. At least 20% or more of Region 7's employment growth (1 out of 5 jobs) will likely be generated by this sector. Health Care expenditures make up 17% of the national economy's GDP and, with the retiring baby boomers and recent health care legislation (Affordable Care Act), it is unlikely this percentage will be reduced. Within the Accommodation and Food Services sector (ranking second in projected employment growth) is found the hotel/motel industry (Shreveport and Bossier City have a number of large hotels associated with its casinos) and diverse restaurants offering expensive cuisine or the ever-growing fast food franchises. In Table 3 the Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services sector is projected to have the highest growth rate in employment at 43.9%. It is speculated that three NAICS sub-sectors will likely drive this employment growth: Legal Services, Accounting, Bookkeeping, and Payroll Services, and Computer Systems Design and Related Services. Should the price of oil rebound in 2017 and during the remainder of this decade, increased exploration and extraction activity within some of Region 7's parishes can be expected along with a strong boost in employment for the Mining sector (the second highest projected growth rate in employment at 34.8%). If the employment projections in Table 3 are accurate, only one of the 20 NAICS sectors in Region 7 will see its employment decline; Agriculture, Fishing, Forestry, and Hunting which employs less than one percent of the Region's labor force.

What possible impact will these long-term industry employment projections have on the employment needs of employers and the knowledge, skills, abilities, and credentials required of Region 7's labor force? Data on industry staffing patterns are combined with industry employment projections to produce employment projections for occupations. Through this process, the LWC has made available long-term employment projections (2013 to 2022) for over 453 occupations in Region 7. Table 4 contains employment projections for the 30 occupations within Region 7 that are projected to see the greatest increases in employment to the year 2022.

One typology that the LWC has developed for evaluating the quality of a job and its associated occupational title is the Star Jobs rating system.

Under this typology, four and five Star Jobs are considered demand occupations taking into consideration such factors as the compensation they offer, education and skill level required, and number of employment opportunities (job openings) expected to be available.

Table 5 contains the Star Jobs rating for the 30 occupations in Table 4, a simplified categorization of the education or training required for the occupation, and estimated average earnings for the occupation in 2014. Of the 30 occupations in Region 7 projected to see the greatest increases in employment (2013 to 2022), thirteen (34%) have been assigned a four or five Star Jobs rating. If occupations with a three Star Jobs rating are also included, seventeen (57%) of the top 30 occupations in projected employment growth could be considered as demand occupations.

Among the 453 occupations for which Region 7 employment projections are available, about a third (32%) have a five or four Star Jobs rating. Including the three Star Jobs occupations pushes this portion up to 52%. Five, four, and three Star Jobs require a greater investment in education or training (from graduate school to short-term vocational training or apprenticeships) and offer greater incomes. And, that is part of the paradox seen in Table 4. The occupations Personal Care Aides and Combined Food Preparation Workers rank first and second in the projected increases in employment but provide an annual income of a little over \$17,000. Both occupations require less than a high school education for entry. The LWC defines economic self-sufficiency as 200% of the HHS Poverty Level for an individual which now equates to \$23,760. Eighteen of the top 30 occupations in Table 4 meet this income standard. 70% of the Lower Living Standard Level (LLSIL) for a family of four is currently at \$25,062. Seventeen of the top 30 occupations in Table 4 meet this income standard. The return on investment from education and training, if it is measured in income, is obvious in Table 5. The Louisiana Workforce Commission Star Jobs rating system and its occupational employment projections Labor Market Information (LMI) will continue to serve as the primary means for determining where Region 7 Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), the One-Stop Center system, and Core Partner funds will be invested in order to meet the needs of employers in having access to a labor force possessing the required skills and credentials.

**Table 4**

**Top 30 Occupations with Greatest Projected Increases in Employment in Region 7  
Northwest Louisiana – 2013 to 2022**

(Source: Louisiana Workforce Commission LMI, [www.laworks.net](http://www.laworks.net))

	2013 Estimated Employment	2022 Projected Employment	Projected Increase in Employment
Personal Care Aides	3,110	4,360	+1,250
Combined Food Preparation	4,440	5,610	+1,170
Registered Nurses	6,130	7,090	+960
Retail Salespersons	8,000	8,890	+890
Waiters & Waitresses	5,030	5,810	+790
Team Assemblers	1,520	2,280	+760
Laborers (Freight, Stock, Material)	4,720	5,440	+720
Nursing Assistants	4,250	4,920	+670
Licensed Practical Nurses	3,450	4,100	+650
Secretaries & Admin. Assistants	5,150	5,780	+630
Bookkeeping, Accounting Clerks	3,590	4,180	+590
Customer Service Representatives	3,440	4,020	+580
General Operations Managers	3,200	3,720	+520
Janitors & Cleaners	5,140	5,650	+520
Heavy & Tractor-Trailer Truck Driver	4,640	5,140	+500
Home Health Aides	1,210	1,710	+500
Cooks, Restaurant	1,920	2,410	+490
Maintenance & Repair Workers	3,520	3,950	+430
First-Line Supervisors Food Prep.	1,860	2,270	+410
Accountants & Auditors	1,570	1,950	+380
Construction Laborers	2,320	2,670	+350
Machinists	720	1,060	+350
Cashiers	7,980	8,320	+340
Maids & Housekeeping Cleaners	2,890	3,220	+340
First Line Supervisors Office/Admin.	2,470	2,780	+320
Industrial Machinery Mechanics	870	1,190	+320
Sales Representatives	2,790	3,110	+310
Food Preparation Workers	2,510	2,810	+300
Office Clerks, General	4,530	4,820	+290
Carpenters	1,780	2,050	+270

**Table 5**

**Star Ratings, Education/Training Required, and Annual Earnings for Top 30 Occupations  
with Greatest Projected Increases in Employment in Region 7  
(Source: Louisiana Workforce Commission LMI, [www.laworks.net](http://www.laworks.net))**

	<b>Star Rating</b>	<b>Education/Training Required</b>	<b>Average Annual Earnings in 2014</b>
<b>Personal Care Aides</b>	1	Less than high school	\$17,299
<b>Combined Food Preparation</b>	1	Less than high school	\$17,303
<b>Registered Nurses</b>	5	Associates degree	\$57,125
<b>Retail Salespersons</b>	2	High school diploma or equivalent	\$23,015
<b>Waiters &amp; Waitresses</b>	2	Less than high school	\$18,943
<b>Team Assemblers</b>	4	High school diploma or equivalent	\$30,129
<b>Laborers: Freight, Stock, Material</b>	2	Less than high school	\$23,655
<b>Nursing Assistants</b>	2	Postsecondary non-degree	\$20,497
<b>Licensed Practical Nurses</b>	4	Postsecondary non-degree	\$37,199
<b>Secretaries &amp; Admin. Assistants</b>	3	Postsecondary non-degree	\$28,011
<b>Bookkeeping, Accounting Clerks</b>	4	Associates Degree	\$35,029
<b>Customer Service Representative</b>	3	Postsecondary non-degree	\$27,690
<b>General Operations Managers</b>	5	Bachelors degree	\$104,531
<b>Janitors &amp; Cleaners</b>	2	Less than high school	\$19,664
<b>Heavy &amp; Tractor-Trailer Drivers</b>	5	Postsecondary non-degree	\$36,417
<b>Home Health Aides</b>	2	Less than high school	\$18,695
<b>Cooks, Restaurant</b>	2	Postsecondary non-degree	\$20,049
<b>Maintenance &amp; Repair Workers</b>	4	High school diploma or equivalent	\$30,722
<b>First-Line Supervisors Food Prep.</b>	3	High school diploma or equivalent	\$28,055
<b>Accountants &amp; Auditors</b>	5	Bachelors degree	\$62,580
<b>Construction Laborers</b>	3	Less than high school	\$28,352
<b>Machinists</b>	5	Postsecondary non-degree	\$39,894
<b>Cashiers</b>	1	High school diploma or equivalent	\$18,188
<b>Maids &amp; Housekeeping Cleaners</b>	1	Less than high school	\$17,519
<b>First Line Supervisors Office/Admin.</b>	5	Associates degree	\$42,948
<b>Industrial Machinery Mechanics</b>	5	Postsecondary non-degree	\$49,758
<b>Sales Representatives</b>	5	Postsecondary non-degree	\$54,840
<b>Food Preparation Workers</b>	1	Less than high school	\$17,523
<b>Office Clerks, General</b>	2	High school diploma or equivalent	\$24,081
<b>Carpenters</b>	5	Postsecondary non-degree	\$33,528

**(B) Workforce Analysis**

**The Plan must include an analysis of the current workforce, including individuals with barriers to employment as defined in section 3 of WIOA. This population must include individuals with disabilities among other groups in the Regional/Local areas as defined by the State. This includes:**

- (i) Employment and Unemployment. Provide an analysis of current employment and unemployment data, including labor force participation rates, and trends in the Region/Local area.**

There is an ongoing discussion among economists and other social scientists concerning an observed drop in the nation's labor force participation rate, the percent of the working age population that is employed or unemployed but still seeking employment. This decline in labor force participation has generally been attributed to the retiring baby boomers who initially entered the labor force in great numbers during the 1970s and the discouraged worker phenomenon, with other social and demographic factors also contributing. There is some indication that Region 7 has also been following this trend in declining labor force participation although it is not possible to say with any certainty what the primary contributing factors are due to a lack of reliable data at the Local or Regional level.

Table 6 shows that, although Region 7's population increased from 2007 to 2015 (an increase of 2.1%) the size of its labor force decreased by 3.1% resulting in a corresponding drop in the percentage of the population involved in the labor force (from 45.7% to 43.3%). Table 7 likely provides a more accurate picture in that it incorporates data on the population 16 years and over within each of Region 7's ten parishes (the population 16 to 64 years of age is the source of most labor force participants). A number of observations can be made from the data in Table 7. Region 7's population 16 years and over grew by 2.2% from 2010 to 2014 with the number of persons in this segment of the population participating in the labor force growing by only about four-tenths of a percentage point (.45%). This resulted in a one percentage point drop in the labor force participation rate (60.8% to 59.8%). But, Table 7 shows variation in the ten parishes that make up Region 7. It is obvious that the parishes with a smaller population have a lower labor force participation rate while the three parishes with the largest populations have labor force participation rates closer to the national norm; combining the populations and labor forces for Caddo and Bossier Parishes yields a labor force participation rate of almost 63%. The data in Table 7 reflect part of the challenge for economic and workforce development activities in Region 7. The Region's parishes that have the smallest populations are more rural in nature and offer their working age populations fewer employment opportunities unless they have the transportation means to commute to the more urban areas where jobs might be available. The age distribution composition of populations also makes a difference in labor force participation.

