



Maryland

GOVERNOR'S WORKFORCE
DEVELOPMENT BOARD



Maryland Statewide Workforce Development Plan

WIOA Combined Plan 2024-2028

Produced by Governor's Workforce Development Board
Published December 22, 2024



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Commonly Used Abbreviations

2Gen	Two-Generation
AEFLA	Adult Education and Family Literacy Act
AELS	Adult Education and Literacy Services
AIB	Accountability Implementation Board
AJC	American Job Center
AMP	Apprenticeship Maryland Program
CAA	Community Action Agency
CCR	College and Career Readiness
CLO	Chief Learning Officer
CRP	Community Rehabilitation Program
CTE	Career and Technical Education
DHS	Department of Human Services
DHCD	Department of Housing and Community Development
DORS	Division of Rehabilitation Services
DPSCS	Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services
DUI	Division of Unemployment Insurance
DWDAL	Division of Workforce Development and Adult Learning
EARN	Employment Advancement Right Now
ETPL	Eligible Training Provider List
FIA	Family Investment Administration
FLC	Foreign Labor Certification
FY	Fiscal Year
GWDB	Governor's Workforce Development Board
JVSG	Jobs for Veterans State Grant
LACES	Literacy, Adult and Community Education System
LDSS	Local Departments of Social Services
LEA	Local Education Agency
LEP	Limited English Proficiency
LMI	Labor Market Information
Local Area	Local Workforce Development Area
LVER	Local Veteran Employment Representative
LWDB	Local Workforce Development Board
MD Labor	Maryland Department of Labor
MD THINK	Maryland's Total Human Services Information Network

MHEC	Maryland Higher Education Commission
MLDS	Maryland Longitudinal Data System
MORA	Maryland Office for Refugees and Asylees
MSDE	Maryland State Department of Education
MSFW	Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker
MWA	Maryland Workforce Association
MWE	Maryland Workforce Exchange
NRS	Maryland Office for Refugees and Asylees
OAS	Office of the Assistant Secretary
OFP	Office of Fair Practices
OWD	Office of Workforce Development
PII	Personally Identifiable Information
PIRL	Participant Individual Record Layout
POAC	Professional Outplacement Assistance Center
Pre-ETS	Pre-Employment Transitioning Services
PY	Program Year
RA	Registered Apprenticeship
RESEA	Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment
ROW	Reemployment Opportunity Workshop
SCSEP	Senior Community Service Employment Program
SNAP E&T	Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment & Training
SSN	Social Security Number
TANF	Temporary Assistance for Needy Families
TCA	Temporary Cash Assistance
UI	Unemployment Insurance
USDOL	United States Department of Labor
VR	Vocational Rehabilitation
WDQI	Workforce Data Quality Initiative
WIOA	Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act
WPR	Work Participation Rate
WPRS	Worker Profiling and Reemployment Services

Executive Summary

Maryland's Talent Strategy: Building Pathways to Work, Wages, and Wealth

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 that would 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 highest levels of educational attainment in the nation, Maryland's labor force participation rate continues to lag. Maryland has made significant progress in the first three years of the Moore-Miller Administration, and there is more to do to ensure that the state's prosperity is unevenly shared and that our economy can grow and thrive in a way that supports all Marylanders.

At the same time, Maryland's workforce is being reshaped by two major forces: rapid technological change – particularly the rise of artificial intelligence – and shifts in federal employment. As a state with one of the highest concentrations of federal workers in the nation, Maryland is uniquely exposed to federal hiring slowdowns, restructuring, and long-term workforce transformation. These shifts create both risk and opportunity: risk of displacement for workers, and opportunity to redeploy highly skilled talent into high-growth sectors of the state's economy.

Simultaneously, artificial intelligence and automation are transforming the nature of work across nearly every industry. These technologies are accelerating demand for new skills, changing job design, and creating entirely new occupations. Maryland's workforce system must not only respond to these changes, but lead in preparing workers and employers to adapt and thrive.

Maryland is not lacking 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 when Governor Moore took office, Maryland needed a clear plan of action that connected all the dots. For Maryland to lead the nation in economic competitiveness – attracting good jobs, capital investment, and innovative industries – the state needed a clear roadmap to chart that journey.

In the 2024-2028 Maryland State Workforce Development Plan the Governor's Workforce Development Board (GWDB) Plan led statewide coordination to set forth an ambitious vision for an aligned and coordinated workforce development ecosystem that will support this goal and leave no one behind.

Maryland's talent strategy responds to this moment with a clear goal: Ensure that every Marylander has a path to a high-wage, future-ready career while supporting employers' ability to grow and compete.

Four Strategic Pillars for a Stronger Workforce and Economy

Maryland's workforce strategy is organized around four core strategic pillars. Together, they provide a focused, practical roadmap for strengthening the economy, expanding opportunity, and keeping pace with the evolving present – and future – of work.

I. Supercharge Key Sectors: Closing workforce gaps in Maryland's key industries and building the talent pipelines Maryland's economy depends on.

Maryland will focus workforce investments on high-growth and high-impact industries that offer strong pathways for family-sustaining careers. These include cybersecurity and information technology, healthcare and life sciences, infrastructure and energy, manufacturing, aerospace and defense, and artificial intelligence and quantum technologies, alongside sectors critical to Maryland's federal and defense ecosystem.

Through employer-led partnerships that build on real-time labor market data and implement targeted training strategies, the State will align education and training with industry demand so that businesses can find the talent they need and Marylanders can access quality jobs. Strategies under this pillar also support workers impacted by federal workforce disruptions and assist employers and workers in adapting to AI.

II. Advance Equity and Access: Removing barriers to quality training and employment opportunities that unlock economic mobility.

A strong economy depends on broad participation, and access to work, wages, and wealth begins-or ends-with the barriers that prevent people from entering, staying in, and advancing in the workforce. This pillar prioritizes integrated, person-centered approaches that connect employment services with essential supports such as childcare, transportation, and behavioral health. By coordinating existing efforts and new innovations across partners and through public-private partnership, Maryland will help more residents move into employment, increase earnings, and build long-term stability.

III. Prepare the Future Workforce: Giving every person a clear path from education to career by redefining career preparation and ensuring access to hands-on, industry-aligned, future-focused learning opportunities.

Maryland is strengthening career preparation so young people graduate with real-world experience, career awareness, and clear next steps - whether that path leads to college, training, or directly into the workforce. This pillar connects the workforce system and the *Blueprint for Maryland's Future*, which expands career-connected learning, registered apprenticeships, and industry-recognized credentials across high schools and postsecondary institutions. By aligning education with workforce needs, Maryland will ensure students are prepared for today's jobs and to seize - and even create - tomorrow's opportunities.

IV. Improve System Alignment and Accountability: Ensuring that Maryland's talent development ecosystem of workforce, education, and supportive service partners delivers results for people and for businesses by aligning performance goals, transparent reporting, accountability, and state-local partnership.

Strong system leadership and partnership is a prerequisite to achieving goals under any of the three pillars above. To deliver on these goals, this pillar focuses on aligning performance goals and metrics, improving data-driven decision-making, streamlining processes, and supporting innovation at the regional and local level. By working as one system, Maryland will deliver better outcomes for workers and employers and ensure public investments are used effectively.

Together, these four pillars form a unified, statewide workforce strategy - one that is ambitious yet practical, outcomes-focused, and centered on economic mobility. Across all

four pillars, Maryland is embedding a forward-looking focus on artificial intelligence, digital transformation, and labor market disruption to ensure the State's workforce system is preparing residents not just for today's jobs – but for the jobs and skills of the future.

Maryland's talent strategy is not just about filling jobs – it is about building pathways to work, wages, and wealth for all Marylanders. Maryland will track a focused set of system-wide and pillar-specific performance indicators to ensure accountability, enable data-driven decision-making, and measure progress toward its talent strategy goals. These indicators align with federal WIOA requirements while expanding to include broader, statewide measures of workforce and education outcomes, and will be shared in a public dashboard.

About the 2026 Plan Modification

The Governor's Workforce Development Board is committed to continuing to refine these strategies, strengthen system alignment, and accelerate implementation of innovative workforce solutions that build robust talent pipelines for Maryland employers and expand opportunity for residents.

Maryland's workforce development system delivers employment and training services through a coordinated network of State agencies, local workforce development boards, education partners, and community organizations. Maryland's 13 local workforce development boards play a central role in this effort, leading service delivery through American Job Centers and regional partnerships across the State.

This Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Combined State Plan brings together workforce, education, and supportive service programs administered across multiple agencies and funding streams, including employment and training programs serving adults and youth, public assistance employment programs, veterans' employment initiatives, community service programs, correctional education, and registered apprenticeship, among others – all in service of the broader talent strategy pillars presented above.

The following sections of this Plan present a detailed analysis of Maryland's economic conditions, the State's strategic vision and implementation approach, coordination strategies among partners, and program-specific operational and performance plans.

Prepared by the business-led Governor's Workforce Development Board in partnership with State agencies, local workforce leaders, private sector partners, and community stakeholders, this Plan builds on the progress already underway and establishes priorities for continued action.

Maryland will move forward with urgency and intention to continue strengthening economic opportunity and ensure the workforce system delivers results for all Marylanders.

Strategic Priorities for Maryland's Workforce Development System 2024-2028

I. Supercharge Key Sectors

Pillar I – Supercharge Key Sectors: Closing workforce gaps in Maryland’s key industries and building the talent pipelines Maryland’s economy depends on.

Maryland is strengthening talent pipelines in its high-growth and high-need industries by developing coordinated sector ecosystems that prepare residents for evolving employer needs. This includes responding to major labor market shifts driven by artificial intelligence and the changing federal employment landscape – ensuring Maryland can reskill impacted workers while meeting emerging industry demand.

The State will continue to partner closely with employers to align training with demand, expand industry-aligned learning opportunities, and scale sector partnerships that connect Marylanders to high-wage, future-ready careers.

Strategies	Key Actions
1.1: Align workforce investments to priority industry sectors	1.1.A: Define high-wage, high-skill, or in-demand and emerging sectors and occupations for Maryland for use across Maryland’s talent system 1.1.B: Map workforce training assets against projected industry demand in priority sectors and occupations 1.1.C: Design and coordinate sector strategies and partnerships in priority sectors that incorporate transition or reskilling pathways for displaced federal workers, where feasible
1.2: Expand Registered Apprenticeship and other experiential learning	1.1.A: Define high-wage, high-skill, or in-demand and emerging sectors and occupations for Maryland for use across Maryland’s talent system 1.1.B: Map workforce training assets against projected industry demand in priority sectors and occupations 1.1.C: Design and coordinate sector strategies and partnerships in priority sectors that incorporate transition or reskilling pathways for displaced federal workers, where feasible

1.3. Identify and scale proven employer-led workforce models	1.3.A: Identify high-performing regional workforce initiatives and sector partnerships, and scale models that demonstrate strong employment and wage outcomes - particularly those aligned to Maryland's priority sectors 1.3.B: Expand employer-driven incumbent worker training, upskilling, and advancement pathways for existing workers to meet immediate and evolving business needs 1.3.C: Strengthen and sustain employer-led workforce models by leveraging private, philanthropic, and innovative financing approaches to expand reach and long-term impact

Pillar II – Advance Equity and Access: Removing barriers to quality training and employment opportunities that unlock economic mobility.

Maryland is strengthening its workforce system by reducing barriers to employment and ensuring that residents can access coordinated, high-quality services that support long-term economic mobility. This includes advancing integrated, person-centered service delivery and aligning workforce, human services, and community-based supports to help individuals enter, persist in, and advance in the workforce.

The State will also continue to partner with employers and community organizations to expand access to quality jobs and support retention and advancement for workers facing barriers to employment, including through Governor Moore’s signature ENOUGH initiative.

Strategies	Key Actions
2.1 Reduce barriers to workforce participation for populations with high barriers	2.1.A: Use data to identify priority populations and communities with the greatest labor force participation gaps and target investments accordingly. 2.1.B: Expand integrated, community-based service delivery by strengthening partnerships and aligning workforce and supportive services, including childcare, transportation, and behavioral health. 2.1.C: Advance targeted strategies for populations facing the greatest barriers – including justice-involved individuals, disconnected youth and young adults, and ENOUGH communities – by expanding re-entry, re-engagement, and coordinated pathways to employment, education, and training
2.2: Support employers in implementing barrier-removing hiring and workforce advancement practices	2.2.A: Expand workplace literacy and advancement programs 2.2.B: Offer employer incentives tied to training and upskilling diverse talent 2.2.C: Lead by example through requirements in state hiring and procurement, including use of paid internships and Registered Apprenticeships and State as a Model Employer

2.3: Advance skills-based hiring and credential transparency	2.3.A: Establish a framework for recognition of prior learning and experience that recognizes and evaluates the knowledge and skills gained through prior learning, work experience, military or other public service, and formal training. 2.3.B: Align career pathways with skill- and competency-focused progression and map those pathways for learners, jobseekers, advisors, and educators. 2.3.C.: Promote and invest in skills-based job matching tools, integrating where feasible into labor exchange platforms and career navigation services.

Pillar III – Prepare the Future Workforce: Giving every person a clear path from education to career by redefining career preparation and ensuring access to hands-on, industry-aligned, future-focused learning opportunities.

Maryland is strengthening career preparation systems to ensure that every young person has a clear pathway to a high-wage, future-ready career. This includes both in-school youth and out-of-school youth, with a focus on re-engagement, skill-building, and connection to employment and training opportunities.

The State will continue to expand access to hands-on, industry-aligned learning, strengthen career navigation, and align education and workforce systems so all young people – regardless of their starting point – can successfully progress along work and learning pathways.

Strategies	Key Actions
3.1: Expand career-connected learning across secondary and postsecondary systems	3.1.A: Increase student participation in Registered Apprenticeships, as well as in internships and other work-based learning 3.1.B: Define rigorous standards for industry-recognized credentials, integrate into programs of study, and expand completion 3.1.C: Integrate career-connected learning into high school and postsecondary graduation pathways

3.2: Strengthen career navigation and workforce information systems for students and out-of-school youth	3.2.A: Develop and implement statewide frameworks, standards, and resources to support career counseling in middle and high school 3.2.B: Provide schools and counselors with up-to-date career pathway information, including on apprenticeships and other career-connecting learning opportunities 3.2.C: Expand career navigation and case management supports for out-of-school youth
3.3: Expand structured workforce entry pathways into high-skill, high-wage, or in-demand occupations	3.3.A: Expand entry pathways into public service and other high-need occupations including education, public safety, human services, and government roles 3.3.B: Integrate apprenticeship, pre-apprenticeship, industry-recognized credentials, service programs, and sector-based training into aligned and clearly defined career pathways 3.3.C: Expand transition and re-engagement pathways for out-of-school youth into employment, postsecondary education, and training through workforce and education program coordination and braiding supports

Pillar IV. Improve System Alignment and Accountability

Ensuring that Maryland's talent development ecosystem of workforce, education, and supportive service partners delivers results for people and for businesses by aligning performance goals, transparent reporting, accountability, and state-local partnership.

Maryland is strengthening coordination, accountability, and performance across its workforce system to ensure that investments translate into measurable results for residents and employers. This includes aligning performance goals across programs, improving transparency of outcomes, and leveraging data to drive continuous improvement and informed decision-making.

By strengthening governance, aligning investments, and supporting regional innovation, Maryland will ensure its talent development ecosystem operates as a unified system capable of delivering results at scale.

Strategies	Key Actions

4.1: Revisit policy and performance incentives and assessment frameworks to align activities with the vision for Maryland's workforce system.	4.1.A: Establish shared statewide workforce performance goals and transparent outcomes reporting to inform data-driven decision-making 4.1.B: Align performance incentives across agencies and programs, including in required reporting by programs where appropriate 4.1.C: Establish a clear review and continuous improvement process for the state's workforce system performance management
4.2: Improve system efficiency and user access	4.2.A: Improve access to centralized information on available workforce programs, credentials, and credentialing pathways 4.2.B: Examine and improve the customer navigation experience through talent system entry points, including through American Job Centers across the state 4.2.C: Modernize the state's labor exchange platform to incorporate skills-driven career navigation and job matching that better connects jobseekers and employers
4.3: Support regional innovation and locally driven solutions	4.3.A: Develop and expand funding vehicles that support local initiatives aligned to the strategies above, including those driven by local workforce development boards 4.3.B: Elevate and share best practices across regions within the state 4.3.C: Align local and regional strategies with statewide priorities, while preserving local flexibility to tailor execution to their economies

Narrative detail can be found beginning in section II(b)(2) on page 86.

System Performance KPIs	Additional Strategic Pillar KPIs
Cross-System Metrics: - LaborForce Participation Rate - Unemployment Rate - Total Credential Attainment Rate (all programs)	Pillar I % of participants in training for priority sectors - Total # of Registered Apprentices (active + new) # of participants trained in AI / digital / emerging technology skills # of workers transitioned from federal employment into priority sectors

• Employment Rates by Education / Credential Level	Pillar II • Disaggregated cross-system and WIOA metrics • Co-enrollment rate across workforce + human services programs
Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act (WIOA) Metrics: • Employment Rates Q2 and Q4 after exit • Median Earnings Q2 after exit • Credential Attainment Rate • Measurable Skill Gains • Employer Retention Rate	Pillar III • WIOA Youth performance in WIOA metrics • % of high school graduates completing the high school level of a registered apprenticeship or industry-recognized credential (<i>Blueprint</i>) • % in-school youth participating in career-connected learning activities • Postsecondary enrollment OR employment within 1 year of graduation
	Pillar IV • State performance on all WIOA primary indicators (aggregate) • % of local areas meeting or exceeding negotiated WIOA performance targets • Co-enrollment rate across core programs (WIOA Titles I-IV, TANF, etc.) • % of programs reporting into shared statewide performance dashboard

II. Strategic Elements

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include a Strategic Planning Elements section that analyzes the State's current economic environment and identifies the State's overall vision for its workforce development system. The required elements in this section allow the State to develop data-driven goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce and to identify successful strategies for aligning workforce development programs to support economic growth. Unless otherwise noted, all Strategic Planning Elements apply to Combined State Plan partner programs included in the plan as well as to core programs. Where requirements identify the term "populations," these must include individuals with barriers to employment as defined at WIOA Section 3. This includes displaced homemakers; low-income individuals; Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians; individuals with disabilities, including youth who are individuals with disabilities; older individuals; ex-offenders; homeless individuals, or homeless children and youths; youth who are in or have aged out of the foster care system; individuals who are English language learners, individuals who have low levels of literacy, and individuals facing substantial cultural barriers; farmworkers (as defined at section 167(i) of WIOA and Training and Employment Guidance Letter No. 35-14); individuals within 2 years of exhausting lifetime eligibility under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program; single parents (including single pregnant women); and long-term unemployed individuals. Additional populations include veterans, unemployed workers, youth, and others that the State may identify.

II. (a) Economic, Workforce, and Workforce Development Activities Analysis

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include an analysis of the economic conditions, economic development strategies, and labor market in which the State's workforce system and programs will operate.

II.(a)(1) Economic and Workforce Analysis

(A) Economic Analysis.

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include an analysis of the economic conditions and trends in the State, including sub-State regions and any specific economic areas identified by the State. This must include:

- (i) **Existing Demand Industry Sectors and Occupations.** Provide an analysis of the industries and occupations for which there is existing demand.
- (ii) **Emerging Demand Industry Sectors and Occupations.** Provide an analysis of the industries and occupations for which demand is emerging.
- (iii) **Employers' Employment Needs.** With regard to the industry sectors and occupations identified in (A)(i) and (ii), provide an assessment of the employment needs of employers, including a description of the knowledge, skills, and abilities required, including credentials and licenses.

(B) Workforce Analysis.

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include an analysis of the current workforce in the State and within various state regions. Provide key analytical conclusions in aggregate as well as disaggregated among populations to identify potential disparities in employment and educational attainment and understand labor force conditions for items (i)-(iii) below.

Populations analyzed must include individuals with barriers to employment described in the first paragraph of Section II. Analysis must include–

- (i) Employment and Unemployment.** Provide an analysis of current employment and unemployment data, including labor force participation rates, and trends in the State.
- (ii) Labor Market Trends.** Provide an analysis of key labor market trends, including across existing industries and occupations.
- (iii) Education and Skill Levels of the Workforce.** Provide an analysis of the educational and skill levels of the workforce.
- (iv) Comparison of Economic and Workforce Analytical Conclusion.** Describe areas of opportunity for meeting hiring, education, and skills needs identified in the economy compared to the assets available in the labor force in the state.

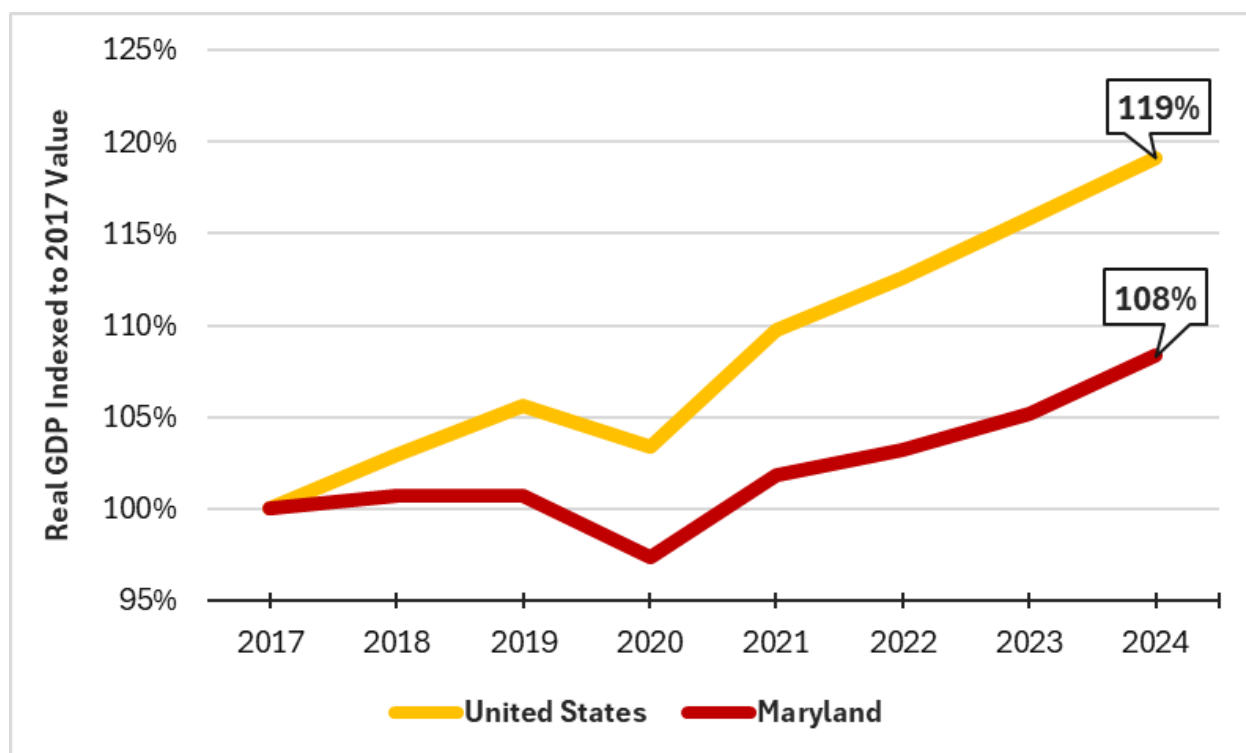
1.0 Economic Analysis

Economic Analysis. The Unified or Combined State Plan must include an analysis of the economic conditions and trends in the State, including sub-State regions and any specific economic areas identified by the State.

1. Economic Analysis

From 2023 to 2024, Maryland's change in its real (inflation-adjusted) gross domestic product (GDP) was slightly larger than the change nationwide (3.0 percent vs 2.8 percent). However, although Maryland's real GDP growth rate outperformed the national trend, the state still has room to catch up from prior underperformance: Between 2017 and 2024, the nation's real GDP grew by 19.1 percent while Maryland's real GDP only improved by 8.4 percent - the 42nd ranked growth rate in the nation. These trends are shown in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Real GDP Indexed to 2017 Levels in Maryland and United States, 2017 - 2024

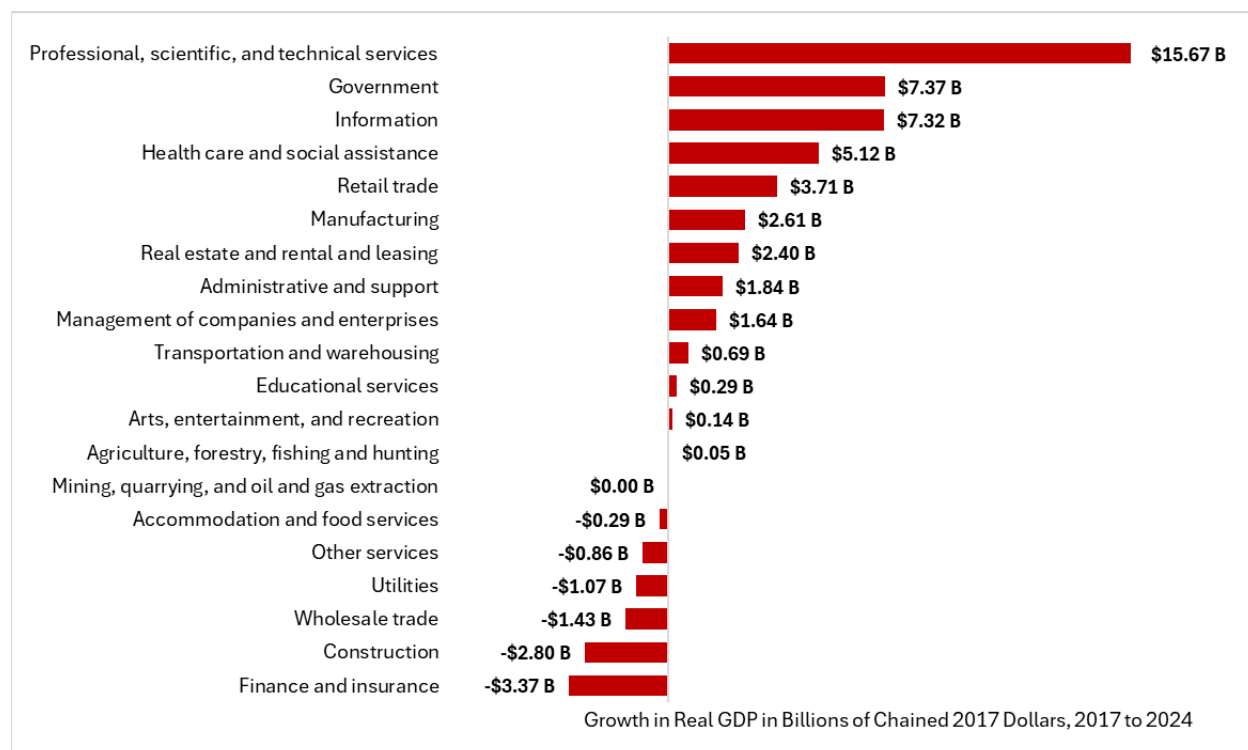


Source: The Bureau of Labor Statistics

Figure 2 shows how Maryland's real GDP has grown over the past seven years by high-level industry. Maryland's Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services sector expanded the largest amount, with real GDP rising by \$19 billion between 2017 and 2024. Growth in this sector was driven by the Computer Systems Design and Related Services and the Miscellaneous Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services subsectors, which grew by

\$8.2 billion and 8.5 billion, respectively. The Information sector grew at the fastest rate from 2017 to 2024 at 42.3 percent. Growth in the Data Processing, Hosting, and Other Information Services subsector grew the most in dollars and rate within the Information industry sector: the subsector grew by \$2.7 billion, which is a 143 percent increase from 2017 to 2024.

Figure 2: Change in Maryland Real GDP By Industry, 2017 – 2024



Source: The Bureau of Economic Analysis

Although 13 of Maryland's 20 high-level industry sectors grew between 2017 and 2024, only two sectors grew at a faster rate in Maryland than nationally – Government and Manufacturing.

Manufacturing in Maryland grew 12.4 percent versus 11.9 percent nationally. This growth was largely due to the Chemical Manufacturing subsector (which includes much of the state's pharmaceutical manufacturing) growing 31.3 percent (\$1.8 billion) between 2017 and 2024. Maryland's Government sector grew by 9.1 percent in Maryland, versus 5.6 percent growth nationally. This was largely the result of growth in Federal Civilian GDP, which grew by 14.2 percent (\$5.6 billion) in Maryland between 2017 and 2024.

In February 2026, the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) published data on GDP in Maryland's counties for 2024 and revised data for 2017 through 2023. In total, Maryland's real

(inflation adjusted) GDP grew by \$12.5 billion in 2024. The table below in Figure 3 shows that Anne Arundel County had the largest GDP growth at almost \$2.3 billion - 18.1 percent of the statewide increase. Somerset County grew its GDP at the fastest rate of 13.6 percent. Only one county (Cecil) had a contraction in GDP for 2024.

Figure 3: Change in Maryland Real GDP (in millions) By Industry, 2023 - 2024

Area	GDP Change; 2023-2024	Percent Change; 2023-2024
Maryland	\$12,547.95	3.0%
Allegany	\$50.51	1.9%
Anne Arundel	\$2,269.36	4.3%
Baltimore	\$1,646.63	2.9%
Baltimore City	\$1,315.80	2.6%
Calvert	\$109.71	2.3%
Caroline	\$68.47	5.9%
Carroll	\$188.35	2.8%
Cecil	-\$39.08	-0.7%
Charles	\$361.30	5.7%
Dorchester	\$69.51	5.2%
Frederick	\$591.33	3.9%
Garrett	\$56.22	4.3%
Harford	\$297.72	2.2%
Howard	\$1,097.40	3.7%
Kent	\$0.81	0.1%
Montgomery	\$1,160.93	1.2%
Prince George's	\$2,230.43	4.6%
Queen Anne's	\$110.97	5.4%
Somerset	\$114.24	13.6%
St. Mary's	\$227.03	2.8%
Talbot	\$37.88	1.8%
Washington	\$181.93	2.5%

Area	GDP Change; 2023-2024	Percent Change; 2023-2024
Wicomico	\$196.04	3.6%

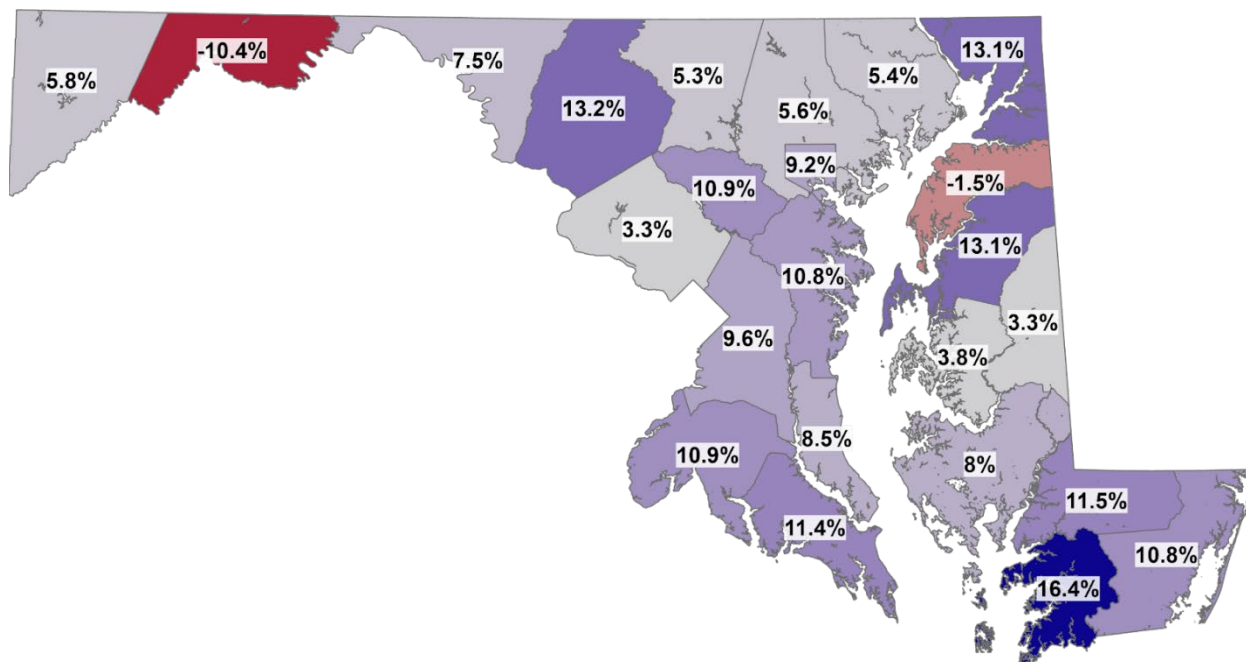
Source: The Bureau of Economic Analysis

Within Anne Arundel County, the main driver of GDP growth was the Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services industry. According to BEA, the sector's contribution to real GDP grew by \$663.73 million. Statewide, real GDP from the Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services industry sector grew by 3.6 percent; in Anne Arundel County the sector grew by 10.7 percent. In 2023, GDP for this sector increased by 6.8 percent, showing an increase in economic output for 2024.

Notably, only one county in Maryland experienced a decline in real GDP between 2023 and 2024. Cecil County's GDP fell by \$39.08 million. The decline in Cecil County was largely driven by cuts in two sectors: real GDP in Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services fell by \$11.45 million and real GDP in Other Services fell by \$5.46 million. Both sectors fared worse in Cecil County than in the state as a whole.

Taking a longer view over the past five years, and as illustrated in Figure 4, Maryland's real GDP growth has not been equal by region. Western Maryland trended slightly worse than the rest of Maryland. Growth has been fairly strong for the rest of Maryland, especially the Lower Shore counties (Wicomico, Worcester, and Somerset). Somerset County increased its GDP to the fastest rate in the state at 16.4 percent. Somerset County's GDP growth has been very broad based. The largest sector to expand has been Government, which grew by \$35.9 million for a growth rate of 14.3 percent. The next strongest sector, Wholesale Trade, grew \$17 million at a rate of 18.2 percent.

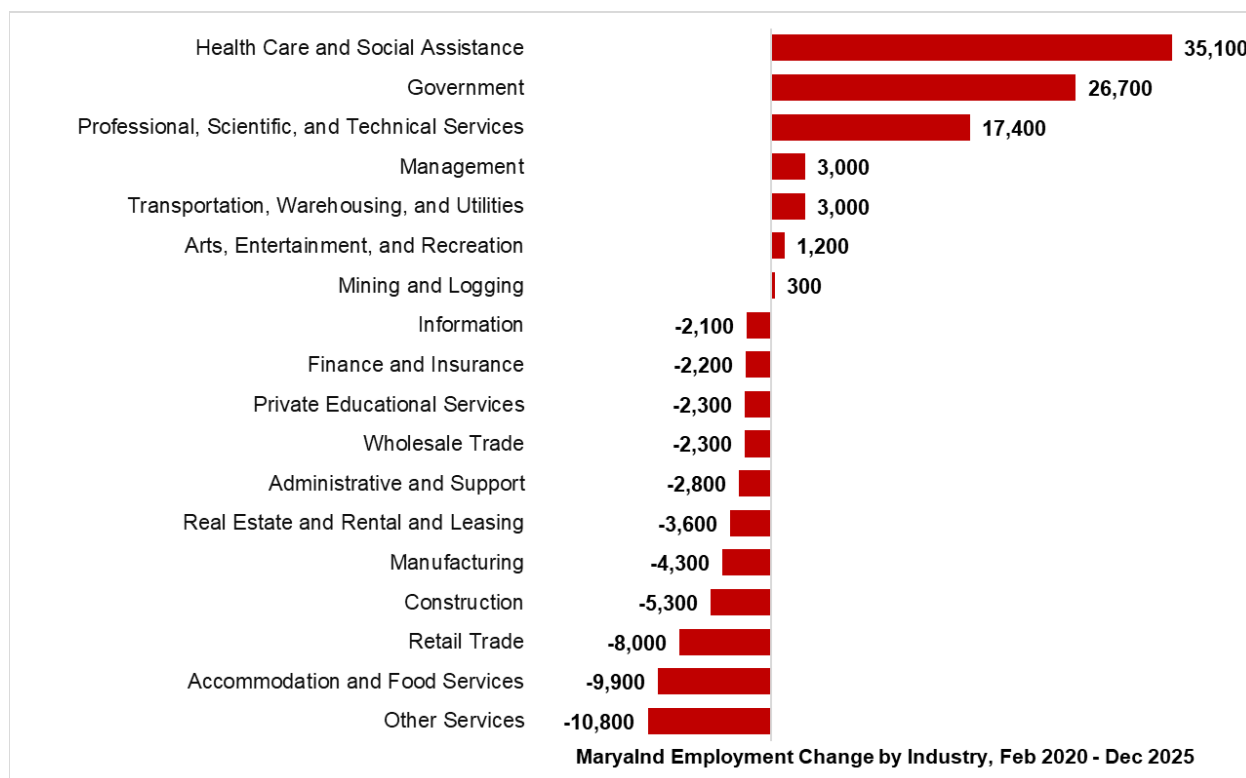
Figure 4: Percent Change in Maryland Real GDP by County, 2019 – 2024



Source: The Bureau of Economic Analysis

While Maryland faces long-term challenges with indicators such as weaker GDP growth, the state also faces some short-term challenges in recovering from the pandemic. Maryland's total nonfarm employment growth rate ranks 41st between February 2020 and December 2025. The state's private-sector growth rate over the same period ranks 45th. Figure 5 shows how employment has changed by industry in Maryland between February 2020 and December 2025.

Figure 5: Maryland Employment Change by Industry, February 2020 - December 2025



Source: The Bureau of Labor Statistics, CES Program

As Figure 5 shows, employment in Maryland's Health Care and Social Assistance sector has grown the most of any of the state's high-level industries. Since February 2020, the sector has added 35,100 jobs and Maryland has the 32nd-best growth rate in the nation.

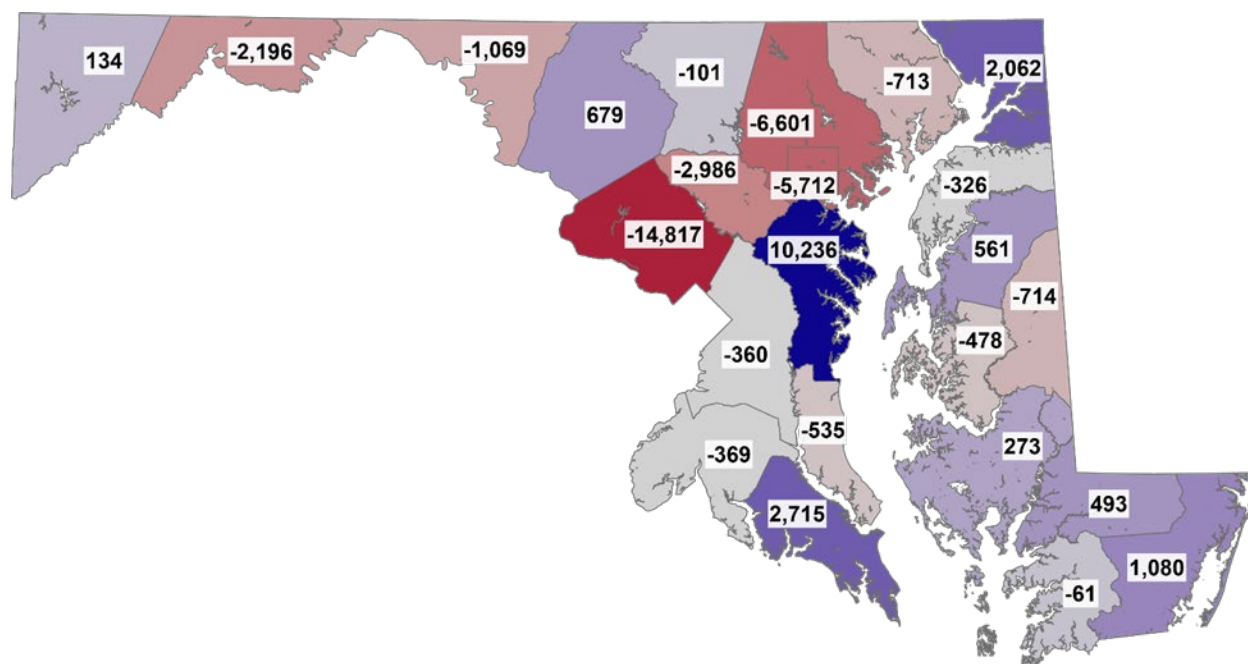
Maryland's public sector has also seen growth. The industry added 26,700 jobs between February 2020 and December 2025. Maryland's growth is largely due to an increase in Local Government jobs – since February 2020 the subsector has added 19,300 jobs. The growth in Government jobs has been mitigated by recent declines in federal government employment in Maryland.

Among Maryland's high-level industries, none has contracted more than the Other Services industry (which includes businesses handling machinery repair, religious activities, grantmaking, laundry services, etc.). Since February 2020, the industry has lost 10,800 jobs. Maryland has the 50th ranked growth rate in this industry since February 2020. The state's Accommodation and Food Services sector has also been slow to recover. Since February 2020 Maryland has lost 9,900 jobs in the industry and has the 40th ranked growth rate.

As employment patterns vary by industry, they also vary by geography. Figure 6 shows the change in private-sector employment by county between 2019 and 2024. Note that county data will not match the monthly employment data discussed above, as they are from different programs that report on different timeframes with different coverage definitions.

As Figure 6 highlights, Montgomery County has seen the largest decline in private sector employment of any Maryland County. Between 2019 and 2024, employment fell by an estimated 14,817 jobs. The largest declines were in Administration and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services (a loss of 4,684 jobs) and Finance and Insurance (a loss of 3,142 jobs). Health Care and Social Assistance added the most jobs of any industry in the county, expanding by 4,840 jobs. Anne Arundel County had the largest gain in private sector employment. Between 2019 and 2024, employment increased by 10,236 jobs. The largest gains were in Manufacturing (an increase of 6,286 jobs) and the Health Care and Social Assistance (an increase of 4,905 jobs).

Figure 6: Annual Average Private Employment Changes by County, 2019 - 2024



Source: The Bureau of Labor Statistics, QCEW Program

In addition to reviewing sectors by how many jobs they are adding in Maryland, it is important to also consider which industries are key sources of strength for the state. The table below shows the ten industries with the highest location quotients that employed at least 7,000 employees in 2024.

Figure 7: Industries in Maryland Employing at Least 7,000 Employees in 2024 by Location Quotient

NAICS	Industry Title	Average Annual Employment 2024	Location Quotient, 2024
5417	Scientific Research And Development Services	40,822	2.47
3345	Navigational, Measuring, Electromedical, And Control Instruments Manufacturing	17,536	2.39
5612	Facilities Support Services	7,557	2.39
5415	Computer Systems Design And Related Services	84,432	1.94
6232	Residential Intellectual And Developmental Disability, Mental Health, And Substance Abuse Facilities	18,361	1.54
8133	Social Advocacy Organizations	7,294	1.52
5611	Office Administrative Services	16,578	1.5
3254	Pharmaceutical And Medicine Manufacturing	9,207	1.48
5416	Management, Scientific, And Technical Consulting Services	48,078	1.45
5419	Other Professional, Scientific, And Technical Services	22,442	1.43

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

The table shows several key areas of strength for Maryland. Of large industries with a high location quotient, Scientific Research and Development has the highest location quotient of 2.47, indicating there are nearly 2 and a half times as many Maryland jobs in this sector as would be expected based on national employment patterns. The sector employs nearly 41,000 workers and is closely tied to the Pharmaceutical and Medicine Manufacturing sector which employs over 9,000 workers and has the eighth highest location quotient.

In fact, each of Maryland's three "Lighthouse" sectors are represented in the above table:

1. Life Sciences

- NAICS 5417 and 3254 have the highest and eighth highest location quotients and employed over 50,000 workers in 2024.

2. Aerospace and Defense

- NAICS 3345 is one component of Maryland's Aerospace and Defense sector and employs over 17,000 workers as of 2024. This sector had the second highest location quotient among larger Maryland industries.

3. IT and Cybersecurity

- NAICS 5415 is one component of Maryland's cybersecurity landscape and has the fourth highest location quotient. This one subsector of IT and Cybersecurity employs over 84,000 workers.

1.1 Defining Priority Sectors By Looking at In-Demand and Emerging Sectors and Occupations

Maryland's diverse economy provides many different career pathways for its workers. This section defines priority sectors for the state's workforce development efforts by reviewing data on in-demand and emerging occupations and industries.

For this report, in-demand occupations and industries are defined as those with the greatest number of job postings over the past year (January to December 2025). The table below shows the ten occupations (defined by 6-digit Standard Occupation Code - or SOC) with the most job openings in Maryland in 2025.

Figure 8: Top Occupations by Total Job Postings in Maryland in 2025

SOC	Occupation Title	Job Postings Between January and December 2025
29-1141	Registered Nurses	48,562
15-1252	Software Developers	18,427
41-2031	Retail Salespersons	18,334
15-1299	Computer Occupations, All Other	16,181
53-3032	Heavy and Tractor Trailer Truck Drivers	12,333
41-1011	First-Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers	11,495
29-1123	Physical Therapists	9,798
31-1120	Home Health and Personal Care Aides	9,376
11-9111	Medical and Health Services Managers	8,918

SOC	Occupation Title	Job Postings Between January and December 2025
43-4051	Customer Service Representatives	8,865

Source: MD Labor analysis of Lightcast Data (datarun 2026.1)

In total, there were 737,918 unique job postings in Maryland in 2025 according to Lightcast data. Of these, Registered Nurses had the most postings of any occupation in Maryland - nearly 49,000 postings. Registered Nurses made up 6.6 percent of all postings in Maryland in 2025. Healthcare roles were in high demand in Maryland, as Physical Therapists (9,798 total postings), Home Health and Personal Care Aides (9,376 total postings), and Medical and Health Services Managers (8,918 total postings) also rounding out the top ten. IT and cybersecurity roles were also heavily advertised for in Maryland in 2025. Software Developers had the second highest total job postings of any occupation (18,427) and Computer Occupations, All Other (often where many cybersecurity roles are categorized) had the fourth highest total with 16,181 postings in 2025.

In addition to examining job postings by occupation, the below chart shows the industries with the most job postings in 2025 in Maryland. As suggested by the occupation data, Health Care and Social Assistance led total job postings last year, with 114,581 total postings (15.5 percent of all postings). Maryland's Professional and Business Services Sector was also in demand - the Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation sector had 105,469 postings in 2025 and the Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services sector had 83,973.

Figure 9: Top Industries by Total Job Postings in Maryland in 2025



Source: MD Labor analysis of Lightcast Data (datarun 2026.1)

In addition to industries and occupations that are currently in demand, Maryland considered occupations that are emerging - those that will grow in the future. The following table contains emerging occupations defined in a manner consistent with Maryland's 2024 to 2028 State Plan: a location quotient less than one, require little prior experience/training, and positive projected employment growth.

Figure 10: Top Emerging Occupations in Maryland

SOC	Occupation Title	Location Quotient	Estimated Growth 2023 - 2033
35-2014	Cooks, Restaurant	0.74	4,154
29-1141	Registered Nurses	0.84	3,841
31-1131	Nursing Assistants	0.98	2,239
53-3032	Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	0.65	2,060
13-2011	Accountants and Auditors	0.99	1,723
35-1012	First-Line Supervisors of Food Preparation and Serving Workers	0.88	1,655

SOC	Occupation Title	Location Quotient	Estimated Growth 2023 - 2033
13-1161	Market Research Analysts and Marketing Specialists	0.79	1,415
11-9021	Construction Managers	0.93	1,118
15-1232	Computer User Support Specialists	0.87	990
25-3031	Substitute Teachers, Short-Term	0.94	943

Source: MD Labor Labor Market Information Team

As the table shows, roles in Health Care, Distribution, Construction, and IT make up many of the top emerging occupations. What is especially notable is the presence of Registered Nurses on the list of the top growing/expanding occupations (Maryland is projected to need another 3,841 Registered Nurses through 2033) as well as topping the list of in-demand occupations, as highlighted earlier.

Maryland also considered industries projected to expand to grow the most through 2033. This analysis differs from the method for occupations because industry data is available to a different level of granularity within MD Labor's projections. The chart below displays the ten industries projected to add the most jobs through 2033.

Figure 11: Maryland Industries Projected to Have the Largest Employment Growth Between 2023 and 2033



Source: MD Labor Labor Market Information Team

As the chart shows, Health Care and Social Assistance is expected to grow the most in Maryland through 2033, adding over 40,000 positions. This is followed closely by Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services.

While there are some differences between the occupations and industries which are currently in demand compared to those which are expected to grow rapidly in the future, there is also significant overlap. Based on the data in this section, and data discussed earlier on key areas of growth in Maryland's economy, eight priority sectors are identified:

1. Healthcare and Social Assistance

- The industry has the most jobs currently posted and is expected to grow the most through 2033 in Maryland. Many of the occupations growing the most or with the highest levels of demand are also in Health Care.

2. Child Care

- Child Care is a subsector of Health Care and Social Assistance and frequently cited as a barrier to employment for workforce training participants. Prioritizing the child care industry allows Maryland to boost labor availability across sectors. This dynamic is the subject of many rigorous recent studies and is discussed further in Section 2.2.

3. Professional and Business Services

- The Professional and Business Services sector is a pillar of Maryland's economy. For example, the Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services industry had the largest growth in real GDP of any sector between 2017 and 2024. This component of the broader Professional and Business Services sector (along with Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation) also has strong current demand and strong forecasted demand over the next ten years.

4. IT and Cybersecurity

- IT and Cybersecurity is a component of the Professional and Business Services sector, though it is worth highlighting separately. Two occupations that are critical to this sector (Software Developers and Computer Occupations, All Other) were among the top ten occupations by job postings in 2025. Furthermore, as discussed earlier, NAICS 5415 (Computer Systems Design) had the fourth highest location quotient of any Maryland industry employing at least 7,000 workers (the subsector also employed by far the most workers of any in the top ten).

5. Life Sciences

- Maryland's Life Sciences industry also falls partly within the larger Professional and Business Services sector. As discussed earlier in this document, Scientific Research and Development has the highest location quotient of any industry in Maryland employing over 7,000 workers in 2024. Pharmaceutical And Medicine Manufacturing had the eighth-highest location quotient. This highly concentrated sector helps drive much of Maryland's growth in Professional and Business Services and Manufacturing.

6. Manufacturing

- Manufacturing is represented as both an in-demand industry as well as a growth sector - the sector is expected to add over 6,000 positions between 2023 and 2033. Additionally, the Navigational, Measuring, Electromedical, And Control Instruments Manufacturing sector had the second highest location quotient in 2024 among Maryland industries employing at least 7,000 employees.

7. Construction

- Construction is a foundational industry and infrastructure jobs are critical to ensure Maryland can meet the needs of businesses looking to expand and locate in the state. The Construction sector is expected to add the fifth most jobs of all industries in Maryland through 2033 and Construction Managers are one of the emerging occupations in Maryland with the highest growth rate.

8. Transportation and Warehousing

- Maryland needs a strong distribution and logistics sector. The sector is expected to add the eighth most jobs through 2033 and builds upon strong assets for Maryland, such as the Port of Baltimore.

These eight sectors are explored in more detail in the following section, along with a discussion of employers' current needs.

1.2 Priority Sector Overview

This section contains detailed information on each of the eight priority sectors identified in the prior section. For each of the eight sectors, this report identifies:

- Projected growth by subsector through 2033.
- Projected growth for key occupations through 2033. Occupations for each priority industry were selected through a review of staffing patterns and job posting data.
- Distribution of job postings by county in 2025.
- Top skills that Maryland employers requested for this sector in 2025.
- Top qualifications that Maryland employers requested for this sector in 2025.

1.2.1 Health Care and Social Assistance

Healthcare remains one of the largest and fastest-growing employment sectors in Maryland. MD Labor projects that the Health Care and Social Assistance sector will add an estimated 33,392 jobs between 2023 and 2033—a 9.7 percent increase. The most rapid growth is projected in Ambulatory Health Care Services (NAICS 621), expanding by 13.7 percent. This growth is driven by outpatient care, diagnostic laboratories, and home health services. Hospitals (6.5 percent) and Nursing and Residential Care Facilities (5.3 percent) also show steady gains.

Figure 12: Projected Maryland Employment Growth by Industry for Key Sectors in Health Care and Social Assistance, 2023 to 2033

NAICS	Industry Title	Employment 2023	Projection Employment 2033	Numeric Change	Percent Change
621000	Ambulatory Health Care Services	157,590	180,473	22,883	13.65%
621100	Offices of Physicians	56,156	63,513	7,357	12.39%

NAICS	Industry Title	Employment 2023	Projection Employment 2033	Numeric Change	Percent Change
621200	Offices of Dentists	17,414	19,004	1,590	8.77%
621300	Offices of Other Health Practitioners	18,958	22,027	3,069	15.12%
621400	Outpatient Care Centers	23,889	27,585	3,696	14.49%
621500	Medical and Diagnostic Laboratories	6,496	7,341	845	12.30%
621600	Home Health Care Services	27,546	33,137	5,591	18.65%
621900	Other Ambulatory Health Care Services	7,132	7,866	734	9.84%
622000	Hospitals	105,430	112,426	6,996	6.45%
622002	State Hospital Employment	2,840	2,887	47	1.63%
622005	Private Hospital Employment	102,590	109,539	6,949	6.58%
623000	Nursing and Residential Care Facilities	64,999	68,512	3,513	5.28%

Source: MD Labor Labor Market Information Team

Workforce development investments in allied health, nursing, and medical technician training directly support this expanding segment, helping Maryland meet rising demand while promoting equitable access to healthcare employment opportunities. The Bureau of Labor Statistics separates health care occupations into two categories: Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations and Healthcare Support Occupations. Both groups of healthcare professionals show sustained employment growth and strong replacement demand.

Among practitioners, Nurse Practitioners (42.78 percent) and Physician Assistants (28.87 percent) lead growth. Both occupations also have high salaries, with both having an annual average wage over \$100,000. Registered Nurses are projected to have more openings each

year through 2033 than any other occupation in the healthcare space, with over 3,000 openings due to growth and labor force replacement each year.

Figure 13: Projected Maryland Employment Growth by Occupation for Key Healthcare Practitioner Roles, 2023 to 2033

Occupational Title	Employment 2024	Growth 2023-2033	Average Annual Openings	Hourly Mean Wage	Annual Mean Wage
Registered Nurses	48,980	7.51%	3,112	\$46.46	\$96,650
Pharmacy Technicians	8,590	9.06%	844	\$21.58	\$44,890
Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses	9,510	3.01%	668	\$33.99	\$70,700
Clinical Laboratory Technologists and Technicians	7,150	8.17%	542	\$30.39	\$63,210
Nurse Practitioners	6,640	42.78%	524	\$61.11	\$127,100
Physician Assistants	2,920	28.87%	297	\$64.70	\$134,580
Dental Hygienists	3,780	10.22%	292	\$50.47	\$104,980
Emergency Medical Technicians	2,970	8.26%	217	\$26.77	\$55,680
Medical Records Specialists	2,810	10.21%	253	\$30.95	\$64,380
Physical Therapists	4,420	15.46%	239	\$51.78	\$107,690

Source: MD Labor Labor Market Information Team

In healthcare support occupations, Home Health and Personal Care Aides have a projected growth rate of 18.7 percent and over 6,000 annual openings, underscoring critical demand for direct care workers. Maryland's shifting healthcare focus is also reflected in other key support roles that offer high growth and mid-range wages, such as Medical Assistants (16.55 percent) and Substance Abuse and Mental Health Counselors (21.13 percent).

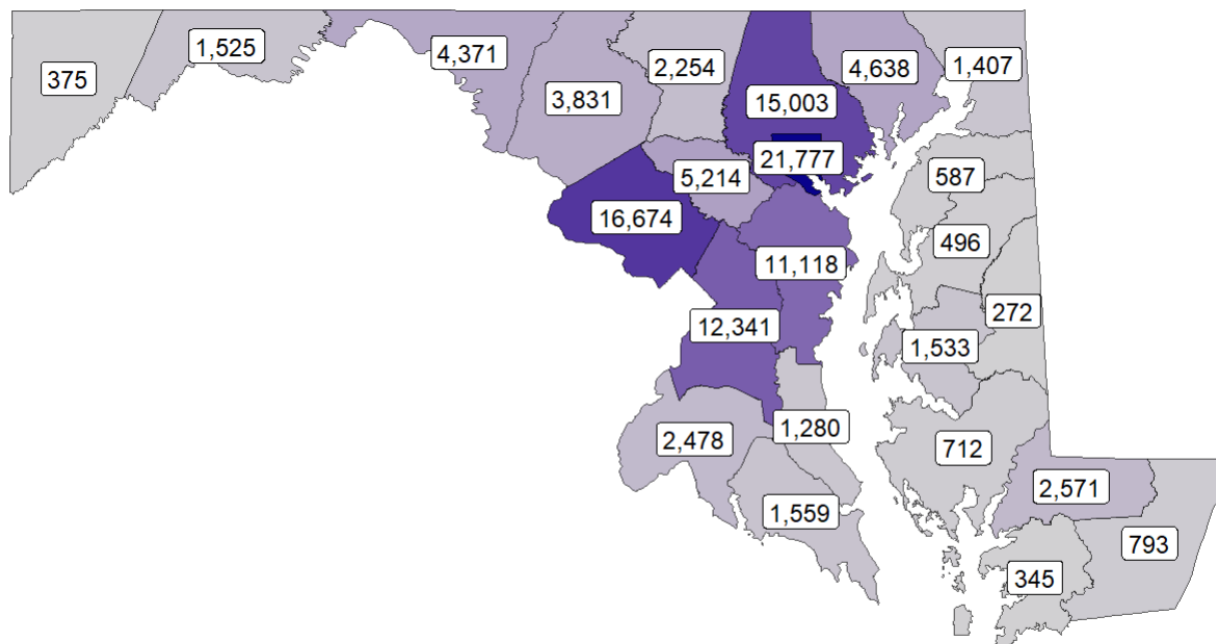
Figure 14: Projected Maryland Employment Growth by Occupation for Key Healthcare Support Roles, 2023 to 2033

Occupational Title	Employment 2024	Growth 2023-2033	Average Annual Openings	Hourly Mean Wage	Annual Mean Wage
Home Health and Personal Care Aides	38,520	18.70%	6,137	\$18.59	\$38,670
Nursing Assistants	24,230	8.58%	4,023	\$20.23	\$42,070
Medical Assistants	14,700	16.55%	2,344	\$21.76	\$45,260
Medical Secretaries and Administrative Assistants	14,550	6.99%	1,486	\$22.88	\$47,580
Substance Abuse, Behavioral Disorder, and Mental Health Counselors	8,180	21.13%	1,000	\$33.09	\$68,830
Dental Assistants	6,520	9.40%	884	\$24.24	\$50,410
Healthcare Social Workers	5,430	11.71%	467	\$32.17	\$66,910
Physical Therapist Assistants	1,740	28.31%	392	\$32.52	\$67,640
Phlebotomists	2,030	9.57%	388	\$23.84	\$49,590
Massage Therapists	1,330	17.08%	299	\$28.45	\$59,180
Medical Equipment Preparers	1,240	6.60%	207	\$23.72	\$49,330

Source: MD Labor Labor Market Information Team

Together, these patterns make healthcare one of the most strategically important and labor-intensive workforce development investment areas. It is also spread across the state, as the map below shows. In 2025, Maryland employers advertised for 114,582 job openings in Maryland, the most of any sector. While Central Maryland had the most job postings in 2025 for Health Care and Social Assistance (led by Baltimore City with 21,777 postings), every county in Maryland had at least several hundred postings (work location was not available for 1,428 postings so these figures may be an undercount). Workforce development efforts for the sector must touch every region of the state to help meet existing gaps and workforce shortages.

Figure 15: Job Postings in Healthcare and Social Assistance by Maryland County, 2025



Source: MD Labor analysis of Lightcast Data (datarun 2026.1)

Across the Maryland healthcare jobs posted in 2025, nursing was the most highly requested skill, appearing in 24 percent of job postings, followed by Medical Records (10 percent) and CPR (9 percent).

Figure 16: Top Skills Requested by Maryland Employers in 2025 for Job Postings in Health Care and Social Assistance

Skills	Postings (Jan 2025-Dec-2025)	Percent of Total Postings
Nursing	24,703	24%
Medical Records	10,941	10%
Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR)	8,948	9%
Electronic Medical Record	8,871	9%
Treatment Planning	8,801	8%
Rehabilitation	6,687	6%
Billing	6,621	6%

Skills	Postings (Jan 2025-Dec-2025)	Percent of Total Postings
Home Health Care	6,601	6%
Nursing Care	6,511	6%
Workflow Management	6,503	6%

Source: MD Labor analysis of Lightcast Data (datarun 2026.1)

With nursing as the top skill requested, it is not surprising that the top qualification appearing in job postings last year was Registered Nurse (RN) credentials, appearing in over 21,000 postings. This was followed by Basic Life Support (BLS) and CPR certifications.

Figure 17: Top Qualifications Requested by Maryland Employers in 2025 for Job Postings in Health Care and Social Assistance

Qualification	Postings with Qualification (Jan 2025-Dec 2025)
Registered Nurse (RN)	21,177
Basic Life Support (BLS) Certification	17,792
Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) Certification	9,291
Valid Driver's License	7,599
Advanced Cardiovascular Life Support (ACLS) Certification	5,453
Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA)	4,385
Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN)	4,311
Nurse Practitioner (APRN-CNP)	3,335
Neonatal Resuscitation Program Certification (NRP)	2,982
Board Certified/Board Eligible	2,810

Source: MD Labor analysis of Lightcast Data (datarun 2026.1)

1.2.2 Child Care Services

Within Health Care and Social Assistance (as discussed in the previous section), the Social Assistance sector (NAICS 624), which includes Child Care Services, is projected to expand significantly, growing by 13.0 percent and adding more than 7,400 jobs across its various subsectors. Specifically, the Child Care Services subsector (NAICS 624400) is expected to experience steady growth of 7.23 percent through 2033, adding 1,279 positions.

Figure 18: Projected Maryland Employment Growth for Child Care Services, 2023 to 2033

NAICS	Industry Title	Employment 2023	Projection Employment 2033	Numeric Change	Percent Change
624400	Child Care Services	17,112	18,391	1,279	7.23%

Source: MD Labor Labor Market Information Team

Within the child care sector, and as shown in the table below, occupational data is characterized by a high volume of demand for entry-level positions alongside developing opportunities for roles requiring advanced levels of education and experience.

Figure 19: Projected Maryland Employment Growth by Occupation for Key Child Care Services Roles, 2023 to 2033

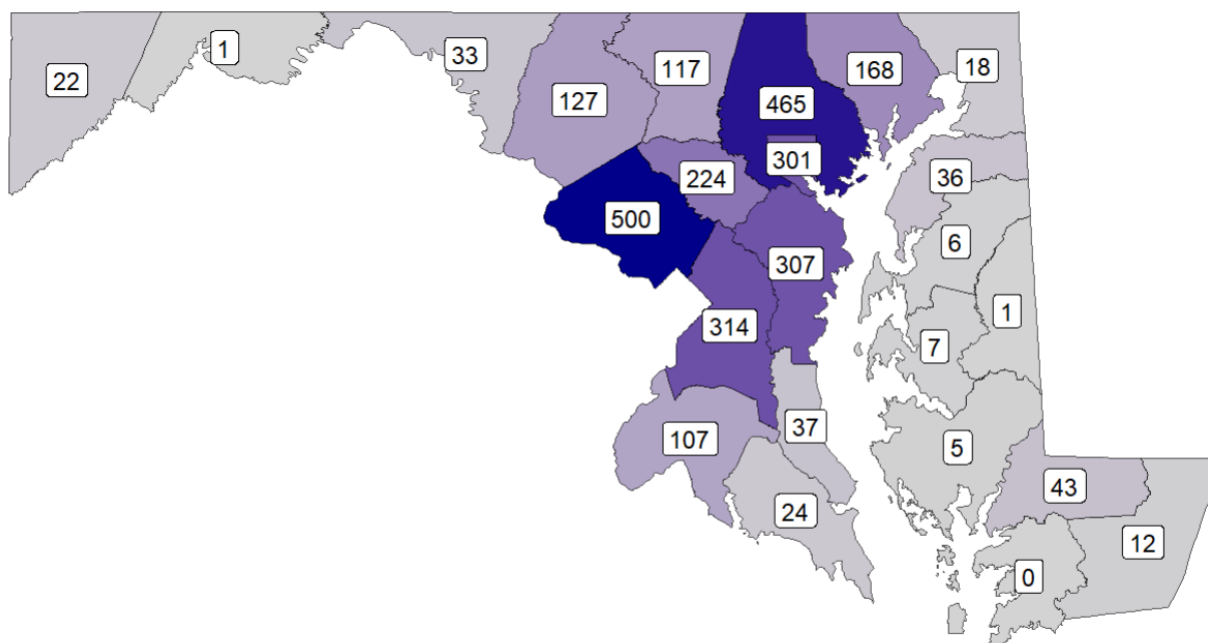
Occupational Title	Employment 2024	Growth 2023-2033	Average Annual Openings	Hourly Mean Wage	Annual Mean Wage
Teaching Assistants, Except Postsecondary	28,030	4.12%	3,220	\$0.00	\$40,280
Childcare Workers	8,910	1.90%	2,094	\$17.46	\$36,320
Preschool Teachers, Except Special Education	7,960	8.76%	1,118	\$22.11	\$45,990
First-line Supervisors of Personal Service Workers	4,360	12.22%	599	\$26.55	\$55,220
Child, Family, and School Social Workers	5,030	7.46%	381	\$35.33	\$73,490
Education and Childcare Administrators, Preschool and Daycare	N/A	2.29%	127	N/A	N/A

Source: MD Labor Labor Market Information Team

Teaching Assistants and Childcare Workers account for the most openings (over 5,000 annually). First-Line Supervisors of Personal Service Workers are growing the fastest (12.22 percent), offering a clear leadership pathway and improved wages (\$55,220). Child, Family, and School Social Workers command the highest average wage in the sector (\$73,490) alongside steady job growth. To support this essential industry, there is a need for workforce investments that focus on reducing turnover and building sustainable career pathways.

