

WIOA Strategic Workforce Development Plan

Local Plan Template

PYs 2024-2027



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Local Area Information

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Date of Submission: April 15, 2024



Local Plan Tracker (Sample)

[Local Plan Tracker PY 2024-2027](#)

Click the link above to use the tracker.

Local Plan Guidance Tracker- SAMPLE									
LOCAL AREA:									
Priority Initiative	What State initiative or regional priority does this support?	Goal Description- what is success?	Targeted Success Date	Milestone		Milestone		Milestone	
				Action Items	Targeted Success Date	Action Items	Targeted Success Date	Action Items	Targeted Success Date

Regional and Local Analysis:

- a. Provide an analysis of regional economic conditions, including:
 - i. Existing and emerging in-demand sectors and occupations,
 - ii. The employment needs of businesses in those sectors and occupations; and
 - iii. How the LWDA compares to the region and any unique contributors to the regional economic conditions and business needs.

Provide an analysis of regional economic conditions:

The Upper Cumberland Local Workforce Development Board is responsible for developing and implementing workforce strategies and activities within the counties that make up these geographic boundaries: Cannon, Clay, Cumberland, Dekalb, Fentress, Jackson, Macon, Overton, Pickett, Putnam, Smith, Van Buren, Warren, and White. Seven counties are classified as transitional by the Appalachian Regional Council. Additionally, six counties are considered At-Risk. Clay County is the only remaining distressed county in the region. Putnam, Cumberland, and Warren counties are labeled as micropolitan. Micropolitan areas are urban clusters with populations between 10,000 and 50,000 people, typically centered around smaller cities or towns.

The Upper Cumberland Local Workforce Development Area (UCLWDA) is part of the broader Middle Region of the State of Tennessee's nine local workforce areas. Geographically located in the central part of the state, our placement partners us with the Northern Middle and Southern Middle Local Workforce Development Areas. The Grand Region covers a total of 40 counties. Among the 40 counties in the Middle Region, 29 counties experienced employment gains compared to the previous year.

Total employment in the Middle Region, excluding agriculture and self-employment, increased to 1,461,565. The labor force in the Middle Region also expanded, with a labor force participation rate of 58.73 percent in 2022, slightly lower than the previous year. However, despite this decrease, the state as a whole saw an increase in its participation rate. The Middle Region's participation rate reflects the overall trend in the state. Despite the overall decline in unemployment, youth unemployment slightly increased in 2021. However, it remained lower in the Region than the state rate.

The poverty rate in the Middle Region remained stable at 13.4 percent, still below the state average but higher than the previous year with the exception of the Upper Cumberland. The LWDA's poverty rate was higher than the state rate at 16.7%.

The average number of establishments increased to 97,982, and payroll surged by 11.4 percent to \$85.9 billion. This growth outpaced the state's growth rate, indicating robust economic activity within the Middle Region. Each of the LWDA's are projected to continue this positive growth trend in 2030 – Northern Middle 29%, Southern Middle, 24 %, and Upper Cumberland 19%.

Healthcare and Social Assistance is projected to be the dominant industry in the Northern Middle LWDA by 2030, with an estimated 168,145 jobs. This industry is expected to continue its prominence, reflecting its importance in providing essential services and meeting the healthcare needs of the region's population.

Manufacturing is projected to remain the dominant industry in the Southern Middle (37,113) and Upper Cumberland (22,511) LWDA's by 2030, with an estimated 22,511 jobs. Manufacturing has historically been a significant sector in the region, and its continued dominance underscores the importance of this industry for economic growth and employment opportunities.

Existing and emerging in-demand sectors and occupations – (See Appendix, Table 1)

It's significant to note that the industries identified in the state plan (Leisure and hospitality; Professional, scientific, and technical services; Healthcare and Social Assistance; Manufacturing; Transportation, Warehousing, and Utilities; Construction; Information) collectively employ a substantial portion of the total Tennessee workforce, accounting for 54.7 percent of employment according to annual averages for 2022. This statistic underscores the critical role these industries play in driving economic activity and providing job opportunities across the state. By employing over half of the workforce, these industries

serve as major contributors to Tennessee's economy, generating income, supporting livelihoods, and fostering economic growth. Their significance extends beyond mere employment numbers, as they often serve as anchors for regional economies, attracting investment, spurring innovation, and driving productivity gains.

The five largest industry sectors in the Middle Region are:

- Healthcare and social assistance (178,447)
- Retail Trade (135,359)
- Manufacturing (139,351)
- Accommodation and Food Services (131,314)
- Educational Services (96,674)

Information and Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services are the industries that are expected to grow the most rapidly in 2030 in the Southern Middle LWDA. Although those industries are projected to have healthy overall growth in all LWDAs, Southern Middle stands out as the LWDA expected to have the most rapid growth in the information industry, with Northern Middle being the next most rapid. The Upper Cumberland LWDA is the only area that is projected to have industries (retail trade and utilities) decrease in percent growth.

The previous section outlined the seven industries targeted for workforce development in the state. Within each of these sectors, emerging industries with the highest projected growth rates until 2030 are identified. Notably, within the information industry, software publishers are anticipated to experience the most substantial growth. Similarly, within healthcare and social assistance, the availability of additional funds for treatment is driving the expansion of residential facilities catering to substance abuse, mental health, and intellectual disability. Furthermore, the aging population is fueling the development of more assisted living facilities. Manufacturing is expected to see significant growth in the electric vehicle and battery manufacturing sectors. Electric vehicle production is underway in the Northern Middle, Southern Middle, and Southeast LWDAs, with plans for expansion into the Southwest LWDA. National investment and employment in electric vehicles, batteries, and related components have surged from 2015 to 2023, with Tennessee ranking among the top 10 states in this sector. This influx of investments, totaling \$16.6 billion, is projected to create 18,300 jobs. These clean technology investments will create employment opportunities across various fields, including electricians, mechanics, construction workers, technicians, engineers, chemists, and related roles. The Inflation Reduction Act is allocating millions of dollars in Tennessee to train workers, particularly in the construction and utility sectors, aiming to enhance energy efficiency in residential settings and expand renewable energy resources.

In the Northern Middle Region, a \$2.1 billion investment is allocated for the construction of a new Titans stadium and accompanying urban amenities. To support this project, "Titan Town" is being developed to recruit, train, and support construction workers and other professionals essential for the project's planning and development. Tennessee's workforce partners are actively involved in this initiative, striving to foster the creation of quality jobs accessible to employees and potential workers across the Middle Region on a fair and equitable basis.

Emerging/In-Demand Growth Industries 2020-2030 include: (See Appendix, Table 2)

Healthcare and Social Assistance

Individual and Family Services
 Residential Intellectual & Developmental Disability, Mental Health, Substance Abuse Facilities
 Offices of Other Health Practitioners

Retail Trade

E-commerce and Online Retail
 Health and Wellness Products
 Specialty Retail Stores
 Specialty Food and Artisan Products
 Outdoor and Recreation Equipment

Manufacturing

Motor Vehicle Mfg.
 Communications Equipment Mfg.

Accommodation and Food Service

Craft Breweries and Distilleries
 Event and Wedding Venues
 Farm-to-Table Restaurants
 Food Truck and Mobile Catering
 Culinary Tourism (cooking classes, food related events, and culinary tours)
 Agritourism and Farm Experiences (farm tours, u-pick farms)

Educational Services

Online Learning Platforms
 STEM Education
 Technical and Vocational Training
 Continuing Education and Professional Development
 Specialized Schools and Academies
 Adult Education and Literacy
 Private Tutoring and Test Preparation Services
 Early Childhood Education
 EdTech Startups

The complete list of eighty-three in demand occupations can be found in the attached Appendix, Table 2. The most prominent industries in the Middle Region LWDAs, including health care and social assistance, manufacturing, administration and support, leisure and hospitality, information, installers and repairers, and construction. Many of the occupations in professional, scientific, and technical services require post-secondary degrees.

Employment needs of businesses in those sectors and occupations – (See Appendix, Table 3)

In addition to finding additional qualified candidates to fill occupations in demand as shown in Table 2 of the Appendix and in the Improving the Workforce for Tennessee 2024, employers need candidates who possess industry specific certifications. As would be expected, these in demand certifications correlate to the largest industry sector: manufacturing, Healthcare, Retail Trade, Accommodation and Food Service, and Educational Services

Occupations with unmet needs by industry for Middle Region:

- A. Manufacturing - Electromechanical Engineering Technicians
- B. Transportation - Heavy Tractor Trailer Truck Drivers, Industrial Truck and Tractor Operators, Mobile Heavy Equipment Mechanics
- C. Business, Finance, Government Management, Support - Medical Records Administrators, Accounting Technicians, Business Statisticians, Project Management Specialists, Public Policy Specialists
- D. Health Sciences - Respiratory Therapist, Physical Therapist, Mental Health Nurses
- E. Human Services - Social and Behavioral Health Workers
- F. Information technology - Computer and IT Security
- G. Education - Early Childhood Educators, Secondary Educators Reading, Math, English, and Art Teachers

How the LWDA compares to the region and any unique contributors to the regional economic conditions and business needs.

Upper Cumberland continued to grow employment from 2021 to 2022, increasing average employment by 3,496 to 111,141. Average weekly wages did increase, from \$803 to \$850. The LWDA is expected to have 19 percent growth over the decade through 2030. The top industries by size are expected to be manufacturing, health care and social assistance, and accommodation and food services. With the increased population growth in this region, all three LWDA's are experiencing growth in the retail trade sector.

Continuing the pandemic recovery, the largest number of jobs are forecast to be created in the accommodation and food services industry, with more than 4,000 in health care and social assistance. Manufacturing will contribute nearly 4,000, but it will not be among the ten most rapidly growing industries. The professional, scientific, and technical industries will be the third most rapidly growing; transportation and warehousing employment is expected to grow by 51 percent.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

The UCLWDB's longstanding support for the manufacturing, transportation, and healthcare sectors shows our commitment to addressing the workforce needs of key industries in the region. To further enhance and build upon this history, in the PY 2024 - 2027 the board will continue to seek out new and innovative ways to partner with these robust sectors in the area. We will also provide support through training and apprenticeships for emerging sectors to include: leisure and hospitality, construction, information, Professional, scientific, and technical services.

Addressing the common theme of a lack of soft skills identified through the UCLWDB Business Services team's informal survey is crucial for enhancing the employability of the workforce. In response to this need, the UCLWDB will partner with the Highlands Training Center to offer My Strategic Compass training, a WIN Learning program, to eligible participants. This soft skills training certification uses psychometric data to assist participants in learning about their strengths as well as what industries and jobs would provide them with a fulfilling career. They also learn critical components of emotional intelligence, professional development and team communication tactics.

Further, the UCLWDB Business Services team will focus on changing the narrative around the youth employment mindset of requiring an employee to be 18 years of age. Using the information provided by the TN Department of Education's Division of College, Career, & Technical Education, the Business Services team will work to raise the awareness of what minors can (and cannot) do in the workplace.

- b. Describe the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to meet the employment needs of businesses, including those in in-demand sectors and employing individuals in demand occupations.

Employers in the Middle Region pursue job candidates with certifications mandated by their workplaces to ensure compliance with industry regulations, maintain safety standards, and enhance the professional qualifications of their workforce. Those most in demand in the Region are CPR, commercial driver's license, CPA, and nursing leadership certifications. Further, based on TNDLWD WIRED data, other certification needs include: proficiency in Microsoft Office and PowerPoint, SQL, Python, operating cash registers and forklifts, and utilizing personal protective equipment. All Health Sciences occupations require post-secondary credentials. Many of those occupations require additional certifications; for example, registered nurses must obtain a bachelor or an associate degree but also must pass the National Council Licensure Exam (NCLEX). Distinct certifications exclusive to the Middle Region include the following: in Southern Middle, the Food Service Professional (ANFD); in Northern Middle, the Behavior Analyst Certification; and in Upper Cumberland, the Dentist (DDS) and Manufacturing Skills Institute (MSI) certifications.

Of the occupations in demand in the Upper Cumberland, those requiring an associate degree ranked at 14% while 79% required only a high school diploma. Average salary for occupations requiring only a high school diploma is \$30,022.

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

Based on the data analysis, in PY 2024-2027, the UCLWDB will continue to ramp up employment efforts in the in-demand fields identified by TNDLWD data. Efforts include: direct hire events in partnership with targeted sectors, increased apprenticeships, supporting cohort training investments, adding healthcare decision makers to the local board, and establishing advisory boards as a supplement to the local board.

As previously mentioned, face-to-face surveys conducted by Business Services staff show that the regardless of the skill level required, soft skills are often lacking. UCLWDB will continue to support training efforts to bridge this skills gap by partnering with the Highlands Training Center to provide soft skill training certification programs.

- c. Provide an analysis of the regional and local workforce, including:
- i. Current labor force employment and unemployment numbers;
 - ii. Information on any trends in the labor market; and
 - iii. Educational and skill levels of the workforce in the region, including individuals with barriers to employment.

Current labor force employment and unemployment numbers;

The Middle Region consists of three Local Workforce Development Areas: Northern Middle, Southern Middle, and Upper Cumberland, encompassing a total of 40 counties. Total employment in the region, excluding agriculture and the self-employed, increased to 1,461,565. Of the 40 counties in the region, 29 counties increased employment as compared to all 40 having increased the year prior. This is an expected pattern as the year prior was a year of recovery for the Tennessee economy. The average number of establishments increased to 97,982 over the year and payroll increased by 11.4 percent to \$85.9 billion. The increase in payroll was at a faster rate than the state.

The average unemployment rate decreased from 2021 to 2022 to 3.0 percent, which is less than the state annual average. Youth unemployment in 2021 (the latest data available) is lower compared to the state rate of 11.4 percent; however, youth unemployment in the Middle Region increased slightly from 9.63 in 2020 to 9.89 in 2021.

Information on any trends in the labor market; and

As noted in the state plan, the top seven industries in the state spurring employment growth were identified as the following:

- Leisure and hospitality
- Health care and social assistance
- Manufacturing
- Transportation, warehousing, and utilities
- Professional, scientific, and technical services
- Construction
- Information

According to annual averages for 2022, these industries employ 54.7 percent of the total Tennessee workforce.

The labor force also increased in the Middle region. The labor force participation rate (LFPR) in the Middle Region in 2022 was 58.73 percent, somewhat lower than the previous year. However, despite this, the state's labor force participation rate increased to 58.6 percent in 2022. The Middle Region's participation rate mirrors the states. The largest decrease for the Middle Region was in the Southern Middle LWDA, which was expected given the negative population growth. A significant decrease in the labor force participation rate was also seen in the Northern Middle area.

The Upper Cumberland LFPR has a wide variance ranging from 40.8% in Van Buren County to 61% in Smith County.

County	LFPR (Dec 2023)
Van Buren	40.80%
Clay	47.20%
Cumberland	46.80%
DeKalb	49.80%
Warren	49.80%
Jackson	51.30%
Pickett	51.50%
Fentress	53.10%
White	54.00%
Overton	54.50%
Putnam	54.50%
Cannon	59.00%
Macon	56.70%
Smith	61.00%

Educational and skill levels of the workforce in the region, including individuals with barriers to employment.

The Upper Cumberland LWDA reported the lowest rate of educational attainment in 2021, with 43.2 percent of the population aged 25 years or more having some college or additional education. In contrast, the rate in the Northern Middle LWDA was 66.8 percent, well above the state’s average. The Middle Region of the state of Tennessee shows significant disparities concerning the post high school educational attainment of individuals based on their race or ethnic heritage. These disparities are not unique to the Middle Region, as they reflect a pattern throughout the whole state. In the Middle Region, the attainment of a bachelor’s degree or higher by individuals who are over the age of 25 and identify their race as White is 33.39 percent, which shows a significant disparity when compared to those who identify their race as Black (28.50), and those who identify their heritage as Hispanic or Latino (18.59). (See Appendix, Table 4.)

The Middle Region, like the state has about a third of those not in the labor force identified as having a disability, with Upper Cumberland LWDA having the highest rate. Further, the presence of a significant proportion of justice-involved individuals (43%) and those with limited English-speaking ability (58%) in the Middle Region presents unique challenges and opportunities for the area. Poverty rates declined from 13.9 percent in 2020 to 13.4 percent for the Middle Region in 2021, as federal aid was targeted to individuals with the greatest needs. The highest poverty rate in the region was in the Upper Cumberland LWDA at 16.7 percent. Upper Cumberland LWDA was the only LWDA in the Middle Region that had poverty rates higher than the state’s average. Addressing the needs of these populations will require regional, tailored strategies to ensure inclusive and effective workforce development.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

In comparison, the Upper Cumberland mirrors the Northern and Southern Middle workforce areas; however, there are a few mitigating factors that pose significant concerns when addressing the unique contributors to the regional economic conditions and business needs. The Upper Cumberland LWDA has the highest poverty rate -16.7% (above the state average) and the lowest educational attainment rate – 43.2% among the three LWDA's that make up the region. Those identified as having a disability comprise a significant number (approximately 1/3) of those not currently in the workforce. These three distressing factors will be the focus of the Upper Cumberland Local Workforce Board in the 2024-2027 period. Strategic plans for increasing education attainment and employment opportunities for those with disabilities and reducing poverty will be discussed within this document.

- d. Provide an analysis of workforce development activities, including education and training, in the region.
 - i. Identify strengths and weaknesses of these workforce development activities, and;
 - ii. Discuss the LWDB's capacity to provide workforce development activities to address the education and skill needs of the local workforce, including individuals with barriers to employment, and the employment needs of businesses.

Provide an analysis of workforce development activities, including education and training in the region.

The Upper Cumberland LWDA offers a diverse range of activities which address varying aspects of the workforce development need. Though the list below is extensive, it is not exhaustive.

Consolidated Business Grants - Consolidated Business Grants (CBGs) are provided through two programs in the Upper Cumberland – On the Job Training (OJT) and Incumbent Worker Training (IWT). On-the-Job Training (OJT) is a form of work-based training provided to an eligible WIOA participant upon entry into employment and while engaged in paid work. OJTs are customized to address specific gaps in the trainee's knowledge or skills that are inhibiting their ability to perform assigned duties fully and adequately. In contrast, Incumbent Worker Training (IWT) is designed to meet the specific requirements of an employer or group of employers and conducted with a commitment by the employer or group of employers to continue to employ an individual upon successful completion of training. IWTs may be used to help avert layoffs or to increase the skill levels of employees so they are eligible for promotion advances within the company and create backfill opportunities. OJT and IWT requests are maintained by the UCLWDB Staff to the Board and recommended for approval through the appropriate funding streams provided that funds are available through CBG or formula dollars.

Commercial Driver's License 3rd Party Testing Organizations– As an innovative way to address employer demand for employees within the transportation sector, The UCLWDB is establishing a pilot program in partnership with Orijin, TLD Logistics and Titles I & II that expedites the time between release from incarceration to active employment .

- **Third-Party Testing Sites:** The presence of four third-party testing sites, located at Cumberland County TCAT, Warren County TCAT, Patriot Trucking, and TLD Logistics, provides convenient access for individuals seeking to obtain commercial driver's licenses (CDLs). These testing sites play a crucial role in facilitating skills assessments and certifications for aspiring truck drivers.
- **Access to Training While Incarcerated:** One of the key features of the program is its provision of training opportunities while individuals are still incarcerated. Leveraging tablets already provided to each Tennessee County jail, participants are enrolled into a pre-apprenticeship through Title II. They then can access educational materials, coursework, and preparation for CDL written exams with the support of an Adult Ed instructor. This approach allows participants to begin their training and skill development while serving their sentences, increasing their readiness for reentry into the workforce upon release. Participants are co-enrolled with Title I and receive wraparound services and support as they transition back into the community and pursue employment opportunities.

Empower - Empower Upper Cumberland works with individuals who have never been in the workforce or who have limited experience. Through working with navigators, who provide peer support, the program focuses on eliminating barriers so that participants can begin focusing on becoming work-ready. As part of becoming work ready, Empower participants complete Aim High certification. The training focuses on soft skills, resume writing, and emotional intelligence. On the employer side of the workforce equation, UCLWDB works with employer for direct hires. Two categories of employers have been developed to insure success for Empower participants:

Preferred – To be a preferred employer, the company must have a minimum wage of \$14 per hour, have insurance benefits, and

have established career pathways allowing an individual within the program to progress or gain new skills to advance their careers.

Preferred Employer benefits include:

- Direct Referrals of Qualified Candidates for Open Positions
- Job Openings Publicized on Empower Websites/Social Media
- Hiring Campaign: In Person or Virtual Employer Meetings with participants

Certified - To be a certified employer, the company staff must complete a three-module Employee Retention virtual training that focuses on educating employers on the Cliff Effect and its impact on people receiving government assistance, Front Line Supervisor training, Trauma Informed strategies.

Certified Employer benefits include:

- Direct Referrals of Qualified Candidates for Open Positions
- Job Openings Publicized on Empower Websites/Social Media
- Hiring Campaign: In Person or Virtual Employer Meetings with participants
- Company logo shared on Empower website.
- May include payment up to 50% of Empower Employees Wages up to 320 hours
- Professional Promotional/Recruiting Video

Faith Based Training Initiatives – Faith based initiatives in the Upper Cumberland all have some form of Workforce Development embedded within the program. UCLWDB’s partnership with these agencies provides value added in many different forms but most especially in work-based learning opportunities. Our partners include Goodwill, Next Steps, Mustard Seed Ranch, Adult & Teen Challenge of the Upper Cumberland, Bread of Life, Genesis House, This is Living Ministries just to name a few.

Highlands Training Center (HTC) – The programs offered at the HTC are accredited through the State of TN and focuses on foundational workforce principles, such as loyalty to employer, timeliness, team communication, emotional, intelligence, conflict management, professional development and much more.

Micro Credentials - Micro-credentials are competency-based certifications that verify an individual’s ability to effectively perform a specific skill or set of skills. Through the use of Coursera, the Upper Cumberland has offered both participants and employers the opportunity to upgrade skills at no cost. Multiple options for micro credentials exist through Coursera offered by the TN Department of Labor & Workforce Development.

Post-Secondary Education - The fourteen counties that make up the Upper Cumberland have extensive access to education and training. The area has Tennessee Colleges of Applied Technology (TCAT) in Cumberland, Overton, and Warren counties with a new service location scheduled to open in Fentress County in 2025. Three 2- year colleges serve the area Motlow (Cannon, Dekalb, Van Buren, Warren, and White Counties), Roane State (Cumberland and Fentress) and Volunteer State (Clay, Jackson, Macon, Pickett, Putnam, Overton, Smith). Tennessee Tech University is the area’s 4-year school. Multiple options for online learning exist including Coursera offered by the TN Department of Labor & Workforce Development.

Registered Apprenticeships –A Registered Apprenticeship is a work-based learning model where apprentices have supervised on-the-job training, along with job-related education, all while working full-time for the employer and earning a wage that increases during progression of the program. Registered Apprenticeship provides the apprentice with an advanced set of skills that meet the specific needs of industry employers. Upon completion of the RA program, participants will receive a nationally recognized and portable credential. Upper Cumberland employers have embraced the earn and learn opportunity. Currently, the UCLWDB is funding apprenticeships over a broad spectrum of programs such as: Healthcare, Information Technology, Education, Transportation and Logistics, and Advanced Manufacturing.

University of Tennessee (TCSEPP & UTCIS)- Tennessee Child Support Employment & Parenting (TCSEPP) is a program administered through the University of TN Social Work Office of Research & Public Service. The program serves non-custodial parent who are ordered to pay child support in Blount, Cocke, Jefferson, Knox and Sevier counties and are interested in finding and maintaining employment and developing strong relationships with their children. UCLWDB has signed an MOU to collaborate through referrals as part of an extension of the pilot program into the Upper Cumberland Area.

The University of TN Center for Industrial Services provides consulting solutions to help companies improve and grow. UCLWDB recently partnered with UTCIS to survey AJC visitors on the availability of broadband in the Upper Cumberland. Results will be forthcoming in spring of 2024. We will also be offering free Optimized People Development training to employers to assist them in hiring and retaining good employees. Finally, as part of our partnership with UTCIS, the Upper Cumberland will begin offering Manufacturing Boot Camp to the justice involved in spring 2024. The goal of this ten-day workshop series is to prepare participants to begin a career in manufacturing. Participants will learn a wide variety of skills relevant to manufacturing through various methods, including hands-on activities and discussions. participants that complete all 10 days of training receive: • University of Tennessee Center for Industrial Services Certificate of Training Completion • OSHA 10-Hour - General Industry card.