**Table 6**

**Region 7 (Northwest Louisiana) Population, Labor Force, and  
Labor Force as Percent of Population 2007 to 2015  
(Source: U.S. Census via www.laworks.com)**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>Labor Force</b>	<b>Labor Force as Percent of Population</b>
2007	581,116	265,390	45.7%
2008	583,549	270,772	46.4%
2009	586,652	266,453	45.4%
2010	590,984	265,002	44.8%
2011	596,305	262,771	44.1%
2012	599,283	259,825	43.4%
2013	597,058	256,649	43.0%
2014	594,374	258,396	43.5%
2015	593,521	257,284	43.3%

**Percent Change – 2007 to 2015**

<b>Population</b>	<b>Labor Force</b>	<b>Labor Force as % of Population</b>
<b>+2.1%</b>	<b>-3.1%</b>	<b>-5.3%</b>

**Table 7**

**Population, Labor Force, and Labor Force Participation Rate 2010 to 2014  
Ten Parishes in Region 7, Northwest Louisiana  
(Source: U. S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey, [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov))**

**Population 16 Years and Over**

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Caddo	197,481	198,385	199,259	199,891	199,940
Bossier	87,618	89,091	90,893	92,483	94,096
Lincoln	37,400	37,812	38,156	38,156	38,559
Webster	32,676	32,585	32,552	32,432	32,397
Natchitoches	30,681	30,873	30,997	30,926	30,899
DeSoto	20,634	20,865	20,978	21,043	21,188
Sabine	18,854	19,006	19,075	19,107	19,077
Claiborne	14,080	14,124	14,165	14,045	13,954
Bienville	11,600	11,532	11,290	11,274	11,216
Red River	7,096	7,041	7,048	6,998	6,965
Region 7 Total	458,120	461,314	464,413	466,355	468,291

**Population 16 Years and Over in Labor Force**

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Caddo	121,126	122,442	123,109	121,880	120,347
Bossier	59,947	59,862	61,882	63,244	63,760
Lincoln	21,809	22,391	22,442	22,985	23,213
Webster	18,419	18,305	18,069	17,384	17,193
Natchitoches	17,605	17,821	17,784	17,768	17,498
DeSoto	12,512	12,425	12,372	11,944	11,727
Sabine	9,940	10,159	10,114	9,907	10,040
Claiborne	7,718	7,549	7,499	7,288	6,841
Bienville	5,731	5,528	5,719	5,759	5,722
Red River	3,883	3,665	3,603	3,766	3,602
Region 7 Total	278,690	280,147	282,593	281,925	279,943

**Labor Force Participation Rate for Population 16 Years and Over**

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Caddo	61.3%	61.7%	61.8%	61.0%	60.2%
Bossier	68.4%	67.2%	68.1%	68.4%	67.8%
Lincoln	58.3%	59.2%	58.8%	60.2%	60.2%
Webster	56.4%	56.2%	55.5%	53.6%	53.1%
Natchitoches	57.4%	57.7%	57.4%	57.5%	56.6%
DeSoto	60.6%	59.5%	59.0%	56.8%	55.3%
Sabine	52.7%	53.5%	53.0%	51.9%	52.6%
Claiborne	54.8%	53.4%	52.9%	51.9%	49.0%
Bienville	49.4%	47.9%	50.7%	51.1%	51.0%
Red River	54.7%	52.1%	51.1%	53.8%	51.7%
Region 7 Total	60.8%	60.7%	60.8%	60.4%	59.8%

For example, the 2010 Census showed that 16% of Claiborne Parish's population is 65 years and over compared with 12.0% for Bossier Parish. Labor force participation for this segment of the population usually begins to drop dramatically due to retirement.

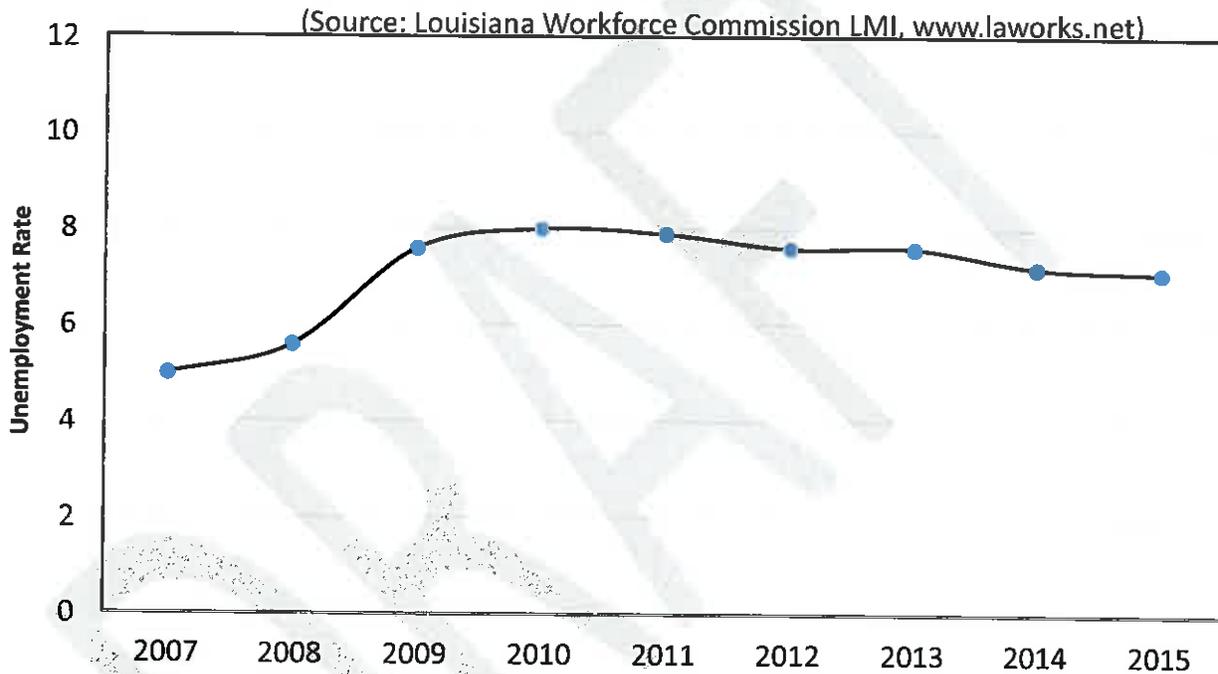
What is an acceptable or good unemployment rate? Although there is no clear consensus within the economics profession, an unemployment rate of around 5.0% is currently considered to be a balancing point where enough jobs are being created to provide employment opportunities for most participants in the labor force looking for work (in theory, unemployment can never go to 0% due to frictional factors). This was Region 7's experience prior to the beginning of the Great Recession. Figure 2 consists of a line graph displaying changes in Region 7's unemployment rate from 2007 to 2015. In 2007, Region 7's unemployment rate was estimated at 5.0% with a dramatic jump to 7.6% in 2009 and an unemployment rate of 8.0% occurring for 2010 before beginning a gradual decline to 7.0% in 2015. According to data from the Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC), in 2007 there were 13,238 unemployed workers in Region 7 with 17,940 unemployed estimated for 2015 (the number of unemployed with Region 7 rose to 21,193 in 2010). The impact of a declining labor force participation rate may be a contributing factor in reducing Region 7's unemployment rate since its peak in 2010 (8.0%) given what appears to be weak employment growth within the Region as demonstrated in Table 1 and Figure 1. Additionally, not all racial/ethnic groups bear the burden of unemployment equally. According to the LWC's publication, Louisiana Labor Force Diversity 2015, African Americans make up 38.2% of Region 7's population, and 36.2% of its labor force, but have an unemployment rate considerably higher than that of the total labor force at 11.0%. Data from this publication also indicate that African Americans comprise over half (55%) of Region 7's unemployed.

Of the individuals with barriers to employment identified in Section 3 of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), there are two groups that are of particular significance to Region 7 in the provision of WIOA funded training services: individuals with disabilities and low income Adults. The data in Table 8 and Table 9 give some indication of these two groups' presence within the ten parishes that make up Region 7 (here, income below poverty level is used as a proxy for low income Adult). In Table 8 there appears to be an association between the percent of the population 16 years and over with any disability and the percent of the same population segment with income below poverty level. Additionally, the presence of both groups appears to be greater in Region 7's parishes that have smaller populations and are more rural in nature. Using the data from the Census Bureau's American Community Survey, it can be estimated that 11% of the population 16 years and over in Region 7 may have a disability. However, the data does not indicate the nature or severity of the disability, the extent of labor force participation of the disabled in each parish, and to what extent accommodations or assistive technology may be necessary for training or employment. However, this underscores the importance of Louisiana Rehabilitation Services (LRS) as a partner within Region 7's public workforce system Business and Career Solutions Centers (BCSCs) in providing services to individuals with disabilities.

As Table 9 shows, the parishes in Region 7 with the highest unemployment rates are more likely to have lower median household incomes.

This could be a consequence of fewer employment opportunities available to the working age population in these parishes but something else that Table 9 points to is the importance of the public education system and health care services in providing jobs in all of Region 7's ten parishes.

**Figure 2 - Trend in Unemployment Rates for Region 7 (Northwest Louisiana)**  
2007 to 2015



**Table 8**  
**Disability and Poverty Level Status for Population 16 Years**  
**and Over in 2014 – Ten Parishes in Region 7, Northwest Louisiana**  
 (Source: U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey, [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov))

	Percent with Any Disability	Percent with Income Below Poverty Level
Bienville	14.1%	17.0%
Webster	12.6%	15.1%
Sabine	12.1%	12.8%
DeSoto	12.0%	12.0%
Red River	11.5%	14.3%
Natchitoches	11.4%	18.8%
Claiborne	11.2%	11.2%
Caddo	9.7%	13.5%
Bossier	8.5%	8.9%
Lincoln	8.2%	8.2%

**Table 9**  
**Unemployment Rate, Median Household Income,**  
**and Sector Employing Greatest Percentage of Civilian Labor Force in 2014**  
**Ten Parishes in Region 7, Northwest Louisiana**  
 (Source: U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey, [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov))

	Unemployment Rate	Median Household Income	Sector Employing Greatest Percentage of Civilian Labor Force
Claiborne	16.0%	\$34,216	Educational Services, Health Care, & Social Assistance – 23.0%
Lincoln	12.3%	\$34,210	Educational Services, Health Care, & Social Assistance – 34.9%
Red River	11.6%	\$37,681	Educational Services, Health Care, & Social Assistance – 22.7%
Natchitoches	11.2%	\$33,629	Educational Services, Health Care, & Social Assistance – 25.6%
Bienville	10.9%	\$32,826	Educational Services, Health Care, & Social Assistance – 23.9%
Sabine	10.6%	\$36,513	Educational Services, Health Care, & Social Assistance – 22.4%
Webster	10.6%	\$35,292	Educational Services, Health Care, & Social Assistance – 22.2%
DeSoto	8.9%	\$41,486	Educational Services, Health Care, & Social Assistance – 20.9%
Caddo	7.7%	\$41,251	Educational Services, Health Care, & Social Assistance – 27.1%
Bossier	6.3%	\$52,754	Educational Services, Health Care, & Social Assistance – 24.1%

**(ii) Labor Market Trends. Provide an analysis of key labor market trends, including across existing industries and occupations.**

This topic was addressed in (A)(iii) above. However, nonfarm payroll data for the Shreveport-Bossier City Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) indicate that overall employment growth for the first four months of 2016 remains weak with the exception of some gains in employment within the Trade, Transportation, Utilities, Educational Services, and Health Care Sectors. In January of 2016 Region 7's unemployment rate slipped under 7.0% (6.8%) and fell to 6.4% in April. It cannot yet be determined if this drop in the Region's unemployment rate represents a trend that will continue throughout the year or if total payroll employment will, at some point, begin to show net gains. All indications are that Region 7 has not fully recovered from the job loss that took place over the period of 2007 to 2015 (see Table 1 and Figure 1).

**(iii) Education and Skill Levels of the Workforce. Provide an analysis of the educational and skill levels of the workforce.**

As seen in Table 5, the education and training required for the top 30 occupations for which employment growth is expected to be the greatest in Region 7 varies but, one thing is certain, education and training have a close correlation with higher incomes. This can be further demonstrated with data available from the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey.

Tables 10, 11, and 12 present a picture of the educational attainment of the population 25 years and over for each of the ten parishes in Region 7 and its relationship with income and poverty status. Data for Louisiana and the United States are also included for comparison. A high school diploma alone is no longer a ticket to a good paying job, but as shown in Table 10, seven of the ten parishes in Region 7 exceed Louisiana in terms of the percentage of the population 25 years and over without a high school diploma. On the average, close to 19% of the Adult population in Region 7 may be lacking a high school diploma compared with 17.2% for Louisiana and 13.6% for the United States. From the data for Region 7's ten parishes contained in Table 11 and Table 12, it can be calculated that having a high school diploma may increase median annual earnings by as much as 45% and come close to reducing the poverty rate by almost half (from 34.0% to 18.7%).

