

Mountain Area Workforce Development Board



Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act

Comprehensive Four-Year Title I Plan

July 1, 2024 - June 30, 2028

North Carolina Department of Commerce
Division of Workforce Solutions
313 Chapanoke Road, Suite 120
4316 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, NC 27699-4316

Introduction and Instructions

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) requires each Local Area Workforce Development Board (WDB) to develop and submit, in partnership with the chief local elected official (CLEO), a comprehensive four-year plan.

The WIOA Comprehensive Four-Year Title I Plan is to provide current information and be effective July 1, 2024 - June 30, 2028 and will include required current local policies. The Local Area Plan will support the alignment strategy described in the 2024-2025 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, Local Area WDBs shall comply with WIOA Section 108 in the preparation and submission of the plan.

The NCWorks Commission developed the strategic vision and mission for North Carolina's Workforce System based on Governor Cooper's NC Job Ready Initiative. 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.

Plans are reviewed by the Division of Workforce Solutions and NCWorks Commission staff. Upon completion of Plan reviews and the resolution of any concerns, as applicable, fully compliant Plans will be given Final Approval. Approval letters are distributed through Workforce Information System Enterprise (WISE). Local WDBs must have a compliant workforce board in place to receive Final Plan Approval and distribution of formula WIOA program year funding. [WIOA Section 108(e)]

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

Local Area WDBs 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: <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/eta>.

North Carolina policy information is available at: <https://www.commerce.nc.gov/jobs-training/workforce-professionals-tools-resources/workforce-policies>. Local Area WDBs should reference the North Carolina WIOA Unified State Plan to be posted March 2024.

Local Area Plan Submission and Due Date

The Local Area Plan must be submitted through Workforce Information System Enterprise (WISE), the Division's web-based financial system.

**The Program Year 2024 - 2028 Plan is Due:
May 1, 2024**

Each attachment must be clearly labeled in either Word or PDF format. Forms requiring original signatures may use DocuSign® (or similar) and may be uploaded in WISE.

If original signatures are obtained, forms may be mailed (and must be uploaded in WISE) to the Local Area WDB's assigned Planner at:

Division of Workforce Solutions
313 Chapanoke Road, Suite 120
4316 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, NC 27699-4316

I. Local Area Workforce Development Board (WDB) Overview

The Local Area WDB Overview provides important contact information that is used throughout the Division of Workforce Solutions (DWS). It is important that this section remains current during the Program Year. Updates should be submitted to the Local Area WDB's assigned DWS Planner when changes occur.

In the first section and anywhere else in the Local Area Plan, please include the appropriate salutation along with Titles such as Dr., The Honorable, Chairperson, and Judge.

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

Mountain Area Workforce Development Board (MAWDB)

- If the Local Area is a Consortium, attach a copy of the current Consortium Agreement.
 - Name document: Local Area WDB Name Consortium Agreement.
A copy of the Consortium Agreement for the Mountain Area Workforce Development Consortium is attached in WISE.
- If the Local Area is not a Consortium, attach a copy of the formal request for Local Area designation.
 - Name document: Local Area WDB Name Local Area designation letter.
- If the Local Area WDB officially changed its name, please attach a copy of the Status of Incorporation, attorney's letter, or other document.

2. List the counties served by the Local Area WDB.

Buncombe, Henderson, Madison, Transylvania

3. Provide the name, title, organization name, address, phone number, and email address of the **Local Area WDB Director**.

Name: <i>Mr. Nathan Ramsey</i>	Title & Salutation: <i>Executive Director</i>
Organization Name: <i>Land of Sky Regional Council</i>	Address: <i>339 New Leicester Highway, Suite 140, Asheville, NC 28806</i>
Phone Number: <i>828-251-7473</i>	Email Address: <i>nathan@landofsky.org</i>

4. Provide the name, elected title, local government affiliation, address, phone number, and email address of the **Chief Local Elected Official (CLEO)**.

Name: <i>Mr. Brownie Newman</i>	Elected Title & Salutation: <i>Commission Vice Chair</i>
Government Affiliation: <i>Buncombe County Board of Commissioners</i>	Address: <i>200 College Street, Suite 300 Asheville, NC 28801</i>
Phone Number: <i>(828) 243-0107</i>	Email Address: <i>Brownie.Newman@buncombecounty.org</i>

5. Provide the name, title, business name, address, phone number, and email address of the **individual authorized to receive official mail for the Chief Local Elected Official (CLEO)**, if different than question 4.

Name: <i>Mr. Lamar Joyner</i>	Title & Salutation: <i>Clerk to the Board</i>
Business: <i>Buncombe County Board of Commissioners</i>	Address: <i>200 College Street, Suite 300 Asheville, NC 28801</i>
Phone Number: <i>(828) 250-4105</i>	Email Address: <i>Lamar.Joyner@buncombecounty.org</i>

6. Provide the name, address, phone 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: <i>Ms. Patricia Rosenberg</i>	Title & Salutation: <i>Finance Director</i>
Organization Name: <i>Land of Sky Regional Council</i>	Address: <i>339 New Leicester Highway, Suite 140, Asheville, NC 28806</i>
Phone Number: <i>828-251-7470</i>	Email Address: <i>patricia@landofsky.org</i>

7. Provide the name, title, organization name, address, phone number and email address of the **Administrative/Fiscal Agent's signatory official**.

Name: <i>Ms. Christina Giles</i>	Title & Salutation: <i>Administration and Communications Director</i>
Organization Name: <i>Land of Sky Regional Council</i>	Address: <i>339 New Leicester Highway, Suite 140, Asheville, NC 28806</i>
Phone Number: <i>828-251-7431</i>	Email Address: <i>christina@landofsky.org</i>

8. 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. A copy of the Administrative Entity/Fiscal Agent's Organizational Chart is attached in WISE.*

9. Provide the **Administrative Entity's Unique Entity Identifier (UEI)** number and assurance that the 'System for Award Management' (SAM) status is current. Administrative Entities must register at least annually on the SAM website <https://sam.gov/content/home> to receive Federal funding [required by Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) Section 4.11 and Section 52.204-7].

HS8MVFRA57. The 'System for Award Management' (SAM) registration is current as Council Land-of-Sky Regional.

10. Provide the name of the **Local Area WDB's Equal Opportunity Officer** who shall be responsible for assuring that discrimination does not occur in its programs or projects. (CPS 10-2021, Change 1)

Ms. Melissa Wright, Equal Opportunity Officer and Workforce Operations Director

- Composition of the Local Area WDBs shall comply with WIOA Section 107. Local Area WDB Membership Requirements have been provided as a reference at [Appendix D](#).

11. Provide each **Local Area WDB members'** name, business title, business name and address, phone number and email address on the provided form. The first block is reserved to identify the Local Area WDB chairperson (*form provided*). Indicate all required representation and indicate if vacant. [WIOA Section 107(b)(2)].

- Name document: ***Local Area WDB Name Board List. The Mountain Area Workforce Development Board's Membership List is attached in WISE. The block on the form provided, certifying compliance with required WIOA Mountain Area Workforce Development Board business nomination process has been checked and the Board is in compliance with this requirement.***
- If a Local Area WDB list is not in compliance, please provide the current list and state the expected date that a compliant list will be provided (detailing vacant positions). Do not change required category names except to clarify those representing multiple categories. When determining the total number of members, representatives serving in more than one category must be counted and listed only once on the form. Identify any names representing a dual category with an asterisk (*).

Notes:

- Please complete the entire form. Check the block on the last page of the form certifying compliance with required WIOA Local Area WDB business nomination process.
 - Representatives with expired terms will not be included in the counted list of Board members. Board member terms must state in a month/date/year format.
 - Plans that do not have a compliant workforce Board will not receive Final Approval. Formula funds will not be awarded until the Local Area WDB has a compliant workforce Board. Exceptions are allowed only when realignment is occurring in the upcoming program year.
-

12. Briefly describe how the Local Area WDB works with local elected officials to ensure viable local business representatives are appointed to the Local Area WDB in compliance with WIOA Section 107.

The Workforce Development Board has a process for ensuring that viable local business representatives are appointed to the Board. When a private sector Board vacancy occurs, the Workforce Director works with the relevant business association in the county, whose contingency has the vacancy, to develop a recommendation for a knowledgeable private sector representative. The recommendation from the business association includes someone with executive level experience with a local business and optimally, who resides within the county. Once a recommendation has been made to the Workforce Director, the recommended business representative is contacted and encouraged to apply to the County Commission for membership on the Local Workforce Development Board. It is the responsibility of the County Commission to approve the applicant for Board membership and to determine the length of term of service of three years if the vacancy is for an expired term or to fulfill an unexpired term.

The Chief Local 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 Local Area WDB shall submit by-laws that clearly demonstrate all WIOA and North Carolina required elements described in [Appendix A](#). Additional by-laws guidance/template and electronic meeting formats have been provided in [Appendix B](#) and [Appendix C](#).

13. Attach the Local Area WDB By-Laws including date adopted/amended. By-Laws must include the required elements found in [Appendix A](#).

- Name document: *Local Area WDB Name By-Laws. A copy of the Mountain Area Workforce Development Board's Bylaws, including date adopted, amended, and required elements, is attached in WISE.*

14. To demonstrate that the attached Local Area WDB By-Laws comply, complete By-Laws Required Elements – Crosswalk chart (form provided).

Sunshine Provision – The Local Area WDB shall make available to the public, on a regular basis through electronic means and open meetings, information regarding the activities of the Local Area WDB, including information regarding the Local Area Plan prior to submission of the Local Area 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 Area WDB. [WIOA Section 107(e)]

15. Describe how the Local Area WDB will make copies of the proposed Local Area Plan available to the public. If stating the Local Area Plan will be on the Local Area WDB website, provide link, as well as individual’s contact information for distribution of Plan. [WIOA Section 108(d) and 108(b)(20)]

The Mountain Area’s Draft Local Area Program Year 2024-2028 Plan will be posted to the website of the Mountain Area Workforce Development Board at www.mountainareaworks.org on the resource tab, under the news tab and to the website of Land of Sky Regional Council at www.landofsky.org on the latest news tab. This is also linked to social media, Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram. The Local Area Plan would be distributed via electronic mail to the Mountain Area Workforce Development Board Distribution Lists, to the Land of Sky Regional Council Board Distribution List, local elected officials and to the local media outlets for public comments once the Draft Plan has been submitted in WISE, the system shared with the state for viewing documents. Public comment is for a period of 30-days, after which time, based on feedback from the Division of Workforce Solutions and public comments, if any, the final Program Year 2024-2028 Plan would be uploaded to WISE including any comments that represent disagreement with the Plan. For Plan distribution contact Melissa Wright, Workforce Operations Director at melissa@landofsky.org.

Public Comment – The Local Area WDB shall make copies of the proposed Local Area 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 Local Area Plan is made available; and include with submission of the Local Area Plan any comments that represent disagreement with the Local Area Plan. [WIOA Section 108(d) and 108(b)(20)]

16. Attach a copy of the Local Area WDB’s organizational chart with an ‘effective as of date.’ Include position titles, names, and contact information.

- Name document: *Local Area WDB Name Organizational Chart. A copy of the Mountain Area Workforce Development Board’s Organizational Chart attached in WISE.*

17. Complete the following chart for the PY2024 Local Area WDB’s planned meeting schedule to include, date, time, location, and virtual link (if applicable). (Expand form as needed)

Date	Time	Location (include address, room # and virtual link)
<i>August 27, 2024</i>	<i>3:00 PM</i>	<i>Land of Sky Regional Council 339 Leicester Highway, Suite 140,</i>

		<i>Asheville, NC 28806 Virtual Component Included Link will be provided prior to meeting</i>
<i>October 22, 2024</i>	<i>3:00 PM</i>	<i>Land of Sky Regional Council 339 Leicester Highway, Suite 140, Asheville, NC 28806 Virtual Component Included Link will be provided prior to meeting</i>
<i>December, 2024 TBD</i>	<i>TBD</i>	<i>Land of Sky Regional Council 339 Leicester Highway, Suite 140, Asheville, NC 28806 Virtual Component Included Link will be provided prior to meeting</i>
<i>January 28, 2025</i>	<i>3:00 PM</i>	<i>Land of Sky Regional Council 339 Leicester Highway, Suite 140, Asheville, NC 28806 Virtual Component Included Link will be provided prior to meeting</i>
<i>March 25, 2025</i>	<i>3:00 PM</i>	<i>Land of Sky Regional Council 339 Leicester Highway, Suite 140, Asheville, NC 28806 Virtual Component Included Link will be provided prior to meeting</i>
<i>May 27, 2025</i>	<i>3:00 PM</i>	<i>Land of Sky Regional Council 339 Leicester Highway, Suite 140, Asheville, NC 28806 Virtual Component Included Link will be provided prior to meeting</i>
<i>June 24, 2025</i>	<i>3:00 PM</i>	<i>Land of Sky Regional Council 339 Leicester Highway, Suite 140, Asheville, NC 28806 Virtual Component Included Link will be provided prior to meeting</i>

Note: All Local Area WDB meetings shall be held in accessible facilities. All materials and discussions should be available in an accessible format upon request as indicated under North Carolina specific requirements detailed in [Appendix A](#).

The Comprehensive Four-Year Plan is developed in partnership with the chief local elected official and approved by the Local Area WDB. This approval should be reflected in the Local Area WDB meeting minutes as an Action item.

18. Provide the Month and Date of the Local Area WDB meeting that the Comprehensive Four-Year Plan was approved. Attach a copy of the Local Area WDB minutes that reflect this action item.

- Name document: *Local Area WDB Name Plan Approval Minutes. The Mountain Area Workforce Development Board Plan Approval Minutes is attached in WISE.*

19. Attach a copy of the signed ‘Certification Regarding Debarment, Suspension, and other Responsibility Matters – Primary Covered Transactions’ Form (*form provided*). [Required by the Regulations implementing Executive Order 12549, Debarment and Suspension, 2 CFR 180, participants’ responsibilities.]

- Name document: *Local Area WDB Name Certification Form. The signed Mountain Area Workforce Development Board Certification Regarding Debarment, Suspension and other Responsibility Matters with Adobe-Sign is attached in WISE.*

Documents must have the original signature or DocuSign® (or similar) of the Administrative Entity signatory official. If using original signatures, mail the signed Certification form to the assigned DWS Planner at:

N.C. Division of Workforce Solutions
313 Chapanoke Road, Suite 120
4316 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, NC 27699-4316

20. Submit the original Local Area WDB and Chief Local Elected Official (CLEO) Signatory Page (*form provided*), bearing the original signatures of the CLEO(s) and the Local Area WDB Chairperson, and attach a copy of the signed document if not using DocuSign® (or similar).

- Name document: *Local Area WDB Name Signatory Page. The signed Mountain Area Workforce Development Board signatory page and Chief Local Elected Official Signatory Page with Adobe Sign is uploaded to WISE.*

If using original signatures, mail the Signatory Page to the assigned DWS Planner at:

N.C. Division of Workforce Solutions
313 Chapanoke Road, Suite 120
4316 Mail Service Center

Raleigh, NC 27699-4316

II. Local Area WDB Strategic Planning

*The Local Area WDB is required to keep the Local Area Plan up to date and adaptable as events and funding changes occur, which may require local area responses. Local Area 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 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 Initiative is built on three core principles: **skills and education 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.*

At the local level, the Local Area WDBs are creatively working to address the new challenges of job growth and expansions. Employers in Local Area WDB areas continue to have a shortage of lower-wage, entry-level and middle-skilled level workers. As a Local Area WDB and workforce system, Local Area WDBs 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, Local Area WDBs are paving the way for an even stronger economy through sector partnerships and career pathways initiatives.

1. Provide a description of the Local Area WDB's strategic vision and goals for preparing an in-demand industry-driven, 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 and how it aligns with regional economic growth, industry sectors, and economic self-sufficiency. [WIOA Section 108(b)(1)(E)]

The Mountain Area WDB's strategic vision centers on developing a workforce that meets the demands of local industries, fosters economic growth, and ensures inclusivity by addressing the needs of youth and individuals facing barriers to employment. The board aims to create a dynamic and adaptable workforce that contributes to the region's economic development. The objectives to reach our goals for an industry-driven, educated and skilled development including individuals with barriers to employment are to collaborate with local businesses to identify current and emerging skill needs, develop training programs that align with industry requirements and promote innovation, enhance partnerships with educational institutions to provide relevant and up-to-date training, implement initiatives that promote continuous skill development and lifelong learning, implement outreach programs to identify and support individuals facing barriers to employment, and develop targeted training programs and support services to address specific barriers. The goals relating to performance measures in self-sufficient economic growth and industry sectors are identifying key sectors for workforce development based on regional economic trends and

aligning training programs with the needs of high-growth industries to foster economic development, equipping them with the skills necessary for gainful employment and career advancement.

2. Provide a description of how the Local Area WDB, 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 Local Area WDB 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. Include how these strategies will be a result of regional economic and employer-driven priorities. [WIOA Section 108(b)(3)]

The Mountain Area WDB's plan involves core program expansion access to employment, training, education, and supportive services for eligible individuals, especially those facing barriers to employment by conducting a comprehensive assessment to identify barriers to employment for the local population, analyze demographic data and labor market information to understand the specific challenges faced by different groups within the community, target and implement outreach and recruitment, with a focus on those facing barriers such as disabilities, lack of education, or other challenges, and customized supportive services with wrap around services. Career pathway development involves a collaboration with employers, industry associations, and educational institutions to identify and develop career pathways aligned with regional economic priorities allowing individuals to progress in their careers. Co-enrollment is provided in multiple core programs to provide a holistic and comprehensive approach to addressing participants' needs and streamline administrative processes to enable seamless participation in various programs simultaneously, maximizing the impact of services provided. Credential attainment development strategies are to improve access to activities leading to recognized postsecondary credentials, including industry-recognized certificates and align training programs with the skill demands of local employers, ensuring that participants acquire credentials that are portable, stackable, and valued in the regional job market. Employer-driven priorities engage employers actively in the workforce development process to ensure that training programs align with current and future industry needs, establish partnerships to inform the design and delivery of training programs and retain feedback, making them responsive to regional economic and employer-driven priorities.

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 Mountain Area WDB's strategic vision and goals start with fostering strong relationships with key entities, such as workforce development agencies, educational institutions, and community organizations and evaluate the available resources within the local area, including funding, expertise, and facilities. Developing a memoranda of understanding with entities to formalize partnerships, regular communication, and data sharing are effective processes that we use. Performance and evaluation information provides us with the outcome of our process. As always outreach is the key. We are also aligned with the States

strategic plan “First in Talent.” We work closely with MyFutureNC to focus on credential attainment. The Local WDB’s certified career pathways allow for the employers to obtain knowledgeable staff and job seekers to obtain training in the most needed areas to obtain a living wage. We have several grants at Land of Sky that focus on reentry, substance use, and early childhood. The Mountain Area Workforce Development Board works closely with these grants to ensure the needs of our community. The Board has also participated in the Fierce Fellows program and will be doing so again this year. These classes assist so many justice involved with returning to the community, soft skills and communication. We are also focusing on the barriers of most and that is transportation, childcare, housing and more recently with many, mental health. The Mountain Area Board sets forth a vision in conjunction with the State to build a job-ready workforce to strengthen companies, attract new businesses, and adapt to a changing economy. Plus, we want to help employers meet their workforce needs and help individuals build their careers.

4. Provide a description of strategies 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 this coordination of services improves service delivery and avoids duplication of services. [WIOA Section 108(b)(12)]

The Mountain Area WDB’s strategies concerning maximizing coordination of services provided under the Wagner-Peyser Act and services provided in the Local Area through the NCWorks Career Center system are to ensure seamless transitions between different services provided by the Wagner-Peyser Act and the NCWorks Career Center, creating a unified and user-friendly experience for job seekers and employers, collaborative partnerships, data sharing and information exchange, cross-training and professional development, coordinated outreach and marketing, and evaluations. Reporting assists us in following up on how well we are doing with the job seekers, employers, cross-training, and performance. By implementing these strategies, the coordination of services under the Wagner-Peyser Act and the NCWorks Career Center system can be optimized, leading to improved service delivery, enhanced efficiency, and the avoidance of duplication of services.

5. Describe how the Local Area WDB implements **each** of the following initiatives: incumbent worker training programs, on-the-job training programs, customized training programs, industry and sector strategies, career pathways initiatives, layoff aversion, utilization of effective business intermediaries, and other employer 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)]

The Mountain Area WDB’s programs and strategies to meet the specific needs of employers in the corresponding region are as follows: Incumbent Worker Training Programs which identify skill gaps within their current workforce, customized training plans to address specific skill needs of incumbent workers, partner with local training providers to deliver relevant and effective training programs. The Board received the American Rescue Plan Act Grant in 2023 for \$904,000 for small businesses. We have

committed the funding and are on target to expend the full amount by expiration.

On the job training which will identify eligible participants, collaborate with local businesses to design on-the-job training programs that provide hands-on experience, offer financial incentives or support to both employers and participants to encourage participation. Customized Training Programs which will assess employer needs, works closely with businesses to understand their unique training requirements, develop tailored programs, design training initiatives that specifically address the needs of individual employers or industries, partner with educational institutions and training providers to deliver specialized programs. Industry and Sector Strategies which conduct labor market analysis, analyze local labor market trends to identify key industries and sectors, develop strategies, work with employers, industry associations, and educational institutions to develop targeted strategies for priority sectors and align training programs. Career Pathways Initiatives which will identify career pathways will map out clear career pathways in collaboration with employers and educational institutions, offer career counseling and guidance services to help individuals navigate and advance along their chosen career pathways. Layoff Aversion which will identify at-risk businesses, monitor local economic conditions and identify businesses at risk of layoffs, Facilitate retraining by implementing programs to retrain workers in at-risk industries for employment in growing sectors. Utilization of Effective Business Intermediaries which collaborate with intermediaries, partner with organizations that act as intermediaries between employers and workforce development programs, facilitate and enhance communication and collaboration between businesses and workforce development entities through effective intermediaries, utilize intermediaries to streamline the recruitment and training process for both employers and job seekers. Plus, the Local Board will continuously assess the needs of employers and be adaptable in designing and implementing programs, facilitate networking, create opportunities for employers to network and share best practices, and foster a collaborative business environment. We take a proactive and collaborative approach to implement initiatives, tailoring their strategies to the specific needs and characteristics of the businesses in the region. As well as regular evaluation and feedback with employers to help refine and improve these initiatives over time.

6. Provide a description of how the Local Area WDB coordinates workforce investment activities – including strategies enhancing services, promoting participation in training programs, and avoiding duplication of services – is carried out in the Local Area with the provision of Adult Education and Literacy activities. [WIOA Section 108(b)(13)]

The Mountain Area Workforce Board plays a crucial role in coordinating workforce investment activities at the local level, including strategies to enhance services, promote participation in training programs, and avoid duplication of services. Strategic Planning begins with engagement to identify the workforce needs of the community. We assess the skill gaps and employment trends to develop strategies that address the unique challenges of the local workforce and foster partnerships with key stakeholders, including adult education providers, literacy organizations, community colleges, and other relevant entities. Collaborative efforts ensure a seamless integration of adult education services with workforce development initiatives. Service Integration through adult education and literacy services into the broader workforce development system is a huge part of the success. Resource alignment involves leveraging federal, state, and local funding sources to enhance and expand educational opportunities for the workforce. Promotion of

Training Programs may include apprenticeships, on-the-job training, and other initiatives that enhance the skills and employability of individuals. To avoid duplication of services the Local Area WDB coordinates with other service providers to prevent duplication of such services. This coordination ensures that adult education and literacy services are complementary and do not overlap with other available programs. Data-Driven Decision-Making is used by the Local Area WDB to inform, monitor the effectiveness of adult education programs, and make adjustments based on the evolving needs of the local workforce. This comprehensive approach ensures that adult education and literacy activities are seamlessly integrated into the broader workforce development system, ultimately leading to improved outcomes for the local workforce.

7. Describe the Local Area’s workforce development system. Identify the following: the programs that are included in the system, 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, and the 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)]

The Mountain Area Workforce Board is a key player in workforce development and is responsible for overseeing the local system's implementation. It works with various entities such as schools, employers, and colleges to coordinate and align workforce development programs. Core programs are identified under WIOA and include Adult, Dislocated Worker, and In School and Out of School Youth programs. These programs aim to provide employment and training services to individuals. Various organizations, such as NCWorks Career Centers, community colleges, and local training providers, administer core programs. Collaboration and communication between the Local Board and administering entities help ensure a seamless provision of services, avoiding duplication and maximizing efficiency. Apart from the core programs, there are other specialized programs focused on specific populations, industries, or skill development areas such as apprenticeship programs, sector-based initiatives, initiatives targeting vulnerable populations, on the job training, incumbent worker training and youth work experience. The Carl D. Perkins Act supports career and technical education (CTE) programs at the secondary and postsecondary levels which we work closely with the CTE Directors in every county in the region to ensure that students have the support, tools, supportive services, and information they need to be successful. The Board includes presentations from all CTE Directors in the region every year. Programs of study under Perkins include career pathways, technical education, and partnerships with employers to enhance workforce readiness which incorporates the NC Job Ready initiative.