Work Int. - Since PY22 the UCLWDB has taken a new and innovative approach to business engagement. While we have demonstrated internal success and are excelling in Key Performance Indicators, area businesses are experiencing a gap between our success and their benefit. Our Business Services Staff no longer offer job fairs, unless specifically requested by an employer. Instead, we encourage employer to host "direct hire" events. One example of a direct hire event is Cookeville Regional Medical Center. Title I participants who are enrolled in Health Sciences programs and UI participants were targeted as potential candidates. When job seekers arrived on site for the event, they were "checked in" by Title III staff who also encouraged them to provide copies of their resumes, etc. before they entered the event. Individual interview rooms were set up for each department participating in the event. Job seekers were offered jobs on the spot.

One of our WEX participants participated in the direct hire event with Cookeville Regional. This individual has severe disabilities. He stated that he had been trying for 5 years to get a job with no results. With minor accommodations he had successfully been working in the Cookeville AJC Welcome Center. When he left the event, he got on the elevator with one of the hospital employees who asked, "Don't you work here at the AJC?" With the biggest smile you have ever seen he responded, "Not anymore"!

The UCLWDB provides a robust slate of workforce development activities including education and training; however, the topography of the area coupled with insufficient modes for travel further enforces the need for a more robust offering of virtual opportunities. In PY 2024 – 2027, our goal is to intensify the use of the Virtual AJC in our counties. We will also, through our partnership with TRANSFR VR, seek funding to offer digital skills training and industry certifications.

Identify strengths and weaknesses of these workforce development activities

The following responses identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the Upper Cumberland' workforce development activities are taken directly from the Local Planning session moderated by the TOSS staff.

Strengths – A wealth of workforce initiatives exist in the Upper Cumberland. Post-secondary partnerships. The current workforce staff is composed of experienced individuals

Weaknesses -

Silos – Despite the abundance of workforce initiatives, most operate in silos.

Staffing - stakeholders identified limited staffing at the staff to the board and Title I program as a drawback for Workforce Services.

Transportation – Lack of reliable public transportation in rural areas.

Housing - Lack of affordable housing for the workforce especially the justice involved.

Child care – Lack of childcare for all socioeconomic levels is nearing the crisis level in the Upper Cumberland.

Benefits Cliff – The UCLWDB is working with Circles, USA to address the benefits cliff in the Upper Cumberland. The benefits cliff occurs when a family's increased income triggers an abrupt loss of public benefits that outweighs the increase in income, often substantially. Because the value of the family's increased income is less than the value of the lost benefit(s), the family is left in a worse financial situation. As of today, only 25 employers have completed the training. While we are pleased with the progress, changing employer mindset is slower than we would like.



Discuss the LWDB's capacity to provide workforce development activities to address the education and skill needs of the local workforce, including individuals with barriers to employment, and the employment needs of businesses.

The UCLWDB realizes that a comprehensive complement of partnerships is vital to harnessing the collective expertise and resources of its partners. Actively engaging our partners creates a more robust and effective workforce development ecosystem that meets the education and skills needs of the local workforce and addresses the demands of employers.

AJC core partners work together to facilitate co-enrollment of individuals seeking credentials as appropriate based upon their individual needs. Upper Cumberland AJCs operate on a "no wrong door" approach to initial services. Every individual entering our AJCs completes the Common Intake Form for needs assessment. As Title I and III teams begin the career pathways development and Individual Employment Plan, clients are given a warm hand off to Title II and IV as appropriate. This high touch process is instrumental in making sure that employees seeking jobs are channeled into programs that not only fit their career goals but meet the training needs of employers.

Circles USA is a new partnership UCLWDB has formed as a result of the Empower Upper Cumberland grant. Circles gathers middle-income and high-income volunteers to support families in poverty. Surrounded by people who have landed jobs, negotiated a lease, or managed credit card debt, for example, people experiencing poverty are more equipped to achieve long-term financial stability through employment success.

Empower Upper Cumberland works with individuals who have never been in the workforce or who have limited experience. Through working with navigators, who provide peer support, the program focuses on eliminating barriers so that participants can begin focusing on becoming work-ready. The stated goal for Empower UC is to lift 1600 families out of poverty into life sustaining employment. Upper Cumberland Workforce is a core partner in this workforce program.

The Upper Cumberland will begin offering Manufacturing Boot Camp to the justice involved in spring 2024. The goal of this ten-day workshop series is to prepare participants to begin a career in manufacturing. Participants will learn a wide variety of skills relevant to manufacturing through various methods, including hands-on activities and discussions. Participants that complete all 10 days of training receive: • University of Tennessee Center for Industrial Services Certificate of Training Completion • OSHA 10-Hour - General Industry card.

The implementation of micro-credentials, as demonstrated by the UCLWDB's cohort training program for Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs) in Jackson and Macon counties, is an excellent approach to addressing specific workforce shortages. Micro-credentials offer a focused and efficient method for upskilling job seekers, providing targeted training to meet the immediate needs of industries or regions. A combined class of participants from both counties resulted in assuring the minimum numbers of student required for the class to "make" was met. WIOA eligible students received tuition and supportive services funding. Program graduates are guaranteed a job in their home county plus, the opportunity for overtime hours in the adjacent county. Upper Cumberland is pursuing the EMT apprenticeship in partnership with the TN Department of Labor & Workforce Development Office of Apprenticeship. In 2024, Northern Middle LWDA will join the cohort model with the inclusion of Trousdale county. By combining our efforts with Jackson and Macon counties, the UCLWDB is not only addressed the EMT shortage but also established a model for effective, collaborative, and sustainable workforce development that can be replicated and adapted in other LWDA's.

Orijin (formerly APDS) is currently partnering with TDLWD on a statewide program aimed at curbing recidivism, educating inmates, and creating a new pipeline of qualified workers for employers. The Reentry, Employment, Adult Education Program, or Project REAP, will put specially designed computer tablets in each of the state's county jails. The tablets allow inmates to complete the required adult education coursework in preparation for the HiSET high school equivalency exam. UCLWDB has capitalized on the state contract by piloting a program with Orijin and TLD Logistics. The goal of this program is to provide the written portion of the CDL program to individuals while incarcerated reducing the time to "getting behind the wheel" by almost half.

Our partnership with the University of Tennessee Center for Industrial Services (UTCIS) to offer Optimized People Development training to employers aligns workforce development and employee retention goals. Collaborating with the University of Tennessee also brings academic expertise, research-based strategies and best practices to the employers in a condensed, user friendly pedagogy. The training encourages employers to invest in employee development by promoting a culture of lifelong learning. This not only benefits businesses but also contributes to the professional growth and job satisfaction of individual employees. By providing



training to employers on hiring and retaining good employees, the UCLWDB supports businesses in building and maintaining a stable workforce.

Another collaboration between UTCIS and UCLWDB centers around serving the reentry population. In spring 2024, we will begin offering Manufacturing Boot Camp to the justice involved in spring 2024. The goal of this ten-day workshop series is to prepare participants to begin a career in manufacturing. Participants will learn a wide variety of skills relevant to manufacturing through various methods, including hands-on activities and discussions all while still incarcerated. Participants that complete all 10 days of training receive:

- University of Tennessee Center for Industrial Services Certificate of Training Completion
- OSHA 10-Hour - General Industry card.

The UCLWDA has strong alliances with each of our post-secondary partners. Tennessee Colleges of Applied Technology (TCAT) are located in Cumberland, Overton, and Warren counties. A new a new service location is scheduled to open in Fentress County in 2025. Three 2- year colleges serve the area Motlow (Cannon, Dekalb, Van Buren, Warren, and White Counties), Roane State (Cumberland and Fentress) and Volunteer State (Clay, Jackson, Macon, Pickett, Putnam, Overton, Smith). Tennessee Tech University is the area's 4-year school.

Our careers advisors are trained to encourage participants to exhaust all possible funding options. WIOA funds are considered "last dollar" therefore, it is important to braid funding. The Tennessee Reconnect Act establishes a last-dollar scholarship for adults to attend a community college tuition-free. With this extension of the Drive to 55, which comes at no additional cost to taxpayers, every Tennessean will have the opportunity to enter or reenter public higher education with no tuition expenses.

Another funding option available to citizens of the state of TN is Tennessee Promise. This program offers both a scholarship and mentoring program focused on increasing the number of students that attend a postsecondary institution in our state. It provides students a last-dollar scholarship, meaning the scholarship may cover the cost of tuition and mandatory fees not covered by the federal Pell grant, the HOPE Scholarship, or the Tennessee Student Assistance Award at any of the state's 13 community colleges or 27 colleges of applied technology. Students may also use the scholarship at other eligible institution offering an associate degree program, but at these institutions the award would be capped at the average cost of tuition and mandatory fees at the community colleges.

The growing preference for Registered Apprenticeships in the Upper Cumberland reflects a proven method for addressing the skills gap. RAs offer several benefits for both employers and workers. As a work-based learning model, apprentices have supervised on-the-job training, along with job-related education, all while working full-time for the employer and earning a wage that increases during progression of the program. Registered Apprenticeship provides the apprentice with an advanced set of skills that meet the specific needs of industry employers. UCLWDB is especially pleased to partner with Clay County for registered apprenticeships in education through the Grow Your Own initiative. Clay County is the only remaining distressed county in the Upper Cumberland LWDA making these apprenticeships a key milestone in the county.

UCLWDB believes success through the Work 1st initiative will increase the area's Labor Force Participation Rate (LFPR). Currently, our labor force participation numbers are slightly lower than they were prior to the COVID-19. The BST plans to gradually increase these rates by utilizing the Work 1st direct referral process.

Consolidated Business Grants (CBGs) are a tried and true method of upskilling multiple employees. These business grants are provided through two programs in the Upper Cumberland – On the Job Training (OJT) and Incumbent Worker Training (IWT). On-the-Job Training (OJT) is a form of work-based training provided to an eligible WIOA participant upon entry into employment and while engaged in paid work. OJTs are customized to address specific gaps in the trainee's knowledge or skills that are inhibiting their ability to perform assigned duties fully and adequately. In contrast, Incumbent Worker Training (IWT) is designed to meet the specific requirements of an employer or group of employers and conducted with a commitment by the employer or group of employers to continue to employ an individual upon successful completion of training. IWTs may be used to help avert layoffs or to increase the skill levels of employees so they are eligible for promotion advances within the company and create backfill opportunities. OJT and IWT requests are maintained by the UCLWDB Staff to the Board and recommended for approval through the appropriate funding streams provided that funds are available.



KEY TAKEAWAYS

The UCLWDB has established strong partnerships to braid funds and address the workforce needs of the Local Workforce Development Area (LWDA). The UCLWDB must take care to constantly seek innovative ways to nurture and grow those partnerships as a secure base in our efforts to support the region's economy.

Support of State Initiatives:

- a. Labor Force Participation Rate (LFPR)
 - i. Describe how the LWDB will provide focused advocacy and engagement to special populations in effort to increase in the local LFPR.
 - ii. What regional or local initiatives will the LWDB support or implement to positively impact LFRP efforts?

Describe how the LWDB will provide focused advocacy and engagement to special populations in effort to increase in the local LFPR.

Veterans and eligible spouses are given statutory priority for WIOA adult formula funds. This means that veterans and eligible spouses who also are recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals*, or individuals who are basic skills deficient would receive first priority for services provided with WIOA adult formula funds. The priority of service for veterans and eligible spouses always applies across all qualified employment and training programs.

The UCLWDB will utilize our faith-based partners and the Cookeville Rescue Mission to serve the homeless population. In 2024, we will pursue reinstatement of AJC core partner services on site at the local Cookeville Rescue Mission.

Through new partnerships with Title IV and existing businesses in the LWDA, we will expand our employment services to individuals with disabilities including: WEX, Career Edge, and mentoring.

The UCLWDB will provide focused advocacy and engagement to the reentry population through the following partnerships

- Orijin (formerly APDS) - Orijin (formerly APDS) is currently partnering with TDLWD on a statewide program aimed at curbing recidivism, educating inmates, and creating a new pipeline of qualified workers for employers. The Reentry, Employment, Adult Education Program, or Project REAP, will put specially designed computer tablets in each of the state's county jails. The tablets allow inmates to complete the required adult education coursework in preparation for the HiSET high school equivalency exam. UCLWDB has capitalized on the state contract by piloting a program with Orijin and TLD Logistics. The goal of this program is to provide the written portion of the CDL program to individuals while incarcerated reducing the time to "getting behind the wheel" by almost half.
- Adult & Teen Challenge - Adult and Teen Challenge of the Upper Cumberland offers a residential recovery program for adult women who want freedom from addiction. Residents actively participate in Bible studies and receive Christian guidance while living in a structured and supportive environment. Adult and Teen Challenge of the Upper Cumberland works together with the legal and judicial system on referrals to the program.
- This is Living - This is Living Ministries is a Parole-Approved Halfway House through the TN Dept of Correction Recovery Congregation, Office of Faith-Based Initiatives Addiction Recovery Program Provider, TDMHSAS.
- Work Release Programs - Macon and Putnam Counties are in the process of creating work release programs. For PY 24-27 the UCLWDB will use the same methodology as in the partnership with Orijin and TLD, the UCLWDB will assist these counties in identifying employers who interested in using the Project REAP tablets to shorten the time from incarceration to employment by uploading pre-employment training and paperwork allowing inmates to complete these first steps while incarcerated.
- Misdemeanor Recovery Court - Tennessee's recovery courts are judicially-supervised court dockets that reduce correctional costs, protect community safety, and improve public welfare. In recovery courts, non-violent individuals with substance use disorders participate in treatment while under close legal and clinical supervision. In partnership with the Smith County General Sessions Court Judge w/ Juvenile Court Jurisdiction, a Career Advisor serves as a member of the program staff. Participants complete a skills assessment, interest inventory, career counseling and the opportunity to complete a WEX.
- Recovery to Work - Reentering the workforce can be a barrier for many in recovery. The desire to become a productive

community member and the opportunity to prove themselves as a great employee can be sidetracked by employment restrictions. Setting up second-chance policies and the ability to provide employment to an already strained workforce can be good for both employer and employee.

The UCLWDB will provide focused advocacy and engagement to the youth in transition population through the following partnerships:

- Extension of Foster Care – EFC is a voluntary program for qualifying young adults up to age 21 that have age out of the Department of Children’s Services custody at age 18 or older. A DCS Independent Living Specialist provides a direct referral to a Title I Career Advisor who works with the referral to complete an interest inventory and skills assessment resulting in any of the following: Co-enrollment with AJC partners, training, supportive services, enrollment in post-secondary education, or employment.
- Youth in the Juvenile Justice System – If a youth in foster care is dependent and neglected, it means they entered custody due to some family issues that make the family unable to properly care for them but does not preclude the youth from being found guilty of a delinquent offense. Youth found guilty of violent crimes against persons are generally placed in hardware secure facilities. The UCLWDB is currently focusing on youth in the juvenile justice system who have been placed in community-based facilities, run by provider partners. Based upon our success in the youth in extension of foster care, in PY 24, the LWDB will again partner with the Department of Children’s Services to implement a direct referral program for youth in the juvenile justice system. As with both the Extension of Foster and Youth Villages model, a DCS Independent Living Specialist will provide a direct referral to a Title I Career Advisor who works with the referral to complete an interest inventory and skills assessment resulting in any of the following: Co-enrollment with AJC partners, training, supportive services, enrollment in post-secondary education, or employment.
- Youth Villages – Youth Villages is a private, nonprofit organization dedicated to helping children with emotional and behavioral problems and their families live successfully. A Lifeset/Extension of Foster Care specialist provides a direct referral to a Title I Career Advisor who works with the referral to complete an interest inventory and skills assessment resulting in any of the following: Co-enrollment with AJC partners, training, supportive services, enrollment in post-secondary education, or employment.



What regional or local initiatives will the LWDB support or implement to positively impact LFRP efforts?

Based upon the data from WIRED that shows that 79% of the in-demand jobs require a high school diploma or equivalent, the LWDB will target increasing education attainment to increase the LFRP. In addition to the advocacy and engagement to the special populations above, in PY 24 – 27 the UCLWDB and AJC Core Partners will launch and ALL4TN project to raise the LFRP by targeting those ages 16 -18 and ages 18 -64 who have no high school diploma or equivalent. The table below shows how many individuals per county 1) who currently do not possess a HS credential 2) the number of individuals the UCLWDB should target to complete the program and thus raise the LFRP by 2%.

County	LFRP (Dec 2023)	**Population 2020 (Census)	**Population 2022	HS-Diploma	* Less than HS	* LFRP Age 16+	* Need to add for 2%	* LFRP 18 to 64	* Need to add for 2%
Van Buren	40.80%	6,168	6,298	592	498	40.80%	104	52.80%	72
Clay	47.20%	7,861	7,486	625	365	47.20%	123	63.30%	83
Cumberland	46.80%	61,145	62,161	3589	1804	46.80%	1,019	69.90%	622
DeKalb	49.80%	20,080	20,397	2015	1248	49.80%	328	61.80%	243
Warren	49.80%	40,953	41,127	3512	2518	49.80%	671	61.80%	499
Jackson	51.30%	11,617	11,582	1079	527	51.30%	189	66.40%	133
Pickett	51.50%	5,001	4,964	594	280	51.50%	81	70.70%	53
Fentress	53.10%	18,489	18,507	1633	839	53.10%	306	69.30%	215
White	54.00%	27,351	27,656	2843	1683	54.00%	451	70.10%	324
Overton	54.50%	22,511	22,562	2033	1058	54.50%	371	70.30%	268
Putnam	54.50%	79,854	81,408	4081	2769	54.50%	1319	66.90%	1013
Cannon	59.00%	14,506	14,641	1086	619	59.00%	239	73.30%	178
Macon	56.70%	25,216	25,855	2647	1400	56.70%	426	67.20%	328
Smith	61.00%	19,904	19,967	1497	778	61.00%	329	74.90%	249

** Data from https://mtida.org/regions#upper_region 2021 population

*Data from tn.gov Labor Force Participation Analysis

The LWDB will also leverage the Summer Youth Employment Program to increase the LFRP. The UCLWDB’s direct services provider, Career TEAM, will work collaboratively with the LWDB and workforce partners to grow the SYEP into a year-round program that will benefit in-school and out-of-school youth, while meeting employer needs for a year-round workforce, leading to full-time employment at a self-sustaining wage. Such outreach will be accomplished through presentations to employers, school groups, and youth service organizations via a variety of networks (chambers of commerce, Business Solutions Team meetings, and personnel associations) about the SYEP and young adult programming with the goal of focusing on paid internships (WEX), training programs, and basic career services preparation. Outreach will extend to young adult communities that may not be enrolled in a traditional high school setting, being inclusive of homeschooling families as well as students enrolled in alternative school, career/technical education centers, and young adults who have stopped out of secondary or post-secondary education.

The LWDB will continue to build upon the success of the Work 1st model to increase the LFRP. In PY22 the UCLWDB implemented the Work 1st model after much encouragement from our board. We are using a continuous improvement methodology to fine tune the programs foundational pillars.

Cornerstone #1: Utilize the One-Stop Operator to redesign the AJC Welcome Function and Referral Processes to increase customer engagement and convert basic touches to enrollments and ultimately employment. Through the use of a common intake form, the OSO refers the individual to the appropriate AJC partner(s). Services are provided as appropriate. Updates are communicated via email to all partners involved in each individual case. When possible, a warm handoff is the preferred method of referral.

Cornerstone #2: Support “work-ready” case management. A “work ready” individual has the basic skills needed to be qualified for a job as determined through skills assessment and interest inventory. For those determined not to be ready to

enter the job market, the Skills Development Team maps out a plan based upon participant interest to produce a “work ready” employee. Work Experience or Work Based Learning as a priority in this case management methodology. We firmly believe Work Experience is a vital tool in creating trained job seekers. It also provides a substantial benefit to employers by providing an interested worker with a subsidized salary. The UCLWDB will strengthen WEX for Title I Adult & Dislocated Worker participants as well as, the Summer Youth Employment Program to offer work experience for Youth. The Upper Cumberland is on track in PY 23 to increase our WEX participants by more than 4 times the number in PY22. Our goal for PY 24-27 is to at minimum maintain PY 23 enrollment and increased our yearly total by 10% each year. Title II partners in the Upper Cumberland have developed two excellent examples of work ready case management through Pre-Apprenticeships: 1) Certified Driver’s License program 2) Licensed Practical Nurse. Pre-Apprenticeships provide coursework or training designed to prepare individuals to enter and succeed in a registered apprenticeship program. Apprenticeships are an excellent example of work-based learning where apprentices have supervised on-the-job training, along with job-related education, awhile earning a wage that increases during the progression of the program. Apprenticeships in the Upper Cumberland are thriving! Serving our smaller more distant counties with Work Based Learning Experiences is a huge challenge. In PY 23, we are excited to have multiple apprentices in each of our 14 counties including two in the Grow Your Own program in Clay.

Cornerstone #3: Establish a direct linkage pipeline with Business Services to create a clear channel for placing Title I and III work-ready participants into open job positions. Using Pillars #1 and #2 to lay the foundation, Pillar #3 brings in Business Services and the Work 1st model to place the now-ready client into work. The Welcome Function started the process by converting a check-in into referral for enrollment. The AJC Skills Development Team worked together to case manage individuals from check-in all the way to “work-ready” based on personal goals. At this phase of the process, the Business Services Team, which consists of Board Staff and all AJC core partners, have taken an “all hands-on deck” approach by creating a pipeline of work ready participants.

In summary, the Work 1st model actively and directly engages employers and job seekers to create workforce pipelines across the Upper Cumberland. The teamwork between Core AJC Partner and Board Staff provides services that bridge the workforce gap and build a better local workforce by serving one job-seeker at time. This model has seen great success in direct hires which increases the LFPR. An excellent example is the partnership with Cookeville Regional Hospital which hired 25+ individuals in a one-day event. We will continue to increase Work-Based Learning opportunities in both Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs. We will also continue to grow our Pre-Apprenticeship and Apprenticeship programs. To measure the success of the initiative specific KPIs using activity codes and reports from Jobs4TN have been agreed upon by the Core Partners of the American Job Center. For participant referrals and placement, the 500, 501, 750, and 850 activity codes are tracked. Title III staff enter the 500/501 activity code into VOS. When a participant receives a job, Title III will mark that the job was received. This action automatically triggers a 750 or 850 placement code into the system.

b. Business Engagement Plan

The UCLWDB will support the state business engagement plan by expanding the "Work 1st" initiative, aligning with the seven pillars as outlined below.

Pillar 1 – Sector Based Service Delivery

The UCLWDB will continue to assess training and employment needs of key businesses within each sector in the LWDA. Advisory boards for each sector are in process and will play an integral role as providing an ongoing forum for employers to communicate their training needs as well as an assessment of how well Workforce is meeting those needs.

Pillar 2 – Business Cycle Framework

The UCLWDB will utilize the Dun & Bradstreet platform to analyze where businesses are within the business cycle and tailor services to each business accordingly. We will continue to expand apprenticeship opportunities to address skills gaps and provide consolidated business grants to support workforce retention and training initiatives.

Pillar 3 – LWDBs as Asset Mappers

The UCLWDB will utilize data and resource partnerships to assist industry and sectors across all stages of business cycles that can benefit from targeted workforce development and promoting funding opportunities to those sectors.

Strategic Partnerships – Collaborating with Regional Economic Development staff, chambers of commerce, secondary and post-secondary education, local elected officials, industrial boards, non-profits, employers and faith-based organizations allows the UCLWDB to tap into their expertise and networks within our communities. By tearing down silos, we can work together as a collective to tackle local economic issues, identify opportunities for workforce development initiatives, training programs, and funding opportunities that align with the economic needs and trends within the LWDA.