In 2025, there were 2,886 job postings across the state for Child Care Services. As shown in the chart below, job postings were heavily concentrated in central Maryland. Although some counties have zero or one posting, that is likely more a factor of incomplete data in online postings than a true signal of low demand.

Figure 20: Job Postings in Child Care Services by Maryland County, 2025



Source: MD Labor analysis of Lightcast Data (datarun 2026.1)

Employers in this sector look for a mix of specialized educational capabilities, classroom management, and physical stamina as shown in the chart below. Pedagogical and developmental skills heavily dominate job postings. Preschool Education is the most requested skill (28 percent of postings), followed closely by Child Development (27 percent) and Lesson Planning (22 percent).

Figure 21: Top Skills Requested by Maryland Employers in 2025 for Job Postings in Child Care Services

Skills	Postings (Jan 2025-Dec-2025)	Percent of Total Postings
Preschool Education	803	28%
Child Development	775	27%
Lesson Planning	645	22%
Lifting Ability	561	19%
Classroom Management	456	16%
Working With Children	289	10%
Behavior Management	242	8%
Safety Training	235	8%
Curriculum Planning	233	8%
Accident Reporting	207	7%

Source: MD Labor analysis of Lightcast Data (datarun 2026.1)

Credentialing in the childcare sector focuses overwhelmingly on immediate health, safety, and foundational certifications, as shown in the chart below.

Figure 22: Top Qualifications Requested by Maryland Employers in 2025 for Job Postings in Child Care Services

Qualification	Postings with Qualification (Jan 2025-Dec-2025)
First Aid Certification	583
Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) Certification	580
Valid Driver's License	110
Registered Nurse (RN)	54
Teaching Certificate	46
Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA)	25
Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA)	23

Qualification	Postings with Qualification (Jan 2025-Dec-2025)
Medication Administration Certification	21
Lifeguard Certification	15
ServSafe Certification	12

Source: MD Labor analysis of Lightcast Data (datarun 2026.1)

1.2.3 Professional and Business Services

The Professional and Business Services sector is a massive component of the Maryland economy, employing a total of 512,291 workers across its key subsectors in 2023. This sector is poised for expansion, driven primarily by highly skilled and specialized subsectors.

As shown below, Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services is the dominant force in this sector. It is projected to grow by 12.09 percent, adding an impressive 40,084 jobs by 2033 (growing from 313,796 to 353,880 jobs).

Figure 23: Projected Maryland Employment Growth by Industry for Key Sectors in Professional and Business Services, 2023 to 2033

NAICS	Industry Title	Employment 2023	Projection Employment 2033	Numeric Change	Percent Change
54	Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	313,796	353,880	40,084	12.09%
55	Management of Companies and Enterprises	28,543	31,885	3,342	11.13%
56	Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	169,952	178,652	8,700	5.00%

Source: MD Labor Labor Market Information Team

Management of Companies and Enterprises also shows strong projected growth at 11.13 percent, adding 3,342 new jobs over the decade. Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services is projected to see a steady 5.00 percent growth, adding 8,700 jobs.

Occupational trends within this sector highlight exceptionally high wages for technical and leadership roles, while administrative support roles face shifting demands. Computer and Mathematical Occupations are the fastest-growing group at 14.32 percent, offering a lucrative annual mean wage of \$127,390 and 11,443 average annual openings. Management Occupations offer the sector's highest annual mean wage at \$142,190, accompanied by a solid 8.77 percent growth rate and 27,190 annual openings. Business and Financial Operations Occupations also provide strong pathways, with an average wage of \$102,000.

Figure 24: Projected Maryland Employment Growth by Occupation for Key Professional and Business Services Roles, 2023 to 2033

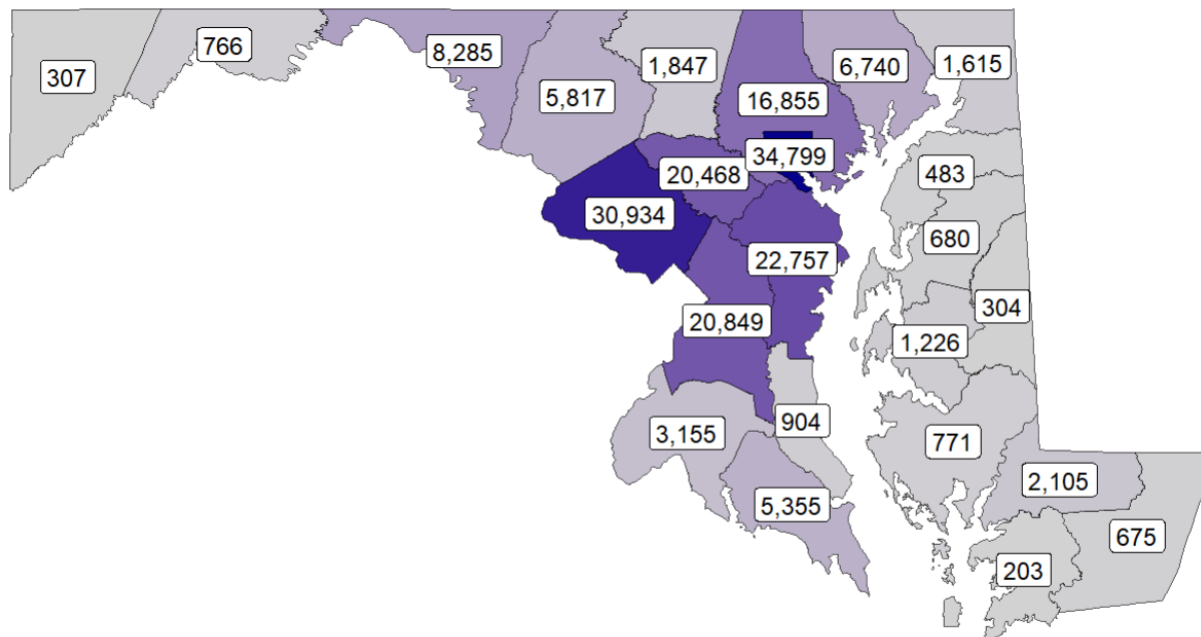
Occupational Title	Employment 2024	Growth 2023-2033	Average Annual Openings	Hourly Mean Wage	Annual Mean Wage
Computer and Mathematical Occupations	139,570	14.32%	11,443	\$61.25	\$127,390
Business and Financial Operations Occupations	226,220	6.69%	22,215	\$49.04	\$102,000
Management Occupations	257,470	8.77%	27,190	\$68.36	\$142,190
Office and Administrative Support Occupations	317,090	-1.96%	36,760	\$25.43	\$52,890
Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance Occupations	84,920	5.13%	14,383	\$19.11	\$39,740

Source: MD Labor Labor Market Information Team

Office and Administrative Support Occupations account for the highest volume of average annual openings (36,760); however, this group is projected to decline by 1.96 percent over the next decade, likely due to automation and modernized business processes.

In 2025, there were 191,971 job postings for this supersector. The counties with the most postings were Baltimore City with 34,799 and Montgomery County with 30,934. Both counties have a strong technical workforce, company headquarters, and a strong administrative job base. Notably, Washington County in Western Maryland had over 8,000 job postings.

Figure 25: Job Postings in Professional and Business Services by Maryland County, 2025



Source: MD Labor analysis of Lightcast Data (datarun 2026.1)

Employers in this sector seek a combination of project leadership, advanced technical expertise, and financial oversight. Project Management is the most highly requested skill across the sector, appearing in 10 percent of total postings (18,369 postings).

Figure 26: Top Skills Requested by Maryland Employers in 2025 for Job Postings in Professional and Business Services

Skills	Postings (Jan 2025-Dec-2025)	Percent of Total Postings
Project Management	18,369	10%
Computer Science	17,290	9%
Python (Programming Language)	11,130	6%
Auditing	10,753	6%
Automation	10,077	5%
Workflow Management	10,021	5%
Agile Methodology	9,471	5%

Skills	Postings (Jan 2025-Dec-2025)	Percent of Total Postings
Systems Engineering	9,190	5%
Accounting	8,309	4%
Nursing	8,023	4%

Source: MD Labor analysis of Lightcast Data (datarun 2026.1)

There is also an overwhelming demand for technology capabilities across job postings in Professional and Business services. Top requested tech skills include Computer Science (9 percent), Python (6 percent), Automation (5 percent), Workflow Management (5 percent), Agile Methodology (5 percent), and Systems Engineering (5 percent).

Credentialing in this sector is heavily defined by strict government security requirements, alongside high demand for specialized healthcare and IT certifications, as illustrated in the chart below.

Figure 27: Top Qualifications Requested by Maryland Employers in 2025 for Job Postings in Professional and Business Services

Qualification	Postings with Qualification (Jan 2025-Dec-2025)
Top Secret-Sensitive Compartmented Information (TS/SCI Clearance)	20,044
Registered Nurse (RN)	14,100
Valid Driver's License	13,027
Security Clearance	11,890
Basic Life Support (BLS) Certification	11,286
Secret Clearance	9,446
CompTIA Security+	3,900
Advanced Cardiovascular Life Support (ACLS) Certification	3,837
Top Secret Clearance	3,755
IAT Level II Certification	3,217

Source: MD Labor analysis of Lightcast Data (datarun 2026.1)

1.2.4 IT and Cybersecurity

IT and Cybersecurity-related industries continue to anchor Maryland's innovation economy. Employment in Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services—a sector that encompasses Computer Systems Design—is projected to grow by 12.1 percent, adding over 40,000 jobs. Similarly, Data Processing and Web Hosting will expand by 14.6 percent, and Computer and Electronic Product Manufacturing by 11.9 percent.

Figure 28: Projected Maryland Employment Growth by Industry for Key Sectors in IT and Cybersecurity, 2023 to 2033

NAICS	Industry Title	Employment 2023	Projection Employment 2033	Numeric Change	Percent Change
334000	Computer and Electronic Product Manufacturing	22,842	25,722	2,880	11.94%
518000	Computing Infrastructure Providers, Data Processing, Web Hosting, and Related Services	4,851	5,606	755	14.56%
519000	Web Search Portals, Libraries, Archives, and Other Information Services	1,445	1,560	115	7.70%
541000	Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	313,796	353,880	40,084	12.09%
541500	Computer Systems Design and Related Services	94,916	111,736	16,820	16.45%

Source: MD Labor Labor Market Information Team

These robust projections validate a continued focus on IT and Cybersecurity careers through targeted workforce development. The IT and Cybersecurity sector is one of Maryland's fastest-growing and highest-paying fields, driven by the state's robust technology ecosystem. Information Security Analysts lead the field with a 36.5 percent growth rate and average annual wages of \$145,450, emphasizing the soaring demand for cybersecurity expertise. Software Developers and Computer and Information Systems Managers also command salaries exceeding \$150,000, with thousands of projected annual openings.

Figure 29: Projected Maryland Employment Growth by Occupation for Key IT and Cybersecurity Roles, 2023 to 2033

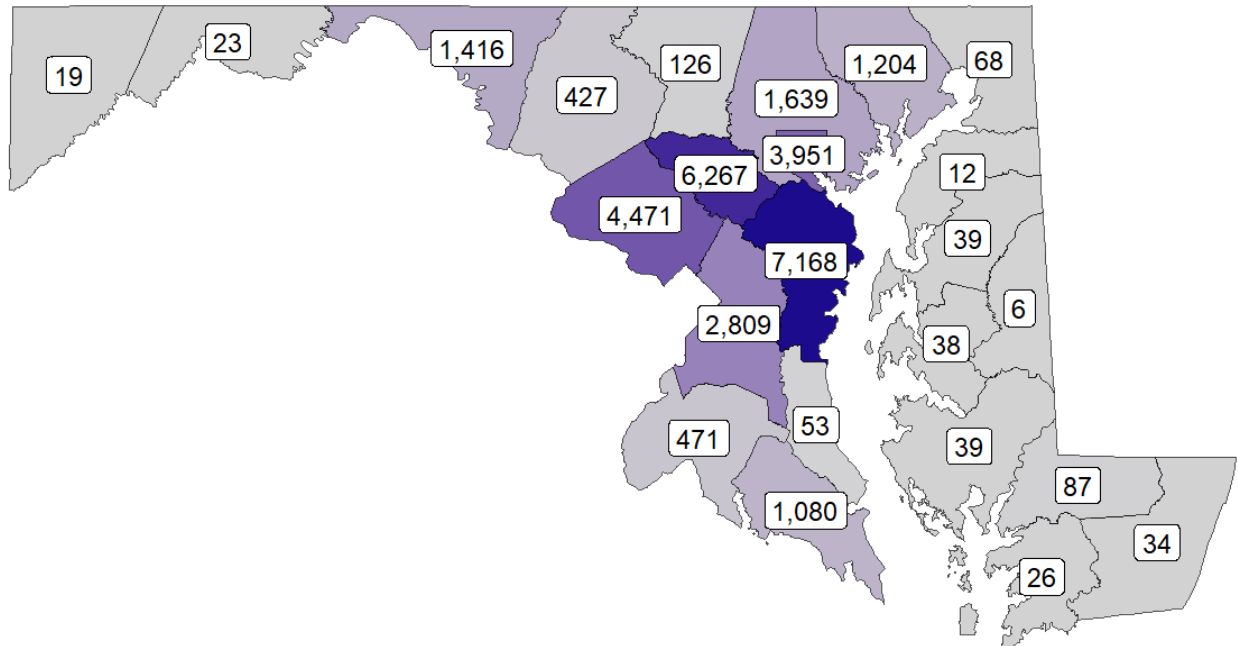
Occupational Title	Employment 2024	Growth 2023-2033	Average Annual Openings	Hourly Mean Wage	Annual Mean Wage
Software Developers	31,940	18.83%	2,580	\$72.50	\$150,800
Computer Occupations, All Other	19,940	11.08%	1,728	\$65.11	\$135,440
Computer and Information Systems Managers	15,120	16.66%	1,326	\$86.43	\$179,780
Computer Systems Analysts	15,090	14.43%	1,162	\$55.30	\$115,010
Information Security Analysts	8,770	36.45%	947	\$69.93	\$145,450
Computer User Support Specialists	10,820	8.21%	890	\$33.30	\$69,260
Computer Network Support Specialists	8,310	10.51%	747	\$52.40	\$108,990
Software Quality Assurance Analysts and Testers	6,340	13.22%	648	\$58.80	\$122,300
Computer Network Architects	5,320	16.88%	551	\$71.39	\$148,490
Network and Computer Systems Administrators	8,760	0.44%	476	\$58.66	\$122,000
Web Developers	2,150	9.25%	172	\$52.02	\$108,190
Database Administrators	2,640	10.77%	147	\$59.82	\$124,430
Web and Digital Interface Designers	1,350	8.90%	122	\$47.37	\$98,530
Database Architects	1,420	11.53%	54	\$68.76	\$143,020

Source: MD Labor Labor Market Information Team

Given that most occupations in this sector are projected to grow by more than 10 percent, strategic workforce development investments are strongly warranted to help meet Maryland's expanding demand for high-growth, high-wage technology talent.

Demand for this talent, as shown in the map below, is concentrated in Anne Arundel and Howard counties, reflecting the presence of Fort Meade, the NSA, US Cyber Command, and associated contractors.

Figure 30: Job Postings in IT and Cybersecurity by Maryland County, 2025



Source: MD Labor analysis of Lightcast Data (datarun 2026.1)

In Maryland job postings in this sector from 2025, Computer Science was the most requested skill, constituting 25 percent of the skills requested in IT and cyber job postings, followed by Python (15 percent), Automation (13 percent), and Project Management (12 percent)

Figure 31: Top Skills Requested by Maryland Employers in 2025 for Job Postings in IT and Cybersecurity

Skills	Postings (Jan 2025-Dec-2025)	Percent of Total Postings
Computer Science	7,868	25%
Python (Programming Language)	4,869	15%
Automation	4,158	13%
Project Management	3,942	12%
Agile Methodology	3,882	12%
Workflow Management	3,638	11%
Amazon Web Services	3,623	11%
Systems Engineering	3,504	11%
Software Engineering	3,501	11%
Software Development	3,409	11%

Source: MD Labor analysis of Lightcast Data (datarun 2026.1)

Due to the nature of IT work in Maryland, security clearances (particularly TS/SCI) and specialized IT credentials, such as CompTIA Security+ and CISSP, are the most heavily requested qualifications.

Figure 32: Top Qualifications Requested by Maryland Employers in 2025 for Job Postings in IT and Cybersecurity

Qualification	Postings with Qualification (Jan 2025-Dec-2025)
Top Secret-Sensitive Compartmented Information (TS/SCI Clearance)	8,551
Security Clearance	4,220

Qualification	Postings with Qualification (Jan 2025-Dec-2025)
Secret Clearance	2,557
CompTIA Security+	1,497
Certified Information Systems Security Professional	1,297
IAT Level II Certification	1,013
Project Management Professional Certification	924
Top Secret Clearance	889
Valid Driver's License	809
GIAC Certifications	666

Source: MD Labor analysis of Lightcast Data (datarun 2026.1)

1.2.5 Life Sciences/Biotechnology

As discussed earlier in this section, Maryland's life sciences sector continues to serve as one of the state's defining industry strengths. Employment in Pharmaceutical and Medicine Manufacturing is projected to increase by 15.4 percent through 2033, while Scientific Research and Development Services will grow by 12.1 percent, adding a combined 7,700 jobs by 2033.

Figure 33: Projected Maryland Employment Growth by Industry for Key Sectors in Life Sciences and Biotechnology, 2023 to 2033

NAICS	Industry Title	Employment 2023	Projection Employment 2033	Numeric Change	Percent Change
325400	Pharmaceutical and Medicine Manufacturing	10,762	12,543	1,781	15.43%
541700	Scientific Research and Development Services	46,242	52,165	5,923	12.13%

This strong growth supports continued investment in training programs targeting Maryland's expanding life sciences ecosystem.

Life Sciences remains a high-wage, innovation-driven industry in Maryland. Key occupations such as Medical Scientists, Bioengineers, and Natural Sciences Managers earn salaries above \$100,000, reflecting the advanced educational and technical demands of the field. Medical Scientists show strong projected growth (11.3 percent), underscoring a continued investment in research and development. Meanwhile, Biological and Science Technicians provide a solid employment base with over 500 annual openings, reflecting consistent demand for laboratory and technical support roles.

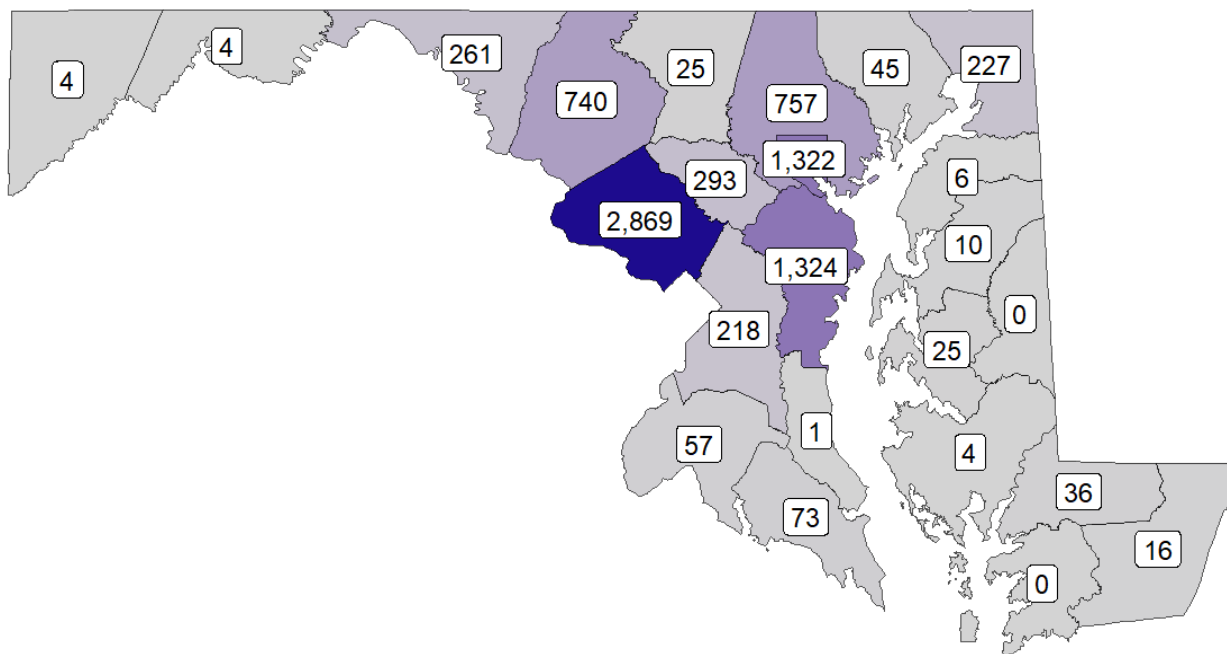
Figure 34: Projected Maryland Employment Growth by Occupation for Key Roles in Life Sciences and Biotechnology, 2023 to 2033

Occupational Title	Employment 2024	Growth 2023-2033	Average Annual Openings	Hourly Mean Wage	Annual Mean Wage
Life, Physical, and Social Science Technicians, All Other	3,080	7.90%	621	\$38.09	\$79,220
Biological Technicians	3,780	8.87%	533	\$26.14	\$54,360
Inspectors, Testers, Sorters, Samplers, and Weighers	4,100	-1.63%	527	\$29.16	\$60,650
Biological Scientists, All Other	5,220	0.86%	470	\$57.75	\$120,120
Medical Scientists, Except Epidemiologists	6,150	11.32%	406	\$54.79	\$113,970
Natural Sciences Managers	5,020	2.98%	376	\$84.11	\$174,950
Microbiologists	2,040	5.22%	171	\$52.34	\$108,870
Chemical Equipment Operators and Tenders	1,150	-0.71%	138	\$31.06	\$64,600
Biochemists and Biophysicists	760	10.35%	85	\$50.92	\$105,920
Bioengineers and Biomedical Engineers	540	5.15%	34	\$51.97	\$108,090

Source: MD Labor Labor Market Information Team

In 2025, employers posted 8,618 Life Sciences openings in Maryland. Montgomery County had by far the most postings for the industry with 2,869, reflecting the hub in the county. However, Anne Arundel County and Baltimore City both had over 1,300 job postings from life sciences firms last year, showing that strong demand does exist in other areas of the state.

Figure 35: Job Postings in Life Sciences by Maryland County, 2025



Source: MD Labor analysis of Lightcast Data (datarun 2026.1)

The sector requires a wide variety of skills ranging from pharmaceuticals and biotechnology to project management and computer science. "Pharmaceuticals" is the most requested skill, required in 21 percent of job postings for this sector, as shown in the table below.

Figure 36: Top Skills Requested by Maryland Employers in 2025 for Job Postings in Life Sciences

Skills	Postings (Jan 2025-Dec 2025)	Percent of Total Postings
Pharmaceuticals	2,865	21%
Project Management	2,059	15%
Computer Science	1,709	12%
Good Manufacturing Practices	1,664	12%
Marketing	1,575	11%
Data Analysis	1,509	11%
Biology	1,392	10%
Biotechnology	1,328	10%
Continuous Improvement Process	1,260	9%
Python (Programming Language)	1,239	9%

Source: MD Labor analysis of Lightcast Data (datarun 2026.1)

Notably, the most frequently requested qualifications in this sector are related to security clearances (such as TS/SCI and Secret clearances), highlighting the unique intersection of life sciences and federal/defense work in Maryland.

Figure 37: Top Qualifications Requested by Maryland Employers in 2025 for Job Postings in Life Sciences

Qualification	Postings with Qualification (Jan 2025-Dec 2025)
Security Clearance	1,875
Valid Driver's License	1,293
Top Secret-Sensitive Compartmented Information (TS/SCI Clearance)	1,248
Secret Clearance	811
Top Secret Clearance	706

Qualification	Postings with Qualification (Jan 2025-Dec 2025)
Master Of Business Administration (MBA)	618
Project Management Professional Certification	180
Full Scope Polygraph (FSP Clearance)	164
Certified Information Systems Security Professional	155
CompTIA Security+	141

Source: MD Labor analysis of Lightcast Data (datarun 2026.1)

1.2.6 Manufacturing

Maryland's manufacturing sector is changing, with an overall projected growth of 4.8 percent (adding nearly 6,300 jobs) by 2033. While legacy industries such as textile mills and printing are facing declines, this is offset by surging demand in subsectors such as pharmaceutical, computer, and food production.

Figure 38: Projected Maryland Employment Growth by Industry for Key Sectors in Manufacturing, 2023 to 2033

NAICS	Industry Title	Employment 2023	Projection Employment 2033	Numeric Change	Percent Change
310000	Manufacturing	129,034	135,328	6,294	4.77%
311000	Food Manufacturing	18,056	20,008	1,952	10.32%
312000	Beverage and Tobacco Product Manufacturing	4,315	4,841	526	11.57%
315000	Apparel Manufacturing	1,355	1,420	65	4.71%
321000	Wood Product Manufacturing	3,065	3,293	228	7.19%
325000	Chemical Manufacturing	14,546	15,723	1,177	7.81%
325400	Pharmaceutical and Medicine Manufacturing	10,762	12,543	1,781	15.43%
327000	Nonmetallic Mineral Product Manufacturing	3,712	3,768	56	1.49%

NAICS	Industry Title	Employment 2023	Projection Employment 2033	Numeric Change	Percent Change
333000	Machinery Manufacturing	7,655	7,923	268	3.45%
334000	Computer and Electronic Product Manufacturing	22,842	25,722	2,880	11.94%
335000	Electrical Equipment, Appliance, and Component Manufacturing	1,689	1,693	4	0.25%
336000	Transportation Equipment Manufacturing	19,413	19,972	559	2.84%
339000	Miscellaneous Manufacturing	4,964	5,283	319	6.25%

Source: MD Labor Labor Market Information Team

Workforce efforts should target areas with expanding employment, particularly Pharmaceutical and Medicine Manufacturing (15.43 percent growth), Computer and Electronic Product Manufacturing (11.94 percent), Beverage and Tobacco Product Manufacturing (11.57 percent), and Food Manufacturing (10.32 percent)

The sector demonstrates a surging demand for highly skilled technical roles. Industrial Machinery Mechanics (20.22 percent) and Logisticians (16.97 percent) represent the strongest growth, offering competitive annual wages of \$65,720 and \$107,100, respectively

Figure 39: Projected Maryland Employment Growth by Occupation for Key Manufacturing Roles, 2023 to 2033

Occupational Title	Employment 2024	Growth 2023-2033	Average Annual Openings	Hourly Mean Wage	Annual Mean Wage
Miscellaneous Assemblers and Fabricators	6,760	2.40%	828	\$22.11	\$45,990
Logisticians	6,830	16.97%	817	\$51.49	\$107,100

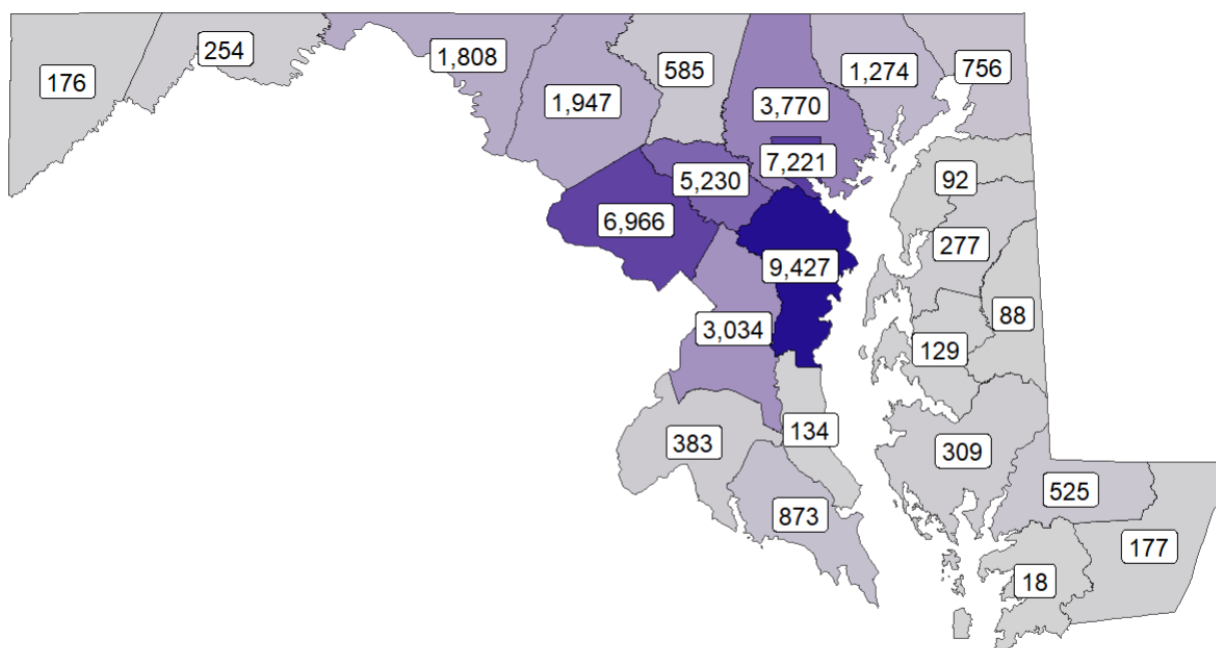
Occupational Title	Employment 2024	Growth 2023-2033	Average Annual Openings	Hourly Mean Wage	Annual Mean Wage
First-Line Supervisors of Production and Operating Workers	6,440	2.81%	645	\$37.23	\$77,440
Inspectors, Testers, Sorters, Samplers, and Weighers	4,100	-1.63%	527	\$29.16	\$60,650
Welders, Cutters, Solderers, and Brazers	3,190	4.04%	395	\$28.75	\$59,800
Industrial Machinery Mechanics	3,070	20.22%	346	\$31.60	\$65,720
Food Processing Workers, All Other	1,970	9.61%	239	\$17.56	\$36,520
Machinists	1,600	1.53%	225	\$29.64	\$61,650
Packaging and Filling Machine Operators and Tenders	2,290	6.71%	216	\$21.20	\$44,100
Mixing and Blending Machine Setters, Operators, and Tenders	1,230	7.79%	172	\$26.10	\$54,290
Sewing Machine Operators	1,290	-1.79%	148	\$18.12	\$37,690
Printing Press Operators	1,280	-8.66%	134	\$24.40	\$50,740

Source: MD Labor Labor Market Information Team

Meanwhile, entry- and mid-skill roles like Assemblers and Welders offer stable employment primarily through replacement needs, while legacy roles like Printing Press Operators are declining (-8.66 percent).

Maryland manufacturers advertised for 46,590 postings across the state in 2025, the largest number of which (9,427) were in Anne Arundel County. Baltimore City had the second largest total with 7,221.

Figure 40: Job Postings in Manufacturing by Maryland County, 2025



Source: MD Labor analysis of Lightcast Data (datarun 2026.1)

As the table below shows, Project Management is the single most requested skill, appearing in 12 percent of postings (5,446 postings). This is followed closely by Continuous Improvement Process (10 percent) and Marketing (9 percent).

Figure 41: Top Skills Requested by Maryland Employers in 2025 for Job Postings in Manufacturing

Skills	Postings (Jan 2025-Dec-2025)	Percent of Total Postings
Project Management	5,446	12%
Continuous Improvement Process	4,523	10%
Marketing	4,147	9%
Lifting Ability	3,862	8%
Computer Science	3,504	8%
Auditing	3,484	7%
Data Analysis	3,223	7%
Python (Programming Language)	3,151	7%
Automation	3,057	7%
SAP Applications	3,047	7%

Source: MD Labor analysis of Lightcast Data (datarun 2026.1)

The sector's shift toward advanced production is evident in the demand for technical skills like Computer Science (8 percent), Data Analysis (7 percent), Python programming (7 percent), Automation (7 percent), and SAP Applications (7 percent). Physical requirements like Lifting Ability remain relevant (8 percent).

The most in-demand qualifications are security clearances (Top Secret-Sensitive Compartmented Information, Secret, and General Security Clearances) and Valid Driver's Licenses.

Figure 42: Top Qualifications Requested by Maryland Employers in 2025 for Job Postings in Manufacturing

Qualification	Postings with Qualification (Jan 2025-Dec-2025)
Top Secret-Sensitive Compartmented Information (TS/SCI Clearance)	4,918
Valid Driver's License	4,786
Security Clearance	4,421
Secret Clearance	2,978

Qualification	Postings with Qualification (Jan 2025-Dec-2025)
Top Secret Clearance	1,182
Master Of Business Administration (MBA)	1,148
CompTIA Security+	734
Project Management Professional Certification	625
IAT Level II Certification	602
Commercial Driver's License (CDL)	593

Source: MD Labor analysis of Lightcast Data (datarun 2026.1)

1.2.7 Construction

Construction is a foundational industry and infrastructure jobs are critical to ensure Maryland can meet the needs of businesses looking to expand and locate in the state. The industry is also primed for growth; MD Labor projects the industry will add 11,657 jobs through 2033 and grow at a 7.0 percent growth rate. The vast majority of this expansion is driven by Specialty Trade Contractors, particularly Building Equipment Contractors, which are expected to grow by 9.15 percent.

Figure 43: Projected Maryland Employment Growth by Industry for Key Sectors in Construction, 2023 to 2033

NAICS	Industry Title	Employment 2023	Projection Employment 2033	Numeric Change	Percent Change
230000	Construction	161,588	173,245	11,657	6.99%
236000	Construction of Buildings	36,111	39,021	2,910	7.78%
237000	Heavy and Civil Engineering Construction	17,315	18,461	1,146	6.43%
238000	Specialty Trade Contractors	108,162	115,763	7,601	6.81%
238100	Foundation, Structure, and Building Exterior Contractors	20,119	21,036	917	4.47%

NAICS	Industry Title	Employment 2023	Projection Employment 2033	Numeric Change	Percent Change
238200	Building Equipment Contractors	55,840	61,164	5,324	9.15%
238300	Building Finishing Contractors	16,182	16,461	279	1.71%
238900	Other Specialty Trade Contractors	16,021	17,102	1,081	6.55%

Source: MD Labor Labor Market Information Team

The strong growth rates in the table above reinforce the continued need for workforce training in the construction sector. Looking specifically at occupations, Electricians are projected to see the highest growth at 13.69 percent, followed closely by Construction Managers at 12.13 percent. High annual openings for First-Line Supervisors, Electricians, and Plumbers indicate a sustained demand for skilled labor that offers viable pathways to middle- and high-wage careers (\$56,000 to over \$130,000 annually).

Figure 44: Projected Maryland Employment Growth by Occupation for Key Roles in Construction, 2023 to 2033

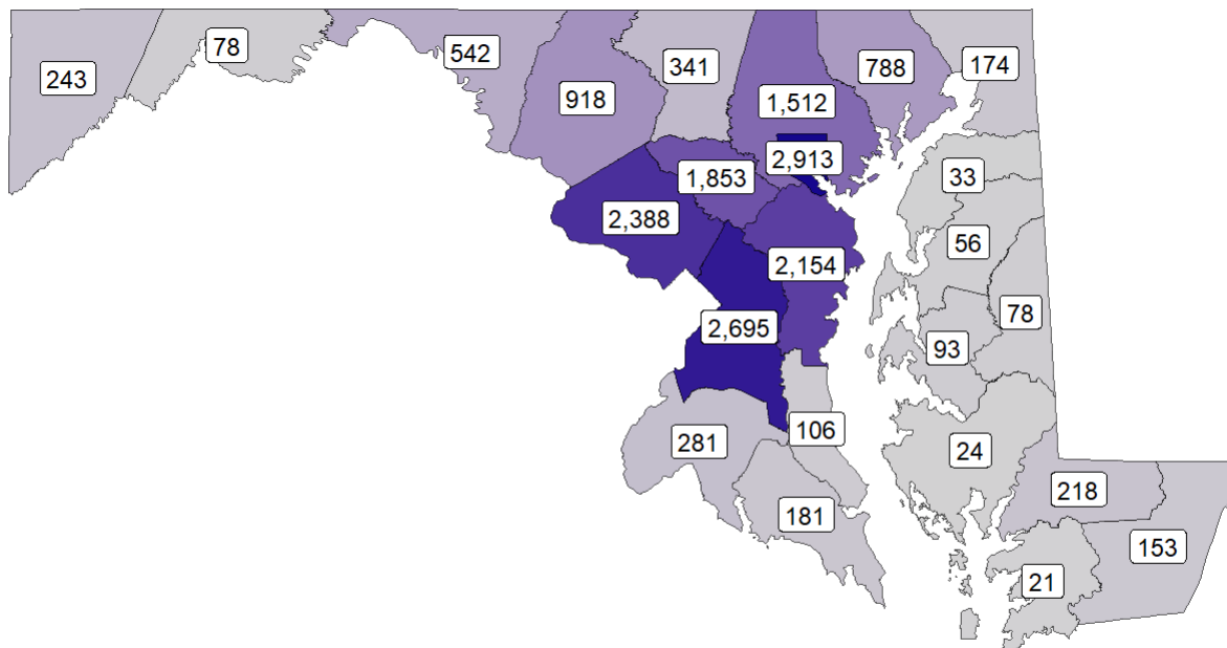
Occupational Title	Employment 2024	Growth 2023-2033	Average Annual Openings	Hourly Mean Wage	Annual Mean Wage
First-Line Supervisors of Construction Trades and Extraction Workers	15,850	8.65%	1,538	\$39.66	\$82,490
Electricians	14,750	13.69%	1,503	\$34.80	\$72,390
Plumbers, Pipefitters, and Steamfitters	11,490	8.14%	1,147	\$33.65	\$69,980
Carpenters	10,460	7.29%	1,133	\$30.33	\$63,080
Construction Managers	5,780	12.13%	848	\$65.09	\$135,390
Heating, Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration Mechanics and Installers	6,380	11.25%	737	\$33.12	\$68,890

Occupational Title	Employment 2024	Growth 2023-2033	Average Annual Openings	Hourly Mean Wage	Annual Mean Wage
Operating Engineers and Other Construction Equipment Operators	6,470	6.79%	592	\$29.38	\$61,110
Painters, Construction and Maintenance	3,440	6.68%	449	\$26.93	\$56,020
Roofers	2,520	8.38%	276	\$28.55	\$59,390
Cement Masons and Concrete Finishers	2,650	1.79%	252	\$24.87	\$51,730
Sheet Metal Workers	2,230	4.11%	185	\$30.81	\$64,090

Source: MD Labor Labor Market Information Team

Maryland's Construction industry was in demand across the state, but the most postings in 2025 for this sector were in Baltimore City (2,913) followed closely by Prince George's County (2,695). According to data from BLS, Prince George's County has the highest level of Construction employment of any Maryland County (29,081 jobs in 2024), while Baltimore City has the seventh highest total (9,497 jobs in 2024). The strength of Baltimore City in the job postings data is a sign of optimism - Construction employment in Baltimore City has fallen since 2019 when the county had 10,907 jobs.

Figure 45: Job Postings in Construction by Maryland County, 2025



Source: MD Labor analysis of Lightcast Data (datarun 2026.1)

General Construction skills are the most requested (20 percent of postings). However, leadership and coordination are critical, with Project Management (18 percent), Subcontracting (12 percent), and Construction Management (7 percent) highly sought after. Specific trade skills like HVAC (12 percent), Plumbing (7 percent), and Roofing (7 percent) are also top priorities, alongside basic requirements like Lifting Ability (12 percent) and a Good Driving Record (9 percent).

Figure 46: Top Skills Requested by Maryland Employers in 2025 for Job Postings in Construction

Skills	Postings (Jan 2025-Dec-2025)	Percent of Total Postings
Construction	3,600	20%
Project Management	3,260	18%
Subcontracting	2,253	12%
HVAC	2,236	12%
Lifting Ability	2,080	12%

Skills	Postings (Jan 2025-Dec-2025)	Percent of Total Postings
Good Driving Record	1,585	9%
Construction Management	1,281	7%
Plumbing	1,262	7%
Marketing	1,209	7%
Roofing	1,197	7%

Source: MD Labor analysis of Lightcast Data (datarun 2026.1)

A Valid Driver's License is the top requested credential by a wide margin. Safety and compliance are essential, with high demand for CPR Certification, 30-Hour and 10-Hour OSHA General Industry Cards, First Aid, and security clearances and TS/SCI Clearances are also notably requested.

Figure 47: Top Qualifications Requested by Maryland Employers in 2025 for Job Postings in Construction

Qualification	Postings with Qualification (Jan 2025-Dec-2025)
Valid Driver's License	4,370
Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) Certification	383
30-Hour OSHA General Industry Card	351
Top Secret-Sensitive Compartmented Information (TS/SCI Clearance)	336
Security Clearance	285
First Aid Certification	282
Commercial Driver's License (CDL)	263
10-Hour OSHA General Industry Card	250
EPA 608 Technician Certification	182
Project Management Professional Certification	147

Source: MD Labor analysis of Lightcast Data (datarun 2026.1)

1.2.8 Transportation, Distribution, and Logistics

Reflecting expanding supply chain and e-commerce activities, the TDL sector is projected to grow by 6.85 percent, adding approximately 7,455 jobs through 2033. Couriers and Messengers represent the fastest-growing subsector at 10.63 percent, and also the subsector adding the most jobs (2,083). Strong gains are also seen in Truck Transportation (1,581 more jobs through 2033) and Warehousing and Storage (1,100 new jobs through 2033).

Figure 48: Projected Maryland Employment Growth by Industry for Key Sectors in Transportation, Distribution, and Logistics, 2023 to 2033

NAICS	Industry Title	Employment 2023	Projection Employment 2033	Numeric Change	Percent Change
480000	Transportation and Warehousing	105,492	112,947	7,455	6.85%
481000	Air Transportation	6,440	7,055	615	9.16%
482000	Rail Transportation	4,732	5,036	304	6.25%
483000	Water Transportation	880	857	(23)	-2.59%
484000	Truck Transportation	17,272	18,853	1,581	8.80%
485000	Transit and Ground Passenger Transportation	10,520	11,442	922	8.44%
486000	Pipeline Transportation	98	102	4	4.36%
487000	Scenic and Sightseeing Transportation	366	386	20	5.35%
488000	Support Activities for Transportation	11,893	12,742	849	6.92%
492000	Couriers and Messengers	18,687	20,770	2,083	10.63%
493000	Warehousing and Storage	34,604	35,704	1,100	3.13%

Source: MD Labor Labor Market Information Team

The sector relies heavily on commercial drivers, with Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers expected to have the most future demand each year through 2033 (2,928 annual openings) and Light Truck/Delivery Drivers showing rapid growth (10.28 percent). Simultaneously,

there is a distinct rise in high-paying logistics coordination roles, such as Transportation, Storage, and Distribution Managers (\$118,800 annual wage; 10.04 percent growth) and Logisticians. Conversely, clerical roles like Shipping, Receiving, and Inventory Clerks are declining by 6.85 percent.

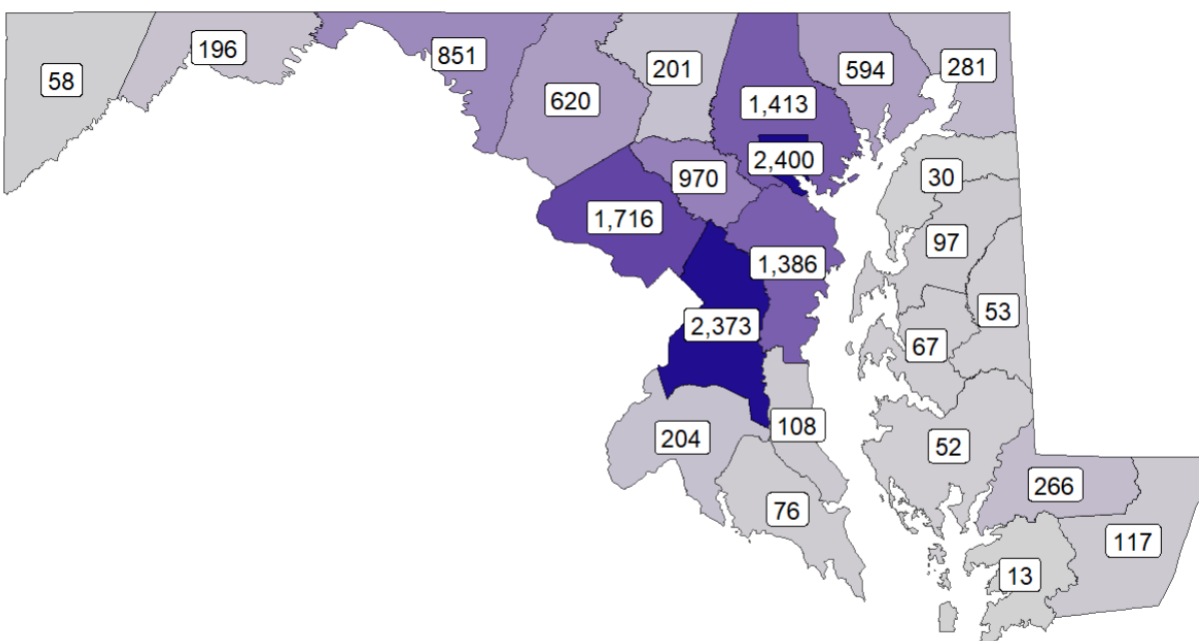
Figure 49: Projected Maryland Employment Growth by Occupation for Key Roles in Transportation, Distribution, and Logistics, 2023 to 2033

Occupational Title	Employment 2024	Growth 2023-2033	Average Annual Openings	Hourly Mean Wage	Annual Mean Wage
Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	23,910	8.01%	2,928	\$28.17	\$58,590
Light Truck Drivers / Delivery Drivers	19,350	10.28%	2,480	\$24.50	\$50,960
Bus Drivers, School	8,320	4.95%	1,428	\$24.77	\$51,520
Industrial Truck and Tractor Operators	12,260	1.38%	1,070	\$23.39	\$48,660
Shipping, Receiving, and Inventory Clerks	14,280	-6.85%	1,033	\$22.35	\$46,490
Logisticians	6,830	16.97%	817	\$51.49	\$107,100
Bus Drivers, Transit and Intercity	4,680	8.28%	608	\$32.48	\$67,560
Transportation, Storage, and Distribution Managers	3,440	10.04%	358	\$57.12	\$118,800
Aircraft Mechanics and Service Technicians	1,630	6.99%	132	\$43.56	\$90,600
Cargo and Freight Agents	840	10.43%	100	\$23.42	\$48,700
Railroad Conductors and Yardmasters	280	5.65%	99	\$38.57	\$80,220
Transportation Inspectors	250	5.71%	40	\$46.17	\$96,030
Crane and Tower Operators	310	4.99%	38	\$33.01	\$68,660

Source: MD Labor Labor Market Information Team

Maryland employers advertised for 14,434 job postings in the Transportation, Distribution, and Logistics industry in 2025. Job postings were highest in Baltimore City (2,400 postings) and Prince George's County (2,373). The volume of postings in Prince George's County is notable, since the size of the county's workforce in this sector ranks fourth, behind Baltimore City, Baltimore County, and Anne Arundel County. However, despite having lower employment than Baltimore County or Anne Arundel County, employers in Prince George's County posted roughly 1,000 more postings than in either of the other counties. Strong posting volume in Washington County (851 postings) in 2025 is expected - Washington County has the highest concentration of Transportation, Distribution, and Logistics jobs in the state.

Figure 50: Job Postings in Transportation, Distribution, and Logistics by Maryland County, 2025



Source: MD Labor analysis of Lightcast Data (datarun 2026.1)

Truck driving is the primary skill requested (16 percent of postings). This is supported by core logistics activities like lifting ability (9 percent), warehousing (8 percent), loading and unloading (8 percent), and operating a forklift truck (4 percent).

Figure 51: Top Skills Requested by Maryland Employers in 2025 for Job Postings in Transportation, Distribution, and Logistics

Skills	Postings (Jan 2025-Dec-2025)	Percent of Total Postings
Truck Driving	2,360	16%
Lifting Ability	1,286	9%
Warehousing	1,203	8%
Loading And Unloading	1,193	8%
Restaurant Operation	865	6%
Good Driving Record	707	5%
Forklift Truck	569	4%
Auditing	555	4%
Project Management	542	4%
No-Touch Freight	452	3%

Source: MD Labor analysis of Lightcast Data (datarun 2026.1)

A Valid Driver's License and commercial license, specifically CDL Class A (1,533) and general CDL (1,483), are the foundational requirements. Specialized credentials such as the Transportation Worker Identification Credential (TWIC) Card, Hazmat Endorsements, and ASE Certifications are also highly sought after.

Figure 52: Top Qualifications Requested by Maryland Employers in 2025 for Job Postings in Transportation, Distribution, and Logistics

Qualification	Postings with Qualification (Jan 2025-Dec-2025)
Valid Driver's License	1,900
CDL Class A License	1,533
Commercial Driver's License (CDL)	1,483
Transportation Worker Identification Credential (TWIC) Card	251

Qualification	Postings with Qualification (Jan 2025-Dec-2025)
Top Secret-Sensitive Compartmented Information (TS/SCI Clearance)	166
Hazmat Endorsement	143
CDL Class B License	131
Security Clearance	131
Automotive Service Excellence (ASE) Certification	123
Project Management Professional Certification	109

Source: MD Labor analysis of Lightcast Data (datarun 2026.1)

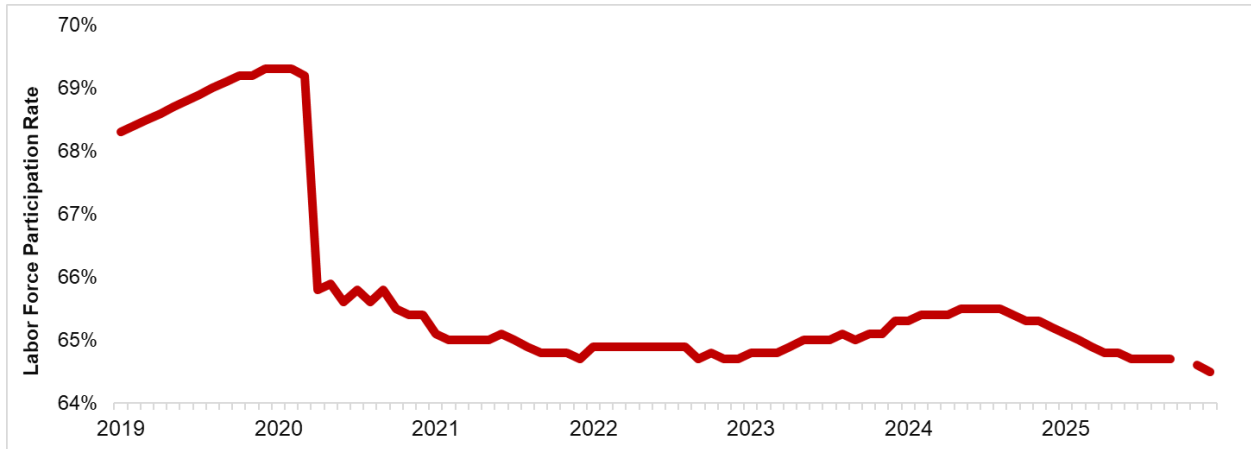
2. Workforce Analysis

This section reviews Maryland's workforce and the workforce across its various counties.

2.1 Employment and Unemployment

One of the challenges Maryland faces in regrowing employment is a labor force that has changed post-pandemic. The labor force includes all Maryland residents who are employed or are actively looking for work. In February 2020, as Figure 53 illustrates, 69.3 percent of Marylanders were in the labor force. However, that number fell to 64.5 percent as of December 2025. This is even below the labor force participation rate from April 2020 of 65.8 percent.

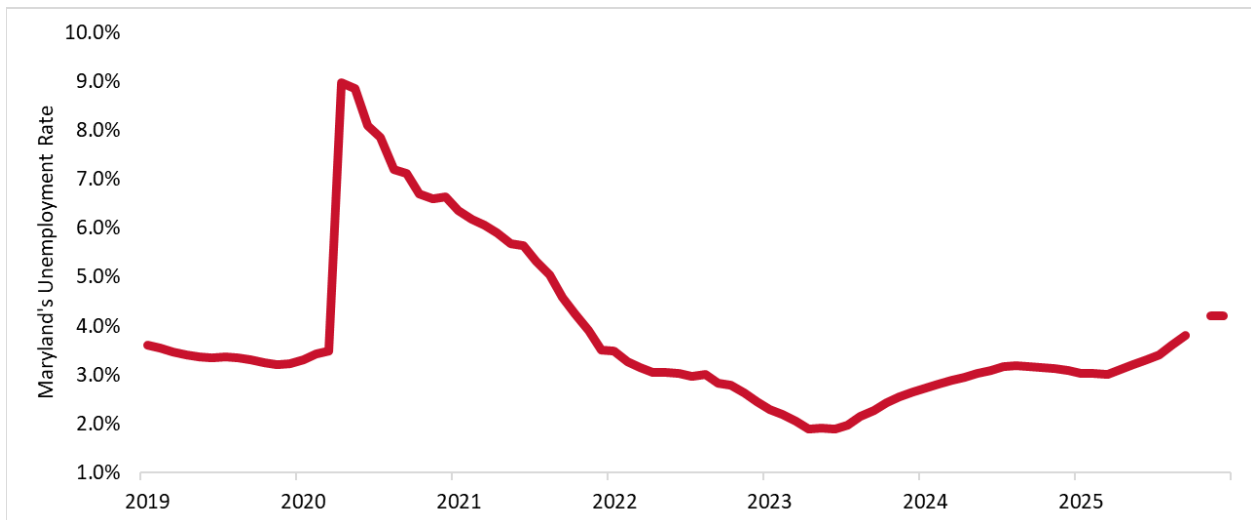
Figure 53: Maryland's Labor Force Participation Rate, January 2019 - December 2025



Source: The Bureau of Labor Statistics, LAUS Program. Due to the federal shutdown, October 2025 data is not available

The drop in Maryland's labor force has implications for the state's unemployment rate. Currently (December 2025), as Figure 54 shows, Maryland has an unemployment rate of 4.2 percent (the 26th lowest rate in the country). Maryland moved from its historic unemployment lows in 2023. Some of the increases are a result of Maryland's historic losses of federal employment in 2025.

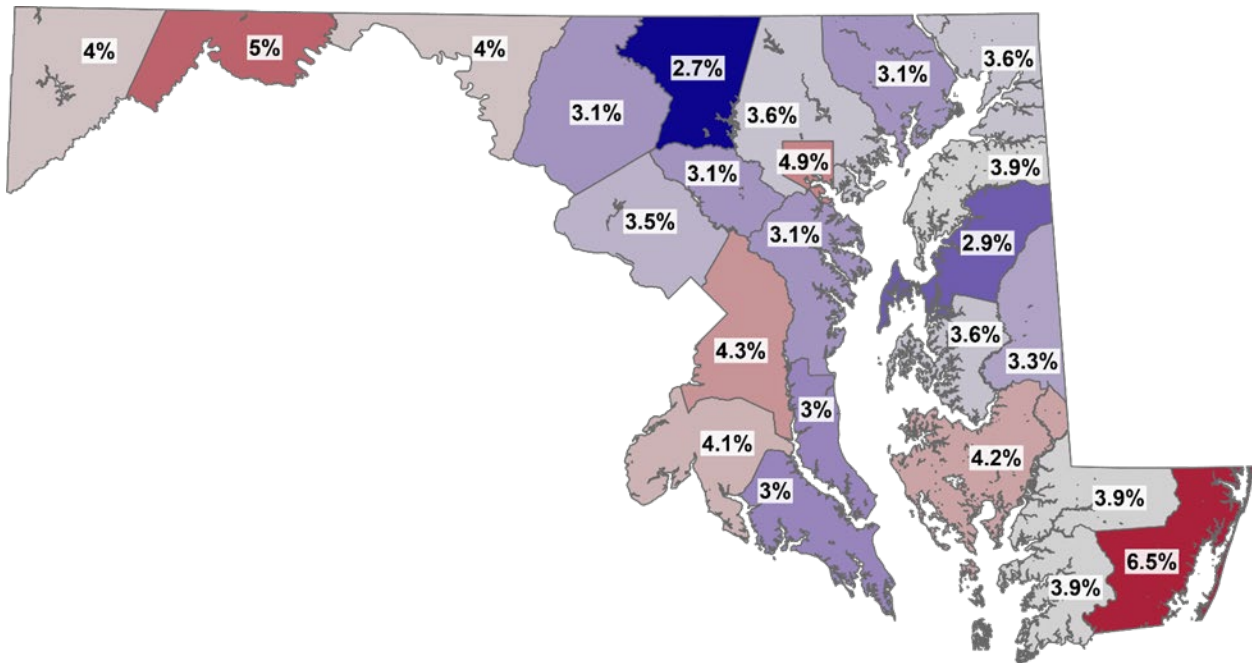
Figure 54: Maryland Unemployment Rate, January 2019 – December 2025



Source: The Bureau of Labor Statistics, LAUS Program. Due to the federal shutdown, October 2025 data is not available

Figure 55 shows the unemployment rate by county as of December 2025 (county data is not seasonally adjusted). Maryland's non-seasonally adjusted unemployment rate in December was 3.7 percent. The highest unemployment rate in the state in December 2025 was in Worcester County, which had a 6.5 percent unemployment rate. Allegany County had the second-highest rate at 5.0 percent. Carroll County had the lowest rates in December 2025 at 2.7 percent.

Figure 55: Not-Seasonally Adjusted Unemployment Rate by County, December 2025



Source: The Bureau of Labor Statistics, LAUS Program

2.2 Labor Market Trends

The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) publishes annual data on the demographic composition of each state's labor force. This data allows policy makers to understand which groups are increasing or decreasing their participation in the economy. As Figure 56 shows, between 2019 and 2025 BLS estimates that Maryland's labor force contracted by 100,000. The majority of this drop came from younger workers, those aged 16 to 24 years. The labor force participation rate for "prime aged workers", the largest age group, declined 0.9 percentage points, while workers age 16 to 24 and 55 and older fell by more (8.7 percentage points for aged 16 to 24 compared to 8.5 percentage points for workers aged 55 and older).

Figure 56: Maryland's Labor Force Changes by Age, 2019 - 2025

Group	Labor Force 2019	Labor Force 2025	Change in Labor Force 2019 - 2025
Total	3,300,000	3,200,000	-100,000
Residents Aged 16 to 24	387,000	307,000	-80,000
Residents Aged 25 to 54	2,021,000	2,062,000	41,000
Residents 55 years and older	893,000	830,000	-63,000

Source: The Bureau of Labor Statistics, LAUS Program. Due to the federal shutdown, 2025 data is an 11-month average

While the 16 to 24 age group had the largest drop in the labor force between 2019 and 2025, there is no additional demographic information to examine in further detail. However, the second largest decline was in the age group 55 and over. According to the annual data from BLS, the drop in Maryland's labor force among the 55 and older mostly came from women. Between 2019 and 2025 52,000 women (82 percent of the drop) left the labor force in Maryland.

Figure 57 Changes in Maryland's Labor Force by Sex for Workers Aged 55 and Older, 2019 - 2025

Group	Labor Force 2019	Labor Force 2025	Change in Labor Force 2019 - 2025
Total	893,000	830,000	-63,000

Men	468,000	458,000	-10,000
Women	425,000	373,000	-52,000

Source: The Bureau of Labor Statistics, LAUS Program. Due to the federal shutdown, 2025 data is an 11-month average

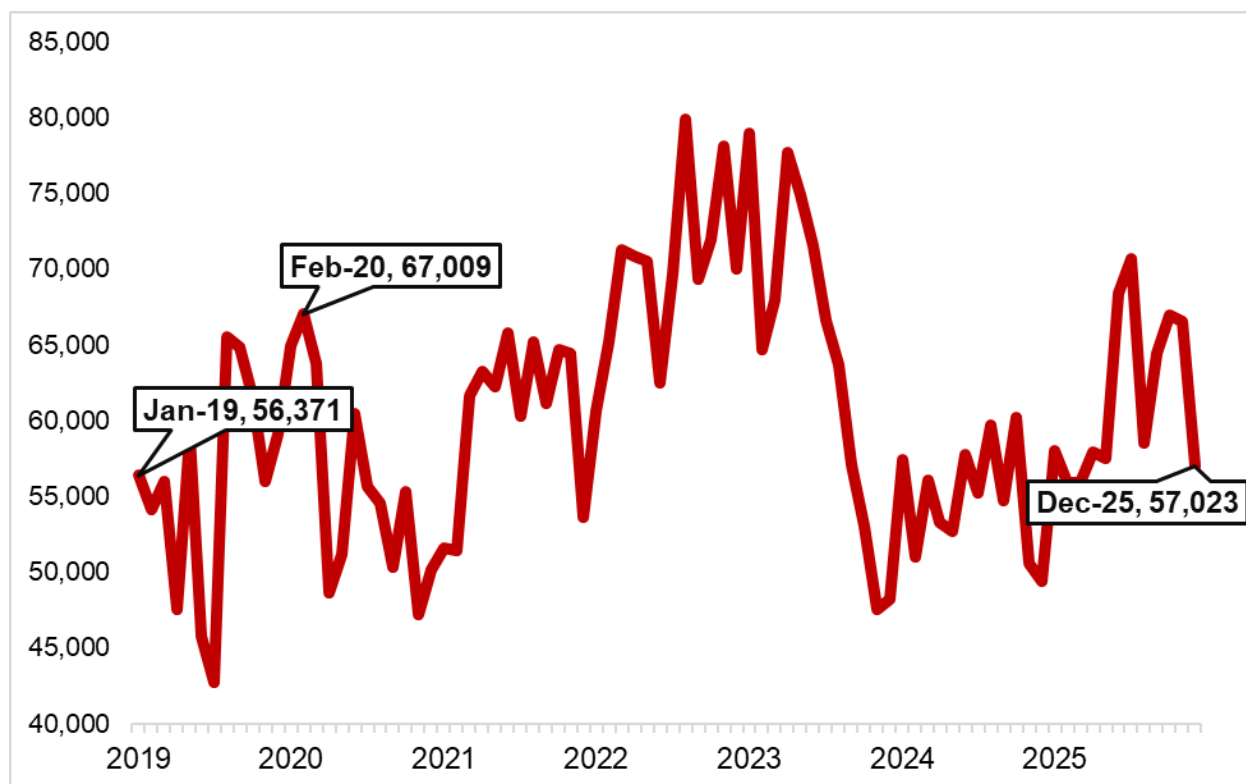
BLS also provides more detailed age breakouts. BLS estimates that the majority of labor force exits among Maryland women aged 55 and older is in the age range of 55 to 64 years of age (decline of 45,000). This age group also dropped in labor force

participation of 3.1 percentage points.

Increasing labor force participation is critical to ensuring Maryland companies are able to fill the positions they are hiring for. Childcare can play an important role, as documented across numerous rigorous studies. These studies inform the selection of childcare as a priority sector for Maryland, as discussed above. For example, a 2025 study showed that “earlier access to childcare not only increases new mothers' employment and earnings but also prompts them to reallocate careers to firms previously unattractive to new mothers,” which are “more demanding” and offer higher pay. Another recent study showed that a “one-mile increase in the distance to the nearest childcare provider is associated with a decrease in female labor force participation of about 2.7%, on average. Finally, given concerns about the declining labor force participation rates for older Marylanders, recent studies have shown that childcare access can improve labor market outcomes for older adults as well. A 2025 study estimated that, after a universal childcare program was established in Quebec, grandmothers’ “employment increase[d] by about 2 percent following the policy’s implementation and remain[ed] at that level in the long run.”

Online job postings data is a relatively new way of evaluating the labor market. Job postings are a more immediate way to gauge what is in demand by evaluating what employers are seeking from job candidates. According to Lightcast, job postings in Maryland have surpassed 2019, pre-pandemic levels.

