

State of Maryland 2024-2028 Regional Plan Guidance

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Guidelines for Developing 2024-2028 Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Regional and Local Workforce Plans

Background

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) is the federal law that governs Maryland's workforce system. WIOA is designed to integrate services to support both businesses and job seekers through strategic cross-sector partnerships. It envisions connecting workforce, education, human services, and economic development entities to ensure strategic leveraging of resources and optimum results. The law addresses the needs of customers through establishing a comprehensive system that provides access to employment, education, training and support services. Through the American Job Centers (AJCs), WIOA works to prepare a trained and competitive workforce to meet the demands of employers and the labor market.

Maryland's Approach

The state of Maryland is at a pivotal moment in its economic trajectory. Governor Wes Moore challenged his Workforce Development Board to craft a workforce plan to increase Maryland's economic competitiveness and advance access to opportunity. To do this, the Board must put in place innovative and evidence-based approaches to supercharge our economy and address persistent equity gaps in the wealth-building of our people. Though Maryland has the lowest unemployment rate, the highest median household income, and among the nation's highest levels of educational attainment, Maryland's labor force participation rate continues to lag. The state's prosperity is unevenly shared. And that's putting the brakes on economic growth.

Maryland does not lack assets: the state has a diverse mix of industries, a significant presence of federal agencies and military installations, and colleges and universities that count world-class research institutions among their ranks. But Maryland needs a tactical and shrewd plan of action that connects all the dots. For Maryland to lead the nation in economic competitiveness – attracting good jobs, capital investment, and innovative industries – the state needs a clear roadmap to chart that journey. More Marylanders need to get back in the labor force for our state to be the leader it can be in both growth and opportunity.

That is why the Governor's Workforce Development Board is pleased to present its roadmap for economic success and equity with the **2024-2028 Maryland State Workforce Development Plan**. This Plan's strategic elements tie together a broad range of partners and resources, aligning around **four core strategic pillars** to realize our ambitious vision for Maryland.



Maryland’s Vision: The Moore-Miller Administration is deeply committed to building pathways to “work, wages and wealth” for all Marylanders in order to continue to grow a thriving and inclusive economy that lifts up every Maryland family. This vision is central to the State’s workforce development efforts, which will be focused on supporting the Governor’s commitment to making Maryland an ever more economically competitive and inclusive state. Inclusivity, diversity, and equity are central to increasing competitiveness - not opposing interests to choose between - as so many states, localities, companies, and systems are learning.

As the Governor has said, “The north star of our administration is to ‘leave no one behind.’” Guided by this north star, Maryland’s vision for Maryland’s workforce system is an aligned and coordinated system delivering talent solutions that support a dynamic, inclusive, and competitive economy, creating opportunities for all businesses to thrive and for every Marylander to access pathways to work, wages, and wealth.

To support this vision, the following core values of the Moore-Miller Administration will guide Maryland’s workforce system partners in their work to realize this vision:

- **Be Innovative:** Collaborate across agencies and stakeholders to identify and implement bold solutions.
- **Be Data-Driven:** Rely on data and experiences to inform our decisions.
- **Move Urgently:** Move quickly and diligently with a purpose.
- **Challenge the Status Quo:** It is okay to disagree and offer a new viewpoint.
- **Be Outcomes-Focused:** Spend each day focused on leaving no one behind.

The GWDB serves as the Governor’s chief strategy and policy-making body for workforce development by engaging key business, labor, education, community, and State and local government leaders to collaborate and advise the Governor on business-led workforce approaches that advance Maryland’s economic competitiveness and build pathways to work, wages and wealth for all Marylanders. The GWDB is charged with setting the vision and strategy for the state’s workforce system, fostering and modeling partnerships that support that vision and strategy, and holding the workforce system accountable to established goals for performance and continuous improvement to realize that vision.

During the next four years, Maryland’s workforce development system will focus on sector strategies, access and equity, apprenticeship, and other experiential learning to prepare the future workforce, and system alignment and accountability. Through the leadership of Governor Moore, we will create a Maryland where no one is left behind. Investments under WIOA will be directed to meet our state’s unique workforce needs through business-led and barrier mitigation strategies. Investments under WIOA will also offer flexibility for local areas to both align with our statewide priorities and tailor solutions to constituents’ needs. Investments will also focus on meeting regional needs and expanding business-led strategies for enhancing our state’s talent pipeline.

Maryland's Four Core Strategic Pillars:

1. **Supercharge Key Sectors** - Setting statewide sector priorities, identifying skill needs, and driving industry leadership and partnership to shape and deliver workforce solutions.
2. **Advance Equity and Access** - Ensure equitable access to quality training and employment opportunities for all Marylanders.
3. **Prepare the Future Workforce** - Transform and expand career-connected learning opportunities to ensure every young person has access to a family-sustaining career pathway, regardless of their plans to obtain a college degree.
4. **Improve System Alignment and Accountability**- Revisit system-wide performance goals, expectations, coordination, accountability, and feedback loops to ensure workforce system partners are working together efficiently and effectively.

Each pillar has a series of activities that will ultimately be tracked by the State to gauge progress and to better understand our system's success in working towards this shared vision and shared goals. Maryland's workforce system will use the Four Core Strategic Pillars as a framework, guiding the shared goals and activities of the WIOA system. This initiative allows partners to think systematically about how workforce services are delivered, whether services are reaching priority populations, and where to eliminate existing gaps to build a more prepared, responsive workforce for Maryland's businesses.

Process for the Development and Submission of Regional and Local Plans

WIOA requires all Regional Plans to align with the State's vision, as set forth in the State Workforce Plan. While Plans are required every four years, at the end of the first two years of the four-year period, the Region, in partnership with the chief elected official(s), must review the Plan and submit modified Plans to ensure conformity with the State Plan.

At minimum, Maryland requires that Regional include the provisions in this guidance by the following dates:

Important Dates Regarding Regional and Local Planning:

September 25, 2024: Regions will receive guidance and timeline from State for WIOA Regional Plans

April 1, 2025: Regional Plans are due to Maryland Governor's Workforce Development Board (GWDB)

When submitting Regional Plans, please submit plans electronically using the Adobe fillable (pdf) template that has been provided to dlgwdb-labor@maryland.gov. The submission should include the name, title, email address, mailing address, and phone number of the person we may contact

questions regarding the Plan. Submissions must also include the prompts within the response document.

Content Requirements

WIOA mandates each Region to develop and submit a comprehensive four-year plan to the Governor. The plan outlines strategies and resources to align and integrate service delivery within the workforce system and supports the State's vision and goals as outlined in the State Plan (*WIOA Section 108(a); 108(b); 20 CFR 670.560*). Regional Plans should be consistent with the State Plan and include links to local policies or attach relevant documents. References to future actions must provide an expected timeline for completion.

Please note that this plan guidance contains new prompts that are all required to be addressed within your responses as follows:

Executive Summary

Your executive summary should be brief (e.g. 3- 6 pages) and must include the following:

Board Background and Leadership:

- Provide a brief overview of your region's leadership, vision/mission, service region(s) covered, and activity/stakeholder engagement undertaken to develop this Plan

Vision for your Region:

- Describe your region's vision, topline challenges, and solutions that touch on priority industries and populations, and key strategies for program and service delivery in your areas.

Commitment to Aligning with the Four Core Strategic Pillars:

- Detail opportunities to align your region's strategy with the State Plan's Four Core Strategic Pillars.
- Provide specific examples of current or planned initiatives that support these pillars, demonstrating your commitment to achieving state-level goals.
- Include a focus on collaboration, innovation, and measurable outcomes to ensure alignment with state priorities.

Section 1: Regional Analysis

- A. This section should include an analysis of the regional economic conditions, including existing and emerging in-demand sectors and occupations, and the employment needs of businesses in those sectors and occupations.
- B. Describe the demographic characteristics of the current workforce, including the educational and literacy levels, with emphasis on youth, adults in transition, and individuals with disabilities. Describe how your region's demographics are changing and the planning implications for the anticipated workforce of the future.
- C. Describe the knowledge and skills needed to meet the employment needs of the employers in your region, including employment needs in in-demand industry sectors and occupations.
- D. Provide an analysis of current employment/unemployment data, labor market trends, and the educational and skill levels of the workforce in your region, including individuals facing employment barriers.

Tools for Analysis

To identify existing and emerging industries and occupations, various methods such as projections and location quotients can be used. For convenience, the **Growth Industry Tool (GIT)** and **Growth Occupation Tool (GOT)** are available to assist with this analysis: <https://www.labor.maryland.gov/lmi/wiagrowthind/got.shtml>

Employment needs can be assessed using employer surveys or real-time Labor Market Information (LMI), including job skills, opening counts, and advertised certifications. Access real-time LMI at <https://mwejobs.maryland.gov/vosnet/Default.aspx>

Section 2: Strategic Planning

Maryland's vision, outlined in the Four Core Strategic Pillars, is to strengthen key sectors by setting statewide priorities, identifying skill needs, and fostering industry partnerships to deliver workforce solutions. The state aims to enhance the effectiveness of its workforce system through a coordinated, inclusive approach that ensures no one is left behind. By creating equitable pathways to work, wages, and wealth, Maryland seeks to boost its economic competitiveness and ensure shared economic growth for all residents.

Part 1: Aligning Maryland's Strategic Pillars

Identify and describe which service strategies and/or services that will be developed on a regional basis and how these strategies will align with the State's four core strategic pillars. Include how your region will ensure consistent implementation of these strategies.

- **Supercharge Key Sectors** - Setting statewide sector priorities, identifying skill needs, and driving industry leadership and partnership to shape and deliver workforce solutions.
- **Advance Equity and Access** - Ensure equitable access to quality training and employment opportunities for all Marylanders.
- **Prepare the Future Workforce** - Transform and expand career-connected learning opportunities to ensure every young person has access to a family-sustaining career pathway, regardless of their plans to obtain a college degree.
- **Improve System Alignment and Accountability**- Revisit system-wide performance goals, expectations, coordination, accountability, and feedback loops to ensure workforce system partners are working together efficiently and effectively.

Part 2: Regional Sector Strategies

- A. This section should describe which in-demand industry sector(s) or occupation(s) the Local Boards in your region are serving and why.
- B. Describe the current status of your regional collaboration in support of the sector/occupation(s) and identify anticipated next steps and timelines for at least the first two years of plan implementation.

Section 3: Coordination with Regional Economic Development Organizations

This Section should Describe your regional economic development services and providers and explain how the Local Board(s) coordinates with them. Outline the current coordination strategy and the anticipated next steps planned for the next four-year period.

Section 4: Coordination of Transportation and/or Other Support Services

Based on your regional analysis, identify if transportation or other support services require coordination, and specify which services and how they will be coordinated.

Section 5: Regional Cost Arrangements

Describe you region's cost arrangements for costs associated with sections 1 through 5 above, including the pooling of administrative costs.

Section 6: Regional Performance Negotiation

Describe the process for negotiating performance in single-area regions. For multi-area regions, explain how your local Workforce Development Areas collaborate to negotiate and agree with the Governor on performance levels and report on accountability measures.