



**Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act
Local and Regional Workforce Development
Area Plans**

**Comprehensive Four-Year Title I Plan for PY
2020 July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2024**

Local Title I WIOA Instructions

Introduction

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) requires each Workforce Development Board (WDB) to develop and submit, in partnership with the local chief elected official, a comprehensive four-year plan. The WIOA Program Year (PY) 2020 Plan is to provide current information and be effective July 1, 2020 - June 30, 2024 and will include all current local policies. The local and regional plan will support the alignment strategy described in the 2020-2024 NC Unified State Plan in accordance with WIOA Section 102(b)(1)(E), and otherwise be consistent with the NC Unified State Plan. North Carolina Governor Roy Cooper's mission is to ensure North Carolinians are better educated, healthier, and have more money in their pockets so that they can live more abundant, purposeful lives. The cornerstone to achieving this goal is to help people get good-paying jobs to support themselves and their families. Through NC Job Ready, Governor Cooper's workforce development initiative, North Carolina is working to build a stronger and better workforce. NC Job Ready is built on three core principles: education and skills attainment are the foundation to a strong and resilient workforce; an employer-led workforce development system is key to the growth of a highly skilled and job ready workforce; and local innovation is critical to a dynamic and effective workforce system. In addition, Workforce Development Boards shall comply with WIOA Sections 106 through 108 in the preparation and submission of the plan.

Through its strategic planning efforts, the NCWorks Commission developed a vision and mission for North Carolina's Workforce System. This vision is to build a job-ready workforce to strengthen North Carolina companies, attract new businesses, and ensure our state can adapt to a changing economy. The mission of the state's workforce development system, is to ensure North Carolina has an innovative, relevant, effective, and efficient workforce development system that develops adaptable, work-ready, skilled talent to meet the current and future needs of workers and businesses to achieve and sustain economic prosperity, and to ensure North Carolinians are ready for the jobs of today and tomorrow by increasing access to education and skills training, fostering employer leadership to prepare workers, and supporting and scaling local innovation.

Federal and State Requirements for Local Administration of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act

Local Workforce Development Boards should reference the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, Public Law 113-128, enacted July 22, 2014. Additional information is available at the U.S. Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration website: www.doleta.gov.

North Carolina policy information is available at <https://www.nccommerce.com/jobs-training/workforce-professionals-tools-resources/workforce-policies>. Local Workforce Development Boards may reference the North Carolina [WIOA Unified State Plan](#).

Plan Submission and Due Date

The Local Plan must be submitted through Workforce Information System Enterprise (WISE), the Division's web-based financial system. ***The due date is May 11, 2020.*** Each attachment must be submitted and labeled separately in either Word or PDF format. Attachments not submitted separately will not be accepted. Forms requiring original signatures may be mailed to the local Board's assigned Planner at: N.C. Division of Workforce Solutions, 4316 Mail Services Center, Raleigh, NC 27699-4316. Hand delivered documents may be left at 313 Chapanoke Road, Suite 120, Raleigh, NC 27603.

I. Workforce Development Board Overview

The Local Area Overview provides important contact information that is used throughout the Division. It is important that this section remain current during the Program Year. Updates should be submitted to the local Board's assigned Division Planner when changes occur.

1. Provide the Local Area's official (legal) name as it appears on the local Consortium Agreement established to administer the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) or, if not a Consortium, in the formal request for Local Area designation.

If the Local Area is a Consortium, attach a copy of the current Consortium Agreement. Name document: Local Area Name Consortium Agreement.

The Local Area's legal name is the High Country Workforce Development Board.

The local consortium is the High Country Workforce Consortium.

See [High Country Consortium Agreement](#).

2. Provide the name, title, organization name, address, telephone number, and e-mail address of the Workforce Development Director.

Name: Keith Deveraux	Title: Director
Organization: High Country WDB	Address: 468 New Market Blvd Boone, NC 28607
Phone number: 828-265-5434 ext. 130	Email address: keith.deveraux@highcountrywdb.com

3. Provide the name, elected title, local government affiliation, address, telephone number, and e-mail address of the Local Area's Chief Elected Official.

Name: Keith Elmore	Elected Title: County Commissioner
Government: Wilkes County	Address: 124 Old Cotton Mill Place Roaring River, NC 28669
Phone number: 336-651-7346	Email address: kelfore@wilkescounty.net

4. Provide the name, title, business name, address, telephone number, and e-mail address of the individual authorized to receive official mail for the Chief Elected Official, if different than question 3.

Name: Same as above	Title:
Business Name:	Address:
Phone number:	Email address:

5. Provide the name, address, telephone number, and email address of the Administrative/Fiscal Agent responsible for disbursing Local Area WIOA grant funds. This is the entity responsible for the disbursement of grant funds. [WIOA Sections 107(d)(12)(B)(i)(III) and 108(b)(15)].

Name: High Country Council of Governments	Title:
Organization:	Address: 468 New Market Blvd. Boone, NC 28607
Phone number: 828-265-5434	Email address: jwiggins@hccog.org

6. Provide the name, title, organization name, address, telephone number, and e-mail address of the Administrative/Fiscal Agent's signatory official.

Name: Julie Wiggins	Title: Executive Director
Organization: High Country Council of Governments	Address: 468 New Market Blvd. Boone, NC 28607
Phone number: 828-265-5434	Email address: jwiggins@hccog.org

7. Attach a copy of the Administrative Entity/Fiscal Agent's organizational chart with an 'effective as of date'. Name document: *Administrative Entity Name Organizational Chart*.

[See High Country Council of Governments Organization Chart.](#)

8. Provide the Administrative Entity's Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number and assurance that the 'System for Award Management' (SAM) status is current. Administrative Entities must register at least annually on the SAM website www.sam.gov to receive Federal funding [required by Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) Section 4.11 and Section 52.204-7].

DUNS# 136098337

9. Provide the name of the local Workforce Development Board's equal opportunity officer who shall be responsible for assuring that discrimination does not occur in its programs or projects. (PS 07-2018)

Rebecca Bloomquist

Composition of the local Workforce Development Boards shall comply with WIOA Section 107. Local Workforce Development Board Membership Requirements have been provided as reference at [Appendix D](#).

10. Provide each Workforce Development Board members' name, business title, business name and address, telephone number and e-mail address on the provided form. The first block is reserved to identify the Board chairperson ([form provided](#)). Indicate all required representation and indicate if vacant. [WIOA Section 107(b)(2)]. Name document: *Local Area Name WDB List*. See [Appendix D](#) for Local Area Workforce Development Boards membership requirements.

Note: Check the block on provided form certifying compliance with required WIOA local Workforce Development Board business nomination process. If the Board membership is not in compliance currently, provide the statement here.

* Use and identify categories as indicated on the form. Do not change required category names except to clarify those with multiple categories.

See High Country WDB List.

The Chief Elected Official must establish by-laws consistent with applicable local procedures, state and federal laws to include WIOA Final Rules and Regulations 679.310(g). The Board shall submit by-laws that clearly demonstrate all WIOA and North Carolina required elements described in [Appendix A](#). Additional by-laws guidance and electronic meeting formats have been provided in [Appendix B](#) and [Appendix C](#).

11. Attach the Workforce Development Board by-laws including date adopted/amended. By-laws must include the required elements found in Appendix A. Name document: Local Area Name WDB by-laws.

See High Country WDB Bylaws.

12. To demonstrate that the attached Workforce Development Board By-laws comply, complete [By-Laws Required Elements – Crosswalk chart](#).

See High Country WDB Bylaws Required Elements Crosswalk

Sunshine Provision - The Local Board shall make available to the public, on a regular basis through electronic means and open meetings, information regarding the activities of the Local Board, including information regarding the Local Plan prior to submission of the Plan, and regarding membership, the designation and certification of one-stop operators, and the award of grants or contracts to eligible providers of youth workforce investment activities, and on request, minutes of formal meetings of the Local Board. [WIOA Section 107(e)]

13. Describe how the Workforce Development Board will make copies of the proposed Local Plan available to the public. [WIOA Section 108(d)]

The plan will be posted on the High Country Workforce Development Board's website for at least 30 days prior to June 30, 2020. HCCOG submits a weekly electronic newsletter to all the member governments. An announcement will be included in the weekly newsletter during the public comment period to include a link to the plan on the Board's website. HCCOG's website will also be used to solicit public comments by either posting the plan on the COG's website or providing a link to the plan on the Board's website.

Public Comment - The Workforce Development Board shall make copies of the proposed Local Plan available to the public through electronic and other means, such as public hearings and local news media; allow for public comment not later than the end of the 30-day period beginning on the date the proposed plan is made available; and, include with submission of the Local Plan any comments that represent disagreement with the Plan. [WIOA Section 108(d)]

14. Attach a copy of the Local Workforce Development Board's organizational chart with an 'effective as of date.' Include position titles. Name document: Local WDB Name Organizational Chart.

See High Country WDB Organization Chart.

15. Complete the following chart for the PY2020 Local Workforce Development Board’s planned meeting schedule to include time, dates and location. *[Expand form as needed.]*

Date	Time	Location (include address and room #)
July 9, 2020	2:30 pm	HCCOG 468 New Market Blvd. Boone, NC 28607 Executive Board Room
September 10, 2020	2:30 pm	HCCOG 468 New Market Blvd. Boone, NC 28607 Executive Board Room
November 12, 2020	2:30 pm	HCCOG 468 New Market Blvd. Boone, NC 28607 Executive Board Room
January 14, 2021	2:30 pm	HCCOG 468 New Market Blvd. Boone, NC 28607 Executive Board Room
March 11, 2021	2:30 pm	HCCOG 468 New Market Blvd. Boone, NC 28607 Executive Board Room
May 13, 2021	2:30 pm	HCCOG 468 New Market Blvd. Boone, NC 28607 Executive Board Room

Note: All local Workforce Development Board meetings will be held in accessible facilities. All materials and discussions should be available in an accessible format upon request.

16. Attach a copy of the signed ‘Certification Regarding Debarment, Suspension, and other Responsibility Matters – Primary Covered Transactions’ ([form provided](#)). [Required by the Regulations implementing Executive Order 12549, Debarment and Suspension, 29 CFR Part 98, Section 98.510, participants’ responsibilities.] Name document: *Local Area Name Certification Form*.

Note: Document must bear the original signature of the Administrative Entity signatory official. Mail the signed [Certification form](#) (page 27) original to Division Planner.

See [High Country WDB Debarment Form](#).

17. Submit the original Workforce Development Board and Chief Elected Official (CEO) Signatory Page ([form provided](#)), bearing the original signatures of the Chief Elected Official(s) and the Workforce Development Board Chairman, and attach a copy of the signed document. Name document: *Local Area Name Signatory Page*.

Note: Mail the signed original [Signatory Form](#) to the assigned Division Planner.

See High Country WDB Signatory Page.

II. Local Area Strategic Planning

Each local Workforce Development Board (WDB) shall develop and submit a comprehensive four-year local Plan. The local Workforce Development Board is required to keep the Plan up to date and fluid as events and funding changes occur which may require local area responses. Local Plans will require an annual modification. North Carolina has implemented integrated services delivery with an enhanced emphasis on regional planning and services. This approach is consistent with federal, state and regional initiatives and opportunities. North Carolina's workforce development system includes businesses, organizations, agencies, employed and unemployed persons, training and educational institutions, adults and youth. To enhance services to all these constituents, aligning workforce development planning and services with regional labor markets is both effective and productive. North Carolina Governor Roy Cooper's NC Job Ready is built on three core principles: education and skills development are the foundation to a strong and resilient workforce; an employer-led workforce development system is key to the growth of a highly skilled and job ready workforce; and local innovation is critical to a dynamic and effective workforce system.

Locally, WDBs are creatively working to address the new challenges of job growth and expansions. With low unemployment rates, Boards continue to have a shortage of middle-skilled level workers. As a Board and workforce system, Boards are leveraging resources and engaging in new partnerships that include the business community, economic developers, chambers of commerce, NCWorks Career Centers, community colleges, public schools, and community partners. Working together, Boards are paving the way for an even stronger economy through sector partnerships and career pathways initiatives.

1. Describe how the local Workforce Development Boards and partners address local challenges for job growth and business expansions?

The High Country workforce Development Board and partners address local challenges for job growth and business expansion by having open communication with partners and the business that is expanding in our local area. The High Country WDB addresses the local challenges of job growth in rural areas by providing funds to train jobseekers for the new jobs that are available in their area or to provide training so that a current employee can upskill their knowledge and advance to a different level within the employers business/organization.

The High Country WDB also makes businesses aware that we can provide workforce services such as on-the-job training where we will pay a portion of the their employees salary while they are training, which provides the business/employer the benefit of saving money while training a new employee, thus the money saved can be used by the business for business growth and expansion.

The High Country WDB in partnership with our local community colleges provide training and education to jobseekers and the current workforce to help our customers to attain credentials, certificates, and advance degrees that help to develop and produce the qualified skilled global workforce to meet the needs of business and industry.

The High Country WDB in partnership with our area chambers of commerce members and economic development commissions we engage with business and industries and listen to what their needs are that will allow businesses to locate to our area and hire citizens in our local communities that will help their businesses grow and expand, which will grow the local

economy because people will be employed and spending money locally where they work and live, therefore providing a good quality of life.

Therefore, the High Country WDB is part of a team that supports the growth and expansions of businesses in our region.

2. Provide a description of the Workforce Development Board's strategic vision and goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce including youth and individuals with barriers to employment. Include goals relating to the performance accountability measures based on primary indicators of performance in order to support regional economic growth and economic self-sufficiency. [WIOA Section 108(b)(1)(E)]

The High Country Workforce Development Board's strategic vision and goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce including youth and individuals with barriers to employment is to evaluate, enhance, and expand services by following the Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act (WIOA) because it is the federal law that governs the state, local governments, and workforce board funding and policy development. The High Country WDB will continuously evaluate and enhance all workforce services in our workforce area based on meeting the needs of jobseekers and employers. The expansion and increase of services will be determined and possible with increase of workforce funding and workforce allocations.

The High Country WDB will continue to foster new and existing partnerships at the federal, state, and local level while promoting the High Country WDB/NCWorks Career Centers and workforce services. The High Country WDB will continue to advocate at the federal, state, and local government for policies that will enhance efforts of the High Country WDB being in compliance with the federal requirements of WIOA.

The High Country WDB will continue to expand and adapt organizational capacity to meet local and regional needs by helping employers meet their workforce needs, and help individuals build careers, strengthen the local economy while meeting the challenges of global competition. Therefore, by using such workforce programs as on-the-job training, work experience, and dislocated worker funding allows the High Country WDB to prepare and educate youth and individuals with barriers to employment, because these programs enhance the skills and education level that prepares them for jobs in the workforce and the global economy and allows the individuals to attain certifications and credentials that will lead to successful and gainful employment.

3. Considering the analyses described in the Regional Strategic Planning Section III, describe strategies to work with the entities that carry out the core programs that align resources available to the Local Area to achieve the strategic vision and goals. [WIOA Section 108(b)(1)(F)]

The High Country Workforce Development Board will use multiple strategies to work with entities that carry out the core programs that align resources available to the local area to achieve the strategic vision and goals. We will continue working collaboratively with our local community colleges and other training providers to convene honest communications with business leaders and assess training that truly enhances their workforce as well as increases a jobseeker's employability. We will continue to use/administer the incumbent worker grant to help employers increase the skills level of their employees to enhance their business and the workforce.

The High Country WDB will continue to use Memorandum of Understanding and the Infrastructure Cost Agreement as convening tools to discuss and ensure that multiple workforce and education agencies have collaborative goals to meet the demands of business and the needs of a diverse jobseeker population. The High Country WDB will continue to collaborate and engage with our workforce partners and job seekers so that all resources and programs will be used to help develop and produce a highly skilled and qualified workforce that will thrive and achieve great success while meeting the needs of jobseekers and employers in our region.

4. Describe Local Area's workforce development system, including identifying the programs included in the system, and how the Workforce Development Board will work with the entities administering core programs and other workforce development programs to support alignment and provision of services, including programs of study authorized under the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 (20 U.S.C. 2301 et seq.). [WIOA Section 108(b)(2)]

Due to the rural nature of the High Country region - its local communities; the variety of staffing and office resources available from partners - each NCWorks Career Center has a unique set of relationships between partners. Board and career center staff are always looking for additional ways to partner and provide more seamless services to customers.

Community Colleges

Mayland Community College currently serves as one of our WIOA service providers for three of our seven counties. Both Caldwell Community College & Technical Institute and Wilkes Community College have also been previous service providers. This institution history provides for a strong relationship with our community colleges in the counties we serve. In many cases HRD staff from the community colleges are closely connected to our NCWorks Centers through their assistance of our job seekers. Other staff from the community colleges are more focused on business customers and participate in our regional business engagement network.

Secondary Schools and CTE Programs

Workforce Board staff have invested considerable time building relationships with the region's secondary schools. The Board began this effort in 2013 when hosting a CTE regional forum to

share information and best practices. This forum has led to many developments throughout the region between the public schools and the NCWorks system. A current partnership involves the development of a Watauga Summer Teacher Academy with a goal of exposing educators to the true needs of local employers. Approximately 25 educators will participate in industry visits to over a dozen employers to better tie education to employment while also hearing from key workforce partners on regional and local needs.

Appalachian State University

The partnership with Appalachian State University to provide a data analysis of workforce system information continues with hopes of expanding their analysis in the near future either through apprenticeships or through Graduate Assistant support. We continue in conversations with ASU's career development center to explore ways NCWorks can partner and build on their services.

Senior Employment Programs

Several centers in our region partner with Urban League to host the Senior Service Employment program. Participants also utilize services offered through the center. When appropriate, senior participants are placed at the career center as a worksite to enhance their skills during program participation.

The WDB continues to partner and build on relationships established with NCWorks partners, secondary schools, community colleges, etc. to support the in-demand training needs of students and employers. The High Country WDB continues to stay connected to the local CTE programs in an effort to align NCWorks system activities to support local CTE initiatives whether through presentations at Workforce Development Board meetings or participating in CTE career fair. In addition, the HCWDB being the regional convener for Certified Career Pathways development strengthened these partnerships.

5. Provide a description of how the Workforce Development Board, working with the entities carrying out core programs, will expand access to employment, training, education and supportive services for eligible individuals, particularly eligible individuals with barriers to employment. Include how the Workforce Development Board will facilitate the development of career pathways and co-enrollment, as appropriate, in core programs, and improve access to activities leading to a recognized postsecondary credential including a credential that is an industry-recognized certificate or certification, portable, and stackable. [WIOA Section 108(b)(3)]

The High Country Workforce Development Board continues to have dialogue with Adult Basic Education services within our local community colleges to increase partnering to serve those that have low basic skills so they may pursue additional educational opportunities and/or enter the workforce. Locally, the WDB is partnering closely with the local K-12 school systems, especially superintendents, high school principals, and CTE staff. Historically, the WDB has partnered with the local community action agencies for the purpose of targeting low income individuals for skill upgrading and placement into employment. It is anticipated that this partnership will increase to achieve the goals of reaching this population. In addition, local partnerships have been established with the regional local homeless shelter to provide job readiness and job search skills to those who are ready to transition from the shelter to full-time residency. Locally Board and career center partnerships with local Vocational Rehabilitation

staff have been close, often resulting in dual enrollments to meet customer needs. It is expected these relationships will continue and strengthen with implementation of WIOA services.

