

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

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

- A. Describe the local strategic vision to support state and regional economic growth (§ 679.560(a)(5)). Describe how this aligns with the State of Illinois' vision and principles (page 1). Include a description of how the region and local areas will accomplish the local strategic vision and support state and regional economic growth.

The Workforce Innovation Board (WIB) of Western Illinois serves as a representative forum of community leaders in the counties of Adams, Brown, Hancock, Henderson, Knox, McDonough, Pike, Schuyler, and Warren. It is an assembly for the discussion of local policy and programs relating to the establishment of the workforce development system for both youth and adults in Western Illinois.

The Workforce Innovation Board of Western Illinois will be the advocate for the resolution of workforce development challenges in Western Illinois and provides an array of resources to meet business and industry workforce needs.

In this role the WIB will:

1. Continuously seek the input of our job seekers and business customers to assure the system is responsive to customer needs;
  2. Ensure that the delivery of services are physically, geographically and programmatically accessible to all;
  3. Ensure that programs and services are tailored and responsive to the needs of each county;
  4. Strive to enhance the services for our customers by creating a seamless and immediate delivery system; and,
  5. Expect our system to continuously improve the delivery of services by providing staff with the necessary tools to achieve these goals.
- B. Describe the local goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce (including youth and individuals with barriers to employment) and goals relating to the performance accountability measures based on performance indicators (§ 677.155(a)(1)). Include a description of how the region and local areas will accomplish local goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce and goals relating to performance.

The WIB tracks enrollments and performance outcomes for Title 1 workforce programs. As part of service integration the WIB will assess services, programs and outcomes of all partners.

The Local Workforce Area partners, education entities and community agencies work together to provide hand-on experiences to promote career opportunities for high school students in Western Illinois. Partners and education entities identify and recruit Opportunity Youth for the Out-of-School program. Partner and community agencies identify and refer individuals with barriers to employment.

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

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

The WIB will continue to emphasize and respond to the talent demands of employers throughout the region. Business Service Teams will continue to engage employers, including small business, to identify and address their workforce needs. Through labor market data, manufacturing, health care and TDL have been identified as key sectors in Western Illinois.

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

The WIB will continue to coordinate with the Community College Advisory committees to identify and address new skill requirements identified by area employers. The WIB will continue to support new and innovative programs.

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

The WIB will continue to rely on local economic development entities as partners in identifying and addressing local business concerns. EDC entities regularly meet with workforce and education representatives to plan and coordinate activities to build a talent pipeline.

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

Illinois Department of Employment Services will continue to participate in Rapid Response activities in the region. In addition, IDES shares information and services available from all partners with UI claimants and has partners either present or be available for one-on-one meetings with Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessments (RESEA) participants.

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

Carl Sandburg College created an entrepreneurial certificate in an academic/credit bearing setting is currently underway.

John Wood Community College works with their advisory committees as well as conducts regular visits to our industry partners to identify the education and skills required for the workforce.

The Spoon River College program in Small Business Management offers a mix of transfer and career courses for the student interested in business and entrepreneurship. This program is part of the Business Management & Administration career cluster.

### *Creating Entrepreneurial Opportunities (CEO) Program*

The Creating Entrepreneurial Opportunities program is a yearlong course designed to introduce ambitious high school students to local businesses and entrepreneurs. Throughout the year students meet with local businesses, learn from guest speakers, participate in a class business, write business plans and start their own business. This program operates in Adams, Brown, Hancock, Knox, McDonough, Pike, and Schuyler counties.

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

Funds are designated for incumbent worker training programs, on-the-job training programs, and apprenticeship programs. Economic Development entities will lead in the implementation of industry and sectors strategies. These strategies will be developed after the business survey has been completed. The WIB supports the efforts of secondary and post-secondary education's efforts in career pathway initiatives.

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

The WIB will work to build a regional network of partnerships to develop and implement outreach strategies based on an analysis of regional labor market factors, sector trends, hiring challenges, and potential solutions for business partners. Three WIB regional strategies are:

- use information about clients' needs, challenges, history, and practices to offer effective assistance and workforce solutions, as applicable.
- serve as a liaison amongst employers, area economic development organizations, and education providers; and,
- create partnerships with local educational and training providers, employers, and CBOs to implement apprenticeship programs and other work-based learning opportunities.

Internships are embedded in a variety of programs at the three community colleges (Carl Sandburg College, John Wood Community College and Spoon River College) in the area and those without look for opportunities for students to gain work-based experiences through job shadowing, industry tours, and in-class visits from industry representatives. The colleges work with advisory committees to gauge the need for required internships as well as opportunities to offer alternative work-based experiences for students.