Seven of the ten parishes in Region 7 lag behind Louisiana in the percentage of the population 25 years and over with a Bachelor's Degree (college diploma). Only Lincoln Parish (the location of Louisiana Tech and Grambling State University) exceeds the United States in the percentage of the population with a Bachelor's Degree. On the positive side, the ten parishes in Region 7 compare favorably with Louisiana and the United States in the percentage of the population 25 years and over with some college or an Associate's Degree. In looking at Table 11, having some college or an Associate's Degree increases median earnings to some extent (beyond having just a high school diploma) but having a Bachelor's Degree increases median earnings significantly.

**Table 10**  
**Educational Attainment of Population 25 Years**  
**and Over in 2014 – Ten Parishes in Region 7, Louisiana, and United States**  
 (Source: U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey, [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov))

	Less Than High School	High School Graduate	Some College	Associate’s Degree	Bachelor’s Degree	Graduate/ Professional Degree
Bienville	20.4%	41.3%	22.2%	4.2%	8.2%	3.9%
Bossier	12.2%	30.7%	24.8%	7.3%	15.8%	9.2%
Caddo	14.3%	33.2%	23.1%	5.9%	15.0%	8.5%
Claiborne	23.7%	40.0%	19.4%	4.0%	8.9%	4.1%
DeSoto	20.7%	40.1%	22.1%	5.1%	8.9%	3.1%
Lincoln	15.1%	27.0%	18.3%	5.1%	20.5%	14.1%
Natchitoches	18.8%	36.1%	20.0%	4.5%	11.7%	8.8%
Red River	24.1%	44.3%	16.7%	3.7%	8.1%	3.2%
Sabine	18.4%	41.2%	21.4%	5.3%	9.5%	4.3%
Webster	21.0%	40.1%	19.5%	5.0%	11.0%	3.4%
Louisiana	17.2%	33.9%	21.4%	5.3%	14.7%	7.4%
United States	13.6%	28.0%	21.2%	7.9%	18.3%	11.0%

**Table 11**  
**Median Earnings in 2014 by Educational Attainment for Population 25 Years and Over**  
**Ten Parishes in Region 7, Louisiana, and United States**  
 (Source: U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey, [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov))

	Less Than High School	High School Graduate	Some College Or Associate’s Degree	Bachelor’s Degree	Graduate/ Professional Degree
Bienville	\$27,634	\$26,358	\$32,229	\$42,887	\$42,500
Bossier	\$19,685	\$30,588	\$34,560	\$49,908	\$59,240
Caddo	\$17,020	\$26,005	\$30,036	\$46,880	\$60,654
Claiborne	\$16,293	\$21,114	\$22,721	\$49,914	\$46,404
DeSoto	\$16,943	\$27,339	\$32,463	\$46,977	\$54,728
Lincoln	\$14,761	\$24,615	\$25,517	\$36,018	\$50,107
Natchitoches	\$14,755	\$24,292	\$26,467	\$42,184	\$55,814
Red River	\$17,407	\$30,854	\$31,600	\$56,282	\$54,167
Sabine	\$23,417	\$30,523	\$29,837	\$45,244	\$51,575
Webster	\$16,569	\$26,043	\$27,175	\$43,957	\$55,313
Louisiana	\$19,807	\$28,123	\$32,131	\$47,451	\$57,218
United States	\$19,954	\$27,868	\$33,988	\$50,515	\$66,944

**Table 12**  
**Poverty Rate for the Population 25 Years and Over by Educational Attainment**  
**Ten Parishes in Region 7, Louisiana, United States**  
 (Source: U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey, [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov))

	Less Than High School Graduate	High School Graduate	Some College Or Associate's Degree	Bachelor's Degree Or Higher
<b>Bienville</b>	35.5%	24.7%	16.5%	9.2%
<b>Bossier</b>	24.3%	13.0%	9.6%	2.0%
<b>Caddo</b>	32.7%	19.2%	12.9%	5.4%
<b>Claiborne</b>	34.8%	21.1%	16.6%	3.3%
<b>DeSoto</b>	40.6%	15.6%	14.1%	8.9%
<b>Lincoln</b>	38.0%	22.3%	24.0%	9.1%
<b>Natchitoches</b>	34.7%	19.8%	13.5%	4.5%
<b>Red River</b>	34.6%	17.5%	15.4%	4.4%
<b>Sabine</b>	30.6%	15.4%	15.8%	4.1%
<b>Webster</b>	34.9%	17.9%	15.2%	6.9%
<b>Louisiana</b>	30.8%	16.2%	12.6%	4.9%
<b>United States</b>	27.6%	14.2%	10.5%	4.5%

This again supports the association between educational attainment and higher incomes for Region 7's working age population.

Usually by the age of 18, many Youth are graduating from high school and making decisions on their future, pursue further education or vocational training, find a job, or possibly enter the military. Having a high school diploma is a springboard to these decisions. But, it appears that a significant percentage of Youth in Region 7 between the ages of 18 to 24 lack this essential accomplishment. As indicated in Table 13, in the ten parishes located in Region 7, anywhere from 12.0% to 35.0% of Youth between the ages of 18 to 24 do not have a high school diploma (or its equivalent). Realizing this need, both Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) within Region 7 have been coordinating services with Louisiana Technical Colleges and Community Based Organizations (CBOs) to assist Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) eligible Out-of-School Youth in preparing for the HiSET (high school equivalency) and in arranging placements in WIOA funded work experience positions with public and private employers. But, as also shown in Table 13, Youth in Region 7 between the ages of 18 to 24 are pursuing further education (and perhaps vocational training) beyond high school in significant numbers, especially in the more urban or populous parishes. The presence of a college (or university) within a parish is obviously an asset when looking at the percentage of Youth in this age group with some college or Associate's Degree (e.g., Bossier, Caddo, Lincoln, Natchitoches).

**Table 13**  
**Educational Attainment of Population 18 to 24 Years – Ten Parishes in Region 7, Louisiana, United States**  
 (Source: U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey, [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov))

	Less Than High School Graduate	High School Graduate	Some College Or Associate's Degree	Bachelor's Degree Or Higher
Bienville	23.0%	44.1%	26.6%	6.3%
Bossier	20.1%	30.4%	42.5%	7.0%
Caddo	22.9%	31.7%	38.9%	6.5%
Claiborne	35.0%	47.1%	16.7%	1.2%
DeSoto	29.8%	27.2%	38.0%	5.1%
Lincoln	11.9%	15.0%	58.0%	15.2%
Natchitoches	17.4%	25.4%	49.6%	7.6%
Red River	29.2%	44.7%	25.0%	1.1%
Sabine	20.8%	46.6%	29.1%	3.4%
Webster	20.3%	44.3%	34.5%	0.8%
Louisiana	19.9%	31.3%	41.6%	7.2%
United States	15.0%	29.5%	45.8%	9.6%

**(iv) Skill Gaps. Describe apparent skill gaps.**

Lack of a high school diploma (or its equivalent) is obviously a significant skill gap for Region 7's Adult population and labor force. And, as with Adults, not having a high school diploma also appears to be a significant skill gap for older Youth (18 to 24) in Region 7. The partnership with Adult Education programs in Region 7 will be vital in closing this skill gap, enhancing the employability of the Adult and older Youth populations, and in increasing labor force participation rates.

Nonetheless, the importance of vocational training or higher education (college/university degree programs) should not be overlooked in addressing skill gaps for Region 7's labor force. Referring back to Table 5, thirteen of the top 30 occupations for which the greatest increases in employment are projected for Region 7 require an Associate's Degree (typically taking 2 years to complete) or a post-secondary non-degree. Becoming a Registered Nurse (a 5 Star Job) requires at least an Associate's Degree and can provide an annual income of over \$50,000. A post-secondary non-degree usually corresponds with obtaining a certificate offered by an educational institution (public or private) required for entry in specific occupations. Examples shown in Table 5 are Heavy & Tractor-Trailer Drivers, Machinists, and Carpenters – all 5 Star or high demand jobs in Region 7. Apprenticeships sponsored by unions or other professional organizations are also an avenue to good paying jobs. In Region 7, Electricians and Plumbers, Pipefitters, and Steamfitters are identified by the Louisiana Workforce Commission as 5 Star Jobs offering average annual earnings at around \$40,000. Union sponsored Apprenticeship programs for both of these occupations are actively working with Region 7's Workforce Development Boards in developing training opportunities for WIOA eligible participants.

What do employers in Region 7 identify as skill gaps within the Local labor force? Information from a second quarter 2011 Job Vacancy Survey conducted for 454 employers in Northwest Louisiana (Region 7) by the Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC) revealed that 27.8% reported no difficulty in filling job vacancies with 26.2% responding that they had difficulty finding applicants with sufficient experience.

Of the 454 employers surveyed, only 11.2% indicated that they had been unable to find applicants with the specific experience, training, skills and/or certification that we are seeking. Around 35% of the employers surveyed cited other factors related to job applicants or employees lacking soft skills, not being able to pass drug tests or background checks, frequent turnover in employees, unacceptable work schedules, and job applicants not willing to work for the wage or salary offered. Results from this employer survey appear to indicate that a Local labor force lacking specific hard skills (occupational skills) is not the major issue, however, relevant work experience, soft skills, and a willingness to accept the work schedule and compensation that goes with a job appear to be the more significant skill gaps characterizing the Local labor force.

The LWC's Regional Industry Coordinator for Northwest Louisiana often meets with employers to discuss their human resource or hiring needs which involves identifying possible skill gaps. Particular emphasis is given to meeting with employers (firms, businesses) who are part of the four (4) targeted industry sectors for Region 7: Health Care, Manufacturing, Transportation, and Services. The following identifies some of the specific soft skills and hard skills (occupational skills) needs identified by Region 7 employers:

**Health Care:** Medical Coding, experienced Registered Nurses (RNs), Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs), and Certified Nursing Assistants (CNAs) (due to frequent employee turnover)

**Manufacturing:** Machinists, Environmental, Health, and Safety Specialists, Electricians, Programmable Logic Controller (PLC) and Human Machine Interface (HMI) programming skills, good math skills, Maintenance Mechanics, Electronic Technicians, Welders, AutoCAD skills, Diesel and Gas Vehicle Mechanics, CDL Drivers for transport trucks.

**Services:** Good customer service skills, better communication (verbal, written) and social skills, trained Cooks, ability to pass drug screening tests and background checks, ability to use applications software such as Microsoft Word and Excel, better interviewing skills.

**Transportation:** CDL Drivers

Hard skills (specific occupational skills) have been cited as a need by some employers in these four targeted sectors but a common theme has been the importance of soft skills and a strong work ethic.

The public workforce system in Region 7 has the capacity and resources to meet skill gaps identified by employers that are related to specific occupational skill needs. However, addressing the soft skills and work ethic possessed by Region 7's labor force will be much more challenging.

## **2) Workforce Development, Education and Training Activities Analysis**

**The Plan must include an analysis of the workforce development activities, including education and training in the Region, to address the education and skill needs of the workforce, and the employment needs of employers. This must include an analysis of: the Region's workforce development activities, including education and training activities of the core programs, Regional Plan partner programs included in this plan and required and optional One-Stop delivery system partners. This must include an analysis of:**

**(A) The Regional Workforce Development Activities provide an analysis of the Regional workforce development activities, including education and training activities of the core programs, plan partner programs included in this Plan, and require and optional One-Stop Delivery System partners.**

The State has formally eliminated the sequence of service provision in Title I programs through development of a new Service Delivery Model. The new model connects all partners to clients at any entry point where assessment occurs. The process is further driven by co-enrollment across all active partner programs. The former sequence of service provision required participants to receive career services prior to training services. This caused confusion and sent mixed signals to individuals trying to access training.