The WDB completed the certification of career pathways in healthcare and advanced manufacturing as both continue to be identified as in-demand sectors in the High Country.

6. Describe the Workforce Development Board's use of initiatives such as incumbent worker training programs, on-the-job training programs, customized training programs, industry and sector strategies, career pathways initiatives, utilization of effective business intermediaries, and other business services and strategies, designed to meet the needs of employers in the corresponding region in support of the regional strategy to meet the needs of businesses. [WIOA Section 108 (b)(4)(B)].

Having increased opportunities in Work Based Learning services is an enhancement to job seekers and employers. Work Based Learning opportunities increases opportunities for employers to provide skill upgrades, reduce the cost of training, and assist job seekers and/or incumbent workers with skills needed to remain successfully employed. Reduced training costs for employers allows them to be more productive by increasing skills needed to perform the job. Job seekers who learn additional skills are more employable and more likely to earn self-sustaining wages. The Work Based Learning services align with NC Job Ready initiative of the Governor. The process that the WDB uses to promote and encourage Work Based Learning, OJT's, and training opportunities is shared through engagement with the local EDC's in each county that we serve, local community colleges workforce development staff, as well as outreach from our business service representatives in our local NCWorks Career Centers.

7. Describe how the Workforce Development Board coordinates and promotes entrepreneurial skills training and microenterprise services. [WIOA Section 108(b)(5)]

These trainings are offered by a variety of organizations in our area. Local community colleges, Appalachian State University, SBTDC, Ascent Business Network, and others offer this training. The career centers refer interested customers to these services in addition to hosting some of the workshops on-site at the career centers.

8. Describe how the Workforce Development Board enhances the use of apprenticeships to support the regional economy and individuals' career advancement. [WIOA Section 108(b)(5)]

Apprenticeships, as part of work-based learning, can be an important part of connecting people to jobs. In the past there have been limited apprenticeship activities in the High Country area. However, over the past couple years the Apprenticeship Wilkes program has begun and is continuing to develop and grow. This partnership has gotten commitment from a number of local employers (Interflex, Jeld-Wen, Infusion Points, Gardner-Glass, and ECMD) interested in and who are hosting students in registered pre-apprenticeships. We are also seeing interest develop in Watauga County through their TradeUp partnership related to the construction industry. High Country recently partnered with the NC Apprenticeship program with local schools/colleges/employers to submit an application focused on the development of youth apprenticeships. If approved, we look forward to potentially expanding this program in the region.

9. Provide a description of how the Workforce Development Board coordinates workforce investment activities carried out in the Local Area with statewide rapid response activities as described in WIOA Section 134(a)(2)(A). [WIOA Section 108(b)(8)] In addition, specifically describe the coordination and delivery of services to businesses to include the following [WIOA Section 108(b)(8)]:
- a. Systems that are used to determine economic trends and partners within your Early Warning Network to help identify those businesses that are expanding and/or struggling.
 - b. Local resources that are provided to help struggling businesses avert or prevent layoffs, and
 - c. Explain coordination with TAA to maximize resources and prevent duplicative services.

Typically, career center managers and business services representatives will know which companies in the region are struggling or expanding and will provide direct assistance and/or referral. Growing companies may be the right fit for an OJT candidate, and struggling businesses may benefit from the expertise of the state Business Edge staff or a local incumbent worker grant.

High Country WDB staff provide regional leadership for Rapid Response activities, which in turn, are provided by local career center staff and partners. Staff will contact the state DWS rapid response unit staff as soon as staff are made aware of the layoff/closure event or announcement. If the event requires state level participation then WDB staff work closely with the state to set up the rapid response meeting with the company and communicate this to the appropriate center staff that will need to participate in the company meeting.

Because of the long history of working with layoffs and closures, local rapid response teams are in place for each of the workforce centers to work with the company and the affected workers. Meetings with the company and with the workers typically include High Country WDB staff, WIOA-funded service provider staff, DWS local and regional staff, DSS staff, local community college staff, and other partner staff such as language interpreters, as appropriate. In many instances, meetings with the company and meetings with the workers will be held at the workplace. In some cases, when there is an immediate closure it is not possible to have the meeting at the workplace, an appropriate facility is secured for purposes of meeting with workers impacted or the meetings are held at the appropriate workforce center. In addition because of this local layoff history coupled with tenured staff, coordination of TAA services and WIOA services is something staff are accustomed to doing.

10. Provide a description of plans, strategies and assurances concerning maximizing coordination of services provided under the Wagner-Peyser Act and services provided in the Local Area through the NCWorks Career Center system. Include how improved service delivery and avoidance of duplication of services are/will be achieved. [WIOA Section 108(b)(12)]

Wagner Peyser services continue to be coordinated in the area. The four (4) Tier 1 certified NCWorks Career Centers have identified center managers with the goal of implementing integrated service delivery between WIOA and DWS staff. The Tier 2 center (1) and the two (2) Remote Site centers operate using a functional approach with all staff being trained in career

service delivery, referrals, and resource assistance. Wagner Peyser and WIOA staff will continue coordination and integration to avoid duplication.

11. Provide a description of how the Workforce Development Board coordinates workforce investment activities carried out in the Local Area with the provision of Adult Education and Literacy activities. [WIOA Section 108(b)(13)]

The WDB continues to build and partner with Adult Education to integrate education and training as part of provided services. Center staff are closely connected with Adult Education, and in some counties have incorporated set scheduled time to spend within Adult Education to outreach to students.

Workforce Development Alignment Summary for Caldwell, Mayland, and Wilkes Community Colleges

Board staff and Adult Education partners recently discussed regional needs and alignment strategies for the upcoming year. With quality service to clients and students as the undergirding motivation for all of the partners, the group decided upon the following broad priorities and alignment activities on which to focus.

Goal 1: Improve service delivery in the One-Stops

- Continue referrals between agencies and continue to streamline the process for students, to share information, to avoid repetitious paperwork and to make tracking more efficient.
- Use similar tools for student intake, development, and assessment to allow sharing and consistency among partners (Such as “Working Smart” curriculum for soft skills and sharing of student assessments).
- Conduct regular cross-training for staff of NCWorks and Adult Education so that clients can receive accurate information from either source for a more fluid process with a goal to have two regional meetings per year along with ongoing local county meetings throughout the year.

Goal 2: Improve outreach and service to employers

- Understand and utilize each other's work on career pathways to support training programs aligned with employer needs.
- Strengthen the partnership with the Business Services team to share information and market services and college training programs and align work-based learning opportunities when appropriate
- Coordinate services to identify On-the-Job Training, work experience, and apprenticeship programs as appropriate for employers and customers
- Align resources and tools for Labor Market Information to assist staff and students with informed decisions.

Goal 3: Engage the region's youth

- Maintain the MOU agreements between public schools, NCWorks and Adult Basic Education to coordinate efforts to serve dropouts, disconnected youth and graduates who are basic skills deficient.
- Convene regular meetings to facilitate communication between partners at the county level to remain engaged in program/staff changes and better serve customers.

Each local plan for Caldwell, Mayland, and Wilkes Community Colleges addresses our program's plans to provide Adult Education and Literacy Activities, including responses to our strategies for instructional practices, ensuring student engagement, offering transitional support, providing professional development to staff, engaging in continuous improvement measures, and aligning our services with those of the other WIOA partners.

Debbie Woodard, Dean of College Readiness at Wilkes Community College serves as the adult literacy representative on the High Country Workforce Development Board for Caldwell, Mayland, and Wilkes Community Colleges. She has served on the board since July 2015. Mike Birkmire, Unit Manager at VR, serves as the local VR representative on the High Country Workforce Development Board for the region.

12. Provide a description of cooperative agreements, as defined in WIOA Section 107(d)(11), between the Workforce Development Board and other local entities described in Section 101(a)(11)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. 721(a)(11)(B)) with respect to efforts that will enhance the provision of services to individuals with disabilities and to other individuals, such as cross training of staff, technical assistance, use and sharing of information, cooperative efforts with employers, and other efforts at cooperation, collaboration, and coordination. [WIOA Section 108(b)(14)]

The Local Area consistently emphasizes to our service providers the need to serve customers with disabilities. Past regional Career Center meetings have included short presentations, and Career Center management teams review information and videos made available through Vocational Rehabilitation. Historically, Career Center partners have been invited to the Equal Opportunity training held by the Local Area for service providers. Marketing efforts are always inclusive of persons with disabilities. It is common to co-enroll customers being served through Vocational Rehabilitation to meet these customers' needs. The WDB's regional representative for Vocational Rehabilitation serves on the Board and has become directly involved in many of the centers around the region. His presence and attention always raises the awareness of center staff about serving customers with disabilities. Some career centers have Vocational Rehabilitation staff onsite (typically part-time) to assist with referrals and placements.

The High Country WDB's Memorandum of Agreement directly references methods of referrals in Section VI:

"Methods to ensure the needs of workers and youth, and individuals with barriers to employment, including individuals with disabilities, are addressed in the provision of necessary and appropriate access to services, including access to technology and materials, made available through the one-

stop delivery system. Partners will utilize methods of referrals of individuals between one-stop operators and one-stop partners for appropriate services and activities.”

13. Provide a detailed description of the competitive process used to award subgrants and contracts in the Local Area for activities carried out under WIOA Title I. [WIOA Section 108(b)(16)]

The High Country Local Area procurement policy requires that a competitive process be followed for the procurement of WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker, Business Services, and Youth Services, except as described in the policy’s non-competitive procurement section. Under WIOA, career center operation is also procured through a competitive process.

Typically, the Board begins the process with an announcement and advertising of Intent to Bid process for Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth services to determine interest from organizations to provide WIOA services within the seven-county workforce area. If more than one organization submits a completed Intent to Bid response, then the Board will have the interested organizations submit a completed response to the Request for Proposal (RFP) for provision of services. Responses are reviewed by WDB staff and a designated RFP review committee, and a recommendation is made to the Board for their consideration. The High Country Workforce Development Board procurement policies and procedures contain an appeals process that service providers or prospective service providers may use if they have a complaint or grievance regarding the Board’s procurement of services.

WIOA service providers are prohibited from awarding subgrants without prior approval from the Local Area.

14. Provide a brief description of the actions the Workforce Development Board will take toward becoming or remaining a high-performing Board, consistent with the factors developed by the NCWorks Commission. [WIOA Section 108(b)(18)]

The High Country Workforce Development Board will take the following actions toward becoming or remaining a high-performing Board, consistent with the factors developed by the NCWorks Commission:

- The High Country WDB will continue to outreach to jobseekers, employers, agency partners, stakeholders, and elected officials on the local state and federal level to promote the Board and make the public aware of its existence and all of the services available to help meet the needs of jobseekers and employers/business and industry.
- The High Country WDB outreach will include providing staff assisted services to a percentage of the labor force to ensure we are meeting the needs of our customers. We will also provide a staff-assisted service to at least 5% of all private businesses in the counties served by the Local Area and at least 10% to private businesses that are new customers; however, this may not always be possible because new businesses and industries are not always opening or locating in the region.

- The High Country WDB will always reach out and serve small businesses with fewer than 100 employees because they are a vital part of our economy and employ people in our communities that keeps our local workforce viable. Therefore, the High Country Workforce Development Board will provide at least 25% of all private businesses with a staff-assisted service to businesses with fewer than 100 employees.
- The High Country Workforce Development Board is working on improving the Skills Gap in our area by providing classroom training, on-the-job training, and/or standardize training services to at least 5% of the adult participants to ensure we are developing a qualified highly skilled workforce to meet the needs of employers and business/industry. The WDB will strive to enroll at least 25% of youth served in the WIOA youth program in a work-based learning activity to help develop and sustain a skilled trained workforce to meet the needs of business and industry.
- The High Country Workforce Development Board has created two NCWorks Certified Career Pathways in the area of Healthcare and Advance Manufacturing because these were the high demand employment areas with employers in our region. We will continue to develop and support these areas because this is where the job growth and demand to hire employees exist. These pathway areas strengthen the economy by paying a sustainable living wage; expanding jobs; and creating employment opportunities for jobseekers.
- The High Country Workforce Board will have 100% of our comprehensive NCWorks Careers Centers certified by the NCWorks Commission to ensure we are providing workforce services in compliance with state and federal guidelines to ensure services and needs of the citizens of North Carolina are being met.

III. Regional Strategic Planning

North Carolina is defined by an expansive geography that covers over 53,000 square miles and spans from the mountains in the west, to the piedmont region in the state's center to the coastal plain region in the east. This expansive geography contributes to the state's diverse mix of rural communities, small towns, cities, metropolitan areas and regional economic centers, each with its own unique industrial composition. Part of North Carolina's economic development strategy includes organization of the state's 100 counties into eight multi-county regions called Prosperity Zones, which are intended to help ensure economic growth across all areas of the state, by leveraging regional economic, workforce and educational resources. Overlaying the eight prosperity zones are North Carolina's 23 Local Workforce Development Board areas that facilitate the delivery of workforce services to the state's citizens and employers.

Local Workforce Development Boards are to continue, or begin, formal interaction based on regional geography aligning with labor market areas. The following regional configurations will be used for submission of this Regional Plan:

- *Western Region: Southwestern and Mountain Areas WDBs;*
- *Northwest Region: High Country, Western Piedmont, and Region C WDBs;*
- *Piedmont Triad Region: Piedmont Triad Regional, Guilford County, DavidsonWorks, and Regional Partnership WDBs;*
- *Southwest Region: Centralina, Charlotte Works, and Gaston County WDBs;*
- *North Central Region: Kerr-Tar, Durham, and Capital Area WDBs;*
- *Sandhills Region: Lumber River, Cumberland County, and Triangle South WDBs;*
- *Northeast Region: Rivers East, Northeastern, and Turning Point WDBs; and*
- *Southeast Region: Eastern Carolina and Cape Fear WDBs.*

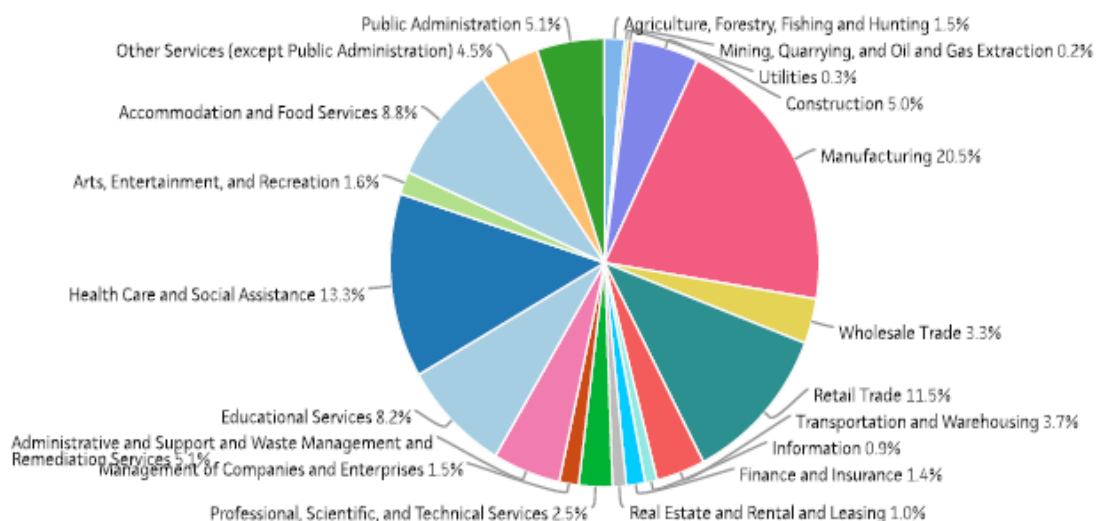
1. Provide an analysis of the regional economic conditions to include: a) existing and emerging in-demand industry sectors and occupations; as well as conditions that contribute to potential layoffs and closures and, b) knowledge and skills needed to meet the employment needs of employers in those industry sectors and occupations. Include sources used and business involvement in determining needs. [WIOA Section 108 (b)(1)(A)(i)(ii) and (B)].

- (a.) Existing and emerging in-demand industry sectors and occupations data report is attached and titled as listed above in the response to Q1. Currently the economy is being directly, and negatively impacted by the COVID-19 Pandemic. Prior to March 1, 2020 the regional economy was thriving and expanding. We anticipate by the end of 2020, and/or once control of the pandemic has taken place, that a positive resurgence in the economy will happen.

Industry Snapshot

The largest sector in the Future Workforce Alliance is Manufacturing, employing 67,560 workers. The next-largest sectors in the region are Health Care and Social Assistance (43,846 workers) and Retail Trade (38,080). High location quotients (LQs) indicate sectors in which a region has high concentrations of employment compared to the national average. The sectors with the largest LQs in the region are Manufacturing (LQ = 2.49), Retail Trade (1.12), and Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting (1.12).

Total Workers for Future Workforce Alliance by Industry



Source: JobsEQ*, Data as of 2019Q4

Employment data are derived from the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, provided by the Bureau of Labor Statistics and imputed where necessary. Data are updated through 2019Q2 with preliminary estimates updated to 2019Q4.

Sectors in the Future Workforce Alliance with the highest average wages per worker are Utilities (\$91,070), Management of Companies and Enterprises (\$80,604), and Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction (\$64,373). Regional sectors with the best job growth (or most moderate job losses) over the last 5 years are Manufacturing (+5,898 jobs), Accommodation and Food Services (+3,255), and Retail Trade (+2,396).

Over the next 5 years, employment in the Future Workforce Alliance is projected to expand by 219 jobs. The fastest growing sector in the region is expected to be Health Care and Social Assistance with a +1.1% year-over-year rate of growth. The strongest forecast by number of jobs over this period is expected for Health Care and Social Assistance (+2,499 jobs), Accommodation and Food Services (+1,015), and Construction (+531).

