

**WORKFORCE INVESTMENT BOARD OF TULARE COUNTY**  
**WIOA LOCAL PLAN**  
**2021-2024**

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**WIB**

Workforce Investment Board  
OF TULARE COUNTY

*Driving Economic Success*

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Under the requirements of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 and guidance published by the California Workforce Development Board and Employment Development Department, the Workforce Investment Board of Tulare County (Tulare County WIB) has developed a four-year Local Plan covering program years 2021-24. Upon approval by state officials representing the Governor, the plan will be effective from July 1, 2021, through June 30, 2025. This plan replaces the WIB's PY 2017-20 Local Plan and its 2019 modification. While this plan carries forward many of the strategies that have made local services effective and programs successful, it expresses the intention of the WIB to examine and embrace opportunities for improvement over the life of the plan.

### ***Plan Development***

The WIB's management team and staff led the planning process on behalf of the board. Developing the plan involved an extensive process of reviewing and evaluating existing partnerships, services, and systems and identifying areas that can be strengthened. The WIB, system partners, businesses, and community stakeholders were engaged in the planning process. Completion of the plan took approximately six months, after which it was made available for public review and comment.

### ***The Planning Process in Context***

In many ways, the planning process was typical and mirrored processes that the local board has used for developing workforce plans over the last four decades. In other ways, it was like no previous planning process. While the development of past plans has certainly been influenced by new legislation, changes in the economy, social issues, and other factors, never before has the Tulare County WIB developed a plan amid a global pandemic that has constrained and changed everything. The adversity and challenges brought about by limitations resulting from COVID-19 have, in many ways, fueled ingenuity. Some of the adaptations and innovations that have been implemented in 2020 and 2021 will likely affect local workforce programs for years to come. Priority considerations for the next four years, which are expressed in the plan, focus in part on how these changes can and should be adopted as permanent strategies. To some extent, the post-pandemic period will usher in a "new world," marked by discernable changes to labor market demands, the availability of jobs, and the skills sought by employers. Tulare County WIB will implement a recovery strategy that recognizes and responds to changes in the labor market and in the communities we serve.

### ***Priorities and Vision for the Workforce System***

WIB members and stakeholders were engaged in discussions about strengthening services and their "vision" for the local workforce system. Dozens of thoughtful, informed, and innovative ideas were shared during these discussions. Several overarching themes emerged from input provided by members of the Workforce Investment Board and stakeholders. These include the following recommendations for the local workforce

development delivery system:

- Continue to identify the skills businesses need most, recognizing that the economic landscape may significantly change and evolve over the next four years and beyond.
- When business needs are identified, move rapidly to transform them into training and services that respond to these needs, leveraging resources from industry, economic development, the workforce system, and, especially, local education partners.
- Focus on foundational skills such as communication and mathematics, digital literacy, financial literacy, and workplace behaviors and attitudes.
- Expand the system's reach, making services available for all job seekers. These efforts should include strategies to increase the physical presence of stakeholders at sites throughout the county and the greater use of online platforms to provide information and deliver services.
- Connecting to other initiatives in the County, address the "digital divide," which limits the access that low-income individuals and communities have to technology and web-based information and services.
- Be intentional about the WIB's strategies to ensure equity, diversity, and inclusion and communicate the WIB's plans on these issues.

WIB leadership will set an agenda for further discussion on these issues as this plan is implemented.

## II. WIOA CORE AND REQUIRED PARTNER COORDINATION

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act includes requirements for Local Boards to establish a framework for collaboration among state and local programs that are financially supported by nineteen distinct federal fund sources. Six of these programs constitute the four “core partners:” the WIOA Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth Programs; the WIOA Title II Adult Education and Family Literacy Act Program; the WIOA Title III Wagner-Peyser Act Program; and the WIOA Title IV State Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program. The core partners, together with thirteen other federally supported programs, make-up the WIOA-mandated one-stop partners. The Tulare County WIB has entered into a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the organizations managing each federal program at the local level. The narrative that follows describes coordination with WIOA core and other required program partners as prescribed by the Act.

### Coordination with AJCC Partners and WIOA Memoranda of Understanding

Long before the passage of WIOA, the Tulare County WIB had developed strong relationships and guidelines for collaboration with most of the state and local agencies that today comprise the one-stop partners prescribed under federal regulations. Over the next four years, there will be many opportunities to strengthen the coordination and alignment of partner services. Some such opportunities are described in the narrative that follows, and others will be identified as the Tulare County workforce system partners continue to work together and collaborate in the months and years ahead.

***Overview of Local One-Stop System Partners***

Following is a summary of the local/regional organizations representing the nineteen (19) federal one-stop partner programs, with which the WIB had developed MOUs.

Federal Partner Programs	MOU Partner
Title I Adult Title I Dislocated Worker Title I Youth	Workforce Investment Board of Tulare County
Title II Adult Education and Literacy	Visalia Unified School District/Visalia Adult School Tulare Joint High School District/Tulare Adult School Porterville Unified School District/Porterville Adult School Cutler-Orosi Joint Unified School District/Cutler-Orosi Adult School Proteus, Inc.
Title III Wagner-Peyser Unemployment Insurance (UI)	Employment Development Department (EDD)
Title IV Vocational Rehabilitation	California Department of Rehabilitation (DOR)

Title V Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP)	Community Services and Employment Training (CSET) SER-Jobs for Progress
Carl Perkins Career, Technical Education	Kern Community College District/Porterville College College of the Sequoias
Community Services Block Grant	Community Services and Employment Training (CSET)
Job Corp	<i>Could not enter into the MOU because of the potential for a future financial commitment.</i>
Jobs for Veterans State Grants	Employment Development Department (EDD)
Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers (WIOA Section 167)	Proteus, Inc.
Native American Programs (WIOA Section 166)	Tule River Indian Tribe of California
Second Chance	<i>No federally funded programs in Tulare County</i>
Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)/CalWORKs	Tulare County Health and Human Services (HHSA)
Trade Adjustment Assistance	Employment Development Department (EDD)
Unemployment Insurance (UI)	Employment Development Department (EDD)
Youth Build	<i>No federally funded programs in Tulare County</i>

Tulare County WIB has also entered into MOUs with the following community partners:

Community Partners	Porterville Sheltered Workshop (PSW) Sequoias Adult Education Consortia (SAEC) Ticket to Work, Tulare County Office of Education (TCOE)
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### ***Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) with System Partners***

Tulare County WIB had developed an MOU with each of the federally funded system partners. The major content of the MOU includes shared customers, shared services, and shared costs. Tulare County also highlights local workforce system service priorities, which include:

Integrated Service Delivery: A seamless system is presented to the customer.

Customer-Focus: All aspects of service delivery are designed with consideration of customers' needs and interests.

Customer Choice: The system provides a wide array of useful information to assist customers in making informed choices.

Customer Access: The system is designed for universal access, with "no wrong door" to access integrated services.

Community Support: The system promotes and nurtures broad-based community support.

Performance: The system establishes identified outcomes and methods for measuring achievement.

### ***Coordination with AJCC Partner Programs***

The following information summarizes how the WIB and the local workforce system collaborate with organizations managing the federally mandated one-stop partner programs.

WIOA Title I – Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth Programs: The three formula-funded programs are administered by the WIB, and services are delivered through the AJCCs by contracted career services providers: CSET in Visalia, Porterville, and Tulare and Proteus, Inc. in Dinuba.

WIOA Title II – Adult Education and Literacy: The Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA), Title II of WIOA, is the principal source of federal funding to states for adult education programs. The program focuses on helping adults to increase their basic education skills; gain support in attaining a secondary school diploma or prepare for an equivalency exam; and, for English language learners, improving reading, writing, speaking, and comprehension skills in English. The Tulare County education agencies that are WIOA Title II grantees are members of the Sequoias Adult Education Consortium and Kern Adult Education Consortium. The WIB and local career service providers are consortium partners. Coordination comes in the form of cross-referrals between workforce and education partners, with Title II grantees serving as the primary resource for remedial and basic education and related programs.

WIOA Title III – Wagner-Peyser: Among all the federal programs with which the WIB collaborates, linkages with Wagner-Peyser are arguably the strongest, as the staff from WIOA and Wagner-Peyser programs have been fully integrated around key functions of the AJCCs. Even with service integration, Wagner-Peyser representatives maintain responsibility for specific services, such as RESEA workshops, coordination of TAA activities, and operation of EDD's Youth Employment Opportunity Program. Enhancements to coordination that have been identified as goals include greater collaboration during enrollment and additional cross-training for WIOA and partner staff on all EDD programs and services, including Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker Outreach and California Training Benefits.

WIOA Title IV – Vocational Rehabilitation: DOR has staff co-located at the comprehensive AJCCs in Visalia and Porterville. Co-location fosters improved communication and coordination of services. The WIB has two programs with shared consumers between DOR and the WIOA Title I Adult and Youth Programs: Summer Training and Employment Program for Students (STEPS), which serves youth and provides students with disabilities job readiness training and work experience in a career pathway matching their



interests and career goals; and the Disability Employment Accelerator (DEA) program, which focuses on providing competitive integrated employment positions for adults. DOR provides a wide range of services for the local workforce system, ranging from interpretation services for deaf and hard of hearing individuals to training for the partners on effectively serving individuals with disabilities. Discussions between WIB and DOR representatives have led to the identification of several areas where improved coordination can be achieved. These include DOR's assistance in working with businesses on the placement of persons with disabilities; improved tracking of referrals and results; and increasing co-enrollments to better leverage resources.