Region 7's Service Delivery Model has effectively combined Core and Intensive services into Career services, giving all partner staff in Business and Career Solutions Centers the flexibility to provide access to training based on assessed need. This:

- Provides more flexible training delivery options to meet the needs of low-income individuals.
- Allow Region 7's Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDAs) to contract with colleges or eligible training providers to supply Customized Training for high-demand occupations and/or industry sectors.
- Region 7 will develop and refine innovative and effective models for obtaining industry-recognized credentials, which includes, integrated education and training approaches, Career Pathways, and industry or sector partnerships.
- Region 7 will also partner with WorkReady U (WRU) to 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 Business and Career Solutions Center in Region 7 that is also a Comprehensive Business and Career Solutions Center offers an extensive array of services which include for job seekers:

- Outreach, common intake and assessment, orientation to services, informational services, 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 child care and transportation.

For employers, Comprehensive Business and Career Solutions Centers offer:

- 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.

**(i) 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 provides opportunities for increasing a family's financial resources, helps parents stay employed, and establishes a solid foundation for the next generation.

For the past decade, Region 7 has consistently shifted toward a knowledge-based economy particularly for occupations found in the Healthcare sector. 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 estimates, and is preparing for, a shift in the next five years that will result in an increasing number of jobs requiring post-secondary education of some kind.

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.

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

**(ii) 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.

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. 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.

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.

### **(iii) Youth**

Because there is no single specific system designed to meet the specific development needs of In and Out-of-School Youth (16 to 24), Region 7 with its core partners, and partner programs has 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. 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'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 percent of Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Youth funds will be spent on workforce development services for Out-of-School Youth.

**(iv) Adult Education**

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) Business and Career Solutions Centers (BCSCs), 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 re-defining 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 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.

**(v) Wagner-Peyser**

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 Business and Career Solutions Centers (BCSCs). The intent is to ensure that unemployment insurance claimants receive the same services as all other job-seekers, including job training, labor exchange, career counseling, and labor market intelligence. The Unemployment Insurance (UI) claimant/job-seeker 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) BCSCs 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 eleven Business and Career Solution Centers dispersed throughout the ten parish area. Five Centers are full-service Centers located in Bossier, Caddo, Lincoln, Natchitoches, and Webster Parishes.

Region 7's leadership utilizes weekly professional staff development activities for staff members located at the BCSCs 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 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.

**(vi) Vocational Rehabilitation Services**

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

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

In addition, the agency's Rehabilitation Employment Development Specialist (REDS) serves as the LRS liaison for all BCSCs in Region 7 which includes providing LRS Public Awareness as well as services to consumers such as job seeking skills techniques and employment development. LRS is committed to the success of the BCSCs 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 BCSCs.

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.

LRS and Bossier Parish Community College (BPCC) will enter into a third party arrangement to provide a post-secondary vocational training program to only those students (consumers) with disabilities who are applicants for or recipients of LRS services.

The Program for Successful Employment (PSE) will be designed to increase the number of consumers with disabilities completing high school through dual enrollment opportunities located on a college campus leading to competitive employment. Once exited from the Local education agency, consumers will complete their courses on the BPCC Campus. PSE will provide career guidance, vocational sampling and training, and job placement opportunities for those consumers in the Northwest, LA.

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 interagency 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.

**(vii) Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS)**

**Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)**

The Louisiana Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) is committed to providing cash assistance and supportive services to needy families meeting specific financial criteria and to provide services necessary to accomplish the goals and purposes of Section 401 of the Social Security Act (42 USC 601) in order to:

- Provide assistance to needy families so that children may be cared for in their own homes or in the homes of relatives.
- End dependence of parents on government benefits by promoting job preparation, and work.
- Prevent and reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancy.
- Encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families.

Region 7 has entered into a contract with the Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC) to operate the Strategies to Empower People (STEP) Program for TANF clients residing in the 10 parishes of Northwest Louisiana. TANF clients are required to report to Case Managers located at five Business and Career Solutions Centers in the Region. These Case Managers assist the clients in developing high-demand job skills and move towards self-sufficiency.

**Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)**

In January 2014, the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) partnered with the Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC) to help Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) recipients develop high-demand job skills and move toward self-sufficiency.

This partnership builds and expands on the previous partnership between DCFS and LWC, the Region's Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs), and the Business and Career Solutions Centers (BCSCs) to deliver workforce services to Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) families engaged in the Strategies to Empower People (STEP) program and the SNAP Louisiana Job Employment Training (LaJET) program. The LaJET program previously only targeted SNAP recipients classified as mandatory work registrants living in five Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs). The expanded partnership supports the registration of all working-age SNAP recipients to enroll with LWC and providing access to job postings, job trainings, and all other services of LWC.

To this end, the DCFS has committed to entering into agreements with public agencies, non-profit organizations, or for-profit organizations to provide intervention services including crisis intervention, counseling, mentoring, support services, and prenatal care information, in addition to information and referrals regarding healthy childbirth, adoption, and parenting to help ensure healthy and full-term pregnancies. Region 7's Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) shall facilitate and operate as appropriate under the specifics of these agreements.

### **Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWDs)**

Due to high unemployment rates in Louisiana, the United States Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service has granted Louisiana's request to exempt certain Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWDs) in Louisiana from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) time limit set forth in the Federal regulation 7 CFR 273.24.

Without this exemption, ABAWDs seeking SNAP assistance are only able to qualify for benefits for three months in a thirty-six month period unless the participant can document satisfactory work, education, or volunteer activities, as qualified under Federal law.

Recognizing the daily challenges faced by those receiving government assistance, it is a goal and a priority in the State of Louisiana to provide access to needed benefits while also providing ABAWD participants in Louisiana's SNAP program with tools to help achieve meaningful and sustainable employment.

Approximately one in four ABAWDs are eighteen to twenty-four year olds who would qualify for certain Federal incentives provided through the Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC), expressly aimed at assisting unemployed Youth who are Out-of-School, to obtain basic educational certifications, job skills, and sustainable employment.

The Department of Children's and Family Services (DCFS) and LWC shall partner to require that, in order to continue participating in SNAP through DCFS, all ABAWDs who are not currently employed, attending school, enrolled in a job training program, or otherwise exempt from current Federal work registration requirements shall register and participate in-person with programs offered by LWC's Business and Career Solutions Centers (BCSCs) providing basic job skills assessments, assistance with resume' preparation, job search, enrollment in education and training, and employment assistance.

All SNAP applicants/recipients who are not exempt from work registration requirements are considered Mandatory Work Registrants (MWRs) and are required to:

- Register for work at application and redetermination with the LWC by creating and maintaining an active Helping Individuals Reach Employment (HiRE) Account.
- Participate in employment and training programs, Louisiana Job Employment Training (LaJET) in LaJET parishes, Strategies to Empower People (STEP), and Unemployment Compensation Benefits (UCB).
- Participate with LWC if the MWR is an ABAWD, and
- Comply with all other work registration requirements.

All MWRs who live in a LaJET parish with the exception of ABAWDs must be referred to LaJET.

All ABAWDs who are MWRs must be referred to LWC instead of LaJET. All ABAWDs must comply with the following requirements to be eligible for SNAP benefits:

- Report to the BCSC when contacted by LWC.
- Attend the mandatory orientation scheduled by LWC, and
- Cooperate and complete all requirements determined by LWC.

DCFS and LWC shall develop policies, procedures, and an implementation schedule to effect these requirements on or before July 1, 2016 for all ABAWDs who are not currently employed, attending school, enrolled in a job training program, or otherwise exempt from current Federal work registration requirements.

LWC's ABAWD program will be known as the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Program (WIOP).

Each Local Workforce Development Area (LWDA) will be sent a notice ahead of time identifying the SNAP referrals who will be instructed by letter to report to a specific BCSC for an orientation.

The referrals will be in two separate groups: Youth (18 to 24) and Adults (25 to 49).

Within 30 days after the orientation they will receive notification to report back to the BCSC for a Comprehensive Assessment. Staff will develop a plan to assist these referrals in finding employment.

If they are still unemployed 30 days from the date the Comprehensive Assessment was completed, the BCSC should consider enrolling them in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) program for a training activity. Examples would be Adult Education (HiSET) for a Youth (18 to 24) who is a dropout and vocational training through an Individual Training Account (ITA) for an Adult (25 to 49). There could also be other options. LWC has assured the LWDA's that the BCSCs will not have to deal with compliance or exemption issues. LWC staff in Baton Rouge will notify DCFS of those SNAP recipients who do not comply with the required visits. DCFS will then decide who gets their SNAP benefits cut off.

**(viii) 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 Business and Career Solutions Centers (BCSCs) 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.

**(ix) Jobs for Veterans State Grant (JVSG)**

Louisiana provides employment, training and placement services to all Veterans through a network of strategically located Business and Career Solutions Centers (BCSCs), 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. Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC) JSVG funded activities are co-located within the State's BCSCs.

JVSG staff make referrals to a Local Veteran Employment Representative (LVER) and a Disabled Veteran Outreach Program (DVOP) Specialist, who 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 (LVER) staff member in Region 7 is located at the Caddo Business and Career Solutions 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 Business and Career Solutions Center that cover Caddo Parish, there is one DVOP located in the Bossier Business and Career Solutions Center that covers Bossier, Bienville, Claiborne, and Webster Parishes, and one DVOP's located in the Natchitoches Business and Career Solutions Center that covers DeSoto, Natchitoches, Red River, and Sabine Parishes.

**(x) 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 Business and Career Solutions 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.

**(xi) 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.

**(xii) 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 Business and Career Solutions 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:

- Intensive 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.
- Becoming responsible citizens.

Shreveport Job Corps and the Caddo Business and Career Solutions 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.

**(xiii) 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 Business and Career Solutions Centers (BCSCs); 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, Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) and transportation. There is a comprehensive child development program (Head Start/Early Head Start) for children between the ages of zero to five years of age and their families. Additionally, the Shreveport Water Assistance Program (SWAP) assists residents of Shreveport only.

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) will be developed to coordinate 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 measureable 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.

Local Workforce Development Area (LWDA) 70 is also partnering with the Bossier Community Action Program to reach the parents of their Head Start students. It is recognized by improving the earning potential of the parents, the potential for high school graduation of their children increases.

**(xiv) Reintegration of Ex-Offenders Program**

The Louisiana Workforce Commission (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 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. 70<sup>th</sup> 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. As the efforts of the Coalition and the awareness of its work expand, the potential positive contributions of a re-energized and re-directed ex-offender community will benefit our Region and beyond in many ways.

**(xv) Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education**

The Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act of 2006 provides an increased focus on the academic achievement of career and technical education students, strengthens the connections between secondary and post-secondary education, and improves State and Local accountability. The purpose of Perkins is to provide individuals with the academic and technical skills needed to succeed in a knowledge and skills-based economy. Perkins supports career and technical education that prepares its students both for post-secondary education and the careers of their choice.

Perkins Grant funds are provided to the State that, in turn, allocates funds by formula to secondary school districts and post-secondary institutions. The State has control over the split of funds between secondary and post-secondary levels.

The State must distribute at least 85 percent of the Grant's funds to Local programs that targets resources to disadvantaged schools and students. The State also receives a Tech Prep Grant that can be folded into Grant funds or used to provide grants to consortia of secondary and post-secondary partners that develop articulated pathways.