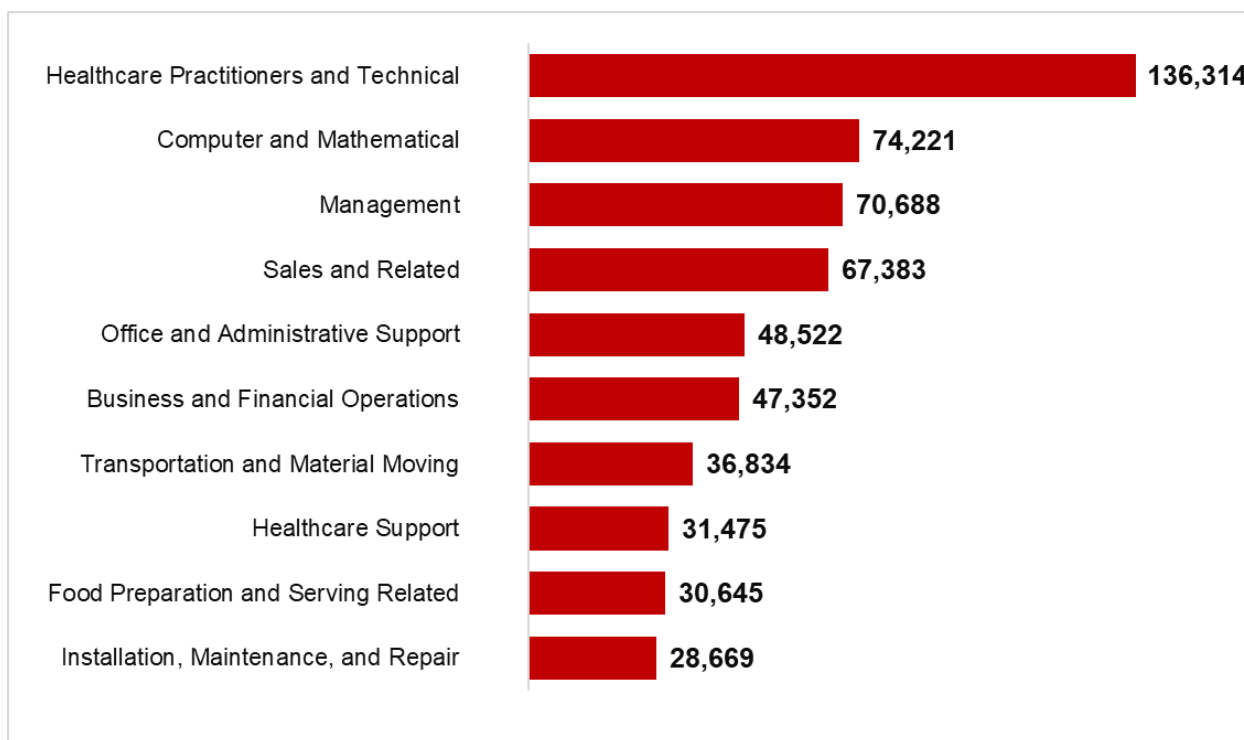
Figure 58: Job Postings by Month on Maryland Workforce Exchange



Source: MD Labor analysis of Lightcast Data (datarun 2026.1)

In 2025, the most Maryland job postings were for Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations. According to data from Lightcast, there were unique 737,921 job postings that year in Maryland. Figure 59 shows the ten occupations (classified by two-digit SOC) with the most active postings in 2025.

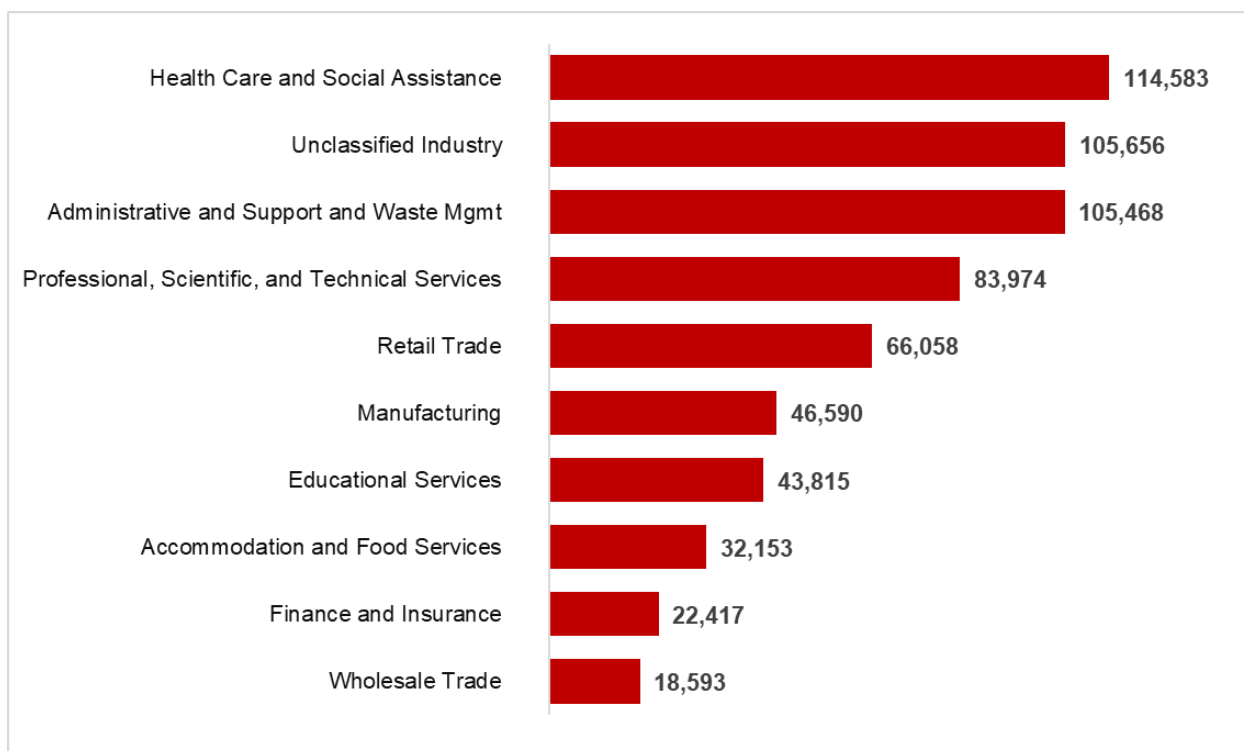
Figure 59: Occupations With the Most Maryland Job Postings in 2025



Source: MD Labor analysis of Lightcast Data (datarun 2026.1)

Similar to Figure 59, Figure 60 displays the number of job postings in Maryland for the industries with the most active postings in 2025. The two lists are similar; for example both lists show the strength of Maryland's health care sector. However, there are differences. The industry chart below shows the need for education jobs, for example.

Figure 60: Industries With the Most Maryland Job Postings in 2025



Source: MD Labor analysis of Lightcast Data (datarun 2026.1)

2.3 Education and Skill Levels of the Workforce

Maryland has a well-educated workforce. According to the US Census' American Community Survey (ACS) data, Maryland had the fifth-highest share of population with a bachelor's degree or higher in 2024, excluding Washington DC. Maryland has the fourth-highest percentage of workers in STEM occupations of any state. This highly educated workforce powers the state's many high-tech industries, as discussed earlier in this report.

Figure 61 presents educational attainment levels for Maryland residents 25 and older. While Maryland is one of the most-educated states in the nation, nearly 400,000 Maryland residents aged 25 and older do not have a high school degree or equivalency. Just over one million Marylanders only have a high school degree or equivalency.

Figure 61: Educational Attainment in Maryland, 2020 - 2024 Average

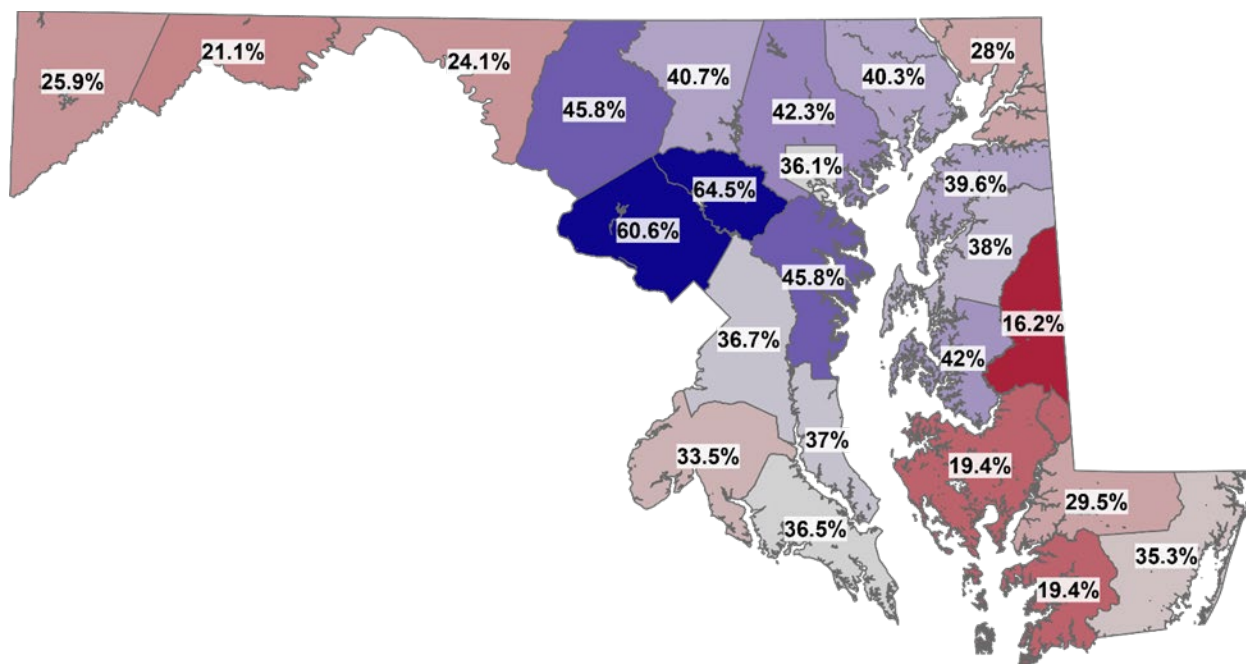
Educational Attainment	Number of Maryland Residents	Percent of Maryland Residents
No high school degree or equivalency	380,692	8.9%

Educational Attainment	Number of Maryland Residents	Percent of Maryland Residents
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	1,008,111	23.4%
Some college, no degree	749,260	17.4%
Associate's degree	294,496	6.8%
Bachelor's degree	975,248	22.7%
Graduate or professional degree	893,528	20.8%

Source: US Census Bureau, ACS

While 43.4 percent of Maryland's population has a bachelor's degree or higher, educational attainment varies significantly by region of the state. As Figure 62 shows, only four counties have an above average share of the population with an advanced degree. Howard County (64.5 percent) and Montgomery County (60.6 percent) are densely populated with highly educated workers. In contrast, Western Maryland and much of the Eastern Shore have much lower educational attainment.

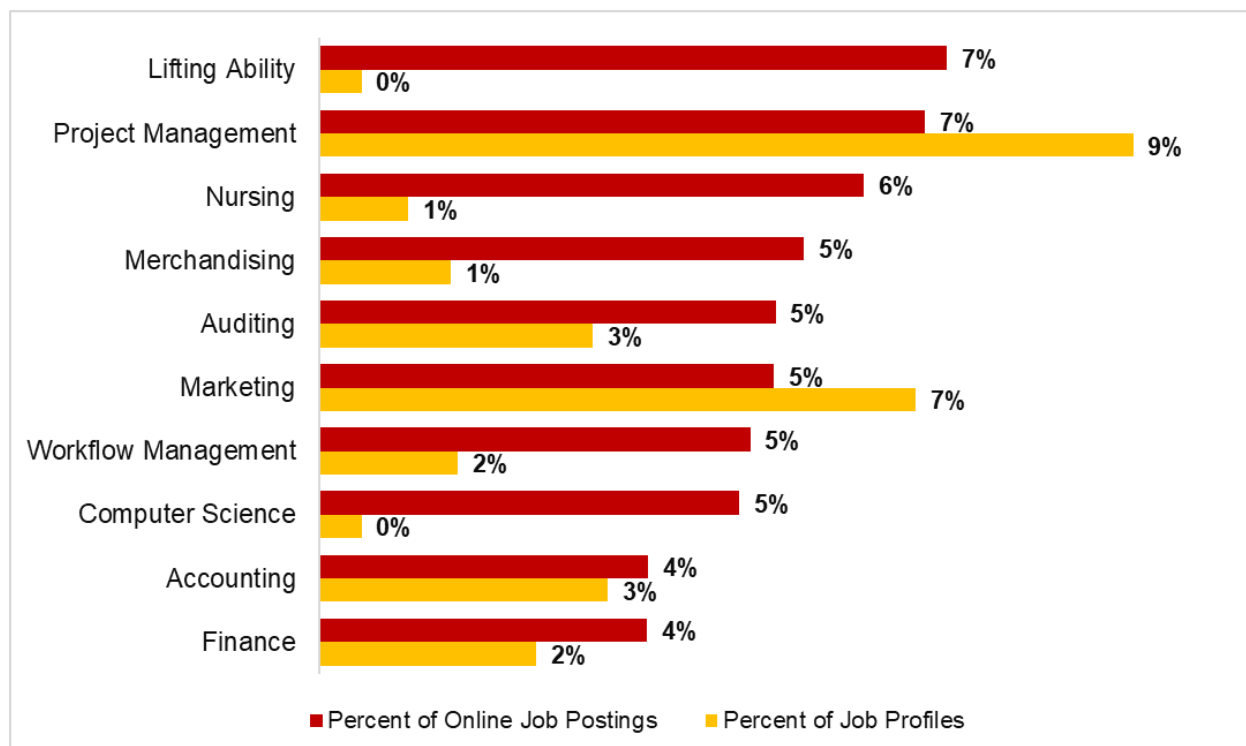
Figure 62: Percent of Population Over 25 With Bachelor's Degree or Higher, 2020-2024 Average



Source: US Census Bureau, ACS

Providing workers with the training they need to find employment in high-demand industries is a key area of focus for Maryland. The need for skilled workers is also evident when looking at job posting data. Workers who have specialized skills have the opportunity to earn more than workers who have not obtained these specialized skills. Figure 63 shows the most requested specialized skills by employers and the share of the workforce that have those specialized skills. Any difference can reveal possible gaps. According to Lightcast, lifting ability is the top requested specialized skill, while only a small percentage (less than one percent) of the talent pool note that skill in online profiles. Other notable shortages include Nursing, which continues to be one of the most requested jobs, and computer science. Finance is the skill projected to grow the fastest at 27.3 percent. Currently, finance has a shortage in that skill. With this specialized skill projected to grow the most, the gap could increase even more. Targeted training or degree programs in finance could shrink this gap.

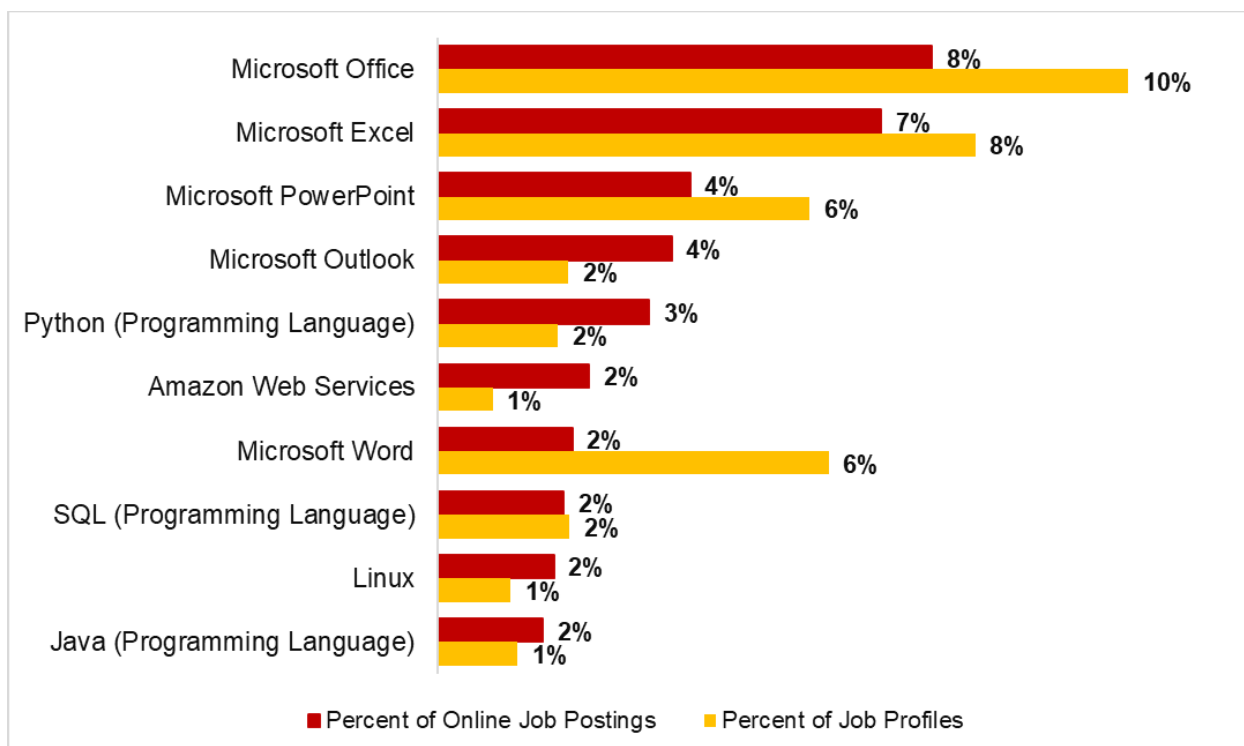
Figure 63: Top 10 Specialized Skills in Job Postings and Profiles in 2025



Source: MD Labor analysis of Lightcast Data (datarun 2026.1)

With the ever-growing need for new tools and technologies in the workforce, software skills are a necessity in today's job market. While some of these tools require little necessary training (e.g., Microsoft Office products) others generally require more in-depth training (e.g., programming in Python or SQL). According to Lightcast and shown in Figure 64, there is an oversupply in software skills for most Microsoft Office products. The software skills where there is a shortage in Maryland's workforce are those skills that involve a programming language (Java, Python, and SQL).

Figure 64: Top 10 Software Skills in Job Postings and Profiles in 2025



Source: MD Labor analysis of Lightcast Data (datarun 2026.1)

II. a. 1. C. Comparison of Economic and Workforce Analytical Conclusion. Describe areas of opportunity for meeting hiring, education, and skills needs identified in the economy compared to the assets available in the labor force in the state.

While Maryland's unemployment rate has been on the rise recently. Its increase is due in large part to job losses in the federal government. Maryland still has an unemployment rate lower than the nation as a whole and has a high-earning and highly educated workforce. Maryland is a top five state for its residents earning a bachelor's or higher. Strong industries in Maryland include healthcare, life sciences, aerospace and defense, and IT/Cybersecurity. Most of the jobs in these industries require a bachelor's degree. This means it will be difficult for Maryland to fill worker demand solely from qualified workers who are actively looking for work. Instead, Maryland will need to partner with employers and workers to ensure unemployed workers can have access to the skills and training they need to fill vacancies statewide. Furthermore, the State will need to focus on re-engaging workers who have fallen out of the labor force (especially women and younger workers aged 16-24) and ensure those workers also have the skills necessary.

Initiatives and partnerships between the Governor's Workforce Development Board; Maryland Workforce Association; Maryland Department of Labor (including the Division of Workforce Development and Adult Learning); other state agencies such as the Maryland State Department of Education, Department of Human Services, and Department of Housing and Community Development; and other partners at the state, local, and federal level will ensure that Maryland's workforce is positioned to meet the needs of the economy of the future.

Appendix A - Job Profiles for Priority Sectors

For each of the eight priority sectors discussed in Section 1.2, this section contains key labor market information (employment and wages by LWDA, top companies hiring in 2025, top skills, and top qualifications) for one key occupation. These are:

- Registered Nurses for Healthcare and Social Assistance,
- Childcare Workers for Child Care
- Software Developers for IT and Cyber
- Biological Technicians for Life Sciences
- Miscellaneous Assemblers and Fabricators for Manufacturing
- Construction Managers for Construction
- Heavy and Tractor Trailer Truck Drivers for Distribution and Logistics

A.1 Registered Nurses

Employment and Wages for Registered Nurses by LWDA, 2024

Area name	Employment	Average Annual Wage
Maryland	48,980	\$96,650
Anne Arundel Workforce Region	4,060	\$95,625
Baltimore City Workforce Region	13,760	\$98,343
Baltimore County Workforce Region	6,980	\$97,993
Carroll Workforce Region	1,240	\$91,320
Frederick Workforce Region	1,540	\$92,330
Howard Workforce Region	1,880	\$93,981
Lower Shore Workforce Region	1,890	\$88,842
Montgomery Workforce Region	7,390	\$101,018
Prince George's Workforce Region	2,990	\$100,070
Southern Maryland Workforce Region	1,340	\$90,278
Susquehanna Workforce Region	1,660	\$97,443
Upper Shore Workforce Region	850	\$89,564

Area name	Employment	Average Annual Wage
Western Maryland Workforce Region	1,960	\$86,510

Source: MD Labor Labor Market Information Team

Top Companies with Maryland Job Postings for Registered Nurses, 2025

Company	Unique Postings (Jan 2025 - Dec 2025)
University Of Maryland Medical System	3,439
MedStar	1,951
Johns Hopkins	1,485
Vetted Health	1,389
Lifebridge Health	1,077

Source: MD Labor analysis of Lightcast Data (datarun 2026.1)

Top Skills In Maryland Job Postings for Registered Nurses, 2025

Skills	Postings	Percent of Total Postings
Nursing	26,412	54%
Nursing Care	7,665	16%
Medication Administration	5,888	12%
Intensive Care Unit	5,517	11%
Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR)	4,479	9%

Source: MD Labor analysis of Lightcast Data (datarun 2026.1)

Top Qualifications In Maryland Job Postings for Registered Nurses, 2025

Qualification	Postings with Qualification
Registered Nurse (RN)	38,116
Basic Life Support (BLS) Certification	16,398
Advanced Cardiovascular Life Support (ACLS) Certification	6,822
Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) Certification	3,691

Qualification	Postings with Qualification
Pediatric Advanced Life Support (PALS)	2,939

Source: MD Labor analysis of Lightcast Data (datarun 2026.1)

A.2 Childcare Workers

Employment & Wages for Childcare Workers by LWDA, 2024

Area Name	Employment	Average Annual Wage
Maryland	8,910	\$36,320
Anne Arundel Workforce Region	650	\$34,394
Baltimore City Workforce Region	550	\$36,458
Baltimore County Workforce Region	1,070	\$35,386
Carroll Workforce Region	240	\$34,301
Frederick Workforce Region	460	\$38,741
Howard Workforce Region	620	\$35,239
Lower Shore Workforce Region	240	\$32,962
Montgomery Workforce Region	2,210	\$37,740
Prince George's Workforce Region	1,530	\$37,246
Southern Maryland Workforce Region	530	\$36,419
Susquehanna Workforce Region	400	\$34,119
Upper Shore Workforce Region	140	\$34,253
Western Maryland Workforce Region	230	\$33,897

Source: MD Labor Labor Market Information Team

Top Companies with Maryland Job Postings for Childcare Workers, 2025

Company	Unique Postings (Jan 2025 - Dec 2025)
A Mother's Prayer Placement	21
White House Nannies	14

Company	Unique Postings (Jan 2025 - Dec 2025)
Philadelphia Nanny Network	11
Estatejobs.Com	11
Abc Care	9

Source: MD Labor analysis of Lightcast Data (datarun 2026.1)

Top Skills In Maryland Job Postings for Childcare Workers, 2025

Skills	Postings	Percent of Total Postings
Child Development	123	20%
Working With Children	108	18%
Meal Planning And Preparation	84	14%
Preschool Education	81	13%
Infant Care	69	11%

Source: MD Labor analysis of Lightcast Data (datarun 2026.1)

Top Qualifications In Maryland Job Postings for Childcare Workers, 2025

Qualification	Postings with Qualification
Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) Certification	132
First Aid Certification	124
Valid Driver's License	79
Teaching Certificate	8
American Society For Quality (ASQ) Certified	5

Source: MD Labor analysis of Lightcast Data (datarun 2026.1)

A.3 Software Developers

Employment and Wages for Software Developers by LWDA, 2024

Area Name	Employment	Average Annual Wage
Maryland	31,940	\$150,800
Anne Arundel Workforce Region	6,000	\$153,392
Baltimore City Workforce Region	2,050	\$139,930
Baltimore County Workforce Region	2,860	\$147,895
Carroll Workforce Region	210	\$143,756
Frederick Workforce Region	1,160	\$158,580
Howard Workforce Region	4,710	\$154,926
Lower Shore Workforce Region	110	\$130,768
Montgomery Workforce Region	5,940	\$153,602
Prince George's Workforce Region	2,100	\$148,651
Southern Maryland Workforce Region	840	\$140,022
Susquehanna Workforce Region	810	\$157,371
Upper Shore Workforce Region	120	\$134,134
Western Maryland Workforce Region	430	\$129,840

Source: MD Labor Labor Market Information Team

Top Companies with Maryland Job Postings for Software Developers, 2025

Company	Unique Postings (Jan 2025 - Dec 2025)
Capital One	1,246
Leidos	1,025
Northrop Grumman	505
Amazon	352
Lockheed Martin	328

Source: MD Labor analysis of Lightcast Data (datarun 2026.1)

Top Skills In Maryland Job Postings for Software Developers, 2025

Skills	Postings (Jan 2025 - Dec 2025)	Percent of Total Postings
Computer Science	8,791	43%
Software Engineering	8,474	42%
Python (Programming Language)	8,379	41%
Software Development	7,423	37%
Agile Methodology	7,211	36%

Source: MD Labor analysis of Lightcast Data (datarun 2026.1)

Top Qualifications In Maryland Job Postings for Software Developers, 2025

Qualification	Postings with Qualification
Top Secret-Sensitive Compartmented Information (TS/SCI Clearance)	6,348
Security Clearance	3,212
Secret Clearance	1,385
CompTIA Security+	744
Top Secret Clearance	568

Source: MD Labor analysis of Lightcast Data (datarun 2026.1)

A.4 Biological Technicians

Employment and Wages for Biological Technicians by LWDA, 2024

Area Name	Employment	Average Annual Wage
Maryland	3,780	\$54,360
Anne Arundel Workforce Region	110	\$49,403
Baltimore City Workforce Region	N/A	N/A
Baltimore County Workforce Region	170	\$47,339
Carroll Workforce Region	N/A	N/A
Frederick Workforce Region	180	\$64,794

Area Name	Employment	Average Annual Wage
Howard Workforce Region	N/A	N/A
Lower Shore Workforce Region	N/A	N/A
Montgomery Workforce Region	600	\$63,344
Prince George's Workforce Region	230	\$58,323
Southern Maryland Workforce Region	N/A	N/A
Susquehanna Workforce Region	60	\$60,194
Upper Shore Workforce Region	80	\$53,844
Western Maryland Workforce Region	40	\$50,905

Source: MD Labor Labor Market Information Team

Top Companies With Maryland Job Postings for Biological Technicians, 2025

Company	Unique Postings (Jan 2025 - Dec 2025)
The Henry M. Jackson Foundation For The Advancement Of Military Medicine	61
Johns Hopkins University	22
Meso Scale Diagnostics, LLC.	9
Parsons	7
Eurofins	6

Source: MD Labor analysis of Lightcast Data (datarun 2026.1)

Top Skills In Maryland Job Postings for Software Developers, 2025

Skills	Unique Postings (Jan 2025 - Dec 2025)	Percent of Total Postings
Biology	110	44%
Data Analysis	81	32%
Biochemical Assays	56	22%
Data Entry	56	22%
Data Collection	55	22%

Source: MD Labor analysis of Lightcast Data (datarun 2026.1)

Top Qualifications In Maryland Job Postings for Software Developers, 2025

Qualification	Postings with Qualification
Secret Clearance	15
Security Clearance	11
Valid Driver's License	4
Public Trust Clearance	2
Microsoft Certified Professional	2

Source: MD Labor analysis of Lightcast Data (datarun 2026.1)

A.5 Miscellaneous Assemblers and Fabricators

Employment and Wages for Miscellaneous Assemblers and Fabricators by LWDA, 2024

Area Name	Employment	Average Annual Wage
Maryland	6,760	\$45,990
Anne Arundel Workforce Region	380	\$44,122
Baltimore City Workforce Region	420	\$43,712
Baltimore County Workforce Region	790	\$43,685
Carroll Workforce Region	490	\$45,974
Frederick Workforce Region	470	\$45,259
Howard Workforce Region	670	\$45,582
Lower Shore Workforce Region	240	\$40,624
Montgomery Workforce Region	530	\$47,896
Prince George's Workforce Region	440	\$49,848
Southern Maryland Workforce Region	120	\$46,941
Susquehanna Workforce Region	660	\$47,509
Upper Shore Workforce Region	400	\$45,741

Area Name	Employment	Average Annual Wage
Western Maryland Workforce Region	860	\$48,520

Source: MD Labor Labor Market Information Team

Top Companies with Maryland Job Postings for Miscellaneous Assemblers and Fabricators, 2025

Company	Unique Postings (Jan 2025 - Dec 2025)
Aerotek	127
Cintas	38
Perdue	32
PeopleShare	25
UniFirst	16

Source: MD Labor analysis of Lightcast Data (datarun 2026.1)

Top Skills In Maryland Job Postings for Miscellaneous Assemblers and Fabricators, 2025

Skills	Postings	Percent of Total Postings
Lifting Ability	166	26%
Packaging And Labeling	163	25%
Warehousing	151	23%
Production Line	150	23%
Machinery	109	17%

Source: MD Labor analysis of Lightcast Data (datarun 2026.1)

Top Qualifications In Maryland Job Postings for Miscellaneous Assemblers and Fabricators, 2025

Qualification	Postings with Qualification
Forklift Certification	20
Valid Driver's License	14
Veterinary License	1

Qualification	Postings with Qualification
Transportation Worker Identification Credential (TWIC) Card	1

Source: MD Labor analysis of Lightcast Data (datarun 2026.1)

A.6 Construction Managers

Employment and Wages for Construction Managers by LWDA, 2024

Area Name	Employment	Average Annual Wage
Maryland	5,780	\$135,390
Anne Arundel Workforce Region	510	\$126,497
Baltimore City Workforce Region	460	\$137,462
Baltimore County Workforce Region	1,040	\$143,115
Carroll Workforce Region	150	\$127,238
Frederick Workforce Region	400	\$128,379
Howard Workforce Region	450	\$132,589
Lower Shore Workforce Region	100	\$113,220
Montgomery Workforce Region	990	\$141,883
Prince George's Workforce Region	880	\$141,707
Southern Maryland Workforce Region	190	\$122,662
Susquehanna Workforce Region	230	\$124,911
Upper Shore Workforce Region	90	\$120,289
Western Maryland Workforce Region	110	\$120,983

Source: MD Labor Labor Market Information Team

Top Companies with Maryland Job Postings for Construction Managers, 2025

Company	Unique Postings (Jan 2025 - Dec 2025)
GPAC	191
Actalent	119

Company	Unique Postings (Jan 2025 - Dec 2025)
CyberCoders	100
Hays	78
Montgomery County Public Schools	61

Source: MD Labor analysis of Lightcast Data (datarun 2026.1)

Top Skills In Maryland Job Postings for Construction Managers, 2025

Skills	Postings	Percent of Total Postings
Construction	2,582	69%
Project Management	2,343	63%
Subcontracting	1,804	48%
Construction Management	1,386	37%
Project Schedules	806	22%

Source: MD Labor analysis of Lightcast Data (datarun 2026.1)

Top Qualifications In Maryland Job Postings for Construction Managers, 2025

Qualification	Postings with Qualification
Valid Driver's License	742
30-Hour OSHA General Industry Card	339
First Aid Certification	173
Project Management Professional Certification	172
Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) Certification	170

Source: MD Labor analysis of Lightcast Data (datarun 2026.1)

A.7 Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers

Employment and Wages for Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers by LWDA, 2024

Area Name	Employment	Average Annual Wage
Maryland	23,910	\$58,590
Anne Arundel Workforce Region	2,700	\$58,997
Baltimore City Workforce Region	2,870	\$59,807
Baltimore County Workforce Region	3,100	\$56,669
Carroll Workforce Region	740	\$55,476
Frederick Workforce Region	810	\$60,590
Howard Workforce Region	1,710	\$60,111
Lower Shore Workforce Region	690	\$59,792
Montgomery Workforce Region	1,770	\$59,898
Prince George's Workforce Region	3,550	\$61,524
Southern Maryland Workforce Region	560	\$56,868
Susquehanna Workforce Region	1,740	\$58,999
Upper Shore Workforce Region	850	\$55,107
Western Maryland Workforce Region	1,850	\$53,985

Source: MD Labor Labor Market Information Team

Top Companies with Maryland Job Postings for Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers, 2025

Company	Unique Postings (Jan 2025 - Dec 2025)
Advance Auto Parts	404
CRST International	369
Epes Transport	324
C.R. England	240
Roadmaster Group	219

Source: MD Labor analysis of Lightcast Data (datarun 2026.1)

Top Skills In Maryland Job Postings for Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers, 2025

Skills	Postings	Percent of Total Postings
Truck Driving	3,923	31%
Loading And Unloading	1,714	14%
Good Driving Record	1,698	14%
Lifting Ability	1,396	11%
Pre-Trip And Post-Trip Vehicle Inspections	1,022	8%

Source: MD Labor analysis of Lightcast Data (datarun 2026.1)

Top Qualifications In Maryland Job Postings for Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers, 2025

Qualification	Postings with Qualification
Commercial Driver's License (CDL)	2,963
CDL Class A License	2,879
Valid Driver's License	2,329
CDL Class B License	765
Tanker Endorsement	314

Source: MD Labor analysis of Lightcast Data (datarun 2026.1)

II.(a)(2) Workforce Development, Education and Training Activities Analysis

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include an analysis of the workforce development activities, including education and training in the State, to address the education and skill needs of the workforce, as identified in (a)(1)(B)(iii) above, and the employment needs of employers, as identified in (a)(1)(A)(iii) above.

This must include an analysis of–

II.(a)(2)(A) The State’s Workforce Development Activities. Provide an analysis of the State’s workforce development activities, including education and training activities of the core programs, Combined State Plan partner programs included in this plan, and required and optional one-stop delivery system partners.

Maryland's workforce development system has an excellent foundation from which to launch, support, and promote a shared statewide vision and strategy to advance the state's workforce development activities. The Governor's Workforce Development Board (GWDB) is the Governor's chief strategy and policy-making body for workforce development. In September 2022, Governor Moore joined newly appointed GWDB leadership, including a new Executive Director, Chair, and Vice Chair, to co-facilitate a discussion to kick off development of the State Workforce Plan. There, he laid out his priorities and his expectations for the Plan and for the GWDB's leadership role in Maryland's workforce system. In December 2022, Governor Moore issued Executive Order 01.01.2023.22 to underscore this role for the GWDB and to streamline its voting membership.¹

The GWDB is a business-led board with a majority of its members representing the industrial and geographic diversity of Maryland's business community. Additional members include the Governor, cabinet secretaries, community colleges, the state Superintendent of Schools, state and local elected officials, labor, and representatives of nonprofit organizations. As of 2022, the GWDB includes the Career Technical Education (CTE) Committee, created as a part of the GWDB under state law, to establish an integrated system of CTE that prepares students for career success and aligns with employers' talent needs.

The Maryland Workforce Association (MWA) is the membership organization of Maryland's 13 Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs). The LWDBs are established in each of Maryland's 13 Local Workforce Development Areas (Local Areas) to ensure that each area's workforce is well-prepared to meet the current and future needs of local employers. The MWA works with the GWDB, MD Labor, and system partners to support a comprehensive and aligned workforce system. Through MWA, the GWDB, MD Labor, and other partner agency staff meet with LWDB leaders at least once per month to share updates, identify opportunities for collaboration, and discuss other important matters pertaining to the public workforce system.

Maryland's State Workforce Plan includes the workforce functions of four state agencies: Department of Labor; Department of Human Services (DHS), the agency charged with administration of Maryland's Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment and Training (SNAP E&T) programs; the Maryland State Department of Education's (MSDE) Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS), the agency charged with administration of the state's Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program; and the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), the agency charged with oversight of the Community Services Block Grant program. Key programs of each state agency included in this Plan are as follows, with descriptions provided below:

- MD Labor Division of Workforce Development and Adult Learning (DWDAL)
 - Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs
 - WIOA Title II Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) program
 - WIOA Title III Employment Service program under the Wagner-Peyser Act
 - Jobs for Veterans State Grant (JVSG)
 - Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP)
 - Additional grant programs, described below
- MSDE DORS

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https://governor.maryland.gov/Lists/ExecutiveOrders/Attachments/29/EO%2001.01.2023.22%20Governor's%20Workforce%20Development%20Board_Accessible.pdf

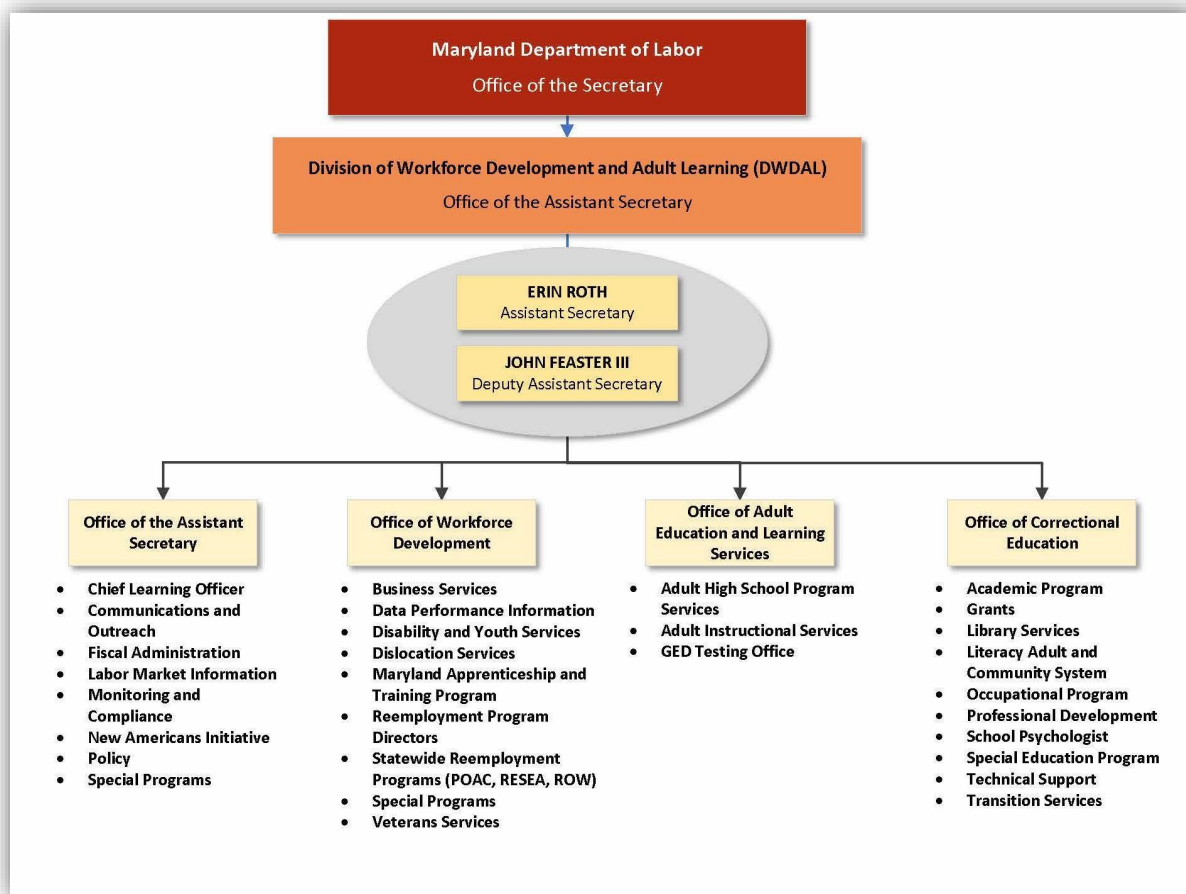
- Title IV VR Services
- Maryland DHS
 - SNAP Employment and Training Program, called Food Supplement Employment and Training (FSET)
 - TANF - Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA)
- Maryland DHCD Division of Neighborhood Revitalization
 - Community Service Block Grant (CSBG)

The table below provides a graphic representation of the various State departments/divisions and the breakdown of roles of the required and optional WIOA system partners in Maryland.

WIOA State Plan Program	Core Program per the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act	Additional WIOA Program for Maryland (Governor's determination)	Maryland State Agency Delivering Program
WIOA Title I Adult Program	X		MD Labor
WIOA Title I Dislocated Worker Program	X		MD Labor
WIOA Title I Youth Program	X		MD Labor
WIOA Title II Adult Education and Family Literacy Program	X		MD Labor
WIOA Title III Wagner-Peyser Program	X		MD Labor
WIOA Title IV VR Program	X		MSDE
TANF Program		X	DHS
SNAP E&T Program		X	DHS
TAA Program		X	MD Labor
JVSG Program		X	MD Labor
UI		X	MD Labor

SCSEP		X	MD Labor & Center for Workforce Inclusion
CSBG		X	DHCD

Maryland Labor's DWDAL is responsible for the administration of the majority of the programs described in this Combined Plan. The Division administers the WIOA Title I, Title II, and Wagner-Peyser programs. The Division also administers the Trade Adjustment Assistance Act program (Trade), the JVSG Program, and the SCSEP. SCSEP is also administered by non-state partners, including the Center for Workforce Inclusion and its subgrantees. Additionally, while not a formal State Plan partner, DWDAL also serves at the State Apprenticeship Agency and houses the Maryland Apprenticeship and Training Program. The following organizational chart provides a visual representation of DWDAL programs.



The Division coordinates the efforts of Maryland's 33 American Job Centers (AJCs), including 18 comprehensive AJCs and 15 satellite centers, as well as an additional 14 affiliate and mobile units, which provide comprehensive services to both jobseekers and businesses. While jobseekers are offered a wide range of career and training services, businesses are provided with numerous types of assistance and growth services. The Division works alongside local partners to provide Rapid Response and Trade Program activities (as appropriate depending on authorization status). DWDAL coordinates many workforce training activities, including

Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA), Reemployment Opportunity Workshop (ROW), Rapid Response, etc. with the Division of Unemployment Insurance (DUI), another division within MD Labor. DWDAL also has a number of specialized offices focused on the diverse needs of Maryland's businesses and jobseekers. Programs provided or overseen by the Division's Office of Workforce Development (OWD) include:

- The **RESEA** program was developed by the United States Department of Labor in an effort to reduce the number of weeks that UI claimants receive benefits. It is designed to proactively help claimants who are most likely to exhaust benefits to identify potential barriers to employment, assess work search progress, and expose individuals to the vast array of services available through the workforce system.
- The **ROW** program is a full-day workshop offered to UI claimants that do not receive RESEA services. It is also designed to shorten the duration of UI benefits received through reemployment efforts.
- The **Veteran Services Unit** operates the **JVSG** program. The JVSG program's mission is two-fold: to provide employment and training services to veterans with significant barriers to employment and to connect employers with work-ready veterans.
- The **Foreign Labor Certification (FLC)** program is an employment-based immigration program that assists applicable employers who have obtained USDOL approval to begin the hiring process of permanent or temporary foreign workers.
- The **Tax Credit Unit** is charged with administering federal tax credit programs, such as the Work Opportunity Tax Credit, which offers income tax incentives to employers for hiring members of targeted population groups, such as registered apprentices, ex-offenders, or certain individuals with disabilities.
- The **Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers (MSFW)** program provides a specialized menu of services within the Wagner-Peyser program and exists to ensure MSFWs are receiving the same employment services that non migrant seasonal farm workers receive at the state's AJCs.
- **DWDAL** serves as the "State Apprenticeship Agency" and, in consultation with the Maryland Apprenticeship and Training Council, is responsible for: registering apprenticeship programs that meet federal and state standards; issuing certificates of completion to apprentices; operating the Apprenticeship Maryland Program (AMP) youth apprenticeship program in collaboration with MSDE; encouraging the development of new programs through outreach and technical assistance; protecting the safety and welfare of apprentices; and assuring that all programs provide high-quality training.
- The **New Americans Initiative** provides much-needed outreach and technical assistance for AJC staff to ensure equitable and meaningful access of services to work-authorized New Americans and individuals with Limited English Proficiency (LEP).
- The **Professional Outplacement Assistance Center (POAC)** provides support to individuals who are in the professional, executive, technical, managerial, and/or scientific occupations, along with recent college graduates, who find themselves in need of assistance to get reconnected to the labor market.

DWDAL is also home to the **Office of Adult Education and Literacy Services (AELS)**. As the WIOA Title II administrator for Maryland, the Office selects local providers of adult education instructional services via a statewide competition. Instructional services include Adult Basic and Secondary Education, English Language Acquisition/Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education, Family Literacy, and High School Diploma preparation. Maryland's current adult education providers include a wide range of community colleges, local public-school systems, community-based organizations, public libraries, and the State's Correctional Education program.

DWDAL also administers Maryland's nationally recognized, state-funded, sector-based workforce development program, **Employment Advancement Right Now (EARN) Maryland**, in consultation with the GWDB. Established in 2014, EARN Maryland is an industry-led program designed with the flexibility to ensure that Maryland employers are central partners in developing the talent they need to compete and grow, while preparing Marylanders for family-sustaining careers in Maryland's key economic sectors. EARN Maryland continues to serve as one of the state's core workforce investments to:

- Address business workforce needs by focusing on industry sector strategies that seek long-term solutions to sustained skills gaps and personnel shortages.
- Address the needs of workers by creating formal career paths to good jobs and sustaining or growing middle-class jobs.
- Encourage mobility for Maryland's most hard-to-serve jobseekers through targeted job readiness training; and
- Foster better coordination between the public, private, and non-profit sectors and the workforce, economic development, and education partners in regions across the State.

The success of EARN Maryland is seeded in meaningful collaboration among a diverse group of stakeholders who make up a Strategic Industry Partnership (SIP) and includes employer and industry partners, non-profit and community-based organizations, and workforce, economic development, and education partners. Recognizing that a workforce system disconnected from business fails to meet the needs of both employers and jobseekers, EARN places employers at the center of the identification of workforce needs and skills gaps. Since the program began in 2014, nearly 9,300 individuals have obtained employment, with just over 1,200 entering new employment during the first three quarters of 2023.

The publicly funded **VR** program in Maryland is administered by the MSDE's DORS in accordance with the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended by WIOA of 2014. DORS is funded primarily by the United States Department of Education's Rehabilitation Services Administration. The federal funding includes a state matching requirement (federal 78.7 percent and state match of 21.3 percent) and maintenance of effort requirement. DORS provides services and support to assist eligible students, youth, and adults with significant disabilities in transition to postsecondary education, training, and employment. DORS also engages with businesses throughout Maryland, assisting them in recruiting and maintaining qualified, valuable employees. DORS also serves as a resource on disability and employment matters such as disability awareness training, workforce diversity and inclusion initiatives, training on the Americans with Disabilities Act, solutions for reasonable accommodations, and worksite consultations.

In Maryland, the **TANF** program is referred to as the **TCA** program and is delivered by the Local **Departments of Social Services (LDSS)** offices. LDSS offices are the statewide framework for delivering education, job training, job placement, and other services to assist TANF customers with overcoming barriers to obtaining self-sustaining employment. Key components of the program include:

- Collaborating with private and public sector partners to identify local growth occupations and their associated education and training requirements.
- Assessing a customer's respective skill sets, career interests, and barriers to obtaining self-sustaining employment.
- Developing or procuring appropriate work-related services, including academic remediation, targeted sector training, and job placement services.

TANF workforce development is built on a philosophy of “universal engagement.” This means that customers are expected to participate in activities based on the results of individual assessments with the goal of employment or removing barriers to employment. Many of the remaining welfare families, in addition to many of the new families applying for TANF, may face barriers that could impede their ability to secure and maintain employment. Workforce development is designed to meet the critical, essential needs of the underemployed, newly unemployed, and hard-to-place. In addition to workforce development, the TANF program provides a broad range of services.

DHS’s **Family Investment Administration (FIA)** has formed partnerships with other state agencies, community organizations, and other administrations within DHS, including the Child Support Enforcement, Social Services division. FIA works with these partners to promote DHS’s goal to protect children by assisting their families to become independent through work, personal, and family responsibility as well as community involvement. The Department expanded its goals to include support for low-income working families and continues to strengthen those partnerships by empowering staff at the LDSS offices across the state to work together to provide employment and training activities, supportive services, and benefits that enable customers to obtain jobs and improve their economic circumstances.

The **SNAP E&T** program in Maryland,[formally known as the is called the Food Supplement Employment and Training (FSET) program] is the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment and Training (SNAP E&T) program and is housed within DHS FIA. The program works to connect individuals who receive monthly SNAP food benefits with successful career training so they may achieve self-sufficiency. Eligible SNAP recipients are connected with approved providers to receive workforce training, job readiness, and other support services. Activities are at no cost to participants, and providers are reimbursed for a portion of their expenses. All services are free of charge.

Maryland’s **UI** program is administered by MD Labor’s DUI. The program pays benefits to Maryland workers who have lost their job through no fault of their own and meet the program’s eligibility requirements. Individuals wishing to file a claim may do so online or via DUI’s Claim Center phone line. Maryland’s AJC staff is trained to assist customers in filing claims. To help customers to benefit from the wide range of job seeker services available to them through the AJCs and WIOA partners, AJC staff administer the RESEA and ROW re-employment programs to ensure they are taking full advantage of the public workforce system’s resources.

The **Community Service Block Grant (CSBG)** is overseen by DHCD’s Division of Neighborhood Revitalization and their local grantees in the state’s Community Action Agencies (CAA). The program’s primary objective is to develop viable communities, principally for persons of low to moderate income, by providing affordable housing and suitable living environments and through the expansion of economic opportunities. The Maryland workforce system welcomed DHCD as a State Plan partner in 2018, irrespective of whether they spend funds on employment and training. The Maryland workforce system, with DHCD and the CAAs, serves similar customers with barriers to employment.

Maryland’s **SCSEP** services are offered by DWDAL and Senior Services America, Inc., and are designed to assist older workers in developing workplace skills that will enable them to attain permanent, unsubsidized employment, either with their host agencies or other nonprofits, government, or private sector employers. Participants are trained by a variety of employers, including schools, physicians, healthcare agencies, hospitals, custodial and maintenance service industries, senior service providers, administrative and management entities, retail

merchants, and transportation, security, and technology companies. SCSEP services are available to job seekers, ages 55 and older, who are unemployed, meet established low-income guidelines, and desire an opportunity for training and employment. Program participants are given a training assignment that most closely matches their personal goals for employment. Training assignments are coordinated with nonprofit or government agencies, also known as host agencies, and are limited to 40 hours per pay period at the established minimum wage hourly rate. Applicants are not required to have previous work experience.

Also, within Maryland Labor, the **Office of Correctional Education** provides educational opportunities for incarcerated individuals, enabling them to become independent and productive workers, citizens, and parents. The Office, with the oversight of the Correctional Education Council and in partnership with the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services (DPSCS), is responsible for the academic, occupational, and transitional education programs provided in Maryland's correctional institutions.

II.(a)(2)(B) Strengths and Weaknesses of Workforce Development Activities

Provide an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the workforce development activities identified in (A), directly above.

The members of the GWDB, including the MD Labor and other WIOA Partners, as well as its business-majority membership, have identified a number of strengths in Maryland's workforce development ecosystem to build on, including:

- Maryland's central and highly accessible location along the Eastern seaboard, its proximity to the nation's capital, and its rich landscape of research institutions yields a diverse and robust industry mix supporting a strong state economy. This includes industries that can offer good, family-sustaining jobs and careers, including cybersecurity and IT, healthcare and life sciences, infrastructure, manufacturing, and education.²
- Maryland positions itself as an attractive destination for both external talent and the development of its own "homegrown" workforce. The state is known for its diverse population, with residents from various ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Baltimore and areas surrounding Washington, DC are particularly diverse. The state is also home to several prestigious educational institutions that attract students and professionals from around the world, contributing to the diversity of the state.
- The Moore-Miller Administration has prioritized an intentional reinvigoration of the GWDB and its intended functionality as the Governor's chief strategy and policy-making body for workforce development, as a platform for agency collaboration and industry engagement, and as a driver for system accountability and continuous improvement.³
- A clear and shared commitment to expanding access to high-quality, low-cost, non-degree career pathways, with a focus on RA and other high-quality, paid experiential learning opportunities.

² See data in Section II.(a)(1). Economic and Workforce Analysis, including Figure 62: Maryland's Top Industries (4-Digit NAICS) by Employment in 2022, with details on annual wages per industry.

³

https://governor.maryland.gov/Lists/ExecutiveOrders/Attachments/29/EO%2001.01.2023.22%20Governor's%20Workforce%20Development%20Board_Accessible.pdf

- Establishment of the GWDB's CTE Committee under state law as a platform for strategic alignment across education, workforce development, and industry stakeholders around reimagining and improving CTE and apprenticeship opportunities and employment outcomes for students across the state, including joint development of the Perkins State CTE Plan with MSDE.
- The consolidation of a large number of workforce development programs under the Division for Workforce Development and Adult Learning within the MD Labor, including WIOA Titles I, II, and III, Correctional Education, and RA, fosters greater program alignment and coordination.

Opportunities

No system is perfect, and Maryland certainly has challenges related to workforce development activities. Some of these challenges include:

- Maryland has been slower to rebound its labor force participation rate post-pandemic, compared to nearby states and the U.S. on average, with around 160,000 fewer workers in the labor force today than before the pandemic. Labor force participation rates remain particularly low among youth, young adults, working-aged women, and older workers.
- There is often a mismatch between what employers need and what is available in the labor market, signaling a need for employers and workforce development and education entities to actively partner to ensure education and workforce development efforts truly align to industry needs and successfully connect job seekers to good jobs.
- The landscape of workforce development programs and services in Maryland is complex and layered, at times challenging for employers and jobseekers to navigate. This signals a need to more consistently distribute and connect potential customers with clear information on programs and services available, and for greater alignment and coordination among partners within and across the state and local levels.
- A large number of Marylanders lack a high school diploma, and additional Marylanders lack a postsecondary degree or credential, making it difficult for them to obtain many jobs.⁴ This signals both a need for more education and credentialing and a need to reexamine whether diplomas and degrees are truly required for a number of jobs for which a candidate without these qualifications may have the appropriate skills and/or experience to succeed in the job.
- Many Marylanders face barriers to participation in workforce opportunities such as lack of affordable transportation or dependent care, or lack of access to obtaining a standard driver's license. Many people with disabilities, New Americans, and people who have been incarcerated face population-specific yet significant barriers to participation in Maryland's labor force as well.
- There is a need for the advancement of digital equity and expanded support for universal access to technology, including broadband access and digital skills. Maryland is working to capitalize on and align workforce efforts with the federal Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program, which is providing \$42.45 billion nationally to expand high-speed internet access.

Maryland is poised to advance solutions to these challenges with many of the strengths noted above, particularly those strengths that position Maryland for inclusive economic growth;

⁴ Maryland's rate of 86.3% is roughly in the middle of US States, compared to highest states (Montana at 94%) and lowest (California, 83%). https://news.maryland.gov/msde/wp-content/uploads/sites/12/2023/02/Graduation-Data-02_28_2023.pdf and multiple sources including <https://www.usnews.com/education/best-high-schools/articles/see-high-school-graduation-rates-by-state>

position the GWDB to serve critical functions around statewide vision and strategy, partnership, and accountability; and position MD Labor's DWDAL to continue to be the central leader in implementing many elements of the state's workforce development strategy. All of Maryland's core partners will work collaboratively to address these challenges.

II.(a)(2)(C) State Workforce Development Capacity

Provide an analysis of the capacity of State entities to provide the workforce development activities identified in (A), above.

The key State agencies that deliver workforce system partner programs include:

- MD Labor
- MSDE DORS
- Maryland DHS

Each of these agencies is led by experienced managers and staffed with experienced professionals. Across the state, Maryland's WIOA partners operate 33 AJCs strategically located to provide access to services to employers and job seekers. Alignment and coordination across these programs ensure that Maryland effectively leverages its existing resources to deliver outstanding customer service to the citizens and businesses that are vital to growing a prosperous and inclusive Maryland economy, one that leaves no one behind. Workforce system partners from these state agencies and other recipients of federal funding utilize a combination of Federal and state funding to support the delivery of services. This braided funding is key to efficiently delivering services. The GWDB and local areas are committed to working together to ensure that Maryland develops a workforce system that strives beyond WIOA to collaboratively meet the needs of job seekers and employers.

II. (b) State Strategic Vision and Goals

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include the State’s strategic vision and goals for developing its workforce and meeting employer needs in order to support economic growth and economic self-sufficiency. This must include–

II.(b)(1) 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. State law further established the CTE Committee of the Governor’s Workforce Development Board to drive deeper alignment of CTE and workforce systems.

Maryland’s workforce development system will advance this vision through four strategic priorities: strengthening talent pipelines in key sectors, expanding access and equity, preparing the future workforce through career-connected learning, and improving system alignment and accountability. WIOA investments will be directed toward business-led, data-driven strategies that respond to Maryland’s evolving economy - including the impacts of technological change and federal workforce shifts - while reducing barriers to participation and supporting economic mobility.

At the same time, the State will maintain flexibility for local areas to align with statewide priorities while tailoring solutions to regional needs, ensuring a coordinated yet locally responsive system that delivers results for both workers and employers

II.(b)(2) Goals

Describe the goals for achieving this vision based on the analysis in section (a) above of the State's economic conditions, workforce, and workforce development activities. This must include–

II.(b)(2)(A) Goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce, including preparing youth and individuals with barriers to employment and other populations.

The State has identified four core strategic pillars to focus the activities of Maryland's workforce system in a unified direction. The four strategic pillars include:

1. **Supercharge Key Sectors:** Closing workforce gaps in Maryland's key industries and building the talent pipelines Maryland's economy depends on.
2. **Advance Equity and Access:** Removing barriers to quality training and employment opportunities that unlock economic mobility.
3. **Prepare the Future Workforce:** Giving every person a clear path from education to career by redefining career preparation and ensuring access to hands-on, industry-aligned, future-focused learning opportunities.
4. **Improve System Alignment and Accountability:** Ensuring that Maryland's talent development ecosystem of workforce, education, and supportive service partners delivers results for people and for businesses by aligning performance goals, transparent reporting, accountability, and state-local partnership.

These pillars were initially developed through facilitated discussion among the GWDB, then validated and finalized with supporting strategies by members of the GWDB, staff from workforce system partner agencies, and LWDB leaders from each of Maryland's 13 LWDBs, and other education and training stakeholders across the state. The pillars were revisited and revalidated by the Board in Fall 2025, with strategies updated and KPIs added during the modification in Spring 2026. Maryland will continue to execute a set of strategies under each pillar to enhance a workforce system that provides residents with training and skills that meet the demands of emerging industries.

The strategies under each pillar will also continue to promote diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility in the workforce. Maryland is committed to addressing barriers to employment for groups historically left behind, such as people with intellectual and developmental disabilities or the formerly incarcerated, and helping to ensure that workforce development programs benefit a broad and diverse range of individuals. Success requires coordinating workforce development efforts with broader economic development goals, identifying key sectors for growth, ensuring that workforce development initiatives support economic development objectives, and fostering collaboration between workforce development agencies and stakeholders statewide.

II.(b)(2)(B) Goals for meeting the skilled workforce needs of employers.

Meeting the skilled workforce needs of employers requires a strategic approach that aligns educational and training programs with the demands of industries. The State of Maryland's four strategic pillars will guide the state's strategy implementation. The strategies and activities described below will guide Maryland's workforce development system and partners to meet the needs of citizens and employers.

Pillar I – Supercharge Key Sectors: Closing workforce gaps in Maryland's key industries and building the talent pipelines Maryland's economy depends on.

Maryland is strengthening talent pipelines in its high-growth and high-need industries by developing coordinated sector ecosystems that prepare residents for evolving employer needs. This includes responding to major labor market shifts driven by artificial intelligence and the changing federal employment landscape – ensuring Maryland can reskill impacted workers while meeting emerging industry demand.

The State will continue to partner closely with employers to align training with demand, expand industry-aligned learning opportunities, and scale sector partnerships that connect Marylanders to high-wage, future-ready careers.

Strategies	Key Actions
1.1: Align workforce investments to priority industry sectors	1.1.A: Define high-wage, high-skill, or in-demand and emerging sectors and occupations for Maryland for use across Maryland's talent system 1.1.B: Map workforce training assets against projected industry demand in priority sectors and occupations 1.1.C: Design and coordinate sector strategies and partnerships in priority sectors that incorporate transition or reskilling pathways for displaced federal workers, where feasible
1.2: Expand Registered Apprenticeship and other experiential learning	1.2.A: Increase the state's capacity to recruit new employers and sponsors for Registered Apprenticeships, including through new pay-per-apprentice and intermediary investments 1.2.B: Reduce administrative barriers to employer and sponsor participation 1.2.C: Expand paid internships, work-based learning, and other experiential learning opportunities, including through less traditional models such as service-connected pathways
1.3. Identify and scale proven employer-led workforce models	1.3.A: Identify high-performing regional workforce initiatives and sector partnerships, and scale models that demonstrate strong employment and wage outcomes – particularly those aligned to Maryland's priority sectors 1.3.B: Expand employer-driven incumbent worker training, upskilling, and advancement pathways for existing workers to meet immediate and evolving business needs 1.3.C: Strengthen and sustain employer-led workforce models by leveraging private, philanthropic, and innovative financing approaches to expand reach and long-term impact

Pillar II – Advance Equity and Access: Removing barriers to quality training and employment opportunities that unlock economic mobility.

Maryland is strengthening its workforce system by reducing barriers to employment and ensuring that residents can access coordinated, high-quality services that support long-term economic mobility. This includes advancing integrated, person-centered service delivery and aligning workforce, human services, and community-based supports to help individuals enter, persist in, and advance in the workforce.

The State will also continue to partner with employers and community organizations to expand access to quality jobs and support retention and advancement for workers facing barriers to employment, including through Governor Moore's signature ENOUGH initiative.

Strategies	Key Actions
2.1 Reduce barriers to workforce participation for populations with high barriers	2.1.A: Use data to identify priority populations and communities with the greatest labor force participation gaps and target investments accordingly. 2.1.B: Expand integrated, community-based service delivery by strengthening partnerships and aligning workforce and supportive services, including childcare, transportation, and behavioral health. 2.1.C: Advance targeted strategies for populations facing the greatest barriers - including justice-involved individuals, disconnected youth and young adults, and ENOUGH communities - by expanding re-entry, re-engagement, and coordinated pathways to employment, education, and training
2.2: Support employers in implementing barrier-removing hiring and workforce advancement practices	2.2.A: Expand workplace literacy and advancement programs 2.2.B: Offer employer incentives tied to training and upskilling diverse talent 2.2.C: Lead by example through requirements in state hiring and procurement, including use of paid internships and Registered Apprenticeships and State as a Model Employer
2.3: Advance skills-based hiring and credential transparency	2.3.A: Establish a framework for recognition of prior learning and experience that recognizes and evaluates the knowledge and skills gained through prior learning, work experience, military or other public service, and formal training. 2.3.B: Align career pathways with skill- and competency-focused progression and map those pathways for learners, jobseekers, advisors, and educators. 2.3.C.: Promote and invest in skills-based job matching tools, integrating where feasible into labor exchange platforms and career navigation services.

Pillar III - Prepare the Future Workforce: Giving every person a clear path from education to career by redefining career preparation and ensuring access to hands-on, industry-aligned,

future-focused learning opportunities.

Maryland is strengthening career preparation systems to ensure that every young person has a clear pathway to a high-wage, future-ready career. This includes both in-school youth and out-of-school youth, with a focus on re-engagement, skill-building, and connection to employment and training opportunities.

The State will continue to expand access to hands-on, industry-aligned learning, strengthen career navigation, and align education and workforce systems so all young people – regardless of their starting point – can successfully progress along work and learning pathways

Strategies	Activities
3.1: Expand career-connected learning across secondary and postsecondary systems	3.1.A: Increase student participation in Registered Apprenticeships, as well as in internships and other work-based learning 3.1.B: Define rigorous standards for industry-recognized credentials, integrate into programs of study, and expand completion 3.1.C: Integrate career-connected learning into high school and postsecondary graduation pathways
3.2: Strengthen career navigation and workforce information systems for students and out-of-school youth	3.2.A: Develop and implement statewide frameworks, standards, and resources to support career counseling in middle and high school 3.2.B: Provide schools and counselors with up-to-date career pathway information, including on apprenticeships and other career-connecting learning opportunities 3.2.C: Expand career navigation and case management supports for out-of-school youth
3.3: Expand structured workforce entry pathways into high-skill, high-wage, or in-demand occupations	3.3.A: Expand entry pathways into public service and other high-need occupations including education, public safety, human services, and government roles 3.3.B: Integrate apprenticeship, pre-apprenticeship, industry-recognized credentials, service programs, and sector-based training into aligned and clearly defined career pathways 3.3.C: Expand transition and re-engagement pathways for out-of-school youth into employment, postsecondary education, and training through workforce and education program coordination and braiding supports

Pillar IV. – Improve System Alignment and Accountability: Ensuring that Maryland’s talent

development ecosystem of workforce, education, and supportive service partners delivers results for people and for businesses by aligning performance goals, transparent reporting, accountability, and state-local partnership.

Maryland is strengthening coordination, accountability, and performance across its workforce system to ensure that investments translate into measurable results for residents and employers. This includes aligning performance goals across programs, improving transparency of outcomes, and leveraging data to drive continuous improvement and informed decision-making.

By strengthening governance, aligning investments, and supporting regional innovation, Maryland will ensure its talent development ecosystem operates as a unified system capable of delivering results at scale.

