

West Alabama Works
Area 3 Local Workforce Development Plan

Local Area Plan Instructions

Four-Year Plan

I. Local Area Governance

- a. Provide the most current organizational chart depicting the relationship of the agencies comprising the workforce system, including education, economic development, and the one-stop delivery system partners.

A finalized copy of the organizational chart for the workforce system is currently being developed.

- b. Identify the entity responsible for the disbursement of grant funds, as determined by the chief elected official or the Governor (20 CFR 679.560(b)(14)). Identify by name, function, and organizational affiliation of the local area:

- i. Signatory Official: **Mr. Mickey A. Hutto**
- ii. Grant Recipient: **Mr. Greg Canfield**
- iii. Chief Elected Official: **Governor Kay Ivey**
- iv. Workforce Development Board Chair: **Gary Nichols**
- v. Chief Fiscal Officer: **Mr. Phillip Fetzer**
- vi. One-Stop Delivery System Area Managers:
Brinda Barrett, Jim Cook, Robert Brantley

II. Local Workforce Development Board

- a. Provide a current listing of Local Board membership, including the category of representation as outlined in WIOA sec. 107(b)(2). The board must include:
 - i. Business Representatives:

Norman Crow, DT & Freight Col, Inc.; Ron Davis, Alabama Automotive Manufacturing Association; Russell DuBose, Phifer Incorporated; John Guest, Michelin North America; Tim Harrison, Harrison Construction; Jason Hoff, Mercedes-Benz US International; Donny Jones, Chamber of Commerce of West Alabama, West AlabamaWorks; Steve Jordan, MoellerTech; Mark McClanahan, Fayette Fabrication; Gary Nichols, McAbee Construction; Joe Patton,

Westerveld Co.; Will Patton, Hunt Refining; Alejandro Perez, CEMEX US; Gary Philips, Premier Service Company; Jon Riley, Hyster-Yale Group; Peggy Sease, DCH Health Systems; Randy Skagen, NUCOR Steel; Charlie Willie, WestRock, INC;

ii. Workforce Representatives:

Mike Fields, Shelton State Community College; Ronny Johnston, Easter Seals West Alabama; Randall Kelly, Plumbers and Pipefitters Local 372; Rickey Kornegay, Alabama AFL-CIO; Will Marable, Tuscaloosa JATC; Harold Parker Plumbers and Pipefitters Local 372; Tim Simmons, Boilermakers 108; Sontonia Stephens, Community Service Programs of West Alabama;

iii. Education and Training Activities Representatives:

Dennis Duncan, Tuscaloosa County Schools; Ken Dawkins, Lamar County School of Technology; Philip Johnson, Shelton State Community College;

iv. Governmental & Economic and Community Development Representatives:

Phyllis Belcher, Greene County IDA; Leslie Dawson, Vocational Rehabilitation; Connie Jones, Alabama Career Center System; Bob Lake, West Alabama Regional Commission; David Thornell, Northwest Alabama Economic Development Alliance;

III. Career Centers

- a. List the Comprehensive Career Centers and the Satellite Career Centers operating within the local area.

Demopolis, Fayette, Livingston, Tuscaloosa, Vernon

- i. Identify which partners are represented in the Career Center; and

Co-located Partners include: WIOA Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth Programs provided by Alabama Department of Commerce; WIOA Title II Adult Education provided by the Alabama Community College System; Wagner-Peyser and Veterans services through the Alabama Department of Labor; Vocational Rehabilitation services by Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services.

Adjunct partners include: Career and Technical Education (Perkins), Community Services Block Grant, Indian and Native American programs, HUD Employment and Training programs, Job

Corps, National Farmworker Jobs program, Senior Community Service Employment program, Trade Adjustment Assistance programs, Unemployment Compensation programs, and YouthBuild.

While these partners are not physically located in the career centers, in the areas they are located there are cross referrals of clients between the partner agencies to ensure clients receive the services that are needed.

- ii. Provide the name, title, telephone number, and email address of principle Career Center contacts.

See Attachment: West Alabama Works! Career Centers

IV. Analysis of Local Area Conditions and Needs

- a. Provide analysis of local area economic conditions including existing and emerging in-demand industry sectors and occupations (20 CFR 679.560(a)(1)(i)). Existing current analysis may be used if available and appropriate (20 CFR 679.560(a)(1)(iii)).

West AlabamaWorks contains nine counties, with the Tuscaloosa Metropolitan area at its core. According to the latest census data, the population in the region is 331,547, with a majority in Tuscaloosa county (200,458). Over 26 percent of the population is over 55 years of age, which is slightly lower than the state average of 27.3 percent. Over 63 percent of the population is white and nearly 35 percent black. West Alabama has a growing Hispanic population with the current estimate of 8,338, an increase of 33 percent since 2010. Apart from Tuscaloosa County, the region is rural.

West Alabama has experienced an exceptional amount of employment growth. The employment in 2015 was estimated at 138,340, which is the highest this century. While many regions of the state have not reached prerecession employment levels, this area has surpassed it. The prime reason for this growth is the rise of automotive manufacturing in the region. Mercedes automotive manufacturing plant began production in Vance, Alabama in 1997, and since then this area has become a huge center for this industry. Since 2000, employment in automotive manufacturing has nearly tripled and the same for automotive parts manufacturing to a total of over 7,000 employed in this industry, with announcements for more. While this industry experienced a downturn during the recession, it surpassed prerecession employment levels in 2014. These new industries have in turn created new jobs in services with proximity to the business locations. Since 2010, accommodation and food services has grown 21 percent, and transportation and warehousing over 41 percent. Unfortunately, mining, a large industry in the region, took a major hit in 2015. Tuscaloosa County is home to two coal mines that represents nearly half of the state's coal production. Since 2010 over 500 workers in this industry have lost their jobs.

The University of Alabama, located in Tuscaloosa, provides a huge boost to the region’s economy. In 2016, the university had a record high fiscal impact of nearly 2.6 billion dollars, 13,217 jobs, and over 128 million dollars in income and sales taxes. The university’s medical school provides an enhanced healthcare industry in the area. It also draws hundreds of thousands of people to various events, creating income for the state. In 2014, nearly 4,400 people were employed as a direct result of tourism in the county.

- b. Provide analysis of local area employment needs of employers in existing and emerging in-demand industry sectors and occupations (20 CFR 679.560(a)(1)(ii)). Existing current analysis may be used if available and appropriate (20 CFR 679.560(a)(1)(iii)).

The region has targeted five industries for workforce development: Manufacturing, Automotive, Construction, Healthcare, and Professional Services. These are industries that provide great opportunities for residents of this region to obtain jobs that offer good wages. The targeted occupations reflect targeted industry sectors and projected high demand occupations.

Existing Demand Industry Sectors And Occupations by Region	
Target Industry Sectors	Occupations
WDR 3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Automotive • Healthcare • Construction • Manufacturing • Professional Services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Healthcare/Nursing • Transportation/Drivers • Logistics • Information Technology • Machinists • Industrial Maintenance • Production/Assemblers • Welders/Fitters

While transportation manufacturing in this region has continued to climb steadily since 2000, overall manufacturing employment has declined. This is mostly due to a decline in nondurable goods manufacturing, such as apparel and petroleum and coal products. Plastics and rubber products also experienced a decline, but in 2016 saw some growth due to a new company that is a supplier to major automotive plants in Alabama and neighboring states. Both primary metal and fabricated metal product manufacturing have experienced steady growth since 2000. Although fabricated metal was affected by the recession, it is beginning to show some recovery. Wood product manufacturing has also seen a recovery since the recession. In 2015 and 2016 there were several expansions in companies involved in machinery manufacturing, which often supply to the automotive manufacturing industry.

Automotive manufacturing has been a great economic boost for this region. Since 2000, employment for automotive manufacturing and parts manufacturing have grown 84 percent. Although these industries did take a hit during the recession, parts manufacturing rebounded quickly in 2012, and continues to grow. Mercedes has continued to add new models to the Alabama production line, and new parts suppliers are still establishing residence in the

region. Announcements were made for at least an additional 1,000 new jobs in parts manufacturing alone and another 1,000 at Mercedes for 2015 and 2016. Furthermore, transportation manufacturing makes up over 36 percent of the manufacturing employment. The average monthly earnings for workers in transportation manufacturing in 2015 was slightly over \$6,000. Seventy-eight percent of the workforce in the automotive industry are between the ages of 25 to 54, with 30 percent between the ages of 45 and 54.

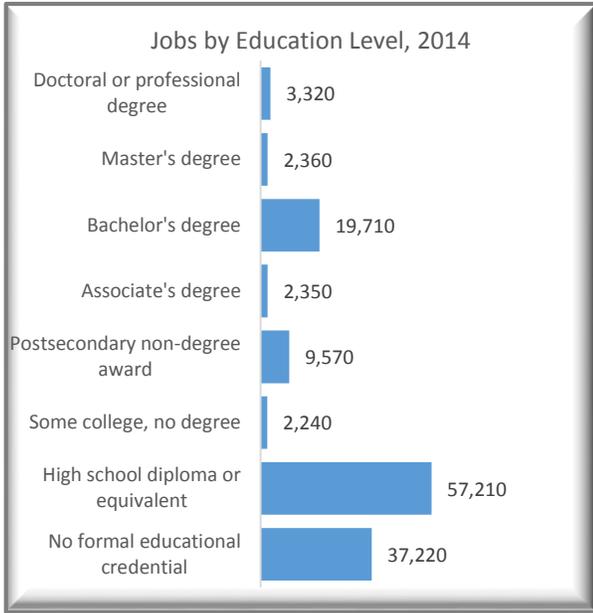
Construction is the industry sector that took the hardest hit during the recession, and has yet to recover to previous levels. In this region, construction employment dropped each of the last three years. However, through 2024 it is projected to increase 10 percent in employment. Approximately 21 percent of the construction workforce is over the age of 55. Furthermore, some of the occupations that are in highest demand in the region are in the construction industry. Maintenance and repair workers are in high demand, but also experience high turnover. Furthermore, electricians are expected to be in high demand. In 2016 there were over 100 online job ads for plumbers in West Alabama.

Healthcare has experienced a slow, but steady increase in this region over the last decade. It is expected to continue to grow around 15 percent through 2024. Between the increased demand, and the workforce getting older, registered nurses is in very high demand. In 2016, there were around 600 new jobs ads for registered nurses. There were also many job ads for physical therapists in this region, with over 100. Both registered nurses and physical therapists are on the high demand list for the region, in addition to nurse practitioners, LPN's, medical assistants, EMT's and paramedics, and physical therapist assistants.

Professional and Business services has remained a fairly stable industry throughout the recession to the present, showing the most growth in management, scientific, and technical consulting services. Most of the high demand jobs in this industry, such as management analysts, logisticians, human resources specialists, training and development specialists, and market research analysts, require a bachelor degree minimum for entry.

- c. What knowledge and skills are needed to meet the employment needs of the employers in the local area, including employment needs in in-demand industry sectors and occupations (20 CFR 679.560(a)(2))?