Carl Perkins Career Technical Education: Coordination with Carl Perkins-funded career and technical education (CTE) programs is facilitated by the Tulare Kings College and Career Collaborative (TKCCC), in which all public education agencies serving adults participate. Perkins programs are present at the two community colleges in Tulare County (College of the Sequoias and Porterville College) and offer numerous vocational skills training programs, many of which are within fields of study linked to local and regional priority sectors. Coordination is primarily achieved through a system of referrals of job seekers/students between the AJCCs and the colleges' CTE staff. Also, the WIB facilitates an Industry Engagement Workgroup for the TKCCC partnership. The WIB also provides opportunities for education partners to promote their programs and services to AJCC customers through a weekly virtual "Training Connect" program.

In 2021, four regional advisory boards will be launched to connect the workforce, postsecondary, and K-12 partners to the industry in a more coordinated way. The WIB will also continue to provide ongoing support for Sector Summit Events, which are used to connect education and workforce partners to the needs of the industry and improve CTE pathways. The WIB is developing informational presentations that will be targeted to faculty and staff of education partners, explaining services and programs offered at the AJCCs.

Title V Older Americans Act: In Tulare County, coordination with the Senior Community Service Employment Program is seamless, as the career services provider for both of the comprehensive AJCCs and one satellite center, CSET, also administers the SCSEP program. The program is promoted to individuals 55 years and older through the AJCCs and the entire network of providers. CSET has provided cross-training about the program to system partners, which covered eligibility requirements, program activities, and program outcomes.

Native American Programs (WIOA Section 166): The Tule River Tribal Council is the WIOA Section 166 grantee in Tulare County. The tribe's workforce development programs offer many of the same services as the WIB's AJCCs, with primary differences being scale, as the AJCCs are much larger, and connections to the full range of system partners. To make information about the local system more convenient and accessible for individuals served by the Tribal Council, the WIB will utilize digital platforms to provide more information, workshops, and services online. The WIB will provide online access to its "Training Connect" and "Job Connect" videos and links to employment opportunities,

along with information on and registration links to AJCC workshops. By making a greater number of services easily accessible to Tule River participants, an increase in co-enrollment is likely.

Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker Program (WIOA Section 167): The WIB has long had strong ties with Proteus, Inc., the local Section 167 grantee. Proteus operates the AJCC Affiliate site in Dinuba, where all customers receive a “central intake” to determine eligibility and appropriateness for various programs to maximize and leverage funds. Through co-enrollment in Section 167, WIOA Title I, and other system programs, Proteus offers migrant and seasonal farmworker customers basic career services, vocational training, work-based learning, work readiness training, ESL, GED services, and supportive services.

Veterans: Coordination with the Jobs for Veterans State Grant programs is achieved by co-location of EDD Disabled Veterans’ Outreach Program (DVOP) Specialists and Local Veterans’ Employment Representatives (LVER) staff at the AJCCs. Center staff and partners serving job seekers from community locations have been oriented to veterans’ services and supports that are provided by these staff. DVOP specialists provide intensive services to veterans and eligible spouses that are designed to facilitate participants’ transition into meaningful civilian employment. LVER staff performs outreach to local businesses and employers to advocate for the hiring of veterans.

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

Community Services Block Grants (CSBG): As is the case with other programs, coordination with CSBG is facilitated by the fact that CSET, the primary career services provider for the local AJCC network, receives CSBG funds. CSET's CSBG program supports the agency's ability to develop and offer services in the areas of employment, education, asset building, housing, nutrition, civic engagement, emergency services, and disaster relief. It supports coordination of services across the agency's four departments (Community Initiatives, Energy Services, Sequoia Community Corps, and Workforce Development), facilitating a "no wrong door" approach to customer service. CSBG also supports agency capacity building, strategic planning, and participation in county-wide collaborations that create solutions to the challenges facing Tulare County's low-income residents.

Unemployment Compensation: Normally, coordination with EDD's Unemployment Insurance program is achieved through a liaison function provided by EDD staff. A UI

Navigator has provided support to AJCC customers on a walk-in basis. UI staff provide RESEA/PJSA workshops at the AJCCs and participate as members of the local Rapid Response Team. To strengthen the connection between the local workforce system and the UI program, WIB and EDD representatives have discussed the implementation of ongoing cross-training so that AJCC staff can function as “UI Navigators” and be proficient in providing customers with answers to the various questions that they frequently pose regarding the UI program.

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families/CalWORKs: Coordination and cross-referrals between the AJCCs and the various TANF-supported programs administered by the Tulare County Health and Human Service Agency (HHSA) have been successful over many years. Welfare-to-Work and Expanded Subsidized Employment staff are co-located at the Visalia and Porterville comprehensive Employment Connection centers and Dinuba and Tulare affiliate Employment Connection centers. Both programs are TANF-supported programs, and adept at assessing clients to determine whether CalWORKs, WIOA, or other workforce system services are needed. Many CalWORKs recipients are co-enrolled in WIOA and partner programs. Section III. A describes coordination specific to the CalFresh Employment and Training Program.

### **Partners’ Efforts to Collaborate on Co-Enrollment and Case Management**

WIOA emphasizes coordination among partner programs, including the use of resources from two or more programs to address the needs of individuals enrolled in WIOA and other publicly funded programs. To access a broad range of resources, individuals eligible across various fund streams may be co-enrolled in multiple programs. Tulare County WIB and system partners understand the value of strategic co-enrollment of workforce system customers in more than one program when distinct resources are required to address the full range of services and support needed by a job seeker to meet his/her goals. In pursuing co-enrollment, system staff is careful to avoid duplication of services across fund streams, ensuring that each program into which an individual is enrolled provides unique services.

#### ***Co-Enrollment Initiatives and Strategies***

Tulare County has implemented several initiatives and strategies to support strategic co-enrollment of job seekers with core, one-stop, and broader system partners. These include:

Coordinated Eligibility and Intake: A “Partner Guide” was developed so that staff at each partner agency could easily identify when a participant may be eligible for and able to benefit from more than one program. Staff representing all partners have been oriented to the guide and the various resources it describes. The guide serves as a catalog of the one-stop partners, services, and eligibility requirements.

System Coordination via The One-Stop Operator Function: The AJCC Operator/OSO is responsible for on-going training, supporting communication within and among sites,

delivering staff training across all agencies, and promoting consistent, coordinated, and quality service. In its Operator role, the WIB ensures that the partners convene regularly. AJCC staff meet monthly (Employment Connection Site Meetings) and the system partners meet quarterly (Employment Connection Committee). The meetings, along with day-to-day communications, provide a platform for discussing shared customers, co-enrollment, and coordinated case management.

Coordination of Referrals: The system partners have developed a streamlined referral process with the implementation of a common referral form. An electronic version is being piloted. A structured and effective system to refer customers between providers is foundational to successful co-enrollment.

Clearly Defined Responsibilities: Each partner is responsible for making appropriate referrals, providing sufficient documentation for the participant files, and tracking referrals. Referrals, and resulting co-enrollment outcomes, are reported to the OSO monthly.

Cross-Training: The WIB's and the local workforce system's commitment to cross-training helps support common case management. The WIB leads system-wide cross-training efforts. Each one-stop partner developed a slide deck providing an overview of its services, resources, and program eligibility requirements. The presentations are cataloged and remain available for refreshers and onboarding of new staff.

### ***Shared Case Management***

Within the integrated model to service delivery that the WB adopted more than a decade ago, teams comprised of staff representing various organizations, programs, and fund streams work together to customize services for individuals. In addition, to WIOA Title I programs, programs represented by the integrated services teams include, but are not limited to Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (WIOA Title II), Disability Employment Accelerator, STEPs, English Language Learner, Prison to Employment, Expanded Subsidized Employment, and Trade Adjustment Assistance. As a result of staff efforts to tailor services to individuals' needs, many participants receive services from more than one program. Members of the integrated services teams communicate about service strategies and coordinated case management for co-enrolled customers. Staff schedules regular meetings to discuss strategies, services, and outcomes. Through the use of CalJOBS, WIOA staff documents the progress of co-enrolled individuals.

### **One-Stop System's Use of Technology and Other Remote Strategies**

Tulare County is home to cities, towns, and rural communities. While well over half of the county's more than 450,000 residents reside in the three largest cities, a significant portion of the population is based in very small towns and remote locations across Tulare County's 4,800 square miles. The WIB ensures that workforce system services are available to all county residents and businesses, no matter their location.

## ***Services to Remote Locations***

The WIB strategically provides access to services for Tulare County residents through four AJCCs which are located in Visalia, Porterville, Dinuba, and Tulare, thereby covering a fairly large portion of the county. The centers all have ample parking and access to bus stops within walking distance, making them accessible for individuals traveling from any part of the county to receive services. However, the WIB's objective is that individuals in remote locations should be able to access services without having to travel long distances from their communities. Remote towns and communities of the county include Alpaugh, Cutler, Ducor, Earlimart, Exeter, Farmersville, Goshen, Ivanhoe, Lemon Cove, Lindsay, London, Orosi, Pixley, Richgrove, Springville, Strathmore, Sultana, Terra Bella, Three Rivers, Tipton, Traver, Woodlake, and Yetttem.