State and Local funds generally are to be used for the following types of activities:

- Serving as a catalyst for change by driving program improvement.
- Developing a strong accountability system that ensures quality and results.
- Strengthening the integration of academic and career and technical education.
- Ensuring access to career and technical education for special populations, including students with disabilities.
- Developing and improving curricula.
- Purchasing equipment to ensure that the classrooms have the latest technology.
- Providing career guidance and academic counseling services.
- Providing professional development and technical assistance for teachers, counselors, and administrators.
- Supporting career and technical education student organizations.

**(B) The Strengths and Weaknesses of Workforce Development Activities. Provide an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the workforce development activities.**

<b>Title I (Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth) and Title III (Wagner-Peyser)</b>	
<b>STRENGTHS</b>	<b>WEAKNESSES/OPPORTUNITIES</b>
In order to comply with WIOA's expectations, Region 7 has made an effort to follow all policies issued by LWC since July 1, 2015. LWC requires development of a Regional Plan by respective LWDBs including performance targets.	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 which should allow the development of a 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.
In preparation for 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.	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.
This Plan will allow Region 7's Boards to operate affiliate Business and Career Solutions Centers with any subset of partners.	While the State's Local Business and Career Solutions Centers effectively became integrated with Local WIOA and State Wagner-Peyser staff as early as 2005, there are currently Business and Career Solutions Centers in Region 7 with limited presence of both Local and State-funded staff providing staff assisted services to employers and job-seekers.
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.	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.

<b>Title II (Adult Education)</b>	
<b>STRENGTHS</b>	<b>WEAKNESSES/OPPORTUNITIES</b>
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.	Streamline assessment mandates and reporting results for students. Adult Education has the capability to provide assessment services throughout the workforce training system for Business and Career Solutions Centers, including services to OSY under WIOA, as well as post-secondary educational institutions, TANF and SNAP programs,
Provide professional development activities/training that aligns CCRS with evidenced-based practices.	Employer engagement and involvement on program design and curriculum to ensure valid education/training meet Regional labor market demands.
Developed and mandated teacher certification course to improve teacher quality and understanding of WIOA requirements.	Develop procedure to evaluate programs and activities to ensure continuous improvement and expansion
Data driven teacher quality evaluation process	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.

<b>Title IV (Vocational Rehabilitation Services)</b>	
<b>STRENGTHS</b>	<b>WEAKNESSES/OPPORTUNITIES</b>
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 Business and Career Solutions Centers.	Expand the integration of Vocational Rehabilitation services within Business and Career Solutions Centers. Proactively address physical and programmatic accessibility; space and logistics, including funding/cost allocation agreements.
An array of services is provided by each component of the Business and Career Solutions Centers, including LRS/VR.	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.
LRS has Employment Development Specialists available in each Region. These individuals are specialized in working with individuals with disabilities, including job placement.	To enhance employer outreach and collaboration with Business and Career Solutions Centers efforts in employer engagement.

**(C) Workforce Development Capacity**

**Region 7 Workforce Development Capacity. Provide an analysis Region 7's capacity to provide the workforce development activities.**

The Region 7 Plan partners have defined capacity in three categories of service: efficiency, connectivity, and funding. Region 7 has a solid foundation in efficiently providing employer and job-seeker services. The implementation and operation of a continuous process improvement strategy shows promise in continuing to create efficiencies in these processes.

There is 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 situation that has evolved is one of Business and Career Solutions Centers (BCSCs) being supported primarily by Wagner-Peyser (WP) and Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Adult, 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 BCSC Services.

The training services in Region 7 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 job-seekers into training with the focus on Industry Based Certifications (IBCs). This will allow employers and job-seekers 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 is quickly building capacity in Business Services through the use of a combination of a Regional Industry Sector Coordinator and Business Consultants, one of which focuses 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 job-seekers in order to anticipate and meet labor market demands in a timely manner.

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. One partner, Vocational Rehabilitation Services, has identified human resources as its greatest challenge 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.

**(b) Region 7 Strategic Vision and Goals.**

**The Regional/Local Plan must include the Region's strategic vision and goals for developing its workforce and meeting employer needs in order to support economic growth and economic self-sufficiency. This must include:**

- **Vision. Describe the Regional strategic vision for its workforce development system.**
- **Goals. Describe the goals for achieving this vision based on the analysis of the Region's economic conditions, workforce, and workforce development activities. This must include:**
  - (A) Goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce, including preparing Youth and individuals with barriers to employment and other populations.**
  - (B) Goals for meeting the skilled workforce needs of employers.**

**1) Vision**

On January 11, 2016, Gov. John Bel Edwards assumed leadership of the State of Louisiana. In his inaugural speech, he highlighted the numerous challenges the State faces, beginning with a \$1.9 billion budget shortfall. He spoke to citizens of his vision, inspired by General of the Army Douglas MacArthur, of how we will meet the mounting challenges ahead, to build courage when courage seems to fail, to regain faith when there seems to be little cause for faith, to create hope when hope becomes forlorn.

Gov. Edwards charged the people of Louisiana to achieve our shared mission of Putting Louisiana First and to make it possible for all Louisiana citizens to be healthy and prosperous.

The Region 7 Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Regional/Local Plan is being developed with the governor's strategic leadership in mind, and is being submitted in compliance with WIOA requirements as a work in progress.

The Region's Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs), support development of an employer-led, demand-driven workforce development system based on occupational forecasts in which training, education and services for job-seekers prepare the Region's residents for high-wage, high-demand career opportunities.

The Region's workforce system will provide pathways for all of its citizens, including individuals who are receiving public assistance, the unemployed or underemployed, those who are deficient in basic skills, as well as persons with disabilities, including disabled Veterans, and others who have significant barriers to employment. All will have access to education, training and the supportive services needed to prepare for and secure high-demand occupations that pay family-sustaining wages.

## **2) Goals**

### **(A) Goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce, including preparing Youth and individuals with barriers to employment and other populations.**

**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 by industry sector employers to train workers and meet occupational demands.
- Support and grow learning opportunities for job-seekers and workers by improving processes for transfer credits through postsecondary, Apprenticeships and college coursework.

**(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.

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

**(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.

### **3) Performance Goals**

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

The Region's Local Workforce Development Areas (LWDAs) proposed performance levels are expected to be negotiated with the Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC) and are subject to modification pending final published regulations on the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Performance Management and Reporting System requirements. In addition to the Common Performance Measures described in Section 116(b)(2)(A), LWDAs will use business-focused metrics to assess outcomes. (See Attachment I, pp. 94-95).

#### **A. Business Metrics for Region 7**

##### **(i) Overall Business Market Penetration**

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 Business and Career Solutions Center (BCSC) 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 BCSC staff. The HiRE system has the capability to have service codes added to indicate business market penetration activity.

##### **(ii) Targeted Business Market Penetration**

The denominator for this measure is 200 businesses in each Local Workforce Development Area (LWDA), which includes the top 50 businesses in each of the top four industries in the workforce Region.

The numerator for this measure include the number of unique businesses in the targeted industries, registered in Helping Individuals Reach Employment (HiRE) that independently or with Business and Career Solutions Center (BCSC) staff assistance, have:

- Posted a job in HiRE.
- Provided Employer-Based Training to a job-seeker.
- 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 employer seminars and workshops.

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

**(iii) Employer-Based Training**

This is a count-based measure. Measured training service contracts to employers and training services delivered to individuals include:

- On-the-Job Training.
- Customized Training Services.
- Apprenticeships.
- Incumbent Worker Training Program (IWTP) State Program.

The primary source of information for this measure is data recorded in the Management Information System (MIS) of the Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC), HiRE. Training services provided by employers are recorded in HiRE by Business and Career Solutions Center (BCSC) staff.

**(iv) Demand Occupation Job Vacancies with Staff Referrals**

This is a percentage measure. The numerator for this measure is the number of job vacancies for demand occupations in Helping Individuals Reach Employment (HiRE), by Local Workforce Development Area (LWDA), receiving at least one staff referral of a job-seeker to fill the position. The denominator for this measure is the number of job listings for demand occupation in HiRE, by LWDA. The primary source of information for this measure is data recorded in the Management Information System (MIS) of the Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC), HiRE. Job listings are recorded in HiRE by BCSC staff and employers.

Specifications for demand occupations are accessible by LWDA, with occupational codes (two digit plus four digit extension) and corresponding Star ratings from the Occupations in Demand List in Labor Market Information (LMI).

LWDAs may add selected demand occupations based on Local economic drivers and market conditions.

**(v) Repeat Customers**

The numerator of this measure is a count of unique employers who received at least one Business and Career Solutions Center (BCSC)/ Helping Individuals Reach Employment (HiRE) service in the baseline year.

The denominator is a count of the unique employers who received at least one BCSC/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) Regional Strategy**

**The Regional/Local Plan must include the Region's strategies to achieve its strategic vision and goals. These strategies must take into account the Region's economic, workforce and workforce development, education and training activities analysis. Include discussion of specific strategies to address the needs of populations.**

Region 7 will work to put in place an effective strategy to prepare for the expected job market expansion, in terms of both skills demand and accelerated job growth. The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) provides a framework in its requirement for agency and program partnerships that will streamline processes and create a pipeline for recruiting, training, educating, and otherwise preparing citizens to acquire a living wage.

To be successful, this must be a collaborative effort and shared responsibility among all partners. An additional benefit of this course of action will come in the form of a stronger economy.

The continuous expansion of the collaborative partnerships will allow the Region to fulfill the requirements of WIOA. It will also maximize benefits to the Region's workforce, employers, and overall economy.

Region 7's primary challenge is the operation of its public workforce system (i.e., WIOA, core partner programs) within the context of a Regional economy that appears to be experiencing weak employment growth. Given this challenge, the focus of Region 7's strategy will be to maximize employment opportunities for its customers (job seekers) by focusing on the following industry sectors:

#### **Health Care**

Region 7's Health Care sector is expected to create the greatest number of employment opportunities for its labor force. WIOA funds will continue to be used to provide financial assistance to those Adults, Dislocated Workers, and Youth wanting to enroll in college degree or vocational training programs related to Health Care sector occupations.

#### **Transportation & Warehousing**

Employment in this sector has shown signs of growth and both Local Workforce Development Areas (LWDAs) in Region 7 will continue issuing Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) to Adults and Dislocated Workers for attending truck driving schools. The trucking industry keeps the American economy moving and Region 7's public workforce system will make its contribution in providing trained (CDL) drivers.

The Port of Caddo-Bossier serves not only as a multi-modal commerce hub, but also as a key economic development agency working to attract investments and create and retain jobs at the Port complex, as well as throughout Caddo and Bossier Parishes. In April of 2016, a substantial majority of citizens throughout Caddo and Bossier Parishes voted to renew a 2.5 mil property tax to support The Port of Caddo-Bossier. In order to continue to attract investments and create good paying jobs, these monies will be used to purchase land and to continue developing a multi-modal transportation network to attract world-class industries to North Louisiana. The Port of Caddo-Bossier is easily accessible by ground transportation and is strategically located to access major Interstate, Federal and State highways and the future Interstate 69 will route directly through The Port of Caddo-Bossier.

The Port of Caddo-Bossier places high priority on moving raw materials and manufactured goods in and out of the Port quickly and efficiently via ground, water, air, and rail transportation. A comprehensive rail network by two Class 1 Rail lines provides service to the Caddo-Bossier community. The Port complex itself is serviced by the Union Pacific with local access to the Kansas City Southern (KCS) available. The Port complex includes 22 miles of industrial grade track and rail. Three Port owned and operated locomotives are available for immediate rail car switching. In addition, the Port offers more than 20,000 feet of rail storage for its tenants.