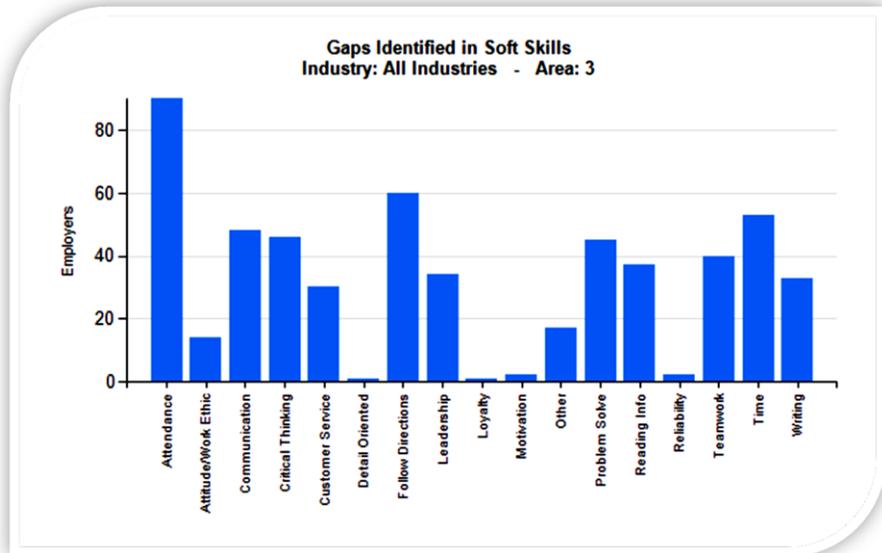
In 2014, only 30.0 percent of jobs were in occupations that typically require postsecondary education for entry. Within this group, jobs in occupations which require a bachelor's degree for entry held the largest share at 50 percent. Occupations requiring a high school diploma or equivalent and no formal educational credential made up 70.0 percent of jobs in 2012. Occupations with the highest percentage growth typically require a form of postsecondary education, with associate's degree occupations holding the highest share at 18.9 percent.



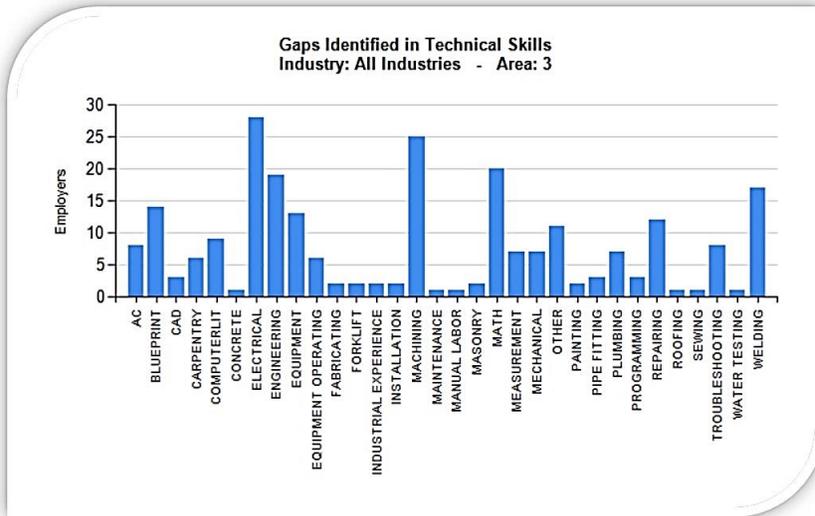
All occupations requiring postsecondary education are projected to grow faster than the average for the region, which is 9.6 percent. Occupations requiring some college, no degree are expected to show a slight drop. This category only covers four occupations, one of which is bookkeepers, which is expected to drop over the period. Those jobs requiring no formal educational credential are expected to only grow 7.6 percent, lower than the region average.

Over the past five years there have been a multitude of reports on the topic of skills gaps. More importantly the emphasis has been on soft skills. Alabama is no different. Employers around the state claim that they cannot find employees with adequate skills. The Alabama

Department of Labor, Labor Market Information Division conducted a skills survey to determine more specifically the problems that employers were experiencing. Many of the employers that expressed these concerns were in manufacturing and construction industries, so for this survey the decision was made to survey employers in those two industries, plus utilities. A sample of 6,926 employers was randomly selected by the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Over 5,000 employers in the three industries responded to the survey, which was published in 2013. The survey instrument included three categories of questions: Recruitment Challenges; Skills Gaps Identified; and Training and Future Needs.



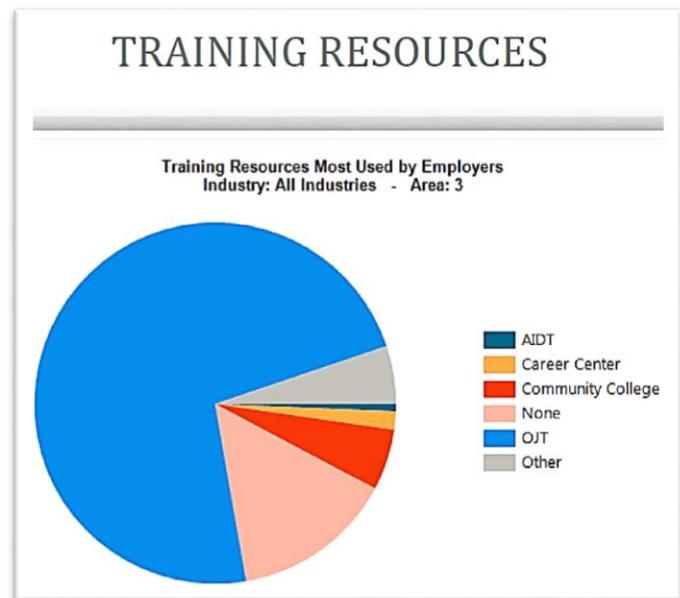
Over 100 employers indicated that the number one reason for rejecting applications was that they did not pass a drug screen, surpassing lack of work experience. When given the



opportunity to list other reasons, employers indicated lack of driver's license or reliable transportation, lack of required certification, attendance history, employment history, failed employment skills testing, and others, most relating to soft skills. A list of soft skills, and a list of technical skills was provided, so the employers could choose all skills gaps that have

been identified in existing staff. Of the soft skills, across all industries and all areas, attendance was the overwhelming top choice. Others chosen at high levels were following directions, time management, and communication. Gaps identified in technical skills often varied by industry. In most manufacturing industries, the top technical gaps were electrical, machining, and math. In utilities, math and electrical tied as top choices. The selections from construction companies varied depending on the type of work that was done. Some of the top choices were carpentry, blueprint reading, machining, plumbing, electrical, and welding. When employers were asked what area of training would be the most valuable to improve the workforce, choosing from soft skills, occupational experience, or education, the majority ranked soft skills as most valuable.

The survey revealed that most employers do not presently use training resources that are offered by various workforce development partners. Most employers conduct their own training, on the job. Of those companies that take advantage of outside training, most use community colleges or some other source. The top three other training resources used include: third party training courses (including online training), association training, and technical schools. Ten percent of



respondents from utilities and from food manufacturing companies stated that they use community colleges to train employees.

- d. Provide analysis of the local area’s workforce, including current labor force employment and unemployment data, information on labor market trends, and educational and skill levels of the workforce, including individuals with barriers to employment 20 CFR 679.560(a)(3)).

The unemployment rate has been declining continuously since 2009 when it was highest due to the recession. In 2015 the average annual unemployment rate for the region was 6.1 percent, ranging from 5.5 percent in Tuscaloosa County, to 11 percent in Greene County. Per the American Community Survey, 2015 unemployment rates were higher for younger workers. Youth, age 16 to 19, experienced an estimated unemployment rate of 31.6 percent in 2015, which is up from 2011 when it was 28.7 percent. Labor Force participants between the ages of 20 and 24 experienced an increase in the unemployment rate between 2011 and 2015, increasing from 14.5 percent to 17.2 percent. In April 2016, unemployment rates

AGE	Unemployment Rate
16 to 19 years	31.55%
20 to 24 years	17.18%
25 to 29 years	11.00%
30 to 34 years	10.43%
35 to 44 years	6.77%
45 to 54 years	4.46%
55 to 59 years	4.61%
60 to 64 years	4.60%
65 to 74 years	4.49%
75 years and over	2.20%
RACE AND HISPANIC OR LATINO ORIGIN	
White alone	7.08%
Black or African American alone	13.73%
American Indian and Alaska Native alone	3.84%
Asian alone	6.03%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone	22.51%
Some other race alone	8.27%
Two or more races	24.34%
Hispanic or Latino origin (of any race)	7.01%
White alone, not Hispanic or Latino	7.03%
POVERTY STATUS IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS	
Below poverty level	29.40%
DISABILITY STATUS	
With any disability	20.46%
EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT	
Population 25 to 64 years	6.97%
Less than high school graduate	15.39%
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	7.71%
Some college or associate's degree	7.46%
Bachelor's degree or higher	3.12%
Military	
Veterans	8.10%

Source: American Community Survey 2015

ranged from 5.0 percent (Tuscaloosa County) to 9.1 percent (Greene County). The latest figures show that in April 2017 West AlabamaWorks had an unemployment rate of 4.5 percent, still higher than the state, which is at 4.4 percent (not seasonally adjusted).

West AlabamaWorks labor force participation rate has fallen from 58.4 percent in 2007 to 54.7 percent in 2015. Since the unemployment rate is based on those people actively seeking employment, the labor force participation has a large impact. The participation rates by age groups for this region have decreased since 2014, with the 16 to 19 age group decreasing from 25.2 in 2014 to 23.9 in 2015, the 20 to 24 age group decreasing from 64.1 percent in 2014 to 62.8 percent in 2015, and the 45 to 54 age group decreasing from 69.5 percent in 2014 to 68.9 percent in 2015. Of the nine counties in West

AlabamaWorks, only Tuscaloosa County, at 58.3 percent, has a higher labor participation rate than the average for the region.

The latest census figures for 2015 estimate the population in the region age 16 to 19 is 22,014. Over 2,300 were not enrolled in school, and approximately 1,070 were not enrolled in school or participating in the labor force. In 2015, there was approximately 8,600 youth age 14 to 21 in the workforce, 56 percent of them worked in retail trade and accommodation and food services, earning an average monthly wage of \$797. Over 600 worked in manufacturing, earning an average monthly wage of \$2,091, over 480 in health care with an average monthly wage of \$1,124, and over 690 in administrative and support and waste management services with an average monthly wage of \$1,843.

Households receiving food stamps/SNAP	20,266
Households with one or more people in the household 60 years and over	26.49%
Households with children under 18 years	51.19%
Households below poverty level	60.64%
Households with one or more people with a disability	46.04%
Household Median Income (dollars) past 12 months	\$14,668
Families Receiving Food Stamp	14,062
Families with no workers in past 12 months	32.56%
Families with 1 worker in past 12 months	46.64%
Families with 2 or more workers in past 12 months	20.80%
Source: American Community Survey 2015	

Per the SSI Annual Statistical Report 2014, Alabama ranks seventh in the nation in the percentage of the population who are receiving disability social security benefits. Census estimates from 2015 show that there were approximately 29,237 people in the region with a disability. Over 8,500 disabled persons were in the labor force in 2015, with 1,775 being

unemployed. Over 46 percent of the households in the region, with one or more people having a disability, received food stamps.