Strategies	Activities
4.1: Revisit policy and performance incentives and assessment frameworks to align activities with the vision for Maryland's workforce system.	4.1.A: Establish shared statewide workforce performance goals and transparent outcomes reporting to inform data-driven decision-making 4.1.B: Align performance incentives across agencies and programs, including in required reporting by programs where appropriate 4.1.C: Establish a clear review and continuous improvement process for the state's workforce system performance management
4.2: Improve system efficiency and user access	4.2.A: Improve access to centralized information on available workforce programs, credentials, and credentialing pathways 4.2.B: Examine and improve the customer navigation experience through talent system entry points, including through American Job Centers across the state 4.2.C: Modernize the state's labor exchange platform to incorporate skills-driven career navigation and job matching that better connects jobseekers and employers
4.3: Support regional innovation and locally-driven solutions	4.3.A: Develop and expand funding vehicles that support local initiatives aligned to the strategies above, including those driven by local workforce development boards 4.3.B: Elevate and share best practices across regions within the state 4.3.C: Align local and regional strategies with statewide priorities, while preserving local flexibility to tailor execution to their economies

System Performance KPIs	Additional Strategic Pillar KPIs
Cross-System Metrics: • Labor Force Participation Rate • Unemployment Rate • Total Credential Attainment Rate (all programs) • Employment Rates by Education / Credential Level Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act (WIOA) Metrics: • Employment Rates Q2 and Q4 after exit • Median Earnings Q2 after exit • Credential Attainment Rate • Measurable Skill Gains • Employer Retention Rate	Pillar I • % of participants in training for priority sectors • Total # of Registered Apprentices (active + new) • # of participants trained in AI / digital / emerging technology skills • # of workers transitioned from federal employment into priority sectors
	Pillar II • Disaggregated cross-system and WIOA metrics • Co-enrollment rate across workforce + human services programs
	Pillar III • WIOA Youth performance in WIOA metrics • % of high school graduates completing the high school level of a registered apprenticeship or industry-recognized credential (<i>Blueprint</i>) • % in-school youth participating in career-connected learning activities • Postsecondary enrollment OR employment within 1 year of graduation
	Pillar IV • State performance on all WIOA primary indicators (aggregate) • % of local areas meeting or exceeding negotiated WIOA performance targets • Co-enrollment rate across core programs (WIOA Titles I-IV, TANF, etc.) • % of programs reporting into shared statewide performance dashboard

By focusing on these strategies and activities, Maryland will develop a skilled workforce that meets the evolving needs of employers, drives inclusive economic growth, and positions the state as a hub for innovation and industry excellence.

II.(b)(3) Performance Goals

Using the table provided in Appendix 1, include the State's expected levels of performance relating to the performance accountability measures based on primary indicators of performance described in section 116(b)(2)(A) of WIOA. (This Strategic Planning element only applies to core programs.)

The U.S. Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration sets performance goals to measure the effectiveness of workforce development programs. Performance measures for the 2026 program year are as follows:

- Employment Rates – Goals related to increasing employment rates for individuals participating in workforce development programs.
- Earnings Increase – Objectives to enhance the earnings of individuals who have undergone workforce training and development.
- Training Completion Rates – Objectives to increase the rates at which participants successfully complete training programs.
- Skill Attainment – Targets related to the acquisition of new skills and competencies by program participants.
- Retention Rates – Related to workers' retention and potentially advancement in a job or career pathway.

- **II.(b)(4) Assessment**

Describe how the State will assess the overall effectiveness of the workforce development system in the State in relation to the strategic vision and goals stated above in sections (b)(1), (2), and (3) and how it will use the results of this assessment, which may include evaluation findings, and other feedback to make continuous or quality improvements. Describe how the State will assess the overall effectiveness of the workforce development system in the State in relation to the strategic vision and goals stated above in sections (b)(1), (2), and (3) and how it will use the results of this assessment, which may include evaluation findings, and other feedback to make continuous or quality improvements.

To ensure that the workforce system continuously improves, Maryland's WIOA partners will place the business and job seeker customers who rely on the workforce system at the center of decisions. Maryland's WIOA partners must continue to strive for excellence, innovation, and the best service delivery possible. People who need services the most will benefit from a system that operates out of realistic and outcomes-driven expectations and is empowered with the flexibility to take risks and experiment when needed to serve target populations.

In recognition of the strengths and opportunities outlined in **Section II.(a)(2)(B) Strengths and Weaknesses of Workforce Development Activities** and recognizing the importance of a shared set of performance benchmarks and success metrics that incentivize the type of performance and service delivery needed to ensure Maryland's workforce system realizes the state's vision and leaves no one behind, Maryland will spend the remainder of 2024 developing a new performance metric framework. This effort will be led by the GWDB and MD Labor's DWDAL and will include evaluation of what has and has not worked well, including the implementation of the previous Benchmarks of Success framework and engagement of state and local partners

II. (c) State Strategy

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include the State's strategies to achieve its strategic vision and goals. These strategies must take into account the State's economic, workforce, and workforce development, education and training activities and analysis provided in Section (a) above. Include discussion of specific strategies to address the needs of populations provided in Section (a).

II.(c)(1) Industry Sector, Occupations, and Career Pathways Strategies

Describe the strategies the State will implement, including industry or sector partnerships related to in-demand industry sectors and occupations and career pathways, as required by WIOA section 101(d)(3)(B), (D). "Career pathway" is defined at WIOA section 3(7) and includes registered apprenticeship. "In-demand industry sector or occupation" is defined at WIOA section 3(23).

Pillar I: Supercharge Key Sectors

Maryland's economic competitiveness depends on its ability to build and sustain strong talent pipelines in industries that are critical to growth and innovation. As labor market demand continues to evolve – driven by rapid technological change, including artificial intelligence, and shifts in federal employment – the State must take a more coordinated and targeted approach to aligning workforce investments with employer needs. This includes ensuring that Maryland can both meet current workforce shortages and respond quickly to emerging opportunities and disruptions across key sectors.

The following strategies focus on aligning investments to priority industries, expanding work-based learning models, and scaling proven employer-led approaches that connect Marylanders to high-wage, in-demand careers.

Priority Sectors

Maryland's priority sectors include: **Cybersecurity and IT (including AI and quantum), Healthcare and Life Sciences, Infrastructure and Energy, Advanced Manufacturing, Aerospace and Defense, Transportation and Logistics, and Hospitality and Tourism, with additional focus on Early Care & Education** as a pervasive supply shortage impacts labor force participation across other priority sectors. These sectoral priorities are informed by labor market demand, projected growth, and their importance to Maryland's economic competitiveness.

1.1 Align workforce investments to priority sectors

Maryland is aligning workforce investments across agencies and funding streams to a common set of priority sectors and occupations, using real-time labor market information to identify demand and target resources where gaps are greatest. The State is leveraging Workforce Pell implementation requirements to, with GWDB leadership, unify the State around common definitions and a "single source of truth" list of high-wage, high-skill, or in-demand occupations, particularly those within the priority sectors listed above. This will become a guiding framework for prioritizing multiple state and federal investments, allowing for some regional variation within that framework given Maryland's highly varied regional economies. This will include guiding future Eligible Training Provider List considerations, Perkins V program of study and industry-recognized credential priorities, and investments

Maryland makes through flagship sector programs such as Employment Advancement Right Now (EARN) Maryland the Talent Innovation Fund (TIF).

To complement this effort and further position Maryland to make highly targeted sectoral training investments, the GWDB is leading development of a statewide asset map, with support from the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL), to map training capacity against projected demand. The GWDB and MD Labor are also partnering with Jobs for the Future to develop comprehensive sector-based workforce strategies and launch industry-led sector partnerships in healthcare and life sciences in 2026.

Using real-time labor market information and employer-validated feedback as these strategies and partnerships take shape, the State is already executing responsive investments. Recent examples include \$10.5 million in EARN Maryland awards announced in July 2025, nearly \$4 million in additional EARN awards announced in October 2025, and another \$2.6 million announced in January 2026 to support training, credential attainment, and supportive services in high-demand sectors. Maryland has also deployed innovation-focused investments, including a \$1.8 million Talent Innovation Fund investment in cyber ranges at Maryland community colleges in 2024 and a \$4 million package of AI and emerging technology workforce investments announced in February 2026, including internship, upskilling, and clinic grant initiatives. In healthcare, this work is expected to be further strengthened by major rural health investments, including \$168 million in federal funding announced at the end of 2025 for rural health advancement and \$750,000 in competitive healthcare workforce grants opened by MD Labor in January 2026. Federal resources are strategically leveraged to complement state investments, such as through the Road to Careers Program launched with Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act resources in 2024 by the Maryland Department of Transportation and MD Labor, or the more recent Rural Health Transformation Program grant Maryland received in December 2025 and that includes resources to support workforce development initiatives in partnership between the Maryland Department of Health and MD Labor.

Ongoing sector strategy efforts also build on the GWDB-TEDCO partnership that produced Maryland's Cybersecurity Talent Strategy in 2025, now being implemented through the Cyber Maryland program. That work is moving from strategy to execution following the July 1, 2025 transition of Cyber Maryland to the Maryland Department of Labor. Additional sector partnerships will be considered in 2027 and beyond. These efforts are being designed to incorporate and complement, rather than duplicate, sector partnership activity already underway in Maryland's 13 local workforce development areas.

The State is also prioritizing rapid reskilling and transition pathways for workers impacted by federal employment shifts, ensuring that highly skilled talent is retained and redeployed into Maryland's growth sectors. In March 2025, Governor Moore announced a partnership with Work for America's Civic Match to connect federal workers and contractors to state and local opportunities. Multiple local workforce areas and county partners have also hosted or co-hosted tailored recruitment events and support services, including major federal worker events in Howard County and Prince George's County. Montgomery County has established the Mobilize Montgomery Federal Workforce Career Center within the Wheaton American Job Center – a first-of-its-kind dedicated center for displaced federal workers and contractors – offering résumé assistance, job placement support, coaching, professional development, financial counseling, and on-site unemployment insurance assistance.

1.2 Expand Registered Apprenticeship and experiential learning

Maryland is scaling Registered Apprenticeship (RA) and other work-based learning models as a primary strategy for connecting residents to high-wage careers. This includes expanding employer participation, reducing administrative barriers, and investing in intermediary models and pay-for-performance approaches to accelerate growth.

The State is building on recent policy and investment actions to expand apprenticeship across both traditional and non-traditional sectors. This includes implementation of the RAISE Act of 2025, one of Governor Moore's signature legislative proposals in 2025, which strengthens Maryland's apprenticeship system through expanded tax incentives for employers, increased support for apprenticeship sponsors, and a focus on scaling high school registered apprenticeship pathways (see Pillar III). Specifically, the RAISE Act created the Maryland Pay Per Apprentice Program Fund; enabled automatic licensure for RAs in certain fields; established mechanisms for revising standard journey worker-apprentice ratios for nonhazardous occupations; set targets for a 20% apprentice work hour requirement on certain public works projects; and established the Maryland Office of Registered Apprenticeship Development (MORAD) within the State's apprenticeship agency, and an associated Advisory Board dedicated to guiding the state's apprenticeship expansion strategy.

Maryland is also deploying targeted investments to grow apprenticeship capacity, including recent competitive solicitations for apprenticeship intermediaries to recruit employers, develop new programs, and support expansion in priority sectors such as healthcare, IT, and infrastructure. These intermediary models are designed to reduce barriers for employers – particularly small and mid-sized businesses – and accelerate the launch of new apprenticeship programs.

Building on the State's commitment to significantly expand apprenticeship participation, Maryland is also increasing access to paid internships, pre-apprenticeships, and service-connected pathways – particularly in priority sectors. These efforts align with broader State investments and policy goals to ensure that more Marylanders can “earn while they learn” and that employers can build sustainable talent pipelines.

1.3 Identify and scale proven employer-led models

Maryland is investing in what works by scaling proven, employer-led workforce models that deliver strong outcomes. This includes continued investment in Employment Advancement Right Now (EARN) Maryland, one of the State's flagship sector partnership initiatives, as well as expansion of incumbent worker training through programs such as Maryland Business Works. According to MD Labor's 2025 EARN annual report, EARN Maryland has positively impacted nearly 30,000 Marylanders since 2014, including more than 12,000 individuals who obtained employment and close to 17,000 incumbent workers who received upskilling support.

Recent investments show how the State is using this model responsively: in 2025 and early 2026, Maryland announced multiple rounds of EARN funding to expand training, credential attainment, and supportive services in high-demand sectors, while also using the Talent Innovation Fund to seed newer strategies in cyber, AI, and other lighthouse industries.

The State is also identifying existing funding sources to leverage in new ways to support employer-led sector-based approaches. For example, through the new Local Workforce Impact Fund – a \$3 million investment from the Governor's WIOA Title I Reserve into local

initiatives that support the state's strategic pillars above - local areas are deepening investments in employer-led training partnerships that deliver results.

The State's partnership with JFF to foster sector partnerships in additional high-priority fields will support identification of new employer-led models and investment opportunities. Together, these efforts help ensure that effective models are scaled to reach more workers and employers across Maryland.

Pillar II: Advancing Equity and Access

Maryland's long-term economic growth depends on expanding workforce participation and ensuring that all residents have access to pathways to work, wages, and wealth. Despite overall economic strength, significant disparities persist - particularly for individuals and communities that have been historically disconnected from opportunity. Addressing these gaps requires a more coordinated, cross-agency approach that reduces barriers to employment and strengthens connections between workforce, human services, and community-based supports.

This work is closely aligned with the Moore-Miller Administration's broader focus on addressing concentrated poverty and expanding opportunity, including the ENOUGH initiative, as well as targeted efforts to improve outcomes for people who face disproportionate barriers to education and employment.

The following strategies focus on reducing barriers to participation, integrating workforce and supportive services, and expanding employer practices that open pathways to opportunity and advancement.

2.1 Reduce barriers to workforce participation

Maryland is taking a targeted, data-driven approach to increasing labor force participation among populations facing the greatest barriers to employment. This work is aligned with the Moore-Miller Administration's broader efforts to address concentrated poverty and expand economic opportunity, including the **ENOUGH initiative (Engaging Neighborhoods, Organizations, Unions, Governments, and Households)** - a place-based strategy that directs resources and cross-agency coordination to communities with the highest rates of child poverty.

The State is prioritizing earlier engagement and stronger pathways for disconnected youth and young adults - particularly **young men and boys**, who face disproportionate barriers to education, employment, and long-term economic mobility - while also expanding re-engagement strategies for individuals who have become disconnected from both school and work. Through deeper partnerships with community-based organizations and more coordinated outreach, Maryland is working to ensure that individuals are connected to education, training, and employment opportunities earlier and more consistently.

At the same time, Maryland is strengthening integrated, person-centered service delivery models that align workforce programs with community-based supports, enabling individuals not only to enter employment, but to persist and advance over time.

2.2 Integrate workforce and supportive services

Maryland is strengthening coordination between workforce programs and critical supportive services – including childcare, transportation, housing, and behavioral health – to reduce barriers to participation and improve outcomes.

Through expanded partnerships across agencies administering TANF, SNAP, CSBG, and other programs, the State is aligning service delivery and increasing co-enrollment to provide more seamless, person-centered support. This approach recognizes that employment outcomes are closely tied to broader economic stability and ensures that individuals can access the full range of services needed to succeed in the workforce.

This strategy is reinforced by targeted investments that integrate workforce and supportive services in practice. For example, MD Labor’s 2026 healthcare workforce grant programs – including the Direct Care Workforce Innovation Program and Career Pathways for Healthcare Workers Program – require employer partnerships and incorporate direct participant supports such as transportation and childcare, while prioritizing service to ENOUGH communities and other high-need populations. The Maryland Department of Transportation and MD Labor’s 2024 Road to Careers Program leveraged \$24 million of federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act funding to issue grants to fill high-demand roles while providing holistic support to job seekers facing barriers to employment, including by providing wraparound services such as transportation, childcare cost, and mental health support.

Maryland will continue prioritizing integration of holistic supports to ensure access to participation and to improve program and employer retention.

2.3 Advance skills-based hiring and employer practices

Maryland has demonstrated a clear commitment to pushing employers to adopt skills-based hiring and advancement practices that expand access to opportunity and better align talent with job requirements. The Maryland General Assembly included in Maryland’s Fiscal Year 2025 budget funding for the GWDB to conduct and publish a study on advancing skills-based hiring approaches, including identifying best public and private sector practices, and preparing actionable policy and program recommendations for the Governor and General Assembly. This provides a focused opportunity to examine best or emerging practices and implement concrete actions to foster a skills-driven labor market.

This work also includes coordinated efforts progressing across the state’s K-12, higher education, and workforce leaders round promoting recognition of prior learning, improving transparency and portability of credentials, and advancing competency-based career pathways that reflect the skills employers actually need. The State is also leveraging its role as an employer and purchaser to lead by example – increasing the use of apprenticeships, paid internships, and inclusive hiring practices across state hiring and procurement.

In parallel, Maryland is investing in tools and systems that support skills-based job matching and career navigation, while expanding alternative pathways into employment – including apprenticeship and experiential learning models – that recognize competencies developed through work, service, and nontraditional education and training.

Pillar III: Preparing the Future Workforce

Maryland’s future economic competitiveness depends on whether today’s students and young adults are prepared to succeed in a rapidly evolving labor market. This requires a more integrated, career-connected system that provides early exposure, clear navigation, and

structured pathways into high-demand careers – while also strengthening re-engagement strategies for out-of-school youth.

The following strategies focus on expanding career-connected learning, strengthening navigation systems, and building clear entry pathways into employment and postsecondary opportunity.

3.1 Expand career-connected learning across secondary and postsecondary systems

Maryland is expanding access to career-connected learning across secondary and postsecondary systems, aligned with the *Blueprint for Maryland's Future*. This includes scaling participation in Registered Apprenticeships, internships, and industry-recognized credentials, and integrating these opportunities into programs of study and graduation pathways.

In 2024–2025 Maryland took several critical steps to build a new, globally-leading system of career-connected learning: In 2024 and early 2025 the GWDB CTE Committee established the Maryland CTE Framework and the state's first-ever definitions and quality criteria for industry-recognized credentials and for registered apprenticeships that begin in high school and progress after graduation. Later in 2025, the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) rolled out the new Core-Flex model, which is designed to give students more flexible, student-centered pathways to graduation by allowing them to blend traditional academics with career-connected experiences such as Career-Connected Learning I and II, dual enrollment, apprenticeships, and CTE coursework. Under this model, career-connected learning is no longer treated as a narrow add-on to Career and Technical Education, but as part of a broader statewide strategy to connect academic learning to the world of work and give students multiple ways to earn graduation credit while preparing for college, career, and life.

To support this shift, Maryland has adopted new statewide Career-Connected Learning guidelines that define high-quality experiences as one of four types – registered apprenticeship, internship, state-approved school-based enterprise, or industry-aligned capstone course – and require these experiences to be employer-informed, credit-bearing, and aligned to student six-year plans. MSDE has also made clear that these new CCL courses are intended to function as flexible graduation-pathway options. This is intended to raise rigor, improve alignment to workforce demand, and ensure that more students graduate with meaningful, high-quality career-connected experiences.

Alongside these frameworks, MD Labor is leading the expansion of high school level registered apprenticeships, including through implementation of the RAISE Act, which strengthens the State's apprenticeship system by expanding employer incentives, supporting intermediary models, and increasing capacity for youth and school-to-apprenticeship pathways. This includes targeted investments to recruit and support employers, expand pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship opportunities aligned to priority sectors, and integrate apprenticeship into secondary and postsecondary pathways so that more students can earn while they learn and transition directly into employment.

3.2 Strengthen career navigation and workforce information systems for students and out-of-school youth

Maryland is building a more coherent and accessible career navigation system that provides students, families, and educators with clear, actionable information about career pathways and labor market demand. This includes strengthening career counseling in middle and high

schools, expanding access to up-to-date workforce information, and improving tools that connect education and workforce systems.

Under the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, Maryland is implementing a more structured, statewide approach to career counseling that emphasizes earlier exposure, consistent quality, and stronger alignment to labor market demand. Most recently, the GWDB CTE Committee collaborated with state and local partners and Jobs for the Future to analyse best practices across Maryland's local jurisdictions. 2026-2028 work includes GWDB CTE Committee's development of a statewide career counseling framework, MSDE and MWA's expansion of professional development and peer learning through a dedicated career counseling network, and deployment of tools and resources from all partners through MSDE's Career Counseling Resource Hub to support counselors, educators, and advisors. These efforts are grounded in best practices that emphasize individualized career planning, use of real-time labor market information, and integration of career exploration and advising throughout a student's educational experience. The State will also conduct an evaluation and continuous improvement of these models to ensure effectiveness and scalability.

Maryland's approach to in-school career counseling is distinguished by its use of Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) as key partners in delivering career navigation services. In several regions, LWDBs support the hiring, training, and coordination of career counselors and navigators, helping to bridge education and workforce systems and ensure that advising is informed by real-time employer demand and workforce program opportunities. This model enables stronger alignment between schools, workforce programs, and employers, and helps ensure that students and jobseekers receive consistent, high-quality guidance connected to actual career pathways.

At the same time, the State is expanding navigation and case management supports for out-of-school youth and young adults to improve re-engagement and transition outcomes. Over time, this work will be supported by improved statewide career information systems and more transparent data on pathways, credentials, and outcomes, enabling students and families to make informed decisions aligned with labor market demand.

3.3 Expand workforce entry pathways into high-skill, high-wage, or in-demand occupations

Maryland is expanding structured pathways into high-skill, high-wage occupations by better aligning education, training, and workforce programs. This includes integrating apprenticeship, pre-apprenticeship, industry-recognized credentials, service programs, and sector-based training into clearly defined and accessible career pathways that connect learners to employment in priority industries.

The State is also prioritizing pathways into public service and other high-need occupations, including education, public safety, and human services. This work is supported by the Moore-Miller Administration's focus on service as a workforce pathway, including the Department of Service and Civic Innovation (DSCI) and the expansion of Maryland's Service Year Option, which has grown significantly since its launch and provides young people with paid, structured opportunities to gain experience, build skills, and transition into careers in public and community-serving fields. These efforts are complemented by targeted investments such as Grow Your Own educator programs, which create clear, supported pathways into teaching and other critical workforce areas.

At the same time, Maryland is strengthening transition and re-engagement strategies for out-of-school youth and young adults, ensuring that individuals who are disconnected from education and employment have visible, supported entry points into postsecondary

education, training, service, and the workforce. Together, these efforts are designed to ensure that all Marylanders – regardless of their starting point – can access and progress along pathways that lead to sustainable careers.

Pillar IV: Improve System Alignment and Accountability

Delivering on Maryland's workforce vision requires a system that operates as a coordinated, high-performing whole – one that aligns strategy, funding, and accountability across workforce, education, and human services programs. Historically, fragmentation across these systems has limited the State's ability to scale impact and measure outcomes effectively. At the same time, emerging priorities – including the need to respond to federal workforce shifts and better leverage data – require stronger coordination and more transparent performance management.

Maryland is addressing this through a more unified approach to governance, data, and continuous improvement, including the development of a statewide workforce performance dashboard to track outcomes and inform decision-making.

The following strategies focus on aligning performance systems, improving access and efficiency, and supporting regional innovation to deliver results at scale.

4.1 Align performance and accountability systems

Maryland is establishing a more unified and transparent performance framework across workforce, education, and human services programs. This includes aligning performance goals across programs, strengthening accountability for outcomes at both the state and local level, and expanding public reporting to improve transparency.

The State's approach builds on federal WIOA indicators while incorporating broader cross-system measures – such as labor force participation, credential attainment, youth outcomes, and regional performance – to better reflect overall system impact. To operationalize this framework, Maryland is advancing development of a statewide workforce performance dashboard, designed to integrate data across agencies and provide a clear, shared view of outcomes aligned to the State's strategic pillars.

The dashboard will serve as a central tool for system accountability, enabling the Governor's Workforce Development Board (GWDB) to monitor performance, identify gaps, and drive continuous improvement across the workforce system. Through regular reporting and review, the GWDB will use the dashboard to track progress against statewide and regional goals, assess performance across programs and populations, and elevate high-impact practices for broader adoption.

Over time, this approach will support more data-driven decision-making, strengthen alignment across partners, and ensure that workforce investments are consistently tied to measurable outcomes for Marylanders and employers.

4.2 Improve system access and efficiency

Maryland is modernizing the workforce system to improve how individuals and employers access services and navigate available opportunities. This includes enhancing access to centralized information on programs and career pathways, improving navigation across entry

points such as American Job Centers, and advancing modernization of the State's labor exchange platform to better connect jobseekers and employers.

Specifically, the GWDB is planning to pair best practice expertise with robust user-centered discovery in 2026 to build a new, actionable vision for the state's labor exchange – the Maryland Workforce Exchange – to optimize the next platform vendor procurement in 2027-2028. This will include exploration of user desirability and technical feasibility for integrating several high-need capabilities discussed across Pillars I-III – including skills-focused job matching technologies, credential registries, and dynamic career pathway navigation capabilities – to maximize the utility of new technology to benefit employer, job seeker, and learner customers across Maryland's education and workforce ecosystem.

Recent federal worker transition efforts have further underscored the importance of accessible and coordinated entry points and access to information, including information on translating existing skills and prior learning into new career opportunities. In response, State and local partners have expanded targeted services – including dedicated supports such as customized job fairs and transition services across multiple local workforce areas – to better serve workers navigating federal employment disruptions, and pending workforce platform modernization like that above will explore solutions in response to this use case.

Finally, the State has also launched coordinated a State-Local effort to better integrate and coordinate service delivery across workforce, health, and human services systems in order to support Marylanders impacted by expanded federal work requirements for SNAP and Medicaid. This approach centers clear state guidance, deployment of new technologies to support smoother referrals and data-sharing, and convening local and regional tactical action-planning sessions to troubleshoot blockers to effective service delivery.

4.3 Support regional innovation

Maryland is supporting locally driven workforce solutions that align with statewide priorities while responding to regional economic needs. This includes expanding flexible funding mechanisms – most notably the Local Workforce Impact Fund (LWIF) – to enable local workforce areas to design and implement strategies that advance the State's sector priorities and equity goals.

In 2026, Maryland launched the LWIF as a targeted investment of approximately \$3 million in WIOA Governor's Reserve funding to accelerate high-impact, locally designed initiatives aligned with the State's strategic pillars, including sector-based training, career-connected learning, and barrier reduction strategies. Funds were awarded competitively to local workforce areas to support projects that demonstrate strong employer engagement, clear pathways to employment, and alignment with priority industries.

Local workforce areas are using LWIF investments to pilot and scale innovative approaches tailored to their regional economies. Examples include sector-based training programs in healthcare and skilled trades, expansion of work-based learning and youth apprenticeship pipelines, targeted outreach and re-engagement strategies for disconnected youth, and integrated service models that combine workforce training with supportive services such as transportation and childcare. Several local areas are also leveraging LWIF to strengthen partnerships with community-based organizations and employers to improve recruitment, retention, and advancement outcomes.

By pairing statewide strategy with flexible, performance-oriented local investment, Maryland is aiming to enable regions to act quickly, test new approaches, and scale what works. These

efforts are supported through ongoing technical assistance, shared learning, and alignment to statewide performance goals – ensuring that successful models can be sustained and replicated across the State.

II.(c)(2). Program Alignment Strategies

Describe the strategies the State will use to align the core programs, any Combined State Plan partner programs included in this Plan, required and optional one-stop partner programs, and any other resources available to the State to achieve fully integrated customer services consistent with the strategic vision and goals described above. Also describe strategies to strengthen workforce development activities in regard to weaknesses identified in section II(a)(2).

Under the Moore-Miller Administration, Maryland has strengthened its approach to workforce system alignment by centralizing cross-program coordination within the **Governor's Workforce Development Board (GWDB)**. The GWDB now leads system alignment efforts through its **Systems Governance Committee**, replacing prior ad hoc coordination structures and providing a more formal, accountable mechanism for aligning strategy, programs, and performance across the workforce system.

The Systems Governance Committee brings together leadership from core WIOA programs, required and optional partners, and key stakeholders across education, human services, and economic development. The Committee supports implementation of the State's strategic priorities – particularly those outlined under Strategic Pillar IV – by advancing cross-program coordination, improving service integration, and strengthening alignment between state and local workforce systems. To ensure strong state-local partnership and industry alignment, the Committee is chaired by a business representative and vice-chaired by a local workforce development area director serving on the GWDB.

In addition to this governance structure, Maryland advances program alignment through the following coordinated strategies:

Cross-Program Alignment and Co-Enrollment

Maryland continues to strengthen alignment across core WIOA programs and partner programs by expanding co-enrollment, improving referral systems, and increasing coordination across service delivery. This includes deeper integration of TANF and SNAP employment and training programs into the workforce system, with a focus on connecting work-eligible individuals to WIOA-funded training and career pathways. State agencies provide ongoing technical assistance to local areas to support co-enrollment, co-location, and coordinated case management, particularly for individuals within WIOA priority populations.

Alignment with Education and Career Pathways Systems

Maryland is strengthening alignment between workforce and education systems to ensure that training and career pathways are responsive to labor market demand. In 2026-2028, this will include:

- **Coordinated development of the WIOA State Plan and the Perkins CTE State Plan**, supported by collaboration between the GWDB's CTE Committee and MSDE/the State Board of Education
 - Partners are exploring plans to potentially pursue a consolidated plan in 2028
- **Alignment with Maryland's community college system and training providers** to expand access to industry-aligned education and training opportunities

- Ongoing coordination with the **Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC)** and MSDE on workforce-relevant policy and planning efforts, including through system and policy upgrades necessitated by the implementation of Workforce Pell

These efforts ensure that career pathways – from secondary education through postsecondary and workforce training – are aligned, accessible, and connected to employment outcomes.

Sector Strategy and Economic Development Alignment

Maryland is aligning workforce and economic development strategies through close coordination with the Maryland Department of Commerce and other partners. This includes:

- Joint identification and validation of priority sectors and high-skill, high-wage, or in-demand occupations as defined by the GWDB (Maryland's Commerce Secretary serves on its Executive Committee)
- Coordination on industry engagement and sector partnerships, including through existing sectoral advisory councils
- Alignment of workforce investments with state economic development priorities and major capital investments

The GWDB also supports sector alignment through partnerships such as its engagement with the Cyber Maryland Program, helping ensure that workforce strategies in high-growth sectors like cybersecurity are informed by labor market data and aligned with broader innovation and economic development efforts.

Targeted Population and Service Integration Strategies

Maryland advances alignment across programs serving specific populations through coordinated, cross-agency efforts, including:

- The Skilled Immigrant Task Force, supporting alignment of workforce, refugee, and adult education services
- Coordination between Title II adult education and Title I workforce programs, including Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IELCE)
- Cross-agency efforts to support individuals impacted by substance use and justice involvement, including collaboration with the Maryland Department of Health and the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services (DPSCS)
- The Correctional Education Council (CEC), which supports alignment of correctional education, workforce training, and reentry services
- The Two-Generation (2Gen) Economic Security Commission, which advances coordinated strategies to support families and break cycles of poverty

These efforts ensure that workforce services are better integrated with broader human services and reentry systems, improving access and outcomes for individuals facing significant barriers to employment.

Training System Alignment and Access

In 2026-2027 the GWDB will revisit and revise the State's Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) policy and procedures to implement performance standards and integrate aligned (existing or forthcoming) state policies defining high-wage, high-skill, or in-demand occupations as well as criteria for true industry-recognized credentials. Maryland's ETPL includes a diverse set of providers such as community colleges, training institutions, EARN Maryland

partnerships, and Registered Apprenticeship programs. Future improvements to the ETPL will focus on increasing high-quality program and provider participation, improving transparency, and ensuring alignment with priority sectors and in-demand occupations.

Statewide and Local Coordination

The GWDB and administering state agencies work in partnership with the **Maryland Workforce Association**, the membership association of Maryland's 13 Local Workforce Development Areas, and other stakeholder organizations to support alignment between state strategy and local implementation. This includes monthly state partner meetings with MWA and other ad-hoc engagements to

- Share information and gather local input on state policy or other decision-making
- Coordinate policy implementation and technical assistance
- Share best practices and support for regional innovation

These efforts ensure that statewide priorities are implemented consistently, in full partnership with local leaders, while maintaining flexibility for local areas to respond to regional labor market needs.

III. Operational Planning Elements

(a) State Strategy Implementation. The Unified or Combined State Plan must include–

(1) State Board Functions. Describe how the State board will implement its functions under section 101(d) of WIOA (i.e., provide a description of Board operational structures and decision-making processes to ensure such functions are carried out).

The Governor's Workforce Development Board (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 a business-led board with a majority of its members representing the industrial and geographic diversity of Maryland's business community. Additional voting members include the Governor, cabinet secretaries, college presidents, the state Superintendent of Schools, state and local elected officials, labor organizations, and representatives of nonprofit organizations. As of 2022, the GWDB includes the CTE Committee, created as a part of the GWDB under state law to establish an integrated system of CTE that prepares students for career success and aligns to employers' talent needs.

Governor Wes Moore began an overhaul of his GWDB in September 2023, when he joined recently-appointed leadership and members, including a new Executive Director, Chair, and Vice Chair, at a public meeting of the Board. There, he co-facilitated discussion of his priorities, his expectations for the GWDB's role in Maryland, and what is and is not working well in workforce development today. In December 2023, Governor Moore issued Executive Order 01.01.2023.22 to further define the role of the GWDB within Maryland's workforce system and to improve its operational efficiency and effectiveness by streamlining its voting membership.

As articulated in this Executive Order, the priority focus areas and functions of the GWDB under the Moore-Miller Administration include, but are not limited to:

- Building talent pipelines to supercharge growth in Maryland's key industry sectors;
- Addressing barriers to employment experienced by underserved populations;
- Expanding access to affordable, high-quality, career-connected experiential learning and industry-recognized credentials, including apprenticeship and career and technical education opportunities;
- Aligning systems, services and resources to strategically leverage Maryland's assets; and
- Supporting collaboration with local workforce development boards and other local stakeholders to ensure those closest to workforce challenges are central to the solutions
- .

The Governor's Workforce Development Board'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.

This vision includes:

- A highly efficient, coordinated, and collaborative ecosystem of state and local workforce development boards, partner agencies, institutions, and employers;
- Increased access to and affordability of both degree and non-degree pathways to quality jobs and family-sustaining careers;

The **GWDB's mission** is to develop strategies, drive alignment, and accelerate implementation of innovative workforce development solutions that build robust talent pipelines for Maryland's employers and advance pathways to work, wages and wealth for all Marylanders.

To support this vision and mission, the GWDB has adapted core values from the Moore-Miller administration to serve as the value basis for not only the GWDB but for Maryland's workforce system and its partners in their work to realize this vision. These core values include:

- **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's okay to disagree and offer a new viewpoint
- **Be Outcomes-Focused:** Spend each day focused on leaving no one behind

To ensure the GWDB is able to carry out the above functions and to execute on the above vision, mission and values, the GWDB relies on the following key oversight and management positions

- *A GWDB Chairperson* who presides over all meetings, appoints committees, and is responsible for leading the Board in its activities and for serving as a principal liaison between the Governor and the Board, along with the Board's Executive Director. As necessary to facilitate the Board's performance of its WIOA duties and responsibilities, the Chairperson duties include: facilitating and driving high-performance governance of the Board; setting priorities and meeting agendas with the Executive Director; holding Board members and committees accountable to established goals and milestones; communicating and coordinating with the Executive Director; facilitating Board and Executive Committee meetings; appointing Board members to committees, as appropriate; serving as an ambassador of the Board and of Maryland's workforce system; and various advocacy and public relations responsibilities.
- *A GWDB Vice Chairperson* who serves at the pleasure of the Board Chair, carrying out the functions of the Chair in their absence and providing strategic thought partnership to the Chair and Executive Director of the Board.
- *An Executive Committee* that is comprised of a majority membership representing private sector employers, including the GWDB Chair and Vice Chair, one member representing community-based organizations, and four members of the Governor's cabinet representing the most essential partners in workforce development: the Maryland Department of Labor, the Maryland Department of Commerce, the Maryland State Department of Education, and the Maryland Higher Education Commission. The Executive Committee steers overall Board strategy and develops recommendations to the Board in the areas of strategic planning, legislation, and operations.

- *GWDB staff members*, provide strategic support, subject matter expertise, and administrative support to the Board to ensure it successfully carries out its functions under WIOA, under Maryland state law, and within the broader workforce development ecosystem in Maryland.

The GWDB has leveraged the development of this State Workforce Plan as an opportunity to build new relationships, deepen partnerships, and align stakeholders around a shared strategy that includes areas for the GWDB to lead in implementation. For the first time in Maryland, the WIOA State Workforce Plan has been developed with business-driven Board leadership and has engaged direct feedback from and collaboration with local workforce development boards.

To accelerate implementation of this State Workforce Plan, the GWDB will focus its efforts on bringing together industry leaders to map skill needs and inform sector strategies and state investments, on fostering greater alignment and coordination among partners, on exploring new innovative approaches including investment vehicles for workforce programs, and on supporting collaboration with local workforce development boards. In addition, the GWDB is also committed to fulfilling its strategic leadership and oversight roles in Maryland's CTE and youth apprenticeship system via its CTE Committee, as required under the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, and is examining current practices to ensure complete fulfillment of its WIOA responsibilities

(2) Implementation of State Strategy. Describe how the lead State agency with responsibility for the administration of each core program or a Combined State Plan partner program included in this plan will implement the State's Strategies identified in II(c) above. This must include a description of–

(A) Core Program Activities to Implement the State's Strategy. Describe the activities the entities carrying out the respective core programs will fund to implement the State's strategies. Also describe how such activities will be aligned across the core programs and Combined State Plan partner programs included in this plan and among the entities administering the programs, including using co-enrollment and other strategies, as appropriate.

To support Maryland's comprehensive and collaborative workforce system, the Maryland WIOA Partners are committed to ensuring effective coordination and alignment of the State's WIOA programs through strategic policy development, coordinated resource sharing, and collaboration with local and regional partners. Together, Maryland's WIOA Partners will facilitate the creation of a strong, skilled workforce that effectively connects with businesses to help them compete in the global, State, and local economies. Consistent with Governor Moore's vision, the WIOA Partners will continue to ensure that customers are provided with the services they need, in a way that avoids duplication of programs and activities carried out through the system.

WIOA Partners will also conduct strategic outreach to entities outside of the formal WIOA network to: (1) educate them on the vast array of services, programs and supports available through the WIOA network in an effort to raise awareness among their customers; and (2) to learn about the available services and supports that exist outside of the WIOA network that could potentially benefit jobseekers, such as health resources, child care services, financial empowerment tools, and library resources.

MD Labor's DWDAL leads the State WIOA workforce system's implementation of operational protocols, programs, and practices. The Division is committed to the collaborative

implementation of policies and procedures that promote systems improvement, efficient operations within the AJC system, and the expansion of established best practices related to service provision. Maryland is positioning itself to make certain that investments in the State's workforce system foster an ecosystem of innovation. With a commitment to continuous improvement, Maryland will continue to take a customer-focused approach to workforce development issues to successfully meet both jobseeker and business needs.

Core program activities to implement the State's strategy include:

- MD Labor includes WIOA Partners in policy decision-making meetings as well as shares completed policies with them through the State's WIOA network email.
- The WIOA partners, at the local and State level, are represented on the WIOA Alignment Group committees, working to collaborate with the GWDB on the vision for the State and to implement it. Committees previously met on a monthly basis. This group's future activity will be coordinated with the new GWDB committee being formed to focus on the Board's WIOA-mandated roles around system alignment and policy development.
- MD Labor has an updated MOU/RSA policy (2021), and with the assistance of USDOL, developed a fiscal tool that was distributed to all partners in January 2020. DWDAL's Fiscal Administration Sub-Recipient Financial Handbook outlines the guidelines for partners in terms of sub-awards, monitoring, and system standards.
- Maryland's WIOA partners have convened on three different occasions thus far to bring together local, state, and federal subject matter experts to break down silos and plan a path forward for the State of Maryland, concerning the implementation of WIOA. Each Convening brought together 150-250 State and local leaders from the workforce system.
- Maryland WIOA partners established the Maryland Apprenticeship Think Tank in January of 2018. The Think Tank is a network of professional organizations committed to expanding apprenticeship opportunities to individuals with disabilities. Through a diverse array of initiatives - research, education, public engagement, and on-the-ground innovation and practice - the Think Tank shares information on emerging trends and opportunities, best practices in apprenticeship and highlight how apprenticeship can break into new industry sectors and serve a more diverse population of VR individuals. Think Tank members consist of a variety of leaders from DORS, including leadership from DORS' Workforce Training Center, along with MD Labor, Maryland Department of Disabilities, the Community College of Baltimore County, and community program providers such as, the ARC, who are collaborating to secure lasting change in the area of Youth, Pre-Apprenticeship and RA at the State and local level. The pandemic put a hold on Think Tank activities, however, MD Labor and DORS are exploring ways to reengage and update the Think Tank.
- Co-location of services: when possible, partners are encouraged to coordinate services in a shared physical location to enhance customer access. The Upper Shore and Prince George's County have been leaders on this effort, establishing AJCs and LDSS at the same site.
- Maryland continues to seed opportunities to invest in the co-enrollment of WIOA Title I and Title II participants through the Career Pathways project (mentioned above) in order to fully integrate adult education and training services.
- The State created a new policy on TAA in 2022 and requires Local Areas to co-enroll Trade participants in WIOA Title I program, so customers have a full menu of opportunities available to them.
- The State allows partner access to the MWE in order for staff at DORS, DHS (TANF), and DHCD to determine if their customers are enrolled in or should be referred to partner programming.

- Maryland's State Plan partners are all represented on the GWDB, and thus this serves as the primary entity that drives employer voice in the State's WIOA programming. Through these connections, partners such as WIOA Title I and Title III interact with businesses to gauge evolving trends, demand, and how to fill critical vacancies. Title II learns of the academic demands related to literacy and numeracy that employers require in their workplaces. Title IV utilizes GWDB connections to further develop opportunities aligned with integrating individuals with varying levels of ability into Maryland's workforce. And finally, SCSEP, TANF, SNAP E&T, TAA, DUI, JVSG, and CSBG staff are able to align the training services for jobseekers with the hiring practices/requirements of the State's business community.

(B) Alignment with Activities outside the Plan. Describe how the activities identified in (A) will be aligned with programs and activities provided by required one-stop partners and other optional one-stop partners and activities provided under employment, training (including Registered Apprenticeships), education (including career and technical education), human services and other programs not covered by the plan, as appropriate, assuring coordination of, and avoiding duplication among these activities.

Collaboration is the hallmark of Maryland's WIOA implementation. Through continuous engagement with a range of state, local, and nonprofit organizations serving shared customers, Maryland's workforce system partners have developed deeper relationships that have allowed them to serve targeted populations with more integrated, effective, and innovative service offerings. The positive results of these efforts have enabled Maryland to:

- Expand RAs;
- Strengthen strategic industry partnerships through the EARN Maryland program;
- Leverage the skills of the State's immigrant population;
- Extend the reach of the workforce system into communities through the public library system; and
- Address the negative impacts of the State's opioid crisis; and implement a 2Gen approach to service delivery.

RAs

The Moore Administration is committed to supporting RA as the State's premiere workforce solution. Maryland's goal is to align apprenticeships with the workforce system to ensure that traditional RA opportunities expand alongside the creation of new opportunities grounded in labor market demand. During the 2016 Legislative Session of the Maryland General Assembly, the Department sponsored Senate Bill 92, a measure that transferred the State's apprenticeship programming to MD Labor's DWDAL. This legislative enactment, approved unanimously by the Assembly and signed into law by former Governor Hogan, provided key resources for the growth and expansion of apprenticeships. The states of Pennsylvania and Delaware have subsequently adopted similar legislation based on Maryland's model.

In 2016, the USDOL awarded MD Labor \$2.2 million to accelerate the development of, and expand availability to, RA opportunities in the State. Through the ApprenticeshipUSA Acceleration Grant and the ApprenticeshipUSA Expansion Grant, MD Labor was able to invest in the State's RA programming, leveraging funds to grow and diversify RAs. Based on MD Labor's successful utilization of those grants, USDOL provided Maryland with an additional ApprenticeshipUSA expansion grant in the amount of \$1,816,649 in 2018. In 2019, USDOL awarded Maryland another \$2,854,797.39 to directly serve new Registered Apprentices, develop new RA programs, and expand the number of existing RA Sponsors. In 2020 Maryland received an American Apprenticeship Initiative grant from the USDOL in the amount of

\$6,012,924.00 to further expand upon RA by serving apprentices, employers and sponsors. Funding was also allocated to expand upon registering high school students directly into RA programs and to further integrate Community Colleges into RA. Maryland's continued success with these grants and with the growth of RA led to two additional awards in 2023 for a combined amount of \$6,650,620.00.

This series of USDOL grants has enabled Maryland to significantly expand RAs as a workforce development solution. Since October 2012, the number of Registered Apprentices has grown by approximately 46 percent. As of October 2023, Maryland had 11,480 registered apprentices earning and learning. This also marks the second year in a row in which Maryland has averaged over 11,000 active apprentices each month of the year, the highest participation rate in state history. Since the Maryland Apprenticeship and Training Program was integrated into Maryland's workforce system in October 2016, a total of 180 new RA programs have been created. An additional 38 programs have been reactivated since November 2016.

The end goal for the 2019, 2020 and 2023 expansion grants is to provide Maryland's business community with a sustainable employment pipeline in both traditional and non-traditional industry sectors.

Expanding Capacity by Increasing Staffing and Infrastructure

- To grow pre-apprenticeship and RA opportunities, key infrastructure investments were needed in the Maryland Apprenticeship and Training Program. Maryland utilized the grant funding to expand the apprenticeship unit from four to fourteen staff. The program team now includes the Program Director, three Program Managers, two Grant Managers, an Administrative Specialist and seven Apprenticeship Navigators.
- The Maryland Apprenticeship and Training Program team served a new record of over 12,000 RAs in 2022 and continues to maintain over 11,000 apprentices actively earning and learning each month. As of November 2023, the Program has exceeded 10,000 Registered Apprentices and the second consecutive year the program exceeded 11,000 registered apprentices. The Maryland Apprenticeship and Training Program has over 125 active occupations, 200 active registered sponsors and over 3,000 approved employers who have participated in RA during this time. The staff has conducted over 450 Compliance Reviews of RA Sponsors since January 2017.
- Maryland WIOA partners established the Maryland Apprenticeship Think Tank in January of 2018. The Think Tank is a network of professional organizations committed to expanding apprenticeship opportunities to individuals with disabilities. Through a diverse array of initiatives – research, education, public engagement, and on-the-ground innovation and practice – the Think Tank shares information on emerging trends and opportunities, best practices in apprenticeship and highlight how apprenticeship can break into new industry sectors and serve a more diverse population of VR individuals. Think Tank members consist of a variety of leaders from DORS, including leadership from DORS' Workforce Training Center, along with MD Labor, Maryland Department of Disabilities, the Community College of Baltimore County, and community program providers such as, the ARC, who are collaborating to secure lasting change in the area of Youth, Pre-Apprenticeship, and RA at the State and local level.

Outreach/Education

- A variety of public engagement strategies are being utilized to increase awareness of RA as an essential tool for workforce development, recruitment, and training the next generation of skilled workers. Outreach and education are critical components to

building partnerships that develop the RA program as the solution to Maryland's 21st century workforce needs. Likewise, MD Labor has looked to increase collaboration between the Maryland Apprenticeship Training Program, LWDBs, and other workforce agencies to identify strategies for connecting jobseekers to RA programs. Apprenticeship staff members regularly engage with staff from LWDBs to participate in job fairs and also in outreach to potential business partners for RA;

- Maryland has had regular discussions with its RA counterparts, both regionally and nationally. These efforts have helped to share best practices for robust engagement with external partners;
- MD Labor conducts extensive outreach on an ongoing basis to chambers of commerce, industry associations, the GWDB, and LWDBs. Robust industry engagement facilitates the development of multi-employer programs and program templates. Maryland's EARN program, a signature workforce initiative built on strategic industry partnerships, has continued to thrive under this approach: through EARN, over 500 industry sector partnerships are being nurtured;
- Funding from the 2020 State Apprenticeship Expansion Grant has been utilized to design the state's first comprehensive outreach plan exclusively for RA. This plan includes the following elements: development of a series of videos to promote the benefits of RA, development and use of informational messages that are shown in each of Maryland's over 60 Motor Vehicle Administration locations, and information posters being placed on Maryland Transit Administration buses.

Advancing Innovative Practices

The State has leveraged events during National Apprenticeship Week each year since 2016 to increase involvement from Local Areas and the WIOA partners. Maryland's Apprenticeship and Training Program has provided training opportunities for Local Areas and WIOA partner staff to become more familiar with RA opportunities. Maryland is continuing to make a concerted effort to add RA sponsors to the ETPL. Since 2017, the State has seen the list grow from 0 sponsors participating to over 65 as of 2023.

Skilled Immigrant Task Force

Maryland recognizes the detrimental effects of brain waste on the economy. "Brain waste" is the result of the underutilization of the skills and experience of foreign-trained immigrants. Because of the economic hardships of immigrants looking for employment opportunities that align with their professional backgrounds and training, Maryland submitted a Letter of Interest to the White House National Skills and Credential Institute in 2016. The LOI identified four key barriers to the integration of skilled immigrants in Maryland's workforce, including:

LEP

Even though most foreign educated individuals possess technical skills needed to perform skilled jobs, they often lack the English proficiency necessary to communicate effectively in a workplace. A study by the Migration Policy Institute found that Maryland has 113,000 LEP individuals who have completed some form of college or higher.

Complex licensing and credentialing processes

Many professional careers in the United States are within regulated professions, many of which are regulated at the state level. In order to return to previous professions, immigrants have to undergo licensing processes that are particularly complex due to foreign credentials

not often well understood or fully recognized. In addition, the licensing process is costly, timely, and confusing for many immigrants.

Limited experience of Maryland's workforce system in working with foreign-born individuals

The ability to assist foreign-born individuals navigate the complex workforce development system requires specialized accommodation and the provision of culturally appropriate services that is often lacking at the local level. Staff at the AJCs and other federal or state funded workforce projects require professional development to enhance services to skilled immigrants seeking to re-enter their profession.

Lack of social capital on the part of immigrants

Numerous studies assert the importance of social connections to find employment. For many newly arrived immigrants who have little to no social connections, finding a job can be difficult despite having all other qualifications.

The Maryland Skilled Immigrant Task Force was created in June 2016 to address these issues, based on the conviction that Maryland can lead the way in creating a win-win environment in which immigrants secure jobs that match their professional and educational backgrounds while simultaneously meeting the hiring demands of the business community. The Task Force is co-sponsored by MD Labor, but many other organizations also contributed toward its creation, including Baltimore City Community College, the Baltimore Mayor's Office for Immigrant and Multicultural Affairs, City of Baltimore Mayor's Office of Employment Development, the Gilchrist Immigrant Resource Center in Montgomery County, International Rescue Committee, Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service/Higher, Montgomery College, Upwardly Global, the Welcome Back Center of Suburban Maryland, and World Education Services (WES) Global Talent Bridge.

The Maryland Office for Refugees and Asylees (MORA) operates within the DHS-FIA. MORA provides support and services to federally recognized refugees and other humanitarian immigrants including asylees, certified Victims of Trafficking, Special Immigrant Visa holders from Iraq and Afghanistan, Cuban and Haitian entrants, and certain Amerasian people. MORA has helped more than 40,000 refugees and eligible humanitarian immigrants make Maryland their home through a statewide network of public and private organizations. MORA provides transitional cash assistance, employment services, ESOL classes, vocational training, health case management, and other supportive services. MORA also partners assist individuals to become independent, contributing members to the national and local economy through a number of transitional services aimed at helping the clients achieve social and economic self-sufficiency.

In 2017, the Task Force issued the first ever *Maryland Workforce System Survey: Serving Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Individuals and Skilled Immigrants*. The tool surveyed WIOA partners from MD Labor, Local Areas, DORS, and LDSS regarding how the workforce system engages immigrants and those with LEP. Of the 428 responses, 51 percent were from those in direct-service positions. Respondents indicated interest in learning how to enhance service to these populations through cross-training and professional development opportunities. The complete survey is available at

<http://www.labor.maryland.gov/employment/wdskilledimmigrantsurvey.pdf>. The Task Force was also key in establishing Maryland's Third WIOA Convening in January 2018, which focused on training for Local Areas and state staff on the provisions of Section 188 of WIOA, the State's Nondiscrimination Plan, and DWDAL's proposed Language Access Plan.

Most recently, the Task Force, in collaboration with MD Labor and several Local Workforce Areas, hosted a two-part virtual Job Resource and Hiring Fair for New Americans in Maryland, including immigrants, refugees and asylees. The goal of the Part 1 event - Pre-Event Webinar was to increase workforce service accessibility and job opportunities for New Americans in Maryland. It set jobseekers up for success at the Part 2 event - Hiring Fair by sharing information on Résumé & Cover Letter Strategies, Job Interview Techniques & Tips, Credential Evaluation Information, and MD Labor Job Seeker Services. The Hiring Fair matched skilled immigrants with employers in industries in which they were interested. The Task Force conducted a survey to best match labor supply with industry demand, and a panel of employers were featured. The Task Force surveyed skilled immigrants and skilled immigrant service providers to identify their career interests, workforce experience, and career readiness needs. This two-part virtual event addressed all language accommodation and workforce culture information needs. These events were simultaneously interpreted into all requested foreign languages as well as American Sign Language. Follow-up feedback was conducted with participants to inform the evolution of best practices for offering multilingual workforce events.

Additionally, Maryland seeks to enhance services to and remove barriers for English language learners through several grant and technical assistance opportunities. First, Maryland was chosen as one of eight U.S. localities to receive customized technical assistance from WES Global Talent Bridge to advance its skilled immigrant integration efforts. Each of the eight pilot communities received 12 hours of coaching and advising provided by WES Global Talent Bridge; 12 hours of additional customized technical assistance from national experts; and four interactive web-based training sessions with WES Global Talent Bridge and other national partners on topics related to immigrant professional integration. Second, MD Labor participated in the National Occupational Licensing Learning Consortium, a peer-learning consortium focused on occupational licensing policies. This selective group worked on understanding ways to remove barriers to labor market entry and improve professional licensing portability and reciprocity. Member states identified areas within their individual policies that may impede entry for populations most burdened by those policies as well as potential solutions to reduce related barriers. These populations include skilled immigrants, people with criminal records, active-duty military, veterans and their spouses, and unemployed and dislocated workers. From participation in this consortium, several changes have been made that reduce language-related licensing barriers for the LEP population for the barber, cosmetology, plumbing, and HVAC professions. LEP individuals seeking a barber or cosmetology license are now able to utilize language interpreters for theory exams and those seeking a plumbing or HVAC license are now able to use a translation dictionary for exams.

Maryland's Response to the Opioid Crisis

Opioid and other substance use surged in Maryland over the last decade, resulting in an urgent and growing public health threat affecting all demographics and geographical settings. In 2017, Former Governor Larry Hogan declared a state of emergency in response to the opioid epidemic ravaging Maryland communities, thus solidifying the state's response framework and encouraging ongoing cooperation and mobilization of partners. Although Maryland saw the number of opioid-related overdose deaths trend downward before the pandemic, COVID-19 and a shift in the state's drug supply had a detrimental impact on that progress. In fact, according to the Maryland Office of Overdose Response, in 2021, Maryland experienced 2,800 overdose related fatalities, representing the largest number in the State's history, largely due to a shift from heroin to fentanyl use. In the 12 months between July 2022 and July 2023, there were 2,583 fatal overdoses in Maryland with fentanyl being involved in about 81% of those deaths.

Since 2018, MD Labor has invested over \$10 million in multiple strategic initiatives, developed in partnership with other state agencies and key stakeholders, to mitigate the impacts of the opioid crisis on Marylanders. Early efforts included a USDOL National Health Emergency Dislocated Worker Demonstration grant and an award from the Women's Bureau which built a foundation by which the Department could implement workforce programming that had a positive impact on the employment and earning potential of individuals impacted by substance use. Simultaneously, MD Labor strengthened partnerships with state agencies including the Maryland Departments of Health and Public Safety and Correctional Services, as well as the Maryland Office of Overdose Response, which have led to some of MD Labor's most successful substance use-related programming.

As a result of the partnership with the Behavioral Health Administration (BHA) and the DPSCS, MD Labor led efforts on a grant proposal to the OCCC that received funding in August 2019. The pilot developed a new offering through MD Labor's Correctional Education program to train Certified Peer Recovery Specialists (CPRSs). Since the initial grant award, MD Labor, in partnership with BHA and DPSCS, has continued to receive funding through FY24 from the OCCC to expand the project throughout the state's correctional institutions.

Starting at the Maryland Correctional Institution for Women, the Certified Peer Recovery Specialist Training for Incarcerated Individuals program has since expanded to nine more institutions in every corner of the state. Students are introduced to the peer recovery specialist role through a two-week classroom training and then engage in 500 hours of experiential learning. The training program culminates in a statewide certification conferred by the Maryland Addiction and Behavioral-health Professionals Certification Board following the passing of an exam.

Students released after completing training work with MD Labor's assigned Reentry Navigators, interface with employers and can connect successful trainees to employment in the behavioral health field upon release. For the students who are incarcerated for a longer period, the CPRS certification provides a more meaningful purpose, allowing the skills learned through the training to help countless other incarcerated individuals through their recovery journey. In 2023, DPSCS added CPRS as a paid work assignment, thus allowing individuals who graduate from the program the opportunity to be paid for the behavioral health support they provide within their institution.

The impact of this training has been significant and far-reaching. For example, the students trained earn their required 500 hours of supervised work or volunteer experience by providing direct peer support to fellow incarcerated women. Further, this certification is highly sought by employers in the mental and behavioral health fields and will greatly increase employability upon release. Additionally, the content delivered through the credential training process simultaneously supports each incarcerated citizen in further developing their personal recovery, increasing the likelihood for sustained recovery after release back into the community.

As of October 2023, over 1700 unique individuals across the institutions have received behavioral health support from a peer and 24 students have been certified. Several students have been released and have found employment as a peer specialist in the community with employers such as the Office of Public Defender, local health departments, and non-profit organizations.

In November of 2022, the MD Labor launched Supporting Recovery Through Employment (SRTE), which sought to build upon best practices learned through previous Opioid Workforce

Innovation Fund (OWIF) grants. SRTE was similarly focused on building a pipeline from training to employment for individuals in recovery from a substance use disorder but offered a higher award threshold for applicants at \$100,000 and an increased cost per participant at \$7,500. The decision to increase the award amount and cost per participant was directly related to learnings from OWIF, in which grantees shared that prospective participants were presenting with higher needs and more complex barriers. Eleven grantees from across the state were awarded a total of nearly \$1 million. Projects included training for commercial driving licensing, solar installation, culinary, and peer recovery. When the grant concluded in October 2023, nearly 500 participants were placed into training, 260 had earned an industry-recognized credential, and over 200 obtained employment.

In September of 2020, Labor was awarded \$4,589,064 from USDOL to provide training and other services through the Support to Communities: Fostering Opioid Recovery through Workforce Development grant. MD Labor awarded funding to seven Local Areas representing 14 jurisdictions across the state that have experienced negative social and economic impacts due to the opioid crisis. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic impacting enrollment and service delivery in the first two years of the grant, the Support to Communities program has placed over 600 participants into training and nearly 400 have obtained employment. This grant will continue through August 2024.

Continuing the long tradition of partnership with BHA, MD Labor was awarded over \$440,000 through BHA's State Opioid Response funding via the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, to create a Recovery Friendly Workplace program. In 2023, MD Labor sub awarded three pilot-sites, Susquehanna Workforce Network, Western Maryland Consortium, and St. Mary's County Health Department, to launch Maryland's Recovery Friendly Workplace model. This model, which is largely based on successful initiatives from both New Hampshire and Rhode Island, is intended to build a network of employers who create workspaces that are both appropriately responsive to, and welcoming of, people in recovery and those impacted by substance use. The sub awardees have committed to hiring a full-time CPRS who will serve as a "Recovery Friendly Advisor" and act as a liaison between the pilot site and the business community. Funding for this pilot lasts through September 2024, by which MD Labor expects to have at least 25 employers onboarded as "recovery friendly". Jobseekers impacted by substance use will also benefit from the Recovery Friendly Workplace program as they will be guided toward employers who have undergone steps to ensure their workplace is supportive of recovery. The project plans to serve 75 individuals impacted by substance use through connections to supportive services and/or employment.

2Gen

Maryland is among a handful of states nationwide integrating a 2Gen approach into workforce system services to disrupt the cycle of intergenerational poverty. Current research indicates that 40 percent of Maryland adults who received TCA in FY 2016 and 2017 received Food Supplement Program (FSP) benefits as children. These statistics substantiate the unfortunate reality that programs intended to be short term interventions have, in some cases, ended up supporting multiple generations of families. The 2Gen approach creates an opportunity to realign programs and deliver services using a more holistic, family-centric model that produces positive outcomes.

To break the cycle of poverty among Maryland families, then-Governor Larry Hogan signed Executive Order 01.01.2017.03 to produce a *Final Report on the Two-Generation Family Economic Security Commission and Pilot Program*, an interagency, multidisciplinary commission to evaluate current programs and policies. Under the provisions of the Executive

Order, the Commission was charged with investigating policy challenges, opportunities, and recommendations regarding the mitigation of multigenerational poverty as follows:

1. Identify services and policies within State programs that can be coordinated to support a multigenerational approach;
2. Identify program and service gaps and inconsistencies between federal, State policies and local policies;
3. Identify, test, and recommend best practices utilized on federal, State and local levels; and
4. Solicit input and guidance regarding 2Gen approach practices and policies from external sources with direct knowledge and experience in the field of multigenerational poverty including, but not limited to, 2Gen approach practicing states, federal and Maryland agencies, private foundations, community-action partnerships, and welfare-advocacy organizations.

The Commission, chaired by Lieutenant Governor Boyd K. Rutherford, held eight public meetings, commencing on June 28, 2017. Input from those meetings was integrated into the *Final Report on the Two-Generation Family Economic Security Commission and Pilot Program* report, which was issued in December of 2018. In addition to providing relevant statistics and profiling best practices from pilot programs, the Report delivered Commission findings and recommendations. These included a recommendation to create a 2Gen Program Officer position within DHS to focus on the 2Gen mission and approach on behalf of the State. The new position, which was filled in 2019, serves as the liaison between state agencies, executive staff, the legislature, and federal partners.

Active 2Gen programs currently overseen by DHS include the following:

Whole Family Approach - Following the report's recommendations, the State's TANF plan has adopted a 2Gen approach to serving families. The 2Gen approach intentionally works to build the whole family's well-being through coordinated programs and services both within the administrations of DHS and throughout the State of Maryland. The 2Gen approach to TANF helps families navigate state and local resources to achieve their goals; and promotes policies and services that reflect the lived experience and input of customers.

2Gen Innovation Grants - Maryland's 2Gen Innovation Grants provide funding for community-based organizations seeking to implement and test new approaches to coordinating services for families receiving TANF. The grant program will fund proposals for technical assistance, strategic planning, updates to data management, management of information systems, or other approaches that result in simultaneous interventions for both parents and children, reflect 2Gen best practices, and demonstrate a clear effort to remove silos in existing programs or strategies that serve different members of the family.

DHS Special Target Populations - Families with disabilities: DHS is committed to strengthening a diverse workforce and connecting TANF customers and their families with disabilities to the supports necessary so that they may fully participate in the state's economy. DHS will enhance staff knowledge and strategies on connecting customers with disabilities with career pathways best suited to a family's specific situation. In doing so, the agency will leverage resources and expertise of WIOA partners including but not limited to MSDE DORS.

Rehabilitation Services and MD Labor - Returning citizens: Approximately 10,000 individuals are released from prison each year in Maryland. Within three years, 40 percent are rearrested. The unemployment rate among those released exceeds 50 percent. While research shows

that an employed ex-offender is less likely to commit crimes and return to prison, a criminal record is the greatest barrier to employment, creating a vicious cycle wherein affected individuals become dependent on criminal activity for living. To interrupt this cycle, the State is providing returning citizens with training opportunities, access to expungement services, and career pathways that are accessible to those with criminal records.

Non-Custodial Parents - DHS will maximize the impact the TANF Block Grant has on families by supporting non-custodial parents (NCP). NCPs eligible to participate include those with children who receive TANF, SNAP, SSI, Medicaid, and/or CHIP. Expanding the eligible population for workforce and training services with the goal of increasing earnings for NCP's will reduce caseloads and prevent TANF leavers from returning to assistance. Supporting NCPs also means that they will be more equipped to meet child-support obligations - decreasing the likelihood that their children will also become welfare recipients.

LEP -DHS is committed to TANF programming that is nimble and responsive to the changing needs of the States' diverse population. Maryland will use TANF to address the needs of families with LEP by creating programs that address barriers unit to the population such as low English language literacy, lack of U.S. work experience, unrecognized education and training credentials, limited professional networks, cultural differences and more.

Substance Abuse - DHS is clear on the impact of the current opioids crises. The Department has noted a shift in caseload demographics such as children residing with relatives as well as an increased need for supportive services such as mental health and/or substance abuse treatment. DHS will ensure any family impacted by substance abuse has the necessary services needed to successfully gain and maintain employment. Through supportive services, the Department will make the necessary referrals, not only to those experiencing a substance abuse disorder but also to those impacted by a family member experiencing addiction. In alignment with the States' 2Gen approach, families who are impacted by substance abuse will be screened so both somatic and mental health needs are addressed for all impacted members of a family.

Caretaker Relatives - Due to the current drug crisis, DHS has noted a trend of increased cases where grandparents and/or other relatives are caring for minors. These trends are most notable in areas with higher rates of opioid misuse. Presumably, parents are unable or unwilling to care for their children due to a variety of reasons that are directly related to drug abuse such as prolonged absences from home, incarceration, admission to treatment facilities, etc. DHS will intentionally screen caretaker relatives and identify opportunities for enhanced supports that address secondary trauma and an often-complex system to navigate.

Youth - In harmony with the DHS's 2Gen approach, the agency is committed to providing youth with the resources and opportunities they need to make informed choices that will positively impact their education and career goals. Work-based learning is a proven practice that leads to better employment outcomes as adults. DHS will provide youth opportunities for contextualized learning to better enhance career opportunities as they enter the workforce.

