

# REGION 7 REGIONAL AND LOCAL PLAN

PY 2024 - 2027



THE COORDINATING & DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

*Partnering For Progress*



A proud partner of the American **JobCenter**<sup>®</sup> network

CHAPTER 1: ECONOMIC AND WORKFORCE ANALYSIS: REGIONAL .....	3
CHAPTER 2: STRATEGIES FOR SERVICE INTEGRATION: REGIONAL.....	23
CHAPTER 3: VISION, GOALS AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES: REGIONAL .....	31
CHAPTER 4: OPERATING SYSTEMS AND POLICIES: LOCAL.....	49
CHAPTER 5: PERFORMANCE GOALS AND EVALUATION: LOCAL.....	71
CHAPTER 6: TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS & ASSURANCES: LOCAL.....	74
REGIONAL / LOCAL PLAN SIGNATURES.....	78

# CHAPTER 1: ECONOMIC AND WORKFORCE ANALYSIS: REGIONAL

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

This regional component of the plan must discuss how the region has collected and analyzed regional labor market information including the local planning requirements. Additionally, the chapter must demonstrate alignment with education and economic development. Regional teams are encouraged to use the labor market information that will provide consistency in the data used for regional analysis throughout the state.

A. Provide an analysis of the:

1. Economic conditions including existing and emerging in-demand industry sectors and occupations (§ 679.560(a)(1)(i));

- What are the targeted industries, high-impact industry clusters, and in-demand occupations in the region?
- What industries and occupations have favorable location quotients?
- What industries and occupations have favorable demand projections based on growth?
- What industries and occupations have favorable demand projections based on replacements?
- What industries and occupations are considered mature but still important to the economy?
- What industries and occupations are considered emerging in the regional economy?
- What sources of supply and demand data were used to determine the targeted industries occupations and skills?

As with the national and state economies, Region 7 (LWDA 70/LWDA 71) was devastated by the coronavirus pandemic but has generally recovered in regaining the jobs that were lost along with a rapid drop in the record unemployment rates for the ten parishes that comprise the region. The chart below demonstrates how total covered employment for Region 7’s ten parishes has recovered comparing 2020 (the year the pandemic arrived) with 2023. The ten parishes are ranked in their total covered employment with Caddo and Bossier combined (in which are located the City of Shreveport and Bossier City) the location of close to 70% of the region’s employed labor force.

### Total Covered Employment in 2020 and 2023 – Ten Parishes in Seventh Planning District

*Source: www.laworks.net, Labor Market Information*

Parish	Covered Employment 2020	Covered Employment 2023	2023 as % of 2020
Caddo	103,532	107,964	104.2%
Bossier	40,975	44,883	109.5%
Lincoln	18,115	18,503	102.1%
Natchitoches	12,853	14,345	111.6%
Webster	11,188	11,228	100.3%
DeSoto	6,470	8,230	127.2%
Sabine	5,352	5,515	103.0%
Bienville	4,007	3,728	93.0%
Claiborne	3,003	3,031	100.9%
Red River	2,326	2,533	108.9%
Region 7 Total	207,821	219,960	105.8%

With the exception of Bienville Parish, employment levels in 2023 for the ten parishes in Region 7 were well beyond where they were for the year 2020 when the pandemic began its grip on the economy. However, total covered employment in Region 7 for the year 2023 was not quite where it was for the pre-pandemic year of 2019. At 219,960, total covered employment in 2023 was about 99.0% of its 2019 level of 222,343 (source: laworks.net). The remaining employment gap of 2,383 (comparing 2019 with 2023) may not all be attributed to the impact of the coronavirus pandemic.

Unemployment rates surged in 2020 as businesses closed and placed many employees on layoff as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. A chart below compares unemployment rates in 2020 for the ten parishes in Region 7 with the year 2023. As can be seen in the chart, the recovery of jobs post-pandemic brought unemployment rates back down to the 3.0% to 4.0% range - unemployment rates more in line with the national and state economies for the year 2023.

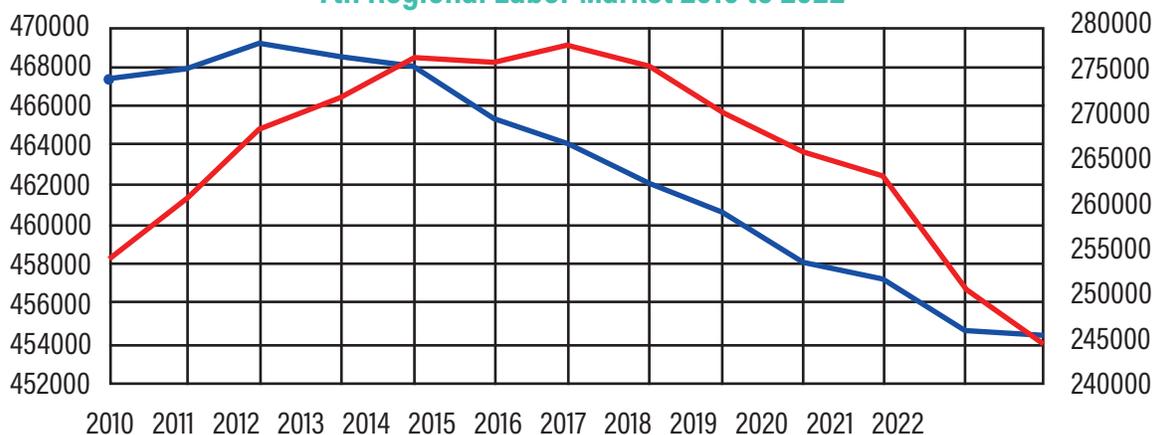
Although the post-pandemic recovery of jobs and falling unemployment rates for Region 7 have been a welcomed development, they do not reflect an ongoing problem for the region’s economy – population loss and, with it, a declining civilian labor force along with somewhat “weak” labor force participation rates. Using data from the U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey, the included graph displays trends in Region 7’s population 16 years of age and over and civilian labor force over the years 2010 to 2022. Beginning with the year 2014, both trend lines follow the same path – a sharp downturn. This may have repercussions for the available labor supply in meeting the needs of existing businesses or new businesses brought to the region through the efforts of local, regional, and state economic development agencies.

### Unemployment Rates in 2020 and 2023 – Ten Parishes in Seventh Planning District

Source: [www.laworks.net](http://www.laworks.net), Labor Market Information

Parish	Unemployment Rate 2020	Unemployment Rate 2023
Bienville Parish	8.1%	4.3%
Bossier Parish	6.6%	3.2%
Caddo Parish	9.4%	4.1%
Claiborne Parish	7.0%	4.0%
DeSoto Parish	7.6%	4.1%
Lincoln Parish	6.6%	3.8%

### Trends in Population 16 Years and Over and Civilian Labor Force 7th Regional Labor Market 2010 to 2022



Based on data from U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey, Tables DP03 & DP05

Red trend line = Population 16 years and over, Blue trend line = Civilian Labor Force

Labor force participation rates for the region's ten parishes remain, with the exception of Bossier Parish, below that of Louisiana and the United States as can be seen below:

### **Estimates of Labor Force Participation Rates for Ten Parishes in Region 7 for Year 2023**

*Source: U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey, Table S2301*

Bossier Parish = 61.8%  
Caddo Parish = 56.7%  
Lincoln Parish = 54.5%  
Natchitoches Parish = 53.4%  
DeSoto Parish = 50.7%  
Red River Parish = 48.2%  
Webster Parish = 47.0%  
Sabine Parish = 46.7%  
Bienville Parish = 45.9%  
Claiborne Parish = 36.5%

Louisiana = 59.3%  
United States = 62.6%  
(source: [www.bls.gov](http://www.bls.gov))

It is speculated that declines in the population 16 years of age and over and the civilian labor force may be behind the region's "below average" labor force participation rates (compared to Louisiana and the United States). At 61.8%, the labor force participation rate for Bossier Parish may be related to its steady growth in population. From 2010 to 2022, the population of Bossier Parish grew by 13.2%, from 113,837 to 128,877 (source: U.S. Census Bureau). All other parishes in Region 7 experienced minimal population growth or a decline in population.

#### **Targeted Industries and High-Impact Industry Clusters**

The chart below ranks employment by major NAICS sectors for Region 7 in 2023. Obviously, Health Care and Social Assistance takes the lead in providing jobs for one out of five workers in Northwest Louisiana. The City of Shreveport and Bossier City are the location of major hospital and health clinic operations such as Ochsner and Willis-Knighton and a plethora of independent doctor and dentist offices. As a "cluster", the top four sectors combined employ a little over half (53%) of the region's labor force. Despite the increasing popularity on Online shopping, Retail Trade ranks second in employment at 12.6% and includes "big-box stores" such as Wal-Mart, Home Depot, Target and Best Buy, in addition to the major retail grocery chains (e.g., Kroger, Brookshires, Albertsons). Food Services captures the many fast-food establishments present in every city, town, and village within the region. Educational Services is also diverse in including local school boards (elementary and secondary public schools), colleges and universities, and vocational schools (both public and private). LSU Health in Shreveport is a major educational institution for conducting medical research and training healthcare professionals.

## Employment by Major NAICS Sectors in 2023 - Seventh Planning District

*Source: www.laworks.net, Labor Market Information*

NAICS Industry Sectors	Employment 2023	% Total Employment
<b>Total</b>	<b>219,953</b>	
Health Care and Social Assistance 62	44,470	20.2%
Retail Trade 44-45	27,626	12.6%
Accommodation & Food Services 72	22,806	10.4%
Educational Services 61	20,977	9.5%
Manufacturing 31-33	17,117	7.8%
Construction 23	11,437	5.2%
Administrative & Waste Services 56	10,717	4.9%
Public Administration 92	10,251	4.7%
Professional & Technical Services 54	8,530	3.9%
Transportation & Warehousing 48-49	7,907	3.6%
Wholesale Trade 42	7,543	3.4%
Mining 21	6,244	2.8%
Finance & Insurance 52	5,257	2.4%
Other Services, except Public Administration 81	5,255	2.4%
Real Estate, Rental, and Leasing 53	3,870	1.8%
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation 71	3,427	1.6%
Information 51	2,392	1.1%
Utilities 22	1,560	.71%
Management of Companies & Enterprises 55	1,515	.69%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing & Hunting 11	1,052	.48%

### **In-Demand Occupations**

There are two “dimensions” to what constitutes an “in-demand” occupation: 1) its place, or ranking, in employing members of the labor force and, 2) the number of job openings, or vacancies, for the occupation, whether the openings are a result of employee turnover (e.g., separations, retirements) or openings newly created based on an increased demand for an employer’s products or services.

The chart below ranks the distribution of employment for twenty-two (22) major occupational groups in Region 7 including information on each occupational group’s mean annual earnings. There is considerable variation within each occupational group in terms of more specific occupational titles and earnings (wages/salaries). Each occupational group also requires different experience and skill sets whether acquired through formal education or on-the-job training. Some occupations are specific to an industry group (e.g., Healthcare Practitioners) while some occupations can be found across several industry groups (e.g., Office & Administrative Support, Management Occupations).

The top four (4) occupations in the chart employ 41% of Region 7’s labor force, providing estimated annual earnings in the range of \$25,962 to \$39,844. The ten (10) occupational groups with annual earnings at or greater than \$50,000 employ approximately a third (33%) of Region 7’s labor force.

## Employment by Major Occupational Groups in Region 7 and Mean Annual Earnings for 2023

*Source: [www.laworks.net](http://www.laworks.net), Labor Market Information*

Major Occupational Groups	Estimated Employment	Annual Mean Earnings
Office & Administrative Support	29,260 (13.4%)	\$39,104
Food Preparation & Serving Related	20,790 (9.5%)	\$25,962
Sales & Related Occupations	20,440 (9.4%)	\$37,557
Transportation & Material Moving	19,910 (9.1%)	\$39,844
Healthcare Practitioners & Technical	18,150 (8.3%)	\$83,406
Educational Instruction & Library	14,570 (6.7%)	\$58,437
Management Occupations	13,000 (6.0%)	\$108,739
Production Occupations	11,560 (5.3%)	\$48,031
Installation, Maintenance & Repair	11,490 (5.3%)	\$52,472
Healthcare Support Occupations	11,390 (5.2%)	\$29,407
Construction & Extraction	10,480 (4.8%)	\$46,004
Building, Grounds Cleaning & Maintenance	8,130 (3.7%)	\$27,556
Business & Financial Operations	7,700 (3.5%)	\$70,242
Protective Service Occupations	6,160 (2.8%)	\$46,593
Personal Care & Service Occupations	4,630 (2.1%)	\$32,001
Community & Social Service Occupations	2,860 (1.3%)	\$47,746
Architecture & Engineering	1,840 (.84%)	\$83,209
Computer & Mathematical Occupations	1,790 (.82%)	\$89,763
Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, Media	1,500 (.69%)	\$47,724
Legal Occupations	1,000 (.46%)	\$85,597
Life, Physical, & Social Sciences	970 (.44%)	\$74,187
Farming, Fishing, Forestry	510 (.23%)	\$51,068
<b>Total Occupational Employment</b>	<b>218,130</b>	

### Industries with Favorable Location Quotients for Region 7

A location quotient reflects an industry's relative importance in providing employment for a specific geographical area's labor force compared to that of the national economy. Using data from the Louisiana Workforce Commission and the Bureau of Labor Statistics ([www.bls.gov](http://www.bls.gov)) it is estimated that there are nine (9) industry groups (NAICS sectors) in Region 7 with a location quotient greater than 1.0:

### Estimated Location Quotients for Seventh Planning District Greater than 1.0

Mining = 7.6

Utilities = 1.9

Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing & Hunting = 1.8

Health Care and Social Assistance = 1.4

Retail Trade = 1.2

Accommodation and Food Services = 1.1

Educational Services = 1.1

Real Estate, Rental, and Leasing = 1.1,

Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, Media = 1.1

As with Louisiana, oil and natural gas exploration and extraction, in addition to numerous companies providing oil field services, make a considerable contribution to Region 7's economy. The Haynesville Shale, present in several Northwest Louisiana parishes, continues to be one of largest natural gas fields in the United States. Data from the Louisiana Department of Energy and Natural Resources indicates that there are presently 17,000 "Producing Wells" in Region 7's ten parishes with half of this figure located in Caddo Parish. The Mining Sector (NAICS 21) in Region 7 may employ a relatively small percentage of the labor force (2.8%) but, its 427 reporting units in 2023 offered the highest average weekly wage at \$1,825 (an annual equivalent of close to \$95,000). If a location quotient is to be an indicator of an industry's high concentration or "specialization" for a regional economy, the oil and gas industry represents this for Region 7.

Information from the Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry shows that, in the year 2020, five parishes in Region 7 were among the top producers in Louisiana of sawtimber, pine and hardwood/pulpwood (Forestry), possibly contributing to the high location quotient of 1.8. A location quotient of 1.4 reflects the Health Care and Social Assistance sector's critical importance to Region 7's economy employing, as already noted, 20% of the labor force with growth in employment expected to continue. The casino industry present in Shreveport and Bossier City (NAICS 71) continues to be a major employer as reflected in its location quotient of 1.1 and may further increase employment with the 2025 opening of the Live! Casino in Bossier City.

### **Occupations with Favorable Location Quotients for Region 7**

Again, using data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics ([www.bls.gov](http://www.bls.gov)) and the Louisiana Workforce Commission, relatively high location quotients were estimated for the following six occupational groups:

Healthcare Practitioners & Technical = 1.5

Installation, Maintenance & Repair = 1.4

Building, Grounds Cleaning & Maintenance = 1.3

Educational Instruction & Library = 1.2

Healthcare Support = 1.2

Construction & Extraction = 1.2

The health care industry (NAICS 62) and Educational Services (NAICS 61) combined employ 30% of Region 7's labor force, contributing to the relatively high location quotients for three occupational groups: Healthcare Practitioners & Technical (1.5), Educational Instruction & Library (1.2), and Healthcare Support (1.2).

The Installation, Maintenance & Repair occupational group is highly concentrated in the Utilities industry, the Building, Grounds Cleanings & Maintenance group in the Accommodations and Casino industries, and the Construction & Extraction occupational group aligned with Mining, possibly contributing to their relatively high location quotients for Region 7.

### **Industries with Favorable Demand Projections for Region 7**

The chart below shows employment projections for the major NAICS Industry Sectors in Region 7 over the period of 2022 to 2032. The twenty sectors are ranked in their percentage employment growth or decline over this ten year period.

**Projected Increases in Employment for NAICS Industry Sectors in Seventh Planning District**  
 Period: 2022 to 2032 - Source: [www.laworks.net](http://www.laworks.net) (Labor Market Information)

NAICS Industry Sectors	% Change 2022 to 2023	Employment Change
Health Care & Social Assistance	+8.4%	+3,398
Construction	+7.9%	+771
Manufacturing	+4.7%	+751
Wholesale Trade	+4.3%	+318
Accommodation & Food Services	+2.5%	+554
Educational Services	+2.1%	+433
Professional, Scientific, & Technical Services	+1.2%	+99
Other Services, Except Public Administration	+1.2%	+212
Transportation & Warehousing	+1.0%	+79
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	+.70%	+20
Government	+.40%	+68
Agriculture, Fishing, Forestry & Hunting	+.40%	+4
Utilities	+.30%	+3
Real Estate & Rental & Leasing	0%	0
Information	-1.4%	-27
Mining	-1.5%	-81
Retail Trade	-1.5%	-415
Administrative & Waste Services	-1.6%	-175
Finance & Insurance	-6.3%	-330
Management of Companies & Enterprises	-13.4%	-186

**Total Increase in Employment, All Sectors = +6,710**

**Sector Percent Contribution to Increase in Employment**

- Health Care & Social Assistance = 50.6%
- Construction = 11.5%
- Manufacturing = 11.2%
- Accommodation & Food Services = 8.3%
- Educational Services = 6.5%
- Wholesale Trade = 4.7%
- Other Services, Except Public Administration = 3.2%
- Professional, Scientific, & Technical Services = 1.5%
- Transportation & Warehousing = 1.2%
- Government = 1.0%

As the chart shows, thirteen of the twenty sectors are projected to see an increase in employment (+6,710) with seven sectors to see a decline in employment giving a net increase in employment over the ten year period of +5,497 (6,710 - 1,215). Probably the most significant observation derived from this chart is that 50% of the projected employment increase is to come from one sector, Health Care & Social Assistance. Economists studying this issue note one reason to be an increase in the aging population, especially the baby-boomer generation entering its retirement years. The expected increase in Construction Sector employment may stem partially from greater government infrastructure investments (federal, state, local). The Manufacturing Sector in Region 7, although experiencing a long-term historical decline in employment, will add 751 employees. Existing and new businesses being established at the Caddo-Bossier Port may be behind this projected increase.

**Occupations with Favorable Demand Projections for Region 7**

The Louisiana Workforce Commission provides long term (2022 to 2032) employment projections for several hundred occupations in Region 7. Given this large number, occupations with 4 and 5 Star demand ratings (top demand) within twenty-one major occupational groups were identified and presented in the chart below:

**Number of 4 and 5 Star Demand Occupations for Twenty-One Major Occupational Categories  
Long Term Occupational Projections (2022 to 2032) for Seventh Planning District**

*Source: www.laworks.net, Labor Market Information*

Major Occupational Groups	4 and 5 Star Demand Occupations
29-0000 Healthcare Practitioners & Technical	39
11-0000 Management Occupations	26
25-0000 Educational Instruction & Library	18
17-0000 Architecture & Engineering	17
49-0000 Installation, Maintenance & Repair	16
13-0000 Business & Financial Operations	15
15-0000 Computer & Mathematical	14
53-0000 Transportation & Material Moving	13
19-0000 Life, Physical & Social Science	13
51-0000 Production Occupations	11
47-0000 Construction & Extraction	10
41-0000 Sales & Related	6
43-0000 Office & Administrative Support	5
31-0000 Healthcare Support Occupations	4
33-0000 Protective Service	4
21-0000 Community & Social Service	3
23-0000 Legal Occupations	2
27-0000 Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports & Media	2
37-0000 Building & Grounds Cleaning & Maintenance	1
39-0000 Personal Care & Service	1
35-0000 Food Preparation & Serving Related	0
45-0000 Farming, Fishing & Forestry	0

Since the Health Care and Educational Services sectors combined employ 30% of Region 7’s labor force, it is not unexpected that the first three occupational categories in the above chart rank the highest in terms of the number of 4 and 5 Star or “top demand” occupations. Of the total 194 4 and 5 Star top demand occupations in Region 7, a little over half (52%) are concentrated in the top four occupational categories.