Some of the workforce system's strategies for getting services to remote communities include:

Outreach from Base Locations: From the four AJCCs, staff devise and then implement outreach strategies to inform individuals and businesses in remote communities about WIOA and other system services. These efforts include establishing and maintaining relationships with organizations in the targeted communities, including public agencies, community organizations, churches and faith-based agencies, and local businesses. Experience has shown that local organizations and sites that are familiar to the community are effective in promoting workforce services. Making flyers, posters, and other printed materials available at these locations helps to build name recognition and familiarity with workforce programs. CSET is the career services provider at Visalia, Porterville, and Tulare one-stop centers are also the Community Action Agency for Tulare County. Given the AJCC sites it manages, along with its other work, CSET targets remote communities including Pixley, Earlimart, Cutler, Exeter, Farmersville, Woodlake, Goshen, and Lindsay. Proteus, which is the Career Services Provider at the Dinuba Center and has offices throughout Tulare County, including remote communities, such as London.

Create Mobile "Pop-Up" One-Stop: Staff will regularly travel to remote communities to meet with interested individuals and customers. Pop-up meeting locations are set-up at partner locations and other public sites, such as libraries to make services locally available.

## ***Technology Support for Remote Access***

Over the last several years, WIB strategies for reaching people in remote communities have increasingly been built around the use of technology that connects people to the internet. However, such strategies are still evolving as many individuals do not always have access to technology. Three issues exist that the WIB is working with system stakeholders and others to address: broadband access; availability of hardware; and residents' digital literacy skills. Progress is occurring in all three areas but is slower than ideal. The WIB and our education partners are ramping up digital literacy training, especially for those requiring basic technology skills that will enable them to effectively

use web-based services. There has also been an increase in the use of support services to put technology in the hands of customers, such as the purchase of Chromebooks for those participating in online training.

With the onset of the pandemic, the WIB and partners began to accelerate efforts to make services available through virtual/online formats. Now, customers in remote locations can access career services, program eligibility, work readiness workshops, and more. Online services that are now routinely used include Zoom, Google Hangouts, Facebook, Docu-sign.

## **Coordination of Workforce Activities and Support Services**

For many WIOA participants, engagement in training, career exploration, job search, and other program activities would not be possible without financial and other forms of support. By definition, support services are resources that enable participation in workforce development services. Therefore, Tulare County WIB, subcontractors, and partners delivering services through the AJCC make every effort to ensure that the individual needs of each participant are identified and that appropriate resources are deployed to address these needs.

### ***Determining Participants' Needs for Support Services***

During an initial assessment, AJCC staff orients applicants to the full range of services available to individuals enrolled in WIOA, including supportive services. Determination of the need for supportive services may be based on several factors, including an individual's employment and career goals, training, and career development activities a participant has selected, and barriers to participation. Following an initial needs assessment, staff continues to evaluate each participant's need for support. The staff assesses needs at different phases of participation to ensure that unique needs are addressed as they arise.

### ***Leveraging and Deploying Support Services Resources***

WIOA participants have access to a wide range of supportive services to support them during their participation in WIOA program services. Among these are assistance with: transportation (e.g., bus passes, mileage reimbursement, other transportation services necessary for training or employment interviews), childcare, health services, legal assistance, housing, interview attire, work clothes, work tools, and other job-related items, tests, and other services necessary for individuals to obtain/retain employment or participate in career and training services.

Support services can be funded from several sources, including the WIOA Adult and Dislocated Programs into which participants are enrolled. In addition, Tulare County WIB is frequently awarded funds under special grant programs from state and local funding sources, such as the City of Visalia homeless project, which provides supportive services similar to WIOA. Tulare County HHSA provides a wide range of supportive services to

individuals receiving cash assistance. These services include transportation assistance, childcare, interview attire, work clothes, and other items necessary to obtain and retain employment or complete a training program. Tulare County's community action agency, CSET, also provides a wide range of support through various funding resources. These include programs to provide individuals with energy assistance, rent or mortgage assistance, and income tax preparation services, among others.

Staff providing direct services to job seekers is familiar with community resources to address supportive service's needs. Case managers make certain that, when referring a customer to a third party for support, they provide a warm hand-off. The staff makes referrals to public and community-based agencies by making direct contact and arranging for AJCC customers to meet with specific partner staff that will assist them with support services. Case managers record support services needs, resources identified to meet these, and referrals to providers.

The pandemic has highlighted for workforce system staff the ever-changing and evolving needs of participants for support, which may currently include technology-related items to enable individuals to participate in online services. The WIB will continue to evaluate trends and make the identification of resources to increase access to support a priority for the workforce system.

### **Physical and Programmatic Accessibility for Individuals with Disabilities**

Tulare County WIB had long made accessibility for persons with disabilities a priority for the AJCCs and the local workforce system. The WIB's use of a four-part approach ensures that our services meet all accessibility requirements as well qualitative priorities we have established for serving individuals with disabilities and customers representing other vulnerable populations. The WIB's approach includes:

1. Ensuring that management and staff have a clear and comprehensive understanding of federal and state regulations and requirements about accessibility and provision of services for persons with disabilities.
2. Development and implementation of local policies on accessibility, non-discrimination, and equal opportunity (EO) requirements and goals.
3. Implementation of services and resources to meet the needs of this target population.
4. Making certain that WIB and AJCC staff, along with system partners are informed and trained in best practices for serving and meeting the employment needs of persons with disabilities.

### ***WIB Policies and Monitoring Protocols***

The WIB's detailed procedures (*TUL17-05 Nondiscrimination and Equal Opportunity Procedures*) cover a full range of critical topics, such as accessibility requirements; reasonable accommodation and reasonable modifications for individuals with disabilities; use of service animals; and mobility aids and devices. The WIB incorporates

requirements into our subrecipient agreements. In addition, EO posters in English and Spanish informing customers of their rights are located in all facilities. Registered customers sign a document indicating that they have been informed of their equal opportunity rights and responsibilities and how the discrimination complaint process works.

The WIB has developed detailed guidelines (*TUL17-08 Oversight and Monitoring for Nondiscrimination and EO Procedures*) for oversight and monitoring of contractors to ensure compliance with the requirements of applicable federal disability nondiscrimination law, including Section 504, Title II of the ADA of 1990, as amended, and WIOA Section 188, concerning individuals with disabilities. It includes a Reasonable Accommodation Policy and Procedure Guide. The WIB reviews with subrecipients an EO monitoring tool that is based on the State's tools for assessing compliance with WIOA Section 188 Nondiscrimination and Equal Opportunity. WIB staff annually conducts on-site visits to all subrecipients to assess EO compliance.

### ***Technology Resources for Persons with Disabilities***

WIB and AJCC leadership and staff continuously evaluate AJCC facilities and resources to identify opportunities to further enhance accessibility for customers with disabilities. Among the technology resources and other forms of support that have been implemented with the AJCCs are:

- UbiDUO, which provides communication assistance for individuals with hearing impairments.
- Deaf and Hard of Hearing Interpreting Service
- TTY Telephone Relay
- LCD Magnifier
- JAWS (Job Access with Speech)
- Zoom text (magnifier/reader)
- Dragon Naturally Speaking

### ***Information and Training for Staff and System Partners***

The Department of Rehabilitation (DOR) is a co-located partner within the local one-stop system and has served as a valuable resource for assisting all AJCC staff in understanding the unique needs of individuals with disabilities and best practices for service delivery. DOR representatives have provided "Windmills" training for center staff. This high-impact attitudinal training program focuses on the unique employment needs of individuals with disabilities. Training will be ongoing to ensure that all staff has up-to-date knowledge and that new staff is well informed about services for customers with disabilities.



### III. STATE STRATEGIC PARTNER COORDINATION

In 2018, the State completed and published a biennial modification to California's Unified Strategic Workforce Development Plan for Program Years 2016-19. Within this modification, the California Workforce Development Board identified several new strategic partnerships with state-level agencies and initiatives. Guidance issued by the State Board in 2018 to Local Boards regarding two-year modifications to their PY 17-20 Plans required that WDBs pursue these partnerships within their jurisdictions. In our 2019 modification to the Local Plan, Tulare County WIB described these local-level relationships, some of which were in the early stages of development. Following is a summary of the evolution of these strategic partnerships as well as approaches under consideration to further strengthen collaboration with local providers and programs.

#### Coordination with County Human Services Agency and Other Local Partners That Serve Individuals That Access CalFresh Employment and Training Services

The development of Tulare County WIB's two-year modification to our 2017-2021 Local Plan coincided with the implementation of a CalFresh Employment and Training (E&T) pilot program in the county. The WIB, AJCCs, and the overall workforce system have had strong ties to the program since its inception. Over the last two years, the program has evolved and the local WIOA program continues to collaborate with the CalFresh E&T program and its staff.