Benteler Steel/Tube is a major employer located at the Port complex. Benteler Steel is a steel tube manufacturing facility that employs 350 workers. Production of a melt shop will add another 200 to 250 workers. The Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC) have worked to process 149 new hires for Benteler Steel through the Bossier and Caddo Business and Career Solutions Centers. The Region's LWDAs will continue to assist Benteler Steel and the other manufacturing tenants, which include Pratt Industries, Ternium, and ADS Logistics Company, LLC, with processing new hires, and providing On-the-Job Training opportunities. The Business Consultants in Region 7 have written an OJT contract with Pratt Industries.

Transportation by rail in Northwest Louisiana is growing. Kansas City Southern (KCS) Railway Company is the smallest and third oldest Class 1 Railroad in North America.

KCS operates over 3,200 track miles in ten states, which includes Louisiana. Shreveport is one of the company's major hubs.

KCS is providing a wide variety of shipping, from the local farmer to major manufacturers with competitive and reliable transportation solutions. The Shreveport hub for KCS currently has openings for 5 positions: Manager Work Equipment, Communications Engineer, Terminal Train Master, and Mechanical Technical Training Specialist, in Shreveport, Louisiana, and Tie and Timber Treater, in Vivian, Louisiana.

### **Manufacturing**

Employment within this Sector in Region 7 continues its historical trend of decline. Currently, only about seven percent of the Region's labor force is employed in manufacturing. Regardless, there are a few large manufacturing firms in Region 7 where employment remains relatively stable (e.g., Libbey Glass and Calumet Industries in Shreveport, Benteler Steel in Caddo Parish). Region 7's public workforce system will continue to offer its services to these firms through placement services and, where feasible, On-the-Job Training (OJT) or Customized Training contracts.

### **Other Services**

Employers in the information technology and computer networking systems industry have established a presence in Region 7. Region 7 will continue to monitor the creation of employment opportunities within this sector and, where needed, devote its training resources (e.g., Individual Training Accounts (ITAs), On-the-Job Training (OJT) contracts to provide training opportunities for Adults, Dislocated Workers, and Youth in the highly technical occupations needed by the information technology industry. Recent examples are OJT contracts that Region 7 has entered into with Allegiance, LLC, and VDO Communications.

### **Adult Education**

As noted, lack of a high school diploma (or its equivalent) is one of the major skill gaps identified for Region 7's Adult and older Youth populations. Adult Education programs (e.g., HiSET) will be an essential part of Region 7's strategy in improving the employability of its working age population.

### **1) Taking into account analyses, a strategy to work with the entities that carry out the core programs to align resources available to the Local area, to achieve the strategic vision and goals.**

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.

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.

- 2) A description of the workforce development system in the Local area that identifies the programs that are included in that system and how the Local board will work with the entities carrying out core programs and others workforce development programs to support alignment to provide services, including programs of study authorized under the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 (20 U.S.C.2301) et seq.).**

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. A consumer information component on employment and training,
- b. A report card on training programs,

- c. Information on projected workforce and job growth and demand, and
- d. 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.

**3) A description of how the Local boards, working with the entities carrying out core programs, will expand access to employment, training, education, and supportive services for eligible individuals, particularly eligible individuals with barriers to employment, including how the Local board will facilitate the development of career pathways and co-enrollment, as appropriate, in core programs, and improve access to activities leading to a recognized post-secondary credential (including a credential that is an industry-recognized certificate or certification, portable, and stackable);**

The Region's Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) working in conjunction with entities carrying out core programs will 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 Business and Career Solutions Centers (BCSCs) 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 will be met through the provision of career services accessible through the BCSC 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 will provide professional development training to all front-line personnel.

The LWDBs will include service providers and CBO's that serve special populations on the LWDBs, or its groups and subcommittees.

The LWDBs will develop a 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 will provide priority to low-income individuals receiving public assistance and are basic skills deficient, and will 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.

### **Louisiana Career Pathways**

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.
  - First stop-out point must be aligned with a viable career opportunity.
  - 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.
  - Could define this as blocks of courses tied to defined entry/exit points.
  - 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.
  - 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.
  - Noncredit Pathways are aligned with credit Pathways so that students can continue into credit-bearing Pathways with transcript credit and without repeating coursework.

Through guidance from The Louisiana Workforce Investment Council (WIC), the Workforce Cabinet, and members of the WIOA Planning Team, 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).

4) A description of the strategies and services that will be used in the Local area.

(A) In order to

- (i) Facilitate engagement of employers, including small employers and employers in in-demand industry sectors and occupations, in workforce development programs; and
- (ii) Support a Local workforce development system that meets the needs of businesses in the Local area; and
- (iii) Better coordinate workforce development programs and economic development; and
- (iv) Strengthen linkages between the One-Stop Delivery System and Unemployment Insurance (UI) programs.

(i) **Business Engagement**

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.

(ii) **Regional Business Service Structure**

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.
- 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.

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) 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 Business and Career Solutions Center (BCSC) 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, in one location.

Our Bossier Business and Career Solutions Center currently houses Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA), Business Consultants (BCs), Incumbent Worker Training Program (IWTP), Rapid Response (RR), and Disabled Veterans Outreach Program (DVOP). 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.

**(iii) Coordination Between Workforce and Economic Development Programs.**

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 job-seekers.

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.
  - 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:
  - Providing guidance on priority target sectors (see above)
  - Identifying employers in priority target sectors
  - Identifying existing industry associations to leverage in development of sector partnerships (e.g. Manufacturing Managers Council, TECHBY20, Louisiana Associated General Contractors)
  - 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.
  - 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), Business and Career Solutions Centers (BCSCs), 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).
  - 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.
  - 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.
  - 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.

**(iv) Linkages Between the One-Stop 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 Business and Career Solutions Centers (BCSCs) 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.

Regional senior managers through their Local managerial structure and in cooperation with Local Workforce Development Area (LWDA) leadership are responsible for ensuring a seamless process in BCSCs 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 job-seekers/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 job-seeker/claimant files an initial UI claim and is determined monetarily eligible, he/she is profiled. Job-seekers/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) job-seekers/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 job-seeker/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 job-seeker/ 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 re-employment 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 job-seeker/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. Job-seekers/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 job-seekers/claimants scheduling their RESEA appointment, failure to keep this appointment may result in a denial of UI benefits.

Job-seekers/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 job-seeker/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 job-seeker/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.

- (B) Include the implementation of 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 employers in the corresponding Region.**

#### **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. In Region 7, IWTP has 28 current contracts totaling \$4,450,339. Eleven applications totaling \$1,407,667 have not yet been forwarded to the Regional Program Advisor.

#### **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 Consultants (BCs) as the methods of service delivery to Local businesses. The OJT program addresses the need of businesses for short-term experiential training.

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

The LWDAs in the Region will seek a closer and better-coordinated relationship with the Region's BCs. The Region utilizes Workkeys and other interest and aptitude assessments as the common assessment instruments for WIOA clients. The Region has attempted to make the assessment process as customer-friendly as possible by offering the assessment every day as needed. This allows the client to fit the process to their schedule thus making for an efficient and streamlined assessment.

OJT is considered one of the most beneficial training opportunities. It assists an employee that may 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**

Allegiance, LLC  
City Printing  
Lamar Advertising  
Libbey Glass  
Shreveport Tractor

**Bossier Parish**

FWC Enterprises (IHOP)  
VDO Communications

**Claiborne Parish**

Delta Contract Interiors, LLC

**DeSoto Parish**

DeSoto Healthcare

**Lincoln Parish**

Monster Moto

**Webster Parish**

Mabo Investments LLC (Popeyes)  
Smith's South Central Sales, LLC

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.

Region 7's LWDAs are currently in the process of completing a Customized Training contract for the Sector Partnership National Emergency (NEG) Grant through a partnership between employees of the Industrial Scaffolding Committee (ISC) and Northwest Louisiana Technical College (NWLTC).

The training is to be conducted at NWLTC's Sabine Valley Campus in Many, Louisiana and the program is designed to help displaced oil field workers in the Region to attain skills necessary for entry level employment in the construction industry as a scaffold builder helper in entry level positions.

The participating employers have a demand for these positions and are donating the use of four types of industrial scaffolding materials for this training project, which also involves transporting of these materials to the Sabine Valley Campus. Estimated value of this contribution is approximately \$16,000 based on rental rates for these materials in the quantity that is required, along with the actual cost of transportation of these materials.

Training facilities for conducting this program are to be provided by NWLTC's Sabine Valley Campus in Many, Louisiana. These facilities include dedicated classroom space, sheltered and unsheltered space for training exercises, along with secure storage space for tools and materials.

Curriculum to be utilized has been developed by the ISC in conjunction with the Louisiana Technical and Community College System and its member institutions. Successful program completers will test for certification offered through the ISC, and will be awarded an industry based credential that is approved by the State of Louisiana's Workforce Investment Council (WIC).

### 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 a new paradigm for Career and Technical Education (CTE), allowing high school students to attain an industry-promulgated, industry-valued credential in order to graduate high school. Louisiana's Jump Start program aligns Louisiana's, K-12<sup>th</sup> grade CTE strategies with the State's economic development strategies.

Jump Starts Regional Team, consisting of school districts, colleges, businesses, and workforce/economic development experts, collaborate to provide career courses and workplace experiences to high school students. Students have the opportunity to earn industry-valued, industry-promulgated credentials in career fields most likely to lead to high-wage jobs, while preparing them to continue their post-secondary education (in 2 and 4 year colleges) and career development.

Region 7's Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) will continue to receive guidance from the Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC) regarding Career Pathways development as part of its ongoing technical assistance and guidance.

A Jump Start Career Diploma Committee Meeting was first held in Shreveport on July 11, 2013. Ms. Gayle Flowers, Caddo Parish School Director of Career, Adult & Alternative Education, organized the meeting and invited the attendees. Many areas of the community were in attendance, from business and industry to education to economic development to workforce development. The hour and a half meeting included a conference call with Mr. Dave Lefkowitz, Deputy Superintendent of Education, and included discussion on:

- Current Career-Prep Initiatives, Successes & Challenges
- Industry Focus Areas: Manufacturing, Construction, Transportation & Healthcare
- Desired Jump Start Pathway Goals
- Employer, Secondary & Post-Secondary Partners
- Consortium Resources: Staffing, Facilities, etc
- Next Steps

A second Jump Start Committee meeting was held on July 24, 2013. With much input from business and industry, and with much dedication from other members a team was formed, and a team leader was selected. This team advanced forward quickly. One of the key reasons for the success of creating a Regional Team was business involvement. Education and a government entities in the past would make decisions in their silo, without outside input greatly limiting the achievement of successful outcomes. This Jump Start Committee enlisted input from the business community, from economic development, from workforce development, etc. and the results have proven their worth.

The Regional Industry Coordinator with the LWC was invited to and attended the initial meeting and has been an integral part of this Northwest Louisiana Jump Start Team. Both Workforce Development Board Directors within Region 7 have dutifully attended many meetings with this task force to supply needed input and support.

In line with the State's objectives, Northwest Louisiana will strive for the full implementation of its Jump Start Model in the Fall of 2017.

Region 7 has two schools dedicated to the goals of the Jump Start initiative: Caddo Career & Technology Center, and the brand new Bossier Parish School for Technology & Innovative Learning.

The Caddo Career & Technology Center, has received national awards in the past and the new Bossier Parish School for Technology & 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 Region 7 to move forward quickly in the Jump Start Initiative. This Initiative has great potential and the next few years in Northwest Louisiana offers promise of a better future for many students and many businesses.

The ultimate goal of Jump Start is for sector partnerships to successfully identify workers with skills that employers need to compete and expand, as well as for workers to receive relevant training that leads to increased job stability and advancement opportunities. Business needs change rapidly, therefore it is critical that this effort be driven by Regional business, and is based on continuous, sustained engagement with Regional 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 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**. This is a cradle to career initiative beginning with reading tutors volunteering in the elementary grades to workforce development projects involving high school students and young people up to the age of 25.