**Occupational Demand Projections Based on Growth**

Using the long term occupational employment projections for Region 7, the following identifies the top three occupations with expected openings due to “growth” for the eleven (11) major occupational categories having the greatest number of 4 and 5 Star demand ratings:

**Healthcare Practitioners & Technical**

Registered Nurses, 10 Year Growth = 430

Nurse Practitioners, 10 Year Growth = 187

Licensed Practical Nurses, 10 Year Growth = 165

### **Management Occupations**

Medical & Health Services Managers, 10 Year Growth = 285

General & Operations Managers, 10 Year Growth = 182

Financial Managers, 10 Year Growth = 83

### **Educational, Instruction and Library**

Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education, 10 Year Growth = 68

Secondary School Teachers, Except Special & Career/Technical Education, 10 Year Growth = 51

Teaching Assistants, Except Postsecondary, 10 Year Growth = 43

### **Architecture & Engineering**

Industrial Engineers, 10 Year Growth = 17

Mechanical Engineers, 10 Year Growth = 7

Electrical & Electronics Engineering Technologists & Technicians, 10 Year Growth = 5

### **Installation, Maintenance & Repair**

Industry Machinery Mechanics, 10 Year Growth = 139

Maintenance & Repair Workers, General = 77

Heating, Air Conditioning & Refrigeration Mechanics & Installers, 10 Year Growth = 39

### **Business & Financial Operations**

Management Analysts, 10 Year Growth = 55

Accountants & Auditors, 10 Year Growth = 45

Market Research Analysts & Marketing Specialists, 10 Year Growth = 33

### **Computer & Mathematical**

Software Developers, 10 Year Growth = 44

Information Security Analysts, 10 Year Growth = 15

Computer Network Support Specialists, 10 Year Growth = 13

### **Transportation & Material Moving**

Stockers & Order Fillers, 10 Year Growth = 278

Heavy & Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers, 10 Year Growth = 113

Laborers & Freight, Stock & Material Movers, 10 Year Growth = 110

### **Life, Physical & Social Science**

Occupational Health & Safety Specialists, 10 Year Growth = 31

Occupational Health & Safety Technicians, 10 Year Growth = 16

Forestry & Conservation Technicians, 10 Year Growth = 7

### **Production Occupations**

First-Line Supervisors of Production & Operating Workers, 10 Year Growth = 392

Welders, Cutters, Solderers, & Brazers, 10 Year Growth = 64

Machinists, 10 Year Growth = 44

### **Construction & Extraction**

Construction Laborers, 10 Year Growth = 315

Electricians, 10 Year Growth = 76

Operating Engineers & Other Construction Equipment Operators, 10 Year Growth = 45

## **Occupational Demand Projections Based on Replacements (Separations)**

An occupational category with a high number of replacements may be a result of employees “separating” due primarily to retirements and voluntary or involuntary terminations. The assumption, though not always valid, is that job positions left open by separations will have to be “refilled” by an employer – the employer will have to “replace” the separated employee. This can be evaluated to some extent by identifying occupations with the greatest number of “exits” based on the long term occupational projections for Region 7. The following are examples of occupations projected to have a high number of “exits” over the ten year projection period (2022 to 2032) that are also identified as top demand (4 and 5 Star):

General & Operations Managers = 1,149 Exits (4 Star Demand Occupation)  
Accountants & Auditors = 512 Exits (4 Star Demand Occupation)  
Educational, Guidance, and Career Counselors & Advisors = 204 Exits (4 Star Demand Occupation)  
Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education = 945 Exits (4 Star Demand Occupation)  
Registered Nurses = 2,402 Exits (5 Star Demand Occupation)  
Pharmacy Technicians = 329 Exits (4 Star Demand Occupations)  
Licensed Practical Nurses = 1,192 Exits (4 Star Demand Occupation)  
Medical Assistants = 667 Exits (4 Star Demand Occupation)  
Police & Sheriff’s Patrol Officers = 532 Exits (4 Star Demand Occupation)  
Sales Representatives, Wholesale & Manufacturing = 728 Exits (5 Star Demand Occupation)  
First-Line Supervisors Office & Administrative Support = 1,169 Exits (4 Star Demand Occupation)  
First-Line Supervisors Construction Trades & Extraction = 425 Exits (5 Star Demand Occupation)  
Construction Laborers = 965 Exits (4 Star Demand Occupation)  
Electricians = 337 Exits (4 Star Demand Occupation)  
First-Line Supervisors Mechanics, Installers, Repairers = 463 Exits (5 Star Demand Occupation)  
Automotive Services Technicians & Mechanics = 453 Exits (4 Star Demand Occupation)  
Maintenance & Repair Workers, General = 1,152 Exits (4 Star Demand Occupation)  
Heavy & Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers = 1,819 Exits (4 Star Demand Occupation)

Industries with high replacement needs can, to some extent, be identified by occupations with high “exits” that are concentrated in those industries. Examples are: Health Care (Registered Nurses, LPNs), Public Administration/Government (Police & Sheriff’s Patrol Officers), Educational Services (Elementary School Teachers) and Construction (Construction Laborers, Electricians).

## **Mature Industries and Occupations of Importance to Region 7 Economy**

Region 7 industries and their associated occupations that can be considered “mature” are those that have been in existence for a considerable period of time (e.g., decades) and continue to see their employment grow or remain relatively stable. For Region 7, Health Care and Educational Services are prime examples. According to data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, in 1990, these two sectors combined employed 10% of the Shreveport-Bossier City MSA labor force. By the year 2020, this had increased to 19% with employment more than doubling from 15,300 to 31,800.

The Manufacturing Sector experienced a reverse trend. In 1990, 15% of the Shreveport-Bossier City MSA was employed by a manufacturing firm but, by 2020, this had dropped to 6.0% of the employed labor force. The loss of manufacturing “giants” such as Shreveport’s General Motors Plant in 2012 and its Libbey Glass plant in 2020 dealt serious blows to Region 7’s manufacturing employment base. However, with contributions from the presence of the Caddo-Bossier Port, there are signs that manufacturing jobs may now be on an “upswing”. According to data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics ([www.bls.gov](http://www.bls.gov)), employment in the Shreveport-Bossier City MSA’s Manufacturing Sector increased to 10,200 from 9,700 over the years 2021 to 2022 with a further jump to 10,700 in 2023.

As already noted, the oil and gas exploration and extraction industries have played a significant role in Region 7's economy over many years with employment in this sector fluctuating mainly as a result of price changes dictated by the national and international demand for energy (oil and natural gas). Employment in the Mining & Logging Sector within the Shreveport-Bossier City MSA reached a low point in the years 2016 – 2017 as a result of an oversupply of oil on the national and international markets with the coronavirus induced recession of 2020-2021 greatly dropping the demand for oil but then driving up the price of oil as the economy recovered and the demand for oil and gas resumed contributing to a spike in inflation. Since mid-2022, employment for the Shreveport-Bossier City MSA's Mining and Logging Sector has stabilized in the range of 5,200 to 5,300 ([www.bls.gov](http://www.bls.gov)).

2. Employment needs of employers in existing and emerging in-demand industry sectors and occupations (§679.560(a)(1)(ii));

New technologies create new industries and occupations. An example for the Region 7 economy is the established of Bossier City's Cyber Innovation Center (CIC) creating, by some estimates, 2,000 jobs requiring highly technical skills and education in the area of computer technology. In 2024, an Amazon Fulfillment Center was opened in Caddo Parish. Local media sources have employment estimates for the new center beginning at 200 with a possible expansion to 1,000 jobs by the end of 2026. This Amazon Fulfillment Center will provide jobs to the local labor force requiring both mid-level (e.g., order pickers) and highly technical skills (robotics maintenance and repair). Shreveport's Biomedical Research Foundation, associated with the LSU Health Sciences Center, is the location of cutting-edge medical research that will continue to require highly educated medical professionals and technicians.

3. Knowledge and skills needed to meet the employment needs of the employers in the region, including employment needs in in-demand industry sectors and occupations (§ 679.560(a)(2));

- What are the targeted career pathway clusters in the region?
- What are the skills that are in demand in the region?
- How well do the existing skills of job seekers match the demands of local businesses?

Long term employment projections for Region 7 (2022 to 2032) indicate that 73% of employment growth will be generated by three (3) industry sectors: Health Care & Social Assistance, Construction, and Manufacturing. The following provides a "profile" for each of these three sectors with a selection of demand occupations and their basic education or training requirements:

**Region 7 Select Occupations in Health Care & Social Assistance (NAICS 62)**  
**Star Demand Rating & Basic Educational Requirements**  
*Source: [www.laworks.net](http://www.laworks.net) (Labor Market Information)*

Occupation	Star Demand Rating	Basic Educational Requirements
Physician Assistants	5	Master's Degree
Physical Therapists	5	Doctoral or Professional Degree
Respiratory Therapists	5	Associate's Degree
Registered Nurses	5	Bachelor's Degree
Dental Hygentists	5	Associate's Degree
Clinical Lab Technicians	5	Bachelor's Degree
Radiologic Technologists	4	Associate's Degree
Pharmacy Technicians	4	High School Diploma/OJT
Licensed Practical Nurse	4	Postsecondary Non-Degree
Medical Records Specialist	4	Postsecondary Non-Degree

**Region 7 Select Occupations in Construction (NAICS 23)**  
**Star Demand Rating & Basic Educational/Training Requirements**  
*Source: www.laworks.net (Labor Market Information)*

Occupation	Star Demand Rating	Basic Educational/Training Req.
Construction Managers	5	Bachelor's Degree
First-Line Supervisors	5	High School Diploma or Equivalent
Carpenters	4	High School Diploma/Apprenticeship
Construction Laborers	4	No formal educational credential
Operating Engineers	4	High School Diploma or Equivalent
Electricians	4	High School Diploma/Apprenticeship
Plumbers, Pipefitters	4	High School Diploma/Apprenticeship
Structural Iron & Steel	4	High School Diploma/Apprenticeship

**Region 7 Select Occupations in Manufacturing (NAICS 31-33)**  
**Star Demand Rating & Basic Educational/Training Requirements**  
*Source: www.laworks.net (Labor Market Information)*

Occupation	Star Demand Rating	Basic Educational/Training Req.
First-Line Supervisors	5	High School Diploma or Equivalent
Extruding & Drawing Machine	4	High School Diploma/OJT
Lathe & Machine Tool Setters	4	High School Diploma/OJT
Welders, Cutters, Solderers	4	High School Diploma/OJT
Gas Plant Operators	4	High School Diploma/OJT
Petroleum Pump System Ops.	4	High School Diploma/OJT
Chemical Equipment Ops.	4	High School Diploma/OJT
Compacting Machine Ops.	4	High School Diploma/OJT
Packaging & Filling Machine	4	High School Diploma/OJT
Paper Goods Machine Ops.	4	High School Diploma/OJT

**Career Pathways and Skills in Demand**

Career pathways are largely determined by an individual's long-term occupational goals and the occupational structure and skill needs of the industry in which they are employed. To "advance" in a career pathway, an individual may have to pursue formal education outside of the workplace or avail themselves to educational or training opportunities offered by their employer. Examples may include employers offering financial assistance to employees to further their job related education, employers participating in the Incumbent Worker Program, and employers involved in union sponsored registered apprenticeship programs. Through "time on the job," some employees may pick up the skills that their employer believes qualifies them for a promotion (i.e., progression on a career pathway).

The occupations included in the charts above give examples of the diverse ways that career paths may be followed. All but one of the ten occupations for Health Care and Social Assistance require post-secondary education (Associate Degree, Bachelor's Degree, Graduate Degree). The Construction Sector includes four occupations where training and skills can be obtained through formal apprenticeships, while, in the Manufacturing Sector, on-the-job training (OJT) is the primary means of skill acquisition and, possibly, progression on a career pathway (e.g., from Laborer to Machine Tool Setter).

### Existing Skills of Job Seekers and Local Business Demand

Matching the skills of job seekers with local business demand can be gauged, to some extent, by looking at information on “currently advertised jobs” available in Louisiana Star Jobs ([www.laworks.net/stars](http://www.laworks.net/stars)). Using this as a source, the chart below shows occupations with 20 or more “openings” for the Shreveport region (7th Planning District):

### Currently Advertised Jobs with 20 or More Openings for Shreveport Region as of December 13, 2024

Source: Louisiana Star Jobs ([www.laworks.net](http://www.laworks.net))

Job Title	Number of Advertised Openings
Registered Nurses	513
First-Line Supervisors Food Preparation & Serving Workers	126
Physical Therapists	126
General & Operations Managers	125
Customer Service Representatives	121
First-Line Supervisors Retail Sales Workers	99
Licensed Practical Nurses	98
Merchandise Displayers & Window Trimmers	84
Tax Preparers	54
Speech-Language Pathologists	45
Heavy & Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	44
Receptionists & Information Clerks	37
Physical Therapy Assistants	36
First Line Supervisors Production & Operating Workers	36
Security Guard	32
Stockers & Order Fillers	31
Pharmacists	31
Sales Managers	30
Radiologic Technologists & Technicians	29
HVAC Mechanics	28
Medical Assistants	28
Pharmacy Technicians	27
Executive Secretaries & Administrative Assistants	25
Nurse Practitioners	23
Dentists	23
Occupational Therapists	22
Family Medicine Physicians	22
Food Service Managers	22
Respiratory Therapists	20

In looking at the twenty-nine (29) occupations in the above chart, clearly, those that are part of the health care industry are dominant. This coincides with the Health Care Sector employing 20% of the Region 7 labor force and as a source of half (50%) of the projected increase in employment over the period of 2022 to 2032. The phenomenal number of 513 openings for Registered Nurses may be a result of a number of factors but indicates a likely “shortage” of qualified workers in this occupation. Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) is one the most frequently requested training activities of applicants eligible for the WIOA program, both LWDA 70 and LWDA 71. Attending a truck driving school to obtain a Class A CDL is also a highly popular training activity among WIOA participants with job openings (i.e., employer demand) for Heavy & Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers continuing to be plentiful.

4. Regional workforce considering current labor force employment and unemployment data, information on labor market trends, and educational and skill levels of the workforce, including individuals with barriers to employment (§ 679.510(a)(1)(iv) and § 679.560(a)(3)).

- How is the region changing in terms of demographics, labor supply and occupational demand?
- What special populations exist in the region, what is their magnitude, and what are the policy and service implications to meet the needs of these individuals?

### Changing Demographics and Labor Supply for Region 7

As described in the section General Economic Conditions, three of the challenges facing Region 7 are a declining population, especially for those 16 years of age and over and, with it, a smaller civilian labor force, in addition to lower than average labor force participation rates. With unemployment rates for Region 7's ten parishes currently remaining relatively "low" (in the 3.0% to 4.0% range), changing demographics for the region present the possibility of a "labor shortage" developing. The changing demographics (e.g., population loss) cannot be quickly reversed by policy decisions or actions taken by local government entities, although it is hoped that an increase in employment opportunities within the region will eventually result in the "in-migration" of a population segment in its prime labor force participation years (i.e., 25 to 54), a slowing of the "out-migration" of the region's population, and an increase in labor force participation rates.

### Special Populations in Region 7

There are likely two "special populations" within Region 7 that educational and workforce development activities should take into consideration: 1) the population below poverty level income that is within its labor force participation years and 2) the population with an educational attainment not beyond that of a high school diploma or equivalency.

### Population 18 to 64 with Income Below Poverty Level and Households Receiving SNAP Benefits

*Source: Census Bureau American Community Survey, Tables S1701 & S2201, Year 2023*

Parish	% Below Poverty Level	% Households Receiving SNAP
Lincoln	32.5%	23.3%
Claiborne	31.6%	28.5%
Bienville	28.6%	23.3%
Webster	27.2%	24.7%
Red River	26.4%	18.8%
Natchitoches	26.0%	19.4%
Sabine	22.9%	20.4%
Caddo	21.4%	20.5%
DeSoto	19.7%	21.6%
Bossier	15.2%	10.3%

In the above chart, one indicator is used to evaluate the poverty status of the population 18 to 64, a population segment that includes those most likely to participate in the labor force. The second indicator shows the percent of a parish's households receiving Food Stamp (SNAP) benefits. Both of these indicators can be used to evaluate the extent of poverty in each of Region 7's ten parishes and both indicators are used in determining eligibility for the WIOA Adult program. Although not a strong correlation, there appears to be some correspondence between the two indicators – parishes in Region 7 that have a high poverty rate for their adult population are also more likely have a higher percentage of households receiving Food Stamp (SNAP) benefits. What these two indicators suggest is that there is a significant segment within each of Region 7's ten parishes that is potentially eligible for WIOA Adult program services such as occupational skills training.

There is another related indicator that shows the relationship between work experience and poverty status for the population 16 years and over. It partially answers the question to what extent is employment related to poverty status in Region 7's ten parishes.

**Work Experience & Poverty Status for Population 16 Years & Over**  
*Source: Census Bureau American Community Survey, Table S1701, Year 2023*

Parish	% Work Full-Time	% Work Part-Time	% Did Not Work
Bienville	31.8% (7.4% Poverty)	16.8% (30.4% Poverty)	51.5% (35.5% Poverty)
Bossier	44.6% (4.7% Poverty)	20.1% (18.0% Poverty)	35.2% (24.0% Poverty)
Caddo	39.6% (5.2% Poverty)	19.5% (25.0% Poverty)	40.9% (31.4% Poverty)
Claiborne	28.4% (6.6% Poverty)	16.2% (32.8% Poverty)	55.4% (39.5% Poverty)
DeSoto	34.6% (6.0% Poverty)	19.8% (24.4% Poverty)	45.6% (27.2% Poverty)
Lincoln	35.0% (5.2% Poverty)	24.8% (41.8% Poverty)	40.2% (41.6% Poverty)
Natchitoches	35.5% (6.1% Poverty)	20.8% (30.8% Poverty)	43.7% (34.1% Poverty)
Red River	33.0% (9.3% Poverty)	19.3% (34.0% Poverty)	47.7% (31.5% Poverty)
Sabine	29.0% (5.0% Poverty)	21.1% (21.2% Poverty)	50.0% (30.5% Poverty)
Webster	32.1% (11.6% Poverty)	18.0% (28.1% Poverty)	50.0% (31.4% Poverty)

The percentages in parentheses indicate the percent poverty status for each of the three work experience categories. Working full-time obviously has a strong impact on reducing poverty but the variation among the ten parishes in Region 7 may be related to the presence of a parish's population in its prime labor force participation years (e.g., 25 to 54) and the availability of employment opportunities (jobs). For example, Bossier Parish and Caddo Parish are the location of two of the region's major municipalities (Bossier City, City of Shreveport) and have the highest percentage of the population 16 years and over working full-time. This may simply be because more employment opportunities (jobs) are available in these two parishes. However, this points to the contribution that WIOA program services can make in providing the adult population in each parish with occupational skills training leading to full-time employment and a reduction in poverty.

**Population 18 to 64 with Income Below Poverty Level and Households Receiving SNAP Benefits**  
*Source: Census Bureau American Community Survey, Tables S1701 & S2201, Year 2023*

Parish	No High School Diploma/Eq.	High School Diploma/Eq.
Claiborne	20.6%	48.8%
Red River	18.8%	51.0%
DeSoto	15.0%	39.5%
Sabine	14.3%	45.5%
Bienville	14.0%	50.1%
Webster	13.8%	43.9%
Natchitoches	12.7%	36.1%
Caddo	12.5%	31.7%
Lincoln	10.6%	29.6%
Bossier	9.3%	50.1%

Another possible barrier to employment for the adult population is those without a high school diploma or equivalency and those who have not pursued education beyond a high school diploma such as attending college or a vocational-technical school. The first column in the chart above ranks the ten parishes in Region 7 by the percent of the population 25 years and over without a high school diploma or equivalency while the second column shows the percent with only a high school diploma. LWDA 70 and LWDA 71 have established referral relationships with Adult Education programs in Region 7 as a means of assisting WIOA program applicants without a high school diploma or equivalency which can often be an obstacle to their enrolling at a vocational-technical school for occupational skills training. Using the Louisiana Workforce Commission's Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL), LWDA 70 and LWDA 71 can provide guidance and counseling to WIOA eligible applicants in selecting occupational skills training programs that, upon successful completion, will lead to employment providing a self-sufficiency income.

