

UPPER CUMBERLAND LOCAL  
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD

# LOCAL PLAN MODIFICATIONS 2022-2024



## LET'S MEET WORKFORCE OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES TOGETHER

A strategic plan to develop, align and integrate service delivery strategies and resources among WIOA core programs and partners in the Upper Cumberland.



**Upper Cumberland Local Workforce Development Board**  
**Local Plan Modification**  
**Program Years 2022-2024**

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## Forward

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The Upper Cumberland Local Workforce Development Board is committed to the strategic initiatives outlined within this planning document. We want to hold ourselves accountable to the vision and goals listed to affect measurable system-wide growth. To that end, each response to the required planning questions herein will include a conclusion summary. The listed "[Summary/Trackable Strategy for Progress Accountability](#)" appears in blue font at the end of each response and serves as a quick reference for our internal and external staff to use in determining objectives. It also serves as an outline to track advancement of our listed goals for periodic progress checks. Success of the Upper Cumberland One-Stop System is dependent upon all partners, board members, board staff, and mayors being accountable to each other for achievement of these common goals and initiatives.

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## Executive Summary

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The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) is a federally funded program through the U.S. Department of Labor and the State of Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development. WIOA is the primary source of federal funds for workforce development activities throughout the nation, with legislation requiring an infrastructure of multiple partners to contribute to operations and services. WIOA funds are awarded to the Consortium of Local Elected Officials (LEOs) of a Local Workforce Development Area (LWDA) to serve two primary customers: job seekers and businesses through a One-Stop Operations system branded as the American Job Center (AJC) system. The intent of WIOA is to strengthen the workforce system through innovation and alignment of services to promote individual and economic growth while meeting the needs of businesses and industries within the area. WIOA puts a primary focus on assisting individuals with barriers to employment by increasing their access to employment, education, training, and support so that they may be successful in the labor market.

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) provides for the establishment of local workforce development boards in each local area to carry out the provisions of the act. Each local workforce development board is certified by the Governor of the State, who in partnership with the State Board, establishes criteria for the Locally Elected Officials (LEOs) to use in the appointment of members to the area's local board. The Consortium of LEOs of the Upper Cumberland local workforce area have appointed members and established the Upper Cumberland Local Workforce Development Board, Incorporated (UCLWDB) to oversee workforce services in Cannon, Clay, Cumberland, DeKalb, Fentress, Jackson, Macon, Overton, Pickett, Putnam, Smith, Van Buren, Warren, and White counties. Members are volunteers representing private employers, higher education, organized labor, non-profit organizations, and public entities. The UCLWDB, in consultation with the Consortium of LEOs, is responsible for the oversight and selection of the One-Stop Operator (OSO) and Career Services Provider (CSP) for adults, dislocated workers, and youth programs. The UCLWDB is a licensed corporation in the State of Tennessee with 501(c)(3) tax status from the Federal Internal Revenue Service and operates as an independent administrative and fiscal entity. The UCLWDB has appointed staff to the board to assist in carrying out administrative functions as prescribed by WIOA, including Business Services.

The UCLWDB establishes the mission and vision for the utilization of WIOA funds allocated to our local workforce development area (LWDA). The Board Chairman and Chief Local Elected Official (CLEO) provide leadership and oversight, while the Executive Committee makes recommendations to the Board

concerning actions as delegated within the UCLWDB By-laws. At the forefront of all UCLWDB activities will be a driving Vision and Mission:

### **Upper Cumberland Local Workforce Development Board Vision**

*The vision of the UCLWDB is to serve as a strategic leader and convener of the local workforce development system to develop policies and investments that support public workforce system strategies, that support regional strategies and regional economies, the development of effective approaches-including local and regional sector partnerships and career pathways and high quality, customer-centered service delivery and service delivery approaches.*

### **Upper Cumberland Local Workforce Development Board Mission Statement**

To engage employers, educators, and community partners in creating a life-long learning environment in the Upper Cumberland that attracts and retains strong businesses as well as a diverse, talented workforce critical for sustaining a vibrant, growing, and innovative economy. The UCLWDB will achieve this vision and mission by:

- Developing strategic partnerships with employers and training providers to align training services with the needs of area employers;
- Enhancing career development services for job seekers to increase job success and knowledge of high skill and in-demand careers;
- Securing state and/or federal funding to develop training programs that support career pathways that build upon the existing skills of the workforce and develop new skills to meet high skill and in-demand careers; and
- Coordinating WIOA activities with the region's economic development plan to coordinate current and future workforce goals and activities.

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## **Operating Systems and Strategies**

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### **(1a) Provide information regarding service strategies implemented both in the physical AJCs, as well as virtually:**

Upper Cumberland AJCs combine a variety of in-person and virtual service strategies to provide customers options. Our physical AJCs continue to utilize a customer-centered design and priority of service as presented in our 2020-2022 Local Plan. Moving forward for PY 22-24, we will focus on enhancement of these already proven strategies. Our Title III and Adult Education partners, along with our One-Stop Operator, have worked together to initiate new customer service standards through our Welcome Function. Beginning March 2022, each and every person who physically walks through our AJC doors will receive a thorough consultation with a trained partner representative. Additionally, as part of our Work 1<sup>st</sup> plan (discussed in Question #3a) any individuals who leave the AJC without receiving an individualized service will be placed onto a spreadsheet and followed up with to present additional service opportunities.

As part of our Partner's Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) renewed August 2021, every Upper Cumberland partner agreed to participate in a Referral Tracker spreadsheet. This spreadsheet is shared between all partners to provide real-time updates on referral progress. This is in no way a substitute to tracking referrals through the Jobs4TN program (which is still required), but is an addition asked for by our partners themselves. Not all partners utilize the Jobs4TN system; and for the ones that do, not all have the same screen access. Partners who do use Jobs4TN simply copy and paste their spreadsheet updates from their virtual case notes to prevent duplication. For those who have separate systems, this is a way to view referral updates and promote accountability. The Upper Cumberland has experienced a 35% increase in co-enrollments since initiating this Referral Tracker spreadsheet. Additionally as part of our Partner's MOU, each core partner agreed to have at least one representative engage in active participation on each AJC Functional Team. Participation could be virtual or in-person depending upon their agency staffing module. However, "active participation" requires monthly functional team attendance, engaging conversation and material for client discussion. One of our goals for PY 22-24 is to strengthen functional teams to ensure we are maximizing service provision.

The Upper Cumberland participated in a pilot version of the VAJC and boasts a comparatively high percentage of VAJC usage compared to other workforce areas. As the VAJC continues to expand, our sights are set on further increasing that usage through in-depth staff training and promoting area-wide awareness. While in-person services will continue to be offered in varying capacities, we believe the VAJC provides an avenue for increased services despite workforce funding cuts.

Another virtual tool implemented within our Title I service strategy is the Career Edge platform. Career Edge was developed by our contracted career services provider, The Career Team. Career Edge contains virtual modules for an array of soft skills training such as budgeting, workplace etiquette, resume writing, and other employment skills. This has become a valuable asset for Career Advisors to utilize for all clients regardless of their career goals. Career Edge modules can be tailored to individual service plans and braided with other partner agency tools for wrap-around success. Career Edge modules can also be used to gauge client "readiness" for WIOA participation. In the face of reduced funding, we will continue to provide basic career services to all individuals. However, we do see the need to maximize our return on investment. Prioritization of individualized service dollars will be for clients who present a willingness to be engaged in the WIOA program.

Lastly, we have partnered with Adult Education (AE) to create AE Virtual Access Points at all of our physical AJC sites. The Virtual Access Point plan was created in conjunction with TDLWD, Adult Education, and our Board to provide start-to-finish virtual services. Adult Education programs can now be accessed at these sites, including testing, classes and learning components.

#### [Summary/Trackable Strategy for progress accountability on physical and virtual service strategies:](#)

- Utilize redesigned Welcome Function to increase client engagement from initial entry and follow-up with individuals who were only self-service.
- Engage partners through the Referral Tracker spreadsheet and active participation on Functional Teams.
- Increase usage of virtual service options such as V AJC, Career Edge, and Virtual Access Points.

**(1b) How the one-stop system is implementing more integrated, technology-focused operations to improve outreach to jobseekers/emp, provide intake, and enhance CM for programs carried out under all partners.**

The Upper Cumberland operates two Comprehensive Centers and seven Affiliate Centers, each servicing the counties in which they are located. In order to effectively serve all Upper Cumberland residents, Affiliate Centers provide support to residents of neighboring counties where no brick-and-mortar AJC is located. These service assignments are listed on the UCLWDB website under "Our Centers" so that residents are aware of how they may access in-person services. While brick-and-mortar AJCs are valued for the full-time in-person services they provide, the UCLWDB also recognizes that technological advances are creating exciting opportunities to serve residents in a more accessible and cost-efficient manner. Additionally, these methods greatly increase one-stop services access for ALL Upper Cumberland residents, particularly those located within our rural areas. The UCLWDB has invested resources to create a new website, "[www.ucwork.org](http://www.ucwork.org)" where information, and initial services can be accessed seven days a week, twenty-four hours a day. Individuals can make an intake appointment through the website to meet with an AJC representative in-person if desired. Booked appointments are directly managed by the One-Stop Operator for proper intake routing and follow-up. Our website also includes a direct link to the TDLWD Virtual AJC (VAJC), which provides a wide and expanding array of virtual service options.