Subject	Veterans
Civilian population 18 years and over	18,406
EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT	
Civilian population 25 years and over	18,131
Less than high school graduate	10.64%
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	35.12%
Some college or associate's degree	34.09%
Bachelor's degree or higher	20.15%
EMPLOYMENT STATUS	
Civilian population 18 to 64 years	10,086
Labor force participation rate	62.36%
Civilian labor force 18 to 64 years	6,290
Unemployment rate	8.10%
POVERTY STATUS IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS	
Income in the past 12 months below poverty level	9.17%
DISABILITY STATUS	
With any disability	34.84%
Source: American Community Survey 2015	

In 2015, Alabama ranked 22nd in the country in veteran population. (VA National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics). In addition, Alabama is home to the fifth largest Army National Guard in the nation, with a total force of approximately 13,000. Per the 2015 American Community Survey (ACS, 2015), the veteran population in the region was approximately 18,400, most of them living in Tuscaloosa County. Veterans display a strong desire to become members of the workforce, which is displayed in the labor force participation rate of 72.0 percent in the state and 62.36 percent in

the region. Nearly 55 percent of the veteran population in the region over the age of 25 has at least some education beyond high school, compared to 63 percent in the state. Approximately 20 percent hold a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 26 percent at the state level. While the unemployment rate in 2015 averaged around 6.5 percent, the rate for veterans was 8.1 percent per census (ACS 2015). Still, there are many who need additional assistance due to disabilities incurred while serving and other circumstances. Nearly 9 percent of veterans in the West Alabama Region were considered below poverty level in 2015

(ACS 2015). Veterans possess the soft skills that employers in the area desperately need, so it's up to local services to help them match their military technical skills to civilian local jobs.

An additional source of skilled labor exists in a pool of workers who are considered underemployed. Workers in occupations that underutilize their experience, training, and skills are underemployed. These workers often respond to job opportunities that they believe are better for reasons that include: lack of job opportunities, low wages in available jobs, and living too far from jobs. Workforce partners in Alabama fund an annual underemployment survey. This survey is in its sixth year of existence. The 2015 survey reported approximately 8,896 responses across the state. In 2016, the underemployment rate in Alabama was 24.3 percent. In the West Alabama area, it was 25.4 percent. In this region, Lamar, Marengo and Tuscaloosa Counties had an underemployment rate lower than the state. Greene County has the highest underemployment rate at over 40 percent.

The underemployed are more willing to commute farther and longer for a better job. For the one-way commute, 48 percent are prepared to travel for 20 or more minutes longer and just over 40 percent will go 20 or more extra miles. Over 75 percent of the workers in the region are satisfied with their jobs, but 25 percent are dissatisfied with their earnings. Fifteen percent of the underemployed say they would be willing to train for a better job, if paid by the trainee, but if the training cost is covered, over 88 percent of them said they would enter training.

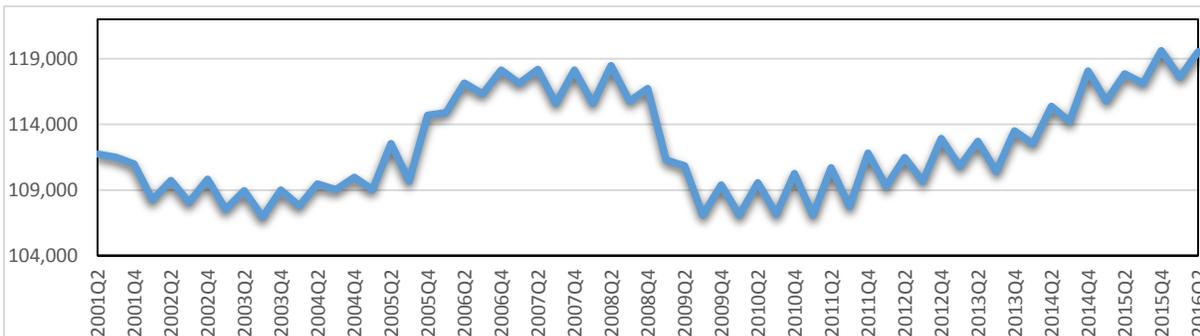
	West	Bibb	Fayette	Greene	Hale	Lamar	Marengo	Pickens	Sumter	Tuscaloosa
Labor Force	150,294	8,544	6,592	2,879	6,100	5,751	7,441	8,089	5,169	99,729
Employed	141,953	8,085	6,205	2,604	5,657	5,452	6,911	7,567	4,783	94,689
Underemployment rate	25.40%	32.50%	25.00%	42.50%	27.30%	16.30%	16.70%	26.20%	30.40%	19.70%
Underemployed workers	36,070	2,628	1,551	1,107	1,543	890	1,152	1,982	1,455	18,654
Unemployed	8,341	459	387	275	443	530	522	386	5,040	8,341
Available labor pool	44,411	3,087	1,938	1,382	1,986	1,420	1,674	2,368	6,495	26,995
Note: Rounding errors may be present. Based on March 2017 labor force data and 2016 underemployment rates.										
Source: Center for Business and Economic Research, The University of Alabama and Alabama Department of Labor.										

Nonagricultural employment in the West AlabamaWorks region has averaged 112,389 employment over the last 15 years. Fortunately, since the lowest point in the most recent recession in 2009, employment has grown 12 percent. In the second quarter of 2016, employment reached 119,534; 1,048 jobs above the highest point of employment between 2006 and 2008.

Manufacturing is the largest industry in this region, consisting of 18 percent of the employment. Transportation Manufacturing makes up a third of the total employment in manufacturing, with the presence of Mercedes and many automotive suppliers. While other historically prime manufacturing industries in the region have been slowly trending downward, such as food, wood, and plastics and rubber manufacturing, they remain a strong part of this region's economy. Healthcare and Educational Services tie for second with 14 percent each. The University of Alabama creates a higher percentage of employment in Educational Services than most other regions. However, over 3,800 workers, 26 percent, in education are over the age of 55, which suggests there could be a shortage of teachers, at all

levels soon. The university also provides a higher percentage of healthcare workers, due to having a highly preferred medical program. In 2015, there were nearly 4,000 workers in health care who were over 55. Between the large growth expected in the industry and those older workers starting to retire, it will be important to continue to train people for various types of jobs in healthcare.

West AlabamaWorks Nonagricultural Employment



The high demand occupations in the region reflect the emphasis in the region on manufacturing, for example the top two occupations are Industrial Engineers and Industrial Machinery Mechanics. Also in the top ten are Team Assemblers and Mechanical Engineers. Slightly over half of the occupations in the Hot 40 high demand for this region require less than a 4-year degree, and most of those are either healthcare or manufacturing related. In addition, three of the top fastest growing occupations in the region are related to manufacturing: CNC Machine Tool Programmers, Industrial Engineering Technicians, and Electrical and Electronics Repairers of commercial and Industrial Equipment. Team Assemblers is the sixth fastest growing occupation in the region. Like the high demand, the fast-growing occupations highlight the importance of manufacturing and healthcare in this region. Out of the twenty fastest growing occupations in this region, all except for two of them require less than a Bachelor Degree, but most do require some sort of training or certification beyond high school.

Currently, employers prefer posting job openings online rather than in newspapers. The help wanted online job ads data revealed that in 2016 the West region’s top two occupations for ads were Truck Drivers and Registered Nurses, which is similar to other regions in the state. Truck drivers had 2,452 new job ads in 2016, and Registered nurses had 609. Additional occupations with a significant number of new job ads for the year were Industrial Engineers (225), automotive technicians and mechanics (119), plumbers and pipefitters (113), telecommunications equipment installers (78), electricians (77), Heating, air conditioning and refrigeration mechanics and installers (62), Industrial truck and tractor operators (62), Bus and Truck Mechanics and diesel engine specialists (60), and welders (58). In the Healthcare sector, there were many ads in the region for Physical Therapists (162). Additional healthcare occupations with lots of job ads in 2016 were LPNs (95), medical assistants (82), nursing assistants (80), and pharmacists (59).

The latest commuting data from 2014 shows that the West AlabamaWorks region experiences a net out commute of workers of 7,388; however, this number is lower than it has been since 2009. The region does have an average regional labor force efficiency, with 67.7 percent of the workers living in the region also working in the region. Over 25 percent of these people living and working in the region work for goods producing industries. In addition, 39.2 percent of these workers' earnings averaged more than \$3,333 per month, higher than both the out commuters and the in commuters. Unfortunately, only 23.3 percent of these workers living and working in the region are younger workers under the age of 29, which indicates that the region is losing much of this talent to other regions. While 51.4 percent of the workers who live in the region work in Tuscaloosa County, over 15,000 work in Jefferson and Shelby counties, most in service industries. The number of in commuters has experienced steady growth since 2006. In 2014 reports show that nearly 31,000 people commuted into the region to work, over 1,800 of them residing in Mississippi. This data reflects both the industry employment and earnings growth in the region since 2009.

- e. Provide analysis of the local area's current workforce development activities, including education and training. This analysis must include the strengths and weaknesses of workforce development activities and capacity to provide the workforce development activities to address the education and skill needs of the workforce, including individuals with barriers to employment, and the employment needs of employers (20 CFR 679.560(a)(4)).

The Governor's Local Workforce Areas' Workforce Development Activities

Alabama devotes significant resources to education and workforce development at the local, regional and State levels. In 2014, Governor Bentley created and formally established the Alabama Workforce Council. The Council was tasked with advising and supporting core partners in Alabama's workforce development and education system to include, but not limited to, reviewing ways to streamline and align the existing workforce development functions in the State, evaluating regional workforce development and educational needs by promoting regional workforce councils and evaluating public/private partnerships (sectors) to create a feedback loop for industry and education.

The core programs including WIOA Title I–B, Wagner–Peyser, Adult Education and Rehabilitation Services provide several educational training activities through their respective programs. These activities are represented on the Alabama Workforce Development Board (AWDB). The AWDB also has cross representation from the private business sector membership on the Alabama Workforce Council.

The core programs previously under the Workforce Investment Act and currently under WIOA have participated and partnered in Alabama's One–Stop Career Center system since 2001. The core partner programs include WIOA Title I adult, dislocated worker and youth training activities. The State level administrative entity for WIOA Title I is the Alabama Department of

Commerce, that provides oversight and policy guidance through the Alabama Workforce Development Board for activities under WIOA Title I.

The workforce development areas provide career services, client assessment, case management, referral to Individual Training Accounts, on-the-job training (OJT), customized training, and work based learning. They also provide specialized employment and training activities for youth, including basic education, GED programs, occupational skills training, and work based learning activities.

The Alabama Workforce System (AWS) includes the following programs and entities operated through the following agents.

- **Alabama Career Center System – Operated as a partnership between the Alabama Department of Commerce ((WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth) and the Alabama Department of Labor (Wagner–Peyser) UI, TAA and Veterans). The Career Center System also collaborates with Adult Education, Rehabilitative Services, TANF, SNAP and Title IV of the Older Americans Act (SCESP). System-wide there are 25 Comprehensive Career Centers and 20 satellite and iterant sites in the system. In PY16 the Alabama Career Center System provided 306,907 individuals with Wagner–Peyser labor exchange services and 6,999 individuals with WIOA training services, serving low–income adults, youth, and dislocated workers. Wagner–Peyser funding for PY16 was \$8,970,663 and Workforce Investment Act funds totaled \$42,478,271.**
- **Adult Education Activities – Adult Education services are offered through the Alabama Community College System (ACCS) throughout the state. In Fiscal Year 2015 funding totaled \$20,154,737 and had enrolled approximately 20,000 full time and 26,000 part-time students in adult education classes. Adult Education have been an active partner with the Alabama Career Center system since 2001 and will continue to expand services within the Career Centers under WIOA.**
- **Alabama Department of Labor – Wagner–Peyser, Unemployment Insurance, Trade Act, and Veterans Services – The Alabama Department of Labor (ADOL) houses the Wagner–Peyser program (Employment Service), Unemployment Insurance, Trade Act, and Veterans Services programs. ADOL Wagner–Peyser and WIOA Title I programs have been collocated as part of the Alabama Career Centers since 2001. The Alabama Job Link (AJL) is provided by the ADOL. Alabama Job Link is the online job seeker and employer registration system that provide job seeker skills, abilities and work history with employers posting job openings in the system. ADOL provides Trade Act services and Veterans employment representatives in the Career Centers. In PY2014 approximately 350,000 job seekers were registered in the AJL system.**
- **Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services (ADRS) – The Department of Rehabilitation Services Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS) provides specialized employment and education related services and training to assist teens and adults with disabilities to become employable. Services include skill assessments, counseling,**

training programs, job placement, assistive technology and transportation. For Program Year 14 funding for the VRS program totaled approximately \$25,000,000; and for the same period 31,244 job seekers with disabilities were provided services. Since 2001 the VRS has been an active partner in the Alabama Career Center System.

