



SONOMA COUNTY
**WORKFORCE
INVESTMENT BOARD**

**Sonoma County Workforce Investment Board
Local Workforce Development Plan
2021 -2024**

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The Sonoma County Workforce Investment Board (WIB) is pleased to share our 2021-2024 Local Workforce Development Plan.

Local Overview

Sonoma County is an urban-rural county located 30 miles north of San Francisco with a

population of 494,336. In December 2020, Sonoma County had a labor force of 250,632 with 234,400 employed and 16,192 unemployed (6.5%). The cost of living in Sonoma County is 77.2% higher than the U.S. average. The Sonoma County Economic Development Board reported that due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Sonoma County in 2020 experienced 30,135 lost jobs and \$614 million in lost state and local tax revenues¹. Sonoma County also experienced two devastating wildfires in August and September 2020 which disproportionately affected farmworker families living and working in the heart of the fire areas. Hispanic or Latino make up 27.3% of the County's population.

Labor market data from a variety of sources is used to keep up to date on local workforce needs and trends. One such source, JobsEQ (Chmura Economics), provides a variety of reports containing current local data on industry sectors, occupations, educational attainment, cost of living and other workforce development indicators.

Sonoma County Top 5 Industries

JobsEQ² shows Sonoma County is home to diverse and growing industries. In 2020, the industry that hosted the most jobs was the Healthcare & Social Assistance industry. Between 2020 to 2025, it is estimated that the industry will add 11% more jobs and continue to be a staple of the County's economy. The industry with the highest average earnings per job in 2020 was Manufacturing (\$83,786). The fastest growing occupation in the Healthcare & Social Assistance industries is Home Health and Personal Care Aides. This occupation is expected to grow 22% between 2020- 2025. Nearly 51% of Sonoma County's employed workforce are employed in the county's top five industries:

1. Healthcare & Social Assistance
2. Manufacturing
3. Retail Trade
4. Construction
5. Accommodation and Food Services

The top five **industries** projected to grow in the next five years reflect the current top five industries that nearly half of Sonoma County's workforce are participating in:

1. Healthcare and Social Assistance
2. Retail Trade
3. Accommodation and Food Services
4. Manufacturing
5. Construction

¹ Sonoma County EDB Economic Impacts from COVID-19 on Sonoma County Economy, 2020

² Industry employment and wages (including total regional employment and wages) are as of 2020Q3 and are based upon BLS QCEW data, imputed by Chmura where necessary, and supplemented by additional sources including Census ZBP data. Employment forecasts are modeled by Chmura and are consistent with BLS national-level 10-year forecasts.

Over the next five years, the following are the top five **occupations** that will be in-demand for Sonoma County:

1. Office and Administrative Support
2. Sales
3. Food Preparation and Serving
4. Transportations and Material Moving
5. Management

Sonoma County WIB

The Sonoma County WIB is a group of key stakeholders appointed by the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors to address workforce challenges throughout Sonoma County. The WIB members are leaders in the community who represent business, industry, labor, education, and economic development. The WIB serves as a strategic leader and convener of employers, workforce development professionals, education providers, economic development agencies and other stakeholders to drive innovation and to align education, workforce and business. The WIB is dedicated to identifying and promoting workforce development strategies that positively impact regional and local economic growth and enable upward mobility for all Sonoma County residents.

Sonoma County WIB Vision:

A robust local workforce with the skills needed for today and for tomorrow.

Sonoma County WIB Mission:

The Sonoma County Workforce Investment Board (WIB) leads an integrated workforce development system to ensure the County's economic vitality and quality of life.

America's Job Center of California

Much of the work the WIB does is through its America's Job Center of California, **Sonoma County Job Link**. Job Link provides career services to individuals looking for employment and assists local businesses in finding a qualified workforce. The guiding principles of the WIB are:

- Vital partnerships are strengthened between business, economic development, education, labor, and community;
- Employers are valued as the pivotal link in our workforce development system; and
- Sonoma County Job Link is our One Stop Center for education, training and job readiness programs to meet the ever-changing needs of area job seekers and employers.

Principles defined by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act

In the 2021-2024 Local Workforce Plan, the WIB has developed strategic activities to support

the principles defined by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and California's State Workforce Development Board (CWDB). These principles include:

- Supporting a High Road Workforce System that includes job quality, worker voice, equity and environmental sustainability
- Fostering “demand-driven skills attainment” by aligning program content between workforce and education with local industry needs to provide Sonoma County employers and businesses with a skilled workforce.
- Enabling upward mobility for all Sonoma County residents, including members of the “hardest to serve” population with barriers to employment. Making workforce and education programs accessible ensures that Sonoma County residents have marketable skills and a level of education that will lead to economic security.
- Aligning, coordinating, and integrating programs and services to use resources to achieve scale and impact while providing the needed services to clients based on their needs.

Regional Planning

The Sonoma County WIB is one of three local workforce areas that make up the North Bay Planning Unit, known as the North Bay Economic Connection (NBEC), which includes the Solano Workforce Development Board and the Workforce Alliance of the North Bay (Marin, Napa, Mendocino, Lake). NBEC has developed a complementary 2021-2024 Regional Plan with regional goals of:

- Driving workforce development outcomes across region
- Intentionality in industry sector engagement
- Expanding on-ramps to career pathways
- Focusing on individuals with barriers who have been historically excluded from prosperity

The Sonoma County Local Workforce Plan intends to operationalize and bridge into the NBEC Regional Plan by:

- Driving and improving policy and service coordination with local partners
- Focusing on improving how to access those services through AJCC, including in remote areas
- Implementing effective service delivery models including co-enrollment and shared case management, and using supportive services to thread workforce and education activities
- Preparing WIOA Title I (Adult/DW/Youth) frontline staff to deliver services aligned with

state goals

Priorities, Recovery and Transition

As we continue to confront the pandemic and the pressures it has placed on the local economy and workforce, Sonoma County is committed to providing uninterrupted career services, business services and layoff mitigation services. This plan will focus on how to improve job seeker and businesses services in Sonoma County and specifically, how the WIB, AJCC and local partners can strengthen workforce supports for our community, particularly in regards to emerging from the public health crisis. COVID-19 has greatly impacted how we deliver our services and the Local Plan will look at how we can further collaborate, innovate and strengthen our partnerships to work towards recovering our workforce post-COVID and transition back to a healthy economy.

Racial and economic equity has emerged as a priority for the WIB, with commitment to defining what equity and a “good job” means along with developing strategies to ensure it is braided into workforce policies and service models. Many of the equity issues that bubbled up with stakeholder engagement feedback are in the same arenas that we often identify as barriers with a need for supportive services, such as transportation, technology assistance and lack of access to basic services, especially in the context of the pandemic and how it has impacted the workforce. Sonoma County recently formed an Office of Equity and the Employment & Training (E&T) Division has been meeting bi-weekly since June 2020 to discuss racial equity in the and to develop and implement strategies on addressing diversity and inequality in the workplace in our services. In March 2021, E&T held two mandatory all staff Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Trainings.

Challenges

Other challenges for Sonoma County coming out of the pandemic:

- **Data Intelligence:** Identifying local trends and projections is difficult when the data being used to make decisions regarding demand-driven metrics is in arrears.
- **Prevalence of low-wage jobs:** While wage increases benefit job seekers, market economics are such that wages need to be economically viable in that sector for businesses to survive. This is a critical investment and highlights the importance of working closely with businesses and policymakers to understand how a variety of factors can impact both employers and job seekers.
- **Unemployment Insurance Benefits (UI):** The uncertainty of the future of unemployment benefits as claims have run long due to the pandemic. From March to November 2020, Sonoma County residents filed a total of 147,854 initial claims for Unemployment Insurance (UI) – including new claims, additional claims, and transitional claims. Currently, it appears many people are staying on UI with increased money and extensions and the AJCC isn't seeing the volume of job seekers in search of training and

job opportunities that we served in previous recessions. This could also be a result of having schools closed and costs of Early Childhood Education (ECE) and childcare could serve a disincentive for job seekers to return to school and the workforce.

- Market failure dilemma: Hospitality is a priority industry and had some of the biggest losses due to the pandemic, the prospects for career pathways for job seekers with livable wages, specifically in a high-cost living area such as Sonoma is limited. There is a plethora of low-skill jobs that are more easily accessible to job seekers but they are low-wage and lack options for pathways to upskill workers into living wage employment opportunities. This presents a structural challenge for Sonoma County, as the hospitality sector is a local economic anchor and a principal industry in our community, but is a mismatch to the High Road Workforce System ideals. The WIB will be working with the Economic Development Board (EDB) and other partners on attracting other sectors into Sonoma County.