Apprenticeships are an important part of our regional strategy. Although the region has not been overly successful to date, the Business Service teams will continue to promote and develop apprenticeships and pre-apprenticeships.

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

The Carl Sandburg College's Institutional Effectiveness Department reviews programs annually to ensure programs meet the needs indicated by labor market data as well as advisory committee surveys and feedback. Program review processes provide the opportunity to seek avenues in which educational programs can be created or revised to allow for a prompt entry into the workforce. John Wood Community College and Spoon River College have a similar process.

Where possible, the region will try to combine shorter training programs with on-the-job training. In addition, there will be an increased effort to work the community colleges internship component of the various approved training programs. The goal is to assist job seekers in obtaining a career in as short of time as possible.

- F. Describe the steps that will be taken to support the state's efforts to align and integrate education, workforce and economic development, including:
1. Fostering the improvement and expansion of employer-driven regional sector partnerships to increase the focus on critical in-demand occupations in key sectors that are the engine of economic growth for the state and its regions.

Partners have been working with local businesses that are involved in manufacturing, healthcare and transportation, distribution and logistics sector-based partnerships. The WIB acts as a neutral convener and has launched each sector partnership by featuring a manufacturing, healthcare and transportation, distribution and logistics industry key speaker at quarterly Board meetings. In addition, meetings will be hosted in each of the nine counties of EDR 10 to determine if there are additional sector priorities based on data that will assist the region in making additional informed decisions.

Economic Development entities will play a leading role in coordinating workforce development and education partners. The Economic Development entities and Chambers of Commerce will work with the WIOA partners in strengthening their business services to maximize their effectiveness while minimizing any duplication of services.

2. Expanding career pathway<sup>7</sup> opportunities through more accelerated and work-based training and align and integrate programs of study leading to industry-recognized credentials and improved employment and earnings.

Carl Sandburg College, John Wood Community College and Spoon River College work closely with its advisory committees consisting of agency, industry, secondary, and post-secondary partners to identify pathways to careers and determine industry sought credentials. Where the opportunity exists, credentials are embedded into programs. For credentials obtained externally post program completion, training is geared toward preparing students with the knowledge and skills necessary to obtain such credentials. A similar process is also utilized by the other two community colleges in the region.

In order to expand career pathway opportunities, the regional partners will collaborate to increase program capacity by reducing duplicative services, building programs at greater scale and leveraging the efficiencies created by a stronger alignment of system resources. Partners will work together with employers to expand bridge and stackable credentials programs to support a broad spectrum of jobseekers looking for career progression and link work-based learning approaches such as apprenticeships, internships and on-the-job training programs that meet industry demands.

The WIB will continue to spearhead initiatives that bring together employers and training providers, working closely with the community colleges to secure support for short and long-term training programs that meet the region's expressed goals. By developing appropriate career pathways that include assessments, training curricula and compatible work- based learning opportunities, the workforce system can prepare structured sequences of activities that will fully prepare youth and adult jobseekers for successful employment.

3. Expanding career services and opportunities for populations facing multiple barriers to close the gap in educational attainment and economic advancement through career pathways and improved career services.

To ensure the proper mix of educational, training and support services is available to all members of the community, the WIB will continue to engage education and training providers, economic development and private sector WIB members in program planning. In addition, specific communication and outreach strategies will be developed that target individuals most in need of services including basic skills deficient individuals, ex-offenders and those with disabilities.

Community Colleges maintains a strong working relationship with social agencies, area regional offices of education, and k-12 partners within its district to assist diverse populations in locating support services needed to obtain an education and succeed in the workforce. By understanding the external resources available through each partner, students are referred to a variety of services available including training related to language skills, tuition assistance, childcare, transportation assistance, and employability skills.

In addition to helping students increase English language skills and obtain high school equivalency, Adult Education programs provide education and support services to help adult learners access employment and succeed in the workforce. Information on career pathways and employment readiness skills are a part of the curriculum and core subjects such as reading, math, science and social studies are contextualized to the workforce. ICAPS programs in Manufacturing, Health Care, and Logistics offer industry recognized credentials to program participants as well as opportunities to gain valuable insight into job responsibilities and employer expectations.

G. Describe how goals established in this plan will be monitored and evaluated.

The WIB will monitor progress on the Goals throughout the life of the Plan. Mid-year reviews and annual evaluations will be conducted.

H. Describe how a *workforce equity lens*<sup>6</sup> is or will be incorporated in the implementation of regional workforce, education, and economic development strategies.

The WIB will develop a plan that will contain the standard elements of diversity, equity, and inclusion. This plan will be shared and coordinated with education entities and economic development entities.

The WIB will promote these standards as a business practice that supports retention and expands recruitment opportunities.