8. Provide a description of (a) cooperative agreements, as defined in WIOA Section 107(d)(11), between the Local Area WDB 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 service 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 to include cooperation, collaboration, and coordination. [WIOA Section 108(b)(14)]

The Mountain Area Workforce Development Board has implemented many virtual aspects to which individuals in the region use frequently, especially those with disabilities. These options include but are not limited to, the VOS Greeter, electronic enrollment, and we are working on Metrix Learning which will assist individuals with disabilities to complete soft skills and career exploration. We also cross-train staff so they are more efficient. We refer to vocational rehabilitation agencies and other relevant entities focusing on services for individuals with disabilities. The primary objective of these cooperative agreements is to enhance the provision of services to individuals with disabilities and other individuals such as justice involved and recovery from substance use. This goes beyond merely meeting regulatory requirements to actively improve the quality and accessibility of services. Cross Training of Staff is one of the best ways to assist all individuals. Entities may provide technical assistance to each other, sharing expertise and best practices in serving individuals with disabilities effectively. The Local Area Board takes the initiative to engage employers in hiring individuals with disabilities, promoting inclusivity in the workplace and job fairs. We have an active and ongoing collaboration, with a focus on coordination to maximize the impact of services provided. These cooperative agreements aim to create synergies between workforce development and disability-focused entities, fostering collaboration and coordination to improve services for individuals with disabilities, and also justice involved and recovery from substance abuse.

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

The Mountain Area Workforce Development Board strives to remain a high-performing entity by involving a strategic and comprehensive approach. This includes developing and implementing a robust strategic plan that aligns with the goals and objectives of the NCWorks Commission and WIOA requirements and improving workforce development programs and services. Other factors include actively involving key stakeholders such as employers, educational institutions, community organizations, and government agencies in the workforce development process. This ensures a collaborative effort to address local labor market needs. Utilizing data and labor market information to inform decision-making processes is also included. This involves regularly analyzing local economic trends, industry demands, and skill gaps to adapt programs and services accordingly. Embracing innovation and staying abreast of emerging trends in workforce development and incorporating new technologies, methodologies, or partnerships to enhance program effectiveness is another factor. We ensure efficient and effective allocation of resources, including funding, to support workforce development initiatives and involving prioritizing investments based on identified needs and expected outcomes. Ensuring full compliance with the regulations and guidelines

outlined in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) is required. This includes adherence to reporting requirements, program standards, and performance expectations. Engaging in proactive outreach and communication efforts to raise awareness of available workforce development services within the community through social media, MAC website, flyers, brochures, and partnerships is necessary for success. Investing in the ongoing professional development of board members and staff ensures they are equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to address evolving workforce challenges. Attending conferences, SETA, forums, training and obtaining any available knowledge ensures their participation which leads to better informed members, better trained staff and new ideas. By taking these actions, the Local Area WDB enhances its capacity to effectively address the workforce needs of its community and strive to achieve high performance.

10. Discuss the increase and expansion of service delivery and awareness efforts to reengage individuals with barriers to include dislocated workers, opportunity youth/high school dropouts, women, people of color in hard-to-reach communities, individuals with disabilities, and justice involved individuals to help reconnect the disconnected workforce. More importantly, clarify how success is measured.

The Mountain Area WDB's expansion of service delivery and awareness efforts to reengage individuals with barriers, such as dislocated workers, opportunity youth and high school dropouts, women, people of color in hard-to-reach communities, individuals with disabilities, and justice-involved individuals, is crucial for creating a more inclusive and diverse workforce. Success in these efforts can be measured through various indicators such as tracking the percentage of targeted individuals who successfully secure employment after participating in reengagement programs through several programs at Land of Sky Regional Council such as WIOA, the INSpire grant, and GO Places grant. The National Dislocated Worker Grant (NDWG) was given to this Local WDB in the amount of \$500,000 to assist dislocated workers in the Western and Southwestern regions with the loss of their jobs at the Canton Paper Mill. We are working very closely and in conjunction with Southwestern, who received \$6.5 million. Both Boards are working together with Pratt and Whitney on their large project to hire 500 employees this year. This will intel dislocated worker on the job training enrollment with the NDWG as well as WIOA program training enrollments. We measure the increase in educational attainment, such as high school diploma or equivalent, among opportunity youth and high school dropouts as well as skill development by assessing the acquisition of new skills and the enhancement of existing ones through training programs. Tracking income levels of the population groups before and after program participation in follow up shows the gauge of economic impact of efforts. Through certified career pathways the focus is on placing individuals in industries where there are skill shortages and high demand workforce. Small business creation and sustainability is a necessity which through the incumbent worker training program this Local Board is able to help many businesses and assist staff with more training and wage increase. The Board works tirelessly in the community on engagement, diversity and inclusion with community activities and their integration into the social fabric. For justice-involved individuals, we track the rate of recidivism to measure the success of reintegration efforts with the INSpire grant and GO Places grant. This program and grants give access to supportive services that individuals would not otherwise have access to in the community. These services also include counseling, childcare, transportation, housing assistance, and mental health

referrals for all qualified individuals. Regular monitoring and evaluation of the program information will provide insights into the effectiveness of service delivery and awareness efforts, helping to refine strategies and allocate resources efficiently. Success is seen not only in individual outcomes but also in the broader societal impact, fostering a more inclusive and resilient workforce.

11. 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).
 - specifically describe the coordination and delivery of services to businesses to include 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. [WIOA Section 108(b)(8)]

The Mountain Area Workforce Development Board plays a crucial role in coordinating workforce investment activities within the Local Area. Coordination involves aligning efforts with statewide rapid response activities and efficiently delivering services to businesses, as well as leveraging systems to identify economic trends and collaborating with partners in the Early Warning Network. Regular meetings and information-sharing mechanisms are established to ensure timely updates on statewide initiatives and programs and alignment of strategies. Strategies are adapted to local needs and conditions, and feedback is provided to the state agencies to enhance coordination. The WDB's and state agencies optimize the allocation of resources, including funding, to address immediate workforce challenges and support dislocated workers. The Local Board employs systems and tools to analyze economic trends, including labor market information, industry reports, and employment projections. The WDB establishes and maintains an Early Warning Network comprising key partners such as chambers of commerce, industry associations, economic development agencies, and local government bodies. Through this network, the WDB receives real-time information about businesses that are either expanding or facing challenges. Input from businesses helps tailor workforce development programs to meet industry demands. Based on identified needs, the WDB designs and delivers customized services for businesses, including training programs, talent recruitment assistance, and workforce retention strategies. Feedback is a key player in this process with partnership development. The Local Board actively engages in partnerships with business associations, educational institutions, and economic development organizations to enhance the reach and impact of workforce development initiatives. The economic and development department is housed in the Land of Sky Regional Council office, so communication is easily conducted. Through these coordinated efforts, the Workforce Development Board aims to ensure a responsive and effective workforce system that meets the needs of both job seekers and businesses within the Local Area.

12. Provide an overview of how the region partners with NC Community Colleges, UNC institutions, and independent colleges in the local areas to prepare workers to succeed by using skills and education attainment with a focus on diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility.

The region partners collaborate with NC Community College and Apprenticeships, Jobs for Graduates, ABTech, Blue Ridge Community College along with the Local Area on the Job Training, Incumbent Worker Training, Job Shadowing and Apprenticeships through employers to better prepare individuals to succeed. The use of job shadowing, on the job training, incumbent worker training, apprenticeships and occupational skills training better equips us to give all individuals training with diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility for every specific position and career through the Local Area Certified Career Pathways. MyfutureNC with the P20 Council also works to ensure the information on certifications is shared with all through NCCareers.org, NCWorks.org, and events. The Workforce Case Managers and Career Centers are trained to vet individuals through assessment to assist them in objectives and goals to lead to their career of choice in a career pathway where the choices are many and wages are higher. And with the workshops held in the Career Centers such as resume building and mock interviews. The participants are better prepared workers heading to success. The better the skills and education attainment, the higher the wages for individuals and the better employee for the employer.

13. Based on the history of economic development projects in the Local Area, how many projects does the Local Area WDB expect to engage in during the upcoming program year? Please indicate the type of services the Local Area WDB expects to provide.

The Mountain Area Workforce Development Board plans approximately twenty new projects this year. The most prominent project is Pratt & Whitney. This has been a continued expansion with this large and growing company. We provided labor market studies to economic developers prior to the announcement and offered a letter of support with commitment of dislocated worker funding when eligibility requirements were met. Since the announcement we have provided \$100,000 for the TransfrVR virtual reality training software to A-B Tech Community College to help support pre-employment assessments and training for prospective Pratt & Whitney employees. We have implemented job fairs and other recruitment efforts to support Pratt & Whitney in partnership with Asheville Chamber and A-B Tech and will continue to do so. This year's goal is to hire 500 employees. With the National Dislocated Worker Grant of 7 million granted to Mountain Area and Southwestern Boards, we are working hand in hand to provide on the job training for dislocated workers and assist Pratt & Whitney with further hiring. We have supported numerous employers who have relocated to the region and employers who have announced expansion projects in the region. These employers include Thermo Fisher Scientific, Haakon Industries, Jabil Healthcare, Printpack, Raybow Pharmaceuticals and more. We assisted with training for all individuals that needed or required training. Other services we have provided these companies and will provide the upcoming closures are on the job training, occupational skills training, workshops, career events, job search, resume building, EAI-REA, orientation, assessments, online assistance, referrals, and case management services that were provided by Workforce Case Managers. The newest project we are working on is the Metrix Learning system. This is a site that can be set up by a groups needs such as reentry, substance use, youth, etc. There are many options, and the site provides many soft skills and in-depth career exploration. We will be using this for the INSpire grant and the Go Places for completion certification required by the grants. And we will use it for WIOA youth, adult, and dislocated worker career exploration and soft skills, and recertification credits are a possibility along with WIOA measurable skill gains. The services provided will

be training, supportive services, job search, resume building, interview mocks, workshops, and referrals. Another project we have is the TransfrVR headsets with the career exploration software coming per the Virtual Reality Software Policy and NFA. These will be shared with the youth contractors to be able to assist youth in researching their career goals and assessments. The Local Board is also hosting Dr. Zeb Regan with his classes again this year in May. We are also considering hosting 4 more job fairs this year, one of which is in April. The Board would like to host the other 3 for healthcare, youth, and one regular job fair. We are also looking into a youth summer employment project and a youth transportation project with Dogwood Health Trust grant TransfrVR is assisting with a grant for 25 headsets for the youth groups in business service. We are also still working on early childhood education, transportation, housing, mental health, economic development assistance, workforce component with programs and grants. Also, we plan a WNC Career Expo for Spring and Fall, Madison County Career Fair for Spring and Fall, Construction Career Day, AI Conference, Youth Job and Internship Fair, Healthcare Career Fair, Pratt & Whitney Career Fair, GE Aerospace Career Fair, CTE Summit, and NCWorks Career Centers Tour.

14. Provide a description of how the WDB is employing sector strategies by creating industry-led sector partnerships to facilitate engagement of employers and better coordinate workforce development services, training, and economic development activities. Include a brief example(s) of existing industry sector initiatives / partnerships or describe the strategy to implement them for evidence-based in-demand industry sectors for the region [WIOA Section 106 (c)(1)(C), Section 107 (d)(4)(D)]

The Mountain Area Workforce Development Board has created industry led partnerships by engaging with the economic development group in our region and in our office to assist in projects, keeping the economic leaders in each county consistently involved in the Board meetings to share what they are working on, how we can assist, and maintain close relationships with the industry led sector companies to better market and implement hiring and training through incumbent worker training and on the job training. The Business Services team implements incumbent worker training with companies to assist with more training for existing staff to be able to avert layoffs, closure and increase competitiveness. And they implement the on-the-job training to assist employers in need of staff with an opportunity to offset initial training costs to fill skilled positions while building organizational productivity as the employee learns job requirements. The facilitation of engagement with employers and workforce services, training, and economic development keeps us all better informed to be able to do all we can for our community. For example, we are working through the Career Centers to identify interested or qualified individuals for in demand positions for nursing, which is one of the largest sectors in the region. We are also identifying issues with companies in the hospitality and tourism sectors to fill their needs. We have been able to assist directly and indirectly the Pratt & Whitney company with job fairs, career events, hiring, training and through meetings to know the needs and assist with them. The goal this year for Pratt & Whitney is to hire 500 employees. We are able to assist with the on-the-job training program through the National Dislocated Worker Grant in partnership with the Southwestern Board. We have certified career pathways as evidence to in demand sectors, which we share with the region to better assist employers and fill the needs of job seekers. It is all about relationships at the end of the day. We have to work together as a team to assist individuals.

15. Identify the Career Pathways developed by the Local Area. Complete the chart below.

Pathway Name	Partner WDBs	Year the pathway was developed	Number of trainees (to date) who have utilized the pathway
Healthcare	Mountain Area	2017	323
Hospitality and Tourism	Mountain Area	2017	127
Advanced Manufacturing	Mountain Area	2016	132
Energy	Centralina Charlotte Works Gaston Region C Western Piedmont Mountain Area	2019	32
Skilled Trades and Construction	Mountain Area	2023	147
Information Technology	Mountain Area	2023	152

16. In addition to facilitating the development of career pathways, also describe the review process for in-demand career pathways to determine if new pathways are needed, or if current pathways should be updated or removed based on the needs of the industry.

- a. Include plans for new career pathways.
- b. Explain how career pathways in the local area are in alignment with other partners/stakeholders' (Department of Public Instruction (DPI), community colleges, MyFutureNC, universities, etc.) existing pathways or if they are duplicates.
- c. Describe the strategy to avoid duplication efforts.
- d. Describe the strategy to promote pathways and recruit participants.

a. *The Mountain Area Workforce Development Board is now completing another new certified career pathway. The Construction and Skilled Trades pathway is in demand and there are higher wages in our region. We have so many supervisors retiring and companies need replacement. The research is done, a video made, and information shared with partners for completion of the certification.*

b. *The career pathways in the local area are in alignment with partners, stakeholders, community colleges, MyFutureNC with P20 Council, universities and more to engage individuals in training for post-secondary credentials and better employment with higher wages. Through research and collaboration with partners, there are no duplications.*

c. *There are no duplications in the certification process due to teamwork, cross-training, knowledge, and research prior to certification in the collaboration with our educational partners and employers to avoid this. Career Pathways are certified by local workforce development boards and may be subsequently recognized by the NCWorks Commission.*

These programs are aimed at improving opportunities for job seekers by communicating in a more clear and straightforward way to understand career pathways. Career pathways programs offer job seekers a pathway of education coursework and/or training credentials that are aligned with employer-validated work readiness standards and competencies. For Career Centers, this involves the need for collaboration with local employers and educators. Through collaboration, Career Centers gain a better understanding of employer's actual needs in addition to understanding the ability of educators. Educators and employers begin collaborating and more effective and efficient career pathways naturally develop for the local community. Business Service and Career Centers, other Board partners, educators, employers, and MyFutureNC with P20 Council research the information to qualify a sector as a Certified Career Pathway. Some of the research involves primarily local job demand and other areas such as wages, job openings, job description, opportunities for advancement, required credentials, education, and training requirements. Having information about career options and access to the training needed to prepare for those careers is critical to being job ready. This is the opportunity to engage the business community, advance education and training and align the workforce development system.

17. Provide a description of the Local Area WDB's capacity to provide workforce investment activities to address (a) education attainment and skill needs of high-demand fields (b) strategies for awareness and cultivation efforts to increase access to education and postsecondary credentials and certificates, availability of learn-and-earn opportunities (internships, apprenticeships, summer employment) and (c) supportive services for hard-to-reach communities. (d) Explain strategies that include NextGen, NCCareers.org and any awareness models for success. (e) Explain strategies to align work across the North Carolina Community College System (NCCCS) and (DPI) to increase youth apprenticeships or assist businesses in hiring youth apprentices.

a. *The Career Pathways are shared with adults, employers, and youth to give them an opportunity to understand the Local Board's goals for the community and individuals, obtain training and education, obtain higher wages and better skilled employees for employers. This process assists with awareness and cultivation efforts to increase access to education, post-secondary credentials, certificates, availability of opportunities such as on the job training, job shadowing, apprenticeships, and paid work experiences which leads to higher wages. Partners support this initiative to be able to provide training for higher wages and better skilled employees.*

b. *The awareness and cultivation of this need and the program increase access to education and post-secondary credentials and certificates for job seekers to find a better career with apprenticeships, paid work experience, job shadowing and on the job training along with supportive services to meet the needs of individuals with barriers in their career search and training for a career with higher wages to support themselves and their families. The NextGen program is assisting youth in finding careers*

earlier in life to have a better start sooner and support their families. We do not typically have funding for summer employment and internships, but we are going to try to work with Dogwood Health Trust to make this possible.

- c. *The Youth Committee is assisting in addressing apprenticeships with local apprenticeship leaders along with the Local Board, especially reaching out to hard-to-reach communities with training and supportive services. Transportation is the largest barrier in the outlying rural areas, but with companies incorporating carpools and a plan to “vanpool” at our local council of government, it is a start. The Henderson County Task Force developed the Pathfinders Program to facilitate transportation for the students in the schools. Wilsonart is developing a transportation program this year also. NC District Export Council and the Board are addressing job shadowing and youth work experience. This allows them to gain experience before choosing a career, so they more than likely make a better career choice.*
- d. *The Local Board has made everyone in the region aware of the NextGen Youth Program and NCCareers.gov through our site, social media, and training. The career centers and case managers have been instructed to use NCCareers.gov and make individuals, job seekers, clients, employers, and participants aware as well. The career centers refer many clients to the NextGen Youth Program for assistance and supportive services. There will be large NextGen posters in our career centers soon.*
- e. *The Work Based Learning Committee is working on apprenticeships, job shadowing, on the job training, and paid work experience by reaching out to the community, employers, schools, and colleges to make them aware, provide information, and start a conversation on how we can better engage with these programs. The Mountain Area Workforce Development Board is also aligning work across the North Carolina Community College System (NCCCS) and the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) to increase youth apprenticeships by enhancing communication. We have them present regularly at committee and Board meetings. There will be large posters in the career centers soon advertising business services including apprenticeships. The Local Board collaborates on aligning educational curricula with the needs of industries offering apprenticeships and ensures that programs offered by NCCCS are relevant and equip students with the skills demanded by the job market. We collaborate with MyFutureNC and the P20 council on this area. Informational sessions, workshops, and events to engage students, parents, educators, and businesses in the apprenticeship ecosystem are held at the colleges locally on a regular basis. We explore and leverage state and federal funding opportunities that support apprenticeship initiatives and collaboratively research grants, subsidies, or other financial incentives to encourage businesses to participate in youth apprenticeship programs. By implementing these strategies, we continue to work effectively with NCCCS and DPI to create a supportive environment for youth apprenticeships, fostering collaboration between education and industry for the benefit of students and the workforce.*

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 20 Local Area WDBs that facilitate the delivery of workforce services to the state's citizens and employers.

Local Area WDBs are to continue, or begin, formal interaction based on these regional geographies. The following regional configurations will be used for submission of this Regional Plan:

- *Western Region: Southwestern, Region C (Foothills), and Mountain Area WDBs.*
- *Northwest Region: High Country, Western Piedmont, and Region C (Foothills)WDBs.*
- *Piedmont Triad Region: Piedmont Triad Regional and GuilfordWorks WDBs.*
- *Southwest Region: Centralina, Charlotte Works, Region C (Foothills), and Gaston County WDBs.*
- *North Central Region: Kerr-Tar, Durham County, Turning Point, Mid-Carolina, and Capital Area WDBs.*
- *Sandhills Region: Cape Fear, Lumber River and Mid-Carolina 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)The Mountain Area Workforce Development Board's analysis of regional economic conditions is the existing and emerging in-demand sectors and occupations for healthcare nurses, commercial drivers, construction and skilled trades for plumbing, electricians, HVAC, and information technology with AI. The lack of job seekers is the largest contribution to potential closures and the increased prices and high interest rates create less spending which leads to layoffs for employers.

b)We utilize data from many labor market statistics and other relevant labor market agencies along with NCCareers.com and analyze employment trends, growth rates, and demand-supply gaps in various sectors. We also refer to industry reports from trade associations, chambers of commerce, and government agencies and identify sectors experiencing growth or decline and understand the reasons behind these trends to better assist to stop potential layoffs and closures. Through our business services and chambers, we conduct surveys with local businesses to understand their current and future hiring needs. We also identify emerging sectors and occupations through direct input from employers with our business service team's boots on the ground. The Board determines how conditions contribute to potential layoffs and closures, with regional economic indicators such as GDP growth, unemployment rates, inflation and research how macroeconomic conditions may impact specific industries. Recent or anticipated policy changes at the local, state, or federal levels and regulatory shifts in different sectors can determine how the market will react. The global economy can also affect the local market depending on what and who. The Mountain Area Workforce Development Board utilizes on-the-job training for Adults, Youth and Dislocated Workers and incumbent worker training to assist employers which leads to hiring knowledgeable employees and less closures. In 2023, there were 12 grants approved and awarded to Land of Sky Regional Council . The Board publishes a Pre-award Questionnaire, Call for Submissions, Application Guidelines, and the Application on www.mountainareaworks.org, landofsky.org and through email communications. The

Workforce Board in 2023 obtained the American Rescue Plan Act Grant of \$904,000 for incumbent worker training and on the job training for small businesses. The funding amount is up to \$25,000 per application. The Board has certified NCWorks Career Pathways in Advanced Manufacturing, Healthcare, Hospitality and Tourism, Energy, and in the process of certification are Skilled Trades and Construction and Information Technology for local career exploration opportunities that increases job seekers interest.

2. Describe how the regional strategic vision aligns with the NCWorks Commission's 2023-2025 Strategic Plan.

The NCWorks Commission 2023-2025 Strategic Plan focuses on key priorities from Governor Cooper's NC Job Ready Initiative which targets three core principles: skills and education attainment, employer leadership, and local innovation throughout North Carolina. The Mountain Area Workforce Development Board aligns its priorities with this plan. We identify the priorities of workforce development, skills training, industry partnerships, and regional economic growth. Analyzing the economic conditions, industry sectors, and workforce needs specific to our region with stakeholders including businesses, educational institutions, government agencies, and community organizations is an onset of an inclusive vision. The Board constantly and consistently seeks input and collaboration on local priorities and challenges related to workforce development and economic development with stakeholders. This facilitates consistent measurement of progress and impact at both regional and state levels and promotes a two-way conversation. Recognizing that regional dynamics may change over time, the Local Board builds adaptability into its regional plan to respond to emerging challenges and opportunities by focusing on unchanging barriers such as housing, transportation, and childcare. Regular communication and collaboration between the regional stakeholders and the Commission are crucial for effective alignment and implementation of workforce development strategies.

3. 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 Local Board's analysis of the workforce in the region is that employees work part-time, which is hourly work is up to 34 hours and full-time is 35 hours up to 40. Most people are working several part time jobs. Living wage for one adult is \$21.56 and two adults, one working with one child is \$34.92, The unemployment rate as of February 2024 is 2.9%. Some of the labor market trends are adaptable skill sets, forward thinking, remote and hybrid work is here to stay, flexible work schedule, work-life balance, growing AI, less degree requirements, and diversity, equity and inclusion. The educational and skill levels of the workforce in the region is below average. Barriers to employment are high due to lack of affordable housing, childcare, and transportation. We utilize official labor market data from sources like the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), state labor departments, chamber surveys, regional workforce agencies, and NC Commerce's Labor and Economic Analysis Division (LEAD) to access information on employment rates, unemployment rates, and labor force participation for future statistics. Technological advancements are impacting the job market, especially with AI coming on the scene so it is beneficial to identify skill sets in demand due to technological changes. Training and Certification Programs are more popular than ever to be able to bring in employees with some knowledge as soon as possible and then identify where additional training resources may be needed. The barriers to employment in our region are still a battle

that we struggle with, but we have many working on them. These are lack of affordable housing, transportation, and childcare. Recently, the Hendersonville Task Force was able to obtain 15 minivans to transport students to and from school and work. One of the local businesses, Wilsonart, is in the process of a transportation project.

4. 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 Mountain Area Workforce Development Board employs a variety of strategies with the engagement of businesses and other employers, including small employers and those in in-demand industry sectors. We have partnerships with industry associations, chambers of commerce, and business groups that align workforce development efforts with the specific needs of key industries. Our business service team ensures that employers are aware and have access to on-the-job training and incumbent worker training. Mountain Area was awarded the American Rescue Plan Act for \$904,000 to assist small businesses with incumbent worker training at \$25,000 per company. This grant was awarded to recognize the small businesses unique needs and challenges. We also offered consultant services inclusive of this grant to employers on workforce planning, talent development, and retention strategies. The Local Board consistently offers customized recruitment services, including job fairs, networking events, and online platforms and tailors recruitment strategies to the needs of specific industries and employers. These training programs in collaboration with employers address specific skill gaps and design programs that align with the evolving needs of in-demand industry sectors.