**Other Special Populations: At-Risk Youth, Single Parent Families, Individuals with Disability**

Two indicators that may be applicable in defining "at-risk youth" are those in the 18 to 24 age group without a high school diploma or equivalency (i.e., dropouts) and those with income below the poverty level.

**Population 18 to 24 without High School Diploma and Unrelated Individuals 18 to 24 with Income Below Poverty Level.**

*Source: Census Bureau American Community Survey, Tables S1501 & S1701 For Year 2023*

Parish	18 to 24 Without High School Diploma	Unrelated 18 to 24 Below Poverty Level
DeSoto	24.4%	64.3%
Bienville	18.9%	25.7%
Webster	17.8%	56.9%
Caddo	17.6%	54.3%
Claiborne	15.5%	53.8%
Bossier	13.0%	38.7%
Red River	12.9%	75.3%
Sabine	11.0%	55.5%
Natchitoches	4.2%	75.8%
Lincoln	3.9%	79.3%

18 to 24 generally includes most out-of-school youth (OSY) potentially eligible for the WIOA Youth program. Being a "dropout" is one of the Youth program barriers determining eligibility for services. In the first column of the above chart, close to 25% of DeSoto Parish youth 18 to 24 may be dropouts and, for those the Census Bureau classified as "Unrelated Individuals", almost two-thirds (64%) have an income below the poverty level. Somewhat similar percentages are shown for Bienville, Webster, and Caddo. For LWDA 70 and LWDA 71, this presents the challenge of attracting (recruiting) these youth to the WIOA program to provide services needed to obtain their high school equivalency (HiSET), provide paid work experience, and possibly on to an occupational skills training program with the ultimate objective to lift them out of poverty.

Single parent families with minor children, especially those with a female householder, are more likely to fall into financial distress or poverty, resulting in a reliance on public assistance for income support.

## Number of Female Householders with Income Below Poverty Level as Percent of All Families

Source: Census Bureau American Community Survey, Table B17006, Year 2023

Parish	Female Householders with Income Below Poverty	As % of All Families
Claiborne	1,116	42.7%
Bienville	1,162	40.1%
Lincoln	2,399	25.8%
Caddo	12,816	23.6%
Webster	1,891	23.1%
DeSoto	1,482	23.1%
Red River	337	20.3%
Natchitoches	1,649	19.6%
Sabine	958	19.2%
Bossier	4,094	13.0%

Table B17006 of the Census Bureau's American Community Survey provides data on family units in the categories of married-couple family, male householder with no spouse present, and female householder with no spouse present. A cursory look at this data shows a much greater incidence of poverty among female householders with minor children present. This is demonstrated in the above chart where the poverty rate among female householders is ranked as a percent of all families in each parish based on the data contained in Table B17006. For seven of the ten parishes in Region 7, the poverty rate among female householders is at 20% or greater with an astounding 40% for Bienville and Claiborne. There are no reliable estimates on the labor force participation of these female householders although "single parent" is one of several barriers to employment included in WIOA. Each program year, LWDA 70 and LWDA 71 enroll a significant number of "single parents" in the Adult and Youth programs providing WIOA financial assistance for occupational skills training and supportive services.

## Population 18 to 64 with a Disability - Ten Parishes in Region 7

Source: Census Bureau American Community Survey, Table S1810, Year 2023

Parish	Population 18 to 64	With Disability	% With Disability
Bienville	7,047	1,272	18.1%
Bossier	71,991	9,202	12.8%
Caddo	131,971	22,273	16.9%
Claiborne	6,564	813	12.4%
DeSoto	15,355	2,890	18.8%
Lincoln	31,473	3,252	10.3%
Natchitoches	21,691	3,143	14.5%
Red River	4,195	672	16.0%
Sabine	12,145	2,460	20.3%
Webster	19,921	3,244	16.3%

Using the data in the above chart, it can be estimated that 15.3% of the population 18 to 64 in Region 7 has a disability. Table S1810 in the American Community Survey also provides data on the nature of the disabilities for this population in three categories: vision difficulty, cognitive difficulty, ambulatory difficulty. However, the data alone do not indicate the "severity" of a disability or, if the disability requires accommodations or auxiliary aids in order for an individual to hold a job or enroll in education or training programs to prepare for employment. Nonetheless, LWDA 70 and LWDA 71 have established a close liaison with staff from Louisiana Rehabilitation Services (LRS) whose offices are present in Region 7 for technical assistance in the provision of employment and training services for individuals with disabilities. Additionally, WIOA case managers in Region 7 have been provided training on disability as a protected class under Section 188 of WIOA along with other sources for technical assistance (e.g., the Job Accommodation Network at <https://askjan.org>).

## Veterans

LWDA 70 and LWDA 71 adhere to the policy that, under the Workforce & Opportunity Act (WIOA), veterans receive priority for service. Based on estimates contained in Table S2101 of the Census Bureau's American Community Survey, the following ranks for the ten parishes in Region 7, the percent of the civilian population 18 years and over with Veteran Status:

### Population 18 and over with Veteran Status

Bossier = 10.7%  
Caddo = 8.2%  
DeSoto = 7.0%  
Sabine = 6.9%  
Webster = 6.7%  
Claiborne = 6.6%  
Natchitoches = 5.5%  
Bienville = 5.3%  
Lincoln = 5.1%  
Red River = 3.4%

Leading at 10.7%, Bossier Parish is the location of a major military installation, Barksdale Air Force Base, with its neighboring parish, Caddo, second at 8.2%.

B. Describe the development and implementation of sector initiatives for in-demand industry sectors or occupations for the planning region (§ 679.510(a)(1)(iii)). Plans must answer the following questions:

- How will the workforce partners convene employers, foundations and regional institutions to help lead sector partnerships and make coordinated investments?
- Identify the established and active industry sector partnerships in the region.
- What other sector-based partnerships exist in the region? If any exist, are they business-led and what is their role in planning?
- What other public-private partnerships exist in the region that could support sector strategies and what is their role in planning?
- What neutral conveners with the capacity to help establish sector partnerships exist in the region and what is their role in planning?
- How will the workforce partners convene employers, foundations and regional institutions to help lead sector partnerships and make coordinated investments?

The Northwest Louisiana Healthcare Sector Partnership serves as a strong example of workforce partners bringing together key stakeholders to address sector-specific needs. The Kick-Off Meeting for this partnership occurred on September 21, 2023, hosted by CHRISTUS Shreveport-Bossier Health System and attended by over 35 individuals, including five CEOs of healthcare facilities. This event highlighted the collective effort of employers, workforce partners, educational institutions, and economic development organizations to strategize and make coordinated investments.

Key Healthcare and workforce partners involved in convening and supporting this initiative include:

- CHRISTUS Shreveport-Bossier Health
- DeSoto Regional Health System
- Natchitoches Regional Medical Center
- Claiborne Memorial Medical Center
- Brentwood Hospital
- Minden Medical Center
- Willis-Knighton Health Systems
- Ochsner LSU Health

- LSU Health Shreveport
- Barksdale Air Force Base
- Local Workforce Development Boards 70 and 71
- Louisiana Workforce Commission
- North Louisiana Economic Partnership
- Bossier Parish Community College
- Northwest Louisiana Technical & Community College
- Southern University of Shreveport

The active involvement of these partners ensures alignment of resources, strategic coordination, and actionable solutions for shared priorities in the healthcare industry.

**Identify the established and active industry sector partnerships in the region.**

The Northwest Louisiana Healthcare Sector Partnership is the primary active industry sector initiative in the region. It focuses on strengthening the healthcare industry through collaboration and collective action. Specific objectives include addressing workforce shortages, recruitment challenges, retention issues, and improving relationships with regional educational institutions.

The partnership has established three committees that meet quarterly:

- Education & Training Committee
- Recruitment & Retention Committee
- Policy & Regulation Committee

Each committee plays a critical role in addressing the key challenges identified by the healthcare sector employers, such as personnel shortages, burnout, soft skills development, and promoting Northwest Louisiana as a healthcare destination.

**What other sector-based partnerships exist in the region? If any exist, are they business-led and what is their role in planning?**

While the Northwest Louisiana Healthcare Sector Partnership is the most prominent, other sector-based partnerships may exist within individual industries, such as manufacturing, transportation, or IT. However, these partnerships are often less formalized compared to the healthcare sector initiative. The healthcare sector partnership stands out due to its business-led structure and its clear role in planning through employer-led committees and actionable priorities.

**What other public-private partnerships exist in the region that could support sector strategies and what is their role in planning?**

The region benefits from multiple public-private partnerships that align with sector strategies. Examples include:

- Greater Shreveport Chamber of Commerce and Bossier Chamber of Commerce, both of which have been engaged to promote the healthcare sector and its career opportunities.
- Local Economic Development Organizations such as the North Louisiana Economic Partnership provide valuable economic insights and regional coordination.
- Educational Partners, including Bossier Parish Community College, Northwest Louisiana Technical & Community College, and Southern University of Shreveport play a critical role in aligning curricula and training programs with industry needs.

These public-private partnerships help amplify the efforts of the sector strategies by promoting regional workforce solutions and supporting healthcare sector growth.

### **What neutral conveners with the capacity to help establish sector partnerships exist in the region and what is their role in planning?**

LWC's Industry Sector Coordinator serves as a neutral convener with the expertise and capacity to facilitate and grow sector partnerships across Northwest Louisiana. LWDBs 70 and 71 works closely with LWC's Industry Sector Coordinator and the regional partners, employers, and educational institutions to ensure ongoing collaboration and progress.

LWC's Industry Sector Coordinator's role in planning includes:

- Facilitating quarterly in-person meetings and committee sessions for the healthcare partnership.
- Coordinate with the NW Louisiana Healthcare Sector Partnership Teams sector-driven initiatives, such as the 2025 Summer Healthcare Camp for middle school students, designed to address long-term workforce shortages by promoting healthcare careers to younger generations.
- Engaging chambers of commerce, educational partners, and employers to align regional resources for maximum impact.

### **Additional Initiative: 2025 Summer Healthcare Camp**

One innovative outcome of the partnership is the planning of the 2025 Summer Healthcare Camp for middle school students, aimed at inspiring interest in healthcare careers early. Highlights of the camp include:

- Two week-long camps hosted at Bossier Parish Community College in mid-July 2025.
- Focused themes such as Lung Day, Cardiac Day, Brain & Mental Health Day, and others, sponsored by healthcare partners.
- A cost-effective program at \$75 per student with 30 students per week, ensuring broad access for the Caddo and Bossier parish communities.

Additionally, Webster Parish representatives are exploring a half-day Healthcare Camp in Spring 2025 for local middle school students in collaboration with Minden Medical Center and Northwest Louisiana Technical & Community College, while Natchitoches Parish representatives are planning a similar initiative in collaboration with Natchitoches Regional Medical Center and Bossier Parish Community College – Natchitoches Campus.

The Northwest Louisiana Healthcare Sector Partnership demonstrates a robust, collaborative approach to addressing in-demand occupations within the healthcare industry. Through employer-led committees, public-private partnerships, and innovative initiatives such as the Healthcare Summer Camp, this sector strategy is well-positioned to strengthen the healthcare workforce and promote long-term economic growth in the region.

## CHAPTER 2: STRATEGIES FOR SERVICE INTEGRATION: REGIONAL

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

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

- Analyze the strengths and weaknesses of workforce development activities in the region.
- Analyze the capacity of the regional partners to provide workforce development activities to address the education and skill needs of the workforce including individuals with barriers to employment.
- Analyze the capacity of the regional partners to provide activities to address the needs of employers.
- How well do existing training programs in the region and local areas prepare job seekers to enter and retain employment with regional businesses?
- Summarize the commitments of each program partner to implement the selected strategies.

### **Analysis of Workforce Development Activities, Including Education and Training, in the Region**

#### Strengths:

- **Collaboration with Regional Partners:** The workforce development activities in Region 7 benefit from partnerships between Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs), community colleges, vocational training centers, and economic development agencies. This collaboration ensures that training programs are aligned with the needs of employers in the region. Programs such as WIOA-funded initiatives, industry-based certifications (IBCs), and work-based learning opportunities strengthen workforce alignment with economic demand.
  - o Example: Collaboration with LCTCS campuses provides accessible post-secondary education and credential opportunities aligned with high-demand occupations.
- **Diverse Training Options:** Education and training programs include classroom training, on-the-job training (OJT), apprenticeship programs, and customized industry training. The availability of Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) ensures that participants receive industry-recognized credentials in high-growth sectors.
  - o Example: Healthcare and skilled trades training address regional demand and employment opportunities.
- **Employer Engagement Initiatives:** Regional workforce systems maintain active employer partnerships through sector-based strategies, American Job Centers (AJCs), and industry-led workforce initiatives. Employers contribute to curriculum development, work-based learning opportunities, and hiring incentives.
- **Focus on Youth:** There is a strong emphasis on youth development through the WIOA Youth Program, which includes education, training, work experience, and incentives, ensuring that young people are prepared to enter the workforce with the skills they need.

#### Weaknesses:

- **Limited Access to Public Transportation in Rural Areas:** A significant portion of Region 7's population resides in rural areas, where transportation options are limited. This often creates barriers for participants who need to attend training programs or secure employment.
- **Skills Mismatch:** Some training programs do not fully align with evolving employer demands, particularly in rapidly changing industries like manufacturing and information technology.
- **Inconsistent Employer Engagement:** While some employers actively engage in workforce development, others are not as involved in shaping the training programs or participating in initiatives that would help address skill gaps. This lack of alignment can hinder the region's ability to meet the specific needs of employers.
- **Workforce Capacity:** Limited staffing and funding resources at AJCs and program partners can affect the ability to scale workforce development activities to meet regional demand.

- Participant Barriers: Individuals with barriers to employment, such as lack of digital literacy, affordable childcare, and housing instability, often face difficulties in completing education and training programs.

### **Analyze the capacity of the regional partners to provide workforce development activities to address the education and skill needs of the workforce including individuals with barriers to employment.**

1. Educational Institutions: LCTCS campuses and vocational schools in Region 7 deliver industry-recognized credentials and associate degree programs aligned with regional priority sectors such as healthcare, advanced manufacturing, IT, and skilled trades.
  - Example: Bossier Parish Community College and Northwestern State University offer specialized training in fields like healthcare, manufacturing, and information technology, addressing regional workforce needs.
2. AJCs: American Job Centers provide job fairs, workshops, case management, career services, and job placement support for individuals facing employment barriers.
3. WIOA Programs: The WIOA programs play a crucial role in upskilling individuals with barriers to employment. Through training, job search assistance, and work experience programs, WIOA provides personalized services to meet the educational and skill needs of participants.
  - Example: WIOA Youth programs assist participants in developing soft skills, completing certifications, and gaining work experience, which improves their employability.
4. Community Support: Several community-based organizations are dedicated to providing education and training opportunities for disadvantaged populations. These organizations, in collaboration with LWDBs, ensure that the most vulnerable populations can access workforce development programs.

### **Challenges:**

- Despite the existing capacity, there is often a need for more specialized programs in rapidly evolving fields such as digital literacy, advanced manufacturing, and green energy, where industry demands outpace current offerings.
- Limited capacity to expand training programs in rural areas due to resource constraints, lack of infrastructure, and transportation barriers.
- Cross-training between the Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC) and Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) is essential due to limited staff covering large territories; equipping local Business Services staff to assist employers with apprenticeship applications and provide timely guidance will enhance efficiency and ensure quicker turnaround times.
- There is a need to address competition among workforce programs targeting the same population and services by fostering collaboration to leverage resources more effectively and expand outreach to a broader service population.

### **Analyze the capacity of the regional partners to provide activities to address the needs of employers:**

1. Workforce Solutions for Employers: Region 7's workforce development system offers services that support employers in recruiting and training employees. These services include customized training, job matching, and access to job fairs.
  - Example: Partnering with businesses in healthcare, manufacturing, and technology sectors to create tailored training programs that meet specific industry needs.
2. Apprenticeship Programs: The region has an increasing focus on apprenticeship programs, which allow employers to play a key role in the development of their future workforce. These programs provide on-the-job training while allowing employers to ensure that employees are equipped with industry-specific skills.

3. Incumbent Worker Training: Region 7 offers incumbent worker training programs that allow current employees to upgrade their skills and enhance their productivity, addressing the evolving skill needs of employers.

Challenges:

- The primary challenge is ensuring consistent employer engagement across all sectors. Some industries, particularly in rural areas, may not see the value in participating in workforce development activities.
- Many small businesses in the region have limited resources to offer training or provide internships, which reduces the potential for job seekers to gain hands-on experience with employers.
- Cross-training between the Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC) and Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) is essential due to limited staff covering large territories; equipping local Business Services staff to assist employers with apprenticeship applications and provide timely guidance will enhance efficiency and ensure quicker turnaround times.
- There is a need to address competition among workforce programs targeting the same population and services by fostering collaboration to leverage resources more effectively and expand outreach to a broader service population.

**How well do existing training programs in the region and local areas prepare job seekers to enter and retain employment with regional businesses?**

1. Technical and Vocational Training: Many local training programs, especially those in partnership with community colleges, prepare job seekers well for entry-level employment. For example, technical training in welding, healthcare certifications, and IT skills help individuals secure positions in high-demand industries.

2. Sector-Specific Training: Programs are increasingly focusing on sectors that drive regional growth, including healthcare, manufacturing, and information technology. However, there is still room for improvement in aligning programs with specific employer needs in emerging fields and overcome a “silo” mentality.

3. Work-Based Learning: Many training programs integrate work-based learning, such as internships, apprenticeships, and on-the-job training, which provide participants with real-world experience and increase their chances of retention in the workforce.

Challenges:

- Although training programs are in place, at times, there can be a lack of alignment between the skills taught and the skills employers need. This gap is particularly noticeable in fast-growing industries where new technologies require more specialized skills.
  - Example: Despite Region 7’s successful collaboration with the Louisiana Workforce Commission and Bossier Parish Community College (BPCC) to secure BPCC’s Fiber Optics Technology training program on the ETPL, challenges arose in connecting program graduates with employment opportunities at internet service providers awarded grants for broadband construction and deployment, despite extensive stakeholder preparation and coordination.
- Increased focus on retention support, such as mentorship and career coaching, is needed to ensure long-term employment outcomes.

**Commitments of Program Partners to Implement Strategies**

Region 7’s workforce development partners have demonstrated a growing commitment to unifying and addressing both the educational and employment needs of individuals and the workforce demands of employers. Their collaborative efforts include:

**Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) and American Job Centers (AJCs)**

- Provide comprehensive career services, including case management, career coaching, and job placement assistance.

- Facilitate access to Individual Training Accounts (ITAs), On-the-Job Training (OJT), and work-based learning opportunities.
- Ensure individuals with barriers to employment receive supportive services, such as transportation assistance, digital literacy training, and financial aid navigation.

### **Community Colleges, Vocational Training Providers, and LCTCS Institutions**

- Develop and deliver industry-relevant training programs in alignment with regional demand sectors and employer feedback.
- Expand credential programs in high-demand industries, such as healthcare, advanced manufacturing, and information technology.
- Collaborate with employers to create tailored curricula that meet workforce needs.
- Increase dual-enrollment opportunities for high school students to support early career preparation.

### **Employers and Industry Partners**

- Engage actively in workforce development efforts, particularly in key sectors like healthcare and manufacturing.
- Support initiatives such as job fairs, apprenticeship programs, and customized training to strengthen talent pipelines.

### **Partner Agencies and Community-Based Organizations (DCFS, LRS, CSBG, CBOs)**

- Provide complementary services, including childcare, housing assistance, transportation, and financial aid, to individuals facing barriers to employment.
- Offer wraparound support services, such as mentorship, to ensure successful workforce participation.

### **WIOA Youth Programs**

- Expand outreach and engagement to serve in-school and out-of-school youth.
- Provide targeted training, credentialing, and soft skills development programs.
- Encourage program completion through incentives like the Conover Workplace Readiness certificates.

Through these commitments, regional partners will continue to enhance workforce development activities, address barriers to employment, and meet the evolving needs of employers to ensure a skilled and prepared workforce in Region 7.

B. Describe how transportation and other supportive services are coordinated within the region (§ 679.510(a)(1)(vi)). Plans must respond to the following questions:

- What regional organizations currently provide or could provide supportive services?
- What policies and procedures will be established to promote coordination of supportive services delivery?

