

AJCC Certification Indicator Assessment

The America's Job Center of CaliforniaSM (AJCC) Certification Indicator Assessment is intended to encourage continuous improvement by identifying areas where an AJCC is exceeding quality expectations, as well as areas where improvement is needed. The Certification Indicators were developed in alignment with the Training and Employment Guidance Letter 04-15, California's Unified Strategic Workforce Development Plan (State Plan), and the AJCC Certification Workgroup's vision for California's One-Stop delivery system.

The matrix below describes each Certification Indicator using both characteristics of a high-quality AJCC and the overall vision and strategies of the State Plan. Additionally, the Certification Indicators are provided as guidance for the evaluator to use to note the assessment of the AJCC's strengths and continuous improvement opportunities. The Local Board may establish additional criteria or set higher standards for continuous improvement than those suggested by the state criteria below.

Local Workforce Development Boards (Local Board) must submit a completed AJCC Certification Indicator Assessment to their Regional Advisor for each comprehensive and/or affiliate/specialized AJCC by **November 1, 2024**.

Name of Local Board: Tulare County Workforce Investment Board

Name of AJCC: Employment Connection – Porterville

AJCC Type: Comprehensive

Both the Baseline and Indicator Assessment portions of the AJCC certification process were completed by an independent evaluator, who applied a bifurcated approach to the review, including:

- 1) A focused review of each of Tulare County's four America's Job Centers of California (AJCCs); and
- 2) Review of all centers from a system perspective.

This approach enabled the evaluator to complete a site-specific assessment of baseline compliance, while recognizing that most of the Indicator Assessment criteria can and should be addressed from a system perspective, based on the fact that, differences in size and on-site partner presence notwithstanding, all centers operate under the same policy structure and deliver the same services. The other notable difference among Tulare County's four Employment Connections centers is that they are operated by two distinct, competitively procured service providers. Community Services Employment Training (CSET) is the service provider for the comprehensive AJCCs in Visalia and Porterville and the affiliate AJCC in Tulare. Proteus, Inc., the local WIOA Section 167 grantee, is the service provider for the Dinuba affiliate center.

This Indicator Assessment narrative is for the comprehensive Employment Connection center in Porterville. However, except where specifically noted, descriptions apply equally to all AJCCs in the Tulare County network.

AJCC Certification Indicator #1: The AJCC ensures universal access, with an emphasis on individuals with barriers to employment.

U.S. Department of Labor Characteristics of a High Quality AJCC

- A. Reflect a welcoming environment to all customer groups who are served by the AJCC. All AJCC staff are courteous, polite, responsive, and helpful to job seekers, businesses, and others who visit the AJCC location, or by telephone or e-mail. AJCC staff are sensitive to the unique needs of individuals with disabilities and are prepared to provide necessary accommodations.
- B. Ensure meaningful access to all customers. AJCCs must be physically and programmatically accessible to all customers, including individuals with disabilities. In doing so, AJCCs use principles of universal and human-centered design, such as flexibility in space usage, the use of pictorial, written, verbal, and tactile modes to communicate with customers with disabilities or Limited English Proficiency; providing clear lines of sight to information for seated or standing users; providing necessary accommodations; and providing adequate space for the use of assistive devices or personal assistants. AJCCs use assistive technology and flexible business hours to meet the range of customer needs.
- C. Include both virtual and center-based service delivery for job seekers, workers, and employers. Both methods of delivery support the talent needs of the regional economy, although each may better serve different customers with different levels of service needs at any given time. The system can expand its reach by delivering robust virtual services; and increasing the accessibility of those services through community partners, such as libraries, community and faith-based organizations, and other partners.

California State Plan Vision and Strategies

Enabling upward mobility for all Californians, including populations with barriers to employment. Workforce and education programs need to be accessible for all Californians and ensure that everyone has access to a marketable set of skills and is able to access the level of education necessary to ensure economic self-sufficiency and security.

AJCC Certification Workgroup's Vision

- All AJCC staff honor and accommodate diversity and are comfortable and adept in providing services to diverse customers, including individuals with disabilities, cultural differences, and all individuals with barriers to employment.
- The local Equal Opportunity Officer (EEO) periodically reviews the AJCC's policies, procedures, and the facility for accessibility and equal opportunity. The EEO then provides recommendations and staff training, where needed.
- The AJCC has a Limited English Proficiency Plan to provide meaningful access for individuals who do not speak English as their primary language and who have limited ability to read, speak, write, or understand English.

- The AJCC uses the principles of universal and human-centered design to ensure inclusive space and materials are available to individuals regardless of their range of abilities, mobility, age, language, learning style, or educational level.
- The AJCC implements the veteran's preference and priority of service requirements.
- The AJCC provides services outside of regular business hours where there is a workforce need as defined by the Local Board.
- The AJCC delivers both AJCC-based and virtual services.
- The AJCC ensures that people with disabilities can access virtual services in a manner that is comparable to those without a disability.

AJCC Certification Indicator #1: The AJCC ensures universal access, with an emphasis on individuals with barriers to employment.

Assessment of the AJCC's Strengths and Continuous Improvement Opportunities:

The operations of the Tulare County Workforce Investment Board's (WIB) network of Employment Connection centers (the local AJCC brand name) clearly demonstrates that the local workforce development system provides customers with universal access to services, while ensuring that individuals with barriers are also able to take advantage of a wide range of services that address their specific needs and support their attainment of skills and employment.

The Employment Connection center in Porterville is one of four AJCCs that are strategically located throughout Tulare County. The geographic distribution of the centers, with comprehensive centers in Visalia and Porterville and affiliates sites in Tulare and Dinuba, ensures that services are accessible to customers in both the County's major population centers and in its many rural communities.

Areas of substantive strength include:

1. The AJCC Offers a Welcoming Environment

The Porterville Employment Connection center is centrally located in Porterville within a facility encompassing more than 11,000 square feet of multi-functional space. Customers approach the center through a reception area where they are greeted by members of the Welcome Team, who quickly determine the purpose of customer visits. Individuals seeking employment or training services are assisted by staff in registering for services and are introduced to team members that can assist them in the next phase of services. Those who are unsure of their precise service needs are oriented to the full range of options available through the AJCC and its extensive network of partners. Individuals coming to the center for a designated purpose (e.g., to attend a workshop, meet with a specific staff member) are guided to the appropriate location.

2. The Center Serves a Diverse Group of Customers

Employment Connections' customer base closely reflects the demographic make-up of Tulare County. Customers of all ages, backgrounds, educational levels, and work histories make use of the center to better understand the labor market, conduct research on employment and career opportunities, prepare for employment, and search for work. Customers with barriers to and unique circumstances related to employment include justice-involved and formerly incarcerated individuals, immigrants and refugees, English language learners, individuals who have not earned a high school diploma or its equivalent, persons with disabilities, homeless and housing insecure individuals, older workers, and disconnected youth, among others. The center's staff are also diverse in their ethnicity, age, experience, and circumstances. They are, therefore, ideally suited to work with individuals seeking employment assistance through the AJCC.

3. An Effective System Ensures Equal Opportunity

WIB leadership has assigned a qualified staff person to serve as the Equal Opportunity Officer (EOO) for the AJCCs and the WIOA-funded local workforce system. This responsibility requires the EOO to review and update WIOA policy to reflect federal, state, and local requirements. In addition, the position and local procedures promote the implementation of services that support equal opportunity for persons with disabilities and individuals from other vulnerable groups. The EOO function is enhanced through linkages with local groups such as the Source in Visalia, which has presented information to Tulare County WIB staff on issues affecting employment opportunities for LBGT+ individuals. These staff are preparing to provide this information to system partners.