We facilitate OJT programs that allow individuals to acquire practical skills while working on the job. This program is an incentive to employers with subsidies or tax credits. The OJT program implements efficient job matching services using technology platforms and provides support for job placement, ensuring a smooth transition for both job seekers and employers. The Board works to promote and expand apprenticeship programs in collaboration with employers and develops apprenticeship frameworks tailored to the needs of in-demand occupations. We promote inclusive hiring practices that support individuals with barriers to employment and provide resources and guidance to employers on creating diverse and inclusive workplaces. The focus on providing tailored support and resources demonstrates a commitment to meeting the diverse needs of employers, fostering collaboration, and ensuring the workforce system is responsive to the dynamic demands of the labor market. Regular feedback loops and communication channels are used to establish and maintain strong connections with employers.

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

The Local Board finds it is crucial to implement strategies and services that facilitate seamless collaboration between these two domains of workforce and economic development. To foster strong partnerships between workforce development agencies, economic development organizations, educational institutions, and industry stakeholders, you need to establish regular communication channels to share information and coordinate efforts. Goals and objectives are established to ensure a unified approach to

regional growth and talent development. Implementing sectoral approaches integrate workforce development and economic development strategies. Identifying key industries and design programs that meet the skill needs of those industries while supporting their growth is a major steppingstone. The sharing of labor market data between workforce and economic development entities and analyzing data collaboratively helps to identify trends, skill gaps, and opportunities for joint initiatives. Cross-training and professional development for staff helps everyone involved see the bigger picture that workforce is economic development and economic development is workforce. This also enhances the understanding and appreciation of each other's priorities and processes which develops the respect that makes a great team. The integrated service delivery through the career centers and seamless delivery model to reach the communities and integrate workforce and economic development services is the most effective. This eliminates redundancies, enhances efficiency and guarantees there are no duplicate services. All programs implement focus on retaining and expanding existing businesses in the region. Collaborating on creating a robust talent pipeline by aligning education and training programs with the needs of growing industries is a main concern for us and the stakeholders so we work in partnership to establish apprenticeship programs and work-based learning opportunities. Conducting joint marketing and outreach efforts to attract businesses and talent to the region is shared through social media, Land of Sky.org, MAC, our newsletter, and emails. By fostering collaboration, sharing data, and providing integrated services, the workforce system can contribute to regional economic growth and ensure that the workforce is equipped with the skills needed by the evolving job market.

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)].

Mountain Area Workforce Development Board's region consists of multiple rural counties where most employees and job seekers must commute to work or find work. The largest county, Buncombe County is a host for most work and high paying jobs. This is due to them having the largest businesses and career pathways with over 24,000 commuters entry Buncombe County each day from surrounding counties. The regional transportation issues related to Workforce Development in the Mountain Area consists of high traffic congestion that leads to increased commute times, affecting the overall productivity and well-being of the workforce. Affordability and accessibility to transportation options, especially for lower-income individuals, can act as barriers to workforce participation especially in rural communities such as Madison and Transylvania. We are prioritizing investments in public transportation infrastructure and implementing bike paths, ridesharing and vanpools to facilitate convenient and efficient transportation from transit hubs to workplaces. Many companies such as Wilsonart are developing their own transportation projects to assist individuals to work and school. Commissioner Rebecca McCall's Henderson County Task Force has purchased 15 minivans to be able to assist in the transportation issue. They will be making sure that many of their youth get to school and work. Strategies for managing traffic congestion are being developed and implemented such as the creation of additional lanes on I26. A possible idea to look at subsidies to make public transportation more affordable for the workforce, especially for low-income individuals, to ensure inclusivity and accessibility. Regional transportation planning is a top priority to enhance regional transportation planning committees to bring together stakeholders from government, businesses, and community organizations to develop comprehensive and sustainable

transportation plans. Some of the regional aspects we are working on are continuous scaling of average distances to see any change in commuting needs, explore innovative technologies such as mobile applications for real-time transit information, smart ticketing systems, and other tech-driven solutions to enhance the overall commuting experience, identify key employment hubs and their spatial distribution within the region, continue to highlight existing public transportation routes and assess their coverage in relation to areas with high workforce density, continue to map areas with significant traffic congestion to target infrastructure improvements strategically, and consider demographic factors such as income levels and employment sectors to tailor transportation solutions to the specific needs of different population segments. A copy of the Regional Commuting Map is attached in WISE.

7. Briefly provide a description of how the Local Area WDB will coordinate education and workforce investment activities carried out in the local area with relevant secondary and postsecondary education programs and activities to coordinate strategies, enhance services, and avoid duplication of services. [WIOA Section 108(b)(10)].

The Mountain Area Workforce Development Board emphasizes the importance of coordination between Local Area Workforce Development Boards and relevant secondary and postsecondary education programs with the most important, partnerships and collaboration by establishing partnerships and collaborative relationships with local secondary and postsecondary educational institutions such as A-B Tech, Blue Ridge Community College, Buncombe County Schools, Henderson County Schools, and Madison County Schools. This involves fostering communication channels to share information on workforce needs, emerging skills, and employment trends. We work closely with MyFutureNC and the P20 Council as well as suggest the use of NCCareers.com. Collaboration extends to joint planning sessions where the Local Area WDB and educational institutions work together to align education and training programs with the demands of the local labor market. This helps in identifying and addressing skill gaps and ensuring that training programs are relevant to current industry needs. Effective coordination relies on the exchange of data between Local Area WDBs and educational institutions. Sharing information on labor market trends, employment opportunities, and educational program outcomes enables better decision-making and program development. Mountain Area works with partners to identify existing services and programs to avoid duplication. This ensures efficient use of resources and prevents unnecessary overlap in providing education and workforce development services. We collaborate with educational partners to establish clear and seamless career pathways for individuals transitioning from education to the workforce. This involves mapping out educational and training steps that align with specific industries and occupations. Our existing career pathways are Information Technology, Construction and Skilled Trades, Healthcare, Hospitality and Tourism, Energy, and Advanced Manufacturing. We coordinate efforts aimed to integrate workforce investment and education services, providing individuals with a more holistic and streamlined approach to career development through integrated one stop systems to enhance service delivery. Most important is establishing feedback mechanisms between partners to ensure a continuous improvement process. Regular communication allows for adjustments to be made based on the evolving needs of the local workforce and economy.

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

The NCWorks Career Centers play a crucial role in serving military veterans by offering specialized services and support tailored to their unique needs and experiences.

- 1. Veteran-Focused Employment Services: NCWorks Career Centers provide specialized employment services designed to assist veterans in translating their military skills and experiences into civilian job opportunities. This includes helping them create effective resumes, prepare for job interviews, and develop strategies for a successful job search.*
- 2. Job Placement Assistance: Career Centers actively connect veterans with employers seeking their specific skill sets. This involves collaborating with local businesses and industries to identify job opportunities that align with the veterans' training and expertise.*
- 3. Skills Assessment and Training: NCWorks Career Centers assist veterans in assessing their skills and identifying any additional training or certifications needed to meet civilian job requirements. They may facilitate access to education and training programs that enhance veterans' employability.*
- 4. Workshops and Training Programs: Career Centers often organize workshops and training sessions tailored to veterans' needs. These may cover topics such as career exploration, networking strategies, and transitioning from military to civilian employment.*
- 5. Access to Resources: NCWorks Career Centers provide veterans with information about available resources, including educational benefits, health services, and financial assistance programs. They help veterans navigate various support systems and connect with organizations that specialize in veterans' services.*
- 6. Collaboration with Veteran Service Organizations: Career Centers often collaborate with veteran service organizations, both at the local and national levels. This partnership enhances the range of support services available to veterans, ensuring a comprehensive and coordinated approach to their employment and career needs.*
- 7. Priority of Service: NCWorks Career Centers adhere to the principle and policy of priority of service for veterans, as mandated by federal law. This means that veterans and their families receive priority access to employment and training services over non-veterans in federally funded programs, ensuring they have equitable access to resources and support.*
- 8. Job Fairs and Networking Events: Career Centers organize job fairs and networking events that specifically target veterans. These events bring together employers seeking veteran talent and veterans looking for employment opportunities, creating a platform for direct interactions and connections.*

By tailoring their services to the unique needs of military veterans and collaborating with various stakeholders, NCWorks Career Centers strive to facilitate a smooth transition from military service to civilian employment and contribute to the overall success of veterans in the workforce.

9. Explain the strategic plan for how the region will respond to national emergencies or weather-related disasters to serve victims (such as lay-off aversion activities) and utilize special grants efficiently throughout the recovery period.

The Mountain Area Workforce Development Board works with the State and partners to identify potential national emergencies and weather-related disasters that may impact the region and conducts risk assessments to understand vulnerabilities, develop strategies for each scenario, and establish emergency communication protocol. Lay-off aversion activities includes working closely with employers to understand their needs. We received \$904,000 last year for incumbent worker training to retain employees for small businesses and avert layoffs or closures. It has been a great success. Our Business Service team has worked tirelessly to assist these companies and they have been very appreciative. We also implement programs to enhance the skills of affected workers, making them more resilient and adaptable to changes in the job market such on the job training, upskilling, and reskilling initiatives. Our Local Board constantly researches and utilizes special grants efficiently. This includes identifying priority areas such as job creation, infrastructure rebuilding, and community support. We foster partnerships with private businesses to facilitate economic recovery. Last year we received a \$500,000 National Dislocated Worker Grant due to the closure of the Canton Papermill. We have also partnered with the Southwestern Board in this situation to assist the many affected. They received 6.5 million. We make sure that the affected individuals have access to continued learning opportunities, including educational grants or subsidies for further education and training. Reporting on our grants, reviewing historical figures and surveys, and information loops following each emergency response identifies strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement. This information is used to enhance the strategic plan for future responses. Th is plan is developed in a simple, flexible and adaptive approach that it can be easily adjusted based on the evolving nature of emergencies and disasters.

IV. NCWorks Commission

The NCWorks Commission recommends policies and strategies which value diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility while enabling the state's workforce to compete in the current and future global economy. The commission leads, builds partnerships, forms alliances, and is accountable for strengthening North Carolina's innovative, inclusive, relevant, effective, and efficient workforce development system.

The Commission is designated as the state's WDB under the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. Led by a private sector chair, the 37-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.

After extensive stakeholder work and programmatic reviews, the following systemwide goals and objectives were created for the workforce development system:

- Prepare workers to succeed in the North Carolina economy by increasing skills and education attainment.
- Create a workforce system that is responsive to the needs of the economy by fostering employer leadership.
- Promote replication of creative solutions to challenging workforce problems by supporting local innovation.
- Promote system access, alignment, integration, and modernization.

1. Briefly describe how the Local Area WDB engages with local employers and informs them of the wide array of business services offered. Include how the Local Area WDB (a) ensures collaboration with other employer-facing workforce program representatives, such as (b) Vocational Rehabilitation, (c) Agriculture Services, (d) Foreign Labor, (e) Re-Entry, and (f) Veterans Services, through processes and procedures for information sharing and efficient employer customer service delivery.

The Board's Business Services Staff, the NCWorks Career Center Managers and Employer Service Teams make employers aware of the business services offered through printed materials, emailed information, websites, media interviews, phone calls and site visits. Also, Board sponsored events, job fairs, career events, and meetings provide an opportunity to share information about business services. With the partnerships in vocational rehabilitation at the colleges, reentry with grant support, veteran services at the Career Center, agricultural services locally, and foreign labor on site at our local council of government, we can work through processes and procedural information with clarity by sharing efficiently with employer customer service delivery. The Local Board works with the onsite foreign labor department at Land of Sky Regional Council to encourage job creation with employers, enhance competitiveness through incumbent worker training, stimulate and strengthen economic growth, diversify, and enhance infrastructure with economic development. A hybrid of virtual and in person events, meetings, and enrollments will be the normal way we do business moving forward. We also collaborate with Job Corp and Vocational Rehabilitation located at Blue Ridge Community College where many of our Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act participants engage in the programs. Many are served through our Career Centers with services provided to the public such as resume building, 50+ program, training, workshops, interview practice, resume building, career events and job fairs. The Buncombe County Career Center provides many scheduled workshops for the community on an array of subjects. These are advertised on our constant contact website with electronic emails sent to employers to share this along with other information as well.

2. Please provide a brief overview of the business services team within the local area. Please identify the individual staff roles the Local Area WDB utilizes to conduct business services (that is Business Services Representative (Local Area WDB staff), contractor staff, Business Engagement Coordinator, NCWorks Career Center Manager, DWS staff, Disabled Veterans Outreach Program, identify who makes regional and local employer referrals to Agricultural Services and/or Foreign Labor staff, etc.).

The Local Board Business Services team consists of a full-time Business Service Representative, a full-time Youth Business Services Representative, and a part-time Business Service Representative. The Career Center Manager is also involved. We have four NCWorks Career Centers with three NCWorks Career Center Managers and each career center has Division of Workforce Solutions staff and a Disabled Veterans Outreach Representative. The referrals to Agricultural Services are made by the Business Services Representative and NCWorks Career Center Managers. The Local Board is going to hire a Foreign Trade Zone staff member to be housed at Land of Sky Regional Council that we will work with directly. The Board identifies and addresses local challenges through our Business Services Department at the Local Area Board, and they reach out to the businesses to serve, provide, and assist with our programs, grants, on the job training, incumbent worker training, Wagner Peyser registration and registering online as employers and providers. Business Services also utilizes the Career Centers to obtain information and reach out to employers, job seekers and employees for training, the community, partners, and businesses.

3. Briefly describe how the Local Area WDB plans to increase NCWorks brand awareness at the local level (consult NCWorks Commission 2023-2025 Strategic Plan).

The Local Workforce Development Board is increasing the NCWorks brand awareness through social media outlets, job fairs, career events, signage, emails, flyers, brochures, name tags, case manager training, career center training, the use of the NCWorks website, constant contact, and knowledge of the brand in discussions at meetings, webinars, and events. The use of the brand on emails is the most utilized because of the many emails that go out each day from the Board. We implement the brand any chance we get and with continued discussions will continue to do so.

Communities across North Carolina are developing strong 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.

4. Describe how the Local Area WDB and the partners identify, address, and provide new and innovative solutions to support the job growth and business expansions of the local workforce system while including Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility.

The Local Area Workforce Development Board provides new and innovative solutions to support the local workforce system by sector strategies focused on the following largest sectors in our region with the most availability and higher wages: Advanced Manufacturing, Healthcare, Hospitality and Tourism, Energy, Construction and Skilled Trades, and Information Technology. The Local Area employers in these sectors have led the development of NCWorks Career Pathways through leadership, research, and partnership which is critical, and these pathways have integrated work based learning opportunities, including registered apprenticeship, internships, job shadowing, paid work experience, incumbent worker training and on the job training. Employers lead the sector initiatives and direct the training as needed for their in-demand occupations for adults, dislocated workers, and youth. Outreach to job seekers is critical and the Local Area has developed "Mountain Area Careers" site, accessible at www.MountainAreaCareers.org to share our region's career pathways available to job seekers and youth. Outreach with diversity, equity and inclusion is a focus at hiring events, job fairs, career events, school functions focused on K12, community

colleges and universities, meetings, webinars, and virtually. The Local Area has a Constant Contact subscription that is utilized to share these opportunities with about 20,000 plus people who are registered as job seekers on NCWorks, as well as employers. Also, the Local Area utilizes social media platforms including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn to share the Career Pathways available in the region. We are looking into other social media outlets as well. All of this information is also shared in our Newsletter. Our NCWorks One Stop Career Centers can assist job seekers and employers with many aspects in diversity, equity and inclusion, such as resume building, employment, training, soft skills, advertising, workshops, job search and interview practices. The NCWorks service delivery model focuses on customer service and is organized around services to customers. It is a system in which Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Adult and Dislocated Worker programs, and the Title III Wagner Peyser Employment Services program are the operational backbone of NCWorks Career Centers. These centers will employ integrated staffing and technology to generate an integrated customer pool and flow. This system is focused on offering value added, staff assisted services at Career Centers which continuously promote and provide until the customer's goal has been achieved. NCWorks Career Center staff are organized by function with the purpose of serving customers efficiently and effectively. Staff are cross trained, so that all center staff has the capacity to serve all customers in person and virtually and are knowledgeable about all services that the NCWorks Career Centers offer. The Career Center Staff are cross trained in virtual interaction for better engagement and communication with customers and participants. Virtual activities include Live Chat on NCWorks, and will continue moving forward, due to the convenience and accessibility along with virtual enrollment. This is convenient for many job seekers, for example, who would like to discover a teleworking position and cannot leave their home due to a physical disability. Our Local Area Board continues to research ways for new and innovative solutions to the workforce system to assist our community to grow with economic development, higher living wages with diversity, equity and inclusion. Land of Sky Regional Council was awarded an Early Childhood Development Grant to help this employee deprived sector. Barriers have always been an issue including transportation and housing. Land of Sky Regional Council is working on a program for Vanpool because transportation is the primary barrier with many rural areas in our region. Communities across North Carolina are developing great local models of workforce development that we can build on and replicate in more places to continue building and expanding innovative solutions. The Board has also obtained grants for reentry, substance disorder, and small businesses to grow our community with assisting more individuals. Land of Sky Regional Council has regular meetings on diversity, equity, and inclusion so the staff are better trained. The power of participation can be unfolding and amazing. Communication leads to more access, opportunities, information for job growth and business expansions.

The U.S. Departments of Commerce and Labor have jointly identified Recruitment and Hiring; Benefits; Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility; Empowerment and Representation; Job Security and Working Conditions; Organizational Culture; Pay; and Skills and Career Advancement as the eight key principles of a good job. Refer to Training and Employment Guidance Letter No. 07-22 for details.

5. Describe the Local Area WDB's strategy for:

- a. incorporating job quality principles into ongoing workforce development activities, to assist with identifying and creating long-term partnerships with employers offering good jobs.
- b. creating strategic, flexible career pathways to good jobs that respond to local labor market needs.

a. The Mountain Area Workforce Development Board incorporates job quality principles into all ongoing workforce activities such as meetings, training, partnerships, relationships, Career Centers, employer engagement, staff orientation, job fairs, and career events. This enables developing long term “workships” (relationships that lead to individuals in the workforce) with employers to assist in acquiring skilled employees that make living wages through our training and job search program. Case Managers and Business Service staff are able to lead individuals to their career of choice in a career pathway for a better wage and life. The Business Service Staff develop relationships and long-term partnerships with employers to identify their needs.

b. All of our Career Pathways are strategic in that they are the largest sector, largest demand and have the highest wages in our region which gives the job seeker a better choice and fills the needs of our employers. Our career pathways are Advanced Manufacturing, Healthcare, Hospitality and Tourism, Energy, Construction and Skilled Trades and Information Technology.

6. Describe how the Local Area WDB ensures that individuals from underserved and underrepresented communities have equitable access to the services of the workforce system and the jobs created in the economic growth spurred by federal investments.

The Mountain Area Board ensures diversity, equity, and inclusion through all we do for every individual including the underserved, underrepresented and hard to reach communities. We obtain grants specifically for these individuals such as substance use and reentry. Through virtual assistance for contact, meetings, enrollments, chat sessions, and online applications, we can reach more of our community in these underrepresented areas such as disabled individuals. Career Centers are located in rural areas to be accessible to the underserved. And the staff is trained to be more understanding of the underserved needs and have lists of entities that we partner with for assistance for all individuals and hard to reach communities. We train and cross train all Career Centers Staff and WIOA Case Managers, so they are able to share this with all they serve. Federal investments have also served individuals in meaningful ways through grants to assist in training, supportive services, and grants for dislocated workers due to so many closures after the pandemic, great resignation, and the downturn of the economy.

7. Describe how the Local Area WDB is engaged in work-based learning projects with local employers.

Special grant funding, obtained by the Board, helps support work-based learning positions at A-B Technical Community College and Blue Ridge Community College, as well as work-based learning initiatives of partner organizations. Currently the Board is acting as the convener for the development and implementation of the Partnership for Youth Apprenticeships. Hospitality and Tourism youth pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs in the K12 system were branded as H&T 4 Me and will be available across other regions as well to other Boards. The Board Business Service staff interface with the Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth contractors to promote the work they are doing with employers in the areas of pre-apprenticeships, apprenticeships, internships, work experience and job shadowing opportunities. The Board is working with Youth Service Providers in the NextGen program on providing

more Virtual Youth Job Shadowing. Plus, the Local Board and Youth Committee are working with employers on the expansion of Youth Apprenticeships and Youth Work Experience. The Board recently received the American Rescue Plan Act Grant to assist small businesses of 25 or less in the incumbent worker training with \$904,000. Land of Sky Regional Council went outside of state lines and collaborated with the State of Tennessee for the recent obtainment of a grant for underserved youth. We will continue to search out and implement grants as much as possible to assist all we can. □

8. Briefly describe how the local board will ensure the continuous improvement of eligible providers of services through the system and ensure that such providers meet the employment needs of local employers, and workers and jobseekers. [WIOA Section 108(b)(6)(A)]

The local board regularly evaluates the performance of eligible service providers. This includes assessing the effectiveness of their programs in achieving employment outcomes, meeting industry demands, and addressing the needs of jobseekers and workers. We research and utilize data collection to measure the success of service providers in placing individuals into sustainable employment. This involves tracking outcomes such as job placement rates, retention, and the relevance of training programs to local labor market needs. Through communication and surveys, we regularly solicit input to understand the strengths and weaknesses of the services, ensuring that the feedback is considered in the continuous improvement process. We work closely with local employers to identify current and future skill needs and ensure that eligible service providers align their offerings with the demands of the local labor market, adjusting programs and services accordingly. We encourage and support ongoing professional development for staff within eligible service providers. This ensures that providers stay informed about industry changes, new technologies, and best practices, enhancing the quality of services they offer. This involves setting benchmarks for program effectiveness, participant outcomes, and overall service quality. To improve performance plans, we work collaboratively with eligible providers to develop and implement performance improvement plans when necessary which involves targeted interventions to address specific challenges and enhance the overall impact of their services. We encourage innovation and the adoption of best practices within eligible service providers and share successful strategies across the workforce development system to facilitate continuous learning and improvement, as well as foster strong partnerships with local stakeholders, including employers, community organizations, and educational institutions. Engaging stakeholders in the planning and evaluation processes ensures that services remain responsive to the evolving needs of the community. By implementing these measures, the local board can fulfill its responsibility to ensure the continuous improvement of eligible providers of services, resulting in a more effective and responsive workforce development system that meets the employment needs of both local employers and jobseekers.

V. NCWorks Career Centers

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.

For any documents that are missing or are unnecessary based on the response provided, please state, “No document is loaded and/or it will be loaded by a specific date.”

1. Identify PY 2024 NCWorks Career Center location(s) including Comprehensive and Affiliate Sites; On-site partners; how NCWorks Career Center operator(s) are designated; provider(s) of WIOA career services and method of selection; whether youth service provider is on-site and, if so, youth services offered. Use the PY 2024 NCWorks Career Center Chart. [WIOA Section 121(b)(1)(A) and (b)(1)(B)]

- Name document: *Local Area Name* PY 2024 NCWorks Career Centers. **A copy of the NCWorks Career Center Location is attached in WISE.**

2. Provide the name(s) of the current One-Stop provider(s), date, and process for when the competitive procurement of the One-Stop Operator(s) occurred. Include the expected length of the contract(s) (one to four years and the current year the contract is (e.g., two of three years). [WIOA Section 108(b)(16)]

Mountain Area Workforce Development Board released a Request for Proposal for One-Stop Operators, which was integrated in the Request for Proposals for Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act in Adult and Dislocated Worker Services on March 23, 2022. The One Stop Operators are Asheville Buncombe Community College in Buncombe, Blue Ridge Community College in Henderson, Asheville Buncombe Community College in Madison, and Blue Ridge Community College in Transylvania Career Centers. Separately, the Request for Proposal for Youth Services was also released on March 23, 2022. Contracts were awarded June 25, 2022, for program operations beginning July 1, 2022. The contract term is for one year, renewable in one-year increments for up to three years. The current service providers for WIOA Out of School Youth are Goodwill Buncombe, Goodwill Transylvania, Henderson County Public Schools, and In-School Youth- Madison County Public Schools. The program year 2022 Requests for Proposals for Adult and Dislocated Worker and Youth were released for competitive procurement on Wednesday, March 23, 2022, and proposals were due by 4:00 pm on Wednesday, May 11, 2022. Due to the fact that the same Contractors responded to the call, they were contracted for another year. The One Stop Operators include Division of Workforce Solutions in Buncombe, Blue Ridge Community College in Henderson, Asheville Buncombe Community College in Madison and Blue Ridge Community College in Transylvania Career Centers and One Stop Operators and for Youth Services for Out of School Youth are Goodwill Buncombe, Goodwill Transylvania and Goodwill Madison, along with Henderson County Public Schools and for In School Youth is Madison County Public Schools. Our Local Board Competitive Procurement policy ensures a competitive procurement process to select providers of Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act in Adult, Dislocated Workers and Youth services, as well as, for the operators of local, certified NCWorks Career Centers in the Mountain Area Region using the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Final Regulations and to allow the one-stop operator selection process to align with the Mountain Area competitive procurement process for selection of providers of Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth Services, which requires the local area to undertake a request for proposal process to competitively procure programs and to contract with Board approved providers for up to three-years, with the initial contract period being one-year, with two extensions of one-year each, based on Board approval.