The strengths and weaknesses of West AlabamaWorks' workforce development activities include the following:

Strengths:

- Strong support from political, education, and business leaders for workforce programs across all agencies and programs.
- Business leadership within the Community College system to align training programs with the needs of business and industry.
- The Alabama Community College System (ACCS) provides access to students throughout the area seeking career pathways and credentials to qualify for middle skills jobs.
- The state and area has partnerships between state level core program agencies that goes back to 2001. There is a culture of strong communication and collaboration that enhances services throughout the Alabama Career Center System.
- The Alabama Career Center System that provides services to job seekers and employers at 5 sites.
- A unified and universal brand for the Alabama Workforce System increases awareness of the system to job seekers and employers using the "Alabama Works" brand and logo.

Weaknesses:

- Limited data integration – Two of the core partner programs maintain separate data management systems for participant tracking and case management functions.
- Lack of a P–20W statewide longitudinal data system to track how job seekers and students are using the Alabama Workforce System and competency job training programs from K–12 and postsecondary to employment.
- The workforce system core and other partners must continue to emphasize soft skills training into all Alabama Workforce System supported training programs.

Capacity to provide the workforce development activities to address the education and skill needs of the workforce:

West AlabamaWorks' workforce system capacity to provide services to both jobseekers and employers is shared by several agencies and program providers. The area's network of Career Centers is a shared function among the Alabama Department of Commerce for WIOA Title I services, the Alabama Department of Labor (ADOL) for Wagner–Peyser, UI, Trade Act and Veterans' services, the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation services for vocational rehabilitation services and the Alabama Community College System (ACCS) for adult education (ABE) services. The network of two (2) comprehensive Career Centers and three (3) satellite and itinerant centers provides broad coverage in all ten (10) counties in the local area. Also, the Alabama JobLink is an internet–based online registration system for jobseekers and employers.

The State agencies overseeing Alabama's WIOA core programs and optional partners not only share space and services throughout the Alabama Career Center System but also interact on a regular basis to share program opportunities to best deliver programs on a local and regional basis. Our agencies working off a solid background of sharing data and collaboration of program services are ready to serve the State's businesses, jobseekers, training seekers, and others with the most viable options to meet their needs. The West AlabamaWorks area has implemented many recent changes including program consolidation and industry led regional councils to ensure more efficient and comprehensive access to available services.

V. Vision

- a. What is the local board's strategic vision to support the area's economic growth and economic self-sufficiency? This vision should be supported by analysis of the local area (Section I) and align with Alabama's Combined State Plan (20 CFR 679.560(a) (5)).

The area will have a Workforce System that is aligned with the general and specific needs of Alabama business and focus on the alignment of programs to meet the skills gap needs of our workers (especially those with barriers to employment) and the economic strategies provided through the state's *Accelerate Alabama 2.0* Strategic Plan.

- b. Identify the local area's goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce (including youth and individuals with barriers to employment) (20 CFR 679.560(a) (5)).

The West AlabamaWorks! Area's goals for preparing an advocated and skilled workforce in the 9 county area includes:

- **Implementation of a robust Regional Workforce Council System that provides direct feedback to the education system (Community College Systems, K-12, Career Tech System) and the WIOA training providers.**
- **Development of strong public/private partnerships that provides direct engagement between the public and private sectors to increase the capacity to meet workforce needs.**
- **Aligning and consolidating the programs of the Community College system and Regional Workforce Councils with the State’s vision and goals.**
- **Aligning the programs of the Community Colleges and other training entities with the “Accelerate Alabama 2.0” plans three main elements: Recruitment, Retention and Renewal.**
- **Ensure all workforce programs have strategies to serve individuals with barriers to employment and close skills gaps.**
- **Foster a strong relationship between workforce development system to create a seamless array of services for jobseekers and employers to address skills gaps as well as skills shortages.**

VI. Local Area Strategy

- a. Based on the analysis in Section IV, what is the local area’s overall strategy to work with the entities that carry out the core programs and required partners to align resources available to the local area, to achieve the strategic vision and goals described in Section II (20 CFR 679.560(a)(6))?

The Department of Commerce’s Workforce Development Division is dedicated to assisting the growth of Alabama businesses and the workers that sustain their operations. By directing individuals toward improving job skills through education and training, the Workforce Development Division equips workers with the tools and talents that employers demand.

At the center of the Workforce Development Division’s mission is AIDT, one of the nation’s top state workforce training agencies. AIDT offers comprehensive pre–employment selection and training, leadership development, on–the job training, and assessments — all specific to each company’s needs. AIDT has worked with thousands of businesses and trained more than 600,000 workers.

The Workforce Development Division is responsible for several workforce programs including the Alabama Career Centers (funded by the Department of Commerce and managed by the

Alabama Department of Labor) and various training programs. The division also oversees the state's Regional Workforce Development Councils, which connect local business leaders with education officials to formulate strategies to ensure the job demands of the industry are being met.

Formally established in 2015 by the Alabama state legislature via Alabama Legislative Act No. 2015-450, the Regional Workforce Councils provide a direct link to the workforce needs of business and industry at the local level. The Councils are business-driven and business-led and work with their member counties to develop a regional strategic plan and comprehensive workforce development system that supports local economic and job development activities.

Councils monitor the workforce needs of business and industry in their region, then develop and implement practical solutions. These range from hosting regional job fairs for immediate hiring needs, to addressing the short-term and long-term training needs of businesses. Regional Workforce Councils are a key mechanism in helping to ensure that there is an available pipeline of highly trained workers with relevant skills that Alabama companies want. The Region 3 Workforce Council directs critical information and data to and from the West AlabamaWorks! Area Board.

- b. What programs are included in the local area's workforce development system (20 CFR 679.560(b) (1) (I))? Provide a listing and brief description of each program.

In the West AlabamaWorks! Local Workforce Area, the Governor's Local Workforce Area Section manages Career Center operations in conjunction with the Employment Service Division of ADOL. All Career Centers have single site managers. Cross training of staff rather than cross awareness is taking place at the career centers. Monthly reporting has become more standardized and efficient with the issuance of guidance by the Local Area. There are currently two (2) comprehensive Career Centers, two (2) satellite centers, one (1) itinerant point location, and a mobile career center in the West AlabamaWorks! Local Workforce Area. Comprehensive centers are full-time centers which have all WIOA partner agencies either on-site or have their services available to customers. Satellite centers are also operated full-time but do not have the full contingent of partner agencies located at the center. Itinerant point centers are only staffed part-time when customer demand has indicated a need in these mainly rural locations. The mobile career center or "bus" is used on-site for job / career fairs, Rapid Response events in cases of mass layoffs, in natural disasters when large numbers of individuals are left unemployed, and numerous other workforce related activities.

The West AlabamaWorks! Local Workforce Area continues to emphasize giving priority of services to veterans and eligible spouses for WIOA funded activities.

Basic career services were available through Alabama's Career Center System and included, at a minimum, the following:

- ❖ Outreach, intake and orientation to available services;
- ❖ Job search, job placement and career counseling as needed via Alabama JobLink;

- ❖ Labor market information;
- ❖ Self-directed initial assessment;
- ❖ Provision of performance and cost information on training providers; and
- ❖ Follow-up services.

Individualized career services are provided for adults and dislocated workers who are determined eligible for WIOA and are registered in the program. Individualized services include, but were not limited to, the following:

- ❖ A comprehensive and specialized assessment of skills levels, aptitudes, abilities and needs;
- ❖ Development of an Individual Employment Plan (IEP/ISS);
- ❖ Case Management activities;
- ❖ Individual career counseling;
- ❖ Referral to training services; and
- ❖ Out-of-area job search assistance.

Training services were provided for adults and dislocated workers who were unable to obtain employment through assistance received in individualized services. Training services included the following:

- ❖ Occupational skills training;
- ❖ On-the-Job Training;
- ❖ Programs that provided workplace training with related instructions;
- ❖ Programs operated by the private sector;
- ❖ Skills upgrading and retraining;
- ❖ Entrepreneurial training;
- ❖ Job readiness training;
- ❖ Adult education and literacy training; and
- ❖ Customized training conducted with a commitment by an employer or a group of employers to employ an individual upon successful completion of training.

The primary means of providing training services for adults and dislocated workers is through the utilization of Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) and On-the-Job Training (OJT). ITAs are available at both public and private training facilities throughout the state with up to \$12,000 available to assist adults and dislocated workers with the cost of books, supplies and tuition associated with the cost of attending for up to two years. West AlabamaWorks! Area targets occupations that are identified as High Growth/High Demand/High Wage and that support the on-going economic development efforts of the state.

The OJT program provides reimbursement to employers for the extra costs associated with training WIOA participants. The reimbursement rate and length of training are negotiated and made a part of the OJT contract. Reimbursement was established at fifty percent (50%) of the participant's hourly wage rate for up to twenty-six (26) weeks.

Youth Program Services

The following Services are provided for youth in the West AlabamaWorks! Local Workforce Area in accordance with WIOA Regulations:

- ❖ Work-based learning program that includes paid and unpaid work experiences, including internships, apprenticeships and job shadowing as appropriate;
- ❖ Remedial Education and GED Preparation;
- ❖ Occupational skills training as appropriate;
- ❖ Leadership development opportunities, which include community service and peer-centered activities encouraging responsibility and other positive social behaviors as appropriate;
- ❖ Supportive services;
- ❖ Adult mentoring;
- ❖ Follow-up services; and
- ❖ Comprehensive guidance and counseling.

The primary means of providing occupational skills training opportunities for youth is through the utilization of the Individual Training Account program. Enrollments in the OJT program were also used as a means of providing youth with training services.

WIOA youth services are provided by a network of youth program providers recommended to the West AlabamaWorks! Local Area Board by the previously established AWDA Local Board. Beginning in PY' 18, youth program providers will be selected by a competitive procurement process. The focus of these youth program providers is services to low out-of-school youth without a high school diploma or GED. These services include assessments, career counseling, and referrals to OJT and ITAs (scholarships). Youth program providers provide various services including remedial education, GED preparation, and soft skills training to prepare youth and young adults to successfully enter the workforce or postsecondary education. Youth can receive occupational skills training via scholarships to postsecondary institutions.

Adult/Dislocated Worker Program Services

Individual Training Account (ITA)

Individual Training Accounts (ITAs), a specific agreement which provides educational or occupational skills training services, are the primary means for Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act training services delivery. Individual Training Account services may only be provided to Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act participants by those training providers who have applied to and been placed on the State's Eligible Provider List. Prospective education and/or occupational skills training providers must meet specific criteria in order to initially and subsequently retain Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act training provider status.

Postsecondary education institutions which offer instruction leading to generally recognized certification in high-demand occupational skills, and other institutions providing similar vocational instruction services, are among the several entities which may apply for inclusion on the Eligible Training Provider List.