With the collaboration of the business community, non-profit organizations, workforce development officials, education representatives, economic development officials, Chamber of Commerce leaders, etc. there has been much progress and quite a few successes. The Louisiana Workforce Commission's (LWC's) Regional Industry Coordinator has been the Workforce Development Committee's Chairman since its inception a couple of years ago. One outstanding project was the taping of over 20 Chief Executive Officers (CEOs), Executives, etc. concerning the business they are in and what they are looking for in future employees. Many told their personal story in order for more young people to understand the effort it takes to be successful in life and in a business environment. These interviews were edited down to ten minutes per person. These videos will be used in classrooms, on social media, and wherever we can reach young people. These have been professionally done. These videos will be released in the Summer of 2016 and we are looking forward to its positive impact with young people.

**5) A description of how the Local board will coordinate workforce investment activities carried out in the Local area with economic development activities carries out in the Region in which the Local area is located (or planning Region), and promote entrepreneurial skills training and microenterprise services;**

Region 7s Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) will work with Louisiana Economic Development's (LED's) Fast Start Program. LED-Fast Start provides quick workforce solutions to businesses in LED's effort to attract new businesses to the State, or retain existing businesses.

Solutions include recruitment and workforce training, working with the State's community and technical college system to develop curriculum approved by the employer(s) to produce short-term training to job candidates and helping trainees attain the skills necessary to fill jobs quickly. Local Business and Career Solutions Centers (BCSCs) partner with Fast Start to refer job candidates for short-term training, and conduct targeted job fairs to connect specific job candidates to specific employers with specific job openings that need to be filled over a specified period of time.

Region 7 is currently engaged in developing Regional sector strategies through a Sector Partnership National Emergency Grant (SP-NEG) the Region has received to develop sector strategies and work with Registered Apprenticeships, and provide On-the-Job Training and Customized Training to eligible Dislocated Workers.

Consultants have been engaged to assist with the development of these strategies, which include engaging business and industry, Economic Development Organizations (EDOs), business associations, and others. This is a business-led approach to respond to the needs of employers within specific industries driving the economy of workforce and economic development in the Region. Successful strategies resulting from this effort will be shared and replicated in other workforce and economic Regions in Louisiana.

Sector strategy initiatives will be developed in Region 7. Region 7 has a Regional Industry Coordinator and Business Consultants currently on staff. Their primary roles are to engage business and industry to identify short and long-term workforce needs, and assist the Region's LWDBs and BCSCs, 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, targeted (top industries) market penetration, employer-based training, staff referral to vacancies in demand occupations (based on 3-5 Star Jobs), and repeat business customers.

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### III. OPERATIONAL PLANNING ELEMENTS

The Region 7 Plan must include an operational planning elements section that supports the Region's strategy and the system-wide vision. Unless otherwise noted, all operational planning elements apply to Regional/Local Plan One-Stop partner programs included in the Plan as well as to core programs. This section must include:

(a) Regional/Local Strategy Implementation. The Regional/Local Plan must include:

(1) A description of the One-Stop delivery system in the Local area.

(A) A description of how the Local board will ensure the continuous improvement of eligible providers of services through the system and ensure that such providers meet the employment needs of the Local employers, workers, and jobseekers.

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 job-seekers 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 business people, 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.

(B) A description of how the Local board will facilitate access to services provided through the One-Stop delivery system, including in remote areas, through the use of technology and through other means.

- 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 five comprehensive Business and Career Solutions Centers (BCSCs), and six satellite Centers. BCSCs 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.

- (C) A description of how entities within the One-Stop delivery system, including One-Stop operators and the One-Stop partners, will comply with Section 188, if applicable, and applicable provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12101 et seq.) regarding the physical and programmatic accessibility of facilities, programs and services, technology, and materials for individuals with disabilities, including providing staff training and support for addressing the needs of individuals with disabilities.**

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 Business and Career Solutions Centers (BCSCs) utilize the One-Stop Disability Access Checklist to self-evaluate its current level of accessibility.

- (D) A description of the roles and resource contributions of the One-Stop partners.**

The Region's Business and Career Solutions Centers (BCSCs) 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 BCSCs, 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.

- (2) A description and assessment of the type and availability of Adult and Dislocated Worker employment and training activities in the Local area;**

- (a) Description and assessment of Adult and Dislocated Worker employment and training activities:**

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 Business and Career Solutions Centers (BCSCs) 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 job-seeker 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.

**(b) The Three Tracks for a Job-Seeker.**

In the revised service delivery process, there are three tracks that any job-seeker 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 Business and Career Solutions Centers (BCSCs), 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.

**(c) Job-seekers 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 job-seekers must report to the Business and Career Solutions Centers (BCSCs) 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 job-seeker 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 job-seekers as well.

**(d) Workforce Ready, in a Demand Occupation.**

Job-seekers who are not Unemployment Insurance (UI) recipients may arrive at the Business and Career Solutions Centers (BCSCs) 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.

Career specialists 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 job-seeker, 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.

**(e) 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 job-seeker to Labor Market Information (LMI), including jobs in demand, wage rates, education requirements, work search tools, skills, and interest-matching assessments.

Career specialists 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 job-seeker on the workforce ready track show continued unemployment, more individualized career services may be indicated. These job-seekers shall be moved to a case management track.

**(f) 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.

Job-seekers 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 job-seeker 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 job-seeker 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 job-seeker becomes workforce ready or enters a training program. In either case, follow-up is critical, using a 30-day cycle until the job-seeker attains employment or complete training.

All IEPs must be recorded in Helping Individuals Reach Employment (HiRE). The preferred method is by using the HiRE Wizard. In order to comply with this requirement when IEPs are created as hard copy only, those IEPs must be scanned into the HiRE system no later than close of business the following business day.

**(3) A description of how the Local board will coordinate workforce investment activities carried out in the Local area with Statewide Rapid Response activities, as described in Section 134(a)(2)(A).**

Layoffs are always challenging for workers and employers. 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.

**(4) A description and assessment of the type and availability of Youth workforce investment activities in the Local area, including activities for Youth who are individuals with disabilities, which description and assessment shall include an identification of successful models of such Youth workforce investment activities:**

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.

The State will monitor and guide LWDA's such that at least 75 percent of available statewide funds and 75 percent of funds available to Local areas are spent on workforce development services for Out-of-School Youth.

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.

Other Youth Program Initiatives will include:

#### **Pre-Employment Training Services (PETS)**

Current Louisiana Rehabilitation Services (LRS) policy and guidelines address the allocation of 15% of State's Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) allotment for the provision of services of Pre-Employment Transition Services (PETS) to high school students with disabilities between the ages of 16-21 who are eligible or potentially eligible for VR services. These high school students will be placed with employers via the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) law. LRS will reimburse employers the student's wages up to \$8.00/hour for 480 hours. Ninety-six students have been placed in this program in Region 7. The required activities of PETS are job exploration counseling; work-based learning experiences; counseling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive transition or post-secondary education programs at institutions of higher education, and instruction in self-advocacy. LRS assigned vendors to work with each high school across the state to make PETS services available to students who receive IDEA funds or students who are an individuals with a disability for the purposes of Section 504 of the Act (29 U.S.C. 794).

LRS will use agency funds for the provision of PETS and VR services on the approved Individual Employment Plan (IEP) that relates directly to the achievement of the agreed upon vocational goal, which is not the responsibility of the education system. The Department of Education (DOE) will use agency funds for the provision of educational services on the approved IEP that relates directly to the achievement of the agreed upon educational goal.

#### **STEP Forward Initiative**

STEP Forward is a catalyst for working together across sectors and geographical lines to prepare the students of Bossier, Caddo, DeSoto, and Webster Parishes for academic achievement, productive citizenship, and global competitiveness, from cradle to career. STEP Forward exists to create a civic infrastructure that aligns and supports the myriad efforts to drive excellence in education Locally.

STEP Forward is a member of the Strive Cradle to Career Network. The National Cradle to Career Network launched in 2011 as a way to connect communities who are building cradle to career civic infrastructure using the Strive Framework. The Network enables members like STEP Forward to share expertise, identify and adapt programs that work and develop effective tools and resources that can be brought to bear on specific challenges. There are more than 80 communities currently a part of the Strive Network.

STEP Forward's Mission is to foster Regional collaboration through active citizenship, improving educational outcomes for all children, building a vibrant community, and preparing a globally competitive workforce.

STEP Forward's Early Childhood Education Purpose Statement: All children should enter Kindergarten prepared. The Early Childhood Network is dedicated to using data and leveraging existing resources in order to enhance collaborative partner services so that children are effectively prepared to successfully enter school ready to learn.

One of STEP Forward's desired outcomes is ensuring that all children are literate by third grade, measured by English/Language Arts proficiency. That Early Literacy Network will use data, leverage Regional partnerships, and share evidence-based practices to provide the best opportunities for third-grade students to score at or above grade level on the State assessment. Examples of learning communities that are already underway in the cradle to career pipeline include, the Reading Pipeline Project, now in its second year, with a goal of improving the percentage of third graders reading at basic and above grade level to 95% in six years.

STEP Forward's Workforce Development purpose statement is to positively impact the workforce by partnering with business, educators, and other stakeholders to increase employment and ultimately enhance the economic viability of the citizens within Bossier, Caddo, DeSoto, and Webster Parishes.

Both Workforce Development Board Directors and Local Area Coordinators have been a part of the STEP Forward Workforce Development Committee since its inception.

The Regional Industry Coordinator from the Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC) has been its Chairman since the first few months of the committee's launch. The STEP Forward Workforce Development Committee meets monthly. The STEP Forward Leadership Committee meets quarterly. The Regional Industry Coordinator also serves on that committee. Some of the completed projects from the Workforce Development Committee are:

- Two Life & Career Fairs for High School Seniors
- List of Credentialed Programs in area training schools, including two High School Career & Technology Training Centers
- Employer Feedback on their Personnel Issues and Challenges
- Video Project featuring numerous CEOs, Plant Managers, Business Owners speaking to young people what they are looking for in employee prospects.

### **Jump Start Initiative**

**Jump Start** is a new paradigm for Career and Technical Education (CTE), allowing high school students to attain an industry-promulgated, industry-valued credential in order to graduate high school. Louisiana's Jump Start program aligns Louisiana's K-12th grade CTE strategies with the State's economic development strategies. Jump Start Regional Teams, consisting of school districts, colleges, businesses, and workforce/economic development experts; collaborate to provide career courses and workplace experiences to high school students. Students have the opportunity to earn industry-valued, industry-promulgated credentials in career fields most likely to lead to high-wage jobs, while preparing them to continue their post-secondary education (in two and four-year colleges) and career development.

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 Mrs. Nada Percival and Mr. Herman Vital have dutifully attended many meetings to supply needed input and support. Each area of the State could implement parts of the Jump Start Model as soon as it was possible, but the full implementation will commence in the Fall of 2017. Northwest Louisiana has gotten a pretty good start.

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 brand new Bossier Parish School for Technology and Innovative Learning. The Caddo Career and Technology Center has received national awards in the past, and the new 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 will benefit because of it. This initiative has great potential and the next few years in Northwest Louisiana offers promise of a better future for many students and many businesses.

#### **Youth Build**

Southern University in Shreveport won a \$1.075 million Grant from the United States Department of Labor's Youth Build Program. It is a national effort to help at-risk young people reshape their lives. This program trains Youth ages 16 to 24 who have not completed high school or may be a part of a disadvantaged Youth population. Youth Build is a broad-based Initiative that affords at-risk students the opportunity to earn their HiSET Degree and National Center for Construction Education and Research (NCCER) construction certification through traditional classroom experiences and service learning projects.