The TDLWO Mobile AJC is also utilized to bring AJC services to the Upper Cumberland. The mobile unit is typically booked for specific events and job fairs to provide additional AJC support. Services offered and customer flow are determined by the event and vary depending upon the needs communicated when booking the mobile unit. Outreach is also conducted through the use of virtual and social media platforms. UCLWDB social media outlets reach thousands of individuals throughout our service area and provide real-time information on AJC services, job fairs, and activities. Additionally, the UCLWDB Google My Business platform is an effective tool to provide awareness of, and access to, the AJC system. Providing information, location services, and direct links to AJC social media and the UCLWDB website permeates through any location barriers rural areas may have. Partners agree to supply outreach information (as far in advance as possible) to the UCLWDB Marketing Team. The Marketing Team will be responsible for utilizing this information for inclusion on virtual and social media platforms, as well as sharing with county representatives to further extend outreach impact.

Providing technology-focused operations to increase outreach and enhance services is a whole-system effort within the Upper Cumberland. In addition to supporting system-wide outreach initiatives, each core partner has made their own commitments to increasing outreach through technology. Within Adult Education, all Upper Cumberland counties provide adult basic education, high school equivalency prep classes, and English as a Second Language classes via online learning format. Clients may receive an established virtual pathway upon registration that will take them all the way through HiSet exam completion. Additionally, with the use of Schoology, the in-person classes utilize online platforms for both core and supplemental instruction to accelerate learning as well as provide online exposure to students. Adult Education provides integrated intentional workforce development initiatives and workforce preparation activities into classes through digital literacy and virtual soft skills training.

Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) is also working to establish new strategies for technology-focused operations. Realizing that a digitally illiterate client will not be prepared to enter the 2022 and beyond workforce, VR has restructured service delivery to include digital training. VR representatives educate clients on basic computer skills through technology workshops. They also actively work to prepare clients for obtaining a job through virtual means- which is common practice in today's workforce climate. VR representatives assist clients in uploading their resume online and also provide mock virtual interviews to prepare for employer virtual interviews.

Title III Wagner-Peyser programs have also moved to incorporate digital literacy into service provision. Title III representatives meet individually with participants to teach them how to upload resumes to online portals for job application. Basic computer skills instruction is also provided when necessary, so that individuals may learn to navigate online job searching themselves. Additionally, local Wagner-Peyser

representatives provide intensive virtual interview preparation through individual mock virtual interviews, as well as virtual interview group workshops.

Summary/Trackable Strategy for progress accountability on improving outreach through integrated technology:

- Engage digital platforms to pierce transportation barriers, particularly within rural communities.
- Promote UCLWDB website as premiere tool for accessing local services, scheduling appointments, and navigating to VAJC. Push to increase self-scheduled appointments through the site.
- Continue increasing social media activities to market AJC activities and Mobile AJC events, as well as grow follower engagement.
- Incorporate expanded digital services of AE, VR, and Title III into regular AJC operations for a system-wide improvement.

**(1c) Provide a description of the initiatives the LWDB (including all partners) are implementing or will be implemented to ensure accessibility to programmatic services.**

The Upper Cumberland consists largely of remote and rural areas. Therefore, it is crucial we ensure programmatic access for rural areas. The UCLWDB sets priority on assuring WIOA services are accessible to *all* job-seekers and employers throughout the Upper Cumberland. The UCLWDB addresses this need by mobilizing partner efforts into these communities where a brick-and-mortar AJC is not present. Our current One-Stop Operator Title I staffing structure provides adequate staffing to bring Title I staff into these rural communities for "pop-up" type mobile AJC events, while still maintaining the mandatory Title I presence in Affiliate and Comprehensive Centers. Mobile events are marketed in coordination with agencies that are physically present in areas of low income and where individuals with barriers often utilize public services: such as HRAs; OHS offices; Health Departments; UT Extension Offices; and community libraries. When necessary, the One-Stop Operator also coordinates with local transportation agencies in an attempt to facilitate transporting individuals that are lacking access to transportation so they are more likely to attend events such as Mobile Job Coach visits or Hiring Fairs. Basic career services, access to individualized career services, and AJC partner programs are made available at every event along with internet access so that job searches and unemployment claims can be completed. Using the Mobile Job Coach, the UCLWDB is able to extend its vision and mission into previously underserved locations, respond to emergency situations, and provide additional support during job fairs. By going into our communities and meeting clients where they are, the UCLWDB is better able to promote services and meet the needs of area individuals.

The Upper Cumberland is also going beyond mobile and pop-up events for rural areas and expanding consistent face-to-face WIOA assistance in all of our counties. New Points of Contact have recently been established in Upper Cumberland counties that do not have an established brick-and-mortar AJC location. A Title I representative is now present one day a week in five additional counties where participants previously have been forced to commute. Similar to our Affiliate Sites, this Title I representative also acts as a referral arm to all other AJC partners and brings the entire host of One-Stop system services with them. Workforce staff set up in an agreed-upon location in coordination with the county mayor's office to provide services and assistance. Individuals who may not have access to these opportunities otherwise are able to receive the full menu of workforce services. The UCLWDB Executive Director has worked personally with County Mayors to establish Points of Contact and continues to foster a sustainable physical presence. Realizing that funding limitations cannot provide a face-to-face WIOA contact everywhere we would like, the Upper Cumberland plans to utilize AJC Access Points to support our current service structure. Our goal for PY 22-24 is to create at least five official Access Points across the workforce area. Public libraries and local high schools, particularly in our most rural communities, will be targeted locations for these Access Points.



Lastly, updating our Google Marketing has proved an effective tool to provide awareness of, and access to, the AJC system. Providing information and direct links to AJC social media and the UCLWDB website permeates through any location barriers rural areas may have. The Upper Cumberland has worked to maintain an active social media presence for the past two years and plans to continue to grow our digital presence. Combined with our updated and maintained website, we have built an excellent platform for marketing VAJC services. As VAJC services expand during PY 22-24, our strategy will be to regularly promote these services as a convenience to customers, as well as a remedy for rural access challenges.

These new initiatives being implemented to increase programmatic accessibility have been outlined within our recent Partner's MOU. The MOU outlines expectations of core partners regarding accessibility. It also includes service integration strategies agreed upon by all partners during MOU negotiations.

Summary/Trackable Strategy for progress accountability on accessibility to programmatic services:

- Host mobile AJC events in conjunction with other public service agencies in rural areas.
- Create at least five Access Points.
- Build "Points of Contact" to compliment current service structure and bridge between brick-and-mortar AJCs and Access Points.

**(Id) How will technology continue to improve the connection to partners across the workforce system? Include the advances made during, as well as those to continue post-COVID.**

Our partners became quite adept at virtual connections during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Upper Cumberland One-Stop system experienced a complete shut-down of in-office operations for a substantial time period. It was a challenge to continue services during that time but we learned from the experience. Prior to this time, when an in-person warm hand-off was not available the referral often lagged. Pandemic restrictions challenged us to perfect the warm hand-off through virtual means. Additionally, our partners had never completed virtual enrollments before this time. Navigating virtual enrollments presented several obstacles which we were proud to work through as a team. We learned as a system what our virtual capabilities could be and saw many opportunities for growth. Virtual warm-hand off referral systems remained in place once in-person services resumed and will continue. Also remaining is a familiarity in digitally conversing and working amongst each other. Not all of our core partners have returned to full-time in-person services within our AJCs. However, full services are still able to be provided through our virtual processes built during pandemic challenges.

The Upper Cumberland's strategy for continuing to improve partner connections through technology will center around our updated virtual meeting capabilities. We are currently updating our large conference area with state-of-the-art digital equipment purchased through an independent grant awarded by Twin Lakes Cooperative. These funds were braided with the Rapid Response Layoff Aversion grant to purchase a full virtual conferencing system including voice-activated cameras, large television monitors, microphones, and conferencing platform. We are excited to market this system as part of our Business Services (see response to Q# 8c), but also have strategic plans to utilize it for partner engagement. Our team will be able to meet with partners as a group, rather than individual "squares" on a computer to promote more robust conversations and professional presentations. This technology equipment will also allow us to host conferences and large-scale partner meetings. We will have the ability gather multiple partners in one physical space and project as a group to other partners joining virtually. We also plan to offer the space to core and external partners for use as a training facility for workforce partnership. These



capabilities will become the fulcrum for deepening partnerships with community and faith-based organizations as well as core and external workforce partners.

Summary/Trackable Strategy for progress accountability on connecting partners through technology:

- Utilize UCLWDB conference room upgrades to host meetings, conferences, and trainings amongst partners for more robust and productive virtual conversations.
- Build workforce partnerships by allowing core and external partners to use virtual conference facilities for training purposes.

**(2a) Describe how the Local Board will support the strategy identified in the TN Combined State Plan and work with entities carrying out core programs, including a description of:**

The UCLWDB's vision is to serve the Upper Cumberland as a strategic leader and convener of the local workforce development system by supporting investments in local, regional and state workforce initiatives. We operate in a tiered manner- where our unique local initiatives are developed to support regional efforts, which have been developed to support state key objectives. All efforts within this plan point to supporting the following State Workforce Board Strategic Goals: (1) Clear connection to Current Industry/Employers; (2) Clear Pipeline Development Infrastructure; (3) Clear Integration with Economic Development; (4) Outcome Visibility-Clear Data/Reporting and Predictive Analysis.

Additionally, the UCLWDB delivers its local mission and strategies through an interconnected American Job Center network by aligning its strategic initiatives to fully support the state's five core strategies/key objectives. Specifically, the UCLWDB will seek to support each underlined key objective as listed below:

Summary/Trackable Strategy for progress accountability on supporting strategies identified in the TN Combined Plan:

- Create an integrated intake system to efficiently deliver services- Improve intake system to create a seamless effect, utilize referral tracker for a more efficient process for co-enrollments.
- Create a shared vision for supporting Tennesseans with the greatest number of barriers to the enter the workforce- Focus efforts in rural communities which historically have the highest percentage of individuals with barriers. Operate Specialized Centers for targeted population outreach as well as intentionally increasing all work-based learning opportunities in rural areas, including apprenticeships.
- Create a trained workforce to meet current industry needs- Increase paid work experience by 10% and Labor Force Participation Rate by 3% over Program Years 2022-2024.
- Create new dashboards to measure the effectiveness of the integrated workforce strategy- Create and monitor local KPI measures to assist in measuring the effectiveness of Business Services integration through our local area.
- Create a simple and effective engagement experience for all candidates- Redesigned UCLWDB website creates direct linkages to AJC services, both physical and virtual. Engage social media platforms to boost customer engagement.

**(2b) Expanding access to employment, training, education, supportive services for eligible individuals, particularly eligible individuals with barriers to employment including individuals with disabilities.**

The UCLWDB will continue to expand access to employment, training, education, and supportive services by seeking out targeted populations and increasing our community footprint. This begins with an innovative plan for Specialized Center AJC sites. Our internal evaluations showed check-in numbers for

Affiliate Sites in White and DeKalb counties were consistently low compared to other counties. Enrollments were also low, particularly for individuals within targeted populations. Area demographics showed a high census of targeted populations within those counties- but we were not reaching them. As examples, DeKalb County had an unemployment rate of 3.7%, yet we had zero new Dislocated Worker enrollments for PY 21 Q2. White County had a Youth population of 5,963, yet we had only one new Youth enrollment for PY 21 Q2. DeKalb and White Counties have a total population of 20,080 and 27,351 respectively. Assuming roughly 2% of this population has touched the justice system in some form, we concluded the Justice-Involved Population was there, but we had only one Justice-Involved enrollment between both counties. In essence, we could prove the targeted population need was present but it was obviously not being met by our Affiliate model. This realization caused our team to "think outside the box" and formulate a plan to actually go outside the four walls of the AJC and find individuals with barriers, rather than sit back and wait for them to come to us.

The UCLWDB presented a "rethink" plan to the TDLWO Commissioner to convert our White and DeKalb County Affiliate sites to Specialized Centers focused on Youth, Dislocated Workers, and Justice-Involved Individuals (*See Attachment I- Redesigning for Success*). This plan was approved by the Commissioner in December 2021 and by our local Board March 2022. Since plan activation, our Title I Career Advisors follow the schedule adopted within the submitted plan for a rotating schedule of in and out-of-the-office service. This schedule was created according to the unique needs of the county and in partnership with available resources within the area. We wanted to establish regular attendance at organizations already serving targeted populations while still maintaining a physical AJC presence. Each day is focused on a particular target group with both in-office and out-of-office services geared towards reaching individuals in that population. Such as, on Tuesdays the White County site is a Specialized Center for Youth and Dislocated Workers. The Career Advisor is off-site from 8:00-9:30am at a Family Resource Center targeting Youth. Then, from 10:00-11:00am Title I moves to Clean Hearts Ministry, a "mission" type organization, to target Dislocated Workers. Finally, the day is completed within the brick-and-mortar AJC from 11:30-4:30pm taking Youth and Dislocated Worker walk-ins and referrals. We also designed out-of-office assignments where the Title I Career Advisors could bring partner representatives. For instance, in DeKalb County the Title I Career Advisor and Adult Education representatives take joint off-site appointments with Dislocated Workers from 8:00-10:00am. Similarly, on Wednesdays in White County the Title I and Title III representatives schedule on-site conferences with Justice-Involved Individuals at the White County Jail for enrollment.

Success of this redesignation to Specialized Centers will be monitored both monthly and quarterly. We are collecting data from check-ins both on-site and off-site through special check-in codes. This will allow us to evaluate if the off-site locations chosen are effective or if we need to shift to a more target-rich location. We will also monitor overall enrollments as well as enrollments of targeted individuals to see if we experience an increase. Team meetings involving Board Staff, One-Stop Operator, Partner Leads, and community stakeholders will assess progress and recommend adjustments if necessary. Our Fiscal Agent will also be tracking increases in travel budgets assigned to those counties to see if they correlate to enrollment increases. This will show us the overall return on investment (ROI) and indicate whether this will be a sustainable model for other counties. If positive ROI is shown, we do plan to recommend this creative approach be expanded to other low-performing AJC sites in our workforce area.

Beyond Specialized Centers, our one-stop system is also engaging in other initiatives to expand program access to individuals with barriers. Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) has created a new case management system and main call line center. The main line is being piloted with our Middle Tennessee Region and allows Administrative Services Assistants to answer calls from anywhere in Tennessee. They can then enter referral information and send direct referrals to the VR Counselor who services that specific area. This approach will help individuals with barriers access VR services quickly and easily. Other partners such as Title III are intentionally increasing outreach to those with barriers by partnering with local

agencies to provide combined resources and hiring events. This is particularly being done within our rural communities to conduct outreach to individuals who would otherwise face travel barriers. Individuals can visit one location close to their home, such as a local public library or community faith-based location, and receive access to all AJC services. The mobile AJC unit can also be scheduled for these types of events as an additional outreach tool.

Summary/Trackable Strategy for progress accountability on expanding services to individuals with barriers:

- Seek out targeted populations through creation of Specialized Centers.
- Prioritize combined client appointments with Title I, Title III, and AE at targeted locations.
- Analyze ROI on Specialized Centers. Adjust as necessary and consider expanding to additional counties.
- Support partner efforts to expand services, such as YR call line pilot.

**(2c) Facilitating the development of career pathways and co-enrollment, as appropriate, in core programs and Improving access to activities leading to a recognized post-secondary credential**

Development of career pathways and co-enrollment in core programs are integral parts of preparing future workforce. The Upper Cumberland was actually one of the first areas within the country to participate in the foundational career pathways development through our work with the Highlands Economic Partnership (discussed in Question #Sa). We continue to partner with the Highlands Economic Partnership and have also developed relationships with Tennessee Re-Connect and Veterans' groups within local colleges. As part of the Harvard University Pathways to Prosperity, Career pathways have been established for the region in key areas of study such as Healthcare, IT, and Advanced Manufacturing to encourage participants to take that first step toward a higher paying job by establishing stackable credentials which seem more reachable. Career Pathways offer the option of getting on or off the path at any point. For example, a participant may choose to pursue the Healthcare pathway. This particular pathway offers the option of building their skills/ attainment as follows: Certified Nurse Assistant licensure (TCAT) - Registered Nurse (Community College) - Bachelors of Science Nursing (University). Healthcare articulation agreements between TCATs, Community Colleges, and four-year Universities exist throughout the region. These agreements decrease the time between certifications/degrees for participants and standardizes plans of study across the region so that all participants have the same opportunity for skill/degree attainment. Similar articulation agreements exist for IT and Advanced Manufacturing.

The Upper Cumberland recently received twelve new Pathways Certifications for several of our counties. Pathway Certifications now exist for the following: Macon County- Teaching as a Profession, Nursing, and Horticulture; Cannon County- Agriculture); White County- Advanced Manufacturing, Welding; Van Buren County- Advanced Manufacturing, Healthcare, IT, Transportation & Logistics, Construction; Putnam County- Childhood Education, Teaching as a Profession. In order to expand on pathways access, Summer Youth Work-Experience programs will act as a feeder into our certified pathways. This will provide greater access for Upper Cumberland high school students. We have partnered with the Upper Cumberland Regional Coordinator for Tennessee Pathways to create summer learning opportunities within in-demand pathways through paid work experience. The coordinator's experience with pathways work-based learning has been an asset to our endeavors, as well as connections already established with school counselors and CTE instructors. Along with our Tennessee Pathways Coordinator, we have been able to utilize CTE Directors and members of our Youth Committee to identify students eligible and ready to participate, while we brought engaged employers willing to participate to the table. At the beginning of summer break students transition from classroom learning into on-the-job training regularly monitored by a program coordinator. The UCLWDB provides subsidized wages as well as assisted

curriculum development. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic halted all school programs in late April 2020. We look forward to conducting this program during Summer 2022, as we feel it will be a valuable tool in creating a Pathways prepared future workforce.

Core partners work together to facilitate co-enrollment of individuals seeking credentials as appropriate based upon their individual needs. Upper Cumberland AJCs operate on a "no wrong door" approach to initial services. Every individual entering our AJCs completes the Common Intake Form for needs assessment. As Title I and III teams begin the career pathways development and Individual Employment Plan, clients are given a warm hand off to Title II and IV as needed. All referrals are tracked by the One-Stop Operator on the Referral Tracker (a document shared by all partners) to monitor referral progress.

[Summary/Trackable Strategy for progress accountability in developing career pathways and co-enrollments leading to credentials:](#)

- Market newly established pathway certifications to area Chambers of Commerce, businesses, and schools.
- Create summer learning opportunities within in-demand pathways through paid work experience focused through area CTE Directors and in-school youth.

**(3a) Describe the employer engagement strategy to better connect business with well-trained and qualified applicants.**

The UCLWDB is taking a new and innovative approach to business engagement beginning in PY 22. While we have demonstrated internal success and are excelling in Key Performance Indicators, area businesses are experiencing a gap between our success and their benefit. Our Job Fairs are well hosted but not well attended. Local employers are struggling to find and retain workers and the Upper Cumberland Labor Force Participation Rate sits at 49%. And most eye-opening: internal process reviews revealed that we are not doing a good job serving clients who "just want a job." Our Resource Room assists individuals with UI claims, but many never met with anyone beyond Welcome Staff. Title III staff provide resume assistance, but lack connections with employers for placement. Title I staff excel at seeing clients through training, but admittedly struggle with those who seek only immediate workforce placement. We knew we must do better- the American Job Center *should* be able to get people jobs! This stemmed a complete process reassessment and resulted in positive change. In order to better serve job seekers and meet current industry needs, the UCLWDB is now piloting an initiative titled "Work 1<sup>st</sup>" (*See Attachment II- Work 1st*). The Work 1<sup>st</sup> initiative was presented to our Board in December 2021 and received an overwhelmingly positive response. The UCLWDB is ready to move forward with Work 1<sup>st</sup> as our premiere business engagement strategy for PY 22-24. The Work 1st strategy consists of three fundamental pillars to success. Each is explained below:

*PILLAR #1: Utilize the One-Stop Operator to redesign the A.JC Welcome Function and Referral Processes to increase customer engagement and convert basic touches to enrollments.* Evaluating our 2021 Jobs4TN check-ins to date by visit reason showed that 19% needed Career Coaching, 38% came looking for a job, and 22% did not have a job. In essence, 79% of the individuals walking into our AJCs came looking for or needed a job. This proved that the clients are there, our lack of success in meeting job seeker and employer needs was not because the clients were not available. If we could do a better job converting our walk-ins into enrollments, and ultimately into job placements, we could meet industry needs. Understanding this, we knew the first step in building a better employment strategy was to actually redesign our Welcome Function. Board Staff and the AJC Welcome Function Team members began process brainstorming in January 2022 and are currently in a 30-60-90-day trial process for new Welcome Function and referral processes. The goal of these improvements is to increase customer engagement

from initial entry and convert basic service touches to enrollments. Our primary tools in accomplishing this will be a newly created Jobs4TN check-in code and a shared referral tracker spreadsheet. The Welcome process was updated to require every single individual entering the AJC meet with not just a Welcome Function representative, but also with a staff member representing a WIOA Title partner trained to recognize specific needs and fully explain available programs. From this point, we use a newly created check-in reason code for "non-serviced individual" to mark individuals whose initial touch did not result in an individualized activity. The purpose of the check-in code allows us to run detailed reports showing which clients came to the AJC but did not receive services beyond the Resource Room. This allows someone from our One-Stop Operator team to follow-up with the now trackable individual and offer additional AJC services. Additionally, any individual referred out of the initial meeting or at any point, is added to a spreadsheet that is shared by all partners. All partners agreed in the UCLWBD Partner's MOU to participate in this referral spreadsheet and update as referral progress is made. This allows partners who do not share in the Jobs4TN system to see what has occurred with their referral and where the client is in our system. It also creates accountability to follow-up on the referral.

PILLAR #2: Support "work-ready" case management. At the request of Title I staff, we will be providing a series of technical assistance on our Work 1<sup>st</sup> program during the second quarter of 2022. We want the driving force of our case management to be work-ready and believe all case management activities should focus in that single direction. For some, getting to "work-ready" will require training based on their career goals. For others, it will not- and these are the individuals we have historically struggled to effectively serve. Technical Assistance will include real-life case management scenarios showing ways to Serve clients who are not interested in training. We recognize the lack of options on how to serve this type of individual is largely due to our own policies. Therefore, supporting "work-ready" case management will also require updates to our Supportive Services and ITA policies to create better avenues of service for Career Advisors. Lastly, we will also set Work Based Learning as a priority in our case management. We firmly believe Work Experience is a vital tool in creating trained job seekers. It also provides a substantial benefit to employers by providing an interested worker with a subsidized salary. In 2021, expenditures on work experience accounted for just 3% of our career services spending. Moving into PY 22-25, the UCLWDB desires to grow that number to 15%. We will focus efforts on creating more work experience and apprenticeship opportunities through the work of our Business Services Team, while also working to increase the quality of work experiences through staff training and client orientations.

PILLAR #3: Establish a direct linkage pipeline with Business Services to create a clear channel for placing Title I and III work-ready participants into open job positions. Using Pillars #1 and #2 to lay the foundation, Pillar #3 brings in Business Services to actually place the now-ready client into work. It is no longer enough to send people home with an updated resume and ask them to search Jobs4TN for a job. We want to go further and actually be the link to their placement in a position. Beginning Summer 2022, our local workforce network will begin to establish what we are calling "direct linkages" to employment positions. The Welcome Function started the process by converting a check-in into referral for enrollment. Our AJC Skills Development Team worked together to case manage individuals from check-in all the way to "work-ready" based on personal goals. And now, the file will be handed over to the Business Services Team to actually connect the work-ready individual to an open position with a local employer. Keeping their thumb on open positions will require work and relationships. Our Business Services Team will work between Title III LEVRs and Board Staff Business Representatives to initiate and foster intimate relationships with employers. We want to start with 3-5 business who are essentially "case managed" by Business Services to utilize the AJC as their direct link for filing employment vacancies. Administrating a 30-60-90-day trial process, we will evaluate our success with those initial businesses and grow the direct linkage program from there.

In summary, the Work 1<sup>st</sup> vision is to actively and directly engage employers and stakeholders to drive innovative workforce solutions across the Upper Cumberland. We will utilize the AJCs to bridge the workforce gap and build a better local workforce by serving one job-seeker at a time. We will increase Work-Based Learning opportunity and encourage Apprenticeship programs. And ultimately, our goal is to link employers and AJC partners through a direct referral program. This strategy will be monitored through a set of local Key Performance Indicators developed by our Business Services Team and approved by the Board to gauge our success.

Summary/Trackable Strategy for progress accountability in connecting business to qualified applicants:

- Implement Work 1<sup>st</sup> vision throughout the Upper Cumberland AJC system through the three established pillars using 30-60-90-day trial processes.
- Build a strong Business Services team to "case manage" businesses to effectively utilize direct linkages for employment placements.

**(3b) Provide a description of how the LWDB will implement initiatives such as apprenticeships, IWTs, OJTs, customized training programs, industry/sector strategies, and career pathways initiatives**

The Middle Tennessee Regional Planning Council has established the five largest in-demand sectors/industries for employment into the year 2028 as the following: Education and Health Services; Trade, Transportation, and Utilities; Professional and Business Services; Leisure and Hospitality; and Manufacturing. As part of the Middle Tennessee Region, the Upper Cumberland will support this strategy by steering our workforce efforts in this direction. Local initiatives such as apprenticeships, customized training, career pathways, and industry strategies will be the implementation arm of these regional priorities. For example, the UCLWDB prioritizes awards for IWT and OJT funds for businesses falling under the five in-demand sectors.

UCLWDB Staff has worked closely with our TDLWD Middle Tennessee Apprenticeship Director to grow local apprenticeships. We acknowledge this as an area of opportunity, as we had the lowest number of Registered Apprenticeships in the Middle Tennessee Region for PY 2021. Growth is on the horizon; however, through exciting apprenticeship programs established, or being established, in each of the in-demand sector categories. They are as follows:

Transportation- The UCLWDB's most successful apprenticeship to date has been our partnership with TLD Trucking in Cumberland County. This trucking apprenticeship program has received statewide attention and recognition from Governor Lee. The TLD program specializes in enrolling Justice-Involved Individuals into their program and giving them the opportunity to establish a career in transportation as a truck driver. Apprentices are recruited as they leave incarceration and invited to enroll as a way to earn their CDL credential. Our Title I staff provides supportive services to those enrolled in order to further support their apprenticeship journey. We were able to enroll fifty-four Registered Apprentices into this program in 2021 and anticipate at least forty more in 2022. The UCLWDB has also worked to establish truck driving apprenticeships with Patriot Trucking, a Veteran owned trucking company catering to Veteran recruitment.

Education & Health Services- The UCLWDB has petitioned TN Department of Education to be the second pilot program to support the "Grow Your Own initiative." This would establish Teacher Occupation Apprenticeships to build teacher certification pathways in our local area. We have six "Grow Your Own" counties within our workforce area: Jackson, Overton, Putnam, White, and Warren Counties. The UCLWDB is also supporting Macon County's GIVE request for Teaching as Profession certifications to over twenty para-professionals enrolled in Teacher licensure. We want to come alongside

them to provide apprenticeship and supportive service funding. Lastly, we are actively working with Putnam County schools to pilot an Early Childhood Education teaching apprenticeship.

Professional Services- The UCLWDB is poised to enroll the first Registered Apprenticeship in Cosmetology within the State of Tennessee. We are partnering with a local high-end salon, LOXX, and area cosmetology certification providers to build this program for supplying highly trained cosmetology professionals.

Healthcare- The UCLWDB is working with United Healthcare and The Quiltss Institute to enroll 15-20 individuals into healthcare careers as Direct Support Professionals to Home Healthcare businesses.

Trade & Utilities- Partnering with the Clay County Utility District, we are in discussion to establish a Registered Apprenticeships Water Ways Management. Also, in Clay County the UCLWDB is working with local business "TDS" to supply two apprentices in Waste Management. Clay is a Distressed County suffering from a 41 % Labor Force Participation Rate. Creating apprenticeship pathways in this area will provide valuable tools in building their workforce.

Manufacturing- The UCLWDB is working with TUTCO Industries and Custom Tool to supply registered apprentices within Advanced Manufacturing. We also partner with the Highland Economic Partnership's Advanced Manufacturing Committee to educate manufacturing businesses on the benefits of registered apprenticeships.

Hospitality- The 2021 Wage and Benefit Survey Report conducted by Middle Tennessee State University lists the hospitality sector as one of the hardest hit from the COVID-19 pandemic. The UCLWDB is seeking to rebuild hospitality pipelines through PY 2024 by apprenticeships. To begin, we are currently filling a Culinary Arts Registered Apprenticeship in partnership with a local advanced culinary restaurant.

The UCLWDB is also focusing on other training initiatives beyond apprenticeships. Under our Work 1<sup>st</sup> vision, Work-Based Learning advocacy and outreach is a primary focus. The Business Services Administrator, under the supervision of the UCLWDB Executive Director, functionally directs Business Services in coordination with the OSO. They work as a cross-functional team to develop service strategies and engage businesses throughout the region in alignment with local and regional goals. Work-Based Learning advocacy requires maintaining close contact with post-secondary training providers and community partners. These connections have presented several opportunities for customized training. UCLWDB connections with area TCATs have been able to foster WBL trainings that are responsive to industry needs. For example, a local manufacturing business recently approached the Overton County TCAT to request skills upgrade training for their employees. The TCAT Director, UCLWDB Executive Director, and Special Projects Coordinator are working together to develop WBL opportunities to answer this need. WBL advocacy and outreach is also stemmed through our relationships with community and economic groups such as The Highlands Economic Partnership. UCLWDB Staff to the Board attend frequent meetings with industry officials such as chamber meetings or board meetings to ensure our objectives are in line with the needs of the employers of the region. Also, with the Highlands Economic Partnership, we made a combined effort to place over three hundred Upper Cumberland students in summer work-based learning positions in 2019. For summer 2020, we were set to exceed that number with summer work-based learning opportunities for youth in the Upper Cumberland. However, COVID-19 school closures and business social distancing restrictions required the suspension of these activities. We look forward to advancing the Youth summer work experience program again in summer 2022.

The UCLWDB will have awarded \$47,600.00 in 2022 IWT grants by the second quarter. We hope to continue IWT and OJT awards as funding is received. Our Board sets these training initiatives as high



priority for building a skilled local workforce. Assuming more training grant dollars will be received, we plan to expand our impact by utilizing the Business Services Team to recruit never-before-awarded businesses within in-demand sectors to receive future funding.

Summary/Trackable Strategy for progress accountability on implementing apprenticeships, IWT & OJTs, customized trainings, industry strategies, and career pathway initiatives:

- Establish apprenticeships focused within each in-demand sector categories.
- Support growth of apprenticeships by using pre-apprenticeships, work-based learning opportunities, and paid work experience within sectors to build a pathway to apprenticeships.
- Recruit never-before awarded businesses within in-demand sectors to receive IWT and OJT funding.

**(3c) Include the utilization of effective business intermediaries and other business services/strategies designed to meet needs of employers in your region in support of the business service strategy.**

The UCLWDB utilizes our county Chambers of Commerce as business intermediaries. We support Chamber activities as a one-stop system. Our Business Services Administrator and TDLWD Regional Director attend all Chamber meetings, when possible, to support their initiatives. Title III staff provide support to Chambers by presenting to Chamber Industrial Boards and providing Labor Market Information from Jobs4TN. We plan to capitalize on this strong relationship by using local Chambers to help establish direct job placement referrals, a cornerstone of our Work 1<sup>st</sup> initiative.

Our Board also considers county mayors to be business intermediaries. Mayors help facilitate contact with business and identify businesses needing assistance. They also serve as an excellent marketing tool for job fairs and recruiting events.

Summary/Trackable Strategy for progress accountability on utilizing business intermediaries to meet needs of employers:

- Maintain active participation in county Chamber of Commerce meetings and events.
- Promote Work 1<sup>st</sup> through Chamber of Commerce relationships to help establish direct job placement referrals.
- Provide regular updates to County Mayors to keep them abreast of workforce activities and facilitate contact with businesses for Work 1<sup>st</sup> direct referrals.

**(3d) How will you measure the effectiveness of the strategy outside of mandated business performance measures? Include information to support the increase of Labor Force Participation Rates.**

Our ability to serve business community needs of the moment is what will make us effective. The UCLWDB Business Services Team (BST) believes the current "need of the moment" is available workers. Therefore, we will measure our effectiveness in serving employers not only by mandated business performance measures, but also by locally designed KPIs focused on direct work placement. We will utilize our Work 1<sup>st</sup> initiative to bridge the gap between open job positions and the AJC caseload of available workers. Currently, our BST is reaching out to business owners and community leaders to communicate the direct referral process. Our first target is businesses that do not have or have not used their recruiting profiles in Jobs4TN to activate a recruiting profile. The Jobs4TN profile is crucial as it helps the BST identify open positions for that employer. The Work 1<sup>st</sup> process will then trigger communication between the Skills Development Team and AJC Career Advisors for participant referrals.

The UCLWDB has worked with the TDLWD to develop several *local* KPIs to measure our Work 1<sup>st</sup> success. Local KPIs will be in addition to mandated business performance measures and will be tracked by the Business Services Administrator and reported to our local Board. These additional KPIs identify the BST's ability to interact with businesses and build recruiting relationships. In contrast, the TDLWO American Job Center KPIs identify their ability to refer quality candidates to these employers. Both sets of KPI measurement are listed below:

<u>Business Services Team KPI (Local)</u>	<u>American Job Center KPIs (State)</u>
Recruiting Profile	Referred to a Job
Promotional Call	Job Placement
Provided Recruitment Services	Adult Work Experience
Referred Qualified Applicant	Youth Work Experience

The UCLWDB believes success through the Work 1<sup>st</sup> initiative will act to increase Upper Cumberland's Labor Force Participation Rate (LFPR). Currently, our labor force participation numbers are slightly lower than they were prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. The BST plans to gradually increase these rates by utilizing the Work 1<sup>st</sup> direct referral process. As AJC partners work alongside the BST to communicate participant referral to the employers, we believe the labor force can increase by 3% in two years. We also believe other strategies discussed within this plan will act in combination with Work 1<sup>st</sup> to further raise the LFPR. For instance, Clay County has the lowest LFPR in the Upper Cumberland. We have several rural community initiatives planned to boost WIOA services access. There are additional Youth Work Experience, Pre-Apprenticeships, and Apprenticeships programs targeted specific Clay County needs.

[Summary/Trackable Strategy for progress accountability on mandated business performance measures and increasing the Labor Force Participation Rate:](#)

- Measure business services impact by number of individuals directly referred into job placement through the Work 1<sup>st</sup> program.
- Use locally developed KPIs measurements to track Business Services success.
- Increase LFPR by 3% over two years by building Work 1<sup>st</sup> direct referrals program.
- Strategically increase apprenticeships and work-based learning opportunities in low LFPR counties.

**(4a) In relation to the Governor's key priorities, provide an overview of current and/or new strategies being implemented by your LWDB to ensure workforce partners collaborate on:**

The UCLWDB seeks to create a space where Titles I, II, III, and IV work alongside external partners (non-profit, community, and faith-based organizations) to carry out strategies initiated in support of the Governor's key priorities. Whenever possible, outreach opportunities are scheduled as a team unit where multiple partners provide in-person services together at community organization events. The One-Stop Operator facilitates a shared appointment calendar to coordinate partner schedules and event attendance. Partners also work amongst each other to coordinate outreach appointments. For example, Titles I and III meet jointly onsite with justice-involved clients at the Community Resource Center (CRC) each week to streamline co-enrollment. Additionally, Title I and Adult Education book joint client appointments onsite at local jails. Our team aims to present as many services as possible to clients at the same time, remembering that individuals are looking for wrap-around *services* not siloed "programs."

In terms of partner collaboration, we discovered a best practice by scheduling our AJC site certification directly before our annual MOU development. Twelve of our fourteen sites were up for recertification in

2021. The certification team (consisting of representatives from core partners and Board Staff) traveled together to each site to work through programmatic and service delivery checklists. Our visits consisted of robust conversation between partners and allowed our team to see first-hand our challenges and opportunities at each location. The discussion of these items prompted ideas to improve partner collaboration system-wide. As the drafting of our annual MOU was only weeks away as well, discussion turned to how we could hold each other accountable on these ideas through the MOU agreement. We were able to be very intentional in drafting the MOU to support active partner involvement in functional team meetings, utilizing a shared referral tracker, prioritizing co-enrollment, and even pooling funds to purchase AJC signage through the IFA. While site certifications do not occur every year, our team agreed to make annual site visits prior to MOU renewal a goal moving forward.

Summary/Trackable Strategy for progress accountability on partner collaboration:

- Joint outreach appointments between partners and community organizations.
- Encourage active functional team membership through MOU agreement.
- Partner participation in shared referral tracker spreadsheet.
- Annual cross-team site visits to discuss programmatic and service delivery improvements.

**(4b) 1) implementation of programs to best serve rural communities (distressed/at-risk); 2) criminal justice reform, 3) vocational & workforce development; and 4) other individuals in priority populations**

(1) Rural Communities- Programs to support rural areas are crucial to the Upper Cumberland. Not only is our workforce area predominately rural, but 43% of our territory is defined as either Distressed or At-Risk. Community partnerships are of even greater importance within these communities, as they are the main axis of outreach. Community locations are utilized for hosting events such as job fairs, training workshops, and literacy events. We work closely with organizations within each local community, including faith-based organizations, to reach individuals and market AJC services. Our rural community strategy will focus on combining partner services such as integrating Adult Education, workplace training, and Title III employment services. The VAJC will be an invaluable tool in bringing these services to rural communities. In PY 22-24, our One-Stop System will conduct both marketing and training on the VAJC to rural communities through our community partners. We will also set priority on establishing Pre-Apprenticeships within rural communities. Recognizing these areas have few individuals relocating into the community for work, we want to focus on training those "homegrown." Upskilling individuals already in the community builds the local skilled worker pipeline, while also boosting the Labor Force Participation Rate.

(2) Justice-Involved Individuals- Re-entering the community is a challenging transition for Justice-Involved Individuals (JII) who face many barriers in restarting their lives outside of incarceration. Recently released individuals are historically difficult to contact once outside incarceration and face competing influences that often impede success. UCLWDB programs for JII address these issues by beginning the WIOA relationship while still incarcerated. AJC staff have completed training to be able to access every county jail within our fourteen-county service area. To this end, the UCLWDB offers Adult Education classes within several of our jails and is seeing success through co-enrollments from Adult Education into WIOA as inmates progress. This project began in Warren County in 2021 and they continue to lead the way for our area with two jail training initiatives. Since 2021, Nc3 training has been provided within the Warren County jail in partnership with the McMinnville TCAT GIVE grant and WIOA Title I. While the program was immediately successful, we did identify areas of adjustment as we moved forward. TCAT instructors assessed that many enrolled inmates struggled with the math required for the Nc3 certification. Adult Education answered that need and has requested approval for a Pre-

Apprenticeship to teach the math skills necessary for those who plan to enroll in the Nc3 trammg program. We are also excited to announce that beginning June I, 2022, select student cohorts will be able to culminate their training through a Registered Apprenticeship in WCJ Welding. Our Business Services Team has secured seven local employers who have agreed to hire graduates of the Warren County jail project. Other counties have witnessed this program's success and have requested similar programs within their jails. During PY 22-24, we look forward to working with the largest jail within our workforce area- Putnam County. Overcrowding issues have prevented workforce programs there in the past. However, new jail facility is now underway and possibilities abound. The UCLWDB Executive Director is serving on a planning committee as well as working closely with the Putnam County Mayor and Sherriiff to plan training and work release programs once the new facility is built.

Beyond meeting Justice-Involved Individuals while incarcerated, our JII programs seek to provide assistance as individuals transition from incarceration to community. Our Veterans and Wagner-Peyser staff provide services to all county jails and prison inmates within thirty days of discharge to begin preparing them for outside employment. This includes workshops on resumes, applications, interview skills, and dress for success. Participants are then co-enrolled with WIOA and other partners to ensure the widest range of services is provided. Veterans and Wagner-Peyser Staff are also included in local Drug Court and Veteran Recovery Court processes. As such, individuals subject to the Court are mandated to meet with AJC staff, who then seek to assist in removing potential barriers to employment.

In 2021, the UCLWDB began working with the Department of Correction's newly opened Community Resource Center (CRC) in Putnam County. Our One-Stop Operator began by marketing WIOA services at their facilities and has grown the program into a system-wide regular presence. Beginning early 2022, representatives of Title I and Title III regularly meet with Justice-Involved Individuals at the CRC to do intakes and make referrals to partner programs. We now are working to further grow the program by facilitating CRC referrals into our other counties. While the CRC is located in Putnam County, it serves many counties within our workforce area. Title I and Title III will now meet with referral individuals in the counties where they reside so that transportation is not a barrier. We anticipate this will continue to increase our justice-involved enrollment numbers, which were already well above negotiated target goals.

The UCLWDB also provides transition support to Justice-Involved Individuals through our work with Tennessee Child Support Employment and Parenting Program (TCSEPP). This program helps individuals establish avenues for self-sustaining ways to pay court-ordered child support. We recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding to provide workforce services to their clients. Placing these individuals into employment not only helps the child they support, but also reduces the likelihood of recidivism through contempt of court.

(3) Vocational and Workforce Development- Our partners lead the way on vocational and workforce development. Growth is focused through established educational pathways certifications. Vocational Rehabilitation is a core partner to our workforce system and is working hard to increase engagement within our AJCs. UCLWDB Title III Leads are partnering with Vocational Rehabilitation to offer the PreETS Program designed to target VR students in area high schools who are about to exit the program. Title III will provide resume assistance and workforce skills training to these students to help them transition from school to workforce. VR students will also be served through the UCLWDB Work I<sup>st</sup> initiative. Once students have been through the PreETS program, our Work I<sup>st</sup> team will seek unsubsidized work placement with one of our direct referral businesses. Adult Education has also set goals to expand workforce development initiatives through integrated education and training, pre-apprenticeships, workplace education and training, and dual enrollment. Title III plans to continue increasing awareness of WIOA programs and workforce placements through hosting workshops, hiring events, and resource fairs.

The UCLWDB is also fostering vocational and workforce development within our rural communities through virtual career exploration. Rural Initiative grant funds in the amount of \$395,000.00 were recently utilized to purchase seventy-nine virtual reality headsets and licenses from TRANSFVR. In March 2022, these headsets were distributed throughout our distressed and at-risk counties for use within their Career and Technical Education (CTE) classrooms. We partnered with TRANSFVR to train county CTE instructors on headset capabilities and usage for maximum return on investment. CTE instructors will incorporate the headsets into their classroom instruction for an array of CTE pathways and skills. Students will get the unique opportunity to progress through virtual training modules within their desired career pathway without leaving the high school classroom. This will be a tremendous asset to rural communities where travel logistics for training access is a huge barrier to CTE courses. Headsets will also be used within these counties to expose middle schoolers to CTE program options. Middle school students will also have opportunities to virtually test personal skill aptitudes and view career options. Our goal through early discovery of career inclinations is to increase CTE program enrollment and ultimately increase CTE pathway pipelines in rural communities.

(4) Other priority populations- The UCLWDB One-Stop system works together to seek out and find individuals in all priority populations. Our community partnerships are key in this endeavor. We work with many local Rescue Missions and food banks to share WIOA services and build awareness of our programs. We also partner with Helping Hands and Habitat for Humanity to assist individuals in crisis. Our goals for PY 22-24 include actively increasing our ability to move individuals from crisis- to stabilization- to WIOA job placement. We recognize that many individuals who walk through our AJC doors are experiencing homelessness or other crisis that make a successful WIOA participation difficult. In the past we relied on limited community resources to bring in crisis assistance. We have sought out more faith-based organizations and have strengthened our connections with community organizations such as Upper Cumberland Human Resources Agency. Our Title I Career Advisors now have a printed list of these resources along with a direct contact. Future quarterly cross-training events will include presentations by representatives from these resources to fully explain how they can help and what services are offered. Additionally, we are reviewing our UCLWDB Supportive Services Policy to identify barriers to supporting crisis individuals. Our team will take advisement from area resource team members for suggested policy improvements to support crisis stabilization gaps with WIOA funds.

Another goal we have set for priority populations is to increase programs for low-income youth. We are working with the UPWARD Bound organization through Volunteer State Community College to identify and serve underprivileged youth. The UCLWDB is also exploring apprenticeship programs for youth aging out of the foster system. The Executive Director of Mustard Seed Ranch, a community-supported home for foster youth, serves on our Local Board and is driving this initiative. We look forward to piloting with Mustard See Ranch and hope to build more workforce direction for underprivileged youth.

[Summary/Trackable Strategy for progress accountability on implementing strategies to support the Governor's key priorities:](#)

- Rural Communities: Bring AJC services to rural communities through local outreach events with partner agencies and local organizations; Establish pre-apprenticeships to take "homegrown" approach of upskilling local individuals to increase labor force participation rate.
- Justice-Involved Individuals: Expand training programs within other local jails to duplicate Warren County pilot project; Design and upstart Putnam County jail program; Support Title III inmate discharge program and increase co-enrollments with Title I; Grow Community Resource Center (CRC) referrals to other UC counties; Braid resources with TCSEPP through MOU services.
- Vocational and Workforce Development: Support Vocational Rehabilitation's PreETS program and move clients to unsubsidized employment through Work 1<sup>st</sup> direct referral placement; Utilize

TRANSFVR headsets to increase CTE programs through career exploration and skill module obtainment.

- Other priority populations: Braid services with local HRA to meet crisis needs of individuals to ready them for active WIOA participation; Increase programs for low-income youth by working with local organizations already serving this population.

**(5a) Describe any partnerships, new collaborations, or innovative practices you would like to share that include connections with non-profit or other community organizations.**

The UCLWDB has established several new partnerships with non-profit and community organizations to collaborate with during PY 22-24. These valuable relationships will be incorporated into the workforce agendas established in the 2020-2024 Local Plan, as well as allow us to set new goals for service strategies.

The UCLWDB has established a new partnership with Cookeville Regional Medical Center (CRMC) Foundation for serving at-risk youth. The CRMC Foundation is a charitable arm of Cookeville Regional Medical Center, the largest provider of health care in the Upper Cumberland. The CRMC Foundation is a non-profit organization that offers many forms of charitable aid to Upper Cumberland residents. We are excited to partner with the CRMC Foundation to assist youth who are enrolled in CRMC drug rehabilitation programs. We have also established a referral connection for individuals served by the Foundation to be referred to our AJCs for job placement or training.

Another new collaboration is with Habitat for Humanity, a well-known non-profit organization providing affordable housing for program graduates. We are excited to be part of Habitat's "hand-up" program as the workforce component required of participants. The Upper Cumberland Chapter of Habitat for Humanity and the UCLWDB have established a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for service referral as well as exchanging letters of support for external grant proposals.

During the first quarter of PY 22, the UCLWDB served as a core partner to the Upper Cumberland Human Resource Agency's successful award of the TANF Opportunity Act Planning Grant. We received \$15,000.00 for our work in collaborating with other core partners to create an innovative poverty reduction infrastructure. If awarded the \$25 million main grant, our role will be to provide the workforce component over the three-year life of the grant through PY 25. The UCLWDB will focus on job placement through expansion of Business Services in the form of four new positions designed to target and build business relationships for direct placement. We also anticipate Title I and III enrollment growth due to referral influx from TANF infrastructure and have requested administrative funds under the grant proposal to offset the expected career services provider contract increase.

We continue to work closely with the Highlands Economic Partnership (HEP) and are working to widen that partnership footprint. The HEP is a public/private sector collaborative designed to boost economic and community development in several of the Upper Cumberland counties. More than eighty-five investor companies made up of federal, state, city and county governments and agencies, chambers of commerce, key officials and business leaders throughout the region, play key roles in the program's development. While not all of the fourteen counties of the Upper Cumberland are represented on the Steering Committee of the HEP, all counties in the Upper Cumberland benefit from the work of the organization. For example, Career and Technical instructors at Putnam, White, and Warren Counties serve alongside local manufacturing and post-secondary representatives on the Pre-Engineering, Advanced Manufacturing Committee, an ad hoc committee of the HEP. Local manufacturing needs such as Industrial Maintenance and Tool & Die training have been identified through the work of this committee. The Livingston TCAT has agreed to offer the training to companies throughout the workforce



area and training grant dollars have been offered to companies who participate. The UCLWDB Executive Director will continue to serve on the Highlands Economic Partnership Workforce Steering Committee through PY 22-24. This committee oversees and supports the implementation of current and new pathways for the Upper Cumberland in partnership with the TN Department of Education and TN Board of Regents (TBR). Our work with this committee and the TBR Upper Cumberland Pathways Coordinator has driven pathways growth through support of our Career and Technical Education Directors utilizing GIVE grants (White, Warren, Van Buren, Macon) and pathways certification. In PY 2021 we were able to support Cookeville High School in their certification of Early Childhood Education and Teaching as a Profession pathway. Along with our TDLWD Middle Region Apprenticeship Director, we are actively working to add an apprenticeship to the Early Childhood Education certification.

Summary/Trackable Strategy for progress accountability on new collaborations with community organizations:

- Partner with CRMC to assist youth enrolled in their drug rehabilitation program.
- Fulfill MOU with Habitat for Humanity for service referral and provide workforce component required for program graduates.
- Collaborate with UCHRA on TANF Opportunity Grant (if funded) by expanding Business Services to market and set up direct referrals.
- Support Highlands Economic Partnership initiatives to widen community footprint and market newly approved career pathways.

**(5b) How is the local area leveraging these valuable partnerships?**

Our main goal in leveraging valuable partnerships is to provide better access and wrap-around services to workforce clients. Our secondary goal is to financially leverage these partnerships to respond in the reality of declining federal WIOA funds. Our budding partnership with UCHRA crisis services is allowing Title I to utilize UCHRA funds to meet certain housing and travel needs for participants (see response to Question #8b). Title I funds that would normally be used for that purpose can then be reserved for other participant allocations. A similar method is being used within our partnership with the Tennessee Child Support Employment and Parenting Program (TCSEPP) through OHS and the University of Tennessee. The UCLWDB and TCSEPP have recently entered into a Memorandum of Understanding together for referral and service braiding. Shared clients will be funded through TCSEPP first, and WIOA last-dollar. Not only does this help preserve WIOA funds, but in many cases, it allows more options for the participant as TCSEPP is not subject to the same spending restrictions as WIOA.

If the Upper Cumberland Human Resource Agency TANF Opportunity Grant proposal is funded, we will follow the same leverage model for enrolled TANF clients during PY 22-25. All expenditures for participants dually enrolled would be funneled to UCHRA for funding first.

Summary/Trackable Strategy for progress accountability on leveraging local partnerships with community organizations:

- Leverage relationships to provide better access and wrap-around services by recognizing and allowing unique organizations to provide resources within their program wheelhouse.
- Realize financial leverage by braiding external funds with WIOA dollars to extend program budget.

**(5c) Has the LWDB considered utilizing fee for services to employers as revenue opportunities to further support WIOA allowable activities? If so, provide details of these opportunities.**



The UCLWDB began exploring fee for services as a revenue generating opportunity in early 2020. Plans were made to utilize our large conference room within the Board Staff offices as a temporary rental for training events. Much effort went into organizing a large-scale Autism Awareness training for first-responders. Unfortunately, this event had to be rescheduled twice and ultimately indefinitely postponed due to COVID-19 concerns and gathering restrictions. We began to see that our event rental plan for generating revenue would need virtual capabilities in order to become a reality in a post-pandemic environment. Our Board Staff began searching for ways to meet that need and are excited to report that need has been met. Through the award of non-WIOA local grant funds, our large conference room is currently undergoing renovations to become a technologically advanced meeting space. Beginning fall of 2022, this renovated space will be available for event rental and our fee for services revenue generating plan is back on track for Program Years 2022-2024.

Our fee for services plan not only includes event space rental, but also event hosting services within our facilities. UCLWDB Board Staff will facilitate employer trainings and continuing education hours through third-party contracts. Two such employer trainings are currently in the works: Mental Health and Financial Literacy trainings are both slated for 2022. Funds generated from these trainings will be reinvested into WIOA allowable Business Services activities.

[Summary/Trackable Strategy for progress accountability on utilizing fees for services:](#)

- Rent updated conference room facility for business conferences and trainings to generate revenue.
- Host employer trainings and continuing education hours events through third-party contracts.

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## **Performance Goals and Evaluation**

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**(6a) How will your LWDB increase physical/programmatic access for each of the 14 SBE groups as outlined within Workforce Services Policy- Key Performance Indicators Section I(B)?**

Strategies for increasing physical and programmatic access for each of the 14 Significant Barriers to Employment (SBE) groups are woven throughout this 2022-2024 Local Plan. Reaching and serving individuals within these groups is central to who we are, and therefore, must be central in all we do. All AJC partners will increase programmatic access through virtual means- such as the VAJC, Adult Education Virtual Access points, and Title I Career Edge modules, thereby eliminating travel barriers many individuals in these groups face (see response to Question #1a). Physical access will be expanded through a growing physical presence in counties that did not previously have AJC representation, as well as the creation of AJC Access Points throughout our area (see response to Question #1c). Specialized Centers have recently been created to better reach targeted populations in White and DeKalb counties (see response to Question #2b), with plans to expand the model if successful return on investment is shown. Work experience will be central to our Work 1<sup>st</sup> initiative (see response to Question #3a) by providing paid job training and resume building opportunities to Title I enrolled individuals with barriers to unsubsidized employment. Programs for pre-apprenticeships and apprenticeships are being added in rural communities with high percentages of low-income individuals, as well as apprenticeships opportunities for Justice-Involved Individuals and youth aging out of foster care (see response to Questions #3b). Programs geared towards priority populations relating to the Governor's key priorities are in place (see response to Question #4b), and growing partnerships with non-profit and community organizations are being utilized for increased outreach (see response to Question #5b).

Crucial to the above-referenced objectives are our external partners, including non-profit and faith-based agencies. The UCLWDB has intentionally sought out community partners able to specifically serve each of the fourteen SBE groups. We will work with each organization to combine their services with AJC programs and resources to provide wrap-around care to SBE individuals. These partners and the SBE they serve are listed below:

Displaced Homemakers- Upper Cumberland Human Resource Agency, Empower UC

Low-Income Individuals or recipients of income-based public assistance- Highlands Residential Services, Habitat for Humanity, OHS, TANF, Empower UC

Native Americans- Native American Indian Association of Tennessee, Inc (MOU in place)

Individuals with mental or physical disabilities, including SSI recipients- Vocational Rehabilitation, Highlands Economic Partnership

Those 55 and older- Upper Cumberland Human Resource Agency, Empower UC

Justice Involved Individuals- Upper Cumberland Community Resources Center (CRC), TDOC, Tennessee Child Support Employment and Parenting Program (MOU in place), Dave's Killer Bread, parole and probation officers

Individuals experiencing homelessness- Upper Cumberland school systems family resource centers (youth and families), Empower UC (youth and families), Community for Heroes (Veterans), Defenders Retreat (Veterans), DAV, AmVets

Youth in or aging out of foster care- DCS, Mustard Seed Ranch, faith-based organizations

[Summary/Trackable Strategy for progress accountability on increasing physical and programmatic access to the 14 significant barriers to employment \(SBE\) groups:](#)

- Maintain focus on SBE groups within all UCL WDB initiatives.
- Utilize designated community partners to specifically serve SBE individuals.
- Eliminate travel barriers through virtual means such as VAJC, Adult Ed Virtual Access Points, Title I Career Edge Modules, and UCLWDB website.
- Grow physical presence in counties not served by a brick-and-mortar AJC by sending a Title I "point of contact" to a designated county agency on a regular bi-weekly schedule.
- Increase targeted population enrollment in White and DeKalb counties through Specialized Center model. Expand to other counties if successful ROI is shown.
- Raise paid work experience by 10% through the Work 1<sup>st</sup> initiative to build resumes of individuals with barriers to employment.
- Increase apprenticeships and pre-apprenticeships in rural areas with high percentages of low-income youth and justice-involved individuals.
- Partner with non-profit and community organizations for increased outreach to SBE groups.

**(6b) Provide in the form of a table: Lead organization, a brief narrative strategy, a list of primary supportive services catered to the SBE's needs, and the monitoring methodology for each SBE group.**

Performance Goals and Evaluation worksheet is attached (*See Attachment III- Local Plan Performance*).

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## **Technical Requirements, Assurances, and Evaluation**

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**(7) Budget Information Provide a detailed budget that lists the sources and uses of TDLWD pass-through funds and all non-Federal matching funds by completing a provided budget toolkit (424A). Budget Form 424A is attached (*See Attachment IV- Budget*).**

**(8a) Describe any local partnerships, new collaborations, or innovative practices you would like to share.**

Question deleted.

**(8b) As WIOA Title I formula allocations continue to decline, how does your LWDB leverage partner resources (funding, other) to help further sustain WIOA programs and services to job seekers and employers?**

The UCLWDB focuses on active relationships with our partners for the purpose of being the strongest workforce system possible. We believe that filling funding gaps through leveraging partner resources is not the ultimate goal- but, rather, the *byproduct* of an effective workforce system. Meaning, when each partner is leveraged to participate through services they are uniquely positioned to provide, everyone wins. Braiding funds and services promote better results for the client (our ultimate goal), but also lessens the administrative and financial on each individual partner participating in the assistance. Therefore, our point of reference in leveraging partner resources to sustain programs is ensuring each partner is engaged and included. This begins through the work of our One-Stop Operator who hosts quarterly cross-trainings to keep AJC staff aware of available partner programs and their direct contacts. Additionally, the One-Stop Operator facilitates regular AJC Team Meetings to promote partner inclusion in service provision. Our Partner's Memorandum of Understanding requires each core partner participate in AJC Team Meetings and supply at least one representative to active service on the Welcome Team, Skills Development Team, and Business Services Team.

Moving forward in PY 22-24, our goal is to go beyond cultivating strong and active relationships within ourselves (core and additional partners), and also focus training on awareness of community relationships and faith-based organizations that can be utilized to provide support services. In late 2021 and early 2022, the UCLWDB Board Staff worked with our Welcome Function Team and Title I provider to conduct "case studies" of clients who were in duress when they came to the AJC. We worked intensively together to identify and meet the emergency needs that prevented them from successful workforce participation. We learned that WIOA is not setup to provide many of the emergencies that prevented the client from successful workforce participation. However, we were able to identify many community resources that we could engage. In one such case study, we had a client who came to us a homeless single mother. Immediately, we were able to work with the Upper Cumberland Human Resource Agency to secure initial funds to place her in a hotel for temporary housing. We were then able to refer her to SNAP for food assistance while continuing to work with UCHRA to obtain a Section 8 housing voucher for permanent housing. When the Section 8 voucher was delayed, we worked with a local faith-based agency to provide hotel extension funds until the permanent housing was available. Our team also identified the county department of education's student services team to supply clothing along with personal and housing necessities. By pulling in external community partners, our team was able to meet the crisis needs of this client without spending WIOA dollars. More importantly, by ensuring the crisis needs were met, we

transitioned her into a stable environment where she was able to participate in WIOA services. She was then able to be a successful Title I and Title III participant and is currently being transitioned from a Title I Work Experience placement to full-time unsubsidized employment! This example "case study" got our wheels turning on how our workforce system can utilize external organizations to provide funds and services beyond WIOA limitations. We were able to identify and then provide cross-training on organizations not previously worked with that can serve the job seeker and in turn, help employers, by supplying a successful work-ready candidate.

The UCLWDB ensures resource braiding occurs through policy development and file monitoring. Many elements under our Supportive Services Policy require documentation that the Career Advisor has attempted to braid funds. For example, the Career Advisor is required to document that the client is not eligible for child care funding through TANF before using Title I funds to provide child care reimbursements. Our Supportive Services Policy will be under review in PY 2022 in response to our case studies discussed above. Our team will look at ways that WIOA supportive services funds can support but not overlap with the community and faith-based organizations we have identified for emergency assistance.

[Summary/Trackable Strategy for progress accountability on leveraging partner resources to sustain WIOA programs:](#)

- Ensure each partner is continually engaged and included through functional team meetings, MOU requirements, and cross-training events.
- Provide AJC staff with in-depth training on partner resources available and how they can best be utilized for services.
- Use partner resources identified in "case studies" to meet crisis needs without spending WIOA dollars.
- Monitor files to ensure funds braiding occurs and identify areas of missed opportunities for training purposes.
- Review UCLWDB Supportive Services policy for ways WIOA funds can braid but not overlap partner organization funds.

**(8c) Is your LWDB considering a request for statewide/rapid response funds to support innovative initiatives? If so, what activities will your LWDB plan to support utilizing SW/RR funds?**

The UCLWDB submitted a request for Rapid Response Layoff Aversion funds in the amount of \$60,327.75. The request focused on two main areas of focus: employer trainings and consolidated business grants; both designed to increase business sustainability and prevent issues leading to employee layoffs.

The 2021 MTIDA Upper Cumberland Wage and Benefit Survey Summary Report showed that in a post-COVID-19 environment, two-thirds of businesses surveyed struggled to train, and therefore ultimately retain, employees. Gathering restrictions and safety protocols have made traditional training methods a challenge. In response, the UCLWDB has requested to divert nearly half of our Rapid Response funds to offering virtual trainings and forums to local businesses. These funds would be braided with a non-WIOA private grant award to purchase virtual conference equipment and training computer laptops. Procuring these resources will allow the UCLWDB facilities to offer a virtual training space for local employer use, while also giving us the opportunity to train employers themselves on workforce issues. Multiple employee training events utilizing this equipment are planned for PY 2021, including Mental Health Training (serving over 500 individuals over a 4-day period).

Recent feedback from Upper Cumberland businesses revealed that we have fallen short in communicating the full realm of AJC services to our local employers. We recognize there is work to do in order to position ourselves as the premiere job placement resource for employers. Our response strategy begins with the basics: utilizing the complete toolkit available on Jobs4TN. Many of our employers report they either do not use the website or do not understand how to effectively access all its resources. Computer laptops purchased with Rapid Response funds will be used to host multiple in-person Jobs4TN Employer Training/Sign-Up events. We will have the ability to host up to thirty business representatives at a time to receive intensive help signing up for and navigating Jobs4TN. Other training events planned will focus on helping business access un-tapped work populations. A Justice Involved Employer to Employer Forum will be virtually hosted using equipment purchased with part of our Rapid Response funds. Several of our local companies have excelled in employing those who have been justice involved. With the low labor force participation rates, many others are looking to mimic their success. Offering this forum virtually will allow us to reach a wide variety of employers, many of whom would not attend due to the distance and required time away from work. The third tier of our Rapid Response training funds strategy will focus on instruction for Work Experience. Work Experience will play a significant role in our Work 1<sup>st</sup> Business Services Strategy for PY 22-24. This will begin with virtual training for employers on the benefits of work experience employees and how to take advantage of the program. Additionally, computer laptops will be dispersed throughout the Upper Cumberland to provide virtual work experience orientations to all Title [ work experience participants. The goal of this orientation will be to provide a better-quality work experience candidate to the employer.

The second focus and remaining use of Rapid Response funds will be for consolidated business grants. Our Board has allocated over half of the funding request be utilized for this purpose. Funds will be issued to individual businesses in the form of consolidated business grants to support skills upgrades, textbook purchase, training supplies and instructor salaries. We will serve six to fifteen businesses, depending on the individual grant funding request. Consolidated Business Grants allow training programs to be customized to the respective needs of employers. These programs also help avert layoffs by updating employee skills to be competitive in the current economic environment.

We believe the combination of awarding customized Consolidated Business Grants paired with business-focused training events will maximize the effectiveness of Rapid Response funds within the Upper Cumberland.

#### Summary/Trackable Strategy for progress accountability on utilizing Rapid Response funds:

- Conduct virtual employee training events in conference room renovated partially through Rapid Response funds.
- Business Services Team to conduct employer outreach to train on full depth of Jobs4TN usage.
- Serve 6-15 businesses though Consolidated Business Grants to help increase their sustainability.

#### **(8d) Has your local area applied for and/or received other grants which have provided additional resources? If not, does your local area plan to apply for additional resources to support local activities?**

As an independent 501 (c)3 entity, the UCLWDB recognizes the importance of seeking additional funding resources to support local activities. This was set as a goal in the 2020 Local Plan, and continues to be a focus through PY 2024. In November 2021, the UCLWDB applied for and received a \$5,000.00 technology grant from the Twin Lakes Cooperative. These grant funds were used to purchase advanced technology equipment for state-of-the-art virtual meeting capabilities within the UCLWDB facilities. This equipment will allow UCLWDB members and partners to virtually converse as a group with other partners and community organizations, rather than as separate "squares" in a Google Meets or Zoom type setting. This will promote more productive virtual meetings and will also allow for better sharing of

materials and more professional presentations within the meeting. Further capitalizing on the originally awarded grant funds, the UCLWDB plans to offer rental use of this technology equipped space to local businesses as a fee-for-services to produce additional revenue.

Another local opportunity for additional grant funding exists through a partnership with Tennessee Tech University and Georgia Tech University. The UCLWDB will join these universities in PY 22 to apply for a Good Jobs Challenge Grant. These grant funds will be used to provide additional funding to leverage workforce development through educational pathways within the region.

For PY 2022-2024, the UCLWDB is also seeking a regional approach to securing additional grant funding resources. Together with our partner LWDA's within the Middle Tennessee Region, we are collectively pursuing funding for the TN Department of Education Teacher Occupation Apprenticeship to address the statewide teacher shortage. As a workforce region, we are also seeking grant funds to more fully support wrap-around services to low-income individuals. The Upper Cumberland is taking the regional lead on securing funding for financial literacy training through a third-party vendor as part of their effort to move participants out of the poverty cycle.

Another potential grant partnership on the horizon is the TANF Opportunity grant funds. The UCLWDB and Northern Middle have collaborated with the Upper Cumberland Human Resource Agency (UCHRA) to support a successful TANF Opportunity proposal after they were awarded the planning grant portion. If awarded, the grant will bring \$25 million dollars to the Middle Tennessee region to address barriers for those at or below the poverty level-including the benefit's cliff that individuals experience in low skill/low wage jobs. The UCLWDB is excited to be a primary partner to UCHRA by providing the workforce component to the proposal.

Summary/Trackable Strategy for progress accountability on seeking additional funding resources:

- Seek additional private grants from local organizations.
- Generate revenue by renting conference facilities updated through private Twin Lakes grant.
- Apply for Good Jobs Challenge Grant with TTU and Georgia Tech.
- Partner with Middle Tennessee LWDA's to pursue funding for the TN Department of Education Teacher Occupation Apprenticeship.
- Serve as primary partner to TANF Opportunity Grant (if funded) to receive additional funding for Business Services.

# Attachments

to include the Stakeholder Announcement and the Signature Page

- Attachment V: Stakeholder Announcement
- Attachment VI: Signature Page