West AlabamaWorks! Local Workforce Area strives to maximize the number of clients in training through the efficient use of local area funds. To maximize the number of participants, the previous AWDA Local Board approved new cost limitations on Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) (effective July 1, 2012). The maximum amount allowable for ITAs was adopted as follows:

Short term training of 13 weeks or less	up to \$3,500
52 weeks training or less	up to \$6,500
17 months or less (greater than 12 months but less than 17)	up to \$8,000
17 to 24 months (greater than 17 months but no longer than 24)	up to \$12,000

On-the-Job Training (OJT)

Under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, On-the-Job Training participants' employers are reimbursed a portion of these participants' wages in compensation for the extraordinary costs in additional time and attention generally associated with the provision of such training, and in recognition of the lesser workplace productivity of these trainees. Negotiations with the employer establish the maximum length of participants' training period. The maximum length of such training, however, is not to exceed six months.

Effective January 2015, the OJT reimbursement policy was changed to pay up to 75% reimbursement of participants' wages for small employers with 1 – 50 employees. The policy for all other employers remains the same at 50% reimbursement. This program is designed to fulfill the employment needs of local employers by providing a trained workforce while increasing productivity and profits.

The goals of the OJT program are permanent employment upon successful completion of training; placement into occupations that are long-term; and to build a skilled workforce for a growing Alabama economy. The OJT program is a highly successful training program for employers and their participant's.

- c. How will the local board support the strategies identified in Alabama's Combined State Plan and work with the entities carrying out core programs and other workforce development programs, including programs of study authorized under the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 (20 U.S.C. 2301 *et*

seq.) to support service alignment (20 CFR 679.560(b)(1)(ii))? Provide information concerning how the local board will work with entities carrying out core programs to:

- i. Expand access to employment, training, education, and supportive services for eligible individuals, particularly those with barriers to employment (20 CFR 679.560(b)(2)(i));

The Alabama Community College System (ACCS), through public two-year colleges and skills centers, provide assessment, counseling, basic education, and job training services for youth and adults served through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. For employers, ACT Work Keys job profiling and assessment services and customized training programs are available through two-year colleges.

Career/Technical educational programs are administered by the Community College System and are funded through state and federal legislation, including the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Act. Although the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act stipulates that institutional recipients of Perkins' funds are mandatory partners in carrying out the Act, it is noted that Perkins' funds are used by a college for overall improvement of career/technical education and are allocated by the college- within the parameters of the legislation- to address various needs identified by college staff and the local career/technical education advisory group from business and industry.

Also within the ACCS, the Adult Education Division provides opportunities for adult learners to improve skills in reading, writing, mathematics, and communications. Diagnostic testing identifies individual needs and as a result, and individualized education plan is designed to help learners reach their educational goals. For many learners, the goal is to earn the General Educational Development (GED) Diploma, generally considered to be equivalent to a high school diploma.

Instruction methods are tailored to meet the needs of the learners. Methodologies range from one-on-one tutoring to group instruction and normally feature computer-based training. Multimedia approaches are being increasingly utilized to aid in individual development. Interactive group instruction and peer tutoring are frequently employed.

Adult education classes can provide the academic instruction that many people in Alabama need to secure the required credential so they can obtain and maintain employment. Most adult education students read at the seventh grade level or lower. Studies have shown that the lack of basic literacy skills is the single most persistent barrier to obtaining employment, whether the group studies welfare recipients, the chronically unemployed, or others. Adult Education classes provide the means by which they can get the basic education they need to succeed, and in doing so, improve their self-esteem and productivity significantly.

Source of funding is both state and federal.

Adult education classes will be available through all Alabama career center locations whenever possible and may be accessed by referral from any of the participating partner agencies based on the identified need(s) of the client. Other adult education classes may be in the community and could be more convenient for the individual to attend. Information regarding the location(s) and schedule of all adult education classes will be available in the one-stop career centers.

The Adult education program also offers the following classes that could be of benefit to people who visit the career centers: job readiness classes for welfare participants, English as a Second Language (ESL) classes, English literacy/civics classes, adult education classes in all of the major correctional institutions, family literacy classes, and adult education classes for special populations. West AlabamaWorks! is currently working closely with Adult Education to introduce contextual learning curricula into pilot adult education locations that will be targeted to learning/employment opportunities in the local service areas.

- ii. Facilitate the development of career pathways and co-enrollment, as appropriate, in core programs (20 CFR 679.560(b)(2)(ii)); and

West AlabamaWorks, through its network of Career Centers, places major emphasis on providing potential WIOA participants with pertinent labor market information to assist them in making career choices into occupational clusters which will provide a pathway leading to higher paying employment which provides a sustaining wage for the participant's family. West AlabamaWorks is also currently working with Adult Education to provide contextual learning opportunities targeted to employment and training in occupations which provide a clear career pathway from entry level/wage employment, through a series of career ladder upgrades in skills and thus to higher wage employment.

- iii. Improve access to activities leading to a recognized post-secondary credential (including a credential that is an industry-recognized certificate or certification, portable, and stackable) (20 CFR 679.560(b) (2)(iii)).

West AlabamaWorks will continue to provide structured assessments and labor market information through the network of Career Centers and only provides WIOA assisted training (Individual Training Accounts) to courses of study which lead to the attainment of a postsecondary credential or other industry recognized certificate or credential.

- d. What strategies and services will the local area use to:
 - i. Facilitate engagement of employers in workforce development programs, including small employers and employers in in-demand industry sectors and occupations (20 CFR 679.560(b)(3)(i));

The recently appointed West AlabamaWorks Board is comprised mostly of representation from small employers which primarily represent in-demand occupations, thus insuring that the needs of the small business sector will be at the forefront of board decisions. The West AlabamaWorks Board works closely with Commerce Workforce Division staff who work full time with the Alabama Regional Workforce Council which is comprised of business representation from each of the state's 7 workforce regions. This partnership allows even greater input into the needs of employers within Region 3.

- ii. Support a local workforce development system that meets the needs of businesses in the local area (20 CFR 679.560(b)(3)(ii));

As part of an on-going restructuring of the state's, previously separated components of the workforce development system have been brought into the Department of Commerce Workforce Development Division. West AlabamaWorks works closely with a representative of the Region 3 Regional Workforce Council regions, housed within the Commerce Workforce Development Division, to insure local input into the services provided by WIOA within each region within the local area.

- iii. Better coordinate workforce development programs and economic development (20 CFR 679.560(b)(3)(iii));

The restructuring of the state's workforce development system, brings various components of the system into the Department of Commerce (see ii above). It also allows the workforce development components to work closely with the Business Development Division of Commerce. As the major agency for the recruitment of new businesses into the state, and the expansion of existing businesses, the Department of Commerce focuses on insuring maximum coordination between the various workforce development programs and the economic development for the state, and the West AlabamaWorks Area.

- iv. Strengthen linkages between the one-stop delivery system and unemployment insurance programs (20 CFR 679.560(b)(3)(iv)); and

Adult and Dislocated Worker services are already co-located within the Alabama Career Centers and share front-line staff as well as supervision with staff of the Alabama Department of Labor (ADOL), and includes job search, WIOA training/retraining services/etc., to individuals receiving Unemployment Insurance (UI). UI is housed within the ADOL and utilizes "Call Centers" and/or electronic filing of UI claims, but all UI claimants must report to one of the Career Centers for an interview and register for work of the Alabama Job Link system. Clients needing assistance to file their UI claims are provided assistance from Career Center staff when needed.

- v. 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 local area employers. Any of the above initiatives the local area chooses to implement should be in support of the other strategies to serve employers outlined above in Section III.d. (20 CFR 679.560(b)(3)(v)).

West AlabamaWorks, and its predecessor AWDA, has previously provided many of the above listed programs to support businesses. This includes on-the-job training marketed by our WIOA funded Business Service Representatives (BSR) in every Career Center located within West AlabamaWorks, and supports the marketing of incumbent worker training programs by these BSRs. West AlabamaWorks is prepared to implement additional services as listed above within local areas as the need is documented.

- e. How will the local board coordinate local workforce investment activities with regional economic development activities carried out in the local area (20 CFR 679.560(b)(4))?

See ii and iii.

- f. How will the local board promote entrepreneurial skills training and microenterprise services (20 CFR 679.560(b)(4))?

West AlabamaWorks will continue to work with the postsecondary education institutions to support any training in this area which would result in a recognized credential. Currently only a couple of providers offer this type training within the local area.

West AlabamaWorks will also work closely with the Small Business Advocacy office within the Business Development Division of the Department of Commerce to promote the development of new businesses, including microenterprise services. These efforts to promote entrepreneurial skills training is enhanced by partnering with the Alabama Small Business Development Network which coordinates with the Consortiums 10 Small Development Centers located throughout the state.

- g. Provide a description of the one-stop delivery system in the local area, including:
 - i. How the local board will ensure the continuous improvement of eligible providers of services through the system and that such providers will meet the employment needs of local employers, workers, and jobseekers (20 CFR 679.560(b)(5)(i));

West AlabamaWorks in conjunction with the states performance requirements for training providers to be included and remain on the states Eligible Training Provider List, will monitor performance of entities providing WIOA funded training to insure that trainees/participants

successfully complete training, earn nationally or industry recognized credentials, and become employed in in- demand occupations needed by regional employers.

- ii. How the local board will facilitate access to services provided through the one-stop delivery system, including in remote areas, through the use of technology and other means (20 CFR 679.560(b)(5)(ii));

Alabama Job Link (AJL) is the on-line portal to services offered through the Alabama Career Center System. It is an internet based self-service system for job seekers who can look for work, post their resume and receive emails notifications of job matches. AJL also provides access to Alabama’s WIOA Eligible Training Provider List for training programs and access to the different programs provided by ADOL and WIOA. AJL also provides a link to partner agency websites.

- iii. How entities within the one-stop delivery system, including career center operators and the career center partners, will comply with WIOA sec. 188, if applicable, and applicable provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12101 *et seq.*) regarding the physical and programmatic accessibility of facilities, programs and services, technology, and materials for individuals with disabilities, including providing staff training and support for addressing the needs of individuals with disabilities (20 CFR 679.560(b)(5)(iii)); and

In 2005, a team of Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services employees reviewed each Alabama Career Center for physical and programmatic accessibility using a survey checklist developed under Section 188 of WIA. A re–survey of Career Centers (including satellite centers) is being done in FY 2016 to check physical and programmatic accessibility of facilities, services, technology and materials using a DOL survey checklist developed under Section 188 of WIOA and a policy checklist. The survey also measures compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements. This re–survey is being conducted by a team of persons with disabilities and others that include assistive technology experts on deaf and blind needs. All of these surveys measure physical access from parking to entrances to where services are provided, as well as, accessibility of bathrooms, telephones, tables, and water fountains. Policies are also being evaluated to ensure that they do not exclude individuals with disabilities. Computers are being evaluated to ensure access for those with disabilities affecting hearing, vision, and manual dexterity.

At the completion of survey of the Career Centers, a summary report will be compiled which will list all physical and programmatic barriers, if any, and suggested strategies to remove those barriers. New policies to ensure access may also be suggested. Responsibility for implementation of barrier removal strategies will be divided between the one–stop delivery system partners. Staff training may be developed where necessary to ensure that they have

the knowledge, sensitivity, and awareness to address the needs of individuals with disabilities.

- iv. What the roles and resource contributions of each career center partner (20 CFR 679.560(b)(5)(iv))?