NAICS	Industry	Current			5-Year History		5-Year Forecast				
		Empl	Avg Ann Wages	LQ	Empl Change	Ann %	Total Demand	Exits	Transfers	Empl Growth	Ann % Growth
31	Manufacturing	67,560	\$47,676	2.49	5,898	1.8%	31,662	12,706	21,756	-2,800	-0.8%
62	Health Care and Social Assistance	43,846	\$43,460	0.92	1,579	0.7%	23,665	10,407	10,759	2,499	1.1%
44	Retail Trade	38,080	\$27,477	1.12	2,396	1.3%	24,235	11,099	14,023	-886	-0.5%
72	Accommodation and Food Services	28,939	\$15,970	0.97	3,255	2.4%	24,771	10,514	13,242	1,015	0.7%
61	Educational Services	26,976	\$37,526	1.00	-1,042	-0.8%	12,098	5,960	6,431	-293	-0.2%
56	Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	16,832	\$27,797	0.80	-523	-0.6%	10,011	4,129	5,632	250	0.3%
92	Public Administration	16,773	\$40,536	1.09	102	0.1%	7,459	3,236	4,403	-181	-0.2%
23	Construction	16,587	\$41,774	0.88	1,871	2.4%	8,777	2,957	5,290	531	0.6%
81	Other Services (except Public Administration)	14,874	\$23,479	1.01	-7	0.0%	8,278	3,841	4,585	-148	-0.2%
48	Transportation and Warehousing	12,117	\$44,804	0.81	1,630	2.9%	6,644	2,755	3,728	160	0.3%
42	Wholesale Trade	10,732	\$56,409	0.86	-68	-0.1%	5,327	2,096	3,474	-242	-0.5%
54	Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	8,339	\$50,078	0.37	1,147	3.0%	3,924	1,344	2,274	306	0.7%
71	Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	5,424	\$21,916	0.82	1,548	7.0%	3,985	1,723	2,128	134	0.5%
11	Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	4,911	\$29,082	1.12	-288	-1.1%	2,451	1,113	1,501	-163	-0.7%
55	Management of Companies and Enterprises	4,821	\$80,604	0.97	-404	-1.6%	2,216	805	1,374	38	0.2%
52	Finance and Insurance	4,749	\$54,297	0.36	-107	-0.4%	2,217	837	1,375	5	0.0%
53	Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	3,352	\$38,516	0.58	249	1.6%	1,729	773	926	30	0.2%
51	Information	2,937	\$55,685	0.45	122	0.8%	1,188	495	877	-184	-1.3%
22	Utilities	1,146	\$91,070	0.68	-197	-3.1%	480	185	325	-29	-0.5%
21	Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	788	\$64,373	0.54	245	7.7%	383	129	268	-14	-0.4%
Total - All Industries		329,784	\$38,979	1.00	17,406	1.1%	179,737	76,727	102,791	219	0.0%

Source: [JobsEQ*](#)

Employment data are derived from the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, provided by the Bureau of Labor Statistics and imputed where necessary. Data are updated through 2019Q2 with preliminary estimates updated to 2019Q4. Forecast employment growth uses national projections adapted for regional growth patterns.

Data Reference: JobsEQ 2020 Economic Overview Report

Occupation Snapshot

The largest major occupation group in the Future Workforce Alliance is Production Occupations, employing 44,018 workers. The next-largest occupation groups in the region are Office and Administrative Support Occupations (40,452 workers) and Sales and Related Occupations (32,664). High location quotients (LQs) indicate occupation groups in which a region has high concentrations of employment compared to the national average. The major groups with the largest LQs in the region are Production Occupations (LQ = 2.24), Healthcare Support Occupations (1.18), and Transportation and Material Moving Occupations (1.11).

Occupation groups in the Future Workforce Alliance with the highest average wages per worker are Management Occupations (\$100,100), Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations (\$74,500), and Architecture and Engineering Occupations (\$71,900). The unemployment rate in the region varied among the major groups from 1.4% among Legal Occupations to 7.9% among Farming, Fishing, and Forestry Occupations.

Over the next 5 years, the fastest growing occupation group in the Future Workforce Alliance is expected to be Healthcare Support Occupations with a +1.4% year-over-year rate of growth. The strongest forecast by number of jobs over this period is expected for Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations (+1,110 jobs) and Healthcare Support Occupations (+754). Over the same period, the highest separation demand (occupation demand due to retirements and workers moving from one occupation to another) is expected in Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations (25,311 jobs) and Production Occupations (23,446).

Future Workforce Alliance, 2019Q4¹

SOC	Occupation	Current					5-Year History			5-Year Forecast				
		Empl	Avg Ann Wages ²	LQ	Unempl	Unempl Rate	Online Job Ads ³	Empl Change	Ann %	Total Demand	Exits	Transfers	Empl Growth	Ann % Growth
51-0000	Production	44,018	\$34,300	2.24	2,002	4.2%	724	2,561	1.2%	21,392	8,949	14,497	-2,054	-1.0%
43-0000	Office and Administrative Support	40,452	\$33,900	0.86	1,656	3.8%	1,296	744	0.4%	20,641	10,082	11,827	-1,268	-0.6%
41-0000	Sales and Related	32,664	\$36,800	1.01	1,645	4.8%	2,488	1,914	1.2%	21,466	9,733	12,410	-677	-0.4%
35-0000	Food Preparation and Serving Related	28,751	\$21,600	1.01	2,031	6.0%	1,925	2,445	1.8%	26,421	11,318	13,993	1,110	0.8%
53-0000	Transportation and Material Moving	25,531	\$33,100	1.11	1,447	5.0%	1,242	1,242	1.0%	15,509	6,223	9,240	46	0.0%
25-0000	Education, Training, and Library	19,841	\$43,300	1.08	619	3.2%	531	-698	-0.7%	8,148	4,183	4,049	-83	-0.1%
11-0000	Management	17,607	\$100,100	0.86	273	1.6%	656	1,061	1.3%	6,812	2,646	4,067	99	0.1%
29-0000	Healthcare Practitioners and Technical	17,542	\$74,500	0.93	296	1.6%	1,425	1,230	1.5%	5,396	2,407	2,372	617	0.7%
47-0000	Construction and Extraction	13,936	\$38,100	0.93	869	5.1%	179	1,036	1.6%	7,503	2,490	4,657	357	0.5%
49-0000	Installation, Maintenance, and Repair	13,863	\$42,700	1.09	427	2.6%	562	1,088	1.6%	6,483	2,433	4,066	-16	0.0%
37-0000	Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance	11,558	\$26,300	1.01	711	5.3%	509	845	1.5%	7,276	3,442	3,715	119	0.2%
13-0000	Business and Financial Operations	11,351	\$63,000	0.65	279	2.7%	378	929	1.7%	5,210	1,693	3,388	129	0.2%
39-0000	Personal Care and Service	10,888	\$24,600	0.76	520	4.4%	417	1,798	3.7%	9,210	4,400	4,132	679	1.2%
31-0000	Healthcare Support	10,723	\$27,300	1.18	407	3.4%	498	-615	-1.1%	7,106	3,285	3,067	754	1.4%
33-0000	Protective Service	6,879	\$35,500	0.97	167	2.4%	154	57	0.2%	3,128	1,468	1,721	-61	-0.2%
21-0000	Community and Social Service	5,864	\$45,000	1.05	108	2.0%	470	95	0.3%	3,475	1,256	2,000	220	0.7%
15-0000	Computer and Mathematical	5,082	\$68,500	0.52	112	2.5%	290	576	2.4%	1,827	447	1,241	139	0.5%

Future Workforce Alliance, 2019Q4¹

SOC	Occupation	Current					5-Year History			5-Year Forecast				
		Empl	Avg Ann Wages ²	LQ	Unempl	Unempl Rate	Online Job Ads ³	Empl Change	Ann %	Total Demand	Exits	Transfers	Empl Growth	Ann % Growth
17-0000	Architecture and Engineering	4,234	\$71,900	0.75	97	2.4%	129	784	4.2%	1,522	532	972	19	0.1%
27-0000	Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media	4,153	\$44,200	0.70	130	3.9%	133	182	0.9%	1,886	849	1,102	-65	-0.3%
19-0000	Life, Physical, and Social Science	2,023	\$59,100	0.77	42	2.4%	89	132	1.4%	919	264	626	29	0.3%
45-0000	Farming, Fishing, and Forestry	1,492	\$30,400	0.71	139	7.9%	9	-66	-0.9%	957	262	757	-62	-0.8%
23-0000	Legal	1,332	\$64,600	0.49	18	1.4%	9	66	1.0%	427	164	244	19	0.3%
Total - All Occupations		329,784	\$41,800	1.00	13,994	4.0%	14,115	17,406	1.1%	182,885	78,524	104,142	219	0.0%

Source: [JobsEQ*](#)

Data as of 2019Q4 unless noted otherwise

Note: Figures may not sum due to rounding.

1. Data based on a four-quarter moving average unless noted otherwise.

2. Wage data are as of 2018 and represent the average for all Covered Employment

3. Data represent found online ads active within the last thirty days in the selected region; data represents a sampling rather than the complete universe of postings. Ads lacking zip code information but designating a place (city, town, etc.) may be assigned to the zip code with greatest employment in that place for queries in this analytic. Due to alternative county-assignment algorithms, ad counts in this analytic may not match that shown in RTI (nor in the popup window ad list).

Occupation employment data are estimated via industry employment data and the estimated industry/occupation mix. Industry employment data are derived from the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, provided by the Bureau of Labor Statistics and currently updated through 2018Q2, imputed where necessary with preliminary estimates updated to 2019Q4. Wages by occupation are as of 2018 provided by the BLS and imputed where necessary. Forecast employment growth uses national projections from the Bureau of Labor Statistics adapted for regional growth patterns.

Data Reference: JobsEQ 2020 Economic Overview Report

- (b.) The continued changes and advancements in technology and automation will drive the demands for increased knowledge and skills needed to meet employment demands in all sectors. Eligible training providers such as our community college partner are already updating curriculum and adding relevant equipment to prepare tomorrow’s workforce. “The foundation human digital, and business skills that will be needed in the digitally intensive economy of the future are already in high demand.” ***The New Foundational Skills of the Digital Economy***

The workforce development boards are made up of 51% private sector businesses therefore, business involvement is constant. Not only do we receive input and engagement from our workforce boards, each local area is involved in on-going career pathway development, which requires business involvement. Both Region C and Western Piedmont has developed and helped grow manufacturing sector partnerships.

2. Describe how the regional strategic vision aligns with the [NCWorks Commission's 2019-2021 Strategic Plan](#).

The vision of the Future Workforce Alliance (FWA) is as follows:

(NCWO Commission Goal 1 Alignment) Help businesses and employers meet their current and future workforce needs by using WIOA Title 1 funding to support and increase in demand occupational training opportunities; help not only youth, but, adults, dislocated workers, and those with barriers, build skills for long-term careers by marketing and increasing exposure to career pathways; strengthen the local economy and develop the talent pipeline through continued focus on the advantages of upskilling; provide jobseekers the opportunity for advanced educational attainment that will provide meaningful careers and improve their quality of life so they can become self-sustaining.

(NCWO Commission Goal 2 Alignment) The FWA Workforce Board Members represent employers from a broad range of leading industries that need workers with the training, skills and dedication to produce important products and services for a global marketplace. For both, we help guide the efforts of public and community resources to enhance North Carolina's workforce capabilities. This includes working collaboratively with our local community colleges as well as other training providers to convene honest communication with business leaders and assess training that truly enhances their workforce as well as increase a jobseeker's employability. The Incumbent Worker Grant (Upskill) is a major asset of the boards and competitive training grants to businesses in addressing employees skill gaps, improving employee retention, helping stabilize the business, and increasing the competitiveness of the employee and business. Through this effort, businesses: Improve Productivity and Increase Competitiveness; Retain Key Talent and Expertise; Reduce Employee Turnover.

Each WDB in the FWA region has various industry led initiatives that have helped create needed training opportunities in in-demand occupations. Currently a Western Region Advanced Manufacturing Partnership (WRAMP) is being developed by McDowell, Polk, Rutherfordton, and Burke Counties. The WRAMP came about as a result of a technical assistance grant from DWS where a consulting group, [Next Generation](#), trains and develops teams to lead industry sector partnerships with a different approach. The Furniture Industry is also driving industry sector training and marketing for its demand. All three workforce boards in the FWA region have certified career pathways in Healthcare, Manufacturing, and Energy Services.

(NCWO Commission Goal 3 Alignment) The FWA meets at least twice a year in person, with multiple conference calls throughout as well. Last year we held our first all staff meeting, which included all NCWorks Career Center staff from the region for a half day of meeting one another and sharing best practices. The NCWorks Training Centers leadership academy "Successful Teams Achieve Results (STARS)" is on its third class and each class has included staff from the FWA region.

The full Western Region, with Mountain Area and Region C leading the charge, applied for an Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) POWER Grant. Currently, the proposal requested \$50,000 in funding from ARC for technical assistance to support the development of a regional "WNC Works: Recovery to Careers" strategy that will lead to both increased cooperation and coordination between organizations assisting recovering addicts return to stable work

situations, as well as the development of a POWER Implementation grant application. The ultimate outcome will be an increase in the number of eligible workers successfully re-entering the workforce after recovering from opioid addiction.

(NCWO Commission Goal 4 Alignment) Each WDB in the FWA region has a required One-Stop Partner MOU and IFA that works as a great convening tool to discuss and ensure that multiple workforce and education agencies have collaborative goals to meet the demands of business and the needs of a diverse jobseeker population. The FWA region strives to market the relevant integrated services within our NCWorks system, which includes the re-notification of the updated NCWorks brand. The FWA board staff have worked diligently to update local marketing materials to reflect the new brand and ensure consistency with hard copies and social media outreach.

In the past, asking for innovative support to provide staff with laptops and wireless capabilities was not received, with privacy issues being the main response. With the recent (March 2020) COVID-19 impact, allowing staff to telework and be mobile/virtual, has brought about a renewed sense of innovation when it comes to technology accessibility outside a NCWorks Career Center. Not only now, but in future, virtual mobility in the community will be a key necessity to ensure the relevancy of the NCWorks System, especially in rural areas like the FWA region.

For the past few years system effectiveness has been being collected by [Eval Group](#) and shared with the local workforce boards. At the moment we will continue to utilize Eval Group. Please find below (Illustration 1) the FWA Region Business Customer Satisfaction Survey Results 11/2017 - 4/2020:

NCWorks Business Customer Satisfaction Survey

Overall Business Customer Satisfaction | Home Page

1. SELECT NCWORK BOARD OR REVIEW PERIOD TO CUSTOMIZE VIEW

NCWorks Board: Multiple values

Review Period: 11/6/2017 to 4/13/2020 and Null values

267

Customer Reviews

2. CLICK SERVICE BUTTONS TO VIEW MORE DETAIL ABOUT CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

NCWorks Online	Career Center	Staff
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3.74

4.12

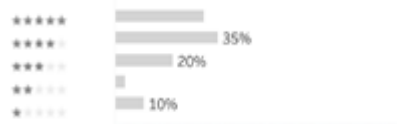
4.41



110 Customer Reviews

26 Customer Reviews

142 Customer Reviews



Service Satisfaction Trend

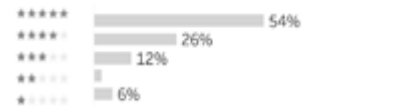


Likeliness to Refer Business Services

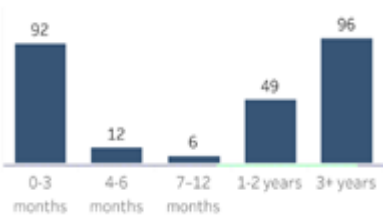
4.2



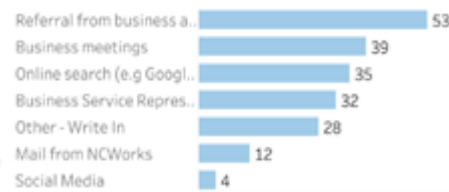
247 Customer Reviews



Time Frame of Using NCWorks Services



How Did You Hear About Us?



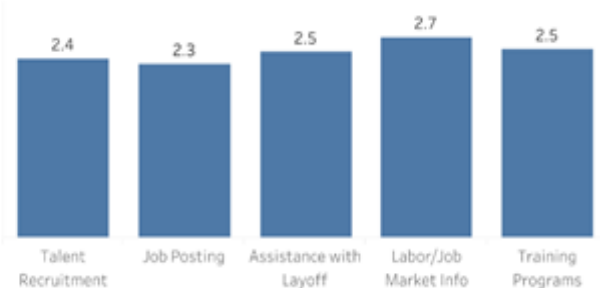
Used NCWorks Online	Visited NCWorks Career Center	Worked with a Staff Team Member
173	49	142

Types of Business Services Received

Talent Recruitment 51 Businesses Job Posting 229 Businesses	Assistance with Layoff ##### Labor or Job Market Info 31 Businesses	Training Programs 23 Businesses Other Services 8 Businesses
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Value of Business Services Received

* On a scale of 1-3 where, 1 = Not at all Valuable, 3 = Very Valuable



Overall Customer Satisfaction | Home Page

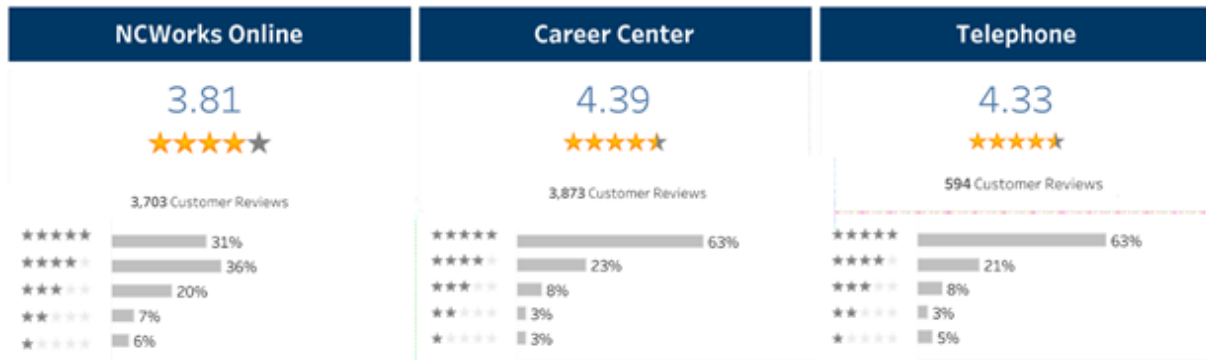
1. SELECT NCWORKS CAREER CENTER OR REVIEW PERIOD TO CUSTOMIZE VIEW
 * Data will not include responses that do not have Career Center location Identified

7,656

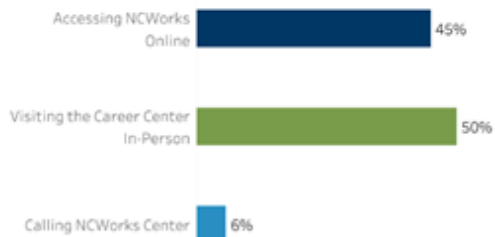
Career Center: Multiple values Review Period: 10/13/2017 to 4/13/2020 and Null values

Customer Reviews

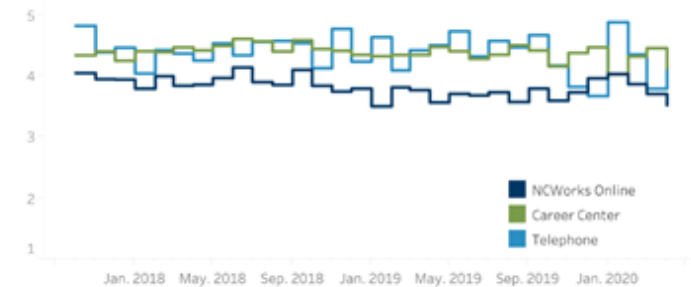
2. CLICK SERVICE BUTTONS TO VIEW MORE DETAIL ABOUT CUSTOMER SATISFACTION



First Experience Using NCWorks



Service Satisfaction Trend

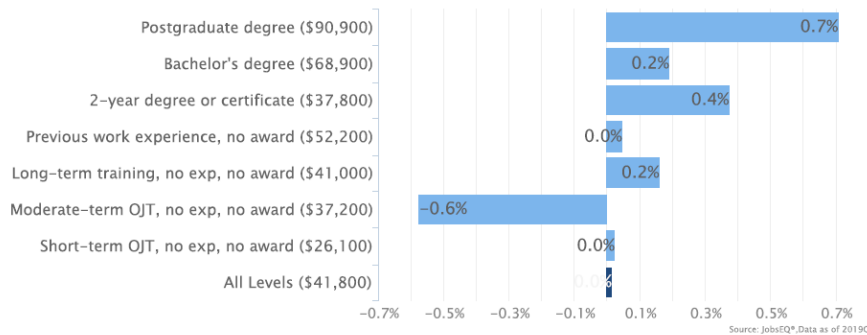


- Provide an analysis of the workforce in the region, including current labor force employment and unemployment data, and information on labor market trends, and the educational and skill levels of the workforce in the region, including individuals with barriers to employment. [WIOA Section 108 (b)(1)(C)].