### **Regional Organizations Providing Supportive Services**

In Region 7, various regional organizations currently provide or could provide supportive services that address critical barriers to employment, such as transportation, housing, and childcare. Key partners in the region include:

- Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS): Offers a range of services that assist low-income populations, including transportation assistance and childcare.
- Louisiana Rehabilitation Services (LRS): Supports individuals with disabilities, offering services that may include transportation and other needs-related support.
- Community Services Block Grant (CSBG): Provides resources to assist low income individuals and families in achieving self-sufficiency.
- SporTran public transportation in Shreveport/Bossier area sports a fleet of modern heavy duty and smaller cutaway buses equipped to handle all passengers, including those with disabilities. Thanks to the Zero Fare Program, residents ride FREE through year 2025.

- Rural Public Transit Program: A pilot operated by the Rapides Area Planning Commission, offering curb-to-curb transportation in Grant and Natchitoches Parishes for the general public and ADA-eligible individuals, Monday–Friday, with service running from 7:00 AM to 5:00 PM.
- Local Public Transportation Providers: Many urban areas in Region 7 have public transportation systems that can offer affordable commuting options.
- However, rural areas may experience limited availability, making transportation a significant barrier.
- Private Transportation Providers: Ride-sharing services such as Uber and Lyft help provide transportation options in rural areas where public transportation may be lacking.

These organizations collaborate to provide services that address the specific needs of individuals in Region 7, particularly those with barriers to employment.

- What policies and procedures will be established to promote coordination of supportive services delivery?

### **Policies and Procedures for Coordinating Supportive Services**

To maximize resources and ensure the efficient delivery of supportive services, Region 7 has established several policies and procedures:

#### **1. Coordination of Transportation and Other Supportive Services:**

- The Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) will work in collaboration with core partners, including CSBG, LRS, DCFS, and local transportation providers, to identify the needs of participants and develop strategies to reduce transportation barriers.
- Transportation assistance will be provided on an as-needed basis, based on individual assessments, and could include bus passes, gas cards, or stipends.
- In areas with limited public transportation options, shared ride services like Uber and Lyft will be leveraged to help participants get to training programs or employment opportunities.

#### **2. Maximizing Resource Utilization:**

- LWDBs will share best practices and explore opportunities for replicating successful strategies across both LWDA 70 and LWDA 71. This could include sharing transportation services or developing joint service offerings to help participants more efficiently access training and employment.
- Coordination with partner organizations offering additional supportive services, such as housing or childcare, has helped streamline service delivery and reduce duplication of efforts. This approach improves efficiency and makes the best use of available resources.

#### **3. Payment for Supportive Services:**

- Supportive services payments will be available for adult, dislocated worker, and youth participants. These payments are designed to help customers participate in workforce programs, secure, and retain employment.
- Payments for transportation and other services will be based on the individual's assessment and availability of funds, with careful monitoring to ensure the fair and effective use of resources.

#### **4. Avoiding Redundancy and Promoting Efficiency:**

- LWDBs will maintain clear policies and procedures for administering supportive services. These guidelines will ensure that funding is used efficiently and that services are provided in a coordinated manner, minimizing duplication and redundancy across programs.
- By creating a unified approach, Region 7 can deliver a comprehensive suite of supportive services that helps participants overcome barriers to employment and achieve long-term success.

In summary, Region 7 is committed to providing a holistic approach to workforce development by coordinating transportation and other supportive services. This collaborative effort will ensure that participants have the resources they need to succeed in workforce programs and secure sustainable employment opportunities.

C. Describe the coordination of services with regional economic development services and WIOA service providers (§679.510(a)(1)(vii)). Plans must answer the following questions:

- What economic development organizations, WIOA service providers or businesses are actively engaged in regional planning?
- What economic development organizations, WIOA service providers or businesses were invited to participate but declined?

### **Active Engagement in Regional Planning**

Each Local Area Board is comprised of at least 51% private sector representatives from local businesses, representing a variety of sectors, including the region's top industry sectors. These representatives provide ongoing feedback on strategy development.

Economic development representatives have been invited to and have participated in local and regional planning, offering meaningful and strategic input into the development of sector strategies.

### **Business Engagement Strategies**

Business Services Team representatives actively engage with the community through:

- Participation in Regional Meetings and Chamber events.
  - Speaking at workforce community meetings.
  - Conducting in-person employer site visits.
  - Maintaining consistent communication via email and phone.
- This proactive engagement generates regular feedback from employers, which informs workforce strategies and initiatives.

### **Stakeholder Feedback and Plan Review**

To ensure an open forum for all stakeholders:

- Opportunities were provided for stakeholders to address the comprehensive four-year plan directly.
- Feedback was gathered through outreach efforts, including partnerships with economic development organizations, educational institutions, and local municipalities.
- The Local Area Workforce Boards review and approve the plan every two years, with the opportunity to vote on the plan during Board meetings.

### **Public Comment and Transparency**

The updated plan is:

- Presented to the Board for comments.
- Publicly posted on each Local Workforce Development Area's (LWDA) webpage.
- Noticed in local newspapers throughout the ten-parish region for four weeks to invite public comment.

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

- Bossier Parish Community College (BPCC) - Adult Education (BPCC)
- Community Development/City of Shreveport - WIOA Title 1 (Adult, Dislocated Worker & Youth)
- Community Foundation of North Louisiana
- Incumbent Worker Training Program (IWTP) Unemployment Insurance (UI)
- Job Corps – Shreveport Job Corps
- Jobs for Veterans (JSVG)
- Labor Programs

- Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC) Wagner-Peyser (includes MSFW)
- Motivation Education & Training, Inc. (MET) - National Farm Worker Job Programs (NFJP)
- National Association for Hispanic Elderly (AYUDA) - Senior Employment
- North Louisiana Economic Partnership
- Northwest Louisiana Technical Community College (NLTC) - Adult Education
- Office of Administration
- Rapid Response
- Reentry Employment Opportunities
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (STEP)
- The Coordinating & Development Corporation - WIOA Title 1 (Adult, Dislocated Worker & Youth)
- Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA)
- Vocational Rehabilitation Services

**What economic development organizations, WIOA service providers or businesses were invited to participate but declined?**

No economic development organizations, WIOA service providers, or businesses invited to participate in the planning process declined the invitation.

D. Describe the coordination of administrative cost arrangements, including the pooling of funds for administrative costs, as appropriate (§ 679.510(a)(1)(v)).

The coordination of administrative cost arrangements, including the pooling of funds for administrative costs, is facilitated through the Infrastructure Funding Agreements (IFAs) and Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) established among American Job Center (AJC) partners. These agreements are essential for maintaining an efficient and effective One- Stop delivery system that ensures equitable and stable funding for operations and services.

**Key Coordination Strategies**

**1. Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) Agreements**

- Local workforce boards (LWDA 70 and LWDA 71), through their One-Stop Operator (OSO), facilitate and complete MOUs/IFAs with core title providers and required partners.
- Each MOU outlines the following:
  - o Services Provided: Services delivered through the One-Stop system, along with methods for coordination and delivery.
  - o Cost Sharing: Funding of services and operational costs through cash, non-cash, or third party in-kind contributions to create a stable and equitable funding stream.
  - o Referral Methods: Referral processes between the OSO and partners to ensure individuals receive appropriate services and activities.
  - o Accessibility: Provisions addressing the needs of workers, youth, and individuals with barriers to employment, including those with disabilities, to ensure access to necessary services, technology, and materials.
  - o Amendments and Reviews: Procedures for amending the MOU and assurances of a review at least every three years to maintain proper funding and service delivery.

**2. Cost Allocation and Resource Sharing**

- MOUs and IFAs ensure the equitable sharing of infrastructure costs among partner programs, proportional to their use of AJCs and the relative benefits they receive.
- Agreements are structured to leverage resources, eliminate duplication of services, and improve overall efficiency, thereby reducing both administrative and program costs.

### **3. Staff Training**

- MOUs enable AJC partners to provide enhanced staff training opportunities that go beyond what individual budgets might typically allow.

### **4. Quarterly Invoicing**

- Local boards, through the OSO, invoice AJC partners quarterly to ensure timely payment of shared costs and proper financial management.

### **Strengthening Partnerships**

Building on a foundation of robust partnerships, local boards, in collaboration with the OSO, continuously expand and deepen relationships with AJC partners. These efforts support the alignment of Regional and Local Plans, enhance local programs, and foster innovative opportunities for shared clients.

### **Alignment with Regional and Local Plans**

The strategies outlined above integrate seamlessly with the broader goals of the Regional and Local Plans, ensuring the effective delivery of services and sustainable operations for the One-Stop system.

## CHAPTER 3: VISION, GOALS AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES: REGIONAL

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

A. Describe the local strategic vision to support state and regional economic growth (§ 679.560(a)(5)). Describe how this aligns with the State of Louisiana's vision and principles.

Region 7's workforce strategic vision focuses on enhancing the competitive position of Northwest Louisiana businesses by developing a highly skilled workforce that meets the needs of employers and supports regional economic growth. This vision aligns with the State of Louisiana's principles by emphasizing innovation, collaboration, and inclusiveness.

Region 7 envisions a workforce development system that is employer-centric, leveraging the collective efforts of economic development partners and fostering strong industry partnerships. The system is holistically focused on regional sector strategies, prioritizing industries that drive economic growth. By utilizing current labor market data, Region 7 addresses both the supply and demand sides of the regional economy, understanding employer needs and evaluating the effectiveness of education and training systems in meeting those demands.

The region's vision emphasizes building career pathways through educational opportunities across the region, ensuring that all individuals, regardless of barriers, have access to employment within targeted industry sectors. This includes creating pathways for low-skilled adults, youth, veterans, individuals with disabilities, returning talent, and those facing multiple challenges to enter the workforce.

To achieve this, Region 7 aims to create a unified system of workforce, education, and economic development partners that supports businesses and individuals while contributing to a vibrant and robust regional economy. This system remains responsive to changes in the economy, including shifts in dominant industries, technological advancements, and evolving skill requirements. By collaborating with educators and economic development agencies, the workforce development system provides an aligned and adaptable framework to support career advancement for workers and job seekers.

The One-Door Employment System: Building on the State of Louisiana's commitment to innovation and accessibility, Region 7 will actively be integrating the One-Door employment system into its service delivery. This initiative provides a unified platform that connects job seekers, employers, and workers, creating a seamless experience. By streamlining services and enhancing the referral process, Region 7 simplifies access to employment and training opportunities while ensuring tailored support for vulnerable populations.

The One-Stop delivery system in Region 7 complements this vision by providing a true "One-Stop" experience, offering seamless access to programs and resources for employers, workers, and job seekers—whether in person or electronically. This comprehensive approach reduces redundancies, enhances service efficiency, and ensures individuals have clear pathways to success.

By focusing on strategic alignment with Louisiana's broader goals, Region 7 strengthens labor force participation and economic resilience. Expanding work-based learning opportunities, such as Registered Apprenticeships, and leveraging sector partnerships further position the region as a leader in workforce innovation. Through collaboration, inclusivity, and targeted interventions, Region 7 is building a resilient and vibrant workforce ecosystem that supports the shared vision of economic growth and workforce excellence for all Louisianans.

B. Describe the local goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce (including youth and individuals with barriers to employment) and goals relating to the performance accountability measures based on performance indicators (§ 677.155(a)(1)).

- **Increase Access to Employment, Education, and Training Services for Those with Barriers to Employment:**  
Establish and expand Career Pathways that provide clear routes to skill, credential, and degree attainment, particularly for individuals facing barriers to employment, such as low-skilled adults and youth. Leverage programs like Jump Start and WorkReady U to provide foundational and advanced skills training.
- **Promote Equity and Workforce Participation of Historically Underrepresented Populations:**  
Partner with community-based organizations and stakeholders to integrate historically underrepresented populations, including individuals with disabilities, veterans, and out-of-school youth, into sector-based Career Pathways. Ensure equity by utilizing programs like WorkReady U and Jump Start to close educational gaps and increase workforce participation.
- **Align Workforce Investment, Education, and Economic Development Systems for a Coordinated Workforce Development System:**  
Strengthen the alignment of Career Pathways with local economic development and education systems, ensuring a seamless transition for participants between educational opportunities, workforce services, and job placements. Integrate programs like Jump Start and STEP Forward as key elements of the Career Pathways model for in-school and out-of-school youth.
- **Develop and Maintain a High-Quality Workforce System to Meet Business Needs and Ensure Global Competitiveness:**  
Foster the development of Regional Sector Partnerships with employers, industry groups, and business associations to create demand-driven Career Pathways that align with local labor market needs. Expand opportunities for Registered Apprenticeships and Pre-Apprenticeships to ensure that the workforce is equipped with the skills required for success in a global economy.
- **Support Lifelong Learning and Up-Skilling for Workers Throughout Their Careers:**  
Provide ongoing opportunities for career advancement and up-skilling through initiatives like Registered Apprenticeships, Pre-Apprenticeships, and seamless credit transfers between postsecondary institutions. Ensure that workers have the tools to continuously build skills and adapt to evolving workforce demands.
- **Increase Opportunities for Youth Work-Based Learning Experiences:**  
Expand work-based learning opportunities for youth by increasing access to summer employment, apprenticeships, internships, and other hands-on experiences that are integrated into the Career Pathways model. Ensure that youth gain valuable work experience to improve their skills and future employability.

Region 7's performance accountability goals focus on improving employer engagement, increasing jobseeker outcomes, and expanding access to Career Pathways. Key objectives include increasing employer participation in the HiRE system, tracking Repeat Business Customers, and enhancing career opportunities for individuals, particularly those facing barriers to employment. By expanding sector-based Career Pathways and incorporating supportive services like transportation and childcare, Region 7 aims to reduce barriers and improve workforce participation, ensuring that both youth and adults can access quality training and education that aligns with industry needs.

The region also focuses on youth engagement in work-based learning opportunities like internships, apprenticeships, and summer employment to prepare them for stable, sustainable employment. By fostering partnerships with businesses, Region 7 will align training programs with workforce demands and measure success through metrics like credential attainment, employment placement, and retention rates.

Lastly, Region 7 aims to establish a comprehensive accountability system that evaluates the effectiveness of workforce programs using both business-focused and jobseeker metrics. This approach will ensure that the region's workforce system continues to evolve to meet the needs of both employers and workers, driving economic growth and improving individual career outcomes.

C. Provide a description of the regional and local strategies that will achieve the vision and principles. This must include a description of the strategies and services that will be used in the local areas:

1. To facilitate engagement of employers in workforce development programs, including small employers and employers in in-demand industry sectors and occupations (§ 679.560(b)(3)(i));

Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) 70 and 71 collaborate with regional economic development entities to address workforce needs in Region 7, with a focus on manufacturing, healthcare, and construction.

Key strategies include:

- Quarterly Workforce Development Ecosystem Meetings:  
Led by the COO of the Northwest Louisiana Economic Partnership, these meetings engage stakeholders to identify workforce needs by parish and drive regional alignment.
- Business Engagement Initiative:  
Focused on developing tailored service packages to meet business needs, particularly for small businesses and targeted industry sectors.

### **Regional Business Services Strategy**

A regional sector-based approach transforms workforce development service delivery in Region 7, ensuring:

- Strategic Partnerships:  
Collaboration among businesses, training providers, community organizations, and key stakeholders to address workforce challenges and promote economic competitiveness.
- Employer-Centric Solutions:  
This problem-oriented approach addresses specific needs of businesses within high-demand sectors, fostering systemic change.

### **Benefits of the Regional Approach**

- Coordinated Service Delivery:  
Regional Business Services Teams (RBSTs) unify workforce agencies, including Rapid Response, Business Service Representatives, and others, to serve businesses effectively across parish boundaries.
- Enhanced Talent Pool:  
Expanding geographic service areas increases the number of qualified job seekers available to employers.
- Support for Economically Less-Developed Areas:  
Recruiting, training, and retaining workers in underserved areas is prioritized.
- Skill Alignment:  
Meeting employer needs for recruitment, retention, and training, while promoting career advancement for workers.

## **Key Components of the Regional Business Services Team (RBST)**

The RBST integrates programs such as:

- Wagner-Peyser
- Veterans/LVER
- WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth Programs
- Louisiana Rehabilitation Services/REDS
- Incumbent Worker Training Program
- Rapid Response Team
- Other employer-focused stakeholders

This alignment ensures seamless delivery of services to small businesses and industries across the region.

## **Partner Co-Location for Enhanced Communication**

Several American Job Centers in Region 7 houses multiple programs, including:

- Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA)
- Business Service Representatives (BSRs)
- Incumbent Worker Training Program (IWTP)
- Rapid Response (RR)
- Disabled Veterans Outreach Program (DVOP)
- WIOA Adult, Youth, and Dislocated Worker Programs
- Wagner Peyser (WP)
- Louisiana Rehabilitation Services (LRS)

Daily communication among co-located partners fosters collaboration, strengthens service delivery, and facilitates cross-regional coordination, adding credibility to workforce services.

## **Employer Engagement Services and Activities**

- Facilitating and supporting employer events.
- Participating in regional business services coordination and outreach efforts.
- Engaging employers in high-wage and high-demand industries, alongside other key sectors.

This strategy aligns workforce development efforts with regional labor market needs, supporting economic growth and workforce advancement throughout Region 7

2. To support a local workforce development system that meets the needs of businesses in the local area (§ 679.560(b)(3)(ii));

The Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) 70 and 71 will continue implementing a proactive, strategic approach to engage local employers and ensure alignment with the workforce needs of in-demand industries and growing sectors. Through targeted sector strategy discussions, the Boards will foster collaboration with employers, economic developers, and community partners to create a workforce system that enhances employment opportunities and supports the economic well-being of Louisiana families.

To strengthen this alignment, the Boards are focusing on expanding employer outreach and enhancing service delivery through the efforts of Title I programs. Local American Job Centers (AJCs) are encouraged to play a pivotal role in community engagement by participating in local chambers of commerce, attending business events, and strengthening relationships with regional employers. The Region 7 One-Stop Operators will facilitate collaboration among AJCs, chambers, and community partners to ensure cohesive efforts and effective outreach.

LWDBs 70 and 71, in partnership with operators, will develop and promote strategies to inform employers about the comprehensive range of services offered through the AJCs, including:

- Employee Recruitment and Screening
- Job Posting Assistance
- Organizing and Participating in Hiring Events
- Prescreening and Referring Qualified Candidates
- Work-Based Learning Opportunities
- Information on Tax Credits
- Access to Labor Market Information (LMI)
- Labor Law Compliance Guidance
- Rapid Response Program Support

By disseminating this information, the Boards aim to strengthen partnerships with local businesses, enhance service accessibility, and address workforce challenges effectively.

Utilizing local labor market information (LMI) will be a cornerstone of the Boards' data-driven approach. By analyzing trends, industry demands, skill gaps, and economic conditions, the Boards will develop initiatives that meet the evolving needs of employers. Louisiana's LMI will guide decisions to identify in-demand industries, forecast job growth, and align workforce training programs with employer requirements.

Through these efforts, LWDBs 70 and 71 are committed to building a responsive, data-informed workforce development system that meets business needs, promotes economic growth, and delivers meaningful employment outcomes for Region 7.

3. To better coordinate workforce development programs and economic development (§ 679.560(b)(3)(iii));

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

1. Establish Career Pathways as a model for skill, credential, and degree attainment for Louisiana citizens to secure jobs that provide opportunities for economic independence and family stability.

2. Increase the participation and utilization of the workforce system by employers and job-seekers.

In particular, Regional and Local EDOs have agreed to:

- Use their strategic plans, industry targets, and priority programs to work with the WIOA Regional Planning Team to develop common goals and priorities for workforce development.
- Provide feedback on priority status of top industries for this Region based on data and emerging trends learned from existing, new, and prospective employers.
  - o For example, the North Louisiana Economic Partnership (NLEP) conducted a 5-year strategic plan that identifies target industries for business development based on our Regional strengths and assets (Advanced Manufacturing to include Aerospace, Professional Services to include Information Technology, Forestry and Agribusiness, and Transportation, Distribution & Logistics), and target talent clusters that should be prioritized to ensure a skilled workforce for our economic driver industries. These talent clusters (skilled trades, healthcare, and information technology) line up well with the Star Jobs and Tiered Job analysis done by the State.