Youth Build will assist over 60 students over the next three years. The program participants will build three family homes in a park area in the Martin Luther King community of Shreveport, LA.

The program will guide Youth into possible careers as Electricians or Plumbers. Both fields are suffering a nationwide shortage in trained workers. Louisiana is suffering from the shortage of construction workers in both South and North Louisiana. At the end of the construction training, students will be able to get at least two certifications in the construction field.

- (5) A description of how the Local board will coordinate education and workforce investment activities carried out in the Local area with relevant secondary and post-secondary education programs and activities to coordinate strategies, enhance services, and avoid duplication of services:**

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.

**(6) A description of how the Local board will coordinate workforce investment activities carried out under this title in the Local area with the provision of transportation, including public transportation, and other appropriate supportive services in the Local area:**

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.

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 and other supportive services.

**(7) A description of plans and strategies for, and assurances concerning, maximizing coordination of services provided by the State employment service under the Wagner-Peyser Act (29 U.S.C. 49 et seq.) and services provided in the Local area through the One-Stop delivery system, to improve service delivery and avoid duplication of services.**

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, 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 Business and Career Solutions Center (BCSC) 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 LWDBs 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 staffs of the LWDBs have come together on the writing of the program plan. The staffs 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.

- (8) A description of how the Local board will coordinate workforce investment activities carried out under this title in the Local area with the provision of Adult Education and literacy activities under title in the Local area, including a description of how the Local board will carry out, consistent with subparagraphs (A) and (B)(i) of Section 107(d)(11) and Section 232, the review of Local applications submitted under Title II.**

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 Business and Career Solutions Centers (BCSCs) 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.

- (9) Describe the privacy safeguards incorporated in the One Stop Delivery System, across partners, related to sharing and protecting personally identifiable information. This includes safeguards required by section 444 of the General Education provision Act (20 U.S.C. 1232g) and other applicable Federal laws.**

All staff, including Local and Wagner-Peyser (WP) staff, in the Region's Business and Career Solutions Center (BCSCs), have been instructed by the Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC) to adhere to strict privacy in the One-Stop Delivery System, across partners, related to sharing personally identifiable information. Social Security numbers or other confidential information will not be sent via email. The USERNAME in HiRE will be used for all correspondence.

- (10) Describe how the Local area will implement and monitor the priority of service provisions for Veterans in accordance with the requirements of the Jobs for Veteran's Act, codified at section 4215 of 38 U.S.C., which applies to all employment and training programs funded in whole or in part by the Department of Labor.**

**Local Areas should also describe the referral process for Veterans determined to have a significant barrier to employment to receive services from the Jobs for Veterans State Grants (JVSG) program's Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) specialist.**

Region 7's Local Workforce Development Areas (LWDAs) provide employment training and placement services to all Veterans through a network of strategically located Business and Career Solutions Centers (BCSCs), 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 BCSCs. 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 State-wide 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 BCSC 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 BCSC 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 BCSC 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.

- (11) Describe how the One-Stop Delivery System (including One-Stop Center operators and the One-Stop Delivery System Partners) will ensure that each One-Stop Center is able to meet the needs of English language learners, such as through established procedures, staff training, resources, and other materials.**

Region 7's Local Workforce Development Areas (LWDAs) will insure 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 insure 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 Business and Career Solutions Centers if necessary and monitor the system for compliance.

- (12) A description of the replicated cooperative agreements (as defined in Section 107(d)(11)) between the Local board or other Local entities described in Section 101(a)(11)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. 721(a)(11)(B)) and the Local office of a designated State agency or designated State unit administering programs carried out under Title I of such Act (29 U.S.C. 720 et seq.) (other than section 112 or part C of that Title (29 U.S.C. 732, 741) and subject to Section 121(f) in accordance with section 101 (a)(11) of such Act (29 U.S.C. 721(a)(11)) with respect to efforts that will enhance the provision of services to individuals with disabilities and to other individuals, such as cross training of staff, technical assistance, use and sharing of information, cooperative efforts with employers, and other efforts at cooperation, collaboration, and coordination.**

Currently, the Local Workforce Development Areas (LWDAs) in Region 7, have an existing Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Louisiana Rehabilitation Services (LRS) in multiple parishes within Region 7. The two LWDAs in the Region will develop a new MOU that is in compliance with the new Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).

Recognizing the high unemployment rate among individuals with disabilities and the qualified-employee shortage businesses are facing, the Region 7's LWDAs are committed to providing reasonable accommodations and access to all programs, services, and facilities. Each Business and Career Solutions Center (BCSC) utilizes the One-Stop disability access checklist to self-evaluate its current level of accessibility.

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 BCSCs 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 BCSC 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 BCSCs will be monitored onsite annually to ensure compliance with this requirement.

**(13) A identification of the entity responsible for the disbursement of grant funds described in Section 107(d)(12)(B)(i)(III), as determined by the Chief Elected Official or the Governor under Section 107(d)(12)(B)(i).**

The Chief Elected Official (CEO) for the Seventh Planning District Consortium serves as the Local Grant Recipient. The Coordinating and Development Corporation (CDC) serves as the Grant Sub-Recipient for LWDA 70 and is responsible for the disbursement of Grant funds as described in Section 107(d)(12)(B)(i)(III).

LWDA 71 (The City of Shreveport) serves as the Grant recipient. The disbursement of Grant funds is through the City of Shreveport's Finance Department.

**(14) A description of the competitive process to be used to award the subgrants and contracts in the Local area for activities carried out under this Title.**

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 will hold a pre-bidders 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.

- (15) A description of the Local levels of performance negotiated with the Governor and Chief Elected Official pursuant to section 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 subtitle B, and the One-Stop Delivery System, in the Local area.**

The Region's Local Workforce Development Areas (LWDAs) proposed performance levels are expected to be negotiated with the Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC) and are subject to modification pending final published regulations on Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Performance Management and Reporting System requirements.

In addition to the Common Performance Measures described in Section 116(b)(2)(A), LWDAs will use business-focused metrics to assess outcomes. (See Attachment A, pp. 94-95).

- (16) A description of the actions the Local board will take toward becoming or remaining a high-performing board, consistent with the factors developed by the State board pursuant to section 101(d)(6).**

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 insure 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).

- (17) A description of how training services under Chapter 3 of subtitle B will be provided in accordance with section 134(c)(3)(G), including, if contracts for the training services will be used, how the use of such contracts will be coordinated with the use of Individual Training Accounts under that chapter and how the Local board will ensure informed customer choice in the selection of training programs regardless of how the training services are to be provided.**

With limited exceptions, the Individual Training Account (ITA) will be the primary method for accessing training services, except for Employer-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 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 enrollment. However, the re-enrollment of any participant will be reviewed for continued funding on a case-by-case basis.

- (18) A description of the process used by the Local Board, consistent with subsection (d), to provide an opportunity for public comment, including comment by representatives of businesses and comment by representatives of labor organizations, and input into the development of the Local Plan, prior to submission of the Plan.**

A draft of the Regional/Local 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.

These measures will allow for formal comments on the Plan 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.

**(19) A description of how One-Stop centers are implementing and transitioning to an integrated, technology-enabled intake and case management information system for programs carried out under this Act and programs carried out by One-Stop partners.**

The presence and increased use of desktop computers with Internet connections located at all of Region 7's Business and Career Solutions Centers (BCSCs) 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 BSCs. Through HiRE, progress will be made in implementing a paperless intake and case management system for BSCs 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.

**IV. COORDINATION WITH REGIONAL/LOCAL PLAN PROGRAMS. Describe the methods used for joint planning and coordination among the core programs, and with the required One-Stop partner programs and other programs and activities included in the Combined Plan.**

The method used for joint Regional planning and coordination of programs within Region 7, included holding two joint planning meetings on May 16, 2016, and June 1, 2016 at the Caddo Business and Career Solutions Center, with the Region's Local Workforce Development Areas (LWDAs), Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) core partners, and One-Stop partner programs. These meetings included staff from the two Local LWDAs in the Region and the WIOA core partners and One-Stop partner programs, to begin a joint planning process in conjunction with WIOA Plan requirements. Through collaboration between these agencies a draft of the Regional/Local 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 Business and Career Solutions Centers (BSCSs) 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, child care, 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.

**V. COMMON ASSURANCES (for all core programs). The Plan must include assurances that: Required Policies for each Local development area with in a planning Region must be included as part of the Plan.**

Currently, the Region's two Local Workforce Development Areas (LWDAs) follow the State's established policies, procedures, and assurances. Each Local area will develop their own policies, procedures, and assurances in accordance with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) program. The Federal funds received to carry out Core programs will not be expended for any purpose other than for activities authorized with respect to such funds under that Core program.

1. The Local Area will establish a policy identifying circumstances that may present a conflict of interest for a Local Board or the entity or class of officials that the member represents, and procedures to resolve such conflicts;
2. The Local Area will establish a policy to provide to the public (including individuals with disabilities) access to meetings of Local Boards and Local Boards, and information regarding activities of Local Boards, such as data on board membership and minutes;
3. The Local Area will establish a policy on fiscal control and fund accounting procedures that are necessary to ensure proper accounting for, funds allotted to the Local Area (this applies to Title 1 and to other discretionary funds allotted to the Local Area);
4. The Local Area will establish a policy which describes action to secure compliance with uniform administrative requirements of this Act, including that the Local area will annually monitor.
5. The Local Area will a policy taking the appropriate action to be in compliance with WIOA Section 188, Nondiscrimination, as applicable.
6. The Local Area will implement a policy to ensure adult-program funds provide a priority in the delivery of career and training services and individualized career services to individuals who are low income, public assistance recipients or basic skills deficient; (The policy must align with State policy Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth Eligibility, Office of Workforce Development (OWD) 2-24.
7. The Federal funds received to carry out a core programs will not be expended for any purpose other than for activities authorized with respect to such funds under that core program. (Plan must include a statement attesting to this assurance).
8. The Local Area will not use funds received under WIOA Title I to assist, promote, or deter union organizing in accordance with WIOA Section 181(b)(7).

Attachment A

**Performance Goals for the Core Programs**

Include the Local area's expected levels of performance relating to the performance accountability indicators of performance described in Section 116(b)(2)(A) of WIOA.

	Proposed/ Expected Level	Negotiated/ Adjusted Level	Proposed/ Expected Level	Negotiated/ Adjusted Level
Adults	%		%	
Dislocated Workers	%		%	
Youth	%		%	
Adults	%		%	
Dislocated Workers	%		%	
Youth	%		%	
Adults	\$		\$	
Dislocated Workers	\$		\$	
Youth	\$		\$	
Adults	%		%	
Dislocated Workers	%		%	
Youth	%		%	
Adults	B		B	
Dislocated Workers	B		B	
Youth	B		B	
Adults	B		B	
Dislocated Workers	B		B	
Youth	B		B	

*B = Baseline: A "baseline" indicator is one for which the Local area will not propose an expected level of performance in the Plan submission and will not come to an agreement with the U. S. Departments on adjusted levels of performance. The State will subsequently issue Local area guidance.*

Attachment A

**Regional Local Workforce Development Area Business Metrics Performance Goals**

	<b>PY 15 Proposed Performance Levels</b>	<b>PY15 Performance Range 80%</b>	<b>2016 Proposed Performance Levels</b>	<b>2016 Negotiated/ Adjusted Level</b>
Overall Market Penetration	24%	19-24%	%	
Targeted Market Penetration	20%	16-20%	%	
Demand Occupations Staff Referrals	45%	36-45%	%	
Repeat Customers	66%	53-66%	%	
Employer Based Training (EBT)	20	16-20		

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