#### ***Workforce System Linkages to CalFresh Employment and Training***

CalFresh E&T is administered by the Tulare County Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA). In early 2019, HHSA entered into an agreement with CSET (which serves as the career service provider for three local AJCCs) to pilot a third-party CalFresh E&T program targeted to the General Assistance population. Participation is voluntary. The pilot has been completed. While HHSA had planned to refer 150 individuals to the program, COVID affected these plans, and far fewer were served. The project is now slated to continue beyond the pilot phase.

#### ***CalFresh Employment and Training Program Design***

The CalFresh E&T model developed by CSET offers two distinct approaches for participants: job search and work-based learning.

Job Search: Under this model, participants attend workshops where, in addition to learning about job search strategies, they have access to an array of current job leads. Workshops emphasize soft skills and prepare participants to not only perform well in interviews but to succeed within work environments.

Work-Based Training: This model uses on-the-job training (OJT) as a method to offer participants both training and exposure to the world of work. After staff assesses and

identifies training needs, they work with participants to pinpoint work-based learning activities that hold promise for imparting the skills most needed by participants.

Under the CalFresh E&T program model, the above strategies may be linked to training by Sequoia Community Corps, which offers work-based and hybrid programs in the trades, including construction, solar, weatherization, urban forestry, recycling, electronic waste collection, oil collection, and recycling education.

### ***Opportunities for Expanding the Partnership***

The program will continue to fund two full-time CalFresh E&T staff who are co-located at the Visalia and Porterville comprehensive Employment Connection centers. CalFresh E&T staff are working with one-stop partners to promote referrals, which would expand the number of individuals to be served beyond those who are referred from HHSA. The partners intend for all participants to receive a comprehensive assessment and, based on needs, be co-enrolled into WIOA Title I and other one-stop program services.

### **Coordination with Local Child Support Agency and Other Local Partners That Serve Individuals Who Are Non-Custodial Parents**

Discussions between the WIB and representatives and the Tulare County Department of Child Support Services (DCSS) took place in 2018 to support the development of the WIB's biennial plan modification built upon an existing, long-standing relationship between the two organizations. For years, DCSS would refer non-custodial parents (NCPs) on its caseload to the workforce system for assistance with job search and employment. While some successes were achieved, the partners agreed that, too often, those being referred did not take full advantage of WIB services based on less than favorable perceptions these individuals had about the referring agency, DCSS.

### ***Initial Plans for Structured Coordination***

During the 2018 discussions, the WIB and DCSS began to consider approaches being implemented throughout California that focused on promoting a more positive image of child support agencies and using this positive image to connect those with enforcement orders to the workforce system. The discussions centered on the greater application of "motivation tools" that Tulare County DCSS could utilize to encourage NCPs to take advantage of workforce programs and services. Among these are the restoration of licenses; revisiting support orders to ensure they reflect the current circumstances of the NCP; and deferring or lessening requirements for payment during the time in which NCPs are engaged in workforce services, training, and job search. The WIB, Child Support Services, and other stakeholders agreed that the best tool to motivate and support NCPs' engagement with the workforce system is providing good and accurate information about child support obligations; payment options; labor market and employment opportunities; and services that can lead to well-paying jobs with career ladder potential. Early discussions also highlighted the importance of making a warm hand-off between the two systems.

## ***Improving Upon Early Successes***

Over the last two years, progress has been made with regard to increasing the number of referrals from DCSS to the AJCCs. DCSS and the WIB collaborated on the development of a referral process. Still, the partners recognize that opportunities exist to improve collaboration, increase referrals, and strengthen coordination. While some of the identified improvement strategies have been paused due to the outbreak of COVID-19, plans agreed to by the partners include:

Entering into a Formal MOU: A structured MOU describing the specific roles and responsibilities, as well as overall approaches to collaboration, has been drafted. Given the reliance of various strategies on the ability to deliver in-person services, the partners will execute and implement the MOU in advance of the AJCCs' fully re-opening.

Improving the Referral Process: The partners intend to streamline the referral process by adopting the process that the AJCCs use with other system partners. Providing a warm hand-off between single points of contact at DCSS and the AJCC is the central feature of this process and ensures responsibility and accountability for managing referrals.

Examining Opportunities for Co-Location: Models implemented elsewhere in the state suggest that there may be significant benefits to co-locating DCSS staff at the AJCCs. The location is perceived by many NCPs as "neutral" and, by meeting with DCSS staff at a Tulare County WIB's Employment Connection Center, customers are likely to better understand the relationship between their ability to fulfill their child support obligations and the workforce assistance services the AJCCs provide. Plans to co-locate a child support staff member at the comprehensive Employment Connection center in Visalia were scheduled for 2020, however, due to the pandemic plans were put on hold.

More Aggressively Promoting Incentives and Benefits: The incentives that DCSS can provide to individuals choosing to participate in workforce system services are significant and have proven to positively influence choices made by NCPs. Moving forward, the partners intend to more assertively promote these benefits to customers.

**Coordination with Local Partnership Agreement Partners Established in Alignment with the Competitive Integrated Employment Blueprint and Other Local Partners That Serve Individuals with Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities.**

On November 14, 2018, during the process of updating and modifying our 2017-21 Local Plan, the Tulare County WIB convened stakeholders from the disability services community and other interested parties in a forum focused on the use of competitive integrated employment (CIE), development of a local partnership agreement (LPA) among the state-mandated core partners, and opportunities for other organizations in the local workforce system to collaborate with the LPA partners. Through this community and stakeholder engagement process, the WIB and other stakeholders learned that the core partners (special education, the regional center, and DOR) had drafted an LPA and it

was going through a review process. By May 2020, all parties to the agreement had signed off on and executed the agreement, The Tulare-Kings LPA, represents the following core partners: Local Education Agency Partners: Delano Joint Union High School District, Exeter Unified School District, Kings County Office of Education, Porterville Unified School District, Tulare County Office of Education, Tulare Joint Union High School District, Visalia Unified School District, Woodlake Unified School District; Department of Rehabilitation: Visalia Branch Office; and Regional Center: Central Valley Regional Center.

The development of the local LPA has had several positive effects for the WIB and the full range of workforce system partners. During the WIB's initial convening on this matter in November 2018, the partners recognized that greater collaboration could be achieved between the traditional disability services network, consisting of CIE core partners and other local organizations primarily focused on persons with disabilities, and the workforce development system partners. As a result of these discussions, a local LPA group was formed (even before the execution of the agreement), which included both the core partners and several community partners, such as the WIB and our career services providers. The group's primary focus is on improving post-secondary outcomes for youth with disabilities. Convenings of the core and community partners have provided a forum for partners to learn about services all agencies provide for individuals with disabilities. Meetings also allow for an exchange of information and announcements of upcoming events.

Virtual meetings of the LPA group have continued to take place during the pandemic. On November 10, 2020, the WIB made a presentation to the group on the following two programs that it administers, which serve individuals with disabilities: Access to Careers and Employment (ACE) and Summer Training and Employment Program for Students with Disabilities (STEPS). The ACE program, which is funded under a State Disability Employment Accelerator (DEA) grant, creates linkages and engages businesses to develop, earn, and learn strategies that lead to competitive integrated employment for people with disabilities. The project serves individuals with disabilities ages 18 and above who are eligible under the WIOA Adult program. The primary focus of STEPS is workplace readiness and work experience. STEPS serves youth ages 16-21 who are enrolled in secondary, post-secondary, or adult education and have a 504 or IEP plan. DOR approves referrals and enrollments, and participants are co-enrolled into the WIOA Youth program.

Collaboration with the LPA partners has not only increased the workforce system partners' awareness of CIE and the unique employment needs of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities but has brought a stronger overall disability focus to the local workforce system. The WIB and system stakeholders will continue to improve collaboration with the LPA partners and other organizations within the local disability services network to ensure that services for individuals with disabilities are widely available and highly effective.

## **Coordination with Community-Based Organizations and Other Local Partners That Serve Individuals Who are English Language Learners, Foreign Born, and/or Refugees**

Approximately two-thirds of Tulare County residents are Latino and among this population, there is a significant number of immigrants. Serving individuals who are developing English language skills is a regular part of the WIB's workforce services operations. Linkages with education and community partners are critical to the WIB's success in meeting the needs of English language learners (ELLs), foreign-born individuals, and refugees.

### ***Network of Providers Serving the Target Population***

Two core relationships are fundamental to the WIB's success in serving ELLs and other immigrants. The career services providers for Tulare County's network of AJCCs are CSET and Proteus (which is the local WIOA Section 167 Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker Program grantee), both of which have decades of experience serving this target populations throughout the County. The two organizations provide an extensive range of services to reduce poverty, develop skills and strengthen individuals' and families' ability to achieve self-sufficiency. Through the implementation of a specialized English Language Learner grant (described below), the WIB and the AJCCs strengthened existing relationships with a variety of education providers and programs. Among these partners are several WIOA Title II grantees, including Sequoias Adult Education Consortium (SAEC), Cutler-Orosi Joint Unified School District (COJUSD), and Tulare Joint Union High School District (TJUHSD). Program Coordinators for the ELL grant project were co-located at the COJUSD Family Education Center, as well as at the TJUHSD's Tulare Adult School campus, to facilitate the co-enrollment of ELLs in WIOA Title I Adult program services. The Coordinators and designated Title II staff worked together to support participants and provide them with the resources to succeed in the achievement of their education and employment goals. The SAEC Navigator, worked closely with ELL Coordinators to recruit targeted individuals for the program, facilitate co-enrollment in WIOA Titles I and II, and provide referrals to address their individual needs. The ELL grant on which these partners collaborated provides a model for future immigrant-focused initiatives in Tulare County.