4. The Center and its Services Are Accessible

In designing the Employment Connection center, Tulare County WIB leadership, AJCC management, and staff have taken great care to ensure that it is accessible to all customers, including individuals with disabilities. The physical layout of the center meets requirements established under the federal Americans with Disabilities Act, Section 188 of WIOA, and various California statutes with accessibility mandates. Furthermore, accessibility for individuals is enhanced through the availability of various assistive technology devices (e.g., modified keyboard, text reader software, captioning) that facilitate use of computer technology for individuals with sensory and mobility-related disabilities.

5. A Plan Is in Place to Support Individuals with Limited English Proficiency

In compliance with federal and state requirements, the WIB has developed a plan to support and serve individuals with limited English proficiency (LEP). The local workforce system takes reasonable steps to ensure assistance to such individuals, including conducting an assessment of LEP individuals to determine their language assistance needs; providing oral interpretation or written translation of both hard-copy and electronic materials, in the appropriate non-English languages, to LEP individuals; and conducting outreach to LEP communities to improve service delivery in needed languages. The plan outlines language assistance measures (e.g., signs, spoken language list), staff training, and other efforts to support services to this key target population.

6. Veterans and Other Key Target Groups

The WIB has established a policy on priority of service requirement for veterans and their eligible spouses for AJCC customers served by WIOA. Priority of service means that veterans and eligible spouses are entitled to take precedence over non-covered persons in obtaining employment, training, and placement services. A veteran or an eligible spouse either receives access to a service earlier in time than a non-covered person or, if the resource is limited, the veteran or eligible spouse receives access to the service instead of or before the non-covered person. In support of this policy, a variety of resources for veterans are available through the AJCC network, including assistance from veterans' support agencies

and from the California Employment Development Department's (EDD) veterans program staff.

WIOA also establishes priority considerations for recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals, and individuals who are basic skills deficient. The WIB has implemented a policy to ensure that these requirements are met.

7. The Center Maintains Regular Business Hours

The Employment Connection center's regular business hours are 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The Tulare County Workforce Investment Board has not determined that additional hours of operations are necessary. However, online information and resources are available at all times. In addition, WIB and AJCC staff frequently participates in workforce system-related activities outside of normal business hours. Such activities include job fairs and employee recruitment activities, as well as rapid response activities,

8. An Array of Web-Based Services Are Available to AJCC Customers

The services of the AJCC and the system partners are explained online through a guide developed by the WIB and through the web presence of each program. Job seekers and businesses can learn about program and service options that have been implemented to address a broad spectrum of needs and preferences. In addition, some system services can be accessed online. Examples include job readiness workshops, appointment scheduling, and enrolling in the CalJOBS system.

Improvement could be realized in the following areas:

1. Examine Opportunities to Expand and Strengthen On-Line/Virtual Services for AJCC Customers

The pause in AJCC operations that occurred in conjunction with the global pandemic led to the local workforce system's adoption of many virtual strategies and methods to deliver services to customers and to connect job seekers with employment. While some virtual services are still available, the majority of services are, again, delivered in-person. Given the diverse clientele of the workforce system and the effect of work and family obligations during regular business hours, WIB and AJCC leadership should examine whether opportunities exist to expand and strengthen virtual services in ways that would attract customers not currently reached by the workforce system or ways that would improve participation among current customers.

AJCC Certification Indicator #2: The AJCC actively supports the One-Stop system through effective partnerships.

U.S. Department of Labor Characteristics of a High Quality AJCC

Reflect on the establishment of robust partnerships among partners. The AJCC operator facilitates an integrated, co-located partnership that seamlessly incorporates the services of all the AJCC partners.

California State Plan Vision and Strategies

Aligning, coordinating, and integrating programs and services to economize limited resources while also providing the right services to clients based on each client's particular and potentially unique needs to facilitate skills attainment.

AJCC Certification Workgroup's Vision

- A system is in place to assess the satisfaction of both co-located and non-co-located partners with the AJCC and its services.
- Both co-located and non-co-located partners believe that the AJCC adds value to their program and customers.
- The required AJCC partners meet on a regular basis to discuss the One-Stop system and the AJCC's contribution to the system and make recommendations for continuous improvement.
- The AJCC actively outreaches and provides access to non-co-located partner customers to participate in AJCC-based services, such as workshops and recruitment events.
- An inventory and overview of all partner programs and services are available to all AJCC staff, and all AJCC staff has received an orientation to all partner programs and services.
- One-Stop system marketing materials that overview all partner programs and services for distribution to customers at the AJCC and at all non-co-located partner locations have been developed.
- The AJCC's partner referral process (as outlined in the Memorandum of Understanding) is being implemented with a focus on quality referrals that are likely to convert to service.
- Referrals are recorded, and a system is in place for partners to follow through and report progress on referrals made.
- The AJCC connects to the community through multiple community partnerships and community access points.

AJCC Certification Indicator #2: The AJCC actively supports the One-Stop system through effective partnerships.

Assessment of the AJCC's Strengths and Continuous Improvement Opportunities:

High-quality, effective, and enduring partnerships are a hallmark of the Tulare County WIB's local workforce development system. These partnerships include relationships with organizations that administer specified, federally funded programs mandated by WIOA, along with collaborations with a wide range of other public and private organizations offering programs and services that complement those offered by the Employment Connection centers.

Building and maintaining strong working partnerships is a foundational strategy for the Tulare County's AJCCs. The WIB's human-centered approach to service delivery recognizes customers' needs are best met holistically and that a "toolkit" consisting of diverse resources is often required to ensure that job seekers are fully prepared for the opportunities within the local labor market and that business have access to a variety of services that enable their enterprises to thrive within a competitive labor market.

Areas of substantive strength include:

1. The WIB Assesses the Satisfaction of Partners with the AJCC and the Workforce System

While partners are essential deliverers of services under the Tulare County workforce system, the WIB also considers them customers, as the WIB and its AJCCs establish and maintain an infrastructure through which partners operate. As such, it is important for the WIB to understand whether partners are satisfied with the AJCC, its operations, and its services. Therefore, a workgroup led by the WIB developed a survey to assess partner satisfaction. The survey was administered to the full range of AJCC partners in 2022. Tulare County WIB representatives intend to process to repeat the process in 2024.

2. The Partners Actively Support the Workforce System

The results of the 2022 survey indicated that there was overwhelming partner support for and satisfaction with the local AJCC system and its services. However, more revealing than the survey itself are the actions of the partners in relation to the Employment Connection Center and its services. Partner interactions with the AJCC are many. Several of the partners, such as EDD and the California Department of Rehabilitation, are co-located at the center. Others, that are not co-located, recognize the extensive resources available at the AJCC and bring their clients, often in groups, to utilize the centers resources, such as workshops and tools for job search and career exploration. Partner management and staff are active in center-based meetings held among the local stakeholders, and partners contribute to cross training and presentations at meetings of their peers. Referrals among the partners and to the AJCC further illustrate partner satisfaction with the Employment Connection centers.