3. Provide a brief description of how Career and Training Services are provided. [WIOA Section 121(e), 134(c)]

- a. Provide a description of how Career and Training services are provided to adults.
- b. Provide a description of how Career and Training services are provided to dislocated workers.
- c. Provide a description of how Career and Training services are provided to youth.

a. *The Career and Training Services provided to adults and dislocated workers by Workforce Case Managers work with the NCWorks Career Center and the local partners, such as the STEP Program and others, to serve customers and participants to the best of their ability are provided to adult, dislocated workers, and youth groups when applicable. The WIOA Case Managers and others employed by the NCWorks Career Center are cross trained and assist the customers and participants with computer access and guide them in the direction they need for employment, such as training in the local colleges to lead to better employment with higher wages and a skilled employee for the employers. The Board has implemented virtual avenues to assist the Career Centers in career and training services, such as online training, live chat, virtual enrollment with capture documents, eligibility explorer to better share information within programs and mobile access which has assisted many including individuals with disabilities. The Career Centers also provide scheduled access to workshops for resume building, soft skills, interview practice and many others. The VOS Greeter was implemented last year as a source to better the client's experience.*

b. *The dislocated workers are served through co-enrollment in Trade Adjustment and Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act programs to better serve their needs. WIOA Case Managers, NCWorks Career Center Staff and referral partners also serve them with various needs such as supportive services.*

c. *The NextGen program at Goodwill along with Henderson and Madison County Public Schools provide career and training services to youth along with in house programs at Goodwill and co-enrollment with the adult group to better service their training needs. These students attend local colleges and schools for training and general education diploma along with supportive services to assist with their barriers. We now have the VOS Greeter software in the Career Centers to assist the staff with customers and recording and sharing information vital to the success of the Centers to follow process and progress to evolve as needed.*

4. Describe how Local Area WDBs determine the need for enrollment in Training Services.

The local Workforce Development Board's Case Managers determine the need for enrollment in training services by an initial interview process to assess the potential participant in the development of the individual employment plan inclusive of the objective and goal. By discussing their needs and goals, they are able to guide them to their future career with training services implemented, monthly contact and follow-up services applied after exit. The assessment, which may include testing, also provides the Case Manager with the skills and training the potential participant has or may need. A financial analysis obtained from the individual gives the Case Manager the information on provided funding and additional funding costs. Virtual enrollment has been put in place to assist participants in their goals to receive training, which also greatly assists individuals with disabilities. The possibility of remote work is also a key

component. The Case Manager discusses all options and opportunities before enrollment to decide the best situation for the individual. This discussion and information determines the need for enrollment in training services.

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

The Local Board's Workforce Case Managers provide follow up services for adults, dislocated workers, and youth participants for one year after exit. These services are individualized and can be provided in person, virtually, by phone or by email. One highlighted service in the Workforce program is to provide individuals workplace counseling. Some of the other services are contacting the individual to verify employment, help secure better paying jobs, career planning, resolving work related problems, providing information about educational opportunities, job search, referrals to other community services, and workshops provided at the Career Centers for the individuals to attend. Follow-up services do not extend the date of exit in performance reporting. The follow up is important for employment, median earnings, credentials, and measurable skill gains in the performance measures. Supportive Services are not given in follow-up. All information is entered in NCWorks. There are no duplicated services due to data entry and communication.

6. Describe how:

- a. New NCWorks Career Center staff (DWS, service providers, and partner staff) are trained in the integrated service delivery system model (include a training timeline).
- b. How long after the initial start date does staff have full access to NCWorks.gov?
- c. The staff development activities reinforce and improve the initial training efforts.
- d. Describe the specific training that staff receive around diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility.

a. ***The Onboarding process in place for new NCWorks Career Center staff was developed by the NC Superusers and is used in its entirety for training all staff on NCWorks. This includes the integrated service delivery system model in Career Centers. This training can take approximately one week but is individualized. Other online training with The Training Center site is provided for up to one year completion, but information is added to this site for continued training. The NCWorks Career Center staff has training required by the NCWorks Career Center Certification Process which can be done in their own time frame as long as completed by the annual review or certification for the centers. Equal Opportunity training is required annually, and it is provided as needed. Online training is also available. Cross training is required for staff.***

b. ***After the Onboarding process, the staff has full access to NCWorks.gov, but additional training is always provided as needed. The time for the Onboard training process is individualized and can take approximately one week which at the end of the of this process the staff has full access immediately to the NCWorks system with the ongoing training by the Workforce Operations Director.***

c. ***The staff development activities assist in improving the initial training efforts by going over every aspect of the system in detail with policy and reinforced by continued training locally monthly,***

quarterly, and as needed. Other training can be provided by the NCWorks Training Center, and the Workforce Operations Director as needed.

- d. The specific training for staff includes NCWorks dashboard, staff account, resources, message center, virtual recruiter, learning center, navigating the system, veteran priority, registration, assist an individual, service tracking, program tabs, Wagner Peyser, Eligibility Explorer, Wizard, resume builder, job search, activities and service codes with case notes, employer search and assistance, document management, confidentiality and redaction. Training for staff in customer service is provided as needed and equal opportunity training is required annually and more often as needed along with shared videos and webinars during the year. The diversity, equity and inclusion training are provided by Land of Sky Regional Council meetings, presentations, shared information, and videos on a monthly basis along with any requested discussion. All training is provided as needed and upon request by the Workforce Operations Director. To ensure that staff is well-equipped to promote diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility, organizations typically provide specific training programs staff may receive training in these areas at meetings such as understanding diversity, cultural competence, conscious bias, introduction to equity, identifying disparities, creating inclusive environments, understanding accessibility, inclusive leadership training, conflict resolution, and policy information. By providing comprehensive training in these areas, organizations can empower their staff to contribute to a more inclusive and equitable workplace and service environment. Continuous learning and reinforcement are crucial for sustaining positive practices over time.*

7. Briefly explain coordination with the Trade Adjustment Act (TAA) to maximize resources and prevent duplicative services. Please include specific details on how case managers for WIOA and TAA programs coordinate to provide seamless services to eligible participants.

The Mountain Area Workforce Development Board ensures implementation of policy for the Trade Adjustment Act and Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. This allows participants in both programs to maximize resources by both sources of funding. The Trade Adjustment Case Managers enroll the individual in Trade Adjustment and collect as much Workforce eligibility documentation as they can. The Workforce Case Manager reviews the eligibility documentation and collects any further and necessary documentation. Once decided if Trade Adjustment will fund the participant, the Workforce Case Manager is contacted to discuss if any Workforce funds are needed. If Trade Adjustment is not used, the participant is reviewed for Workforce funds. Either way, the Trade Adjustment participant is enrolled in the Workforce program for policy compliance and future assistance. All information in NCWorks.gov can be seen by all program operators so there is no duplication of services. Both program Case Managers coordinate with constant communication to provide seamless services to eligible participants. All activities are recorded in NCWorks to be seen by all program managers so they are not duplicated, and program managers can give the best customer service to the participant. Workforce Case Managers follow up after exit for one year to ensure employment or assist with job search.

8. Briefly describe how the NCWorks Career Center serves persons with disabilities.

The NCWorks Career Center is designed to provide comprehensive services to individuals seeking employment, and this includes tailored support for persons with disabilities. Most important is accessibility and accommodation ensuring physical spaces are wheelchair accessible and equipped with necessary accommodations to meet the needs of individuals with disabilities. Career counselors at NCWorks work with individuals with disabilities to develop personalized career plans that consider their unique skills, abilities, and career goals. The center conducts assessments to identify the skills and abilities of individuals with disabilities, helping to match them with suitable employment opportunities. Assistive technology and tools such as Chat VOS Greeter, and electronic enrollment help those with disabilities. Referral to support services is a huge success. NCWorks Career Centers collaborate with local disability support organizations and agencies to provide referrals for additional services, such as vocational rehabilitation, counseling, and medical assistance. Workshops and events organized by NCWorks take into consideration the accessibility needs of individuals with disabilities, providing inclusive materials and ensuring physical spaces are accessible. The NCWorks Career Center adheres to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) guidelines, ensuring that services and facilities are compliant with the law to create an inclusive environment. The center collaborates with employers to promote inclusive hiring initiatives, encouraging businesses to consider individuals with disabilities for employment opportunities. Individuals with disabilities receive ongoing support from career counselors and staff, assisting them in overcoming barriers and challenges they may encounter in the workplace. By incorporating these strategies, NCWorks Career Centers strive to create an inclusive and supportive environment for persons with disabilities, empowering them to achieve their career goals and successfully integrate into the workforce.

9. Briefly describe the integrated service delivery strategy for serving employers and how the Local Area WDB staff and staff within the NCWorks Career Center coordinate outreach strategies and services to maximize resources and prevent duplicative services.

The NCWorks integrated service delivery model focuses on customer service and is organized around services to customers. It is a system in which Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Adult and Dislocated Worker programs, and the Wagner Peyser Employment Services program are the operational backbone of NCWorks Career Centers. NCWorks Career Centers will employ integrated staffing and technology to generate an integrated customer pool and flow with diversity, equity, and inclusion. This system is focused on offering value added, cross-trained staff assisted services at Career Centers which are continuously promoted and provided until the customer's goal has been achieved. NCWorks Career Center staff is organized by function with the purpose of serving customers efficiently and effectively. Staff organized by function are cross trained, so that all center staff have the capacity to serve all customers and are knowledgeable about all services that the NCWorks Career Centers offer. Virtual activities that also maximize resources include Live Chat, Eligibility Explorer, enrollment and Capture Documents on NCWorks. The Staff is trained in the integrated services delivery system model fully in NCWorks by the Onboarding process developed by NC Superusers, which can take approximately one week depending on the new staff. We want them to feel comfortable with the system and the program. Then they are allowed to work in the training system on NCWorks.gov immediately. At this point of completion, they are given full access to NCWorks.gov. The new staff will work with a seasoned Workforce Case Manager to begin

enrollments in the Workforce Program. Once the new staff are on their own, they will receive daily and weekly follow-up training. This training continues for all Workforce Case Managers as needed, daily, weekly, quarterly by email, phone, virtual platforms and in person. The availability of the Local Workforce Operations Director for this kind of timeframe and individualized training has proven to be highly effective with consistency leading to better performing Workforce Case Managers. The NCWorks system allows the Case Managers to see all the programs and activities so none are duplicated. All staff are trained in all activities for better engagement and communication with customers and participants, as well as training in diversity, inclusion, and equity. The Career Centers not only work with job seekers, students and other individuals that need workforce related assistance, but they also collaborate with employers and providers to assist in registering on NCWorks.gov to share careers, fill positions, provide education and training assistance, and hold job fairs at the Centers. The Workforce Operations Director works with providers to assist with registering and updating courses for those already registered. The centers, along with Business Services for the Local Board, contact employers each week to see how they may be of assistance and contact new employers for registration. They then enter the employer and provider activities in the NCWorks system for recording and reporting. All Workforce Case Managers and Career Center staff are cross trained to better serve individuals and job seekers. The Business Service staff and Career Centers work more closely with the employers for registration and recording in NCWorks.

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

Local area strategies and services used to strengthen linkages between Boards and the NCWorks Career Centers with unemployment insurance programs are through the one-stop partners integrated delivery system identified in Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, Temporary Assistance, Trade Adjustment Assistance Programs, Unemployment Compensation Programs, Reentry Employment Opportunities and Second Chance Act Programs. These programs work together with co-enrollment, meetings for updates, referrals, constant communication with shared information to better insure the services to participants such as payment, counseling, job search, training, guidance, career exploration, career services, resume building, and workshops.

11. Attach a flowchart for services – flowchart must include:

- a. initial one-on-one interviews with customers,
- b. skills assessments, and
- c. determination of the need for further services.

- Name document: *Local Area WDB Name Services Flowchart 2024. Service Flow Charts for the NCWorks Centers in the Mountain Area Region are attached in WISE.*

12. Attach the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Local Area WDB and partners concerning operation of the NCWorks Career Center system. [WIOA Section 121(c)(1)(2)(A)]

- Name document: *Local Area WDB Name NCWorks Career Center MOU. The Memorandum of Understanding(s) between Mountain Area Workforce Development Board and the NCWorks Career Centers are attached in WISE.*

13. Describe the Local Area WDB's method for providing oversight to include:

- a. the review process and the frequency of review for the NCWorks Career Center system in the Local Area, including processes for ensuring quality customer service; and
- b. the roles and any resource contributions of the NCWorks Career Center partners. [WIOA Section 121(a)(3)] [WIOA Section 108(b)(6)(D)]

The Local Board's method for providing oversight includes the review process and certification process of the career centers. This process involves assessing the performance, effectiveness, and overall quality of services provided by the career centers with the tools and information to benefit customers which may include job placement rates, customer satisfaction, outcomes for various training programs, and the efficiency of services provided to jobseekers and employers. The review process is conducted regularly to ensure ongoing improvement and continuous monitoring and evaluation help identify areas of strength and areas that may require improvement, allowing for timely adjustments and enhancements. This is followed by State reviews annually and certifications every three years. A key focus of the review process is assessing the quality of customer service provided by the NCWorks Career Centers. This involves evaluating the responsiveness, courtesy, and effectiveness of staff in assisting jobseekers and employers. Surveys, feedback mechanisms, and direct engagement with customers are employed to gather insights into the customer service experience. The VOS Greeter was installed last year to better serve and monitor customers and their activities to access their needs. The Local Area WDB identifies and collaborates with various partners involved in the NCWorks Career Center system. These partners are educational institutions, community organizations, economic development agencies, and local employers. Each partner plays a specific role in contributing resources and expertise to the overall effectiveness of the career center system. The referral system is a substantial assistance to customers for additional assistance and supportive services.

14. Describe how the Local Area WDB facilitates access to services provided through the NCWorks Career Center delivery system, including in remote areas, through the use of technology and through other means. [WIOA Section 108(b)(6)(B)]

To adhere and ensure accessibility to services provided through the NCWorks Career Center delivery system, including in remote areas, the Local Area Workforce Development Board employs various strategies, often leveraging technology. Virtual services have been a major implementation with the Local WDB ensuring that NCWorks Career Center services are accessible through online platforms. This includes user-friendly websites, where jobseekers and employers can access resources, submit applications,

enrollments and participate in virtual workshops. Virtual Career Counseling utilizing video conferencing and telecommunication tools for virtual career counseling sessions ensures that individuals in remote areas have access to personalized guidance. The development of mobile applications allows users to access essential career services, job listings, and resources from their smartphones. This is particularly beneficial for individuals in remote areas with limited access to traditional career centers. Hosting webinars and online workshops enables individuals to participate in career development and training activities without having to visit a physical location. This is especially valuable for those in remote areas. Collaborating with libraries, community centers, and other public facilities provides access points for individuals in remote areas to connect with NCWorks Career Center services. These facilities can serve as satellite access points. Deploying mobile career center units equipped with technology to rural or remote areas ensures that residents have direct access to career services, counseling, and job search assistance without needing to travel long distances. Offering digital literacy training programs ensures that individuals in remote areas have the necessary skills to navigate online platforms and take advantage of virtual services. Establishing feedback mechanisms allows the Local Area WDB to receive input from users in remote areas, ensuring that services remain accessible, relevant, and effective. We use comment cards, and the VOS Greeter can be used for this as well. By implementing these strategies, the Local Area WDB can bridge the gap and facilitate access to NCWorks Career Center services, even in remote areas, promoting inclusivity, and equal opportunities for all individuals.

15. Describe how NCWorks Career Centers are using virtual technology to provide integrated, technology-enabled intake and case management information systems for programs carried out under WIOA including youth programs, and programs carried out by NCWorks Career Center partners. What software are NCWorks Career Centers using? [WIOA Section 108 (b)(21)]

The NCWorks Career Centers are using virtual technology to provide integrated and virtual enrollment services for all individuals including youth with the Live Chat session, Eligibility Explorer, and Capture Documents to give and obtain information. The virtual enrollment allows the potential participant to upload eligibility documents to the NCWorks system at their convenience through Capture Documents and fill out an application for possible enrollment in applicable programs. There is also a mobile application in place. The Case Managers are able to implement the Workforce policy and guidelines in person or virtually starting with the collection of eligibility documents. All case notes are provided on the case management system in the process to better serve an array of public assistance programs to the unemployed, employed, and career seekers. Additionally, NCWorks Buncombe County Career Center provides the following services virtually, Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessments, which includes an initial one-on-one assessment of a claimants continuing unemployment eligibility, confirming employment status and a review of the claimant's work search activities. After two weeks, they conduct a follow-through RESEA appointment to track claimant's progress. Employability Assessment Interview provides concentrated reemployment services to claimants receiving unemployment benefits. The EAI program is mandatory for persons receiving unemployment benefits. EAI claimants must be scheduled within four weeks of their first payment of unemployment benefits for program services. Other services are orientation to NCWorks Career Center services, register customer in NCWorks.gov, set up a personal profile for job seeker, conduct a job

search and giving referrals to open positions as requested, set up Virtual Recruiter, create a new resume or update an existing one, upload into NCWorks.gov profile, set up email account, discuss Workforce training opportunities, refer to training providers, career assessment and guidance, job market information, interview practice and preparation, referral to community agencies for child care, transportation, housing, and virtual job fairs for job seekers and employers, case management, explain unemployment process and provide direction to Division of Employment Security for assistance, job seeking skills workshops, Finding the Fit with the Myers-Briggs, identifying career interests, interviewing practice, job search for experienced workers, LinkedIn, Networking in the Virtual World, Mastering Online Applications, Networking – The Most Effective Way to Find a Job, Virtual Interviewing, Write a Winning Resume, computer labs with microphones and cameras for private, virtual interviews between job seekers and employers. The NCWorks Career Centers rely heavily on online services to serve customers with disabilities and many more. The Virtual Job Shadow tool is used to assist in career exploration, job shadowing, as well as job search and resume assistance. Additionally, NCWorks.gov is utilized as the main data management tool. This platform is used for job search, virtual job recruiter, resume assistance, labor market information, as well as usage as the intensive case management tool for Workforce enrolled individuals. Business customers also use NCWorks.gov to post positions, set up virtual recruiters as well as advertise upcoming job fairs and career expos. These NCWorks Centers also use ACT WorkKeys Curriculum to assess, and gain needed workplace skills. ACT WorkKeys Curriculum is supported by the Local Board as support for the NCWorks System in the region. All of the above are offered online and conducted remotely. Finally, customers are assisted by providing wireless internet, and a video camera for needed access to video cameras for job interviews. NCWorks Career Centers have the ability to utilize virtual meeting platforms such as Microsoft Teams to meet with customers and partners when needed. Virtual meetings and meetings by phone are options that are offered to clients who are interested in job search or other resources if they do not want to visit the NCWorks office in person. Job seekers are assisted in preparing for virtual interviews with employers by scheduling practice interviews with them in the Career Centers so they can be more comfortable with the technology. Workforce Case Managers and clients have the ability to sign documents electronically. Clients have the ability to upload eligibility documents to their own NCWorks.gov account for consideration without having to bring them to the office in person. After the Sapphire update, the Eligibility Explorer application was added to NCWorks to allow information submitted to other programs to be moved to the Workforce application as prompted. The update also provides a more informative outline to job seekers and a more user-friendly system to employers and providers. Eligibility Explorer allows individuals to fill out an application for programs without coming into the Career Centers. Phones, email, and text messaging are utilized to stay in contact with customers and distribute information with personal information always taken into consideration per policy. On a regional level, Constant Contact is utilized to send out bi-weekly newsletters to the Mountain Area Region of upcoming events and jobs in the area. NCWorks Career Centers use Constant Contact to promote specific events, trainings, workshops, and jobs that may be of interest to clients. They continue to connect with job seekers and the community through Facebook by sharing relevant articles on employment issues, promoting training and educational opportunities at AB Tech, and promoting local job opportunities. The Mountain Area site shares local information about our programs. And finally, the VOS Greeter software was recently installed in the Career Centers which assist staff and individuals with a seamless visit.

16. 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)]

The Local Board emphasizes the importance of compliance with Section 188 of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990. This includes addressing the physical and programmatic accessibility of facilities, programs and services, technology, and materials for individuals with disabilities within the NCWorks Career Center system. Here's how entities within the system, including Career Center operators and partners, typically ensure compliance. Entities within the NCWorks Career Center system conduct regular assessments to evaluate the physical and programmatic accessibility of their facilities. This includes a comprehensive review of the physical environment, technology infrastructure, and program offerings. Staff, including Career Center operators and partners, receive training in ADA regulations and guidelines. This ensures that they are aware of the requirements and are equipped to implement accessible practices in their day-to-day operations. Career Centers and partner facilities adhere to accessibility standards outlined in the ADA. This involves providing wheelchair ramps, accessible entrances, elevators, and other features that make physical spaces welcoming and usable for individuals with disabilities. NCWorks Career Centers invest in and utilize technology that is accessible to individuals with disabilities. This includes ensuring compatibility with screen readers, providing alternative formats for digital content, and offering adaptive equipment. Career Center operators and partners design programs and services with inclusivity in mind. This involves considering the diverse needs of individuals with disabilities and making necessary accommodations to ensure their full participation. Written materials, online content, and communication tools are designed to be accessible. This includes providing information in alternative formats such as large print, Braille, using accessible web design principles, and offering communication aids. Career Centers and partners collaborate with local disability organizations and advocacy groups. Career Centers and partners continuously monitor their accessibility efforts and seek opportunities for improvement. This involves regular self-assessment, audits, and feedback loops to adapt to evolving accessibility standards and best practices. By prioritizing accessibility and compliance with Section 188 and the ADA, entities within the NCWorks Career Center system create an inclusive environment that fosters equal opportunities for individuals with disabilities in accessing facilities, programs, services, technology, and materials.

VI. Employer Services

1. Please describe the efforts of the Local Area WDB staff, Employer services staff and Career Center staff have made to deliver business services on a regional basis in the following areas:
 - a. Utilizing regional and local economic data to inform priorities [WIOA Section 108 (b)(1)(A)(i)(ii) and (B)].