Other essential partners in serving ELLs include EDD, which has staff dedicated to Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker outreach. The WIB is committed to sustaining and developing relationships with all ELL partners. Continued collaboration will enable the workforce system to effectively serve the ELL population, leverage resources to meet their needs, and expand the network of organizations serving this key target group.

### ***Coordination of Services***

Frequent and regular communication among agencies serving ELLs and immigrants is crucial to the coordination of services. AJCC staff attends various local and regional meetings where many CBOs and their partners convene to share information about

resources and services available to this target group. Gatherings include monthly C.O.N.N.E.C.T. sessions and meetings of the South Valley Collaborative, which includes participation by organizations providing diverse services, such as healthcare, parenting classes, and employment preparation activities, among others.

The WIB has collected and summarized the resources of an extensive network of partners, including those serving foreign-born individuals, within the Employment Connection Partner Guide. This guide was developed to support a seamless referral process among partners and system stakeholders and has been of great value in providing access to services for the ELL population.

As with partners serving all target populations, the WIB will look for opportunities for AJCC staff to co-locate at ELL-serving organizations. This is a high priority for agencies with locations in remote/rural communities in Tulare County. The co-location of staff creates a mechanism to provide ELL customers greater access to information regarding system-wide services such as English instruction and other educational programs, employment services, and support resources. Furthermore, the WIB seeks to expand on the one-stop concept by creating more community access points in areas where immigrants live, such as CSETs Family Resource Center located in the rural community of Tipton.

It should be noted that immigrants from Mexico and other Latin American countries are not the only foreign-born individuals in Tulare County. The workforce system stakeholders are committed to supporting all immigrant groups in meeting their employment and career development goals. The stakeholders have connections to a wide range of resources that enables local workforce programs to access language and cultural liaison resources to serve job seekers no matter their primary language or background.

## **IV. WIOA TITLE I COORDINATION**

The following narrative addresses services, activities, and administrative requirements of the Tulare County WIB under the WIOA Title I formula programs, along with strategies for staff preparation, training, and ongoing professional development to effectively respond to participant needs.

### **Staff Training and Professional Development to Increase Digital Technology Skills**

Overall, we have found that WIB staff, those employed by CSET, and the majority of staff representing the local workforce system have a high level of competency concerning digital skills and the use of technology that enables web-based meetings and all forms of distance learning. With the sudden and severe impact of the pandemic on workforce operations, the WIB was quick to adopt the use of virtual platforms for every aspect of service delivery and administration. In the first weeks of the worldwide health crisis, WIB management and AJCC supervisors recognized the need among some staff for training and support to increase their knowledge of and confidence in using various forms of virtual communication. To this end, in May 2020, the WIB contracted with Virginia Hamilton of Innovation Catalyst to provide training to frontline staff and partner representatives. The session covered critical topics including:

- Guidance on leading and developing virtual workshops;
- Planning virtual meetings to be customer-centered;
- Tools that can be used within virtual space to increase engagement; and
- Zoom “best practices;”

Over 80 frontline and management staff attended this training and, as a result, a “virtual workshop” group was formed to examine opportunities to develop and implement strategies to provide and/or enhance online sessions. As we move forward into the four years covered by this plan, WIB leadership anticipates that workforce services will become increasingly “hybrid” in nature – part in-person and part online. Using the Employment Connection Committee as a platform for discussion, the WIB will continue to assess the needs of system staff at all levels for training in digital skills and technology.

### **Frontline Staff Training and Professional Development to Increase Cultural Competency and Effectiveness in Working with Individuals and Groups that Have Been Exposed to Trauma**

Tulare County has a diverse population with many immigrants calling communities within the county home. As an extension of this diversity, the WIB has long considered cultural awareness to be an important part of staff development. With the intensive national focus on equity, diversity, and inclusion, organizations throughout the county, including the WIB and our providers, have expanded our views on how to ensure that issues of cultural competency are addressed. The WIB plans to offer ongoing training on cultural competency, equity, diversity, and inclusion to all workforce system staff. In addition,

content from the training will be embedded in the AJCCs' Integrated Teams' work to promote ongoing skill development. Topics to be addressed through training will include, but not be limited to:

- Racial, ethnic, and religious diversity
- Cultural and language diversity
- Working with LGBTQ individuals
- Age and generational issues
- Working effectively with individuals with disabilities of all types
- Best practices for working with justice-involved individuals.

The system works with trauma-exposed individuals from many distinct and unique backgrounds. The effects of trauma can be long-lasting and have profound effects on individuals' ability to learn, work, and succeed in careers. While it is not our intention to diagnose or treat trauma-exposed individuals, the WIB will provide training that assists staff from across the local workforce system in understanding trauma and its effects, recognizing signs of trauma, and making appropriate referrals. Such training is likely to address, at a minimum:

- Understanding various sources of trauma (e.g., abuse, neglect, homelessness, food insecurity, incarceration, violence, racial or ethnic bias)
- Making appropriate referrals to address the effects of trauma
- Providing workforce services to individuals living with and managing trauma

For both cultural competency and understanding experiences of individuals exposed to trauma, Tulare County WIB has not yet determined the individuals or organizations that will develop and deliver training. However, organizations in the community have experience in these areas, such as Family Services of Tulare County, which has staff with expertise in dealing with trauma. As we implement this plan, the WIB will research available training and survey local, regional and statewide trainers and consultants regarding training that could be customized to the unique needs of Tulare County.

### **Coordination of Rapid Response and Layoff Aversion Activities**

Upon the rollout of the federal Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification (WARN) Act in 1989, Tulare County WIB began providing Rapid Response services to workers affected by layoffs covered under the legislation. Over the last three decades, the WIB, EDD, and local partners have continued to develop and refine Rapid Response services, reflecting guidance from U.S. DOL and the State of California and ever-evolving labor market needs. In recent years, layoff aversion activities have become an increasingly important part of the workforce system's strategies to minimize the effects of layoffs – actual or potential – on Tulare County workers.

### ***Responding to Events of Worker Dislocation***

Tulare County businesses experiencing events of worker dislocation defined in WARN



must notify the Governor, and state officials, in turn, provide notification to the WIB. Following the WIB's notification, our Rapid Response team (which consists of a Rapid Response Coordinator and a Career Coach, along with a UI Specialist employed by EDD) convenes to prepare an event-specific strategy, and then meets with company officials and organized labor representatives (if applicable). One or more Rapid Response Orientation sessions are scheduled for affected workers. During the orientation, the Rapid Response team presents information about services and resources available to help laid-off workers, including information about eligibility for Unemployment Insurance, training and employment opportunities available at the Employment Connection Centers, temporary rental and mortgage assistance, health care insurance, and more. These sessions are typically conducted at sites where workers are employed but may be held at nearby facilities. Workers receive information kits, which include printed pamphlets and flyers which summarize the information presented during the orientation and explain the next steps, including how to contact an Employment Connection Career Coach. As a follow-up service to the initial orientations, the WIB hosts weekly Rapid Response webinars that serve to further elaborate on information originally presented to workers and as a forum for workers to pose questions to workforce system staff. Presently, given restrictions on in-person services, these events are promoted via the Board's website and via social media sites, such as Facebook. After these sessions, registrants receive a follow-up email with all slides attached, along with detailed information providing "quick links" and other useful resources.

As long as the state- and county-guided COVID-19 protocols remain in effect, the WIB will continue to conduct Rapid Response activities, including all meetings and orientations, through web-based virtual conferencing platforms.

### ***Efforts to Avert Worker Dislocation***

The primary mechanism through which the WIB conducts Layoff Aversion is robust business outreach and engagement activities. Members of the WIB's Business Services Team, as well as Business Resource Specialists stationed within the AJCCs, support this process by providing businesses with customized solutions to a variety of needs. Discussions with business leaders often initially focus on workforce hiring and training issues. However, during a "needs assessment" conducted by the Business Services Team, a wide range of other issues may be identified. For businesses in distress or for which specific concerns are identified, resources are presented, which may include: Workshare assistance through EDD; information on loans such as those recently available through CARES funding; Small Business Development Center (SBDC) resources; and California Training Benefits. The WIB's website and postings on social media sites provide information about a variety of services available to businesses.

### ***Central Valley Industry Engagement Roundtable Support for Rapid Response***

Supporting regional and local efforts to serve business is the Central Valley Industry Engagement Roundtable (CVIER), which includes participation by all eight local boards in the Central Valley and Mother Lode WDB. Also participating are EDD, representatives

of the California Workforce Development Board, and the California Labor Federation. The group meets monthly to coordinate messaging and discuss Rapid Response and other strategies for the region. The group identified needs to increase staff knowledge about labor market information, Incumbent Worker Training, Rapid Response Services, and Sector Partnerships. Training on these topics has been provided to Tulare County workforce system staff and others throughout the Valley. As the CVIER stakeholders continue to meet, Tulare County WIB anticipates that additional strategies will be identified to support businesses, including improved approaches Rapid Response, Recruitment Assistance, and Layoff Aversion activities.