3. System Partners Meet Regularly, Communicate Actively, and Share Information Effectively

The WIB and AJCC management have worked together to create a meeting structure that both ensures a consistent flow of information through the network of AJCCs and among center staff and partners. These meetings include those of the Employment Connection Committee, which has representation from all of the required partners and others; meetings of members of the AJCC's integrated services teams; project specific meetings to address issues pertaining to unique projects and grants; and ad hoc meetings that are organized to address specific issues and topics on which the partners are collaborating. The meeting structure aside, AJCC management is committed to an environment that promotes communication among staff and with partners and system stakeholders located outside the center.

4. WIB Leadership and Center Management Successfully Engage with All System Partners

Communication and collaboration among the system partners that have staff co-located at the AJCC on a full- or part-time basis is facilitated by proximity. However, as suggested above, the WIB and center management are engaged with WIOA-mandated and local partners that operate outside the AJCC. An example of such engagement includes the participation of partners and their customers at businesses recruitment events hosted at or through the centers. Other efforts to engage with partners and the individuals they serve include remote activities by Employment Connection-based staff, such as conducting recruitment of participants at Tulare County Probation Department facilities.

5. A Workforce System Partner Guide Serves as an Effective Inventory of Programs and Services

WIB staff has led the development of a guide to the full range of services that are available through the organizations that comprise the local workforce development system partnership. This resource informs customers about partner programs and services. The guide offers a basic overview of partner program eligibility and application processes and includes contact information. This resource is a useful tool for AJCC staff, partner representatives, and for individuals seeking employment and career information and details on training programs, support resources, or other services that will enable them to pursue their employment, career, and personal goals.

6. An Employment Connection Branding Initiative Promotes Service Integration

To encourage, promote, and support partners' participation in the Employment Connection brand that has been built over many years by the Tulare County WIB on behalf of the workforce system and the network of AJCCs, a brand guide has been developed. The guide provides specific parameters for the use of the Employment Connection brand, including, but not limited to its mission, relating to customers, brand attributes, messaging to job seekers, messaging to businesses,

and co-branding. These guidelines not only ensure conformity and consistency but communicate to system partners the value of the brand and advantages of their connecting with brand in the operation and delivery of services.

7. Cross Referrals Occur Regularly among the System Partners

WIOA requires that a memorandum of understanding (MOU) be developed among the organizations that administer the WIOA-mandated one-stop programs, which are federal programs providing services related to workforce development, skills training, basic education, and related support services. The core function of the MOU is to describe how partners will work together, and, within this framework, the ways in which referrals of customers and candidates for services will be made among the partners. As indicated, the network of AJCCs and a host of partner programs regularly make referrals among their programs, with some customers, ultimately, participating in multiple partner services that address their unique needs and employment goals.

8. The WIB and AJCC Are Actively Engaged in Processes to Improve the Tracking of Referrals

Long before the implementation of WIOA, the local workforce development system struggled with tracking partner referrals and their outcomes, and this continues to be the case. The reason is simple. The partners, while committed to collaboration, do not all use the same management information system. Those operating under the auspices of the California Employment Development Department use the CalJOBS system. Other programs, including those providing public assistance, rehabilitation services, education, and community services, use distinct systems that are not easily integrated with CalJOBS. Tulare County WIB is working toward the adoption of the “Unite Us” system, which can securely coordinate closed-loop referrals and share trusted resources among partners. As this process moves forward, the challenge will be securing partners’ commitment to adopt the system.

9. Local and Community Partnerships Supplement Those Required by Federal and State Guidance

The AJCCs and the local workforce system remain open to expanding partnerships with non-federal programs and local providers that offer services that complement those of system. County Probation, the Source, and Tulare County Libraries Literacy Center are just a few of the many local organizations that collaborate with the public workforce system.

Improvement could be realized in the following areas:

1. Examine Opportunities to More Fully Integrate Local and Community Partners within the Employment Connection Brand

There are many local programs and services that are connected to the workforce system and maintain relationships with the AJCCs. Several of these organizations function effectively as community on-ramps to the AJCCs by providing information

on center and partner services and by making referrals. WIB and AJCC leadership should examine opportunities to more fully integrate these local partners into the workforce system, thereby structuring relationships that are more effective and are mutually beneficial.

AJCC Certification Indicator #3: The AJCC provides integrated, customer-centered services.

U.S. Department of Labor Characteristics of a High Quality AJCC

- A. Organize and integrate services by function, rather than by program; when permitted by a program's authorizing statute and as appropriate, and by coordinating staff communication, capacity building, and training efforts. Functional alignment includes having AJCC staff who perform similar tasks serve on relevant functional teams, (e.g., skills development team). Service integration focuses on serving all customers seamlessly, including targeted populations, by providing a full range of services staffed by cross-functional teams, consistent with each program's purpose, scope, and requirements.
- B. Use an integrated and expert intake process for all customers entering the AJCCs. Frontline staff are highly familiar with the functions and basic eligibility requirements of each program. They can appropriately assist customers and make knowledgeable referrals to partner programs, as needed and as appropriate, given the authorized scope of the program.
- C. Develop and maintain integrated case management systems that inform customer service throughout the customer's interaction with the integrated system and allow information collected from customers at intake to be captured. Customer information is properly secured in accordance with personally identifiable information guidelines and facilitated as appropriate, with the necessary MOU or other forms of confidentiality and data sharing agreements. Data, however, would be shared with other programs within the One-Stop system only after the informed written consent of the individual has been obtained, where required.

California State Plan Vision and Strategies

- A. Integrated Service Delivery: braiding resources and coordinating services at the local level to meet client needs.
- B. Customer-Centered Service Design: use of customer-centered design to involve frontline staff and customers in the development, prototyping, and evaluation of AJCC services, resources, tools, and systems.

AJCC Certification Workgroup's Vision

- AJCC staff identifies with the AJCC system (and not just their specific program), believes that all AJCC customers are shared customers, and contributes to providing a positive AJCC experience for every AJCC customer.
- AJCC staff have received customer service and customer-centered design training.
- AJCC staff is cross trained in program partner eligibility and services, so they have the capacity to functionally serve customers well.
- The AJCC has clearly identified the roles, responsibilities, and authorities of both functional leaders and the supervisors of program partners, and the AJCC has an integrated functional organizational chart.

- The AJCC has a system in place to promptly greet all AJCC customers, identify the reason for their visit and their needs, and connect them to appropriate services as quickly as possible.
- The AJCC has developed integrated customer flow procedures that respond to customer need and moves customers seamlessly between AJCC entry and service delivery with as few hand-offs as possible.
- All AJCC co-located partners have identified the Career Services that apply to their program, and the AJCC has developed methods to align/integrate the delivery of those services.
- The AJCC has established protocols to co-enroll customers in more than one partner program when there is value to customers and has a strategy for effectively sharing case management when customers are co-enrolled.

AJCC Certification Indicator #3: The AJCC provides integrated, customer-centered services.

Assessment of the AJCC's Strengths and Continuous Improvement Opportunities:

The AJCCs in Tulare County are characterized by a strong customer focus. This focus is exemplified by the system's intentional adoption of human-centered design strategies and approaches and by day-to-day practices that emphasize services that meet customers where they are, providing those that best address individual needs and circumstances.

Tulare County WIB was one of the nation's first local workforce systems to implement participant-focused design initiatives under a U.S. Department of Labor-sponsored customer-centered design challenge. Following its highly successful participation in this process, translating customer focus into customer-centered design has become part of the Employment Connection's way of doing business. Ensuring a positive customer experience is a central focus of the AJCCs, with team members available to assist job seekers in navigating a wide range of services options, resources, providers, and programs.