- Assist in development of sector partnerships by:
  - o Providing guidance on priority target sectors (see above)
  - o Identifying employers in priority target sectors
  - o Identifying existing industry associations to leverage in development of sector partnerships (e.g. Manufacturing Managers Council, FAME Northwest Louisiana, TECHBY20, Louisiana Associated General Contractors)
  - o Invite new employers in target sectors to join sector partnership
- Serve on Regional Business Services Team, including attending regular Team meetings and providing feedback from employers on employment needs, existing and emerging, as well as skills gaps.
- Assist in development of Career Pathways and stackable credentials based on employer feedback.
  - o Based on strong existing relationships with higher education institutions in developing or updating certification programs to meet the needs of employers (e.g. Advisory Board participation, scheduling intensive interviews/tours of employers' facilities and critical skill needs), EDOs can convene industry-education-training work sessions to develop detailed Career Pathways with relevant industry-valued credentials.
- Assist in alignment of sector training between K-12 (Jump Start) and post-secondary to ensure there are not gaps and that students can easily transition from industry training under Jump Start to related industry training at a post-secondary institution within their Region.
- Identify employers that could form consortia for training (Incumbent Worker Training, in particular) or Apprenticeship programs (e.g. FAME).
- Solicit feedback from employers about Star Jobs identified for this Region (are they relevant for Regional employers, what jobs are missing). Assist in creation and dissemination of target sector employer skill surveys.
- Market workforce solutions offered by the Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC), American Job Centers (AJCs), and Louisiana Economic Development (LED) Fast Start to existing and new employers.

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

- Assist in development and implementation of public marketing strategies to highlight Star Jobs and training programs that support them to all segments of the community (parents, elected officials, non-profits organizations, other government agencies, etc).
  - o North Louisiana Manufacturing Month is one way the North Louisiana Economic Partnership (NLEP) is providing career exploration, by coordinating tours of manufacturing plants and manufacturing training programs for high school students in Northwest Louisiana. Each student receives a take-home booklet of information on manufacturing occupations, average salaries, and Regional training programs.
  - o NLEP facilitates 2-3 convenings a year of the Northwest Louisiana Workforce Development Ecosystem, which is made up of a variety of governmental, nonprofit, education, chamber and economic development organizations that have at least some parts of their mission and programming dedicated to helping residents qualify for family-supporting jobs. At these convenings, partner organizations share information about new programs or new funding sources that are tied to high-demand, good-wage jobs so all entities present can connect their clients to them.
- Assist in identifying alternate funding (private sector, Federal government, non-profit) for critical training programs or services that support Star Jobs.
  - o This could include organizing employer consortia for Apprenticeship programs, soliciting private, public, and foundation dollars for support of Jump Start implementation and marketing, and bringing together collaborators on Federal or National foundation grant opportunities.

- o An example of this is the Federation for Advanced Manufacturing Education (FAME), which has a chapter in Northwest Louisiana based in the Shreveport-Bossier market. The program is a partnership between participating manufacturers, Bossier Parish Community College, and “backbone” organization NLEP to develop and administer a work-study model that prepares students to become skilled maintenance technicians, a high-demand occupation across the nation.

Region 7 is committed to fostering seamless integration between workforce development and economic development efforts to drive job creation, enhance skill development, and support long-term economic growth. By working closely with the Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC), regional economic development organizations, and local business leaders, Region 7 ensures alignment of workforce strategies with the broader economic goals of the region.

### **Engaging New Employers**

- Collaborate with the Louisiana Workforce Commission and regional economic development partners to provide incoming employers with comprehensive information about the workforce services and resources available to them.
- Offer customized support to new employers, including access to recruitment, training, and work-based learning programs, to ensure their workforce needs are met.

### **Strengthening Communication Channels**

- Maintain ongoing communication with economic developers to exchange critical workforce intelligence and share insights about industry trends, employer needs, and regional priorities.
- Use shared intelligence to inform training providers and partners about current and anticipated workforce demands, ensuring alignment of training programs with employer needs.

### **Participation in Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Planning**

- Actively participate in regional CEDS planning meetings alongside economic development partners, business leaders, and other stakeholders.
- Contribute to the development of long-term strategic plans that integrate workforce development as a key component of regional economic growth.

### **Enhancing Collaboration with Local Business Leaders**

- Work with local employers to identify skill gaps and develop tailored workforce solutions, including on-the-job training, apprenticeships, and upskilling initiatives.
- Engage business leaders in discussions about emerging industries and opportunities to create sustainable jobs in the region.

Through these coordinated efforts, Region 7 will ensure that workforce development programs remain responsive to the economic development needs of the region, supporting sustainable growth and the creation of a skilled and competitive workforce.

4. To strengthen linkages between the one-stop delivery system and unemployment insurance programs (§ 679.560(b)(3)(iv));

Region 7 will strengthen linkages between the one-stop delivery system and unemployment insurance programs by developing seamless referral processes and ensuring effective coordination between services. Formal referral procedures are established to connect unemployment insurance claimants with one-stop services, supported by regular staff training on eligibility criteria and application processes. Integrated service delivery can further enhance these connections by co-locating unemployment insurance program representatives at the one-stop center, where feasible, and using shared technology systems like HiRE to provide unified access to reemployment assistance, job matching, and training opportunities.

Additionally, the one-stop delivery system can collaborate with unemployment insurance programs to deliver tailored job search support that meets work-search requirements, such as hosting workshops on resume writing, interview skills, and labor market navigation. Offering targeted Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessments (RESEA) can further assist claimants in transitioning from unemployment to employment by providing career planning, skills development, and job matching.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### **Description of a RESEA**

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

**Eligibility Review**

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

**Labor Market Information**

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

**Employment Strategy Plan**

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

**Individual Employment Plan (IEP)**

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

**Referral to Re-employment Services and Appropriate Training**

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

**Re-employment Services**

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

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

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

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

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

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

Multiple strategies strengthen the linkages between the one-stop delivery system and unemployment insurance programs. RESEA participants are directly linked to the unemployment insurance program; these participants are expected to meet with an employment specialist/case manager to more intensely engage in career services. Wagner-Peyser staff encourage unemployment insurance participants to meet with case management staff for employment services beyond basic career services.

Regular communication and coordination between one-stop staff, unemployment insurance program representatives, and other workforce partners are essential to ensure services are aligned and responsive to the needs of claimants. Shared outreach campaigns and marketing efforts can effectively inform unemployment insurance claimants of available services, while supportive services, such as assistance with transportation or childcare, can help overcome barriers to participation. Leveraging data analytics to identify workforce trends and evaluate linkage efforts is crucial to tailoring services and improving outcomes. By integrating efforts, such as co-hosting job fairs and connecting claimants to in-demand industry opportunities, the one-stop delivery system can enhance the effectiveness of these partnerships. These actions create a cohesive approach to workforce development, ensuring unemployment insurance claimants receive the comprehensive support they need to reenter the labor market successfully.

5. To promote entrepreneurial skills training and microenterprise services (§ 679.560(b)(4));

Region 7 relies on the expertise of Regional Industry Coordinators and Business Service Representatives (BSRs) to champion entrepreneurial skills training and microenterprise development. These professionals play a critical role in engaging businesses and industry leaders to identify workforce needs and in assisting Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) and American Job Centers (AJCs) with setting goals, objectives, and strategies to address these needs effectively.

Incorporate entrepreneurial training as a career pathway option for participants interested in self-employment. Training programs can include workshops on business start-up strategies, accessing capital, risk management, and leveraging technology. Microenterprise services, such as mentorship programs and connections to business incubators or co-working spaces, can further support participants in turning business ideas into viable ventures. One local option of microenterprise is The Milam Street Kitchen Incubator/Community Kitchen which functions as a kitchen incubator/workforce development hybrid to encourage culinary and workforce training entrepreneurship opportunities to the Allendale/Ledbetter Heights community. The proposed project builds upon an existing economic strength and targeted economic development industry for the state – food production and culinary arts – making use of idle, abandoned, and adjudicated properties acquired by the City of Shreveport for Choice Implementation activities. The multi-faceted project has an immediate economic impact by providing affordable workspace, opportunities for business expansion, a means for like-minded businesses to partner and network with one another, technical assistance to culinary businesses for marketing, financial training, and other needed skills, and a place for the community to come together through the Community Kitchen's Community Café. Targeted outreach should focus on specific populations, such as youth, veterans, dislocated workers, and individuals with barriers to employment, while marketing strategies should highlight entrepreneurship as a path to economic independence.

Additionally, hosting events such as business pitch competitions, entrepreneurial expos, and networking sessions can foster innovation and connect participants with potential investors and community resources. To support program sustainability, LWDBs can use WIOA funds to deliver microenterprise activities, provide technical assistance, and establish referral networks to connect participants with financing options like microloans.

Finally, measurable outcomes such as the number of businesses launched, participants completing training, or jobs created should be tracked to evaluate program success and drive continuous improvement. By aligning efforts workforce systems can promote entrepreneurship as a dynamic pathway to self-sufficiency and economic growth.

Through a collaborative approach, Region 7 has identified healthcare, manufacturing, transportation, and IT as the region's top industries with the most pressing workforce demands. Using Labor Market Information (LMI) and partnerships with Regional Economic Development Organizations (EDOs), high-demand occupations in these industries are targeted, with a specific focus on positions rated as 3-5 stars by Louisiana Star Jobs. This strategic alignment ensures that workforce initiatives directly support the region's economic priorities.

To measure the effectiveness of services provided, Region 7 has implemented business metrics designed to evaluate market penetration and track repeat business customers. These metrics provide a framework for assessing the region's impact on businesses and ensuring that workforce services are meeting employer needs and driving economic growth.

Entrepreneurial skills training is further supported by collaborations between regional boards and educational institutions. This partnership creates opportunities to tailor training programs that incorporate employer feedback and address skill gaps in the workforce. By staying attuned to employer needs and adapting to evolving economic conditions, the region enhances its capacity to prepare individuals for entrepreneurial opportunities.

The AJCs in Region 7, working in partnership with the Louisiana Workforce Commission, extend robust support to microenterprise ventures. These services include hosting recruitment events, pre-screening candidates for small business needs, assisting with job postings, and providing free resources available through the workforce system. These initiatives aim to empower small businesses by equipping them with the tools and support necessary to succeed.

By fostering entrepreneurial skills and supporting microenterprise development, Region 7 is advancing a comprehensive approach to workforce development that aligns with employer needs and promotes long-term regional economic growth.

6. To implement initiatives such as incumbent worker training programs, on-the-job training programs, customized training programs, industry and sector strategies, career pathways initiatives, utilization of effective business intermediaries, and other business services and strategies designed to meet the needs of regional employers (§ 679.560(b)(3)(v)).

Region 7 is dedicated to implementing and supporting innovative programs and strategies to address the workforce demands of regional employers. By leveraging partnerships with key industries, integrating career pathways, and providing targeted business services, Region 7 ensures a responsive and adaptable workforce system aligned with regional economic priorities.

- Career Pathways for All Participants
  - o Provide WIOA adults, dislocated workers, and youth with clearly defined career pathways designed to lead to living-wage jobs in the region.
  - o Collaborate with education and training providers to align curricula with industry standards, ensuring participants gain the skills necessary for career advancement.

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

Students are required to attain industry-promulgated, industry-valued credentials in order to graduate with a Career Diploma. Schools receive the same accountability grade credit for preparing students for careers in high-demand job sectors as they do for students who achieve top academic honors. The Regional Industry Coordinator with the Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC) has been an integral part of this Northwest Louisiana Jump Start Team.

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

As a condition of approving the pathways, the board commissioned a panel that includes CTE directors to bring back to BESE further adjustments to Jump Start 2.0, including further universal courses.

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

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

Pathways in the following industries:

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

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

- Incumbent Worker Training Programs
  - o Work with employers to develop training programs that upskill their current workforce, increasing productivity and reducing turnover.
  - o Leverage WIOA funding to support employer investments in employee development.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Region 7's Local Workforce Development Areas (LWDAs) actively leverage On-the-Job Training (OJT) programs to address skill gaps and connect job seekers with meaningful employment opportunities. These programs are implemented in collaboration with the Louisiana Workforce Commission's (LWC) Business Service Representatives (BSRs) and Industry Sector Coordinators to ensure seamless service delivery to local businesses.

OJT programs in Region 7 target high-demand industries such as healthcare, manufacturing, and service sectors, where workforce shortages are most prevalent. These partnerships allow employers to provide hands-on training for new hires while addressing immediate skill gaps. Business Service Representatives (BSRs) from LWDA 70 and LWDA 71 work directly with employers to facilitate demand-driven workforce solutions, including OJT contracts, ensuring alignment with industry needs.

In addition to OJT, Region 7 offers Customized Training tailored to the specific requirements of local industries. The BSRs and Youth Business Representatives (YBRs) engage directly with businesses to understand their unique challenges and serve as valuable referral sources for Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) clients interested in OJT or Customized Training opportunities.

OJT programs begin with a skills-gap analysis, developed collaboratively by the BSRs and the employer. This assessment evaluates the knowledge and skills of each WIOA participant, identifies areas for improvement, and establishes a customized training plan. Employers are actively involved in setting the training timeline and objectives to ensure the program meets their needs.

For participants, OJT provides the chance to earn an income while gaining the skills necessary to succeed in a new role. Employers benefit from reduced training costs, as they can be reimbursed up to 50% of the participant's wage rate to cover the extraordinary costs of training and supervision. Eligible employers include public, private non-profit, and private sector organizations.

The duration of OJT is determined by several factors, including the target occupation, the participant's prior experience, and the service strategy. Once participants are certified for the program and hired by an employer, reimbursement for training costs begins and continues until the training period concludes.

By addressing the workforce needs of both employers and job seekers, Region 7's OJT programs play a vital role in building a skilled workforce while driving economic growth in the region.

- Customized Training Programs
  - Design tailored training solutions to meet specific employer or industry needs, focusing on high-demand occupations and critical skills gaps in the region.
  - Work closely with employers and training providers to ensure program relevancy and effectiveness.
  
- Industry and Sector Strategies
  - Strengthen sector partnerships in healthcare, manufacturing, and service industries to identify workforce needs, design solutions, and enhance workforce pipelines.
  - Support the development of regional strategies to address emerging demands in critical sectors.
  
- Sector Strategies and Career Pathways
  - The Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) in Region 7, in collaboration with Chief Elected Officials (CEOs), are spearheading regional planning processes aimed at establishing effective service strategies and developing sector-specific initiatives for in-demand occupations. These efforts align employment, training, education, and supportive services to create career pathways tailored to the region's workforce needs.
  - Sector strategies are employer-driven and designed to ensure that businesses recognize the value of their involvement in the partnership. They aim to address skill gaps by growing the pipeline of qualified candidates for targeted industries. Initiatives like Jump Start and WorkReady U (WRU), embedded within the education system, are key components of these efforts to enhance career readiness and support economic growth.

Sector strategies in Region 7 are not one-size-fits-all but are rooted in common principles that reflect the needs of local economies:

- Dual Purpose: Align education, training, and support services to meet employer needs while ensuring accessibility for a wide range of workers.
- Strong Intermediary Role: Depend on a dedicated organization to sustain momentum, facilitate communication, and broker relationships between service providers and employers.
- Employer-Driven Focus: Engage businesses to drive the strategy and recognize their direct benefits.
- Systemic Change: Promote workforce strategies that benefit workers across all wage and skill levels, support industry growth, and enhance the broader community.
- Workforce System Integration: Position the workforce system as a key player, serving as an intermediary, operations manager, funding source, or provider of Labor Market Information (LMI).

The "MA NOW" Training Program was proven to be a resounding success, exemplified by the seamless transition of participants into meaningful employment in healthcare. Through the combined efforts of Ochsner Health System, Southern University of Shreveport, LWDA 70, and LWDA 71, students not only received tuition-free education but also hands-on training across multiple departments, gaining essential skills and certifications in HIPAA and OSHA compliance. Graduates of the four-month program, equipped with comprehensive clinical and administrative expertise, were successfully placed into Medical Assistant positions at Ochsner's neighborhood health centers. These placements not only addressed workforce shortages but also empowered participants to embark on fulfilling healthcare careers, improving patient care and enhancing community health outcomes.

- Utilization of Effective Business Intermediaries
  - Engage industry associations, chambers of commerce, and other business intermediaries to expand employer outreach and collaboration.

- o Use these partnerships to promote WIOA services and enhance the alignment of workforce programs with employer needs.
- Business Services and Strategies
  - o Provide a comprehensive suite of business services, including talent recruitment, labor market information, and financial incentives for workforce training.
  - o Regularly assess employer satisfaction and adapt services to meet evolving needs.

Through these initiatives, Region 7 will continue to strengthen its partnerships with employers, enhance career pathways for job seekers, and build a workforce that supports the region's economic growth and competitiveness.

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

Region 7 is committed to expanding access to apprenticeships and other work-based learning (WBL) opportunities by fostering collaboration with the Louisiana Workforce Commission, employers, higher education partners, and Career and Technical Education (CTE) institutions. Through a strategic focus on enhancing employer engagement, program accessibility, and participant success, Region 7 aims to establish a comprehensive framework for workforce skill development that meets the demands of the local job market. The following strategies will guide these efforts:

#### 1. Employer Recruitment for Work-Based Learning Opportunities

- Develop targeted outreach initiatives to recruit employers across industries to serve as sponsors for work-based learning programs.
- Educate employers about the benefits of apprenticeship and other WBL models, emphasizing their role in addressing skill gaps and workforce shortages.

#### 2. Expansion of Registered Apprenticeship Programs

- Partner with the Louisiana Workforce Commission to expand existing Registered Apprenticeship programs and assist employers in designing and implementing new programs tailored to regional workforce needs.
- Promote the inclusion of apprenticeships within the State's Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL), ensuring access to WBL opportunities for job seekers.

#### 3. Connecting CTE Students to Apprenticeship Pathways

- Collaborate with CTE programs, higher education partners, and employers to align technical training with apprenticeship opportunities.
- Facilitate dual enrollment and pre-apprenticeship programs to create seamless transitions from secondary education to apprenticeships.

#### 4. Promotion of Work-Based Learning Options to Employers

- Conduct employer workshops and marketing campaigns to raise awareness of WBL models such as apprenticeship, on-the-job training (OJT), internships, and part-time job opportunities for students.
- Highlight success stories of employers and participants who have benefited from WBL programs.

#### 5. Affordable Education Through Work-Based Learning

- Promote apprenticeships and WBL programs as debt-free pathways to higher education and career advancement.
- Showcase how participants can earn wages while gaining industry-recognized credentials.

#### 6. Ensuring Access to Diverse Work-Based Learning Opportunities

- Work with training providers to expand the range of WBL options listed on the ETPL, ensuring a variety of opportunities for job seekers.
- Leverage federal and state funding to provide financial incentives for employers and support services for participants.

By implementing these strategies, Region 7 seeks to strengthen the workforce pipeline, address skills gaps, and offer equitable access to high-quality learning opportunities that meet the needs of both job seekers and employers.

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

Region 7 is committed to expediting the transition from credentialing to employment by engaging closely with employers and educational institutions. Tailored training programs are crafted to equip jobseekers with industry-specific credentials, enhancing their employability upon completion. Additionally, many of these programs integrate On-the-Job Training (OJT) to provide further skill development, ensuring that participants are well-prepared to meet the immediate workforce needs of employers. This approach not only helps individuals secure jobs quickly but also supports regional economic growth by addressing critical skill shortages in key sectors.

Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) 70 and 71 have cultivated key partnerships with institutions such as Ochsner and Southern University of Shreveport to develop customized training programs that directly address industry needs. These initiatives are designed to bridge the gap between credential attainment and employment, ensuring that jobseekers acquire the skills necessary to meet the demands of the labor market. By collaborating with employers to align training with real-world requirements, these programs provide participants with both the theoretical knowledge and hands-on experience needed to succeed.

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

- Fostering the improvement and expansion of employer-driven regional sector partnerships to increase the focus on critical in-demand occupations in key sectors that are the engine of economic growth for the state and its regions.
- Expanding career pathway opportunities through more accelerated and work-based training and align and integrate programs of study leading to industry-recognized credentials and improved employment and earnings.
- Expanding career services and opportunities for populations facing multiple barriers to close the gap in educational attainment and economic advancement through career pathways and improved career services and expansion of bridge programs.
- Expanding information for employers and job seekers to access services to support the alignment and integration of economic development, workforce development and education initiatives for supporting sector partnerships and career pathways.