Transitional Support Services - The Transitional Support Services (TSS) initiative began in July 2019. The purpose of the initiative is to help TANF leavers to smoothly transition to self-sufficiency. Through TSS, a TANF household is able to continue to receive cash assistance for a period of time after their TANF case closes due to income over-scale. DHS will continue to enhance the program to include additional support services (i.e. case management and post-job placement) assistance to ensure that TANF leavers are able to not only maintain

employment, but also, they thrive. DHS is currently developing a process to automatically refer TSS recipients to the SNAP E&T to access additional services that will lead to increased household income and improved overall economic wellbeing.

Extended the Allowable Time Period for Vocational Education and Education Program - Beginning July 1, 2020, the State will allow an applicant or a recipient to meet the work activity requirement for a maximum of 24 months by either:

- Engaging in a minimum of 20 hours per week of vocational education training that is directly related to employment and education that leads to an associate degree, a diploma or a certificate; or
- Engaging in an average of at least 20 hours per week of education directly related to employment, which may include an adult basic education program, an English as a second language program, or a high school diploma/GED program.

Maryland's Total Human Services Information Network (MD THINK) - DHS is building a groundbreaking technology platform that will transform the State's ability to deliver vital human services to constituents. The first program of its kind in the nation, MD THINK will serve more than two million Marylanders through one cloud-based platform. It will integrate the state's health and human services applications, so workforce system partners can more effectively and efficiently deliver multiple services on a unified platform.

(C) Coordination, Alignment, and Provision of Services to Individuals. Describe how the entities carrying out the respective core programs, Combined State Plan partner programs included in this plan, and required and optional one-stop partner programs will coordinate activities and resources to provide comprehensive, high-quality, customer-centered services, including supportive services (e.g. transportation), to individuals, including those populations identified in section II(a)(1)(B), and individuals in remote areas The activities described shall conform to the statutory requirements of each program.

Jobseekers as Customers: Coordination, Alignment, and Provision of Services

Jobseekers as Customers: Coordination, Alignment, and Provision of Services

For jobseekers— especially jobseekers who are unemployed or who face barriers to employment—this approach means that the State will strive to ensure customers who are receiving multiple services across agencies are not discouraged or disenfranchised by unnecessary bureaucracy. Instead, Maryland customers will feel encouraged and assisted by the workforce system because the WIOA Partners will continue to communicate often and effectively, taking action to align efforts across programs when possible. The WIOA Partners meet on a monthly basis through the WIOA Alignment Group to discuss implementation and alignment efforts, and to address the progress and opportunities for improvement, which would include training opportunities for staff.

Maryland leverages multiple avenues and access points to provide efficient and effective services and systems for customers. To help operationalize alignment efforts, to help operationalize alignment efforts, MD Labor, Department of Human Services (DHS), Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS), Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), and local workforce partners are committed to cross training employees and sharing resources and data, as appropriate and when possible. Collaboration between State and local workforce partners and the co-location of resources will further foster improved customer service, as it will help identify commonalities and ensure that processes are in place to provide a greater number of services to shared customers. The WIOA Partners will explore ways to include incentives for local

providers to serve those who are most in need of assistance. The WIOA Partners are further committed to placing jobseekers in the center of service delivery solutions.

Maryland's WIOA Partners are committed to serving the following target populations, identified by the State as individuals with barriers to employment:

- Target Populations: Individuals with Barriers to Employment
- Displaced Homemakers
- Eligible MSFWs
- Ex-offenders
- Homeless individuals
- Individuals facing substantial cultural barriers
- Individuals with disabilities, including youth with disabilities
- Individuals within two years of exhausting lifetime eligibility under Part A of the Social Security Act
- Individuals who are English language learners
- Individuals who are unemployed, including the long-term unemployed
- Individuals who have low levels of literacy
- Individuals without a High School Diploma
- Low-income individuals (including TANF and SNAP recipients)
- Native Americans, Alaskan Natives, and Native Hawaiians
- Older individuals
- Single parents (including single pregnant women and non-custodial parents)
- Veterans
- Youth who are in or have aged out of the foster care system

Maryland is dedicated to continued discussions regarding the individual barriers noted on the above list and is open to exploring whether additional barriers to employment should be included. Maryland allows for Local Areas to include specific additional barriers that the Local Areas may wish to include in their service delivery. These individuals face challenges that require the WIOA Partners to work together to coordinate services and to implement innovative strategies to meet their needs throughout the job acquisition, training, and business recruitment processes.

Maryland's WIOA system will:

- Incorporate continuous staff training, which is paramount to understanding and properly utilizing the tools available to facilitate assessment, to disseminate information on services available throughout the system, and to refer customers to appropriate WIOA partner organizations.
- Provide multiple access points to increase outreach and balance efficiency among the various persons involved with the customer experience.
- Create a robust menu of services and appropriate referrals that can effectively meet the needs of a diverse customer base.
- Establish relationships, competence, and accountability among all partners involved in the system. Through the Alignment Group, the WIOA Partners will establish deeper relationships and accountability to enhance the customers' experiences.
- Encourage sharing of information among partners, such as creating a resource map, workforce network blog, WIOA listserv, and a common customer service management system. The Alignment Group will provide guidance to the system.
- Encourage greater business involvement in workforce processes, in Workforce Development Boards, and in the sharing of "industry-related" work skills and behavioral expectations. This includes a greater collaborative role for community

- colleges and industry organizations in developing programs that meet labor market needs in the Local Area.
- Research developing a common intake process that provides the ability to access customer information on services provided and next steps in the process.
 - Reduce duplicative processes to expand staff's ability to serve customers more efficiently;
 - Establish guidelines for WIOA Partners to manage and refer customers to other partners;
 - Identify liaisons among the various partners to assure that customers experience a seamless flow and referral to appropriate services.
 - Develop a mechanism for clear identification of resources and service responsibilities among the partners and within the community.
 - Place customers at the center of policy decisions regarding service delivery.

Maryland's WIOA system can be a pathway to the middle class and a means to maintain and build the skills necessary to remain in the middle class. Maryland is committed to ensuring its target populations are able to access the WIOA system on a priority basis. The State will ensure WIOA priority of service provisions are appropriately followed and monitored through several means. Within the WIOA local plans, Maryland will require Local Areas to provide details on how priority shall be given in the Local Area within the requisite parameters of the law and State policy. Additionally, Maryland's WIOA Memoranda of Understanding will ensure priority of service is effectively offered. Maryland policy requires that local WIOA Memoranda of Understanding contain provisions regarding a number of key components, including priority of service.

Supportive Services

To fully address the wide range of barriers that WIOA participants may face, Maryland is committed to offering a diverse array of supportive services, as appropriate. Supportive and wrap-around services will provide financial and other assistance to participants who would not be able to successfully participate otherwise. Using a systems approach, the WIOA Partners are committed to working together to ensure supportive service resources are leveraged effectively for jobseekers. By taking advantage of opportunities to braid funding streams within Maryland's WIOA system, participants may be supported with transportation assistance, suitable attire for work, tools, work or training equipment, child or dependent care, graduation fees, union fees, clothing for interviews or work, and more.

Maryland's WIOA Partners recognize that supportive service needs vary widely by participant and geography and, therefore, supportive services must be designed to assist in the removal of the specific barriers that individual participants face. The State will consider customer feedback to drive decision-making to ensure that supportive service funding is allocated in a way that truly meets customer needs. In recent policy development efforts, the State has discussed increased costs for transportation, housing, and clothing, and has adjusted suggested thresholds for support service expenses.

Additionally, programs working with out-of-school youth ages 16-24 are strongly encouraged to work with Local Management Boards through the Governor's Office for Children to plan and implement supportive services that respond to the needs of youth in their respective jurisdictions. Local Management Boards are local government designees established in each of Maryland's 24 jurisdictions to ensure the coordinated implementation of a local inter-agency service delivery system for children, youth, and families. Local Management Boards are able to apply for flexible State funds from the Children's Cabinet to support programming that aligns with Governor Moore's goal of leaving no one behind. These flexible State funds

may provide necessary supports that could not otherwise be provided with existing, less flexible Federal dollars. It is envisioned that collaborative planning and implementation will prevent service duplication and ensure that State funds are used to fill gaps in services. Local plans must address how they will leverage and coordinate supportive services in service delivery.

Youth Programs have continued to utilize service models that best meet the needs of their participants. This includes the continuation of virtual services, hybrid service models, and in-person services. Local Programs have instituted virtual training platforms as well as AI programs to provide access to job shadowing opportunities for youth participants. Local Areas continue to be innovative in their approach to serving youth across the State. Areas are continuing to build strong partnerships with community-based organizations as well as local agency partners. These relationships have proven to be valuable in creating referral processes between agencies such as Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS) and the Department of Health (DHS), as we have seen a rise in the necessity of health services, primarily mental health services.

All of Maryland's Core Partners are committed to aligning activities and resources, including for those participating in the Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) program. The WIOA Alignment Group meets monthly to discuss continuous coordination of services, referrals, and co-enrollment. In order to ensure, comprehensive, customer-centered services, the partners have adopted strategies, not limited to, including:

- Co-location of services: when possible, partners are encouraged to coordinate services in a shared physical location to enhance customer access. The Upper Shore and Prince George's County have been leaders on this effort, establishing American Job Centers (AJCs) and Local Departments of Social Services (LDSSs) at the same site. Additionally, several Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS) offices are co-located with American Job Centers throughout the state;
- Maryland continues to seed opportunities to invest in the co-enrollment of WIOA Title I and Title II participants through the Career Pathways project (mentioned above) in order to fully integrate adult education and training services;
- The State revised its policy on TAA in 2021 and requires Local Areas to co-enroll Trade participants in WIOA Title I program, so customers have a full menu of opportunities available to them; and
- The State allows partner access to the Maryland Workforce Exchange (MWE) in order for staff at DORS, DHS (TANF), and DHCD to determine if their customers are enrolled in or should be referred to partner programming.

(D) Coordination, Alignment and Provision of Services to Employers. Describe how the entities carrying out the respective core programs, any Combined State Plan partner program included in this plan, required and optional one-stop partner programs will coordinate activities and resources to provide comprehensive, high-quality services to employers to meet their current and projected workforce needs and to achieve the goals of industry or sector partners in the state. The activities described shall conform to the statutory requirements of each program.

As the most direct beneficiaries of a strong pipeline of skilled workers, Maryland businesses are a primary driver for and consumer of the State's workforce system. All of Maryland's workforce system partners proactively engage businesses early and often in the development of services, to ensure workforce solutions meet quality criteria and are responsive to employer needs. In addition to working with businesses to innovate new workforce solutions, the State's workforce system must also ensure businesses are benefiting from the wide array

of existing professional development, support services, and incumbent worker resources available through Maryland's network of AJCs.

DORS

DORS continues to expand engagement with businesses to assist them with their workforce needs and provide for quality VR services and employment outcomes. Like its WIOA Partners, DORS has embraced the dual-customer model and has dedicated staff tasked with employer outreach and engagement.

The DORS Business Relations Branch includes a Program Manager and seven regional Business Services Representatives. This organizational structure ensures statewide coverage, information sharing, collaboration, and a team approach to employer engagement. The Business Relations Branch works closely with the agency's Workforce and Technology Center (WTC) Employment Services to coordinate services to employers that enhance services and prepare consumers to meet employer needs. WTC's training advisory committees engage employers in specific industries to ensure training programs are in line with industry needs and standards. Additionally, DORS Rehabilitation Technology Services provides assistance to employers through onsite technology assessment services.

DORS Business Services Representatives collaborate with MD Labor and local workforce business services representatives for business outreach and quality services. The WIOA Partners and their Business Services teams agree to work together to ensure quality customer service to businesses. Through frequent communication and collaborative efforts, the WIOA Business Services Team members have developed a deeper understanding of the services each partner offers, and, after understanding a business's needs, connections are made with appropriate team members to ensure the workforce needs are met. Additionally, the local Business Services Teams collaborate with WIOA partners to sponsor events beneficial to businesses, such as trainings, business summits, and job fairs.

Title II

Adult Education and Literacy Service is a vital component of Maryland's workforce system. Providing academic instruction, high school equivalency pathways, workforce preparation and integrated education and training for adult learners provides these individuals with the skills they need to compete in global, regional, state, and local economies. Effectively assessing the needs of the adult learner is key to ensuring that the individual receives the time and attention they need to not only secure a competitive wage job, but to secure an in-demand career with advancement, to support and thrive in their family and community.

In all jurisdictions of the State, Adult Education is at the table at both the local Workforce Development Boards, as well as in local and regional planning of workforce services. This interconnectivity results in businesses having coordinated access not only to a pipeline of talent, but also educational services that can provide the skills potential employees would need to be successful.

By accurately measuring a learner's literacy, numeracy, and English language skills, Maryland's WIOA system is better equipped to provide comprehensive, high-quality services to businesses to by providing the learner/jobseeker tailored education and/or training plan, and ultimately assist the individual in obtaining gainful employment based upon the workforce needs of local businesses. Maryland's comprehensive Basic Skills Assessment Policy ensures that all aspects of the workforce system are properly assessing the linguistic and academic skills of all job seekers.

English language learners represent over 60% of the Title II adult education population. They provide substantial contributions to Maryland's workforce and economy and seek to improve their skills to broaden their workforce and career opportunities as well as economic advancement. Maryland's workforce system must strive to tailor services for this population as they obtain English literacy, secondary level upskilling, training for in-demand careers, and workforce preparation services. With a historically low unemployment rate, businesses must be able to tap into the underutilized resource of skilled immigrants in our State. The English Language Acquisition services of Maryland's Title II providers, combined with Workplace Literacy services and the expertise of Maryland's Skilled Immigrant Task Force provide businesses both access to this segment of the workforce, as well as the tools for both businesses and adult learners to use to be successful in their career pathway.

Maryland's Skilled Immigrant Task Force provides WIOA partners and immigrant serving communities with a shared forum to address the needs of Maryland's immigrant population including those who participate in the adult education and literacy services. The Task Force has generated recommendations for holistically serving Maryland's skilled immigrant population.

As businesses look towards the State workforce system for support in finding and hiring a talented pipeline of workers, Title II will continue its development of employer partnerships to deliver Workplace Literacy programming. Workplace Literacy programs strengthen employee retention by utilizing the expertise of adult education providers to deliver contextualized adult literacy and English language acquisition courses at the job site, targeted to the specific needs of each employer. Workers have the benefit of receiving needed instruction at a convenient location, while also allowing the employer to invest in the needs of their workforce to retain and promote from within.

GWDB

The Governor's Workforce Development Board (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. As described above and in accordance with the board composition requirements of WIOA, the GWDB is comprised of a business-majority membership. Following the GWDB's model and per WIOA requirements, the State similarly requires Local Boards to develop business-majority Board memberships. Local Areas must also outline in their local WIOA plans how they intend to provide a greater business voice in local workforce services.

Maryland's State Workforce Plan partners are all represented on the GWDB, and thus the GWDB serves as the primary entity that drives employer voice in the State's WIOA programming and that serves as a platform for coordinated collaboration and alignment across system partners at the state level.

Alignment of Business Services

As of February 2024, Maryland is working to transition leadership of almost all business service outreach activities to local Title I partners apart from RA. While the State will continue to lead apprenticeship business engagement and Maryland Apprenticeship and Training Council-related activities, Local Workforce Development Areas will begin to oversee the remainder of those efforts. In this new setup, some apprenticeship functions can be performed by both

local staff and RA, but the State will retain any items that require State merit staff. MD Labor will work collaboratively with local partners to set expectations on critical points of communication over the coming months.

The LVER is integrated into local business services teams in the Local Workforce Development Area. The LVER's role has not changed with the business services transition.

EARN Maryland

The EARN program, is a nationally recognized, State-funded competitive workforce development grant program that is industry-led, regional in focus, and a proven strategy for helping businesses cultivate the skilled workforce they need to compete. It is flexible and innovative, designed to ensure that Maryland employers have the talent they need to compete and grow in an ever-changing 21st century economy.

The goals of EARN are to:

- Address the demands of businesses by focusing intensively on the workforce needs of a specific industry sector over a sustained period;
- Address the needs of workers by creating formal career paths to good jobs, reducing barriers to employment, and sustaining or growing middle class jobs; and,
- Encourage mobility for Maryland's most hard-to-serve jobseekers through job readiness training, which may include GED® preparation, occupational skills development, literacy advancement, and transportation and childcare components.

EARN invests in strategic industry partnerships from key economic sectors in every region, coordinating educational, workforce and economic development initiatives to address the multiple needs of companies, starting with the training of skilled workers.

While traditional workforce programs often look to training entities or higher education to determine training needs and develop curriculum, EARN's innovative model asks business and industry partners to identify skills gaps and workforce training needs, as well as effective training strategies and techniques for identified skill sets. Essentially, the direct involvement of employers is required at every step in the process.

Because EARN targets services to individuals with barriers to employment, the provision of wrap around services are a crucial element in the model's success. Strategic Industry Partnerships who are awarded EARN grants must include at least two "diverse partners," often nonprofit organizations or LWDBs with extensive experience in barrier removal. Training plans must describe how support services, including barrier removal services, will holistically meet participant needs.

(E) Partner Engagement with Educational Institutions and other Education and Training Providers. Describe how the State's Strategies will engage the State's community colleges, adult education providers, area career and technical education schools, providers on the State's eligible training provider list, and other education and training providers, as partners in the workforce development system to create a job-driven education and training system. WIOA section 102(b)(2)(B)(iv). Include how the State's strategies will enable the State to leverage other Federal, State, and local investments to enhance access to workforce development programs at these institutions.

Maryland maintains strong collaborative partnerships between educational institutions and other WIOA State partners to create a job-driven education and training system. These connections support a cohesive, integrated workforce system that prepares workers with the in-demand skills that Maryland's employers need. To facilitate collaboration, Maryland houses adult education and literacy programs (WIOA Title II programs) within MD Labor's DWDAL, alongside other WIOA programming. Program colocation fosters regular communication and shared strategic planning, which helps to ensure that local adult education service providers

and the WIOA Title I providers in Local Areas are positioned to effectively coordinate services and resources.

With strong partnerships as a foundation, Maryland has employed a range of engagement strategies:

Policy Development

MD Labor's DWDAL engages education partners in important policy initiatives:

- To reduce duplicative testing and streamline referrals between partner agencies, DWDAL worked with education stakeholders (including representatives from community colleges) to develop PI 2023-02 Basic Education Skills and English Language Assessments, a policy on ABE and English language assessments. This policy unifies requirements for Title I and Title II providers. This policy is updated annually to ensure it is current with all requirements and best practices.
- In 2023, DWDAL released a new policy on Maryland's Eligible Training Provider process, PI 2023-03 WIOA Title I Training & Maryland's Eligible Training Provider List, to ensure that Local Areas have sufficient numbers and a diverse pool of quality providers of in-demand training. The ETPL policy was developed to: help Maryland create an effective marketplace for the training programs available to WIOA participants with Individual Training Accounts (ITAs); reduce burden on training providers to submit accurate performance information and to guide WIOA participants, in conjunction with staff, in selecting training in the State and Local Areas; prohibit discrimination by training providers in accepting and enrolling WIOA program participants; provide guidance on reciprocity with other states; and, provide information on eligible training programs to WIOA participants in a way that helps them make informed decisions, along with staff and within local policy, on how to use their ITAs.
- As part of MD Labor's 2020-2023 State Apprenticeship Expansion Grant, which provides funding from the USDOL for expanding RA opportunities throughout Maryland, DWDAL created the 2021 Maryland Community College Apprenticeship Initiative. This opportunity provides grant funds to increase the integration of community colleges and RAs into Maryland's workforce system.
- In 2019, DWDAL released PI 2019-04 Privacy and Data Security to provide statewide guidance on the management of Personally Identifiable Information (PII), an important issue when sharing participant information between partners.

Career Pathways

In an effort to strengthen career pathways implementation in Maryland, in 2018 MD Labor launched the Career Pathways Program, which awarded up to \$250,000 per jurisdiction to increase WIOA Title II learner access to Title I training and career opportunities while addressing the needs of local businesses. Over 190 adult learners were served in various areas, including healthcare, apartment maintenance, and diesel mechanics.

In addition to the career outcomes of the learners, the program culminated in the creation of Career Pathways Connections for Adult Learners, a guide that addresses the persistent challenge of connecting Title I and Title II clients to co-enrollment opportunities, as well as the benefits of utilizing the services of both programs to empower adult learners to advance in their careers. This guide outlined the best practices learned and a roadmap to sustainable implementation across the State. Establishing strong partnerships between agencies and

meeting participants where they are were just a few of the recommendations made from this pilot program. One standout jurisdiction was Howard County, in which two separate Title II providers formed a long-lasting partnership with the local AJC to serve the needs of English learners in their jurisdiction. The local partnership in Howard County has continued beyond the end of the grant, with its success being touted nationally at the EARN Economic Integration webinar and a training at the 2023 National Association of State Directors of Adult Education.

Youth Apprenticeships

Maryland has made great strides in building youth apprenticeship opportunities. Through the work of the Maryland Youth Apprenticeship Advisory Committee (the “Committee”) and the continued push by MD Labor, the MSDE, the Maryland Department of Commerce (Commerce), and the Local Education Agencies (LEA) across the State, more students, parents, and employers understand the benefits of apprenticeship opportunities for youth.

During 2018, groundwork was put in place to make youth apprenticeship available statewide by the conclusion of the initial two-year, two-county pilot program. The Youth Apprenticeship Advisory Board worked with MD Labor and MSDE to craft the educational framework necessary for local public-school systems to design and implement their own youth apprenticeship initiatives. Local county school systems were invited to submit proposals to MSDE staff members to add the AMP as a Career and Technology Education (CTE) program of study for its students. As a CTE program, local systems can use Perkins Grant funds to support the program. Both departments are hopeful that this approach will help to facilitate the future entry of additional participating school systems.

Expansion of AMP during this period of historically low unemployment is the ideal time for the program to become a proven, sustainable workforce development strategy. In 2018, the groundwork was put in place to expand youth apprenticeship to be available statewide. Labor, Commerce, and MSDE’s original goal for growing AMP during 2019 was to increase the program from the original two pilot counties to a total of six participating school systems. As a consequence of combined efforts, since the June 2018 unveiling by MSDE of the AMP CTE Program of Study, all 24 of Maryland’s LEAs have adopted the model.

As the program has expanded, MD Labor and its partners have taken steps to ensure adaptability by working with employers to identify a variety of training models for greater program flexibility. This includes providing related instruction through any of the following formats: through the local high school, through online programs offered either at the place of employment or at the high school, at the work site of a participating employer, through an industry association, through a Joint Apprenticeship and Training School, or through the community college. The learning component is designed to comport with the needs of the employer to include credentialing and certification. Maryland also focuses its recruitment of employers from one of MSDE’s ten Career Cluster areas which are based on the high-demand sectors defined by Commerce. MD Labor, MSDE, and Commerce aligned the program with federal, state, and local resources to ensure that AMP addresses Maryland’s workforce and economic development needs.

The number of youth apprenticeship employers approved to participate has grown from just 14 in the initial cohort year of 2016-2017 to over 575 by November 2023. The program has seen similar growth in the number of youth apprentices being served over that same time period, increasing from 11 to over 625.

MD Labor and MSDE are committed to growing the program to scale so that as many of Maryland's young people as possible can utilize this innovative career pathway program. For example, as part of MD Labor's 2020-2023 State Apprenticeship Expansion Grant, which provides funding from the USDOL for expanding RA opportunities throughout Maryland, DWDAL created the 2021 Maryland Youth Apprenticeship Initiative. This opportunity provides grant funds to increase youth apprenticeship opportunities throughout the state.

Training without the close involvement of industry and business will likely be to no avail. Maryland has embraced employer and industry driven models to training through the EARN Maryland program and through the State's investments in RAs.

EARN Maryland

EARN Maryland is the State's nationally recognized workforce program. The program is industry-led, designed to address business workforce needs by focusing on industry sector strategies that produce long-term solutions to sustained skills gaps and personnel shortages. The success of the program is seeded in collaboration among a diverse group of partners, including employer and industry partners, nonprofit and community-based organizations, and workforce, economic development, and education partners. Based upon employer-identified training needs, Strategic Industry Partnerships provide education and skills training to unemployed and underemployed Marylanders, including support for individuals with specific barriers to employment. EARN also provides career advancement strategies for incumbent workers.

Since the program began in 2014, EARN has been recognized as a national best practice for its innovation and implementation of sector strategies. In 2015 and 2016, the National Skills Coalition and Urban Institute praised EARN as a leader in industry-led workforce initiatives. In 2017, EARN was highlighted at the National Conference for State Legislatures as a model to be emulated. Additionally, at the request of the National Skills Coalition, EARN Maryland staff provided technical assistance to states seeking to emulate this national best practice. In 2018, EARN was named one of the Top 25 programs in Harvard's 2018 Innovations in American Government Award competition, which highlights exemplary models of government innovation.

As of October 2023, nearly 9,300 individuals, many of whom have barriers to employment, have obtained employment as a result of their participation in EARN programming. Additionally, over 13,000 incumbent workers have participated in training, earning a new skill, certification or credential. Employer partners identify many benefits to their employees participating in EARN training, including increased cost savings, productivity and retention.

In an effort to build upon the success of the program, the annual budget for EARN has more than doubled in size since the inception of the program, which has significantly increased the reach of the program.

Due to the critical role of employer and industry partners in the implementation of the program, EARN partnerships are encouraged to grow their employer network. In 2023, the Business Economic and Community Outreach Network (BEACON) performed a survey to ascertain the effectiveness of the program from the perspective of EARN employer and industry partners. 81% of survey respondents stated that they have a significant competitive advantage over their peers, with 17% responding that EARN participants have at least some competitive advantages. A mere one percent of employers surveyed responded that EARN participants had no competitive advantage over their counterparts. In addition, nearly 99% of

respondents affirmed that their participation in EARN is worth the investment and the same percentage believe that the program has had a positive impact on their business.

The results of this survey solidify the impact of the industry-led model in improving business outcomes and best serving Maryland's workforce.

Over the last several years, the Department has continued its partnership with the Maryland DHS' SNAP E&T Program. Funded by the United States Department of Agriculture, the program connects people who receive monthly food supplement benefits (SNAP, food stamps) to job-driven training programs. The program requires a cost-match with non-federal funding. Participating programs will be reimbursed up to 50 percent of allowable program costs, thus increasing the State's and other non-federal funders' investment and increasing the number of Marylanders to receive in-demand skills training. Because EARN is a state-funded program, EARN Maryland partnerships have the means to provide the cost match. Sixteen EARN grantees are FSET providers, including the Jane Addams Resource Corporation, Civic Works, Humanim, Job Opportunities Task Force, NPower, Per Scholas, Maryland Food Bank, BCR Cyber, ByteBack, , Maryland New Directions, ITWorks, Vehicles for Change, Goodwill Industries of the Chesapeake, Paul's Place, the National Center for Institutions and Alternatives, and I'm Still Standing Community Development Corporation.

On February 16, 2023, the State Workforce System issued PI 2023-03 WIOA Title I Training & Maryland's Eligible Training Provider List. The policy was the result of over a year's worth of convening stakeholders, public comment, and technical assistance. Both EARN partnerships and RAs were represented in the discussions and policy formulation. Prior to 2017, EARN partnerships had not been included on the ETPL but based on the feedback from EARN partnerships, community colleges, and others, the State established a process that would allow EARN Maryland performance outcome reports to count as past performance data submitted for initial eligibility. Since then, there have been several EARN grantees added to the ETPL.

RAs

Since becoming a part of MD Labor DWDAL in 2016, the Office of Apprenticeship and Training has made a concerted effort to utilize this time-tested model as the State's premiere workforce solution. The structure of RA is flexible and innovative, allowing for businesses to create a structured training model to connect highly skilled workers to the employer. The Apprentices benefit through the OJL, which allows them to earn an income while they learn the skills needed for the job.

Leveraging federal funding for the acceleration and expansion of apprenticeship opportunities, the State hired additional staff charged with building partnerships with new, existing and inactive sponsors and/or businesses. Industry engagement and participation are also key to the successful expansion of RA in Maryland. Outreach to chambers of commerce and industry associations, and State and LWDBs are occurring. The connections with these industry groups nurtured several opportunities to engage industry to develop multi-employer programs and program templates. Lastly, relationships are being leveraged with sector partnerships through EARN.

In January 2017, there were no RA sponsors on the State's ETPL. Due to the effort of the Office of Apprenticeship and Training, and as a result of intensive outreach, over 55 have since joined the ETPL to leverage WIOA funding.

(F) Improving Access to Postsecondary Credentials. Describe how the State's strategies will improve access to activities leading to recognized postsecondary credentials, including Registered Apprenticeship certificates. This includes credentials that are industry-recognized certificates, licenses or certifications, and that are portable and stackable.

Maryland has established a strong record of implementing best practices related to improving access to education and industry-recognized credentials. The State continues to actively invest in a variety of initiatives that will drive the excellence of Maryland's workforce today and well into the future. Going forward, Maryland's workforce system partners continually work together to achieve the goal of increasing earning capacity of Maryland's workforce system customers by maximizing access to and use of skills and credentialing.

IELCE and IET

Adult Education grantees of WIOA Title II funds in Maryland are encouraged to design and deliver Integrated Education and Training programming that meets the needs of the local workforce area as well as the career goals of adult learners in their jurisdiction. These providers are strongly encouraged to plan these activities with the participation of other core program partners, certified training providers, and businesses to develop programs that will meet the needs of a high-demand industry. IET programs should be a component in a comprehensive Career Pathway program. The three IET components of Adult education and literacy activities, Workforce preparation activities, and Workforce training must be provided contextually and concurrently for a specific occupation or occupation cluster for the purpose of educational and career advancement. The instruction must be aligned with the CCR standards and integrate workforce preparation activities.

Adult Education providers are required to complete an IET Planning Tool for each cohort to ensure there has been proper planning and considerations made on the best way to deliver this instruction concurrently and contextually. In addition, the provider must identify all planned completions of MSG Type IV (Progress Towards Milestones) and MSH Type V (Industry Recognized Certifications) that will be accomplished during the cohort.

WIOA Section 243 funding authorizes Integrated English Literacy and Civics Integration funding for successful applicants. The three required components of IELCE course work are:

1. English Language Acquisition (speaking and comprehension);
2. Literacy (reading and writing); and
3. Civics education (the rights and responsibilities of citizenship and civic participation).

In addition to the required components, IELCE programs are required to align programming with Maryland's ESOL content standards, as well as being taught concurrently with instruction on the rights and responsibilities of citizenship and civic participation, understanding the American systems of government, education, healthcare, and the American workplace. Finally, programs receiving IELCE funds under Section 243 of WIOA must ensure that students in the program have access to integrated education and training (IET). Access to an IET means that students who are in Section 243 (IELCE) funded services are also able to attend an IET course, if interested; however, students enrolled in the IELCE program are not required to participate in such service.

RA

Governor Moore's strategic vision for the workforce system is to provide businesses with the skilled workforce they need to compete in the global, regional, and local economies. A bedrock strategy within that vision is the expansion of RA opportunities. The State's goal is to align RAs with Maryland's workforce system to ensure that traditional RA expands alongside the creation of new opportunities grounded in labor market demand.

Maryland's Apprenticeship and Training Program registers three types of apprenticeships: time-based, competency-based, and hybrid models. Competency-based apprenticeship programs are a new addition to Maryland's menu, introduced into State regulation in 2017. By expanding the menu of apprenticeship models, Maryland has created new opportunities for employers and prospective apprentices seeking alternatives to a time-based apprenticeship.

Maryland has received nearly \$20,000,000 in funding to expand RA from the USDOL since 2016. The latest award comes in the form of the 2023 State Apprenticeship Expansion Grant in the amount of \$6,650,620.00. These funds will serve to align RAs with public sector apprenticeships and degree bearing apprenticeships in hospitality in conjunction with community college partners and will provide public sector employers and private businesses with a sustainable pipeline in both traditional and non-traditional industry sectors.

Maryland has devoted the majority of funding from each of its USDOL apprenticeship grants directly into programming that enable existing RA programs to increase in size while also allowing for significant investments in new RA programs. For example, as part of the 2020 State Apprenticeship Expansion Grant, Maryland has dedicated \$3.2 million to support an Employer Incentive Program (which reimburses employers who hire new apprentices a portion of wages), and a series of awards to expand both registered and youth apprenticeship.

MD Labor has increased its RA staff to integrate apprenticeship into the workforce system by adding Apprenticeship Navigators. A primary area of focus for the Apprenticeship Navigator role is to conduct outreach to the business community, existing sponsors, inactive sponsors, and other potential stakeholder groups. These outreach activities have resulted in the registration of 180 new apprenticeship sponsors, and the reactivation of 38 RA Sponsors since September 2016. Additionally, staff have worked to expand the Youth Apprenticeship Pilot Program into AMP. The AMP program provides youth apprenticeship opportunities to participating school systems throughout the state. Originally a two-county pilot program, AMP has now expanded to all 24 local school systems. Presently available to high school students through their school system, youth apprenticeships are "earn and learn" work opportunities focused on high-growth, high demand industries. A youth apprentice participating in this program receives paid, supervised, structured, On-the-Job Learning (OJL) from a mentor in a specific in-demand occupation with the related instruction being provided by the school system, community colleges, union training center, association, or online. Youth apprenticeship students work a minimum of 450 hours with a certified employer, while receiving concurrent related instruction through their high school. Participating students typically work during the summer after their junior year and during their senior year with a state-approved employer. They work with a mentor to learn valuable skills and earn industry credentials and high school credit. Students also receive training in interpersonal/social skills and general knowledge of the world of work. Since the program's inception for the 2016-2017 school year, the number of youth apprentices has climbed from 11 to over 625, with over 575 businesses being approved for the program as of November 2023.

MD Labor will increase opportunities for engagement with the business community, jobseekers and RA Sponsors by utilizing a cross-training strategy of the Business Solutions, Reentry Navigators, Local Veteran Employment Representatives (LVER), and Apprenticeship

and Training staff. This strategy provides RA strategies to be provided by all business facing staff creating an efficient outreach effort for Maryland businesses.

ETPL

To expand the number and diversity of high-quality training providers on the ETPL, the State conducted a highly collaborative process to develop a new ETPL policy and processes. The [WIOA Title I Training & Maryland's ETPL policy](#), updated in 2021 and updated again in 2023, was designed to encourage the participation of the education and training institutions that play such a pivotal role in building a highly qualified workforce. Outcomes of the new policy indicate the inclusive development process was successful in communicating the value of the list to stakeholders. Applications from community colleges have seen a sharp increase, and in the short period of time the new policy has been implemented, 58 RA programs have been added. In order to include additional providers on the ETPL.

(G) Coordinating with Economic Development Strategies. Describe how the activities identified in (A) will be coordinated with economic development entities, strategies, and activities in the State.

Coordinating with Commerce

Recognizing that greater collaboration between agencies may require the use of common platforms, data collection, and information sharing, MD Labor works with representatives from Maryland's Commerce Department to align processes and leverage each agency's core strengths in a more coordinated way. Staff who administer business services attend quarterly training on business retention, growth and layoff aversion strategies, as well as economic and industry indicators and LMI. Additionally, representatives from MD Labor and Commerce will continue discussions to allow for greater coordination of services, including but not limited to access to Commerce's current business services platform.

Furthermore, joint investment in incumbent worker training programs, such as Maryland Business Works, support employer strategies for upgrading the skills of currently employed workers. Incumbent worker training programs invest not only in the employee who obtains transferable skills and industry-recognized credentials, but also supports the competitiveness of Maryland's businesses by ensuring that their incumbent employees can effectively adapt to meet continually advancing technologies. Additionally, these programs typically support business retention and expansion efforts. They do so not by developing basic skill levels in occupations with growing demand, a primary focus of Maryland's EARN program, but by supporting company efforts to update skills for new processes and equipment.

Both MD Labor and the Commerce Department have previously invested in matching grant programs directed to businesses. These investments in Maryland's businesses provided customized training solutions for individual companies with unique or proprietary technical skill requirements. Under WIOA, incumbent worker training can be used to help avert potential layoffs of employees, or to increase the skill levels of employees. MD and Commerce will continue to work collaboratively to find ways to renew efforts to increase incumbent worker training funds and will jointly market the availability of these training funds to ensure Maryland's businesses are competitive and their employees are well-trained to compete in a global marketplace.

(b) State Operating Systems and Policies. The Unified or Combined State Plan must include a description of the State operating systems and policies that will support the implementation of the State strategy described in section II Strategic Elements. This includes—

(1) State operating systems that support coordinated implementation of State strategies (for example labor market information systems, data systems, communication systems, case management systems, job banks, etc.).

Maryland is committed to moving towards an integrated systems approach, in which its separate legacy data systems will be replaced gradually. While MD Labor, DORS, DHS, and DHCD can report on each individual WIOA program to the respective federal oversight agencies, Maryland does not currently have an integrated system that is accessible to all partner programs. MD Labor is therefore currently unable to access data from agencies, like DORS and DHS, which collect data outside of the MWE system, and agencies may have limited knowledge of how partner programs are serving mutual customers.

The MWE serves as the data system for a number of WIOA programs: the WIOA Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs; WIOA Title III Wagner-Peyser employment services, JVSG, MSFW, Dislocated Worker Grants, Trade and the ETPL. ETPL is managed in the MWE along with all provider data. Local Area can use the MWE to track locally defined programs. The MWE REX module supports UI claimants alongside the UI modernization efforts. However, TANF, VR, Adult Education, and the CSBGs use their own data collection systems.

WIOA partner agencies have been granted “read only” basic access, to MWE. This allows partners the ability to view a shared customer. Journey through the local AJC. . On December 18, 2017, the WIOA partners issued Policy Issuance 2017-10: Partner Access to the MWE. The policy allows for read-only access to the MWE be granted to WIOA partners. The proper Memorandum of Understanding has been executed between partners and confidentiality statements for individual users outline responsibilities to maintain confidentiality and to protect PII.

In short, while many of the State’s WIOA programs use the MWE for the processes previously described several of the State’s other WIOA programs operate in a different agency data system. At times, this can challenge the ability to share information on mutual customers. Recognizing this challenge, in the interim, Maryland is committed to establishing data sharing agreements in the absence of one common State system. Maryland is also committed to exploring common platform methods that will help us to improve system coordination. **Currently, MD Labor’s WDQI grant is using workforce data and along with the Maryland Longitudinal Data System (MLDS) for data integration and research.**

(2) The State policies that will support the implementation of the State’s strategies (for example., co-enrollment policies and universal intake processes where appropriate). In addition, provide the State’s guidelines for State-administered one-stop partner programs’ contributions to a one-stop delivery system and any additional guidance for one-stop partner contributions.

WIOA Policy Work

The GWDB sets forth public policy guidance for the workforce system. This includes, but is not limited to, the promotion of sector strategies and the development and growth of industry-led partnerships for workforce training delivery. The GWDB plays the critical role of finding ways to promote Maryland’s workforce system to businesses and jobseekers alike. GWDB also provides needed insight into the needs of Maryland’s businesses and will be apprised of operational policy needs.

Maryland is committed to a collaborative approach to operational policymaking and will continue to encourage participation from State and local partners across the WIOA system. The WIOA Partners will develop WIOA policies using DWDAL's eight step process for policy development (<http://www.labor.maryland.gov/employment/mpi/>):

Maryland's 8-Step Process for WIOA Policy Development

1. Determine policy need
2. Policy Session with Subject Matter Experts
3. Policy drafting
4. Review & Comment Period
5. Updates to draft
6. Final approvals
7. Policy dissemination
8. Policy modification (when applicable)

The WIOA Partners have a robust and collaborative operational policy plan in place to guide the state's workforce system. Maryland is committed to implementing WIOA with a true systems approach, and therefore, MD Labor, DORS, DHS, and DHCD are committed to jointly issuing policies, memos, and guidance documents for the WIOA system, in line with the direction of the GWDB, and as appropriate. Jointly issuing operational policies is Maryland's way of ensuring all staff and system partners, regardless of which agency or organization they represent, will have the same expectations, training, and understanding of how to interact with customers and each other.

By taking a collaborative, thoughtful approach, which allows for subject matter experts across the system to weigh in, the WIOA Policy Work Group, in coordination with the WIOA Alignment Group and the GWDB, successfully works to provide policy guidance on a variety of topics that are key to WIOA implementation. The USDOL has touted Maryland's approach to policymaking as a national best practice and Maryland often provides technical assistance on the development of policies to other states via webinars and conference call.

All of Maryland's policy guidance is provided on MD Labor's website to ensure ease of access for staff and the general public, alike (<http://www.labor.maryland.gov/employment/mpi/>). To help identify specific WIOA policy needs, the WIOA Policy Work Group solicits feedback from the State's other WIOA Workgroups to ensure policy needs were documented and subject matter experts from relevant State and local organizations were appropriately identified and engaged. Additionally, MD Labor reviewed its existing policies and identified areas that could benefit from improvement and/or alignment with other WIOA programs.

The WIOA Policy Work Group, in consultation with the other WIOA Work Groups, thus identified a variety of policy needs and work is ongoing to fully develop strong policies that align with the State Plan's vision. The Policy Work Group has strategically solicited the expertise of a wide range of subject matter experts, ranging from directors to front-line staff, which represent many different organizations and will continue to work systematically to issue policy guidance as necessary for effective and efficient system operations.

These collaborative, comprehensive policy efforts build on and leverage state policies that promote a systems approach to implementing WIOA. Maryland has intentionally developed policies that align with the State's strategies under WIOA. For example, in order to have a comprehensive system that serves customer needs, Maryland has issued policies related to co-enrollment. This is evident in recent issuances about the State's career pathways project that encourages co-enrollment between Title I and Title II, a 2022 TAA policy issuance, which outlines co-enrollment in TAA and WIOA Title I, as well as how TAA and UI coordinate. These

issuances are available at the link above. One-Stop partner contributions are outlined in various policy issuances and representatives from partner organizations participate in MD Labor's policy development process. For example, the State has recently issued policies on topics related to privacy of shared customer data, coordinated performance goals, data validation, and National Reporting System (NRS)-approved assessments for the WIOA system.

In terms of outlining One-Stop partner contributions, MD Labor has an MOU/RSA policy, and with the assistance of USDOL, developed a fiscal tool that was distributed to all partners in January 2020. DWDAL's *Fiscal Administration Sub-Recipient Financial Handbook* outlines the guidelines for partners in terms of sub-awards, monitoring, and system standards.

Finally, when a shift in strategy or service delivery occurs, the State's policy development framework allows for quick action to support system stakeholders. As temporary allowances emerged during the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, Maryland opted to rapidly develop a pandemic flexibility policy to memorialize all finite changes to operations. On June 25, 2020, and then later on June 22, 2021, MD Labor issued *COVID-19 Flexibility Guidelines for the Maryland Workforce System* policies to document temporary changes such as increases in administrative costs, changes to remote assessments, and use of funds for PPE and sanitization resources.

(3) State Program and State Board Overview

(A) State Agency Organization. Describe the organization and delivery systems at the state and local levels for the programs covered in the plan, including the organizational structure. Include an organizational chart.

Four Maryland State agencies are responsible for administration and oversight of the State's WIOA System:

- MD Labor - DWDAL DUI;
- MSDE DORS;
- Maryland DHS FIA; and
- Maryland DHCD.

This section details both the state and local organization and delivery systems for the Maryland's WIOA programs.

Organizational charts can be found below:

Department of Labor (MD Labor) and Division of Workforce Development and Adult Learning (DWDAL) Organizational

Charts: <https://labor.maryland.gov/employment/wioadllrdwalorgchart.pdf>.

MD Labor Division of Unemployment Insurance (DUI) Organizational

Chart: <https://labor.maryland.gov/employment/wioadllrduiorgchart.pdf>.

Department of Human Services (DHS) Organizational

Chart: <https://msa.maryland.gov/msa/mdmanual/18dhr/pdf/18dhs.pdf>.

Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) Division of Rehabilitation Services

(DORS): <https://labor.maryland.gov/employment/wioamsdeorgchart.pdf>.

Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) Organizational

Chart: <https://msa.maryland.gov/msa/mdmanual/17dhcd/pdf/17dhcd.pdf>.

MD Labor - DWDAL

MD Labor's organizational structure includes the Office of the Secretary, Office of the Deputy Secretary, and seven Divisions. As one of the seven Divisions, the DWDAL is responsible for administering the majority of programs set forth in this Combined Plan.

DWDAL's administration activities include:

- Overseeing Title I funding awarded to the State's designated Local Areas;
- Developing policies and procedures to guide the overall workforce system;
- Managing the statewide information and technology system for case management, performance reporting, and LMI – the MWE; and
- Providing technical assistance related to programming and system improvements.

The Governor designated 13 Local Areas in Maryland. Each Local Area operates at least one comprehensive AJC, as well as one or more affiliate centers or specialized service access points. A network of AJCs currently serve Maryland job seekers and businesses. A list of AJCs by county is available at the following link: <http://www.labor.maryland.gov/county/>.

DWDAL works collaboratively with the business-led Boards responsible for governing the implementation of workforce system services delivered in and through local AJCs within their Local Areas.

DWDAL's Organizational Composition

The DWDAL Office of the Assistant Secretary (OAS) ensures Division initiatives and program activities are aligned with the strategic vision for the State's workforce system. The DWDAL OAS coordinates the work of three Offices: 1) the OWD; 2) the Office of AELS; and 3) the Office of Correctional Education.

DWDAL - Office of the Assistant Secretary (OAS)

- *The Policy Unit* identifies and prioritizes policy needs and leads an inclusive policy development process that incorporates broad stakeholder input to produce clear, practical guidance. In addition to policy development, the Policy Unit supports strategic planning activities within DWDAL and works closely with the Maryland Workforce System's Chief Learning Office to enhance system cohesion through consistent implementation of system-wide policies and best practices.
- *The Professional Development and Technical Assistance Unit* is led by the Chief Learning Officer (CLO), whose position is jointly funded by MD Labor, the DHS, and DORS. The role of this Unit is to establish, maintain, and promote a high quality, coordinated professional development system for Maryland's workforce system that is collaboratively developed, cohesively designed, and collectively managed.
- *The New Americans Unit* expedites immigrant integration into the economic and civic life of the state through outreach and community engagement efforts. Through such efforts, the New Americans Unit shares information on training and employment opportunities with immigrants who call Maryland home and promotes adult literacy and English language acquisition for immigrants, including foreign born professionals. The New Americans Unit partners with MORA to jointly co-sponsor the Maryland Skilled Immigrant Task Force. The Task Force works to create a win-win environment in which immigrants are able to secure jobs that match their professional and educational backgrounds while simultaneously meeting the hiring demands of the business community along with DHS MORA. The Task Force focuses on the issues of

LEP, addressing challenges associated with complex licensing and credentialing processes, limited experience of Maryland's workforce system in working with foreign-born individuals, and the lack of social capital on the part of immigrants.

- *The Special Grants Unit* oversees the implementation of multiple grant-funded programs that support innovative, integrated workforce system solutions. The Special Grants Unit administers the EARN Maryland program, the State's nationally-recognized, industry-led workforce development model that uses sector strategies to produce long-term solutions to skills gaps and personnel shortages. The unit also oversees multiple grant initiatives designed to address Maryland's serious opioid crisis.
- *Communications and Outreach Unit* works in coordination with other DWDAL units, other Divisions within MD Labor, and external State agencies and other organizations to ensure that accurate, clear, and consistent messaging regarding DWDAL programs and services is effectively relayed to businesses, jobseekers, and the public.
- *The Monitoring and Compliance Unit* provides fiscal and programmatic monitoring of local workforce and adult education entities to ensure compliance with applicable federal and state law.
- *The Fiscal Administration Unit* ensures the effective, prudent and efficient use of public resources in accordance with the laws and regulations established by both the Federal government and the State of Maryland. The Unit does this by establishing and adhering to fiscal controls, administrative systems, and processes. The Fiscal Administration Unit provides meaningful fiscal information to the Division's leadership team that empowers them to align strategic business decisions with the multiple sources of available funding. The Unit manages and assists in maintaining solvency of the funding for all DWDAL programs.

OWD

The OWD is comprised of 12 units. Some of these units oversee the implementation of multiple programs, while other focus on a single program. Their specific functions are as follows:

- *The AJC Operations Unit* provides centralized oversight of MD Labor's Labor Exchange Administrators (LEAs). LEAs manage employment and training programs and services throughout the State's AJCs. The AJC Operations Unit administers jobseeker services through Wagner-Peyser and WIOA Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs funding.
- *The Dislocation Services Unit (DSU)* provides centralized oversight and administration of Rapid Response and Trade Program services:
 - Rapid Response services are designed to reduce or eliminate the time an individual receives UI benefits by quickly connecting businesses and workers impacted by a dislocation event with workforce system resources. Maryland Rapid Response teams work with businesses and jobseekers to customize services, providing them onsite at an affected business or at an alternate location and accommodating work schedules, as needed.
 - *The Trade Program* provides aid to eligible workers who lose their jobs, or whose hours of work and wages are reduced, as a result of increased imports or production transfers abroad. The Trade Program provides trade-affected workers with opportunities to obtain the support, resources, skills, and the credentials they need to return to the workforce in a good job. Trade program services include employment and case management services, training, job search allowances, relocation allowances, reemployment and Alternative / Reemployment

Trade Adjustment Assistance wage subsidies for older workers, and income support in the form of Trade Readjustment Allowances (TRA).

- *The Reemployment Services Unit* provides centralized oversight and administration of the RESEA program and the ROW:
 - The RESEA Program: 1) assists UI claimants in becoming employed sooner; 2) reduces the number of weeks that UI benefits are paid out to claimants; 3) improves the solvency of the UI trust fund; and 4) reduces fraudulent UI claims and overpayments. The DWDAL and DUI jointly administer the RESEA program, which is available in all Local Areas across the State. State workforce staff funded under the RESEA grant coordinate and facilitate RESEA workshops in AJCs throughout the State, making it easy for participants to smoothly transition from developing an Individual Reemployment Plan (IRP) to accessing services that will help them quickly regain employment.
 - *The ROW Program* is a full-day workshop offered to UI claimants identified using Maryland's Worker Profiling and Reemployment Services (WPRS), not chosen for RESEA to shorten the duration of UI benefits received through reemployment efforts.
- *The POAC Unit* assists recent college graduates and jobseekers otherwise prepared for or with work experience in professional, executive, technical, managerial, and/or scientific occupations to find appropriate employment opportunities. POAC provides employers with access to an e-service program where they can use active marketing approaches to promote employment opportunities.
- *The Veteran Services Unit* operates the JVSG. The JVSG Program offers employment and training services to Veterans with significant barriers to employment and connects employers with work-ready Veterans.
- *The Foreign Labor Certification Program Unit* assists applicable employers, who have obtained USDOL approval to begin the hiring process of permanent or temporary foreign workers. The program assists employers across Maryland in navigating federal program requirements, including application processing, data collection, wage and prevailing practice surveys in specific employment areas where foreign workers have been brought to Maryland.
- *The Tax Credit Unit* administers federal and state tax credit programs that offer income tax incentives to employers for hiring members of targeted population groups, such as ex-offenders or certain individuals with disabilities.
- *MSFW Unit* ensures migrant and seasonal farm workers receive the same employment services that non-migrant seasonal farm workers receive at Maryland AJCs.
- *The Reentry Services Unit* works to increase access to employment for Maryland citizens with criminal backgrounds. The unit provides technical assistance to jobseekers, staff, and employers to increase the number of individuals hired with criminal history and barriers to employment. As part of the unit's responsibilities, unit staff work with local AJCs to administer the federal Bonding Program.
- *The Youth and Disability Services Unit* provides coordination and technical assistance support to the Local Areas and partner service providers responsible for serving WIOA Title I youth program participants and AJC customers with disabilities.
- *The Apprenticeship and Training Program Unit* works collaboratively with the Maryland Apprenticeship and Training Council to: 1) register apprenticeship programs that meet federal and state standards; 2) issue certificates of completion to apprentices; 3) encourage the development of new programs through outreach and technical assistance; 4) protect the safety and welfare of apprentices; and 5) assure that all programs provide high-quality training.
- *The Performance Unit* collects, analyzes, and produces labor market and workforce information as a service to businesses, jobseekers, students, and workforce entities. The unit is organized into three units that manage: 1) performance and data quality; 2)

the MWE, and 3) LMI. Additionally, the unit manages and maintains the Workforce Information Database, the production of industry and occupational employment projections, and other workforce information and economic products and services.

- *The SCSEP Unit* assists job seekers 55 or older who are unemployed, meet established low-income guidelines, and desire an opportunity for training an employment, to access training and employment services. SCSEP participants receive training in workplace skills and access to unsubsidized employment, either with nonprofit or government agencies – known at “host agencies” – or private sector employers.

Office of Adult Education and Literacy Services (AELS)

The Office of AELS provides services to Maryland’s adult learners, as required under WIOA Title II. The Office selects local providers of adult education instructional services via a statewide competition. Instructional services include Adult Basic and Secondary Education, English Language Acquisition / Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education, Family Literacy, and High School Diploma preparation.

Maryland’s current providers include a wide-range of community colleges, local public-school systems, community-based organizations, public libraries, and the state’s Correctional Education program. A complete listing of local providers of adult education authorized under Title II can be found at: <http://www.labor.maryland.gov/gedmd/programs.shtml>. The Office provides monitoring, technical assistance, professional development, and assistance to these providers, and serves as the State’s contact for adult education with the United States Department of Education. The Office administers Maryland’s GED® and National External Diploma Program®, which help adult learners and out-of-school youth to obtain their Maryland High School Diplomas. A complete listing of GED® testing sites in Maryland is found at <http://www.labor.maryland.gov/gedmd/ged.shtml>.

Correctional Education

The Office Correctional Education provides educational opportunities for incarcerated men and women that enable them to become independent and productive workers, citizens, and parents. Correctional Education, with the oversight of the Correctional Education Council and in partnership with the DPSCS, is responsible for the academic, occupational, and transitional programs provided in Maryland’s correctional institutions.

The academic program begins with basic literacy and continues along a learning continuum through high school equivalency completion. Special education services are also available to eligible students. Upon attainment of the Maryland High School Diploma through passage of the GED® examination, students may participate in one of 23 occupational programs or postsecondary education courses. Many of the occupational programs provide unique opportunities for the justice-involved individuals to obtain nationally recognized credentials, with the goal of reaching economic self-sufficiency.

Occupational Programs Offered by Maryland Correctional Education:

- Architectural CADD
- Automotive Body Repair
- Automotive Maintenance and Inspection
- Building Maintenance
- Fabric and Upholstery Cleaning
- Furniture Upholstery

- Graphic Arts and Design
- Introduction to Word and Excel
- Office Practice and Management
- Office Technology
- Pre-Apprenticeship Carpentry
- Pre-Apprenticeship Electrical
- Pre-Apprenticeship Facilities Maintenance
- Pre-Apprenticeship HVAC/R
- Pre-Apprenticeship Masonry
- Pre-Apprenticeship Plumbing
- Pre-Apprenticeship Sheet Metal
- Pre-Apprenticeship Welding
- Print Communication
- Roofing
- Small Engine Repair
- Warehouse/Distribution
- Woodworking/Finish Carpentry

Transitional programs also provide students with skills for developing short and long-term employment plans including job search strategies and soft skills training for job readiness. In short, the program seeks to provide educational opportunities to support the inmate's successful reentry and reintegration into the community.

MSDE - DORS

DORS administers Maryland's VR program. DORS provides services and supports to assist eligible students, youth, and adults with significant disabilities transition to postsecondary education, training, and employment. VR services and Pre-Employment Transition Services are provided by the following branches:

- *The Office of Field Services* provides services such as career counseling, assistive technology, vocational training, work readiness training, job development services, and Pre-Employment Transition Services. Staff members are located in 24 field offices located throughout the state, some of which are co-located with AJCs.
- *The Office for Blindness and Vision Services* specializes in services to individuals whose primary disability is blindness or vision loss, to assist them in achieving their goals of employment and of independence in their homes and communities. The Office oversees the Maryland Business Enterprise Program (BEP) for the Blind, a program that prepares individuals who are legally blind to operate vending, gift, or food service businesses in public facilities, in accordance with the Randolph Sheppard Act.
- *The Workforce and Technology Center* is a comprehensive VR facility that offers career assessment services, career and skills training, job placement assistance, Assistive Technology services, and other medical and support services. A complete listing of DORS Regions and Offices is available at the following link: <http://dors.maryland.gov/resources/Pages/locations.aspx>.

DHS -FIA

Maryland refers to the TANF program as the TCA program. The TCA program is implemented through LDSSs, located in all of the State's 24 jurisdictions. The locations of LDSS offices and contact information can be accessed at <http://dhs.maryland.gov/local-offices>. Through LDSS service points, workforce system customers may access or receive referrals to

education, job training, job placement, and other services to help them overcome employment barriers and obtain self-sustaining employment. Additionally, this part of DHS also administers the SNAP E&T program.

MD LABOR-DUI

DUI administers Maryland's UI compensation program, as well as some components of the Trade Program. DUI processes UI claims and serves qualified UI recipients. DUI staff work collaboratively with DWDAL-OWD staff responsible for delivering RESEA and ROW programs, to assist unemployed Marylanders in determining their eligibility for and access to UI benefits.

The Community Service Block Grant

The Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) program supports a range of direct services designed to assist low-income individuals and families with achieving self-sufficiency through a statewide network of seventeen Community Action Agencies. Congress annually appropriates funds for the CSBG program which are administered at the state level by the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development. Community Action Agencies (also known as CSBG Eligible Entities or CAAs) receive 90 percent of the funds allocated to Maryland in order to operate programs and services that effectively address the causes and conditions of poverty in the Agency's service area. These Agencies have been formally designated by local governing bodies in every jurisdiction in Maryland to serve as the official anti-poverty agency for that jurisdiction.

(B) State Board. Provide a description of the State Board activities that will assist State Board members and staff in carrying out State Board functions effectively. Also, provide a membership roster for the State Board consistent with 20 CFR 679.110-120, including members' organizational affiliations and position titles.

Membership Roster

- Hon. Wes Moore, *Governor*
- Carim Khouzami, *Board Chair*, CEO, Baltimore Gas & Electric
- Delali Dzirasa, *Board Vice-Chair*, Founder & CEO, Fearless, Inc.
- Ferris Allen, III, Thoroughbred Horse Trainer, Warwick Stable
- Kevin Anderson, Secretary, Maryland Department of Commerce
- Hon. Vanessa Atterbeary, State Delegate, District 13
- Alexander Austin, President & CEO, Prince George's Chamber of Commerce
- Marco V. Ávila, P.E., Vice President, WSP
- Calvin Ball, County Executive, Howard County
- John D. Barber, Jr., President of Local 177, Northeast Regional Council of Carpenters
- Hon. Joanne C. Benson, State Senator, District 24
- Gary E. Bockrath, Consultant
- Jennifer W. Bodensiek, Chief Development Officer, Junior Achievement of Greater Washington
- Donald Boyd, Supervisor of Strategic Initiatives, Dorchester County Public Schools
- Brian S. Cavey, International Vice President, International Association of Heat and Frost Insulators & Allied Workers
- Dr. Annesa Cheek, President, Frederick Community College
- Jody Boone, Acting Assistant State Superintendent, DORS, Maryland State Department of Education
- Donna Edwards, President, MD State and DC AFL-CIO

- **Mackenzie Garvin**, Director, Baltimore City Mayor's Office of Employment Development
- **Steven W. Groenke**, CEO, Storbyte, Inc.
- **Kevin D. Heffner**, President and CEO, LifeSpan Network
- **Stacey Herman**, Director, Project SEARCH and CORE Foundations, Kennedy Krieger Institute
- **Matthew R. Holloway**, Farmer, Quantico Creek Sod Farms, Inc.
- **Cormac Hughes**, Campus President, Lincoln College of Technology
- **Dr. Roderick King**, Chief Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Officer, University of Maryland Medical System
- **Larry Letow**, President, CyberCX
- **Aminah "Amie" J. Long**, Human Resources Director, Chaney Enterprises
- **Jessica Mente**, Director of Training, Royal Farms
- **Kirkland J. Murray**, President & CEO, Anne Arundel Workforce Development Corporation, and President, Maryland Workforce Association
- **Stephen Wayne Neal**, President & CEO, K. Neal International Trucks, Inc.
- **Myra W. Norton**, *CTE Committee Chair*, Senior Director, Johns Hopkins Technology Ventures
- **Sanjay Rai**, Acting Secretary, Maryland Higher Education Commission
- **Charles A. Ramos**, Consultant
- **Edward C. Rothstein (COL Ret)**, Commissioner, Carroll County Commissioners Office
- **Martin "Marty" Schwartz**, President, Vehicles for Change
- **Michelle B. Smith**, President & CEO, 1st Choice, LLC
- **Brian Stamper**, Executive Director of Manufacturing Sciences, AstraZeneca
- **Inez Stewart**, Senior Vice President of Human Resources, Johns Hopkins Medicine
- **Teaera Strum**, Chief Executive Officer, Strum Contracting Company, Inc.
- **Michael D. Thomas**, Vice President, Workforce Development & Continuing Education, Baltimore City Community College
- **Perketer Tucker**, Director, Office of Adult Education and Literacy Services, Maryland Department of Labor
- **Charles T. Wetherington**, President, BTE Technologies, Inc.
- **Carey Wright**, Interim State Superintendent of Schools, Maryland State Department of Education
- **Portia Wu**, Secretary, Maryland Department of Labor
- **Charnetia V. Young**, Director, Business Development and Workforce Initiatives, CVS Health

The following members of the Governor's Cabinet work with the GWDB in a non-voting capacity, serving as advisors on select topics and engaging as partners on initiatives of the Board that are relevant to their department missions.

- **Carol Beatty**, Secretary, Maryland Department of Disabilities
- **Jacob Day**, Secretary, Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development
- **Rafael López**, Secretary, Maryland Department of Human Services
- **Paul Monteiro**, Secretary, Maryland Department of Service and Civic Innovation
- **Carmel Roques**, Secretary, Maryland Department of Aging
- **Vincent "Vinny" Schiraldi**, Secretary, Department of Juvenile Services
- **Laura Herrera Scott**, Secretary, Maryland Department of Health
- **Carolyn Scruggs**, Secretary, Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services
- **Paul Wiedefeld**, Secretary, Maryland Department of Transportation
- **Anthony "Tony" Woods**, Secretary, Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs

Board Activities

The GWDB holds four quarterly meetings annually, which are open to the public. In Fall 2023 meetings were switched from a fully virtual format to a hybrid format, with an option for Board members and members of the public to participate either in-person or virtually. The GWDB's Executive Committee holds quarterly virtual meetings that are typically scheduled one month in advance of full Board meetings to discuss the agenda for upcoming meetings and other issues, as appropriate. In addition, topic-specific working groups have convened to support strategic plan development over fall and winter 2023-2024, and the Plan will inform development of new work groups or standing committees as the GWDB takes up additional projects to accelerate Plan implementation

To support Plan implementation the GWDB will stand up three new committees to align with Pillars I, II, and IV of the Strategic Plan above (with the CTE Committee aligning to Pillar III). These will be committees focused on industry partnerships and sector strategies; on access, equity and barrier removal; and on system governance and alignment. The committee focused on system governance and alignment will support the GWDB's required functions under WIOA, including the development and approval of policy to guide the overall workforce system as well as policies specific to LWDBs and Local Areas, such as board and job center certification, regional and local planning guidance, and resource sharing agreements.

To further support implementation of the Plan, the GWDB will continue to partner closely with the MWA, which represents 13 LWDB directors across the state, in enhancing guidance and operations of the state's LWDBs. The Executive Director and two Deputy Directors of the GWDB and a leadership team from MD Labor's DWDAL attend meetings of the MWA, which meets regularly to discuss matters pertaining to the workforce system and exchange information on current issues.

Additional expectations for the activities of the GWDB are outlined in the Executive Order signed by Governor Moore in December 2022. The Executive Order can be accessed at: https://governor.maryland.gov/Lists/ExecutiveOrders/Attachments/29/EO%2001.01.2023.22%20Governor's%20Workforce%20Development%20Board_Accessible.pdf

Additionally, as a result of the *Blueprint for Maryland's Future* legislation, in 2022 the GWDB established a CTE Committee within the Board. The *Blueprint for Maryland's Future*, which became law per Maryland Constitution Chapter 36 of 2021, is an expansive education reform bill aimed to develop school programs and standards that provide Maryland students with a world-class education. The legislation includes multiple components including early childhood education, teacher training and retention, resources for students, and an emphasis on CCR. The legislation mandates the creation of a CTE Committee within the GWDB. The purpose of the CTE Committee is to build an integrated, globally competitive framework for providing CTE to Maryland students and the workforce. This CTE Committee will have oversight for developing a statewide framework for CTE, including supporting and overseeing reporting against the legislated goal that by the 2030-2031 school year, 45% of high school students shall complete a high-school level of a RA or another industry-recognized credential by the time of graduation.

As of Fall 2023, the CTE Committee holds a minimum of four quarterly public meetings, also held in a hybrid format similar to the GWDB public meetings, with a majority of meetings held at CTE high schools and featuring optional member tours of facilities. The CTE Committee has multiple duties, including but not limited to:

- Defining the "high-school level of a RA" as utilized in *Blueprint* legislation;

- Defining what types of apprenticeship and industry-recognized credentials will be counted toward the 45% goal noted above;
- Developing a new and rigorous definition, set of criteria, and comprehensive review process for industry-recognized credentials;
- Working with the business community to develop CTE learning opportunities and ensuring that CTE programs are aligned with labor industry demands;
- Addressing operational issues associated with delivering CTE and apprenticeships to high school students; and
- Establishing a CTE Expert Review Team to review school CTE programs.

The CTE Committee is composed of the following GWDB members: State Superintendent of Schools; Secretary of Higher Education; Secretary of Labor; Secretary of Commerce; Chair of the CTE Skills Standards Advisory Committee; and six members who collectively represent employers, industry or trade associations, labor organizations, community colleges, agricultural community, and experts in CTE programming.