The local workforce system's customer focus is not limited to job seekers. The WIB's Business Services Team is supported by AJCC staff in making certain that all centers work effectively to match qualified candidates from their pool of job seekers to businesses seeking new employees.

Areas of substantive strength include:

1. An Employment Connection Branding Initiative Promotes Service Integration

As described under Indicator 2, Tulare County WIB has developed an Employment Connection brand guide to establish parameters for use of this AJCC moniker. The Employment Connection brand, along with requirements for its use, serve as unifying factors among the partners and promote the workforce system over any independent organization's or program's name or brand. Partner organizations familiarize their staff with the brand, and the WIB and AJCCs include this information within their onboarding process.

2. The AJCC Continues to Build Staff Knowledge on Customer-Centered Design

Following early successes with the application of universal design principles to workforce development service delivery practices, Tulare County WIB and AJCC management have continued to invest in training and staff development in customer-centered design. The WIB has engaged Middle State, a local small business enterprise with specialized knowledge in this area, to provide training for staff and partners and to support human-centered design initiatives of the local workforce development system.

3. Training on Strategies and Techniques to Provide Effective Customer Service is On-Going

In the decade since the WIOA legislation was authorized, the local workforce system has made available various training sessions dealing with customer service. The topic is one that resonates with all AJCC personnel, from managers to line staff, as they spend much, if not most, of their workdays with customers. An example of recent training that has been provided to staff is a workshop titled "*How to Deal with Difficult Customers*," which highlighted ways to diffuse tense situations and turn tense interactions into positive customer service experiences.

4. Regular and Continuous Cross Training Occurs among the Workforce System Partners

For many years, Tulare County WIB and AJCC management have organized and led an on-going series of cross training sessions for center staff and partners. These sessions have generally taken place during regular, all partner Employment Connection Committee meetings. Over the last few years, partner presentations about their programs and services have been recorded and are available online for future viewing. However, training by the local workforce system partners remains on-going, as programs and services change, and new staff regularly joins the various workforce services agencies.

5. Integrated Functional Teams Staff the AJCC

AJCC staff members are organized into three teams: a Welcome Team, a Skills and Talent Team, and an Employment Solutions Team. This integrated approach to service delivery highlights for staff that job seekers using the center's services are shared customers. The teams are principally staffed by WIOA Title I career services provider and WIOA Title III Wagner-Peyser program representatives.

6. Sound Procedures Ensure that Customers Are Guided to Appropriate Services

The AJCC utilizes a Welcome Guide as a resource to inform staff and customers of options to guide their participation in center services. In a practical manner, the guide distinguishes between self-guided resources, staff-supported resources, and system-supported resources. The guide also specifies where enrollment in WIOA is required.

7. A Partner Services Guide is Available to AJCC and Partner Staff

A partner services guide assembled by the WIB serves as an "at-a-glance" directory of the principal programs and services offered by the WIOA-mandated partner organizations. The guide summarizes service locations, contact information, eligibility requirements, program content and length, and general outcomes typically achieved by various programs. The guide is an effective tool to support service planning and participant referrals.

8. Co-Enrollment of Participants in Two or More Partner Programs Is an Effective Tool to Promote Holistic Service Delivery

The AJCCs within Tulare County WIB's network approach service delivery from a straightforward, needs-based perspective. Assessment and personalized service planning is conducted with all customers participating in individualized career services and/or training. These processes reveal services needed to prepare individuals for employment within their chosen field. Services, for example, may include a combination of basic skills training, work-based learning, vocational training in a classroom setting, and support services. To access all of these services for an individual, co-enrollment in two or more programs may be necessary. WIOA Title I program participants also frequently take part in activities funded by Wagner-Peyser, TANF, the Rehabilitation Act, the Jobs for Veterans State Grants program, or specialized grants. Unique, non-duplicative services (e.g., case management, training, support) are provided by each program in which a participant is enrolled. To the extent it is permissible, communication takes place between case managers across the various programs to ensure service coordination and to monitor progress toward achievement of training and employment goals.

No areas for improvement were identified in connection with this indicator.

AJCC Certification Indicator #4: The AJCC is an on-ramp for skill development and attaining industry-recognized credentials that meet the needs of targeted regional sectors and pathways.

U.S. Department of Labor Characteristics of a High Quality AJCC

- A. Improve the skills of job seekers and worker customers. AJCCs offer access to education and training leading to industry-recognized credentials through the use of career pathways, apprenticeships, and other strategies that enable customers to compete successfully in today's global economy.
- B. Value skill development by assessing and improving each individual's basic, occupational, and employability skills.
- C. Balance traditional labor exchange services with strategic talent development within a regional economy.
- D. Create opportunities for individuals at all skill levels and levels of experience by providing customers as much timely, labor market, job-driven information, and choice as possible related to education and training, careers, and service delivery options while offering customers the opportunity to receive both skill-development and job placement services.

California State Plan Vision and Strategies

- A. Career Pathways: enabling progressive skills development through education and training programs, using multiple entry and exit level of skills development corresponds with a labor market payoff for those being trained or educated and results in industry-recognized credentials.
- B. Earn and Learn: a subsidized program that allows individuals to gain work experience while getting paid. Individuals receive training and education that combine applied learning opportunities while participating in the labor market.
- C. Supportive Services: providing supportive services like childcare, transportation, and counseling to facilitate program completion by those enrolled in training and education courses.
- D. AJCCs as an access point for programs providing "demand-driven skills attainment." From this perspective, AJCCs operate as an "on-ramp" or "gateway" to the "Regional Sector Pathways" programs either built out or identified through the regional planning process described above.
- E. AJCCs will continue to provide the full array of Career Services and function as labor exchanges. Still, there will be much greater emphasis on treating AJCCs as an access point for education and training services for those who want and need them.

AJCC Certification Workgroup's Vision

- All AJCC staff (i.e., the staff of all co-located partners regardless of staff position or program) value both skill development and employment outcomes and know how they can promote and contribute to both.

- All AJCC staff knows the regional target sectors, can identify regional sector career pathways, and can understand what those mean in terms of providing services to customers.
- The AJCC has skill development and training opportunities for customers at all skill and experience levels.
- The AJCC staff assist customers in accessing and enrolling in robust training services, including career pathways, integrated education and training, workforce preparation, work-based learning, and apprenticeship.
- AJCC staff are committed to and competent in helping customers navigate career pathways that result in industry-recognized credentials.
- The AJCC does not implement a “sequence of service requirement” for training and does not have cumbersome entry steps that prohibit easy access to education and training that leads to industry-recognized credentials.
- The AJCC ensures that supportive services are available to customers, as appropriate, to facilitate participation in training services.
- The AJCC strives to increase the number of all AJCC customers receiving skill development and training services, resulting in industry-recognized credentials.

AJCC Certification Indicator #4: The AJCC is an on-ramp for skill development and the attainment of industry-recognized credentials that meet the needs of targeted regional sectors and pathways.

Assessment of the AJCC's Strengths and Continuous Improvement Opportunities:

Staff at each AJCC within Tulare County's Employment Connection network treat job seekers as individuals, recognizing that each customer's path to employment and a career will reflect unique needs and circumstances, including, for some, overcoming barriers. For customers needing to develop skills required to qualify for employment, various training programs are available. While many job seekers choose classroom-based programs offered by public and private institutions that have been placed on a list of eligible training providers, others prefer training offered in real work setting, such as on-the-job training, which offers the opportunity to earn and learn.