1. Fostering the improvement and expansion of employer-driven regional sector partnerships:

- Sector Partnerships: LWDA 70 and LWDA 71 will work with employers, economic development organizations, and education providers to create and expand employer-driven sector partnerships in key industries, such as health-care, manufacturing, and information technology. These partnerships will focus on identifying and addressing critical workforce needs in high-demand occupations that drive economic growth.
  - o Establish regional employer advisory councils to ensure industry input on training curriculum and work-based learning initiatives.
  - o Partner with Louisiana Economic Development (LED) and local chambers of commerce to facilitate regular sector meetings that align workforce strategies with economic priorities.

2. Expanding career pathway opportunities through accelerated and work-based training:

- Career Pathways Development: Programs will emphasize streamlined pathways to employment, focusing on accelerated training models, apprenticeships, and dual-enrollment opportunities for students to earn industry-recognized credentials.

- o Partner with LCTCS campuses to offer short-term credential programs that align with regional demand sectors.
- o Expand apprenticeship and work-based learning opportunities, such as on-the-job training (OJT) and incumbent worker training, to enhance skills and employment outcomes.

3. Expanding career services and opportunities for populations facing multiple barriers:

- Targeted Support Services: LWDA 70 and LWDA 71 will work to close educational and economic attainment gaps by expanding bridge programs, career services, and wraparound support for individuals with barriers to employment.
  - o Implement bridge programs to help individuals with low educational attainment transition into career pathways that lead to family-sustaining wages.
  - o Enhance outreach to underserved and rural populations through mobile career centers, virtual career services, and partnerships with community-based organizations.
  - o Provide supportive services, such as transportation assistance, childcare, and mentorship, to ensure successful program completion.

4. Expanding access to information for employers and job seekers to support alignment and integration:

- Enhanced Communication Tools: LWDA 70 and LWDA 71 will develop and expand resources to improve information sharing among employers, job seekers, and stakeholders.
  - o Work towards launching a regional workforce portal to connect employers, job seekers, and training providers with workforce development services and programs.
  - o Continue to provide employers with labor market information (LMI) to support hiring decisions and workforce planning.
  - o Collaborate with local school systems and LCTCS campuses to improve career awareness initiatives for youth, including job fairs, career exploration programs, and work-based learning opportunities.

**Conclusion**

The partnership between Local Workforce Development Areas 70 and 71 reflects a shared dedication to enhancing workforce opportunities and strengthening the economic foundation of Northwest Louisiana. By uniting resources and building meaningful collaborations with employers, educational institutions, and community organizations, this regional plan positions both areas to address local challenges and meet workforce demands effectively.

This plan underscores the importance of tailoring strategies to the unique needs of our communities while remaining flexible in an ever-changing labor market. By prioritizing skills development, fostering equitable access to opportunities, and aligning efforts with regional economic goals, we can create pathways to success for individuals and families while supporting local businesses.

Moving forward, the collaboration between LWDA 70 and LWDA 71 will serve as a model of effective workforce development, ensuring that our region is not only prepared to meet current workforce needs but is also poised for future growth and innovation. Together, we are building a stronger, more resilient workforce that benefits everyone in the communities we serve.

Attachments: Region 7 – Local Workforce Development Area Plans

- LWDA 70: Seventh Planning District Consortium Local Plan & Attachments
- LWDA 71: City of Shreveport, Department of Community Development Local Plan & Attachments

# City of Shreveport, Department of Community Development LWDA 71

Plan Effective Date: July 1, 2024



A proud partner of the  American Job Center<sup>®</sup> network

## CHAPTER 4: OPERATING SYSTEMS AND POLICIES: LOCAL

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

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

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

Local Workforce Development Area 71 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) outlines the structure of the one-stop delivery system and includes other essential details for the establishment and operation of effective local workforce development systems, as required by the WIOA Rule (20 CFR Part 678.705). The MOU, along with any future modifications, is incorporated by reference into this plan. LWDA 71 have entered into MOUs with the organizations responsible for managing each federal program at the local level. Access to the various partner programs is made available through Region 7's American Job Center locations, either directly or through referrals, ensuring that individuals in the region can connect to a broad range of services that support their workforce development needs.

2. The Local Workforce Development Area Service Integration Action Plan provides a description of how local workforce partners will align and coordinate services as required by the State of Louisiana Integrated Service Delivery Policy (OWD 2-23.2). The Service Integration Action Plan and any subsequent modifications is incorporated by reference into this plan.

LWDA 71 work closely with their MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) partners to expand access to employment, training, education, and supportive services, with a particular emphasis on individuals facing barriers to employment. Through the MOU, the local workforce development system coordinates efforts with all required WIOA (Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act) partners as well as other local key organizations. The MOU outlines the roles and contributions of partners within the one-stop system and details how services will be coordinated across various programs. Additionally, Region 7 partners are committed to cross-training staff and providing other professional learning opportunities to support continuous improvement. Both Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) hold quarterly meetings with American Job Center (AJC) partners, offering each partner the opportunity to discuss the previous quarter's experiences, suggest logistical changes to enhance services, and share any organizational updates. This collaborative environment fosters the exchange of information and the promotion of essential services.

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

1. How the workforce centers are implementing and transitioning to an integrated, technology-enabled intake and case management information system for programs carried out under WIOA (§ 679.560(b)(20)).

LWDA 71 has thoughtfully integrated lessons learned from remote service delivery into its ongoing service offerings. One of the key adjustments is the continued use of remote delivery, which has proven beneficial for individuals facing transportation barriers. Virtual options are particularly helpful, as they allow individuals to access services without the need to travel. For those with access to technology, virtual appointments remain a viable option, offering flexibility and convenience. Additionally, the use of electronic tools, such as electronic check in, electronic signatures to validate program participation which enhances engagement and streamline processes, making interactions with the services more efficient. Recognizing the importance of digital literacy, LWDA 71 also provides digital skills training and ensures access to necessary tools, empowering individuals to make the most of available remote services. Overall, the strategy embraces a blended approach, combining remote tools with in-person services. This ensures that individuals can choose the method that best suits their needs, reflecting

LWDA 71's commitment to accessibility, flexibility, and inclusiveness.

2. How the Local Board will facilitate access to services provided through the one-stop delivery system, including in remote areas, through the use of technology and other means (§ 679.560(b)(5)(ii)).

LWDA 71 has successfully integrated lessons learned from remote delivery into its workforce development strategies. The ongoing use of virtual appointments for those with access to technology continues to offer flexibility, particularly for individuals facing transportation barriers. The incorporation of digital tools, such as electronic signatures and virtual platforms, enhances accessibility and engagement with services, ensuring they remain effective for a broader range of individuals. In line with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), each local workforce board's MOU outlines the collaborative roles of all One-Stop Center Partners. These partners include the Core Partners under WIOA, such as Title I, Adult Education and Literacy, Rehabilitation, and Wagner-Peyser Act entities, as well as the One-Stop Operator. These partnerships are grounded in mutual trust and a shared commitment to the success of the One-Stop System, which facilitates access to integrated workforce services for individuals as they progress through career pathways. The MOU underscores the importance of a person-centered care approach, which is central to LWDA 71's service delivery model. This model ensures that services are tailored to meet the diverse needs of individuals, whether through in-person appointments, phone calls, or virtual meetings (e.g., Zoom, Face-Time). Additionally, LWDA 71 recognizes the need to support digital literacy, providing resources such as Chromebooks, along-side training and assistance with technology. As LWDA 71 continues to adapt its delivery methods, it will maintain its focus on providing services in the most effective manner for each individual, ensuring they have access to the tools and resources necessary to succeed in high paying, growing sectors of the economy. This approach ensures equitable access and fosters long-term opportunities for employment.

C. Describe how the Local Board will support the strategies identified in the Combined State Plan and work with entities carrying out core programs, including a description of (§679.560(b)(1)(ii)):

1. Expanding access to employment, training, education and supportive services for eligible individuals, particularly eligible individuals with barriers to employment (§ 679.560(b)(2)(i));

- Scaling up the use of Integrated Education and Training models to help adults get their GED and work on other basic skills and English language acquisition while earning credential and industry-recognized credentials that lead to in-demand occupations;
- Using the insights and lessons learned from successful dual credit programs to scale up similar efforts in other sectors and regions;
- Determining the most effective marketing methods and messages for informing college and university students about Prior Learning Assessments;
- Investigating how targeted marketing can identify segments of the labor force, such as mature workers and the underemployed, who may not require extensive education or training to qualify for jobs in high demand occupations;

LWDA 71 has adopted a person-centered care approach to service delivery, focusing on providing the necessary tools and resources that best meet the needs of its customers and communities. Recognizing the importance of digital literacy, LWDA 71 quickly identified the need for access to technology, including Chromebooks, and has worked to ensure that customers have the resources to succeed. Services are offered in a variety of formats, such as by phone, in person, or through virtual platforms like Zoom and FaceTime, depending on the customer's needs and preferences. A key aspect of this service model is the assistance provided with technology and the training offered to help customers develop the digital skills needed to navigate these resources effectively. As Region 7 continues to serve its community, it will maintain its commitment to delivering services in the most convenient and accessible way for each individual. LWDA 71 staff follow Board Policies when determining the need for support services, ensuring that all decisions are consistent with established procedures. These determinations are documented in the HiRE case management system, which helps track and justify the need for services. The process includes an assessment of the customer's financial need for support services, an evaluation of the availability of community

resources to meet that need, and a review of the customer's current financial situation through a budget worksheet. The staff also ensure that the services provided are reasonable, appropriate, and compliant with board, state, and federal regulations. Any exploration of resources, as well as the rationale for approving, denying, or terminating services, is thoroughly documented in HiRE case notes. This process ensures transparency and accountability in the provision of support services. As LDWA 71 continues its work, it remains dedicated to offering services that are tailored to the individual needs of each customer, ensuring they have the resources and support needed to succeed in their career and employment goals.

2. Facilitating the development of career pathways and co-enrollment, as appropriate, in core programs (§ 679.560(b)(2)(ii)); and

Career pathways are a key feature of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), providing job seekers with clear and structured paths of education, training, and credentials aligned with employer-validated work readiness standards and competencies. LWDA71 career pathways focus on high-demand occupations, particularly in Manufacturing, IT, and Healthcare fields. Information on these pathways is easily accessible at the One-Stop Center and through Louisiana Works, ensuring that job seekers can explore available opportunities. LWDA 71 staff are trained to understand the local high-demand occupations and the career pathways that lead to them. This expertise enables staff to guide job seekers in identifying suitable career paths and educational opportunities to pursue them. Additionally, co-enrollment in core programs across the system is encouraged, helping individuals access a wide range of resources and support.

The Local Boards in Region 7 are also committed to expanding career pathway options for high school students in partnership with the secondary education system, private businesses, and local Chambers of Commerce or other business-oriented stakeholders. Over the course of this plan, Region 7 expects to see significant growth in the number and awareness of career pathway options available to high school students, which will help equip the next generation with the skills and credentials needed to thrive in high-demand industries. This collaborative effort aims to create a stronger pipeline of skilled workers ready to meet the needs of the regional economy.

3. Improving access to activities leading to a recognized post-secondary credential (including a credential that is an industry-recognized certificate or certification, portable, and stackable) (§ 679.560(b)(2)(iii)).

Louisiana Career Pathways are designed to enhance both individual lives and the state's economy by offering a structured, integrated approach to education and training. These pathways provide citizens with opportunities to progress through various levels of education and training, ultimately leading to high-value, high-demand careers. By meeting learners where they are, Louisiana Career Pathways span across high school, adult education, post-secondary education, and beyond, ensuring that individuals are prepared for sustainable employment. The Career Pathways model connects education and training programs with essential support services, enabling individuals to enter and advance within specific industries or occupational sectors. Each step along the pathway is carefully crafted to prepare workers and students for the next level of employment and education. These pathways often include opportunities for acceleration, contextualized learning, work-based learning, and co- or dual enrollment, where appropriate, to further enhance participants' skills and career prospects. The structure of Louisiana Career Pathways includes a logical progression of courses, tied to defined entry and exit points. This sequence provides a clear and actionable plan for students, outlining what courses to take and when. Furthermore, the model integrates comprehensive student support, including academic assistance, non-academic support, transitional services, career exploration, and ongoing career development. Job placement assistance is also a crucial component, ensuring that students not only complete their programs but also successfully enter the workforce.

Career Pathways also offer the opportunity to earn college credit, with pathways that can include noncredit programs leading to Industry-Based Credentials (IBCs). To ensure continuity, noncredit pathways are aligned with credit-bearing pathways, allowing students to transition seamlessly without repeating coursework. The model also includes a consistent state policy on awarding college credit for IBCs, ensuring that individuals who complete noncredit programs can progress into credit-bearing educational opportunities. Louisiana Career Pathways are built through strong partnerships with businesses, industries, and regional economic development entities, ensuring that the pathways align with both current and future sector needs. These pathways are designed with multiple entry points, allowing individuals with various levels of basic skills or prior educational and work experience to participate. They also incorporate multiple exit points, or “off-ramps,” which lead to industry-recognized stackable credentials or academic credentials. The first exit point is strategically aligned with viable career opportunities, ensuring that individuals who exit the pathway at various stages still have access to meaningful employment. Ultimately, these pathways are designed to lead individuals to high-wage, high-demand careers, contributing to long-term economic stability and growth.

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

1. Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth employment and training activities under WIOA Title I (§ 679.560(b)(6)).

The City of Shreveport’s Workforce Development Board (WDB) is committed to implementing comprehensive coordination strategies to enhance services and avoid duplication of activities for Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth employment and training programs under WIOA Title I. These strategies are aligned with Louisiana’s Combined State Plan for Program Years 2024–2027, focusing on career pathways, sector partnerships, and integrated service delivery systems to address workforce needs and support economic growth in Region 7. The WDB collaborates closely with state, regional, and local partners, including the Louisiana Workforce Commission, educational institutions, and economic development organizations, to ensure alignment of efforts. By engaging with community colleges, universities, and vocational training providers, the WDB facilitates industry-specific training programs in high-demand sectors such as healthcare, manufacturing, and construction, while working with local economic development councils to attract new employers and create additional job opportunities.

To ensure services meet the needs of both job seekers and employers, the WDB utilizes data-driven decision-making tools such as the Louisiana Occupational Information System (LOIS) to analyze labor market trends and allocate resources effectively. Integrated service delivery is a cornerstone of the WDB’s strategy, with one-stop centers serving as hubs for co-located partner programs and cross-trained staff to provide holistic support. Coordination between Title I services and other core programs, such as Wagner-Peyser and Adult Education, ensures streamlined access and efficient service delivery. Recognizing the challenges unique to Region 7, including low labor force participation rates in certain parishes, the WDB prioritizes targeted outreach and tailored services for underserved populations to promote equitable access to training and employment opportunities.

The WDB also focuses on fostering partnerships within high-impact industry clusters, such as healthcare and social assistance, retail trade, and construction, to develop training pipelines and work-based learning opportunities that align with regional demand. To avoid duplication of activities, the WDB emphasizes regular communication and joint planning with partners, shared digital platforms for referrals and reporting, and coordinated funding strategies to maximize impact. These efforts ensure a collaborative and efficient workforce system that meets the needs of employers and job seekers while driving economic growth and workforce development across the region.

### **Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA)**

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

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

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

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

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

#### Jobs for Veterans State Grant (JVSG)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### **DCFS Workforce Development (WD)/ TANF Section**

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

### **DCFS -Strategies to Empower People (STEP)**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### **Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP)**

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

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

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

## **Job Corps**

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

LWDA 70 & LWDA 71 is committed to partnering with Job Corps in its purpose of assisting eligible Youth to connect to the labor force by providing them with:

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

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

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

## **Community Services Block Grant (CSBG)**

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

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

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

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

## Reintegration of Ex-Offenders Program

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

The Coalition consists of representatives from Local and Regional agencies and service providers that offer the services and conducts monthly meetings, usually held at the Goodwill facility at 800 W. 70th St. in Shreveport to provide a forum to share valuable information with participating members and seek to actually make these services and this information available at the grassroots level. The coalition consist of over 200 members and monthly meetings average 40 members. As the efforts of the Coalition and the awareness of its work expand, the potential positive contributions of a re-energized and redirected returning citizen community will benefit our Region and beyond in many ways.

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

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

2. Adult education and literacy activities under WIOA Title II. This description must include how the Local Board will carry out the review of local applications submitted under Title II consistent with WIOA Secs. 107(d)(11)(A) and (B)(i) and WIOA Sec. 232 (§ 679.560(b)(12)).

To ensure compliance with WIOA Title II requirements and to promote high-quality adult education and literacy services, the Local Workforce Development Board (LWDB) has established a structured process for reviewing local applications submitted under WIOA Secs. 107(d)(11)(A), (B)(i), and Sec. 232. This process ensures alignment with regional workforce needs and supports the integration of Title II services with broader workforce development strategies.

Region 7's LWDBs coordinates with Title II providers to ensure that adult education programs address the foundational skills necessary for individuals to achieve economic self-sufficiency and advance in the workforce. This includes reviewing applications to confirm alignment with the regional and state plan objectives, prioritizing programs that serve individuals with significant barriers to employment, and ensuring equitable access to literacy services across the local areas.

The review process ensures:

- **Alignment Evaluation:** Applications will be reviewed to determine how well proposed activities align with the Local Plan's goals and regional labor market demands, including collaboration with employers and training providers.
- **Collaboration with Partners:** The LWDA's will facilitate communication between Title II applicants, one-stop partners, and community stakeholders to encourage program integration and resource-sharing.
- **Performance Metrics:** Applications will be assessed based on clearly defined performance goals, such as measurable skill gains, credential attainment, and participant employment outcomes.
- **Support for Diverse Populations:** Special emphasis will be placed on proposals targeting underrepresented groups, such as English language learners, individuals with low literacy levels, and adults with disabilities.

The LWDA's will also provide recommendations and feedback to ensure continuous improvement and alignment with workforce development priorities. By actively engaging with Title II providers and maintaining an open, collaborative process, the board will foster a robust system of adult education services that supports lifelong learning and regional economic growth.

This process exemplifies the LWDA's commitment to ensuring that adult education and literacy activities serve as a vital bridge to workforce success for all individuals in the local area.

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

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

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

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

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

- Read, write, and speak English and perform mathematics or other activities necessary for attainment of a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent.
- Transition to post-secondary education and training (Train to Attain) is a program of WRU and allows for the earning of an Industry Based Certification (IBC) while enrolled in HiSET courses.
- Obtain employment.

3. Wagner-Peyser Act (29 U.S.C. 49 et seq.) services (§ 679.560(b)(11)).

LWDA 70 and LWDA 71 already meets a major requirement of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) with the co-location of Wagner-Peyser (WP) Employment Services in Region 7's American Job Centers (AJCs). The intent is to ensure that unemployment insurance claimants receive the same services as all other jobseekers, including job training, labor exchange, career counseling, and labor market intelligence. The Unemployment Insurance (UI) claimant/jobseeker will also receive eligibility assessments and referrals to an array of education resources and training through the WP Employment Service Program.

The public workforce development system across Louisiana is comprised of 8 Regional Local Market Areas, 15 local workforce development boards, and 62 American Job Centers (AJC). All AJCs around the State offer skills assessment services, job search assistance, and referrals to Adult Education programs seeking to connect individuals with meaningful and sustainable employment.

LWDA 71 has one comprehensive American Job Center in Caddo Parish.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Directors actively participate in the Louisiana Workforce Association and maintain ongoing communication about State, Local, and Regional matters. They are attuned to the needs and priorities of their respective LWDBs, enabling them to develop policies and procedures that foster effective collaboration across the boards.

4.Vocational rehabilitation service activities under WIOA Title IV (§ 679.560(b)(13)).

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

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

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

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

LRS will continue to uphold the achievement of competitive integrated employment of individuals with disabilities. Our Vocational Rehabilitation Program sets out to accomplish this task by building relationships with employers in the communities and various cities in the State of Louisiana. In order to form these connections, LRS REDS begin to build these relations by first gaining an understanding of what the business and workforce needs are in each area of the State. This is done by expanding our outreach to the business community and then by referring or recommending those clients that will fit their workforce needs.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

5. Relevant secondary and post-secondary education programs and activities with education and workforce investment activities (§ 679.560(b)(9)).

The local workforce system in Region 7 is committed to aligning secondary and post-secondary education programs with workforce development activities to respond effectively to the region’s economic needs. This approach is focused on ensuring that businesses can hire, retain, train, and advance workers to meet current and future demands. By connecting businesses with qualified job seekers, the workforce system eliminates service duplication and reduces administrative overhead, which enhances the overall effectiveness of our programs.