We will also showcase success stories of businesses that have utilized WIOA programs to address skill gaps and promote growth by encouraging employers to complete the training required to become certified employers through our Empower grant. Certified Employer benefits include:

- Direct Referrals of Qualified Candidates for Open Positions
- Job Openings Publicized on Empower Websites/Social Media
- Hiring Campaign: In Person or Virtual Employer Meetings with participants
- Company logo shared on Empower website.
- May include payment up to 50% of Empower Employees Wages up to 320 hours
- Professional Promotional/Recruiting Video

Pillar 4 – Employer Case Management

The UCLWDB already has dedicated staff who strategically manage employer engagement to reduce employer fatigue, foster long term relationships, and contribute to the economic growth of the region through our Work 1st model. In PY 2024-2027, we will work with the Regional Business Consultant to pilot the CRM. Adding this tool to our comprehensive employer case management strategy will provide much needed guidance in navigating the services of the American Job Center and assist in identify workforce services that need improvement allowing for strategies adjustments as needed.

Pillar 5 – Enterprise Alignment

We will provide specialized training for our Business Engagement staff, to ensure they have the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively utilize the information contained in individual employer portfolios. This training will equip consultants with strategies for engaging with employers, understanding their needs, and tailoring workforce solutions to meet those needs. As a result, consultants can build stronger relationships with employers and deliver more targeted services, ultimately enhancing the impact of the UCLWDB's workforce development efforts.

We will host monthly "Power Hours" to serve as a valuable platform for fostering collaboration and alignment among partners, including American Job Center partners, local Economic Development staff, Chambers of Commerce and other stakeholders. These



events will provide an opportunity for Upper Cumberland partners to come together to share information, engagement strategies, and exchange best practices. By regularly convening partners in this way, the UCLWDB facilitates knowledge sharing, problem solving, and alignment of resources including opportunities for braiding of funding.

Pillar 6 – AJC Network

The UCLWDB utilize the extensive capabilities of the AJC network. Further, will revisit the use of the virtual American Job Center in the AJCs with the intent of using this platform to provide services in our rural areas. We will seek further training as well as access to the notification system from the state staff.

Pillar 7 – Training and Development

The UCLWDB will work with the AJC partners to instill a culture of continuous improvement by seeking feedback from businesses, analyzing outcomes, and adjusting our approach based upon lessons learned. We will promote simplicity in communication discouraging the use of bureaucratic jargon and acronyms. We will offer training on using a problem-solving mindset by proactively offering suggestions and strategies for overcoming challenges effectively shifting from the process of describing available workforce programs to presenting real life solutions and clearly articulating the value of workforce partnerships.

c. Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP)

- i. Describe how the LWDB will implement SYEP in the local area.
- ii. How will the LWDB leverage partnerships and current connections with both in-school and out-of-school youth, as well as employers, to increase SYEP participation and job placement?
- iii. Describe how the LWDB will conduct outreach to employers, as well as youth participants, to ensure Youth work experience is utilized year-round.

Describe how the LWDB will implement SYEP in the local area.

The LWDB is contracting with our current youth service provider, Career TEAM, for the enrollment of and direct service delivery for 120 youth in the TN Youth Employment Program (TYEP) formerly SYEP. Since TYEP participants are not required to be WIOA eligible, Career Team will co-enroll whenever possible in both TYEP and Title I. In order to successfully manage the program, Career TEAM maintain close communication and collaboration with TDWLD to leverage resources (including the TYEP playbook), access technical assistance, and stay informed about updates or changes to TYEP guidelines and policies. An excellent example of collaboration that already exist is the development of a step-by-step guide for enrollment that was created by an Upper Cumberland TYEP participant and has been approved by TNDLWD for use with the program.(See Appendix). This partnership allows the Career Team to align its service delivery with state priorities, address challenges or barriers encountered during implementation, and contribute to ongoing program improvement efforts in both Title I and the TYEP.

Career TEAM is already active among area high schools in the implementation of Career EDGE. Career EDGE is a remote access career preparation program that provides virtual basic career services, including resume development, interviewing skills and practice, as well as modules that prepare young adults for the world of work and advancement in employment. Career EDGE is also utilized as part of the individualized training plan for all young adults in the TYEP program. The combination of virtual and in-person services will enhance the TYEP experience for young adults in the Upper Cumberland region.

How will the LWDB leverage partnerships and current connections with both in-school and out-of-school you, as well as employers, to increase SYEP participation and job placement?

The LWDB's direct services provider, Career TEAM, will work collaboratively with the LWDB, local chambers of commerce, Business Solutions Team, and other partners to locate meaningful and appropriate worksite locations for in-school and out-of-school young adults. The goal of the TYEP program is job placement or training preparation upon completion of the program.

Describe how the LWDB will conduct outreach to employers, as well as youth participants, to ensure Youth work experience is utilized year-round.

The LWDB's direct services provider, Career TEAM, will work collaboratively with the LWDB and workforce partners to ensure the TYEP program (formerly SYEP) is utilized as a year-round program that will benefit in-school and out-of-school youth, while meeting employer needs for a year-round workforce, leading to full-time employment at a self-sustaining wage. Career TEAM will leverage both TYEP state funds and WIOA Title I funds as appropriate to support the year-round program. This may involve blending and braiding funding sources to maximize resources and ensure that program activities are adequately funded to meet participant and employer needs effectively.

Outreach will be accomplished through presentations to career counselors, employers, school groups, and faith-based organizations, and youth service organizations via a variety of networks (chambers of commerce, Business Solutions Team meetings, and personnel associations) about the TYEP and young adult programming with the goal of focusing on paid internships (WEX), training programs, and basic career services preparation. Outreach will extend to young adult communities that may not be enrolled in a traditional high school setting, being inclusive of homeschooling families as well as students enrolled in alternative school, career/technical education centers, and young adults who have stopped out of secondary or post-secondary education.

d. AJC Operations Improvement: AJC Assessment

- i. Provide an analysis of the KPMG assessment study results specific to the local area.
 - ii. How does the LWDB plan to incorporate the recommendations and adjust the local service strategy if necessary?

Provide an analysis of the KPMG assessment study results specific to the local area.

The KPMG study indicates both an opportunity and a challenge in addressing the needs of the homeless and unemployed population in the Upper Cumberland region. The fact that the Upper Cumberland region has enrolled the highest percentage (46%) of the homeless population in Title I programs demonstrates success in engagement. We will build upon this achievement by leverage existing collaborations and partnerships within the community to extend the reach of AJC programs. We will review our service strategy to determine how to better provide services directly to areas with higher concentrations of homeless and unemployed individuals.

The identification of unmet demands for employers in the Upper Cumberland LWDBs, presents an opportunity to enhance workforce development strategies. The observation of a high number of job postings without any applications in AJCs like Sparta and Jamestown Fentress County, coupled with a relatively long Title I program duration, suggests areas for potential improvement. We will utilize the "Work 1st" model to offer direct referrals to employers is a strategic approach that can enhance the efficiency of workforce development efforts. Further, the UCLWDB will work with our CSP to reduce the duration of Title I programs as a strategic initiative to enhance participant completion rates and facilitate a more direct transition to the workforce.

The study identified the need for clarification of roles and responsibilities. Addressing overlapping roles and responsibilities, as well as navigating challenges arising from expanded requirements and limited resources, requires a strategic and collaborative approach. The UCLWDB has made significant progress in this area by contracting with an experienced, active one-stop-operator. The new one stop operator has created a more cohesive work environment through fostering a work environment characterized by clarity, collaboration, and continuous improvement.

The lack of access to personal computers may limit the options of how customers receive services from AJC and/or AE centers. This barrier poses challenges particularly to those with a high travel burden (such as no public transportation access, no/low access to personal vehicles, rural, and far away from centers). The combination of lacking access to computers and transportation could greatly prevent customers receiving trainings. The two counties with lowest rate of access to personal computers in the Upper Cumberland are Van Buren, and Jackson County; approximately one out of five households in each of these counties do not have a personal computer. The UCLWDB is currently in the process of reviewing its service model. Expanding computer access in all fourteen counties, especially Jackson and Van Buren, is a high priority for PY 2024-2027. Potential options include:

- 1) partnerships with chambers of commerce, high schools, libraries, and community centers to host computer access points leveraging existing infrastructure to minimize costs and enhance accessibility.
- 2) Develop a monthly schedule for the mobile AJC in some of our counties. Consider factors such as local events, community activities, and peak times for job seekers to maximize the impact of the mobile AJC services.

We would launch a promotional campaign in partnership with local media, community bulletin boards, and social media to reach a broad audience in order to raise awareness of the new computer access points and the mobile AJC schedule.

Access to a personal vehicle is one of the biggest challenges residents of Tennessee and the Upper Cumberland face. Lack of transportation options limits their ability to travel to an AJC or AE site where most services are provided. Van Buren County has greater than 9% of its residents who do not have any vehicle in their household. The UCLWDB supportive services policy does allow for the use of funding for ride sharing services such as Uber and Lyft, as well as, the use of Upper Cumberland Human Resource Agency (UCHRA) transportation services. The UCLWDB is currently in discussion with UCHRA to sign an MOU for the use of their job access program which is designed specifically to assist low income individuals with transportation to and from their place of employment and to and from childcare facilities.

How does the LWDB plan to incorporate the recommendations and adjust the local service strategy if necessary?

Recognizing the need for a change in the local service strategy model is a crucial step toward addressing customer access challenges effectively. The UCLWDB is actively developing strategies to include but not limited to:

We will build upon the achievement of enrolling 46% of the homeless population by leverage existing collaborations and partnerships within the community to extend the reach of AJC programs. We will review our service strategy to determine how to better provide services directly to areas with higher concentrations of homeless and unemployed individuals. Further, we are leveraging our partnership with Habitat for Humanity to explore the use of tiny homes as transitional housing.

Utilizing the "Work 1st" model we will offer direct referrals to employers as a strategic approach that can enhance the efficiency of workforce development efforts. Further, the UCLWDB will work with our CSP to reduce the duration of Title I programs as a strategic initiative to enhance participant completion rates and facilitate a more direct transition to the workforce.

We will continue to build upon the success of the new one-stop operator in fostering a collaborative work environment by strengthening partnerships through team building and cross functional training. Further, we will work to break down silos to promote a more holistic approach to services.

We will expand computer access in all fourteen counties, especially Jackson and Van Buren, in PY 2024-2027. Options include: 1) partnerships with chambers of commerce, high schools, libraries, and community centers to host computer access points. Leverage existing infrastructure to minimize costs and enhance accessibility. 2) Develop a monthly schedule for the mobile AJC in Jackson and Van Buren counties. Consider factors such as local events, community activities, and peak times for job seekers to maximize the impact of the mobile AJC services. We would launch a promotional campaign to raise awareness of the new computer access points and the mobile AJC schedule. Utilize local media, community bulletin boards, and social media to reach a broad audience

Through implementing a new services strategy model as mentioned in the previous paragraph, the UCLWDB will successfully expand computer access to all counties in our LWDA bridging the digital divide and providing valuable resources to residents in counties with limited access to personal vehicles or transportation.

e. Infrastructure

- i. Describe how the LWDB plans to implement an innovative and effective funding structure to incorporate the blending and braiding of resources.
- ii. What additional funding sources, beyond WIOA formula dollars, does the LWDB plan to seek?
- iii. How does the LWDB plan to staff and administer any programs funded through non-WIOA sources?

INNOVATIVE AND EFFECTIVE FUNDING STRUCTURE TO INCORPORATE THE BLENDING AND BRAIDING OF RESOURCES

For the PY24-27, the UCLWDB will work with AJC core partners and LEOs to assess the viability and practicality of brick and mortar AJC sites in each of our current locations. Staffing shortages necessitate the evaluation of our service model. In the spring of 2024, UCLWDB staff and AJC core partners will undertake a “road show” by meeting with all LEOs, chamber directors, and educators in all 14 of the counties we serve. The intent is to present stakeholders with the option of creating a workforce station in each chamber office and each high school in the area. Each workforce station would have access to Jobs4TN, Core Partner information (including whom to contact), Career Edge and much more for the job seeking public. Chamber staff and CTE Directors/Counselors will be trained to offer meaningful assistance. Creating these workforce stations will also serve to further access to Adult Education services in our effort to facilitate education attainment and increase the LFPR. Moving away from a traditional brick-and-mortar location eliminates expenses associated with rent, utilities, maintenance, and other overhead costs. Further, by streamlining operations and utilizing available virtual service delivery platforms such as the virtual AJC, fewer employees will be required to support the workforce needs of the area. This can result in savings on salaries, benefits, and other personnel-related expenses. The agility of the new service model should result in better service delivery, optimize resource allocation, and provide cost-effective alternatives to brick and mortar service delivery.

Salvation Army (Overton & Putnam) – The Salvation Army provides assistance in removing barrier to employment by providing funding for AJC participant that have a need that cannot be covered under WIOA guidelines or UCLWDB policies.

FUNDING SOURCES BEYOND WIOA DOLLARS

The Upper Cumberland and Northern Middle LWDAs will collaborate on two grant opportunities: Pathway Home and Improving Job Opportunities for Youth Affected by Violence, Poverty.

- Pathway Home which is a \$52 million U.S. Department of Labor funding opportunity for organizations that provide reentry services to incarcerated individuals before release from state correctional facilities or county or local jails. By eliminating gaps between release from prison or jail and enrollment in a workforce development program, the funding will enhance reintegration efforts and reduce recidivism.
- Improving Job Opportunities for Youth Affected by Violence, Poverty an \$85 million funding opportunity to support programs that provide skills training through work-based learning, employment services, educational support and mentorship to youth and young adults in communities affected by violence, crime and poverty. Violence and poverty can prevent teenagers from realizing their potential and block access to equitable educational and employment opportunities. The announced Growth Opportunities funding will help to address those structural barriers by supporting local organizations that provide jobs, training and supportive services that prepare and empower young people to succeed in the labor market and their communities.

UCLWDB will seek 5% of each county's total funds received as they become available using the combined amount to support reentry efforts involving opioids with the area. Approximate amounts include:

- Cannon – \$5000
- Clay – \$2200
- Cumberland – \$15000
- DeKalb – \$6000
- Fentress – \$6000
- Smith – \$5500
- Putnam – \$17500
- Overton – \$6000
- Van Buren – \$1500
- Warren – \$10000
- White – \$7000
- Macon \$6000
- Pickett – \$1200
- Jackson – \$3500

Private Donations – Though it is rare, UCLWDB does on occasion receive private donation funds.

STAFFING AND ADMINISTERING PROGRAMS FUNDED THROUGH NON-WIOA SOURCES

The UCLWDB is utilizing their 501c3 (Workforce Connections) to diversify funding sources and support staffing by implementing a fee-for-services model to leverage our expertise and resources to generate additional revenue streams and enhance its overall financial resilience and sustainability. This model also allows Workforce Connections to expand its reach and impact by providing valuable services to a broader range of stakeholders beyond its traditional grant-funded programs. As part of the Empower grant, we are working with Scott Miller and Associates to create consulting services, technical assistance, workshops, and other customized trainings as part of our cache of fee for services offerings.

Strategic Planning Elements:

- a. Describe the LWDB's strategic vision and goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce, including youth and individuals with barriers to employment.
 - i. How do the local area's workforce development programs, including programs provided by partner agencies, support this strategic vision?
 - ii. How will the local area, working with the entities that carry out the core programs, align available resources to achieve the strategic vision and goals?

Describe the LWDB's strategic vision and goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce, including youth and individuals with barriers to employment.

The UCLWDB's strategic vision for preparing an educated and skilled workforce, including youth and individuals with disabilities and other barriers to employment, aligns with the overarching goals of the Middle Tennessee region and actively supports the Tennessee Combined Plan. Drawing on the collective resources of the American Job Center core partners and engaging external stakeholders, the Local Workforce Development Board will maintain and strengthen its role as a strategic convener by facilitating connections between individuals seeking employment and the educational and skill requirements demanded by area employers. To maximize the impact of this role, the UCLWDB will focus on four main goals for the PY 2024-2027.

1) Increase the LFPR by 2% in the Upper Cumberland

SYEP/TYEP - We will ramp up our efforts to provide meaningful work experiences for youth in the region by offering opportunities for hands-on learning, skill development, and exposure to jobs. All SYEP/TYEP will be exposed to Career Edge offering them guidance on: the importance of professionalism, teamwork, communication, problem-solving skills, career exploration activities, workshops, setting goals for their future education/employment, resume writing, interview preparation, and job search strategies.

Employer Engagement - We will utilize the "Work 1st" model to offer direct referrals to employers as a strategic approach that can enhance the efficiency of workforce development efforts. Further, the UCLWDB will work with our CSP to reduce the duration of Title I programs as a strategic initiative to enhance participant completion rates and facilitate a more direct transition to the workforce.

Education Attainment - We will partner with Title II, Adult Education and LEOs to target counties with the lowest levels of education attainment to emphasize the benefits of credential attainment.

Reentry - The UCLWDB will continue Supporting reentry efforts through partnerships with Orijin, Adult & Teen Challenge, This is Living Ministries, work release programs, misdemeanor recovery court, recovery to work, and youth in transition.

Serving those with disabilities - Given that approximately one-third of the unemployed in the region identify as having a disability this is a huge population that is underserved. By strengthening partnerships with Vocational Rehabilitation Board and adopting a collaborative approach, the UCLWDB will improve the accessibility, effectiveness, and inclusiveness of workforce development services for individuals with disabilities in the Upper Cumberland region.

2) Superior Service Delivery Across the Workforce System in the Upper Cumberland

Enrollment - We will build upon our success in enrolling homeless participants by leverage existing collaborations and partnerships within the community to extend the reach of AJC programs. We will review our service strategy to determine how to better provide services directly to areas with higher concentrations of the homeless and unemployed individuals.

Employer Engagement - We will utilize the "Work 1st" model to offer direct referrals to employers as a strategic approach that can enhance the efficiency of workforce development efforts. Further, the UCLWDB will work with our CSP to reduce the duration of Title I programs as a strategic initiative to enhance participant completion rates and facilitate a more direct transition to the workforce.

Clarification of Roles and Responsibilities – In partnership with the new one-stop operator, the UCLWDB will continue to enhance collaboration, communication, and overall effectiveness within the American Job Centers ensuring cohesive operations and providing high-quality services to job seekers and employers in the community.

Expanding Access - Expanding computer access in all fourteen counties, especially Jackson and Van Buren, is a high priority for PY 2024-2027. Potential options include: 1) partnerships with chambers of commerce, high schools, libraries, and community centers to host computer access points. Leverage existing infrastructure to minimize costs and enhance accessibility. Through a generous donation from one of our local workforce partners, we have sufficient computer hardware for 30 locations. 2) Develop a monthly schedule for the mobile AJC in Jackson and Van Buren counties. We will attend local events, community activities, and peak times for job seekers to maximize the impact of the mobile AJC services. We would launch a promotional campaign to raise awareness of the new computer access points and the mobile AJC schedule. Utilize local media, community bulletin boards, and social media to reach a broad audience.

Transportation - Access to a personal vehicle is one of the biggest challenges residents of Tennessee and the Upper Cumberland face. Lack of transportation options limits their ability to travel to an AJC or AE site where most services are provided. Van Buren County has greater than 9% of its residents who do not have any vehicle in their household. As described in the above paragraph, the UCLWDB is reviewing potential service model changes that would enhance availability of services to customers with transportation barriers.

3) Use Data and Predictive Analysis to Drive the System

In PY 2024 – 2027, the UCLWDB will explore data solutions that enhance the identification of job placements within the Job Center such as extending access to the use of activity codes 500 & 501 to Title I staff and partnering with the Regional Business Coordinator to pilot the Zendesk/CRM case management. Further, we will maximize the utilization of data from the Dun & Bradstreet platform to provide lifecycle support to employers in the local area.

4) Business Engagement Plan

The UCLWDB already has a robust framework in place for business engagement. Our current strategies already include many of the elements identified through the business engagement plan such as employer case management and utilizing the Dun & Bradstreet platform to address issues. The BEP will only serve to enhance our thriving business services offerings. Through these tactics, the UCLWDB will contribute to Tennessee's goal of becoming the number one state to work in the Southeast.

How do the local area's workforce development programs, including programs provided by partner agencies, support this strategic vision?

Putting people to work is the ultimate goal of the workforce system. To achieve this overarching objective, it is important to design and implement a comprehensive plan that addresses the many facets of employment readiness and job placement. UCLWDB has many partnerships that support the implementation of our strategic vision. None are more vital than the partners within the American Job Center system.

American Job Center Partners – This group of core partners provides the knowledge and expertise to provide comprehensive skills assessment, career counseling and guidance co-enrollments, job placement services and much more.

- Title I (Adult, Dislocated, & Youth) - Title I offers career services that encompass a wide range of activities including: skills interest inventory, skills assessment, career counseling, WEX, internships, OJT, skills training, post-secondary credential attainment, and providing supportive services. Co-enrollment with Title I services is the connector for all other partners within the American Job Centers.
- Title II (Adult Education) – UCLWDB Adult Education partners play a pivotal role in supporting our strategic vision of

Local Plan Template PY 2024-2027

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preparing an educated and skilled workforce by offering a range of education and workforce prep services. These services include: high school equivalency prep, basic computer skills training, financial literacy, English as a second language, communications skills, pre-apprenticeships.

- Title III (Wagner-Peyser) – As the state staff located in the AJC, Title III is a critical piece of the American Job Center service model. Workforce services provided include: SNAP E&T, job search assistance, resume writing and interview preparation, job placement support, veterans services including serving as the liaison for disabled veterans and employers. In the Upper Cumberland, Title III staff have been instrumental in the implementation of the Work 1st model established by the board.
- Title IV (Vocational Rehabilitation) –As a key partner in the Upper Cumberland American Job Center system, VR staff play a vital role in empowering individuals with disabilities to achieve their employment goals, contribute to the workforce, and lead fulfilling lives. Through their expertise, advocacy, and support, VR professionals help build inclusive and diverse workplaces that benefit individuals and businesses. One key aspect of the VR role is job site review. Site reviews provide valuable assistance in understanding any necessary accommodations job candidates may require ensuring that a successful match is made between employee and employer.

Post-Secondary Partners - The UCLWDA has Tennessee Colleges of Applied Technology (TCAT) in Cumberland, Overton, and Warren counties with a new service location scheduled to open in Fentress County in 2025. Three 2- year colleges serve the area Motlow (Cannon, Dekalb, Van Buren, Warren, and White Counties), Roane State (Cumberland and Fentress) and Volunteer State (Clay, Jackson, Macon, Pickett, Putnam, Overton, Smith). Tennessee Tech University is the area's 4-year school. Multiple options for online learning exist including Coursera offered by the TN Department of Labor & Workforce Development.

How will the local area, working with the entities that carry out the core programs, align available resources to achieve the strategic vision and goals?

Cross-Training – Through the OSO we will facilitate cross-training opportunities for staff members across the AJCs with the intent of enhancing the skills and knowledge of all partners to ensure a more cohesive and coordinated approach to serving job seekers and employers.

Streamlined Service Delivery – Implement the use of a newly revised common in-take form in the AJC to create a clear process for enrollment and future co-enrollment for partners as well as create a more user-friendly experience for job seekers and employers.

Co-enrollments - Co-enrollments play a crucial role in maximizing service delivery by leveraging the strengths of multiple AJC partners. Our main goal in leveraging co-enrollments is to provide better access and wrap-around services to workforce clients. Our secondary goal is to financially leverage these partnerships to respond in the reality of declining federal WIOA funds.

Resource Sharing – Through the use of the IFA/MOU the AJC partners agree to share resources and to define the parameters within which local education, workforce, economic development, and other partner programs and entities operating within the Upper Cumberland will creating a seamless, customer-focused network that aligns service delivery and enhances access to services.

Regular Joint Strategy Meetings – The partners in the AJC regularly participate in joint strategy meetings (Welcome Function, BST, Skills Development) to assess the progress of collaborative initiatives, address challenges, and recalibrate strategies as needed to achieve common goals.

Advisory Boards - Our advisory boards will include representatives from UCLWDB, AJC partners, employers, and the community to solicit input and feedback from diverse perspectives to inform decision-making and ensure responsiveness to the workforce area needs.