The FWA region has a civilian labor force of 375,393 with a participation rate of 56.6 percent (56.6%). The seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for the FWA was 3.5% as of February 2020. The regional unemployment rate was the same as the national rate of 3.5 percent (3.5%). One year earlier (February 2019) the unemployment rate was 4.0 percent (4.0%).

Of individuals 25 to 64 in the region, 19.7% have a bachelor’s degree or higher with compares with 32.9% in the nation. Expected growth rates for occupations vary by the education and training required. While all employment in the FWA is projected to have a 0% growth over the next 10 years, occupations typically requiring a postgraduate degree are expected to grow 0.7% per year, those requiring a bachelor’s degree are forecast to grow 0.2% per year, and occupations typically needing a two-year degree or certificated are expected to grow 0.4% per year. (JobsEQ 2020 Economic Overview Report).

Annual Average Projected Job Growth by Training Required for Future Workforce Alliance



Employment by occupation data are estimates are as of 2019Q4. Education levels of occupations are based on BLS assignments. Forecast employment growth uses national projections from the Bureau of Labor Statistics adapted for regional growth patterns.

Since the type of barriers to employment varies, ongoing engagement with Vocational Rehabilitation, Adult Basic Education programming, English as a Second Language and Older Adults that wish to work is strengthened by local area meetings held through the NCWorks Career Centers, the Workforce Board members and the annual One-Stop Required Partner MOU/Infrastructure Funding agreement processes. Please see below for data specific to those with barriers (highlighted in yellow).

	Percent			Value		
	Future Workforce Alliance	North Carolina	USA	Future Workforce Alliance	North Carolina	USA
Educational Attainment, Age 25-64						
No High School Diploma	15.0%	11.2%	11.2%	61,447	595,025	18,885,967
High School Graduate	30.7%	24.3%	25.8%	126,159	1,290,502	43,699,272
Some College, No Degree	22.7%	22.2%	21.0%	93,325	1,176,483	35,525,113
Associate's Degree	11.8%	10.2%	9.1%	48,542	543,508	15,389,737
Bachelor's Degree	13.3%	21.1%	20.8%	54,668	1,120,125	35,261,652
Postgraduate Degree	6.4%	11.0%	12.1%	26,366	585,133	20,445,749
Social						
Poverty Level (of all people) ¹	17.5%	15.4%	14.1%	136,745	1,523,949	44,257,979
Households Receiving Food Stamps/SNAP	14.9%	13.2%	12.2%	47,332	515,577	14,635,287
Enrolled in Grade 12 (% of total population)	1.3%	1.3%	1.4%	10,784	134,820	4,442,295
Disconnected Youth ^{1,3}	3.0%	2.7%	2.6%	1,347	14,426	438,452
Children in Single Parent Families (% of all children) ⁴	35.4%	36.3%	34.3%	53,330	785,978	23,973,249
Uninsured	11.5%	11.1%	9.4%	90,912	1,100,719	29,752,767
With a Disability, Age 18-64 ⁵	15.0%	11.5%	10.3%	71,654	702,834	20,240,504
With a Disability, Age 18-64, Labor Force Participation Rate and Size ⁵	32.8%	39.0%	41.6%	23,525	273,823	8,421,018
Foreign Born	4.1%	7.9%	13.5%	33,046	799,616	43,539,499
Speak English Less Than Very Well (population 5 yrs and over)	2.7%	4.6%	8.5%	20,592	438,667	25,647,781

Source: [JobsEQ*](#)

1. American Community Survey 2014-2018, unless noted otherwise

2. Median values for certain aggregate regions (such as MSAs) may be estimated as the weighted averages of the median values from the composing counties.

3. Disconnected Youth are 16-19 year olds who are (1) not in school, (2) not high school graduates, and (3) either unemployed or not in the labor force.

4. Census 2019, annual average growth rate since 2009

5. See Rio Arriba errata note in the Data Dictionary.

Data Reference: JobsEQ 2020 Economic Overview Report

- Describe strategies, used to facilitate engagement of businesses and other employers, including small employers and in-demand industry sector occupations. Describe methods and services to support the workforce system in meeting employer needs. [WIOA Section 108 (b)(4)(A)(i)(ii)].

The Workforce Development Boards partner with Economic Developers, Community Colleges, Chambers of Commerce, and Industry Leaders to identify small businesses and in-demand sectors occupations. One of our workforce development resources is our Upskill Training Grant (Incumbent Worker Training). The Upskill Training Grant is designed to offer funding assistance to small businesses and high-growth and in-demand industry sectors for incumbent worker training. This training grant offers funding resources to assist businesses with their strategies to develop talent so they can meet their current and future workforce needs.

Local area business service teams stay up to date and engaged with businesses in order to understand business needs and help them (business) develop labor market intelligence that will guide their recruitment and retention efforts. Tools such as the [LEAD Workforce Board Labor Market Overview](#), Data from Chmura Jobs EQ and the [Western Piedmont Economic Indicator Newsletter](#) support business needs and strategies.

5. Describe strategies and services used to coordinate workforce development programs and economic development. [WIOA Section 108 (b)(4)(A)(iii)].

Each of the FWA member workforce entities regularly meets with local Economic Development entities to assess their needs, discuss projects and provide support and encouragement related to both new recruitment efforts and existing industries. The FWA is completely committed to developing and maintaining relationships with Economic Development partners in order to best meet business customer needs. For the Northwest Prosperity Zone we meet with Bill Slagle, EDPNC, Economic Development Regional Industry Mgr; Lisa Conger, CTE Regional Rep, and Betty Silver, Customized Training Rep to discuss strategies and services for workforce and economic development.

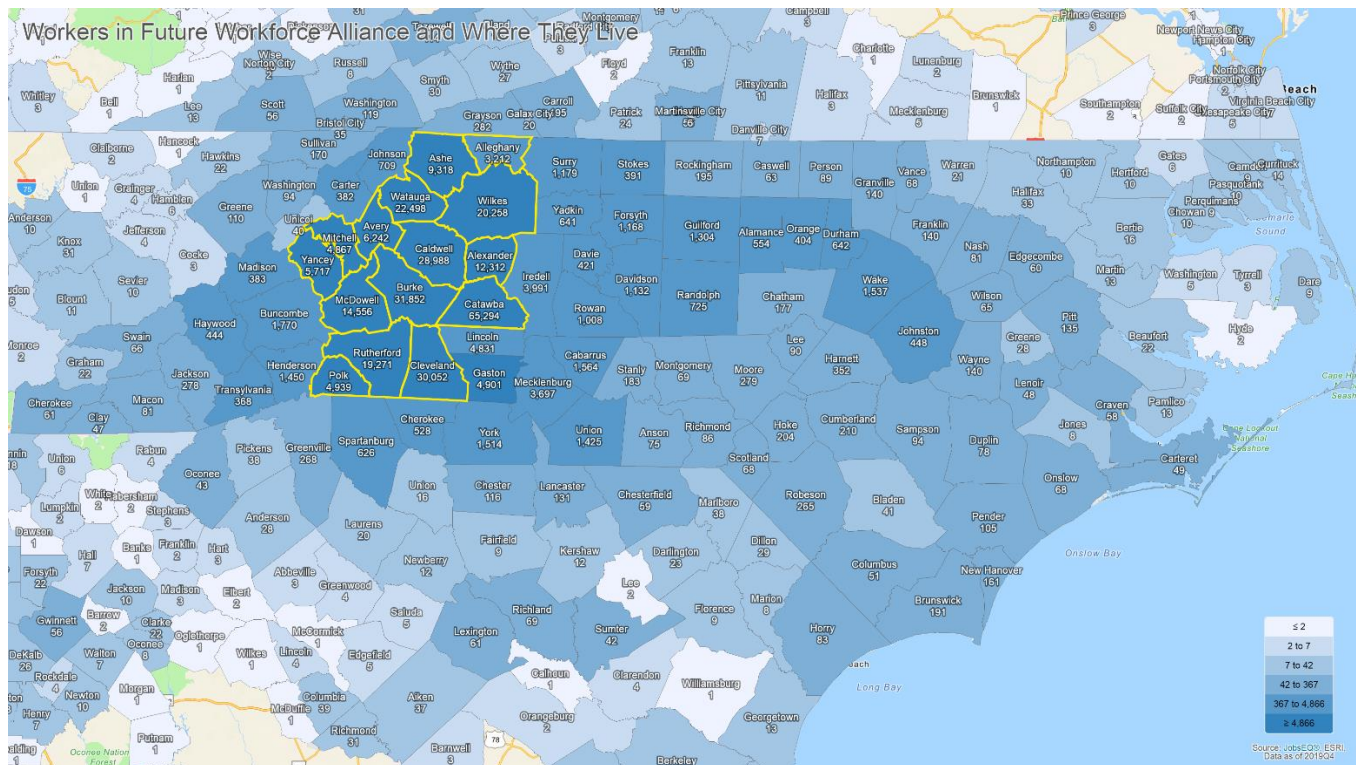
6. Outline regional transportation issues related to workforce development and ways the region is/will address needs identified. Include a description *and* map of the regional commuting patterns. [WIOA Section 108(b)(11)].

Most of the FWA are rural areas and local transportation is one of the biggest challenges. While it has improved, still in most cases mass transit does not exist. Many rural counties have local transportation authorities that may be utilized when necessary; however, often the cost of utilizing these services is prohibitive.

In PY19 High Country received a local innovation grant in partnership with Wilkes Community College as the lead agency, to conduct a study on transportation barriers in Wilkes County. This study resulted in a lengthy report summarizing the data to include results of local surveys and resources and recommendations.

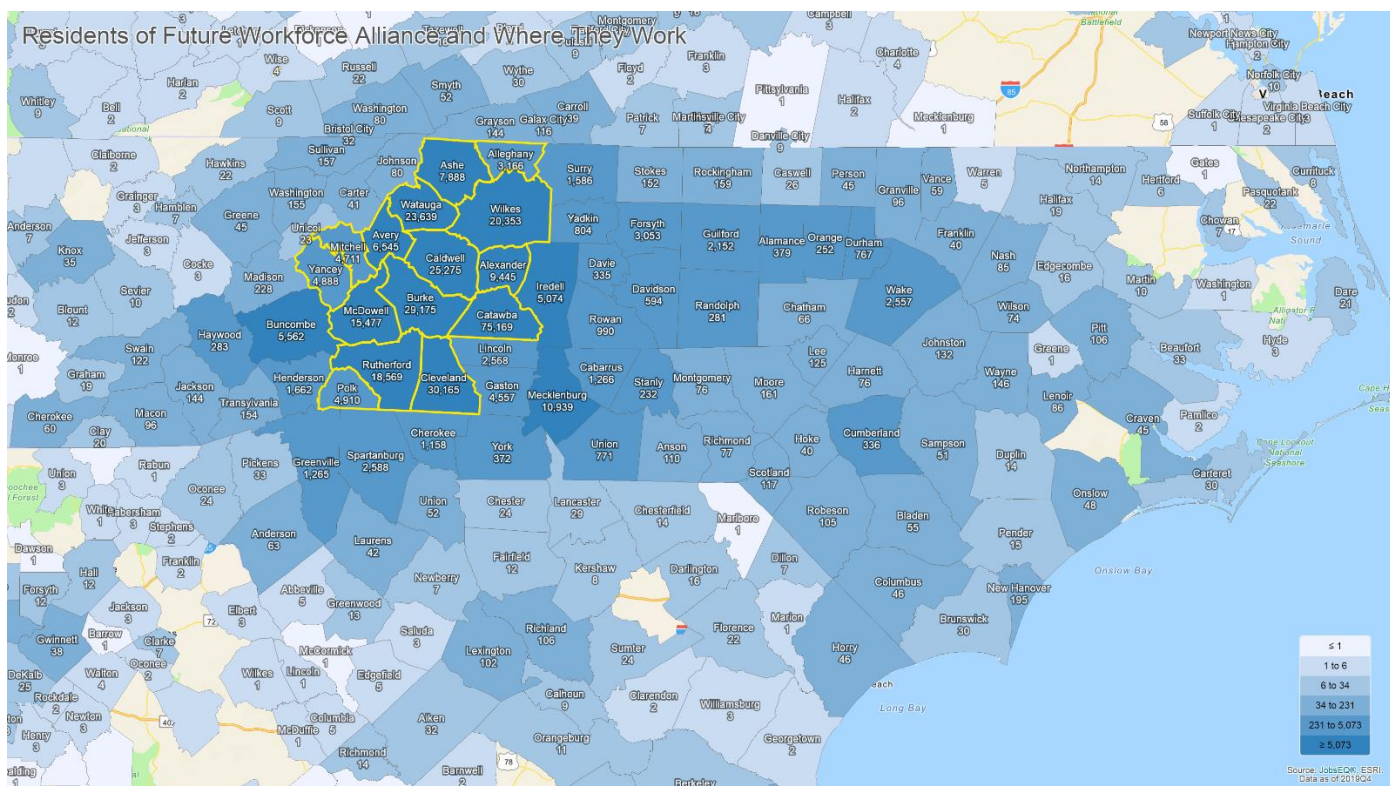
Map 1: Workers in the Future Workforce Alliance and Where They Live

(Source: JobsEQ - ESRI Data as of 2019 Q4)



Map 2: Residents of Future Workforce Alliance and Where They Work

(Source: JobsEQ - ESRI Data as of 2019 Q4)



7. Describe how the region coordinates with area secondary education, community colleges and universities to align strategies, enhance services and avoid duplication of services. [WIOA Section 108(b)(10)].

The Workforce Development Boards in the High Country, Region C, and Western Piedmont have worked together as members of the Future Workforce Alliance (FWA) for a number of years. Each of the FWA Workforce Development Boards benefit from regular collaboration and consistent communication with local community college providers.

Currently there are eight community colleges in the FWA service region that are members of the N.C. Community College system (Caldwell, Catawba Valley, Cleveland, Isothermal, Mayland, McDowell Technical, Western Piedmont, and Wilkes). The prevalence of these institutions of higher learning allows the FWA providers to collaboratively work in developing training programs that support high growth occupations and in building career pathways that can support local business needs and foster growth. It also allows the FWA to regularly act as a convener to share ideas and program of instruction examples between training entities, thus ensuring that there is an effort to minimize duplication. We have engaged in ongoing communication with Community College providers to build and monitor training programs for viability and effectiveness.

Furthermore, the FWA remains very involved with Public School officials on a regular basis. This allows for Career pathway development to be targeted at specific sectors and to insure that all applicable representatives are involved in the planning and execution of building such initiatives. STEM West continues to promote science, technology and math in the secondary schools by providing tours, doing summer camps and events and providing opportunities for teachers to tour businesses and see STEM at work in industry. It also provides opportunities for teachers to develop partnerships with local businesses for classroom projects and presentations. The STEM West initiative involves many of the school systems in the FWA area.

Another significant accomplishment for the FWA area is the announcement of and ground breaking for the western campus of the NC School of Science and Math, to be built in Morganton, NC. This is significant because it will bring increased STEM focused educational resources and attention to the FWA region. The NC School of Science and Math in Durham, NC has had positive and significant effects on that area, and we expect the same to occur in the West as we look forward to the opening of the school in the next year or two based on funding availability.

Recently many of the FWA educational and business partners and other community stakeholders worked with the same from the Western Region to develop an Energy Career Pathway to help meet the increasing need for workers in various positions in the energy sector. The FWA will continue to leverage and value educational partners and stakeholders in an effort to always be developing and evolving career pathway strategies for students, jobseekers, and business customers.

8. Provide details on how the region addresses workforce issues specifically related to its a) cities and/or towns; b) suburban areas; and c) rural areas.

The FWA covers a total of 15 of the 100 North Carolina counties. As a result, there is a wide range of diversity regarding socio-economic, demographic, and logistic challenges. While the majority of the FWA service area is recognized as being in rural communities, there are developing cities and towns scattered throughout the entire region. Despite these differences, the FWA is currently experiencing moderate growth in the Manufacturing, Allied Health and Hospitality/Tourism sectors. As a result, the FWA is able to continue to identify and replicate best practices wherever possible. Examples include the creation of Work Readiness Certification training programs to address soft skills issues throughout multiple areas. The FWA also works diligently to remain engaged and active throughout the entire NCWorks Career Center system through the auspices of Integrated Services Delivery. It is through these relationships that the FWA and associated staff can stay informed about local challenges, develop and maintain regular communication with jobseeker customers, and continuously assess and identify workforce issues in a variety of areas.

The FWA workforce boards also have an advantage of knowing and understanding the cities, towns, suburban and rural areas' outlying workforce issues because they are housed within councils of government. Through this relationship we have quicker knowledge of business expansion needs from the community development block grants; housing needs from Section 8 housing; as well as transportation and data analysis that can assist us and other workforce partners.

9. Briefly describe how the NCWorks Career Centers serve military veterans.

The FWA is committed to providing prioritized services to military veterans and their families. The FWA works closely with Local Veteran Employment Representatives as well as with Disabled Veteran's Outreach Program Specialists to insure that there is a wide variety of services available to military veterans and their families. It is vital to the FWA to insure that local business and employer representatives are aware of a variety of veteran related subsidies and incentives designed to encourage and accelerate the employment of military veterans.

The FWA also participates in regional Stand Downs in order to provide services for veterans. The WDBs work with, assist, and help coordinate these events. Recently the Innovate Catawba Workforce team coordinated a USO of NC training event, sending out invitations across the region to HR personnel. This opportunity consisted of military consultant/outreach groups like USO of NC to provide training to HR personnel in the region to educate them on how to go to a military base, engage with those about to separate, and recruit them for job opportunities in our area businesses.