Strategies Moving Forward

The following are strategies for the WIB to address in post-COVID recovery and emerging into a healthy economy moving forward:

- Partner with educational institutions, trade associations, businesses and non-profit organizations to establish workforce development programs that focus on carbon neutral and resilient building technologies by 2023.
- Watch for and apply for relevant grant opportunities for areas of pain in our local economy to target who has been hardest hit by the pandemic, either through industries or education providers (technical, language, etc.).
- Identify ways to help people in the hospitality industry identify sustainable career paths and/or utilize their applicable skill sets and transition into other in-demand industries with better outcomes.
- Identify occupations that are going to show growth with wage increases and determine what paths and which opportunities will be available in the future
- Distinguish quality, living wage employment opportunities, assist and direct job seekers in transition into those emerging occupations.
- Ensure WIB, AJCC and partner staff attend trainings in Racial Equity, Diversity and Inclusion and look to how equity can be incorporated into workforce policies.
- Prioritizing digital fluency and technical literacy as a supportive service; influence the categorization of access to technology (such as internet access) as a basic need, similar to a utility like water and electricity, especially in regards to telework demand.
- Provide data to the Workforce Investment Board and to Job Link vocational counselors in order to ensure that fiscal and programmatic policies and procedures reflect current workforce needs.

Sonoma County is fortunate to have strong partnerships with education, community-based organizations, labor, economic development, professional associations, leadership groups, and business. These partnerships allow the WIB and Job Link to work towards recovering our workforce post-Covid and transition to a healthy economy while providing a high level of service that contributes to the county's and its resident's economic wellness.

WIOA Core and Required Partner Coordination

How Local Boards and AJCC partners will coordinate the services and resources identified in their MOU, as outlined in WSD18-12 (PDF), *WIOA Memorandums of Understanding*.

The WIB and Job Link are embedded in the Sonoma County Human Services Department's Employment & Training (E&T) Division. The E&T Division administers the CalWORKs program, housing assistance programs and WIOA programs. In order to establish a high quality AJCC delivery system and enhance collaboration among partner programs, the WIB and our AJCC partners are working together to create a unified service delivery system that best meets the needs of our shared customers and provides universal access to the full range of employment services, training and education and employer assistance available. The role of the AJCC One-Stop-Operator, California Human Development (CHD) includes ensuring the implementation of partner responsibilities and contributions agreed upon in the MOU and coordinating the service delivery of the required AJCC partners and service providers.

The WIB regularly engages with WIOA Title II programs through participation in community initiatives and through a monthly coordination meeting with WIB staff. Information on current and upcoming projects is shared, and multiple efforts exist to cross promote and collaborate on projects where customers would benefit from services on both sides. To carry out the WIOA core programs, Title I- Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth and Rapid Response; Title II- Adult Education, Title III- Wagner-Peyser and Title IV- Vocational Rehabilitation, core partners are represented as members on the WIB as well as serve on the Job Link Steering Committee (JLSC) to discuss how the core programs are being used, exploring what new service delivery or programs could be developed, especially in regards to transitioning to virtual, in-person and/or a hybrid of service delivery and how resources can align to best support the community.

With the most recent impact of COVID-19, Job Link continues to work closely with the Employment Development Department (EDD) Workforce Services Branch staff on how to best support customers through the process of applying for Unemployment Insurance benefits and offering additional resources and referrals. Through monthly JLSC meetings, a discussion around each partner's customers and services help to inform the discussion of how best to serve our customers through effective partnerships, referrals, and cross-training staff.

The WIB's goals in the area of aligning and coordinating services include:

- Meeting regularly with partners to identify areas of collaboration to develop or enhance services and to leverage resources.

- Creating and sharing tool kits (career pathways, hiring incentives, training funding).
- Exploring ways to share the latest in labor market data, career pathways, and workforce trend information with customers and partners.
- Working in partnership with the Adult Education Consortium, the Career Technical Education Foundation, Santa Rosa Junior College, the WIOA Youth program, and CalWORKs to share information, promote trainings, and align resources wherever possible.
- Using evidence-based practices to develop solid training programs that respond to current workforce issues while placing individuals in employment or on a career pathway.
- Implement the Integrated Education and Training (IET) model for all upcoming cohorts to continue to pursue aligning and merging publicly funded Title II education and training programs and other Title I workforce development resources with concrete employment opportunities.
- Applying for additional funding relevant to the priorities of the WIB and adapting to related Covid-specific funding opportunities.
- Promote regional work with North Bay RPU and other regional partners (North Bay Trades Introduction Program (TIP), Bay Area Community College Consortium, North Bay Apprenticeship Coordinators Association, etc.).

WIB's Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

The WIB's Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with our partners define goals, roles and identify specific services to be provided to customers, including those individuals with barriers to employment, whether on-site at the AJCC, virtually or by referral to the partner's primary office. All core partners are also invited to participate in several cross-agency committees on staff development, marketing, and business services. These agreements reflect service coordination and collaboration between the WIB and AJCC partners:

- Sonoma County Human Services Department
Provides WIOA Adult and Dislocated Worker Career Services including intake, orientation, registration assistance, workshops, individualized career services, training services, follow-up services and business services. Provides a disability program navigator for additional assistance.
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)
CalWORKs staff provide intake, orientation, and case management for Public Assistance benefits and Welfare to Work services. AJCC staff assist CalWORKs customers in developing their career and education plans. This includes providing information on career pathways and education and training opportunities.
- Employment Development Department (EDD)

Provides intake, orientation, registration assistance, workshops, UI assistance, Veteran's services (including services for disabled veterans), Migrant Seasonal Farmworker program, Trade Adjustment Act.

- Department of Rehabilitation (DOR)

Provides intake, orientation and registration assistance and workshops, can provide onsite orientations on DOR services for individuals with disabilities.

- California Human Development

One Stop Operator who is responsible for the day-to-day governance of the AJCC System. Provides basic career services, as determined by specific needs of participants, including but not limited to intake; initial assessment; labor exchange services; labor market information; information regarding filing unemployment claims, referrals to job search, placement, recruitment, and CalJOBS. Also provides vocational training programs, paid work experience, on the job training, job search services, job placement assistance and resume building available to the farmworker community both in English and Spanish.

- Adult Education Consortium

Does not provide on-site services, but participates through regular partner meetings to share information on trainings and make referrals to assist individuals who need to find jobs, build basic educational or occupational skills, earn a postsecondary certificate or degree, or obtain guidance on how to make career choices, or are businesses and employers seeking skilled workers.

- Community Action Partnership

Does not provide on-site services, offers employment and training services under the Community Services Block Grant targeting low-income Californians and disadvantaged communities in the Sonoma area.

- Sonoma County Community Development Commission

Does not provide on-site services, customers are participants in the Sonoma County Housing Authority's Family Self-Sufficiency Program (FSS). These individuals proactively sign up for the program with the goal of becoming independent of government assistance through gainful employment.

- Job Corps

Provides employment and training activities for youth ages 16 to 24 to support responsible citizenship and to assist eligible youth to connect to the labor force by providing them with intensive social, academic, career and technical education, and service-learning opportunities in order for such youth to obtain secondary school diplomas or recognized postsecondary credentials.

- SER – Jobs For Progress, Inc

Co-located at the AJCC Affiliate site managed by the Employment Development

Department (EDD), helps older people obtain the training needed to find good jobs in the community, designed to assist low-income mature individuals who need to enter the workforce, secure more challenging positions, move into new career areas or supplement their incomes.

- Southern California American Indian Resource Center, Inc.

Does not provide on-site services, provides employment and training activities for Indians and Native Americans in order to develop the tools to become contributing members of their communities; and to improve educational opportunities and resources for Indian and Native American people who live in the service area.

Co-Enrollment and Common Case Management

How the Local Board and AJCC partners will work towards co-enrollment and/or common case management as a service delivery strategy, as outlined in WSD19-09(PDF), *Strategic Co-Enrollment – Unified Plan Partners*.

Aligning and merging publicly funded education and training programs, such as Integrated Education and Training (IET) and other Title II programs, Title I workforce development resources with concrete employment opportunities is good for job seekers and leads to a stronger local workforce. Solidifying partnerships with employers who offer advancement opportunities in a high growth industry will help elevate vulnerable community members out of poverty. By working with the partners and programs who routinely serve the target populations and are already established partner agencies within the AJCC system, Title I staff and partners can coordinate with each other and educational institutions to support customers through various activities, provide additional workforce assistance and co-enroll as appropriate into existing county leveraged programs.

Common intake involves the AJCC having staff that are cross-trained and knowledgeable in the functions and basic eligibility requirements of multiple programs. When customers present themselves at an AJCC center, either directly or by referral, they are registered into the CalJOBS system for intake and case management purposes. All staff providing assistance, regardless of their specific agency, are trained on how to use the system for this common intake process. To ensure all customers receive the benefit and services they are eligible for across all programs, the core partners established a universal intake form and referral process. The process focuses on reducing duplicative paperwork or intake procedures so that individuals can immediately receive the benefit of services. This process also streamlines data sharing and supports the tracking of referrals, co-enrollments and outcomes and helps people with multiple barriers access coordinated services. Customers can request or staff can recommend, referrals to partner agencies when there is a need for a more nuanced or specific service not available with the AJCC. Commonly these referrals are to other WIOA core programs. In these cases, referral processes outline steps to ensure a smooth customer transition. All incoming and outgoing referrals are documented in the CalJOBS system by AJCC staff.