Based as an assessment of their existing skills, Employment Connection customers may also be connected to programs that help them to improve basic skills, such as reading, writing, and math; attain a high school diploma or equivalent; or participate in English-as-a-Second Language classes.

Areas of substantive strength include:

1. There Are Multiple Points at Which Customers Can Choose to Participate in Skills Training

Some individuals are motivated to seek assistance from the Employment Connection centers based on their interest in pursuing occupational skills training to qualify for work in which they are interested. Yet, many other individuals arrive at the AJCC with just a hope of assistance in finding a job. For these customers, many opportunities exist to make decisions about training. For some, the decision comes early in their experience with the center as they are oriented to services and learn about training opportunities. For others, the decision to pursue training is prompted by learning that they lack skills to qualify for careers in which they are most interested.

2. Training on "Sector Profiles" Has Been Provided to the AJCC's Skills and Talent Team

The WIB's Business Services Team has developed one-page profiles on the region's six priority sectors, which include advanced manufacturing, construction, green energy, healthcare, high-value agriculture, and transportation and logistics. Utilizing these profiles, training has been provided to members of the Skills and Talent Team to help increase their knowledge about jobs in industry with the greatest demand and/or growth.

3. A Robust Menu of Training Programs Is Available to AJCC Customers

AJCC customers can access several dozen local training programs that have been placed on the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL). Programs on this list are

generally linked to demand occupations and to jobs within priority industries that are targeted by the WIB. Still, many training opportunities are available apart from those of the ETPL. Such programs make use of work-based learning models, including on-the-job and customized training, where businesses design and deliver training to new employees. Job seekers can also access academic support and basic skills programs such and courses that prepare them to earn a high school diploma or its equivalent and English-as-s-Second Language (ESL) programs.

4. A Weekly Newsletter is Published Covering Demand Jobs within the Local Labor Market

To further increase staff's knowledge of labor market demand and jobs for which local businesses are hiring, the WIB's Business Services Team puts together a weekly newsletter. This information is an important resource for staff as they work with job seekers to determine the types of training that are connected to skills that employers are looking for.

5. Job Seekers in Need of Training Can Access Programs without Unnecessary Delays

Employment Connection protocols do not require customers to participate in a protracted series of "prerequisite" activities in order to pursue skills training. The decision to identify a suitable training program is one that customers and staff may arrive at soon after enrollment. Service planning is then directed to preparing for and enrolling in training.

6. Job Seekers Can Earn a Range of Industry-Recognized and Employer-Valued Credentials

The majority of training programs on the ETPL lead to a credential (e.g., certification, diploma) that is recognized by local businesses. In many cases (e.g., Licensed Vocational Nurse certification), these certifications are portable and are recognized across various states. Other forms of training, such as programs that are work-based, may also hold unique value with local businesses that are familiar with the companies that provided training to an individual.

7. A Multi-Faceted Funding Strategy Is Used to Support Customers' Participation in Training and Career Services

In accordance with WIOA, AJCC customers may access supportive services that enable their participation in training and career services (e.g. bus passes, uniforms or work-related clothing, tools). The WIB's policy on the availability of supportive services emphasizes the use of non-WIOA resources, wherever possible. AJCC staff, therefore, have developed strong relationships with local mission-driven organizations that can provide services ranging from low-cost healthcare to childcare and free legal services. As described in response to Indicator 3, co-enrollment in partner programs, such as TANF or those offered by the Department of Rehabilitation, often increases access to supportive services not generally funded by WIOA.

Improvement could be realized in the following areas:

1. The Workforce Investment Board and WIB Leadership Should Assess the Appropriateness of Existing Financial Caps on Training

WIB leadership should consider an assessment of caps established on funds allowed to support enrollment of participants into programs on the Eligible Training Provider List. Limits on funding per participant should reflect a commitment to the equitable distribution of opportunities for participants and should address the needs of participants requiring skills and businesses seeking talent.

2. The Business Services Team Should Design and Implement a Structured Labor Market Information Training Program for Staff

To create a strong base of knowledge among the AJCC's direct services staff, the WIB's Business Services Team should develop a training program, perhaps consisting of several modules, addressing basic economics; local labor market information and how to use it in service planning; the region's target industries; sector strategies in Tulare County and adjacent workforce areas; career pathways and industry-specific training programs; and quality jobs. This training would support staff's ability to effectively support job seekers in making decisions about training and preparation for jobs and careers.

AJCC Certification Indicators #5: The AJCC actively engages industry and labor and supports regional sector strategies through an integrated business service strategy that focuses on quality jobs.

U.S. Department of Labor Characteristics of a High Quality AJCC

- A. Design and implement practices that actively engage industry sectors and use economic and labor market information, sector strategies, career pathways, registered apprenticeships, and competency models to help drive skill-based initiatives.
- B. Develop, offer, and deliver quality business services that assist specific businesses and industry sectors in overcoming the challenges of recruiting, retaining, and developing talent for the regional economy.
- C. To support area employers and industry sectors most effectively, AJCC staff identify and clearly understand industry skill needs, identify appropriate strategies for assisting employers, and coordinate business services activities across AJCC partner programs, as appropriate.
- D. To incorporate an integrated and aligned business services strategy among AJCC partners to present a unified voice for the AJCC in its communications with employers.
- E. Additionally, AJCCs use the forthcoming performance measure(s) on effectiveness in serving employers to support continuous improvement of these services.

California State Plan Vision and Strategies

- A. Regional partnerships: building partnerships between industry leaders, workforce professionals, education and training providers, and economic development leaders to develop workforce and education policies that increase job quality and support regional economic growth.
- B. Sector strategies: aligning workforce and education programs with leading and emergent industry sectors' skills needs.
- C. Fostering demand-driven skills attainment: workforce and education programs must align program content with the state's industry sector needs to provide California's high road employers and businesses with the skilled workforce it needs to compete in the global economy.

AJCC Certification Workgroup's Vision

- All AJCC staff have advanced knowledge of the regional economy, labor market conditions, business talent supply chains, and the needs of high-growth sectors and high road employers.
- The AJCC focuses on quality jobs by actively promoting targeted sector opportunities and high-demand occupations to all AJCC customers.
- The AJCC promotes systems and partnerships that connect workers to high-quality jobs or entry-level work with clear routes to advancement.

- The AJCC has a defined strategy in place to regularly seek and capture employer advice in the design and delivery of demand-driven services for job seekers.
- The AJCC is an integral partner in the implementation of the Local Board's integrated business services strategy and seeks to minimize redundant employer contacts while maximizing access to system-wide, integrated business services.
- The AJCC offers a wide range of AJCC-based services for employers, including referral of qualified candidates, on-site recruitment, pre-employment testing, skill verification, and hiring and training subsidies.
- The AJCC consistently seeks feedback and satisfaction data from businesses on the delivery of business services and applies it for continuous improvement.

AJCC Certification Indicators #5: The AJCC actively engages industry and labor and supports regional sector strategies through an integrated business service strategy that focuses on quality jobs.

Assessment of the AJCC's Strengths and Continuous Improvement Opportunities:

Through a centralized business services function, the WIB engages with leadership from companies representing all key industries in Tulare County and throughout the Southern San Joaquin Valley region. Engagement with businesses occurs through various forms of contact, including, but not limited to, one-on-one discussions, such as needs assessments and communication on job orders; hiring events, including those focused on company-specific recruitment and area-wide job fairs; and sector-specific convenings and meetings, which are generally organized by economic development agencies, industry associations, chambers of commerce, and other business-serving organizations.