The roles and resource contributions of each partner will be listed in the Career Center Partnership's MOU. See Attachment West AlabamaWorks! MOU

- h. Provide a description and assessment of the type and availability of adult and dislocated worker employment and training activities in the local area (20 CFR 679.560(b)(6)).

Funds received by the State and allocated to the Local Workforce Development Board (LWDB) for Adult and Dislocated Worker Services will be used to:

- Provide Basic Career Services to assist job seekers in finding employment
- Provide Individualized Career Services to provide a more comprehensive assessment to identify the need for additional services
- Provide Follow Up Services for not less than 12 months following entry into unsubsidized employment
- Provide Training Services to job seekers who do not have the skills necessary to secure employment

Services provided through the Alabama Career Center System will assist customers in finding employment, education and/or training that will lead to employment or career enhancement.

For customers who need more than Basic Career Services to find employment, WIOA provides more comprehensive and specific Individualized Career Services and Training Services to assist in employment development.

Basic Career Services will be provided by Alabama Career Center staff assigned Wagner-Peyser (WP) duties. These services are available to Adult and Dislocated Worker customers through the Alabama Career Center System. Basic Career Services will include, at a minimum:

- Determinations of whether the individual is eligible to receive assistance from the adult, dislocated worker, or youth programs.
- Outreach, intake, and orientation to information and other services available through the Career Center System
- Initial assessments of skill levels including academic skills, aptitudes, abilities (including skills gaps), English language proficiency, and supportive services needed
- Labor Exchange Services, including:

- Job search and placement assistance, and, when needed by an individual, career counseling, including:
 - Provisions of information on in-demand industry sectors and occupations
 - Provision of information on nontraditional employment
 - Provision of referrals to and coordination of activities with other programs and services, including those within the Career Center System and when appropriate other workforce development programs
 - Job vacancy listings in such labor market areas
 - Information on job skills necessary to obtain the jobs described above
 - Information relating to local occupations in demand and the earnings and skills requirements for such occupations
- Provision of performance information and program cost information on eligible training service by program and type of providers
- Provision of information on how the local area is performing on Performance Measures and any additional performance information with respect to the Alabama Career Center System
- Provision of information relating to the availability of supportive services or assistance, and appropriated referrals to those services and assistance, including: child care; child support; medical or child health assistance available through State's Medicaid program and Children's Health Insurance Program; benefits under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP); assistance through the earned income tax credit; housing counseling and assistance services sponsored through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD); and assistance under a State program for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and other supportive services and transportation provided through that program
- Assistance in establishing eligibility for programs of financial aid assistance for training and education programs not provided under WIOA
- Provision of information regarding filing claims for unemployment compensation
- Re-Employment Services including a one-on-one interview, resume assistance, initial assessment, orientation to the Career Center and electronic database, Labor Market Information, Individual Employment Plan, referrals to Supportive Services, and other services as deemed appropriate
- UI Eligibility Assessment regarding availability for work, ability to work and job search activities.
- Assistance in establishing eligibility for programs of financial aid assistance for training and education programs that are not funded under the WIOA and that are available in the local area
- Follow-up services, including counseling regarding the workplace for participants in workforce development activities, who are placed in unsubsidized employment for not less than 12 months after the first day of employment, as appropriate

Individualized Career Services will be recorded services that will be provided by the Alabama Career Center System staff to Adults and Dislocated Workers who have been determined eligible for WIOA services and are unable to obtain a job. Individualized Career Services are to be individualized for job seekers and require significant staff time and include the following:

- A comprehensive and specialized assessment of skills levels, aptitudes, abilities and needs which will include diagnostic testing and use of other assessment tools; and/or in-depth interview and evaluation to identify employment barriers, supportive service needs, and appropriate goals
- Development of an Individual Employment Plan (IEP) that will include employment goals, appropriate planning objectives and the appropriate mix of services (both WIOA and non-WIOA) available in the local area necessary for customers to achieve employment goals
- Career Planning activities
- Labor Exchange Activities
- Individual career counseling/planning
- Group career counseling
- Referral to Training Services
- Out-of-area job search and relocation assistance
- Short-term pre-vocational services and activities provided through the Alabama Career Center System including learning skills, communication skills, interviewing skills, punctuality and personal maintenance skills, professional conduct skills, and other skills development designed to prepare job seekers for unsubsidized employment
- Internships and work experiences that are linked to careers
- Financial literacy services
- English language acquisition and integrated education and training programs as provided by Adult Education and Basic Literacy services

Follow-up Services must be provided as appropriate for participants who are placed in unsubsidized employment, for up to 12 months after the first day of employment. Follow-up services do not extend the date of exit in performance reporting.

Training Services may be needed for employed, unemployed or underemployed Adults and Dislocated Workers who have not been able to obtain employment leading to self-sufficiency. There is no sequence of service requirement for “career services” and training. This means that the Alabama Career Center System staff may determine training is appropriate regardless of whether the individual has received basic or individualized career services first. Under WIOA, training services may be provided if the Career Center staff determine, after an interview, evaluation or assessment, and career planning, that the individual:

- Is unlikely or unable to obtain or retain employment, that leads to economic self-sufficiency or wages comparable to or higher than wages from previous employment through career services alone;
- Is in need of training services to obtain or retain employment that leads to economic self-sufficiency or wages comparable to or higher than wages from previous employment, through career services alone; and
- Has the skills and qualifications to successfully participate in the selected program of training services.

Training services, when determined appropriate, must be provided either through an Individual Training Account (ITA) or through an OJT training contract. Training services must be linked to in-demand employment opportunities in the local area or planning region or in a geographic area in which the adult or dislocated worker is willing to commute or relocate. The selection of training services should be conducted in a manner that maximizes customer choice, is linked to in-demand occupations, informed by the performance of relevant training providers, and coordinated to the extent possible with other sources of assistance. Under, WIOA-funded Training Services are available through public and private partner and non-partner agencies as identified on the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL), <https://www.etpl.alabama.gov>.

Non-WIOA funded training may be available through public and private partner and non-partner agencies such as Adult Vocational Rehabilitation Services, Adult Education, Pell Grant, academic and/or technical scholarships, employer tuition reimbursement programs, and others.

The WIOA states that Training Services are directly linked to job opportunities in the local area and may include:

- Occupational skills training, including training for non-traditional employment such as dedicated classroom training, and Individual Training Accounts (ITAs)
- On-The-Job training (OJT)
- Programs that combine workplace training with related instruction, which may include cooperative education programs
- Training programs operated by the private sector
- Skills upgrading and retraining
- Apprenticeship training
- Entrepreneurial training
- Job readiness training
- Adult education and literacy training
- Customized training conducted with a commitment by an employer or group of employers to employ an individual upon successful completion of the training

- i. Provide a description of how the local board will coordinate workforce investment activities carried out in the local area with statewide rapid response activities (20 CFR 679.560(b)(7)).

The West AlabamaWorks Local Board is made aware of all WARN and non-WARN notices by the State's Rapid Response Unit. Local Board staff receive Dislocated Worker event reports via email to be made aware of planned dislocation events by company and location. Career Center Area Managers and local Career Center managers are copied on e-mails announcing the date and time of group employee meetings (GEM's) to coordinate attendance by Career Center staff to provide information to dislocated workers about programs, services and training opportunities at the local Career Center.

- j. Provide a description and assessment of the type and availability of youth workforce investment activities in the local area including activities for youth who are individuals with disabilities, which must include an identification of successful models of such activities (20 CFR 679.560(b)(8)).

The Alabama Career Center System uses its association with its Career Center partners and local community agencies to ensure that the needs of youth are met while presenting the maximum opportunities for their goal achievements. A strong connection is fostered between youth program services, activities, and the Alabama Career Center System. It is important to ensure that youth are completely familiar with community services that assist in the reduction of barriers to employment, education, or training. Once eligibility determination has been made, the eligible youth is enrolled into WIOA and shall receive services available through the Alabama Career Center System to include an objective assessment that contains an academic and skills assessment of:

- Basic skills**
- Occupational skills**
- Prior work history**
- Employability (pre-employment/work maturity skills)**
- Aptitudes**
- Interests**

The assessment process also includes an orientation to the assessment process, an interview, determination of supportive service needs, and the determination of developmental needs. Information collected during the assessment process is used to develop individual service strategies for youth and will be recorded on the Individual Service Strategy (ISS) and documented in the electronic case file. If the youth has been recently assessed by another agency for education or training purposes and the previous assessment meets WIOA requirements, additional assessment may not be required.

Youth must be administered an academic assessment (TABE) within the first 60 days of eligibility determination. This will be the pretest for determining “measurable skills gains”. The TABE assessment can be accepted from another approved agency, such as Adult Education, if it was administered within 6 months prior to eligibility determination. A TABE post-test to document measurable academic skills gains can be administered at any time and multiple times during a youth’s enrollment period, but MUST be administered at least once during a program year.

It is the role of the Alabama Career Center System or approved Youth program staff to assist youth in the determination of their interests, abilities, and future plans through the assessment and interview process.

Assessment information will assist both the youth and the Alabama Career Center System staff in developing an appropriate career plan.

Alabama Career Center System staff will assist youth who are prepared to make the commitment toward success.

Assessment is a process through which joint decisions can be made concerning goals, objectives, employment, education, or training. If, during the assessment process, it is determined that the youth needs the services of another Career Center partner or community activity, referrals will be made.

Case Management and Career Guidance is an all-encompassing activity that begins with the initial contact with the youth and culminates with any post-follow up activities that may be needed by the youth. Alabama Career Center System staff begin the Case Management process by conducting an informative orientation to the selected activity, maintaining close contact with youth throughout participation, counseling and referring to supportive services as needed, assisting in job search and placement activities, and performing needed follow-up services. Documentation of all case management and career guidance activities will be accomplished through notes entered into the electronic case file.

The ISS will be developed for each youth and that it identifies “an employment goal including, in appropriate circumstances, non-traditional jobs, appropriate achievement objectives, and appropriate services for the participant...”

Youth, who choose employment as a primary goal, should be given the opportunity to participate in work readiness activities. Youth, who request job readiness or employment activities, may participate in work experience (paid or unpaid), job shadowing, internships, and/or occupational skills training. In the Governor's Local Workforce Areas, Work Based Learning (WBL) is a critical program element designed to help youth with limited skills and little to no work experience achieve a state of job readiness. Youth will also be referred to On-the-Job Training or Individual Referral training providers as appropriate.

When job ready, youth will be provided Labor Exchange Services including job search through Alabama JobLink and other methods. In addition, the youth will have a professionally developed résumé that includes all education and training gained, as well as any other criteria that would make the youth more employable.

In-School Youth are primarily served through dual enrollment activities which allow them to complete for-credit college courses in a technical field while obtaining their high school diploma. These youths may be transitioned into an individual training account. Additional program offerings may include leadership development activities addressing teamwork, decision-making, personal responsibility, citizenship training, positive attitude development, self-esteem building, cultural diversity training, adult mentoring, and positive social behavior development.

Out-of-School Youth may participate in basic academic skills development to obtain the developmental skills necessary to enter employment, postsecondary education and/or training leading to employment. Depending upon the degree of remediation necessary, these youth may be involved in study skills training, one-on-one tutoring, academic skills remediation, or GED preparation.

All currently enrolled youth should be actively engaged in appropriate services. All youth, whether enrolled in Career Center Youth Services and Individual Training Accounts or with a Youth Services provider, ***must receive*** a monthly contact from their case manager. In addition, all youth enrolled with a Youth Services provider ***must receive*** a “value-added” service from the Youth provider on a monthly basis. These services must be well documented and dictated by needs identified and incorporated in the ISS.