- b. Collaborating with employer-facing partners such as Agricultural Services, Foreign Labor and Veteran Services to meet employer needs and jobseeker recruitment efforts.
- c. Providing local and regional Rapid Response services, including identifying struggling and at-risk businesses and providing services to help avert layoffs. [WIOA Section 108 (b)(8)]
- d. Coordinating with DWS TAA and Business Services staff to provide Rapid Response assistance and appropriate career and training services to workers for whom a petition has been filed. (20 CFR 618.816)
- e. Including Historically Underutilized Businesses (OG 20-2021)

a. The employer services team at the NCWorks Centers take job orders from regional employers. If the employer is not registered in NCWorks, the Center staff assist in registering the employer. All job orders are verified before being made public, first to veterans and then to the general public. Job orders are reviewed daily by career center staff and publicized internally and externally to staff, job seekers, and workforce partners via email, social media, whiteboards, newsletters, and announcements. Business service representatives also take job orders or refer the employer to an NCWorks staff person. The NCWorks staff and Board's Business Services Representatives make every effort to be flexible with an employer's time and resources and will visit their worksite on request to assist with creating an NCWorks.gov account, posting job openings and recruitment of applicants. The Workforce Operations Director assists employers and providers as needed and when necessary, assists Business Services and entering employer codes to utilize the system for reporting all initiative taken with all employers. The Business Service staff visit many employers in the region that are registered in NCWorks on a weekly basis to see how they can be of assistance and share information such as available grants. They also visit employers who are not registered to explain how they can be of assistance, how to register, and share information such as available grants. This information is entered in NCWorks and now Salesforce via employer codes.

b. The Business Services Representatives assist agricultural businesses by referring businesses to the NC Commerce, Agricultural Services Representative for the Western NC Region. The Agriculture Representative assists business with recruitment and hiring of seasonal and migrant workers, H2A Visas, training, regulations and compliance, safety, and migrant housing. The Business Services Representatives are not involved with foreign labor staffing. Land of Sky Regional Council implemented the Foreign Trade Zone in house by hiring a staff person to oversee Foreign Labor. The NCWorks Centers also make referrals to the Agriculture Representative and assist with job postings.

c. For the Local Board to effectively provide local and regional Rapid Response services, including identifying struggling and at-risk businesses while offering interventions to avert layoffs, the Local Area Workforce Development Board follows a strategic approach with proactive engagement by actively monitoring the local and regional economy to identify businesses that may be struggling or at risk of layoffs. This involves collaborating with economic development agencies, industry associations, and other stakeholders to gather timely information. We work with the State and local partners to get ahead of any closures, economic distress, or businesses experiencing economic downturns. Regular employer outreach activities by our Business Services Team provides opportunities to assess their needs and offer support. The ARPA Small Business Grant of \$904,000 has helped so many business locally to avert layoffs and closures after the pandemic. Identifying the skill needs of struggling businesses

allows the Local Area WDB to design targeted training and upskilling programs to enhance the workforce's capabilities and address the challenges faced by the businesses. Collaborating with economic development agencies ensures alignment between workforce development efforts and broader economic development strategies. This collaboration enhances the effectiveness of interventions to support struggling businesses. Clear communication, by our Business Services Team, about the assistance options and benefits encourages businesses to seek support early in the process. By implementing these measures, the Local Area WDB aims to effectively provide Rapid Response services, identify struggling businesses, and offer timely interventions to avert layoffs.

d. *The Local Board effectively provides Rapid Response assistance to workers for whom a Trade Adjustment Assistance petition has been filed, coordination between the Local Area Workforce Development Board, Department of Workforce Services, DWS, TAA, and Business Services staff is crucial. DWS, TAA, and Business Services staff share relevant data and conduct joint analyses to identify affected workers and businesses. This collaborative effort allows for a comprehensive understanding of the impact of trade-related events on the local workforce. Through collaboration, the teams identify workers who are eligible for TAA assistance and Rapid Response services. This includes workers facing layoffs due to foreign trade-related circumstances. With the assistance of all partner groups including WIOA, the individuals are able to receive much needed support. Coordinated efforts are made to communicate with affected workers, ensuring they are informed about available Rapid Response services, TAA benefits, and career and training opportunities. This may involve joint outreach events, informational sessions, and distribution of materials. Business Services staff work closely with affected workers to provide career counseling, skills assessments, and guidance on available training programs. This ensures that workers are well-informed about their options for career advancement. DWS and TAA staff coordinate with the Local Area WDB to align training opportunities with the needs of affected workers. This may involve identifying suitable training providers, ensuring access to relevant programs such as WIOA, and addressing any barriers to participation along with possible on the job training, job search, resume and interview building. DWS, TAA, and Business Services staff work together to coordinate support services for affected workers. This may include access to financial counseling, transportation assistance, childcare support, and other resources to help mitigate barriers to reemployment as well as referrals. Ongoing communication between the Local Area WDB, DWS, TAA, and Business Services staff is essential to address any emerging challenges, share updates on the progress of Rapid Response activities, and make adjustments to the plan as needed. By fostering collaboration and coordination among these entities, the Local Area WDB ensures a seamless and comprehensive approach to providing Rapid Response assistance and career and training services to workers for whom a TAA petition has been filed.*

e. *The efforts of the Business Services Representative have been to utilize the programs, grants and NCWorks to better assist underutilized and small businesses in their marketing, training, and efforts to introduce job seekers to businesses historically unnoticed but necessary for the community. Business Services as well as the Career Centers reach out to businesses each week to introduce themselves and how the NCWorks system can help their sector along with offering to assist in registration, give detailed information on the programs, and grants available. The Business Services staff are also enrolling many incumbent workers for small businesses through the Salesforce system to assist in their success and the local economy with the continuing work on the Small Business Work Based Learning Grant with \$904,000.*

2. Please describe employer-focused partnership efforts in the areas of education and training and economic development in the following areas:

- a. Enhancing the use of On-the-Job Training (OJT), Incumbent Worker Training (IWT), apprenticeships, and other work-based learning opportunities to support the regional economy and individuals' career advancement.
- b. Coordinating and promoting entrepreneurial skills training and microenterprise services. [WIOA Section 108 (b)(5)]
- c. Participating in regional economic strategic planning and economic development recruitment, retention and expansions with employers, education partners and economic developers. [WIOA Section 108 (b)(4)(A)(iii)].

a. *To enhance the use of On-the-Job Training, Incumbent Worker Training, apprenticeships, and other work-based learning opportunities to support the regional economy and individuals' career advancement, the Local Area Workforce Development Board typically implements a strategic approach to conduct a thorough needs assessment of the regional economy to identify skill gaps, industry demands, workforce requirements, engage with employers, industry associations, and economic development agencies to understand current and future needs. The Business Service Team raises awareness among employers and individuals about the benefits of OJT, IWT, apprenticeships, and other work-based learning opportunities by reach out to them to highlight the advantages, such as hands-on experience, skill development, and career advancement. Collaborating with our partners assists in design and implementation effective work-based learning programs aligned with industry needs. The Business Service Team works closely with employers to design customized training programs that meet their specific needs and tailor OJT and IWT programs to address skill gaps and ensure that the training aligns with industry standards and advancements. Promoting and expanding apprenticeship programs by working with employers to develop structured and accredited apprenticeship opportunities and facilitate partnerships with educational institutions to provide a combination of on-the-job and classroom training makes for a good partnership for all. We have developed clear skill development career pathways within work-based learning programs and provide individuals with opportunities to progress in their careers through structured training, mentorship, and advancement opportunities within the company. Supportive services offered and referrals to individuals participating in work-based learning programs, including counseling, mentorship, and resources to enhances their overall learning experience and increases the likelihood of a successful career advancement. We work on implementing flexible training models that accommodate the diverse needs of both employers and workers. This may involve part-time apprenticeships, modular training options, and virtual learning components to enhance accessibility. Monitoring, evaluating and feedback from employers and participants assists in assessing the impact on skill development, career progression, and the overall success of the initiatives. Our Board Committees work with the local community to raise awareness about the benefits of work-based learning opportunities and collaborate with community organizations, schools, and career counseling centers to encourage individuals to explore these*

pathways. We stay informed about industry trends, emerging technologies, and changes in the regional economy and work with our partners to adjust work-based learning programs to align with evolving industry needs, ensuring that participants are equipped with relevant and up-to-date skills. By incorporating these elements into our strategy, the Local Area WDB can effectively enhance the use of OJT, IWT, apprenticeships, and other work-based learning opportunities, contributing to the regional economy and supporting individuals in their career advancement endeavors.

- b. *To coordinate and promote entrepreneurial skills training and microenterprise services, the Local Area Workforce Development Board implements a set of strategies to support individuals in developing and growing their own businesses. Our WIOA Case Managers do assessments to identify individuals interested in entrepreneurship and determine their current skill levels. This helps tailor training programs to meet the specific needs of aspiring entrepreneurs. Partnerships with Small Business Development Centers such as Blue Ridge Community College, provides access to expertise, mentorship, and resources for individuals seeking to start or expand microenterprises. The Local Career Centers offer workshops that can assist in entrepreneurial, and microenterprises and they cover key topics such as business planning, financial management, marketing, and legal considerations. These programs may be delivered in collaboration with local educational institutions, business organizations, or community partners.*

We work on establishing mentorship programs connecting experienced entrepreneurs with those starting their businesses because mentorships provide valuable guidance, insights, and support throughout the entrepreneurial journey. The Local Career Centers organize networking events, business mixers, and industry-specific gatherings to facilitate connections among entrepreneurs, potential customers, and business support organizations. Networking is crucial for building relationships and exploring collaboration opportunities. Most important is collaborating with local educational institutions to integrate entrepreneurial skills training into academic programs to offer individuals. This can include incorporating entrepreneurship courses, internships, and experiential learning opportunities. By incorporating these elements into our strategy, the Local Area WDB can effectively coordinate and promote entrepreneurial skills training and microenterprise services, empowering individuals to successfully launch and grow their businesses.

- c. *The Mountain Area Workforce Development Board actively participates in regional economic strategic planning and contributes to economic development efforts, including recruitment, retention, and expansions with employers, education partners, and economic developers and employs a collaborative and strategic approach along with the Economic Development Department located at Land of Sky Regional Council. We all establish and maintain strong partnerships with key stakeholders, including employers and educational institutions. The Local Board actively participates in regional planning meetings, economic development meetings, and other relevant forums and we contribute workforce development perspectives to the broader regional economic planning process. We work with economic developers and education partners to share labor market data, industry trends, and other relevant information. This collaborative data-sharing approach ensures that economic strategies are informed by workforce needs and vice versa. The larger picture is that workforce is economic development and economic development is workforce. We work closely with employers, industry associations, and economic developers to identify high-demand sectors and industries in the region. This information informs targeted workforce development efforts and supports strategic planning. Alignment of*

workforce development strategies with education partners, including K-12 schools, community colleges, and vocational training institutions assist with curriculum development and training programs to address the needs of emerging industries. Employer-led initiatives and Talent pipeline initiatives support workforce development needs. Participation in the development of recruitment and retention strategies for businesses in the region involves understanding the workforce needs of existing employers and attracting new businesses through a skilled and qualified workforce. We have been working with Pratt & Whitney since before they opened to address their hiring and training needs. The Local Board ensures the integration of diverse perspectives in regional economic strategic planning and considers the needs of underrepresented communities and industries to promote inclusive growth and equitable economic development. By actively participating in regional economic strategic planning and collaborating with key stakeholders, the Local Area WDB can contribute significantly to the alignment of workforce development efforts with broader economic development goals.

VII. Performance

U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL) has the following WIOA Performance Indicators:

- Employment Rate – 2nd Quarter After Exit
- Employment Rate – 4th Quarter After Exit
- Median Earnings – 2nd Quarter After Exit
- Credential Attainment Rate
- Measurable Skill Gains
- Effectiveness in Serving Employers (system-wide measure, not program specific)

1. Examine the Local Area WDB’s current Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth performance on the Federal Primary Indicators of Performance for PY 2022-2023 and prior Program Years. (Reports available via FutureWorks BI.) What are some factors that have impacted performance levels both positively and negatively in the current program year?
 - a. Provide at least two examples of positive factors and two examples of negative factors with an explanation of each. Some examples to consider include:
 - unemployment rate
 - factory closures/openings
 - economic development recruitment
 - retention and expansion efforts
 - regional industry growth priorities
 - weather events and natural disasters that may have impacted the area
 - internal operational factors

b. Are there any factors that you anticipate will impact your performance during the upcoming program year(s) either positively or negatively?

a. The Local Board factors for positive impact are stronger employer engagement with the availability for employer code data entry in SalesForce, the ARPA Small Business Grant for Incumbent Worker Training, the National Dislocated Worker Grant, the Virtual Reality Grant, the virtual additions to the system and policy, ARPA Reentry and Substance Use Disorder Grants. These factors gave us the opportunity to provide a better list of code entries, impact the lives of many with more funding, and add the virtual aspect for easier access.

The negative factors are our low unemployment rate at 2.9 in February and employers need staff, economic downturn with high prices, gas, interest rates, and as always barriers to employment such as transportation, childcare, and housing. These factors hinder individuals from participating fully in workforce development programs and employment. Also, there have been several companies close in the area such as the Canton Papermill and PrintPak which causes unemployment, but it is bittersweet since many employers in our community have openings with higher wages.

b. I believe the factor of having the new Metrix Learning system will impact performance in a positive manner in the upcoming program year. This site will increase our measurable skills gains but will also help many individuals with soft skills and career exploration. The virtual reality grant provided us with two headsets that make a positive impact on the youth with career exploration. We also have a childcare grant at Land of Sky that will help this barrier and we are working on a transportation program. We may not be able to completely solve the barrier issue, but we are engaging with our committees and partners to make a huge impact.

2. What strategies and methods are in place to meet or exceed performance goals? Include information about tracking performance, ensuring accountability of positive performance outcomes, and training.

Consider including the following information:

- Who is responsible for tracking performance?
- Which reporting resources are used?
- Is FutureWorks BI employed? If so, how, and how often?
- How often is training provided to staff?

b. The ability of Mountain Area Workforce Development Board to meet or exceed performance outcomes start with Workforce Service Providers and NCWorks Career Centers in the Local Area and they are provided continual training and are monitored on a monthly basis by the Workforce Operations Director, Melissa Wright, to determine compliance with all relevant regulations, policies, and guidelines. Board staff and Workforce service providers meet on a quarterly basis as well as weekly when needed for training, to review performance, share best practices and to develop strategies to improve performance. This is also done virtually and individually when needed. The Mountain Area Workforce Development Board Workforce Operations Director reviews participant's files to determine compliance. The Mountain Area Workforce Development Board Workforce Operations Director reviews performance reports on a weekly and monthly basis with discussions occurring continually on possible opportunities to improve performance

outcomes individually. Daily information is shared with the service providers from NCWorks and FutureWorks Reporting to better serve the community and to improve file information and performance as well as diversity, equity, and inclusion and how it affects performance positively when information is shared and negatively when barriers are in place. FutureWorks Dashboards are shared with providers and Board Members. Credential Reporting from the Roster in FutureWorks, as well as NCWorks is used to follow up on credential completion and data entry to NCWorks for performance measures. Performance is shared among the Board and Stakeholders in each of the board packets for the Local Area Board Meetings. Performance is shared with Workforce Case Managers on an ongoing basis along with Adult Priority of Service and Data Integrity Measures. Contractors are encouraged to take initiative-taking steps to improve performance and contracts demand that the Local Area meet or exceed all relevant performance measures, including federal performance measures. Follow-up services are critical in achieving performance measures and contractors are expected to provide follow up services for one year after exit. The employment, median earnings, credentials, and measurable skills gains are recorded in the 2nd and 4th quarters by the State, which impact performance measures. All Workforce Case Managers are expected to make improvements in necessary areas on a quarterly basis. The Board is required to meet the 20% Youth Work Experience each year to ensure that youth use this tool to prepare for their workforce career. The primary importance of the performance measures is employment which the Local Board maintains our goal to assist in serving all individuals with equity, diversity, and inclusion in our community to ensure them training and employment with higher wages for a better life and to assist employers with skilled staff to improve their company and our community. If the performance measures are impacted negatively, the Case Managers are expected to improve performance within the next two quarters. If there is no improvement at that point, a letter will be sent to the Supervisor to inform them of the issue and if continued a Request for Proposal may be sent out. The Local Board will always do our best to meet goals for all performance.

3. Discuss what corrective action steps are in place if, at any point during the program year, the Local Area WDB is not on track to meet or exceed yearly performance indicator goals.

This question is intended to be hypothetical and is seeking what plan the Local Area WDB has in place to address failing performance if it were to occur. Answers should address how the Local Area WDB:

- monitors performance,
- communicates with staff,
- makes changes to Local Area WDB performance and training strategies based on reporting data,
- and utilizes follow-up accountability measures.

The Local Area Board maintains constant tracking of all performance measures to meet annual goals and to improve performance that may not be on track to meet. This happens through the following process to establish sharing efforts leading to goals met and discussion to better improve performance where goals might not be met. The Local Area reviews performance on an ongoing basis through NCWorks and FutureWorks Reporting and Rosters. Workforce Case managers are notified on a regular basis of any issues with performance. The Local Area holds quarterly case managers' meetings, and weekly if needed, where performance is reviewed and information is shared on how to improve performance, along with

training. The Mountain Area Workforce Development Board Workforce Operations Director reviews the individuals in the performance pool and emphasizes to the Case Managers the importance of follow up, especially in the 2nd and 4th quarter, where the State pulls the Performance Measures for employment, median earnings, credentials, and measurable skills gains. Individuals are offered follow-up services and are provided with other opportunities to maintain employment, earn a post-secondary credential and to increase their wages. Workforce Service Providers and NCWorks Career Centers in the Local Area are monitored on a daily basis to determine compliance with all relevant regulations and policies. Board staff and Workforce service providers meet on a quarterly basis for training, to review performance, share best practices and to develop strategies to improve performance. The Workforce Operations Director reviews participant's files to determine compliance with eligibility, that all documents are uploaded into NCWorks system and that case notes are comprehensive and appropriately detailed. The Workforce Operations Director reviews performance reports on a monthly basis and discussion occurs continually on possible opportunities to improve performance outcomes. Daily information is shared with the service providers from NCWorks and FutureWorks to improve file information and performance. FutureWorks Dashboards and are shared with the Board Members, as well as NCWorks is used to follow up on credential completion and data entry to NCWorks for performance measures The Credential Reporting is used to follow up on credential completion and data entry to NCWorks. Performance is shared among the Board and Stakeholders in each of the board packets for the Local Area Board Meetings. Performance is shared with Workforce Case Managers on an ongoing basis. Performance is shared with Workforce Case Managers on an ongoing basis by email, reporting, in person and virtual meetings, print outs and phone conversations Contractors are encouraged to take proactive steps to improve performance and contracts demand that the Local Area meet or exceed all relevant performance measures including federal performance measures. Follow-up services are critical in achieving performance measures and contractors are expected to provide follow up services. The employment is recorded in the 2nd and 4th quarters, which impacts performance measures. Circumstances can also control performance measures due to low unemployment because everyone that wants to work is working. If the performance numbers are impacted negatively, the Case Managers are expected to improve performance within the next two quarters. If there is no improvement at that point, a letter will be sent to the Supervisor to inform them of the issue and if continued a Request for Proposal may be sent out. We are pleased that there are virtual opportunities for measurable skills gain now for the performance measures. If the performance measures are impacted negatively, the Case Managers are expected to improve performance within the next two quarters. If there is no improvement at that point, a letter will be sent to the Supervisor to inform them of the issue and if continued a Request for Proposal may be sent out. The Local Board is dedicated to meeting and exceeding goals set for all performance.

4. How is performance information shared throughout the hierarchy of staff? Please detail how the Local Area WDB addresses performance data in its relationship with its service provider(s) and how case managers are using performance data to drive Local Area WDB performance.

Consider including the following information:

- a. How is performance tracked in your organization?
- b. How is performance information communicated with staff?
- c. How are staff/contractors held accountable?

d. How is training provided in your organization?

The Local Board shares performance among the Board and Stakeholders in each of the board packets for the Local Area Board Meetings. Performance is shared with Workforce Case Managers on an ongoing basis by email, reporting, in person and virtual meetings, print outs and phone conversations. This information is taken from NCWorks and FutureWorks BI. Contractors are encouraged to take proactive steps to improve performance and contracts demand that the Local Area meet or exceed all relevant performance measures including federal performance measures.. Different counties have different performance measures such as rural counties have a transportation barrier due to the fact of less public transportation so this can decrease the performance measures. Low unemployment can affect the dislocated worker performance measure and so on. The Local Board is dedicated to the goals we have set with the State Follow up services are critical in achieving performance measures and contractors are expected to provide follow up services, which the employment, median earnings, and measurable skill gains are recorded in the 2nd and 4th quarters and impact performance numbers positively with employment. The Local Area reviews performance on an ongoing basis through NCWorks and FutureWorks. Case managers are notified on a regular basis of any issues with performance, weekly and monthly. The Local Area holds quarterly case managers meetings where performance is reviewed and information is shared on how to improve performance, along with program training. The Mountain Area Workforce Development Board Workforce Operations Director reviews the individuals in the performance pool and emphasizes to the Case Managers the importance of follow-up, especially in the 2nd and 4th quarter. Individuals are offered follow-up services and are provided with other opportunities to maintain employment, earn a post-secondary credential and to increase their wages. The Workforce Operations Director reviews participant's files to determine compliance and that all documents are uploaded into NCWorks system and that case notes are comprehensive and appropriately detailed. The Workforce Operations Director reviews performance reports on a monthly basis and discussion occurs continually on possible opportunities to improve performance outcomes and to meet training expenditure requirements. Daily information is shared with the service providers from NCWorks and FutureWorks to better serve the community and to improve file information and performance with diversity, equity, and inclusion. FutureWorks Dashboards are shared with the Board Members, as well as the credential reporting is used to follow up on credential completion and insertion to NCWorks. The recorded employment impacts performance measures and develops various levels of staff to meet their assigned goals.. If the performance numbers are impacted negatively, the Case Managers are expected to improve performance within the next two quarters. If there is no improvement at that point, a letter will be sent to the Supervisor to inform them of the issue and if continued a Request for Proposal may be sent out. The Local Board will always do our best to meet out performance goals.

5. Discuss the factors that contribute to the Local Area WDB's credential attainment indicator.
- What are the challenges that the Local Area WDB faces in achieving its credential attainment goal?
 - What are some of the strategies that contribute to the Local Area WDB's success in achieving its credential attainment goal?
 - How do case managers make use of NCcareers.org and the NC Workforce Credentials list?

a. The Local Board's challenges in achieving credential attainment goals are few due to the success of MyFutureNC and the P20 Council. We also have ways to avoid them if they occur. Some individuals have limited access to high-quality training programs which can hinder participants from acquiring the credentials necessary for their chosen career paths. That is why we train our WIOA Case Managers to do the individual assessments as thoroughly as possible. Financial constraints, including the cost of tuition, textbooks, and associated fees, can be a significant barrier for individuals seeking to attain credentials. Lack of financial support may discourage participation and completion of training programs, but the Workforce Board tries to solve this barrier with the WIOA program, the Pell Grant, and referrals. Insufficient awareness about available training opportunities and the value of specific credentials can lead to low enrollment but our providers communicate effectively because they know it is crucial to informing individuals about the benefits of credential attainment and if they do not have the answer or referral, they reach out to the Workforce Operations Director for assistance. Personal challenges may occur such as childcare issues, transportation barriers, or health concerns can impede participants' ability to complete training programs successfully. Addressing these barriers is essential for improving credential attainment rates. We partner and refer to address these situations. Individuals may lack the foundational skills or prerequisites needed to successfully complete credential programs. Addressing these gaps through pre-training support and educational resources is vital. This is also where our WIOA Case Manager assessment is important, as well as engagement and motivation with the participant.

b. Our career pathways contribute to the success in achieving our credential attainment goal. We align them with the community needs, higher wages, larger companies, industry demands. Adequate support services, such as career counseling, mentorship, or access to supportive resources, may impact participants' ability to navigate training programs and overcome challenges during the credential attainment process is a huge part that the Case Managers play to provide this access. The Local Board works closely with MyFutureNC and the P20 Council to solve any credential attainment issues. The Case Managers use the NCCareer.org site to address these challenges which require a comprehensive and collaborative approach that involves ongoing assessment, stakeholder engagement, and strategic planning. By identifying and mitigating these obstacles, the Local Area WDB enhances its capacity to achieve credential attainment goals and better support individuals in their career development.

c. NCCareers.org and the NC Workforce Credentials list serve as valuable resources for case managers in supporting individuals through the career development and credential attainment process through career exploration and guidance. Case managers use NCCareers.org to assist individuals in exploring various career paths, understanding the requirements for different occupations, and assessing their interests and skills. The platform provides comprehensive information about job profiles, industry trends, and career pathways. NCCareers.org often integrates information from the NC Workforce Credentials list. Case managers leverage these resources to identify relevant and in-demand credentials associated with specific occupations. This helps in guiding individuals toward credential programs that align with their career goals. Case managers utilize NCCareers.org to access information about educational and training

opportunities available in North Carolina. They can guide individuals to institutions and programs that offer the credentials identified as valuable in the workforce. By cross-referencing information from the NC Workforce Credentials list with individual career goals, case managers can create customized plans for credential attainment. This mapping ensures that the selected credentials are directly relevant to the chosen career pathway. NCcareers.org and the NC Workforce Credentials list provide details about the requirements and prerequisites for various credentials. Case managers use this information to guide individuals through the necessary steps, including prerequisite courses or exams, to qualify for specific credentials. NC Workforce Credentials list includes industry-recognized credentials that are valued by employers. Case managers utilize this information to guide individuals toward credentials that are widely recognized in the labor market, enhancing their employability. Case managers use data available on NCcareers.org to align credential recommendations with the current and projected labor market demand in specific regions. This ensures that individuals pursue credentials that enhance their competitiveness in the local job market. Providing individuals with access to NCcareers.org and the NC Workforce Credentials list empowers them to make informed decisions about their career and educational pathways. Case managers assist in interpreting the information and guiding individuals toward choices aligned with their aspirations. Case managers may integrate information from these platforms into career planning workshops that may be offered at our career centers or one-on-one counseling sessions. This allows individuals to explore career options, understand the credential landscape, and plan their educational and career journeys effectively. Overall, the integration of NCcareers.org and the NC Workforce Credentials list into case management practices enhances the effectiveness of career guidance, educational planning, and credential attainment support for individuals seeking to advance their careers.

6. When selecting an eligible training provider from the State Eligible Training Provider List to certify for local use, what is the review process the Local Area WDB uses to make this decision? How does the Local Area WDB ensure informed customer choice in the selection of training providers? In other words, how are customers advised that they have options in choosing their provider? [WIOA Section 108(b)(19)]

Eligible training providers have been reviewed in the past when they registered, yearly additions and every two years for detailed updates. The State now approves the providers and their courses based off of required documentation from the company and success of the programs or provider. Once approved by the State, the Local Board looks at local approval based off of the system information with cost, local questionnaire provided to the provider and determines if it is a local career pathway that is needed and offering in demand occupational skills training. If approved at this point, the Workforce Operations Director certifies the program and provider. The customers are provided with a list of the providers by the Workforce Case Manager during the initial assessment to determine the goal of the customer and assist in career advancement. The NCWorks system is also shared with the individual for approved programs, along with the NCCareers.org and Wagner Peyser registration with the Eligibility Explorer application.

7. Indicate whether the Local Area WDB has additional requirements for training providers above and beyond those requirements stated in the State ETPL policy. Does the Local Area WDB make use of USDOL's trainingproviderresults.gov website in its evaluation of which training providers to certify for local area use? If so, how?

The Local Board reviews the providers and programs to benefit the local area needs, as well as making sure they align with our career pathways and meet the needs of our employers in the community.

We focus on certifying training providers that align with key industries in the local area. This ensures that training programs contribute directly to the development of skills in demand by employers.

We evaluate state requirements, training providers based on outcomes such as job placement rates, retention in employment, and wage progression as well. We research the trainingproviderresults.gov website for performance data on training providers, including information on participant completion, employment outcomes, and earnings. The website serves as a tool by offering transparency into the outcomes of various training programs. We may use this information to prioritize providers with strong performance records. We have flexibility in setting additional criteria to meet the unique needs of our communities. But we rely on the State reporting to suggest providers and programs for the most part and then review them, unless approached by a provider and we decide if we want to recommend them to the state by the above process.