10. Provide details on how the region is prepared to respond to serve victims of national emergencies or hurricane disasters.

While being at the western end of NC typically does not have us seeing widespread hurricane disasters, the recent COVID-19 pandemic is requiring us to take action in ways we have never had to respond. We have not had time to reflect on the many lessons learned from this situation because it is still ongoing and could be for the rest of 2020.

At best, it has highlighted the lack of our virtual capabilities and capacity to provide services by virtual tactics. Learning from this pandemic, a goal is to have our virtual mobility stabilized with increased laptops for staff to use outside the center, wi-fi (jetpacks) for staff, virtual meeting license, and potentially a mobile/vehicle unit to better address a local/state/national emergency.

NCWorks Commission

The NCWorks Commission recommends policies and strategies that enable the state's workforce and businesses to compete in the global economy.

The Commission is designated as the state's Workforce Development Board under the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. Led by a private sector chair, the 33-member Commission includes representatives from the business community, heads of state workforce agencies, educators, and community leaders. All members are appointed by the Governor.

Mission of the NCWorks Commission: To ensure North Carolina has an innovative, relevant, effective, and efficient workforce development system that develops adaptable, work-ready, skilled talent to meet the current and future needs of workers and businesses to achieve and sustain economic prosperity; and to ensure North Carolinians are ready for the jobs of today and tomorrow by increasing access to education and skills training, fostering employer leadership to prepare workers, and supporting and scaling local innovation.

*The NCWorks Commission developed its **2019-2021 Strategic Plan** based on four overall goals:*

GOAL 1: Prepare workers to succeed in the North Carolina economy by increasing skills and education attainment.

Education is the foundation to a strong workforce. As the skill requirements of jobs increase and change rapidly, businesses need to find people with the right skills for the jobs they create, and North Carolinians need access to training so they can be ready for those jobs.

1. Briefly describe how the local Workforce Development Board plans to prepare workers to succeed in the North Carolina economy by increasing skills and education attainment. Think about the [myFutureNC](#) goal of increasing the total number of **additional** post-secondary credentials by 400,000 by the year 2030. What strategy does the local Workforce Development Board have to support this goal?

[The WDB has signed a resolution to support the myFutureNC goal of increasing credentials. Initial information has been shared with WDB members, local officials, and staff and this will continue as the process moves forward. Board staff have participated in state and local discussions regarding attainment goals and are awaiting additional local demographics to assist in reaching local goals and making this a regional priority. We will continue to increase partnerships around this common goal and promote credential attainment as a priority within NCWorks centers.](#)

2. Briefly describe how the local Workforce Development Board plans to promote access to job training for high-demand fields.

[The WDB manages and offers programs that bring businesses and job seekers together and help workers develop skills that they need to thrive in the workplace. We promote our services via outreach programs such as on-site visits with employers to learn about their industry so that we can better connect the right people with the right jobs. One of our underlying philosophies](#)

includes serve more people; deliver quality services to both employers and job-seekers; work more effectively with companion organizations such as education, economic development agencies, human service providers, as well as our local community colleges. Funded training programs align with in demand areas in the region and in partnership with the community college. Customers and staff utilize local data on high demand fields. WIOA training funds are spent to support training in high demand programs that have successful entered employment rates.

3. Briefly describe how the local Workforce Development Board plans to increase access to education for individuals with barriers.

Partnerships with educational institutions in the region allow for cross referrals of customers to assist in access to education for all individuals. Staff require and assist customers with applying for financial aid to assist with the cost of tuition, books, and supplies. Customers not eligible for or have exhausted financial aid are considered for scholarships through WIOA. Staff also partner with other organizations such as VR or Goodwill when opportunities may be available to cost share these expenses. Finish Line Grants have also afforded financial assistance to students facing financial emergencies who may have otherwise dropped out. Other partnerships also serve justice involved individuals through the NC re-entry services or Goodwill re-entry programs with a goal to assist individuals with re-entering the workforce. Mayland and Wilkes Community College both have strong presence in the local prison systems teaching classes geared towards soft skills and re-entry and information regarding local services and NCWorks. Fairly new, four key class components addressed by Mayland include Money Management, Soft Skills, Workplace Readiness, and Community Resources that has been well received.

GOAL 2: Create a workforce development system that is responsive to the needs of the economy by fostering employer leadership.

Employer-led job training programs have the best career outcomes. Employers know best what skills their workers need, and employer involvement is key for workforce development and job readiness. Businesses that invest in developing North Carolina's workforce will benefit from well-trained employees and a more innovative and diverse workplace that better reflects its community.

4. Briefly describe how the local Workforce Development Board makes local employers aware of the wide array of business services offered.

The High Country WDB makes local employers aware services offered through various means:

- Promotion of the board website and state level website resources;
- Presentation to various civic groups and boards of commissioners;
- Partnerships with economic development commissions and memberships with local chambers of commerce.
- Newsletters that share success stories of other local businesses that have utilized services;

5. Briefly describe how the local Workforce Development Board plans to enhance work-based learning projects to a broader range of local employers.

This past year High Country received an Enhancement Grant with the goal to expand work-based learning opportunities in the region. These funds are specifically designated to increase the number of work experiences, OJT's, and to implement incumbent worker training programs to a broader range of employers. Information regarding work-based learning is shared with partners and employers on an ongoing basis.

6. Briefly describe how the local Workforce Development Board works with local elected officials to ensure viable local business representatives are appointed to the local Workforce Development Board?

When a vacancy occurs on the Board or when terms are getting ready to expire, the Board Director notifies the appropriate local government of the vacancy. That notification includes any pertinent information about a replacement or re-appointment. Staff also share if economic developers or chambers of commerce have specifically recommended someone for the position. In absence of an interested business, the Director provides information to the local government about reaching out to the local chambers and economic development offices for potential candidates. Communication also includes the requirements of the vacant seats as described in the Board's Bylaws.

7. Does the local Workforce Development Board currently have any sector partnerships established with local or regional businesses? If so, please cite an example.

At the current time the High Country Workforce Development Board does not currently have any sector partnerships established with local or regional businesses. However, the partnerships that grew out of the certified career pathways process are still strong. Businesses are engaged with local education partners in the areas of advanced manufacturing and healthcare.

GOAL 3: Promote replication of creative solutions to challenging workforce problems by supporting local innovation.

Communities across North Carolina are developing great local models of workforce development. North Carolina should build on those successes and replicate them in more places to continue building and expanding innovative solutions.

8. Briefly describe how the local Workforce Development Board provides new and innovative solutions to support growth of the local workforce system.

The High Country WDB recently received an innovation grant to study workforce barriers to employment, such as transportation issues. The project focused on the lack of affordable public transportation in rural Wilkes County and how it impacts individuals being unable to work or losing their jobs. A collaborative group consisting of the HCWDB, Wilkes Community College,

Goodwill Industries, and others oversaw the study, which was presented to the local transportation board.

In addition, the HCWDB is currently administering a Maximize Carolina grant in partnership with the Mitchell County Chamber of Commerce in an effort to create a talent pipeline for local industries. The grant focuses on an outreach campaign to local students and their parents to make them aware of available jobs in Mitchell County. The campaign, Mitchell Works, emphasizes that you don't have to leave home for a good-paying job.

9. Has the local Workforce Development Board received any (Federal, State or Local) funding for local innovative projects? If so, please list these grants.

This past year the WDB received a local Innovation Grant as awarded in partnership with Wilkes Community College as the lead agency. This grant was a collaboration of multiple partners in Wilkes which was designed to focus on the issue of transportation barriers faced by customers and students. This study resulted in a comprehensive report regarding transportation in Wilkes to include a local assessment, survey summaries, and recommendations.

GOAL 4: Promote system access, alignment, integration, and modernization.

North Carolina's workforce system includes multiple agencies, programs, and funders. Collaboration, policy alignment, systemic communication, integration, and modernization of the workforce system will ensure a strong and healthy workforce system that can adapt to a changing economy.

10. Briefly describe how the local Workforce Development Board plans to increase NCWorks brand awareness.

Various methods will be used to increase NCWorks brand awareness. Staff regularly promote NCWorks throughout the community in their day-to-day work with customers and partners. New signage that incorporates the new branding at the career centers coupled with print material assist with brand promotion.

Social media promotion has been extremely effective in promoting center activities and services in the past and will continue to be a focus of efforts. An unintended consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic and customers being unable to obtain assistance from DES in the early days of the crisis was more awareness of centers on social media. Even though social media account administrators could not always help with particular details of claims the personal contact, support, and encouragement to those in crisis will be remembered and hopefully shared via word of mouth with family and friends.

11. Briefly describe any local area best practices on modernization of local career centers.

The High Country WDB recently purchased a VOIP phone system linking three of our NCWorks Career Centers (two Tier 1 centers and a Remote Site) together allowing calls to be forwarded to other locations quickly and efficiently. The system also allows staff to receive voicemail as email messages increasing the efficiency of service delivery and allowing quicker response time from staff.

12. Briefly describe how the local Workforce Development Board plans work toward increased alignment with other local workforce system partners. How will you work together to ensure North Carolinians receive more comprehensive services across a broader range?

Through collaboration with local area community colleges and the K12 school system regarding training needs of businesses and class development, the HCWDB will help ensure that quality, relevant education and training is provided within the region. Partnership with local chambers of commerce help spread the word about system services, partners, and connections to those in the community who may not know what assistance they need as well as exposing the workforce system to new ideas and possibilities on which it can make a local impact. Workforce development board meetings also provide an excellent venue to discuss local issues with partners and interested community members.

13. Briefly describe how the local Workforce Development Board is supporting [Executive Order No. 92--Employment First for North Carolinians with Disabilities](#). Employment First is a national movement which recognizes that all citizens, including individuals with significant disabilities, are capable of full participation in integrated employment and community life.

The High Country Workforce Development Board is supporting Executive Order No. 92 - Employment First for North Carolinians with Disabilities, and recognizes that all citizens including individuals with significant disabilities are capable of full participation in integrated employment and community life. In partnership with with NC Vocational Rehabilitation Services, the HCWDB will work to ensure that people with disabilities can participate in employment in the region. NCWorks Career Center staff make referrals for people who need intensive or supportive services provided by NC Vocational Rehabilitation Services. NCWorks Career Centers are accessible to people with disabilities and are reviewed for accessibility annually. Our board member who represents NC Vocational Rehabilitation Services helps keep the board informed and is also very active in the local career centers.

IV. NCWorks Career Centers

1. Identify NCWorks Career Center location(s) including Tier 1, Tier 2, Affiliate, and Specialized sites; On-site partners; how NCWorks Career Center operator(s) are designated; provider(s) of WIOA career services and method of selection; whether youth services provider is on-site and, if so, youth services offered. Use the NCWorks [Career Center Chart](#). [WIOA Section 121(b)(1)(A) and (b)(1)(B)] Name document: *Local Area Name Career Centers*.

See High Country Career Centers.

2. Provide the date and process for when the competitive procurement of the One-Stop Operators(s) occurred. Include the expected length of the contract (one-four years).

The One Stop Operators for our seven (7) centers were procured through our WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth Request for Proposal process that was released January 2020, followed by a bidders conference, and responses were due February 2020. The HCWDB made the recommendation of service providers and the one stop operators at its regularly scheduled meeting in March 2020. Mayland Community College (MCC) and Goodwill were selected to receive one year contracts beginning July 1, 2020 with the option to renew based on satisfactory performance. Due to the situation with Covid-19 we are in discussions to consider a current contract extensions with ResCare as transition planning/hiring has been postponed with incoming provider Goodwill.

3. What strategies have been used to better meet the needs of individuals with barriers to employment and increase access to services and programs of the one-stop delivery system, such as improving digital literacy skills, and leveraging resources and capacity within the local workforce development system?

All the career centers in the region perform outreach to local partners agencies, whether DSS, food pantries, domestic violence shelters, and others to provide information about center services and opportunities.

In addition, in May of 2018 the HCWDB hosted Working Smart training for certain career center staff and partner agency staff. Since that time there have been several successful classes offered at the community college and the career center, including multiple ones with local prisons for inmates who are getting ready to be released. Staff have also taken the Working Smart class to Eckerd Connects who serves troubled youth and have seen great success and partnerships through this collaboration. Centers also work closely with Goodwill Re-entry and the Regional Re-entry specialist to serve the offender population.

Some additional newer partnerships have been around serving those dealing with substance abuse and discussing strategies to provide holistic services and assisting with entering employment.

The WDB also sponsored Mental Health First Aid Training for all center staff in the High Country to assist in dealing with customers and safety concerns.

4. How are training programs such as apprenticeship, incumbent worker training, on-the-job training, and other work-based learning opportunities leading to industry-recognized credentials aligned with employers' needs, and marketed to support talent development?

Apprenticeship programs are in the works in our Local Area in particular with the Apprenticeship Wilkes program. On-the-Job Training and work-based learning in general have both been successful for individuals who have been appropriate for the programs. Both have led to individuals obtaining employment which also serves as a best practice to share with other interested businesses. The HCWDB makes an effort to tell these stories through its Board meetings, Facebook page, and publications of its administrative entity (High Country Council of Governments) which is read by all the local governments in the region as well as state and federal representatives. During March 2020 High Country participated in a joint application to focus on the development of youth apprenticeship with partnership of local school systems and employers to be submitted by NC state office. High Country has also received an Enhancement Grant with funds dedicated to work based learning opportunities which has allowed expansion of incumbent worker grants in the region. Watauga County is also interested in developing a work based learning program to support the construction trades industry.

5. Provide a brief description of the NCWorks Career Center system in your local area and include how Career and Training Services are provided. [WIOA Section 121(e), 134(c)]

In the High Country area, there are currently four certified Tier 1 NCWorks Career Centers with three secondary locations. Each county is set up differently based on hours, staffing, partners, and lease holder. WDB staff work closely with center managers on various projects and issues on a regular basis. Career centers also work closely with HRD to provide career services and workshops and/or assessments when available.

In general, all staff participate in providing basic career services to include welcome, registration, initial assessment, and job search. Individuals that require more one-on-one services may schedule a return visit or meet with HRD staff. Customers that need skill upgrading are referred to WIOA staff for further information on training services and assessment.

6. Describe how local Workforce Development Boards determine the need for enrollment in Training Services.

All customers receive basic career services through our NCWorks Career Centers to include registration and initial assessment. During the assessment process, customers that have been identified as appropriate and in need of skill training or upgrading, or who have expressed interest in additional training are referred to WIOA staff or a WIOA orientation session. WIOA staff then further assess the customer on current skills and employability. Other assessments are used as needed to determine the individual's appropriateness for training (such as interests, aptitudes, or basic skills).

7. Describe how follow-up services are provided through the NCWorks Career Centers. [WIOA Section 134(c)(2)(xiii)]

Follow-up services are provided by WIOA staff on a regular basis for WIOA youth and training customers to include services to assist with successful employment or the need of any additional services. Staff outreach to customers by phone, email, Facebook, mailings, through the NCWorks email system, and schedule follow-up appointments as needed. Centers are consistently discussing and exploring ways to improve follow-up services for walk-in traffic to ensure needs are being met so as to encourage return visits, etc. Centers have a local goal to provide follow up for 25% of their customers. This is accomplished via phone, email and NCWorks notices. It is the goal of all centers to define and improve follow-up services to customers.

8. Describe how new NCWorks Career Center staff are trained in the integrated services delivery system model and at what point do they have full access to NCWorks.gov and the timeline for accomplishing the training for new staff. Describe the staff development activities that reinforce and improve the initial training efforts.

All staff have received training from WDB staff and/or DWS managers regarding use and expectations of NCWorks. Local super users consistently provide technical assistance to staff on a daily basis and provide guidance on changes and troubleshooting. New staff are typically trained within two weeks and often shadow other staff during use of system. WDB staff have also provided various training sessions to partners such as VR, libraries, and the housing authority. Once training has been completed, the RFA is submitted by WDB staff or DWS manager for staff access. Staff are also provided the NCWorks training site in order to practice using the system. WDB staff work closely with state staff regarding use of system. The Regional Analyst also provides ongoing training based on needs of staff and refresher training.

9. Describe how the Workforce Development Board holds the NCWorks Career Center operator and contractors accountable for activities and customer outcomes in the Center.

Staff will continue to monitor federal performance measure outcomes throughout the year using FutureWorks and NCWorks reports. It is anticipated that with close monitoring throughout the year, WDB staff can communicate to center staff ways that performance outcomes may be improved, sooner rather than later. As we learn more about WIOA measures, technical assistance will need to be provided to career center staff either by WDB staff or DWS staff. Goals set by the Commission for our workforce area will be measured to some level down to each career center. The Executive Committee helps provide oversight for career center and service provider performance. Extension of contracts will be dependent on successful delivery of services and acceptable performance outcomes. Customer satisfaction will also need to be measured. WDB staff in partnership with DWS will develop a plan for measuring customer satisfaction.

In addition, operators and contractors have signed the local Memorandum of Agreement that sets forth the terms of cooperation and support in building and maintaining an integrated service delivery system in the region.

10. Describe how the Workforce Development Board facilitates access to services provided through the NCWorks Career Center delivery system, including remote areas, using technology and through other means. [WIOA Section 108(b)(6)(B)]

The Workforce Board continues to pursue the use of technology for increased service delivery and in some cases, have implemented initial efforts. Technology usage can be challenging in rural areas where high speed internet is not universally available, and technology literacy levels can be low with some populations. Current efforts include continued training for regional library staff in the use of NCWorks Online and providing contact information easily accessible for staff. Centers have continued outreach to local high schools on using school technology to register seniors for job search.

Additional ways to reach more customers across the region through the use of technology will continue to be developed. It is anticipated that the NCWorks mobile application will also increase access to the local population.

With the new addition of the live chat feature on NCWorks, customers will have additional means to communicate with staff and obtain information on services and jobs.

Case Managers are using Zoom, Go To Meeting, Facebook, Skype, and text as ways to meet and keep in contact with participants /customers to provide crucial services.

11. Describe Local Area strategies and services that will be used to strengthen linkages between Boards and the NCWorks Career Center system and unemployment insurance programs. [WIOA Section 108(b)(4)(A)(iv)]

In general, customers receiving unemployment insurance continue to decrease in the region; however, customers continue to need assistance related to their claim. However, with the current situation related to Covid-19 the need for unemployment assistance has drastically increased. Center staff provide general information regarding how to file a claim and provide the website and customer service number for additional detailed information. Employability Assessment Interview (EAI) appointments have been expanded to additional centers in order to reduce transportation burdens to our customers. Customers receiving unemployment are informed of all center services and provided referrals as appropriate. Updated information regarding changes to unemployment benefits and processes are consistently posted to local Facebook pages and shared with staff and customers. Given the current economic conditions we anticipate receiving additional guidance on providing unemployment services when centers reopen.

12. Describe how the Local Workforce Development Board has implemented a business services team and how they are supported by NCWorks Career Center integrated services staff.