- b. Describe the LWDB’s goals relating to performance accountabilities measures. How do these measures support regional economic growth and self-sufficiency?

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)- Provide a way of measuring the effectiveness of an organization in achieving its goals. In pursuit of continuous improvement, the Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development developed annualized regional and state KPIs. KPIs align with the Governor’s Objective to become the best public workforce in the nation; increase transparency, fiscal accountability, responsiveness, and foster regional collaboration.

KPIs are negotiated with the state and were developed to increase the impact of the public workforce system, primarily through increased enrollment which correlates to a more robust workforce ecosystem that fuels economic growth.

The state identified the following programs to have new enrollment targets: Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth, Title II Adult Education, Title III Wagner-Peyser, Title IV Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP), Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment and Training (SNAP), Jobs for Veterans State Grant (JVSG), Re-Employment Services and Eligibility Assessments (RESEA), Migrant and Seasonal Farm Work (MSFW), Reentry.

Upper Cumberland negotiated target for PY 23 – 24 are below.

Program	PY 23 Target
Adult, Dislocated Worker, New Enrollments	338
JVSG	21
Justice Involved, New Enrollments	276
RESEA	18
SCSEP	7
SNAP E & T, New Enrollments	187
TAA	90%
Wagner- Peyser, New Enrollments	1702
Youth, New Enrollments	112
Youth Work Experience, New Enrollments	100
In-School Youth, New Enrollments	34

- c. Provide a description of how the LWDB will support the strategy identified in the State Plan and work with the entities carrying out core programs and other workforce development programs, including those authorized under the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act to support service alignment.

The strategic goals of the Upper Cumberland Local Workforce Development Board (UCLWDB) are aligned with the broader goals of the Middle Tennessee region and the Tennessee Combined Plan. These goals are designed to drive local economic growth, support workforce development, and enhance the competitiveness of businesses not only in the Upper Cumberland and the State of Tennessee but also in the global market.

The partnership between the Upper Cumberland Local Workforce Development Board (UCLWDB) and Tennessee Colleges of Applied Technology (TCATs) is a critical component of the region's efforts to address workforce development needs and support economic growth. This partnership goes beyond traditional career and technical training to encompass a range of workforce development activities based on sector strategy needs.

High-Quality Programs: Perkins funding supports the development and enhancement of high-quality CTE programs that align with industry standards and meet the needs of both learners and employers. By investing in curriculum development, teacher training, and program evaluation, Perkins ensures that CTE programs are rigorous, relevant, and responsive to evolving workforce demands including the development of new programs to meet the demands of emerging industries such as TCAT Crossville's Power Sport Technology program designed to serve the local recreation employers.

Alignment with Industry Needs: Perkins funding enables CTE programs to stay abreast of industry trends and emerging technologies, ensuring that students are prepared for the demands of the modern workforce. By collaborating with employers, industry partners, and local workforce development boards, Perkins-funded programs can align their curriculum with current and future workforce needs, helping students develop the skills and competencies required for success in high-demand fields.

Grant Applications: The UCLWDB and TCATs work together to identify funding opportunities and submit grant applications to support workforce development efforts in the region. This may include grants from federal, state, and private sources that provide funding for training programs, equipment upgrades, and other workforce development initiatives.

Job Placement Services: TCATs collaborate with the UCLWDB to provide job placement services for graduates of their training programs. This may involve connecting graduates with local employers, facilitating job fairs and recruitment events, and providing career counseling and support services to help individuals secure employment.

We are excited about the future partnership with the new TCAT slated for Fentress County. A ground-breaking ceremony is scheduled for spring 2024.

Local One-Stop System:

- a. Describe the LWDA's progressive service strategy, incorporating updates resulting from the AJC Assessment, and how the annual Partner's Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) will support the implementation of this strategy.

The KPMG AJC Assessment identified the following issues that need addressing in the Upper Cumberland:

1. Upper Cumberland region has enrolled the highest percentage (46%) of the homeless population in Title I programs demonstrates success in engagement of this population.
2. Employers have unmet needs that can be address by the AJC core partners.
3. Clarification of roles and responsibilities is needed among the AJC core partners.
4. Lack of access to personal computers may limit the options of how customers receive services from AJC and/or AE centers.
5. Transportation/ lack of access to personal computers to a personal vehicle.

Recognizing the need for a progressive service strategy in the local AJC is a crucial step toward addressing customer access challenges effectively. Based upon feedback from the AJC Assessment, the UCLWDB is actively developing strategies to include but not limited to:

We will build upon the achievement of enrolling 46% of the homeless population by leverage existing collaborations and partnerships within the community to extend the reach of AJC programs. We will review our service strategy to determine how to better provide services directly to areas with higher concentrations of homeless and unemployed individuals.

Utilizing the "Work 1st" model we will offer direct referrals to employers as a strategic approach that can enhance the efficiency of workforce development efforts. Further, the UCLWDB will work with our CSP to reduce the duration of Title I programs as a strategic initiative to enhance participant completion rates and facilitate a more direct transition to the workforce.

We will continue to build upon the success of the new one-stop operator in fostering a collaborative work environment by strengthening partnerships through team building and cross functional training. Further, we will work to break down silos to promote a more holistic approach to services.

We will expand computer access in all fourteen counties, especially Jackson and Van Buren, in PY 2024-2027. Potential options include: 1) partnerships with chambers of commerce, high schools, libraries, and community centers to host computer access points. Leverage existing infrastructure to minimize costs and enhance accessibility. 2) Develop a monthly schedule for the mobile AJC in Jackson and Van Buren counties. Consider factors such as local events, community activities, and peak times for job seekers to maximize the impact of the mobile AJC services. We would launch a promotional campaign to raise awareness of the new computer access points and the mobile AJC schedule. Utilize local media, community bulletin boards, and social media to reach a broad audience

Through implementing a new services strategy model as mentioned in the previous paragraph, the UCLWDB will successfully expand computer access to all counties in our LWDA bridging the digital divide and providing valuable resources to residents in counties with limited access to personal vehicles or transportation.

The MOU supports the development of these strategies through:

- 1) Collaborate and reasonably assist each other in the development of necessary service delivery protocols for the services outlined in this MOU;
- 2) Endorse a single customer flow model based upon customer need;

- 3) Refer customers between Partners according to methods listed in this MOU;
- 4) Fulfill all data collection, information gathering and reporting needs in order to facilitate co-enrollment and case management across programs and funding streams; and
- 5) Participate in the One-Stop Service Delivery System through the following means:
 - a. Accessibility of their respective services through the One-Stop Delivery System;
 - b. Participation in the operation of the One-Stop Delivery system consistent with the terms of this MOU;
 - c. Ensure all Partners and staff are adequately cross-trained to produce efficient co-enrollments;
 - d. Sustained involvement for the continuous improvement of the area One-Stop Delivery System;
 - e. Responsiveness to local employer needs and economic conditions;
 - f. Co-branding through the dominant use of the American Job Center (AJC) identifier on any joint products, programs, activities, services, facilities, and materials used under the combined partnership.
 - g. Actively assist in the achievement of Key Performance Indicator (KPI) targets negotiated between the UCLWDB and TDWLD. Partners are responsible for meeting their individual program targets. Partners will also take reasonable measures to encourage and facilitate target achievement for all partners under the UCLWDB One-Stop network.

- b. Identify programs that are part of the local area’s one-stop system, and describe the role and resource contribution of each, including:
 - i. Core programs;
 - ii. Additional partner programs, including those that support alignment under the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006; and
 - iii. Other workforce development programs, if applicable.

CORE PROGRAMS

Title I - Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs administered by Department of Labor (DOL)
 Title II- Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) program administered by Education Department (ED)
 Title III - Employment Service program under the Wagner-Peyser Act administered by DOL
 Title IV - Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 administered by ED.

Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Partners

The Upper Cumberland has successfully partnered with the Carl D. Perkins partners to offer CTE dual credit courses in area high schools providing pathways for stackable credentials.



TCAT Locations in the Upper Cumberland – Cumberland County, Warren County, Overton County. All TCATS in the Upper Cumberland offer dual enrollment CTE courses at the High Schools.

Post-Secondary Partners

2 -Year - Motlow, Roane State, Volunteer State
 4 – Year – TN Tech, University of TN

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

TSCEPP – Tennessee Child Support Employment & Parenting is a program administered through the University of TN Social Work Office of Research & Public Service. The program serves non-custodial parent who are ordered to pay child support in Blount, Cocke, Jefferson, Knox and Sevier counties and are interested in finding and maintaining employment and developing strong relationships with their children. UCLWDB has signed an MOU to collaborate through referrals as part of an extension of the pilot program into the Upper Cumberland Area.

Volunteer Behavioral Health – Volunteer Behavioral Health Care System was established to bring together behavioral health professionals dedicated to caring for our communities. Covering over 11,000 square miles in Tennessee, VBHCS is an active partner in the Upper Cumberland. Pre-pandemic, the UCLWDB was in discussion to establish an MOU for VBHCS to provide a counselor in the AJC one or two days per week. In 2024, those discussions will resume as a way to better serve our customers.

Upper Cumberland Human Resource Agency/Empower Upper Cumberland – Based on the region-wide mission to lift 1,600 children and their families out of poverty by 2025, Empower Upper Cumberland (Empower UC) is comprised of key regional partners, including Cookeville Regional Charitable Foundation, Highlands Economic Partnership, Tennessee Tech University, Upper Cumberland Development District, Upper Cumberland Human Resource Agency, Upper Cumberland Local Workforce Development Board, and WCTE Central TN PBS.

Department of Children’s Services – The UCLWDB has developed a direct referral partnership for participants enrolled in the extension of foster care program, the juvenile justice program and Youth Villages.

FAITH BASED ORGANIZATIONS

Next Step for Life - Providing transitional living to formerly incarcerated adults (male & female) with an intact family structure and encouraging growth by teaching spiritual, emotional, mental, and physical principles and practices for success.

This is Living Ministries - This is Living Ministries is on a mission to restore participants through the transformative power of the Gospel giving them the skills necessary to reenter society free from the effects of trauma and free from life-controlling issues such as addiction, allowing them to fulfill the purpose God has for their lives.

Mustard Seed Ranch - Mustard Seed Ranch (MSR) is a community-supported, interdenominational Christian ministry designed to take children out of unsafe environments and into loving, nurturing homes. Out of the social, emotional, intellectual and spiritual support each child receives, seeds of hope begin to take root. In time, each child becomes empowered to overcome limiting cycles of behavior and replace them with an understanding of God's abundant purpose for their life.

Habitat for Humanity - All adults approved for the Upper Cumberland Habitat for Humanity Home Ownership program are required to meet with a Title I Career advisor at the American Job Center for an assessment of their skills, talents, and current career trajectory. The Career Advisor will then suggest appropriate referrals to partner agencies and /or create a plan of action to improve skills and gain further opportunities within their chosen career field. The future homeowner receives sweat equity credit for any hours spent with the American Job Center for assessment and/or training.

Catholic Charities – The UCLWDB has begun exploring the option of partnering with Catholic Charities.

OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

Highland's Economic Partnership – The Highlands Economic Partnership strives to improve the quality of life for all citizens by providing opportunities for businesses to grow and prosper, and by providing access for citizens of all ages educational experiences that will allow them to better themselves generationally. We do this through Economic Development, Workforce Development and Workplace Education

University of TN Center for Industrial Services – The University of Tennessee Center for Industrial Services (UT CIS) delivers technical assistance and training to businesses and communities throughout Tennessee. UTCIS has the real-world experience and expertise to give businesses and communities the tools they need to grow, succeed and create good jobs. The UCLWDB partners with UTCIS on multiple projects including training and reentry.

Goodwill – Goodwill's nonprofit mission is changing lives through education, training and employment.

Career TEAM - Career TEAM, and their state-of-the-art portal, Career EDGE, are dedicated to changing lives and producing superior employment outcomes. The Career Edge is provided free of charge to all Upper Cumberland secondary schools.

Orijin - We partner with facilities and employers to empower justice-impacted individuals with the necessary educational tools to rewrite their life stories. Our approach has proven to exceed the technological needs of correctional facilities, reduce recruitment and retention costs for employers, and lead our learners to sustainable employment.

- c. Describe how the LWDB will support state plan strategies and work with the entities carrying out programs in the one-stop system to coordinate and support service alignment.

The Upper Cumberland Local Workforce Development Board (UCLWDB) is committed to supporting the strategies outlined in the state plan and collaborating with partners within the One-Stop system to coordinate and align services effectively. The UCLWDB will closely align its priorities, goals, and activities with the strategies outlined in the state plan for workforce development. Actively working to stay informed about state-level initiatives, policies, and funding priorities ensures that our efforts are not duplicative but rather complementary and supportive of broader state objectives. Working closely with the American Job Centers (AJCs) we will leverage resources, share best practices, and coordinate services to maximize the impact of workforce development efforts. The UCLWDB staff to the board will work to integrate and coordinate services with our AJC partners we will work to ensure a seamless and efficient experience for job seekers and employers. This will include streamlining processes, sharing information and resources, and aligning service delivery models to better meet the needs of customers. Data sharing, and analysis such as LMI, program outcomes, and customer/employer needs will be a priority in making informed decisions. The UCLWDB will prioritize continuous improvement efforts to assess the effectiveness of service delivery within the one-stop system and identify areas for improvement. We will improve our customer services used to solicit customer feedback as this initiative will include the use of the Google My Business platform. These initiatives will be set in motion with the intent of identifying gaps, measure performance, and make data-driven improvements to service delivery.

Workforce Development and Career Pathways

- a. Describe how the LWDB will work with providers to facilitate the development of career pathways, including co-enrollment in core programs and academic training programs when appropriate.

Development of career pathways and co-enrollment in core programs are integral parts of preparing future workforce. The Upper Cumberland was one of the first areas within the country to participate in the foundational career pathways development through our work with the Highlands Economic Partnership. Career Pathways offer the option of getting on or off the education path at any point.

Pathway Certifications exist for the following: Macon County- Teaching as a Profession, Nursing, and Horticulture; Cannon County- Agriculture); White County- Advanced Manufacturing, Welding; Van Buren County- Advanced Manufacturing, Healthcare, IT, Transportation & Logistics, Construction; Putnam County- Childhood Education, Teaching as a Profession. To expand on pathways access, Summer Youth Work-Experience programs will act as a feeder into our certified pathways.

Core partners work together to facilitate co-enrollment of individuals seeking credentials as appropriate based upon their individual needs. Upper Cumberland AJCs operate on a “no wrong door” approach to initial services. Every individual entering our AJCs completes the Common Intake Form for needs assessment. As Title I and III teams begin the career pathways development and Individual Employment Plan, clients are given a warm hand off to Title II and IV as needed.

Post-Secondary partnerships are vital to workforce development. From ETPL development, tuition assistance, and provision of supportive services for students, workforce brings resources to assist student success. Our Career Specialists are encouraged to cultivate strong relationships with post-secondary educational institutions in their assigned counties.

- b. Describe how the LWDB will work with providers to improve access to activities leading to recognized postsecondary credentials.
 - i. Explain how the LWDB will ensure these credentials are transferable to other occupations or industries (“portable”).
 - ii. Explain how the LWDB will ensure these credentials are part of a sequence of credentials that can be accumulated over time (“stackable”)? If yes, please explain.

Describe how the LWDB will work with providers to improve access to activities leading to recognized postsecondary credentials.

Career Specialists assist clients in completing an interest inventory and reviewing the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) to find programs that are in their choice of career fields that are eligible for WIOA funding.

To ensure that continuous improvement of eligible providers of services are being utilized, the local board maintains strong relationships with providers and industry representatives. Our Board member roster includes members from training institutions who provide educated input on training demands. (They are, however, asked to abstain from voting on ETPL matters to avoid conflicts of interest). Additionally, our Board roster is full of industry representatives from both large and small industries within different types of sectors. Their perspective on current and upcoming workforce and pipeline demand is invaluable to Board decisions. Our local elected officials also provide crucial information on their commerce and skilled workforce needs. Each mayor is able to communicate the unique needs of their county’s economic demands. In PY 2024- 2027 the UCLWDB will extend our scope of external industry feedback through establishing advisory board relative to each in demand strategy sector.

All Eligible Training Provider (ETP) programs approved for initial eligibility must be reviewed annually by the UCLWDB. This annual subsequent review ensures continuous improvement by analyzing several factors. First, the UCLWDB reviews the ETP’s past efforts in providing services. Secondly, their success in achieving appropriate performance metrics from their submitted quarterly reports is assessed. Third, any supplemental information on how providers are meeting the needs of local employers, workers and job seekers is considered. Only those programs with a minimum of ten (10) WIOA students enrolled during the reporting year are considered for subsequent eligibility decisions. Any program that fails to meet the minimum performance standards, as established by the State, will be removed from the ETPL for a minimum period of one (1) program year. (*See Upper Cumberland Local Workforce Development Board’s ETPL Policy and Procedures*). In order to ensure customer choice is given to clients of the Upper Cumberland region, all Career Specialists are trained by the Career Service Provider in providing a full view of programs that are eligible to them under the ETPL. All clients are referred to this list so that they can see the programs that are eligible to be paid for through WIOA funding. In addition, Career Specialists provide Case Management by discussing the options of training providers and giving input, when solicited, on the financial components of the programs that they chose.

Explain how the LWDB will ensure these credentials are transferable to other occupations or industries (“portable”).

Articulation Agreements - An articulation agreement document is between two colleges or universities and lays out a transfer plan between two program offerings. It helps the student by ensuring all completed classes (credits) transfer and shows a clear pathway for continued advancement. The Upper Cumberland service providers have multiple articulation agreements in place. Most notable are in Healthcare and Advanced Manufacturing.

Financial Aid Office Engagement – One of the most valuable resources for Career Advisors is the engagement of post-secondary Financial Aid Officers (FAOs). FAOs are able to assist in identifying individuals who need assistance in making their educational dreams a reality. In addition, FAOs are instrumental in “getting the word out” about WIOA programs. For example, this realization has prompted the UCLWDB to focus on training all Career Specialists on how to best engage FAOs and utilize that partnership in upcoming years.

Veterans and Prior Learning Assessment - Veterans services will include assessing skills obtained while serving in the military and

translating those abilities into marketable skills in the civilian labor force. The UCLWDB will participate in the use of Prior Learning Assessments (PLA) provided by the Universities located within our region. Each University offers varying levels of PLA for their students with some Universities offering as much as 60 credits for PLA, while others may offer as few as 6. The disparity is currently being addressed by establishing a PLA database which can be used by Veterans and Career Specialist in establishing a career pathway for participants. PLA credit is extremely valuable to Veterans in that the time to degree can be shortened significantly, and avoids paying for courses for which the participant has already had extensive training through their military service.

Explain how the LWDB will ensure these credentials are part of a sequence of credentials that can be accumulated over time (“stackable”)? If yes, please explain.

As described in the above paragraph, an articulation agreement document is between two colleges or universities and lays out a transfer plan between two program offerings. It helps the student by ensuring all completed classes (credits) transfer and shows a clear pathway for continued advancement. The UCLWDB takes great pride in tailoring approved programs and providers to the needs of local employers, workers, and jobseekers through the existence of articulation agreements in the area. For example, a participant may choose to pursue the Healthcare pathway. This pathway offers the option of “stacking” their skills/ attainment as follows: Certified Nurse Assistant licensure (TCAT) → Registered Nurse (Community College) → Bachelor of Science Nursing (University). Healthcare articulation agreements between TCATs, Community Colleges, and four-year Universities exist throughout the region. These agreements decrease the time between certifications/degrees for participants and standardizes plans of study across the region so that all participants have the same opportunity for skill/degree attainment. Similar articulation agreements that foster stackable credentials exist for IT and Advanced Manufacturing.

In August of 2023, the UCLWDB updated their ITA policy to include the following verbiage to encourage career advisors in the promotion of stackable credentials as part of their career counseling.

“The UCLWDB encourages stackable credentials as part of the individual training account.”

Access to Employment and Services:

- a. Describe how the LWDB and its partners will expand access to employment, training, education, and supportive services for eligible individuals, particularly individuals with barriers to employment.

The UCLWDB, in partnership with entities that carry out core programs, will expand access to employment, training, education and supportive services for eligible individuals particularly individuals with barrier to employment by increasing investments in transportation, technology and strategic partnerships.

Transportation - We recognize that addressing the transportation barriers in rural areas ins critical for ensuring equal access to workforce development services. In PY 2020 – 2024, Board Staff successfully partnered with UCHRA to establish a bus route that included the Putnam County AJC as a designated pick/drop off site. In PY 2024 – 2027, the UCLWDB will work to secure a payment voucher system allowing WIOA funding dollars to be spent on UCHRA’s Job Access Program which provides multiple transportation options including: Go Upper Cumberland, Ride Upper Cumberland, Pick Up Upper Cumberland. Another brand-new option is TMA Group/Vanstar. TMA is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation established to help advance transit and mobility options and is funded by the TN Department of Transportation, the Federal Transit Administration and the Federal Highway Administration.

Our Career Specialists have been trained to recognize individual transportation issues and have been empowered to provide relief through our supportive services policy. This consistent support through travel expenditures is a highly effective tool in maintaining communication with clients. When clients know they can be reimbursed for their travel expenditure every two weeks, it provides a dependable contact opportunity to keep them actively engaged with their Career Specialist.

Technology – The pandemic created a seismic shift in education and work which requires companies and educational institutions to be nimbler in their delivery of training. adapting workers to the current economic environment now requires creative use of technology in all aspects of workforce training. In demand jobs rely on the use of technology ranging from tele-health and IT technical support, to logistics and supply-chain management, along with sustaining fields like software engineering, skilled trades and many more service sector jobs. Educational institutions are moving even traditionally “hands-on” instruction courses to online modules. We began meeting this shift during the 2020-2022 program years and will continue to do so in PY 2024-2027. Our partnership with Twin Lakes Telephone Corporative, the largest internet provider within the Upper Cumberland area, to continue expanding internet services to individuals in all of our counties is ongoing. Our available workforce cannot be prepared to meet the “new normal” of educational and workforce training if they do not have access to reliable internet. Through economic grants and workforce recommendations, access continues to be expanded throughout our area. We are also using technology to train behind bars with tablets in each of our county jails. The tablets contain platforms such as Career Edge and specialized trainings. Finally, all partners will be called upon to review their assessment, enrollment and communication strategies to not only initially engage and sustain customers through technology, but to prepare them to enter a workforce dependent upon it.

Community Partnerships: Expanding access during the post COVID-19 pandemic era will necessitate utilizing creative partnerships such as our partnership with Oriijin and Career Edge. In addition to the joint efforts listed above, we will seek to increase access to employment and training services through strengthened community partnerships such as Genesis House (safe house for domestic violence victims), Hope House (a recovery center for addicts and alcoholics) and Chance, a residential home for girls.

- b. Provide a description of how the LWDB will provide services to priority populations as outlined in the State Plan, including:
 - i. Directions given to the One-Stop System Operator to ensure priority for adult career and training services is given to recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals, and individuals who are basic skills deficient.
 - ii. How the LWDB will determine priority populations and how to best serve them, along with any other state requirements.

Provide a description of how the LWDB will provide services to priority populations as outlined in the State Plan

The UCLWDB One-Stop system is actively seeking and identifying individuals in all priority populations. Our scope of influence includes faith-based organizations, day reporting centers, high schools, post-secondary institutions just to name a few. This inclusive approach reflects a commitment to providing support and resources to a diverse range of individuals within the local workforce area. Our emphasis on community partnerships are critical in the collaborative efforts to address the needs of different populations effectively.

By working together with various community partners, the UCLWDB One-Stop system leverages a broader network of resources and expertise enhancing our abilities to reach and assist individuals in priority populations.

Directions given to the One-Stop System Operator to ensure priority for adult career and training services is given to recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals, and individuals who are basic skills deficient.

How to Apply Priority of Service:

Basic career services will be made available to all job seekers providing priority of service to eligible Veterans and Spouses. Priority for receipt of individualized career services and training services is determined during enrollment and will be given to adult customers in the following order, regardless of funding levels:

Priority 1 – Veterans and eligible spouses who are recipients of public assistance, low-income individuals, or individuals who are basic skills deficient receive first priority for services.