To further strengthen these connections, the region utilizes a Comprehensive Labor Market Information System that provides key insights into employment and training, tracks the effectiveness of training programs, forecasts job growth, and matches job seekers with employers. These tools, including the HiRE system, ensure that both job seekers and employers are equipped with the information needed to make informed decisions about careers and hiring.

LWDA 70 and LWDA 71 works closely with core partners and One-Stop partners to provide coordinated, high-quality services designed to meet the needs of both job seekers and employers. The partnership model is particularly effective in ensuring that workforce development efforts are responsive to labor demand, moving beyond traditional job matching and training to address the collective needs of the region’s workforce.

Educational institutions, particularly those within the Louisiana Community and Technical College System, play a critical role in this alignment. These institutions, alongside other partners, are engaged in providing sector-specific training programs and work-based learning opportunities, such as apprenticeships and internships, to help individuals gain the skills needed to secure high-wage, high-demand jobs. The focus on Career Pathways, which integrates education, training, and support services, prepares students and workers for successful careers and economic independence.

Additionally, the Louisiana Workforce Commission's Star Jobs ratings system plays a pivotal role in guiding educational programs and workforce development efforts. By ranking the highest-demand, highest-wage jobs, the Star Jobs system informs decisions at educational institutions, ensuring that training programs are aligned with the region's labor market needs. This system is used by institutions to guide funding decisions, curriculum development, and career counseling, ensuring that individuals are prepared for careers that offer both growth potential and financial stability.

Through these efforts, LWDAs in Region 7 works to ensure that the workforce system is well-integrated with educational opportunities, providing pathways for individuals to gain the skills needed for sustainable employment and contributing to the region's economic development.

6. How the Local Board will support the state strategies identified under § 676.105 and work with the entities carrying out core programs and other workforce development programs, including programs of study and career pathway programs under the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act authorized under the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 (20 U.S.C. 2301 et seq.) to support service alignment and needs identified in regional or local level assessments including the Perkins Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment (§ 679.560(b)(1)(ii)).

### **Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

If the Department of Labor grants the State of Louisiana its petitioned waiver of Local Boards to expend 50% of Youth funds on both ISY and OSY; LWDA 70 will continue its work with Regional school systems to strengthen the opportunity for CTE students to receive paid Work Experience in in-demand occupations. Thus, providing greater opportunities for rural youth, who face significant barriers to employment, the leveraged opportunity to earn themselves skilled experience and a stronger likelihood to progress on a career pathway toward self-sufficiency.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

7. Provide a copy of the local supportive service policies and describe how the Local Board will coordinate the provision of transportation and other appropriate supportive services in the local area (§ 679.560(b) (10)) and include information on the supportive services by each local program as appropriate.

The City of Shreveport's Workforce Development Board (WDB) recognizes that transportation and other supportive services are critical to ensuring equitable access to workforce programs and achieving positive outcomes for participants in the local area. The WDB coordinates the provision of these services through a combination of partnerships, strategic investments, and integrated service delivery models. This coordination aims to address barriers to participation in Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs under WIOA Title I while ensuring alignment with regional needs.

Transportation is often one of the most significant barriers for participants in the local area. To address this, the WDB collaborates with local transit authorities, including the Shreveport Area Transit System (SporTran) and other transportation providers, to facilitate affordable and reliable transportation options. This includes providing bus passes, fuel cards, ride-sharing options, and travel stipends to program participants. Additionally, the WDB works with employers and training providers to identify and support transportation solutions for participants commuting to job sites, apprenticeships, and educational institutions.

Other supportive services offered by the WDB include child care referrals, tools and equipment for training or employment, work attire. For example, the Youth program provides mentoring, leadership development, and incentives tied to performance goals, in addition to covering costs for books, uniforms, and other training-related needs.

The provision of supportive services is coordinated through the one-stop delivery system, where case managers assess participant needs during initial intake and ongoing engagement. Supportive services are outlined in each participant's Individual Employment Plan (IEP) or Individual Service Strategy (ISS) to ensure services are tailored to their specific circumstances and aligned with their employment and training goals. The WDB also partners with local social service agencies, nonprofit organizations, and community-based groups to leverage additional resources and avoid duplication of services. Examples include partnerships with organizations providing child care subsidies, housing assistance, and mental health services.

To ensure accountability and transparency, supportive services are managed through the state's case management system, HiRE (Helping Individuals Reach Employment). This platform allows case managers to track services provided, document expenditures, and monitor participant progress. Furthermore, the WDB regularly evaluates the effectiveness of supportive services through participant feedback and program performance reviews, making adjustments as needed to address emerging barriers or challenges in the local area.

Through these strategies, the WDB ensures that transportation and other supportive services are seamlessly integrated into workforce programs, effectively addressing barriers to participation and empowering individuals to achieve long-term employment success.

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

1. A description and assessment of the type and availability of adult and dislocated worker employment and training activities in the local area (§ 679.560(b)(6)).

LWDA 71 operates its Adult training program with a focus on identifying workers who either currently need or will need higher levels of education to improve their outcomes in the labor market. The goal is to reduce the incidence and duration of unemployment while supporting higher earnings and long-term job stability. By aligning its efforts with the Title I Priority of Service requirement, Region 7 ensures that priority access to higher-intensity career services and training is provided to individuals who face significant barriers to employment. LWDA 71 leverages all available funding streams and partnerships, regardless of local funding availability, to deliver these services. Priority is given to public assistance recipients, other low-income individuals, and individuals who are deficient in basic skills. This approach ensures that those with the greatest need are supported in their pursuit of education and training, enabling them to enhance their skills and secure stable employment opportunities. By focusing on these priority populations, LWDA 71 aims to improve employment outcomes and promote economic self-sufficiency for individuals in the region.

2. A description of how the Local Board will coordinate workforce development activities carried out in the local area with statewide rapid response activities (§ 679.560(b)(7)).

The Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) coordinate workforce development activities with Rapid Response services to support both workers and employers facing challenging situations, such as layoffs or plant shutdowns. The Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC) offers Rapid Response Services that assist employers in navigating the process in an orderly and legal manner. Working in partnership with LWDBs and other service providers, including training and supportive service organizations, the LWC ensures that both workers and employers receive the support needed during these difficult transitions. Direct services for workers facing large-scale layoffs or plant shutdowns are designed to help them quickly re-enter the workforce. These services focus on overcoming significant barriers to employment, such as transferring specialized skills to different occupations or industries, adapting to changes in market demand, addressing issues related to age or length of work experience, the need for formal training or education, and the challenge of finding jobs that match the level of their previous positions. LWDA 71 actively engages in Rapid Response activities, and within LWDA 71, efforts are made to ensure that dislocated workers within the Shreveport City Limits are appropriately serviced, helping them successfully navigate employment changes and transition to new opportunities as quickly as possible.

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

1. A description and assessment of the type and availability of youth workforce investment activities in the local area, including activities for youth who are individuals with disabilities, which must include an identification of successful models of such activities (§ 679.560(b)(8)).

Region 7 has the autonomy to develop its own Youth service delivery model for Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Youth services. This model is designed to support the implementation of Career Pathways that promote post-secondary education and address the specific needs of both low-income In-School Youth and Out-of-School Youth. The goal is to ensure that youth in the region have access to pathways that lead to sustainable employment, educational attainment, and career success. Region 7's Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) are responsible for procuring and providing all fourteen Youth Program Elements outlined under WIOA. These elements are critical in providing a comprehensive support system that addresses the varied needs of youth, including career exploration, education, skill development, and work-based learning opportunities. In particular, LWDA 71 is committed to developing and providing appropriate service models for Out-of-School Youth, who often face additional barriers to education and employment. By focusing on these youth populations, LWDA 71 aims to provide targeted services that enhance their opportunities for future success and integration into the workforce.

2. A description of how local areas will meet the minimum expenditure rate for out-of-school youth.

Both the State and LWDA71 will continue to monitor financial operations to ensure compliance with the 75% expenditure requirement for out-of-school youth (OSY) services. However, the Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC) received a continuation for a waiver submitted by the state, which lowers the expenditure requirement for Governor's reserve and local areas for Program Year (PY) 2022 and PY 2023 from 75% to 50% for OSY, ages 16-24. Additionally, the waiver approved the use of Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) for in-school youth (ISY), ages 16-21, allowing more flexibility in service provision for these youth populations. LWDA 71 is also committed to ensuring that youth with disabilities have access to necessary accommodation and assistive technology to participate fully in program activities. This includes working closely with Louisiana Rehabilitation Services (LRS) to provide services such as tutoring, study skills training, attainment of the HiSET, work experience, summer employment, and, when appropriate, vocational training. Region 7 utilizes a combination of contracted youth services in LWDA 71 and in-house services in LWDA 70. Expenditures for Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) and work-based learning for WIOA-eligible youth are primarily allocated to out-of-school youth, in alignment with the waiver. Contracts for youth training services are also predominantly focused on out-of-school youth, with a small percentage directed toward in-school programs. This approach ensures that LWDA 71 is effectively meeting the needs of youth who face barriers to education and employment, particularly those who are out of school.

G. Provide a description of how the local area will provide services to individuals with barriers to employment<sup>8</sup> as outlined in the Combined State Plan:

1. Provide information on how priority will be given to recipients of public assistance, other low- income individuals and individuals who are basic skills deficient consistent with WIOA Sec. 134(c)(3)(E) (§ 679.560(b)(21)).

The Adult Priority of Service policy in LWDA 71 ensures that priority is given to low-income individuals receiving public assistance, as well as those who are basic skills deficient. This policy clearly outlines how the needs of various special populations, including displaced workers, displaced homemakers, women, minorities, veterans, and individuals with multiple barriers to employment, will be addressed. Specific focus is given to populations such as individuals training for non-traditional employment, older workers, individuals with limited English-speaking abilities, and individuals with disabilities.

To meet these needs, LWDA 71 is committed to offering tailored services that provide equitable access to education, training, and employment opportunities. This includes providing priority access to higher-intensity career services and training, as well as ensuring that support services are available to help these individuals overcome barriers to employment. By focusing on these priority populations, Region 7 aims to increase the number of individuals who gain the skills and support needed to enter and succeed in the workforce, ensuring a more inclusive and equitable labor market. The Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) in Region 7, in collaboration with core program partners, place significant emphasis on addressing the needs of special applicant groups to expand access to employment, training, education, and supportive services for eligible individuals, particularly those facing barriers to employment. These efforts are focused on ensuring that individuals who face additional challenges, such as veterans, migrant seasonal farm workers, and those with disabilities, have the resources and opportunities they need to succeed in the workforce. The American Job Centers (AJCs) in the region, in coordination with system partners, will develop targeted service strategies designed to meet the specific needs of these groups. To assist in this process, the Helping Individuals Reach Employment (HiRE) system collects data on the placement and retention of special applicant groups, which helps to inform the development of effective service strategies tailored to each group's needs. Local Veterans' Employment Representatives (LVER) and Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) staff are fully utilized to provide comprehensive case management services to veterans, ensuring they receive the support necessary to secure and maintain employment. Additionally, to the extent feasible, services will also be extended to Migrant Seasonal Farm Workers (MSFWs), helping to address their unique employment challenges. Faith-Based and Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) play an integral role in this process, both as service providers and as valuable resources for skills development and support for special applicant groups. These collaborative efforts ensure that individuals facing significant barriers to employment receive the comprehensive support they need to successfully enter and advance in the workforce.

2. Describe how the local workforce area will ensure equitable access to workforce and educational services through the following actions:

- Disaggregating data by race, gender and target population to reveal where disparities and inequities exist in policies and programs.
- Developing equity goals in conjunction with the education system and prepare action plans to achieve them.
- Exposing more high school students, particularly young women and minorities, to careers in science, technology, engineering and math fields.
- Exploring how effective mentor programs can be expanded to adults, particularly those who are displaced and moving to a new career.
- Providing training to workforce program staff on data-driven approaches to address equity gaps.
- Enduring workforce services are strategically located in relation to the populations in most need.

LWDA 71 is committed to ensuring that all individuals have equitable access to the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) program services. As part of this effort, LWDA 71 collects data on race, gender, and disability status for all people registering for services. This data is periodically reviewed to assess the representation of WIOA participants relative to the region's population and labor force. Additionally, Region 7 analyzes data from the Louisiana Workforce Commission's Louisiana Labor Force Diversity Data to identify any underserved populations and ensure that no group is excluded from access to program services. To increase the availability of WIOA program services across all population groups, LWDA 71 uses local media sources to inform the public about available services.

This includes outreach efforts to diverse communities and utilizing local labor market information (LMI) tools to help develop Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) and Individual Service Strategies (ISS) for participants. Region 7 also emphasizes outreach to public, private, and nonprofit organizations that work with youth, especially in high-demand career pathways such as science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM).

Ongoing training is provided to WIOA program staff to ensure they are knowledgeable about nondiscrimination requirements, particularly Section 188 of WIOA, and understand the importance of offering equal access to services for all individuals. This training reinforces the value of mentorship and guides staff in supporting participants through the development of their IEPs.

The region ensures that American Job Centers (AJCs), located within the ten parishes of Region 7, provide convenient and reasonable access to WIOA program services. IEP goals and objectives are integrated into follow-up services, helping participants stay on track with their career development. AJCs also make a concerted effort to ensure that all customers, regardless of race or gender, are informed about the full range of educational and training activities available through the Louisiana Workforce Commission's Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL). During IEP/ISS development, LMI and other data-driven tools are used to offer participants a comprehensive picture of available career pathways, helping them make informed decisions about their education and training options.

LWDA 71 workforce system continuously evaluates economic and workforce data, using insights from the region's ecosystem to strategically target services to populations most in need. Services are marketed to areas identified through Census data as having the greatest need for support, ensuring that resources are directed to where they can have the most impact on improving employment outcomes for underserved populations.

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

1. How local areas will meet the annual Training Expenditure Requirement;

The Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) within LWDA 71 will adhere to the State Training Expenditure Requirements for training-related services and activities as specified in the State policy. To meet this requirement, the majority of expenditures will be directed toward occupational skills training (through Individual Training Accounts, or ITAs) and work-based learning activities such as Incumbent Worker Training (IWT), On-the-Job Training (OJT), Apprenticeships, and Work Experience/Internships. Funds may be transferred between Adult and Dislocated Worker funding streams on an as-needed basis throughout the program year to ensure appropriate service delivery and funding allocation. Each LWDB has submitted a copy of their approved ITA Policy in the Appendix. ITAs will cover training services for skills in demand occupations, including all registered apprenticeship programs, from training providers listed on the approved Statewide Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL). As part of the eligibility process, all participants must apply for federal financial assistance, including the Pell Grant/Federal Student Aid (FASFA), and provide proof of their application for this aid. Any Pell grant funding received by participants will be applied to tuition and other education-related expenses, ensuring that participants have access to the necessary resources to complete their training programs successfully.

2. How local areas will encourage the use of work-based learning strategies, including the local area goals for specific work-based learning activities and proposed outcomes related to these activities;

LWDA 71 staff work closely with business services staff at the Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC) and industry partnerships to engage employers in key industries. This collaboration involves continuously assessing employers' hiring needs and coordinating a variety of training opportunities, such as on-the-job training and incumbent worker training, to address those needs. Feedback from employers is essential in ensuring that workforce and training services are aligned with industry demands and effectively prepare individuals for the credentials needed to secure jobs in high-demand industries. LWDA 71 exclusively utilize the State's Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) to access skills training for WIOA-eligible participants. These local boards will inform training providers in the area about the opportunity to apply for approval on the statewide ETPL.

The boards advocate for training programs that meet the needs of local employers, particularly in providing entry-level training that leads to career pathways in high-demand and high-growth industries. To ensure the effectiveness of training services, LWDA 71 will continuously monitor key metrics, including completion rates, employment rates, and wages of individuals who have participated in training programs. This monitoring helps to ensure that training providers receiving WIOA funding are successfully helping job seekers obtain employment that leads to family-supporting wages and provides opportunities for career advancement.

3. Provide a copy of the local Individual Training Account Policy and describe how training services outlined in WIOA Sec. 134 will be provided through the use of individual training accounts, including, if contracts for training services will be used, how the use of such contracts will be coordinated with the use of individual training accounts under that chapter, and how the Local Board will ensure informed customer choice in the selection of training programs regardless of how the training services are to be provided (§ 679.560(b)(18)); and

Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) 71 in Region 7 are committed to ensuring a robust and effective training service delivery system by:

1. Collaboration with the State: They will collaborate with the State to ensure there are sufficient numbers and types of training providers accessible in each local area, including providers with expertise in assisting individuals with disabilities and adults in need of adult education and literacy activities, as described in WIOA sections 107(d)(10)(E), 122, and 134.

2. Partnership with Employers and Education Providers: LWDA 71 will work with local and regional employers, as well as education providers, to ensure the availability of training programs that provide credentials, certificates, and/or skills valued by employers within priority industry sectors identified in the local strategic plan.

3. Availability of Training Provider Information: In partnership with the state, the LWDBs will make the list of eligible training providers, along with accompanying information, available through Region 7's American Job Centers.

To assess subsequent eligibility, the LWDBs, LWDA 71 staff, and Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC) will verify that training providers continue to meet or exceed the negotiated state-level Title I Adult performance goals, which include:

- Employment Rate (2nd Quarter)
- Credential Attainment
- Measurable Skill Gains

Performance calculations for each program will be based on WIOA-funded participants and verified using the federal Eligible Training Provider (ETP) report published by the state, LWDA 71 may choose not to support ETPs that fail to meet local performance standards, in line with state and local policies and procedures. However, these policies will include an appeals process, allowing training providers to appeal a denial of eligibility from the local list of approved training providers. The appeals procedure follows the state's guidelines for such cases and is further detailed in each local area's Individual Training Account (ITA) policy, as outlined in 20 CFR 680.482(e) and 683.630(b). Additionally, the LWDA 71 will comply with the State Training Expenditure Requirements as outlined in the State policy. This will be achieved by providing a combination of services, with the majority of expenditures directed toward occupational skills training (via ITAs) and work-based learning activities, such as Incumbent Worker Training (IWT), On-the-Job Training (OJT), Apprenticeships, and Work Experience/Internships. Funds will be transferred between Adult and Dislocated Worker streams on an as-needed basis throughout the program year to ensure adequate funding for training services.

4. Provide a copy of the local training provider approval policy and procedures. Describe how the Local Board will ensure the continuous improvement of eligible providers of services through the system and that the providers will meet the employment needs of local employers, workers and jobseekers.

Each Local Workforce Development Board (LWDB) has provided a copy of their approved Individual Training Account (ITA) Policy in the Appendix. ITAs will be used to fund training services for skills in-demand occupations, including all registered apprenticeship programs, as determined by each Board. Training providers included in the approved Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) are the primary source for these services. As part of the application process, all participants must apply for Pell Grants/Federal Student Aid (FASFA) and any other applicable grant assistance. Proof of the application for this financial aid must be provided. Any Pell grant funding received by the participant must be applied toward their tuition and other education-related expenses, ensuring that financial resources are utilized effectively to support the participant's education and training. This approach ensures that training services are accessible while leveraging available financial aid to help cover the costs of education.

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

1. To transfer funds between the adult and dislocated worker funding streams.

Funds will be transferred between Adult and Dislocated Worker streams on an as-needed basis throughout the program year, with the maximum allowable transfer set at 75 percent as per state policy. In the first year when funds are made available, a local board may submit a written notice requesting a transfer of funds between Adult and Dislocated Worker funds, with a limit of up to 50 percent. In the second year, local boards may request an additional transfer of up to 25 percent, allowing for a total transfer of up to 75 percent between the two funding streams. These transfers are designed to provide flexibility, ensuring that resources are allocated efficiently to meet the changing needs of the workforce and training services within each local area. The written notice ensures that the process is transparent and follows state guidelines.

2. To use funds for incumbent worker training as outlined in WIOA Sec. 134(d)(4)(A)(i).

Up to 20% of Adult and/or Dislocated Worker funds may be allocated for Incumbent Worker Training (IWT), with the specific amount diverted for this purpose determined based on the overall budget. Priority will be given to Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) and On-the-Job Training (OJT) during periods of moderate to high unemployment, ensuring that resources are directed to where they are most needed. Preference will be given to IWT projects that demonstrate several key criteria, including a clear avenue toward layoff aversion, which helps prevent job losses within companies. Additionally, projects that show demonstrable position and/or pay upgrades for trainees will be prioritized, ensuring that the training leads to measurable improvements in workers' careers. Projects that incorporate an apprenticeship model, offer industry-recognized credentials, or have a significant impact on the company's competitiveness will also be favored. These criteria ensure that IWT funds are utilized effectively to enhance both the workforce and the overall success of employers in the region.