- Name Document: *Local Area WDB Name ETPL Policy. A copy of the Mountain Area Workforce Development Board's Eligible Training Providers Policy is attached in WISE.*

VIII. 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]

The process to ensure individuals are not discriminated against based on age, disability, sex, race, color, or national origin is through continual equal opportunity training, reporting and reviews with diversity, equity, and inclusion training as well as customer service training when requested. The training process is scheduled on an annual basis and more frequent when necessary. There are equal opportunity and diversity, equity and inclusion meetings and webinars assigned during the year and some on a monthly basis. Individual meetings are also held with Workforce Case Managers if necessary to ensure fairness for all. Access to centers and their services are provided for persons with disabilities. There is also more virtual access for the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act enrollment with capture documents and the Eligibility Explorer application. NCWorks.org and NCCareers.org are extremely helpful sites for a career search. FutureWorks and NCWorks Reporting provides the reports for the Workforce Operations Director to share the individual breakdown of various areas with each Case Manager to better train on equal opportunity, diversity, equity, and inclusion so each individual can be assisted fairly. The Local Board has not had any reports of discrimination of any kind due to the training provided. If this were to happen, the Board would follow the Equal Opportunity Policy attached to address any issues with individuals and staff.

2. Attach the Local Area WDB's current Equal Opportunity (EO) Complaint Grievance Procedure to address EO requirements [29 CFR 38.35].

- Name document: *Local Area WDB Name EO Complaint Grievance Procedure. The Mountain Area Equal Opportunity Complaint Grievance Procedure is attached in WISE.*

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

The Workforce Operations Director ensures that Local Equal Opportunity procedures are updated by visiting the Contractors and Career Centers on an annual basis to verify materials and services are in place and files are monitored on daily basis for Equal Opportunity procedures and documentation with discussion among the Case Managers and Career Centers on equal opportunity and diversity, equity, and inclusion. The State provides training on an annual basis. Local Board training is provided as needed, along with online training during the year. The use of NCWorks and FutureWorks allows for the breakdown of individuals for monitoring ethnicity as well. Circumstances and location can control this due to the individual needs and rural areas. The Local Board is dedicated to serving any and all individuals through equal opportunity, diversity, equity, and inclusion.

IX. Adult and Dislocated Worker Services

1. Provide an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of existing Adult and Dislocated Worker education and training services.
 - a. 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.
 - b. Describe plans to address any weaknesses identified. [WIOA Section 108(b)(1)(D)]

a. The Mountain Area's vision for serving the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act eligible Adults and Dislocated Workers includes excellent customer service training and diversity, equity, and inclusion training and equal opportunity training all when needed, high level goals in performance and measurable skills gains areas, continual training in NCWorks and Workforce, expanded dislocated worker vision with stop gap and 13 consecutive weeks unemployed, justice involved and daily discussions with Workforce Case Managers on files improvements, corrections, ideas and accomplishments. These objectives will increase and improve employment outcomes in this population due to more knowledgeable staff and increase in service with completion of training and employment opportunities. The NCWorks Career Centers provide services such as resume building, interview practice, workshops, job search and such. The WIOA Case Managers in connection with the schools and colleges such as ABTech and Blue Ridge Community Colleges, assist individuals with doing assessments, determining their objectives and goals and choosing training. The capacity to address the identified education and skill needs of the workforce are determined by each individual assessment for the program, the individual goals, and employers needs through career pathways for the most needed positions for the largest sectors and higher wages for skilled employees for the employers. Short term training is a huge option now due to employers seeking more staff and job seekers that need jobs right away due to layoffs and such. The importance of excellent customer service is

shared with the providers to increase communication with the public to better service individuals and employers with diversity, equity, and inclusion. Business Services contacts the local employers on a regular basis and provides a list of existing employment needs online as well as training needs such as on the job training and incumbent worker training. They also keep the employers and providers well versed on the registration process in NCWorks. The services provided are individualized but accessible to all per policy. Barriers are still a weakness for training services which we address with supportive services per policy the best we can. We will continue to serve our region's employers and individuals to lead to a better community and better life for all.

b. The Local Business Services communicate with employers and providers to address any weakness identified to serve all involved and provide the information and tools to succeed. We offer Incumbent Worker Training to avert layoffs, on the job training for better skilled employees for career aggression with higher wages, and job fairs and career events for marketing. We are working with the colleges, employers, committees and partners to assist any way we can with barriers such as housing, transportation, and childcare. We have a childcare development grant at Land of Sky Regional Council to assist in the community. We work tirelessly on options for transportation such as vanpools and companies are working on their own transportation programs as well. The close work we do with the economic development department at Land of Sky Regional Council with many partners will hopefully bring housing solutions.

2. Provide a description and assessment of the type and availability of adult and dislocated worker employment and training activities in the local area. [WIOA Section 108(b)(7)]

The Local Board's contractors provide training programs available for adult and dislocated workers in the local area. This includes vocational training, skills development, on-the-job training, apprenticeships, and incumbent worker training. We highlight educational opportunities such as adult education, literacy programs, and basic skills training and consider partnerships with local educational institutions offering degree and certification programs. Along with WIOA Case Managers, career centers outline the job placement services available, including career counseling, resume building, interview preparation, and job search assistance and consider whether these services are tailored to the specific needs of adult and dislocated workers. They evaluate the effectiveness of job placement services by examining placement rates, employment outcomes, and employer satisfaction. They describe services that guide individuals in exploring career options and making informed decisions about their career paths. This may include assessments, counseling, and exploration tools. The local career pathways are shared as well as supportive services available or by referral, such as transportation assistance, childcare support, and other resources that address barriers to employment. The collaborations with local employers, industry associations, and businesses to facilitate job placements, internships, and work-based learning opportunities are also highlighted. We explore how adult and dislocated worker employment and training activities are integrated with other workforce development programs and social services in the local area and located at Land of Sky Regional Council. By systematically describing and assessing these components, the Local Area Workforce Development Board can gain a comprehensive understanding of the type and availability of adult and dislocated worker employment and training activities in the local area. This information is essential for making informed decisions, refining strategies, and continuously improving services to meet the evolving needs of the workforce.

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 Local Area WDB and service delivery. Include the expected length of the contract(s) (one to three years and the current year status of the contract (e.g., two of three years). Identify any service provider contract extensions. [WIOA Section 108(b)(16), CPS 04-2022]

The Mountain Area Workforce Development Board released a Request for Proposals for One-Stop Operators, which was integrated in the Request for Proposals for the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Adult and Dislocated Worker Services on March 23, 2022. Contracts were awarded at the Board meeting held on June 25, 2022, for program operations to begin July 1, 2022. The contract term is for one year, renewable in one-year increments for up to three years. The process begins with the Notice of Solicitation published in a regional newspaper, print and online, announcing the Workforce funding opportunity to operate Adult and Dislocated Worker programs. Once the notice is published, the Request for Proposal is distributed via the Bidder's List and posted to www.mountainareaworks.org on the resource tab and www.landofsky.org websites on the opportunities tab. After the Bidder's Conference is scheduled, questions are accepted and answered. All questions and answers are sent to the Bidder's List. Potential Bidders are required to submit a Letter of Intent to bid. Bidders' proposals must be received by the established due date. Once received, Board members and staff review the proposals and make recommendations to the full Board for selection of contractors to operate the upcoming program year's Adult and Dislocated Worker programs. The One Stop Operator selection is included in the Adult and Dislocated Worker Request for Proposal with no funding available to support that designation. Selection of program operators is through competitive procurement and the Board assure an arm's length relationship between the Local Board and service delivery by requiring that contractors who are current Workforce Board members abstain from the selection process, do not participate in discussion regarding selection of program operators and do not move, second or vote to approve contractors for the upcoming program year. As a small region with limited funding, the Local Board does not allow profit from the Workforce contracts. This limits the bidders who are interested in submitting proposals to operate programs. Our Local Board Competitive Procurement policy ensures a competitive procurement process to select providers of Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Adult, Dislocated Workers and Youth services, as well as, for the operators of local, certified NCWorks Career Centers in the Mountain Area Region using the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Final Regulations and to allow the one-stop operator selection process to align with the Mountain Area competitive procurement process for selection of providers of Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth Services, which requires the local area to undertake a request for proposal process to competitively procure programs and to contract with Board-approved providers for up to three-years, with the initial contract period being one-year, with two extensions of one-year each, based on Board approval. A contract extension was approved by the Board for the PY2023 and will be on the agenda for extension at the Board meeting in May 2024 for approval.

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

4. Attach the Local Area WDB's Adult/Dislocated Worker Service Provider list effective July 1, 2024 using the PY 2024 Adult/Dislocated Worker Service Provider List provided.

- Name document: Local Area WDB Name PY 2024 Adult/Dislocated Worker Service Provider List. ***The Mountain Area Local WDB Adult/Dislocated Worker Service Provider List is attached in WISE.***

5. Describe the Local Area WDB's vision for serving the WIOA eligible Adults and Dislocated Workers to include (a) high level goals, (b) outreach strategies, (c) services delivery, and (d) expected outcomes.

The Local Area has seen many individuals who are unemployed, per the most recent data available from the NC Department of Commerce, Labor, and Economic Analysis Division. The Local Board is focused on using alternative definitions, already in progress, of Dislocated Workers including Stop Gap employment and those who have not been employed for thirteen consecutive weeks due to unemployment, justice involved, substance use disorder recovery or continuous training. There is a decline in Dislocated Workers due to the fact that fewer individuals are willing to enter training and to seek additional education when they are laid off because of their need to work immediately to support their family. There are several company closures that we will assist with in the extremely near future along with obtaining the National Dislocated Worker Grant. The Local Area Career Centers regularly contact those registered on NCWorks receiving unemployment insurance. The Business Services department for the Local Board is reaching out to employers to serve with on-the-job training, apprenticeships, work-based learning, incumbent worker training and job shadowing. They are also working with the local Career Centers to assist with Dislocated Workers and Adults who seek training, education, and employment. We cross training all staff to assist with more knowledge in sharing opportunities and branding with NCWorks, so all individuals know where to look for their career. The Workforce Case Managers are trained frequently and consistently on updates, policies and guidelines, equal opportunity, diversity, equity, and inclusion to better assist possible participants in the program. The virtual aspect of NCWorks is user friendly to assist job seekers, customers and participants in job search, programs, workshops, and enrollment. The Early Childhood Development Grant has assisted the daycare and pre-school sector by enrolling many in training, after losing so many due to Covid. The previous National Dislocated Worker Grant for Covid assisted the Workforce and Trade Adjustment program in co-enrollments to give individuals more opportunities. The new training for a commercial driver's license provided by one of the local colleges has increased the number of Adult and Dislocated Worker enrollments. The Career Centers reach out to individuals with many workshops held regularly and this gives them the opportunity to address training, education, and careers in local career pathways. This will assist the employers in their hiring and retainment of better trained individuals. Our goals are to increase our dislocated worker numbers, increase our adult priority of service and credential attainment with measurable skill gains and as always assist in the youth group with barriers. The expected outcome is that we help individuals in many ways with many opportunities for a better life and better community.

6. Describe the Local Area WDB's method for ensuring that a sufficient number of adults receiving individualized career and training services in the Local Area are from one of the following priority of services categories: public assistance, low-income individuals and individuals who are basic skills deficient. [134(c)(3)(E), 3(24)]

Adult Priority of Service is necessary for Mountain Area Local Workforce Development Board due to the assistance needed by individuals in our community and the policy goal of 75% adult priority of service that must be met. There are a sufficient number of adults receiving individualized career and training services by our well-trained Workforce Case Managers in the Local Area and they are usually from one of the priority of services categories such as public assistance, low income, or basic skills deficient. But the primary one for our Local Area is public assistance with low income. The Workforce Operations Director trains the Case Managers to co-enroll whenever possible and applicable. This co-enrollment with Adults, Dislocated Workers and Youth and the required co-enrollment with Trade Adjustment assists in the assurance that a sufficient number of adults will receive training services and supportive services if applicable. The community assists in referrals from participants sharing Workforce Case Manager's names to the Local Task Force for Disconnected Youth. The Local Board receives referrals from the Justice Center, Food Stamp office, Trade Adjustment Case Managers, the unemployment office, students, employers that have participated in Incumbent Worker Training and On the Job Training, as well as the partnerships we have with economic development representatives, MyFutureNC, INspire, GO Places, other Boards and partners. The referral system is a wonderful opportunity to assist many in the community, which leads to better trained employees for the employers and satisfied employers, both send referrals to our Board. Referrals also lead to more assisted justice involved and substance use reentry individuals and on the job training.

7. Describe follow-up services provided to Adults and Dislocated Workers. [WIOA Section 134(c)(2)(xiii)]

The Workforce Operations Director for the Mountain Area Workforce Board monitors the follow up services provided to adults and dislocated workers for individual assistance and performance measures. Follow-up services must be provided for the 12 months following exit. Staff must evaluate and determine the level of intensity to best suit the needs of the individual. These services may consist of verifying employment and wages, discussing work related issues, providing education opportunities, referral to other community services, sharing job search, and labor market information. This follow up is recorded in NCWorks.

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.

8. Please describe the process for monitoring the service provider(s) in the Local Area WDB. Include details such as how it is conducted, who is involved, and how often.

The Workforce Operations Director for the Mountain Area Workforce Board monitors the service providers in the Local Area on a weekly basis. The service provider is monitored on each new enrollment with eligibility documentation including redaction, rotation and grey scale, data validation, self-attestation usage, case notes and activities provided and dated correctly. The Specialist conducts monitoring on the file when work experience, on the job training, and other training is provided to ensure contracts and documents with a follow up for timesheets and attendance sheets for programs. The Specialist conducts monitoring when a participant is ready to exit for applicable documents with redaction, rotation and grey scale, credentials, closed Plan, closed activities and exit case note. A monthly contact monitoring is conducted every month to ensure contact between the Case Manager and their participants. A follow-up monitoring is conducted every quarter to ensure follow-up is being provided and every two months the Adult Priority of Service with Data Integrity Measures report and Performance Measures are shared with the Case Managers. Work experience and on-the-job training monitoring are completed halfway through each participant's timeframe with on-the-job training and 10% of the work experience participants are monitored. The State and Local Board monitors the Workforce program annually. They share a letter to open the monitoring process. Observations, technical assistance and findings are shared with the Local Board who shares with the Case Managers and corrected. This is a good learning process for them. The State shares a letter to close the monitoring process. The finance monitoring is conducted on a monthly basis with invoices by Board Staff meetings on file discussions including training, case notes, activities, documents, etc. Also, informal monitoring is always held as needed. Annual monitoring occurs with all financial documents.

X. 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 (OSY) – A minimum of 75% of the Youth funds allocated to Local Area WDBs, except for the Local Area WDB expenditures for administration, must be used to provide services to OSY.*
- Work Experience – Not less than 20% of Youth funds allocated to the Local Area WDB, except for the Local Area WDB 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.*

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:

In-School Youth Analysis

- a. Approximately, what number of the Youth are ages 14-21?
- b. Approximately, what percentage of these youth are low-income (eligible for WIOA In-school program)?
- c. Approximately, what number of these Youth are in the current school dropout statistics?

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?
- b. Youth ages 16-24 represent what % of the population?
- c. What are the general educational levels of this age group?
- d. What is the general employment status of this age group?

The Mountain Area WDB's general overview of the local current total population for the Title I eligible youth in our region consisting of Buncombe, Henderson, Madison, and Transylvania counties is below.

In-School Youth Analysis:

- A. There were 52 youth, ages 14-21, who were attending school, according to NCWorks.***
- B. Approximately 100% of in-school youth, ages 14-21, are low income.***
- C. There were 0 youth in current drop out status.***

Out-of-School Analysis:

- A. There were 87 youth, ages 16-24, who were not attending school.***
- B. Out-of-school youth ages 16-24 make up approximately 100% of total 16-24 youth in the area.***
- C. The general education level of this age group gauged on the completed education level at WIOA enrollment is 10th grade.***
- D. The general employment status of this age group is unemployed.***

**NC Division of Labor and Economic Analysis Division (LEAD) is a data resource.*

2. Based on the analysis in question 1, does the local Workforce Development Board plan to serve In-School Youth?

Mountain WDB will continue the In School Youth Program with our contractor, Madison County School due to the fact that we want to help all the youth we can when we have the opportunity.

3. Provide a description and assessment of the type and availability of youth workforce activities in the Local Area WDB, 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)]			
Youth Workforce Activity	Activities For Persons with Disabilities?	Brief Assessment/Model Used	Success Rating
<i>Youth Paid Work Experience</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>Administration</i>	<i>Successful and still in operation</i>
<i>Youth and Adult Co-enrollment</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>Co-enrollment give more funding and opportunity for individualized training</i>	<i>Successful and use when needed and funding is available</i>
<i>Youth On the Job Training</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>Irrigation Technician</i>	<i>Successful and more Youth OJTs to come</i>
<i>Youth Job Shadowing</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>Maintenance</i>	<i>Successful and continuing</i>

4. Describe how the Local Area WDB’s Young Adult (NextGen) Program design is unique to include:

- providing objective assessments.
- supportive services needed; and
- developmental needs of each participant, for the purpose of identifying appropriate services and career pathways for participants. [WIOA Section 129(c)(1)(A)]

a. The Local Area NextGen Program design includes a review of basic and occupational skills, prior work experience, employability potential, and developmental needs. Assessments must also consider a youth's strengths rather than just focusing on areas that need improvement. TABE testing is used to assist in assessments to better establish a career goal for the individual early in life to be able to find a career with living wages for a family. This assists the Case Manager in finding the strengths and weaknesses to better engage the individual in a career that they will enjoy and will be successful.

b. Support Services should be reasonable and necessary to enable a participant to take part in training related to their Individual Service Strategy. A Support Service should not duplicate a service a participant could receive from another program in the community.

c. Developmental needs are presented when testing and developing the individual service strategy with objective assessment in workforce investment activities, through statewide and local workforce investment systems that increase the employment, retention, and earnings of participants, and increase occupational skill attainment by participants, and as a result, improve the quality of the workforce, reduce welfare dependency, and enhance the productivity and competitiveness of the nation, as well as support a family. The local career pathways are shared and explained to the participants so they understand a better position and better wage can be achieved in these sectors. Youth and Adult co-enrollments give the individual youth more opportunity and access to funding and training. Along with the Youth on the Job Training, Youth Job Shadowing and Youth Apprenticeships which increase the opportunity for skilled training and a better career with higher wages.

5. How does the Local Area WDB 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)] How does the provider ensure the ISS is unique to the individual?

Each youth has a comprehensive Individual Service Strategy based on their career goals and career pathways are shared and explained during intake. The objective assessment will help the youth reach their career goals by obtaining their Diploma or High School Equivalency, earning a post-secondary credential, and entering a rewarding career pathway. NCWorks NextGen Youth Case Managers work closely with the youth and employers to help the youth find the right career pathway for each individual specifically. The fundamentals of the NCWorks NextGen Youth Program are Intake, Objective Assessment, Individual Service Strategy and Information and Referrals along with Career Pathways. Based on individual needs identified through the Objective Assessment and Individualized Service Strategy, youth and young adults are served through an array of Workforce Development services that fall within the fourteen required program elements of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. The focus on serving youth and young adults is education, career pathways, career experience, career exploration, leadership development and wrap around services. Youth performance indicators for post-secondary credential attainment, employment and earnings will be met or exceeded by following this framework. Work experience is a fundamental part of the NCWorks NextGen Youth Program since it allows youth and young adults to explore career options and to determine what occupations they like and what roles are not a good fit for them. Work experience, job shadowing, on the job training and apprenticeships also provide employers an opportunity to see the youth and young adults perform in real life jobs to determine if the youth and young adults could be offered full time, unsubsidized employment. Work experience along with on-the-job training and apprenticeships is the most effective training tool available and increasing the work-based learning opportunities available to youth and young adults will help the Local Area more effectively meet performance measures as well as connect them with rewarding career pathways. The co-enrollment of adult and youth groups gives youth more opportunity in training to prepare for their career. We as a Local Board are committed to the assistance of youth and all other individuals with equal opportunity, diversity, inclusion, and equity to support our community, as well as assist our partners, employers, other Boards, and economic development sector.

6. Describe the Local Area WDB’s 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)]

The strategy to ensure the Youth NextGen Program activities lead to a high school diploma or equivalent is to make sure each youth has a comprehensive Individual Service Strategy based on their career goals. The objective assessment will help the youth reach their career goals by obtaining their diploma or high school equivalency, earning a postsecondary credential, and entering into a rewarding career pathway along with work experience, job shadowing, and apprenticeships. NCWorks NextGen Youth Case Mangers work closely with the youth and employers to help the youth find the right career pathway for them and experience work-based learning. They also stay in contact with them on a monthly basis and sometimes

weekly, which develops a relationship and respect for the Case Manager to be more influential in leading the participant to the completion of training. The fundamentals of the NCWorks NextGen Youth Program are Intake, Objective Assessment, Individual Service Strategy and Information and Referrals and work-based learning. Based on individual needs identified through the Objective Assessment and Individualized Service Strategy, youth and young adults are served through an array of Workforce Development services that fall within the fourteen required program elements of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. The focus on serving youth and young adults is education, career pathways, career experience, leadership development and wrap around services. Work experience along with youth on the job training, youth apprenticeships, job shadowing is a fundamental part of the NCWorks NextGen Youth Program since it allows youth and young adults to explore career options and to determine what occupations they like and what roles that are not a good fit for them. This leads them to a better career with higher wages.

7. Describe how follow-up services will be provided for (NextGen) youth. [WIOA Section 134(c)(2)(xiii)]

The Mountain Area's Youth Program Operators provide follow up services for NextGen Youth who have completed Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act short term or long-term training and are seeking employment or have entered employment, as well as training for their general education diploma. Staff conduct these follow-ups in person, by telephone or by email. Follow up services continue for a minimum of 12 months after exit from the program. When the participant exits from the program, Mountain Area Workforce Development Board places significant emphasis on providing follow up, since we recognize most of our clients have many barriers to employment. Collaborating with the clients proactively can help the individual remain employed and make progress on their self-selected career pathway. These services provided are career counseling, job search, discussion of work-related issues, referrals to community services, labor market information, and education information. This is recorded in NCWorks.

Note: All youth participants must receive some form of follow-up for a minimum duration of 12 months.

8. Where does the Local Area WDB plan to serve the young adults (NextGen): NCWorks Career Centers Specialized Centers, Services Provider Offices, or Hybrid situations? Explain if it is both NCWorks Career Centers and Provider Offices or some other option.

The local area serves the NextGen young adults through the public schools and Goodwill contractors offices. This will be hybrid, online or in person depending on what best benefits the individual. The Youth Committee was established to address any programs, sites, functions, and technology to increase the opportunity to serve NextGen customers such as on the job training, job shadowing, apprenticeships along with paid work experience. The NextGen Youth attend the Asheville Buncombe Technical College and Blue Ridge Community College for training when appropriate. They are also co-enrolled in adult and youth groups for more opportunity for funding and training. The Career Centers hold scheduled workshops to benefit all individuals. We at the Mountain Area Workforce Board do all we can to assist all individuals in our region with equal opportunity, diversity, inclusion and equity in training and employment that leads to higher wages for a better life.

9. Attach the Local Area WDB Youth Service Provider’s chart, effective July 1, 2024, using the PY 2024 Youth Service Provider List provided. Complete each column to include specifying where Youth Services are provided.

- Name the document: *PY 2024 Local Area WDB Name Youth Service Provider List. A copy of the Mountain Area Youth Service Provider List is attached in WISE.*

10. Provide the date and process for the competitive procurement of the Youth Programs that ensures an arm’s-length relationship between the Local Area WDB and service delivery. Include the expected length of the contract(s) (one to three years and the current year status of the contract (e.g., two of three years). Identify any service provider contract extensions. [WIOA Section 108(b)(16), CPS 04-2022]

The Request for Proposal process begins with the publication of a Notice of Solicitation, after which the Request for Proposal packets are distributed to the Youth Bidders’ List and upon request. A Bidders’ Conference was held, and questions answered, which were distributed to all Bidders. A Letter of Intent to Bid was also required from potential Bidders. Proposals were due by the date established in the request and were received from the current Youth Program Operators. The program year 2022 Requests for Proposals for Adult and Dislocated Worker and Youth were released for competitive procurement on Wednesday, March 23, 2022, and proposals were due by 4:00 pm on Wednesday, May 11, 2022. Due to the fact that the same Contractors responded to the call, they were contracted for another year. They are the Buncombe, Henderson, Madison, and Transylvania Career Centers and for Youth Services for Out of School Youth are Goodwill Buncombe, Goodwill Transylvania, and Madison, along with Henderson County Public School and for In School Youth is Madison County Public School. Our Local Board Competitive Procurement policy ensures a competitive procurement process to select providers of Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Adult, Dislocated Workers and Youth services, as well as, for the operators of local, certified NCWorks Career Centers in the Mountain Area Region using the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Final Regulations and to allow the one-stop operator selection process to align with the Mountain Area competitive procurement process for selection of providers of Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth Services, which requires the local area to undertake a request for proposal process to competitively procure programs and to contract with Board approved providers for up to three years, with the initial contract period being one year, with two extensions of one year each, based on Board approval.