### **Services and Activities Available under WIOA Title I Adult and Dislocated Worker Programs**

Tulare County WIB's WIOA Adult and Dislocated Worker programs and services are employment-focused and targeted to industries in which there is significant demand for talent. While the WIB strives to continuously improve services, the local workforce system is highly effective in meeting the needs of business and job seekers. System strengths include, but are not limited to:

- A focus on and investment in areas of key sectors of the economy including advanced manufacturing, construction, energy, healthcare, transportation, logistics, and value-added agriculture.
- Strong local partnerships across which resources are leveraged to increase efficiencies and through which collaboration enables more effective service delivery.
- Regular strategic convenings of all system partners through quarterly meetings of the Employment Connection Committee.
- Service integration across various fund sources and programs, which features cross-trained staff, strategically integrated teams, and effective communication strategies.
- A commitment to innovation and improvement through efforts such as the development and implementation of an electronic referral and tracking process.

The information that follows further highlights system strengths and effectiveness.

#### ***Approach to Adult and Dislocated Worker Service Delivery***

The WIOA Title I Adult and Dislocated Worker service delivery system is structured to provide quality career and training services for eligible individuals and to achieve performance goals set at the local level and negotiated with the state. Beyond these strategies, there are several unique characteristics of the Tulare County WIB's approach to service delivery that set its programs apart from other local workforce systems. Among these are:

- Integrated Service Delivery System/Teams
- Customer-Centered Design
- Focus on Priority Sectors and Jobs
- Use of Career-Specific Assessments

Integrated Service Delivery System/Teams: The AJCC has integrated partners services within three major components: an integrated customer pool that ensures all customers are registered; integrated customer flow offering universal access to demand-driven, skills-based services; and an integrated staffing approach that provides services to customers as they are served through the integrated customer flow. Service Delivery Teams include:

A Welcome Team greets customers, which provides an individual or group overview of services, assists customers with self-registration on Employmentconnect.org, and offers customers the opportunity to register for WIOA services. When customers seek more than minimal assistance from staff, they must be registered, and eligibility must be determined. The Welcome Team determines WIOA Adult Priority of Service and/or Dislocated Worker eligibility through the EmploymentConnection.org system. Upon completion of this process, the staff hands customers over to the Skills and Talent Team for individualized career services.

The Skills & Talent Team makes WIOA basic career services available for all job seekers and provides individualized career services for individuals determined in need of and suitable for such services to obtain or retain employment in a career pathway. Through an objective assessment process, a career coach and the job seekers jointly develop an Individual Employment Plan (IEP). The plan identifies employment goals, a career pathway, achievement objectives, and an appropriate combination of services for the participant to obtain these goals and objectives. IEPs are one of the most effective ways to serve individuals with barriers to employment.

The Employment Solutions Team works with businesses to understand their employment needs and connect them to diverse and high-quality talent. Job developers work in partnership with WIB Business Services to support Tulare County employers. The team's services to support business include: providing access to a job-ready candidate pool; applicant pre-screening; customized recruitment; and access to work-based learning models.

Customer-Centered Design: The WIB, the AJCC career services providers, and system partners have embraced a customer-centered approach to designing and developing services. The WIB formed three local design teams with twenty-one representatives from partner agencies, local businesses, and six WIB staff to participate in a seven-week Human-Centered Design (HCD) program to assess and design workforce services focused on a distinct customer: business; unemployed adults; and youth. The HCD teams assessed needs through one-on-one interviews with customers, emersion, and surveys to develop and prototype services for each customer group.

Priority Sectors and Quality Jobs: One-page labor market profiles have been created for the region's priority sectors. Training has been provided to demonstrate how to use the data presented within the profiles. Following this initial overview, monthly training will be provided to examine the labor market for each of the priority sectors. In addition, frontline staff will continue to participate in Sector Summits, conducted quarterly by the Tulare Kings College and Career Collaborative. These summits feature on-site business externships; sector-specific updates about the labor market; and dialogue to encourage collaboration between workforce and education partners.

Career-Specific Skills Assessment: All WIOA customers seeking training are assessed with WorkKeys, a tool produced by ACT, the company that produces the ACT college entrance exam. The WorkKeys assessment is designed to gauge an individual's level of "workplace employability skills" in three areas: Applied Mathematics; Locating Information, and Reading for Information. Upon completion of the assessment, participants earn a National Work Readiness Certificate, which identifies their skill level in the core subject areas.

### ***Career Services***

The delivery of career services at Tulare County WIB's Employment Connection centers (the AJCCs) begins with a greeting and an introduction to services. AJCC staff next determines WIOA eligibility, conducts an objective assessment, and develops an action plan, which will address job readiness, supportive services, and job search assistance. Customers may participate exclusively in basic career services or may need additional assistance and be enrolled in individualized career services.

Basic career services must be made available to all individuals seeking services served in the one-stop delivery system, and include:

- Determinations of eligibility;
- Outreach, intake, and orientation;
- Initial assessment;
- Labor exchange services;
- Referrals;
- Workforce and labor market employment information;
- Performance information and program cost information;
- Local area performance accountability measures;
- Availability of supportive services or assistance;
- Assistance in establishing eligibility for programs of financial aid assistance for training and education programs not provided under WIOA; and
- Information and assistance regarding filing claims under UI programs.

Individualized career services are provided when they are needed for an individual to obtain or retain employment. One-stop center staff relies principally on assessments to determine the need for and appropriateness of individualized career services. These services include:

- Comprehensive and specialized assessments;
- Development of an individual employment plan;
- Group and/or individual counseling and mentoring;
- Career planning (e.g., case management);
- Short-term pre-vocational services;
- Internships and work experiences that are linked to careers;
- Workforce preparation activities;
- Financial literacy services;
- Out-of-area job search assistance and relocation assistance; and
- English language acquisition and integrated education and training programs.

### ***Training Services***

The Tulare County WIB makes a wide variety of training available to help job seekers prepare for jobs and career key sectors. Training modalities include:

Off-the-Shelf Training Using Individual Training Accounts: During the initial assessment, AJCC staff provides participants with an orientation to all WIOA services, including occupational skills training available through providers and programs listed on the Eligible Training Providers List. In consultation with AJCC staff, individuals receive information regarding approved programs, program quality, and training provider performance information. Participants conduct school visits to obtain more information such as class start dates, course curriculum, and other information about programs. The WIB gives priority to training programs that lead to recognized postsecondary credentials and are in-demand occupations in the WIB's targeted industry sectors. Programs/courses are purchased through individual training accounts (ITAs) established for the participant.

On-the-Job-Training (OJT) is a work-based learning model that provides training in an employment setting. Businesses may be reimbursed up to 75 percent of the participant's wages to cover training costs. Job-specific training plans are developed to provide structure and specify skills development outcomes.

Transitional Jobs: This activity provides participants with work experience that takes place within the context of an employee-employer relationship, in which the program provider generally acts as the employer and provides an opportunity to develop important workplace skills.

Incumbent Worker Training: The WIB has designated the manufacturing, logistics and transportation, and healthcare industries as priority sectors for incumbent worker training and has worked with local training providers to offer multi-employer site training programs that are customized to meet the needs of companies in these sectors.

## ***Priority of Service***

The AJCCs prioritize services for Adult Program participants that meet criteria in the following categories.

Public Assistance Recipients and Other Low-Income Individuals: The WIB published local directive WIB TUL 16-01, which provides guidance on the priority of service for recipients of public assistance and other low-income individuals. To be considered low-income, an individual must meet one of the following criteria:

- Receives, or in the past six months has received or is a member of a family that is receiving, or in the past six months has received, assistance through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program, supplemental security income program, or state or local income-based public assistance;
- Is in a family with total family income that does not exceed the higher of the following: beneath the Poverty line or 70 percent of the Lower Living Standard Income Level;
- Is homeless; or
- Is an individual with a disability whose own income does not exceed the income requirement but is a member of a family whose total income does exceed the maximum.

Tulare County HHSA, along with other public agencies and community-based providers assists the AJCCs in recruiting individuals from this priority group.

Individuals Who Are Basic Skills Deficient: Priority for individuals in this category is established at the time of eligibility determination and does not change during participation. Basic skills deficiency criteria include:

- Lacks HS Diploma or equivalency and is not enrolled in postsecondary education;
- Enrolled in Title II Adult Education/Literacy program;
- English, reading, writing, or computing skills at an 8.9 or below grade level;
- Determined to be limited English skills proficient through staff-documented observations; or
- A standardized test may be used to assess basic skills that include reading, writing, or computing skills.

Information regarding the eligibility of documented is the participant's file and make take the form of school records; a referral from a WIOA Title II basic adult education or ELL program; academic assessment results; case notes; or self-attestation.

Individualized career services and training services are each subjects to the WIB's priority of service provisions.

## Services and Activities Available under WIOA Title I Youth Program

Tulare County WIB's Youth services are provided to both in-school and out-of-school youth ages 16 to 24, with 80 percent of youth funds targeting those who are out of school. Youth programs are co-located in both comprehensive AJCCs (Porterville and Visalia), in addition to other sites so that youth throughout the county can access services.