Co-enrolling customers in multiple workforce development programs makes it easier on

customers to experience the full impact of WIOA without having to navigate multiple and siloed systems. It also serves to maximize funding and enriches the training environment by bringing in services to address barriers. There are two specific areas of focus for the WIB with WIOA Title I and Title II co-enrollment in order for participants to have access to the entire system of resources that is available. The first is through the Prison to Employment (P2E) regional effort and the second is through the implementation of the English Language Learners (ELL) Integrated Education and Training (IET) model cohort.

Through the Prison to Employment (P2E) EDD grant funding, the WIB is working with the EDB on a process map for justice-involved individuals to identify potential opportunities to better serve this population. This includes an inventory of in-custody workforce training programs and determining gaps in pathways from in-custody training to job opportunities. Key stakeholders were identified at the jail and the Probation Department and meetings have been held to identify ways to promote discussion and decision-making related to increasing WIOA, AJCC and community partners presence and improving employment pathways for the justice-involved population.

2021 – 2024 Strategies towards increasing co-enrollment and/or common case management as a service delivery strategy for P2E population:

- Develop an inventory of existing training needs for WIB and AJCC staff and employer partners that will improve their ability to work with and serve individuals with justice-involvement.
- AJCC staff will provide job coaching and peer support services for individuals who have been linked to employment or are job ready and seeking employment.
- WIB will begin the process of identifying an integrated assessment model, taking into consideration the capacity to conduct job readiness assessments in-custody.
- Market Job Link services to both the inmates and the staff of the jail to encourage access to resources
- Create a form or packet for inmates that can be held in jail housing to expedite process of job readiness assessment
- Post-COVID, identify a (security cleared) Job Link point person to be physically located in the jail to pick up mail, teach classes or workshops, as well as meet and engage with inmates to assess and provide workforce support services.
- Increase employer outreach efforts from a regional planning process to build and formalize partnerships for establishing employment opportunities for individuals with justice involvement and update internal second-chance employer inventories.

The WIB has a collaborative training program for English Language Learners (ELL), currently in its fifth cohort. The program connects WIOA Title I and Title II resources centered on an ESL/Construction class. There is an Integrated Resource Team (“ELL Workgroup”) comprised of Titles 1 and 2, community-based organizations, employers and the support systems of the participants themselves. A new component of the cohort is the connection to local employers with a pathway to employment. Working in partnership with the Sonoma County Economic Development Board, thirteen local Building & Trades employers have been identified as eager to hire up to 176 ELL participants who complete the program. The program also braids in other social services such as child care, legal services, immigration and citizenship education to address real-life challenges students face in completing training programs.

2021 – 2024 Strategies towards increasing co-enrollment and/or common case management as a service delivery strategy for ELL population:

- Identify and partner with employers who already have practices in place to help support the ELL population, such as those with existing efforts to recruit ELLs and pay for ESL or other training classes for continued workforce development. Support, promote and expand the model to more employers.
- Conduct an outreach campaign across multiple platforms will take place to reach ELLs across the county through radio ads and interviews, press releases and other printed promotional materials.
- Provide screening for program eligibility and suitability with Job Link Title 1 Employment and Training Counselors (ETCs) where individuals will develop an Individualized Services Strategy (ISS).
- Deliver assessments of individuals’ current skills, education and work experience, along with future goals.
- Enroll customers in SRJC Adult Education Title II IET program.
- Provide comprehensive, intensive case management by Job Link Title 1 ETCs to ELL students so they can work on barrier reduction prior to the start of and throughout the ELL IET program.
- Coordinate with ELL Workgroup partners to identify and provide any other social supportive services that may be needed
- Job Link Business Services Team will connect ELLs with job development and job placement.
- Following completion of the IET program, additional training and placement into employment will be available in the form of work-based-learning (WBL), pre-

apprenticeships, On-the-Job Training (OJT) and ultimately employment.

- Further advance an equitable high road agenda in accordance with California's Strategic Plan by creating a blueprint for a strong network and support system for ELLs that can be institutionalized in our collective service models for ongoing implementation.

In addition to P2E and ELL populations, there are also efforts underway to work with DOR on co-enrollment, specifically with OJT opportunities and to provide more options for accelerated co-enrollment in order to maximize available supports.

One-Stop Delivery System

How the Local Board and AJCC partners will facilitate access to services provided through the one-stop delivery system, including in remote areas, through the use of technology and other means.

Pre-COVID, program staff from each partner agency were physically present at the AJCC and trained to provide information about all programs, services, and activities that may be available to the customer through other partners. Job Link and our community partners have worked tirelessly to convert in-person services to remote services to promote safety during COVID. All partners are providing online options that comply with COVID-19 restrictions and as much as possible help customers access services such as virtual one-on-one interviews, job fairs, workshops and hiring events.

Additionally, through funding received from the EDD COVID-19 Additional Assistance Navigation grant, Sonoma County Job Link will expand basic employment services and increase the provision of supportive services to customers that reside outside of the central Santa Rosa area by increasing the number of navigation staff at Job Link and at other community hubs in outlying areas to provide easier access and greater support to job seekers. Navigation staff will provide one-to-one customer assistance for all elements of basic career services including a warm handoff to more intensive workforce services such as vocational counseling, subsidized training and job placement. The hiring of additional navigators will also amplify outreach to customers affected by layoffs due to COVID-19.

Targeted populations for this increased outreach include community members who are designated as priority populations for Job Link, with enhanced outreach to communities who have traditionally been underserved due to access barriers. For example, individuals without convenient transportation, very low-income individuals and underemployed individuals who cannot get to Job Link due to distance and hours of operations will be served more effectively. Customers need basic career and supportive services as they navigate the unemployment system and consider next steps for employment. For those customers in need of training services, enrollment in more intensive individualized career services will be facilitated.

2021 – 2024 Strategies to facilitate access to services provided through the one-stop delivery system, including in remote areas, through the use of technology and other means:

- Add four time-limited AJCC Navigators with the goal to increase Job Link’s virtual reach and on-site presence across Sonoma County.
- Identify opportunities to co-locate off-site Navigators at libraries, adult schools, La Luz or other similar venues.
- Staff navigators both in-person and remotely throughout locations at community-based organizations and libraries in Guerneville, Cloverdale, Boyes Hot Springs and Petaluma.
- Increase the number of on-line workshops/services that clients could participate in via-remote by creating the following (including but not limited to):
 1. Job Search 101
 2. Self-assessment
 3. Networking in a virtual world
 4. How do to an informational interview
- Utilize the AJCC Tracking Spreadsheet to track how many clients have been served.
- Create effective local safety nets that would reduce the need for clients to travel to Santa Rosa for employment/social services needed by them.

Workforce and Education Activities

How the Local Board and AJCC partners will coordinate workforce and education activities with the provision of appropriate supportive services.

The WIB and Job Link have excellent relationships with numerous educational partners and employers throughout the community. Aligning and merging publicly funded education and training programs, such as Title II programs and Title I workforce development resources with concrete employment opportunities leads to a stronger local workforce. The WIB has a longstanding partnership with the SRJC Adult Education Department who is represented as a member of the WIB, participates in the AJCC Steering Committee and provides Title II services to job seekers also receiving Title 1 services. Petaluma Adult School and Catholic Charities are also longtime educational partners and are WIOA Title II recipients. Workforce development resources are also available at our other partner local educational institutions including Sonoma County Office of Education, Sonoma State University and the Career Technical Education (CTE) Foundation in their work expanding and enhancing career technical education programs throughout the county to align with the economic and workforce development needs of local employers and industries.

Additionally, a connection to apprenticeships and training certificate programs help job seekers secure employment. For instance, WIB partners the Lime Foundation and North Bay Trades Introduction Program (NB TIP) work-based training programs are designed entirely around skill building to meet industry needs and provides job training and work placement. Sonoma County has a diverse range of employers along with substantial resources to help connect customers with high-quality jobs. Communication and alignment between workforce

development programs, training providers, employers and educational institutions leads to more streamlined talent pipelines, reducing difficulties with recruitment and retention. Additionally, the Economic Development Board provides linkages to businesses and the Job Link Business Services Team connects customers to employment with job development and job placement.

Along with strong partnerships with employers, ongoing case management services with individualized career coaching and needed wrap-around services from the partnership organizations assist in successfully removing barriers for customers. The WIB provides customers with supportive services through the Adult, Dislocated and Youth programs. These services include assistance with securing childcare, transportation, association dues, books, interview clothing, access to technology and equipment to successfully participate in online learning environments, career coaching and tools and uniforms for individuals who are receiving training or career development services. In the event customers need additional supportive services not available through the WIOA programs, referrals are made to partner programs to provide assistance to help reduce barriers. Utilizing additional partnerships provide further wrap-around social services such as Housing Counseling, Public Benefit Education and Enrollment, Immigration Legal Services and Financial Literacy and Civics and Citizenship Education.