The local Memorandum of Agreement specifies that required center partners coordinate business services activities and employer visits with other center and local partners already providing those services. In addition business services staff in the region work with other center staff to communicate business needs (hiring, training needs, application requirements, etc.). This can make it very effective in placing a work experience or OJT quickly. Center

operators and center managers play an important roll in ensuring that the collaboration and organization of employer visits, center job fairs, and participation in community events to network with businesses.

13. Describe how entities within the NCWorks Career Center system, including Career Center operators and partners, will comply with Section 188, if applicable, and 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. [WIOA Section 108(b)(6)(C)]

Workforce staff are made aware of expectations for maintaining non-discriminatory programs and services by the WDB staff and the administrative entity. Equal Opportunity (EO) requirements are also covered by the employing organization for new employees as part of their orientation. Customers are made aware of equal opportunity rights through placement of EO posters in each of the NCWorks Centers. Also customers enrolled into services are given an orientation which includes an overview of equal opportunity policy. As part of the orientation, a Customer Participant Rights Form is completed by the staff person with signatures from both the customer and the staff person. The customer is provided a copy of this form which explains the EO process and how to file a complaint if the customer feels they have been a victim of discrimination.

Staff are made aware of their right to file a complaint as well. This is typically done by the service provider organization or in the case of the WDB level staff by the administrative entity. Also brochures, marketing materials, the Board website, letterhead, and email signatures, etc. include the EO tagline. Contracts include the state mandated EO language and service provider assurances include statements regarding compliance with EO requirements.

14. Describe the integrated customer service process for participants. Attach a flow chart for services to include initial one-on-one interviews with customers, including NCWorks.gov dual registration, skills assessments, and determination of further services. Name document: Local Area Name Service Flow Chart 2020.

When a customer arrives at the center, he/she is greeted by someone from the welcome team or one of the two or three staff available (this is the case for most of the region's centers). This initial welcome is part of the talent engagement function and is very critical to make the customer feel welcomed; to know they are dealing with a friendly professional; to be confident in the staff member's expertise and knowledge; and to know they are in the right place.

An initial assessment will be completed during this process to determine if they are a first-time customer or a returning customer, is he/she a job-seeking customer or an employer customer. Employer customers are connected with the Business Services staff.

Staff get better acquainted with the customer and their background and needs while providing an overview of available services and next steps for the customer based on their individual needs and interests. This could potentially end the first visit with something scheduled at the center in the near future or even at the time of this visit, such as an appointment with a case manager, a workshop on job search techniques or pre-employment testing for a particular employer.

If the customer is a job seeker and it is their first visit or it's been quite some time since they have been to the center, then staff assistance will include some type of orientation to the center and its services including getting the person registered in NCWorks or finding their case in the event that they have visited a center before and previously registered.

It would be optimal to have a profile completed in NCWorks at this stage but may not be realistic during this visit. This should be a goal but is not always feasible.

After completing the appropriate services within the talent engagement or welcome function, a customer can move into the talent development or training functional area or move directly to talent employment solutions, depending on their individual needs. If the customer is job-ready then the customer may potentially move directly to Employment Solutions. In a small center, all this may happen with the same staff person as opposed to larger centers where customers have a much greater potential to move around and receive services from an assortment of staff members.

For a customer that may not be job-ready or need to add skills, the next step may lead to the talent development resources. This area may include career guidance and counseling, development of an employment plan, meeting with a staff member about TAA or scholarship services, or other services available.

At the end of each visit to the center, the customer has moved closer to meeting their individual education and/or employment goals with a next step to keep them engaged. Obviously some of the goals will be to increase customer skills, increase educational attainment, and placement into employment. The "product box" that each center develops will provide the tools and resources for customers to meet their goals. Customer satisfaction is important for the centers. As integrated service delivery evolves, the flow may change somewhat to meet continuous improvement for service delivery. The attached flow chart gives a much better picture of the types of services that will be made available through the local centers within the three functional areas and how customers move through the service delivery process.

[See High Country Service Flow Chart 2020.](#)

15. If applicable, attach the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) among the local Workforce Development Board and partners concerning operation of the NCWorks Career Center system. (A MOU guide is attached for your reference as Appendix X). [WIOA Section 121(b)(A)(iii)]. Name document: *Local Area Name NCWorks Career Center MOU*.

[See High Country NCWorks Career Center MOU.](#)

16. Describe how the Workforce Development Board uses a portion of funds available to the Local Area to maintain the NCWorks Career Center system, including payment of the infrastructure costs of Career Centers. [WIOA Section 121(b)(1)(A)(ii) and (h)]

During the RFP process a limited amount of funds are set aside for center operations. To date High Country has received a refund of infrastructure costs. These funds are designated for center functions such as rent, utilities, training, etc.

17. Describe the roles and any resource contributions of the NCWorks Career Center partners.
 [WIOA Section 108(b)(6)(D)]

In the High Country, we currently have seven NCWorks Career Centers across our seven-county service delivery area. WIOA service providers and local DWS staff form the core of service delivery in our centers and contribute to them. The Infrastructure Funding Agreement (IFA) determines the dollar value of contributions by required system partners from the state level. Below is a listing based on the PY2019 IFA of contributions of partners with a presence in the local career centers.

NCWorks Partner	Infrastructure Total Share (PY 2019)	In-Kind	In-Kind Description
WIOA Title I A/DW/Y	\$118,869.36		
WIOA Title III W-P	\$172,906.19		
WIOA Title II (shared between MCC and WCC)	\$480.00		
Carl D. Perkins (shared between MCC and WCC)	\$482.00		
NC Vocational Rehabilitation	\$11,492.00		
Northwest Regional Library System		\$4,200.00 <i>est.</i>	Career center in the Alleghany library includes rent, utilities, trash collection, and facility cleaning
Employment and Training programs		\$58,400.00 <i>est.</i>	Career center locations on Avery campus (\$18,400) and Mitchell campus (\$40,00) of MCC includes rent, utilities, IT support, phones, trash collections, facility cleaning, maintenance, and security.
TOTAL	\$304,229.55	\$62,600.00	

18. Describe the Workforce Development Board's method for planning oversight, review process and frequency of review for the NCWorks Career Center system in the Local Area, including processes for ensuring quality customer service. [WIOA Section 121(a)(3)]

High Country WDB staff, partners, and service providers agree that customer service is top priority when serving customers. WDB staff work closely with center managers to address any concerns regarding operations or service delivery within the center or by staff. Center managers along with the Regional Operations Director often present updates at local WDB meetings regarding services and events. The WDB will begin implementing regularly scheduled leadership meetings to provide oversight of services and improve communication and processes.

19. Describe how NCWorks Career Centers are using the integrated, technology-enabled intake and case management information system for programs carried out under WIOA and programs carried out by NCWorks Career Center partners. [WIOA Section 108 (b)(21)]

All NCWorks Career Center staff utilize NCWorks for keying of and tracking participant data and activities to include dual enrollment when appropriate. All staff are trained on the system and provided technical assistance on an ongoing basis. Staff are also using the document storage features for eligibility and other program documents. New features currently being added include the live chat feature and ability for customers to upload personal information.

V. Employer Services

1. Please briefly describe the efforts of the Business Services Representatives and/or Employer Services staff in the following areas:

- Promoting work-based learning opportunities to employers
On-the-Job Training (OJT) and work-based learning have both been successful for individuals who have been approved for the programs. Both have led to individuals obtaining employment which also serves as a best practice to share with other interested businesses. The HCWDB makes every effort to tell these stories through its Board meetings, Facebook page, and publications of its administrative entity (HCCOG).
- Exploring/ promoting sector strategies with employers
Board staff, service provider staff, center staff and other community partners work together to develop sector strategies for the region.
- Utilizing employer data to inform priorities
Board staff, service provider staff, center staff use numeric and anecdotal data to make decisions on services, strategies to provide those services, as well as how programs dollars should be allocated.
- Making employer referrals to Agricultural Services and/or Foreign Labor staff
Agricultural Services staff regularly visits centers and provides staff training on the availability of employment opportunities in the area.

2. Please describe the efforts the Workforce Development Board has made to deliver business services on a regional basis. (possibly duplicative of items above)

Business services within the High Country region are coordinated at two levels: board level and service provider level.

The WDB's Communications and Business Services Coordinator coordinates trainings, outreach information, labor market information, and policy information for the region as a whole. At the career center level, the contracted business services representative works in conjunction with NCWorks Career Center Managers and DWS partners to respond and outreach to local businesses - whether for hiring events in the center, multi-employer job fairs, one-on-one assistance, on-the-job training and work experience placement.

3. Describe how the Board partners with employers and other organizations to promote work-based learning activities.

Work-based learning information is regularly shared at events hosted by these organizations either by local center staff or WDB staff. The WDB is a member of most of the chambers within its seven-county region and has good working relationships with the economic developers in the region. Also, WDB staff and career center staff regularly engage with post-secondary

education and are able to share information regarding these activities. As staff visit employers in the region opportunities for work based learning are sought as appropriate.

4. Please describe business services partnership efforts in the areas of education, economic development and with employers.

Board staff, service provider staff, and other community partners work together to accomplish the following:

- Develop sector strategies and sustain certified career pathways;
- Share information and referrals and promote training regarding entrepreneurial skills and microenterprise skills;
- Participates in meetings with Pre-Apprenticeship initiative in Wilkes County;
- Partners with economic development on various events/initiatives such as the industry and education group in Wilkes County, the Maximize Carolina grant in Mitchell County, and regular participation in HCWDB meetings;
- Works together with partners to coordinate engagement efforts with small business employers and in-demand sector occupations;
- Board maintains a subscription to Chmura JobsEQ for economic analysis data and provides data on request to education entities, businesses, local governments, and other local partners [*The HCWDB has a current partnership with Wilkes Community College to provide data to inform the school's strategic plan to offer appropriate education opportunities to assist in providing a locally-trained workforce*];
- Each Board meeting, one or two private sector and/or public sector board members give a brief presentation to the board and audience which sparks great discussion and questions about local needs (workers, needed job skills, and ebb and flow of business can impact worker need and particular skills); and
- The HCWDB serves as the Advisory Committee for the High Country Council of Governments Certified Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) that is sent to the US Economic Development Administration (EDA) with a regional list of related needs that would positively impact economic development in the seven-county region.

VI. Performance

1. Examine the local Board's current Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth performance on the Federal Primary Indicators of Performance for PY 2019 and previous Program Years (reports available via FutureWorks).
 - a. What are some of the factors in the local area that impact performance levels (both positively and negatively)? Be sure to consider factors such as the unemployment rate, factory closures/openings, weather events & natural disasters that may have impacted the area, as well as internal operational factors that may impact the local area's performance.

The passage of WIOA presented learning curves for seasoned staff. Staff continue to learn and develop their understanding of WIOA expectations and measures. With the most recent RFP process completed March 2020, we will have a change to a new service provider in four counties for the next program year. We anticipate the hiring of new staff to present a number of challenges from learning workforce to transition of cases. The Local Area has worked closely with staff to develop their understanding of WIOA and local policies. Board staff continuously provide technical assistance and review files for services and keying in an effort to improve performance. With the current Covid-19 pandemic, centers and staff are learning to operate differently and explore new ways to provide services. We anticipate that due to the significant changes in the economy due to layoffs and reductions in force along with the transition to online learning, performance will experience a disruption and likely decline.

- b. What strategies are in place to maintain or improve performance?

WDB staff will continue to run performance reports from both NCWorks and FutureWorks at least quarterly to gauge how we are doing in the area of WIOA performance outcomes and service delivery. Staff will also run reports from NCWorks regularly to see which customers are in the performance pool. Staff monitor these cases in NCWorks to determine that all critical data has been keyed into the system to give us the best possible performance outcomes. Staff continuously provide technical assistance to service providers in efforts to meet performance measures. Staff have also began reviewing weekly exit reports to ensure data is keyed and request that staff review each case individually prior to exit to ensure all data and case notes are properly keyed to ensure the best possible performance outcome.

- c. In the event the local board is not on track to meet yearly performance indicator goals, please discuss what corrective actions/steps would be undertaken to address this situation.

It is anticipated the Local Area will achieve performance goals. HCWDB staff review monthly invoices from the WIOA service providers. During this process, spending limits and expectations are reviewed to insure compliance with WIOA requirements. Corrective action plans will be developed to remedy any issues observed. Staff are continuing to learn the WIOA measures and understand how data is best keyed into

NCWorks. All staff are aware of the 90% expectation for achieving measures. Staff also participate in local Super User meetings in order to stay informed of up-to-date information and attend available trainings when offered. The WDB also partners with the Regional Analyst for technical assistance and training as needed.

- d. How is performance information shared throughout the hierarchy of staff? Please detail how the Board addresses performance data in its relationship with its contractor(s) and how case managers are using performance data to drive local area performance.

WDB staff will run performance reports from both databases such as NCWorks as well as FutureWorks at least quarterly. WDB staff will monitor cases in NCWorks to determine that all necessary data/activities is keyed correctly to ensure that we glean the best possible and accurate performance outcomes. WDB staff will meet to go over the results with contract staff and directors to give guidance and technical assistance as needed. The WDB staff will update the board as appropriate as to where we are currently at in meeting our performance measures. Contractors also provide summaries of services that assist them in knowing their data and performance impacts.

2. In recent years, many Workforce Development Boards have seen decreasing population counts for the number of Dislocated Workers served. Please describe the strategies the Board has in place to ensure this population is sufficiently (proportionately) represented in the performance pool. Be sure to include whether the Board makes use of the nontraditional Dislocated Worker definitions (such as any individuals who are long-term unemployed and can, therefore, be considered Dislocated Workers) in the response.

High Country WDB goals are to help potential DW improve skills and find a new career path. Staff stay informed of business closings in order to provide services and information regarding WIOA. Customers that visit the center for their UI assessments, are also informed about additional services and referred as appropriate. When appropriate, customers will be served under the long term unemployed category. Centers are also providing followup to customers who have recently visited/receive services which may also identify additional DW. In response to the surge in layoffs due to Covid-19, High Country has applied for additional funds to assist in serving additional dislocated workers.

3. The Measurable Skill Gains measure is a real-time indicator denoting participants who are making demonstrable progress on a track toward Credential Attainment. Please describe how the Board makes use of the information the Measurable Skill Gains measure provides as a means of ensuring the Board reaches its Credential Attainment indicator goal.

Board staff have emphasized the importance of keying measurable skills gains in order to assist in providing base-line data for setting our upcoming goal. During internal monitoring, staff review to see if skills gains have been keyed for those in training most commonly obtained through the use of report cards along the way. As we continue to gain a clear understanding of how this measure is defined and what counts towards a skills gain additional guidance/training will be made available to staff.

4. Please describe the process for monitoring service providers in the local area. Include details such as how it is conducted, who is involved, how often, et cetera.

Performance is tracked in NCWorks Online with all staff inputting services and notes regarding service delivery. Futureworks performance management software is also used and gathers NCWorks online data to provide detailed reports on performance. Futureworks will be used to develop goals and improve performance. Staff have also tried to utilize reports from NCWorks and identify areas that need attention and/or data cleanup. In addition, WDB staff provide reports to assist staff in identifying keying errors and any cleanup of data that may be needed. WDB staff review weekly soon to exit reports which provide an opportunity to review all cases prior to exit to ensure data is keyed correctly and up to date. WDB staff also perform financial and programmatic monitoring multiple times throughout the year. However, informal desk monitoring occurs monthly as files are reviewed and technical assistance is provided.

VII. Equal Opportunity

1. Describe processes to ensure individuals are not discriminated against based on age, disability, sex, race, color or national origin. [WIOA Section 188].

Local staff are made aware of expectations for maintaining non-discriminatory programs and services by the designated Equal Opportunity Officer through updates as well as annual training by Mose Dorsey, the DWS WIOA Equal Opportunity Officer. Equal Opportunity (EO) requirements are also covered by the employing organization for new center employees as part of their orientation.

Customers are made aware of equal opportunity rights through placement of EO posters in each of the NCWorks Centers. Also customers enrolled into services are given an orientation which includes an overview of equal opportunity policy. As part of the orientation, a Customer Participant Rights Form is completed by the staff person with signatures from both the customer and the staff person. The customer is provided a copy of this form which explains the EO process and how to file a complaint if the customer feels they have been a victim of discrimination.

Staff are made aware of their right to file a complaint as well. This is typically done by the service provider organization or in the case of the WDB level staff by the administrative entity. Also brochures, marketing materials, the Board website, letterhead, and email signatures, etc. include the EO tagline. Contracts include the required EO language and service provider assurances include statements regarding compliance with EO requirements.

2. Attach the Local Area's current Equal Opportunity (EO) Complaint Grievance Procedure to address EO requirements [29 CFR Part 37.71]. Name document: *Local Area Name EO Complaint Grievance Procedure 2020*.

[See High Country EO Complaint Grievance Procedure 2020](#)

3. Describe methods to ensure local Equal Opportunity procedures are updated.

Local policies are reviewed on an annual basis, if not sooner based on new information that is provided either by DWS or USDOL. When policies are updated, the new policy is placed in the EO section of the Board's website and information regarding the new policy is sent out to all career center staff.

Due the recent repercussions of COVID-19, the EO Officer has researched information regarding how center business can operate in a way that will protect staff and customers and any impacts on equal opportunity and the Americans with Disabilities Act. This information will be shared with all staff when a plan and/or policy is in place.

VIII. Adult and Dislocated Worker Services

1. Describe the local Workforce Development Board's vision for serving the WIOA eligible Adults and Dislocated Workers to include high level goals, outreach strategies, service delivery and expected outcomes. Describe how this vision will improve the employment outcomes for this population.

High Country WDB's vision is "to grow the High Country economy by strengthening the region's workforce and connecting employers to skilled, high quality employees." Serving WIOA eligible adults and dislocated workers is a major priority for the Board within that vision. One of the four goals within the latest strategic plan is "prepare workers to succeed in the High Country economy and continuously improve their skills." The Board is interested in implementing the following strategies:

- Strengthen career development services and ensure consistency across programs
- Enhance programs and enrollment in critical career clusters by targeting resources
- Strategically coordinate programs among workforce partners to develop skill and education pathways
- Continue providing structured work-based learning

The Board expects customer achievement outcomes to - at a minimum - meet our established federal performance goals of entry into employment, retention in employment and the earning of self-sufficient wages to meet our performance goal. Further, the Board expects our service providers to build on their already successful work-based learning activities. The Board believes that successful implementation of these strategies will further improve our local economy.

Centers are consistently taking the center out into the community to provide outreach and engagement with partners and community events and initiatives along with employers. This outreach proves useful in recruitment of customers and work based learning opportunities which often result in successful employment outcomes.

2. Provide an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of existing Adult and Dislocated Worker education and training services. Include how services are provided and the capacity to address the identified education and skill needs of the workforce and the employment needs of employers. Describe plans to address any weaknesses identified. [WIOA Section 108(b)(1)(D)]

While the High Country Workforce Area is primarily rural in nature, there are a number of training options available within commuting distances of most of the communities. However, transportation to and from training institutions is one of the most serious challenges for many customers to obtain the training and education services needed to obtain adequate employment. Locally, classroom/occupational skills training and on-the-job training are the two types of training most commonly available to customers receiving workforce services within the High Country Workforce Area.