### ***Tulare County WIOA Youth Services***

WIOA prescribes 14 youth elements or service categories that must be available in all Youth programs. The actual services provided to a participant are based on the results of individual assessments. The WIB ensures that youth can access all WIOA-required services, including the following, which are those that typically reflect areas of greatest need among local youth.

Assessment: All participants enrolled in the WIOA youth program receive an objective assessment, which establishes a baseline for activities and training. Included is a review of education, work history, employability, interests, aptitudes, and needs for supportive services. CASAS is used to determine grade equivalent reading and math levels, which may indicate a basic skills deficiency that will be addressed by the program. Other instruments used to assess youth include Mynextmove and O\*Net.

Service and Career Planning: As Individual Service Strategy is developed using results of the objective assessment. This written plan identifies short and long-term goals for education, employment, and careers.

Career Exploration and Preparation: Youth examine career opportunities, along with labor market demand and projections, education and preparation required for specific jobs, and career paths from entry-level to advanced positions in fields of interest.

Work Readiness Skills Training: Youth participate in workshops and one-on-one activities to improve their knowledge and abilities in interviewing skills, resume building, job search, conflict resolution, and team building, and receive guidance on completing financial aid and college applications.

Leadership and Personal Development Activities: The program engages youth in setting goals and participation in events and projects within their communities.

Counseling and Case Management: Each youth receives one-on-one support from a case manager and may be referred for additional specialized services such as personal, family, or substance use-related counseling. Some youth may receive individual or group mentoring support.

Support Services: Based on individual needs, youth may receive support services to enable their participation in education, training, other services, and employment. See item II.D for a description of support services provided by the WIB.

Work Experience: Most youths participate in work experience, which is a structured learning activity that takes place in a workplace and provides youth with opportunities for career exploration and skill development.

Occupational Skills Training: Job-specific training for in-demand occupations is available to youth ages 18-24. Youth may participate in training-specific assessments to determine their suitability for various programs.

Activities to Support Educational Attainment: Youth have access to a wide range of training to improve basic skills, advance toward school completion, or prepare for post-secondary transition, such as enrollment in college, advanced training, or other vocational programs, including apprenticeships.

Follow-Up: WIOA Youth Program staff provide a minimum of 12 months of follow-up services for participants, which may include counseling, referrals, and other forms of support.

### ***Serving Youth with Disabilities***

Individuals with disabilities participate in a comprehensive assessment to identify their skills, interests, barriers, and goals. Based on the results of their assessment, these participants receive services corresponding to their individual needs. Depending on the participant, services may include activities leading to competitive integrated employment opportunities.

Aside from the services listed above, the Summer Training and Employment Program for Students (STEPS) is a specialized program in which the WIB and DOR share consumers. The program serves students with disabilities with job readiness training and work experience in a career pathway matching their interests and career goals.

### ***Strategies to Promote Digital Literacy***

Whether youth services are provided at a comprehensive AJCC, a satellite center, or a community-based site, participants have access to technology in resource rooms, large and small. The overwhelming majority of youth participants demonstrate high levels of digital literacy, as they were born into a world where personal computers, personal devices, and the Internet are part of daily life. While the WIB has served many youth participants who have not had their hardware, exposure in school and through other activities has resulted in their development of strong digital skills. Even when encountering new technology, young people tend to approach such situations with far less apprehension than their older counterparts, such as baby boomers. When youth participants do need support to increase their digital literacy skills, workshops, tutorials, and on-line training are available.

To address challenges brought about by COVID-19, Tulare County WIB has increased



the availability of technology-related support services for youth, including purchasing such items as Chromebooks and hot spots. Youth have received the vast majority of their services during the pandemic via virtual platforms, thereby increasing their familiarity with and skills in using these services.

### ***Expanding on a Successful Approach***

While the WIB's model has proven successful, both in terms of interest from local youth and the outcomes they achieve, operating WIOA programs (including programs serving youth) following the outbreak of the coronavirus has provided a challenging, but unique environment for working and learning. Based on the success of our efforts in transforming traditional service models to new online formats (and the largely positive reactions we have received from many youth participants to these services), the WIB expects that, in the future, our approach to service delivery will be more "hybrid," offering a combination of in-person and online services to meet the needs, preferences and learning styles of various youth.

### **Entity Responsible for Disbursement of Grant Funds and the Competitive Process Used to Award Contracts for WIOA Title I Activities**

The Tulare County WIB is responsible for the disbursement of grant funds. The WIB has been delegated the authority to disburse WIOA grant funds by agreement with the Tulare County Board of Supervisors (TCBOS). This authority is documented in an Administrative Services Agreement between the WIB and TCBOS dated August 22, 2017.

The WIB uses a competitive procurement process to award grants and contracts for activities carried out under this plan. This process follows all applicable federal, state, and local guidelines for such procurement. Procurement of WIOA Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs take place every four years. During the 4 years covered by this plan, procurement will result in the award of contracts for all Title I programs.

All procurement transactions by the WIB and its subrecipients are conducted in a manner providing full and open competition consistent with standards of the Uniform Guidance at 2 CFR part 200. To the extent possible, bidders/proposers or offerors must have an equal chance to secure a contract. The requirements specified in the procurement must bear a relationship to the need being procured. The process for a competitive procurement includes the following:

- A Request for Proposal/Quote (RFP/RFQ) is prepared that includes response timelines, ensuring sufficient time for all phases of the procurement process to be carried out.
- Proposal evaluation procedures are established.
- Public notification of the procurement is issued through an announcement in a local public medium (e.g., newspaper) or media that, at a minimum, cover the entire service area. A copy of the RFP/RFQ is provided to any party requesting it. Notification is made through the dissemination of RFP/RFQ to entities included on the current,

applicable proposal list. A record (e.g., log) is made of all inquiries received regarding the procurement and the submission requirements. All inquiries are responded to in writing, except those, which are answered in the solicitation. Copies of all inquiries and written responses are distributed on a timely basis to all parties to whom the solicitation has been distributed. Clarification updates are issued weekly to ensure that timely and accurate information is distributed to all potential bidders.

- A proposers' conference is held after the distribution of the RFP. When such a conference is held, all parties to whom the solicitations have been distributed are notified of the date, time, and place of the conference. This notification is included in the RFP itself. Each question answered at the conference is documented in writing and this information is provided as an addendum to the solicitation package to any subsequent requesters of the RFP.
- The date and time proposals are received are noted to ensure that only proposals received by the due date and time qualify for the evaluation process.
- Competitive negotiation requires that at least two responsive proposals for the same scope of work and service area are received in response to the RFP. If only one responsive proposal is received, then there has been a failed competition and the WIB has the option to re-compete the procurement or proceed. The WIB's definition of a failed competition and its rights and options in the event of such a failure are included in the RFP. The WIB will consider a competition to have failed when less than two responsive proposals have been received to a solicitation.

### **How the Local Board Fulfills the Duties of the AJCC Operator and/or the Career Services Provider or Selection of AJCC Operators and Career Services Providers**

Tulare County WIB has implemented approaches to fulfilling the WIOA-mandated Operator and Career Services Provider roles that produce strong results for the local workforce development delivery system:

#### ***AJCC/One-Stop Operator***

The WIB has secured approval from the state to serve the AJCC/One-Stop Operator (OSO) for the workforce system in Tulare County. As the OSO, the WIB provides coordination of services as prescribed by WIOA and its implementing regulations for the local network of AJCCs, including two comprehensive centers; one in Visalia and the other in Porterville.

The WIB has identified a number of advantages to acting in the role of OSO. First, it eliminates duplication of effort, as the WIB already provides much of the coordination of the AJCC system that is required of the OSO. In addition, the WIB's longstanding role in the community has resulted in many strong and effective relationships with required partners and other stakeholders. The WIB had led the development and implementation of customer-focused services for employers and job seekers. This approach to the AJCCs' delivery of services enables the system to address participants' individual needs and circumstances, which often call for the deployment of services from multiple partners.

In the role of OSO, the WIB strives to continuously evaluate and improve services and to realize efficiencies that make services more accessible and that achieve greater results. As OSO, the WIB continues to embrace the following guiding WIOA Principles:

- Streamlining services through AJCC service delivery systems;
- Empowering individuals through information and access to training service;
- Providing universal access to employment-related services; and
- Increasing accountability (i.e., improving customers' employment retention and earnings, improving the quality of the workforce, sustaining economic growth, enhancing productivity, and reducing welfare dependency).

### ***Career Services Provider***

The WIB competitively procures and contracts out the duties and responsibilities of the career service provider. The board contracts with Community Services & Employment Training (CSET) to deliver career services in Visalia, Porterville, and Tulare centers, and Proteus, Inc. is contracted to deliver career services in Dinuba. Their role as career services providers is described under Section IV.D of this plan.

## V. CONSIDERATIONS FOR PROGRAM YEARS 2021 - 24

Based on discussions held throughout the planning process, the following topics have been identified as priorities for further exploration, development, and/or enhancement as the WIB and the partners implement the Local Plan.