Priority 2 – Individuals (not veterans or eligible spouses) who are recipients of public assistance, low-income individuals, and individuals who are basic skills deficient (including English language learners) and Title I Adult program eligibility.

Priority 3 – Veterans and eligible spouses who meet Title I Adult program eligibility.

Priority 4 – Other individuals (not veterans or eligible spouses) who do not meet the statutory priority (such as public assistance recipients, other low-income individuals including underemployed, or those who are basic skills deficient), but do meet discretionary criteria established by the UCLWDB, and Title I Adult program eligibility.

In accordance with WIOA Section 2, the purpose of the WIOA is to increase, particularly for individuals with barriers to employment, access to and opportunities for the employment education, training, and supportive services they need to success in the labor market. Furthermore, per TN Department of Labor and Workforce Development (TDLWD) Workforce Services Guidance – WIOA Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) / One-Stop Service Delivery and Infrastructure Funding Agreement (IFA), the following demographics experiencing barriers to employment are

specifically targeted for services and must be provided priority for training activities as Priority 4:

- Individuals with significant barriers to employment
- Displaced Homemakers
- Eligible Migrant and Seasonal Workers
- Justice Involved Individuals
- Homeless Individuals
- Individuals facing substantial cultural barriers
- Individuals with disabilities, including youth with disabilities
- Individuals within two years of exhausting lifetime eligibility under Part A of the Social Security Act
- Individuals who are English language learners
- Individuals who are unemployed including the long-term unemployed
- Individuals who have low levels of literacy
- Individuals without a high school diploma
- Native Americans, Alaskan Natives, and Native Hawaiians
- Older individuals
- Single parents (including single pregnant women and non-custodial parents)
- Veterans
- Youth who are in, or have aged out of, the foster care system

To be served under Priority 4, individuals must supply the following documentation as appropriate:

Barrier	Required Documentation
Displaced Homemakers	Documentation of living in the same household as a spouse or parent/guardian who had income supporting the applicant and providing unpaid services; Documentation of loss of income; and Documentation of being unemployed or underemployed and experiencing difficulty in obtaining or upgrading employment.
Native Americans, Alaskan Natives, and Native Hawaiians	Self-Attestation on Application
Individuals with disabilities, including youth with disabilities	Documentation of the disability such as a written statement from Vocational Rehabilitation reflecting current services, verification showing current receipt of SSI or SSD for the individual from the Social Security Administration, or a letter from a local education entity stating the individual is M-Teamed based on a disability.
Older individuals (an individual age 55 or older)	Usual documentation requirements for Date of Birth (i.e. Driver's License, Birth Certificate, etc.)
Justice-Involved Individuals	Self-Attestation on Application
Homeless individuals (as defined by the Violence Against Women Act of 1994), or homeless children and youths (as defined by the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act)	Self-Attestation on Application
Youth who are in or have aged out of the foster care system	Documentation of foster care status from the appropriate foster care agency
Eligible migrant and seasonal farmworkers	Documentation of eligibility from TOPS
Individuals within 2 years of exhausting lifetime eligibility under part A of the Social Security Act	Agency (i.e. DHS) documentation
Single parents (including single pregnant women and non-custodial parents)	Documentation of parenting (i.e. birth certificate) for single parents; Self-Attestation on Application and/or documented in case notes for single pregnant women; and Indication of single status on the Application, including only one parent being listed in the household
Long-term unemployed individuals (Individuals who are unemployed for 27 or more weeks per WIOA Application found in the Virtual One Stop system as provided by TNDOL)	Self-Attestation on the Application; and Documentation of means of support
Individuals facing substantial cultural barriers	Self-Attestation on Application and/or documented in case notes
Individuals who are English language learners, and individuals who have low levels of literacy	Objective, valid, and reliable assessment such as the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment Systems (CASAS) or Tests of Adult Basic Education (TABE)
Individuals without a high school diploma	Self-Attestation on Application and/or documented in case notes

Priority 5 – Persons outside the groups given priority under WIOA but do meet Title I Adult program eligibility.

INSTRUCTIONS: The above priority requirements do not necessarily mean that only the recipients of public assistance and other low-income individuals can receive WIOA Adult funded career and training services.

- Priority of service is determined during eligibility and enrollment.
- Priority of service does not guarantee that by virtue of status an individual will always receive service. The individual must be eligible and able to benefit from the services.
- Once a participant is enrolled in a WIOA individualized career service or training service, that participant may not be displaced by an individual who qualifies for priority of service.
- If the priority of service is based on basic skills deficient criteria, the participant's file must contain academic tests which include the participant's name, date of test, and results.
- An individual with a disability whose family does not meet income eligibility criteria will qualify for priority as a low-income adult.
- Underemployed individuals, who are employed full or part-time, must also meet the definition of a low-income individual to be eligible for the adult priority.
- Adult participants shall be determined by the program operator as in need of and able to benefit from services. `

How the LWDB will determine priority populations and how to best serve them, along with any other state requirements.

Developing strategies to serve priority populations is a crucial aspect of the Local Workforce Development Board's responsibilities. The UCLWDB Priority of Service Policy identifies priority populations as:

1. **Veteran:** A veteran is a person who has served at least one (1) day of active duty in the military, naval, or air service, and who was discharged or released from such service with other than a dishonorable discharge.
2. **Eligible Spouse:** An eligible spouse must meet one (1) of the following qualifications:
 - A spouse of any veteran who died of a service-connected disability;
 - A spouse of any member of the Armed Forces serving on active duty who, at the time of application for the priority, is listed in one or more of the following categories and has been so listed for a total of more than ninety (90) days:
 - Missing in action
 - Captured in the line of duty by a hostile force, or
 - Forcibly detained or interned in the line of duty by a foreign government or power;
 - A spouse of a veteran who has a total disability resulting from a service-connected disability, as evaluated by the department of Veteran Affairs; or
 - A spouse of any veteran who died while a disability was in existence.

A spouse will lose eligibility if it is derived from a living veteran, or a service member, who loses their status which made them eligible. Such a situation would be: if a veteran, with a total service-connected disability, were to receive a revised-disability rating at a lower level.

Similarly, a spouse, whose eligibility is derived from a living veteran or service member, would lose that eligibility upon a divorce from that veteran or service member.

The spouse of a veteran who died as the result of a service-connected disability, or died while a disability was in existence, would not lose covered status through subsequent remarriage.

3. **Low-Income Individual (LII):** A low-income individual is defined as a person who meets any of the following criteria and will satisfy the low-income requirement for WIOA Title I Adult services:

Recipient of Public Assistance:

Individuals who receive, or in the past six (6) months have received, or are a member of a family that is receiving or in the past six (6) months has received, assistance through one (1) or more of the following:

- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP);
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program;
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program; or
- State or local income-based public assistance.

Low-Income Includes:

- Recipients of public assistance (defined above);
- Individuals in a family with total income below the higher of the federal poverty line or seventy percent (70%) of the lower living standard income level (see [WIOA Relevant Income Levels](#));
- Homeless individuals (as defined by the Violence Against Women Act) or a homeless child or youth (as defined by the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act);
- Receives or is eligible to receive a free or reduced-price lunch under the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act;
- Foster youth on behalf of whom State or local government payments are made; or
- Individuals with disabilities whose own income is below the higher of the federal poverty line or seventy percent (70%) of the lower living standard income level, but who is a member of a family whose income does not meet this requirement.

A youth eighteen (18) or older, who was determined to be a low-income individual eligible for the WIOA Title I Youth program, may be co-enrolled in the WIOA Title I Adult program without an additional determination of eligibility. They may be counted as an individual who meets adult priority of service if the original determination was made no more than six (6) months prior to the date of co-enrollment.

Under WIOA, an individual with a disability, whose family does not meet income eligibility criteria, will qualify for priority as a low-income adult.

4. **Basic Skills Deficient:** WIOA defines basic skills deficient as "an individual who is unable to compute or solve problems, read, write, or speak English at a level necessary to function on the job, in the individual's family, or in society." It is expected that any such basic skills deficiencies will be determined by an objective, valid, and reliable assessment such as the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment Systems (CASAS) or Tests of Adult Basic Education (TABE).

UCLWDB has defined basic skills deficient as an individual who has English reading, writing, or computing skills at or below the 8th grade level on a generally accepted standardized test (CASAS or TABE). If priority of service is based on basic skills deficient criteria then the participant's file must contain academic tests (including the participant's name, date of test, and results).

5. **Underemployed:** Individuals are employed full or part-time and must also meet the definition of a low-income individual in order to be eligible for the adult priority.

Covered Person: An individual who meets the above definition of veteran or eligible spouse.

c. Describe how the local area will facilitate access to services through the One-Stop delivery system, including remote areas, through the use of technology.

In the spring of 2024, UCLWDB staff and AJC core partners will undertake a “road show” by meeting with all LEOs, chamber directors, and educators in all 14 of the counties we serve. The intent is to present stakeholders with the option of creating a workforce station in each chamber office and each high school in the area. Each workforce station would have access to Jobs4TN, Core Partner information (including whom to contact), Career Edge and much more for the job seeking public. Chamber staff and CTE Directors/Counselors will be trained to offer meaningful assistance. Access points provide access to One-Stop partner programs, services, and activities to job seekers and employers. The Upper Cumberland Executive Director works with county mayors to strategically locate Access Points within community libraries and local government offices to utilize computer and technology equipment provided through the location.

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The Upper Cumberland has recently partnered with the University of TN Center for Industrial Services in a grant funded survey to assess broadband availability across the area. As of the timing of this report, we have not yet received results.

In the PY 2024 -2027, our goal is to significantly increase the utilization of the Virtual AJC. We will seek technical assistance for our AJC staff in best practices for using this technology. We will also partner with our stakeholders in each of our 14 counties to promote its usage.

d. Describe how AJCs are implementing and transitioning to an integrated technology enabled intake care management information system.

Virtual AJC - Our website includes a direct link to the TDLWD Virtual AJC (VAJC), which provides a wide and expanding array of virtual service options.

Digital Common In-Take Form - Core AJC staff are collaborating with the Middle TN AJC Regional Director to enhance teamwork and improve service delivery around the implementation of a digital common in-take form. The form has been approved for use by AJC Team Leads and the benefits of using the form have been clearly communicate to all staff members, emphasizing how it can improve efficiency, reduce redundancies, and enhance the overall client experience.

Career Edge - Team Leads have been trained on how to Optimize the use of Career Edge, ensuring that it becomes an integral and effective tool in intake care management and supporting clients' career development.

e. Provide a description and assessment of the type and availability of programs and services provided to adults and dislocated workers in the local area.

Administration of the WIOA grant dollars funds the Upper Cumberland's capacity to facilitate work readiness and boost the local area supply of skilled workers available to our employers. This included special grant funded opportunities such as apprenticeships and consolidated business grants. The UCLWDB utilizes the combined formula dollars and special grants to focus on workforce development through individualized services, work-based learning programs, barrier removal, and concentrated efforts on adapting our workforce.

Individualized Services - The UCLWDB meets area workforce needs by providing a wide range of employment and training activities for Adults and Dislocated Workers. These range from intensive one on one case management to financial supportive service programs. Employment services for these clients include assistance with job search, assistance with resume creation, access to workshops, and financial assistance to enter employment (i.e., purchase of uniforms or financial assistance with gas to get to and from work and job searches). With regard to training, adult and dislocated worker clients are given assessments to determine potential career fields for which they may be best suited, as well as given information on Labor Market Information to make the best decision on a career field that they want to enter. In addition, Career Specialists can assist clients in utilizing the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) to find programs that are in their choice of career fields and are eligible for WIOA funding. Following placement in gainful employment, Career Specialists provide ongoing support and guidance to help each participant overcome specific employment-focused challenges and barriers, ultimately leading to greater job retention and growth. We maintain close relationships with local training providers, such as TCATs, and community partners, such as Adult Education, food banks, and TN Reconnect to maximize WIOA services and provide complete wraparound support for participants. Many enrollments for Title I come through these means, as well as common intakes that are processed on customers as they enter the AJC. These practices are excellent methods of ensuring that participants are receiving needed services such as referral to training, supportive service assistance, and placement and retention in employment. It is our best practice to partner with community organizations and leverage their resources to more fully serve AJC customers with individualized services.

Work Experience (WEX)/Work Based Learning – WEX or Work-based learning programs are heavily relied upon to provide training opportunities to Adults and Dislocated Workers. Both the participant and the employer benefit from WEX participation. The participant is able to gain on-the-job experience while the employer can train “test drive” an employee at no cost. It is a win-win for both.

Barrier Removal - Removing barriers to provide universal access throughout our workforce area is essential to the WIOA program. With this in mind, the Upper Cumberland systematically reviews internal policies for ways to remove barriers. We also participate in regional policy alignment reviews to ensure any policy variations do not create barriers for eligible programs or potentially eligible participants. Removing barriers increases access to education, training, and employment universally. The Upper Cumberland continues to focus on innovating and creating programs to respond to populations with unique barriers within our local area and workforce region.

Adaptable Workforce - Ensuring Middle Tennessee job seekers are prepared to enter and retain employment not only requires funded training programs and barrier removal plans, but also the ability to adapt with a changing workforce environment. The COVID-19 pandemic created some of the most drastic effects to workforce in modern history and those effects continue to evolve. The long-term effects of pandemic business adjustments and economic impact are still unknown. However, one thing is certain: our workforce must be adaptable. Hard hit industries such leisure and hospitality, manufacturing, and professional services have yet to recover from its effects. Concentrated efforts are being made in each of these areas. The Upper Cumberland is working towards enhancing strategies to promote entrepreneurial skills training and microenterprise services locally and on the regional level. This will be accomplished through crucial community partnerships accessed to serve innovation and business development in various stages. Pipeline entrepreneurial skills training is encouraged through Career and Technical Education instructors as well as secondary school STEM programs. On-the-Job Trainings such as WEX are expanding as a method of career exploration. Once ready to utilize these skills, partnerships with local non-profit entrepreneurial offices, Small Business Administrations and area Chambers of Commerce will facilitate business plan development and successful acquisition of start-up funds.

DHS/TANF-DHS provides a variety of services to individuals seeking eligibility for and receiving SNAP and TANF. TANF provides temporary cash assistance and child care subsidies and a variety of other support services available to help customers make the transition to self-sufficiency. Title I and TANF work to encourage co-enrollments as a natural integration of services. By braiding

Workforce and TANF resources, the UCLWDB can more fully meet participant need. WIOA funds are last-dollar but can be utilized to pick up where DHS/TANF resources stop in areas such as transportation and child care. Additionally, WIOA can provide tuition assistance and job training to offer a “hand-up,” not just a “hand-out.”

SCSEP- Workforce aligns services with the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) by assisting SCSEP participants transitioning into unsubsidized workforce. Title I Staff provide help with computer skills, online job searches, resume assistance, and job readiness skills. When appropriate and eligible, supportive services may be provided to remove barriers such as lack of interview clothing or to meet transportation needs.

- f. Describe how workforce activities will be coordinated with the provision of transportation, including public transportation, and appropriate supportive services in the local area.

The UCLWDB, in partnership with entities that carry out core programs, will expand access to employment, training, education and supportive services for eligible individuals particularly individuals with barrier to employment by increasing investments in transportation, technology and strategic partnerships.

Transportation - We recognize that addressing the transportation barriers in rural areas is critical for ensuring equal access to workforce development services. In PY 2020 – 2024, Board Staff successfully partnered with UCHRA to establish a bus route that included the Putnam County AJC as a designated pick/drop off site. In PY 2024 – 2027, the UCLWDB will work to secure a payment voucher system allowing WIOA funding dollars to be spent on UCHRA’s Job Access Program which provides multiple transportation options including: Go Upper Cumberland, Ride Upper Cumberland, Pick Up Upper Cumberland. Another brand-new option is TMA Group/Vanstar. TMA is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation established to help advance transit and mobility options and is funded by the TN Department of Transportation, the Federal Transit Administration and the Federal Highway Administration.

Our Career Specialists have been trained to recognize individual transportation issues and have been empowered to provide relief through our supportive services policy. This consistent support through travel expenditures is a highly effective tool in maintaining communication with clients. When clients know they can be reimbursed for their travel expenditure every two weeks, it provides a dependable contact opportunity to keep them actively engaged with their Career Specialist.

- g. Provide a description of services available to veterans and eligible spouses, to include priority of service and the use of available Jobs for Veterans State Grants (JVSG) staff.

The JVSG funding supports the Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) specialist position, Local Veterans' Employment Representative (LVER) staff, and Consolidated Position staff.

DVOP specialists provide individualized career services to eligible veterans and eligible spouses experiencing significant barriers to employment, as well as other additional populations authorized by the Secretary, with an emphasis on assisting veterans who are economically or educationally disadvantaged. Veterans facing these barriers include veterans experiencing homelessness and vocational rehabilitation clients.

LVER staff conducts outreach to employers to advocate for the hiring of veterans. They also work with businesses, contractors, and employer organizations to develop career opportunities for veterans.

Consolidated Position staff serve in a dual role as a DVOP specialist and an LVER.

Priority of Service (POS) as required by 38 U.S.C. 4215 (b) and 20 CFR parts 1001 and 1010, is an essential element given to covered persons (Veterans and other eligible persons including spouses who meet the criteria for POS) who participate in the Labor Exchange system. All covered persons are to receive POS at any "point of entry", which includes physical locations, such as AJCs, as well as websites and other virtual service delivery resources. Additionally, POS is provided within the AJC interviewing process to include career assessment and counseling, access to job search tools like the Internet, availability of classes to improve marketability such as resume writing and job interviewing programs and referral to all new and existing job training programs offered as a matter of course in the daily operations of the TDLWD Labor Exchange System.

Over the past year, a sample of services provided in from the Cumberland County staff include:
Conducted 62 outreaches which is 322% more than required. Outreaches included but not limited to: State Prison, County Jails, County VSO's, VA Clinic, Homeless Shelter, Christian Ministries, Food Banks and Community Colleges.
Facilitated internal and external job fairs with a total of 506 job seekers attending. Veterans were hired! Provided 701 employer services this FY. #1 in the State (LVER).

h. What initiatives will the LWDB implement to best serve individuals who have been justice involved?

The Upper Cumberland Local Workforce Development Board (UCLWDB) is committed to serving individuals who have been justice-involved. Provided below is a list of planned initiatives with a brief synopsis describing the opportunities each program offers.

- Orijin (formerly APDS) - Orijin (formerly APDS) is currently partnering with TDLWD on a statewide program aimed at curbing recidivism, educating inmates, and creating a new pipeline of qualified workers for employers. The Reentry, Employment, Adult Education Program, or Project REAP, will put specially designed computer tablets in each of the state's county jails. The tablets allow inmates to complete the required adult education coursework in preparation for the HiSET high school equivalency exam. UCLWDB has capitalized on the state contract by piloting a program with Orijin and TLD Logistics. The goal of this program is to provide the written portion of the CDL program to individuals while incarcerated reducing the time to "getting behind the wheel" by almost half. In PY 2024-2024, UCLWDB will partner with Macon County and BabyNov to expand the Orijin project to include UTCIS Manufacturing Boot Camp.
- Partnership with the TN Justice Bus – We are partnering with the Justice Bus to host two events in the Upper Cumberland in spring 20224. Commissioned by the TN Supreme Court, the TN Justice Bus is a mobile law office that brings technology to rural and underserved communities. The TN Justice Bus is a cargo van outfitted with computers, tablets, a printer, internet access, video displays, Wi-Fi, and other office supplies. Lawyers and other volunteers are able to provide on-the-spot access to legal help and meet Tennesseans where they are.



- Adult & Teen Challenge - Adult and Teen Challenge of the Upper Cumberland offers a residential recovery program for adult women who want freedom from addiction. Residents actively participate in Bible studies and receive Christian guidance while living in a structured and supportive environment. Adult and Teen Challenge of the Upper Cumberland works together with the legal and judicial system on referrals to the program.
- This is Living – This is Living Ministries is a Parole-Approved Halfway House through the TN Dept of Correction Recovery Congregation, Office of Faith-Based Initiatives Addiction Recovery Program Provider, TDMHSAS
- Work Release Programs - Macon and Putnam Counties are in the process of creating work release programs. For PY 24-27 the UCLWDB will use the same methodology as in the partnership with Orijin and TLD, the UCLWDB will assist these counties in identifying employers who interested in using the Project REAP tablets to shorten the time from incarceration to employment by uploading pre-employment training and paperwork allowing inmates to complete these first steps while incarcerated.
- Misdemeanor Recovery Court – Tennessee's recovery courts are judicially-supervised court dockets that reduce correctional costs, protect community safety, and improve public welfare. In recovery courts, non-violent individuals with substance use disorders participate in treatment while under close legal and clinical supervision. In partnership with the

Smith County General Sessions Court Judge w/ Juvenile Court Jurisdiction, a Career Advisor serves as a member of the program staff. Participants complete a skills assessment, interest inventory, career counseling and the opportunity to complete a WEX.

- *Recovery to Work* - Reentering the workforce can be a barrier for many in recovery. The desire to become a productive community member and the opportunity to prove themselves as a great employee can be sidetracked by employment restrictions. Setting up second-chance policies and the ability to provide employment to an already strained workforce can be good for both employer and employee.
- *Next Steps for Life* - Provides transitional living to adults with an intact family structure and encouraging growth by teaching spiritual, emotional, mental, and physical principles and practices for success.
- *Youth Extension of Foster Care* – EFC is a voluntary program for qualifying young adults up to age 21 that have age out of the Department of Children’s Services custody at age 18 or older. A DCS Independent Living Specialist provides a direct referral to a Title I Career Advisor who works with the referral to complete an interest inventory and skills assessment resulting in any of the following: Co-enrollment with AJC partners, training, supportive services, enrollment in post-secondary education, or employment.
- *Youth in the Juvenile Justice System* – If a youth in foster care is dependent and neglected, it means they entered custody due to some family issues that make the family unable to properly care for them but does not preclude the youth from being found guilty of a delinquent offense. Youth found guilty of violent crimes against persons are generally placed in hardware secure facilities. The UCLWDB is currently focusing on youth in the juvenile justice system who have been placed in community-based facilities, run by provider partners. Based upon our success in the youth in extension of foster care, in PY 24, the LWDB will again partner with the Department of Children’s Services to implement a direct referral program for youth in the juvenile justice system. As with both the Extension of Foster and Youth Villages model, a DCS Independent Living Specialist will provide a direct referral to a Title I Career Advisor who works with the referral to complete an interest inventory and skills assessment resulting in any of the following: Co-enrollment with AJC partners, training, supportive services, enrollment in post-secondary education, or employment.
- *Youth Villages* – Youth Villages is a private, nonprofit organization dedicated to helping children with emotional and behavioral problems and their families live successfully. A Lifeset/Extension of Foster Care specialist provides a direct referral to a Title I Career Advisor who works with the referral to complete an interest inventory and skills assessment resulting in any of the following: Co-enrollment with AJC partners, training, supportive services, enrollment in post-secondary education, or employment.

Northern Middle and Upper Cumberland will partner with TRANSFR VR to apply for the Pathway Home grant which is a \$52 million U.S. Department of Labor funding opportunity for organizations that provide reentry services to incarcerated individuals before release from state correctional facilities or county or local jails. By eliminating gaps between release from prison or jail and enrollment in a workforce development program, the funding will enhance reintegration efforts and reduce recidivism.

We also plan to apply for the Improving Job Opportunities for Youth Affected by Violence, Poverty an \$85 million funding opportunity to support programs that provide skills training through work-based learning, employment services, educational support and mentorship to youth and young adults in communities affected by violence, crime and poverty. Violence and poverty can prevent teenagers from realizing their potential and block access to equitable educational and employment opportunities. The announced Growth Opportunities funding will help to address those structural barriers by supporting local organizations that provide jobs, training and supportive services that prepare and empower young people to succeed in the labor market and their communities.

In PY 2024, UCLWDB will expand our partnership with the University of Tennessee through their Tennessee Child Support Employment & Parenting (TCSEPP) program which is administered through the University of TN Social Work Office of Research & Public Service. The program serves non-custodial parent who are ordered to pay child support in Blount, Cocke, Jefferson, Knox and Sevier counties and are interested in finding and maintaining employment and developing strong relationships with their children. UCLWDB has signed an MOU to collaborate through referrals as part of an extension of the pilot program into the Upper Cumberland Area.