3. To use funds for transitional jobs as outlined in WIOA Sec. 134(d)(5).

Up to 10% of combined Adult and Dislocated Worker allotments may be used on transitional jobs for Adult clients. Target populations for transitional jobs include, but are not limited to, ex-offenders, long-term unemployed, and individuals with disabilities.

4. To use funds for pay for performance contracts as outlined in WIOA Sec. 133(b)(2-3).

No funds will be expended on performance contracts, without Board approval.

## CHAPTER 5: PERFORMANCE GOALS AND EVALUATION: LOCAL

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

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

### 1. WIOA Performance Measures

LWDA 71 continuously strives to provide high-quality services to both businesses and individuals within the local area. To ensure effectiveness, quarterly performance reporting is conducted at both the state and local levels, covering all aspects of the local board, including Service Provider performance, One-Stop Operations, and Fiscal Services. Any deficiencies identified during these reports are thoroughly researched to determine their cause, and necessary training is provided for staff to improve performance measures. Each Local Workforce Development Board (LWDB) maintains an open-door policy for communication, ensuring that feedback from all staff, including those at One-Stop Centers, is available at all times. This open communication fosters a collaborative environment where feedback and suggestions can be shared freely. The team approach is strongly emphasized, not only among local staff but also in relationships with local partners. This collaborative culture helps maintain a high level of service in the local area. Guidance provided from federal and state levels is shared with all local staff. In addition, local training is conducted to ensure that all staff understand and are equipped to implement the best practices and processes. This approach helps ensure that services are delivered effectively and aligned with federal and state guidelines.

### LWDA 71 WIOA PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Adult	LWDA 71 PY2024	LWDA 71 PY2025
Entered Employment Rate, 2nd Quarter After Exit	75.9%	75.9%
Entered Employment Rate, 4th Quarter After Exit	68.0%	68.0%
Median Earnings, 2nd Quarter After Exit	\$7,900	\$7,900
Credential Attainment	57.8%	57.8%
Measurable Skills Gain	65.8%	65.8%

Dislocated Worker	LWDA 71 PY2024	LWDA 71 PY2025
Entered Employment Rate, 2nd Quarter After Exit	70.2%	70.2%
Entered Employment Rate, 4th Quarter After Exit	74.6%	74.6%
Median Earnings, 2nd Quarter After Exit	\$8,695	\$8,695
Credential Attainment	78.5%	78.5%
Measurable Skills Gain	69.8%	69.8%

Youth	LWDA 71 PY2024	LWDA 71 PY2025
Entered Employment Rate, 2nd Quarter After Exit	75.7%	75.7%
Entered Employment Rate, 4th Quarter After Exit	76.7%	76.7%
Median Earnings, 2nd Quarter After Exit	\$4,700	\$4,700
Credential Attainment	63.0%	63.0%
Measurable Skills Gain	50.1%	50.1%

## 2. Additional State Performance Measures

The City of Shreveport's Workforce Development Board (WDB) is committed to becoming and remaining a high-performing board in alignment with the factors established by the State Workforce Development Board. The WDB actively works to meet and exceed the local levels of performance negotiated with the Governor and the Chief Elected Official under WIOA Section 116(c). These performance measures include core indicators such as employment rates (second and fourth quarters after exit), median earnings, credential attainment rates, measurable skill gains, and effectiveness in serving employers. In addition to these federally required measures, the WDB adheres to additional state performance measures to ensure accountability, continuous improvement, and alignment with regional and state workforce priorities.

The WDB collaborates with the Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC) to establish annual performance targets that reflect the priorities of WIOA Title I programs and any additional state-specific objectives. These targets are used to evaluate the outcomes of Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs, as well as the performance of the one-stop delivery system and its partners. To ensure consistent progress, the WDB conducts regular performance reviews using real-time data generated through the state's case management system, HiRE (Helping Individuals Reach Employment). This data-driven approach allows for timely adjustments to service delivery models and programs.

Accountability for the local fiscal agent, eligible providers, and one-stop operators is a key focus for the WDB. Oversight mechanisms such as financial reviews, audits, and programmatic evaluations ensure compliance with performance measures and effective use of resources. Providers are assessed using a combination of quantitative metrics, such as participant outcomes and cost efficiency, and qualitative feedback, including participant satisfaction surveys. To foster continuous improvement, the WDB prioritizes staff and partner development by offering training on performance standards, best practices, and innovative workforce solutions.

In alignment with additional state performance measures, the WDB emphasizes equity in service delivery, effectiveness in serving priority populations, and regional economic impact. Service strategies and resource allocation are tailored to meet these priorities, with targeted outreach to underserved populations and alignment of training programs with emerging industry demands. Collaborative partnerships with core and required partners, such as Adult Education providers and Vocational Rehabilitation services, enhance the integration of services and leverage resources to improve participant outcomes. Additionally, the WDB works closely with local employers to ensure training programs meet labor market needs, enabling participants to secure employment in high-demand, high-wage industries.

Transparency and reporting are integral to the WDB's approach, with performance results shared regularly with Local Elected Officials, WDB members, and other stakeholders. This promotes accountability, informed decision-making, and community engagement. By achieving or exceeding negotiated performance levels, demonstrating innovative service delivery practices, maintaining strong fiscal accountability, and fostering effective collaboration, the WDB actively pursues recognition as a high-performing board. These efforts ensure the delivery of high-quality workforce services, meeting the needs of local employers and job seekers while driving economic growth in the region.

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

1. What existing service delivery strategies will be expanded based on promising return on investment?

LWDA 71 through their administrative staff, will conduct continuous oversight, monitoring, and evaluation of the One-Stop Delivery System to ensure that a comprehensive range of services is being provided. This includes ensuring that career services, as described in Section 134 of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), are accessible to all participants. The Boards will also ensure that access to training services is provided, particularly serving as the primary point of access to these services for individuals outlined in Section 134.

Additionally, the One-Stop Delivery System will facilitate access to a variety of employment and training activities as described in Section 134 of WIOA, ensuring that participants are able to engage in opportunities that promote their career development. The Boards will also ensure access to programs and activities carried out by One-Stop partners, as outlined in the same section of the WIOA, to foster collaboration and resource-sharing. Finally, LWDA 71 will provide access to the data, information, and analysis specified in Section 15(a) of the Wagner-Peyser (WP) Act. This includes job search, placement, recruitment, and other labor exchange services authorized under the WP Act, ensuring that all job seekers have access to essential labor market information and employment opportunities.

## 2. What existing service delivery strategies will be curtailed or eliminated based on minimal return on investment?

LWDA 71 will continue to monitor the performance of all approved training providers and programs to ensure that they are aligned with the needs of local employers and lead to certifications or degrees that are in demand within the region. This ongoing oversight will ensure that training programs are effective in preparing participants for careers in high-growth industries. The Boards will regularly assess the relevance and quality of these programs, make adjustments as necessary to ensure that they continue to meet the workforce demands of the area and provide job seekers with the skills needed to secure meaningful, in-demand employment.

## 3. What new service strategies will be used to address regional educational and training needs based on promising return on investment?

- What return on investment and qualitative outcome data for various education and training programs will be collected to identify barriers to enrollments?
- What are the most cost-effective approaches to taking down those barriers or helping residents overcome them?

LWDA 71 staff will continue to research training programs that are not currently approved locally but are operated by approved training providers in Louisiana. These programs will be evaluated for cost-effectiveness, measurable outcomes in terms of completion, certification, and employment results. The focus will be on identifying short-term training opportunities in high-growth, in-demand fields, including those that offer flexibility for individuals to work during the week while attending training on weekends or evenings. Additionally, online training programs will be considered for their ability to provide participants with similar flexibility, allowing them to maintain employment while earning industry-recognized certifications in a timely manner. Once these training programs are identified, the local workforce boards (LWDA 70 and LWDA 71) will work to recommend them for approval to be added to the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL), ensuring that job seekers have access to a broader range of relevant and accessible training options. LWDA 71 will continue to collaborate with all partners to identify and address barriers faced by residents in the area, working on cost-effective solutions to reduce obstacles in accessing services. One key method being implemented is simplifying the registration process for programs to ensure that it does not require multiple visits to the American Job Centers (AJCs), which can help minimize frustration and improve accessibility. Additionally, ensuring that all information about training and education programs is readily available online allows residents to access these details from their homes or mobile phones, increasing convenience and reducing the need for in-person visits. To support residents facing transportation challenges, LWDA 71 will continue to research and support high-quality online training programs that allow individuals to earn industry-recognized certifications without the need for travel. Furthermore, through the one-stop Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), the boards will work with partners to ensure that individuals have access to all necessary services at the AJCs. This includes having representatives from agencies such as Workforce Partners (WP), Louisiana Rehabilitation Services (LRS), the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), local employers, and local post-secondary institutions available to meet the diverse needs of residents. By focusing on these strategies, LWDA 71 aims to enhance access to services, reduce barriers, and improve outcomes for individuals in the region.

## CHAPTER 6: TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS & ASSURANCES: LOCAL

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

### A. Fiscal Management

1. Identify the entity responsible for the disbursement of grant funds described in WIOA Sec. 107(d)(12)(B)(i)(III) as determined by the chief elected official or the Governor under WIOA Sec. 107(d)(12)(B)(i) (§ 679.560(b)(14)).

City of Shreveport  
Finance Department  
Sheila Faour, Director of Finance  
(318) 673-5404  
sheila.faour@shreveportla.gov

2. Provide a copy of the local procurement policies and procedures and describe the competitive procurement process that will be used to award the sub grants and contracts for WIOA Title I activities (§ 679.560(b)(15)).

### B. Physical and Programmatic Accessibility

1. Describe how entities within the one-stop delivery system, including one-stop operators and the one-stop partners, will comply with WIOA Sec. 188, if applicable, and applicable provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12101 et seq.) regarding the physical and programmatic accessibility of facilities, programs and services, technology and materials for individuals with disabilities, including providing staff training and support for addressing the needs of individuals with disabilities (§ 679.560(b)(5)(iii)).

The City of Shreveport's one-stop delivery system, including one-stop operators and partners, is fully committed to complying with WIOA Section 188 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) to ensure the physical and programmatic accessibility of facilities, programs, services, technology, and materials for individuals with disabilities. All one-stop facilities are designed to meet ADA standards, incorporating features such as ramps, elevators, automatic doors, accessible restrooms, and designated parking spaces. Regular inspections and audits are conducted to maintain compliance and promptly address any identified issues. Programmatic accessibility is a priority, with reasonable accommodations provided to meet the diverse needs of individuals with disabilities. These accommodations include interpreters for individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing, assistive technology for those with visual impairments, and materials in alternative formats such as Braille, large print, or accessible digital versions. Additionally, online platforms and digital resources are designed to comply with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) to ensure individuals with disabilities can navigate and utilize these tools independently.

Staff within the one-stop delivery system receive ongoing training on ADA compliance and best practices for serving individuals with disabilities. This training focuses on recognizing and addressing accessibility needs, using assistive technologies, and providing inclusive customer service to ensure that all individuals receive personalized and effective support. The system also collaborates with local organizations specializing in disability services, such as Vocational Rehabilitation agencies, to enhance its capacity to provide specialized accommodations and access to additional resources. Furthermore, the one-stop system regularly evaluates its compliance with WIOA Section 188 and ADA requirements through internal audits, customer feedback, and consultation with advocacy groups. Any barriers identified during these evaluations are addressed through actionable improvement plans to ensure continuous progress in accessibility. By prioritizing inclusivity and compliance, the City of Shreveport's one-stop delivery system ensures that individuals with disabilities have equitable access to the resources and support they need to achieve their employment and training goals. This approach reinforces the WDB's commitment to delivering high-quality, inclusive services that meet federal standards.

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

The Local Workforce Development Board (LWDB) 71 ensures that all local service providers, including additional providers, integrate and provide access to the full set of services within the one-stop system, with a specific focus on enhancing services for individuals with disabilities. This is achieved through a unified framework of cross-training, technical assistance, collaboration, and coordination to ensure inclusivity and accessibility for all participants. Service providers collaborate to deliver a comprehensive range of workforce development services, including employment, education, training, and support-ive services, that address the unique needs of individuals with disabilities. The LWDB facilitates alignment of resources and programs across agencies to reduce duplication and maximize the effectiveness of service delivery.

A key component of this strategy is cross-training staff across all providers to increase their understanding of disability-related needs, assistive technologies, and inclusive practices. Training topics include ADA compliance, effective communication strategies, and identifying and addressing barriers to employment. These efforts ensure that staff are equipped to effectively serve individuals with disabilities at any entry point into the one-stop system. In addition to staff training, the LWDB provides technical assistance to service providers to support the development and implementation of accessible services. This includes guidance on using assistive technologies, creating accessible program materials, and adhering to best practices for inclusivity. Providers share information through centralized case management systems like HiRE (Helping Individuals Reach Employment), ensuring seamless communication about participants' needs and progress across partners, which minimizes service gaps and enhances continuity of care.

Collaboration with employers is also a vital part of enhancing services for individuals with disabilities. The LWDB engages employers to promote inclusive hiring practices, develop work-based learning opportunities, and implement workplace accommodations to support the success of employees with disabilities. Service providers assist employers with job analysis, workplace modifications, and staff training to create inclusive and accessible work environments. Partnerships with organizations such as Vocational Rehabilitation services and other disability-focused entities further enhance the system's ability to address the unique needs of individuals with disabilities. Regular joint planning sessions and collaborative meetings between partners ensure a coordinated approach and alignment in service delivery.

To enhance physical and programmatic accessibility, the LWDB has invested in assistive technology, facility modifications, and the provision of materials in alternative formats, such as Braille and large print. Virtual service options are also designed to be accessible to individuals with disabilities, including those who rely on screen readers or other assistive devices. Through these integrated and cooperative efforts, LWDB 71 ensures that the one-stop system is inclusive, effective, and accessible for all individuals, particularly those with disabilities, while meeting the requirements of § 679.560(b)(13) and promoting equitable access to workforce development services.

### C. Plan Development and Public Comment

1. Describe the process used by the Local Board, consistent with WIOA Sec. 108(d), to provide a 30- day public comment period prior to submission of the plan, including an opportunity to have input into the development of the local plan, particularly for representatives of businesses, education and labor organizations (§ 679.560(b)(19)).

The Local Workforce Development Board (LWDB) 71 follows an inclusive and transparent process to provide a 30-day public comment period prior to the submission of the local plan, consistent with WIOA Section 108(d). This process ensures that representatives from businesses, education, and labor organizations, along with other stakeholders, have an opportunity to provide input into the development of the plan.

To initiate the public comment period, the LWDB publishes a formal announcement in local newspapers, on the City of Shreveport's Department of Community Development website, and through targeted communications to stakeholders. The announcement includes information on the availability of the draft plan, instructions for submitting comments, and details of any scheduled public meetings or forums. Copies of the draft plan are made accessible online and, upon request, in physical formats at designated locations, including the LWDB office and the Caddo American Job Center.

During the 30-day period, the LWDB actively solicits input from key stakeholders such as local businesses, educational institutions, labor organizations, community-based organizations, and members of the general public. Public meetings or listening sessions may be scheduled to provide a platform for stakeholders to present their feedback directly. These sessions are designed to encourage dialogue, clarify any aspects of the plan, and gather diverse perspectives.

The LWDB ensures that the comments received are reviewed and considered in the finalization of the plan. A summary of the public comments, including how they were addressed or incorporated into the final plan, is documented to maintain transparency and accountability. This process reflects LWDB 71's commitment to fostering collaboration and ensuring that the local plan aligns with the workforce needs and priorities of the community. Through this approach, LWDB 71 ensures that the development of the local plan is inclusive, reflective of stakeholder input, and compliant with WIOA requirements.

2. Provide a summary of the public comments received and how this information was addressed by the CEO, partners and the Local Board in the final plan.

Public comments received during the 30-day comment period are an integral part of the plan development process for the Local Workforce Development Board (LWDB) 71. These comments are collected through multiple channels, including public meetings, online submissions, and written correspondence, ensuring accessibility and broad participation from community stakeholders, including businesses, education representatives, labor organizations, and the general public. Once gathered, the comments are compiled and reviewed by the LWDB, the Chief Elected Official (CEO), and one-stop partners. This collaborative review process ensures that all feedback is carefully considered and evaluated for its relevance and alignment with the strategic goals of the workforce system.

The CEO, partners, and the Local Board work together to determine how the feedback will be incorporated into the final plan. Comments that highlight gaps in services, suggest improvements, or identify emerging community needs are prioritized for integration. For example, if stakeholders recommend expanding services for underserved populations or enhancing accessibility for individuals with disabilities, these suggestions are reflected in revised strategies, goals, or resource allocation within the plan. Additionally, comments requiring clarification or further explanation of plan components are addressed through revisions that improve the plan's transparency and alignment with community priorities.

A summary of the public comments and how they were addressed is included in the final plan to ensure transparency and accountability. This summary demonstrates the LWDB's commitment to fostering an inclusive planning process that values community input. Through this structured approach, the CEO, partners, and LWDB ensure that the final plan reflects the needs and priorities of the local workforce area, ultimately strengthening the effectiveness and responsiveness of the workforce development system.

3. Provide information regarding the regional and local plan modification procedures.

The modification procedures for regional and local workforce plans ensure that strategies remain responsive to evolving economic conditions, labor market trends, and community needs. Modifications are initiated when significant changes occur, such as industry expansions or closures, updates to state or federal policies, shifts in funding allocations, or adjustments to performance goals and service delivery strategies. When a modification is necessary, the Local Workforce Development Board (LWDB) 71, in coordination with regional partners, conducts a comprehensive review of the existing plan. This process includes analyzing updated labor market data, consulting with stakeholders such as businesses, education providers, and labor organizations, and identifying adjustments needed to address gaps or emerging priorities.

A draft of the modified plan is developed and shared with stakeholders for input, ensuring an inclusive process that reflects the needs of the community. The draft is then subjected to a 30-day public comment period, during which the proposed changes are made publicly available through various channels, including the LWDB's website and local publications. Feedback received during this period is reviewed, and necessary revisions are incorporated to address community concerns and suggestions. Once finalized, the modified plan is presented to the LWDB, the Chief Elected Official (CEO), and any relevant regional oversight bodies for review and approval. Following local approval, the plan is submitted to the Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC) for state-level review and final authorization.

To ensure plans remain dynamic and effective, LWDB 71 engages in ongoing monitoring and evaluation of performance data, stakeholder feedback, and labor market trends. This continuous process allows the board to identify additional needs or opportunities for improvement, prompting further modifications as necessary. By following these procedures, LWDB 71 ensures its regional and local plans remain adaptive, collaborative, and aligned with the workforce development priorities of the region and the state.

## REGIONAL / LOCAL PLAN SIGNATURES

By signing the Regional / Local Plan, all signatories attest that:

1. They submit this plan on behalf of the region and the local areas within that region;
2. The planning was done with leaders throughout the region and represents the collective thinking of those regional representatives;
3. The information contained herein is true and accurate to the best of their knowledge;
4. The regional plan and accompanying local plans represent the local workforce development boards' efforts to maximize resources available under Title I of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act and to coordinate these resources with other State and Local programs in the planning region;
5. They will operate the local system in accordance with the regional plan, their respective local area plan, and applicable federal and state laws, regulations, policies and rules.

Name of Chief Elected Official for the LWDA:

Signature and Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Tom Arceneaux, Mayor Date

Address: 505 Travis Street, Suite 200, Shreveport, LA 71101  
Telephone Number: (318)673-5050  
E-Mail Address: tom.arceneaux@shreveportla.gov

Name of Local Workforce Development Board Chairman:

Signature and Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Katrina Worsham, Chairperson Date

Address: 8216 Jewella Avenue, Shreveport, LA 71108  
Telephone Number: (318)688-8312  
E-Mail Address: Katrina.worsham.l92r@statefarm.com

Name of Local Workforce Development Board Director:

Signature and Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Bridgette Clark, Bureau Chief Date

Address: 2121 Fairfield Avenue, Suite 100, Shreveport, LA 71104  
Telephone Number: (318)676-5357  
E-Mail Address: bridgette.clark@shreveportla.gov