USDOL granted North Carolina a waiver for Program Years 2022 and 2023, which reduced the minimum Title I Youth expenditure rate requirement for OSY from 75% to 50% and allowed the maximum expenditure rate for in-school youth (ISY) to be increased from 25% to up to 50%. NC is requesting the same waiver for Program Year 2024.

11. Provide the Local Area WDB’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.

- a) State how the WDB will achieve the 75% OSY expenditure rate and describe the steps that will be taken to comply with the WDB's programmatic goals and outcomes.
- b) Describe why there is a need to serve additional ISY in the local area region and state how the WDB will achieve the 25% ISY expenditure rate.
- c) Describe how the local area region will be able to meet the demand for youth services by using the waiver.

[WIOA Section 129(a)(4)(A)] (CPS 09-2021, Change 1) (OG 07-2022, Change 1)

The Local Board will achieve the 75% expenditure in the Workforce Youth program by the operator's enrollments in the program with training, supportive services, work experience. They also provide career counseling, planning services for eligible youth, and work-based learning opportunities for eligible youth participants. They will refer clients for short and long-term training opportunities and on-the-job training funded by the Local Workforce Board when possible. These participants will be provided with registered apprenticeship opportunities when arrangements with employers can be made, along with possible job shadowing opportunities. The career readiness coaches work with youth and help them determine their best option to improve their skills and employment opportunities. In some cases, the youth may choose not to re-enroll in the public school system and will work to obtain their high school equivalency diploma. All of the programs emphasize work experience, short term skills training focusing on earning an industry recognized post-secondary occupational skills credential and on the job training, when funding is available, to assist with placement into unsubsidized employment. Supportive Services are also provided when the student is in training and needs supportive assistance. The Youth Program Operators in the region are working to eliminate barriers between the Title II Adult Education providers at the community colleges and area literacy councils by working with the Local County Disconnected Youth Task Force and Jobs for NC Graduates. Improving collaboration will help reach more Youth and provide them many different career pathways with self-sufficient wages. We have one contractor in Madison County and there is a need there for the in-school youth work experience program so we want to help with any opportunity that we have and can. We will not use the 50% waiver.

12. How does the Local Area WDB ensure that the minimum of 20% of funds is spent on work experience and is the Local Area WDB expending the 20% minimum on work experience, to include an estimate of expenditures that will be paid wages to youth? If the Local Area WDB has not been meeting the minimum of 20% of funds, please explain additional measures to be taken this year. [WIOA Section 129(c)(4)] (CPS 09-2021, Change 1)

The Local Area is committed to meeting the federally mandated 20% requirement of all Youth funds to be spent on work experience. It is the intent of the Local Area to maximize youth work experience to the greatest extent possible. The NCWorks NextGen Youth Program Case Managers are always connecting with the Local Area business services team to increase opportunities to expand work experience with on-the-job training, apprenticeships, and job shadowing. Board staff monitors youth work experience spending on a monthly basis to determine if the Local Area is on target to meet the 20% work experience mandate. If

youth contractors are not reporting sufficient youth work experience, staff will meet with contractors to determine strategy needed to increase their youth work experience through apprenticeships, job shadowing, on the job training and paid work experience. Also, the Local Area financial reports are shared with the Board at each regularly scheduled meetings and the Board is informed about the progress being made to meet the 20% work experience mandate which the Youth Committee collaborates on. Measures have been taken to ensure the mandate will be met with staff time and more work experience funding.

13. Does the Local Area WDB have a dedicated full-time Youth Business Services Representative (or similar title) at the Local Area WDB level or at the Provider level? If so, state at which level, how many representatives, and how this impacts the Youth Program Design?

The Mountain Area Workforce Board has recently hired one dedicated full-time Youth Business Services Representative on our Board staff. This should open up more opportunity to advance assistance for summer employment, transportation, communication and collaboration with youth groups, and further barrier assistance.

14. Does the Local Area WDB have special programs for young adults that are Justice-Involved or have a substance use disorder? If yes, please briefly describe them.

The Local Board ensures the assistance of justice involved and substance use disorder individuals in our WIOA program. We recently obtained, along with Land of Sky Regional Council, two grants from the American Rescue Plan Act. These grants are for reentry and substance use disorder. The Board is dedicated to serving all individuals with equal opportunity, equity, inclusion, and diversity. Land of Sky Regional Council also has another INspire grant that assists with this also. Last year, we assisted Dr. Zeb Regan's Fierce Fellows justice involved soft skills program and were able to enroll 13 justice involved participants in the WIOA program and provide services. It was such a success that we have been asked to host the program again this year in May.

15. Describe how the Local Area WDB 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 Local Area WDB's and the creation of career pathways for youth. [USDOL TEGL 8-15]

a. The Local Area's NCWorks Career Centers and Title II Adult Education and Family Literacy Act programs work closely together through a process of informal and formal referral processes. In all four counties in the Local Area, the community college is a provider of Adult Education and Literacy. The advantage in three of the four counties is that the NCWorks Career Center is located on the community college campus and often within walking distance of the Adult Education and Literacy provider. In the case

of the Buncombe NCWorks Career Center, the community college and the center are on the same public transportation bus line and in relatively close proximity. Based on the initial screening at the NCWorks Career Center, it is determined whether the individual needs additional literacy skills. A referral is then made to the Adult Education and Literacy provider along with additional guidance for the individual. There is a follow up to determine if the individual accessed the literacy services.

b. Title IV Vocational Rehabilitation staff is out posted on a weekly basis at the Buncombe NCWorks Career Center. At the other three NCWorks Career Centers in the region, there is a process of informal and formal referrals to Vocational Rehabilitation. The Vocational Rehabilitation office is served by limited public transportation access and our posting staff allows for more accessibility for career services for individuals with disabilities.

c. Adult education, occupational education and training and workforce preparation, as well as career pathways for youth, are often linked. The NCWorks Career Centers in the Local Area have an integrated service design, which provides services to many different populations in a seamless manner. All centers have staff trained to work with job seekers with barriers to employment, which includes former offender specialists. There is close collaboration with agencies providing public assistance and services to homeless individuals with each of the NCWorks Career Centers. Since messaging and marketing can be used for different populations, the career pathways available to youth are the same career pathways available to other populations. These Career Pathways are Healthcare, Hospitality and Tourism, Advanced Manufacturing, Energy, and in the process of certification are Information Technology and Skilled Trades and Construction. A career pathway offers many on ramp and off ramp opportunities depending on that individual's preferences and life circumstances. Regardless of the age of the individual or their relevant skill level, the career pathways can be made available to all these populations through co-enrollment and other avenues.

16. Specify if the Local Area WDB plans to offer incentives for (NextGen) youth. If yes, attach the Youth Incentive Policy, which should 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 Area WDB's internal controls to safeguard cash/gift cards.

- Name document: Local Area WDB Name Youth Incentive Policy. **The Mountain Area does not have a Youth Incentives Policy, nor does it provide Youth participants with incentives.**

Note: Federal funds may not be spent on entertainment costs. Youth Incentive Policies should include compliance with the Cost Principles in 2 CFR part 200; identify types of items that may be awarded (gift cards, plaques, certificates, checks); identify types of achievements/completion of activities (an inclusive list is required); practices for internal controls for safeguarding incentives and provide a sample list of required documentation for reimbursement (diploma, evaluations).

17. If the Local Area WDB does not offer incentives for (NextGen) youth, please explain why.

The Board has made significant cuts to our youth contractors' budgets, including reducing youth contractors by two contractors, while still maintaining services in each county in the region. We do not have the funding to offer incentives and therefore do not have a policy.

18. 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)]

The Local Area is focused on the NCWorks NextGen Youth Program with the target sector career pathways of Advanced Manufacturing, Healthcare, Hospitality and Tourism, Energy, and in the process of certification are Information Technology and Skilled Trades and Construction. The Board has determined that these sectors are the source of high demand and high wage jobs in the Local Area. As a result, with employer leadership the Local Area has developed career pathways for these sectors. These career pathways are focused on diverse populations including youth, justice involved, substance use disorder and persons with disabilities. Helping connect with these career pathways will lead to careers that offer self-sufficient wages, unsubsidized employment including in small employers, specifically in demand industry sectors and occupations to local and regional labor markets.

19. Please complete the Youth Program Elements chart provided to demonstrate how the Local Area WDB ensures each of the 14 youth program elements is made available to youth participants. Be certain to complete both columns of the chart to demonstrate partnerships and potential use of shared funding. Please specify partners. [WIOA Section 129(c)(2)(A)]

- Name document: Local Area WDB Name Youth Program Elements Chart. ***The Mountain Area's Youth Program Elements is attached in WISE.***

20. Does the Local Area WDB 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)]

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

Not Applicable.

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

a) Provide the committee's purpose/vision.

Yes, the Mountain Area Workforce Development Board has a standing Youth Committee that provides information and assists with planning, operational and other issues relating to the provision of services to NextGen young adults. The Youth Committee is comprised of Board members, employers, educators, and representatives of community organizations that serve NextGen youth and young adults. The Youth

Committee’s purpose is to establish and maintain better education and careers for the youth and young adults, so they are able to have a better life and support a family. The committee’s vision in this is to collaborate with partners and economic development to assist with barriers in transportation, childcare and housing, which holds most youth and young adults back and more work-based learning opportunities.

b) Provide the youth committee’s top three goals or objectives for PY 2024.

Work more closely with the region’s CTE Directors

Find more options for the transportation barrier

Communicate more with employers about work experience and on the job training

c) Provide a list of youth committee members to include members’ agencies/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 Local Area WDB member*).

- Name document: *Local Area WDB Name Youth Committee Members* [WIOA Section 107(b)(4)(A)(ii)]
The Mountain Area’s Youth Committee Members List is attached in WISE.

c. Complete the following chart for the PY 2024 Youth Committee’s planned meeting schedule to include dates, time, and location. (Expand form as needed or mark Not Applicable.)

Date	Time	Location (include address and room #)
<i>April 25, 2024</i>	<i>10:00 am</i>	<i>Virtual Meeting 339 New Leicester Highway, Asheville, NC 28806 Link will be shared prior to meeting</i>
<i>June 21, 2024</i>	<i>10:00 am</i>	<i>Virtual Meeting 339 New Leicester Highway, Asheville, NC 28806 Link will be shared prior to meeting</i>
<i>August 16, 2024</i>	<i>10:00 am</i>	<i>Virtual Meeting 339 New Leicester Highway, Asheville, NC 28806 Link will be shared prior to meeting</i>
<i>October 18, 2024</i>	<i>1:00 pm</i>	<i>Virtual Meeting 339 New Leicester Highway, Asheville, NC 28806 Link will be shared prior to meeting</i>
<i>December</i>	<i>12:00 pm</i>	<i>TBD (not a regular meeting)</i>
<i>March 20, 2025</i>	<i>1:00 pm</i>	<i>Virtual Meeting 339 New Leicester Highway, Asheville, NC 28806 Link will be shared prior to meeting</i>
<i>May 22, 2025</i>	<i>1:00 pm</i>	<i>Virtual Meeting 339 New Leicester Highway, Asheville, NC 28806 Link will be shared prior to meeting</i>

XI. Local Area WDB Innovations

1. List all additional funding received by the Local Area WDB (for example, to include but not limited to, special grants, NC Job Ready Workforce Investment Grants, Business Services funds, National Dislocated Worker Grants (NDWG) (disaster), YouthBuild, Foundations, American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), Partners for Reentry Opportunities in Workforce Development (PROWD), NCWorks Commission Local Innovation Fund Grant, and/or outside funding to include a brief description of the source and the amount received).

Grant Name/Kind	Brief Description	Beginning and End date	Source and Amount	Partner Organization (if applicable)
<i>ARC INspire Grant</i>	<i>Recovery to career</i>	<i>July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2024</i>	<i>Dogwood Health Trust and Appalachian Regional Commission \$1.1 million 3 years</i>	<i>Southwestern 11 counties</i>
<i>ARC Power Grant</i>	<i>Early Childhood Development initiative</i>	<i>July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2024</i>	<i>Dogwood Health Trust and Appalachian Regional Commission \$1.1 million 3 years</i>	<i>Southwestern 11 counties</i>
<i>American Rescue Plan Act Grant</i>	<i>Small Businesses Reentry Substance Use</i>	<i>March 1, 2023 – June 30, 2026</i>	<i>Division of Workforce Solutions \$250,000</i>	<i>Mountain Area</i>
<i>National Dislocated Worker Grant</i>	<i>Evergreen Closure June 9, 2023</i>	<i>March 1, 2023- March 31, 2025</i>	<i>\$500,000</i>	<i>Mountain Area</i>
<i>Workforce Opportunity for Rural Communities</i>	<i>Facilitate alignment of workforce and economic development strategies</i>	<i>February 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024 \$1.4 million</i>	<i>USDOL \$1.4 million</i>	<i>Mountain Area</i>
<i>GO PLACES Youth Demonstration Grant</i>	<i>Provides services to at-risk, justice involved Youth in two census tracks in Asheville, NC and in Knoxville and</i>	<i>April 1, 2023-June 30, 2026</i>	<i>USDOL 3.9 million</i>	<i>Eastern Tennessee Development District</i>

Grant Name/Kind	Brief Description	Beginning and End date	Source and Amount	Partner Organization (if applicable)
	<i>Cooke County, TN and surrounding area.</i>			

2. Provide a clear and detailed example of the Local Area WDB’s best or promising **Adult/Dislocated Worker** program practice that has yielded positive results with evidence, which affirms this practice is effective.

One of the best and most viable adult and dislocated worker program practices is that case managers help the participant in the beginning to narrow down training to the best option for employment, training to better qualify them for a permanent position and better prepare them for employers, so they can make the highest wages possible. Also, the co-enrollment of Workforce and Trade Adjustment programs is a practice that not only has assisted individuals with more opportunities but has also increased the enrollment numbers for the programs. Due to the scheduled closure of a large manufacturing facility Continental, a WARN notice was issued in February 2020 for a closure date of March 2023. In an effort to assist affected workers who met dislocated worker eligibility, the Board offered financial support for online training and certifications to upskill these individuals. This allowed them to obtain training and certifications that are critical to their next job. Another company closed June 9, 2023, Evergreen; and we received another National Dislocated Worker Grant of \$500,000 to assist these employees along with the Southwestern Board. Evidence is collected from NCWorks and FutureWorks that shows the increase in enrollments which increased performance measures. This was not only from this situation but also due to the increased numbers in training for commercial driver’s licenses. These numbers are still not pre-pandemic numbers, but our goal at the Local Board is to assist anyone in need that we can, such as individuals seeking training or employment for increased wages and employers seeking skilled employees in our regional communities, response to other Boards in need and collaborate with other States for grants to assist our communities, such as in the USDOL grant we received with Tennessee. Evidence is collected from NCWorks that shows the increase in activities from this as well.

3. Provide a clear and detailed example of the Local Area WDB’s best or promising **Youth** program practice that has yielded positive results with evidence, which affirms this practice is effective.

One of the best youth practices is the incorporation of work experience, on the job training, job shadowing and apprenticeships give the youth a better start to a career and higher wages to support themselves and their families. Being able to enroll youth in work experience shows impressive results and better career choices with higher wages. Evidence is collected from NCWorks and FutureWorks that shows the increase in enrollments which increased performance measures. Enrollments doubled again this program year as did the work experience.

4. Provide a clear and detailed example of the Local Area WDB's best or promising **regional strategy** that has yielded positive results with evidence, which affirms this practice is effective.

One of the best regional strategies that has yielded positive results is comprehensive sector-based workforce development initiative. The Local Area WDB implemented a comprehensive sector-based workforce development initiative targeting the growing healthcare industry in the region and the lack of staff. Recognizing the increasing demand for healthcare professionals, the WDB collaborated with employers, education providers, and community organizations collaborated to design and implement a multifaceted strategy, we conducted a thorough analysis of the healthcare sector, identifying current and future workforce needs, key occupations, and skill requirements. Since we have strong partnerships with local healthcare employers, including hospitals, clinics, and long-term care facilities, we engaged with employers in regular dialogue to understand their hiring needs and challenges. We have implemented customized training, on the job training, with supportive services in mind, and aligned curriculum with credentialing requirements. The evidence of positive results is the fact that it led to more training enrollments and many individuals successfully transitioned from training programs to full-time employment. Employers reported high levels of satisfaction with the quality of candidates emerging from the training programs. They noted that program participants were well-prepared for the demands of the healthcare workplace. Individuals who completed the training programs experienced tangible career advancement. Some started as entry-level healthcare workers and progressed to more advanced roles, contributing to a skilled and stable healthcare workforce. It is crucial for WDBs to conduct thorough sector analysis, engage employers actively, and tailor training programs to meet the unique demands of the local labor market.

5. Provide a clear and detailed example of the Local Area WDB's best or promising **virtual services strategy** that has yielded positive results with evidence, which affirms this practice is effective.

The best and most promising virtual service strategy now and moving forward in this technology world is the virtual WIOA enrollment with electronic signature. We have more enrollments because more people every day want more technology and would rather be online than in an office.

6. Provide a clear and detailed example of the Local Area WDB’s innovative **business services strategies** and engagement practices that demonstrated employers taking charge and driving the agenda that has yielded positive results with evidence, which affirms this practice is effective.

One of the best strategies for business services as a whole is still to share policy and guideline information with the employers, so they can better assist the participant in the explanation of the program and collection of documentation for the WIOA program as well as a better experience for the employer and job seeker altogether. And this can also lead to more registrations in NCWorks with employers and providers because they better understand what we have to offer and how much more it can help them now and futuristically. There is evidence of this as we have more registrations locally with employer codes increasing every day in our Salesforce system and NCWorks.

XII. Program Year 2024 Local Area WDB Plan Required Policy Attachments

1. The following policies are *required* to be attached as separate documents in WISE as part of the PY 2024 Local Area Plan. The Local Area Plan is not complete without these documents.

- Name Each Document: Local Area WDB Name, Policy Name. **Mountain Area Policies are uploaded to WISE.**

- In the first column, state if the policy is attached or why it is missing and when it can be expected. If two of the policies have been combined, please make a notation.

- In the second column mark “Yes” **only** if the policy has been changed/revised for the PY 2024 Plan and has not been previously submitted to the DWS.
- Revised policies should be submitted with a highlight or summary of the changes made to the local policy.
- Do not add an empty document in WISE as a “placeholder.”

Required Local Area WDB Policies	Attached (Yes/No). If no, why?	Revised for PY 2024 (Yes/No) and needs review
1. Adult/Dislocated Worker Experience Policy	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>
2. Competitive Procurement Policy	<i>Yes.</i>	<i>No</i>
3. Conflict of Interest Policy	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>
4. Nondiscrimination/Equal Opportunity Standards and Complaint Procedures	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>
5. Financial Management Policy for Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Title I	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>
6. Individualized Training Account Policy	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>
7. On-the-Job Training Policy	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>
8. Oversight Monitoring Policy, Tool and Schedule	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>
9. Priority of Service Policy	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>
10. Youth Work Experience Policy	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>
11. Supportive Services Policy	<i>Yes-includes Needs Related Payment Policy</i>	<i>No</i>
12. Local Area WDB WIOA and TAA Co-enrollment Policy	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>
13. Eligible Training Provider Policy	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>
14. Non-Criminal Complaint Procedures	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>

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

In the second column mark “Yes” **only** if the policy has been changed for PY 2024 and has not been previously submitted to the DWS.

- Do not add a blank document in WISE as a “placeholder.”

- These policies are required to operate/offer these services
- If “Yes,” load the policy as a separate document.
- Name document: *Local Area WDB Name, Policy Name*. (Example: IWT Policy – Yes. Attached as *Board Name IWT Policy*.)

Optional Local Area WDB Policies	Yes- the Local Area WDB has a policy or N/A (Not Applicable)	Revised for PY 2024 (Add Yes or N/A for this column)
1. Local Area WDB Guidance for Local Incumbent Worker Grants	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>
2. Local Area WDB Needs-Related Policy	<i>No-included in Supportive Service Policy</i>	<i>No</i>
3. Local Area WDB Transitional Jobs Policy	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No.</i>
4. Local Area WDB Youth Incentive Policy	<i>No</i>	<i>No</i>

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	<i>\$1,750 per semester</i> <i>\$5,250 per year</i> <i>\$10,500 per two years</i>
Time Limits	<i>Up to Two Years for an associate degree. One-year for Diploma or Certificate credential. An additional \$1,000 will be allowed if necessary to complete the training up to a maximum of \$8,000, on a case-by-case basis, per case manager request.</i>
Degree or Certificates allowed (Associate, Bachelor’s, other)	<i>Associate degree, Diploma, and Certificates are allowed. A bachelor’s degree is allowed when indicated by the long-term training participant’s Individual Employment Plan and the training could be completed within the time frame and dollar limits of the ITA.</i>

Individual Training Accounts (ITA) Summary	
Procedures for determining case-by-case exceptions for training that may be allowed	<i>Case Managers have the ability to request waivers to funding and time limits based on individual participant circumstances.</i>
Period for which ITAs are issued (semester, school year, short-term, etc.)	<i>Each Semester an ITA is issued for Participants in long-term training.</i>
Supportive Services covered by ITA (provide examples such as uniforms, tools, physical exams, etc.)	<i>Items which are integral to training, including required uniforms, tools, exams such as nursing.</i>
Other	<i>Not Applicable</i>

4. Provide a description of how training services under chapter 3 of subtitle B will be provided in accordance with section 134(c)(3)(G), including if contracts for the training services will be used, how the use of such contracts will be coordinated with the use of individual training accounts under that chapter and how the local board will ensure informed customer choice in the selection of training programs regardless of how the training services are to be provided. [WIOA Section 108(b)(19)]

The Mountain Area Workforce Development Board training services are provided in accordance with the aforementioned section, addressing the use of contracts, coordination with individual training accounts, and ensures informed customer choice. The Board identifies eligible training providers based on the criteria specified in WIOA. These providers include educational institutions and community-based organizations. The Board follows the competitive procurement process. This involves soliciting proposals from eligible training providers and selecting those that best meet the needs of participants and the local workforce. The Local WDB uses Individual Training Accounts to access training services. ITAs provide participants with the flexibility to choose training programs that align with their career goals. The use of ITAs are aligned with WIOA requirements, ensuring that participants have access to a variety of training options that are responsive to the needs of the local labor market. This process involves consultation with career counselors or case managers to guide participants in making informed choices. The Local WDB provide a comprehensive career counseling and guidance services to participants. This includes informing them about available training options, potential career pathways, and the labor market demand for specific occupations. They will have access to information about various training providers, programs, and credentials from NCWorks and NCCareers.gov. This information is transparent, easily accessible, and regularly updated to reflect current offerings. The Local WDB conducts orientation sessions or workshops to familiarize participants with the available training options, the benefits of different credentials, and the potential career paths associated with various training programs. Ongoing support is provided to participants throughout the training process. This includes monitoring progress, addressing challenges, and ensuring that participants have the necessary resources to successfully complete their training. By implementing these strategies, the Local Workforce Development Board provides effective training services

under Chapter 3 of Subtitle B in accordance with WIOA Section 108(b)(19). The emphasis is on ensuring informed customer choice, aligning training options with local labor market demands, and promoting transparency and accountability in the delivery of training services.

5. Please specify the supportive services provided by the Local Area WDB Supportive Services Policy. List specific items under Supplies, Emergency, and Other, as identified in the Local Area WDB policy. (Expand form as needed.)

Transportation	Childcare	Supplies <i>(include examples)</i>	Emergency <i>(include examples)</i>	Other <i>(include examples)</i>
<i>Transportation to employment</i>	<i>Childcare to support a working parent no late fees</i>	<i>Supplies required for employment uniform, shoes, tools</i>	<i>Utility bill no late fees</i>	<i>Rent no late fees</i>
<i>Transportation to training</i>	<i>Dependent care no late fees</i>	<i>Supplies required for training such as uniform, shoes, tools</i>	<i>Medical bill no late fees</i>	<i>Educational testing not in ITA</i>
<i>Vehicle repair with 3 estimates</i>	<i>Disability accommodations</i>	<i>Eyeglasses</i>	<i>Dentist no late fees</i>	<i>Training material not in ITA</i>

Note: The Local Area WDB must adequately safeguard all forms of supportive services payments (i.e., gas cards, cash, gift cards, etc.) and assure that they are used solely for authorized purposes. The Supportive Services Policy must include the Local Area WDB’s internal controls to safeguard supportive services. The internal controls must address issuance, storage, and reconciliation of supportive services throughout the area and be clearly stated within the policy.