We will also build upon our partnership with the University of TN Center for Industrial Services to provide consulting solutions to help companies improve and grow. UCLWDB recently partnered with UTCIS to survey AJC visitors on the availability of broadband in the Upper Cumberland. Results will be forthcoming in spring of 2024. We will also be offering free Optimized People

Development training to employers to assist them in hiring and retaining good employees. Finally, as part of our partnership with UTCIS, the Upper Cumberland will begin offering Manufacturing Boot Camp to the justice involved in spring 2024. The goal of this ten-day workshop series is to prepare participants to begin a career in manufacturing. Participants will learn a wide variety of skills relevant to manufacturing through various methods, including hands-on activities and discussions. participants that complete all 10 days of training receive: • University of Tennessee Center for Industrial Services Certificate of Training Completion • OSHA 10-Hour - General Industry card.

- i. Describe any MOU agreements in place to enhance the quality and availability of services to people with disabilities, such as cross training to staff, technical assistance, or methods of sharing information.

Below is a synopsis of the MOU that accompanies the IFA outlining roles and responsibilities. This policy outlines cross training, technical assistance and information sharing methods. The entire MOU is available at ucwork.org.

The purpose of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the UCLWDB and its WIOA workforce partners is to define the parameters within which local education, workforce, economic development, and other Partner programs and entities operating within the Upper Cumberland will create a seamless, customer-focused network that aligns service delivery and enhances access to services. This MOU will define the roles and responsibilities of each partner as mutually agreed by the parties for the operation of the American Job Center service delivery system in the Upper Cumberland Local Workforce Development Area, as required under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).

The scope of this MOU will streamline workforce activities, prevent duplication of services and eliminate inefficient practices by outlining service integration and functional alignment. Each partner to this MOU presents a commitment to a single functional organization, customer flow and service delivery. By realizing one-stop opportunities together, partners are able to build community-benefiting bridges, rather than silos of programmatic isolation. Methods of referrals will be established, along with data and information sharing procedures in order to facilitate co-enrollment and case management between programs.

To this end, all partners under this MOU will:

- 1) Collaborate and reasonably assist each other in the development of necessary service delivery protocols for the services outlined in this MOU;
- 2) Endorse a single customer flow model based upon customer need;
- 3) Refer customers between Partners according to methods listed in this MOU;
- 4) Fulfill all data collection, information gathering and reporting needs in order to facilitate co-enrollment and case management across programs and funding streams; and
- 5) Participate in the One-Stop Service Delivery System through the following means:
 - a. Accessibility of their respective services through the One-Stop Delivery System;
 - b. Participation in the operation of the One-Stop Delivery system consistent with the terms of this MOU;
 - c. Ensure all Partners and staff are adequately cross-trained to produce efficient co-enrollments;
 - d. Sustained involvement for the continuous improvement of the area One-Stop Delivery System;
 - e. Responsiveness to local employer needs and economic conditions;
 - f. Co-branding through the dominant use of the American Job Center (AJC) identifier on any joint products, programs, activities, services, facilities, and materials used under the combined partnership.
 - g. Actively assist in the achievement of Key Performance Indicator (KPI) targets negotiated between the UCLWDB and TDWLD. Partners are responsible for meeting their individual program targets. Partners will also take reasonable measure to encourage and facilitate target achievement for all partners under the UCLWDB One-Stop network.

- j. Describe how One-Stop System Operators and One-Stop partners will comply with the nondiscrimination requirements of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) (section 188), and applicable provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12101 et seq.) regarding:
 - i. The physical and programmatic accessibility of facilities, programs, and services;
 - ii. Technology and materials for individuals with disabilities; and
 - iii. Providing staff training and support for addressing the needs of individuals with disabilities.

The physical and programmatic accessibility of facilities, programs, and services: - Vocational Rehabilitation assists persons with disabilities with finding gainful employment. Vocational Rehabilitation provides services to all eligible persons regardless of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, or political affiliation or belief.

Technology and materials for individuals with disabilities; and - Vocational Rehabilitation provides both materials and technological assistance to aid persons with disabilities to be able to fully participate in the Vocational Rehabilitation program and services as well as provides assistive technology to customers who meet economic need with necessary equipment and technology to participate in training and to be successfully employed. Services such to help persons with sensory issues or language barriers are utilized to help customer with the application process as well as regular communication with their counselor and other VR staff. Other assistive technology needed is determined through assistive technology evaluations.

Providing staff training and support for addressing the needs of individuals with disabilities. - Vocational Rehabilitation staff receive regular mandatory and professional development trainings to increase their knowledge, skills, and ability to properly serve persons with disabilities to ensure they receive the best quality services needed to obtain their person-centered goal for employment. VR staff also participate in cross-trainings with One-Stop partners.

Describe the roles and resource contributions of the One-Stop partners related to the nondiscrimination requirements of WIOA (section 188), and applicable provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12101 et seq.). - Vocational Rehabilitation works in collaboration with other One-Stop partners to provide braided services to our shared customers.

See the UCLWDB policy below:

POLICY: This policy sets forth guidance requirements for all Upper Cumberland workforce area American Job Centers (AJC) and service providers to ensure compliance with the ADA requirements, as well as ensuring access to participants with disabilities in regard to the use of auxiliary aids and other communication assistance. This policy also addresses the use of service dogs in the AJC.

I. Auxiliary Aids

The Upper Cumberland will ensure the following auxiliary aids and services – or similar assistance as may be appropriate – be made to customers in need of such aids and services in accordance with 28 CFR 36.303 and ADA Effective Communication Guidelines (Attachment A of this policy):

- 1) Over-the-phone interpretation
- 2) Consecutive interpretation, either in person or written translation
- 3) Sign language interpretation
- 4) Text Telephone (TTY) devices, telephone amplifiers, or assistive listening devices
- 5) Computer aided transcription services
- 6) Hearing-aid compatible (HAC) telephones captioning services and equipment

- 7) Audio recordings, computer disks, visual devices, certain material in braille, and other assistive technologies designed to help needs of individuals who have hearing or seeing difficulties

If consecutive interpretation is provided with the Upper Cumberland area AJCs, the interpreter must be licensed as a Certified Interpreter in the State of Tennessee. In determining the type of auxiliary aid or service to a participant with a disability, assisting staff must give primary consideration to the request of the participant.

II. Service Animals (TCA 62-7-112):

Service animals may be used by individuals with disabilities in assistance with "work tasks" (work task is defined within the definition section of this policy).

1. No individual shall be discriminated against on the basis of disability in the full and equal enjoyment of the goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages, or accommodations of any Upper Cumberland workforce area AJC, which operates as a place of public accommodation. Pursuant to 28 CFR 36.302(c)(2), a public accommodation may ask the individual with a disability to remove a service animal from the premises if:
 - a) The animal is out of control and the animal's handler does not take effective action to control it; or
 - b) The animal is not housebroken.If an animal is properly excluded under 28 CFR 36.302(c)(2), AJC staff shall give the individual with a disability the opportunity to obtain goods, services, and accommodations without having the service animal on the premises. 28 CFR 36.302(c)(3)
2. The Upper Cumberland workforce area AJC system recognizes that only dogs are considered to be service animals in the State of Tennessee. Service animals are any dog that is individually trained to do work or preform a work task for the benefit of an individual with a disability, including providing physical, sensory, psychiatric, intellectual, or mental assistance.
3. AJC staff is not responsible for the care or supervision of a service animal.
4. Individuals with disabilities shall be permitted to be accompanied by their service animal in all areas of the AJC where members of the public, program participants, clients, customers, patrons, or invitees, as relevant, are allowed to go.
5. AJC staff shall not ask about the nature or extent of a person's disability or require documentation in order to allow the individual to be accompanied by a service animal.
6. In determining whether an animal qualifies as a service animal, AJC staff may:
 - a) Ask if the animal is required because of a disability; or
 - b) Ask what task the animal has been trained to perform.
7. AJC staff shall not ask or require an individual with a disability to pay a surcharge or comply with any other requirements not applicable to people without pets.

III. Definitions

1. **Auxiliary Aids and Services** (Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, amended, Section 12103(1); 28 CFR 36.303): Includes qualified interpreters, note takers, computer-aided services, written materials, telephone handset amplifiers, assistive listening devices or systems, CAP TEL phones, telephones compatible with hearing aids, closed caption decoders, open and closed captioning, telecommunications devices for deaf persons (TDDs), videotext displays, or other effective methods of making aurally delivered materials available to individuals with hearing impairments, qualified readers, taped texts, audio recordings, Brailled materials, large print materials, or other effective methods of making visually delivered materials available to individuals with visual impairments, acquisition or modification of equipment or devices, or other similar services and actions.
2. **Disability:** ADA defines a person with a disability as an individual who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits at least one major life activity, has a record of such impairment, or is regarded as having such impairment. Under ADA, "disability" is not a medical term but instead a legal categorization. (Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, amended, Section 12102(1)).
3. **Major Life Activities:** include but are not limited to, caring for oneself, performing manual tasks, seeing, hearing, eating, sleeping, walking, standing, lifting, bending, breathing, learning, reading, concentrating, thinking, communicating, and working. Major life activities also include major bodily functions. (Americas with Disabilities Act of 1990, amended, Section 12102(2), and Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act of 2008 Section 4(a)(2)).
4. **Consecutive Interpretation:** a translation technique where the interpreter waits for the speaker to finish a sentence or idea before rendering the speaker's words into the target language.

5. **Primary Consideration:** honoring the choice of the participant with a disability unless the provider can demonstrate one of the following: another equally effective means of communication is available; or the use of the chosen means would result in a fundamental alteration of service, program, or activity (28 CFR 35.164); or that the use of the chosen means would result in an undue financial or administrative burden (28 CFR 35.164).
6. **Work Task:** for the purpose of this policy, the appropriate work or task of a service animal may include, but is not limited to the following; assisting individuals who are blind or low vision with navigation or other tasks, alerting individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing to the presence of people or sounds, providing nonviolent protection or rescue, pulling a wheelchair, assisting an individual during a seizure, alerting an individual to the presence of allergens, retrieving items such as medication or the telephone, providing physical support, assistance with balance and stability to persons with mobile disabilities, helping people with psychiatric and neurological disabilities by preventing or interrupting impulsive or destructive behaviors. A work task *may not* include crime deterrent by effect of the animal's presence, or the provision of emotional support, well-being, comfort, or companionship.

Business Engagement:

- a. Describe how the LWDB will utilize the Business Engagement Plan to provide consistent messaging and services to local area business and industry.

The UCLWDB will work closely with core partners to assure consistent messaging through, alignment of objectives, unified training programs, streamlined service delivery and enhanced branding.

The strategies outlined for business engagement for Program Years 2024-2027 include a comprehensive and proactive approach to encourage the business collective and local economic development partners to the table. Planned initiatives include:

- 1) Using Advisory Boards to communicate with key stakeholders establishes a valuable feedback loop. This approach ensures that the UCLWDB remains connected with the needs and insights of local businesses. The Advisory Boards serve as a conduit for stakeholders to share workforce insights, contributing to more informed talent development strategies.
- 2) Leveraging Advisory Boards to relay industry-specific training opportunities such as OPDS, IWT, OJT, and Apprenticeships is a tailored approach to meeting local business needs. Engaging local industry associations in the process enhances awareness and understanding of the collaborative relationship with the LWDB. This strategy strengthens the connection between workforce development initiatives and the specific requirements of local businesses.
- 3) Aligning Industry Needs with Local Education Systems - Working closely with employers and local school systems to align industry needs with the local education system is a proactive step toward building a continuous pipeline of skilled employees. This strategy facilitates a seamless transition from education to employment, ensuring that the local workforce is equipped with the relevant skills demanded by industries in the region.
- 4) Data Sharing and Analysis for Informed Decision-Making - Implementing data sharing and analysis among partners enhances the UCLWDB's ability to make informed decisions. By pooling information gathered at local meetings, the LWDB can identify industry sectors in need of additional workforce or upskilling. This collaborative data approach enables targeted interventions and strategic workforce planning.
- 5) Continuous Evaluation and Feedback - Seeking continuous evaluation and feedback on the effectiveness of workforce and economic development programs demonstrates a commitment to ongoing improvement. Regularly assessing program outcomes and gathering feedback ensures that initiatives remain responsive to evolving needs and challenges in the local area.

- b. What local area initiatives (such as registered apprenticeships, incumbent worker training programs, on-the-job training programs, and customized training solutions) will be used to facilitate engagement of businesses, including small businesses and businesses in in-demand sectors and occupations?

Apprenticeships - Apprenticeships are an excellent example of work-based learning where apprentices have supervised on-the-job training, along with job-related education, awhile earning a wage that increases during the progression of the program. Apprenticeships in the Upper Cumberland are thriving! Serving our smaller more distant counties with Work Based Learning Experiences is a huge challenge. In PY 23, we are excited to have multiple apprentices in each of our 14 counties including two in the Grow Your Own program in Clay.

Consolidated Business Grants - Consolidated Business Grants (CBGs) are provided through two programs in the Upper Cumberland – On the Job Training (OJT) and Incumbent Worker Training (IWT). On-the-Job Training (OJT) is a form of work-based training provided to an eligible WIOA participant upon entry into employment and while engaged in paid work. OJTs are customized to address specific gaps in the trainee’s knowledge or skills that are inhibiting their ability to perform assigned duties fully and adequately. In contrast, Incumbent Worker Training (IWT) is designed to meet the specific requirements of an employer or group of employers and conducted with a commitment by the employer or group of employers to continue to employ an individual upon successful completion of training. IWTs may be used to help avert layoffs or to increase the skill levels of employees so they are eligible for promotion advances within the company and create backfill opportunities. OJT and IWT requests are maintained by the UCLWDB Staff to the Board and recommended for approval through the appropriate funding streams provided that funds are available through CBG or formula Dollars

Upper Cumberland Human Resource Agency/Empower Upper Cumberland – Based on the region-wide mission to lift 1,600 children and their families out of poverty by 2025, Empower Upper Cumberland (Empower UC) is comprised of key regional partners, including Cookeville Regional Charitable Foundation, Highlands Economic Partnership, Tennessee Tech University, Upper Cumberland Development District, Upper Cumberland Human Resource Agency, Upper Cumberland Local Workforce Development Board, and WCTE Central TN PBS. This collective group of stakeholders has partnered with the Poverty Solution to implement Circles USA which focuses heavily on mentorships and training. UCLWDB provides support and training to potential employers as part of the program.

c. Describe how the LWDB drives the partnerships necessary for effective business engagement, including the use of business intermediaries and economic development groups

The emphasis on partnerships as a key factor in the effective business engagement strategy of the Upper Cumberland Local Workforce Development Board (UCLWDB). The introduction of Industry Advisory Boards in Program Year 24 (PY 24) is a notable step toward fostering closer collaboration with stakeholders. The Industry Advisory Boards will bring together a diverse range of stakeholders, including businesses, educators, community organizations, and government entities. See the potential list of partners below:

Chambers of Commerce -The UCLWDB leverages Chambers of Commerce as business intermediaries as a strategic approach for connecting with local businesses. Our Business Services Administrator and Empower Business Consultants attend all chamber meetings across the LWDA. Title III staff support Chambers by presenting to Industrial Boards and providing Labor Market Information (LMI) from Jobs4TN. In PY 2024-2027 the UCLWDB will capitalize on this strong relationship by using local Chambers as access points.

Local Elected Officials - The UCLWDB strengthens its ties with local government leaders by using them as business intermediaries. This approach assures a coordinated and impactful approach to workforce development in each of the fourteen counties we serve. The engagement of county mayors as key partners has proven to be an excellent way to foster outreach and leverage their influence for workforce initiatives in the LWDA.

Upper Cumberland Development District (UCDD)/Upper Cumberland Human Resource Agency (UCHRA) -UCDD & UCHRA are governmental agencies created by the Tennessee General Assembly to administer regional programs to the 14 counties of the Upper Cumberland region of Tennessee: Cannon, Clay, Cumberland, DeKalb, Fentress, Jackson, Macon, Overton, Pickett, Putnam, Smith, Van Buren, Warren, and White. For over 50 years, our organization has been serving the residents of this region by providing solutions through regional cooperation and it is our belief that the 14 counties, along with the many municipalities contained within, are made stronger through regional cooperation and shared resources.

Highlands Economic Partnership – The Highlands Economic Partnership, launched in 2006 by the Cookeville-Putnam County Chamber of Commerce as the Highlands Initiative, is a collaborative, public/private sector program designed to boost economic and community development in Jackson, Overton, Putnam and White counties. Investor companies made up of federal, state, city and county governments and agencies, chambers of commerce, key officials and business leaders throughout the region, play fundamental roles in the program’s development.

TN Department of Economic and Community Development - The partnership between the Upper Cumberland Local Workforce Development Board (UCLWDB) and the Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development (TNECD) in supporting industries looking to locate or expand in the Upper Cumberland supports a well-rounded support system for industries in the region. This collaboration benefits the employer through the combined expertise of the UCLWDB and TNECD. The occasional braiding of funds showcases both agencies commitment to resource allocation benefiting our customer.

- d. Describe how the local area’s workforce development programs and strategies will be coordinated with economic development activities.
 - i. Describe how these programs will promote entrepreneurial skills training and microenterprise services

Coordinating local workforce development programs with economic development activities involves creating strong relationships with our ECD partners to coordinate both agencies efforts aimed at enhancing the skills of the workforce and initiatives focused on fostering economic growth. This coordination ensures that the local workforce is equipped with the necessary skills and competencies to meet the demands of the evolving economy.

Strategic Alignment

Communication – Our ECD partners will play a crucial role in our monthly “Power Hours” as described earlier in this document. Power Hours will provide a regular communication channel to stay updated on inquiries from business and industries considering locating in TN.

Data Sharing - Exchange relevant data and information with ECD staff to facilitate a comprehensive understanding of industry needs and priorities. This can involve sharing labor market data, workforce development reports, and demographic information to inform strategic decision-making and resource allocation.

Identifying Opportunities for Braiding Funding - Collaborate with ECD staff to identify opportunities to braid funding to support growth or to avoid layoffs. An excellent example of this type of partnership is the expansion of Fitzgerald Trailers. Through braiding of funding, we were able to serve the company with the result of a very satisfied customer.

Engaging Educators - Work closely with educators, including K-12 schools, community colleges, and technical schools, to create a pipeline of talent that meets the needs of emerging industries. This can involve convening meetings between educators and industry representatives to discuss skill requirements, curriculum development, and training pathways.

Customized Training Programs - Develop customized training programs in collaboration with educators and industry partners to ensure that students are equipped with the skills and qualifications needed for employment in high-demand sectors. These programs may include apprenticeships, internships, certification courses, and other hands-on learning experience.

Promoting Career Pathways - Promote career pathways in emerging industries to students, job seekers, and individuals transitioning between careers. This can involve providing information about job opportunities, skill requirements, and potential career trajectories in growing sectors, helping individuals make informed decisions about their education and career paths.

Identifying Economic Trends - Workforce development programs should conduct regular assessments of the local economic landscape to identify emerging industries, skill gaps, and areas of growth.

Continual Monitoring – Partner with ECD to continually monitor employer needs and workforce pipeline effectiveness to ensure alignment that drives economic growth within the region.

Collaborative Partnerships

Economic and Community Development – Through intentional communication with ECD staff and conducting research, sharing data, engaging educators (secondary and post-secondary), developing customized training programs, braiding funds, and promoting career pathways, UCLWDB and our ECD partners can be nimble in our responses to rapidly changing industry and business needs within the Upper Cumberland Region.

Public-Private Partnerships - Establishing partnerships between local government agencies, educational institutions, and private enterprises can facilitate the development of targeted training programs that meet the needs of both employers and job seekers.

Sector Advisory Boards - Creating industry advisory boards composed of local business leaders can provide valuable insights into the skills required in the workforce, fostering a direct link between economic development priorities and workforce training.

Entrepreneurial Skills Training:

Curriculum Development - Workforce development programs can integrate entrepreneurial skills training into their curriculum, offering courses or workshops that teach essential skills such as business planning, financial management, and marketing.

Incubator Programs – Partner with The Biz Foundry, a local entrepreneurial center, to establish business incubators or innovation hubs can provide aspiring entrepreneurs with resources, mentorship, and networking opportunities, fostering a supportive environment for the development of new businesses.

Microenterprise Services

Through our partnership with the Small Business Development Center, UCLWDB offers a warm hand off to small business trying to navigate the complexities of business. The SBDC services include:

Access to Capital - Collaborating with financial institutions to provide microloans or grants to small businesses and startups, ensuring that financial barriers do not impede the growth of microenterprises.

Technical Assistance - Offering technical support services, such as business coaching, legal advice, and marketing assistance, can enhance the sustainability and success of microenterprises.

Skills Assessment – SBDC partners with UCLWDB, ECD and education stakeholders to provide skills assessment and training.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Performance Metrics - Establishing key performance indicators (KPIs) to assess the effectiveness of workforce development programs in meeting economic development goals, including the growth of entrepreneurial ventures and microenterprises.

Continuous Improvement - Regularly gathering feedback from employers, entrepreneurs, and participants in workforce development programs can inform adjustments and improvements to ensure ongoing alignment with economic development strategies.

e. Describe how the LWDB will coordinate its workforce investment activities with statewide rapid response activities.

In addition to working with complementary service providers to leverage support provided to customers, the One-Stop Operator also works directly with employers facing layoffs to connect dislocated workers with WIOA services and other outreach events. This process helps those individuals to return to the workforce as quickly and seamlessly as possible. Rapid Response events are a coordinated effort by multiple partner programs and generally include the following:

- Onsite Rapid Response presentation facilitated by at least one representative from each program, providing a summary of programs and services offered through the American Job Center.
- An informational packet which includes a full list of all AJC locations in the region, directory of AJC Services listing all partners, list of recent job postings on Jobs4TN for specific counties, directory of resources such as DHS and Health Dept. contact information, Adult Education, SNAP E&T and TN Reconnect materials.
- Access to local employers for specialized recruiting
- Mobile AJC services to include assistance with Jobs4TN, resume writing, cover letter, mock interviews, and job search
- Onsite scheduling of appointments with Title I Dislocated Worker Career Specialist if desired
- Referrals to partners and other agencies as appropriate

One of the most significant tools in our rapid response tool belt is the Dun & Bradstreet platform funded by the State of TN. Using the predictive analytics from the Dun & Bradstreet platform, empowers the UCLWDB to make informed CBG funding decisions, proactively support businesses, and contribute to the overall resilience of companies in the area including those that need rapid response services.

Training Services

- a. Describe how the local area will provide adult and dislocated worker employment and training activities. This may include incumbent worker, on-the-job, and customized training programs.

The Upper Cumberland Local Workforce Development Board (UCLWDB) is committed to providing comprehensive adult and dislocated worker employment and training activities tailored to meet the diverse needs of job seekers and employers in the region. Here's how the UCLWDB will deliver these services through various means including but not limited to:

Apprenticeships - Apprenticeships are an excellent example of work-based learning where apprentices have supervised on-the-job training, along with job-related education, awhile earning a wage that increases during the progression of the program. Apprenticeships in the Upper Cumberland are thriving! Serving our smaller more distant counties with Work Based Learning Experiences is a huge challenge. In PY 23, we are excited to have multiple apprentices in each of our 14 counties including two in the Grow Your Own program in Clay.

WEX - Work Experience or Work Based Learning is a priority in our CSP's case management methodology. Career TEAM support Work Experience as a vital tool in creating trained job seekers. It also provides a substantial benefit to employers by providing an interested worker with a subsidized salary. The UCLWDB will strengthen WEX for Title I Adult & Dislocated Worker participants as well as, the Summer Youth Employment Program to offer work experience for Youth. The Upper Cumberland is on track in PY 23 to increase our WEX participants by more than 4 times the number in PY22. Our goal for PY 24-27 is to at minimum maintain PY 23 enrollment and increased our yearly total by 10% each year.