2021 – 2024 Strategies to coordinate workforce and education activities with the provision of appropriate supportive services:

- Research and conduct staff training on best practices, such as the IET model, for demand-driven job seeker services in which education and training programs lead to tangible employment opportunities. Coordinate with partners to provide supportive services.
- Coordinate with Business Services Team and EDB on connecting employers and training providers to ensure workforce supports are matching employer's needs.
- Request presentations from training providers and other community-based organizations for staff and clients on educational and supportive services that are available as resources.
- Invite more partners to be located on-site including Title II Adult Education Providers (SRJC, Petaluma Adult School, Catholic Charities)
- Partner with SRJC Experience Works program (or similar program or training) which promotes the development of soft skills or life skills.
- Identify best practices with programs in other workforce areas and convene discussions on service design. Determine if strategies are relevant locally and coordinate service delivery.

ADA Accessibility

How the Local Board and AJCC partners will comply with WIOA Section 188 and applicable

provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 regarding the physical and programmatic accessibility of facilities, programs and services, technology, and materials for individuals with disabilities, as outlined in WSD17-01 (PDF), *Nondiscrimination and Equal Opportunity Procedures*.

AJCC staff and partners follow procedures and policies that promote inclusion, choice and accessibility in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). AJCC staff are provided training on cultural sensitivity and disability awareness and can request additional training in order to best meet the needs of their customers. The onsite Disability Program Navigator provides individualized assistance to customers as requested to ensure they have access to the resources needed to be successful when navigating different service providers, training programs or employment services. The Navigator is able to provide technical assistance, resources and referrals to both customers and staff.

The AJCC also maintains assistive technology and provides interpreters services on site for customers accessing services within the AJCC. All website, marketing and recruitment materials go through a review process to ensure compliance with ADA. ADA compliant materials and language contain positive images and words regarding persons with disabilities and Equal Employment Opportunity posters are prominently displayed within the AJCC. The E&T Guide to Digital ADA Standards is also posted on the Human Services Department (HSD) Portal Intranet for staff to use as a resource.

All E&T employees and partner staff must attend the Human Services Department (HSD) "Learning Disability Sensitivity Training." The training is also being provided to new staff. This training focuses on recognizing and identifying potential learning issues so that working with clients is more effective, less frustrating, and leads to increased job success for clients. The first session provides sensitivity training, using lecture, videos and experiential exercises to increase awareness. Individuals who will be screening clients for a possible learning disability also attend the "HSD - Learning Disability Training Tool Certification" Training.

CalFresh State Strategic Partner Coordination

How the Local Board will coordinate with County Health and Human Services Agencies and other local partners who serve individuals who access CalFresh Employment and Training services.

In December 2020, there were 29,346 CalFresh recipients in Sonoma County. Job Link, Sonoma County's comprehensive career center (America's Job Center of California) provided individualized career services to 131 CalFresh recipients in 2020 through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), many of whom are referred as a condition of their eligibility for County General Assistance.

The Sonoma County Human Services Department Economic Assistance (EA) Division administers the CalFresh Program. Sonoma County is currently included in a state waiver of work requirements for CalFresh participants and therefore does not require local CalFresh

recipients to engage in job search or other career development services. The EA Division is also the administrator of the County's General Assistance Program which includes food assistance along with a small cash grant. Eligibility for General Assistance for people who are employable (people who are incapacitated do not have to work) is contingent upon meeting work requirements, which can be met in the following ways:

1. Workfare: Task-based assignments at either Sonoma County Regional Parks (e.g. litter removal, trail maintenance) or Sonoma County Human Services Department (e.g. building application packages)
2. Job Search: Workshops, computer classes and job search assistance at Sonoma County Job Link
3. Community Health Worker Training: Currently provided by the Northern California Center for Well-Being (NCCWB). NCCWB will be conducting the trainings for Sonoma County CalFresh participants. Beginning 10/1/2021, Fresh Success will hold the contract.
4. Training: Cell ED delivers essential skills training in three-minute lessons on any mobile phone. Learners simply call, text, or click to access a world of learning. Administered through Fresh Success, but meets some of the requirements for CFET.

These four options comprise Sonoma County's CalFresh Employment and Training (CFET) program. An average of 40 participants are enrolled in CFET per month. WIOA supportive services are available in the form of transportation assistance, work clothing and or uniforms, and haircuts, however the CFET budget is used for these expenses). Federal 50% CFET funding Community colleges, community-based organizations, and other third-party providers are eligible for 50% federal reimbursement for CFET activities. Currently, the Center for Well Being and Fresh Success pursues federal reimbursement. All other CFET expenses are supported with state and local funds.

2021 – 2024 Strategies to Increase Workforce Development Opportunities for CalFresh Participants:

The Sonoma County Workforce Investment Board, in partnership with the Sonoma County Human Services Department and community-based organizations, will increase the number of CalFresh participants who benefit from WIOA services through the following strategies:

- Pursue federal 50% CFET funding, including "third party reimbursement" to extend the reach of employment services to more of the CalFresh population. The goal is to have state approval of Sonoma's expanded CFET plan by August 2021.
- HSD will develop and submit a plan to Food and Nutrition Services in order to access additional funding through the CFET 50% option to allow for more CalFresh individuals

to be served. The goal is to have state approval of Sonoma's expanded CFET plan by August 2021.

- The WIB will convene Santa Rosa Junior College and Sonoma State University, CalFresh program managers, and the community-based organizations that work directly with the CalFresh population in order to leverage resources to include in the CFET 50% funding plan.
- HSD will establish procedures to co-enroll individuals in CFET and WIOA.
- Increase outreach to CalFresh participants about Job Link and other employment related services available in the community. Job Link staff will provide written materials and do in-person and virtual presentations to CalFresh staff on WIOA services, including providing pop-up tables in CalFresh lobbies and other high-traffic locations in the community to interact directly with CalFresh participants.
- Re-design the General Assistance workforce program to include work and training activities that are likely to translate into a path to employment.
- Research and implement best practices, such as job development and job coaching, in serving this population and form additional partnerships and options for individuals required to complete work requirements in order to receive General Assistance.
- Strengthen coordination among CalFresh, Job Link and Department of Rehabilitation to ensure cross referrals and to increase the number of disabled individuals receiving vocational rehabilitation.
- Explore additional community-based employment options well-suited to CalFresh participants that can be provided via contract with the Workforce Investment Board. The Goodwill Industries of the Redwood Empire currently provides employment services to CalWORKs participants via contract with the Sonoma County Human Services Department. HSD will analyze and, if feasible, take steps to expand contracted employment services to serve CalFresh participants, especially those well suited to Goodwill's service design such as individuals with very high barriers to employment.

In addition to the array of employment services available to CalFresh participants via Job Link, CalWORKs funds intensive employment services via contract with Goodwill Industries of the Redwood Empire. Both Job Link and Goodwill ensure that those needing intensive services and support get the assistance they need to gain employment, with an emphasis on jobs that have career pathways in local in-demand sectors. WIOA and CalWORKs funds are used for an array of employment services that support initial job search all the way through job placement and follow up. Assistance with addressing barriers associated with poverty must be addressed through thoughtful social and emotional engagement that acknowledges that participants may often have multiple difficulties impacting their lives that require flexible and creative plans to

ensure their success. Life skills workshops such as balancing work and family, decision-making, stress management, financial literacy, anger management, techniques for finding and retaining housing, and time management is also among the supports offered to CalFresh participants.

Child Support Services State Strategic Partner Coordination

How the Local Board will coordinate with Local Child Support Agencies and other local partners who serve individuals who are non-custodial parents.

In Sonoma County, there are 8,900 individuals served by the Department of Child Support Services.

The WIB continues to partner with the Sonoma County Department of Child Support Services (DCSS) to implement the Non-Custodial Parent (NCP) Program with the goal of assisting non-custodial parents with finding employment in order to provide financial support to their children. The departments developed an assessment and referral system that established one point of contact in each agency. NCPs can receive both basic and individual career services, including access to Job Link's workforce services focused on career pathway opportunities that lead to progression into livable wage jobs and careers. NCPs are able to access the extensive menu of supportive services, training and education opportunities, and job support and retention services.

DCSS focuses on the whole family by working with them to find solutions that are in every family member's best interest. This includes releasing a driver's license when a member needs to work and setting up payment plans. This whole family approach to support presents the opportunity to educate participants, as well as the DCSS caseworker, on what is available via Job Link to motivate participation, particularly when coupled with the flexibility DCSS has in issuing sanctions. Access to work-related uniforms, tools, and transportation assistance are often enough for DCSS participants to consider accessing individual career services. However, many NCPs face significant barriers to employment, most notably lack of transportation and concerns and misinformation regarding the garnishment of wages, which have precluded many NCPs from seeking services at Job Link.

2021 – 2024 Strategies to coordinate with Local Child Support Agencies and other local partners who serve individuals who are non-custodial parents:

- Increase outreach to DCSS participants about Job Link and other employment related services available in the community. Job Link staff will provide written materials and do in-person and virtual presentations to DCSS staff on WIOA services as well as explore holding office hours at DCSS to interact with potential participants directly. Outreach will highlight benefits of working with Job Link in terms of income mobility and positive impact to children.
- Explore, with intent to implement, court-ordered participation in Job Link services. Incentivized involvement in WIOA services has the potential to serve up to 200 referrals

per year. This strategy is contingent upon thorough analysis of the resources required to effectively serve up to 200 more customers.

- Provide customized services based on the needs of the individual. Some NCPs face barriers common to underserved communities that extend beyond the inability to pay their Child Support, including levels of instability that adversely affect decision making. Case managers across multiple systems will work together to take a holistic approach to serving the population. They will meet customers where they are, both physically and emotionally.
- Provide work readiness support. The WIB will expand services to include the provision of work readiness and life skills coupled with community-based employment options as needed.

Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities State Strategic Partner Coordination

How the Local Board will coordinate with Local Partnership Agreement partners, established in alignment with the Competitive Integrated Employment Blueprint, and other local partners who serve individuals with developmental and intellectual disabilities.

Department of Rehabilitation staff are co-located at Job Link to assist in serving customers with disabilities. Job Link has a Disability Navigator and staff have received training from both the Department of Rehabilitation (DOR) and the Human Services Department on serving clients with disabilities and on referring to DOR, as appropriate.

In addition to a number of community partners and resources, DOR specifically brings the following local and regional core partners in service of people with ID/DD:

1. North Bay Regional Center (NBRC)
2. Redwood Empire District, California Department of Rehabilitation (DOR)
3. Sonoma County Office of Education (SCOE)
4. Napa Valley Unified School District (NVUSD)
5. West Sonoma County Union High School District (WSCUHSD)
6. Lattice Educational Services

The WIB is a core partner in the Local Partnership Agreement (LPA) that has been developed to outline efforts to provide collaborative services that avoid duplication and provides optimal outcomes for individuals with ID/DD.

2021 – 2024 Strategies to Increase Workforce Development Opportunities for Individuals with ID/DD:

- As part of the LPA efforts, Job Link's Team Workforce will develop a business advisory board along with DOR, North Bay Regional Center and educational partners.
- Expand the capacity to provide job development specific to the needs of the population. Individuals with ID/DD need to be linked to employers. Job Link Business Services can create customized work opportunities that meet the needs of both.
- Strengthen coordination between DOR and Job Link to improve awareness of the needs of clients with ID/DD.
- Train AJCC staff on how best to address the needs of these jobseekers in support of Competitive Integrated Employment. Staff cross training will also ensure DOR staff and AJCC staff understand each other's programs and corresponding services. Encourage adoption of a person-centered approach throughout planning and implementation.
- Formulate strategies for co-enrollment, specifically with OJT opportunities and provide more options for accelerated co-enrollment, particularly as WIOA restricts the use of subminimum wages for individuals with disabilities.
- Convene planning on possibility of having DOR staff co-located at Job Link and/or Job Link staff co-located at DOR.
- Increase coordination of business outreach efforts, building on Team Workforce efforts.

English Language Learners

How the Local Board will coordinate with community-based organizations and other local partners who serve individuals who are English language learners, foreign born, and/or refugees.

Sonoma County has a population of 494,336 with Hispanic or Latino making up 27.3% of the County's population. The Hispanic population is projected to increase by more than 100,000 individuals with a rate of growth that is 2.5 times faster than the total population in the county. 70% of Hispanics between the ages of 25 and 54 are employed or looking for work. According to the 2020 Census, 11.3% of the population speaks English "less than well" and 30% of Latino households are limited English-speaking. Median household income for Latino families is 22% lower than White households and only 11% of Latinos in Sonoma County have Bachelor's degrees compared to 39% of White individuals. The cost of living in Sonoma County is 77.2% higher than the U.S. average. 66% of COVID positive individuals in Sonoma County are Hispanic/Latino.

Many in our community require additional support in order to pursue employment. This is especially the case now in Sonoma County, within a context of recovery from successive natural disasters and a global health pandemic, which impact low-income and communities of color disproportionately. Gaps in education and employment services were illuminated as the stay at home orders caused schools and service providers to close their doors. Local English language Learners (ELL) had already been disproportionately underserved with WIOA dollars and this trend has continued into the pandemic. ELLs are a large portion of the County's workforce

along with those who are foreign born and/or refugees and are a priority group for the Sonoma WIB. They often have limited opportunities for career advancement, as English skills are often required for more advanced positions, regardless of technical skills meaning they face the dual challenge of language skills getting in the way of both promotions as well as further education to be able to promote.

Job Link has six bilingual case managers on staff, bilingual navigators in the Resource Center and all outreach materials are published in both English and Spanish. In addition, California Human Development (CHD) collaborates with the WIB in serving these populations. CHD provides services through four separate programs:

1. The 167 National Farmworker Jobs program provides career services, counseling, education, work experience, vocational and on-the-job training, English as a Second Language (ESL) and Vocational English as a Second Language (VESL) classes, and supportive services.
2. The Dislocated Agricultural Workers program issues emergency relief funding.
3. The WIOA 167 Temporary Housing Assistance Program provides needs-based payment.
4. Community Service Block Grants fund a rapid response network and mobile units to bolster outreach efforts. Petaluma Adult School (PAS) also serves the ELL population through several programs made possible by WIOA Adult Education funding, including:
 - ELL classes, along with work experience opportunities, a family resource center, a Spanish GED class.
 - Evening child care.
 - Training and certificate programs that do not require a minimum number of enrollments.

The WIB has strong relationships with community partners also focused on workforce development. Sonoma County has had an active and diverse workgroup focused on effectively serve the ELL community. We have several local partners and community-based organizations that we coordinate with to help serve the ELL, foreign born and refugee populations. In 2017, the ELL workgroup was formed by agencies joining together to respond to the ELL community's needs. It consists of: Community Action Partnership of Sonoma County, Employment Development Department, SRJC, Sonoma County Economic Development Board, Petaluma Adult School, California Human Development, Catholic Charities, Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of Sonoma County, Corazon Healdsburg, La Luz Sonoma, and County of Sonoma Human Services Department.

The ELL Workgroup continues to collaborate and meet to plan ELL cohorts and in Spring 2021, Sonoma County Job Link will start its fifth ELL cohort in collaboration with SRJC and offer the

ESL/IET course with construction as the selected industry, which followed a Fall 2020 semester class which offered ESL and computers for the workplace to the community. The WIB has overseen four previous cohorts of ELL students enrolled in both an integrated ESL/vocational course as well as WIOA Title I services. Previous ELL cohorts were successful in drawing multiple funding sources beyond WIOA to include TANF, private donations and grants. The ELL Immersion Program was pivotal in providing an intensive ESL course of study with a concerted effort to better prepare participants to significantly advance on their path towards improved employment or a new career. All graduates improved their English skills and nearly 60% experienced gains in employment.

The Sonoma County WIB, in partnership with Santa Rosa Junior College, Sonoma County Job Link and the EDB recently applied for a grant through EDD for an IET ELL Pilot program. The WIB intends to continue to pursue the IET model for all of its upcoming cohorts as the services and supports offered through Title I services at Job Link and Title II education providers will open up an array of assessment and vocational services including supportive services, and a clear road to further training, education and employment through job development and paid earn and learn placements.

Connections to outside community services such as immigration and citizenship, childcare, basic needs, housing, etc. are made available through partners. These strategies can bridge system gaps and create both virtual and in-person solutions for those that face significant barriers to employment by providing appropriate technology and resources required to complete online courses and vocational training. Additional partnerships will provide further wrap-around social services such as Housing Counseling, Public Benefit Education and Enrollment, Immigration Legal Services and Financial Literacy and Civics and Citizenship Education.

2021 – 2024 Strategies to Increase Workforce Development Opportunities for ELL, the Foreign Born, and Refugees:

- Continue to pursue the IET model for all upcoming cohorts.
- Expand the capacity to provide bilingual and culturally competent job development specifically serving the ELL community. Doing so will encourage trust by ELL participants that may be hesitant to engage with governmental institutions. Job Link Business Services is well positioned to create customized work opportunities for ELL job seekers.
- Post-pandemic, explore co-location at California Human Development, Petaluma Adult School and other trusted institutions. Engaging with participants in their geographic location, and using already trusted institutions, will strengthen outreach and engagement efforts. The WIB will strive to alleviate fears by convening and being present at forums and events hosted by trusted institutions, such as La Luz and the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce.

- Develop a strategy to accelerate the enrollment process at Job Link. Streamlined enrollment means that participants can access needed services such as childcare, transportation, and work/training opportunities quickly.
- Co-enroll participants in multiple workforce programs, Title I and Title II services, including Adult Education, in order to maximize available supports.
- Continue the WIB's ELL Cohorts and IET model of braiding Title I and Title II funds for maximum leverage and identify pathways to employment by further building relationships with employers. Look for further development opportunities from private sources for those not eligible for federal programs.
- Convene Education and Community Based Organizations to streamline access to education and training. More nimble programs need to be available that include open entry and exit, the ability to wave pre-requisites based on prior work/education experience, and that take into consideration the needs of individuals to work and earn income while attending training. WIOA can also be used to support the creation of customized training opportunities that are not offered by traditional education institutions.
- Develop customized service plans. Take a holistic approach to customizing and prioritizing services to meet the needs of the individual, including consideration of needs beyond just vocational. Assistance will also be provided with labor market research for those whose second language is English.

Building on the trust and success of past ELL cohorts, the WIB will continue to utilize its labor market data to keep up to date on local workforce needs and trends to ensure that its actions reflect the needs of the workforce community. This will in turn influence the supports given to this population.

WIOA Title I Coordination Expanding Digital Fluency

Training and/or professional development that will be provided to frontline staff to gain and expand proficiency in digital fluency and distance learning.

All WIB staff can attend several trainings on how to expand their proficiency in digital fluency and distance learning to offer continued support for meeting participant's needs. HSD offers courses on using technology to communicate, different e-communication tools that are available, client confidentiality, healthy communication and maintaining morale and engagement virtually. Staff can also participate in the following trainings: Applying Best Practices in Managing Remote Workers & Teams; Improving Communication, Meetings, and Engagement; Enhancing Accountability, Collaboration, and Teamwork; Creating Alignment and a Culture of Resolution and Agreement. These courses provide methods of communicate effectively in one-on-ones, learning to have effective critical conversations on-line, coaching your staff in prioritizing, timeliness and self-management, increasing engagement and

motivation on-line and inspiring individuals and teams to greatness. In addition, WIB staff attended trainings on how to utilize Zoom and WebEx platforms in order to virtually engage with clients and attend meetings with other staff, community partners or other public forums.

2021 – 2024 Strategies to increase training and/or professional development that will be provided to frontline staff to gain and expand proficiency in digital fluency and distance learning:

- Create a digital information team with active ETC participation to create, promote, and deliver online resources to clients. This could involve producing or purchasing tools that clients can use or access remotely to get information. This includes:
 - Developing “working copies” of Scholarship Applications and Job Search Plans that clients can access and edit virtually
 - Posting virtual content such as online workshops, tutorials and assessments
 - Develop a virtual space to give clients the ability to upload documents such as resumes, etc. for an ETC or other frontline staff to review
 - Purchasing actual devices as a supportive service for clients (iPad’s, laptops, etc.)
- Schedule basic computer skills courses taught by partners such as Petaluma Adult School in the Job Link lab (post-COVID).
- Develop online training and information for clients. Modules could include:
 - Job Search information
 - Program Information
 - How to look up a program on the ETPL
 - Online information similar to in-person Training Information Sessions (related to scholarship process)
- Provide internal training on use of nationally recognized assessment tools such as the MBTI/ Strong Interest Inventory/Self-Directed Search/DISC/CPI, etc.
- Become members of professional organizations (Career Counseling) and attend professional conferences beyond CWA to bring in resources and information from both inside and outside of workforce organizations.

WIOA Title I Coordination Cultural Competency and Trauma-Exposed Populations

Training and/or professional development that will be provided to frontline staff to ensure cultural competencies and an understanding of the experiences of trauma-exposed populations.

The need to address trauma is increasingly viewed as an important component of effective Health and Human service delivery. With funding from the California Office of the Surgeon

General and in support of the statewide ACES Aware Initiative, Health Action, a Department of Health Services initiative, offers a variety of free trainings designed to build knowledge and skills to identify, address and support healing from early adversity and trauma. These training activities are particularly valuable as the County continues to navigate the profound stress generated by the local recurring wildfire disasters, Covid and Shelter-in-Place (SIP), and reckon with legacies of racism and cultural oppression. Participants learn about the impact of race-based trauma and white supremacy on our individual neurophysiology and our community health, and identify new ways of cultivate adaptive behaviors to promote social engagement and mitigate defensive behaviors.

HSD also offers several Trauma Informed Care (TIC) training series to staff. The purpose of these trainings is to improve service delivery, by providing training and support to facilitate collaboration and create collective strategies to cope with the macro-level stressors that impact social services. All trainings include content on implicit Bias and the trauma of racial inequity. This training is intended for all frontline staff working with individuals, families and children who have experienced complex trauma. HSD also offers courses on Unconscious Bias which illustrates acknowledgement and identification of different types of unconscious bias and how they occur, as well as Cultural Intelligence, and how to work effectively with different cultures or people of different cultures.

Additionally, HSD offers 'Bridges Out of Poverty'. Participants are engaged in identifying reasons for poverty in their own community while empathizing with the challenges of those who are in generational poverty. Participants also engage in a simulation where they utilize the "mental model of generational poverty" to try to understand the difficulties of making it through the month when in "survival mind." The Curriculum consists of describing experiences common to individuals in generational poverty; explaining the differences of the "mental models" of those in generational poverty and those in middle class; and applying components of the mental model of generational poverty in a simulation.

2021 – 2024 Strategies to Increase training and/or professional development that will be provided to frontline staff to ensure cultural competencies and an understanding of the experiences of trauma-exposed populations:

- Provide mandatory annual training for all staff and partner staff in Trauma-Informed Care, CalWORKS 2.0 framework, equity and inclusion, including cultural competency, mental health, and best practices on how to serve/engage with our priority populations.
- Provide training facilitated by a probation officer or other appropriate staff to better understand justice involved individuals.
- Have guest speakers from partner and community agencies at staff meetings to present on services; create a Job Link Committee to coordinate guest speakers.

Rapid Response and Layoff Aversion Activities

How the Local Board will coordinate workforce investment activities carried out in the Local

Area with statewide rapid response activities, as outlined in [WSD16-04 \(PDF\)](#), *Rapid Response and Layoff Aversion Activities*.

The WIB oversees a cross-partnership team that responds to Rapid Response requests, layoff notices, or other outreach activities such as when a Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification (WARN) is posted. When a business is closing or laying off employees, our Rapid Response team is there to assist employers and workers with the layoff transition, provide free information, resources and guidance to explain the services and training opportunities that are available, and provides direct, on-site and virtual presentations for employees and seeks to assist with re-training or job placements to avoid layoffs wherever possible. Rapid Response is a cooperative effort between the Rapid Response Coordinator, the AJCC, and the Employment Development Department (EDD) to assist employers and workers during a mass layoff or business closing. The Rapid Response outreach team includes staff from:

- WIOA Rapid Response Coordinator (resume assistance, training opportunities)
- Employment Development Department (Unemployment Insurance Benefits)
- Healthcare Insurance Options (Cobra, existing health plan, etc.)
- Financial Advisor (Pension, 401K, etc.)
- Other AJCC Partners (DOR, Goodwill, etc.)

In addition, the business outreach arm of the Economic Development Board does regular outreach to screen for businesses that may be at risk for layoffs. When a business is identified, the Job Link Business Services team works with the business to determine if retraining would prevent layoffs, and provide training support for the business to reduce or eliminate the need for the layoff. When appropriate, Job Link Business Services staff also puts together customized hiring events for groups facing a layoff in order to reduce or eliminate the gap between jobs. On these occasions, staff seeks to work collaboratively across the county to attract businesses looking for a workforce with similar skills sets and enroll appropriate clients in 45-day Rapid Re-Employment services.

Enrolling clients in 45-day Rapid Re-Employment services can be challenging as oftentimes WARN notices are not posted immediately and the Rapid Response team isn't notified until potentially up to 4 weeks after the layoff notices been entered, which significantly limits the 45-day window. Another challenge during the pandemic is that employers are hesitant about releasing any confidential information, especially virtually, about their employees. This can limit the team's ability to conduct proactive outreach and results in the responsibility falling on the employees to make contact. Unemployment benefits also play a major factor as retail workers in our priority hospitality industry are currently receiving UI benefits and many prefer to wait for retail jobs to come back instead of gaining employment elsewhere in a different field or occupation.

2021 – 2024 Strategies to coordinate workforce investment activities carried out in the Local Area with statewide rapid response activities:

- Increase the utilization of labor market research software and workforce data systems (Chmura JobsEQ, etc.) that provide projections of growth and decline within industries in order to get ahead of potential layoffs and keep abreast of trends.
- Work with EDB and other business partners to gather information on which businesses may be looking to close or layoff employees in addition to conducting outreach to multiple businesses through networking events, Employer Spotlights (presentations on career paths, hiring practices, skills needed, etc.) and local business publications (North Bay Business Journal, NorthBay biz, Press Democrat, etc.).
- Connect job seekers that are going through layoffs with one business to another business that is hiring in order to enroll in 45-day Rapid Reemployment. This could be done through either identifying hiring employers in similar fields or working with the job seekers through our career services (career coaching, retraining, OJT, resume review and other basic career services, etc.) to identify skills that can be applied across multiple sectors.
- While limited to virtual services, addressing employer concerns regarding confidentiality through communication and ensuring the team's contact information is available and easy to access. Resuming site visits and connecting with employees directly should also assuage concerns with comfort levels and accessibility.

Priority Services for Adult/Dislocated Worker Career and Training Services

A description and assessment of the type and availability of adult and dislocated worker employment and training activities in the Local Area. This includes how the Local Board will ensure that priority for adult career and training services will be given to recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals, and individuals who are basic skills deficient, as outlined in [WSD15-14 \(PDF\)](#), *WIOA Adult Program Priority of Service*.

The WIB values the critical importance of assisting individuals with higher barriers to achieve greater employment success. In 2019, the Sonoma County WIB updated the 'Priority of Service' policy for its WIOA Adult Program, in accordance with WSD14-14, that defines high priority groups, and requires that these groups be given priority access to individualized career services and training funds. In addition to the priorities of individuals who may receive services, the WIB may also identify industries in which to prioritize for the use of training and supportive services.

Priority of service is given in the following order:

- Veterans and their eligible spouses who are amongst any of the groups listed below continue to receive first priority
- Dislocated Workers
- Adults who meet one or more of the following criteria: low-income (includes homeless individuals); Basic Skills Deficient, including limited English speakers

- Recipients of cash-aid, public assistance (examples: CalFresh, General Assistance, SSI)
- 'Out of School' Youth between 18-24
- Non-custodial parents who owe, but who are not paying child-support
- Have a disability (includes individuals with severe mental illness)
- Have at any time served a custody sentence in an adult or juvenile facility (Federal, State, Local); or in an alternative custody program such as home detention; are on parole, probation, mandatory supervision, post-release community supervision, or are otherwise a part of the supervised population
- Individuals currently, or formerly in the Foster care system; including youth in placement through juvenile probation

The WIB has prioritized marketing and outreach efforts to reach the customer groups identified in the Priority of Service policy, and focused on meaningful collaboration with community partners who also serve the same groups of individuals. For any future development or modification of services, the WIB solicits feedback from these customer groups to help determine which enhancement efforts will be the most valuable.

All AJCC partners provide services to both adults and dislocated workers in Sonoma County. This includes job counseling, assistance with training or retraining, layoff support, and job placement assistance. For special populations, such as older adults, younger adults, ex-offenders, limited English Speakers, veterans or the homeless, additional support services are provided. These services are designed to provide additional support in overcoming barriers due to a lack of soft skills, literacy skills, education, transportation, and more. Individuals are able to access information on jobs, training, and community resources, as well as access to trained staff members who are able to provide individualized assistance and training funds for those that qualify.

The WIB has strong relationships with community partners focused on workforce development. In order to ensure we are reaching as many populations as possible, WIB and Title I staff coordinate with several partners in the community to reach our priority populations. Priorities include building and aligning programs that establish training initiatives and close the skill gap between the workforce and the technical and soft skills employers are looking for. Increasing the diversity of experience and skills present in the workforce ensures an adaptable workforce and focusing on training efforts can cultivate a qualified workforce that satisfies employer demand and meets current and future job requirements.

In 2017, the English Language Learners (ELL) workgroup was formed by AJCC Partner agencies joining together to respond to the ELL community's needs. The ELL Workgroup is comprised of Titles I and II, community-based organizations, employers and the support systems of the participants themselves.

The WIB is also collaborating with those that work with justice-involved individuals through the EDD Prison to Employment Grant (P2E) and are currently working alongside EDB on a process improvement map to identify gaps in our current customer services model which will lead to enhanced outreach efforts and improved coordination of services and referrals within the justice and workforce development system. Pre-COVID, there was a WIOA staff person stationed at the Veteran Services Office one day a week to conduct outreach to ensure that the veteran population can easily be referred and access employment and training services and will resume once public safety guidelines allow.

2021 – 2024 Strategies to ensure that priority for adult career and training services will be given to recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals, and individuals who are basic skills deficient:

- Grow staff expertise in serving our community – those who are excluded from prosperity, through staff training on priority populations through best practices for demand-driven job seeker services.
- Coordinate a service design that includes Temporary Work Experience (TWEX) and points people to good jobs in growth industries with career pathways with AJCC and community partners.
- Expand training provider and business engagement through the Business Services Team and EDB with job development and placement by connecting job seekers with employment opportunities with in-demand industries:
 - Job Link will seek out and partner with education providers that have programs resulting in certificates, degrees, or skills considered desirable by employers in in-demand industries.
 - The Business Service Team (BST) will connect and partner with an employer(s) operating in one or more of our priority industries and identify a variety of occupational pathways and the skills required to move up the career ladder. The BST will seek a commitment from the employer to hire and support job seekers in targeted, priority populations to utilize OJT funding.
 - Job Link will facilitate candidate recruitment and assessment, provide Title I or 3rd party specified training, and/or supportive services to ensure the candidate is work ready, while providing ongoing support to the employer and job seeker through OJT and case management support.
- Use best practices with Cohort Training models; types of cohorts to include:
 - Industry and/or occupational specific cohorts within in-demand industries
 - Specific priority population cohorts such as older workers, justice involved, individuals with disabilities, ELLs, etc.
 - Youth-specific cohort around building TWEX
- Developing apprenticeship opportunities outside of Building and Trades for in-demand

industries such as:

- Culinary
- Cannabis through a grant from United Farm Workers for the funds (non-WIOA federal restriction)
- Solar
- Electric Vehicles
- Strengthen and enhance partnerships with community-based organizations, Department of Health Services, DOR, Day Reporting Center, Corrections, etc. to encourage collaboration on workforce system supports.
- Invite more community partners to be located on-site to provide expertise on specific priority populations.
- Incorporate client voice, including youth in conversations around service delivery through:
 - Focus groups with clients or informational groups to learn more about their needs
 - Targeted surveys
 - Talking to community partners working with priority populations about how best to serve and continue to develop partnerships
- Further develop and introduce workshops in coordination with partners like National Asian Pacific, CHD and Probation on populations or topics such as:
 - Older Workers
 - Expungement workshops (justice involved)
 - Industry specific
- Provide enhanced client training experience by:
 - Revising the existing scholarship application to include specific career ladder information for each industry on every application
 - Supporting clients by funding certifications and licensing and providing supportive services along the way
- Link employers and education and training providers to identify in-demand career pathways for a variety of industries to help guide job seekers through:
 - Using existing educational material to create a method for mapping out unique pathways for each job seeker depending on interests and skill set of job seeker
 - Job Link providing presentations (during both business and evening hours) for the community on local employers, career pathways, and Labor Market Information (LMI), etc.

Youth Workforce Investment Activities

A description and assessment of the type and availability of youth workforce investment activities in the Local Area, as outlined in [WSD17-07 \(PDF\)](#), *WIOA Youth Program Requirements*. This includes any strategies the Local Board has about how to increase the digital literacy and fluency of youth participants, including youth with disabilities.

Sonoma County has an abundance of workforce programs serving the local youth population. The WIB is involved in many of these initiatives, particularly those that involve serving out of school youth, and other youth with barriers, including disabilities. The central focus of these initiatives is to:

- Educate youth about the career pathway opportunities available to them, and the training and education that will help them to successfully meet the workforce needs of local industry in growing sectors.
- Provide opportunities for youth to interact with local industry, and within different occupations. This may be through apprenticeships, job shadowing, temporary work experience, or other hands on activities that provide youth the opportunity to learn about possible careers.
- Ensure all youth have basic literacy and numeracy skills, high school diplomas, English language skills, and appropriate job training to be able to earn a living wage.
- Reduce or eliminate barriers to accessing information or services, by developing smoother intake and referral processes, eliminating cumbersome or unnecessary steps to access services, and integrating youth feedback into program design.
- Provide supportive services for youth who have additional needs such as housing, childcare, or are struggling with a learning, mental or physical disability that is interfering with their ability to obtain or retain employment.
- Develop life and soft skills such as time management, conflict management, financial literacy and anger management.
- Promote and assist youth with receiving post-secondary training or education, including apprenticeships, vocational certificates or traditional two- and four-year degree programs.
- Align education programs with the needs of industry.
- Provide opportunities for youth to 'earn and learn', where they can receive wages while learning a new skill and training in a job.
- Engage with employers to who offer youth friendly employment opportunities.
- Expand opportunities for youth to network with local business and education and training providers.
- Expand access for teachers to interact more with industry.

- Provide training on entrepreneurship and small business in order to help youth build their own businesses.

The goal of Sonoma County's Upstream Investments initiative is to ensure evidence based and promising practices are used to develop programs with public funding. Many of the youth programs available in Sonoma County meet Upstream Investment standards.

The WIB provides direct services in these areas to youth through two programs:

My Pathway Program (MPP)

This program serves youth and young adults, primarily between the ages 16 to 24, and is designed to fill the gaps in the lives of youth who may lack the family, educational, and/or social framework to prepare them to make a successful transition to adulthood. Additionally, this program is meant to further their education and employment opportunities along a career path in one of Sonoma County's growing sectors. MPP participants receive access to career and education development assistance, case management support for other identified needs, and access to training and vocational development opportunities through Temporary Work Experience and On-the-Job Training.

Sonoma County Youth Ecology Corps (SCYEC)

This program provides youth and young adults with meaningful, paid work experience, environmental education, and the opportunity to explore careers and develop work-readiness skills. The program is open to all local residents between 18 and 24, and targets disadvantaged youth, especially youth currently enrolled in WIOA and current or former foster youth. Participants work with public or non-profit agencies on crew-based projects or in individual placements in order to develop work readiness and/or vocational skills related to a chosen career path. This program also provides soft skills training, financial literacy training, and culminates with a final event where participants can interact with education and training providers and local business. As appropriate, youth who are at least 18, may also be co-enrolled in the WIOA Adult programs, and work with staff at the AJCC.

2021 – 2024 Strategies to increase youth workforce investment activities:

- Continue to provide individualized career pathway planning support, including short- and long-term employment goals, work experience, and other supports necessary to help youth progress on their path. Track all progress.
- Develop a checklist to use before contracting with Work Experience (WEX) employers to confirm they meet the criteria of providing a "good job".
- Ensure service design considers changes due to COVID (e.g., virtual work, types of available jobs, etc.) and helps meet clients where they are.
- Identify barriers and critical needs of current and former foster youth, those involved with the justice system (including probation youth in placement whom are considered a part of the foster care system) and young adults experiencing homelessness. With youth partners, explore and expand opportunities for these youth to connect them to

workforce services, career pathways and entry and advancement in gainful employment.

- Link youth to work experience opportunities in in-demand sectors, in addition to public and non-profit agencies.
- Train youth providers on in-demand sectors and providing Labor Market Information (LMI).
- Get input on youth's interests regarding the in-demand sectors.

In Program Year 2019-20, 45% (25) of WIB's youth program participants self-reported as having a disability. Seventy-six percent of these participants (19) specified the category of disability; learning disability and mental or psychiatric disability were the most common reported (53% (10) and 47% (9), respectively). Strategies to alleviate the effects of the disability are identified in the youth service provider's written procedure for serving youth with disabilities. The WIB recognizes that digital literacy and fluency are essential for our youth participants, including youth with disabilities, to be able to obtain and retain employment and succeed in our increasingly digitized world, and are especially critical during the present COVID-19 pandemic.

2021 – 2024 Strategies to increase the digital literacy and fluency of youth participants, including youth with disabilities:

- Assessing participant literacy/fluency at program entry.
- Including critical employability digital literacy skills (i.e., problem solving using technology, computer and mobile device interactions, basic tools such as email and word processing, data security, and data ethics) in work readiness training activities.
- Identifying occupation-specific digital skills required to meet the local workforce needs on their identified career pathway.
- Helping participants develop a plan to acquire those skills.

While the Title I programs mentioned above are available to youth with disabilities, the following local organizations offer additional programs specifically to serve this population:

Sonoma County Office of Education (SCOE)

SCOE provides a special education Transition Program. The Transition Program is designed to "teach work" to special education students, ages 18-22, and to support their growth into adulthood. Program activities take place at work sites and other locations with the goal of helping students acquire the skills to secure and maintain employment after they leave school. All of SCOE's other workplace development activities are available to youth with disabilities.

Santa Rosa Junior College (SRJC)

The Disability Resources Department facilitates equal access for students with disabilities to workforce development assistance. They also do specific outreach to identify high school

seniors who have received Special Education to assist with transitioning them to become an SRJC student and navigating the SRJC system.

Sonoma State University (SSU)

The Department of Disability Services provides specific support to students on navigating the SSU system.

Department of Rehabilitation (DOR)

DOR provides workforce services specifically to individuals with disabilities who are at least 18. Individuals can receive customized support to obtain or retain employment, and to receive appropriate vocational training, including on-the-job support.

North Bay Regional Center (NBRC)

NBRC provides workforce, educational support, and supportive services to individuals with development disabilities that began before the age of 18.

Redwood Empire Industries (REI)

REI offers work training and educational enrichment classes onsite and in community settings for adults with developmental, physical, and mental health disabilities who are over 18 years old that are referred by the Department of Rehabilitation or the North Bay Regional Center. REI provides individual plans focused on the needs and interests of each customer including entry-level job habits, training, and job placement individually and in groups. Specifically designed placement plans for employment preparation, job development, placement, and job coaching services are available.

Becoming Independent (BI)

BI provide a spectrum of programs, called Employing Abilities, that helps hundreds of individuals 18 years and over with developmental disabilities become successful employees in the North Bay community. They do this through three strategies: tailored day services, supported employment services, and vocational services.

Buckelew Programs

Buckelew Programs serves youth, adults, seniors and families experiencing mental health and/or substance use challenges. Their employment services program provides a comprehensive approach to assisting people to secure and maintain employment and includes pre-employment counseling, vocational training, job development, placement, and job coaching. In addition, Buckelew's social enterprises offers paid training opportunities through their Blue Skies Clerical and Blue Skies Janitorial Services. They also operate the Transition Age Youth (TAY) Program serving 15 young adults, ages 18 to 26, which are in need of mental health services and housing. Youth are given the skills they need to live and thrive independently, including assistance with finding housing and jobs.

Goodwill Industries of the Redwood Empire (GIRE)

GIRE administers a number of employment programs for the Sonoma County Human Services

Department, including the Learning Enhancement & Achievement Program (LEAP). The purpose of the LEAP program is to identify learning disabled customers and support them through individualized accommodation plans.

North Bay Industries (NBI)

NBI assists adults 18 and over with disabilities to become more productive, self-reliant members of their communities through participation in agency-sponsored training, housing and employment programs. These programs may include gainful employment, pre-vocational training, and other habilitation and rehabilitation services.

America's Job Centers of CaliforniaSM (AJCC)

Finally, the AJCC also has a Disability Navigator that is available to youth to assist them with accessing specific services from partner agencies, such as those listed above. Once in-person services resume, Job Link will go back to offering Basic Computer Skills course in both English and Spanish for those looking to increase their digital literacy.

HSD also provides training for 'Growing Up in a Digital World: The intersection of CSEC + Technology'. This training focuses on the intersection of CSEC and technology. The Internet has opened the door to CSEC recruitment, so its crucial providers are continually engaging in dialogue with youth about technology. The training focuses on the dangers of cell phones, social media, cyber bullying, sexting, and online gaming and discusses safety strategies for each of these categories and conversation starters with youth.

Disbursal of Grant Funds

The entity responsible for the disbursal of grant funds as determined by the Chief Elected Official (CEO) or the Governor, and the competitive process that will be used toward the sub-grants and contracts for WIOA Title I activities.

The Sonoma County Human Services Department, Employment and Training Division, is responsible for the disbursal of WIOA grant funds through an arrangement with the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors. The WIB is housed within the Human Services Department.

AJCC Operator

A description about how the Local Board fulfills the duties of the AJCC Operator and/or the Career Services Provider as outlined in [WSD19-13 \(PDF\)](#), Selection of AJCC Operators and Career Services Providers. This should include the name(s) and role(s) of all entities the Local Board contracts with.

California Human Development applied and was approved to be the Career Services Provider in Sonoma County and procured the role of the One Stop Operator (OSO). In October of 2019, the WIB and the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors approved the selection of California Human Development as the One Stop Operator for the period of November 1, 2019 to June 30, 2021.

Stakeholder and Community Engagement

Using the Stakeholder and Community Engagement Summary Template (Attachment 2), RPUs and Local Boards should provide a detailed description of how meaningful stakeholder involvement and community engagement was achieved when developing the Regional and Local Plans. This summary should be included as an attachment to both the Regional and Local Plans. A list of potential Regional and Local Planning partners (Attachment 3) is included as a tool to assist with identifying stakeholders for the planning process.

The Sonoma County WIB used multiple processes to elicit participation in planning efforts and the public comment process. Input was solicited at the Local Stakeholder Engagement feedback session for WIOA, SonomaWORKS, CalFresh, TANF, Child Support and Youth Populations on March 9, 2021, the WIB meeting held on March 10, 2021, the Job Link Steering Committee on March 11, 2021, the ELL Workgroup and the Local Stakeholder Engagement feedback session for Individuals with Disabilities, Veterans and Justice Involved Populations meeting on March 17, 2021. An ADA-compliant copy of the draft plan was posted to the WIB website (www.sonomawib.org) on March 23, 2021 and notifications were sent to regional Workforce Development Boards, workforce partners, education, labor, business, community-based organizations and other stakeholders.