The GWDB and CTE Committee will be working with partners across Maryland to build a CTE system that prepares students to begin careers and develop the skills necessary to meet the workforce and economic development needs of the 21st century.

(4) Assessment and Evaluation of Programs and AJC Program partners.

(A) *Assessment of Core and One-Stop Program Partner Programs.* Describe how the core programs will be assessed each year based on State performance accountability measures described in section 116(b) of WIOA. Describe how other one-stop delivery system partner program services and Combined State Plan partner programs included in the plan will be assessed each year. This State assessment must include the quality, effectiveness, and improvement of programs broken down by local area or provider. Such state assessments should take into account local and regional planning goals.

Measuring Maryland's Success: Revising Systems for More Comprehensive Performance Accountability and Evaluation

While MD Labor, MSDE, DHS, and DHCD are capable of reporting on each individual program to the respective federal oversight agency, Maryland does not currently have an integrated performance reporting and accountability system that includes partner programs. Under WIOA, states must report Title I and III program files through the USDOL, while Adult Education and VR files are submitted through the Department of Education. As shown, the Maryland Workforce Exchange (MWE) currently houses the following USDOL programs: WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth, Wagner-Peyser, JVSG, SCSEP, and Trade program participants. While the State has successfully increased the capacity of the MWE by adding in 2017 a module focused on reemployment of UI claimants, TANF, SNAP, VR, Adult Education, and CSBG are not currently MWE users.

To address the lack of integrated performance accountability and reporting systems, and as part of its previously described work in the coming year to review and, where needed, redesign routine mechanisms for partner engagement, performance reporting and assessment, and system evaluation mechanisms, the GWDB and its staff will collaborate with partner program leadership on development of a new assessment and evaluation model and cadence. This will include responding to the requirements under WIOA around comprehensive and rigorous evaluations led by and reporting to the state workforce development board.

As part of this undertaking, GWDB staff will work especially closely with DWDAL team members who oversee monitoring and assessment, to integrate existing processes and resources or tools into a comprehensive performance reporting and evaluation system. For example, DWDAL's monitoring unit's annual review is an oversight activity that offers opportunities for technical assistance and corrective action. Their monitoring review process assesses progress in service delivery, identifies areas of compliance, provides technical assistance to help resolve non-compliance issues, and ensures that Federal and State funds are used responsibly according to the laws and regulations. Additionally, DWDAL's performance assessment unit is part of the annual state performance assessment (WIOA Section 116). This assessment helps with the identification of performance success or failures with respect to the primary indicators of performance for each of the six WIOA core programs in each local area.

Information on Performance Measures

Under WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker, JVSG, Wagner-Peyser, Title II and Title IV Performance Measures are as follows:

- Employment Rate QTR2- Percentage of participants in unsubsidized employment in the second quarter after exit (Q2 post-exit).
- Employment Rate QTR4- Percentage of participants in unsubsidized employment in the fourth quarter after exit (Q4 post-exit).
- Median Earnings - Median earnings of participants in the second quarter after exit (Median earnings Q2 after exit).
- Credential Rate - Percentage of participants with postsecondary credential attainment or high school diploma or GED® during participation in the program or within one year after exit. (WP and JVSG is excluded)
- Measurable Skills Gain - Percentage of participants who, during the PY, are in education or training programs that lead to recognized postsecondary credential or employment, and who achieve measurable skills gain (documented academic, technical, occupational or other forms of progress, toward the credential or employment). (WP and JVSG is excluded)

In accordance with §677.155(d)(1-6), the primary indicators for the youth program under title I of WIOA are:

WIOA Youth Performance Measures

- Placement in Employment or Education QTR2 - Percentage of participants who are in education and training, or in unsubsidized employment, during the second quarter after exit (Q2 post-exit).
- Placement in Employment or Education QTR4 - Percentage of participants who are in education and training, or in unsubsidized employment, during the fourth quarter after exit (Q4 post-exit).
- Median Earnings - Median earnings of participants in the second quarter after exit (Median earnings Q2 after exit).
- Credential Rate - Percentage of participants with postsecondary credential attainment or high school diploma or GED® during participation in the program or within one year after exit.
- Measurable Skills Gain - Percentage of participants who, during the PY, are in education or training programs that lead to recognized postsecondary credential or employment, and who achieve measurable skill gain (documented academic,

technical, occupational or other forms of progress, toward the credential or employment).

In accordance with §677.155(a)(1)(vi), there is a new primary indicator for the effectiveness in serving employers under WIOA, which is:

WIOA Effectiveness in Servicing Employers Measures

- **Employer Penetration Rate-** addresses the programs' efforts to provide quality engagement and services to all employers and sectors within a state and local economy. Percentage of employers using WIOA core program services out of all employers in the state.
- **Repeat Business Customers-** addresses the programs' efforts to provide quality engagement and services to employers and sectors and establish productive relationships with employers and sectors over extended periods of time; percentage of employers who have used WIOA core program services more than once during the last three reporting periods.
- **Retention with Same Employer in the 2nd and 4th Quarters after Exit.** Addresses the programs' efforts to provide employers with skilled workers; Percentage of participants with wage records who exit and were employed by the same employer in the second and fourth quarters after exit.

States must select two of the three measures above to report on for PY 2022 and PY 2023. Maryland chose to report on all three for PY 2022 in an effort to provide a complete picture of how the programs are currently engaging with employers and meeting their needs. The implementation of WIOA performance accountability requirements was phased in and implemented by July 1, 2016 (PY 2016). Performance reporting of the negotiated performance measures began PY 2017.

While MD Labor, MSDE, DHS, and DHCD are capable of reporting on each individual program to the respective federal oversight agency, Maryland does not currently have an integrated system that includes partner programs. Under WIOA, states must report Title I and III program files through the USDOL, while Adult Education and VR files are submitted through the Department of Education. As shown, the MWE currently houses the following USDOL programs: WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth, NDWG, Wagner-Peyser, JVSC, SCSEP, and Trade program participants. While the State has successfully increased the capacity of the MWE by adding in 2017 a module focused on reemployment of UI claimants; TANF, SNAP, VR, Adult Education, and CSBG are not currently MWE users.

The WIOA partners intend to replace the existing multiple systems with a new system that will include imaging and workflow management, and a robust business rules engine like MWE to aid in eligibility determination and creating and managing benefit plans, as well as report performance accountability measures. As previously noted, Maryland's WIOA partners are dedicated to placing customers at the heart of the WIOA system.

Maryland's WIOA partners are further committed to conducting ongoing evaluations of workforce activities carried out in the state in order to promote, establish, implement, and utilize methods for continuously improving core program activities. This will allow the WIOA system to achieve high-level performance within, and high-level outcomes from the workforce development system.

Core WIOA Programs

WIOA standardizes performance requirements across core programs. For the WIOA Title I Adult and Dislocated Worker Programs, Title II Adult Education and Literacy programs, Title III Wagner-Peyser employment services, and Title IV VR, the primary indicators of performance are, as follows:

- Employment during 2nd quarter after exit,
- Employment during 4th quarter after exit,
- Median earnings,
- Credential attainment rate, (Excludes Title III and JVSG)
- Measurable skills gain, (Excludes Title III and JVSG) and
- Effectiveness in serving employers.

For the WIOA Title I Youth program, the primary indicators of performance are, as follows:

- Employment, education, or training during 2nd quarter after exit;
- Employment, education, or training during 4th quarter after exit;
- Median earnings;
- Credential attainment rate;
- Measurable skills gain; and
- Effectiveness in serving employers.

Title III Wagner-Peyser (Employment Services) and JVSG is exempted from Credential Attainment and Measurable Skill Gains. Effectiveness in Serving Employers is a pilot measure, where states must select two of the three federal proposed metrics. This measure is measured across all six core programs. Data sharing agreements are required to secure data from VR in order to report these measures for PY 2017 and thereafter. For PY 2022 and PY2023 Maryland selected to report all three effectiveness measures. WIOA explains that each state shall identify within the State Plan its expected levels of performance for each primary indicator, for each program, for the first two PYs covered by the State Plan. The law subsequently explains that the levels agreed to by the state, the Secretary of Labor, and the Secretary of Education, shall be considered to be the state adjusted performance and shall be incorporated into the State Plan prior to its approval. Maryland received from USDOL further guidance on the WIOA performance measures via Training and Employment Guidance Letters (TEGL 10-16 Change 2) and Training and Employment Notices (TENs). Maryland's WIOA partners are committed to continuing to work closely with USDOL in anticipation of additional information.

In October of 2023, the Office of Workforce Information and Performance was eliminated and operations moved to OWD (MWE and Performance) and OAS (LMI). MD Labor's Performance Unit works with Local Areas and Regions and takes performance assessment into account when establishing goals. Local Area staff use the MWE to report, on an individual customer basis, the data needed to produce the performance measures used to review actual accomplishments. The Performance Unit produces, reviews, and provides copies of the WIOA and Wagner Peyser Quarterly reports. The Performance Unit also provides to the Local Areas a quarterly summary report, which highlights the Local Areas' performance compared to their locally negotiated goals. This report indicates their current status (exceeding, meeting, or failing) for each of the measures. In addition, MD Labor also provides the Local Areas data extract files (for both WIOA and Wagner Peyser) to conduct their own analysis of the individual records.

Procedures are in place to address substandard performance. The first step is to determine if the performance for the particular measure or measures is a local issue or a data reporting issue. If the latter is the case, then no technical assistance is provided.

If a determination is made that the area is experiencing a performance issue that cannot be attributed to a reporting issue, then a more extensive review of the performance data is performed. This is a vital part of the review process. The detailed data is analyzed to determine possible factors that may be influencing performance, sufficient and poor. It is important to note that the Local Areas now have the capability to review the performance outcomes tables that are used to produce their local performance measures and how their performance relates to the State.

The State follows a formal analysis process. A standard procedure is utilized at quarterly intervals that includes taking the extract from the previous quarter and matching with the current quarter to reveal changes (some changes are expected). Each performance measure is reviewed closely, both positives and negatives.

“High” is defined as 95 percent and above. “Low” is defined as close to 90 percent and below. When low is determined, the data for that particular Local Area is analyzed closely. All fields that attribute to the measure definition are examined. Findings are always shared with Local Areas. If findings affect more than one Local Area, information is communicated and shared throughout. Local Areas, State staff, and managers are notified when an issue is determined.

Every two years, the state and USDOL negotiate Maryland’s targets for performance measures for employment services for Veterans, as part of the WIOA state plan submission timeline. As part of both program and fiscal monitoring, Local Area leadership and MD Labor’s Title III Reemployment Program Directors complete an assessment survey regarding partners, their service delivery, and their performance. When a partner is not performing well, and/or not in accordance with the MOU or RSA, a Corrective Action Plan is developed.

Performance reports, partner feedback, and Corrective Action Plans are considered in goal negotiations AND taken into account during the review of Local and Regional Plans. Maryland has a robust procedure of reviewing and editing Local and Regional Plans, and the DWDAL Monitoring and Compliance Unit, as well as representatives from OWIP, participate in that effort. The Plans are broken into sections and reviewed by Subject Matter Experts who then work with the Regions and Local Areas to refine their goals.

When developing the State’s policy on monitoring (PI 2019-07 Monitoring) and other monitoring tools, stakeholders considered how to involve partners and leadership in the evaluation process. As a result, reports are often shared with Local Directors and LWDB Chairs. Additionally, MD Labor’s Program Monitoring Questionnaire includes, but is not limited to, the following questions for evaluation prior and during monitoring visits:

- Please describe any special, shared, or common responsibilities taken on by the AJC partners to improve service delivery within the AJC. For example, which partners provide assistance in the resource room, reception, workshops, assessments, participant outreach, etc.?
- Describe the processes and tools that are in place to support continuous improvement activities in the AJC.
- How is the Local Area integrating and partnering its programs within the AJC? Please provide examples of the integration/coordination of activities (USDOL Core Monitoring Guide).
- How does the Local Area assess its performance integration, and how is the data used?

- What area of integration has been identified as a priority for the Local Areas and what action had been taken for this integration?

The responses are used to guide discussions during visits, provide technical assistance, and again, contribute to Maryland's overall commitment to continuous partner and workforce system's evaluation. Moreover, MD Labor's Program and Fiscal Monitoring Questionnaires contains a subsection for each program to ensure comprehensive assessment of all partners.

Using this process during Covid became challenging. Both the initial COVID period and the post-crisis period continue to have a profound impact on the Monitoring and Compliance Unit. With limited staff, the unit had to find new ways to communicate, engage, track, and observe the local area's activities. Monitors, who had the responsibility of ensuring locals implement the law to improve access to the public workforce system, studied remotely how local areas worked together and strengthened their network amid the crisis with limited staff using the electronic questionnaire. For the monitoring unit, having a limited staff made it challenging to train new local staff, incorporate their new virtual procedures in the review process, identify potentially new risks, and build relationships with new local leaders - but it was done. Nonetheless, the MD Labor Department compliance unit had taken proactive steps to ensure that the wagon train kept moving by using remote communications, new tools and technology. In this way, new risks were prevented from developing using the new Risk Assessment tool, and evaluation spreadsheets. Any training provided was based on local needs determined through outreach by the monitors as well as information obtained from local directors and key staff. To maintain momentum in a now seemingly remote environment, the monitors had scheduled annual remote training for topics where deficiencies were identified. The Program and Fiscal Questionnaire and use our internal Technical Assistance log are also used for this purpose. Monitors were responsible for making sure every local area was familiar with all aspects of the referral system that should be integrated in their daily service delivery and the significance of electronic document collection, the storage of PII, and authentication of electronic signatures during the crisis - and in today's post environment.

Despite the challenges posed by the pre- and post-pandemic, the Monitoring and Compliance Unit is committed to ensuring that monitoring reviews will continue throughout 2024 and beyond. Keeping in mind that WIOA charges local areas to deliver a broad array of quality integrated services to customers of the public workforce system- the team will act with intention as the quality analyst to confirm the quality of the system through various communication channels and discussions. Moreover, through the quality checks, the localities will be expected to highlight how they continue to engage businesses and customers through virtual services, meetings, online training, and in-person thus ensuring that the provisions of WIOA are maintained. The monitors will observe how local areas are continuing to increase access to and opportunities for the employment, education, training, and support services that individuals need, particularly those with barriers to employment. More importantly, how they continue to build partnerships to strengthen the workforce system.

Additional specific examples are listed below:

TANF

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services assesses state TANF performance based on the Work Participation Rate (WPR) performance indicator. Under the WPR, states must engage TANF work eligible individuals in federally approved, countable work activities for a specific number of hours per week. By statute, the target WPR is 50 percent. Below is Maryland's WPR federal indicator:

WPR – The total number of work eligible TANF Customers that have met their work requirement, averaging 30 hours per week (20 hours a week for single parents with one or more children under six years old), in the month. In addition to the federal WPR, Maryland assesses performance based on the following indicators:

- **Job Placements** – The total number of TANF Customers that were placed in a subsidized public employment, subsidized private employment, unsubsidized employment, or OJT activity;
- **Ten Dollar per Hour Job Placements** – The total number of TANF Customers that were placed in a subsidized public employment, subsidized private employment, unsubsidized employment, or OJT activity and scheduled for 30 hours per week or more;
- **Job Retention** – Achieve a job retention rate of 75 percent; and
- **Strategic Benchmark Goals** – increasing the earning capacity of TANF Customers through employment, skills and credentialing, eliminating barriers to employment, and increasing core life skills.

Maryland DHS will continue to focus on the primary federal TANF performance measure of 50 percent for WPR. In addition to WPR, DHS will begin to provide and report out data on TANF outcomes for the first three proposed Common Measures: Employment, Retention, and Median Wages.

Trade Program

USDOL assessed Maryland's Trade performance through the Participant Individual Record Layout (PIRL). The PIRL is used by USDOL to compile the TAADI, TRADE Data Integrity feature where the data extract captures the full universe of Trade applicants, including Trade participants who receive benefits and services across programs. A standardized set of data elements that includes information on participant demographics, types of services received, and performance outcomes is a key component of this reporting structure. As the TAADI is intended to track information on Trade activity on a "real time" basis for individuals, from the point of Trade eligibility determination through post-participation outcomes, the data are used to respond quickly and effectively to the management information needs of Congress, the Executive Branch agencies of the federal government, and a variety of stakeholders who develop and implement Trade program design. In addition, Trade assessment data are made available to the public based on industry, state, and national aggregates through a query-able search feature on the Trade website located at www.doleta.gov/tradeact, which provides an unprecedented level of transparency on Trade participation.

JVSG Program

Annually, the state and USDOL negotiate Maryland's targets for performance measures for employment services for Veterans. Performance during previous periods guides the performance negotiation process to ensure that performance levels are both realistic and challenging. States are expected to develop strategies and policies that demonstrate continuous improvement. USDOL measures the effectiveness of a state's employment services by reviewing:

- The JVSG Program; and
- All other USDOL administered programs that are offered to Veterans through the AJC delivery system.

Should the state fall short of its negotiated targets, USDOL's Veterans Employment Training Services (VETS) provides technical assistance to help the state achieve success in providing Veterans with employment services that lead to viable opportunities for employment. In accordance with TEN 8-16, the WIOA core program indicators and reporting requirements now also apply to the JVSG program; Employment Rate Quarter 2, Median, and Employment Rate Quarter 4. JVSG also negotiates performance of all veterans for Employment Rate Quarter 2, Median, and Employment Rate Quarter 4. JVSG also reports the Individualized Career Services Rate (goal of 90%) and the Services to Non-Veterans (0%). Individualized Career Services Rate is of exiters, the number who received individualized career services plus those in training divided by the total number in the current quarter. Services to Non-Veterans is Total Current Eligible Veterans divided by Total Participants Served equals Service Rate to Veterans; 100 minus the Service Rate to Non-Veterans is the Service Rate to Non Veterans.

(B) Previous Assessment Results. For each four-year state plan and state plan modification, provide the results of assessments of the effectiveness of the core programs and other one-stop partner programs and Combined State Plan partner programs included in the Unified or Combined State plan during the preceding 2-year period (i.e. the 2-year period of the plan modification cycle), in accordance with methods described in 4(A) .Describe how the State is adapting its strategies based on these assessments.

In 2017, Maryland was held to 14 measures. The 14 measures included Employment Rate Quarter 2 (Adult, Dislocated Worker, Wagner-Peyser and Youth- Employment and Education Rate Quarter 2), Employment Rate Quarter 4 (Adult, Dislocated Worker, Wagner-Peyser and Youth- Employment and Education Rate Quarter 4), Median Earnings (Adult, Dislocated Worker, Wagner-Peyser), and Credential Attainment (Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth). Median Earnings for Youth and Measurable Skills Gains were considered baseline measures/indicators. Baseline indicators are certain primary indicators of performance that will be used as baseline data to inform the process to determine the negotiated levels of performance in future program years.

Maryland exceeded 13 measures and met 1 (Adult Median Earnings). In 2018, Maryland exceeded all 14 measures. In 2019, Maryland, exceeded 13 of the 14 measures and met 1 measure (Youth Credential Attainment).

In 2020, Maryland was held to 18 measures. The 18 measures included Employment Rate Quarter 2 (Adult, Dislocated Worker, Wagner-Peyser and Youth Employment and Education Rate Quarter 2), Employment Rate Quarter 4 (Adult, Dislocated Worker, Wagner-Peyser and Youth- Employment and Education Rate Quarter 4), Median Earnings (Adult, Dislocated Worker, Wagner-Peyser, and Youth), Credential Attainment (Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth), and Measurable Skill Gains (Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth). Of the 18 measures, Maryland exceeded all 18 measures for federal reporting.

In PY2021, Maryland exceeded 15 of the 18 measures and met 3 (Employment Rate Quarter 2 Adult, Employment Rate Quarter 2 Dislocated Worker, and Employment Rate Quarter 2 Wagner Peyser), with 4 of the 12 Local Areas "not meeting" the Dislocated Worker Employment Rate Quarter 2 and four only "meeting." For Adult Employment Rate Quarter 2, six areas only met the measure, two did not meet, and four exceeded. For Wagner Peyser Employment Rate Quarter 2, six areas only met the measure, one did not meet, and five exceeded.

In PY2022, Maryland exceeded the 18 measures. In regards to Credential Attainment, of the 13 local areas; 4 areas failed Adult Credential, 4 areas failed Youth Credential, and 2 areas failed Dislocated Worker Credential.

In PY2023 Quarter 1, under new standards, Maryland exceeded 16 of the 18 measures, meeting two measures (Dislocated Worker Employment Rate Quarter 2 and Adult Credential Attainment). In regards to Credential Attainment, which has the most areas of the 13 regions failing; three areas failed Adult Credential and five areas met, four areas failed Youth Credential and one area met, and two areas failed Dislocated Worker Credential and two areas met. In regards to Dislocated Worker Employment Rate Quarter 2, two areas failed the measures and four areas met the measure.

In response to COVID-19 and recognizing the need to improve outcomes related to dislocated workers, Maryland's Combined WIOA State Plan partners worked collaboratively to bolster the workforce system. There are multiple entry points to services, and Maryland subscribes to a "no wrong door" philosophy for customer access to services. Weekly orientations, walk-ins, partner referrals, ROW, and RESEA are typical entry points for new customers.

The State's Core Partners continuously reflect on strengths and weaknesses in the system. Previously, the Data and Dashboard committee completed analyses of shared partner data to identify opportunities for enhancement and shared a "Scorecard Data Dashboard" with the WIOA Alignment Group. The Scorecard revealed system strengths in the areas of achieving skills gains and room for improvement in coordinating life management skills instruction, such as financial education.

Moving forward, while MD Labor, MSDE, DHS, and DHCD are capable of reporting on each individual program to the respective federal oversight agency, Maryland does not currently have an integrated performance reporting and accountability system that includes partner programs. Under WIOA, states must report Title I and III program files through the USDOL, while Adult Education and VR files are submitted through the Department of Education. As shown, the Maryland Workforce Exchange (MWE) currently houses the following USDOL programs: WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth, Wagner-Peyser, JVSC, SCSEP, and Trade program participants. While the State has successfully increased the capacity of the MWE by adding in 2017 a module focused on reemployment of UI claimants, TANF, SNAP, VR, Adult Education, and CSBG are not currently MWE users.

To address the lack of integrated performance accountability and reporting systems, and as part of its previously described work in the coming year to review and, where needed, redesign routine mechanisms for partner engagement, performance reporting and assessment, and system evaluation mechanisms, the GWDB and its staff will collaborate with partner program leadership on development of a new assessment and evaluation model and cadence. This will include responding to the requirements under WIOA around comprehensive and rigorous evaluations led by and reporting to the state workforce development board.

As part of this undertaking, GWDB staff will work especially closely with DWDAL team members who oversee monitoring and assessment, to integrate existing processes and resources or tools into a comprehensive performance reporting and evaluation system. For example, DWDAL's monitoring unit's annual review is an oversight activity that offers opportunities for technical assistance and corrective action. Their monitoring review process assesses progress in service delivery, identifies areas of compliance, provides technical assistance to help resolve non-compliance issues, and ensures that Federal and State funds are used responsibly according to the laws and regulations. Additionally, DWDAL's performance assessment unit is part of the annual state performance assessment (WIOA Section 116). This assessment helps with the identification of performance success or failures with respect to the primary indicators of performance for each of the six WIOA core programs in each local area.

Preceding Performance

Maryland's previous performance assessment results are, as follows:

Title I and Title III Performance – Maryland PY 2017 / FY 2018

		Standard	MD Performance	% Standard Achieved
Employment Rate QTR2				
	Adults	72%	76.9%	106.8%
	Dislocated Workers	80%	82.6%	103.2%
	Labor Exchange	55%	63.6%	115.7%
Employment Rate QTR4				
	Adults	70%	76.7%	109.6%
	Dislocated Workers	75%	80.5%	107.3%
	Labor Exchange	55%	64.7%	117.7%
Median Earnings				
	Adults	\$6,500	\$5,994	92.2%
	Dislocated Workers	\$7,800	\$8,123	104.1%
	Labor Exchange	\$5,000	\$5,505	110.1%
	Youth		\$3,363	Baseline
Youth Education and Employment Rate QTR2				
	Youth	60%	73.5%	122.5%
Youth Education and Employment Rate QTR4				
	Youth	60%	76.6%	127.7%
Credential Attainment				
	Adults	57%	73.9%	129.7%
	Dislocated Workers	55%	70.5%	128.3%
	Youth	60%	76.5%	127.5%
Measurable Skills Gains				

	Adults		47.5%	Baseline
	Dislocated Workers		40.6%	Baseline
	Youth		44.7%	Baseline
Employer Effectiveness Measures				
Retention With Same Employer			62.8%	Baseline
Penetration Rate			8.8%	Baseline
Repeat Business			40.9%	Baseline

Title I and Title III Performance - Maryland PY 2018 / FY 2019

		Standard	MD Performance	%Standard Achieved
Employment Rate QTR2				
	Adults	75%	76.3%	101.7%
	Dislocated Workers	80%	84.4%	105.5%
	Labor Exchange	58%	66.7%	115.0%
Employment Rate QTR4				
	Adults	71%	74.9%	105.6%
	Dislocated Workers	76%	83.2%	109.5%
	Labor Exchange	57%	68.0%	119.2%
Median Earnings				
	Adults	\$5,900	\$6,963	118.0%
	Dislocated Workers	\$7,900	\$9,585	121.3%
	Labor Exchange	\$5,000	\$6,209	124.2%
	Youth		\$3,386	Baseline
Youth Education and Employment Rate QTR2				
	Youth	67%	75.8%	113.2%
Youth Education and Employment Rate QTR4				

	Youth	61%	75.8%	124.3%
Credential Attainment				
	Adults	58%	63.8%	109.9%
	Dislocated Workers	56%	59.2%	105.7%
	Youth	65%	66.2%	101.8%
Measurable Skills Gains				
	Adults		65.8%	Baseline
	Dislocated Workers		69.4%	Baseline
	Youth		46.6%	Baseline
Employer Effectiveness Measures				
Retention With Same Employer			66.4%	Baseline
Penetration Rate			8.3%	Baseline
Repeat Business			30.6%	Baseline

Title I and Title III Performance - Maryland PY 2019

		Standard	MD Performance	% Standard Achieved
Employment Rate QTR2				
	Adults	75%	80.5%	107.3%
	Dislocated Workers	80%	84.4%	105.5%
	Labor Exchange	58%	67.4%	116.2%
Employment Rate QTR4				
	Adults	71%	77.1%	108.6%
	Dislocated Workers	76%	83.8%	110.3%
	Labor Exchange	57%	69.3%	121.6%
Median Earnings				
	Adults	\$5,900	\$6,712	113.8%
	Dislocated Workers	\$7,900	\$9,480	120.0%

	Labor Exchange	\$5,000	\$6,695	133.9%
	Youth		\$3,800	Baseline
Youth Education and Employment Rate QTR2				
	Youth	67%	73.6%	109.9%
Youth Education and Employment Rate QTR4				
	Youth	61%	72.5%	118.8%
Credential Attainment				
	Adults	58%	63.7%	109.8%
	Dislocated Workers	56%	61.2%	109.2%
	Youth	65%	64.7%	99.5%
Measurable Skills Gains				
	Adults		57.2%	Baseline
	Dislocated Workers		62.2%	Baseline
	Youth		49.7%	Baseline
Employer Effectiveness Measures				
Retention With Same Employer			63.3%	Baseline
Penetration Rate			8.5%	Baseline
Repeat Business			28.9%	Baseline

Title I and Title III Performance - Maryland PY 2020

		Standard	MD Performance	% Standard Achieved
Employment Rate QTR2				
	Adults	76%	77.3%	101.7%
	Dislocated Workers	80%	83.0%	103.8%
	Labor Exchange	59%	60.0%	101.7%
Employment Rate QTR4				
	Adults	72%	76.6%	106.4%

	Dislocated Workers	76%	82.2%	108.2%
	Labor Exchange	58%	61.8%	106.5%
Median Earnings				
	Adults	\$6,200	\$7,614	122.8%
	Dislocated Workers	\$8,000	\$9,982	124.8%
	Labor Exchange	\$5,550	\$6,876	123.9%
	Youth	\$3,410	\$3,737	109.6%
Youth Education and Employment Rate QTR2				
	Youth	69%	70.6%	102.3%
Youth Education and Employment Rate QTR4				
	Youth	63%	72.3%	114.7%
Credential Attainment				
	Adults	60%	65.5%	109.1%
	Dislocated Workers	56%	59.9%	106.9%
	Youth	62%	65.0%	104.9%
Measurable Skills Gains				
	Adults	52%	70.5%	135.7%
	Dislocated Workers	52%	75.8%	145.7%
	Youth	48%	65.7%	136.9%
Employer Effectiveness Measures				
Retention With Same Employer			63.0%	Baseline
Penetration Rate			9.8%	Baseline
Repeat Business			28.6%	Baseline

Title I and Title III Performance - Maryland PY 2021/FY2022

		Standard	MD Performance	% Standard Achieved
Employment Rate QTR2				
	Adults	76%	74.3%	97.8%
	Dislocated Workers	80%	77.9%	97.3%
	Labor Exchange	59%	58.8%	99.7%
Employment Rate QTR4				
	Adults	72%	74.0%	102.7%
	Dislocated Workers	76%	79.8%	105.0%
	Labor Exchange	58%	63.5%	109.5%
Median Earnings				
	Adults	\$6,200	\$7,855	124.7%
	Dislocated Workers	\$8,000	\$10,053	122.6%
	Labor Exchange	\$5,550	\$6,839	122.1%
	Youth	\$3,410	\$4,104	120.4%
Youth Education and Employment Rate QTR2				
	Youth	69%	75.5%	109.4%
Youth Education and Employment Rate QTR4				
	Youth	63%	71.7%	112.1%
Credential Attainment				
	Adults	60%	62.9%	103.1%
	Dislocated Workers	56%	62.9%	112.3%
	Youth	62%	70.6%	113.8%
Measurable Skills Gains				
	Adults	52%	65.6%	123.8%
	Dislocated Workers	52%	72.4%	136.5%
	Youth	48%	58.7%	122.4%
Employer Effectiveness Measures				

Retention With Same Employer			63.2%	Baseline
Penetration Rate			8.4%	Baseline
Repeat Business			22.8%	Baseline

Title I and Title III Performance - Maryland PY 2022/FY2023

		Standard	MD Performance	% Standard Achieved
Employment Rate QTR2				
	Adults	75%	82.0%	109.4%
	Dislocated Workers	78%	80.4%	103.0%
	Labor Exchange	59.5%	63.6%	106.9%
Employment Rate QTR4				
	Adults	73%	80.5%	110.2%
	Dislocated Workers	77%	80.7%	104.7%
	Labor Exchange	59.5%	66.4%	111.7%
Median Earnings				
	Adults	\$6,400	\$8,562	133.8%
	Dislocated Workers	\$8,250	\$9,326	113.0%
	Labor Exchange	\$6,000	\$7,954	132.6%
	Youth	\$3,500	\$4,590	131.1%
Youth Education and Employment Rate QTR2				
	Youth	71.5%	81.5%	114.0%
Youth Education and Employment Rate QTR4				
	Youth	65%	78.7%	121.1%
Credential Attainment				
	Adults	62%	62.3%	100.5%
	Dislocated Workers	56.5%	65.5%	116.0%
	Youth	63%	66.6%	105.7%

Measurable Skills Gains				
	Adults	58%	71.0%	122.5%
	Dislocated Workers	59%	71.9%	121.8%
	Youth	54%	65.1%	120.5%
Employer Effectiveness Measures				
Retention With Same Employer			65.8%	Baseline
Penetration Rate			7.5%	Baseline
Repeat Business			26.0%	Baseline

Title II Measurable Skill Gains (MSG) By Entry Level (from NRS Table 4) - July 1, 2023 - June 30, 2023

All Periods of Participation:

Entering Educational Functioning Level	Total Number of Periods of Participation (PoPs)	Total Number of PoPs Achieving At Least One Educational Functioning Level	Total Number of PoPs Attaining a Secondary School Diploma or Its Equivalent	Total Number of IET or Workplace Literacy Pops Achieving an MSG Other Than EFL and Secondary School Diploma	Percentage of Periods of Participation with Measurable Skill Gains
ABE Level 1	484	188	1	0	39.04%
ABE Level 2	2,044	664	24	1	33.70%
ABE Level 3	2,485	635	134	0	30.94%
ABE Level 4	1,910	543	195	3	38.79%
ABE Level 5	538	118	88	4	39.03%
ABE Level 6	290	10	92	1	35.51%
ABE Total	7,751	2,158	634	9	34.84%
ESL Level 1	579	268	0	0	46.28%
ESL Level 2	1,227	645	0	0	52.56%
ESL Level 3	2,587	1,157	0	2	44.80%
ESL Level 4	3,155	1,236	0	6	39.36%
ESL Level 5	2,624	959	1	31	37.76%
ESL Level 6	2,077	454	0	53	24.89%
ESL Total	12,249	4,729	1	92	39.36%
Grand Total	20,000	6,887	535	101	37.61%

Title II Educational Functioning Level Gain for Pre- and Post-Tested Participants (from NRS Table 4B) - July 1, 2023 - June 30, 2023

Entering Educational Functioning Level	Total Number of Participants	Number with EFL Gain	Percentage Achieving EFL Gain
ABE Level 1	270	188	69.62%
ABE Level 2	1,080	675	62.50%
ABE Level 3	1,213	686	56.55%
ABE Level 4	951	589	61.93%
ABE Level 5	174	67	38.50%
ABE Total	3,688	2,205	59.78%
ESL Level 1	330	267	80.90%
ESL Level 2	767	642	83.70%
ESL Level 3	1,641	1,149	70.01%
ESL Level 4	2,170	1,237	57.00%
ESL Level 5	1,715	964	56.20%
ESL Level 6	1,421	460	32.37%
ESL Total	8,044	4,719	58.66%
Grand Total	11,732	6,924	59.01%

Title II Core Follow-Up Outcome Achievement (from NRS Table 5) - July 1, 2022 - June 30, 2023

All Periods of Participation:

Primary Indicator of Performance	Total Period of Participation (of participants who exited)	Total Number of PoPs in which Participants Achieved Outcome or Median Earnings Value for All PoPs	Percentage of Participants in All PoPs Achieving Outcome
Employment Second Quarter After Exit	11,522	4,176	36.26%
Employment Fourth Quarter After Exit	10,378	3,805	36.66%
Median Earnings Second Quarter after exit	11,522	\$7,193.00	N/A
Attained a Secondary School Diploma/Equivalent and Enrolled in Postsecondary Education or Training within one year of exit	814	264	32.43%
Attained a Secondary School Diploma/Equivalent and Employed within one year of exit	814	264	32.43%

Primary Indicator of Performance	Total Period of Participation (of participants who exited)	Total Number of PoPs in which Participants Achieved Outcome or Median Earnings Value for All PoPs	Percentage of Participants in All PoPs Achieving Outcome
Attained a Postsecondary Credential while enrolled or within one year of exit	267	66	24.71%
Attained any credential (unduplicated)	1,079	309	28.63%

Table: All Periods of Participation

Primary Indicators of Performance	Total Periods of Participation	Total Number of Periods of Participation in which Participants Achieved Outcome or Median Earnings Value for All Periods of Participation	Percentage of Participants in All Periods of Participation Achieving Outcome
Employment Second Quarter after exit	16,934	5,436	32.10%
Employment Fourth Quarter after exit	18,322	6,761	36.90%
Median Earnings Second Quarter after exit	16,799	\$5211.00	N/A
Attained a Secondary School Diploma/Equivalent and Enrolled in Postsecondary Education or Training within one year of exit	998	17	1.70%
Attained a Secondary School Diploma/Equivalent and Employed within one year of exit	998	6	0.60%
Attained a Postsecondary Credential while enrolled or within one year of exit	300	9	3.00%
Attained any credential (unduplicated)	1288	32	2.48%

WIOA Title IV VR

DORS - Federal Standards & Indicators Report, Federal FYS 2021 & 2022

Standard	Federal FY 2021	Federal FY 2022	Federal Standard
Number of Closed Cases with an Employment Outcome	974	1,004	At least one more than the previous year.

Standard	Federal FY 2021	Federal FY 2022	Federal Standard
Standards			Federal Minimum Standard
Of the Closed Cases that received services, the percentage with an Employment Outcome	35.28%	33.51%	55.80%
Of the Closed Cases with an Employment Outcome, the percentage that have a wage greater than or equal to Minimum Wage.	98.97%	99.30%	72.60%
Of the Closed Cases with an Employment Outcome, the percentage that have a wage greater than or equal to the Minimum Wage and have Significant Disabilities.	100.00%	100.00%	62.40%
Ratio of Average State Wage to the average wage of Closed Cases with Employment Outcome that have wages greater than or equal to Minimum Wage.	0.63	0.70	0.52
Difference between the percentage of Closed Cases with Employment Outcomes that have a wage greater than or equal to the Minimum Wage that are Self Support at Application and the percentage of Closed Cases with Employment Outcomes that have a wage greater than or equal to the Minimum Wage that are Self Support at Closure.	56.432	50.351	53.000
Ratio of Minority Service Rate to Non-Minority Service Rate	0.867	0.914	0.800

Table: DORS - Federal Standards & Indicators Report, Federal FYs 2022& 2023

TANF

Preceding Performance

Under current law, states receive credit against their work standards for reductions in the number of families receiving assistance under TANF and associated state programs from FY2005 forward. Maryland received a caseload reduction credit of 38.2 percent for FFY 2022. After applying the 38.2 percent caseload reduction credit to the required overall rate of 50 percent for FFY 2022, the adjusted WPR target for Maryland to meet became 11.8%. Maryland achieved an overall participation rate of 12 percent. The Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2023 bill proposes to change the period for which caseload declines are measured, so that states would receive credit for reductions in families receiving assistance only from FY2015 forward. This will take effect in FFY 2026.

In the chart below we show the WPR broken out for each local department of social services. It is clear the WPR for each local department is significantly lower than our previous table in 2020-2024 WIOA Combined State Plan. The sharp decline is mainly due to work requirements being waived during COVID and fully resuming in January 2022. The below chart reflects FFY 2022 (October 1, 2021 - September 30, 2022). COVID coupled with several legislative changes, forced DHS to re-think how to best serve TANF families. Maryland is taking advantage of our large caseload reduction credit for our WPR, this gives us the opportunity to adopt a more customer-centered approach in service delivery. In the past DHS has been compliance driven. Shifting to a more customer-centered approach in service delivery is onerous and takes

significant time to train all DHS staff. As DHS continues to strive towards serving the whole TANF family and meeting families where they are the WPR will slowly continue to improve.

TANF, Federal FY 2022 Aggregate Scores At-A-Glance

Jurisdiction		WPR	Total Job Placements	Total Full-Time 30% Above Minimum Wage Job Placements
Large Counties				
	*Baltimore City	7%	886	288
	*Baltimore County	14%	1,141	542
	*Prince George's	4%	650	359
Medium Counties				
	*Anne Arundel	5%	642	252
	*Montgomery	20%	566	310
	Wicomico	7%	188	41
	Harford	7%	207	108
	*St. Mary's	2%	101	20
	Howard	10%	147	93
	Washington	2%	345	114
	Cecil	3%	85	37
Small Counties				
	Frederick	1%	61	20
	Charles	3%	49	29
	Allegany	2%	170	40
	Dorchester	0%	1	1
	Caroline	7%	59	12
	Carroll	3%	30	9
	Somerset	4%	77	16
	Queen Anne's	3%	29	9
	Calvert	4%	49	13
	Worcester	5%	25	1
	Garrett	4%	38	7
	Talbot	3	27	7
	Kent	1%	5	1
MARYLAND		12%	5,578	2,329

Trade Program

FY 2016:

	Goal	FY 2016 Q1 (As of 03/10/16)	FY 2016 Q2 (As of 05/31/16)	FY 2016 Q3 (As of 09/01/16)	FY 2016 Q4 (As of 12/09/16)
Training Expenditures	85% - 115%	Discrepancy	Discrepancy	Discrepancy	Explained
TRA Expenditures	85% - 115%	Pass	Pass	Pass	Explained
A/RTAA Expenditures	85% - 115%	Pass	Pass	Pass	Explained
Job Srch / Reloc Exp	85% - 115%	Pass	Pass	Pass	Explained
Tenure	100%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
ONET	100%	83.1%	89.7%	100.0%	100.0%
ISP	100%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
NAICS	90%	97.1%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Credential	70%	54.4%	51.6%	67.0%	69.3%
Rapid Response	55%	60.6%	40.0%	60.0%	64.9%
Case Management	50%	87.7%	85.5%	79.4%	81.8%
Training Completion	75%	56.3%	67.5%	69.2%	80.2%
Agent Liable	75%	89.2%	84.8%	75.7%	77.3%
Employment After Exit	100%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Wages Prior	100%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Wages Following	100%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

FY 2017:

Measure	Target	FY 2017 Q1 (As of 03/01/17)	FY 2017 Q2 (As of 05/24/17)	FY 2017 Q3 (As of 09/08/17)	FY 2017 Q4
Training Expenditures	85% - 115%	Pass	Discrepancy	Discrepancy	
TRA Expenditures	85% - 115%	Discrepancy	Pass	Pass	
A/RTAA Expenditures	85% - 115%	Pass	Discrepancy	Pass	
Job Srch / Reloc Exp	85% - 115%	Pass	Pass	Pass	
Tenure	100%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	
ONET	100%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	
ISP	100%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	
NAICS	90%	99.5%	100.0%	97.2%	
Credential	70%	71.6%	75.6%	72.9%	
Rapid Response	55%	75.9%	73.7%	68.9%	

Measure	Target	FY 2017 Q1 (As of 03/01/17)	FY 2017 Q2 (As of 05/24/17)	FY 2017 Q3 (As of 09/08/17)	FY 2017 Q4
Case Management	75%	89.6%	86.7%	83.3%	
Training Completion	75%	83.8%	81.9%	78.7%	
Agent Liable	75%	88.4%	85.7%	83.2%	
Employment After Exit	100%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	
Wages Prior	100%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	
Wages Following	100%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	

FY 2018:

Measure	Target	FY 2018 Q1 (As of 03/22/18)	FY 2018 Q2 (As of 06/08/18)	FY 2018 Q3 (As of 09/10/18)	FY 2018 Q4 (As of 01/02/19)
Training Expenditures	85% - 115%	Discrepancy	Discrepancy	Pass	Discrepancy
TRA Expenditures	85% - 115%	Discrepancy	Pass	Pass	Discrepancy
A/RTAA Expenditures	85% - 115%	Discrepancy	Pass	Pass	Pass
Job Srch / Reloc Exp	85% - 115%	Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass
Tenure	100%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
ONET	100%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
IEP	100%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
NAICS	90%	93.9%	97.1%	96.7%	96.4%
Credential	70%	70.0%	85.7%	83.9%	81.5%
Rapid Response	55%	75.4%	66.7%	62.2%	65.4%
Case Management	75%	75.3%	87.9%	86.3%	86.6%
Training Completion	75%	75.0%	80.0%	79.5%	87.1%
Co-Enrollment	50%	3.9%	3.2%	4.4%	7.1%
Employment After Exit	100%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Wages Prior	100%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Wages Following	100%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Measure	Target	FY 2019 Q1 (As of 03/11/19)	FY 2019 Q2 (As of 05/29/19)	FY 2019 Q3 (As of 09/03/19)	FY 2019 Q4 (As of 12/06/19)
Training Expenditures	85% - 115%	- Discrepancy	Discrepancy	Discrepancy	Discrepancy
TRA Expenditures	85% - 115%	- Discrepancy	Pass	Pass	Pass
A/RTAA Expenditures	85% - 115%	- Discrepancy	Pass	Pass	Discrepancy
Job Srch / Reloc Exp	85% - 115%	- Pass	Pass	Pass	Discrepancy
Rapid Response	55%	96.4%	96.1%	87.5%	96.2%
Petition Number	100%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
IEP	100%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Co-Enrollment	50%	6.5%	5.6%	4.7%	11.5%
Case Management	75%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Training Case Management	90%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Training Completion	75%	82.1%	87.1%	81.3%	82.4%
Credential	70%	84.0%	81.5%	77.8%	78.1%
Service in Quarter	95%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
ONET	100%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
NAICS	90%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Wages	100%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Measure	Target	12/31/2019 Percent	03/31/2020 Percent	06/30/2020 Percent	09/30/2020 Percent
Training Expenditures	85% - 115%	Discrepancy	Discrepancy	Pass	Pass
TRA Expenditures	85% - 115%	Pass	Discrepancy	Discrepancy	Pass
A/RTAA Expenditures	85% - 115%	Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass
Job Srch / Reloc Exp	85% - 115%	Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass
Rapid Response	0.6	95.2%	93.0%	94.3%	90.4%
Petition Number	1	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
IEP	1	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Co-Enrollment	0.5	14.6%	17.9%	18.8%	17.8%
Case Management	0.75	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Training Case Management	0.9	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Training Completion	0.75	81.8%	81.6%	84.8%	85.7%
Credential	0.75	85.2%	78.3%	75.0%	80.8%
Service in Quarter	0.95	98.6%	98.7%	100.0%	100.0%

Measure	Target	12/31/2019 Percent	03/31/2020 Percent	06/30/2020 Percent	09/30/2020 Percent
ONET	1	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
NAICS	0.9	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Wages	1	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Measure	Target	12/31/2020 Percent	03/31/2021 Percent	06/30/2021 Percent
Training Expenditures	85% - 115%	Pass	Pass	Pass
TRA Expenditures	85% - 115%	Discrepancy	Discrepancy	Discrepancy
A/RTAA Expenditures	85% - 115%	Discrepancy	Discrepancy	Discrepancy
Job Srch / Reloc Exp	85% - 115%	Discrepancy	Discrepancy	Pass
Rapid Response	65%	83.3%	92.3%	76.9%
Petition Number	100%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
IEP	100%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Co-Enrollment	75%	6.3%	0.0%	0.0%
Case Management	75%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Training Case Management	90%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Training Completion	75%	89.5%	87.5%	84.8%
Training Result	80%	80.0%	83.3%	97.8%
Service in Quarter	95%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
ONET	100%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
NAICS	90%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Wages	100%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

JVSG

PY 2015 Veteran Program Assessment Results

DVOP Specialists: (Source VET-200A)	Negotiated Targets	Q-4 Performance	% of standard
Intensive Services Provided to Individuals by DVOP Specialists/Total Veterans and Eligible Persons Served by DVOP Specialists in the State (<i>New</i>)	90%	85%	94%
Veterans' Entered Employment Rate (VEER) <i>Weighted</i>	60%	68%	113%
Veterans' Employment Retention Rate (VERR)	83%	81%	98%
Veterans' Average Earnings (VAE) (Six-Months)	\$19,400	\$18,556	96%
Disabled Veterans' EER (DVEER)	49%	51%	104%
Disabled Veterans' ERR (DVERR)	83%	81%	98%

DVOP Specialists: (Source VET-200A)	Negotiated Targets	Q-4 Performance	% of standard
Disabled Veterans' AE (DVAE) (Six Months)	\$22,600	\$21,872	97%

Performance Targets for Labor Exchange Services for Veterans (Source: ETA-9002D):	Negotiated Targets	Q-4 Performance	% of standard
Veterans' Entered Employment Rate (VEER)	52%	55%	106%
Veterans' Employment Retention Rate (VERR)	84%	81%	96%
Veterans' Average Earnings (VAE) (Six-Months)	\$19,700	\$19,957	101%
Disabled Veterans' EER (DVEER)	50%	49%	98%
Disabled Veterans' ERR (DVERR)	84%	83%	99%
Disabled Veterans' AE (DVAE) (Six Months)	\$23,000	\$22,809	99%

PY 2017 WIOA Veteran Program Assessment Results

DVOP Specialists:	Negotiated Targets	Q-4 Performance
Employment Rate QTR2		57.2%
Employment Rate QTR4		53.5%
Median		\$7,018
Veterans' Employment Rate QTR2		56.7%
Veterans' Employment Rate QTR4		53.4%
Veterans' Median		\$6,960
Disabled Veterans' Employment Rate QTR2		54.1%
Disabled Veterans' Employment Rate QTR4		52.4%
Disabled Veterans' Median		\$7,884

PY 2018 WIOA Veteran Program Assessment Results:

DVOP Specialists:	Negotiated Targets	Q-4 Performance	% of standard
Employment Rate QTR2	55%	57.5%	104.5%
Employment Rate QTR4	52%	55.9%	107.5%

DVOP Specialists:	Negotiated Targets	Q-4 Performance	% of standard
Median	\$6,800	\$7,253	106.7%
Veterans' Employment Rate QTR2 (WP)	55%	60.3%	109.6%
Veterans' Employment Rate QTR4 (WP)	52%	59.1%	113.7%
Veterans' Median (WP)	\$6,800	\$6,939	102.0%

PY 2019 WIOA Veteran Program Assessment Results:

DVOP Specialists:	Negotiated Targets	Q-4 Performance	% of standard
Employment Rate QTR2	55%	55.2%	100.4%
Employment Rate QTR4	52%	55.8%	107.3%
Median	\$6,800	\$6,694	98.4%
Veterans' Employment Rate QTR2 (WP)	55%	59.9%	108.9%
Veterans' Employment Rate QTR4 (WP)	52%	58.5%	112.5%
Veterans' Median (WP)	\$6,800	\$7,153	105.2%

PY 2020 WIOA Veteran Program Assessment Results:

DVOP Specialists:	Negotiated Targets	Q-4 Performance	% of standard
Employment Rate QTR2	53%	53.2%	100.4%
Employment Rate QTR4	51%	50.1%	98.2%
Median	\$6,600	\$7,533	114.1%
Veterans' Employment Rate QTR2 (WP)	55%	52.1%	94.7%
Veterans' Employment Rate QTR4 (WP)	52%	52.4%	100.8%
Veterans' Median (WP)	\$6,800	\$7,659	112.6%

PY 2021 WIOA Veteran Program Assessment Results:

DVOP Specialists:	Negotiated Targets	Q-4 Performance	% of standard
Employment Rate QTR2	53%	52.2%	98.5%
Employment Rate QTR4	51%	51.1%	100.2%
Median	\$6,600	\$8,549	129.5%

DVOP Specialists:	Negotiated Targets	Q-4 Performance	% of standard
Veterans' Employment Rate QTR2 (WP)	55%	53.9%	98.0%
Veterans' Employment Rate QTR4 (WP)	52%	51.8%	99.6%
Veterans' Median (WP)	\$6,800	\$8,226	121.0%

PY 2022 WIOA Veteran Program Assessment Results:

DVOP Specialists:	Negotiated Targets	Q-4 Performance	% of standard
Employment Rate QTR2	51%	49.9%	97.8%
Employment Rate QTR4	50%	49.9%	99.8%
Median	\$6,800	\$9,334	137.3%
Veterans' Employment Rate QTR2 (WP)	55%	52.6%	95.6%
Veterans' Employment Rate QTR4 (WP)	52%	52.7%	101.3%
Veterans' Median (WP)	\$6,800	\$8,946	131.6%

Maryland reviews the above results and utilizes them to enhance the workforce system. Specifically, MD Labor utilizes these figures to provide ongoing technical assistance for Local Areas, adult education providers, and partner programs. Evidence of this is reflected in coordinated training for DVOPs/LVERs regarding serving Veterans with SBE, the Office of AELS offering a Virtual Training Institute twice annually to providers in order to discuss best practices that may lead to improved employment goals, and OWIP's regular technical assistance to look at "High" and "Low" performance when Local Areas hover above or below 90 percent on metrics.

Additionally, the State utilizes this data to adapt strategies and request technical assistance. When Maryland recognized that very few adult learners were also enrolled in workforce programming via Title I, the State shifted its strategy and made a targeted investment in co-enrollment using Set Aside funds. Finally, on areas where the State may need improvement, MD Labor requests assistance from VETS, ETA, and/or outside organizations.

(C) Evaluation. Describe how the State will conduct evaluations and research projects of activities carried out in the State under WIOA core programs; how such projects will be coordinated with, and designed in conjunction with, State and local boards and with State agencies responsible for the administration of all respective core programs; and, further, how the projects will be coordinated with the evaluations provided for by the Secretary of Labor and the Secretary of Education under WIOA (WIOA Section 116(e)).

Recognizing that program evaluation and research are two key components of achieving overall system improvement, Maryland's WIOA Partners are committed to working with appropriate organizations to design and coordinate projects that inform sound WIOA

policymaking that is refined to appropriately meet shared customer needs. Evidence provided by research and evaluations can improve policy in two main ways: it can lead policymakers to adopt or scale-up programs or policies that are found to have net social benefits; or it can lead policymakers to terminate existing programs that are found to have net social costs. The WIOA Partners, therefore, agree to explore how independent evaluation efforts, that have been historically contracted by each agency independently, can be coordinated to provide a comprehensive, deeper look at the overall WIOA system.

In addition to this continued commitment, the State has developed formal monitoring tools to conduct regular evaluations. All AJC program partners are assessed by both the State and Local Areas twice annually in conjunction with formal monitoring by DWDAL's Monitoring and Compliance Unit. As part of both program and fiscal monitoring, Local Area leadership and MD Labor's Title III Labor Exchange Administrators complete an assessment survey regarding partners, their service delivery, and their performance. When a partner is not performing well, and/or not in accordance with the MOU or RSA, a Corrective Action Plan is developed.

When developing the State's policy on monitoring (*PI 2019-07 Monitoring*) and other monitoring tools, stakeholders considered how to involve partners and leadership in the evaluation process. As a result, reports are often shared with Local Directors and LWDB Chairs. Additionally, MD Labor's Program Monitoring Questionnaire includes, but is not limited to, the following questions for evaluation prior and during monitoring visits:

- Please describe any special, shared, or common responsibilities taken on by the AJC partners to improve service delivery within the AJC. For example, which partners provide assistance in the resource room, reception, workshops, assessments, participant outreach, etc.?
- Describe the processes and tools that are in place to support continuous improvement activities in the AJC.
- How is the Local Area integrating and partnering its programs within the AJC? Please provide examples of the integration/coordination of activities (USDOL Core Monitoring Guide).
- How does the Local Area assess its performance integration, and how is the data used?
- What area of integration has been identified as a priority for the Local Areas and what action had been taken for this integration?

Responses are used to guide discussions during visits, provide technical assistance, and again, contribute to Maryland's overall commitment to continuous partner and system evaluation.

(5) Distribution of Funds for Core Programs. Describe the methods and factors the state will use in distributing funds under the core programs in accordance with the provisions authorizing such distributions.

(A) For Title I programs, provide a description of the written policies that establish the state's methods and factors used to distribute funds to Local Areas for–

TEGL 15-22 outlines methods upon which the state must allocate PY23/FY24 WIOA Title I funds. The allocation methods for Youth and Adult funds are a fixed formula. The allocation method for Dislocated Worker funds allows flexibility at the state level within given parameters.

(i) Youth activities in accordance with WIOA section 128(b)(2) or (b)(3)

Maryland distributes WIOA Title I Youth funds in accordance with the formula allocation method cited in WIOA Section 128 (b)(2)(A). Maryland decided not to set aside the allowable 15 percent of the funds, but rather to set aside 14 percent of the funds for the Governor's Reserve. 86 percent of funds will be distributed to the Local Areas using the following three factors enumerated in Section 127(b)(1)(C) of WIOA:

- 33 1/3 percent shall be allotted on the basis of the relative number of unemployed individuals in areas of substantial unemployment in each Local Area, compared to the total number of unemployed individuals in areas of substantial unemployment in all states;
- 33 1/3 percent shall be allotted on the basis of the relative excess number of unemployed individuals in each state, compared to the total excess number of unemployed individuals in all states; and
- 33 1/3 percent shall be allotted on the basis of the relative number of disadvantaged youth in each state, compared to the total number of disadvantaged youth in all states. In determining an allotment in relation to a Local Area's disadvantaged youth, the allotment shall be based on the higher of– (1) the number of individuals who are age 16 through 21 in families with an income below the low-income level in such area; or (2) the number of disadvantaged youth in such area.

The Local Area shall not receive an allocation percentage for a FY that is less than 90 percent of the average allocation percentage of the Local Area for the two preceding FYs. Amounts necessary for increasing such allocations to Local Areas to comply with the preceding sentence shall be obtained by ratably reducing the allocations to be made to other Local Areas.

(ii) Adult and training activities in accordance with WIOA section 133(b)(2) or (b)(3)

Maryland will distribute WIOA Title I Adult funds in accordance with the formula allocation method cited in WIOA Section 133 (b)(2)(A). Maryland decided not to set aside the allowable maximum of 15 percent, but rather to set aside 14 percent of the funds as the Governor's Reserve. 86 percent of funds will be distributed to the Local Areas using the following three factors enumerated in Section 132(b)(1)(B) of WIOA:

- 33 1/3 percent shall be allotted on the basis of the relative number of unemployed individuals in areas of substantial unemployment in each Local Area, compared to the total number of unemployed individuals in areas of substantial unemployment in the state;
- 33 1/3 percent shall be allotted on the basis of the relative excess number of unemployed individuals in each Local Area, compared to the total excess number of unemployed individuals in the state; and
- 33 1/3 percent shall be allotted on the basis of the relative number of disadvantaged adults in each Local Area, compared to the total number of disadvantaged adults in the state. The allotment shall be based on the higher of– (1) the number of adults in families with an income below the low-income level in such area; or (2) the number of disadvantaged adults in such area.

The Local Area shall not receive an allocation percentage for a FY that is less than 90 percent of the average allocation percentage of the Local Area for the two preceding FYs. Amounts necessary for increasing such allocations to Local Areas to comply with the preceding sentence shall be obtained by ratably reducing the allocations to be made to other Local Areas.

(iii) Dislocated worker employment and training activities in accordance with WIOA section 133(b)(2) and based on data and weights assigned

Maryland will distribute WIOA Title I Dislocated Worker funds in accordance with the formula allocation method cited in WIOA Section 133 (b)(2)(A). 14 percent of the funds will be set aside as the Governor's Reserve, 17.5 percent of the funds will be set aside for Rapid Response Activities (the allowable maximum for Rapid Response is 25 percent), and 68.5 percent of funds will be distributed to the Local Areas.

Maryland refers to TEGL 15-22 and WIOA section 133(b)(2) as a guide for allocations. Initially, the Maryland WIOA Fiscal Accountability Workgroup, composed of Local Directors, local staff, and staff from the DWDAL, met multiple times to discuss the allocation formula for Dislocated Worker funds administered under Title I of WIOA. Specifically, WIOA Section 133 provides that information that can be used in the formulation of the Dislocated Worker allocation includes "insured unemployment data, unemployment concentrations, plant closing and mass layoff data, declining industries data, farmer rancher economic hardship data, and long-term unemployment data." Utilizing the data referenced above, which included unemployment statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages and other Bureau of Labor Statistics data, and other sources, the workgroup identified six factors to be used to determine the local Dislocated Worker formula:

- UI Exhaustees;
- Insured Unemployed;
- Unemployed;
- Declining Industries;
- Mass Layoffs/Plant Closings; and,
- Farmer/Rancher Data.

The workgroup also recommended the priority of the factors. While recommendations were made, the workgroup deferred any final decision regarding the factors used, and the weighting of those factors. Consistent with the purpose of the dislocated worker program, the allocation method addresses current and future needs by focusing on unemployed individuals. Maryland combines the Insured Unemployed and Unemployed into one factor with a high assigned weighting. This was done to ensure that all unemployed individuals, regardless of their status as receiving UI benefits, can utilize dislocated worker funding within the existing constraints of the law.

Based on that conversation and substantial research and data analysis, it was concluded that the final factors and weighting for the Dislocated Workers local formula allocations are:

1. Priority Weighting Unemployed 49 percent;
2. UI Exhaustee 29 percent;
3. Declining Industries eight percent;
4. Mass Layoffs/Plant Closings (WARN and other data) seven percent; and
5. Farmer/Rancher Data seven percent.

Dislocated Workers Formula Allocation Factors	Priority	Weighting
Unemployed	1	49 percent
UI Exhaustee	2	29 percent
Declining Industries	3	8 percent
Mass Layoffs/Plant Closings (WARN and other data)	4	7 percent

Dislocated Workers Formula Allocation Factors	Priority	Weighting
Farmer/Rancher Data	5	7 percent

Table: Factors and weighting for the Dislocated Workers local formula allocations

In accordance with TEGL 15-22, Local Areas that would receive less than 90 percent of their relative share as compared to their last two years' funding level will be held at 90 percent. Again, it is noted that pursuant to Policy Issuance 2016-01, *Transfer Authority for WIOA Title I Adult and Dislocated Worker Funds*, as issued on January 12, 2016, and consistent with Section 133 of WIOA, a Local Area may transfer up to and including 100 percent of a PY and FY allocation for Adult employment and training activities, and up to and including 100 percent of a PY and FY allocation for Dislocated Worker employment and training activities between the two programs. Transfers may only occur between Adult and Dislocated Worker funds within the same funding phase.

B. For Title II –

(i) Describe the methods and factors the eligible agency will use to distribute title II funds.

For the Title II Adult Education fund, Maryland awards grants to eligible providers through a competitive application process to establish or operate programs that provide adult education and literacy activities. The application process is open to eligible providers for seamless delivery of services, ensuring that services are available in every jurisdiction based on the level of need. The services provided must focus on the adult education goals described in WIOA Title II, which are:

1. Assist adults to become literate and obtain the knowledge and skills, and credentials necessary to attain employment and economic self-sufficiency;
2. Assist adults who are parents or family members to obtain the educational skills necessary to become full partners in the educational development of their children and lead to sustainable improvements in the economic opportunities for their families;
3. Assist adults in attaining a secondary school diploma and in the transition to post-secondary education and training, including through career pathways; and
4. Assist immigrants and other individuals who are English language learners to improve reading, writing, speaking and comprehension and mathematics skills and acquire understanding of the American system of government, individual freedom, and the responsibilities of citizenship.

In 2023, the DWDAL Office of AELS released a competitive grant application in Maryland, authorized and funded under WIOA Title II, to cover a program cycle of four years. The development process for this competitive grant application included input from partner programs overseen by DWDAL's OAS and OWD, as well as the external WIOA partners. The competitive grant application was posted on the MD Labor website in January 2023, seeking local providers of services to commence operation on July 1, 2023, continuing for a 4-year period, pending compliance with all requirements of the grant. During the 4-year period, annual continuation applications are required that must include activity and partnership updates, performance reviews and projections, annual class schedules, data quality reviews, budgets, and assurances.

All applicants for WIOA Title II funding were required to submit a proposal in response to this competitive grant application, including separate applications for providers seeking to deliver Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IELCE) (WIOA Section 243 funds) or delivery of the National External Diploma Program (NEDP).

Funding allocations by county are determined on the basis of need and demand. Need is established through the U.S. Census data including the American Community Survey, which identifies the numbers of individuals residing in counties with less than a high education and those who speak English "less than very well" at home. Demand is established from historical adult education enrollment data by county.

Proposals submitted in response to the competitive grant application are reviewed by AELS, along with an independent team of reviewers including individuals with knowledge and expertise in adult education, WIOA partner agency officials, and DWDAL personnel. Applications are scored in alignment with the Considerations set out in WIOA, Title II, Section 231. Demonstrated effectiveness will be determined by the applicant's submission of verifiable data that documented previous successful provision of services. Applicants are required to submit performance data on the program's record of improving the skills of the eligible population, including individuals at the lowest levels of literacy in reading, writing,

mathematics, and English language acquisition Past performance must also include data related to High School Diploma attainment and transition to post-secondary education and training. Previously funded programs submitted data that has been entered in the Literacy, Adult and Community Education System (LACES) in previous funding cycles, while new applicants must demonstrate past effectiveness in serving basic skills deficient individuals and success in achieving results in the performance areas listed above.

The following services are funded:

Table: Adult Education & Family Literacy Act Services

FEDERAL FUNDS

Fund Name	Services/Activities
ABE/ESL	Adult Basic Education (ABE) instructional services for learners at the ABE 1 through 4 NRS levels, and/or English as a Second Language (ESL) instructional services for learners at the ESL 1 through 6 NRS levels
ASE	Adult Secondary Education (ASE) instructional services for learners at the ABE 5 through 6 NRS levels
Local Institutionalized*	Instructional services in local correctional facilities and other institutions (including any prison, jail, reformatory, work farm, detention center, halfway house, community-based rehabilitation center, or other similar institution for the confinement or rehabilitation of criminal offenders) for learners at any of the ABE, ASE, and ESL NRS levels.
Family Literacy	Adult education instruction, partner program coordination, and parent education

STATE FUNDS

Fund Name	Services/Activities
Literacy Works	1st priority –Local accountability and data reporting to LACES
	2nd priority –Direct instructional services to augment the services described for ABE/ESL, ASE, NEDP, IELCE (NRS Levels)
	3rd priority –Locally developed and accepted State required Professional Development activities for staff
AGE	Adult General Education (AGE) funds are only available to local public-school systems and designated for instructional services to learners at the ABE 5-6 levels

ADDITIONAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

Fund Name	Services/Activities
IELCE (federal)	Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IELCE) prepares adults who are English language learners and places such adults in unsubsidized employment in high-demand industries and occupations that lead to economic self-sufficiency. Programs must integrate with the local workforce development system and its functions to carry out the activities of the program.

Fund Name	Services/Activities
NEDP (State and federal)	National External Diploma Program (NEDP) is an applied performance assessment system high school diploma option (<i>see</i> Assurances Section for the Maryland National External Diploma Program)

DWDAL's Monitoring and Compliance Unit visits include fiscal and programmatic monitoring that review partnerships, customer flow, fiscal, and programmatic files under Title I and III. This monitoring occurs in accordance with MOUs, the State Plan, and Local Plans. Written reports are provided identifying findings that require corrective actions, as well as areas of concerns as a warning of future issues. Best practices are identified and shared with other areas. Sanctions would apply following two years of poor performance which included reduction of funds or decertification as an area. Additionally, the TAA program is also monitored by the Monitoring and Compliance Unit.