IWT - Incumbent Worker Training is designed to meet the specific requirements of an employer or group of employers and conducted with a commitment by the employer or group of employers to continue to employ an individual upon successful completion of training. IWTs may be used to help avert layoffs or to increase the skill levels of employees so they are eligible for promotion advances within the company and create backfill opportunities. IWT funds are also an excellent resource for companies seeking customized training.

OJT - On-the-Job Training is a form of work-based training provided to an eligible WIOA participant upon entry into employment and while engaged in paid work. OJTs are customized to address specific gaps in the trainee's knowledge or skills that are inhibiting their ability to perform assigned duties fully and adequately.

Soft Skills - The Highlands Training Center offers soft skills training certifications. The state approved program uses psychometric data to assist participants in learning about their strengths as well as what industries and jobs would provide them with a fulfilling career. They also learn critical components of emotional intelligence, professional development and team communication tactics.

Post-Secondary – Trainings provided by our post-secondary partners that result in the participant receiving a credential that is stackable and portable are integral to the success of the WIOA program in the Upper Cumberland and in meeting the needs of employers. Career advisors work with participants in completing an interest inventory and a skills assessment. Those results are then compared with LMI and the ETPL to determine the viability of the participants chosen field of employment.

Micro Credentials - Micro-credentials are competency-based certifications that verify an individual's ability to effectively perform a specific skill or set of skills. Through the use of Coursera, the Upper Cumberland has offered both participants and employers the opportunity to upgrade skills at no cost. Multiple options for micro credentials exist through Coursera offered by the TN Department of Labor & Workforce Development.

b. Describe how contracts will be coordinated with the use of Individual Training Accounts (ITAs).

Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) allow Adults, Dislocated Workers and Out-of-School Youth to access training from an entity on the State's approved Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) that will assist them in obtaining self-sufficient employment. ITAs are developed following a comprehensive assessment of the customer's needs. See Upper Cumberland Local Workforce Development Board's Individual Training Account Policy at ucwork.org. To receive training services, the assessment should determine that the participant is:

- Unlikely or unable to obtain or retain employment that leads to economic self-sufficiency or wages comparable to, or higher than, wages from previous employment through career services.
- In need of training services to obtain or retain employment that leads to economic self-sufficiency or wages comparable to, or higher than, wages from previous employment through career services.
- To have the skills and qualifications to participate successfully in training services.

- c. Describe how the LWDB will ensure informed customer choice in the selection of training programs regardless of how training services are provided.

In order to ensure informed customer choice in the selection of training programs is provided to participants in the Upper Cumberland region, all Career Specialists are trained by the Career Service Provider in providing a full complement of programs that are eligible to them under the ETPL. All clients are referred to this list so that they can see the programs that are eligible to be paid for through WIOA funding. In addition, participants are provided with career counseling on in demand occupations through LMI data. Career Specialists provide case management by discussing the options of training providers and giving input, when solicited, on the financial components of the programs in the client's field of interest.

d. Describe how the LWDB will ensure continuous improvement of eligible training providers of services and that the providers will meet the needs of local employers and jobseekers.

In accordance with section 122(d) of WIOA, training services must be provided by an Eligible Training Provider (ETP). Training is available through the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) comprised of training institutions deemed eligible to receive WIOA Title I funds. The ETPL ensures the accountability, quality and labor-market relevance of programs and ensures customer choice. The initial eligibility of the training provider ensures that WIOA participants using Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) for high quality training programs that lead to positive educational and employment outcomes. The United States Department of Labor (USDOL) requires the Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development (TDLWD) to annually report on the performance of the providers included on the ETPL. State minimum performance standard measures are:

- WIOA student completion rate for each program must be $\geq 40\%$
- All student's completion rate for each program must be $\geq 40\%$
- WIOA student placement rate for each program must be $\geq 70\%$
- All student's placement rate for each program must be $\geq 70\%$

Program Coordination:

- a. Describe how education and workforce investment activities will be coordinated in the local area. This must include:
 - ii. Coordination of relevant secondary and postsecondary education programs;
 - iii. Activities with education and workforce investment activities to coordinate strategies and enhance services; and
 - iv. A description of how the LWDB will avoid duplication of services.

Coordination of relevant secondary and postsecondary education programs;

In the Upper Cumberland region, coordination of education and workforce investment activities involves aligning secondary and postsecondary education programs to meet the needs of the local workforce and economy. Through already established partnerships The UCLWDB will continue to work closely with secondary and post-secondary education partners to ensure that students are prepared for success in the workforce by serving on advisory boards, providing input on curriculum development, and co-enrollment in WEX.

Activities with education and workforce investment activities to coordinate strategies and enhance services; and

Our partnership with the Highlands Economic Partnership integrates workforce development activities such as industry tours and job shadowing opportunities. VITAL Academy through Putnam County Schools offers dual providing students the opportunity to obtain an associate degree while simultaneously working toward a high school diploma. Articulation agreements between secondary and postsecondary education institutions already exist facilitating a seamless transition for students pursuing further education and training. Lastly, we will assist in mapping out career pathways, identifying stackable credentials, industry-recognized certifications, and providing guidance and support to students as they navigate their educational and career options.

A description of how the LWDB will avoid duplication of services.

The Upper Cumberland Local Workforce Development Board (UCLWDB) will rely upon strategic planning processes and continuous communication with our secondary and post-secondary partners to identify gaps, redundancies, and areas of overlap in education and workforce services.

- b. Describe plans, strategies, and assurances concerning the coordination of services provided by the State employment service under the Wagner-Peyser Act (29 U.S.C. 49 et seq.), to improve service delivery and avoid duplication of services.

Wagner-Peyser staff streamline the process for accessing customer needs through a proactive approach to enhance service delivery at the American Job Center (AJC). Ensuring that the Welcome Team is informed of all AJC plans and strategies is a critical first step. The Welcome Team serves as the initial point of contact for customers, and their awareness of overarching plans helps create a seamless experience for individuals seeking services. The utilization of the referral process is another critical step to ensuring that services align with the specific needs of customers. This process helps direct individuals to the appropriate services and resources, streamlining the customer journey and maximizing the impact of available services. The coordination within functional teams reflects a collaborative effort to provide a holistic set of services to customers. By meeting regularly, these teams can discuss ongoing services, training programs, workshops, and supportive services, providing a coordinated and comprehensive approach to customer support. These meetings and coordination within functional teams provide a platform for continuous improvement. This allows staff to assess the effectiveness of current services, identify areas for enhancement, and adapt strategies to better meet evolving customer needs.

- c. How will the LWDB coordinate WIOA Title I workforce investment activities with adult education and literacy activities under WIOA Title II?
 - i. Include information on expanding access to employment, training, education, and supportive services provided through the local one-stop system for Title II participants with barriers to employment.
 - ii. Include how the LWDB will carry out the review of local applications submitted under Title II consistent with WIOA Sec. 107(d)(11)(A) and (B)(i) and WIOA Sec. 232.

How will the LWDB Coordinate WIOA Title I workforce investment activities with adult education and literacy activities under WIOA Title II?

The UCLWDB will coordinate WIOA Title I workforce investment activities with Adult Education and Literacy activities by overcoming barriers to equitable participation, including barriers based on gender, race, color, national origin, disability and age through the following strategies:

Flexibility - Flexible learning opportunities for students and computer or paper-based materials: Each student will meet with faculty and staff to design their own learning plan. Classes will be offered in the morning, evening, and weekends each week. Curriculum products will be both computer and paper-based.

Compliance - Classroom locations will be ADA compliant.

Inclusion - Foster a sense of community. Students will be taught to help each other accomplish their goals, regardless of circumstance or need. Independent research has shown that cultivating a sense of belonging among students is an essential element of adult learning. Hire (when possible) staff that is representative of the community.

Reduce Language Barriers - To reduce language barriers, printed materials will be available in both English, Spanish and other languages as needed. Partners will be utilized to interpret as needed. A welcoming atmosphere will exist within all classes. ESL teachers will be specifically trained in knowledge of cultural differences and unique challenges faced by students without English language skills.

Staff Training – The One-Stop-Operator in partnership with the UCLWDB provides training in essential areas for all AJC staff:

- Active Shooter Training
- Americans with Disabilities Act Privacy issue in the Workplace
- Child Abuse and Molestation
- Federal Civil Rights training to include sexual harassment and equal employment opportunity (EEO)
- Continuity of Business - Weather Awareness and Safety Guidelines

Include information on expanding access to employment, training, education, and supportive services provided through the local one-stop system for Title II participants with barriers to employment.

Adult Education encourage pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship opportunities at each employer interaction. This approach aligns with the broader goal of workforce development, which involves creating pathways for individuals to acquire the skills and experience needed for employment. Integrating adult education into pre-apprenticeship programs addresses the specific needs and qualifications required by employers in the region and shortens the time from new hire to productive employee.

In PY 2024- 2027, Adult Education will make a follow-up contact to more clearly define needs and scope of services available.

In PY 2024 – 2027, The LWDB will share any data gathered from area employers on literacy needs in the workplace including basic skills, HSED, English as a Second Language, digital literacy, and soft skills to strengthen partnerships and promote the alignment of adult education services with the needs of area employers.

In PY 2024 – 2027, through the LWDB’s CSP, work experience (WEX) participants will be provided the opportunity to enroll in adult education to complete academic review, earn up to three digital literacy certificates, and a soft skills certificate. Likewise, adult education graduates will be made aware of funding opportunities through Title I.

In PY 2024 – 2027, participants will be made aware of the WEX program and referred as part of their pathway to employment when appropriate.

In PY 2024- 2027, Adult Education will include a short video about the LWDB’s CSP offerings and eligibility requirements during new student orientation to make students aware of available opportunities.

In PY 2024-2027, the UCLWDB’s CSP will provide a yearly review of participant eligibility and available services during adult education local professional development to ensure successful co-enrollments.

Include how the LWDB will carry out the review of local applications submitted under Title II consistent with WIOA Sec. 107(d)(11)(A) and (B)(i) and WIOA Sec. 232.

Adult Education services focus on literacy but also include Adult Basic Education, Adult Secondary Education, Corrections/Re-Entry, Workplace English as Second Language (ESL) and Integrated Education and Technology. enables students to enter into the nursing program, an in-demand occupation for our local area and region. The newly launched IET with TCAT at Crossville also supports a healthcare career pathway. Additionally, adult education offers instruction in ten of the fourteen local county jails to support the local, regional, and state focus on removing barriers to employment for ex-offenders and promote positive re-entry.

Adult Education aligns with workforce development activities by participating in cross-training events to ensure there is a working knowledge of all programs and to maximize the use of these program and benefits. Local and regional workforce planning meetings are attended as needed as well as partners’ meetings. The adult education district coordinator serves as a member on local workforce boards and committees. Our class structure and services provide access to education and training needed to help support job seekers and workers transition to sustainable employment. Adult education teachers employ contextualized learning strategies that correlate to in-demand sectors of health care, advanced manufacturing, and information technology. Soft-skills are embedded within the adult education program including elements of customer service, problem solving, interpersonal skills, time management, and flexibility. Coordinated activities among partners help transition students to post-secondary education and training in advanced manufacturing such as mechatronics and robotics. Furthermore, co-enrollment in a variety of programs leverages resources to allow all partners to reach successful measurable outcomes and to more quickly impact community prosperity. Referrals to Youth Can, WIOA, SNAP E&T, and Vocational Rehabilitation are completed upon intake, exit, or as needs of students arise. The Local Board will carry out the review of local applications submitted under Title II. The State Division of Adult Education forwards applications from applicants’ selected service area to the UCLWDB. The UCLWDB Executive Director and Board Chairman had the opportunity to make recommendations to the Division based upon whether the applications were in alignment with UCLWDB goals and plans. Additional factors reviewed in support were dashboard reports, One-Stop Operator data submitted by Adult Education, and performance reports.

- d. Describe any executed cooperative agreements that define how all local service providers, including additional providers, will carry out the requirements for integration of and access to the entire set of services available in the local one-stop system.

The American Job Center Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is a cooperative agreement utilized by the UCLWDB to define how all local service providers, including additional providers, will carry out the requirements for integration of and access to the entire set of services available in the local one-stop system. This MOU outlines the roles and responsibilities of each partner organization involved in the one-stop system, ensuring coordination and collaboration in delivering comprehensive workforce services to job seekers and employers within the local area. Key components of the cooperative agreement between all AJC partners includes:

1. Collaborate and reasonably assist each other in the development of necessary service delivery protocols for the services outlined in this MOU;
2. Endorse a single customer flow model based upon customer need;
3. Refer customers between Partners according to methods listed in this MOU;
4. Fulfill all data collection, information gathering and reporting needs in order to facilitate co-enrollment and case management across programs and funding streams; and
5. Participate in the One-Stop Service Delivery System through the following means:
 - a) Accessibility of their respective services through the One-Stop Delivery System;
 - b) Participation in the operation of the One-Stop Delivery system consistent with the terms of this MOU;
 - c) Ensure all Partners and staff are adequately cross-trained to produce efficient co-enrollments;
 - d) Sustained involvement for the continuous improvement of the area One-Stop Delivery System;
 - e) Responsiveness to local employer needs and economic conditions;
 - f) Co-branding through the dominant use of the American Job Center (AJC) identifier on any joint products, programs, activities, services, facilities, and materials used under the combined partnership.
- 6) Actively assist in the achievement of Key Performance Indicator (KPI) targets negotiated between the UCLWDB and TDWLD. Partners are responsible for meeting their individual program targets. Partners will also take reasonable measures to encourage and facilitate target achievement for all partners under the UCLWDB One-Stop network.

(See Appendix.)

In addition to the cooperative agreement listed above, The UCLWDB has the following executed MOUs in place:

Habitat for Humanity MOU – All adults approved for Upper Cumberland Habitat for Humanity’s Home Ownership program are required to meet with a Title I Career Advisor at the American Job Center for an assessment of their skills, talents, and current career trajectory. The Career Advisor suggests appropriate referrals to AJC partner agencies (Titles II, III, & IV, TANF) and/or create a plan of action to improve skills and gain further opportunities within their chosen field of employment. The future homeowner receives sweat equity credits for any hours spent with the American Job Center for assessment and/or training.

Upper Cumberland Human Resource Agency (SCSEP) MOU - UCHRA provides SCSEP services in Clay, Overton, Pickett, and White Counties through a contract with Senior Services of America. The UCLWDB provides services in Jackson, Fentress Dekalb, Warren, Smith, and Van Buren Counties. Both agencies provide services in Cumberland and Putnam Counties. A referral MOU

TN Child Support Employment and Parenting Program MOU - UCLWDB and TSCEPP will mutually send and receive referrals for clients in need of employment and parenting services. Participants enrolled in both programs will receive resources to address barriers such as employment, lack of job skills, substance abuse, housing and transportation issues, and mental/physical health problems.

e. How do the LWDA’s programs and strategies strengthen the linkages between the One-Stop delivery system and unemployment insurance programs?

American Job Centers provide meaningful assistance by supplying technology, log in assistance, and referring to the appropriate partners within the AJC. Title III staff maintain an unemployment insurance spreadsheet to track and share issues. The customer is able to obtain information and resources through the AJC to assist with their Unemployment Insurance concerns.

Adopting the Work 1st model has elevated the linkage between the one-Stop delivery system and unemployment programs to another level. Our research shows that over 70% of the individuals who visit an American Job Center is either currently looking for work or will be looking for work in the near future. This includes individuals who visited the AJC to do their weekly certification and job search as part of the unemployment insurance requirements. Work 1st is a proactive and comprehensive initiative that requires strong linkages amongst the core partners. In this model, everyone is actively involved and contributing to the success of workforce development. Close collaboration between the Business Service Administrator, Title III team leads, and Local Veterans Employment Representatives (LVERs) is crucial. Together, they manage recruiting profiles, place job orders in the Jobs4TN system, and coordinate efforts to connect job seekers with employment opportunities. Further, Title III staff members actively assist participants by providing necessary resources for job placement. This support includes resume building, interview preparation, and guidance through the application process, ensuring participants are well-equipped for success. Title I Career Advisors, working closely with participants, play a key role in introducing them to new job opportunities. The Business Services Team conducts regular meetings to discuss participants' job placement needs. This collaborative approach enables the Business Service Team to strategically target specific sectors for optimal placement, aligning participant skills with industry demands.

Youth Activities

- a. Provide an assessment of the type and availability of youth workforce investment activities in the local area.

Career EDGE - Career EDGE is a remote access career preparation program that provides virtual basic career services, including resume development, interviewing skills and practice, as well as modules that prepare young adults for the world of work and advancement in employment. Career EDGE is also utilized as part of the individualized training plan for all young adults in the SYEP program. The combination of virtual and in-person services will enhance the SYEP experience for young adults in the Upper Cumberland region.

SYEP/TYEP - The UCLWDB's direct services provider, Career TEAM, will work collaboratively with the LWDB and workforce partners to grow the SYEP into a year-round program that will benefit in-school and out-of-school youth, while meeting employer needs for a year-round workforce, leading to full-time employment at a self-sustaining wage. Such outreach will be accomplished through presentations to employers, school groups, and youth service organizations via a variety of networks (chambers of commerce, Business Solutions Team meetings, and personnel associations) about the SYEP and young adult programming with the goal of focusing on paid internships (WEX), training programs, and basic career services preparation. Outreach will extend to young adult communities that may not be enrolled in a traditional high school setting, being inclusive of homeschooling families as well as students enrolled in alternative school, career/technical education centers, and young adults who have stopped out of secondary or post-secondary education.

Youth in Transition

- **Youth Extension of Foster Care** – EFC is a voluntary program for qualifying young adults up to age 21 that have age out of the Department of Children's Services custody at age 18 or older. A DCS Independent Living Specialist provides a direct referral to a Title I Career Advisor who works with the referral to complete an interest inventory and skills assessment resulting in any of the following: Co-enrollment with AJC partners, training, supportive services, enrollment in post-secondary education, or employment.
- **Youth in the Juvenile Justice System** – If a youth in foster care is dependent and neglected, it means they entered custody due to some family issues that make the family unable to properly care for them but does not preclude the youth from being found guilty of a delinquent offense. Youth found guilty of violent crimes against persons are generally placed in hardware secure facilities. The UCLWDB is currently focusing on youth in the juvenile justice system who have been placed in community-based facilities, run by provider partners. Based upon our success in the youth in extension of foster care, in PY 24, the LWDB will again partner with the Department of Children's Services to implement a direct referral program for youth in the juvenile justice system. As with both the Extension of Foster and Youth Villages model, a DCS Independent Living Specialist will provide a direct referral to a Title I Career Advisor who works with the referral to complete an interest inventory and skills assessment resulting in any of the following: Co-enrollment with AJC partners, training, supportive services, enrollment in post-secondary education, or employment.
- **Youth Villages** – Youth Villages is a private, nonprofit organization dedicated to helping children with emotional and behavioral problems and their families live successfully. A Lifeset/Extension of Foster Care specialist provides a direct referral to a Title I Career Advisor who works with the referral to complete an interest inventory and skills assessment resulting in any of the following: Co-enrollment with AJC partners, training, supportive services, enrollment in post-secondary education, or employment.
- **Misdemeanor Recovery Court** – Tennessee's recovery courts are judicially-supervised court dockets that reduce correctional costs, protect community safety, and improve public welfare. In recovery courts, non-violent individuals with substance use disorders participate in treatment while under close legal and clinical supervision. In partnership with the Smith County General Sessions Court Judge w/ Juvenile Court Jurisdiction, a Career Advisor serves as a member of the program staff. Participants complete a skills assessment, interest inventory, career counseling and the opportunity to complete a WEX.
- **Teen Challenge** - Teen Challenge of the Upper Cumberland offers a residential recovery program for adult women who want freedom from addiction. Residents actively participate in Bible studies and receive Christian guidance while living

in a structured and supportive environment. Adult and Teen Challenge of the Upper Cumberland works together with the legal and judicial system on referrals to the program.

- b. Explain how providers and LWDB staff ensure the WIOA elements:
 - i. Connect back to the WIOA Youth Program Design Framework, particularly the Objective Assessments and ISS; and
 - ii. Are made available to youth with disabilities by describing specific program practices, tools, and services that are tailored to serve youth with disabilities.

Providers and LWDB staff ensure the WIOA elements connect back to the WIOA Youth Program Design Framework, particularly the Objective Assessments and ISS

The Youth Program Design is an essential element to assist youth service providers to develop comprehensive service strategies based upon individual needs. The UCLWDB will monitor all youth programs through desktop files reviews and onsite assessments.

Assessment - Assessment is a process that identifies service needs. An objective assessment must be administered to all eligible youth. The WIOA youth program design requires an objective assessment of academic levels, goals, interests, skills levels, abilities, aptitudes, and supportive service needs; it also measures barriers and strengths. Assessment results are used to develop the Individual Service Strategy (ISS). The results from the objective assessment must be entered into Jobs4TN.

Individual Service Strategy (ISS) - The Individual Service Strategy is the plan that identifies the employment goals, educational objectives, and appropriate services for the participants. Development and updating as necessary of an ISS is required for each participant. An ISS must be directly linked to one or more of the indicators of performance and identifies a career pathway that includes education and employment goals. Goals and objectives must be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and timely and align to the interest and career pathway identified in the objective assessment. A new service strategy for a participant is not required if the provider carrying out such a program determines it is appropriate to use a recent service strategy developed for the participant under another education training program.

Career Coaching - Case management is more a process than a service, and typically includes non-instructional activities such as navigation to and arrangements for academic, career or personal counseling, financial aid, childcare, housing, and other financial assistance that can be critical to the success and continued engagement of the individual in pursuing their career pathway component. Youth programs must provide case management services to assist a youth participant in making informed choices and completing the program. Support may be provided on an individual or group basis. Career Coaching principles and methods must be incorporated throughout the program design. A case manager is assigned to follow the process of each youth participant from enrollment to program exit, including follow-up services.

The UCLWDB will assist the youth provider in providing training assistance to case managers focusing on the program framework related to the intake and orientation process, assessments used to identify service needs, developing ISS plans that are directly linked to one or more performance indicators that identify a career pathway that includes education and employment goals, career coaching to assist the participant in making informed decisions to complete the program, supportive services that enable the participant to participate in youth activities and follow-up services to ensure the participant is successful in employment and/or post-secondary education and training beyond program completion.

Are made available to youth with disabilities by describing specific program practices, tools, and services that are tailored to serve youth with disabilities.

Title I Youth services are provided through a contracted service provider. The Upper Cumberland Local Workforce Development Board will work to develop intensive outreach efforts to non-profits, community groups, faith-based agencies, schools, and other support agencies who can provide youth services. The UCLWDB will work with the selected provider of youth services to establish Access Points in local area high school libraries with staff trained to assist youth in accessing all available services. Outreach programs will be implemented to target populations with barriers to employment (including but not limited to, offenders, homeless individuals, basic skills deficient, English language learners, individuals aging out of foster care, pregnant or parenting individuals, and persons with disabilities).

Youth Committee: To ensure the success of the Youth program the UCLWDB will look to further utilize the established Youth Committee to evaluate and assist with developing effective strategies that support the state and local goals, to produce positive outcomes for the participants and the program activities. Special Education teachers play a key role on this committee in providing guidance in assisting students with disabilities. The committee will look to create opportunities for participants to share their success in the program and provide volunteer opportunities for former participants.

- c. Describe successful models for youth services from your local area, including but not limited to virtual work experiences, OSY recruitment, and engagement strategies.

Career TEAM, UCLWDB Career Services Provider, offers virtual career employment opportunities for youth including the use of Career Edge for interest inventory and skills assessment. We are aware of the need to expand virtual work experience and employment opportunities. Through informal discussions with participants, we have discovered that most are not prepared to enter the virtual workforce. To ensure a successful experience for both the employee and the employer, we have created a handbook of best practices and for assisting individuals in determining their readiness for a remote work experience.