Value-added services are provided in person and may include, but are not limited to, workshops, job shadowing, tutoring, résumé development, labor market and career exploration, development of basic skills, occupational skills and work readiness skills, drop-out prevention strategies, interest inventories, peer group motivational meetings, applications for financial aid and many more.

Youth should also be introduced to planning tools such as My Next Move, www.MyNextMove.org, and MySkills, MyFuture, www.mySkillsmFuture.org.

- k. How will the local board coordinate relevant secondary and post-secondary education programs and activities with education and workforce investment activities to coordinate strategies, enhance services, and avoid duplication of services (20 CFR 679.560(b)(9))?

The West AlabamaWorks Area Local Board staff regularly network with secondary and postsecondary leaderships through State, Regional, and Local forums and meetings to

exchange information about programs and services in the local area. Local Board members will also be provided information and updates about relevant secondary and postsecondary programs in the West AlabamaWorks Area.

- I. How will the local board coordinate WIOA Title I workforce investment activities (adult, dislocated worker, and youth programs) with the provision of transportation and other appropriate services in the local area (20 CFR 679.560(b)(10))?

West AlabamaWorks is predominately a rural area with only minimal access to a full-time public transportation system. The public transportation systems that are available to serve the rural areas offer very minimal transportation access that is restricted to very structured routes and travel times, and are typically not sufficient to provide participants access to travel to and from training providers or to work-based training opportunities. Transportation assistance is provided by most of our 4 current Youth Providers either by agency vans, or gas cards for either WIOA participant vehicles or, most often, for participants to use for gas in friends/family vehicles in exchange for transportation to class.

- m. Provide plans and strategies for maximizing coordination, improving service delivery, and avoiding duplication of Wagner-Peyser Act services and other services provided through the one-stop delivery system (20 CFR 679.560(b)(11)).

WIOA staff with in the West AlabamaWorks Area have been collocated within the Alabama Career Center System of strategically placed (One-Stop) Career Centers for approximately 20 years and have worked closely with the Wagner-Peyser staff to provide non-duplicated services. That coordination and cooperation between the Alabama Department of Labor (WP/UI/TAA/etc.) and West AlabamaWorks WIOA Title I staff has advanced so that our agencies share in the costs of supervision, and facility costs, to the point that we now have a cost-sharing agreement whereas the costs of Career Center Area managers and individual Career Center local office managers is allocated monthly based on the percent of non-supervisory staff charged to the individual benefitting cost centers. A finalized copy of the Cost- Allocation MOU is currently being negotiated and is expected to be finalized and released in January 2018.

- n. How will the local board coordinate WIOA Title I workforce investment activities (adult, dislocated worker and youth programs) with adult education and literacy activities under WIOA Title II? This description must include how the local board will carry out the review of local applications submitted under Title II consistent with WIOA Secs. 107(d)(11)(A) and (B)(i) and WIOA Sec. 232, for example, promoting concurrent enrollment in programs and activities, as appropriate (20 CFR 679.560(b)(12)).

Adult Education provided by the Alabama Career College System is present in both of comprehensive Career Centers located within the West AlabamaWorks Local Area. West AlabamaWorks Youth Providers only provide adult education services where they are not readily available for Adult Education. West AlabamaWorks Youth providers augment the adult education classes by providing tutors, space, participant incentives and other services to enhance the participation for participants who are basic skills deficient and/or need a GED or high school diploma to successfully enter the workforce or enter postsecondary education opportunities.

A representative from the local board, or local Board staff member will be on the State AE review committee for the adult education Request for Funding Proposals (RFP). The board will select one/two people from the board to represent them on the AE review committee. The board reviewer will make sure that each of the submitted proposals are in alignment with the goals of the board. The next competitive process required for Title II under WIOA is in 2017 and must be complete with providers ready to begin on July 1, 2017. The current tentative timeline for the process is to release an RFP in January/February 2017 and the review the applications April/May and make selections for new providers by June to begin providing service on July 1, 2017.

- o. Attach current copies of Memorandums of Understanding or other executed cooperative agreements which define how all local service providers, including additional providers, will carry out the requirements for integration of and access to the entire set of services available in the local one-stop delivery system (20 CFR 679.560(b)(13)).

See Attachment West AlabamaWorks! MOU

- p. Provide a statement indicating that the local area will negotiate local levels of performance consistent with WIOA sec. 166(c) with the Workforce Development Division (WDD) and that these performance levels will be included in each year's Grant Agreement. These levels will be negotiated when the U.S. Department of Labor and other applicable federal agencies finalize performance levels for the State (20 CFR 679.560(b)(16)).

The state has not been scheduled to initiate WIOA Performance levels for Alabama. Once these state performance levels have been negotiated, the West AlabamaWorks Local Workforce Area will be notified of proposed WIOA performance levels for the local area. At that point, West Alabama Works staff will review the proposed WIOA performance levels, and initiate the negotiation for final performance.

- q. What actions will the local board take toward becoming or remaining a high-performing board, consistent with the factors developed by the State Board (20 CFR 679.560(b)(17))?

The West AlabamaWorks board and board staff within the Governor’s Local Workforce Areas Section of the Workforce Development Division of Commerce will continue to stress the targeting of training referrals to occupations that have been identified as High Demand/High Growth/ and High Wage occupations which can be attained by postsecondary education training programs that do not exceed the 104 week maximum allowed by the WIOA. These identified occupations will be adjusted for each Region of the State utilizing data developed by the Alabama Department of Labor’s Labor Market Division.

- r. How will individual training accounts be used to provide training services to adults and dislocated workers? Will contracts for training services be used? If training contracts for services are used, how will this be coordinated with the use of individuals training accounts? How will the local board ensure informed customer choice in the selection of training programs regardless of how the training services are to be provided (20 CFR 679.560(b)(18))?

The Alabama Department of Commerce, through the Workforce Development Division, hosts a website that provides job seekers full and accurate information concerning available Training Services on the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL), accessible at <https://www.etpl.alabama.gov>. Cost information is provided and may include such items as tuition and required books, materials, supplies, and fees. Performance information available through the website provides general statistics including successful training completions, job acquisition rates, entry-level wages, and career and promotional opportunities. This information will be provided to job seekers and should facilitate comparison shopping to ensure an informed customer choice, which aligns with the current Labor Market Information.

Job seekers may not need WIOA financial assistance to complete training necessary for job acquisition. Non-WIOA assistance may be available through grants, scholarships, or partner services and should be accessed in the event that WIOA funds are not sufficient to meet all training needs. Career Services will continue to be provided while job seekers are enrolled in Training Services. Case Management will take on even more importance since customers will be receiving services away from the Career Center. Extra efforts may be required to stay in contact with them. Also, additional supportive services may need to be addressed at this time to help ensure success.

Open lines of communication between the Alabama Career Center staff and the proper contact persons, as identified by the training provider, are very important. This may help to ensure that job seekers will have a smooth entry into Training Services and will facilitate both the Case Management and maintenance of Individual Training Accounts and On-the-Job Training Contracts during the term of participation. Once again, as job seekers complete or near the end of participation in Training Services, appropriate Labor Exchange activities, which may include an updated resume, should be initiated to facilitate entry into

unsubsidized employment. These services can be accomplished through a team approach of Alabama Career Center staff and other partners.

Alabama Career Center System is committed to fully integrating Registered Apprenticeship (RA) programs as an employment and training solution for one-stop centers. Career Centers are encouraged to use RA as a career pathway for job seekers and a job-driven strategy for businesses. RA programs automatically qualify to be placed on the State and Local Board's Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) allowing ITA's to support participants in RA programs

- s. Describe the one-stop delivery system's current intake and case management information system(s). Are all WIOA and career center partners using the same system? How do WIOA and career center partners plan to implement and transition to an integrated, technology-enabled intake and case management information system (20 CFR 679.560(b)(20))?

Data collection and reporting processes for Title 1 and Title III programs is through the Alabama Job Link system for Adult and Dislocated Worker participants through the one stop centers. Participant data for Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth programs is uploaded nightly to the Alaworks data collection programs used by the Department of Commerce for Title I programs. Adult Education and Rehabilitative Services use programs developed to facilitate reporting requirement from their respective funding agencies

Two of the core partners in Alabama have interoperable management information systems to exchange common data elements. The WIOA Title I entity (Alabama Department of Commerce) and the Wagner-Peyser entity (Alabama Department of Labor) run a nightly data extract that moves data from Alabama JobLink (AJL) to AlaWorks for the WIOA adult and dislocated worker reporting elements. Also, the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services (ADRS) and the Alabama Department of Human Resources participate in a data warehouse provided by the Department of Commerce, known as the Interagency Electronic Linkage System (IELS). The IELS allows these agencies to extract data already collected by the Alabama Career Centers of clients served by these respective agencies.

- t. What policies does the local board have in place for the local one-stop delivery system that ensure priority for adult career and training services will be given to recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals, and individuals who are basic skills deficient (20 CFR 679.560(b)(21))?

The state has established that priority of service will be given to individuals on public assistance, other low-income individuals who are basic skills deficient in accordance with the requirements of WIOA sec 134(c)(3). The State Program Integrity Section will review activities, services, administration, and management practices to ensure compliance with the Act, Federal and State Regulations, OMB Circulars, Government Auditing Standards, Generally

Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP), State Law and Governor’s Workforce Innovation Directives.

- u. How will the local area, and in particular the career centers, comply with the Jobs for Veterans Act requirements?

In affiliation with the American Job Center (AJC) network, the Alabama Veterans’ Services Program within the Alabama Career Center system shall offer comprehensive employment and career placement service to nearly 25,000 veterans a year through a combination of self-service Internet-based job services and direct assistance at AJCs throughout the state. The Alabama Job Link (AJL) system, as a point of entry for self-service registration, provides a priority service notification to veterans and covered persons at the Alabama Joblink website.

Veterans and persons entitled to priority services and training complete a universal application that includes features and questions designed to assist staff members in identifying them for priority services and training at the point of entry into the workforce development system.

Veterans who can use AJL competently are encouraged to self-register and make maximum use of the automated access to resources. As a core service, career center specialists review applications and resumes submitted by veterans and covered persons who register for employment using self-service, to ensure that veterans’ applications clearly state job objectives and show meaningful information with regards to work history, education and training. Because veterans’ resumes are listed first in the search results and are annotated with an American flag, employers can quickly locate qualified veterans for job openings. To ensure that veterans’ receive priority in referral to job openings, the Alabama Job Link system provides 24-hour email alerts to veterans for any job listing that matches their resumes. The automated system to select qualified candidates for job openings is programmed to refer only qualified veterans in the first 24 hours of the listing, unless no qualified veterans are available.

Priority service is also provided when veterans, or others eligible for priority, are identified at intake when registering for services at any AJC, or other service delivery points. Career center specialists will ensure that each veteran completing a full application will have properly recorded their skills, education, training, job or career interests, work experience, licenses or certifications, employment availability, contact information, and other vital information.

Additionally, AJCs will use signage, graphics, and displays to inform veterans and Covered Persons of priority service (as described under Title 38 U.S.C. Chapter 42 and 20 CFR Part 1010) and as applicable to all US DOL-funded employment services and training.