JVSG Program audits each of the 13 Local Areas once every two years. The audit covers partnerships and how mandatory partners in the State Plan operate and work together as it relates to JVSG guidance.

Local performance negotiations are based on past performance and future modeling provided by the USDOL. Information is used to measure how the system is operating as far as Title I and III.

Youth providers that are contracted out by Local Areas are assessed annually and are not renewed if determined to be ineffective.

(ii) Describe how the eligible agency will ensure direct and equitable access to all eligible providers to apply and compete for funds and how the eligible agency will ensure that it is using the same grant or contract announcement and application procedure for all eligible providers.

As the oversight and administrative agency for WIOA Title II adult education programs, MD Labor evaluates past performance in delivering adult education and family literacy activities, in order to assess the effectiveness of applicants during the competitive process. Selected applicants must document success in providing AELS.

Title II providers in each jurisdiction are selected on the basis of a competitive application process. The MD Labor office of AELS was responsible for developing and disseminating the grant application for services to be delivered by local providers, as authorized and funded under WIOA Title II. The competitive grant application was posted publicly on the MD Labor website. Only providers who responded to the competitive grant application in a timely manner, adhering to all submission requirements and deadlines, were considered for funding under WIOA Title II.

MD Labor directly awarded grants to providers deemed to have successfully responded to the competitive grant application requirements and satisfactorily documented previous success in providing the services. Sub-contracts were considered for funding. Proposals submitted in response to the competitive grant application were reviewed by AELS, along with an independent team of reviewers that includes individuals with knowledge and expertise in adult education, WIOA partner agency officials, and DWDAL personnel. Reviewers scored applications on the considerations set out in WIOA, Title II, Section 231.

(C) Title IV VR In the case of a State that, under section 101(a)(2)(A)(i) of the Rehabilitation Act designates a State agency to administer the part of the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)

services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan under which VR services are provided for individuals who are blind, describe the process and the factors used by the State to determine the distribution of funds among the two VR agencies in the State.

DORS is a Combined Agency that provides services for individuals who are blind. As such this provision is not applicable in Maryland.

(6) Program Data

(A) **Data Alignment and Integration.** Describe the plans of the lead State agencies with responsibility for the administration of the core programs, along with the State Board, to align and integrate available workforce and education data systems for the core programs, unemployment insurance programs, and education through postsecondary education, and to the extent possible, the Combined State Plan partner programs included in this plan. The description of the State's plan for integrating data systems should include the State's goals for achieving integration and any progress to date. Describe data-collection and reporting processes used for all programs and activities, including the State's process to collect and report data on co-enrollment, and for those present in the one-stop centers.

(i) Describe the state's plans to make the management information systems for the core programs interoperable to maximize the efficient exchange of common data elements to support assessment and evaluation.

WIOA Program	Data System(s) Used	Year Contract Expires
Adult Program	MWE	2029
Dislocated Worker Program	MWE	2029
Youth Program	MWE	2029
Wagner-Peyser Act Program	MWE	2029
AEFLA Program	LACES	2022
VR Program	AWARE	2025
TANF Program	WORKS	N/A
SNAP E&T Program	WORKS	N/A
Trade Adjustment Assistance for Workers Program	MWE	2029
JVSG Program	MWE	2029
SCSEP	MWE	2029
REO	N/A	N/A
Community Service Block Grant	N/A	N/A
UI	BEACON	N/A - in negotiation

Table: WIOA Program Data and System Alignment

WIOA Program Data and System Alignment

Although MD Labor, MSDE, DHS, and DHCD report on each individual program to the respective federal oversight agency, Maryland does not currently have an integrated system with all partner programs. MD Labor is therefore currently unable to report data from agencies, like MSDE-DORS and DHS-FIA, which report using their own established systems. Since 2020, Maryland has used MLDS to provide employment follow-up measures for Title II

reporting. In 2023, WIOA Title I and III data was also added to the system. Non-credit enrollment and training data from MHEC is currently in the test phase to be added to MLDS as well. In future years, Maryland plans to leverage the MLDS partnership to assist with an increasing number of follow-up measure projects, as well as to develop dashboards that will assist in measuring the effectiveness of Maryland's workforce system.

As shown, the MWE currently houses WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth, Wagner-Peyser, JVSC, Trade, Apprenticeship, and SCSEP program participants, however, TANF, VR, and Adult Education, are not currently in MWE. Due to contract end dates, the WIOA leadership team recognizes that Maryland needs both short- and long-term solutions and goals to data sharing and alignment. To reach the long-term goal of system integration or alignment, the WIOA Alignment Group leadership team continues to identify potential options for common platforms and data integration. The team will schedule demonstrations with vendors and will work together to weigh the advantages and disadvantages of the options available.

DORS submits the Case Service Report (RSA-911) for the State VR Services Program and the State Supported Employment Services Program to report data on open service records on a quarterly basis, while adhering to "Guidance for Validating Jointly Required Performance Data Submitted under WIOA" (RSA-TAC-19-01).

The Case Services Report (RSA-911) is aligned with the WIOA PIRL is derived from the Joint Performance Information Collection Request and provides a standardized set of Data Elements, definitions, and reporting instructions that will be used to describe the characteristics, activities, and outcomes of WIOA participants.

DORS receives quarterly employment records through an agreement with the University of Baltimore Jacob France Institute (JFI) and MD Labor. JFI serves as an operations contractor for LABOR and JFI maintains and archives certain confidential LABOR UI data, including confidential wage information. DORS reports data on co-enrollment on a quarterly basis. Partner collaboration is tracked using Special Programs in the AWARE case management system.

DHS is leading discussions with WIOA partners on long-term solutions in the development of prototypes, using multiple technologies to evaluate which best suit the needs of the state. Overall requirements and features are to be defined based on the suggestions from various stakeholders. MD THINK is a cloud-based technology platform to revolutionize Maryland's delivery of human services. MD THINK will eventually integrate data systems from numerous programs and agencies. Currently, these agencies all have their own systems, housing disconnected yet overlapping information. MD THINK represents the largest Information Technology project in the history of Maryland. This modern "client-centric" integrated platform will eventually provide employees, partner providers, and constituents of Maryland's human services agencies an efficient and effective platform for delivering collaborative services. A web and mobile front end will provide a central place to access any service from any participating agency. MD THINK is being implemented program-by-program.

The WIOA partners intend to replace the multiple, existing systems, shown above, with a new system that will be adaptable across multiple Maryland State agencies. All require a system with similar attributes: a flexible, robust case management platform with safeguarding of PII, and a comprehensive, adaptable rules engine.

In the short-term, the WIOA leadership team and the Data and Dashboard workgroup are committed to working together to address data alignment and information sharing concerns through the following methods:

- Creating an inventory of data that is collected, by WIOA program, to determine which data elements (Social Security Number (SSN), demographic data, etc.) would be helpful to partner WIOA organizations for eligibility purposes, etc.;
- Establishing Memoranda of Understanding between WIOA agencies, when applicable;
- Developing one standard confidentiality/ethics form for use with all personnel within the WIOA system to ensure staff understand, and agree with signature, to their responsibilities related to safeguarding confidential WIOA records;
- Developing one standard waiver for use with customers at first touch within the WIOA system to ensure compliance with applicable state and federal laws (e.g.: Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA); Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPPA); etc.);
- Granting “read-only” basic access, with the appropriate releases, to limited WIOA system staff;
- Recognizing that if a WIOA partner agency has verified eligibility documentation, then the same documentation does not need to be duplicated by another state agency for a common customer; and
- Recognizing that partner access to the MWE system to a read-only level requires a team approach, where agencies must triage clients in order to properly enroll them and provide the most appropriate services.

(ii) Describe the state’s plans to integrate data systems to facilitate streamlined intake and service delivery to track participation across all programs included in this plan.

Maryland invested in the Maryland Total Human-services Integrated Network (MDTHINK), one of the largest information technology projects in the state’s history. MD THINK is a cloud-based technology platform designed to revolutionize Maryland’s delivery of human services. The “client-centric” integrated platform will provide employees, partner providers, and constituents of Maryland’s human services agencies an efficient and effective platform for delivering collaborative services. A web-based and mobile-friendly front end provides a central place to access any service from any participating agency. MD THINK is currently under development in phases. Phase I of development involved certain DHS programs and was completed in November of 2021. The State anticipates that DHS’ partner WIOA programs will be included in a later phase of development.

Until then, in the short term, effective with MD Labor Policy Issuance 2017-10 – Partner Access to the MWE, MD Labor has expanded partner access to the MWE system to a read-only level. Expanding partner access to the MWE system to a read-only level requires a team approach, where agencies must triage clients in order to properly enroll them and provide the most appropriate services. Currently, PII, including SSN, disability status, etc., are stored and protected through MWE, where partners can only see information that is pertinent to their work. Additionally, limited read-only confidential UI information can be viewed through the MWE system and must be protected accordingly. MWE is a secure platform to protect the confidentiality of customers. As access to the MWE is expanded, client protections are central to determining appropriate partner security level. Each partner contact should only be granted access to data, forms, and reports relevant to their programs and those services offered by those programs, but they cannot edit, change, or add data or case notes to the MWE system.

(iii) Explain how the State board will assist the governor in aligning technology and data systems across required one-stop partner programs (including design and implementation of common intake, data collection, etc.) and how such alignment will improve service delivery to individuals, including unemployed individuals.

Under its new leadership, the GWDB is in the process of standing up a new subcommittee dedicated to system governance and accountability, and this work will include a new exploration of efforts that have been undertaken but were unsuccessful or stalled in the recent past. This committee will also develop recommendations and/or take action, as appropriate, to assist the governor in aligning technology and data systems across required one-stop partner programs in order to improve service delivery.

(iv) Describe the state's plans to develop and produce the reports required under section 116, performance accountability system. (WIOA section 116(d)(2)).

Interoperability of Maryland's WIOA Management Information Systems

Once integrated, the WIOA partners will be able to effectively use the WIOA management system to assess the progress of participants exiting from core programs and completing postsecondary education or entering into or retaining employment. The modernized WIOA management system will provide a common data infrastructure from which ad hoc and automatically generated reports may be produced. Once established, this system will provide the ability to flexibly analyze and visualize data across the WIOA system, either in a consolidated fashion or using system specific data. Analysts will have the ability to quickly explore data through easily customized visualization tools. This allows for a drag and drop type interface, which would eliminate the need for hard coding when generating a new report or changing an existing report.

Until then, in order to collect the participant level data that will be aggregated and displayed in USDOL quarterly reports, Maryland will use a standardized individual record file from the MWE for USDOL program participants, called the WIOA PIRL. The PIRL provides a standardized set of data elements, definitions, and reporting instructions that will be used to describe the characteristics, activities, and outcomes of WIOA participants. Maryland will be able to meet USDOL requirements to collect participant information that corresponds with the data elements and descriptions delineated within the PIRL. Once collected, this information will then be aggregated according to the conditions outlined in the WIOA Data Element Specifications, which detail the common data elements and technical specifications necessary for calculation of reporting elements under all the USDOL programs listed in the paragraph below. Once aggregated, Maryland will submit the outcomes of the PIRL data to USDOL, which will be displayed according to the frameworks within the USDOL Performance Scorecard and the WIOA Pay-for-Performance Scorecard. Each program mentioned in the supporting statement will generate a program specific report that mirrors the construct of the USDOL Performance Scorecard.

Additionally, to meet USDOL requirements, Maryland will certify and submit the USDOL Performance Scorecard to USDOL on a quarterly basis and will submit the Pay-for-Performance report(s) quarterly, when applicable. The accuracy, reliability, and comparability of program reports submitted by Maryland using federal funds are fundamental elements of good public administration and are necessary tools for maintaining and demonstrating system integrity. The use of a standard set of data elements, definitions, and specifications at all levels of the workforce system helps improve the quality of the performance information that Maryland reports on its WIOA programs. The set of common performance indicators represents the key results that Maryland strives to achieve for their customers, and that the WIOA federal oversight agencies, like USDOL are interested in measuring. Using this set of common indicators affords ETA the ability to describe, in a similar manner, the core purposes of the workforce system – through the program services received, how many people obtained jobs; their earnings; and what skill gains they achieved. They are an integral part of Maryland's

WIOA performance accountability system, and through the Workforce Performance Accountability, Information, and Reporting System, Maryland will continue to collect and report data on program activities, participants, and outcomes that are necessary for program management and to convey complete and accurate information on the performance of workforce programs to policymakers and stakeholders.

Section 116(d)(1) of WIOA mandates that the United States Secretaries of Labor and Education develop a template for performance reports to be used by states, LWDBs, and eligible providers of training services for reporting on outcomes achieved by participants in the WIOA core programs. Required annual data for the core programs include those related to primary performance indicators, participant counts and costs, and barriers to employment. Maryland will work to ensure data are collected and reported in a timely and accurate manner.

The WIOA partners are dedicated to providing their staff with additional training regarding performance reporting to ensure proficiency. Sec. 506(b)(1) of WIOA states that section 116 of WIOA will go into effect at the start of the second full PY after the date WIOA was enacted. WIOA was enacted on July 22, 2014. Therefore, Section 116's performance accountability system is effective July 1, 2016. Approval of this information collection is required so that the states, grantees, and other entities can begin programming their management information systems in order to allow for collection of the necessary data to implement the data collection and reporting requirements of Section 116 in accordance with the WIOA statute.

Local provider data and performance from the State's Title II grantees is reported in LACES for Adult Education programming and reported quarterly to OCTAE. An Adult Education Specialist in MD Labor's DWDAL oversees this effort and works directly with the Manager of Information Systems (MIS) at each Title II site to collect data on a regular basis. Additionally, this MD Labor staff person provides ongoing technical assistance to ensure data is accurately compiled and entered by local providers.

Title IV DORS monitors performance on an ongoing basis. DORS staff have access to AWARE VR standardized performance reports on an ongoing basis through weekly, monthly, quarterly, and annual reports. Performance is monitored regularly to ensure progress toward the achievement of performance goals. Additionally, Alliance Enterprises has been working with DORS and other VR agencies to develop new data reporting elements in accordance with WIOA common performance indicators. As Alliance Enterprises updates AWARE, DORS will ensure that staff are provided necessary training. Also, DORS staff will continue to work with its workforce partners toward implementing WIOA common performance indicators.

(B) Assessment of Participants' Post-Program Success. Describe how lead State agencies will use the workforce development system to assess the progress of participants who are exiting from core programs in entering, persisting in, and completing postsecondary education, or entering or remaining in employment. States may choose to set additional indicators of performance.

Through WIOA and the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA), Congress requires states to track participants' post-program success using a series of measures. For the WIOA Title I Adult and Dislocated Worker Programs, Title II Adult Education and Literacy programs, Title III Wagner-Peyser employment services, and Title IV VR, the primary indicators of performance are, as follows:

- Employment during 2nd quarter after exit
- Employment during 4th quarter after exit
- Median earnings

- Credential attainment rate (excluding Wagner-Peyser)
- Measurable skills gain (excluding Wagner-Peyser)
- Effectiveness in serving employers

For the WIOA Title I Youth program, the primary indicators of performance are, as follows:

- Employment, education, or training during 2nd quarter after exit
- Employment, education, or training during 4th quarter after exit
- Median earnings
- Credential attainment rate
- Measurable skills gain
- Effectiveness in serving employers

For the TANF Program, the primary indicator of performance, based on PRWORA requirements, is the WPR. The WPR is a measurement of families getting TANF cash assistance that include an adult “engaged in work”—that is, participating in a qualifying work-related activity for a sufficient number of hours per week. Maryland is fully committed to tracking these mandated outcomes but recognizes that the WIOA system’s mark of success goes beyond these measures. Utilizing the technical assistance provided to Maryland through its participation in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ Systems to Family Stability National Policy Academy, the WIOA partners have worked collaboratively to determine how best to measure success. As Maryland seeks to strengthen and enhance its workforce system through implementation of the State Plan, success requires a commitment to innovation, collaboration, and a true systems approach among the state’s many workforce partners.

The WIOA partners are committed to driving resources, services, and collaboration towards strategies that will effectively and efficiently push the system to make progress in reaching its goals. The WIOA Alignment Group will work with the WIOA Work Groups and the GWDB to find ways to effectively measure and strategize how best to meet benchmarks across the system. Additionally, the GWDB and WIOA Alignment Group will continually revisit these benchmarks to gauge progress and to determine whether additional measures should be tracked.

Workforce Data Quality Initiative Grant (WDQI)

In July 2021, Maryland received a three-year WDQI Round VIII grant award to create a more comprehensive database within the MLDS. The “Maryland WIOA Data Aligned” project will integrate WIOA Titles I and III data, as well as the MHEC’s community college non-credit training data, into the MLDS. This project supports the vision articulated in Maryland’s WIOA State Plan. The Maryland WIOA Data Aligned project will help the workforce system think systematically about how services are delivered, whether they effectively reach priority populations, and eliminate existing gaps to build a better equipped and more equitable State workforce. Connecting workforce, UI, and education data contained in MLDS and improving the quality and breadth of WIOA data in the MLDS is critical to workforce system advancement.

MD Labor cannot determine needs, gaps in services, and system-wide outcomes without a data-informed understanding. The Maryland workforce system agrees that this project is a worthwhile effort. The WDQI award will enable MD Labor and grant partners to accomplish projected goals within the next three years. By connecting this workforce and education data not previously available longitudinally, all partners will accurately measure the successes and challenges of the State’s workforce system to inform policymakers and other stakeholders.

(C) Use of UI Wage Record Data. Explain how the State will meet the requirements to utilize quarterly UI wage records for performance accountability, evaluations, and as a source for workforce and labor market information, consistent with Federal and State law. (This Operational Planning element applies to core programs.)

Use of UI Data

Under WIOA, UI wage records will continue to serve as the primary source for all employment related performance measures. To obtain UI Data, WIOA partners must (1) enter into an approved data sharing agreement with DUI, (2) submit and keep current the required confidentiality forms, and (3) recognize access to UI Data pursuant to a data sharing agreement as an in-kind contribution in a Resource Sharing Agreement or provide DUI an annual fee for access to the information. These requirements imposed on WIOA partners are necessary to demonstrate compliance with federal and state UI information confidentiality rules and allow the State to maintain its good standing with USDOL.

To guarantee that Maryland is seeing a full and accurate picture of the impact its WIOA programs have on participants' employment outcomes, the state plans to use supplemental wage record data to document participants' entry and retention in employment when wage records are unavailable. Although a majority of employment situations will be covered by wage records, certain other types of employment, particularly self-employment, are either excluded from UI wage records, or remain difficult to gain access to due to restrictions related to confidentiality. WIOA partners take the responsibilities of privacy and confidentiality very seriously. Therefore, the WIOA partners are dedicated to ensuring that staff who access and review UI wage records sign appropriate confidentiality and ethical disclosures every six months.

Fiscal Management and Accountability System

All of Maryland's WIOA programs use the Financial Management Information System (FMIS) for fiscal and management accountability information. FMIS is an integrated database system with purchasing and accounting components. FMIS runs on the Comptroller of Maryland's Annapolis Data Center's computers and supports individual agency and statewide purchasing and accounting operations.

FMIS supports purchasing functions through the Advanced Purchasing and Inventory Control System (ADPICS) component and supports the accounting operations through the Relational Standard Accounting and Reporting System (R*STARS) component. The integration of procurement and accounting processing within FMIS results in two primary agencies, the Department of Information Technology (DoIT) and the Comptroller of Maryland, having responsibility for separate aspects of FMIS. Specifically, DoIT is responsible for daily FMIS administration, including maintenance, operation, security, and backup of related database records and the computer programs that perform online and overnight processing. The Comptroller of Maryland's General Accounting Division (GAD) is primarily responsible for R*STARS operations, security, and reporting.

(D) Privacy Safeguards. Describe the privacy safeguards incorporated in the State's workforce development system, including safeguards required by section 444 of the General Education Provisions Act (20 U.S.C. 1232g) and other applicable Federal laws.

Privacy Safeguards

To protect PII, Maryland adheres to USDOL guidance provided in Training and Employment Guidance Letter 39-11, "Guidance on the Handling and Protection of PII." MD Labor's DWDAL issued a policy in spring 2019 on [Privacy and Data Protection](#), outlining the Division's privacy safeguards. All programs under DWDAL must adhere to the policy.

Whenever possible, Maryland will continue to use unique identifiers for participant tracking instead of SSNs. While SSNs may initially be required for performance tracking purposes, staff may use a unique identifier to link each individual record back to the SSN. Once the SSN is entered for performance tracking, the unique identifier may be used in place of the SSN for tracking purposes. When SSNs are used for tracking purposes, Maryland requires its WIOA programs to store or display SSNs in a way that is not attributable to any particular individual. For Maryland's WIOA programs using the MWE, the state subsequently uses alternative identifiers, such as state IDs, after SSNs have initially been supplied. When SSNs are used, this information is truncated and encrypted within the MWE. Only WIOA staff with selective privileges can access SSNs. To secure the System Internet communications within the MWE, a Secure Sockets Layer (SSL) is used to encrypt a session between the server and the web user. SSL is a program layer for managing the security of message transmissions in a network. The programming for maintaining data confidentiality is contained in a program layer between an application such as the System and the Internet's Transmission Control Protocol / Internet Protocol (TCP/IP) layers. The "sockets" part of the term refers to the socket method of passing data back and forth between a client and a server program in a network or between program layers in the same computer. SSL uses the public-and-private key encryption system from RSA. A digital certificate is an electronic "credit card" that establishes credentials when carrying out transactions on the web and is issued by a certification authority. It contains a copy of the certificate holder's public key, which is used for encrypting and decrypting messages and digital signatures, and the digital signature of the certificate-issuing authority. This is used so that a recipient can verify the certificate is real. The following data will always be encrypted when it is accessed by the MWE System:

- SSN,
- Federal Employer Identifier Number,
- Wage Records,
- Identifying information (including LEP and disability status),
- Information relating to benefits and public assistance received, and
- User ID and Password.

The MWE system includes a set of permissions that determine the resources in the system that a specific user can access and/or modify. For example, some staff will be able to only view certain data while others will be able to view and modify this data. When MWE's creator, Geographic Solutions, hosts the System, the data is secured behind the advanced firewall. In addition, MD Labor's current policy on PII recommends that SSNs are obtained for performance and reporting purposes, but it also states that SSNs are not required for services to be provided. Because SSNs are important for tracking outcomes, staff should seek SSNs, and in doing so, should communicate the following to customers:

- You are not required to provide us with your SSN. Your receipt of services will not be affected by disclosure or nondisclosure of your SSN or any other information that is voluntarily requested.
- SSNs are used to facilitate efficient recordkeeping, integrated service delivery, performance measurement, research, planning, and program evaluation.
- Your SSN will be kept confidential and is intended for use only by the program administrator and the federal government for reporting and evaluation.

Due to privacy concerns among Local Areas and MD Labor, Maryland formed a workgroup in 2016 to assess policy related to privacy and to work with the federal oversight agencies, like USDOL, to determine alternative methods of tracking that do not require staff to collect PII. The desired goal is to obtain accurate eligibility documentation while reducing paper case files. Utilization of a module within the MWE allows all eligibility information and supporting documentation to be scanned and uploaded to the MWE eliminating the need for a paper file.

(7) Priority of Service for Veterans.

- (A) Describe how the State will implement the priority of service provisions for covered persons in accordance with the requirements of the Jobs for Veterans Act, codified at section 4215 of 38 U.S.C., which applies to all employment and training programs funded in whole or in part by the Department of Labor.**
- (B) Describe how the State will monitor priority of service provisions for veterans.**
- (C) Describe the triage and referral process for eligible veterans and other populations determined eligible to receive services from the Jobs for Veterans State Grants (JVSG) program's Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) specialist/Consolidated Position.**

Men and women who have served in the U.S. armed forces or who have been the persons of service members have made significant sacrifices on behalf of the United States. In recognition of their service, and in accordance with the WIOA, the Jobs for Veterans Act of 2002[1], and the Veterans' Benefits, Healthcare, and Information Technology Act of 2006,[2] Maryland is committed to prioritizing services to "veterans and eligible persons" who meet the criteria for "covered persons." Maryland's workforce system must ensure that members of this population have access to services that enable them to qualify for, find, and keep good civilian jobs in occupations with career pathways.

The table below provides criteria for determining whether an individual meets the WIOA definition for a "covered person:"

Veterans	Eligible Persons
Veterans who have served at least one day in the active military, naval, or air service, who were discharged or released from service under any condition other than a condition classified as dishonorable, and who are otherwise eligible for participation in programming are included as covered persons. This definition includes Reserve units and National Guard units activated for Federal Service.	An “eligible person” means an eligible spouse/caregiver of any of the following: a. An eligible spouse/caregiver of any veteran who died of a service- connected disability; b. An eligible spouse/caregiver of any member of the Armed Forces serving on active duty who, at the time of application for the priority, is listed in one or more of the following categories and has been so listed for a total of more than 90 days; i. Missing in action; ii. Captured in the line of duty by a hostile force; or iii. Forcibly detained or interned in the line of duty by a foreign government or power. c. An eligible spouse/caregiver of any veteran who has a total disability resulting from a service-connected disability, as evaluated by the Department of Veterans Affairs; or d. An eligible spouse/caregiver of any veteran who died while a disability was in existence.

For universal access programs, such as Wagner-Peyser, covered persons must receive Priority of Service over all other program participants. However, for programs with specific eligibility criteria, such as the WIOA Title I Adult program, covered persons must first meet all statutory eligibility requirements of the program to receive Priority of Service.

Priority of service for the WIOA Title I Adult Program must be provided in the following order:

- First, to "veterans and eligible persons" (or covered persons) (who also are included in the groups given statutory priority for WIOA adult formula funds). This means that "veterans and eligible persons" (or covered persons) who also are recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals, or individuals who are basic skills deficient would receive first priority for services provided with WIOA adult formula funds.
- Second, to non-covered persons (individuals who are not "veterans and eligible persons" (or covered persons)) who are included in the groups given priority for WIOA adult formula funds.
- Third, to "veterans and eligible persons" (or covered persons) who are not included in WIOA's priority groups.

- Fourth, to any other populations identified by the Governor or Local Board for priority.
- Last, to non-covered persons outside of the groups given priority under WIOA.

** **Note:** When past income is an eligibility determinant for Federal employment or training programs, any amounts received as military pay or allowances by any person who served on active duty, and certain other specified benefits, must be disregarded for the veteran and for other individuals for whom those amounts would normally be applied in making an eligibility determination. Military earnings are not to be included when calculating income for veterans or transitioning service members for this priority.*

For programs that target specific populations without statutory mandate, covered persons must receive the highest priority for enrollment, consistent with the priority of service applied to universal access programs. State and local operators do not have the discretion to establish further priorities within the overall Priority of Service; this right is reserved for the United States Secretary of Labor only. Local Area directors must ensure that local WIOA plans incorporate a Veterans Priority of Service policy that is consistent with the requirements of State policy and the law.

Identifying Veteran Status

Each American Job Center (AJC), or other relevant point of entry, should inform covered persons that, by identifying as a Veteran or covered person, they are entitled to Priority of Service. One of the responsibilities of the LVERs and the Consolidated DVOP/LVER is to ensure that signage and detailed sign-in sheets exist at the point of entry. The workforce system and affiliate program operators must enable "veterans and eligible persons" (or covered persons) to identify themselves as Veterans at the point of entry to the system or program, so that covered persons can take full advantage of Priority of Service.

AJCs and affiliate program operators must ensure that covered "veterans and eligible persons" (or covered persons) are made aware of:

- Priority of Service entitlement;
- The full array of employment training and placement services available;
- Applicable eligibility requirements for programs and services.

Verifying Veteran Status

Any individual self-identifying as a covered person should be provided immediate priority in the delivery of employment and training services. No covered person should be denied access on a priority basis to any services provided by program staff in order to verify covered person status. The only services that require eligibility verification are those that involve the use of outside resources, such as classroom training. For example, to receive training services under WIOA Title I programs, veteran status must be verified. Even in these instances, verification is only necessary where a decision is made to commit outside resources to a covered person over another individual. For all other purposes, covered persons should be enrolled and provided immediate priority before providing verification as a covered person. It is neither necessary nor appropriate for any staff to require verification of the status of a "veterans and eligible spouses" (or covered persons) at the point of entry, unless the individual who self-identifies as a covered "veterans and eligible spouses" (or covered persons):

1. Is to immediately undergo eligibility determination and must be registered or enrolled in a program; or,

2. The applicable federal program rules require verification of covered "veterans and eligible spouses" (or covered persons) status at that time.

To receive Priority of Service for career services, covered persons may self-attest their "veterans and eligible persons" (or covered persons) status. To receive training services under WIOA, however, Veteran status must be verified.

Implementing Priority of Service

The regulations provide that priority of service means the right of eligible covered persons to take precedence over eligible non-covered persons in obtaining services. The regulations further specify that taking precedence may mean:

- The covered person receives access to the service or resource earlier in time than the non-covered person; or
- If the service or resource is limited, the covered person receives access to the service or resource instead of or before the non-covered person.

The regulations specify how priority of service is to be applied across three different types of qualified job training programs:

- Universal access programs that do not target specific groups;
- Discretionary targeting programs that focus on certain groups but are not mandated to serve target group members before other eligible individuals; and
- Statutory targeting programs that are mandated by federal law to provide priority or preference to certain groups.

Monitoring Compliance with Priority of Service

USDOL will monitor recipients of funds for qualified job training programs to ensure that covered persons are made aware of and provided priority of service. Monitoring will be performed jointly by the Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS), the USDOL agency responsible for administering the program, and the Regional LVER.

The following will be used to measure compliance:

- The ratio of veterans referred to employment and WIOA services versus non-veteran clients
- The ratio of veterans referred and accepted to WIOA training versus non-veterans
- Are veterans priority of service signage easily seen near entrance
- Are front desk personnel fully versed on veteran priority of service

If monitoring identifies non-compliance with priority of service, the results of the monitoring:

1. Will be handled in accord with each program's compliance review procedures; and
2. May lead to imposition of a corrective action plan.

Referral Process for Veterans Determined to Have Significant Barriers to Employment

The USDOL's Employment and Training Administration anticipates that approximately 30 percent of veterans seeking AJC services nationwide will be identified as having a significant barrier to employment (SBE). This guidance is designed to assist DVOP specialists in targeting

services to eligible veterans and persons who meet criteria for SBE status in order to fulfill their primary responsibility to provide intensive services to this population.

An eligible "veterans and eligible persons" (or covered persons) is determined to have an SBE if he or she attests to belonging to at least one of the criteria below:

- A special disabled or disabled veteran, as those terms are defined in 38 U.S.C. 4211(1) and; Special disabled and disabled veterans are those:
 - Who are entitled to compensation (or those who would be entitled to compensation, yet are not receiving it due to the receipt of military retired pay) under laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans' Affairs; or
 - Who was discharged or released from active duty because of a service-connected disability;
- A homeless person, as defined in Sections 103(a) and (b) of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 11302(a) and (b)), as amended;
- A recently separated service member, as defined in 38 U.S.C. 4211(6), who has been unemployed for 27 or more weeks in the previous 12 months; i.e. the term of unemployment over the previous 12 months remains 27 weeks; however, the requirement of 27 consecutive weeks is eliminated;
- An offender, as defined by WIOA Section 3 (38), who is currently incarcerated or who has been released from incarceration; i.e. the expanded definition of SBE includes any eligible veteran or eligible person who is or is currently or formerly incarcerated by removing the last 12 months requirement;
- A veteran lacking a high school diploma or equivalent certificate;
- A low-income individual (as defined by WIOA Section 3 (36));
- A veteran between the ages of 18 and 24 years old who possess limited civilian work history;
- A Vietnam-era veteran. Vietnam-era veterans are those for which any part of their active military, naval, or air service was during the Vietnam era (the period beginning February 28, 1961, and ending May 7, 1975, in the case of a veteran who served in the Republic of Vietnam during that period, and the period beginning August 5, 1964, and ending May 7, 1975, in all other cases); and
- Eligible Transitioning Service Members, Spouses and Caregivers. In annual appropriations bills since the consolidated Appropriations Act of 2014, Congress authorized JVSG grants to support services described in VPL 07-14 to:
 - Transitioning members of the Armed Forces who have been identified as in need of individualized career services;
 - Members of the Armed Forces who are wounded, ill, or injured and receiving treatment in Military Treatment Facilities (MTFs) or Warrior Transition Units (WTUs); and
 - The spouses or other family caregivers of such wounded, ill, or injured members.

Veterans who do not fall into one of the categories targeted for services by DVOP specialists remain eligible for services under WIOA Title I for adults, dislocated workers, and youth, WIOA Title III for employment services under the Wagner-Peyser program.

During a Veteran's initial visit, AJC staff are responsible for assessing the Veteran to determine whether an SBE exists. If a Veteran self identifies as having an SBE, then AJC staff should use the Eligibility Checklist to document status. The Checklist will be used by the AJC staff as a way to lead a conversation concerning potential barriers. Staff should not ask the Veterans to complete the form themselves. AJC staff shall assess the Veteran for SBEs in a private area to allow the Veteran an opportunity to feel safe about providing sensitive information.

After the AJC staff's initial assessment and delivery of Basic Career Services, Veterans with an SBE that require and will benefit from intensive services shall be referred to the DVOP upon the Veteran's agreement. If a DVOP or the Consolidated DVOP/LVER is requested and is unavailable, the self-attestation form will serve as a referral for DVOPs or the Consolidated DVOP/LVER to follow-up. If the Veteran with an SBE refuses DVOP services, they shall be provided with AJC services.

If an SBE is not identified, then the Veteran shall be provided with the applicable and available ETA-administered AJC services. If a Veteran without an SBE indicates a preference to work with a Veteran representative, Local Area staff should work with JVSG staff to ensure the Veteran job seeker understands DVOP specialists, LVER, and the Consolidated DVOP/LVER staff roles. Priority of Service must be given to all eligible Veterans and persons.

(8) Addressing the Accessibility of the AJC Delivery System for Individuals with Disabilities. Describe how the one-stop delivery system (including one-stop center operators and the one-stop delivery system partners), will comply with section 188 of WIOA (if applicable) and applicable provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12101 et seq.) regarding the physical and programmatic accessibility of facilities, programs, services, technology, and materials for individuals with disabilities. This also must include a description of compliance through providing staff training and support for addressing the needs of individuals with disabilities. Describe the State's one-stop center certification policy, particularly the accessibility criteria.

WIOA System Accessibility for All Marylanders

Maryland's WIOA oversight entities are committed to ensuring that individuals with disabilities have equal access to all WIOA covered programs and activities. The State of Maryland will ensure that sub-recipients establish and implement appropriate procedures and processes under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Rehabilitation Act -Title IV. The State of Maryland has taken necessary steps to identify compliance under Section 188 of WIOA, which contains provisions identical to those in Section 188 of Workforce Investment Act, as well as 29 CFR Part 38, which is similar to 29 CFR Part 37. Additionally, the state will ensure that all Local Areas comply with provisions that prohibit discrimination against individuals who apply to, participate in, work for, or come into contact with programs and activities that receive financial assistance from USDOL, United States Department of Education, and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Section 188 of WIOA prohibits discrimination against all individuals in the United States on the basis of race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy, childbirth, and related medical conditions, transgender status, and gender identity), national origin (including LEP), age, disability, or political affiliation or belief, or against beneficiaries on the basis of either citizenship status or participation in any WIOA Title I-financially assisted program or activity. Section 188 also requires that reasonable accommodations be provided to eligible individuals with disabilities. AJCs are expected to meet the needs of their customers by ensuring universal access to their programs and activities for all qualified individuals. Universal access includes performance of the following functions:

- Understanding local needs;
- Marketing and outreach;
- Involving community groups and schools;
- Affecting collaboration, including partnerships and linkages;
- Staff training;
- Intake, registration and orientation;

- Assessments and screening; and
- Service delivery.

Maryland's AJCs are required to provide reasonable accommodation for individuals with disabilities to ensure equal access and opportunity. The term "reasonable accommodation" is defined as "modifications or adjustments to an application/registration process that enables a qualified applicant/registrant with a disability to be considered for the aid, benefits, services, training or employment that the qualified applicant/registrant desires;" or "modifications or adjustments that enable a qualified individual with a disability to perform the essential functions of a job, or receive aid, benefits, services, or training equal to that provided to qualified individuals without disabilities," or "modifications or adjustments that enable a qualified individual with a disability to enjoy the same benefits and privileges of the aid." AJC will make visible to participants that:

- Section 188 implements the nondiscrimination and equal opportunity provisions of WIOA, which are contained in Section 188 of the statute.
- Section 188 prohibits discrimination against all individuals in the United States on the basis of race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy, childbirth, and related medical conditions, transgender status, and gender identity), national origin (including LEP), age, disability, or political affiliation or belief, or against beneficiaries on the basis of either citizenship status or participation in any WIOA Title I-financially assisted program or activity.
- Section 188 also requires that reasonable accommodations be provided to qualified individuals with disabilities in certain circumstances.

The state expects local providers to acknowledge in local plans and/or policies that they understand that, while Section 188 regulations ensure equal opportunity for individuals with disabilities, sub-recipients may also be subject to the requirements of:

- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, which prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities by recipients of federal financial assistance;
- Title I of the ADA, which prohibits discrimination in employment based on disability;
- Title II of the ADA, which prohibits state and local governments from discriminating on the basis of disability;
- Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act; and
- Maryland Anti-Discrimination laws.

The MD Labor Office of Fair Practices (OFP) maintains a current listing of businesses and individuals who interpret, that provide for Braille, and other auxiliary aids and services. Alternate formats including large format copies are made available upon request. The OFP maintains regular contact with the Maryland Department of Disabilities for related guidance and technical assistance.

Included in the administrative directives that the OFP has developed and disseminated is a directive, entitled "Alternate Formats", which documents the related policy and procedure and includes a resource list of contacts.

DWDAL maintains contact with organizations and agencies that provide services to and/or advocate on behalf of individuals with disabilities. Through these associations, MD Labor receives regular guidance and technical assistance on providing notice and services to individuals with disabilities.

The guidelines for the development and submission of each grant recipient's Local WIOA Plan included the requirement that recipients describe the steps they would take to ensure that communications with individuals with disabilities, including individuals with visual or hearing impairments, are as effective as communications with others.

Monitoring of Sites

For WIOA programs under MD Labor's oversight, in order to confirm compliance under Section 188, DWDAL state Regional Program Monitors conduct onsite reviews. Prior to the commencement of the visit, the Monitor confirms with the Program Manager or Director that notification of the visit was received, staff are aware and requested information prior to the visit is unchanged. The Program Monitor observes the site's triage system, confirms that appropriate federal signs are visible to participants, and examines the kiosk to confirm that appropriate WIOA, Veteran, ITA, and OJT information is available. A site walk-through determines whether:

- EO Law Posters are in plain sight, centrally located, in needed languages and provide state and local EO Officer contact information;
- WIOA, Veteran, ITA, and OJT Literature are present;
- EO tagline is inserted and correct;
- TTY/TDD or Relay Service number is provided where phone numbers are listed;
- Site is accessible, i.e. ADA compliant;
- Disability entrance signage is present;
- Entrance and parking lot are accessible; and
- There are both Accessible stations and Assistive Technology.

The Monitor performs a case file review analyzing documentation, intake processes, eligibility determination, and access to services based on the laws under WIOA Title I and Title IV from randomly selected files for the PY. Tests will be performed using the monitoring tools, created by the Monitoring Unit, along with instruments provided by MD Labor OFP. The Monitor develops a report highlighting any discrepancies, findings, or concerns that will be forwarded to the OFP and the OAS for further review. The WIOA partners are dedicated to ensuring that subject matter experts in relevant areas, such as disabilities and accessibility, are included in monitoring best practice training and discussions to ensure that WIOA programming is delivered thoroughly and effectively.

As of January 2024, MD Labor's OFP administers the comprehensive EO monitoring of the Local Areas.

DORS self-monitors for compliance with the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act to ensure that all offices, programs, services, technology, and materials are fully accessible to staff with disabilities and consumers with significant disabilities. On a daily basis, staff with disabilities and participants in the VR program monitor DORS for accessibility. Monitoring activities are also conducted by the United States Department of Education, Rehabilitation Services Administration, as well as by state and federal auditors.

DHS provides assistance to individuals and families with disabilities applying for or receiving TANF by ensuring equal access to people with disabilities; ensuring that policies, practices, and procedures are modified for people with disabilities where necessary; and ensuring that methods of administration do not discriminate on the basis of disability. Applicants and recipients are provided special accommodations and auxiliary aids such as interpreters for

individuals with hearing impairments, large type reading materials for individuals with visual impairments, and telephone interviews for those customers who are unable to visit a LDSS.

Further, specifically with TANF workforce development programs, DHS requires LDSS to complete an annual Plan for Achieving Self-Sufficiency (PASS).⁵ Included in the annual plan are project descriptions for all work program activities. In the Plan, LDSS are required to describe their assessment, reasonable accommodation, and monitoring processes which will include a communication strategy with vendors that provide workforce development services, if applicable. Additionally, DHS conducts monthly technical assistance/monitoring calls and annual on-site monitoring visits with each LDSS, which includes evaluation of ADA compliance. Compliance will be measured, among other things, by the promulgation of policies, tracking of requests for reasonable accommodations, and participation in DHS ADA trainings. Finally, monitoring is also conducted by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services as well as state and federal auditors.

(9) Addressing the Accessibility of the AJC Delivery System for Individuals who are English Language Learners. Describe how the one-stop delivery system (including one-stop center operators and the one-stop delivery system partners) will ensure that each one-stop center is able to meet the needs of English language learners, such as through established procedures, staff training, resources, and other materials. Describe how English language learners will be made aware of the opportunity to enroll and/or co-enroll in all the core programs for which they are eligible.

Background

According to July 2023 MD Labor data, English language learners represent approximately 61 percent of the State's Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title II adult education population. According to the Census Bureau's 2018-2022 American Community Survey, Maryland is home to 6,161,707 residents and, of the statewide population aged five or older, 19.8 percent report that they speak a language other than English at home and 7.3 percent report speaking English less than "very well." Additionally, the Census Bureau reports that, of the 965,638 foreign-born persons in Maryland of the age of five or older, 80.6 percent speak a language other than English and 37.8 percent report speaking English less than "very well" (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018-2022). These populations provide substantial contributions to Maryland's economy every day. In turn, Maryland's workforce system must strive to tailor services for this population as they obtain literacy and high school equivalency, training, and employment services.

MD Labor takes seriously its commitment to being in compliance with equal opportunity and nondiscrimination matters. First, Maryland's Nondiscrimination Policy fulfills the requirements of WIOA Section 188 and 29 CFR Part 38. The policy states that it is the position of the State of Maryland to prohibit all forms of unlawful discrimination against any individuals in the United States on the basis of race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy, childbirth, and related medical conditions, transgender status, and gender identity), national origin (including LEP), age, [disability](#), or political affiliation or belief, or against beneficiaries on the basis of either [citizenship](#) status or [participation](#) in any [WIOA financially assisted programs or activities](#).

⁵ PASS Plans are written by each of the 24 LDSS. These plans outline how each LDSS will provide employment and training services to TANF and TANF related populations (non-custodial parents, foster youth and foster alumni). These PASS Plans are not the same as the PASS plans defined by the Social Security Administration.

Second, MD Labor's OFP is responsible for overall compliance regarding equal opportunity and nondiscrimination matters. The OFP provides technical assistance and professional development opportunities. All Local Areas have designated an Equal Opportunity Officer to ensure accessibility of the Local Areas' AJCs. In addition to the equal opportunity and accommodations training conducted by that office, Maryland is dedicated to ensuring that frontline staff are trained to meet the needs of Maryland's English language learners through professional development opportunities.

Third, the presence of a language access plan displays the agency's commitment to ensuring services for English language learners. DWDAL and DUI jointly developed a Language Access Plan (LAP) in 2020. The LAP was revised in 2022 and is currently under revision for publication in the Spring of 2024. The LAP identifies how DWDAL and DUI, along with the statewide network of AJCs and Title II adult education sites, will work collaboratively to ensure workforce system access for multilingual learners.

Language Access Services

The LAP is established pursuant to and in accordance with, State Government Article, §§10-1101, Annotated Code of Maryland: "The General Assembly finds that the inability to speak, understand, or read the English language is a barrier that prevents access to public services provided by state departments, agencies, and programs, and that the public services available through these entities are essential to the welfare of Maryland residents. It is the policy of the state that state departments, agencies, and programs shall provide equal access to public services for individuals with LEP."

The provision of equal access to public services details both spoken interpretation and written translation services. There are two types of spoken interpretation services: in-person and telephonic. In person and virtual interpretation are real-time, face-to-face oral interpretation service options that allows customers to receive information in their preferred language with incorporation of "cultural and syntactical context." The State of Maryland currently contracts with Ad-Astra, Inc. (Ad-Astra) to provide these services. Telephonic interpretation also allows customers to receive information in their preferred language with incorporation of cultural and syntactical context through the telephone, where the interpreter is able to relay the messages of a staff person. The State of Maryland currently contracts with Language Line Solutions, Inc. (Language Line) to provide this service. Based on Maryland Code, State agencies and grantees must provide face-to-face, in-house oral language service if contact between the agency and individuals with LEP is on a weekly or more frequent basis. In the LAP, MD Labor provides guidance on implementing this code on a state-level and local-level.

To ensure speakers of other languages are aware of available interpretation language services at the State's AJCs, a variety of resources are used. AJCs display "I Speak" posters near the point of entry, listing 38 identifiable languages that customers can point to so staff can arrange appropriate interpretation services. AJCs may also display multilingual brochures specifically designed for the LEP population as well as Equal Opportunity posters in languages other than English.

Maryland Code also stipulates requirements for written translation services. Vital documents must be translated into any language spoken by any LEP population that constitutes three percent or more of the overall population within the geographic area. According to MD Labor's OFP, a "vital document" is one that conveys information that critically affects the program recipient to make decisions about his or her participation in an activity. Documents that require a signature and mention the continuation or termination of a benefit are considered "vital." This may include web-based information. The State currently contracts

with Ad-Astra to provide written translation services in order to ensure material is accessible to LEP individuals. All state vendor contracts may be utilized by Local Areas.

Maryland also uses “Babel Notices” to communicate the significance of vital information to English language learners and LEP individuals. Local Areas should include Babel Notices pursuant to the three percent population stipulation in State Law. For instance, DUI issues Babel Notices with their communications, and DWDAL issues Babel Notices in communications to ROW and RESEA customers. Census data should be used to determine which languages to include and will be reviewed as new statistics become available. Data in the MWE regarding LEP status and preferred language allows Local Areas to develop a baseline of what populations use and require linguistic services. Local Areas are able to alter their Babel Notices according to the languages most relevant to their areas.

To complement the 2022 LAP, the 2023 Language Access Plan Resource Guide was created to create an easy-to-use resource for frontline staff to use when working with LEP customers. The guide highlights applicable laws, strategies to access language needs, best practices in working with LEP customers and interpreters, detailed instruction of accessing the State’s contracted language assistance vendors, and available resources to aid in working with LEP customers.

Additionally, three professional development opportunities for staff were conducted to reinforce the commitment to ensuring services are accessible to LEP customers. These opportunities included a Language Assistance Services training to review the requirements of the LAP, contracted vendors, best practices in working with LEP customers, and best practices in working with interpreters. Additionally, staff were given the opportunity to engage with language assistance vendors, Language Line and Ad Astra, during the Meet the Vendors training. This training included a presentation by each vendor about their services and how to access them, as well as the opportunity for staff to ask questions directly to the vendors. The last training conducted was Refugee Resettlement 101, where the Director of MORA presented on the refugee resettlement process in the U.S. There will be a continued focus on supporting local area staff with training and professional development opportunities to ensure they have the knowledge and resources needed to support the LEP population.

DWDAL and DUI publications available in Spanish include the Pocket Resume for Job Interviews, Services for Migrant and Seasonal Farm Workers, GED® Testing, the publication “What you need to know about UI in Maryland,” and BEACON 2.0 Claimant User Guide. Additional resources are continually reviewed for content and ease of translation. Because of the significant number of Spanish-speaking claimants seeking services, the College Park UI Claim Center employs Spanish-speaking staff that review claims over the phone for claimants from the entire State. The Division’s Spanish speaking personnel also assist with employer inquiries when necessary.

DORS currently has its website and written materials available in five non-English languages: Chinese, French, Korean, Spanish, and Vietnamese. These languages were selected based on Census data and customer requests. Similarly, DHS has forms and outreach materials available in Spanish and English as well as FIA forms to apply for assistance available in Amharic, Arabic, Burmese, Chinese, Farsi, French, Korean, Nepalese, Russian, TIC, Traditional Chinese, and Vietnamese. Concerning DHS’ local department of social services (LDSS) offices, the preferred language of customers is recorded in the client database system. This information is utilized to translate documents before sending them out to customers. Multilingual pay, a program for increased compensation for staff fluent in more than one language and who directly work with customers, acts as an incentive program for LDSS staff, as well as Title III AJC employees.

Using a translation application, MD Labor's website can be translated into more than 100 languages. The MWE is available in 20 languages. These languages were selected based on Census data and in adherence to State statute. DWDAL also created documents listing multilingual DWDAL staff and Local Area AJC staff for internal reference.

Other Initiatives

In addition to ensuring language access services, MD Labor's New Americans Initiative will provide much needed outreach and technical assistance for AJC staff. To ensure high quality services to both jobseekers and businesses, professional development opportunities are currently available and advertised through regular communications from Central Office administration. Through leveraging partnerships under WIOA, new professional development and training opportunities on topics relevant to all WIOA partners will be available to staff. Providing accessibility to the workforce system for all of Maryland's jobseekers is central to Maryland's approach under WIOA.

MD Labor co-leads the Skilled Immigrant Task Force (Task Force) with DHS' MORA. Recognizing the detrimental effects of brain waste on the economy, as well as the economic hardships of immigrants looking for employment opportunities that align with their professional backgrounds and training, Maryland submitted a Letter of Interest (LOI) to the White House National Skills and Credential Institute in 2016. The LOI identified four key barriers to the integration of skilled immigrants in Maryland's workforce, including LEP, complex licensing and credentialing processes, limited experience of Maryland's workforce system in working with foreign-born individuals, and lack of social capital on the part of immigrants. The Task Force was created in June 2016 to address these issues, believing that the State of Maryland could lead the way in creating a win-win environment in which immigrants secure jobs that match their professional and educational backgrounds while simultaneously meeting the hiring demands of the business community. The Task Force includes representation from national agencies, state agencies, local governments, AJCs, adult education providers, service providers, and local refugee resettlement agencies.

Serving the immigrant population of Maryland for their full integration into the State's workforce system is one of the top priorities of the Task Force as well as MD Labor. In collaboration with MD Labor and several Local Workforce Areas, the Task Force (SITF) hosted a two-part virtual Job Resource and Hiring Fair for New Americans in Maryland, including immigrants, refugees and asylees. The goal of the Part 1 event - Pre-Event Webinar was to increase workforce service accessibility and job opportunities for New Americans in Maryland. It set jobseekers up for success at the Part 2 event - Hiring Fair by sharing information on Résumé & Cover Letter Strategies, Job Interview Techniques & Tips, Credential Evaluation Information, and MD Labor Job Seeker Services. The Hiring Fair matched skilled immigrants with employers in industries in which they were interested. The Task Force conducted a survey to best match labor supply with industry demand, and a panel of employers were featured. The Task Force surveyed skilled immigrants and skilled immigrant service providers to identify their career interests, workforce experience, and career readiness needs. This two-part virtual event addressed all language accommodation and workforce culture information needs. These events were simultaneously interpreted into all requested foreign languages as well as American Sign Language. Follow-up feedback was conducted with participants to inform the evolution of best practices for offering multilingual workforce events.

MD Labor hosted a statewide virtual Apprenticeship Resource Fair for New Americans. RA is Maryland's premier "Earn While You Learn" career pathway. This event featured speakers from

the MD Labor presenting Maryland Apprenticeship and Training Program (MATP) and various apprenticeship program sponsors in a variety of industries across the state.

Currently, in year eight of the Task Force (July 2023-June 2024), the following workgroups have completed or are working on the following:

- The Career Pathways workgroup is currently working to create six career pathways guides for occupations in healthcare for Medical Assistant, Occupational Therapy Assistant, Pharmacy Technician, Physician Assistant, Registered Nurse, and Pharmacist. These guides include an overview of the occupations, and the step needed to obtain certification/licensure in Maryland, with a focus on information targeted for the immigrant and refugee population.
- The Business Engagement workgroup developed a presentation to highlight the benefits of hiring internationally trained professionals (ITP) and ways to engage with the ITP talent pool. This should ultimately connect employers to Task Force members working directly to support ITPs. Workgroup members will then connect with local chambers of commerce and workforce boards to be added to their meeting agendas to present. Thus far, a presentation was made at the Greater Bethesda Chamber of Commerce.
- For the past two years, the Job Fair workgroup has collaborated with a local church community to host a job fair for their primarily Amharic-speaking community. Both job fairs resulted in 100's of job seekers connecting with the resources and employers.
- Lastly, the Entrepreneurship Guide workgroup is working to develop a guide for immigrants and refugees looking to start or grow their own business.

Additionally, Maryland seeks to enhance services to and remove barriers for English language learners through several grant and technical assistance opportunities. First, Maryland was chosen as one of eight U.S. localities to receive customized technical assistance from WES Global Talent Bridge (GTB) to advance its skilled immigrant integration efforts through their Skilled Immigrant Integration Program (SIIP). Each of the eight pilot communities received 12 hours of coaching and advising provided by WES GTB; 12 hours of additional customized technical assistance from national experts; and four interactive web-based training sessions with WES GTB and other national partners on topics related to immigrant professional integration. Additionally, Maryland participated in two in-person, peer-learning convenings as part of this project: one in Syracuse, New York and one in Toronto, Canada. As part of the pilot group, each community participated in monthly calls with WES GTB and other participating localities to share ideas and provide updates on the progress of strategic efforts. From participating in this project, the Task Force created a guide for foreign-trained engineers seeking to re-enter the engineering profession in Maryland as well as honed strategies for employer engagement. The engineering guide was published in 2018.

Since participating in the SIIP Program Maryland is now part of the SIIP Alumni group which offers quarterly training covering varying topics about skilled immigrant integration. Additionally, for the past two years, Maryland has been able to participate in the SIIP Annual convening which brings together past and present SIIP participants to surface any technical assistance needs or best practices, networking opportunities, and discussions on topics such as employer engagement, policy and advocacy, and funding strategies.

MD Labor participated in the National Occupational Licensing Learning Consortium; a peer-learning consortium focused on occupational licensing policies. This selective group worked on understanding ways to remove barriers to labor market entry and improve professional licensing portability and reciprocity. Member states identified areas within their individual policies that may impede entry for populations most burdened by those policies as well as

potential solutions to reduce related barriers. These populations include skilled immigrants, people with criminal records, active-duty military, veterans and their spouses, and unemployed and dislocated workers. From participation in this consortium, several changes have been made that reduce language-related licensing barriers for the LEP population for the barber, cosmetology, plumbing, and HVAC professions. LEP individuals seeking a barber or cosmetology license are now able to utilize language interpreters for theory exams and those seeking a plumbing or HVAC license are now able to use a translation dictionary for exams.

Along with the several representatives from Maryland Apprenticeship and Training Program (MATP), the Office of New Americans Initiative (NAI) joined the US Department of Labor's (DOL) Increasing Apprentice Diversity Cohort to develop the State Action Plan. For the National Apprenticeship Week 2020, outreach video messages from several dignitaries (Governor, First Lady, and DHS's Secretary) about Maryland's RA Program were created in Korean and Spanish as well as English to raise awareness of the meaningful contributions apprenticeship programs in the U.S. make to our country's workforce. [Registered Apprenticeship Brochure](#) is available in Amharic, Chinese, Dari, French, Korean, Pashto, Russian, Spanish, Swahili, Tagalog, Tigrinya, and Vietnamese.

MD Labor and MORA at DHS formed a workgroup with representatives from three local resettlement agencies (International Rescue Committee (IRC), Ethiopian Community Development Council, and Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service) in Maryland to create informative and helpful materials for employers to hire Afghan Special Immigrant Visas (SIVs) resettling in the United States. MATP, NAI and MORA work together to provide apprenticeship opportunities to youth refugees. Additionally, DWDAL granted funding to two local resettlement agencies, IRC and Lutheran Social Services of the National Capital Area, for supportive services in connecting their clients with RA opportunities.

Stakeholder organizations continue to build relationships, share ideas, and discuss best practices. The Task Force's workgroups created a Resource Guide for New American Job Seekers, which lists nationwide and local organizations and services/programs with descriptions, phone numbers, and links. This guide is also available in Arabic, Chinese, Dari, French, Korean, Pashto, Spanish, Swahili, and Vietnamese. A Financial Literacy Guide which lists a variety of financial education providers throughout Maryland as well as information about common financial questions, including loans, taxes, unemployment, and frauds was published. This guide is also available in Amharic, Chinese, Dari, French, Korean, Pashto, Spanish, Swahili, Tagalog, Tigrinya, and Vietnamese.

Through policy issuances and monitoring, the state workforce system will ensure that the needs of English language learners will be met.

IV. Coordination with State Plan Programs

Describe the methods used for joint planning and coordination among the core programs, and with the required one-stop partner programs and other programs and activities included in the Unified or Combined State Plan.

MD Labor (including TAA), DHCD, DHS, DORS, and all other programs engaged in Maryland's Combined Plan worked together to implement the Benchmarks of Success. The Benchmarks reflected a shared and coordinated vision of excellence among the State's workforce system partners and provide a strategic tool for continuous improvement. Recognizing the importance of a shared set of performance benchmarks and success metrics that incentivize the type of performance and service delivery needed to ensure Maryland's workforce system realizes the state's vision and leaves no one behind, Maryland will spend the remainder of 2024 developing a new performance metric framework. This effort will be led by the GWDB and MD Labor's DWDAL and will include evaluation of what has and has not worked well, including in implementing the previous Benchmarks of Success framework, and engagement of state and local partners.

Joint planning and coordination occurs between all partners. Specifically, strategies to integrate the TAA include issuing a new policy in 2022 to ensure better coordination between TAA and UI, encouraging the co-enrollment of TAA participants in Title I programming, extensive co-planning between the TAA and staff that administer Rapid Response/Business Services, and representation on the WIOA Alignment Group via MD Labor's Director of Workforce Development.

In order to guide the WIOA partners in this work, WIOA partners will work together to lay the foundation of this new performance metric system. Strategic goals and corresponding benchmarks will be focused around the central vision of the State Plan and the WIOA system. In prior years, the committees of the WIOA Alignment Group below, convened by DWDAL, formed the infrastructure for achieving this work and these focus areas will be incorporated into the revisiting and potential revamp of the Benchmarks framework to be led by the GWDB and DWDAL:

1. Executive Steering Committee- including the executive leadership from the core WIOA partner agencies, responsible for providing strategic oversight and direction to the Benchmarks initiative, and governing the WIOA Alignment Group;
2. WIOA Alignment Workgroup- responsible for ensuring the strategic vision of the Executive Steering Committee is realized by providing operational guidance to the other Benchmark committees;
3. Data and Dashboard- responsible for developing a consistent, sustainable system all workforce partners can use to measure, analyze, display, and apply Benchmarks data to continuously improve the quality and effectiveness of services;
4. Professional Development and Technical Assistance- responsible for producing, disseminating, and facilitating professional development and technical assistance programming that supports Maryland's WIOA partners in what the Benchmarks are

and how they can be used to drive continuous improvement; additionally, this committee will conduct a stakeholder analysis;

5. Policy- responsible for identifying opportunities to support the implementation of the Benchmarks via policy change; and
6. Communications- responsible for developing a plan that identifies stakeholders, effective communication methods, and maps out the implementation of the Benchmarks. This committee facilitates and maintains the internal communication between the committees as well as external communication about the Benchmarks.

Maryland's WIOA Alignment Group

The WIOA Alignment Group meets monthly and is the main coordinating body under Maryland's Combined State Plan. The Alignment Group includes leadership from the key programs represented in the Maryland State Plan. At a minimum, the Alignment Group will be comprised of the following:

- At least one representative of the GWDB;
- At least one representative from the Maryland MD Labor's DWDAL, including TAA;
- At least one representative from the Maryland MD Labor's DUI;
- At least one representative from the Maryland DHS' FIA;
- At least one representative from the MSDE's DORS;
- At least two Local Area representatives, including the MWA chair;
- At least one local representative from the DORS;
- At least one local representative of a WIOA Title II adult education service provider;
- At least one representative from a Local Department of Social Services (LDSS); and
- At least one representative from the DHCD.

V. Common Assurances

(FOR ALL CORE PROGRAMS)

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include assurances that:

	Assurance
X	1. The State has established a policy identifying circumstances that may present a conflict of interest for a State Board or local board member, or the entity or class of officials that the member represents, and procedures to resolve such conflicts;
X	2. The State has established a policy to provide to the public (including individuals with disabilities) access to meetings of State Boards and local boards, and information regarding activities of State Boards and local boards, such as data on board membership and minutes;
X	3. The lead State agencies with optimal policy-making authority and responsibility for the administration of core programs reviewed and commented on the appropriate operational planning elements of the Unified or Combined State Plan, and approved the elements as serving the needs of the populations served by such programs;
X	4. (a) The State obtained input into the development of the Unified or Combined State Plan and provided an opportunity for comment on the plan by representatives of local boards and chief elected officials, businesses, labor organizations, institutions of higher education, the entities responsible for planning or administering the core programs, required one-stop partners and the other Combined Plan programs (if included in the State Plan), other primary stakeholders, including other organizations that provide services to individuals with barriers to employment, and the general public, and that the Unified or Combined State Plan is available and accessible to the general public; (b) The State provided an opportunity for review and comment on the plan by the State Board, including State agency official(s) for the UI Agency if such official(s) is a member of the State Board;
X	5. The State has established, in accordance with WIOA section 116(i), fiscal control and fund accounting procedures that may be necessary to ensure the proper disbursement of, and accounting for, funds paid to the State through allotments made for the core programs to carry out workforce development activities;
X	6. The State has taken appropriate action to secure compliance with uniform administrative requirements in this Act, including that the State will annually monitor local areas to ensure compliance and otherwise take appropriate action to secure compliance with the uniform administrative requirements under WIOA section 184(a)(3);
X	7. The State has taken the appropriate action to be in compliance with WIOA section 188, Nondiscrimination, as applicable;
X	8. The Federal funds received to carry out a core program will not be expended for any purpose other than for activities authorized with respect to such funds under that core program;
X	9. The State will pay an appropriate share (as defined by the State board) of the costs of carrying out section 116, from funds made available through each of the core programs;
X	10. The State has a one-stop certification policy that ensures the physical and programmatic accessibility of all one-stop centers with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA);
X	11. Service providers have a referral process in place for directing Veterans with Significant Barriers to Employment (SBE) to DVOP services, when appropriate; and
X	12. Priority of service for veterans and eligible spouses is provided in accordance with 38 USC 4215 in all workforce preparation, development or delivery of programs or services funded directly, in whole or in part, by the Department of Labor.

VI. Program-Specific Requirements for Core Programs

The State must address all program-specific requirements in this section for the WIOA core programs regardless of whether the State submits either a Unified or Combined State Plan.

ADULT, DISLOCATED WORKER, AND YOUTH ACTIVITIES UNDER TITLE I-B.

(1) Regions and Local Areas.

(A) Identify the regions and the Local Areas designated in the State.

Maryland's Planning Regions

Regional planning is a requirement under Section 106 of WIOA. The Act requires the State to identify planning regions as a part of the process for developing the State plan. Maryland's Local Areas have historically entered into agreements wherein they developed regions and produced plans to regionally target various industry sectors. Maryland's workforce areas include:

- Anne Arundel County;
- Baltimore City;
- Baltimore County;
- Carroll County;
- Frederick County;
- Howard County;
- Lower Shore (made up of Wicomico, Somerset, and Worcester Counties);
- Montgomery County;
- Prince George's County;
- Southern Maryland (made up of Charles, Calvert, and St. Mary's Counties);
- Susquehanna (made up of Harford and Cecil Counties);
- Upper Shore (made up of Kent, Queen Anne's, Talbot, Caroline, and Dorchester Counties); and
- Western Maryland (made up of Garrett, Allegany, and Washington Counties).

Based on a variety of considerations described in the next section of this plan, the State has designated regions as follows:

- Western - The Western region is comprised of the Western Maryland Local Area. This Local Area is comprised of Maryland's three most western counties: Garrett, Allegany, and Washington.
- Capital - The Capital region includes three Local Areas: Prince George's, Montgomery and Frederick. All three are located along the Washington, D.C. corridor.
- Central - The Central region is comprised of five Local Areas: Anne Arundel, Baltimore County, Baltimore City, Carroll, Howard, and Susquehanna.
- Southern - The Southern region is comprised of the Southern Maryland Local Area. That Local Area is comprised of Calvert, Saint Mary's, and Charles Counties.

- Eastern Shore - The Eastern Shore region is comprised of two Local Areas: Upper Shore and Lower Shore.

(B) Describe the process and policy used for designating local areas, including procedures for determining whether the local area met the criteria for “performed successfully” and “sustained fiscal integrity” in accordance with 106(b)(2) and (3) of WIOA. Describe the process used for identifying regions and planning regions under section 106(a) of WIOA. This must include a description of how the State consulted with the local boards and chief elected officials in identifying the regions.