While engagement with businesses enables all four Employment Connection centers to match their customers who are seeking employment with job opportunities, it also serves to inform those representing the local system about the broader workforce needs of key industry sectors. Business engagement is foundational to the system's ability to work with partners, including education, on the development of curricula and career pathway programs. Arguably, Tulare County WIB has developed the strongest industry engagement strategy in the region, having been instrumental in developing and/or growing sector partnerships supporting manufacturing and other key industries.

Areas of substantive strength include:

1. The Business Services Team Hosts Quarterly Industry Summits

As a means of industry engagement, the WIB's Business Services Team hosts quarterly industry summits with leaders from companies representing the region's key target sectors. These events provide a forum for discussions among industry professionals and the opportunity for workforce system representatives to learn from their insights. This information helps to shape content and approaches to service delivery.

2. The Workforce Investment Board Has Adopted a Local Definition of Job Quality

The Tulare County WIB has adopted a Job Quality Framework. This framework establishes a baseline for job quality which informs the activities of the local workforce system in preparing residents for jobs and careers. The framework sets standards for compensation and stability; growth and development; workplace culture and empowerment; wealth and benefit sharing; and health and safety. As a framework, rather than a hard and fast definition, the WIB's job quality statement creates an environment for workforce preparation that recognizes that individuals will work toward positions that embody all of most of the qualities that it outlines. The framework acknowledges that jobs lacking the full range of quality attributes may put workers on the path to secure such jobs.

3. System Representatives Participate in Sector Partnership Activities

Tulare County WIB has been active in developing and supporting sector partnerships in the region. These partnerships provide a foundation for businesses to collaborate in addressing key industry needs, including recruitment of employees, worker retention, skills upgrading for the current workforce, replacement of retirees, adapting to changing workplace technology, and skills needed by current and future candidates. One such partnership that the WIB and workforce system partners support is the South Valley Industrial Collaborative, which convenes leaders from manufacturing, transportation and logistics, and value-added agriculture.

4. The WIB and the AJCCs Offer an Impressive Menu of Services for Businesses

Business Services are centralized at the WIB, which ensures that such services are closely coordinated with those provided to job seekers served by the Employment Connection centers. AJCC-based services for business customers include, but are not limited to, recruitment events for individual companies; job fairs to recruit for multiple companies (including events that concentrate on one or more of the region's target sectors); and processing, screening and testing of candidates. Businesses may use the centers to conduct individual candidate interviews or for meetings. The WIB's Business Services Team is also experienced at bringing services, such as needs assessments and support for developing work-based learning programs, to business where they operate. The workforce system's success in maintaining positive and productive relationships with businesses throughout the county is largely attributable to making services flexible and easily accessible.

5. The System Seeks Input from Businesses

As described in the foregoing responses, the workforce system utilizes its quarterly industry summits and participation in sector partnership events to ascertain the needs of local businesses, particularly those linked to regional target sectors. They also do so at chamber meetings and similar events. Through other small group and individual contacts, staff regularly engages with business representatives. While conducting needs assessment and holding one-on-one discussions, staff has ample opportunity to obtain input on companies' workforce needs.

6. Business Satisfaction Is Surveyed at Some Key Points of Contact

Business customer satisfaction is surveyed at various key points in the delivery of services, including at hiring events, such as job fairs, and at the completion of work-based training activities.

7. The System Averts and Responds to Worker Dislocation

The Business Service Team manages both layoff aversion and rapid response activities for the local workforce development system. Aversion activities are interventions for businesses facing circumstances that may lead to downsizing of

the workforce because of contracting operations or company closure. The WIB may provide direct support in the form of worker upskilling training or may connect the business to other resources such organizations offering financing opportunities or cost cutting strategies. Rapid response services are provided when a formal notice of layoff or closure has been provided or, in cases involving fewer employees, informal notification is made to the WIB, AJCC, or an intermediary. Working with representatives of the affected company, labor representatives (as applicable, and system partners (such as EDD, which administers the unemployment compensation program), rapid response services coordinated by the WIB are focused on workers and consist, principally, of information on how to access unemployment benefits and services, such as training and reemployment support available through the AJCCs.

8. Workforce System Representatives Participate in Regional Initiatives

Tulare County WIB is part of the largest workforce region in California: The San Joaquin Valley and Associated Counties Regional Planning Unit, which covers eight local workforce development areas, represents ten counties, and extends across approximately 25% of the state's land mass. Within this immense region, Tulare County effectively collaborates with other local boards and entities on various initiatives. One example of such collaboration is the County's subregional leadership role in the Community Economic Resilience Fund project, also known as "California Jobs First" initiative.

9. Staff Match Job Seekers to Employment Opportunities

While many services for business customers are provided by the WIB's business services team, AJCC staff have primary responsibility for matching job seekers with available positions, many of which are identified by the WIB. AJCC representatives are effective at the matching process, as they are adept at identifying customers' experience and skills and connecting them to job requirements.

Improvement could be realized in the following areas:

1. The WIB Should Expand the Points at Which Business Satisfaction is Surveyed

While business satisfaction is surveyed at various points in the delivery of services, the current process likely misses some key business customers, such as those that hire individuals referred by the AJCC, including those who have recently completed training funded by WIOA.

2. The Business Services Team Should Design and Implement a Structured Labor Market Information Training Program for Staff

To create a strong base of knowledge among the AJCC's direct services staff, the WIB's Business Services Team should develop a training program, perhaps consisting of several modules, addressing basic economics; local labor market information and how to use it in service planning; the region's target industries;

sector strategies in Tulare County and adjacent workforce areas; career pathways and industry-specific training programs; and quality jobs. This training would support staff's ability to effectively support job seekers in making decisions about training and preparation for jobs and careers.

AJCC Certification Indicator #6: The AJCC has high-quality, well-informed, and cross-trained staffing.

U.S. Department of Labor Characteristics of a High Quality AJCC

- A. Train and equip AJCC staff in an ongoing learning process with the knowledge, skills, and motivation to provide superior service to all job seekers, including those with disabilities and businesses, in an integrated, regionally focused framework of service delivery. AJCC staff are cross-trained, as appropriate, to increase staff capacity, expertise, and efficiency. Cross-training allows staff from differing programs to understand every program and to share their expertise about the needs of specific populations so that all staff can better serve all customers. AJCC staff are routinely trained and are keenly aware of how their particular function supports and contributes to the overall vision of the local board.
- B. The AJCC center is staffed with highly trained career counselors, skilled in advising job seekers of their options, knowledgeable about local labor market dynamics, and aware of available services inside and outside the AJCC.

California State Plan Vision and Strategies

Certification criteria will include an assessment of professional development and staff capacity building.

AJCC Certification Workgroup's Vision

- The AJCC has regular staff meetings with all AJCC staff (i.e., the staff of all co-located partners regardless of program) to build relationships, provide updates on center activities, and discuss strategies for AJCC improvement.
- Partners have agreed to provide training to all AJCC staff on a regular basis.
- There is a capacity building and/or professional development plan for staff and partners.
- All AJCC staff has received training on the services of One-Stop partners, eligibility for those services, and the process for referring customers to partners.
- All AJCC staff has received training on how to use labor market information to help customers identify career pathways, develop in-demand skills and credentials, and find jobs.
- All AJCC staff has received training to effectively assist customers in registering with CalJOBS and match customers to available jobs.
- All AJCC staff has received training on serving individuals with barriers to employment, including customers with disabilities.
- All AJCC staff has received training on providing excellent customer service and customer-centered design.
- All AJCC staff has received training on sector strategies, career pathways, job quality, and high road training partnerships.