The Upper Cumberland Local Workforce Development Board (UCLWDB) has outlined a comprehensive set of engagement strategies for Out-of-School Youth (OSY). These strategies recognize the diverse needs and circumstances of OSY and aim to reach them through various channels to include:

SYEP/TYEP - The UCLWDB's direct services provider, Career TEAM, will work collaboratively with the LWDB and workforce partners to grow the SYEP into a year-round program that will benefit in-school and out-of-school youth, while meeting employer needs for a year-round workforce, leading to full-time employment at a self-sustaining wage. Such outreach will be accomplished through presentations to employers, school groups, and youth service organizations via a variety of networks (chambers of commerce, Business Solutions Team meetings, and personnel associations) about the SYEP and young adult programming with the goal of focusing on paid internships (WEX), training programs, and basic career services preparation. Outreach will extend to young adult communities to reach young adults who have stopped out of secondary or post-secondary education.

Youth in Transition

- *Youth Extension of Foster Care* – EFC is a voluntary program for qualifying young adults up to age 21 that have age out of the Department of Children's Services custody at age 18 or older. A DCS Independent Living Specialist provides a direct referral to a Title I Career Advisor who works with the referral to complete an interest inventory and skills assessment resulting in any of the following: Co-enrollment with AJC partners, training, supportive services, enrollment in post-secondary education, or employment.
- *Youth in the Juvenile Justice System* – If a youth in foster care is dependent and neglected, it means they entered custody due to some family issues that make the family unable to properly care for them but does not preclude the youth from being found guilty of a delinquent offense. Youth found guilty of violent crimes against persons are generally placed in hardware secure facilities. The UCLWDB is currently focusing on youth in the juvenile justice system who have been placed in community-based facilities, run by provider partners. Based upon our success in the youth in extension of foster care, in PY 24, the LWDB will again partner with the Department of Children's Services to implement a direct referral program for youth in the juvenile justice system. As with both the Extension of Foster and Youth Villages model, a DCS Independent Living Specialist will provide a direct referral to a Title I Career Advisor who works with the referral to complete an interest inventory and skills assessment resulting in any of the following: Co-enrollment with AJC partners, training, supportive services, enrollment in post-secondary education, or employment.
- *Youth Villages* – Youth Villages is a private, nonprofit organization dedicated to helping children with emotional and behavioral problems and their families live successfully. A Lifeset/Extension of Foster Care specialist provides a direct referral to a Title I Career Advisor who works with the referral to complete an interest inventory and skills assessment resulting in any of the following: Co-enrollment with AJC partners, training, supportive services, enrollment in post-secondary education, or employment.
- *Misdemeanor Recovery Court* – Tennessee's recovery courts are judicially-supervised court dockets that reduce correctional costs, protect community safety, and improve public welfare. In recovery courts, non-violent individuals with substance use disorders participate in treatment while under close legal and clinical supervision. In partnership with the Smith County General Sessions Court Judge w/ Juvenile Court Jurisdiction, a Career Advisor serves as a member of the program staff. Participants complete a skills assessment, interest inventory, career counseling and the opportunity to complete a WEX.
- *Teen Challenge* - Teen Challenge of the Upper Cumberland offers a residential recovery program for adult women who

want freedom from addiction. Residents actively participate in Bible studies and receive Christian guidance while living in a structured and supportive environment. Adult and Teen Challenge of the Upper Cumberland works together with the legal and judicial system on referrals to the program.

- d. Explain how the LWDB has defined the criterion of “requires additional assistance to complete an educational program, or to secure and hold employment” for OSY and ISY, including:
- i. Evidence supporting the established criteria, to include current labor market information, statistical evidence and other data deemed supportive;
 - ii. A description of how the LWDB ensures regional alignment in this criteria; and
 - iii. List any documentation required from the participant to support established criteria and any additional case management parameters the LWDB has deemed necessary.

The UCLWDB defines the criterion of “requires additional assistance to complete and educational program or to secure and hold employment for ISY as:

- Has poor attendance patterns in an educational program during the last 12 months;
- Has been expelled or suspended from school within the last 12 calendar months;
- Is attending an alternative school or has been enrolled in an alternative learning track within the past 12 months;
- Has below average grades;
- Has been previously placed in out-of-home care (foster care, group home or kinship care) for more than 6 months and is between the ages of 14 to 21;
- Has currently incarcerated parent(s) or guardian or has been justice-involved themselves;
- Has been referred to or treated by an agency for substance abuse or psychological problems.
- Has supportive service needs to complete an educational program or to secure or hold employment.

The UCLWDB defines the criterion of “requires additional assistance to complete and educational program or to secure and hold employment for OSY as:

- Has dropped out of a post-secondary educational program during the past 12 calendar months;
- Has a poor work history, to include no work history, or has been fired from a job in the last 6 calendar months;
- Has been expelled or suspended from school within the last 12 calendar months;
- Has attended an alternative school or was enrolled in an alternative learning track within the past 12 months;
- Has below average grades;
- Has been previously placed in out-of-home care (foster care, group home or kinship care) for more than 6 months and is between the ages of 16 to 24;
- Has currently incarcerated parent(s) or guardian or has been justice-involved themselves;
- Has been referred to or treated by an agency for substance abuse or psychological problems.
- Has supportive service needs to complete an educational program or to secure or hold employment.

Evidence supporting the established criteria, to include current labor market information, statistical evidence and other data deemed supportive

Data from the Middle Tennessee Industrial Development Associations (https://mtida.org/regions#upper_region) and data from TNDLWD Labor Force Participation Analysis show a distinct correlation between education attainment and labor force participation. The average across the Upper Cumberland ranges from a low of 40.8% LFPR in Van Buren county to a high of 61% LFPR in Smith county. According to a report from The Foundation for Aids research Opioid and Health <https://opioid.amfar.org/TN>, eleven of the 14 counties in the Upper Cumberland are vulnerable for outbreaks of HIV and/or Hepatitis C. These represent the top

5% in the nation. Addressing the vulnerability to HIV and Hepatitis C in the Upper Cumberland region is a critical public health/workforce concern. While there may be no statistical evidence specific to the UCLWDA, the logical inference of the vulnerability within the area emphasizes the need for proactive measures which supporting youth career engagement.

A description of how the LWDB ensures regional alignment in this criterion

The Upper Cumberland systematically reviews internal policies for ways to remove barriers. In PY 2023, the board updated several policies that created unintended barriers for our participants. We also participate in regional policy alignment reviews to ensure any policy variations do not create barriers for eligible programs or potentially eligible participants. We acknowledge the regional process has lagged in the process.

List any documentation required from the participant to support established criteria and any additional case management parameters the LWDB has deemed necessary.

The UCLWDB requires our career advisors to have participants complete a "Needs Additional Assistance" form in addition to the traditionally required documentation. (See Appendix)

Individual Service Strategy - Individual Service Strategy (ISS): The Individual Service Strategy is the plan that identifies the employment goals, educational objectives, and prescribed appropriate services for the participants. The ISS is essential in identifying service strategies for each participant that directly link to one or more of the indicators of performance, as described in WIOA Section 116(b)(2)(A)(ii). The strategy should also identify career pathways that include education and employment goals (including, in appropriate circumstances, nontraditional employment), appropriate achievement objectives, and appropriate services for the participants using the assessment as a reference. A new service strategy for a participant is not required if the provider carrying out such a program determines it is appropriate to use a recent service strategy developed for the participant under another education training program.

WIOA Intake Registration - Intake: Involves registration, eligibility determination, and collection of documentation to support verification of eligibility for services. Other services also include referral for basic skills development and referral to other services as appropriate.

Self-Attestation - When self-attestation is used, documentation must include, at a minimum, the following information: 1. The applicant's full name 2. Clear statements of the issues being documented 3. The applicant's signature 4. Date signed 5. Career advisor's signature will serve as witness to all self-attestation documents.

Case Note(s) - Case notes "tell the story" of the participant's experience and how the career advisor provided advisement. Case notes provide a record of all the things that happened with a participant during their participation under the WIOA program from registration and eligibility through to follow-up.

Administration

- a. Identify the entity responsible for the disbursement of grant funds as determined by the Chief Local Elected Official (CLEO) or the Governor under WIOA sec. 107(d)(12)(B)(i).

The entity responsible for the disbursement of grant funds as described in WIOA and as determined by the CLEO, is the Upper Cumberland Local Workforce Development Board, Incorporated (UCLWDB). This entity has approved 501(c)(3) tax status from the Internal Revenue Service and operates as a non-profit corporation. The UCLWDB assumed fiscal responsibilities effective July 1, 2019.

b. Describe the competitive process to be used to award subgrants and contracts for WIOA Title I activities in the local area.

The [Procurement Policy](#) describes the methods used in the procurement of goods and services in the Upper Cumberland based on the total dollar amount of the purchase. Subawards and contracts for WIOA Title I activities follow the formal competitive solicitation method, a formal sealed bid solicitation process used when the estimated aggregate total of the expense is \$50,000 or more including renewal terms of multi-year awards. This formal competitive process is conducted by issuing a Request for Proposals (RFP). All awarding contracts are approved by majority vote of UCLWDB members.

All competitive procurement transactions are conducted in a manner providing full and open competition consistent with the standards provided in 2 CFR 200.319. In order to ensure objective contractor performance and eliminate unfair competitive advantage, contractors that develop or draft specifications, requirements, statements of work, or invitations for bids or requests for proposals are excluded from competing for such procurements. UCLWDB procurement transactions contain no requirements that unduly restrict competition as specified in 2 CFR 200.319(a) and (b), and UCLWDB procurement procedures ensure that all solicitations:

- incorporate a clear and accurate description of the technical requirements for the material, product(s), or service(s) to be procured in a manner that does not duly restrict competition, and
- identify all requirements that bidders must fulfill and all other factors to be used in evaluating bids or proposals.

The UCLWDB ensures that all prequalified lists of persons, firms, or products, that are used in acquiring goods and service are current and include enough qualified sources to ensure maximum open and free competition. The UCLWDB does not preclude bidders from qualifying during the solicitation period.

When conducting competitive proposals, the following requirements apply:

- Requests for proposals are publicized on the UCLWDB website as well as applicable legal publications (e.g. local major newspapers such as Herald-Citizen and Crossville Chronicle) and identify all evaluation factors and their relative importance. Efforts are made to make the RFP as widely available as possible. Any response to publicized requests for proposals are considered to the maximum extent feasible.
- Proposals are solicited from an adequate number of qualified sources.
- UCLWDB follows the TDLWD's methods for conducting technical evaluations of proposals received and for selecting recipients.
- Contracts are awarded to the responsible firm whose proposal is most advantageous to the program, with price and other factors considered.
- UCLWDB procurement professionals follow the UCLWDB Procurement Manual in conducting procurement processes and procedures.

All Requests for Proposals (RFPs) that contain requests for One-Stop Operators and Career Service Providers include the duties set forth in 20 CFR 678.620 which are adopted in the State of Tennessee's Regional and Local Planning policies, as well as the State's One-Stop Delivery and Design System policy. The selection of One-Stop Operator and Career Service Provider are competitively procured as two separate RFPs. The UCLWDB follows all federal, state, and local competitive procurement requirements in this selection process, including the TDLWD [One-Stop Operator and Career Service Provider Procurement](#) policy. All efforts are made to actively solicit goods and services from minority-owned, woman-owned, service-disabled veteran-owned, businesses owned by persons with disabilities, and small businesses when possible.

- c. Provide the local levels of performance negotiated with the Governor and CLEO to be used to measure the performance of the local area and to be used by the LWDB for measuring the performance of the fiscal agent, eligible providers, and the One-Stop delivery system, in the local area.

The local levels of performance for the Upper Cumberland can be found in the table below. Since the official negotiation, The UCLWDB has worked with state staff to include an additional key performance indicator to measure the success of the Work 1st initiative. That KPI is not included in the table.

Program	PY 23 Target
Adult, Dislocated Worker, New Enrollments	338
JVSG	21
Justice Involved, New Enrollments	276
RESEA	18
SCSEP	7
SNAP E & T, New Enrollments	187
TAA	90%
Wagner- Peyser, New Enrollments	1702
Youth, New Enrollments	112
Youth Work Experience, New Enrollments	100
In-School Youth, New Enrollments	34

d. Describe the actions taken toward becoming or remaining a high-performing LWDB, consistent with factors developed by the State Workforce Board (SWB).

The UCLWDB has taken several steps over the past year to become a high performing LWDB. We acknowledge that not all plans have been fully implemented but all are in various stages of completion. Under the leadership of our Board Chairman, Bob Young, we have sought to follow the goals for a high functioning board as outlined in the National Governors Association Publication Building a High Performing State Workforce Board.

Set & Communicate the Vision for the Workforce System – The vision of the UCLWDB is to serve as a strategic leader and convener of local workforce development system stakeholders. The UCLWDB will partner with employers and the workforce development system to develop policies and investments that support public workforce system strategies, that support regional strategies and regional economies, the development of effective approaches- including local and regional sector partnerships and career pathways and high quality, customer centered service delivery and service delivery approaches.

Onboarding – In order to create a culture that ensures board members are successful in setting & communicating the vision for the workforce area, the Executive Director provides comprehensive onboarding training for new board members, as well as refresher training for seasoned members. The training contains the following information:

- Overview of WIOA and the Workforce System - New board members receive an introduction to the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act and the broader workforce system. This includes an overview of the key principles, goals, and requirements of WIOA, as well as an understanding of the various stakeholders and partners involved in the workforce system.
- Introduction to the Chief Local Elected Official (CLEO) - Board members learn about the role and responsibilities of the Chief Local Elected Official (CLEO) within the LWDA. This includes understanding the CLEO's authority, decision-making processes, and involvement in setting the direction and priorities for workforce development efforts in the region.
- Introduction to the Board Chair - Board members are introduced to the Board Chair and gain an understanding of the Chair's roles and responsibilities. This includes learning about the Chair's leadership role in facilitating board meetings, fostering collaboration among board members, and representing the board externally.
- Overview of the Fourteen Counties Served - New board members receive an overview of the geographic scope of the LWDA, including the fourteen counties served within the region. This helps board members understand the demographic, economic, and workforce characteristics of the area they are tasked with serving.
- Introduction to Executive Committee Members - Board members are introduced to members of the Executive Committee and learn about their roles and functions. This includes understanding how the Executive Committee supports the overall governance and decision-making processes of the board.
- Introduction to Staff Roles and Responsibilities - Board members gain insight into the roles and responsibilities of staff members who support the board and the broader workforce system. This includes understanding the functions of key staff members, such as the Executive Director, Regional Director, and program staff.
- American Job Center Partners - Board members learn about the various partners and stakeholders involved in the American Job Center (AJC) network. This includes understanding the roles and responsibilities of AJC partners in delivering workforce services and supporting job seekers and employers.
- Roles and Responsibilities of Board Members - All board members, both new and seasoned, receive clarity on their roles and responsibilities as board members. This includes understanding their fiduciary duties, participation expectations, and responsibilities for setting strategic direction and overseeing the implementation of workforce programs and initiatives.
- A list of Acronyms - Workforce development acronyms can often be confusing to board members. By providing new board members with an extensive list of acronyms commonly used within the workforce system, the training helps them understand and interpret board meeting discussions and written communication/documents more effectively.

Board Buddies – Pairing new members with more seasoned board members provides them with a mentor who can offer guidance, advice, and support as they navigate their roles and responsibilities. Experienced board members can share insights, best practices, and institutional knowledge to help new members acclimate to the board environment more quickly. Having a "board buddy" also provides new members with a familiar face at meetings, which can help alleviate any feelings of apprehension they may have.

Meeting Format/Structure – The UCLWDB board voted to approve the following reports through consent agenda: Executive Director, Fiscal, Business Services, OSO, and CSP. By providing board members with reports in advance of meetings, they have the opportunity to review and digest the information prior to the meeting. This ensures that board members come prepared with an understanding of the board's administrative matters. Board members are given ample opportunity to discuss any part of the reports they may not clearly understand. With the majority of meeting time now dedicated to strategic discussions, board members can focus on setting goals, developing plans, and making decisions that advance the vision and mission of the workforce system within the LWDA. This ensures that board meetings are outcomes-oriented and focused on driving positive change and impact.

Our board chair recognized that the UCLWDB needed to distinguish the ourselves as the premier leader and convener in the field of workforce development. In the spring of 2023, he commissioned a task force lead by Dr. Thomas Payne, Dean of the College of Business at Tennessee Technological University (TTU). The taskforce membership included:

- Dr. Robert Bell, President Emeritus, TTU
- Ms. Lillian Hartgrove, Chair, TN Department of Education
- Mr. Zach Buckner, Director of Marketing North America, Hormann
- Dr. Julie Pharr, Associate Dean & Professor of Marketing, TTU
- Mr. Bob Young, UCLWDB Chairman
- Ms. Becky Hull, UCLWDB Executive Director

As part of the taskforce plan, the UCLWDB Executive Director met with each of Dr. Pharr's marketing classes to provide the students with comprehensive information about the UCLWDB's mission, goals, current initiatives and challenges. Students were then assigned to groups of four and presented recommendations to the taskforce through a final group project presentation. Based upon the presentations, the taskforce identified three main objectives.

Establish our Identity – Invest in a comprehensive branding strategy that communicates the UCLWDB's identity effectively

Establish our Purpose – Clearly define the UCLWDB's unique value proposition.

Create a marketing plan - Develop a comprehensive public relations and marketing campaign to raise awareness of the UCLWDB's initiatives and achievements. Utilize various channels, including social media, press releases, and community events, to showcase the organization's leadership in workforce development.

Our Board Chairman unveiled the new name for our 501(c)(3) at our grand opening for our new office's location. "Workforce Connections, Linking People & Business" conveys strength and purpose with a clear tagline that concisely communicates our mission.



Model and Manage Strategic Partnerships that Achieve the Vision – Board members are our most valuable partners and our strongest ally. Training is a crucial aspect of ensuring their effective engagement in the strategic initiatives of our workforce development efforts. In PY 2024 -2027, UCLWDB will begin pairing new board members with experienced "board buddies" is an excellent strategy to facilitate their engagement, provide mentorship, and help them navigate the intricacies of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).

The UCLWDB will continue to develop strategic partnerships with employers and training providers to align training services with the needs of employers within the LWDA and across the middle region. Through our Work 1st model, we will continue to assist job seekers in removing barriers through training for in demand occupations, assist training providers in keeping their finger on the pulse of industry training needs and by assisting employers in hiring a well-trained, dependable workforce. Through these robust and strategic partnerships, we can achieve our goal of turning career pathways into superhighways that facilitate seamless transitions and accelerate the growth of our workforce.

Use data and accountability systems to Keep the System Accountable to the vision - We will establish an accountability framework that clearly outlines responsibilities and expectations for stakeholders to ensure that all partners have an understand their roles in achieving the vision. We will develop performance dashboards that provide a visual representation of key performance metrics (including Work 1st). We will make these dashboards accessible to stakeholders, including board members, staff, and partners, to enhance transparency and accountability.

Public Comment:

- a. Describe the process used by the LWDB to provide a period of no more than 30 days for public comment.

UCLWDB will host a listening session after regular business hours on March 19, 2024 between the hours of 5-6 PM CST at 345 S Jefferson Avenue, 4th floor boardroom. The listening sessions will be open to the public.

The process utilized by the Upper Cumberland Local Workforce Development Board to ensure transparency and solicit feedback from our stakeholders providing for a period of a minimum of fifteen (15) and no more than a thirty (30) day period for public comment is as follows:

Notification has been shared with all WIOA Core Partners, relevant regional/local stakeholders – county mayors, board members, community partners, chambers of commerce, etc. via multiple media including: the ucwork.org website, flyers, email, and public notices in the AJCs, community bulletin boards, and county mayor offices. Multiple options for feedback are available – email, in-person, and via USPS

Copies of plan documents are made available at all AJC locations, workforce board offices, and online platforms.

Any comments received during the public comment time period will be included as part of the local plan documents submitted to the State Workforce Board.

b. Include any comments submitted during the public comment period that represent disagreement with the plan.

No comments received.

Stakeholder Involvement:

- a) Describe how stakeholder involvement requirements were met for the local plan, pursuant to the TDLWD Regional and Local Plan policy.

The Upper Cumberland Local Workforce Staff to the Board organized a Local Plan planning session which was held on February 14, 2024. Stakeholders in attendance included: Chambers of Commerce, Economic Development, Human Resource Agencies, Development District, TCATS, 2-year post-secondary, 4-year post-secondary, MTIDA, UTCIS, Employers, Department of Corrections, AJC partners, faith-based partners, Empower Upper Cumberland, WCTE PBS, secondary education partners including CTE Directors.

TOSS staff facilitated breakout groups that focused on responding to the following questions:

Question 1 Strengths & Weaknesses of the workforce activities in the Upper Cumberland – Ex. Training, Education, Employer needs, Other

Question 2 How can the Local Workforce Development Board and its partners expand access to employment, training, education, and supportive services for eligible individuals, particularly those with barriers to employment?

Question 3 How can the Local Workforce Development Board and its partners work with employers to reduce employer fatigue from multiple agency visits/asks while also making them aware of the services and opportunities available to them?

Question 4 How can the Local Workforce Development Board and its partners work together to determine how many of our students/participants are entering the labor force in the Upper Cumberland?

Attachments

Attachment A- Required Policies

In the space below, please provide a link to the LWDB policy page, which must include the following required local policies:

- Property Management Policy [UCLWDB Property Management Policy](#)
- Supportive Services Policy [UCLWDB Supportive Services Policy](#)
- Youth Program Design Policy [UCLWDB Youth Program Service Design and Framework Policy](#)
- Priority of Service Policy [UCLWDB Priority of Service](#)
- Local Governance Policy [Board Meeting Information Access Policy](#)
- Co-Enrollment Policy [UCLWDB Co -Enrollment Policy](#)
- Electronic Case Files Policy [UCLWDB Electronic Case Files Policy](#)
- Grievance and Complaint Resolution Policy [UCLWDB Grievance and Complaint Policy](#)
- Minimum Participant Cost Rate Policy [UCLWDB MPCR Policy](#)
- Monitoring Policy [UCLWDB Monitoring Policy](#)
- Youth Eligibility Policy [UCLWDB Youth Eligibility Policy](#)

All policies can be found on the UCLWDB website at: [ucwork.org/policies and agreements](https://ucwork.org/policies-and-agreements)

Attachment B- CLEO Signature page

Attachment B can be submitted one of two ways. If the LWDA has capacity for electronic signatures, it can be linked in the space below. In the alternative, the LWDA can provide via email. Please designate which option is selected.

Attachment B is linked in the space below:

Attachment B has been sent via email to Workforce.Board@tn.gov

Attachment C- Partners MOU & IFA

Please affirm the LWDA has previously submitted a Partner's MOU and Infrastructure Funding Agreement pursuant to TDLWD-WFS Guidance-WIOA Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)/One-Stop Service Delivery and Infrastructure Funding Agreement (IFA). In the space below, provide the date on which these documents were most recently submitted: February 7, 2024

Attachment D- Additional Cooperative Agreements

Please provide any executed cooperative agreements, other than the Partner's MOU, to which the LWDA is a party. Any additional cooperative agreements can be provided as "Attachment D to Local Plan" via email to

Workforce.Board@tn.gov. In the space below, please list the name of any additional cooperative agreement that will be included. If none exist, please state "none."

None

Attachment E- Budget Information and Supporting Materials

Please provide the following fiscal materials via email to Workforce.Board@tn.gov using the subject line "Local Plan Attachment E."

- Detailed budget listing the sources and uses of TDLWD pass-through funds and all non-Federal matching funds
- Supporting budget narrative explaining expenditures by line items listed on Standard Form 424A
(Include purpose of travel and supply/equipment lists and describe expenses in the 'other' line item, if applicable. If the budget includes personnel or contractual expenses, cash or in-kind, estimate the number of hours/days and hourly rate, or portion of FTE and salary, for the time that is expected to be spent on the proposed project by key personnel, contractors, or consultants. If the budget includes land or buildings, provide an MAI appraisal or comparable appraisal. Include a description of all leveraged funds, including any fee based and/or revenue generated. Include description of any in-kind resources, including the methods used to determine their value).
- Letters of Commitment from each non-TDLWD funding source (federal state, local, or private) that specifies the amount and type of funds committed (grant, loan, cash, or in-kind)

1) Upper Cumberland Empower Contract (See Appendix)

- Any additional pertinent supporting materials, as applicable.

2) Fiscal Agent Agreement (See Appendix)



In the text box below, provide the date Attachment E was submitted and name of individual submitting: