

SUMMARY REPORT

Key Findings from WIOA Stakeholder Engagement and Listening



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OVERVIEW

The following report summarizes key findings from Stakeholder Listening and Engagement Sessions that will be used to refine a four-year strategic plan for the State’s Workforce Development System under the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).

The sessions covered a variety of discussion topics, but focused on gathering feedback on a new, forward-looking economic analysis; identifying current strengths/weaknesses in Illinois’ Workforce Development System; and examining how to address current WIOA challenges and

opportunities in Illinois.

All stakeholder feedback and comments collected during recent listening sessions has been reviewed and analyzed in preparation of this report. A selection of verbatim comments made by stakeholders has been included to help readers understand feedback from the voice of individual stakeholders. In some instances, stakeholder comments were edited to protect the identity of contributing stakeholders and to condense the amount of text featured in the report.

The Workforce Development System wishes to extend its appreciation to all the stakeholders who generously shared their perspectives, insights, and time to participate in the listening and engagement sessions.

METHODOLOGY

A total of nineteen (19) WIOA Stakeholder Listening and Engagement Sessions were held throughout the State of Illinois in Fall 2023. The sessions were held both in-person and online. In total, over 500 stakeholders participated in the listening and engagement sessions.

Sixteen (16) of the stakeholder sessions were held in-person and spread across ten Economic Development Regions. The in-person sessions were attended by stakeholders who represent Illinois Workforce Service Providers, Community Action Agencies, Community Colleges,

Employers, and Federal, State and Local Government. Most of the sessions were conducted in English, however, three sessions in EDR 4 were conducted in Spanish by a bi-lingual facilitator.

Three additional sessions were held online, each with a different intended audience – service providers, employers and individuals. A handful of one-on-one follow-up interviews were also conducted with stakeholders who specifically provide workforce support for immigrants and workers enrolled in English Language Acquisition (ELA) courses.

All stakeholder listening sessions were held between September and November 2023. The in person listening sessions were approximately 1½ to 2 hours in length and held in community college meeting rooms, public libraries, and community centers. Stakeholder attendance at in person sessions varied, but generally averaged around 10-12 stakeholders per session. The online webinar sessions reached a much larger pool of employers and jobseekers with more than one hundred stakeholders on each call.

To increase consistency across the sessions the same presentation and facilitator guide was used for the listening and engagement sessions. Facilitators completed moderator training to ensure these materials would be used effectively, and facilitators were prepared to elicit desired responses and feedback from participating stakeholders.

RESPONDENT PROFILE

Approximately 588 WIOA stakeholders participated in Illinois WIOA Listening and Engagement Sessions. Feedback was obtained from stakeholders in ten (10) economic development regions, ensuring broad participation across the State of Illinois.

Participating stakeholders represented different entities within Illinois, including employers, workforce development service providers, community colleges, community action agencies, jobseekers, and federal/state/local government representatives. Given the diversity of businesses represented in the listening sessions, there are both similar and divergent

perspectives, at times, that can help shape the state's workforce development planning process.

About half of stakeholders who participated in listening sessions fulfill a role within their organization where they provide hands-on workforce development support for jobseekers or work to educate future workers. Over one-quarter of stakeholders are senior executives within their organizations, and about one-third serve the public more generally, through federal, state or local governments. Additionally, some stakeholders were jobseekers, consultants, or retired individuals with a specific interest in workforce development.

Nearly all stakeholders attended listening sessions conducted in English, however, a few participated in Spanish sessions led by a bi-lingual moderator. Similarly, most stakeholders participated in sessions conducted online, however, just under one-quarter attended in-person. There is a notable gender skew among stakeholders; about two-thirds are female and one-third are male. Other demographic data on stakeholders, such as age or income metrics, were not gathered.

Tables and charts available in the appendix starting on page 35 provide more detailed information on stakeholders who participated in the listening and engagement sessions.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Stakeholders who participated appear to have genuine interest in the State's new WIOA four-year plan. Regardless of their role in the system, they appear to be committed to working with the State to strengthen the Workforce Development System and hope for more opportunities in the future to engage in discussion.

Stakeholders describe Illinois' Workforce Development System as having both strengths and weaknesses. Strengths are frequently identified as adaptability, staff commitment, programs, partnership between different service providers, and facilities. Weaknesses are identified as things

which generally impede the efficiency and effectiveness the system, such as outdated information systems, inability of program staff to access and share data across partners, resistance to collaboration between programs, and a process which at times seems to impede rather than streamline their workforce development efforts. Key threats to the system are reportedly the burden that the current process places on individuals, employers and staff, such as program drop outs and staff turnover; backlogged demand; and a rising population of immigrants with urgent, unmet needs. Despite these challenges, stakeholders remain optimistic about the future and hope the State's new strategic plan for WIOA will provide a detailed roadmap for the future.

When exposed to an overview of new draft plan, stakeholders are receptive to the three overall goals outlined in the draft plan. In fact, many stakeholders feel the over-arching goals are aligned to their current work and feel the goals will allow them to work toward achieving WIOA's mission. When exposed to strategies for each goal, however, stakeholders are receptive, but to varying degrees.

Goal 1 strategies are considered important though many stakeholders say that the word "customers" should be defined when used in "customer-focused" and in other areas of the plan. They often prefer more specific descriptors, such as jobseekers, employers, etc. Goal 1 strategies pertaining to equity and access, collaboration, and building awareness, they say, are dependent on first overcoming existing barriers which impede success. For example, to ensure equity and access, they say current WIOA eligibility requirements must be reviewed through the lens of disabled individuals, who may only have capacity to work part-time. To enable collaboration, they explain that information systems must first allow for information sharing. And, to build awareness, they report that a state-wide marketing plan and invest in building capacity for marketing and awareness-building activities at the ground level. The final Goal 1 related to "frontline workers" is generally considered confusing; some stakeholders reveal that they do not understand the meaning of "frontline workers" and suggest removing this item.

Goal 2 strategies, which focus on supporting employers, are met with the greatest degree of resistance. While they generally understand the Goal 3 strategies, some workforce service providers indicate that they have limited time to support employers. As such, while they attempt to support employers upon request, they are currently unable to provide the level of employer support depicted in Goal 2, since they are currently required to spend a high proportion of their time supporting jobseekers. The remainder of time is spent on process-related hurdles, such as paperwork and accessing data. Without a reduction in process-related burden or improved efficiency, Goal 2 strategies are, at times, considered aspirational or unrealistic.

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Stakeholders appear to support Goal 3 strategies, which focus on the use of customer-centered and data-informed practices. However, some stakeholders indicate that they are confused with this terminology. For example, many stakeholders say they do not know what "a data-informed approach" is, and others are confused by text that suggests that they will "interact with jobseekers where they live and visit." The latter phrase is considered generally impractical, given the State's rural settings and distance between job centers. Lastly, stakeholders mention concern about use of the phrase, "historically marginalized," indicating that WIOA is focused on serving all people eligible for services, not people defined as "historically marginalized." Some suggest it may be more appropriate to describe them as "underserved individuals eligible for WIOA services."

Stakeholders generally feel that the Economic Analysis contained in the draft plan is accurate and well-aligned to the State overall. Despite this, some indicate that it would be helpful if the plan provided both state and regional assessments of industry job growth given wide industry variations across Illinois. While stakeholders are receptive to the Economic Analysis, they reveal that some Illinois industries seem mischaracterized, which may be a function of basing the analysis predominantly on NAICS without customization or adaptation for the State of Illinois.

For example, some stakeholders question the current categorization of Education Services in Illinois as a maturing industry, given current teacher shortages, growing demand for educators to support a rising immigrant population, and state-wide initiatives such as “Pre-school for All.” Similarly, some feel that Health Care should be a growing industry in Illinois, given that Illinois healthcare is often ranked best in the nation, there is diversity of health care companies—providers, pharma, device manufacturers in Illinois--and the state’s demand for healthcare workers is currently unmet.

Stakeholders also report that the plan should recognize the State’s considerable investments in building new industries. For example, while Clean Energy is not a NAICS per se, some feel it should be listed as an emerging industry in the analysis given the State’s commitment to the clean industry, as evidenced by Illinois’ Clean Energy Jobs Act (CEJA). They indicate the State’s effort to bring such industries as solar, wind, and electrical vehicle manufacturing to Illinois should indicate that the industry will be growing in the State during the next 8 years. Additionally, they suggest that job reporting for Agriculture should be split into cannabis and non-cannabis production, given that WIOA does not support job placement in the marijuana industry hence data could be misleading.

Stakeholders frequently mention that the Economic Analysis appears to be missing an important assessment of job value. Stakeholders explain that the analysis should provide a prediction on the proportion of jobs created for each industry that will result in full-time vs. part-time positions. Similarly, they also seek to understand what the estimated average wage will be for new jobs generated by each industry. More specifically, they seek to understand whether the industries are expected to provide “living wages” for workers in their area. At present, stakeholders indicate that cost of food and housing, particularly in EDR 4, is often a barrier for the jobseekers they support.

CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

- Stakeholders are receptive to the overview of the State’s draft four-year strategic plan for WIOA that was presented to them. They consider the draft plan to be a roadmap for the future, outlining what they will be expected to do to achieve WIOA’s mission.
- The three main goals in the draft plan (Goals 1, 2, and 3) are viewed as consistent with stakeholders’ current work and needs, and described as appropriate for the State’s future.

- Specific language and descriptors used in the draft plan sometimes confuse stakeholders and could be clarified for greater understanding. When using unfamiliar terms – such as “customer,” “customer-focused,” “data-informed approach,” “frontline workers,” or “historically marginalized” — care must be taken to either explain the meaning of the words, or to use more basic words that will be more easily understood.
- Strategies for Goals 1 and 3 in the draft plan are well-received. Stakeholders generally embrace the proposed approaches, however, often indicate that existing barriers may impede the ability to successfully implement the strategies. For example, while improved collaboration between program partners is an intended strategy, some stakeholders believe it may not be possible without first implementing a state-wide information system that allows for data-sharing between partners. In the plan, identifying longer-term state-wide actions to reduce such barriers could be beneficial.
- Strategies for Goal 2 in the draft plan are met with both receptivity and resistance. Service providers indicated they want to support employers, but that some grants dictate how much time they must be spend serving individuals, leaving little time left over for serving employers. Given mixed reactions to Goal 2 strategies, it may be ideal to flip the order of the goals, placing goal 3 ahead of 2, and then scale back the current Goal 2 to make it seem more realistic and achievable. Additionally, it may be necessary to reassure service providers that the State will provide support to help them to deliver more employer focused support.
- Missing elements of the plan appear to be an examination of state policy necessary to streamline WIOA activities, a review of best practices for WIOA in other states, process re engineering, broader support for immigrants, and improved system architecture. The draft plan may wish to address these topics in its four-year strategic plan.
- The Economic Analysis included in the draft plan is used to determine how to prepare, educate, train, and place jobseekers in positions for industry. While the current analysis is well-received, some stakeholders feel it needs to be expanded to discuss industry sub sectors relevant to Illinois--i.e. those which may fall between or outside of existing NAICS classifications (e.g. Clean Energy, Early Childhood Education, Cannabis growing, etc.)--and to provide value projections for the jobs that will be created by each industry.

DETAILED FINDINGS

Stakeholder Perspectives on WIOA Four-Year Plan Economic Analysis

An Economic Analysis will be included in the State’s Four-Year Strategic Plan for WIOA and will serve as a foundation for evolving workforce development strategies and tactics. An overview

of the WIOA Economic Analysis was shared with stakeholders during all engagement listening sessions. This Economic Analysis assigns Illinois industries to one of three growth-related categories—Leading, Emerging, and Maturing Industries. This NAICS-based analysis projects the expected Illinois job gains or losses in each industry over the next 8 years. Classification as a leading, emerging, or maturing industry is determined based upon an industry’s standing in Illinois compared to the nation as a whole and whether job growth for each industry is expected to rise or decline in coming years, as indicated by net changes in jobs gained or lost,

Industry summary slides shared with stakeholders are shown below:

We have more jobs and workers in these than the national average. A The number of jobs is anticipated to increase over the next years. North American Industry Classification System Base Year Projected Year Net Change AI S Title Employment Employment Transportation and Warehousing , , , Financial Activities , 1, 1, 1, 1, Manufacturing 1, 1, 1, Professional and Business Services , 1, 1, 1 Retail , ,	We have less jobs and workers in these areas than the national average. UT The number of jobs is anticipated to increase over the next years. North American Industry Classification System Base Year Projected Year Net Change AI S Title Employment Employment Health Care and Social Assistance 1, 1, , Retail Trade 1, 1, 1, 1, Agricultural Production 1, 1, Leisure and Hospitality , 1, , Government , , 1, Construction , , 11
We have more jobs and workers in these industries than the national average. UT The number of jobs is anticipated to decrease over the next years. North American Industry Classification System Base Year Projected Year Net Change AI S Title Employment Employment Wholesale Trade , , , Personal and Other Services , , , Educational Services, Private and Public , 1, , 1	

Stakeholders Reveal Opportunities to Refine WIOA Economic Analysis

While most stakeholders are receptive to the WIOA Economic Analysis for Illinois, they frequently offer suggestions to update the Economic Analysis . While the analysis is generally considered on the mark overall, some stakeholders express concerns that projected job growth in select industries—notably in education, healthcare, and manufacturing—may currently be underestimated. Key discussion themes and verbatim comments are summarized on the following pages.

Stakeholders Feel the State’s Economic Analysis Is Realistic

When asked to share their overall impressions of the WIOA Economic Analysis, the majority of stakeholders report that the industry-specific assessments make sense for Illinois as a whole. Some also feel the estimates are well-aligned to their regions or local areas.

"Yep, it's aligned. For instance, leading industries, I think the number one (industry) was transportation. We are receiving an influx of jobseekers to receive their CDL license." (EDR 4, Joliet, English, Workforce Services Provider)

"I can see that there is a great interest in joining these (leading or growing) industries in our area, yet I don't see enough resources. However, it's great to use this plan to tip people toward these specific industries." (EDR 4, Little Village, Spanish, Community Action Agency)

Stakeholders Believe Education Industry Will Grow/Is Not Maturing In Illinois Most stakeholders suggest that there are some industries they would expect to fall into different categories. For example, though education is identified as a maturing industry in the WIOA Economic Analysis, the majority stakeholders suggest that education in Illinois should be described as a leading or industry, given current teacher shortages across all grade levels, coupled with increasing demand for education which is driven by a growing immigrant population. In addition, some stakeholders suggest that there will be a growing need for educators to support the Governor's emergent "Pre-school for All" initiatives.

"I want to disagree with the maturing (industry) slide, because of the need for teachers. There is a dire need for teachers in both the private sector and public sectors. I don't feel like (Educational Services, Private and Public) is maturing. Teachers are retiring--coming out of it--and school districts, and schools are just scrambling to figure out what to do." (EDR 4, Joliet, English, Workforce Services Provider)

"(There is a growing need) not only for K-12 and post-secondary educators, but also for preschool educators. In fact, there is a dire need for pre-school education. Even prior to kindergarten, I know the Governor has made a commitment with some funds to ensure "Pre school for All" initiatives, so there's qualified pre-school educators. I just really feel like labeling that one (Educational Services, Private and Public) as a maturing industry, is not true at all." (EDR 4, Joliet, English, Workforce Services Provider)

"We have unmet needs for childcare workers. Childcare is really struggling (in Illinois). (There is considerable demand for teachers) in particular, in early childhood education." (EDR 4, Grayslake, English, Workforce Services Provider)

"I was just in a webinar about addressing the teacher shortages in our region, specifically in our district which is a very large district. You know experiencing a shortage of not only teachers, but also of paraprofessionals and bus drivers. It seems like the Pandemic really

impacted those numbers, so it was kind of surprising to see that it's (Education Services is) a maturing industry." (Online, English, Employer)

"Again, (does) it makes sense for education? No. at all." (EDR 10, Quincy, English, Workforce

Services Provider)

“Yes, it’s backwards . . . We can’t staff (the education openings) we’ve got here. So, take away . . . yeah, that (categorization of Education Services) seems backwards.” (EDR 10, Quincy, English, Local Government)

“So it’s very surprising to me (that Education Services is not labeled as a leading or growing industry).” (EDR 4, Grayslake, English, Workforce Services Provider)

“Educational Services surprises me. So, I’m guessing that’s schools, right? So that’s why it surprises me . . . that that’s a maturing industry and that jobs are going away in education.” (EDR 4, Chicago, English, Community Action Agency)

“Just with a growing population (in Chicago), you just assume that there’s going to be an increase in demand for education.” (EDR 4, Chicago, English, State Government)

“I think if we assume trade schools are in there and short-term skills training, then I would be shocked if that’s still the jobs number there. I’m not sure if that’s a part of that category. I would expect more jobs in education.” (EDR 4, Chicago, English, Workforce Services Provider)

“I would’ve expected Education to be on the rise . . . In the last six months, I’ve heard more and more stories about school districts that are starting their own programs to educate teachers, moms who they’re putting through school and paying them and such because they are so short on teachers. It surprised me to see that.” (EDR 4, Grayslake, English, Workforce Services Provider)

“One of the things I wanted to say regarding Education—me being in that field--we actually have a shortage with instructors because of the income level we have in my school. The minimum is \$35.5K because we have to offer it that way. We’re probably looking for better paying jobs in the industry.” (EDR 4, Chicago, English, Community College)

“There is also growing demand for English instruction for an increasing number of immigrants. That’s going to be driving demand (for educators) as well.” (EDR 4, Joliet, English, Unknown)

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“There’s a teacher shortage everywhere . . . I’ve heard education sort of equates to the population size, which is going down slightly (in Illinois) and may be transitioning more online, however, we still have a teacher shortage. When you think about education as a whole, are there any reasons that you might expect it to be increasing in Illinois? Don’t you

think with an increase in the number of immigrants coming to our state that this could affect those educational jobs?” (EDR 4, Chicago, English, Workforce Services Provider)

Stakeholders Expect to See Clean Energy Listed as a Growing Industry for Illinois A few stakeholders suggest that clean energy should be an industry category in the WIOA State Economic Analysis, even though it does not have its own NAICS classification. They explain that given the state’s significant investment in building clean energy solutions (e.g. wind, solar, EV manufacturing, etc.)--as made possible through the Illinois Clean Energy and Jobs Act--this industry sub-sector should be included in the analysis so that the State can work toward preparing and supporting future workers for clean energy employment.

“Clean Energy is going to be an emerging field for the Northeast region and actually the whole State of Illinois because of CEJA (the Clean Energy Jobs Act). So, as the state goes further into this industry, it should be a focus in their plans. So just something to think about. There's no labor market data in it because it's so new, but it should be something that the State considers during their planning when thinking about in the future.” (EDR 4, Joliet, English, Workforce Services Provider)

“Great point especially with Line Electric here in Will County. And in KANE County, we are getting an EV (Electric Vehicle) manufacturer, so new jobs are coming in solar and wind and everything.” (EDR 4, Joliet, English, Workforce Services Provider)

Stakeholders Anticipate Higher Job Demand in Health Care

Some stakeholders feel that Healthcare in Illinois should be a leading industry rather than an emerging industry, especially given high quality healthcare in Illinois and a growing demand for healthcare workers.

“I was actually surprised that the healthcare industry was on the emerging one (slide) and not the leading one. The healthcare industry has been here for a long time in Illinois, and the (current) need for healthcare workers is great, because we have some pharmaceutical companies and other health care providers (in Lake County). Students in our healthcare program are hired before they even graduate.” (EDR 4, Grayslake, English, Community College)

“I was fortunate yesterday I went to a healthcare panel here in Lake County talking specifically about employment, and we still really, really struggle in this area with being able to staff medical and such.” (EDR 4, Grayslake, English, Workforce Services Provider)

“I'm (expecting but) not seeing healthcare and IT (Information Technology) among the leading industries. I think after the Pandemic, there's been demand in health. There's also a lot of IT companies that have sort of shifted their approach to workforce. I'm also involved in a vocational school we've seen an uptick in demand in both areas.” (EDR 4, Chicago, English,

Workforce Services Provider)

“Because trained healthcare workers are in short supply, there’s already a trend to cross train and merge different (healthcare) occupations into the same role. So, instead of having a CNA and a Medical Assistant, we’re combining them into a Certified Medical Assistant. . . You’re asking people to do more things (which is more consistent with a Leading Industry).” (EDR 7, Mattoon, English, Illinois Corporation - Employer).

“Well, I would put a much higher emphasis in our region on healthcare over the first series, so we're in manufacturing, we're in health care, we're into a lot of logistics transportation.” (EDR 6, Moline, English, Workforce Services Provider)

Stakeholders Look for More Specificity in the Agriculture Industry Job Data About one-quarter of stakeholders feel that the agricultural industry data needs to be split into cannabis and non-cannabis farming, since WIOA is not able to support cannabis employers or individuals. Some believe that much of the growth in Illinois agriculture is generated by cannabis growers,

and as a result, it may be inappropriate to label the entire industry as a growth industry, especially if they are not allowed to invest efforts in developing workers for this sub-sector.

"I serve three counties, and I don't really see the job growth in the agricultural area. Agricultural production doesn't really produce quality (jobs). I would need to know more, like what is that industry specifically. Is Agriculture Production tied to the cannabis industry? I need a little more detail on that. Is that related to the cannabis marijuana? Because if it is, it really shouldn't be part of the WIOA plan because WIOA cannot do anything with the marijuana industry. So, I'd like to really delve into where those jobs are? Marijuana is a big industry because it is legal in the State of Illinois, but we can't touch it." (EDR 4, Joliet, English, Workforce Services Provider)

Stakeholders Question Manufacturing Job Growth Projections

A few stakeholders question whether estimates of job demand for the state's manufacturing industry are accurate given that they feel manufacturing was negatively affected by the Pandemic and is still rebounding.

"I would have thought there would have been a much higher number (for) the manufacturing industry (because it's still rebounding)." (EDR 10, Quincy, English, Illinois Corporation - Employer)

Stakeholders Question Retail Trade Job Growth Projections

A few stakeholders suggest that they might expect retail trade to be a maturing rather than an emerging industry in Illinois. They explain that online ordering and AI may prompt a declining need for workers.

"I would say retail trade (is not emerging). I would think that (retail) would kind of taper off, especially with online shopping and the introduction to AI technology." (EDR 4, Chicago, English, Community College)

Stakeholders Suggest Supplementing Economic Analysis with Regional Views Some stakeholders suggest that it may be helpful if the jobs data were also broken out at both the state and regional levels, given that data for their region may not conform with the State as a whole. As such, when they look at state-wide data, some feel it appears out-of-synch with their regional market.

"This (manufacturing data) probably incorporates the fact that we had a facility close in Galesburg (and projects it to the state as a whole) . . . a lot of folks were laid off. So, there's a big point here that it might be important to get regional labor market data. So yeah, that's why I'm suggesting (that they include data by) regions." (EDR 10, Quincy, English, Workforce Services Provider)

Stakeholders Feel the Economic Analysis Needs to Consider the Value of Jobs Created Some stakeholders in each location indicate that the WIOA Economic Analysis needs to examine the value or quality of jobs generated. This is a concern that transcends all participant roles, from individuals to service providers.

Providers, for example, say the plan should estimate the number of full-time and part-time jobs generated and explain if the new jobs are expected to provide living wages. They ask whether the new jobs will allow newly-placed employees to cover the cost of local housing or transportation to the job site, since it is challenging to place individuals into new jobs if planned wages are unable to offset such costs.

Individuals, on the other hand, are more apt to question what the approximate hourly wage will be for the new jobs generated and/or whether they will be able to afford transportation to the new job site.

"I was surprised to see the number of job increases for Leisure and Hospitality. I am just kind of interested in what might be driving that? On the other hand, what are the wages related to those jobs and are they full-time jobs? Are they more part-time? I think it'd be helpful to be able to dig in a little bit more as to what are those types of jobs and are they living wage jobs?" (EDR 4, Joliet, English, Community College)

"Our program is a really good program, but there's a gap with the housing market right now in terms of getting them placed into jobs and being independent. Our struggle right now is we're bringing them on with Job Corps with WIOA, but then when it comes time to get them jobs, we're having a hard time finding places for them to live (that are affordable) once they're done attending the job corps program." (EDR 4, Joliet, English, Workforce Services Provider)

"This is good information, but what's the pay scale of the positions (created). You know, McDonald's is \$14 an hour, Walmart is \$14.50 an hour . . . how does pay scale come into this plan?" (Online, English, Jobseeker)

"With regard to transportation, you know Uber can get expensive if you don't have access to public transportation. And with public transportation, you're operating on their schedule and that (schedule) might not align with your work schedule (so transportation access and/or cost) should be considered." (Online, English, Jobseeker)

“It's (industry job estimates in the analysis are) very misleading. Yes, there are some agriculture jobs, but it's not a leading industry in any way. And we don't prepare people for those jobs, because so few of them are full-time jobs of any kind of. So it's misleading, when you look at jobs in agriculture, in my opinion, because it doesn't take into account value of those jobs.” (EDR 8, Ina, English, Retired)

DETAILED FINDINGS

Stakeholder Perspective on WIOA Four-Year Plan Goals & Strategies

Stakeholders Support Goals and Seek Clear Pathways to Achieving Goals During listening sessions, Stakeholders were presented with three main goals for Illinois’

Workforce Development System, as shown below.



Nearly all stakeholders agree that the three goals are positively-framed, and in most cases, are aligned to their current work. Despite this, some suggest that it will be necessary to develop more specific, actionable strategies to address each of the goals, and to examine existing policies and procedures to ensure they do not serve as barriers to fulfilling the goals.

"When it comes to these goals, I feel like we're already doing this. Check that, move on. ...it's nice to say that, and then the policies and the requirements that are put in place handcuff us." (EDR 4, Joliet, English, Workforce Services Provider)

"I think they're (the goals are) on a very high level what we work on." (EDR 4, Grayslake, Workforce Services Provider)

"The majority of us said we're already doing it (working toward these goals). So yeah, I think we'd be remiss if we didn't say we were helping jobseekers and employers by fulfilling these goals." (EDR 4, Joliet, English, Workforce Services Provider)

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"Goals are great, but sometimes the way we must implement actually slows our ability to reach the goals. I'll give you an example; we have the state ETPL system (Eligible Training Provider List). I think that's great that, as a state, we can say these are the high growth, high demand industries because Will County is a lot different than McHenry County in what our demand for occupations are. We have to petition (the State), however, to get occupations data that tells us what a high growth/high demand industry is locally. If we were able to access and use data (freely), we would be able to just say, as a local workforce system, this is

what we need versus having to take it up the flagpole to get it. And sometimes, that causes a delay or pre-empts someone (a jobseeker from) being able to go into that field.” (EDR 4, Joliet, English, Workforce Services Provider)

“I don't see anything here about looking at policy, and taking a closer look at how policies can be rewritten in order to better support the workforce systems.” (EDR 4, Joliet, English, Community College)

Review of Draft Goal Strategies

After discussion of the goals, draft strategies were shared for all three goals. Stakeholders were asked to share their impressions of the proposed strategies, including whether they thought the strategies were clear, viable, and would enable the State’s workforce development system to achieve the corresponding goal.

While nearly all attendees agree the draft strategies are appropriate and will help achieve the three goals, some stakeholders reveal that there is opportunity to strengthen clarity of the strategies and to examine how existing protocols, processes, and systems may impede future success when implementing the strategies. These concerns are discussed on the following pages for each set of draft strategies.

Draft Goal 1 Strategies

Overall, most stakeholders share positive reactions to Draft Goal 1 strategies, explaining that excellence in approach to collaboration and customer service are ideals to strive for. Despite this, some stakeholders say the word “customer” requires definition and others feel the last strategy discussing frontline workers is unclear. Strategies designed to increase equity and access, collaboration, and awareness are often said to require steps to first overcome existing barriers.

The Draft Goal 1 Strategies slide shown in listening sessions is shown below, along with key insights from stakeholders highlighted in blue. This slide is then followed by discussion themes/respondent comments.

Goal Strategies Illinois Workforce Development System is an example of excellence in its approach to collaboration and customer service. The Workforce development System uses a customer centered approach to service delivery. The Workforce development System centers equity and access. WIOA partners and other workforce and education systems in Illinois enhance coordination and collaboration. Jobseekers and employers have a broader awareness of the Workforce development System. The state enhances local service delivery through supporting frontline workers.	Must define “customer”. Must first address barriers. Statement is confusing.
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Many stakeholders indicate that they like the Draft Goal 1 strategies conceptually.

“I love the customer-centered approach. I love the ideology that we’re going to take a holistic approach to every person that walks in the door because that is what we’re supposed to do. You know we need to be there. We need to be accessible. Those are really great goals, and I’m glad that they’re there.” (EDR 6, Moline, English, Workforce Services Provider)

“We want to be on record as complementing our partners. Throughout the Pandemic, we continue to focus on service integration, and figuring out ways to do that in a different way. Dealing with the online (virtual service delivery offerings) and closing of the center for a period of time...I just think it’s important to recognize that our partners continue to be committed to service integration...”(EDR 10, Quincy, English, Workforce Services Provider)

Some stakeholders suggest that the word ‘customer’ requires greater definition. They ask if customer means individual, employer, returning citizen, immigrant, apprentice, part-time

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and/or full-time job candidates, etc. These comments are often echoed across the slides whenever the word ‘customer’ is used.

“Who’s the customer? They’re using ‘customer-centered’ and ‘data informed’. They’re referring to both jobseekers and employers. They have two very two different needs. It’s (use of the word ‘customer’ is) too wide.” (EDR 4, Chicago, English, Community College)

“And the (term) ‘customer’ . . . Are you including returning citizens? So when I hear ‘customer’, I’m thinking, does that include returning citizens? We don’t call them customers. That may be a national term. Call them returning citizens.” (EDR 4, Chicago,

Some indicate that while a “customer-centered approach” sounds positive, the WIOA process is too rigidly centered around eligibility and timelines, rather than on customer experience. They feel they need more discretion about how to allocate services. There is frequent discussion about the need to help people build skills along a multi-year timeline in order to help them work toward long-term employment. Immigrants, low literacy adults, and people without prior work experience are often said to have a longer runway to employment that spans more than one year.

“WIOA supports a good jobseeker, but we want to ensure that there’s still an entry point for low literacy adults because sometimes that’s the only way to get them into the (labor) market is to start with a pre-entry point. That initially may not make them the jobseeker because they need to learn how to read first.” (EDR 8, Ina, English, Community College)

“I would include pre-apprenticeship along with the apprenticeships. There are great apprenticeship opportunities for individuals that don't have some of those basic skills that they need in order to be fully considered for those (apprenticeships), especially as we're looking at marginalized communities. We need to be investing a lot more resources in getting them (customers) prepared so that they can be fully committed to an apprenticeship.” (EDR 4, Joliet, English, Community College)

“If a student comes in at a (National Reporting System) Level 1, they're going to need easily three years of English just to get to a consistent, intermediate level of communication to really advance just in their daily life in general.” (EDR 4, Individual Interview, English, Community Action Agency)

Others suggest that while a “customer-centered approach” may be ideal, there are currently many hurdles in the workforce development system that essentially serve as barriers to effective customer service. Some explain that processes are duplicative, systems not easy to use, and work needs to be streamlined so that workforce development staff can spend more time actually working with customers instead of completing process-related work.

“I just have a question about whether the process is customer-centered. So I am part of the education system and workforce development program--helping students determine if they can receive services--because of either their immigration status or their ability to work, or just finding things that are needed--the process takes a long time. . . . The length of time it takes to get through all the steps that they have to do is cumbersome. So, I think streamlining is a really important part of keeping them in that system, so that they can actually get to the end.” (EDR 5, Rockford, English, Unknown)

“And then that ‘customer-centered’ approach. . . again, our students are coming in at 30

and above. They have children. They have to put food on the table. I know that a lot of the American Job Centers may add additional tasks onto the applicant. Part of it is to kind of prove that that person actually wants access to WIOA. So it may be (that) you need to attend these four professional development (workshops) or you may need to do all these extra things. Making sure all of that is accessible for those customers so that if they can't go into this physical space. Maybe they can access it online or maybe there's a phone module that they can take. Or, making sure those additional asks are actually something that someone can do because again, if they've got to pick up their kid from school, they're not going to have time to.” (EDR 4, Chicago, English, Community College)

“So, are our state systems going to be able to talk to one another? Because until that happens, there's no way we can actually do a customer-centered focus.” (EDR 8, Ina, English, Retired)

“The students that I see now that I put out their inspiration forms, the process does seem unnecessary. It just seems unnecessary, especially for the student who I know wants to come here before school X, but then they're made to go and visit several other schools and fill out this form.” (EDR 4, Chicago, English, Community College)

“A reduction in paperwork would be really phenomenal. I talk to my jobseekers about connecting people to careers, and so I talk to a lot of people in a lot of different fields about both their experience accessing services in the State of Illinois and in other spaces. I've spoken to plenty of people who are coming from Texas or coming from Florida, some of the states where a lot of Illinoisans are going, and they're saying accessing services is so easy. No, there's not as many roadblocks to being able to access what they need in those other spaces. We need to study best practices and learn from other states.” (EDR4, Chicago, English, Community College)

“So representing adult education, when we talk about equitable and accessible, again, I feel like most of my students are not able to access WIOA services unless they've completed their high school diploma; for some people that can happen next week, and for some people, that can happen in two years. For some people, that may never occur. And so it becomes

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inequitable and it becomes inaccessible when there are adults who are saying, I need employment in one of these fields, but because of a certification that doesn't necessarily speak to where I'll eventually be employed and the work that I'll eventually be doing can't get access to it. So they need to find other means to do so in the private market typically.” (EDR4, Chicago, English, Community College)

Enhanced coordination and collaboration is viewed as an ideal, but some feel that barriers to collaboration exist, including system-wide receptivity to collaboration, an unclear mission, understanding of what services are offered from site to site, and a de-centralized workforce

development structure.

"I think one of the things you're looking to emphasize with these strategies is collaboration and coordination. Compared to other states, we are very disjointed because of the system's composition, but because of this, coordination and collaboration should be at the forefront. Because we are structured differently, we need to have strong coordination." (EDR 2, Champaign, English, Workforce Services Provider).

"I was thinking that too, especially in terms of coordination. I see that each agency, especially the four core partners, and there is resistance to collaboration." (EDR 2, Champaign, English, State Government)

"The partner that handles the finances does have the upper hand. There is non-collaboration happening. If each agency was tasked with understanding every other agency's role (perhaps that would increase receptivity to collaboration)." (EDR 2, Champaign, English, State Government)

"So, I think there isn't confusion among people accessing the information. Rather, there is confusion among people who work within the workforce system. There isn't much communication between planning people and the frontline workers. There doesn't seem to be an emphasis on conveying the mission to everyone within the workforce (system) and how they can work together." (EDR 3, East Peoria, English, State Government)

Many also suggest that lack of system integration—i.e. collaborators working on different information systems—makes it hard for collaborators to share data and information, which is viewed as requisite to collaboration.

"How can we make it seamless for the customer if we can't access data from our partners? We are not set up for anything to be seamless." (EDR 3, East Peoria, English, State Government)

"I think in WIOA, it's mandated that these systems talk to each other. Now, that's been in effect more than 10 years and our systems still don't talk to each other. And, anytime we ask

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about this, there is no money for this. It's a big lift to get these systems to talk to each other. Even a referral to talk to each other." (EDR 4, Grayslake, English, Workforce Services Provider)

"I wish that the whip would do a study on what the cost (of system de-centralization) really is . . . How much money are we losing on an annual basis because we don't have a modern overall system for our clients to use and for our staff to share information system-wide? We just keep putting patches in and our systems go down, and then you don't have access to information coming out of it. Others are on a different system altogether, so information

sharing is limited.” (EDR 6, Moline, English, Workforce Services Provider)

“... we need one reporting system for the State of Illinois. It's difficult for us to collaborate among partners if IDES is working with a different system than Title I and Title 2 are. So unless and until we're going to start really putting some dollars in it from a state standpoint and have a reporting system that all of us can feed into, collaboration will be limited.” (EDR 4, Joliet, English, Workforce Services Provider)

“We need a common system (case management/data system) that we are forced to use. With all the core partners using different systems, it is impossible.” (EDR 3, East Peoria, English, State Government)

“We need to be assisting jobseekers as they maintain and share personal information system-wide. An individual's records or the system needs to be able to float with them as they go from place to place.” (EDR 4, Joliet, English, Workforce Services Provider)

Many also feel that the current workNet systems are not easy to use or learn regardless of whether the users are individuals or service provider staff, or computer literate or not. *“It's just difficult to use. Try to watch a client search for a high growth, high demand application on Illinois workNet ... My case managers (even) struggle with it. So if they're doing it all day, every day, and they're struggling with it, it's impossible for a client to understand (how to use it).” (EDR 4 Joliet, English, Community College)*

“workNet is hard to use regardless of computer literacy or language proficiency. I have those skills, and I still don't understand that system.” (EDR 4, Joliet, English, Community College)

“Searching for a local workforce office on Illinois workNet is impossible to do.” (EDR 4, Joliet, English, Workforce Services Provider)

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Nearly all stakeholders agree that establishing broader awareness of the Workforce Development System is needed. In addition, many believe that there needs to be more definitive guidance for marketing activity. Some stakeholders say marketing efforts vary from site to site, with some sites not engaging at all. They suggest that there needs to be greater staff development and capacity building for marketing, so that people know what to do to increase awareness.

“I think jobseekers also are unaware of our services, especially in specifically marginalized communities. We try to use strategies but are not getting to our target demographic. People typically (learn of our services through) word-of-mouth. We need a statewide marketing

campaign. There must be different ways to reach all the demographics.” (EDR 2, Champaign, English, Workforce Services Provider)

Some stakeholders have questions about the strategy statement, “***The State enhances local service delivery through supporting frontline workers.***” Some question what local service delivery means, while others want to know who frontline workers are (are they workforce service providers or jobseekers). A few feel that it is odd that the statement references the State enhancing local service delivery when workforce force partners and job centers are charged with supporting jobseekers and employers.

“What do we mean by frontline workers? (If that is people working with customers) then everyone in our building is a frontline worker, but I am a director. I don’t think this statement makes sense.” (EDR 2, Champaign, English, State Government)

“We need to acknowledge that frontline workers mean almost all local practitioners.” (EDR 2, Champaign, English, Workforce Services Provider)

“Cross off the bottom line. It seems like this means that frontline workers aren’t getting support as it is.” (EDR 2, Champaign, English, Workforce Services Provider)

“What does that last one mean? . . . (The state enhances local service delivery through frontline workers) What do they mean by frontline workers? Would that be like the people who go into a one-stop center?” (EDR 4, Grayslake, Community College)

“My first thought when I saw this was professional development. So, I think that's probably in that last piece (meaning) support frontline workers by paying them better and providing professional development. Case workers often get the brunt of clients' anger, frustration, and so we need to improve retention of frontline workers.” (EDR 4, Grayslake, State Government)

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“For the frontline workers, who do you identify as the frontline workers? Are those people who are boots on the ground? The grant partners? Or the one-stop center (workers)?” (EDR 7, Mattoon, Community Action Agency)

Draft Goal 2 Strategies

Though many workforce services providers indicate that they do maintain relationships with local employers and work toward aligning the training of jobseekers to employers' needs, most workforce service providers agree that they do not have time or motivation to delve more deeply into employer needs, provide more holistic employer services, or develop employer tools or practices.

For this reason, Draft Goal 2 Strategies are often perceived to be aspirational in nature and are not considered to be entirely realistic. A key obstacle to serving employers through the job centers and workforce partners generally appears to be the facts that staff are stretched too thinly already and that there is no additional financial incentive linked to providing employer services.

Draft Goal 2 Strategies Illinois Workforce Development System will enhance employers' abilities to hire and retain skilled workers that meet their emerging needs. The Workforce Development System supports, informs and enhances employers' talent strategies. The various partners in the Workforce Development System leverage their business services to provide more holistic support to employers. The Workforce Development System will build out tools and practices that can help employers adopt a culture that promotes equity and accessibility.	May be too aspirational in nature. Grants dictate a focus on individuals. Workforce staff has little time left over to holistically serve employers, especially when there is no financial incentive for doing so.
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The majority of workforce services providers agree that their ability to support employers is limited. They explain that it may not be realistic to assume that job centers and workforce partners can provide additional or holistic services to employers in the manner described.

"This would be the elephant in the room, but I'm going to bring it up because the State currently has limitations on the Title I side, which dictates a 50% minimum training requirement for adult dislocated workers. So, 50% of our adult dislocated worker funds have to be spent on clients through training, through supportive services through job training. It also includes OJT (On-the-Job Training) and current worker training. However, that ties our hands because . . . all our funds have to go to training; that's what we exist for. That's all we do is write training vouchers. It doesn't give us flexibility. It doesn't make us available for that holistic goal about hiring and helping employers." (EDR 4, Joliet, English, Workforce Services Provider)

“On the employer side, what we can do for employers is actually limited, especially for helping them with the recruiting and hiring piece. That is a free service that we get no money for, so we really can't spend time doing that . . . because we have to spend time recruiting individuals and putting them into training because 50% of our funds have to be in training. So, we really can't achieve this goal to help employers hire and recruit.” (EDR 4, Joliet, English, Workforce Services Provider)

A few employers also indicate that they would not seek holistic support or tools and practices from workforce development staff because their corporations often require higher quality materials than centers have historically been able to provide.

Draft Goal 3 Strategies

While participants are generally receptive to Draft Goal 3 Strategies, some feel that greater definition of terminology is required, particularly when it comes to such terms as ‘equitable’, ‘accessible’, ‘data-informed approach’, ‘historically marginalized’, and ‘interacting in the places where people live’.

Some stakeholders explain that WIOA is structured around an individual’s ability to meet certain eligibility criteria, not necessarily about whether providing service is equitable, accessible, or for individuals who are historically marginalized. For example, some say that the WIOA program is not equitable for disabled individuals who may only seek part-time employment; i.e. because WIOA focuses more narrowly on full-time workers. Similarly, some say that due to distance between job centers and the fact that not all job centers offer all services, it is not actually possible to serve individuals in all the places they live and visit. Some stakeholders also indicate that people who are historically-marginalized may not actually qualify for services, so it may be misleading to suggest that.

Goal Strategies Illinois Workforce Development System will serve customer entered and data informed rates to improve the ability of the jobseeker to enter in training fielding career paths in a manner that is equitable and accessible. The Workforce Development System educates and supports jobseekers regarding how to navigate the labor market. The Workforce Development System interacts with jobseekers in the places where they live and visit. The workforce development system will use a data informed approach to reduce barriers to services for jobseekers who have historically been marginalized.	Words mean different things. Must provide greater definition here. Don't understand what this means. Feel it would be impossible to do. Statement is confusing. What is a data-informed approach? Not all historically marginalized individuals are eligible for WIOA services.
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Some stakeholders believe that WIOA policies and eligibility criteria may, at times, serve as a barrier to delivering workforce services that are equitable.

“I would say another WIOA policy barrier that we've seen is related to individuals with disabilities. They may not be in a situation where they're able to or want to work full-time, especially if that puts them over the threshold of being able to receive other forms of aid. But the system is set up where we need to be pushing them into full-time jobs, and so there's

not a great in-between to be able to serve those individuals equitably.” (EDR 4, Joliet, English, Workforce Services Provider)

“On the jobseeker side, if someone comes in who has training and they need help with individualized career services, resume development. and job leads . . . those individuals are not (going to receive) customer-focused service and might slip through the cracks because we have to focus on training (that we’re compensated to provide and) where we’re held accountable. It may not seem entirely equitable for some individuals seeking career services support.” (EDR 4, Joliet, English, Workforce Services Provider)

Some stakeholders suggest that because people in Illinois are dispersed throughout the State and job centers are far apart, interacting with individuals in the places where they live and visit may not be realistic.

“Because every workforce area has a one-stop (center) . . . we have an MOU that has all our partners, so is the state expecting us to put our show on the road all the time? I mean, could we go throughout the community, which is an unrealistic expectation from your local workforce system. We don't have the staff or the money to do that. Are they (the State) expecting technology to do that, which is totally different. I would need clarification on (how) to accomplish that goal. I couldn't do it if they wanted fiscal bodies in places especially if you go to Southern Illinois, (as) they serve 14 counties. That's just huge. I mean you can't be everywhere with the small dollar amounts we get.” (EDR 4, Joliet, English, Workforce Services Provider)

Some terms within Draft Goal 3 Strategy are described as unclear and said to require greater definition.

“What is a ‘data-informed approach’? That is rhetorical. It needs to be defined.” (EDR 2, Champaign, English, State Government)

“Has marginalized been defined by the State? Or is that up to each area to define?” (EDR 7, Mattoon, English, Workforce Services Provider)

“Some people may be ‘historically-marginalized’ and in need our support, but they still don’t meet WIOA eligibility criteria.” (EDR 4, Chicago, English, Workforce Services Provider)

DETAILED FINDINGS

Strengths, Weaknesses, Threats and Opportunities in the Illinois Workforce Development System

Stakeholders who participated in listening and engagement sessions often describe WIOA program strengths and weaknesses, as well as opportunities and threats. Based upon their comments, a SWOT Analysis has been prepared which summarizes stakeholder themes by category (strength, weakness, etc.) and identifies whether each factor primarily affects micro/local level activities, or macro/state level activities. While there is some overlap in mentions across the local and state columns (shown below), understanding where issues must be addressed is foundational to developing potential strategies.

Table 9: Summary of Illinois WIOA SWOT Analysis

	Micro or Local Level	Macro or State Level
Strengths	• Adaptability • Resilience • Existing Partnerships • Existing Programs • Good Facilities	• Commitment to State's WIOA Plan • Proposed State Goals Align to Our Current Work/"Doing That Now"

Weaknesses	• Backlog of Customers Needing Support/Long Wait Lists • Not Able to Keep Up with Influx of Immigrants to My Area • Not Able to Do More for Employers Due to Limitations • Need More Bi-lingual Staff/Navigators • Lack of Flexibility, i.e. Inability to Make Discretionary Decisions that are Best for My Location • Limited Community Awareness of Where We're located or What We Do • Educator Shortage in My Area Prompts Education and Skills Gaps • Limited Understanding of Staff Demand for Emerging Industries Regionally	• Continue to Gather Stakeholder Feedback and Show How Feedback Was Applied to WIOA Plans and Decisions • Lack of WIOA Program and Job Center Awareness • Stipends Needed for Eligible Individuals Who Participate in Language or Job Training • Less than Optimal Collaboration among Workforce Partners • Review Eligibility Requirements to Ensure Equitable Access for Disabled • Streamline Support for Illinois Employers, Reducing Burden on Local Sites • Out-of-date Information Systems • Ineffective Information Technology Architecture/Inability to Share Relevant Data between Partners • workNet Is Not Easy to Use
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	Micro or Local Level	Macro or State Level
	• Complex Process/Duplication of Effort Translates to Inefficiencies/Burden on Workers	• Need to Change Employer Perceptions about Immigrants • Need to More Effectively Align HS Curriculums to Industry Demand • Current Processes/Duplicative Work/ Paperwork Reduces Efficiency

Opportunities	• Educate Workforce Providers about Specific Illinois Initiatives that Will Spur Job Growth Initiatives in their Regions (e.g. CEJA, EV, Solar, Wind, etc.) • Need to Identify and Focus on Jobs that Will eliver “ iving Wages” by Region • Increased Language Training for Existing Staff to Expand Their Ability to Serve Immigrants in both English and Spanish	• Building Capacity for Marketing at the State and Local Levels to Build Program Awareness • Need to Learn from WIOA Programs in Other States/Conduct Best Practices Research in Other States • Consider Establishing a Portable, Electronic Customer Record which Can Be Shared by All Partners • Eliminate Requirement for Students to Visit Multiple Sites Before Entry/Burdensome • Simplify or Expedite Certifications for Immigrants to Confirm Equivalent Education or Past Work Experience • Need to Develop Affordable Housing to Support WIOA Participants • Audit and Re-engineer Workforce Processes to Streamline and Increase Efficiencies Across Sites • Develop a Plan for Transitioning Workforce Providers and Partners to a Shared IT Platform • Develop a State-wide Program for High Quality Employer Education and Support to Reduce Burden on Local Workforce Service Providers • Streamline Processes Which Allow Workforce Providers to More Easily Support Employers Need to Use Basic Terms and Common Language That Is Clear for All Workforce Audiences
Threats	• Staff Turnover	• State’s Inability to Overcome arriers

		to Achieve Program Goals and
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	Micro or Local Level	Macro or State Level
	• High Influx of Immigrants that are Under-served/Not Prepared to Contribute to the Workforce	Objectives During the Period Covered by the Four-Year Strategic Plan • Higher Program Costs Due to Inefficiencies • Inability of the State's WIOA Program to Keep Pace with Rising Demand for Services • Slower Adoption of Emerging Industries in Illinois Due to an Unprepared Workforce or Inability to Meet Regional Demand for Skilled Workers • Higher Burden on Other State Cost Centers Because Immigrants Are Not Quickly Prepared to Enter the Workforce

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APPENDIX

STATEMENT OF LIMITATIONS

The research to support WIOA Stakeholder Listening and Engagement naturally has limitations that should be considered when interpreting findings. Each limitation is outlined below in greater detail.

First, this research is primarily qualitative in nature and data was gathered using different methodologies, including large state-wide webinars, in-person regional meetings, and one-on-one in-person interviews. The use of different methodologies and the different number attendees by method allows stakeholders varied contexts for commenting or asking questions. As such, stakeholders attending in-person sessions may have had greater opportunity to comment than those who attended online sessions, where the focus was more on listening. Despite this, use of both methods helps to collectively ensure feedback is received from people who may not have been able to attend in-person.

Other than data tables which show counts and percentages that describe participating stakeholders by location and role (see Respondent Profile), the information in this report is not intended to quantify information about how a broader set of stakeholders in Illinois would respond when asked about WIOA's development of the four-year strategic plan. That is, we do not have data tables which suggest that a certain percentage of people want X or Y, or agree with approach Z. Alternatively, feedback is presented in paragraphs which summarize the approximate share of stakeholders who voiced a particular idea, such as "most," "some" or "a few stakeholders." This is a common practice when reporting qualitative information and helps to summarize discussion themes and consensus among stakeholders.

In some cases, respondents do not respond to specific questions, their responses in session were not recorded, or they preferred not to be recorded. As such, we cannot infer that these individuals supported or rejected the ideas presented. Rather, we need to accept the premise that not all perspectives may be documented within this report.

Similarly, the information in this report cannot be projected to all WIOA stakeholders in the state. Rather, this data reflects the opinions and perspectives of a sub-sample of stakeholders who voluntarily agreed to participate in listening sessions when they were asked to do so. Accordingly, we can consider the themes that arose during the stakeholder listening and engagement sessions but must also recognize that there could be other perspectives which are essentially not represented in this report.

Qualitative research is based primarily on individual responses to open-ended questions and follow-up probes designed to extract stakeholder feedback. Generally, it is considered optimal to have one moderator who leads all sessions to maximize consistency and limit the introduction of discussion leader bias. In this research, however, four such moderators/discussion leaders were used in to cover all Economic Development Regions across the State of Illinois. Sessions were led by the prime contractor for technical assistance (KEB), an independent research firm (Aeffect), and two state universities.

Because different organizations gathered information and may generally follow different protocols when conducting research, not all of the sessions were recorded, meaning that transcriptions are not consistently available for all engagement sessions. The sessions conducted by the two consulting firms were generally recorded and transcribed, but the quality of these products varies somewhat by location. The two universities generally provided stakeholder comment cards for analysis. It should be noted that no recordings or comment cards were received for EDR 1 (Springfield) or EDR 9 (Collinsville), as such we represent these areas in the analysis.

Similarly, though three sessions were held in Spanish (in EDR 4, specifically in Aurora, Little Village, and Joliet), there were few attendees, hence the analysis provides minimal feedback from Spanish-speaking stakeholders. Lastly, few stakeholder comments arose from online Employer and Individual sessions, hence the State may wish to prioritize other ways to engage with these specific stakeholder groups in the coming year.

Table: Participating Stakeholders by Economic Development Region

Economic Development	Count	%
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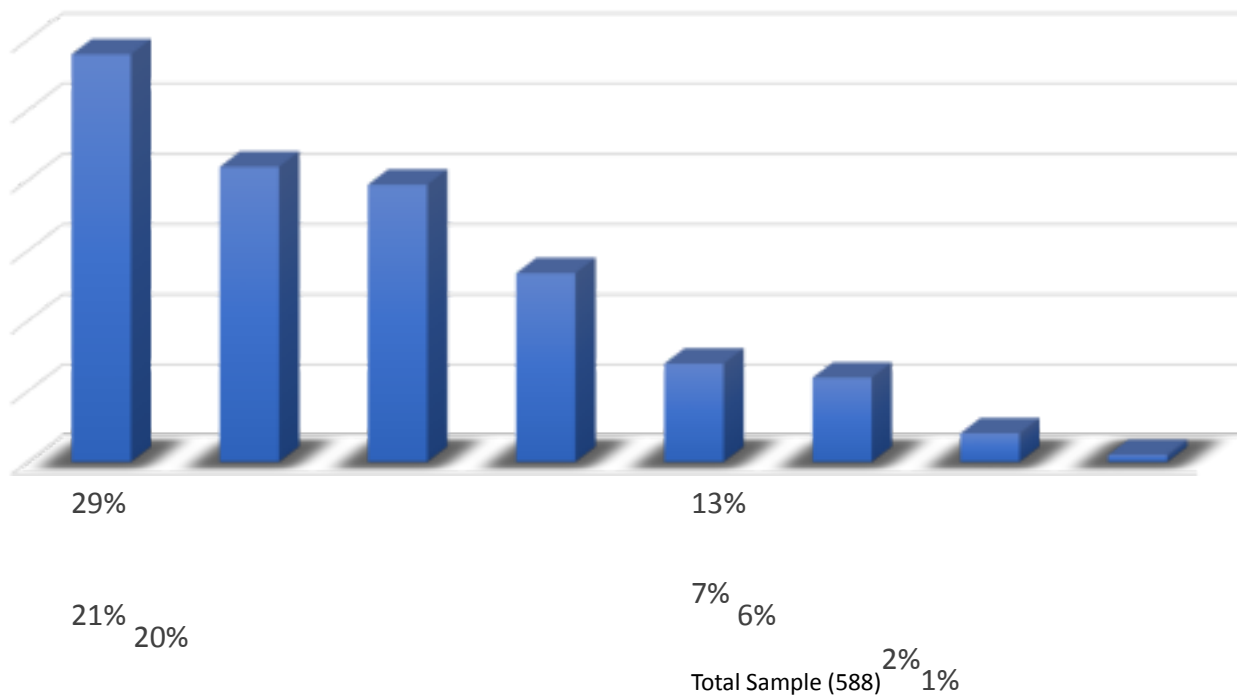
Region (EDR)				
		EDR 8 - Southern	11	2%
EDR 1 - Central	11	EDR 9 - Southwest	4	1%
EDR 2 - East Central	6	EDR 10 - West Central	7	1%
EDR 3 - North Central	9	Webinars	452	77%
EDR 4 - Northeast	47	Total Sample	588	100%
EDR 5 - Northern Stateline	25	10 Economic Development Regions (EDRs)		
EDR 6 - Northwest	6			
EDR 7 - Southeast	10			



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Table : Participating Stakeholders by Type

	Count		
		Community Action Agency	42
		Jobseeker	37
State Government	173	Local Government	12
Work Force Provider	126	Federal Government	3
Illinois Corporation (Employer)	116	Total Sample	588
Community College	79		100%



State Government Work Force Provider Illinois Corporation (Employer) Community College Community Action Agency Job Seeker Local Government Federal

Table : Participating Stakeholders by Title

Job Title/Position	Count	%
President/Owner/Partner/CEO/Executive or Senior Director/VP /Dir	165	28%
HR Manager/Talent Acquisition/Recruiting Specialist/HR Supervisor/Regional Manager	102	17%

Career Specialist/Navigator/Counselor/Apprenticeship/Career Coach	79	13%
Program Manager/Adult Education Manager/Business Service Manager	70	12%
Coordinator/Outreach/Program Coordinator	55	9%
Jobseeker (Individual)	37	6%
Dean/Associate Dean Adult Ed/Assoc Vice Chancellor/Assoc Director	33	6%
Business Services Consultant/WF Consultant/Business Engagement Specialist	29	5%
Other/Administrative Assistant/Retired	11	2%
Economist/Labor Market Economist/Economic Consultant	7	1%
Total Sample	588	100%

HR Manager/Talent Acquisition/Recruiting Specialist/HR Supervisor/Regional Mgr 17%
Program Manager/Adult Education Mgr/Business Service Mgr

12%

5%

Economist/Labor Market Economist/Economic Consultant
2%

Coordinator/Outreach /Program Coordinator
9%

Career Spec/Navigator/Counselor/Apprenticeship/Career Coach
13%

Dean/Associate Dean Adult Ed/Assoc Vice

Business Services Consultant/WF Consult/Bus Engagement Spec

Job Seeker (Individual) 6%

President/Owner/Partner/CEO / Executive Dir/VP/Senior Dir/Director
28%

Other/Admin Assistant/Retired
2%

Chancellor/Assoc Dir 6%

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Total Sample (588)

Table 4: Participating Stakeholders by Mode

	Count	%
Online	452	77%

In-Person	136	23%
Total Sample	588	100%



Online,
77%

In-Person,
23%

Total Sample (588)

Table 5: Gender

Female

Female
Male
Total Sample

68%

32%

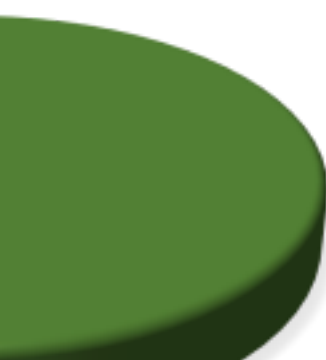
Total Sample (588)

Male

Table 6: Language

	Count	%
English	585	99%
Spanish	3	1%
Total Sample	588	100%

English
99%



Spanish

1% Total Sample (588)

Table 7: Participating Stakeholders by Venue/Location

Date	Venue/Location	Count	%
09/20/23	Online Webinar – Tour Announcement*	140	24%
09/26/23	Online Webinar with Employers*	223	38%
10/05/23	Parkland Community College - Champaign (EDR2)	6	1%
10/10/23	Online Webinar with Jobseekers*	84	14%
10/17/23	Lincoln Land Community College - Springfield (EDR1)	11	2%
10/20/23	John Wood Community College - Quincy (EDR10)	7	1%
10/20/23	Rock Valley Community College - Rockford (EDR5)	25	4%
10/24/23	Illinois Central College - East Peoria (EDR3)	9	2%
10/25/23	Black Hawk Community College - Moline (EDR6)	6	1%
10/27/23	Joliet Jr. College - Joliet (EDR4)	15	3%

11/06/23	Waubensee Community College - Aurora (EDR4) (Span)	--	--
11/07/23	College of Lake County - Grayslake (EDR4)	8	1%
11/07/23	Lake Land Community College - Mattoon (EDR7)	10	2%
11/09/23	Little Village Public Library - Chicago (EDR4) (Span)	1	<1%
11/13/23	Rend Lake Community College - Ina (EDR8)	11	2%
11/13/23	Gateway Convention Center - Collinsville (EDR9)	4	1%
11/14/23	Malcom X - City Colleges of Chicago (EDR4)	12	2%
11/15/23	Joliet Jr. College - Joliet (EDR4) (Span)	2	<1%
11/16/23	Harry S. Truman - City Colleges of Chicago (EDR4)	9	2%
9/28-10/10/23	In-Depth Interviews (EDR4)	5	1%
	Total Sample	588	100%

* Note: Attendance for online listening sessions was estimated based upon site registration.

Table 8: Job Center Location, Used WIOA Services & WIOA Provider

Date	Venue/Location	Knows Location of WIOA Job Center	Used WIOA Services
		(Count)	(Count)
09/20/23	Online Webinar – Tour Announcement	N/A	N/A
09/26/23	Online Webinar with Employers	N/A	Mixed

3			(No count)
10/05/2 3	Parkland Community College - Champaign (EDR2)	2	2
10/10/2 3	Online Webinar with Jobseekers	N/A	3
10/17/2 3	Lincoln Land Community College - Springfield (EDR1)*	--	--
10/20/2 3	John Wood Community College - Quincy (EDR10)	4	4
10/20/2 3	Rock Valley Community College - Rockford (EDR5)	N/A	N/A
10/24/2 3	Illinois Central College - East Peoria (EDR3)	--	--
10/25/2 3	Black Hawk Community College - Moline (EDR6)	N/A	N/A
10/27/2 3	Joliet Jr. College - Joliet (EDR4)	14	2
11/06/2 3	Waubonsee Community College - Aurora (EDR4) (Span)+	--	--
11/07/2 3	College of Lake County - Grayslake (EDR4)	5	8
11/07/2 3	Lake Land Community College - Mattoon (EDR7)	Yes (No Count)	N/A
11/09/2 3	Little Village Public Library - Chicago (EDR4) (Span)	1	1
11/13/2 3	Rend Lake Community College - Ina (EDR8)	11	11
11/13/2 3	Gateway Convention Center - Collinsville (EDR9)*	--	--
11/14/2 3	Malcom X - City Colleges of Chicago (EDR4)	11	2
11/15/2 3	Joliet Jr. College - Joliet (EDR4) (Span)	2	2

11/16/23	Harry S. Truman - City Colleges of Chicago (EDR4)	7	1
	Total Sample	57	36

Q1. How many of you know the location of the nearest WIOA Job Center?

Q2. How many of you have used WIOA Services?

Notes:

* No recordings or data from this session

+ No attendance at this location

N/A Questions not asked in this location.

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WIOA Stakeholder Meeting Facilitation Guide

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Roles and Responsibilities

Facilitator:

Your roles as a facilitator is to ensure the meeting is successful in informing attendees about the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Action and the concepts being developed for the next workforce development state plan, as well as soliciting and recording feedback from attendees.

Preparation:

Facilitators are expected to know the content of both the presentation and facilitator's guide. Direct any questions about the content of either to Drew Thomason at KEB (drewt@kebcpa.com).

Day Of:

Facilitators are expected to arrive at the location about one hour before the slated presentation. Facilitators are responsible for working with Illinois State University's Illinois Center for Specialized Professional Support (ISCSPS) and each location to arrange the necessary technology at each location. Technology required includes a projector and computer capable of running Microsoft PowerPoint

If you are using a recording device at the meeting (audio recorder, app on your phone, etc.) make sure to inform the audience you are recording the session.

When asking discussion questions of the audience, please remind them to state their name and organization before providing their response.

Afterwards:

Please provide participants' responses to KEB within 2 weeks of the event by emailing completed Attachment 1 and Attachment 2 for each meeting you facilitate.

Questions can be directed to Drew Thomason (drewt@kebcpa.com).

KEB:

KEB is coordinating the WIOA State Plan Stakeholder Engagement facilitator. KEB will work orient each organization facilitating meetings to this facilitator guide, including reviewing the presentation and areas in the presentation to solicit feedback from participants.

KEB will provide further clarification on participants' questions when needed. **Attendees:**

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Attendees are expected to be respectful of the facilitator and provide feedback when appropriate.

Presentation Script

Background – Slide 2:

Illinois has a workforce development system that strives to provide workers and jobseekers with the training, skills and support they need to develop and navigate a successful career path. The workforce development system also strives to help employers find and retain skilled workers that can help their business thrive.

To ensure the efforts of the workforce development system are focused, cohesive and symbiotic, every four years the state develops a strategic plan for the system.

Today's Purpose – Slide 3:

Our purpose today is to discuss the concepts being explored for inclusion in the state plan and to get your feedback on what the plan and the state workforce system can do to ensure the success of jobseekers, workers and employers in the state.

To ensure everyone can participate in the discussion, we will start with an overview of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WEE-oh-UGH) and how it is structured in Illinois. We will then move into a review and discussion of specific items under development for the state plan.

Does anyone have questions about our purpose today?

What is WIOA? – Slides 4 - 6:

Read Slides 4 – 6

What is WIOA? Slide 7:

American Job Centers under WIOA provide individuals with career planning,

connection to training programs, basic adult education skills and job placement services for individuals.

American Job Centers offer services for hiring and placement, local labor market information, and employee training. American Job Centers offer services for hiring and placement, local labor market information, and employee training.

American Job Centers across Illinois provide information about local and federal resources to assist with business decisions, including marketing and economic development opportunities.

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The Framework for WIOA Activities and Integration – Slide 8:

The framework of our workforce development system is such that it is constantly feedbacking on the work that is being done to improve itself. First, we have the vision, which is represented here in blue. It is lens of what the workforce development system can and should be, and is the lens through which everything else in the system is viewed. Next we have Yellow, the Strategy. Strategies set the priorities and objectives to achieve the vision for Illinois' workforce development system. The Strategies inform policies, which are red. These are developed through inclusive efforts to set clear expectations, requirements and procedures for operationalizing priorities. And lastly we have operations, orange. Operational plans to implement those strategies and policies with real commitments and resources. Those efforts are then maintained and adapted over time.

Illinois Vision and Strategies – Slide 9:

Starting at the top, the Governor and the Illinois Workforce Innovation Board are integral in setting the vision and strategies for our workforce development system.

IWIB Committees, Work Groups, Task Forces – Slide 10:

The IWIB consists of committees, work groups and tasks force that each have a unique purpose described on the slide. For the purposes of today, they are the policy setting organization of the workforce development system.

WIOA Interagency Teams – Slide 11:

Interagency teams are created to focus on IWIB committees, task forces and work operational issues of WIOA. While all these groups, the local workforce boards and the groups have representation on various Illinois Workforce Partnership are outlined

in blue because they also inform and implement policies at the local level.

Does anyone have any questions about the background regarding WIOA?

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2024 WIOA State Plan – Slide 12: [READ SLIDE]

Strategic Elements – Slide 13:

The strategic elements are essentially the part of the plan that includes analyses of the State's economic conditions, workforce characteristics and workforce development activities.

The strategic elements also address skills gaps as well to ensure we are meeting employer demands, using activities and strategies (ex. Increasing apprenticeship opportunities).

Then following based on that analysis, we set a vision and goals, and outline strategies that will help us achieve our vision and goals.

Economic Analysis – Slide 14:

Various aspects of the state's economy were analyzed, including current labor market trends, emerging, leading and maturing industries and sectors, and employee needs. Several interesting findings from that analysis include:

- Although Illinois has a somewhat higher unemployment rate than the nation, there

is also a higher labor force participation rate. In both geographies, the labor force participation rate remains lower in 2023 than it was in January 2019. Labor force participation fell in April 2020 due to the pandemic, but it gradually recovered through 2021. By January 2022, labor force participation had nearly returned to pre-pandemic levels and has remained relatively stable in 2023.

- Unemployment varies considerably within Illinois, by region and by county. The region with the highest unemployment rate is the Northern Stateline, with a not seasonally-adjusted unemployment rate of 6.0% compared to 4.5% statewide. Three regions tied for the lowest unemployment rate, at 4.4%: Northeastern, Southeastern, and Southwestern. However, unemployment is not consistent within economic regions, even. For example, the Southern region has a 5.1% unemployment rate, but the rate is higher than 7% in the counties of Alexander and Pulaski.

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Leading Industries – Slide 15

The interagency data team analyzed various sectors in Illinois and sorted them into 3 categories – leading, emerging and maturing. How a sector is categorized depends on whether the concentration of those jobs in Illinois is higher or lower than their national concentration, and if the number of jobs in those sectors is expected to increase or decrease over the next 8 years.

Labor in leading industries is more concentrated in Illinois than the national average and the number of jobs is anticipated to increase over the next 8 years.

Our leading industries are transportation and warehousing, financial activities, manufacturing, professional and business services and utilities.

Emerging Industries – Slide 16:

Labor in emerging industries is less concentrated in Illinois than the national average, but the number of jobs is anticipated to increase over the next 8 years.

Our emerging industries are health care and social assistance, retail trade, agriculture production, leisure and hospitality, government and construction.

Maturing Industries – Slide 17:

Labor in maturing industries is more concentrated in Illinois than the national average, but the number of jobs is anticipated to decrease over the next 8 years.

Our emerging industries are wholesale trade, personal and other services and education services (private and public)

How do these findings and projections align with the reality you see on a daily basis?

Regional Industries – Slide 18:

[READ SLIDE]

Skills Gap – Slide 19:

When exploring skills gaps, it was found that we have a gap between certificate earners and those with associate degrees, and job openings requiring those certificates and degrees, meaning there are more openings than potential employees. The opposite is true for bachelor or higher degrees, with a few exceptions, such as software engineer.

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Workforce Analysis – Slide 20:

In addition to examining outside factors impacting individuals and employers, we are tasked with self-reflection. The workforce system is analyzed in areas of capacity, and its strengths and weaknesses. There have been many efforts over the past 18 months to examine the workforce system. These efforts in and of themselves are a strength of our system. Another strength of the system is the ability to quickly address talent pipeline issues.

Some weaknesses that have been identified are a confusing system to navigate, a lack of awareness among the public about what the workforce system has to offer, and the struggle to tracking individuals who are mobile and might move between different service delivery areas.

Vision, Goals and Strategies – Slide 21:

Based on all of that analysis, along with the various examinations of the workforce system over the past several years and input from state agencies, employers, community based organizations, labor organizations, and other stakeholders, the state has developed a draft vision and strategies for the workforce development system.

State Plan Vision – Slide 22:

In May of this year Governor Pritzker held a vision

session of state board members, state agency directors, employers, labor and community advocates and other workforce stakeholders. Based on the feedback from the Governor, the group at the visioning session, and various reports and studies that have been conducted over the past several years, this draft vision was created.

WIOA State Plan Key Goals – Slide 23:

Also discussed at the May meeting were goals for the Workforce Development System. From that discussion and subsequent feedback, we have three draft goals. The goals are designed to address the three components of the workforce system – the system itself, employers and job-seekers and individuals. They are

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[READ SLIDE]

State Strategies to Achieve These Goals – Slide 24:

[READ SLIDE]

Draft Goal 1 Strategies – Slide 25:

[READ SLIDE]

Draft Goal 2 Strategies – Slide 26:

[READ SLIDE]

Draft Goal 3 Strategies – Slide 27:

[READ SLIDE]

Operational Elements – Slide 28:

Now this takes us to the operationalization of the strategic elements of the plan. We are going to cover the main elements of State Plan's operational elements, which as you might guess, operationalize the strategic elements of the State Plan.

Implementation of the State's Strategies – This describes specific actions the state will take to operationalize its strategies.

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State operating systems and policies - The State operating systems that will support the implementation of the State's strategies, such as labor market information systems, data systems, communication systems, case-management systems, job banks, etc.).

Assessment and Evaluation – How the system will continuously assess the performance outcomes of the workforce system in annual performance and benchmark reports.

Program data – How the state will align and integrate data and data systems to enhance the coordination of WIOA programs.

Ensuring the one-stop delivery system is accessible.

These elements identify efforts to support the strategic vision explored in the strategic elements.

For the purposes of today, we will be highlighting content regarding the implementation of the state's strategies and ensuring the one-stop delivery system is accessible to all.

Draft Activities – Slide 29:

We implement strategies by writing activities that describe specific actions the state will take to accomplish the goals set in the plan. We are still working through what specific activities will be included in the plan, but some being explored include [READ SLIDE]

Ensuring Accessibility – Slide 34:

While there are specific sections that are required regarding accessibility, Governor Pritzker has put a focus on ensuring accessibility and equity in the state's workforce development system. Learnings from the Governor's Commission on Workforce Equity and Access will be incorporated throughout the plan, including here. Specific activities that the state will undertake include:

- Assessment of service delivery – conducting a holistic assessment of service delivery in the state and make improvements based on lessons learned and best practices discovered.
- One-Stop Center Certification – using this process to ensure local workforce areas focus on equitable and accessible service delivery

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- Professional Development and Technical Assistance – provide the support to frontline service delivery staff that focuses on equity and accessibility.

Timeline for Finalizing State Plan – Slide 35:

A draft state plan will be completed in December and posted for public comment during the month of January. The final state plan will be submitted to the federal government in March 2024 and will go into effect on July 1, 2024

Attachment 1 Sign-In Sheet

Location:

Date: _____

[illegible]

Attachment 2 WIOA Stakeholder General Feedback Form Instructions:

Complete the table below as well as a table for each answer provided for the discussion questions. Add additional tables for each question as needed. Provide a completed attachment to KEB within 2 weeks of the stakeholder event.

Date:	
Location:	
Facilitator Name:	
Facilitator Organization:	

Participant Name:	
Participant Organization:	

Participant Input:	
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Participant Name:	
Participant Organization:	
Participant Input:	

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Participant Name:	
Participant Organization:	
Participant Input:	

Participant Name:	
Participant Organization:	
Participant Input:	

Attachment 3 – WIOA Stakeholder Presentation Question Feedback Form

Instructions:

Complete the table below as well as a table for each answer provided for the discussion questions. Add additional tables for each question as needed. Provide a completed attachment to KEB within 2 weeks of the stakeholder event.

Date:	
Location:	
Facilitator Name:	
Facilitator Organization:	

What is WIOA – Slide 7

Have you used WIOA services before?

Do you know where your local American Job Center is located?

Participant Name:	
Participant Organization:	
Participant Input:	

Participant Name:	
Participant Organization:	
Participant Input:	

Economic Analysis – Slide 14

How do these findings align with the reality you see on a daily basis?

Participant Name:	
Participant Organization:	
Participant Input:	

Participant Name:	
Participant Organization:	
Participant Input:	

Participant Name:	
Participant Organization:	
Participant Input:	

Workforce Analysis – Slide 16:

If you have interacted with the workforce development system, what are some

of your experiences. What worked well and what caused issues?

Participant Name:	
Participant Organization:	
Participant Input:	

Participant Name:	
Participant Organization:	
Participant Input:	

Participant Name:	
Participant Organization:	
Participant Input:	

WIOA Stat Plan Key Goals – Slide 19:

What is your reaction to these goals?

Will achieving these goals help individuals and employers?

Participant Name:	
Participant Organization:	
Participant Input:	

Participant Name:	
Participant Organization:	
Participant Input:	

Participant Name:	
Participant Organization:	
Participant Input:	

Draft Goal 1 Strategies – Slide 21:

How will these strategies help accomplish this goal?

Are there strategies that need to be changed, added, or removed to help accomplish this goal?

Participant Name:	
Participant Organization:	
Participant Input:	

Participant Name:	
Participant Organization:	
Participant Input:	

Participant Name:	
Participant Organization:	
Participant Input:	

How will these strategies help accomplish this goal?

Are there strategies that need to be changed, added, or removed to help accomplish this goal?

Participant Name:	
Participant Organization:	
Participant Input:	

Participant Name:	
Participant Organization:	
Participant Input:	

Participant Name:	
Participant Organization:	
Participant Input:	

Draft Goal 3 Strategies – Slide 23:

How will these strategies help accomplish this goal?

Are there strategies that need to be changed, added, or removed to help accomplish this goal?

Participant Name:	
Participant Organization:	
Participant Input:	

Participant Name:	
Participant Organization:	
Participant Input:	

Participant Name:	
Participant Organization:	
Participant Input:	

Draft Activities – Slide 25:

What specific activities and actions should be included in the plan to ensure your success?

Participant Name:	
Participant Organization:	
Participant Input:	

Participant Name:	
Participant Organization:	
Participant Input:	

Participant Name:	
Participant Organization:	
Participant Input:	

Ensuring Accessibility – Slide 26:

What specific activities and actions should be included in the plan to ensure an equitable and accessible system?

Participant Name:	
Participant Organization:	
Participant Input:	

Participant Name:	
Participant Organization:	
Participant Input:	

Participant Name:	
Participant Organization:	
Participant Input:	

LIST OF STAKEHOLDER COMMENTS

Economic Development Region 2 (Champaign, IL)

What is WIOA? – Slide 7

[Do you know where your local American Job Center is located?]

Two people raised their hands.

[How many people are providing WIOA Services?]

No attendee response.

[Have you used WIOA services before?]

Two people raised their hands.

Economic Analysis – Slide 11

[Does anyone have any questions about the background regarding WIOA?]

“Our area is currently working on an equity report. Is that part of this plan?” (EDR 2, Champaign, English, Community College)

Economic Analysis – Slides 14-16:

[How do these findings align with the reality you see on a daily basis?]

“Is this nationwide?” (EDR 2, Champaign, English, State Government)

“Is there a further breakdown on each of these sectors (regional industries)?” (EDR 2, Champaign, English, Community College)

“I think this is the reality of these sectors dealing with shortages.” (EDR 2, Champaign, English, Workforce Services Provider).

“With the Advisory Committee, it's tough to get businesses and employer involvement.” (EDR 2, Champaign, English, Community College)

Workforce Analysis – Slide 20:

[If you have interacted with the workforce development system, what are some of your experiences.]

What worked well and what caused issues?]

No attendee response.

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WIOA State Plan Key Goals – Slide 23:

[What is your reaction to these goals?]

[Will achieving these goals help individuals and employers?]

No attendee response.

Draft Goal 1 Strategies – Slide 25:

[How will these strategies help accomplish this goal?]

[Are there strategies that need to be changed, added, or removed to help accomplish this goal?]

"I think one of the things you're looking to emphasize with these strategies is collaboration and coordination. Compared to other states, we are very disjointed because of the system's composition, but because of this, coordination and collaboration should be at the forefront. Because we are structured differently, we need to have strong coordination." (EDR 2, Champaign, English, Workforce Services Provider).

"I was thinking that too, especially in terms of coordination. I see that each agency, especially the four core partners, and there is resistance to collaboration." (EDR 2, Champaign, English, State Government)

"The partner that handles the finances does have the upper hand. There is non-collaboration happening. If each agency were tasked with understanding every other agency's role (perhaps that would increase receptivity to collaboration)." (EDR 2, Champaign, English, State Government)

"Equity and access are very charged and very heavy words; they need to be understood and defined. They need to be taken out and replaced with what the state means. Also, adding streamlining needs to be in here somewhere." (EDR 2, Champaign, English, State Government)

"What do we mean by frontline workers? (If that is people working with customers) then everyone in our building is a frontline worker, but I am a director. I don't think this statement makes sense." (EDR 2, Champaign, English, State Government)

“When you are looking at a state plan or a local plan, some agencies define these (front-line workers) as only as greeters.” (EDR 2, Champaign, English, State Government)

“Cross off the bottom line. It seems like this means that frontline workers aren’t getting support as it is.” (EDR 2, Champaign, English, Workforce Service Provider)

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Draft Goal 2 Strategies – Slide 26:

[How will these strategies help accomplish this goal?]

[Are there strategies that need to be changed, added, or removed to help accomplish this goal?]

“Why isn’t DEIB (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging) not in here?” (EDR 2, Champaign, English, State Government)

“We can’t get our businesses to come to the meeting.” (EDR 2, Champaign, English, State Government)

“Most employers do not know the workforce system exists. The major employers who sit on our board know about us. But a large contingent doesn’t know we exist. A lot of that is the need for marketing. In my area, we have a combined Chamber and EDC (Economic Development Corporation), but some are unaware of these services.” (EDR 2, Champaign, English, State Government)

“We don’t advertise ourselves and the work that we do to help people and our work. There are so many misconceptions about the work we do as well.” (EDR 2, Champaign, English, State Government)

“At Richland, to deal with the emerging needs for skilled workers, we have non-credit programs that are increasing, construction, the trades. And we are working with employers in the area to have their input on the curriculum. These are increasing to deal with the emerging needs, so to have that be a part of the system, although it is not a typical program for a community college, we get many interested people. We are trying to be responsive.” (EDR 2, Champaign, English, Community College)

Draft Goal 3 Strategies – Slide 27:

[How will these strategies help accomplish this goal?]

[Are there strategies that need to be changed, added, or removed to help accomplish this goal?]

“What is a data-informed approach? That is rhetorical. It needs to be defined.” (EDR 2, Champaign, English, State Government)

“I think jobseekers also are unaware of our services, especially in specifically marginalized communities. We try to use strategies but are not getting to our target demographic. People typically (learn of our services through) word-of-mouth. We need a statewide marketing campaign. There must be different ways to reach all the demographics.” (EDR 2, Champaign, English, Workforce Services Provider)

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“Do you have surveys that ask how participants hear about your services?” (EDR 2, Champaign, English, Unknown)

“Are people able to navigate the websites if they got there? [...] some need digital skills.” (EDR 2, Champaign, English, Unknown)

“We are trying to develop social media skills...we use billboards in high-traffic areas.” (EDR 2, Champaign, English, Community College)

“We are paying for YouTube and radio advertisements.” (EDR 2, Champaign, English, Workforce Service Provider)

“Phone alerts would be great.” (EDR 2, Champaign, English, State Government)

Draft Activities – Slide 29:

[What specific activities and actions should be included in the plan to ensure your success?]

“When you say, ‘explore a virtual front door’, are you talking about the state or the local systems? I think the state’s (Illinois workNet) needs to be simplified, especially for jobseekers. One comment we get is that jobseekers find it very difficult to navigate the system. There is a lot of good information on it, but people can’t find a path to the information. There are things that can be done to make this pathway friendly. This is the buffet, but you don’t know what to pick.” (EDR 2, Champaign, English, Workforce Service Provider)

“Is everything on Illinois workNet phone friendly?” (EDR 2, Champaign, English, State Government)

“When people file for unemployment, we encourage people to use our website, and it requires a two or four-step verification. Now, we require registering with Illinois JobLink. Referrals should be for every stakeholder and partner so that we can use this information, too. We all must reach out and understand that we are the whole workforce system. Our workforce board doesn’t even understand what services that we offer.” (EDR 2, Champaign, English, State Government)

“This means sharing with all of our partners and boards. We have a monthly meeting with each of our partners to discuss our programs.” (EDR 2, Champaign, English, Workforce Service Provider)

“We have a title 1B, has a van to take it to the outpost areas. Why don’t we have a marketing plan for the marketing plan [referring to WWW].” (EDR 2, Champaign, English, State Government)

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“As the other states continue to create one workforce development, we need to increase our collaboration.” (EDR 2, Champaign, English, Workforce Service Provider)

Ensuring Accessibility – Slide 34:

[What specific activities and actions should be included in the plan to ensure an equitable and accessible system?]

“I’ve been an EO officer, I think the biggest way to ensure accessibility statewide is to ensure adequate staffing. For DCEO, we are down to one person statewide, and as a local EO person, we rely on the state level to give us guidance and support. There needs to be agency-level statewide support.” (EDR 2, Champaign, English, Workforce Service Provider)

“Can we define accessibility as it is access to the programs available? Are we talking about building aspects, maintenance, etc.? This includes digital literacy.” (EDR 2, Champaign, English, State Government)

“We need to acknowledge that frontline workers mean almost all local practitioners.” (EDR 2, Champaign, English, Workforce Service Provider)

“I would put digital literacy in this category. So many of our services rely on people’s ability to work on a computer. This does cut people off from our system. It is a challenge to find ways to address this at our local level. People should not have to pay to get that basic level of education.” (EDR 2, Champaign, English, Workforce Service Provider)

“Real-time interpreters could be expanded to a digital navigator. I would classify people at that level as the same as language interpreters. We need to employ digital navigators.” (EDR 2,

Champaign, English, State Government)

“We have a need for French interpreters.” (EDR 2, Champaign, English, State Government)

Next Steps – Slide 35:

[Any other questions or comments?]

“(I have a) marketing idea for ads wrapping on buses.” (EDR 2, Champaign, English, Community College)

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LIST OF STAKEHOLDER COMMENTS

Economic Development Region 3 (East Peoria, IL)

What is WIOA? – Slide 7

[Have you used WIOA services before?]

Three out of nine people raised their hands.

[Do you know where your local American Job Center is located?]

No attendee response.

[How many people are providing WIOA Services?]

No attendee response.

Economic Analysis – Slide 11

[Does anyone have any questions about the background regarding WIOA?]

No attendee response.

Economic Analysis – Slides 14-16

[How do these findings align with the reality you see on a daily basis?]

Regional Industries – Slide 18:

“I’m a little surprised by healthcare, (which) is a big industry in this area.” (EDR 3, East Peoria, English, State Government)

“Healthcare in this area, bounces between maturing and emerging because of how steady the market share is. The graph is more of a life cycle; new industries start in the right-bottom quadrant, as they grow (in comparison to the state), they grow into the top-right quadrant. As they mature, they will move into the left-top quadrant. Dying industries will be in the left bottom quadrant. The cluster of the industries in the middle remain steady to state average.” (EDR 3, East Peoria, English, State Government)

Workforce Analysis – Slide 20:

[If you have interacted with the workforce development system, what are some of your experiences. What worked well and what caused issues?]

“So, I think there isn’t confusion among people accessing the information. Rather, there is confusion among people who work within the workforce system. There isn’t much

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communication between planning people and the front-line workers. There doesn’t seem to be an emphasis on conveying the mission to everyone within the workforce and how they can work together.” (EDR 3, East Peoria, English, State Government)

“There is a lack of knowledge from people who are accessing the system on regarding what is a credential and why its important. It seems the system waits too long to convey the message of different career pathways.” (EDR 3, East Peoria, English, Workforce Office Provider)

WIOA State Plan Vision – Slide 22:

“It looks good and sounds good, but meeting community members where they are, how will we do that? Is there going to be funding to do that?” (EDR 3, East Peoria, English, State Government)

“‘Accessible manner’ is a pretty large statement, but we can’t guarantee that people (individuals) will achieve their goals. No matter how many supports are in place, some people are not going to get to those goals. It’s great to have a high goal, but we’re never going to (achieve) it all.” (EDR 3, East Peoria, English, State Government)

WIOA State Plan Key Goals – Slide 23:

[What is your reaction to these goals?]

"I think there isn't confusion among people accessing the information. Rather, there is confusion among people who work within the workforce system. There is not much communication between planning people and the frontline workers. There doesn't seem to be an emphasis on conveying the mission to everyone within the workforce (system) and how they can work together." (EDR 3, East Peoria, English, State Government)

"There is a lack of knowledge from people who are accessing the system regarding what is a credential and why its important. It seems the (Workforce Development) system waits too long to convey the message of different career pathways." (EDR 3, East Peoria, English, Workforce Service Provider)

[Will achieving these goals help individuals and employers?]

"Achieving these goals would obviously help jobseekers and employers. But these make me laugh. Having been working with WIOA for a long time, for us to be an example of excellence, we would need to get all four core partners to have buy-in and be actively involved in the process. Maybe in some areas, this is happening, but there are some areas where this is not." (EDR 3, East Peoria, English, State Government)

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"The definition of customer service is also changing. This is so much harder than the statement conveys. All directors in the core partners should be mandated, by their directors, to actively participate in the process. If we are going to make this work. How can we make it seamless for the customer if we can't access data from our partners? We are not set up for anything to be seamless." (EDR 3, East Peoria, English, State Government)

"We need a common system (case management/data system) that we are forced to use. With all the core partners using different systems, it is impossible." (EDR 3, East Peoria, English, State Government)

"I do not think these are SMART (Specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time-bound) Goals. These statements feel like you are trying to meet your word count in a school essay. Can you define excellence? I don't have any metrics for this or know how any of these can be achieved and they are too broad. What does it mean to enhance an employer's ability to hire?" (EDR 3, East Peoria, English, Community College)

Draft Goal 1 Strategies – Slide 25:
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[How will these strategies help accomplish this goal?]

[Are there strategies that need to be changed, added, or removed to help accomplish this goal?]

“These are so broad. What is customer customer-centered approach? There are 50 different trainings on different approaches. What does it mean to center equity and access?” (EDR 3, East Peoria, English, State Government)

“I understand that these need to be broad so that local and regional areas can write their own. But these are not giving guidance. How is the state going to support front-line workers? I would love to know.” (EDR 3, East Peoria, English, State Government)

“With customer center design, they are doing the exact opposite while creating this plan. Because no one is allowing frontline workers to give input into the plan. No one is mandated to be here, so if this is our turn to tell the state what we need we should have to be here.” (EDR 3, East Peoria, English, State Government)

“I don’t know how anything is going to get achieved through all of this. Each of these need an ending to the sentence that includes the implementation portion.” (EDR 3, East Peoria, English, Community College)

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“Did anyone ask a front-line worker? In our office, it wasn’t going smoothly; the people operationalizing the process were asked to help create strategies to help fix the issue.” (EDR 3, East Peoria, English, State Government)

“One way to help frontline workers, is to hire enough workers. Everyone I know is overloaded with their caseloads. You can teach all the frontline workers anything you want, but they can’t get to it. We need more people. I don’t think this is a funding issue. I think before COVID we were fully staffed. Staff works the call center in two-week periods and that is taxing an already overtaxed caseload in some instances.” (EDR 3, East Peoria, English, State Government)

“The part that says WIOA partners... enhance collaboration. We are part of a LIWA based in Peoria, so we don’t get any partnership because we’re in Heartland. No one will refer anyone to us. We are not at the table for the conversation because the One-Stop doesn’t work for us. We don’t get any referrals. We don’t get invited; I do get updates, but I don’t get to be involved.” (EDR 3, East Peoria, English, Community College)

“Part of the problem is that everyone has turnover, so no one knows who to reach out to so that everyone who needs to be at the table is at the table. We must get all of the partners at the table.” (EDR 3, East Peoria, English, State Government)

[How will these strategies help accomplish this goal?]

[Are there strategies that need to be changed, added, or removed to help accomplish this goal?]

“How are we going to reach employers?” (EDR 3, East Peoria, English, State Government)

“There is a huge disconnect between the LWIBs and the LWIAs and the employers won’t show up. For IDES we can’t go to a chamber meeting because we don’t pay to be at the meeting. We have to convince them why its important to be present.” (EDR 3, East Peoria, English, State Government)

“You really have to go to the board and get on their agenda. At the Chamber, we would have to be members. But getting on the LWIBs agendas, would be the best route.” (EDR 3, East Peoria, English, State Government)

“The missing element is the education of the businesspeople so they can know what exists along with examples of why it helps.” (EDR 3, East Peoria, English, Workforce Service Provider)

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Draft Goal 3 Strategies – Slide 27:
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[How will these strategies help accomplish this goal?]

[Are there strategies that need to be changed, added, or removed to help accomplish this goal?]

“How do these data systems talk to each other throughout the state?” (EDR 3, East Peoria, English, Workforce Service Provider)

“How are they going to do any of these?” (EDR 3, East Peoria, English, Community College)

“Not all offices are accessible to where people live, they don’t visit local offices very often; are they considering funding an initiative to send people where they live? They’re saying this is what they want, but some things are financially driven, so how are all areas able to do this?” (EDR 3, East Peoria, English, State Government)

“Customer-Centered approach; we have a call center like DHS. Why is the state so focused on taking the face-to-face interactions away from us? We are getting less and less face time with our customers. If they don’t have access to a computer or understand how to navigate

computers, then being on a phone won't help. We're appointment only. The pros for this is that for staff they can plan accordingly. The cons are that most people who work for our agency are there because they want to help people. We are appointment only because of security concerns. Our administration is new pre-pandemic." (EDR 3, East Peoria, English, State Government)

"(Regarding virtual services) When we have customers who are unable to get to an office because of transportation or mobility barriers. Having virtual signature options has made some things go much smoother. But we have both walk-in and appointment only. Face-to-face is important because some of these issues are big." (EDR 3, East Peoria, English, State Government)

Draft Activities – Slide 29:

[What specific activities and actions should be included in the plan to ensure your success?]

"What does it mean to have a virtual front-door? Who is the marketing plan geared to?" (EDR 3, East Peoria, English, State Government)

"It says referral system, but this needs to be an overarching data system that includes referrals." (EDR 3, East Peoria, English, State Government)

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"What is the definition of a good job-standard? It seems like each of these activities should be broken out to actionable items we can do." (EDR 3, East Peoria, English, Community College)

"Does the virtual font-door go against the need for face-to-face? When you talk about equity, it may be great for some, but we also need a face-to-face option. I don't see the face-to-face option on here, so obviously that isn't a priority." (EDR 3, East Peoria, English, Workforce Service Provider)

Ensuring Accessibility – Slide 34:

[What specific activities and actions should be included in the plan to ensure an equitable and accessible system?]

"Our agency has a real-time interpreter's line. But sign-language interpreters are really hard to get." (EDR 3, East Peoria, English, State Government)

"Increase your website accessibility is important. Our websites are not built for accessibility."

LIST OF STAKEHOLDER COMMENTS

Economic Development Region 4 (Joliet, IL)

What is WIOA? – Slide 7

[Have you used WIOA services before?]

Two people indicate they have used WIOA services before.
Seven people raised their hands to indicate they are “providers”.

[Do you know where your local American Job Center is located?]

Most everyone raised their hands as “yes” they know where the local American Job Center is located.

[Does anyone have any questions about the background regarding WIOA?]

No questions asked.

Economic Analysis – Slides 14-16

[How do these findings align with the reality you see on a daily basis?]

“Yep, it's aligned. For instance, leading industries, I think the number one (industry) was transportation. We are receiving an influx of jobseekers to receive their CDL license.” (EDR 4, Joliet, English, Workforce Services Provider)

“I want to disagree with the maturing (industry) slide, because of the need for teachers. There is a dire need for teachers in both the private sector and public sectors. I don't feel like (Educational Services, Private and Public) is maturing. Teachers are retiring--coming out of it--and school districts, and schools are just scrambling to figure out what to do.” (EDR 4, Joliet, English, Workforce Services Provider)

“Clean Energy is going to be an emerging field for the Northeast region and actually the whole State of Illinois because of CEJA (the Clean Energy Jobs Act). So, as the state goes further into this industry, it should be a focus in their plans. So just something to think about. There's no labor market data in it because it's so new, but it should be something that the State considers during their planning when thinking about in the future.” (EDR 4, Joliet, English, Workforce Services Provider)

“Great point especially with Line Electric here in Will County. And in KANE County, we are getting an EV (Electric Vehicle) manufacturer, so new jobs are coming in solar and wind and everything.” (EDR 4, Joliet, English, Workforce Services Provider)

“I was surprised to see the number of job increases for Leisure and Hospitality. I am just kind of interested in what might be driving that? Then also on the other hand, what are the wages

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related to those jobs and are they full-time jobs? Are they more part-time? I think it'd be helpful to be able to dig in a little bit more as to what are those types of jobs and are they living wage jobs?” (EDR 4, Joliet, English, Community College)

“I serve three counties, and I don't really see the job growth in the agricultural area. Agricultural production doesn't really produce quality (jobs). I would need to know more, like what is that industry specifically. Is Agriculture Production tied to the cannabis industry? I need a little more detail on that. Is that related to the cannabis marijuana? Because if it is, it really shouldn't be part of the WIOA plan because WIOA cannot do anything with the marijuana industry. So, I'd like to really delve into where those jobs are? Marijuana is a big industry because it is legal in the State of Illinois, but we can't touch it.” (EDR 4, Joliet, English, Workforce Services Provider)

Workforce Analysis – Slide 20:

[If you have interacted with the workforce development system, what are some of your experiences. What worked well and what caused issues?]

“You mentioned there's a skills gap between individuals earning certificates and individuals earning associate degrees. It seems like the system with the performance measures is set up to try to get people through as quickly as possible and get that certificate rather than having to invest in individuals for multiple years. If they don't get that job right away, then it really hurts our performance. And so I think that we take that into consideration as we are guiding individuals.” (EDR 4, Joliet, English, Community College)

“Our system and our program is a really good program, but there's a gap with the housing market right now in terms of supporting getting them placed into jobs and being independent. That's our struggle right now is we're bringing on the other involved with Job Corps with WIOA, but then when it comes time to get them jobs, we're having a hard time finding places for them to live once they're done attending the job corps program.” (EDR 4, Joliet, English, Workforce Services Provider)

WIOA State Plan Key Goals – Slide 23:
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[What is your reaction to these goals?]

“Yeah, I feel like we're already doing it. But I think that it's nice to say that and then the policies and the requirements that are put in place handcuff us.” (EDR 4, Joliet, English, Community College)

[Will achieving these goals help individuals and employers?]

“Goals are great, but sometimes the way we must implement actually slows our ability to reach the goals. I'll give you an example; we have the state ETPL system (Eligible Training Provider List). I think that's great that, as a state, we can say these are the high growth, high demand industries because Will County is a lot different than McHenry County in what our demand for