AJCC Certification Indicator #6: The AJCC has high-quality, well-informed, and cross-trained staffing.

Assessment of the AJCC's Strengths and Continuous Improvement Opportunities:

Tulare County WIB competitively procures career services providers for its AJCCs. CSET, which serves as the service provider for the Employment Connection center in Porterville, is highly experienced in the field of workforce development and has long served in this capacity in Tulare County. One of criteria on which CSET was selected is its process for selecting and training its personnel. Internal training protocols are enhanced by those led or organized by Tulare County WIB. Training takes place in various forms and formats. Cross training among the system partners, locally and regionally organized training reflecting staff needs for critical information, and training offered at workforce development-specific seminars and conferences are just a few of ways that AJCC staff increases its knowledge and improves its skills. The majority of training is available not only for Tulare County WIB and career services provider staff, but for workforce system partner staff, whether or not these individuals are stationed at an Employment Connection center.

Staff quality is built not only by years of experience and formal staff training, but also by structured and informal information sharing which is ubiquitous throughout the AJCC system in Tulare County. Through integrated team huddles, on-site partner meetings, and gatherings of the Employment Connection Committee, which includes all system partners, managers and staff consistently share information, which ensures that all individuals, irrespective of their roles, remain well prepared to fulfill their assigned functions and to serve AJCC customers.

Areas of substantive strength include:

1. Tulare County WIB Selects Service Providers with Knowledge and Experience

Even without the wide variety of training procured and organized by Tulare County WIB, the knowledge and capabilities of the AJCC staff would be considerable given CSET's commitment to ensuring that its employees are fully prepared to effectively perform the tasks to which they have been assigned. The organizations not only vets staff for experience but provides ongoing training to ensure their competence.

2. Training is Frequently Offered and Is Widely Available

The workforce development system in Tulare County benefits from the WIB's emphasis on training to increase the knowledge and effectiveness of AJCC staff and individuals representing the full range of partners and stakeholders. The WIB is committed to developing an "ecosystem" in which system staff is well prepared to meet the challenges of preparing a diverse workforce for an evolving labor market. Training is offered regularly, with various sessions available throughout the year. Many WIB-sponsored sessions include content that staff and partners have requested, such as customer service training and information on best practices for serving vulnerable populations, As described earlier, cross training among the system partners is ongoing and is regularly repeated to ensure that

changes and updates to partners' programs and services are clearly communicated to staff and stakeholders. Given the array of partners within the local workforce system, training by these organizations makes training a regular occurrence.

3. Training Covers a Multitude of Topics

Training provided to AJCC staff over the last three years has covered a very broad range of topics, including: case management strategies; customer service; customer-centered design; strategies for serving vulnerable populations; trauma-informed services; self-care for workforce professionals; sector strategies; services for transition-age youth; employment preparation for justice-involved individuals; and job retention strategies; among other topics. This diversity of training topics ensures that AJCC staff are able to perform all tasks that enable the local workforce system to achieve the goals established by WIOA for both job seekers and businesses.

4. Cross Training Supports System-Wide Knowledge

As indicated, cross training by system partners creates a service delivery environment in which various organizations are able to communicate to prospective customers the full range of workforce development and training services available in Tulare County. This dynamic corresponds to WIOA's vision for local workforce systems and their capacity to represent all partner programs and services.

5. Training Improves Services to Individuals with Barriers to Employment

Individuals seeking assistance from Employment Connection centers represent an impressively diverse array of groups, including many job seekers who have distinct barriers to employment. Among these are refugees resettled in Central California by federal mandates, survivors of domestic violence, individuals recovering from substance use disorders, formerly incarcerated individuals, seniors returning to the workforce after retirement, and many others who face challenges with respect to securing and retaining employment. Many AJCC staff would be unfamiliar with the unique challenges faced by these individuals without training and information made available by the WIB and system partners. Such training will be on-going to ensure that the system staff continue to have the requisite knowledge to meet the needs of diverse populations.

6. Knowledge Helps Staff Improve Customer Satisfaction

One of the ways the local workforce development system measures its effectiveness is through customers' satisfaction with the services that they have received. Customers, such as justice-involved individuals and persons with disabilities, are likely to perceive whether staff are familiar with the challenges they face in connection with their background and circumstances. Training is essential to ensuring that AJCC staff is able to address the needs of diverse populations.

7. Industry Events Improve Staff Knowledge About Key Sectors

One of the most effective methods of increasing AJCC staff knowledge about the region's priority sectors is the WIB's industry-related convenings, which include quarterly industry summits and meetings of sector partnerships. These sessions provide fundamental information for AJCC staff concerning the industries that provide the greatest opportunities for local residents and businesses.

8. A Structured Meeting Protocol Promotes Regular Information Sharing

As described, WIB and AJCC management organize and oversee a series of meetings among managers and staff of the local workforce system partners. These sessions are instrumental in providing information to all partners. Records of discussions and presentations are maintained to ensure that information is available for future reference and for stakeholders who are not able to attend various meetings.

9. Staff Knowledge of CalJOBS Supports Strong Service Delivery

The state's workforce development MIS and case management system of record is CalJOBS. Its complexity requires that staff participate in extensive training, which includes EDD-sponsored sessions, which are available annually, at minimum, and local training that is provided to AJCC staff by Tulare County WIB representatives. Currently, AJCC staff has been trained in the various functions of CalJOBS, including its case management and job matching utilities.

Improvement could be realized in the following areas:

1. The Business Services Team Should Design and Implement a Structured Labor Market Information Training Program for Staff

To create a strong base of knowledge among the AJCC's direct services staff, the WIB's Business Services Team should develop a training program, perhaps consisting of several modules, addressing basic economics; local labor market information and how to use it in service planning; the region's target industries; sector strategies in Tulare County and adjacent workforce areas; career pathways and industry-specific training programs; and quality jobs. This training would support staff's ability to effectively support job seekers in making decisions about training and preparation for jobs and careers.

2. The WIB and AJCCs Should Develop an Annual Training Calendar

Given the workforce system's ongoing need for training, WIB leadership should consider adopting and publishing an annual training calendar, which would identify regular intervals at which training would be provided (e.g., monthly, quarterly) and would be populated with training agreed upon by WIB and AJCC management and the local workforce system partners.

AJCC Certification Indicator #7: The AJCC achieves business results through data-driven continuous improvement.

U.S. Department of Labor Characteristics of a High Quality AJCC

- A. Use common performance indicators to ensure that federal investments in employment and training programs are evidence-based, labor market-driven, and accountable to participants and taxpayers. Center performance is transparent and accountable to the communities and regions served; data entry staff are trained and understand the importance of data validation, data collection processes, and the importance of accurate reporting.
- B. Develop and implement operational policies that reflect an integrated performance, communication, and case management system, and use technology to achieve integration and expanded service offerings.

California State Plan Vision and Strategies

Certification criteria will include an assessment of the way the AJCC will use data for continuous improvement.