Moreover, local career center managers will develop outreach activities to locate Covered Persons under Veterans’ Priority. Managers or designated representatives will review special

reports generated by AJL for the purpose of identifying veterans and Covered Persons who may be contacted and made aware of their priority in services and training. Career Center managers will develop local service strategies and training goals for veterans and Covered Persons entitled to Veterans' Priority, in consultation with their partner agencies and training providers, to encourage maximum utilization of services and training by veterans and Covered Persons.

All Alabama Workforce Development regions have implemented Veterans' Priority in the State WIOA and Wagner–Peyser Plan of Service. Disabled Veterans Outreach Program (DVOP) representatives and Local Veterans Employment Representatives (LVERs) shall complement Priority of Service provided by the AJC to veterans and Covered Persons, as mandated under Title 38 U.S.C., Chapter 41, and in accordance with the general and special provisions of the Jobs For Veterans State Grant (JVSG), and applicable regulations, policies, and directive guidance for JVSG from the Assistant Secretary, Veterans Employment and Training (ASVET), including Veterans Program Letters addressing DVOP–LVER Roles and Responsibilities.

The Alabama strategy leverages improvements in technology to enable career center specialists to locate and review the resumes of veterans using on–line self–services for the purpose of offering helpful advice or suggestions on presenting their skills and abilities to prospective employers, because the AJL data system is designed to support employers searching for key words, then automatically flags the resumes of veterans and Covered Persons who are identified as qualified candidates within the parameters entered by the employer. This advantage offers veterans and Covered Person a Priority in Service and enables an employer to contact them directly, with or without a referral through a posted job order.

Targeting Services to Veterans with Significant Barriers to Employment (SBE):

- **Alabama Career Centers in the statewide American Job center (AJC) network will provide comprehensive employment, training, and career placement services to nearly 25,000 veterans a year through a combination of Internet–based job services and personal assistance at Alabama Career Centers in the statewide AJC network. Alabama has more than 32,000 residents currently serving in the Armed Forces and of which includes 13,000 in the National Guard and Reserve component. Alabama National Guard ranked fifth in numbers of troops deployed.**

The Alabama Career Center system in the American Job Center network operates under the auspices of the Alabama Department of Labor, the state agency responsible for providing employment services and related services to veterans, and is authorized by the Governor to make application for funds to carry out the Jobs for Veterans State Grant (JVSG), the Disabled Veterans Outreach Program (DVOP) and Local Veterans Employment Representative (LVER) program as mandated under Title 38 U.S.C. Chapter 41.

The Alabama Job Link (AJL) enables veterans to use self-services, including registration. This approach enables specialists in the DVOP to review the registrations and resumes submitted by veterans on-line and then contact veterans who appear to need further assistance. Alabama DVOP specialists prioritize their efforts with veterans who are facing significant barriers to employment (SBE) in securing employment, including veterans who appear to be having difficulty in using the Alabama Job Link (AJL) automated system. The assignment of DVOP specialists at specific Alabama Career Centers in the statewide American Job Center (AJC) network is based on a strategy to ensure veterans with SBEs are priority customers in the Alabama Workforce Development system. Although many veterans can and will use the internet-based self-registration and various self-service features, veterans with SBEs are provided intensive services. Veterans who enter the Alabama Workforce Development System at an AJC (Alabama Career Center), are served initially by career center specialists. For veterans who appear to have an SBE, career center specialists will offer additional services, to include referral to a DVOP who will provide intensive and case management services for veterans determined to have a Significant Barrier to Employment (SBE), as defined by Veterans Program Letter (VPL) 03-14 and VPL 04-14:

1. All veterans enrolled in the Five-track Employment Program administered by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) Service. As covered in a separate agreement with VR&E, a client determined to be "Job-Ready" by VR&E will be referred by a VR&E Employment Coordinator to the state's Intensive Services Coordinator (ISC), who will refer the Job Ready VR&E client to an appropriate AJC manager for case management and job placement services.
2. Homeless Veterans, as defined in Section 103(a) of the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 11302(a)).
3. Veterans lacking a high school diploma or equivalent certificate.
4. A Recently-separated military service member, as defined in 38 U.S.C § 4211(6), who at any time in the previous 12 months has been unemployed for 27 or more consecutive weeks.
5. Low-income veterans (as defined by WIOA at Sec. 3(24) (B)).
6. A veteran who is an ex-offender, as defined by WIOA Section 3(24) (F)), who has been released from incarceration within the last 12 months.
7. Veterans ages 18-24 years old transitioning from active military service.
8. A Special Disabled Veteran or Disabled Veteran, as those terms are defined in 38 U.S.C § 4211(1). Special Disabled and Disabled Veterans are those who are entitled to compensation (or who but for the receipt of military retired pay would be entitled to compensation) under laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans' Affairs; or, were discharged or released from active duty because of a service connected disability.
9. Veterans in the categories above will be provided a comprehensive Assessment of Employability, addressing barriers to employment and a written Individual Employment Plan (IEP) outlining the individual's employability planning.

Locating Priority Group Veterans

Veterans in priority groups will be located in the data system by developing special reports and search capabilities of the AJL system. Career Center/AJC staff members will outreach to veterans who may benefit from DVOP services. DVOPs will outreach to homeless shelters, community agencies that provide services to homeless individuals, and will participate in special events for disabled and homeless veterans, such as Homeless Veterans Stand Downs.

VII. Service Provider Selection Policies

- a. Provide a description of the competitive process that will be used to award any subgrants and contracts for WIOA Title I activities (20 CFR 679.560(b)(15)).

Providers will be required to collaborate with partners from the Career Centers and other social services, education, and employment–related supports in the area. The formula will be designed to consider the levels of performance in the local programs as compared to established goals as a basis for an increase or decrease in funds.

The proposal application will collect basic information regarding the eligible provider including, but not limited to, location, service area, scope of work for the program, demographics served, fiscal management procedures, and audit history. Additionally, each applicant will be required to submit a proposed budget, as well as programmatic information regarding statutory requirements. Questions may include the following:

1. Provide the vision and mission of the program or organization. Please include a description of the population that the program will serve, including how the program will meet the needs of adults with barriers to employment (e.g. Displaced Homemaker, Low–income Individual, individuals with Disabilities, Single Parents, and other individuals as described in the law).
2. Provide a description of any cooperative agreements/contracts that the program has with other agencies and service providers for the delivery of adult education and literacy activities. Also, describe ways in which the program coordinates with other service providers to provide wrap–around services to participants (e.g. child care, transportation).
3. Describe how the program will align activities to the Local Plan for WIOA providers and supportive services. Include a description of how the program will promote concurrent enrollment with Title I programs.
4. Describe the methods the program will employ to meet the State adjusted levels of performance. Additionally, describe the program’s mechanism and process for collecting and reporting data to assess performance. The description of the program’s methods to meet performance measures should focus on efforts to meet or achieve:

- a. Percentage of participants in unsubsidized employment after program exit;
- b. Median earnings of program participants;
- c. Percentage of participants who obtain a recognized postsecondary credential or a secondary school diploma/equivalent during program participation or after exiting;
- d. Effective service provided to employers.

5. Describe the program's current and/or future involvement as a local One-Stop Career Center partner, including how the program will contribute to products or services for Career Center participant, with emphasis on individuals with barriers to employment. Describe how the program's contribution to the One-Stop Career Center will be coordinated with other core providers, and delivered to participants.

6. Describe the scope of the program's activities, and the delivery of services to ensure that the needs of all eligible participants will be met.

7. Describe the program's ability to meet the considerations used to assess the RFP that are listed below.

Assessing the RFP

The assessment of each grant application will involve an intense evaluation of the ability of the eligible provider to meet the workforce needs of the area and to comply with the expectations and statutes described within the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. At minimum, the review process and scoring rubric will consider the following:

1. The ability of the eligible provider to meet the workforce needs identified for the population in the area. Emphasis will be given to the provider's ability to provide targeted service to individuals with barriers to employment—including low literacy skills and an English language barrier.
2. The eligible provider's ability to provide service to individuals with a (physical or learning) disability.
3. The eligible provider's demonstrated effectiveness in providing training and instruction, including its ability to meet required levels of performance.
4. The eligible provider's alignment with the WIOA Local Plan.
5. The depth, intensity, and rigor of the programs and activities offered by the eligible provider. Attention will be given to the extent to which the eligible provider

incorporates stringent research in the grant proposal submission and the development of the program itself.

6. The extent to which the eligible provider's program is based on intense research and best practices.

7. The extent to which the eligible provider demonstrates the effective use of technology for instruction, to include distance education, toward students' improved performance.

8. The eligible provider's demonstrated integration of contextualized instruction, to blend various skills, and preparation for transition to post-secondary education or entry into the workplace. Attention will be given to activities that promote and lead to economic self-sufficiency, and the ability to exercise the full rights of citizenship.

9. The qualifications and expertise of the eligible provider's instructors, counselors, and administrative staff. The eligible provider must also demonstrate its ability and intent to provide high quality professional development to instructors and staff, toward the improvement of student performance.

10. The eligible provider's collaboration with other available education, training, and social service resources in the community. Particularly, the eligible provider should have or establish significant partnerships with public schools, post-secondary institutions, industry/business partners, and workforce boards.

11. The flexibility of program scheduling offered by the eligible provider, including coordination (when available) with Federal, State, and local support services such as childcare, transportation, and mental health services.

12. The eligible provider's information management system; the expectation will be that the eligible provider will use the state-administered designated Adult Education System for Accountability and Performance for all grant related data collection and reporting.

b. Identify local board criteria for awarding grants for youth activities.

The State will establish policy requiring Local Workforce Development Areas to submit RFP's for WIOA youth activities for review before being issued by the local area. The RFP's will be required to award youth program funds to established potential youth providers with the organizational history to meet expected youth performance measures.

c. How will the local area determine service provider suitability for inclusion on the Eligible Training Providers List?

See GWID 2015-03 Change 1

NOTE: West AlabamaWorks does not manage the ETPL, but will review all providers and courses of instruction provided by these providers to ensure that the training provided meets the West AlabamaWorks local board’s focus on promoting only those occupations that provide entry employment into occupations, including those that provide career ladders/career pathways leading to High Growth/High Demand occupations that provide a sustainable wage for the participant and their families.

http://www.madeinalabama.com/assets/gwd/gwid/GWID_2015-03Change01.pdf

- d. How will the local area secure the required performance information from service providers?

All West AlabamaWorks training providers, including both Youth Providers and ITA/skills training providers are required to report all performance outcomes to the Alabama Career Center locations within the local area in “real-time”. This includes the reporting of credentials/degrees/employment/measurable skills gains etc. Our network of career centers then report these outcomes to us by entering the information into the Alabama Job Link and AlaWorks data reporting system. In addition, for actual reporting of WIOA reportable outcomes of employment and wages the area relies on the state to secure this data from the Alabama Department of Labor’s Unemployment Compensation system from actual wages reported to that Agency.

VIII. Monitoring & Oversight Policy

- a. Provide a copy of the local area’s monitoring and oversight policies and procedures.

See Attachment: Governor’s Local Workforce Area Monitoring Guide

IX. Grievance Procedures and Policies

- a. Provide a copy of the local area’s Grievance Procedures and Policies.

See Attachment: Grievance Procedures and Policies

X. Comment Period

- a. What process will the local board use to provide a public comment period no longer than thirty days prior to submission of the plan? How will the local board ensure that the public, particularly representatives of businesses, education, and

labor organizations, have an opportunity to have input into the development of the plan (20 CFR 679.550(b), 679.560(b)(19))?

The West AlabamaWorks Local Plan will be posted on the WestAlabamaWorks.com website for a period of not less than 30 days.