For those customers that do not qualify for Pell Grants or other financial assistance, adequate funding is an issue. High Country has seen a significant decrease to funding

over the last several years. These continued decreases impact the Local Area's ability to fund training and education services at levels once provided. We will continue to try and meet financial assistance needs of our customers through the use of Pell Grants and other scholarships, moving funds between Adult and Dislocated Worker funding streams, and requesting contingency Dislocated Worker Funds as the state makes those funds available to local areas. Historically, High Country has benefited financially from multiple voluntary transfers from other WDBs. We will continue to pursue this in the future.

Except for training provided on-site by the employer usually done through OJT's, the bulk of adult and dislocated worker actual occupational skills training opportunities rest with the region's three community colleges. All sites provide curriculum, HRD, and Adult Education opportunities for customers of all ages.

Caldwell Community College & Technical Institute (CCCTI) serves Watauga County; however, the bulk of their skills training must be obtained at the main campus in Hudson. CCCTI continues efforts to expand training opportunities in Watauga County. Mayland Community College (MCC) serves Avery, Mitchell, and Yancey counties, while Alleghany, Ashe, and Wilkes counties are served by Wilkes Community College (WCC). Surry Community College, McDowell Tech, AB Tech, and Western Piedmont Community College are commonly relied on for training, as well. Tennessee Tech also has nursing and allied health training that is easily accessible for North Carolina residents that live on the western side of the region.

Appalachian State University (ASU) serves the region with many community college students transferring to ASU to complete degree requirements. Business, nursing, education, and industrial technology are just a few of the curricular areas designed to fill skill needs. Although not often used by WIOA participants, Lees-McRae College, a private liberal arts college located in Avery County, provides another opportunity for higher education in our region. East Tennessee State University (ETSU) offers in-state tuition for North Carolina residents of counties adjacent to the county where ETSU is located and offers much easier access for residents located on the west side of the region. They have a number of high quality healthcare related programs including nursing. Popular training options among dislocated workers have been nursing and other healthcare related fields. These training areas have often provided excellent career opportunities at high wages.

The following is a broad list of training opportunities available in the Local Area. WIOA may not provide funds for all of these areas. Because economic conditions are always changing, the WDB has tried to take a flexible approach to training for WIOA customers, keeping in mind customer choice and local demands.

Most common training areas utilized through CCCTI include the following: nursing, truck driving, biomedical, and continuing education courses such as welding, nursing assistant, phlebotomy, and pharmacy tech.

Skills training opportunities at MCC include the following: accounting, electrical/electronics technology, electronics engineering technology, welding, nursing, auto body repair, horticulture, basic law enforcement, industrial maintenance, business

administration, information systems, cosmetology, manicuring instructor, cosmetology instructor, nursing assistant, human service technology, criminal justice technology, office systems technology (with or without medical concentration), early childhood associate, aesthetics technology and esthetics technology instructor, marketing and retailing, forest management technology, computer engineering technology, medical assisting, physical therapy and physical therapy assistant, carpentry, and plumbing.

Wilkes Community College offers academic programs in the following disciplines: Arts & Sciences, Business & Public Service Technologies, Health Sciences, and Industrial Engineering. A sampling of course offerings within these divisions includes the following: accounting, architectural technology, business administration, computer science/information systems programming, auto body repair, nursing, basic law enforcement, culinary technology, criminal justice, corrections, early childhood associate/operator, hotel and restaurant management, information systems, dental assisting, human service technology, medical assisting, speech-language pathology, automotive systems, broadcasting and production, building construction, horticulture, industrial maintenance/controls, electronics engineering, heavy equipment and transportation technology, heating/ventilation/air conditioning, machining technology.

In an effort to train the workforce for the skills needed for future employer needs, all three community colleges have expanded their course offerings in green technology and have incorporated these skills in a number of classes. Local career advisors are encouraged to utilize those course offerings, when appropriate, with their customers.

Other green training opportunities available in the area include those offered at Appalachian State University. Appalachian State University/Western North Carolina Renewable Energy Initiative and Building Performance Engineering (located in Boone) provides a wide array of nationally recognized energy conservation and energy efficiency courses with emphasis on BPI certification.

General observations over the last several years:

- Less long-term curriculum training and more short-term training is being provided.
 - Many customers in long-term training qualify for Pell Grants or other financial assistance so the Local Area is paying fewer actual training costs.
 - More funds are being expended on supplies/tools needed within their training programs and other ancillary costs such as background checks, physicals, immunizations, drug screening, testing and test preparation costs, and licensing.
3. Provide the date and process for the competitive procurement of the Adult and Dislocated Worker Programs that ensures an arm's-length relationship between the Workforce Development Board and service delivery. Identify any service provider contract extensions.

Note: While Final Regulations Section 679.410 (b) and (c) provide exceptions to the competitive procurement process, WDBs *must* have an arm's-length relationship to the delivery of services.

The WDB completed competitive procurement of Adult/DW services March 2020. An RFP was released January 2020, with proposals due February 2020 and the review/selection during March 2020.

4. Attach the Local Workforce Development Board's Adult and Dislocated Worker (DW) service providers chart effective July 1, 2020 using the [Adult/Dislocated Worker Service Provider List](#) provided. Name document: *Local Area Name Adult and DW Providers 2020*.

See [High Country Adult and DW Providers 2020](#).

5. Describe how and when eligible training providers are reviewed at the local level and how customers are informed they have choices in choosing their providers. Define what "significant number of competent providers" means in the local area. Include whether the local Workforce Development Board uses more strict performance measures to evaluate eligible training providers. Attach if a separate policy. Name document: *Local Area Name Eligible Training Providers Policy*. [PS 06-2019]

Potential WIOA participants are referred to NCWorks Online to search for training providers. If they are interested in a training provider or program that is not approved by the Local Area, they may request that the training provider/program be added and/or approved by the WDB. The WDB is currently reviewing the list of approved in-demand industries and occupations for training. The WDB has three (3) community colleges in addition to for-profit training providers. With this level of coverage, the WDB finds that we have a significant number of competent providers. Training providers who have been approved in NCWorks Online come up for review in the system every two (2) years. At this time, the provider and program are reviewed for demand for jobs in the Local Area and past successes of the program.

6. Describe follow-up services provided to Adults and Dislocated Workers.

Follow-up services are provided by WIOA staff on a regular basis for WIOA youth and adult/dislocated worker training customers including services to assist with successful employment, training completion, or the need of any additional services to assist the customer in completing their service plan. Staff reach out to customers by phone, email, Facebook, mailings, the NCWorks email system and schedule follow-up appointments as needed. Centers continue to discuss and explore ways to improve follow-up services for walk-in traffic to ensure needs are being met so as to encourage return visits. It is the goal of all centers to define and improve follow-up services to customers.

Per Training and Employment Guidance Letter (TEGL) 19-16 and Section 134(C)(2)(A), funds described shall be used to provide career services, which shall be available to individuals who are adults or dislocated workers through the one-stop delivery system and shall, at a minimum, include - ...(xiii) follow up services, including counseling regarding the workplace, for participants in workforce investment activities authorized under this subtitle who are placed in unsubsidized employment, for not less than 12 months after the first day of the employment, as appropriate.

IX. Youth Services

USDOL provides funds to states who in turn provide local workforce areas resources to deliver a comprehensive array of youth services that focus on assisting out-of-school youth and in-school youth with one or more barriers to employment prepare for post-secondary education and employment opportunities, attain educational and/or skills training credentials, and secure employment with career/promotional opportunities. USDOL and North Carolina's priorities are:

- *Out-of-School Youth – A minimum of 75 percent of the Youth funds allocated local areas, except for the local area expenditures for administration, must be used to provide services to OSY;*
- *Work Experience – Not less than 20 percent of Youth funds allocated to the local area, except for the local area expenditures for administration, must be used to provide paid and unpaid work experiences; and a*
- *Focus on Partnering – Co-enrollment encouraged where appropriate with Title II and IV.*

USDOL also focuses on the following WIOA Performance Indicators:

- Employment, education, or training during the 2nd quarter after exit
 - Employment, education, or training during the 4th quarter after exit
 - Median earnings during the 2nd quarter after exit
 - Credential Attainment Rate
 - Measurable Skill Gains
 - Effectiveness in serving employers (system-wide measure, not program specific)
- NOTE: Performance is Section VII.

1. Provide a general overview of the local current total population (within five years) of the Title I WIOA eligible youth by Local Workforce Development Board area. Include the following general information for the local Workforce Development Board area:

In-School Youth Analysis

- a. Approximately, what number of the Youth are ages 14-21?

As provided by LEAD:

County	Youth Ages 14-21	% Youth Ages 14-21	# Youth Ages 12-17 In Poverty
Alleghany	1,002	8.8%	320
Ashe	2,397	8.7%	485
Avery	1,546	8.6%	192
Mitchell	1,343	8.8%	165
Watauga	14,127	24.8%	507
Wilkes	6,871	9.8%	1,554
Yancey	1,564	8.5%	281
Total	28,860		3,504

- b. Approximately, what percentage of these youth are low-income (eligible for WIOA In-school program)?

See chart in item (a).

- c. Approximately, what number of these Youth are in the current school dropout statistics?

According to NC DPI the 18-19 dropout rate and count are as follows:

County	18-19 Rate	18-19 Count
Alleghany	1.81%	8
Ashe	.32%	3
Avery	2.51%	15
Mitchell	.47%	3
Watauga	.77%	11
Wilkes	2.34%	69
Yancey	2.77	19

Out-of-School Analysis

- a. Approximately what number of Youth ages 16-24 of the current total population (within five years) make up the population?

See chart in item (b).

- b. Youth ages 16-24 represent what % of the population?

As provided by LEAD:

County	Youth 16-24	% Youth 16-24
Alleghany	1,144	10%
Ashe	2,596	9.4%
Avery	1,907	10.6%
Mitchell	1,557	10.2%
Watauga	19,085	33.4%
Wilkes	7,600	10.9%
Yancey	1,728	9.4%
Total	35,617	

- c. What are the general educational levels of this age group?

The general educational levels for those ages 18-24 for youth in the High Country are as follows:

County	% Less than High School Diploma	% High School or GED	% Some college or 2-year degree	% Bachelors or higher
Alleghany	13.5	42.7	38.5	5.3
Ashe	16.7	38.3	37.2	7.8
Avery	6.7	42.2	46.4	4.7
Mitchell	18.9	28.7	46.2	6.2
Watauga	2.2	12.4	77.0	8.4
Wilkes	16.4	25.3	53.1	5.2
Yancey	11.3	40.3	42.1	6.3

d. What is the general employment status of this age group?

The general employment status of ages 16-24 are as follows:

County	# Youth 16-24 in Labor Force	# Youth 16-24 Not in Labor Force
Alleghany	605	471
Ashe	1,513	770
Avery	1,237	860
Mitchell	861	637
Watauga	7,958	9,074
Wilkes	4,279	2,515
Yancey	971	710
Total	17,424	15,037

2. Based on the assessment above, does the local Workforce Development Board plan to serve In-School Youth?

At this time in-school youth services will remain as a case-by-case basis.

3. Provide a description and assessment of the type and availability of youth workforce activities in the Local Area, including activities for youth who are individuals with disabilities. Include identification of successful models of such youth workforce investment activities being used and/or planned. [WIOA Section 108 (b)(9)].

The High Country region has greatly increased its partnerships with the local schools and community colleges in regards to serving youth system-wide. Partnerships include activities such as the Wilkes County Schools Business and Industry Education Forum (BEIF), Apprenticeship Wilkes, assisting with planning and carrying out of Avery’s Grade 8 program and Blue Ridge Academy, and Mitchell and Yancey’s career days and senior NCWorks registrations, along with various other career days and events. Youth staff work closely with VR for appropriate referrals both to and from for appropriate enrollments. These efforts continue to grow stronger as WDB and provider staff engage with additional projects and partners.

4. Describe the local area's broad Young Adult (NextGen) Program design to include:
 - a. Providing objective assessments;
 - b. Supportive service's needs;
 - c. and developmental needs of each participant, for the purpose of identifying appropriate services and career pathways for participants. [WIOA Section 129(c)(1)(A)]

In the High Country our target population is out of school youth with barriers to employment and/or education. Following WIOA eligibility guidelines, youth meet with a career advisor to determine eligibility, complete an objective assessment, and develop a plan for services. Identified needs will be addressed directly or by referral when possible. Youth receive guidance and counseling to assist them in completion of a credential and/or to enter employment. Youth services are housed within the career center and benefit from all center services. Youth benefit from training assistance, supportive services most often in the form of transportation and childcare assistance, and work experience. Staff work with a number of partners to address the needs of participants. During case management services staff are aware of meeting the needs of youth based on where they are developmentally by considering current skills, gaps, and supports available to them.

5. How does the local area ensure the Individual Service Strategy (ISS) identifies appropriate services based on the objective assessment and is linked to youth performance indicators, career pathways and program elements? [WIOA Section 129(c)(1)(B)]

Based on the objective assessment a plan of services is developed in partnership with the career advisor and the participant. All services are documented in the service strategy to include program elements such as educational goals, employment goals, work experience, and supportive services. Plans are periodically reviewed and updated when changes have occurred. The service strategy is signed by both staff and the participant and scanned into NCWorks.

6. Describe the local area's broad Young Adult (NextGen) Program design to include:
 - a. Employment Goals, and
 - b. Education Goals.

High Country staff strive to provide services that result in skills development that result in employment opportunities for all customers that are served. This process begins with the first meeting with a customer as a plan of service is developed to assess their skills, develop their educational goals that may range from GED to short term training to two-four year degrees, to credential attainment, to entering employment. Once educational goals are met staff assist customers with employment goals of entering and retaining employment in order to be successful.

7. Where does the local area plan to serve the young adults (NextGen): NCWorks Career Centers Tier 1, Tier 2, Specialized Centers, Service Provider Offices, or Hybrid situations. Explain if it is both NCWorks Career Centers and Provider Offices or some other option.

Youth services will continue to be offered at each local career center in each county. See center chart for statuses.

8. What new local higher-level goals (not traditional performance measures) are in place to serve the young adult (NextGen) population to include new outreach strategies and interactions with this population outside of the office/NCWorks Career Center setting? Do these improve employment outcomes and retention (or other identified local needs) for this population?

A newer initiative started this past year includes a local partnership with Eckerd Connects designed to serve at risk youth in a residential setting. Center staff have been regularly visiting the center and providing Working Smart training to small groups of students. This has been well received by staff and youth and has resulted in great partnerships. The Apprenticeship Wilkes program has also been developing and in recent partnerships we have assisted in efforts to secure additional funding for youth placements by participating in a NC youth apprenticeship grant application. Staff also frequently visit the adult education/basic skills department to connect and serve youth as they engage in these services.

9. Provide a description and assessment of the type and availability of youth (NextGen) workforce activities in the Local Area, including activities for youth who are individuals with disabilities. Include identification of successful models of such youth workforce investment activities being used and/or planned. [WIOA Section 108(b)(9)]

The High Country region has greatly increased its partnerships with the local schools and community colleges in regards to serving youth system-wide. Partnerships with the Wilkes County Schools Business and Industry Education Forum (BEIF) along with Apprenticeship Wilkes are both growing. Staff continue assisting with planning and carrying out of Avery's Grade 8 program and Blue Ridge Academy, and Mitchell and Yancey's career days and senior NCWorks registrations. Youth staff work closely with VR for appropriate referrals both to and from for appropriate enrollments. These efforts continue to grow stronger as WDB and provider staff engage with additional projects and partners. Centers and staff are consistently engaging with community events and partners to outreach and engage customers from career days to Trunk or Treat events.

In the Mayland Community College service area, staff continue to assist with events aimed at high school students to provide them with real local labor market and workplace skills information to include employer and campus visits which included an extensive look at the Anspach Advanced Manufacturing Center's 3D modeling and other advanced technology; local industry tours with Altec and BRP; and 90 minute workplace skills workshops provided by the NCWorks Career Center staff.

In addition to these efforts, the region has strong connections with local training providers. Locally, classroom/occupational skills training and work experience/OJT are the two types of training available to youth customers receiving services within the High Country Workforce Area.

As funds allow, staff may set up short-term work experiences between youth and an employer that meets a participant's interest and needs in an effort to obtain work readiness skills and hands-on skill development. This type of hands-on training provides youth with a realistic view of employer expectations while being in the real world of work. Work experiences will

be set up as funds allow by service providers. OJT is also an option made available to youth participants.

The High Country region includes three community colleges: Caldwell Community College and Technical Institute, Mayland Community College, and Wilkes Community College. All sites provide curriculum, HRD, and Basic Skills opportunities for customers of all ages. Partnerships with adult education are particularly strong in serving dropouts with credential completion.

Caldwell Community College & Technical Institute serves Watauga County; however, the bulk of their skills training must be obtained at the main campus in Hudson. CCCTI continues efforts to expand training opportunities in Watauga County. Mayland Community College (MCC) serves Avery, Mitchell, and Yancey counties, while Alleghany, Ashe, and Wilkes counties are served by Wilkes Community College (WCC). Surry Community College, McDowell Tech, AB Tech, and Western Piedmont Community College are commonly relied on for training, as well. Tennessee Tech also has nursing and allied health training that is easily accessible for North Carolina residents that live on the western side of the region.

Appalachian State University (ASU) serves the region with many community college students transferring to ASU to complete degree requirements. Business, nursing, education, and industrial technology are just a few of the curricular areas designed to fill skill needs. Although not often used by WIOA participants, Lees-McRae College, a private liberal arts college located in Avery County, provides another opportunity for higher education in our region. East Tennessee State University (ETSU) offers in-state tuition for North Carolina residents of counties adjacent to the county where ETSU is located and offers much easier access for residents located on the west side of the region. They have a number of high quality healthcare related programs including nursing. Popular training options among dislocated workers have been nursing and other healthcare related fields. These training areas have often provided excellent career opportunities at high wages.

Most common training areas utilized through CCCTI include the following: nursing, truck driving, biomedical, and continuing education courses such as welding, nursing assistant, phlebotomy, and pharmacy tech.

Skills training opportunities at MCC include the following: accounting, electrical/electronics technology, electronics engineering technology, welding, nursing, auto body repair, horticulture, basic law enforcement, industrial maintenance, business administration, information systems, cosmetology, manicuring instructor, cosmetology instructor, nursing assistant, human service technology, criminal justice technology, office systems technology (with or without medical concentration), early childhood associate, aesthetics technology and esthetics technology instructor, marketing and retailing, forest management technology, computer engineering technology, medical assisting, physical therapy and physical therapy assistant, carpentry, and plumbing. Mayland also offers The Life Works project is a service learning initiative of Mayland Community College. Through this project, students build academic, employability, and life skills through a series of entrepreneurial activities. Students learn and practice these skills through the creation, distribution, and sale of a number of different hands-on projects. Some items are donated to local organizations, while others are sold as a fundraiser to support further educational opportunities for the students. The project is supported and operated by students in the Life Skills and Work Skills Academy classes.