**Major themes** identified by the WIB and stakeholders include:

1. Continue to identify the skills businesses need most, recognizing that the economic landscape may significantly change and evolve over the next four years and beyond.
2. When business needs are identified, move rapidly to transform them into training and services that respond to these needs, leveraging resources from industry, economic development, the workforce system, and, especially, local education partners.
3. Focus on foundational skills such as communication and mathematics, digital literacy, financial literacy, and workplace behaviors and attitudes.
4. Expand the system's reach, making services available for all job seekers. These efforts should include strategies to increase the physical presence of stakeholders at sites through the county and the greater use of online platforms to provide information and deliver services.
5. Connecting to other initiatives in the County, address the "digital divide," which limits the access that low-income individuals and communities have to technology and web-based information and services.
6. Be intentional about the WIB's strategies to ensure equity, diversity, and inclusion and communicate the WIB's plans on these issues.

**Other workforce strategies and issues** that stakeholders have suggested the WIB and partners examine and evaluate include the following:

7. Develop strategies for a hybrid service delivery model, which marries newly implemented online and virtual strategies to traditional in-person service delivery.
8. Considering all of the changes brought by the pandemic and the likelihood the economy will reopen slowly with many changes in the labor market, develop a COVID recovery plan for the workforce system that identifies strategies and services that may need to be developed or enhanced to meet the evolving needs of business and job seekers.
9. Develop new partnerships and expand existing ones to connect to customer groups that are currently underserved.

10. Assess the extent to which the WIB has achieved brand recognition among key customers in the county and consider options to improve the level of recognition.
11. Beyond websites and social media postings, more fully harness the power of the web to identify and attract new customers.
12. Identify system challenges that could be improved by and otherwise benefit from an intensive application of human-centered design approaches that the WIB and system partners have previously used to achieve improvements.

The following items are included as part of the Local Plan.

Attachment 1: Stakeholder and Community Engagement Summary

Attachment 2: Public Comments Received that Disagree with the Local Plan

Attachment 3: Signature Page

## **Stakeholder and Community Engagement Summary**

To facilitate the engagement of stakeholders in planning for the local workforce development delivery system and in the development of the PY 2021-24 Local Plan, the WIB hosted a series of three community and stakeholder forums focused on topics affecting strategies and services across the system.

These forums included:

Vision for the Local Workforce System: How can workforce system partners and other stakeholders create a system that is more equitable, accessible, and effective?

This forum was held via Zoom on November 24, 2020.

Strengthening the Role of the AJCC as an Access Point for all System Partners and Programs: How can the AJCC be more effectively promoted and used as a central access point for all local workforce system services?

This forum was held via Zoom on December 16, 2020.

Improving Workforce System Services: How can workforce system services be made more effective and relevant for all customers, including vulnerable populations that have been underserved by traditional programs?

This forum was held via Zoom on December 8, 2020.

In addition, a planning discussion centered on “vision” was held with the members of the Workforce Development Board during their meeting on November 18, 2020.

Where necessary, agency-to-agency discussions were held with various partners and stakeholders to enhance collaboration between their programs and those of the WIB.

Such discussions were conducted via Zoom and included meetings with:

- EDD on November 9, 2020, regarding the Wagner-Peyser and UI programs.
- Proteus, Inc., and CSET on January 6, 2021, regarding the WIOA Section 167 MSFW Program.
- Tulare County Health & Human Service Agency on November 30, 2020, regarding CalFresh Employment & Training program.
- Department of Rehabilitation on November 24, 2020, regarding vocational rehabilitation programs.
- Tule River Indian Tribe of California on December 15, 2020, regarding the WIOA 166 Indian and Native American Programs.

- Tulare County Department of Child Support Services on December 9, 2020, regarding child support services.

<b>Mode of Outreach</b>	<b>Target of Outreach</b>	<b>Summary of Attendance</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Email, Social Media, Web Site	EDD	-Attended forums. -Participated in 1-to-1 discussions with WDB	Engaged in the planning process.
Email, Social Media, Web Site	Department of Rehabilitation	-Attended forums. -Participated in 1-to-1 discussions with WDB	Engaged in the planning process.
Email, Social Media, Web Site	Business – Family HealthCare Network	-Attended forums.	Engaged in the planning process.
Email, Social Media, Web Site	Business /Economic Development – Bank of the Sierra	-Attended forums.	Engaged in the planning process.
Email, Social Media, Web Site	Business – Ken’s Stakes & Supplies	-Attended forums.	Engaged in the planning process.
Email, Social Media, Web Site	Business – Warren & Baerg Manufacturing, Inc.	-Attended forums.	Engaged in the planning process.
Email, Social Media, Web Site	Business – Tulare County Farm Bureau	-Attended forums.	Engaged in the planning process.
Email, Social Media, Web Site	Labor – International Association of Sheet Metal, Air, Rail, and Transportation Workers	-Attended forums.	Engaged in the planning process.
Email, Social Media, Web Site	Education – Cutler-Orosi Joint Unified School District	-Attended forums.	Engaged in the planning process.
Email, Social Media, Web Site	Education – College of the Sequoias	-Attended forums.	Engaged in the planning process.
Email, Social Media, Web Site	Local Government – Board of Supervisors	-Attended forums.	Engaged in the planning process.
Email, Social Media, Web Site	Community Services	-Attended forums.	Engaged in the planning process.



	Employment Training – NextStep	-Participated in 1-to-1 discussions with WDB	
Email, Social Media, Web Site	Community Services Employment Training – Sequoias Community Corps	-Attended forums.	Engaged in the planning process.
Email, Social Media, Web Site	Community Services Employment Training – CalFresh E&T	-Attended forums. -Participated in 1-to-1 discussions with WDB	Engaged in the planning process.
Email, Social Media, Web Site	Community Services Employment Training – Title I Youth Program	-Attended forums.	Engaged in the planning process.
Email, Social Media, Web Site	Tulare Adult School	-Attended forums.	Engaged in the planning process.
Email, Social Media, Web Site	Proteus, Inc. – WIOA Section 167 Program	-Attended forums. -Participated in 1-to-1 discussions with WDB	Engaged in the planning process.
Email, Social Media, Web Site	Proteus, Inc. – Education Division	-Attended forums.	Engaged in the planning process.
Email, Social Media, Web Site	Hispanic Chamber Foundation Tulare & Kings	-Attended forums.	Engaged in the planning process.
Email, Social Media, Web Site	Sequoias Adult Education Consortium	-Attended forums.	Engaged in the planning process.
Email, Social Media, Web Site	Visalia Adult School	-Attended forums.	Engaged in the planning process.
Email, Social Media, Web Site	Employment Connection – Justice-Involved Programs	-Attended forums. -Participated in 1-to-1 discussions with WDB	Engaged in the planning process.
Email, Social Media, Web Site	Employment Connection – Title I Adult/Dislocated Worker Program	-Attended forums. -Participated in 1-to-1 discussions with WDB	Engaged in the planning process.
Email, Social Media, Web Site	Employment Connection – ACE/DEA	-Attended forums.	Engaged in the planning process.

		-Participated in 1-to-1 discussions with WDB	
Email, Social Media, Web Site	Employment Connection – English Language Learners	-Attended forums.	Engaged in the planning process.
Email, Social Media, Web Site	Family Services of Tulare County	-Attended forums.	Engaged in the planning process.
Email, Social Media, Web Site	Department of Child Support Services	-Attended forums. -Participated in 1-to-1 discussions with WDB	Engaged in the planning process.
Email, Social Media, Web Site	Health & Human Service Agency TulareWORKS	-Attended forums. -Participated in 1-to-1 discussions with WDB	Engaged in the planning process.
Email, Social Media, Web Site	Health & Human Service Agency CalFresh E&T Programs	-Attended forums. -Participated in 1-to-1 discussions with WDB	Engaged in the planning process.
Email, Social Media, Web Site	Central Valley Regional Center (CVRC)	-Attended forums.	Engaged in the planning process.
Email, Social Media, Web Site	WestCare	-Attended forums.	Engaged in the planning process.
Email, Social Media, Web Site	Tulare County Probation	-Attended forums.	Engaged in the planning process.
Social Media	Community Members	-Attended forums.	Engaged in the planning process.
Email, Social Media, Web Site	Tulare County Office of Education	-Attended forums.	Engaged in the planning process.
Email, Social Media, Web Site, Phone Call	Tule River Indian Tribe of California	-Participated in 1-to-1 discussion with WDB	Engaged in the planning process.
Email, Social Media, Web Site	Workforce Investment Board of Tulare County	-Attended forums. -Participated in 1-to-1 discussions with WDB	Engaged in the planning process.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS RECEIVED THAT DISAGREE WITH THE LOCAL PLAN**

- *No comments were received during the 30-day public comment period.*

**SIGNATURE PAGE**

The following signatures represent approval of the Local Plan by the Workforce Investment Board of Tulare County and the Chief Elected Official for Tulare County Local Workforce Area

For the **Workforce Investment Board of Tulare County**

	
Kerry Hydash, Chair	Date

For the **Tulare County Board of Supervisors**

	
Amy Shuklian, Local Chief Elected Official	Date

APPROVED BY  
WORKFORCE INVESTMENT BOARD  
MINUTES OF 04-14-2021