AJCC Certification Workgroup's Vision

- The AJCC contributes to the achievement of WIOA performance indicators for all core program partners.
- The AJCC reports to the Local Board on an ongoing basis the number of customers served, the types of services provided, and the outcomes of those services.
- The AJCC operates in a cost-efficient manner, and the results justify the resources invested.
- The AJCC has a system in place to collect satisfaction data from individuals and employers using the AJCC's services.
- The AJCC has a system in place to capture and respond to specific customer feedback, complaints, and compliments.
- The AJCC regularly reviews and analyzes performance, customer satisfaction, and service data and develops specific plans for AJCC service improvements.
- The AJCC regularly identifies areas of needed technical assistance to improve business results and taps available resources to obtain needed assistance.

AJCC Certification Indicator #7: The AJCC achieves business results through data-driven continuous improvement.

Assessment of the AJCC's Strengths and Continuous Improvement Opportunities:

The use of data to record and track results is critical to the operation of successful workforce development programs and to determining how well programs and services meet the needs of both job seeker and business customers. Data informs every aspect of the Tulare County WIB's programs from design to delivery to evaluation. Data used for these purposes may be either quantitative or qualitative in nature. Data sources are many and, while a wide variety of data sets are used frequently, the WIB regularly tests and utilizes new data reference points as they are identified.

Labor market information (LMI) and analysis from public sources, such as the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics and California EDD's Labor Market Information Division, as well as proprietary data bases, are commonly used to identify industry and occupational targets for participant training and job placement. Regional and local LMI supplements such data. Information from business leaders, economic development professionals, industry associations, and others with an intimate knowledge of the local labor market serves to provide both real time insights and forecasts on business needs, which are essential to the WIB's and its AJCCs' developing and implementing program and process improvements.

WIOA's performance indicators provide a means of measuring program effectiveness with respect to job placement, wages, job retention, credential attainment and more. AJCC and WIB managers and staff regularly review program performance on these indicators, which provides a clear picture of how well services are translating into results.

Data obtained directly from customers is also key to ensuring that programs and services are addressing customers' priorities, needs, and preferences. Needs assessments and satisfaction surveys are among the most common methods utilized by Tulare County WIB and its network of AJCCs to determine what customers want and their opinions on the value and effectiveness of the services that they have received. Customer feedback is reviewed regularly and often serves as the basis for improvements to content and delivery of services.

Areas of substantive strength include:

1. The WIB and the AJCCs Support Achievement of WIOA Common Measures

The AJCCs are responsible for achieving goals leading to attainment of the measures under the WIOA Title I Adult and Dislocated Worker programs that they operate. WIOA Title I program goals are also supported by the center. While the WIB and the Employment Connection centers have not established a structured plan to support all core partners or others in their achievement WIOA performance measures, there are many ways in which the WIB and the AJCCs contribute to the capacity of the programs to meet these measures. Among these are the following:

- The extensive business outreach efforts of the WIOA Title I-funded system create relationships with companies across the county that lead to job opportunities for customers of all system partners;
- All job orders identified by the WIB and AJCC service providers are provided to Wagner-Peyser (WIOA Title III) staff, thereby becoming available to a much larger pool of candidates, including potentially, customers of all core partners;
- The Employment Connection Committee enables sharing of strategies, including those pertaining to services and performance, which can be applied to all partner programs; and
- Co-enrollment of participants across multiple program and funds streams lead to performance outcomes that can be claimed by all partners providing services.

2. Regular Presentations are Made to the Workforce Investment Board Program Evaluation Committee

With data summarizing the results produced by the AJCCs, Management provides updates to members of the WIB, starting with the Program Evaluation Committee, the responsibilities of which include a review of system performance. Not only do such presentations provide opportunities for Board-level recommendations, making this information available for review during public meetings increases transparency concerning system performance on key measures.

3. Performance Results Drive Decision Making

The WIB, its executive leadership, AJCC management, and supervisors overseeing various aspects of program operations and service delivery all utilize performance data to make decisions about programming. The numbers of individuals enrolled, trained, placed, and retained in employment reveals how well strategies are working for key customer groups. In instances where performance does not meet established benchmarks, service strategies may be adjusted to accelerate improvements.

4. Design of Services Begins and Ends with Data

Labor market, demographic, and performance data all contribute to the design of programs and the delivery of services to job seekers and businesses. Evaluation of program effectiveness, customer satisfaction results, performance levels, and changing economic and workforce data all help shape improvement to the content of programs and processes used to deliver services to customers.

5. Jobs Seekers Provide Feedback in Accordance with Their Preferences

Job Seekers can provide input on their satisfaction with the AJCC and the services they participate in. Surveys are available in hard copy format and electronically. While customer input is specifically requested at the conclusion of distinct activities, such as workshops, individuals served by the AJCC can provide feedback at any point during or following receipt of services.

6. Business Satisfaction Is Surveyed at Some Key Points of Contact

Business customer satisfaction is surveyed at several key points in the delivery of services, including at hiring events, such as job fairs, and at the completion of work-based training activities.

7. Transparency Is a Results Strategy

Performance and satisfaction data are shared with members of the Tulare County Workforce Investment Board, with core and mandatory workforce partners, and with system stakeholders of all types. This transparency encourages AJCC management and staff to strive for high performance in every aspect of service delivery.

8. The System Leverages Funding Across Traditional and Specialized Fund Streams

Service planning, support, case management, training, job placement, retention, and follow-up are costly services for WIOA and the local workforce system partners. For participants with unique circumstances and barriers to employment, the cost of services is often significant. The partners have developed protocols to cross refer, co-enroll and co-case manage customers that enable them to leverage financial resources across programs to ensure that a participant's range of services are met. This strategy includes accessing the resources of federally funded programs (such as those funded by Wagner-Peyser and the Rehabilitation Act), state programs, including those offered by public education providers, and a range of special grants, many of which are supported by the WIOA Title I Governor's Reserve funds.

9. Efforts to Meet System Training Needs Are On-Going

As described in connection with nearly all indicators, training for AJCC staff is a core strategy of the local workforce system to ensure that Employment Connection services continue to meet the needs of customers. Therefore, the WIB is committed to providing training for staff and partners on an ongoing basis.

10. AJCC Management Ensures that Feedback Translates to Improvement

As described, feedback from customers is secured in connection with various services and activities. This feedback is first reviewed by the Employment Connection management team. At this level of review, managers will frequently work either independently or as a group to devise, develop, and implement solutions to concerns, deficiencies, or problems identified by customers. Depending on the nature and complexity of the issues brought to light by customers, they may be reviewed during meetings of co-located partner management. In such circumstances, issues are presented and discussed, and recommendations are proffered. WIB and center management are responsible for implementation of improvement strategies and follow-up on their effectiveness.

Improvement could be realized in the following areas:

1. WIB Should Expand the Points at Which Business Satisfaction is Surveyed

While business satisfaction is surveyed at various points in the delivery of services, the current process likely misses some key business customers, such as those that hire individuals referred by the AJJC, including those who have recently completed training funded by WIOA.

2. The WIB and the AJCCs Should Publish Results of Improvement Initiatives

Given the significance of customer feedback and other data regarding program performance on local efforts to strengthen workforce programs and services, WIB leadership should consider summarizing and publishing on its website information on changes implemented as a result of such input and data. By making this information easily available, all customers and stakeholders will see how feedback and performance translate into actual system improvements.

By signing below, the Local Board Chair agrees with the **AJCC's Certification Indicator Assessment** and attests to develop a continuous improvement plan with target dates.



Signature

Colby Wells

Name

Board Chair

Title

September 11, 2024

Date

APPROVED BY
WORKFORCE INVESTMENT BOARD
MINUTES OF 09-11-2024