Wilkes Community College offers academic programs in the following disciplines: Arts & Sciences, Business & Public Service Technologies, Health Sciences, and Industrial Engineering. A sampling of course offerings within these divisions includes the following: accounting, architectural technology, business administration, computer science/information systems programming, auto body repair, nursing, basic law enforcement, culinary technology, criminal justice, corrections, early childhood associate/operator, hotel and restaurant management, information systems, dental assisting, human service technology, medical assisting, speech-language pathology, automotive systems, broadcasting and production, building construction, horticulture, industrial maintenance/controls, electronics engineering, heavy equipment and transportation technology, heating/ventilation/air conditioning, machining technology. Wilkes currently also has a time limited grant from Communities in School at a single high school designed to focus on career coaching with students. Wilkes also offers their Career Step program designed to serve students earning an occupational diploma, high school IEP or who have intellectual challenges or disabilities. The program leads students on a step-by-step journey through basic academics, liberal arts, employability skills, workplace readiness, and concludes with hands-on training for a chosen career pathway.

In an effort to train the workforce for the skills needed for future employer needs, all three community colleges have expanded their course offerings in green technology and have incorporated these skills in a number of classes. Other green training opportunities available in the area include those offered at Appalachian State University. Appalachian State University/Western North Carolina Renewable Energy Initiative and Building Performance Engineering (located in Boone) provides a wide array of nationally recognized energy conservation and energy efficiency courses with emphasis on BPI certification.

10. Provide the Workforce Development Board's approach to meeting the required 75% minimum (NextGen) youth expenditures on out-of-school youth and include special outreach efforts and highlight planned program design. [WIOA Section 129(a)(4)(A)]

High Country has emphasized services to out of school youth over the past several years and continues to do so. Our RFP states that providers should plan to dedicate at least 80% of youth funding towards out of school youth. Discussion also continues with Adult Education on ways to partner and refer in order to serve dropouts or those who are basic skills deficient. Staff continue to work with partners and emphasize our target population of out of school youth. Current program design elements being considered include services/activities directly related to soft skills and career pathways.

11. Describe how the local Workforce Development Board partners, aligns, and leverages, as appropriate with:

- a. Title II Adult Education and Family Literacy Act program resources and policies;
- b. Title IV Vocational Rehabilitation program resources and policies;
- c. Integrates adult education with occupational education and training and workforce preparation, as Boards as the creation of career pathways for youth. [USDOL TEGL 8-15]

The WDB continues to build and partner with Adult Education and Vocational Rehabilitation to integrate education and training as part of provided services. Center staff

are closely connected with Adult Education, and in some counties have incorporated set scheduled time to spend within Adult Education to outreach to students. Adult Education and VR are both active WDB members and represent their services regionally. During the previous work related to career pathways both partners played a strong role in the planning and development of the local pathway of Health Care and Advanced Manufacturing. The WDB/center staff have partnered with VR most recently on a project that has provided training opportunities for staff regarding case management services and employment opportunities for those with disabilities. When appropriate, customers are dually enrolled to expand case management services or cost sharing for training and support. Local partner meetings are held on a regular basis that includes adult education and VR that allows additional collaboration on projects and events and serving customers.

Workforce Development Alignment Summary for Caldwell, Mayland, and Wilkes Community Colleges

Board staff and Adult Education partners recently discussed regional needs and alignment strategies for the upcoming year. With quality service to clients and students as the undergirding motivation for all of the partners, the group decided upon the following broad priorities and alignment activities on which to focus.

Goal 1: Improve service delivery in the One-Stops.

- Continue referrals between agencies and continue to streamline the process for students, to share information, to avoid repetitious paperwork and to make tracking more efficient.
- Use similar tools for student intake, development, and assessment to allow sharing and consistency among partners (Such as “Working Smart” curriculum for soft skills and sharing of student assessments).
- Conduct regular cross-training for staff of NCWorks and Adult Education so that clients can receive accurate information from either source for a more fluid process with a goal to have two regional meetings per year along with ongoing local county meetings throughout the year.

Goal 2: Improve outreach and service to employers.

- Understand and utilize each other's work on career pathways to support training programs aligned with employer needs.
- Strengthen the partnership with the Business Services team to share information and market services and college training programs and align work-based learning opportunities when appropriate
- Coordinate services to identify On-the-Job Training, work experience, and apprenticeship programs as appropriate for employers and customers
- Align resources and tools for Labor Market Information to assist staff and students with informed decisions.

Goal 3: Engage the region's youth.

- Maintain the MOU agreements between public schools, NCWorks and Adult Basic Education to coordinate efforts to serve dropouts, disconnected youth and graduates who are basic skills deficient.
- Convene regular meetings to facilitate communication between partners at the county level to remain engaged in program/staff changes and better serve customers.

Each local plan for Caldwell, Mayland, and Wilkes Community Colleges addresses our program's plans to provide Adult Education and Literacy Activities, including responses to our strategies for instructional practices, ensuring student engagement, offering transitional support, providing professional development to staff, engaging in continuous improvement measures, and aligning our services with those of the other WIOA partners.

Debbie Woodard, Dean of College Readiness at Wilkes Community College serves as the adult literacy representative on the High Country Workforce Development Board for Caldwell, Mayland, and Wilkes Community Colleges. She has served on the board since July 2015. Mike Birkmire, Unit Manager at VR, serves as the local VR representative on the High Country Workforce Development Board for the region.

12. Describe how follow-up services will be provided for (NextGen) youth.

Note: All youth participants must receive some form of follow-up for a minimum duration of twelve months.

All youth receive follow-up services for at least 12 months. It is expected that at least quarterly follow-up be provided by staff once a youth has exited. Staff outreach to youth by phone, email, Facebook, mailings, through NCWorks email system, and schedule follow-up appointments as needed. Follow-up services may include many services similarly provided during enrollment to assist the youth with retention and/or education completion. Services are keyed in NCWorks and any attained outcomes are keyed in the appropriate quarterly follow-up section.

13. Specify if the Local Workforce Development Board plans to offer incentives for (NextGen) youth. If yes, attach the Youth Incentive Policy to include: a) criteria to be used to award incentives; b) type(s) of incentive awards to be made available; c) whether WIOA funds will be used and d) the Local Workforce Development Board has internal controls to safeguard cash/gift cards. Name document: *Local Area Name Youth Incentive Policy*.

Note: Federal funds may not be spent on entertainment costs.

High Country does offer incentives to youth.

See High Country Youth Incentive Policy.

14. If the Local Workforce Development Board does not offer incentives for (NextGen) youth, please explain why.

N/A

15. Describe the local area strategy to ensure youth (NextGen) program activities lead to a High School Diploma or its equivalent or a recognized post-secondary credential and post-secondary education and training opportunities. [WIOA Section 129(c)(1)(C)]

Service providers continue to have a strong partnership with local community college programs that offer high school diplomas or its equivalent along with post-secondary education training opportunities. Staff often attend GED student orientations to share information about services and opportunities in the region and explore ways the partnership can better serve students. Center staff and college programs have had an ongoing relationship with the good of the students in mind. This includes assisting students with assessments, financial aid, to training completion.

Our relationship with the community colleges and the Finish Line Grant program has offered additional opportunities to partner and serve additional students to ensure credential attainments. Credential completion is an important element in our youth services. Close partnerships with Adult Education results in referrals and access to students that would benefit from enrollment. Career advisors work closely with students and Adult Education staff to ensure participants are on track to complete their diploma/equivalent. When needed, program funds are also used to support the cost of testing for students. Career advisors also work closely with community college continuing education and curriculum programs to ensure participants are on track for completion. Funds are often used to assist with tuition and fees and supportive services when needed to address barriers. Career advisors counsel students during training on successful strategies to completion and provide encouragement along the way. The local incentive policy also allows incentives to be awarded for credential completion.

16. Describe the local strategy to prepare the youth (NextGen) for unsubsidized employment, including with small employers, specifically those that include in-demand industry sectors and occupations of the local and/or regional labor markets. [WIOA Section 129(c)(1)(C)(v)]

Youth staff engage youth customers from the beginning on career awareness opportunities in the area. This includes ongoing discussion regarding available job opportunities, jobs in demand, and training that may assist in gaining the necessary skills to become employed. Youth are often placed with small employers as they participate in work based learning opportunities or other areas of potential growth. Staff also partner with local school systems as we support local employers and continue to learn of local needs and ways to support them.

During enrollment and follow-up, career advisors provide guidance and counseling on work readiness expectations that will lead to success in the workplace. Staff also counsel youth to address barriers that may prevent employment success. Staff have and continue to develop local knowledge regarding small and large employers and engage in community activities that connect them with employers in the area. Events such as career fairs and hiring events provide staff the opportunity to meet with employers to understand their needs which assists them in serving participants. Youth staff also work closely with other center staff and partners in efforts to assist youth in entering unsubsidized employment. We have also had success with youth entering employment upon completion of a work experience and have utilized OJT when appropriate.

17. Please complete the [Youth Program Elements chart](#) provided to demonstrate how the local Workforce Development Board ensures each of the 14 youth program elements is made available to youth participants. [WIOA Section 129(c)(2)(A)] Name document: Local Area Name Youth Program Elements

See High Country Youth Program Elements.

18. How does the local area ensure that the minimum of 20% of funds is spent on work experience and is the local area expending the 20% minimum on work experience to include an estimate of expenditures that will be paid wages to youth.? [WIOA Section 129(c)(4)]

Contracted service providers know the requirement that a minimum of 20% of youth funding is dedicated to work experience. This amount is specified in their contracts. Staff are actively assessing youth and setting up work experiences at locations to meet the needs of youth.

19. Does the Workforce Development Board have a standing committee to provide information to assist with planning, operational and other issues relating to the provision of services to youth? [WIOA Section 107(b)(4)(A)(ii)]

No.

a. If no, describe how oversight to planning, operational and other issues relating to the provision of services to youth will be provided.

Currently the WDB does not have a standing youth committee. Locally, youth services are provided within the career centers. Given the increased age of youth up to 24, we feel many needed services will be similar to that of our adult services. The NCWorks committee reviews information related to services through the centers, which will include youth services.

b. If yes, please provide a response to the following:

c. Provide the committee’s purpose/vision.

d. Provide the committee’s top three goals or objectives for PY 2020.

e. Attach the list of members to include members’ agency/organization, one of which must be a community-based organization with a demonstrated record of success in serving eligible youth. Provide the Committee’s Chair information in the first block (who must be a Workforce Development Board member.) Name document: Local Area Name Youth Committee Members. [WIOA Section 107(b)(4)(A)(ii)] and,

f. Complete the following chart for the PY 2020 Youth Committee’s planned meeting schedule to include dates, time and location. *[Expand form as needed.]*

Date	Time	Location (include address and room #)

20. Provide the date and process for when the competitive procurement of the Youth Programs was completed, to include any contract extensions.

The WDB completed competitive procurement of youth services March 2020. An RFP was released January 2020, with proposals due February 2020, and the review/selection during March 2020.

21. Attach the Local Workforce Development Board Youth service provider's chart, effective July 1, 2020, using the [Youth Service Provider List](#) provided. Complete each column to include specifying where Youth Services are provided. Name the document: *Local Area Name Youth Providers 2020*.

See High Country Youth Providers 2020.

X. Local Innovations

1. List additional funding received by the local Workforce Development Board to include special grants (Enhancement, Finish Line, Innovation), National Dislocated Worker Grants (disaster), YouthBuild, Foundation, outside funding and others to include a brief description the source and the amount.

Grant Name/Kind	Description	Beginning and End date	Source and Amount
Local Innovation Grant	Focus on transportation barriers in Wilkes County to include local study	July 19-May 20	\$98,013 Statewide Activities
Enhancement Grant	Focus on work based learning opportunities to include incumbent worker training, OJT, and WEX	Jan 2020-June 2021	\$200,000 Statewide Activities Funds
Finish Line Grant	Funds to assist students with completion of training who face financial emergencies	Year two began August 2019 and is ongoing	Total to date \$158,438 Statewide Activities Funds
Maximize Carolina	Funds to partner with Mitchell Chamber on school partnership to highlight local employment opportunities	Awarded Nov 2018 - Extended to Dec 2020	\$71,250 Statewide Activities Funds
Dislocated Worker Contingency	Funds to assisting in serving additional dislocated workers	October 2019-June 2020	\$200,000 Rapid Response Funds
Emergency Telework Grant	Funds to assist with needed equipment for teleworking during Covid-19	April 2019 - June 2019	\$5,000 Statewide Activities Funds

2. Describe one local Workforce Development Board best adult/dislocated worker program practice.

A best practice that has yielded positive outcomes resulted in our partnership with a local home healthcare employer who was experiencing difficulty in recruiting and retaining trained staff. Through the partnership a number of adults were identified as needing CNA training who were then enrolled in WIOA. An agreement was made to split the cost of the training expenses which benefited both parties. Those that were current employees, received a small pay increase which assisted with retention. The employer was very grateful for the assistance and felt it was a great partnership and made a difference in meeting their needs.

3. Describe one local Workforce Development Board best youth program practice.

Historically our youth providers have had good relationships with our education partners. This partnership has continued this year and has expanded to additional schools with participation in high school and middle school career days and events. Participation in these events has provided more exposure to career pathways, NextGen, and NCWorks Career Centers. This past year youth staff participated in a construction specific career day for students in response to employer needs.

4. Describe one local Workforce Development Board regional strategy that has yielded positive results.

The High Country Workforce Development Board holds regional meetings with both WIOA contracted staff, DWS career center staff, and management staff. This meeting is an incubator where staff can share/develop ideas, receive training and be the catalyst for change in the High Country region.

The workforce development director has an open door/phone policy where regional employees and management employees in the region can contact him to discuss matters that affect the High Country Workforce region.

The High Country Workforce Development Board has increased its partnership with Goodwill Industries Northwest, the Boone Chamber of Commerce, Caldwell Community College & Technical Institute to implement a hospitality training certification program for the local hotel and lodging industries in Watauga County. The hospitality partnership has been successful, and interest continues to grow.

Each WDB meeting there is a presentation or cross-education component done by either the business board members or the public sector. Since this initiative has been incorporated into the meetings, we have seen board member attendance increase as well as audience attendance increase. In addition, feedback has been overwhelmingly positive from board members – whether they are presenting or learning.

5. Describe one local Workforce Development Board Incumbent Worker or other business services best strategy.

At each WDB meeting there is a presentation or cross-education component done by either the business board members or the public sector. Since this initiative has been incorporated into the meetings, we have seen board member attendance increase as well as audience attendance increase. In addition, feedback has been overwhelmingly positive from board members – whether they are presenting or learning.

Board staff have noticed that an unintended result of this board meeting programming has been more board members networking with each other after the meetings. What started out as an educational piece/way to introduce new board members has become a business/public sector networking opportunity as well.

High Country also received additional funding targeted towards incumbent worker training opportunities in the region. We have seen interest in this from various local partners and employers and anticipate implementing training contracts this coming year.

XI. Program Year 2020 Local Workforce Development Board Plan Required Policy Attachments

1. The following policies are required to be attached as separate documents in WISE as part of the PY2020 Comprehensive Regional Plan. Name documents: *Local Area Name, Policy Name*.

In the first column, state if it is attached or why it is missing and when it can be expected. In the second column mark **only** if the policy has been changed/revised since PY2019 and requires a special review for PY 2020 and has not been previously submitted to the Division.

Do not add an empty document in WISE as a “placeholder”.

Required Local Policies and DWS Reference	Attached (Yes/No)	Revised for PY2020 (Yes/No)
1. Adult/Dislocated Worker Work Experience Policy (PS 10-2017)	Yes	
2. Competitive Procurement Policy (PS 19-2017, Change 1)	Yes	
3. Conflict of Interest Policy (PS 18-2017)	Yes	
4. Nondiscrimination/Equal Opportunity Standards and Complaint Procedures (PS 07-2018)	Yes	
5. Financial Management Policy for Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Title I (PS 20-2017, Change 1)	Yes	
6. Individualized Training Account Policy	Yes	
7. On-the-Job Training Policy (PS 04-2015, Change 1)	Yes	
8. Oversight Monitoring Policy, Tool and Schedule	Yes	
9. Priority of Service Policy (PS 03-2017)	Yes	
10. Youth Work Experience Policy (PS 10-2017)	Yes	
11. Local Supportive Services Policy	Yes	
12. Local Sampling Policy/Self-Attestation Procedures & Monitoring Schedule	Yes	

2. Designate whether the following local Optional Policy is included and used at the local Workforce Development Board and is included in the Plan or write “N/A” implying “Not Applicable”, the Workforce Development Board does not have this policy and therefore does not use these services.

In the second column mark **only** if the policy has been changed/revised since PY2019 and requires a special review for PY 2020 and has not been previously submitted to the Division.

Do not add an empty document in WISE as a “placeholder”.

If “Yes”, load the policy as a separate document. Name documents: Local Area Name, Policy Name. [Example: IWT Policy – Yes. Attached as *Board Name IWT Policy*.]

Optional Local Policies	Yes- the Board has a policy or N/A (Not Applicable)	Revised for PY2020
1. Local Area Incumbent Worker Training Policy (PS 17-2017, Change 1)	Yes	
2. Local Area Needs-Related Policy	No	
3. Local Area Transitional Jobs Policy	No	
4. Local Area Youth Incentive Policy	Yes	

3. Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) are required [Regulations Section 680.300] to pay the cost of training provided with Adult and Dislocated Worker funds and limitations on duration and amount may be included [Regulations Section 680.320]. Please provide the following ITA elements in summary:

Individual Training Accounts (ITA) Summary	
Dollar Amounts	\$4,300 annually and \$8,600 lifetime limit
Time Limits	Generally two years; however, longer as necessary based on training needs.
Degree or Certificates allowed (Associate's, Bachelor's, other)	Generally Associate's degrees; however, as need is identified assisting with Bachelor's is allowed along with other diploma/certification/or licensure programs
Procedures for determining case-by-case exceptions for training that may be allowed	Service Providers typically make decisions on training programs for customers. However, often when questions come up or something out of the ordinary arises the service providers contact WDB staff for guidance.
Period for which ITAs are issued (semester, school year, short term, etc.)	Generally by semester or as needed due to shorter term training.
Supportive Services covered by ITA (provide examples such as uniforms, tools, physical exams, etc.)	N/A, these items are not covered ITA
Other	

4. Please specify the supportive services provided by the local Board Supportive Services Policy. List specific items under Supplies, Emergency and Other, as identified in the local policy. *[Expand form as needed.]*

Transportation	Childcare	Supplies <i>(include examples)</i>	Emergency <i>(include examples)</i>	Other <i>(include examples)</i>
Yes	Yes	Yes, such as training materials	Yes, such as tires/car repairs	