Attachment Checklist from Local Area Plan Instructions

- Local Area WDB Signed copy of Consortium Agreement (if applicable)
- Local Area WDB Administrative Entity Organizational Chart
- Local Area WDB Board Members (*form provided*)
- Local Area WDB By-Laws
- Local Area WDB By-Laws Required Elements Crosswalk (*form provided*)
- Local Area WDB Organizational Chart
- Local Area WDB Administrative Entity Certification Regarding Debarment* (*form provided*)
- Local Area WDB Workforce Development Area Signatory Form* (*form provided*)
- Local Area WDB NCWorks Career Centers (*form provided*)
- Local Area WDB Adult and Dislocated Worker Service Provider (*form provided*)
- Local Area WDB Eligible Training Provider Policy
- Local Area WDB 14 Youth Program Elements Chart (*form provided*)
- Local Area WDB Youth Committee Meeting Schedule (*optional*)
- Local Area WDB Youth Committee Members (*optional*)
- Local Area WDB Youth Service Provider (*form provided*)
- Local Area WDB Youth Incentive Policy (*optional*)
- Local Area WDB WIOA and TAA Co-enrollment Policy (*required*)
- Local Area Adult/Dislocated Worker Work Experience Policy
- Competitive Procurement Policy
- Conflict of Interest Policy
- Nondiscrimination/Equal Opportunity Standards and Complaint Procedures
- Financial Management Policy for Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Title I
- Local Area WDB Individualized Training Account Policy
- On-the-Job Training Policy
- Local Area WDB Oversight Monitoring Policy, Tool, and Schedule
- Priority of Service Policy
- Youth Work Experience Policy
- Local Area WDB Supportive Services Policy
- Local Area WDB Incumbent Worker Training Policy (*optional*)
- Local Area WDB Needs-Related Policy (*optional*)
- Non-Criminal Complaint Procedures
- Local Area WDB Transitional Jobs Policy (*optional*)
- Memorandum of Understanding
- Customer Flow Chart

*Mail signed and unfolded originals to assigned DWS Planner at:

N.C. Division of Workforce Solutions
313 Chapanoke Road, Suite 120
4316 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, NC 27699-4316

DocuSign® (or similar) signature pages may be uploaded in WISE.

Appendices

NC Local Area WDB By-Laws Required Elements

[Appendix A](#)

By-Laws Guidance

[Appendix B](#)

Guidance Regarding Meetings and Conferencing via Electronic Means

[Appendix C](#)

Local Area WDB Membership Requirements

[Appendix D](#)

NC Local Area WDB By-Laws Required Elements

At a minimum, the Local Area WDB by-laws must include the following items for DWS approval. When submitting the Local Area WDB by-laws, please specify the section (provide a clear crosswalk) where the following required elements are located within the submitted by-laws.

Elements 1-7 are the *required* elements designated at WIOA Final Rule 679.310(g).

1. The nomination process used by the Chief Local Elected Officials (CLEOs) to elect the Local Area Board Chair and members.
2. The term limitations and how the term appointments will be staggered to ensure only a portion of membership expire in a given year.
3. The process to notify the Chief Local Elected Officials (CLEOs) of a Board member vacancy to ensure a prompt nominee within ninety (90) days of the vacancy.
4. The proxy and alternative designee process will be used when a Board member is unable to attend a meeting and assigns a designee as per the requirements of 20 CFR 679.110(d)(4).
5. The use of technology such as phone and web-based meetings, which will be used to promote Board member participation (20 CFR 679.110(d)(5)).
6. The process to ensure Board members actively participate in convening the workforce development system's stakeholders, brokering relationship with a diverse range of employers, and leveraging support for workforce development activities.
7. A description of any other conditions governing appointment or membership on the Board as deemed appropriate by the Chief Local Elected Officials (CLEOs); (20 CFR 679.310(g)(1-7)).

North Carolina specific requirements that must be specified within the by-laws:

1. The adopted generally accepted parliamentary procedure, such as Robert's Rules of Order, chosen by the Board.
2. Whether an appointee filling a vacancy will serve the remainder of the unexpired term or be appointed for a new full term.
3. The Board's policy assuring attendance and participation of its members.
4. Quorum requirements to be not less than 51% constituting 51% of the total filled Board positions.
5. Any standing committees the Board has established shall be included in the by-laws.
6. The Board's conflict of interest policy, which may not be any less stringent than the requirements of the DWS's Policy, shall be referenced in the by-laws.
7. The process the Board will take when expedient action is warranted between Board meetings, such as calling a special meeting or allowing the Executive Committee to act on behalf of the Board.
8. Board meetings will be held in accessible facilities with accessible materials available upon prior request.
9. The Board will meet no less than four times per program year.

By-Laws Guidance

This template is provided for guidance purposes only. It contains sample language that may be used in by-laws development. It is not required that Boards utilize this template or language within. This template reflects multiple counties within a Consortium. Single-county Boards and non-Consortia will need to adjust their by-laws accordingly.

Article 1

Name and Purpose

Section 1. Name

The name of this organization shall be the **Click Here to Enter WDB Name. Board** (hereinafter referred to as the “Board”).

Section 2. Purpose and Responsibilities

The purpose for which the Board is organized is to perform all functions of a WDB and Local Workforce Development Area as set forth in the Federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 (“WIOA”), or the corresponding provision of any applicable federal or state laws of related purpose and the rules and regulations promulgated thereunder, and Section 143B-438.11 of the North Carolina General Statutes and to perform such functions with the **Click Here to Enter WDB Name. WDB.**

The Board services area shall encompass the counties of **Click Here to Enter WDB Name..**

The Board responsibilities shall include:

1. Develop and submit Local Area Plan annually to the Governor, a comprehensive 4-year Local Area Plan, in partnership with the Chief Local Elected Official.
2. Perform workforce research and regional market analysis.
3. Convene local workforce development system stakeholders to assist in the development of the Local Area Plan and identify non-federal expertise and resources to leverage support for workforce development activities.
4. Lead efforts to engage with a diverse range of employers and with entities in the region involved.
5. Lead efforts with representatives of secondary and postsecondary education programs in the Local Area to develop and implement career pathways within the Local Area by aligning the employment, training, education, and supportive services that are needed by adults and youth, particularly individuals with barriers.

By-Laws Guidance

6. Lead efforts in the Local Area to identify proven and promising strategies and initiatives for meeting the needs of employers, and workers and jobseekers in the local workforce system, and to identify and disseminate information on promising practices carried out in other local areas.
7. Develop strategies for using technology to maximize the accessibility and effectiveness of the local workforce development system for employers, workers, and jobseekers.
8. Conduct program oversight.
9. Negotiate and reach agreement on local performance accountability measures.
10. Designate or certify one-stop operators, contractors, and service providers and, in appropriate circumstances, terminate for cause the eligibility of such operators.
11. Coordinate activities with education and training providers in the local area.
12. Develop a budget for the activities of the Local Area WDB consistent with the Local Area Plan and the duties of the Local Area Board and subject to the approval of the Chief Local Elected Official.
13. Annually review the physical and programmatic accessibility provisions of all one-stop centers, as well as locations for contractors and service providers, in the local area, in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.

Article 2

Board Members

Section 1. Appointment

There shall be a Board of no more than **Click Here to Enter Number**. Board members. Members of this organization shall be appointed by the following procedure: The Chief Local Elected Official (of the **Click Here to Enter Name**. County Board of Commissioners, hereinafter referred to as the CLEO) shall appoint members based on nominations from the following: local business organizations; local education agencies; vocational education institutions, community-based organizations, and higher educational institutions; and private and proprietary schools; state or local labor organizations and other interested organizations.

The number of business sector nominees shall be at least 51% of the number of individuals to be appointed and are appointed from amongst individuals nominated by local business organizations and business trade associations. The nominated candidate or company must be a member of the nominating organization. A majority of the Members shall be representatives of businesses in the local area (including small businesses or organizations representing businesses that, at a minimum, include high-quality, work-relevant training and development in in-demand industry sectors or occupations in the local area) and are owners, chief executives or

By-Laws Guidance

operating officers, or other business executives or employers with optimum policy making or hiring authority. The members of the local Board shall represent diverse geographic areas within the local area.

Section 2. Composition

Organized Labor and Community Based Organizations: Not less than 20% of the Members shall be representatives of the workforce within the local area, who:

- i. shall include representatives of labor organizations, who have been nominated by local labor federations, or other representatives of employees.
- ii. shall include a representative, who shall be a member of a labor organization or a training director, from a joint labor-management apprenticeship program, or if no such program exists in the area, such a representative of an apprenticeship program in the area, if such a program exists.
- iii. may include representatives of community-based organizations that have demonstrated experience and expertise in addressing the employment needs of individuals with barriers to employment, including organizations that serve veterans or that provide or support competitive integrated employment for individuals with disabilities; and
- iv. may include representatives of organizations that have demonstrated experience and expertise in addressing the employment, training, or education needs of eligible youth, including representatives of organizations that serve out-of-school youth;

Education and training activities: The Board shall include representatives of entities administering education and training activities in the local area, who:

- i. shall include a representative of eligible providers administering adult education and literacy activities under Title II of the WIOA;
- ii. shall include a representative of institutions of higher education providing workforce investment activities (including community colleges);
- iii. may include representatives of local educational agencies, and of community-based organizations with demonstrated experience and expertise in addressing the education or training needs of individuals with barriers to training;

The Board shall include representatives of governmental and economic and community development entities serving the local area, who:

- i. shall include a representative of economic and community development entities;
- ii. shall include an appropriate representative from the State Employment Service Office under the Wagner-Peyser Act serving the local area;
- iii. shall include an appropriate representative of the programs carried out under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, serving the local area;

By-Laws Guidance

- iv. may include representatives of agencies or entities administering programs serving the local area relating to transportation, housing, and public assistance, and
- v. may include representatives of philanthropic organizations serving the local area; and

This Board may include such other individuals or representatives of entities as the Chief Local Elected Official determines appropriate.

Section 3. Tenure

All appointments will be for a two-year term to expire on June 30 of each respective term. No member shall serve more than three consecutive terms (6 years) or a total of five terms (10 years) in any one appointed position. An individual whose initial appointment is to fill an unexpired term or an initial staggered term of less than two years, shall be eligible to serve the number of full-length terms other members are eligible to serve, unless, prior to the time for reappointment that individual has already served six consecutive years. Members may be re-appointed at the discretion of the Chief Local Elected Official subject to the term limitations outlined in this section.

Terms shall be staggered to ensure that at any given time a percentage of the members are experienced in WDB functions.

The Board shall advise the Consortium Counties of potential Board member vacancies prior to the end of the term. In the case of a midterm vacancy, an immediate replacement shall be requested of the Consortium County represented by the departing Board member. The appointed Board member shall fill the remaining term of office.

The Board shall not compensate Board Members for their services, but by resolution of the Board, a fixed sum and expenses, if any, may be allowed for attendance at each regular or special meetings of the Board.

Section 4. Termination for Cause

By two-thirds majority vote of the membership or by action of the Chief Local Elected Official, a member may be removed for cause from the Board. Cause would be for such actions as malfeasance, misconduct, or any action which would be deemed not in the best interest of the Board; or three unexcused absences from regular scheduled meetings within the preceding twelve calendar months. Notice that a removal vote that may be taken for cause must be included on the agenda of said meeting. The Chair shall send a precautionary letter to the said Board member upon two unexcused absences within the preceding twelve calendar months prior to the next meeting.

Section 5. Resignation

Letters of resignation must be submitted to the [Click Here to Enter WDB Name](#). Chair. Three consecutive absences without justification and no response to the above referenced letter from the chair will be considered acceptable terms for resignation. Justification must be submitted in writing. The Board Chair has the authority to accept or deny justification.

By-Laws Guidance

Section 6. Vacancies

Upon vacancy of any position on this Board, the procedure in Article II, Section 1, will be followed to provide replacement representation to complete the remainder of that term of appointment.

Article 3 Meetings

Section 1. Regular Meetings

The Board shall meet at a public location at such time and place as determined by the Chairperson. All meetings must be held in an accessible facility, in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements. All materials must be in an accessible format (i.e., large print, Braille, interpreter, etc.), as needed or indicated.

The Board will meet no less than four times per program year. Regular Board meetings are face to face; however, Board members may attend meetings via conference call, video communications and other alternative methods.

Five working days' notice shall be delivered to each member stating a reasonable time, date and place of the meeting and the meeting's purpose unless deemed an emergency by the Chair or Executive Committee calling for said special meeting.

Section 2. Special Meetings

The Chair of the Board and Committee Chair may, when deemed necessary, call a special meeting of the Board via conference call, video communications, or alternative media sources for transacting any business designated in the call.

Section 3. Quorum

At all meetings (regular or special) of the Board, a majority of the Board members present constitutes a quorum for transacting business. A quorum shall require the participation of Board members constituting 51% of the total filled Board positions. Proxy representatives who are unable to cast votes shall not count toward meeting the quorum requirement. Votes may be cast via electronic medium for remote attendees. The act of the majority of the Board members present at a meeting at which a quorum is present shall be the act of the Board. However, a two-thirds vote of those present shall be required to amend any provision of these by-laws.

Section 4. Conduct of Meetings

All meetings of this Board shall be conducted in accordance with the latest edition of Robert's Rules of Order.

By-Laws Guidance

Section 5. Open Meetings

Local Area Board Conducts Business Openly: The Local Area Board must conduct its business in an open manner as required by WIOA sec. 107(e), by making available to the public, on a regular basis through electronic means and open meetings, information about the activities of the local Board. (20 CFR 679.390) This includes:

- a. Information about the Local Area Plan, or modification to the Local Area Plan, before submission of the Local Area Plan;
- b. List and affiliation of Local Area WDB members;
- c. Selection of one-stop operators;
- d. Award of grants or contracts to eligible training providers of workforce investment activities including providers of youth workforce investment activities;
- e. Minutes of formal meetings of the Local Area Board; and
- f. Local Area Board by-laws, consistent with § 679.310(g).

Section 6. Proxy Representation and Voting

A member may designate a representative to attend a meeting of the Board in his/her absence. The proxy must meet the membership criteria for the member's affiliation type. The proxy will count toward the appointed member's attendance. The representative may participate in discussions and may vote so long as the member provides written voting instructions to the Chair allowing his/her proxy representative to cast votes in accordance with the written voting instructions.

Each Board member present shall be entitled to one vote on each matter for which a vote is taken. Votes may be cast telephonically or via electronic medium.

Section 7. Conflict of Interest and Voting

No WDB member (whether compensated or not) shall engage in any activity, including participation in the selection, award or administration of a sub-grant or contract supported by WIOA funds if a conflict of interest, real or apparent would be involved. Such a conflict would arise when:

- i. The individual,
- ii. any member of the individual 's immediate family,
- iii. the individual's partner, or
- iv. an organization which employs, or is about to employ any of the above, has a financial interest in the firm or organization selected for the award.

No WDB member, member of his/her immediate family, officers, employees, or agents of the WDB member's agency or business, shall neither solicit nor accept gratuities, favors, or anything of value from contractors, potential contractors, or parties to sub agreements.

By-Laws Guidance

A WDB member shall not cast a vote on, or participate in, any decision-making capacity on the provision of services by such member (or any organization which that member directly represents), nor on any matter which would provide any direct financial benefit to that member.

No WDB members shall participate in a governmental decision including voting on a matter (including recommendations, appointments, obligating or committing the WDB to a course of action) when such action influences a decision or exercises judgement in making a decision. Any member with a potential or actual conflict of interest shall comply with requirements for public disclosure and recusal.

Article 4

Organization

Section 1. Officers

The officers of this Board shall be a Chair, a Vice-Chair, and a Secretary.

Section 2. Election of Officers

Officers of this Board shall be elected in June for two-year terms. The Chair and Vice-Chair will be elected from among the members who are representatives of the business sector. The secretary will be elected from among all members.

The Chair shall appoint a nominating committee to recommend officers who shall be elected from the Board's business sector membership and shall begin their term at the beginning of the new program year effective July 1. These officers shall serve until their successors are elected and qualified or until they are no longer Board members. If an officer is unable to complete his/her term the Board shall elect a successor to complete the remaining portion of the original term. The Vice-Chair shall not be required to succeed the Chair at the end of the Chair's term of office.

Section 3. Chair

The Chair shall preside at Board meetings, designate standing and ad hoc committees deemed appropriate and appoint their Chair and members. The Chair shall not vote except in the case of a tie, in which event he/she shall cast the deciding vote.

Section 4. Vice-Chair

The Vice-Chair shall assume all duties and responsibilities of the Chair in his/her absence from meetings. In the event that the office of Chair is vacated before the end of the term, the Vice-Chair shall assume the office in an acting capacity until such time as the Board elects a new Chair.

By-Laws Guidance

Section 5. Secretary

The Secretary shall be responsible for proper notification of meetings, review, and submission of the minutes to the Board, and shall carry out any other duties deemed appropriate by the Chair. Local Area staff will serve as support personnel in performing these duties.

Section 6. Executive Committee

The Executive Committee shall consist of the Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary (from a sector other than business), and the previous Chair or Vice-Chair. As determined by the Chair of the Board, chairs of Board committees will attend Executive Committee meetings. Responsibilities of the Executive Committee are as follows: make standing committee assignments and coordination among committees, prepare recommendations to Board on state and national issues, act as needed between regularly scheduled Board meetings, and develop immediate and long-range goals for Board concurrence.

Section 7. Vacancy

If an office becomes vacant, the Board shall elect a successor at its next meeting.

Article 5 Committees

Section 1.

The Chair of the Board shall have the power, except as otherwise provided in this Article, to appoint the members of any Committee for a term of two (2) years. No Committee, except as elsewhere provided in this Article, shall take any action or position on behalf of the Board, bind the Board, or exercise the authority of the Board in the management of the Corporation. The Chair of all the Committees shall be members of the Board. The Executive Committee of the Board shall meet at the call of the Chair of the Board or the written request of any two (2) members of the committee. The Board's other Committees shall meet at the call of their respective Chair or the Chair of the Board.

Section 2.

Electronic meetings shall be permissible in lieu of face-to-face committee meetings at the discretion of the Committee Chair. An electronic meeting of the Committee occurs when Board members are in different locations, connected by electronic means, through audio, video, or both. All votes taken during an electronic meeting shall be by roll call. All scheduled electronic meetings shall be held in such a way that all members participating can hear each other at the same time. When speaking, each member will be asked to clearly identify himself, so that proper recognition is given and recorded. All Board policies, administrative practices, and by-laws shall apply equally to electronic meetings.

By-Laws Guidance

Section 3.

The Local Area WDB may establish standing committees to provide information and assist the Board in carrying out its responsibilities (20 CFR 679.360).

Article 6

Amendments

Section 1. Amendment Procedure

Board by-laws can be amended at any regular Board meeting provided the proposed amendment(s) has been submitted in writing to the Board members at least two weeks prior to the meeting.

Section 2. Vote Needed

The by-laws shall be amended upon affirmative vote by a two-thirds majority of the Board.

Article 7

Severability

In the event that any of the rules, regulations, restrictions, covenants, or conditions of these by-laws are held to be partially or wholly invalid or unenforceable for any reason, such holding shall not affect, alter, modify, or impair in any manner any of the other terms, provisions, rules, regulations, restrictions, covenants, or conditions contained herein.

Adopted This NUMBER DATE Day of MONTH, YEAR.

Board Director, Printed Name and Signature

Date

Chief Local Elected Official Printed Name and Signature

Date

Board Chair, Printed Name and Signature

Date

Guidance Regarding Meetings and Conferencing via Electronic Means

All public WDB meetings and Committee meetings will be held at specified times and places which are convenient and open to the public.

The Board believes it is in the best interests of its members, systems, and customers that the fullest participation and attendance in all meetings be achieved whenever possible. Furthermore, it recognizes that the use of electronic, audio or video conferencing for meeting attendance and voting requirements is permissible so long as the meeting is conducted in accordance with the Sunshine Provision.

The Board in all of its regular and special, standing committee, and ad hoc committee meetings complies with and intends to comply with the provisions of the Sunshine Provision. Therefore, the Board hereby adopts this policy, to be used when needed, to make use of the capabilities for conferencing by electronic means or any other type of audio or video conferencing for its meetings *or* any of the standing committee and ad hoc committee meetings as set forth and adopted according to the following rules as applicable:

- A. All pertinent provisions of the Sunshine Provision must be complied with, including specifically the proper notice of any regular or special meeting, the proper record keeping or minutes of each meeting, the appropriate agenda preparation for each meeting, which in addition shall be posted along with the notice of the meeting; and, in particular, any use of closed sessions shall be in compliance with the provisions of WIOA.
- B. All Board and Committee members attending meetings by electronic conferencing shall be entitled to vote as if they were personally and physically present at the meeting site so long as a quorum is, in total, present and accounted for, and their votes shall be recorded by the Board Director.
- C. A Board or Committee member who attends a meeting by electronic, video, or audio conference must provide notice to the Board Director at least 24 hours prior to the meeting unless such advance notice is impracticable.
- D. The location of the meeting included on the notice shall be equipped with a suitable transmission system (e.g., a speakerphone) in order that the public audience, the members in attendance and any staff in attendance will be able to hear any input, vote, or discussion of the conference and that the member attending by electronic means shall have a similar capability of hearing and participating in such input, vote, or discussion.
- E. As the Board or its committees begin each new matter of business, the Chair will check with all remote locations(s) where members are to ensure that each such connection is active.

Guidance Regarding Meetings and Conferencing via Electronic Means

- F. When a motion is made, and seconded, and discussion regarding the motion begins, the Chair will check that the connection with remote location(s) where members are present is active. Prior to closing discussion and taking any vote, the Chair will ask all remote location(s) where member(s) is(are) present whether there are any additional comments, questions, or information to be added to the discussion.

- G. All decisions will be made using majority rule except when a higher vote is required. There will be no muting of any connections with remote location(s) where members are present at any time. There will be no sidebar discussions.

- H. The procedures outlined above shall also apply to each Board and its Committee members.

Local Area WDB Membership Requirements

Representative of Business (WIOA Section 107(b) (2)(A))

Who May Satisfy the Requirements:

The majority of the members of the Local Area WDB must be representatives of private sector business in the local area. At a minimum, two members must represent small business as defined by the U.S. Small Business Administration. Business representatives serving on Local Area WDBs may also serve on the State Board. Each business representative must meet the following criteria:

- be an owner, chief executive officer, chief operating officer, or other individual with optimum policy making and hiring authority;
- provide employment opportunities in **in-demand** industry sectors or occupations, as those terms are defined in WIOA section 3(23); and provide high-quality, work-relevant training and development opportunities to its workforce or the workforce of others (in the case of organizations representing business as per WIOA Sec. 107(b)(2)(A)(ii); and
- are appointed from among individuals nominated by local business organizations and business trade associations.

In North Carolina, examples of allowable business organizations may include chambers of commerce, trade organizations, large non-profit organizations, such as Rex Hospital, and for-profit organizations, such as Duke Hospital, depending on the specific circumstances. Examples of unallowable business organizations include the N.C. Department of Public Safety or other state or municipal agencies.

Representative of Workforce (WIOA Section 107(b)(2)(B))

Who May Satisfy the Requirements:

Not less than 20% of the members of the Local Area WDB **must** be workforce representatives. These representatives:

- **must include two or more representatives of labor organizations**, where such organizations exist in the local area. Where labor organizations do not exist, representatives must be selected from other employee representatives;

Employee representatives must come from organizations that advocate, enhance, or protect the rights of a group of employees. In North Carolina, such examples include the North Carolina Association of Educators (NCAE), the State Employees Association of North Carolina (SEANC), and the National Guard Association). The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) is an example of an organization that is not allowable as a labor organization.

Local Area WDB Membership Requirements

- **must include one or more representatives of a joint labor management, or union affiliated, registered apprenticeship** program within the area who must be a training director or a member of a labor organization. If no union affiliated registered apprenticeship programs exist in the area, a representative of a registered apprenticeship program with no union affiliation must be appointed, if one exists.

In addition to the representatives enumerated above, the Local Area WDB **may** include the following to contribute to the 20% requirement:

- one or more representatives of community-based organizations that have demonstrated experience and expertise in addressing the employment, training, or education needs of individuals with barriers to employment, including organizations that serve veterans or provide or support competitive integrated employment for individuals with disabilities; and

In North Carolina, examples of allowable community-based organizations include organizations such as Goodwill and community action agencies.

- one or more representatives of organizations that demonstrated experience or expertise in addressing the employment, training, or education needs of eligible youth, including representatives of organizations that serve out-of-school youth.

Community College representatives would not be appropriate for this category.

Representatives of Education and Training (WIOA Section 107(b) (2)(C))

Who May Satisfy the Requirements:

The balance of Local Area WDB membership **must include:**

- **At least one** eligible provider administering **adult education and literacy** activities under WIOA Title II;
- **At least one** representative from an **institution of higher education** providing workforce investments activities, including community colleges; and
- **At least one representative** from each of the following governmental and economic and community development entities:
 - **Economic and community development** entities;
 - The **State Employment Service Office** under the Wagner-Peyser Act (29 U.S. C. 49 et seq.) serving the local area; and
 - The programs carried out under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, other than Sec. 112 or part C of that title.

Local Area WDB Membership Requirements

In addition to the representatives enumerated above, the Chief Local Elected Official (CLEO) **may** appoint other appropriate entities in the local area, including:

- Entities administering education and training activities who represent local educational agencies or community-based organizations with demonstrated expertise in addressing the education and training needs for individuals with barriers to employment;
- Governmental and economic and community development entities who represent transportation, housing, and public assistance programs;
- Philanthropic organizations serving the local area;
- and Other appropriate individuals as determined by the Chief Local Elected Official (CLEO).
- The board chair shall be elected among the business representatives.

The Division of Workforce Solutions may request additional information from Local Area WDBs on representatives and the organizations they represent at any time in order to determine compliance with these requirements. The final determination on whether requirements are met is made by the Division of Workforce Solutions.