Process for Determining Regions

The State of Maryland convened a group of stakeholders to examine proposed methodology in delineating regions pursuant to Section 106 of WIOA. That group, consisting of the MD Labor, economists, and local workforce development directors collaboratively reviewed the list of variables that could be used to delineate regions of economic activity pursuant to Section 679.210 of the Notice of Proposed Rulemaking issued by USDOL on April 16, 2015.

The Executive Director of the GWDB contacted Maryland’s chief elected officials explaining the statutory requirements regarding regional planning in July 2015.

In October 2015, the WIOA workgroup on LMI distributed, for public review, a list of draft variables that the State proposed to use for delineating regions. The MD Labor led workgroup proposed the use of a similarity index that would include Local Areas with similar or shared labor markets, shared common economic development areas, and adequate possession of federal and non-federal resources to ensure that a proposed region would have appropriate education and training institutions. The State considered the following additional variables:

- Population centers
- Commuting patterns
- Land ownership
- Industrial composition
- Location Quotients
- Labor force conditions
- Geographic boundaries

After allowing for adequate public comment, three (3) draft maps incorporating the variables were circulated for public inspection, review, and comment. After consultation with the Maryland’s local workforce directors, the department issued a fourth map for review and comment. The Workforce Investment Network of Maryland (WIN) which is now MWA, comprised of the State’s Local Area executive directors, ultimately agreed to the designation of areas listed above. That designation was consistent with commuting patterns, industrial composition, and previous collaborations that the Local Areas engaged in in the past.

Functions of the Planning Regions

Pursuant to Section 106 of WIOA, LWDBs and chief elected officials must engage in a regional planning process. That process must result in the preparation of regional plan. The regional plan must incorporate the local plans for each of the Local Areas in the planning region and must be aligned with Maryland’s State Plan. Maryland, pursuant to Section 106 of WIOA, will provide technical assistance and LMI upon the request of a Local Area to assist with regional planning. Pursuant to Section 106 of WIOA, each regional plan shall collaboratively engage in a process that results in:

- The establishment of regional service strategies, including use of cooperative service delivery agreements
- The development and implementation of sector initiatives for in-demand industry sectors or occupations for the region
- The collection and analysis of regional labor market data, in conjunction with the State
- The establishment of administrative cost arrangements, including the pooling of funds for administrative costs, as appropriate, for the region
- The coordination of transportation and other supportive services, as appropriate, for the region
- The coordination of services with regional economic development services and providers
- The establishment of an agreement regarding collective negotiation with the State on local levels of performance, and report on performance accountability measures for Local Areas or the planning region as set forth in Section 116(c) of WIOA.

Subsequent Designation of Regions

Upon request of the chief elected officials from the Local Areas affected, or every two years beginning July 1, 2016, the State will review the current configuration of regions. Should it be determined that the regions no longer meet the needs of the State's workforce system, the State will undertake a reconfiguration of the regions in coordination with Maryland's LWDBs and chief elected officials.

Designation and Re-Designation of Local Areas

Upon request of a chief elected official(s) of a Local Area, the Governor shall approve the re-designation of a Local Area that has performed successfully and sustained fiscal integrity. For the purposes of these measures, Maryland adopts the following definitions:

- *Performed Successfully* -- The term "performance successfully" means the Local Area met or exceeded the adjusted levels of performance for primary indicators of performance described in Section 116(b)(2)(A) (or, if applicable, core indicators of performance described in Section 136(b)(2)(A) of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998) for each of the last two consecutive years for which data are available preceding the determination of performance under this paragraph.
- *Sustained Fiscal Integrity* -- The term "sustained fiscal integrity" means that the Secretary has not made a formal determination, during either of the last two consecutive years preceding the determination regarding such integrity, that the administrative entity of the area misspent funds provided under Subtitle B of WIOA (or, if applicable, Title I of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998) due to willful disregard of the requirements of the provision involved, gross negligence, or failure to comply with accepted standards of administration.

Upon receipt of a request from a chief elected official for a particular Local Area to re-designate the Local Area, the Maryland MD Labor will conduct a review of the Local Area's performance and fiscal integrity to ensure that it both performed successfully and sustained fiscal integrity. Upon conclusion of the same, the Secretary of the MD Labor will recommend to the Governor whether Local Area should be re-designated.

(C) Provide the appeals process referred to in section 106(b)(5) of WIOA relating to designation of Local Areas.

In the event that a unit of general local government (including a combination of such units) is not granted re-designation, or an area is not re-designated as a planning region, the Local Area or region may appeal the decision, pursuant to Section 106(a)(5) of WIOA to the GWDB. In the decision not to re-designate a Local Area or region, the Governor shall temporarily designate the successor for the previously designated Local Area or region. Should the previously designated area or region wish to appeal, such an appeal must be made in writing within 30 days of the Governor's decision not to re-designate either the Local Area or region. If the appeal does not result in a designation of the Local Area or a region, the United States Secretary of Labor, after receiving a request for review from the unit and on determining that the unit was not accorded procedural rights as specified under Section 102(b)(2)(D)(i)(III) of WIOA, or that the area meets the requirements as set forth above, may require the area be designated as a Local Area or region.

The appeal process for initial designation of Local Areas is reflected in the [*GWDB's Local Workforce Development Board Certification Policy*](#). The Board will work with USDOL through technical assistance to redevelop and reissue this policy. The updated issuance will include the procedure for Local Areas to appeal designations to USDOL should they not be satisfied with State decisions.

(D) Provide the appeals process referred to in section 121(h)(2)(E) of WIOA relating to determinations for infrastructure funding.

On April 26, 2021, the GWDB approved Policy Issuance 2021-04, entitled [*WIOA Memorandum of Understanding and Resource Sharing Agreements*](#). The Policy outlines the requirements of a WIOA compliant Memoranda of Understanding and Resource Sharing Agreements, and further outlines the process in which disputes regarding funding are resolved. For purposes of an appeal of a determination regarding the state formula of infrastructure funding, the impasse process outlined in the Policy should be used to resolve the appeal. The impasse process is as follows:

Impasse Step 1: GWDB Proposes Resolution

The GWDB Executive Director is responsible for notifying the GWDB Chair that an impasse has been declared. At this point, the GWDB Executive Director and the DWDAL Assistant Secretary must provide the GWDB Chair with relevant materials for review, including but not limited to: A. The completed Dispute Resolution Form; and, B. GWDB Executive Director and DWDAL Assistant Secretary's proposed joint resolution. In turn, the GWDB Chair is responsible for selecting three GWDB members to serve as members of an Impasse Review Team. The Impasse Review Team must investigate the dispute to obtain additional information or to clarify the facts presented. Within 14 business days of the declaration of impasse, the Impasse Review Team must meet to discuss the dispute with all appropriate State and local Partners. After meeting, within seven business days, the Impasse Review Team must provide a written response and dated summary of the proposed resolution to all appropriate Parties. The LWDB Chair (or designee) then must contact the petitioner, the appropriate State and local Partners (when a local Partner is not the petitioner) and the LWDB (when the Board is not the petitioner) to verify that all appropriate Parties are in agreement with the proposed resolution. The State will consider the dispute to be settled when all Partners are in agreement. If the dispute is not resolved within ten business days of receipt of the GWDB Impasse Review Team's written response, then Step 2 of the impasse procedure must be followed.

Impasse Step 2: Governor Resolves Dispute

After an impasse has gone through Step 1 and remains unresolved, then it is the responsibility of the GWDB Chair to inform the Governor of the impasse. The Chair must provide the Governor with relevant materials for review, including but not limited to: A. The completed Dispute Resolution Form; B. GWDB Executive Director and DWDAL Assistant Secretary's proposed joint resolution; and C. The GWDB Impasse Review Team's proposed resolution. Upon review, the Governor will determine how the impasse shall be resolved. The LWDB Chair (or designee) will ensure that all Partners are aware of the Governor's decision. In accordance with WIOA, the impasse decision made by the Governor shall be applicable to the Local Area for that PY and for each subsequent PY for which Partners fail to reach such agreements. Partners should be aware that there are consequences for noncompliance, and that these consequences may include the withholding of federal and/or State funds, as appropriate and allowable under applicable laws and regulations, including 2 CFR Part 200.38. If the State cannot assist the LWDB in resolving the impasse, the Governor or the GWDB must report the failure to the Secretary of USDOL and to the head of any other Federal agency with responsibility for oversight of a Partner's program.

Appeal of Infrastructure Funding Determinations

Section 121 of WIOA provides two separate formulas for the provision of infrastructure costs: the locally negotiated formula and the State-based formula. All Local Areas are encouraged to come to a mutually beneficial infrastructure formula. Section 121(h) notes that should consensus on a locally negotiated formula not be achieved, the State funding mechanism will be used. When a locally negotiated formula is not achieved, and in accordance with Section 121, the Governor, after consultation with Chief Elected Officials, LWDBs, and the State board, shall determine the portion of funds to be provided by each Partner. According to 20 CFR 678.738, the Governor must calculate the statewide cap on the contributions for one-stop infrastructure funding required to be provided by each one-stop partner program for those Local Areas that have not reached agreement. The cap is the amount determined under paragraph (a)(4) of this section, which the Governor derives by: A. Determining the percentage of the corresponding AJC Partner program provided in paragraph (d) of this section to the amount of federal funds provided to carry out the one-stop partner program in the State for the applicable FY; B. Selecting a factor (or factors) that reasonably indicates the use of AJCs in the State, applying such factor(s) to all Local Areas in the State, and determining the percentage of such factor(s) applicable to the Local Areas that reached agreement under the local funding mechanism in the State; C. Determining the amount resulting from applying the percentage determined in paragraph (a)(2) of this section to the amount determined under paragraph (a)(1) of this section for the AJC Partner program; and D. Determining the amount that results from subtracting the amount determined under paragraph (a)(3) of this section from the amount determined under paragraph (a)(1) of this section. The outcome of this final calculation results in the Partner program's cap.

(2) Statewide Activities.

(A) Provide State policies or guidance for the statewide workforce development system and for use of State funds for workforce investment activities.

MD Labor's DWDAL has a robust policy development process and regularly issues policies for the statewide workforce development system. Policies cover a variety of topics and compliance metrics to include assessment, performance, monitoring, and discretionary grants. The Division includes a Policy Unit made up of a director, policy analysts, and a special assistant. The production of this unit is detailed in DWDAL's PI 2015-01 [Process for Policy](#)

Development. Input from system stakeholders and subject matter experts is collected for each issuance through a structured three-meeting process and a two-week public comment period.

State investment in workforce system activities includes but is not limited to the EARN Maryland program, a portion of SCSEP, RA (though this is not WIOA-specific), co-enrollment of participants between WIOA Titles I and II programming, and funds for summer youth programming. In recent years the Department has issued policies relate to this programming. They are available at the link mentioned above.

The State's WIOA Alignment Group, which is comprised of leadership representing all of the workforce system partners, meets on a monthly basis. The role of the WIOA Alignment Group is both strategic and tactical: it considers system-level opportunities for advancing the integration and cohesion of the State's workforce system and develops system-level solutions. The WIOA Alignment Group has led the development of certain policies to promote interagency service integration. Additionally, the WIOA Alignment Group has also created a brand-new CLO position to establish and build system-wide competencies through a systemic approach to professional development. Professional development activities will include cross training of partner program's services and on expanding staff expertise on successfully supporting targeted populations, such as LEP individuals (as outlined in other sections of the Plan), people with disabilities, youth, older workers, and other targeted groups.

One policy developed by the WIOA Alignment Group, PI 2017-10 [Partner Access to the Maryland Workforce Exchange \(MWE\)](#), was issued to provide opportunities for partner agencies to access information on the MWE, MD Labor's statewide performance and case-management data system which also offers a wide range of services to jobseekers and businesses. Extending MWE access to partners allows staff to view information on shared customers and deliver more streamlined, targeted services more quickly. The policy explains the process partner agencies must follow to gain access to the MWE system, the responsibilities of all partners in sharing MWE access, and requirements for MWE training.

The CLO position provides a unique opportunity for partner programs to share professional development expertise and resources that previously dwelt in silos. The CLO works with an advisory board to establish a professional development curriculum designed to equip workforce staff across partner programs with system-level competencies. To ensure the existing trainings available through partner agencies are fully leveraged and effectively coordinated, the CLO conducts a comprehensive professional development program inventory. The CLO monitors the landscape of policies across partner programs and facilitate professional development and technical assistance to assist partner programs in consistently implementing programming according to State and federal rules and requirements.

There are currently 9 professional development training modules available and over 1,400 users spanning across more than 40 organizations in Maryland (including State agencies) that have benefited from the training. The training modules teach, refresh and test an individual's knowledge of different programs and subjects within the State's workforce system. Specifically, each of the 9 modules focus on a different aspect of the WIOA system, including topics such as the *Benchmarks of Success*, the GWDB, the different WIOA Titles (Titles I-IV), with additional topics and modules regularly being developed and made available to staff. With a completion rate of 79% across users, the professional development training modules have demonstrated great success in improving understanding and collaboration across all organizations engaged in the workforce system, allowing staff to better serve both job seekers and employers.

(B) Describe how the State intends to use Governor’s set aside funding for mandatory and discretionary activities, including how the State will conduct evaluations of Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth activities.

Governor Moore’s WIOA Set Aside Funding

As required in Section 134 of WIOA, DWDAL has set aside funding for both required (section 134.2) and allowable (section 134.3) Statewide activities. The final determination of the use of available funding for allowable activities is made by the Governor or their designee. MD Labor is committed to providing funding opportunities for workforce delivery systems that are innovative and industry-driven. MD Labor is particularly interested in providing funding to workforce training opportunities in the industries identified in Governor Moore’s strategic plan. Additionally, in an effort to further align workforce development and apprenticeship opportunities, MD Labor is committed to providing funding for apprenticeship opportunities in nontraditional apprenticeship fields.

Innovation requires investment. Since the initial drafting of the State Plan, the WIOA partners have dedicated their efforts to providing funding for projects and interventions with the ultimate goal of systems change. As such, the WIOA Alignment Group discussed, in 2017, various proposals that would provide seed funding for Local Areas to innovate and strengthen local partnerships.

Career Pathways and Co-Enrollment Demonstration Projects

Maryland has invested \$1.5 million of its WIOA Governor’s set-aside funding in local workforce entities since 2018 to support career pathway initiatives, for WIOA Title I Local Areas to partner with WIOA Title II Adult Education providers.

In keeping within the WIOA regulations’ focus on career pathway models, MD Labor developed this initiative with the following goals in mind:

- Increase WIOA Title II adult learners’ access to WIOA Title I training and career opportunities;
- Focus on meeting lower-level adult learners where they are regarding education levels, and support them in meeting career goals;
- Increase adult learners’ co-enrollment in WIOA Titles I and II;
- Address the needs of businesses;
- Expand career pathways through piloting one or more proven interventions;
- Support the creation of a Maryland WIOA Co-Enrollment and Career Pathways Guide to facilitate the distribution of information related to best practices, successes, challenges, and more; and
- Achieve sustainability once grant funds are exhausted or the project has ended through connecting to the Maryland ETPL or by other means.

Local workforce entities had the opportunity to apply for up to \$250,000 in funding to develop innovative demonstration projects with a consortium of local partners, including adult education providers and business partners. Eligible applicants were provided a menu of interventions that were selected by the department after careful consideration and review of national best practices.

These interventions include:

- English language acquisition,

- Distance learning,
- RA or pre-apprenticeship,
- Integrated education and training,
- Integrated English literacy and civics education, and
- Transition support specialists between local workforce and adult education entities.

Most of Maryland's LWDBs applied for this funding, and ultimately the state selected seven career pathway projects over three rounds of funding to offer adult learners innovative career pathways. Through strategic investments such as these, the department is changing the way the State approaches workforce development. The projects created with this funding began on April 1, 2018, and are currently active. To date, a total of 176 individuals statewide have been served by these career pathways grants, with nearly 100 receiving WIOA approved certificated and certifications, and 84 entering employment.

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Reentry Navigators

The AJC at Mondawmin Mall is currently the only designated reentry center in the State. This is based on need and the premise that many ex-offenders have historically returned to Baltimore City upon their release. At the same time, correctional education programs are offered throughout the state at various institutions. Before release, inmates take part in Employment Readiness Workshops designed to make them aware of the AJCs, help with resume building, etc. However, there is no systematic approach to referring those returning to communities to the AJCs, or to area employers who would hire ex-offenders.

To address this need, MD Labor utilizes is using WIOA Set Aside Funding to support hire Reentry Navigators who can serve newly returning citizens incarcerated individuals throughout the State. Reentry Navigators interface with inmates in correctional education programs (both academic and occupational) and continue to serve these individuals post-release through the local AJC. Navigators also interact with businesses who hire ex-offenders.

In 2022, These individuals were converted to permanent contractual positions and report directly to the Reemployment Program Directors Labor Exchange Administrator for the Local Area. Due to the success of the pilot program, the remaining eight Local Areas were provided permanent positions to expand the initiative statewide. The expansion will result in eleven 11 navigators across in the AJC across the state. are in the process of recruiting and hiring dedicated Reentry Navigators to expand the initiative across Maryland.

Maryland Business Works

MD Labor has invested \$2.5 million to date in the Maryland Business Works program. This competitive grant provides business match funds for incumbent worker training that leads to career growth and increased wages for participating workers. Participating businesses are reimbursed for 50 percent of the training costs. In FY 20232021, MD Labor allocated \$237,523 for grants through this program. The grant served 212 trainees across a number of industries and resulted in industry recognized credentials for all that completed training.

Other Potential Interventions and Projects

The WIOA partners will continue to find ways to invest in the partnerships that continue to form as a result of Maryland's implementation of the federal Act. The State has been in discussion with new plan partners to find ways to implement workforce interventions for homeless individuals. These potential interventions also align with the State's *Benchmarks for Success*.

Evaluations

DWDAL's Monitoring and Compliance unit conducts annual evaluations of all Title I grantees to ensure compliance as directed by Federal and State policies and regulations governed by WIOA. These reviews are conducted onsite or remotely and cover both program and fiscal.

(C) Describe how the State will utilize Rapid Response funds to respond to layoffs and plant closings and coordinate services to quickly aid companies and their affected workers. States also should describe any layoff aversion strategies they have implemented to address at risk companies and workers.

Rapid Response and Layoff Aversion in Maryland

In Maryland, Rapid Response is a collaborative effort that involves locally defined partnerships with staff from MD Labor's DWDAL's Dislocation Services Unit (DSU), the Local Areas, the state's Business Solutions Team, and the MD Labor DUI. Rapid Response teams work with both Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification (WARN) and non-WARN businesses and employees to quickly maximize public and private resources that will minimize the disruptions on companies, affected workers, and communities associated with job loss. Generally, Rapid Response Teams provide customized services onsite at an affected company, accommodate work schedules, and assist companies and workers through the challenging transitions associated with job loss. All Rapid Responses—irrespective of the size of the dislocation event and whether it is a WARN or non-WARN situation—involve: (1) an initial business consultation, which is employer-focused, and (2) an information session, which is employee focused. DWDAL works collaboratively with the Local Areas, the DUI, and other relevant stakeholders to ensure effective, customer-centric Rapid Response provision.

As noted in MD Labor's PI 2018-05 Rapid Response, for each Rapid Response event, it is the responsibility of the local Rapid Response team's MD Labor Regional Business Solutions Consultant to take the lead in ensuring all relevant parties remain informed throughout the process. The local MD Labor's Regional Business Solutions Consultant may delegate tasks to any member of the local Rapid Response team so long as all requirements contained within Maryland's Rapid Response policy are met and Rapid Response is effectively delivered.

Once an employer has submitted a Notice of Dislocation, the DSU must complete the Dislocation Event Communication Template in the MWE for distribution to the relevant Local Rapid Response team(s) across the state. For larger dislocation events involving 25+ impacted workers, the MD Labor DSU must also distribute the completed dislocation event notification form en masse to stakeholders beyond the local Rapid Response team, including the MD Labor Secretary and the Governor's Office, to raise awareness and leverage additional support.

The local MD Labor Regional Business Solutions Consultant (or designee) is responsible for: (1) capturing detail needed for reporting purposes in the MWE; and (2) managing and coordinating the specific Rapid Response effort with relevant team members to decide:

- What approach should be taken for the initial business consultation?

- Who specifically should participate in the initial business consultation from the local Rapid Response Team and in what capacity?

WARN Protocols

To ensure quality coordination, MD Labor Business Solutions Team and DSU are responsible for sharing WARN information with relevant staff from DWDAL, the affected Local Area(s), the MD Labor DUI, and other relevant stakeholders in a timely manner. WARNs are posted on MD Labor's WARN Log within 48 hours of receipt of the notification. The Rapid Response team is then responsible for keeping the Local Area well informed of its anticipated actions, and for contacting the business in a timely manner to explain the importance of Rapid Response services and to determine the business' level of interest.

Non-WARN Protocols

In the absence of a WARN, a business may contact any member of the Rapid Response team. For example, the business may contact the Local Area directly if it has an existing relationship or it may contact the DUI to ask specific UI questions. It is the responsibility of the individual who has been contacted to ensure coordination and information sharing between the Rapid Response team, DSU, and DUI occurs timely. In the same way that DWDAL must coordinate with the Local Area(s), DUI, and other stakeholders in WARN situations, the Local Area(s) must coordinate with DWDAL and keep DWDAL well-informed of its anticipated actions in non-WARN situations, as it will be included in reporting to the USDOL.

Initial Business Consultation (Employer Focused)

The initial business consultation is an opportunity for designated members of the local Rapid Response team to meet with the business to understand employer needs, investigate the possibility of Trade impact,[1] and provide information regarding the benefits of moving forward with offering an employee-focused Rapid Response Information Session.

In the initial business consultation, the local Rapid Response team should make available to employers:

- Labor market and retraining information;
- On-site UI bulk claim registration;
- Job placement services;
- Job seeking information;
- Referral to retraining opportunities; and
- Trade Adjustment Assistance program information.

The primary goals of the consultation are to: (1) support the business in meeting its needs; and (2) secure the employer's commitment to offer an Information Session geared towards employees. Staff should arrange for initial business consultations on company time at the work site, when appropriate. To gain employer participation and support, the Rapid Response team shall describe the benefits of holding an employee focused information session.

The secondary goal is to obtain information about the impacted workers, so additional services can be planned and implemented appropriately. The Rapid Response team should encourage the employer to provide the following information concerning the affected employees prior to the employee focused Information Session, either by completing the template Impacted Worker Information Form or through other means. Information gained in the initial business consultation would ideally include:

- Salary range for each affected employee;
- Average years of employment;
- Gender and age breakdown;
- Retirees;
- Retirement, pension or severance packages;
- Whether job transfer will be available;
- Educational levels;
- Commuter patterns;
- Literacy issues;
- Whether there is a large English Language Learners population;
- Whether job skills are unique to the employer;
- Whether there is a large number of older workers; and
- Whether the company is utilizing an outplacement service for employees.

Prior to an employee-focused Rapid Response event, the designated Rapid Response team should also encourage the business to solicit resumes from affected employees. Staff should gather information concerning the skills and abilities of impacted workers to be used for outreach with local businesses. Staff should use the information learned during a consultation to inform future outreach opportunities and to provide information on business needs.

Information Session (Employee Focused)

The Information Session is an opportunity for designated members of the Rapid Response team to meet with the impacted workers to:

- Advise the dislocated workers on the transition services that are available via the AJCs and workforce system;
- Explain the basics of the UI benefit system;
- Provide assistance with planning for reemployment services to the labor force;
- Provide assistance with planning for and implementing an on-site displaced worker assistance center;
- Provide financial resources, as available, to assist with a wide range of employment and training services; and
- Offer informational sessions to help reduce worker anxiety and minimize negative impact on the business.

The DUI's involvement will vary based on the size of the dislocation event and staff capacity. For dislocation events impacting 25+ employees, DUI staff must have the capacity to actively participate in the employee-focused information sessions. For smaller dislocation events, the DUI staff will participate as capacity allows.

During smaller dislocation events where DUI in-person participation is not possible, the Regional Business Solution Consultant from the local Rapid Response team should relay UI information through a standard PowerPoint and provide handouts and DUI contact information, as time permits. If not enough time is permitted to cover any/all UI information, the local Rapid Response team must instead verbally provide DUI's contact information along with handouts of the PowerPoint presentation and other relevant materials.

At the conclusion of the Rapid Response event(s), the Regional Business Solutions Consultant (or designee) should complete the Rapid Response Summary Form and provide the summary to the local Rapid Response Team.

Layoff Aversion and Rapid Response

Staff who administer business services assist eligible businesses with layoff aversion and/or Rapid Response along any given point of a business' lifecycle.

Staff who administer business services offer an array of initiatives and strategies that work towards job creation and layoff aversion. As defined by USDOL, layoff aversion is:

- When a worker's job is saved with an existing employer that is at risk of downsizing or closing; or,
- When a worker at risk of dislocation transitions to a new job, with the same employer or a different employer, and experiences no or a minimal break in employment.

Through on-going engagement with businesses, field representatives will establish relationships with employers and obtain basic knowledge regarding the company, their needs and processes as well as their well-being. If an employer contacts a field representative and advises them they are struggling, or if the representative suspects difficulties or obtains information suggesting trouble via news articles, current LMI or other sources, arrangements can be made to work with the employer to take a pro-active approach.

Field representatives can assist employers with strategies such as: providing assistance with incumbent worker training or other worker upskilling requirements; funding feasibility studies; connecting companies to business loan programs or other resources; establishing links to economic development activities and assistance; succession planning; proactively identifying opportunities for potential economic transition into other growing industry sectors; cost reduction; process improvement; and connecting businesses to qualified workers.

(D) Describe the State policies and procedures to provide Rapid Responses in cases of natural disasters including coordination with FEMA and other entities.

For Disaster Planning, USDOL recommends that states use Rapid Response funds to plan for disaster response before a disaster strikes. In keeping with that recommendation, MD Labor has developed a plan and taken initial preparation and coordination steps to strive for strong disaster preparedness. In the event of a disaster, MD Labor will use Rapid Response funds to support the following activities:

- Devise prospective strategies to provide assistance to Local Areas experiencing disasters;
- Identify strategies for aversion of layoffs;
- Ensure mechanisms for regular exchange of information relating to potential dislocations are in place;
- Collect and analyze data and information for a number of purposes; and
- Hold disaster drills.

In the event of a natural disaster, mass layoff, or other emergency, MD Labor's Secretary will work closely with the Governor and other cabinet-level staff to execute the appropriate actions in a timely manner through the Department's position on the Maryland Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) Board. The Secretary, in turn, will communicate with appropriate staff, including the Rapid Response team, to ensure the state fulfills its obligation to deliver the appropriate services and transitions workers to new employment as quickly as possible. The Director of the Department's Office of General Services serves as the point person for MEMA. The Director takes part in daily conference calls throughout the immediate

aftermath of the emergency, and interfaces with Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), MEMA and other state agencies to coordinate the appropriate response. That information, in turn, is provided to senior staff of the Department.

In response to the State of Emergency caused by COVID-19 pandemic, the Regional Business Solutions team ensured that affected business, employees, and job seekers had access to information and services by transforming all in person visits to a virtual environment. The Regional Business Solutions team conducted virtual rapid responses in an effort to inform employers and dislocated workers about UI, healthcare, workshare, and training opportunities as well as providing them layoff aversion efforts by providing them with targeted recruitment events. In addition, the Regional Business Solution team held virtual roundtables and town meetings to help employers resolve their labor shortage and receive assistance in finding resources for layoff aversion grant opportunities. Finally, the Regional Business Solutions team, along with their partner network, coordinated numerous regional and industry sector recruitment events to help employers with their recruitment needs and job seekers with their search for employment. DWDAL, in turn, worked closely with staff from the Local Areas to ensure that recruitment events, job fairs, job listings, and job clubs were widely distributed utilizing social media and email blasts. These experiences have helped refine the Rapid Response teams practices in a post-pandemic world.

Rapid Response teams are expected to be flexible and responsive. Therefore, it is appropriate that Rapid Response teams play a key role in disaster response in partnership with other internal and external government, nonprofit, and private agencies.

If necessary, Maryland will be able to access these funds for the following activities:

- Purchase and deployment of mobile units for service delivery in disaster areas;
- Support for organizing physical locations for disaster relief centers;
- Assist individuals with applying for UI (and Disaster Unemployment Assistance);
- Support sharing information on services available, including temporary jobs through National Dislocated Worker Grants;
- Hiring staff to support range of needs of impacted individuals, including counselors; and
- Job search assistance.

The DSU, in partnership with the staff who administer business services, will continue to work to ensure that Maryland businesses consider the importance of having an emergency plan within their own organization. Staff will offer assistance in the development of their personal disaster plan, according to their projected needs.

The federal government provides additional services to workers whose jobs are lost, or hours greatly reduced, due to foreign trade or shifts in production out of the United States. The Trade Act program is administered, staffed, and implemented by DWDAL and DUI, alongside the state's Local Areas. While not all job loss due to foreign competition meets the requirements of the Trade Act, the Rapid Response team will work with businesses to provide information on Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) and the benefits workers can receive if a business is certified as trade-affected. A business, union, the Rapid Response team, or the workers themselves can file a trade petition with the USDOL.

Rapid Response activities are offered to all worker groups notified of a layoff when the DSU receives a WARN, Notice of Dislocation Event, or when notified of potential layoffs. The Rapid Response Team or Business Solutions Representative works with businesses to schedule Rapid Response information sessions for impacted workers. These sessions may be held

virtually, in-person, or a combination of both depending upon the preference of both the employer and impacted worker group. During these sessions, workers are informed of the various services offered by the local AJC and the UI program. When it is determined that a potential Trade impact exists, Trade Program information sessions are coordinated, and workers are informed of the Trade program benefits and options available. These individuals may receive services through their local AJC, as appropriate, prior to their certification of eligibility to apply for benefits and services under the Trade Act programs. Rapid Response funds will be utilized to provide layoff aversion activities.

These activities include recruitment events to create business connections, to support Local Area initiatives to re-train and to provide supportive services. The DSU reviews WARN notices and works with businesses to determine if a petition can be filed as early as possible to speed the process for Trade approval. If a worker has been dislocated and is waiting for TAA eligibility determination, that person can receive career services at the local center. Once a petition is approved, DSU staff notify impacted workers of the additional benefits available under Trade and how to apply. Rapid Response funds are utilized to provide assistance to Local Areas in situations where the layoff event results and a need beyond the availability of local resources, including TAA assistance. Local Areas may request additional Rapid Response funds, or the DSU may apply for a National Dislocated Worker Grant (NDWG) as needed to supplement other funding to serve impacted workers that may not seek assistance under Trade.

TAA, offered at no cost to employers, allows impacted workers to access an even wider array of services for which they would not otherwise be eligible. Once the adversely affected workers become certified under the Trade program, DUI is notified and mails out letters to each of the impacted workers of the Trade certified company. The Reemployment and Trade Unit places advertisements in local papers and/or via online publication, announcing that the company has been Trade Certified and providing instructions for next steps.

The DSU sends out packets to the impacted workers on the eligibility list that include a letter notifying them of the TAA certification, dates, times and locations where they can attend a Trade Information Session, and information on Rapid Response services. A Trade informational session (or multiple sessions) is delivered by the DSU Field Representative in coordination with Trade Program case managers local to the impacted workers, the Rapid Response team, and local partner program staff. All services and benefits for which participants may be eligible based on their approved petition identifier, are presented during these events. Investigations may take several months and are concluded when USDOL makes a Trade Determination.

Irrespective of the USDOL determination, an initial Rapid Response is always offered and arranged whenever possible for workers affected by business closings, regardless of the size of the dislocation, and whether or not a WARN was received. Maryland strives to ensure all workers receive the same services and information consistently and effectively. All impacted workers may still receive services in any one of the AJCs. Once the notice of Trade Certification is received, they may transition over to the Trade Adjustment Assistance Program if they choose to take advantage of the additional services provided to them under their corresponding certification number.

The TAA Program, outlined in PI 2022-02 [*Trade Adjustment Assistance*](#), enables adversely affected workers to prepare for reemployment as quickly as possible by allowing Trade-impacted participants to work individually with a case manager located in one of the statewide AJCs. The case manager will work with the DSU to enroll eligible participants in the Trade Program. Participants must be co-enrolled whenever possible, as co-enrollment allows the individual to receive career services, reemployment services, training, and support

services. Funding for both programs is available at each of the AJCs. All Trade-affected workers are Dislocated Workers. Individuals eligible for Dislocated Worker Services and TAA Services are provided career services with the same case manager, providing a seamless approach to the development of an Individualized Employment Plan, training program, and other career services.

Case management begins with an initial assessment of the individual's skills, interests, abilities, and goals. Marketable and transferable skills are identified during this assessment process, as well as matching existing skills to available, suitable employment with local employers. Many times, the trade petition is certified well after the assessment process, and because MD Labor has a co-enrollment process, the individual can continue working with the same case manager while being provided services and benefits under both the WIOA Title I Dislocated Worker program and the Trade program.

After the assessment is completed, if it is determined that the individual requires retraining in order to become reemployed in suitable employment, the case manager will continue working with the individual to develop a training plan. Participants must research training programs and requirements. They may access statewide LMI for this purpose. Training is approved if (1) the proposed training meets the six criteria for approval of training under the Trade Act, and (2) Federal Trade funds are available. The TAA state merit staff review and make final determinations on retraining plans, ensuring they meet the Federal requirements under the Trade Act. Co-enrollment continues through the end of the retraining program ensuring the needs of the individual are met.

Maryland strives to provide high quality, integrated services that meet customer needs. When assisting trade-impacted individuals, all partners work together to provide accurate and consistent information. Both MD Labor divisions and the case manager working with the individual must collaborate when developing Individualized Employment Plans. The case manager must gather accurate information during the entire training program to provide progress updates and report on benchmarks, and to ensure that the Trade Readjustment Allowance deadlines are met. This is of paramount importance, as the individual must be able to enter and complete the retraining program in the required amount of time with the financial support provided. The DSU and the DUI Reemployment and Trade Unit work hand in hand in an effort to provide TAA training and Trade Readjustment Allowance support without interruption and in compliance with Program rules and guidance for the duration of their services.

(E) Describe how the State provides early intervention (e.g., Rapid Response) and ensures the provision of appropriate career services to worker groups on whose behalf a Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) petition has been filed. (Section 134(a)(2)(A) and TAA Section 221(a)(2)(A) .) This description must include how the State disseminates benefit information to provide workers in the groups identified in the TAA petitions with an accurate understanding of the provision of TAA benefits and services in such a way that they are transparent to the dislocated worker applying for them (Trade Act Sec. 221(a)(2)(A) and Sec. 225; Governor-Secretary Agreement). Describe how the State will use funds that have been reserved for Rapid Response to provide services for every worker group that files a TAA petition and how the state will ensure the provision of appropriate career service to workers in the groups identified in the petition (TAA Sec. 221(a)(2)(A)).

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(b) Adult and Dislocated Worker Programs

(1) Work-based Training Models. If the State is utilizing work-based training models (e.g. on-the-job training, incumbent worker training, transitional jobs, and customized training) as part of its training strategy and these strategies are not already discussed in other sections of the plan, describe the State's strategies for how these models ensure high quality training for both the participant and the employer.

EARN

EARN is a state-funded, competitive workforce program that is industry-led and regional in focus. The program's flexible and innovative design ensures that Maryland's businesses have the talent they need to compete and grow, while providing targeted education and skills training to Maryland jobseekers. EARN is comprised of Strategic Industry Partnerships (SIPs) that represent a variety of industries, including healthcare, manufacturing, construction, and biotechnology.

While traditional workforce programs often look to training entities or higher education to determine training needs and develop curriculum, EARN's innovative model tasks business and industry partners with designing the programs. At a higher level, employers are challenged to look both within and beyond their individual organization, to identify the specific skill needs for their workforce as well as the broader range of skills needed within their industry sector.

Employers and industry partners are encouraged to analyze the diverse evolving needs within their industry, too, such as training needs associated with keeping pace with increasingly sophisticated technology, and the shifting demographics caused by retirements, etc. By anticipating the changing landscape of training needs, curriculum can be designed flexibly to perform over time as an effective workforce solution.

During the development of training, employer and industry partners are consulted to determine which training strategies and techniques will be most effective in training for the skill sets they need in workers. For instance, some employers indicate that in order to truly master certain skills, on-the-job learning experiences, rather than classroom training, or some combination of both, are ideal. Because employers are the experts on what makes a competent employee, they are experienced in identifying the correct training techniques to ensure success of skill formation.

Finally, employers and industry partners are required to participate in training. This occurs in a variety of ways, including teaching specific courses, observing training, and mentoring trainees. This level of participation not only allows employers to ensure the training meets their vision, but also gives employers exposure to potential employment candidates.

Soft skills are frequently rated by EARN employers as being equal in importance with specific occupational or technical skills. To address the soft skills issue, EARN partnerships participate in identifying which soft skills are critical to success in the industry. Soft skills training is implemented in the classroom and modeled in on-the-job work experiences. Some partnerships utilize a simulated work environment throughout training that requires trainees to clock in and out and practice leadership techniques on newer trainees. Essentially, trainees are required to prove that they are able to meet employer standards and that they are adequately prepared for employment.

Because EARN employers and industry partners are involved in training throughout the entire process, they play a key role in quality control. Employers are encouraged to provide feedback on training curriculum and implementation during quarterly partnership meetings throughout their participation in the program. Due to the intentional flexibility of EARN, changes to curriculum and/or training implementation can be made based on employer feedback. Upon the completion of entry-level training, employers will ideally interview successful candidates who have gone through training designed according to their standards.

EARN trainees often have significant barriers to employment, including criminal backgrounds, low levels of literacy, lack of transportation, and disadvantaged backgrounds. Each industry

partnership operating an EARN grant must include at least two “diverse partners,” with experience in barrier removal. Partnerships targeting underserved groups must focus on the whole person when developing a training plan. An EARN trainee may have a wide array of technical skills and strong soft skills, but without transportation to get to work on time, their retention will not be high. To provide holistic services, partners work individually with trainees to ensure all barriers to employment are removed before entering the workforce, maximizing the odds for success. Examples of barrier removal services provided to EARN trainees include record expungement, bus tokens or a vehicle, providing bridge instruction in math and reading, GED® courses, and stipends for training.

Since the program began in 2014, EARN has been recognized as a national best practice for its innovation and implementation of sector strategies. In 2015 and 2016, the National Skills Coalition and Urban Institute praised EARN as a leader in industry-led workforce initiatives. In 2017, EARN was highlighted at the National Conference for State Legislatures as a model to be emulated. Additionally, at the request of the National Skills Coalition, EARN staff provided technical assistance to states seeking to emulate this national best practice. In 2018, EARN was named one of the Top 25 programs in Harvard’s 2018 Innovations in American Government Award competition, which highlights exemplary models of government innovation.

EARN has received these accolades because the program works. As of October 2023, nearly 9,300 individuals have obtained employment upon completion of EARN training. As of October 2023, over 13,000 incumbent workers participated in training, earning a new skill, certification or credential.

EARN, Going Forward

By supporting company efforts to update skills for new processes and equipment, there is an opportunity for staff who administer business services to educate businesses not currently involved with EARN on both entry-level and incumbent worker training efforts, where appropriate. Both MD Labor and Commerce have previously invested in matching grant programs directed to businesses. These investments in Maryland’s businesses provided customized training solutions for individual companies with unique or proprietary technical skill requirements.

Much has been learned through the implementation of EARN to date, but there are new ideas to explore and further develop to better serve businesses and jobseekers.

Areas for future exploration:

- Developing an approach for industry-lead programs to target special populations such as those served by DORS, TANF, etc. - The interplay between industry-led partnerships and provision of services to targeted populations is one that some grantees have undertaken. Maryland looks forward to learning from their experiences.
- Bringing programs such as EARN to scale - EARN has been successful and has involved more than 1,000 business and industry partners. However, Maryland has approximately 10,000 businesses. The effort to involve a larger number of businesses in industry-led partnerships, leading to training, and the creation and use of career pathways, is a challenge that EARN can help to address by providing lessons learned.
- Outline strategies to increase work-based learning experiences such as paid internships and RAs that provide jobseekers with the skills and credentials necessary to secure employment and advance in their jobs with family sustaining wages and benefits by building new sector partnerships and strengthening existing partnerships

- EARN will serve as the starting point for this, as some SIPs are providing work-based learning experiences. Maryland looks forward to building on lessons learned.
- Tying business services with EARN - Maryland is committed to creating a business-focused delivery system for workforce needs. In a business-focused system, customized training can be used to meet the special requirements of an employer or group of employers, conducted with a commitment by the employer to employ all individuals upon successful completion of training. Some EARN Partnerships are providing incumbent worker training that meet an employer's specialized needs. Under WIOA, incumbent worker training is an allowable cost, so the partners will review best practices from these training initiatives. The WIOA Partners collaborate with the business to identify eligible program participants and potential sources of training funds.
- Identification and delivery of industry recognized credentials through industry-led partnerships.

Maryland Business Works

Maryland Business Works is Maryland's incumbent worker training program. It is available to all businesses seeking to upskill their current workforce. LWDBs also can utilize funds for incumbent worker training programs and continue to leverage State and local grants to meet the needs of business. In Maryland, navigators have leveraged use of Title I funds, Maryland Business Works funds, and RA tax credits to assist businesses reduce costs of creating work and learn programs by blending each funding opportunity.

RA and Youth Apprenticeship

Maryland's expanding youth apprenticeship programming further demonstrates the State's commitment to high quality work-based training opportunities for both participants and employers.

Youth apprenticeship gives business the unique opportunity to train, influence, and shape high school students into top-performing employees who are invested in their business. The program requires that eligible employers hire AMP (the State's youth apprenticeship initiative) participants in eligible career track occupations related to in-demand industries and provide paid compensation, thus creating an "earn and learn" opportunity.

RAs are opportunities where workers "earn and learn." While working on the job, employees receive one-on-one full-time training from a skilled craftsperson as well as related classroom instruction. An apprentice is "sponsored" by an employer or association and is paid according to a progressive pay scale.

In both youth and RAs, Maryland's business and apprenticeship navigators work with Local Areas, employers, and school systems to connect interested job seekers and students to high performing apprenticeships. Using "boots on the ground" visits, navigators promote the work and learn properties of RA to build relationships with businesses for future programs, as well as referrals for employment.

Continuous work with Local Areas to educate staff on the value of apprenticeships as a workforce tool builds additional partnerships as well as pipelines to fund related instruction and OJL using Title I funding for those eligible under Title I youth, adult, and dislocated worker programs.

Maryland will further ensure that at least 20 percent of youth formula funds at the local level are used on work-based training activities such as summer jobs, OJL, and apprenticeship for In-School Youth (ISY) and Out-of-School Youth (OSY). LWDBs must further utilize WIOA funds in support of the business focused system. LWDBs must identify locally defined priority industries and develop and provide appropriate services based upon input received from employers and other key partners. Apprenticeships, OJL, incumbent worker training, and individual training accounts can be used to provide business-driven training.

(2) Registered Apprenticeships. Describe how the State will incorporate Registered Apprenticeship into its strategy for service design and delivery (e.g., outreach to sponsors and prospective sponsors, identifying potential participants and connecting them to apprenticeship opportunities).

Governor Moore's strategic vision for the workforce system is to provide businesses with the skilled workforce they need to compete in the global, regional, and local economies. A bedrock strategy within that vision is the expansion of RAs, a time-honored work-based learning model that offers both Sponsors and job seekers valuable benefits.

The apprenticeship model offers jobseekers access to one-on-one OJL training and related classroom instruction as a path to mastering occupational skills. Most RAs provide opportunities for career advancement that incorporate progressive wage increases aligned with skill increases. Often, RAs also offer healthcare, retirement and fringe benefits, as well.

RAs provide desirable outcomes for employers, as well. The employees produced through RAs are technically up-to-date workers capable of meeting existing workforce needs. Over time, these same employees can become the pipeline of skilled workers employers can feel comfortable promoting from technical to management positions. Besides these inherent benefits, RAs are also associated with reduced employee turnover, quality output, increased productivity and a more cohesive team.

Maryland has made significant progress towards the goal to align RAs with Maryland's workforce system. During the 2016 Legislative Session, the Maryland General Assembly transferred the State's RA program from Maryland's Higher Education Commission to Labor's DWDAL. This legislative enactment, approved unanimously by the Assembly and signed into law by then-Governor Hogan, has allowed the State to align RAs with workforce development programming. The change also provides key resources for the growth and expansion of RAs.

Apprenticeship Models

RAs combine supervised, structured, OJL and Related Technical Instruction (RTI) to teach Registered Apprentices the skills needed to succeed in a specific occupation. RAs are voluntary, industry-driven programs sponsored by employers, employer associations, or jointly by management and labor. A program sponsor can be an individual employer, groups of employers, or combinations of employers and unions. Each sponsor develops a RA program based on the needs of specific occupations.

Maryland recognizes three types of RAs:

- Time-based RA programs - The most common model, Time-based Programs combine a full-time position requiring a minimum of 2,000 hours of paid OJL with 144 hours of RTI. Time-based programs vary in length from one to five years. Apprentices who satisfy OJL and RTI requirements are certified as Journeypersons in the occupation.

- Competency-based RA programs - The Competency-based RA model was approved under new regulations as a recognized RA model in 2017. In the Competency-based Model, apprentices progress through a training program, mastering individually identified and measured competencies. Sponsors measure apprentice skill gains through demonstration during work activities. The model enables Sponsors to offer an open entry and exit method, shortening the required time for apprentices who acquire skills more quickly, while extending the training period for apprentices who need more time to meet skill requirements.
- Hybrid RA programs - This model blends elements of time and competency-based models, blending OJL and RTI. Sponsors establish minimum and maximum ranges of hours based on the job requirements.

The RA Process for Jobseekers

Jobseekers interested in exploring RA opportunities are encouraged to research trades to learn more about related occupations. A list of all approved RA sponsors, occupations and other information such as how to directly apply to a sponsor can be found on the Apprenticeship Locator link on the Maryland Apprenticeship and Training Webpage: <http://www.labor.maryland.gov/employment/appr/>. Prospective apprentices seeking additional information may also contact the Maryland Apprenticeship and Training Program via email at info@mdapprenticeship.com.

Newly hired apprentices and their Sponsors must complete an Apprentice Agreement, which must be filed with the Maryland Apprenticeship and Training Council. The Apprenticeship Agreement formally classifies the individual as a Registered Apprentice. The Maryland Apprenticeship and Training Council is responsible for registering and regulating the State approved RA programs in Maryland. Apprentices who meet all program requirements receive a certificate of completion and are nationally recognized journeypersons.

The RA Process for Sponsors

Potential Sponsors develop RA programs and apply for registration. The Maryland Apprenticeship and Training Council reviews the “Standards of Apprenticeship” which include:

- An organized, written training plan;
- The terms and conditions of employment;
- Provision of Related Technical Instruction;
- An equal employment opportunity pledge;
- Proper supervision of the apprentice(s).

Maryland will continue to explore opportunities to leverage existing and future discretionary grant opportunities to create and enhance pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs across Maryland and support the creation of new Sponsors.

ETPL

The State is committed to adding all RA programs that indicate interest to the State’s ETPL. Per MD Labor’s *PI 2023-03 WIOA Title I Training & Maryland’s Eligible Training Provider List* policy, the comprehensive ETPL policy issued February 16, 2023, RAs are automatically included on Maryland’s ETPL if approved via the extensive application and vetting process conducted by Maryland’s Apprenticeship and Training Council. Approved RAs will remain on the ETPL as long as the program is registered or until the program Sponsor notifies the

Maryland Director of Apprenticeship and Training that it no longer wants to be included on the list. In December 2016, Maryland Labor notified all existing RA program sponsors of their eligibility to be on Maryland's ETPL and notified each new Sponsor as they were approved by the Council. For inclusion, new Sponsors must complete and submit the form accessible at: www.doit.state.md.us/selectsurvey/RegisteredApprenticeshipProgram.

Through outreach and educational efforts, the ETPL now includes over 65 RA programs. Maryland's Apprenticeship and Training Council will continue to work with RA programs to encourage use of the ETPL as an important avenue to access WIOA funding for training and to create pipelines for apprenticeship programs across Maryland.

Connecting Individuals with Disabilities to Apprenticeship Opportunities

The State of Maryland is committed to providing opportunities for individuals with disabilities, and the RA program is no exception. RAs offer adults and young adults, including those with disabilities, career pathways that provide earn while you learn opportunities within high-demand occupations. To help build upon these opportunities, MD Labor and the MSDE's DORS formed the "Apprenticeship Think Tank."

The Think Tank focuses on three areas:

- Increasing awareness of RA through DORS counselor training, AJC staff training, and outreach to DORS counselors with youth in and out of school. Training is offered both statewide and to individual Local Areas.
- Increasing opportunities for participation in RA programs by directly connecting jobseekers at AJC's and through their DORS counselors to apprenticeship programs, pre apprenticeship training, and other support services to ensure successful participation for individuals with barriers.
- Increasing participation in RA by developing relationships with current RA Sponsors to support their efforts to hire individuals with disabilities. Both DORS and MD Labor business staff cultivate relationships with new employers and current employers that work with DORS to expand and create RA programs opportunities. Additional work is being done to create and connect individuals with robust pre apprenticeship programs to prepare for apprenticeship.

Youth Apprenticeships

Maryland has also made great strides in establishing youth apprenticeship opportunities. Through the work of the Maryland Youth Apprenticeship Advisory Committee (the "Committee") and the continued push by MD Labor, MSDE, the Maryland Department of Commerce (Commerce), and the LEAs across State, more students, parents, and employers understand the benefits of apprenticeship opportunities for youth.

Youth apprenticeship became available across the State in 2018, at the conclusion of an initial two-year, two county pilot program. The Youth Apprenticeship Advisory Board, MD Labor and MSDE worked together to craft the educational framework necessary for local public-school systems to design and implement their own youth apprenticeship initiatives. By doing so, the local county school system can submit proposals to MSDE staff members to add the AMP as a CTE program of study for its students. As a CTE program, local systems can use Perkins Grant funds to support the program. Both departments are hopeful that this approach will facilitate the entry of additional participating school systems.

Expansion of AMP during this period of historically low unemployment is the ideal time for the program to become a proven, sustainable workforce development strategy. In 2018, the groundwork was put in place to expand youth apprenticeship to be available statewide. MD Labor, Commerce, and MSDE's original goal for growing AMP during 2019 was to increase the program from the original two pilot counties to a total of six participating school systems. As a consequence of combined efforts, since the June 2018 unveiling by MSDE of the AMP CTE Program of Study, all 24 of Maryland's LEAs have adopted the model.

As the program has expanded, MD Labor and its partners have taken steps to ensure adaptability by working with employers to identify a variety of training models for greater program flexibility. This includes providing related instruction through any of the following formats: through the local high school, through online programs offered either at the place of employment or at the high school, at the work site of a participating employer, through an industry association, through a Joint Apprenticeship and Training School, or through the community college. The learning component is designed to comport with the needs of the employer to include credentialing and certification.

Maryland also focuses its recruitment of employers from one of MSDE's ten Career Cluster areas, which are based on the high-demand sectors defined by Commerce. Labor, MSDE, and Commerce aligned the program with federal, state, and local resources to ensure that AMP addresses Maryland's workforce and economic development needs.

MD Labor and MSDE are committed to growing the program to scale so that as many of Maryland's young people as possible can utilize this innovative career pathway program. Moreover, the Department will continue to explore ways to use youth apprenticeship as a springboard to post-secondary education and/or job training and career development.

(3) Training Provider Eligibility Procedure. Provide the procedure, eligibility criteria, and information requirements for determining training provider initial and continued eligibility, including Registered Apprenticeship programs (WIOA Section 122).

Under WIOA, training is provided to eligible adults, dislocated workers, and youth through a robust ETPL, comprised of entities with capabilities of training individuals to enter quality employment. MD Labor plays a leadership role in ensuring the success of the ETPL in collaboration with the State's LWDBs and other partners, such as the MHEC. Maryland's ETPL and the related eligibility procedures were developed to ensure the accountability, quality, and labor market relevance of programs of training services that receive funds through WIOA Title I, Subtitle B.

MD Labor updated policy 2023-03 , "[*WIOA Title I Training & Maryland's Eligible Training Provider List*](#)" in February 2023. MD Labor streamlined the initial application process, elaborated on the continued eligibility process, provided guidance on reciprocity with other states, accounted for new federal guidance, and clarified items from the previous iterations.

WIOA participants can participate in any training program across the State (or within a State with reciprocity) no matter what county they live in, assuming they meet the program qualifications. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, MD Labor is encouraging online training programs to apply for inclusion on the ETPL. Increased online offerings will allow participants across the State to choose the training that best meets their needs and interest, particularly for individuals in rural areas.

When developing the ETPL policy, the State had the following goals in mind:

- Ensure that Local Areas have sufficient numbers and a diverse pool of quality providers of in-demand training;
- Create an effective marketplace for the training programs available to WIOA participants with Individual Training Accounts (ITAs);
- Guide WIOA participants, in conjunction with staff, in selecting training in the State and Local Areas;
- Prohibit discrimination by training providers in accepting and enrolling WIOA program participants; and
- Provide information on eligible training programs to WIOA participants in a way that helps them make informed decisions, along with staff and within local policy, on how to use their ITAs.

As the State workforce agency, MD Labor has been designated as the entity responsible for defining and carrying out the processes and procedures for determining the eligibility of training providers and programs of training services. MD Labor is specifically responsible for:

- Developing and maintaining the State ETPL and programs as described in 20 CFR 680.450 (initial eligibility), 20 CFR 680.460 (continued eligibility), and 20 CFR 680.490 (performance and cost information reporting requirements);
- Ensuring that programs meet eligibility criteria and performance criteria established by MD Labor;
- Removing programs that do not meet State-established program criteria or performance levels, as described in 680.480(c) and in this policy;
- Taking appropriate enforcement actions against providers that intentionally supply inaccurate information or that substantially violate the requirements of WIOA, as described in 680.480(a) and (b); and
- Disseminating the ETPL, accompanied by performance and cost information related to each program, to the public and the LWDBs throughout the State, as further described in 680.500.

The State's LWDBs are responsible for the following functions:

- Carrying out the policies and procedures assigned to the LWDB;
- Documenting local policies and procedures as related to ETPL, including the handling of PII and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act;
- Ensuring the protection of PII and other sensitive information;
- Working with MD Labor to ensure there are sufficient numbers and types of providers of training services, including eligible providers with expertise in assisting individuals with disabilities and adults in need of adult education and literacy activities described under WIOA sec 107(d)(10)(E), serving the Local Area;
- Ensuring the dissemination and appropriate use of the Maryland ETPL through the local AJC delivery system; and
- Monitoring the ETPL and/or training providers who receive Title I funding, as they are the entities that oversee and approve these training activities.

Initial Eligibility

The process of initial eligibility for inclusion on the ETPL is designed to ensure that WIOA participants are using ITAs for high-quality training programs that are likely to result in

positive employment outcomes. The eligibility review process provides an opportunity to assess whether training programs meet the quality standards required by Maryland to be included on the ETPL and to ensure customers have access to up-to-date information about program requirements and costs.

MD Labor, in consultation with the GWDB, is charged with establishing eligibility criteria and procedures for the initial eligibility of training providers and programs to receive funds under WIOA Title I, Subtitle B. The State and its LWDBs must work together to ensure sufficient numbers and types of training providers and programs to maximize customer choice while maintaining the quality and integrity of training services. MD Labor will use the information provided in ETPL application to inform customers and stakeholders on: (1) the ETPL website and other related public materials; and (2) the ETPL annual performance report.

The application process for initial ETPL eligibility consists of one step unless the program must also submit a separate application to MHEC for Private Career School approval. The ETPL initial eligibility application is online here::<https://www.labor.maryland.gov/employment/train/>.

The applications must include the following key elements:

- Training Provider Name,
- Employer Identification Number,
- Type of Entity,
- Address,
- Whether the program is on another State's ETPL,
- Date the training program was established,
- Classification of Instructional Programs code,
- Relevant O*NET code(s) for the occupations for which the program prepares students,
- Training program title,
- Qualifications required of training staff,
- Certificate(s) awarded through the program,
- Certification(s) awarded through the program,
- Degree(s) awarded through the program,
- License(s) awarded through the program,
- Whether the program offers a work-based learning component,
- Whether the training institution offers career services,
- How the training is delivered (e.g. online, in-person, hybrid),
- When the training is offered (e.g. day, evening, weekend),
- Program costs (total, fees, books, supplies, other),
- Whether the program is accredited by the U.S. Department of Education,
- Total credit hours, and Total clock hours,
- Total number of weeks required to complete the training program,
- Scheduled length,
- Required proprietary tests and minimum scores,
- Admission requirements,
- A description of the program's existing partnership with the Maryland business community if any,
- How the program will align with in-demand industry sectors and occupations (as specified in the State Plan and/or Local Plans),
- An assurance for data collection.
- Description of partnership with, if any, and relevancy for business.
- Description of how the provider's training services align with in-demand industry sectors and occupations, as specified in the WIOA State and/or Local Plan(s).

- At least two quarters of verifiable performance outcome data for initial ETPL consideration except for “new” training programs, which are exempted from this requirement. New programs must submit all other application items, including the assurance for data collection in the future.
- Commitment from the program provider to begin collecting and reporting to MD Labor the SSNs of all individuals engaging in the program (to include all WIOA-funded participants and all non-WIOA funded participants) on an annual basis, as prescribed by MD Labor, once included on the ETPL in order to meet performance requirements of WIOA Sections 116(b)(2)(A)(i)(I)-(IV), 20 CFR 680.460(g)(1)-(4), and 20 CFR 361.230.

MD Labor displays relevant, aggregated data on the Department’s website to inform customer choice. Initial eligibility for a particular program expires after one year of initial approval, and therefore, providers must apply for continued eligibility each year after.

Continued Eligibility

The USDOL requires MD Labor to annually report on the performance of providers included on Maryland’s ETPL. The information submitted by providers to MD Labor for annual reporting purposes will: assist MD Labor in determining whether a program meets requirements for continued ETPL eligibility; assist WIOA participants and members of the general public in identifying effective training programs and providers; and benefit providers by widely disseminating information about their programs and potentially as a tool to enhance their programs, which in turn would provide a direct benefit to participants.

To complete the annual report, the WIOA Training Program Manager will rely on information from three key places: (1) data submitted annually for reporting purposes by the providers; (2) information provided in the ETPL application (or provided via ETPL program updates from the training provider to the WIOA Training Program Manager); (3) data concerning WIOA participants that are captured in the MWE. The annual report includes performance and cost information for each program of study on the ETPL. The continued eligibility process accounts for WIOA performance indicators, information reported to State agencies on federal and state training programs other than WIOA Title I-B programs, the programs’ ability to provide trainings that are physically and programmatically accessible for individuals who are employed and individuals with barriers to employment, including individuals with disabilities.

Training programs that are on other State’s ETPLs must still submit the initial online application to join Maryland’s list; however, they do not need to provide performance data as part of the initial application.

Removal from the ETPL

MD Labor may remove a program from the ETPL for one of the following reasons:

- Significant and repetitive customer complaints,
- At the MD Labor Secretary’s discretion,
- Substantial violations (e.g., unauthorized sharing of participant PII, fraud, breaking State and/or federal law, etc.),
- Lack of in-demand determination, and/or
- Loss of approval, accreditation, or debarment.

Appeal Process

ETPL programs that are either (1) denied entrance to the ETPL or (2) removed from the ETPL for one of the above-mentioned reasons can appeal the decision. The WIOA ETPL Program Manager informs the provider in writing, with at least ten business days' notice, that it will soon be removed from the ETPL, and provide information on how to appeal the decision. Similarly, programs whose applications to the ETPL were denied are provided information on how to appeal.

Programs may appeal directly to the Assistant Secretary of MD Labor's DWDAL within 25 business days of notification of the removal or denial. Appeal must state, in writing, the basis of the appeal, including the facts or issues that support the appeal and a request for a conference, if one is desired.

Within 25 business days of receipt of an appeal request, MD Labor shall notify all relevant parties (including the review team and, as appropriate, the MHEC) in writing of the date, time, and location of the appeal conference. A program that is removed from the ETPL for "substantial violations" shall be excluded for two years after which time the provider may reapply for eligibility. A program that wins an appeal is eligible to remain on the Maryland ETPL until time for eligibility renewal. The decision of the DWDAL Assistant Secretary will be final.

RA Programs

Under WIOA, RA programs are not subject to the same application and performance information requirements or to a period of initial or continued ETPL eligibility as other training providers. This is because they go through an extensive application and vetting process with the Maryland Apprenticeship and Training Council to become a RA program sponsor. RA program sponsors are, therefore, automatically eligible for inclusion on the state ETPL and will remain on the list as long as the program is registered or until the program sponsor notifies the Maryland Director of Apprenticeship and Training that it no longer wants to be included on Maryland's ETPL.

In December 2016, MD Labor notified all existing RA program sponsors of their eligibility to be on Maryland's ETPL. MD Labor is committed to adding all RA programs that indicate interest to the State's ETPL.

(4) Describe how the State will implement and monitor for the Adult Priority of Service requirement in WIOA section 134 (c)(3)(E) that requires American Job Center staff, when using WIOA Adult program funds to provide individualized career services and training services, to give priority of service to recipients of public assistance, low-income individuals, and individuals who are basic skills deficient (including English language learners).

Maryland's WIOA system can be a pathway to the middle class and a means to maintain and build the skills necessary to remain in the middle class. Maryland is committed to ensuring its target populations are able to access the WIOA system on a priority basis. For the WIOA Title I Adult Program, this means that Local Areas must provide priority for training activities to individuals in the target populations.

Target Populations: Individuals with Barriers to Employment

- Displaced Homemakers
- Eligible MSFWs
- Ex-offenders
- Homeless individuals
- Individuals facing substantial cultural barriers

- Individuals with disabilities, including youth with disabilities
- Individuals within two years of exhausting lifetime eligibility under Part A of the Social Security Act - TANF
- Individuals who are English language learners
- Individuals who are unemployed, including the long-term unemployed
- Individuals who have low levels of literacy
- Individuals without a High School Diploma
- Low-income individuals (including TANF and SNAP recipients)
- Long-term unemployed individuals
- Native Americans, Alaskan Natives, and Native Hawaiians
- Older individuals
- Single parents (including single pregnant women and non-custodial parents)
- Veterans
- Youth who are in or have aged out of the foster care system

Per [TEGL 07-20](#), priority of service for Maryland workforce system customers is as follows:

- First, to veterans and eligible persons (who also are included in the groups given statutory priority for WIOA adult formula funds). This means that veterans and eligible persons who also are recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals, or individuals who are basic skills deficient would receive first priority for services provided with WIOA adult formula funds.
- Second, to non-covered persons (individuals who are not veterans or eligible persons) who are included in the groups given priority for WIOA adult formula funds.
- Third, to veterans and eligible persons who are not included in WIOA's priority groups.
- Fourth, to any other populations identified by the GWDB for priority.
- Last, to non-covered persons outside the groups given priority under WIOA.

Note: *When past income is an eligibility determinant for Federal employment or training programs, any amounts received as military pay or allowances by any person who served on active duty, and certain other specified benefits, must be disregarded for the veteran and for other individuals for whom those amounts would normally be applied in making an eligibility determination. Military earnings are not to be included when calculating income for veterans or transitioning service members for this priority.*

The state will ensure priority of service provisions are appropriately followed and monitored through several means. First, the Local Areas must adhere to these priority provisions and, within their local plans, provide details on how priority shall be given in the Local Area within these parameters. Specifically, Maryland asked its 13 Local Areas to provide “a description of how the LWDB will provide priority of service that conforms to the State Plan. This should include a description of additional local requirements or discretionary priorities, including data to support the need and how the local requirement and/or priority will be documented and implemented for the Adult program.”

Finally, Maryland will ensure priority of service is effectively offered through local WIOA Memoranda of Understanding. The GWDB, MD Labor, DHS, DHCD and MSDE/DORS jointly issued [PI 2021-04 WIOA Memoranda of Understanding & Resource Sharing Agreements](#) with fillable templates. This policy requires that WIOA Memoranda of Understanding contain provisions regarding a number of key components, including priority of service. The policy states that “all partners must certify within the local WIOA Memorandum of Understanding that they will adhere to all statutes, regulations, policies, and plans regarding priority of service, including, but not limited to, priority of service for the WIOA Title I Adult Program and for veterans and their eligible spouses.” MD Labor will confirm priority of service during its

annual comprehensive monitoring conducted by the Monitoring and Compliance Unit under the DWDAL.

(5) Describe the state's criteria regarding Local Area transfer of funds between the adult and dislocated worker programs.

On behalf of the Governor, MD Labor annually allocates funds for both the WIOA Title I Adult and Dislocated Worker programs. Allocations are made to LWDBs for Local Areas in consultation with the chief local elected officials. As explained in WIOA Section 133, when approved by MD Labor, a LWDB may transfer up to and including 100 percent of a PY and FY allocation for Adult employment and training activities, and up to and including 100 percent of a PY and FY allocation for Dislocated Worker employment and training activities between the two programs. Procedures for transfers are outlined in MD Labor's *PI 2016-01 [Transfer Authority for WIOA Title I Adult & Dislocated Worker Funds](#)*. The Department will request technical assistance from USDOL related to the requirement of the Governor's transfer approval in the coming FY.

Transfers may only occur between Adult and Dislocated Worker funds within the same funding phase. For example, PY 2021 expenditures cannot be transferred to PY 2020 funding. LWDBs may not transfer funds to or from the Youth program. A LWDB may delegate its authority under WIOA Section 133 to the director of Local Area or other designated signatory of the Local Area. A delegation can only be accomplished through a resolution of the LWDB, or by a process that is identified in the area's approved Local Plan.

When a LWDB elects to exercise its transfer authority, MD Labor will require that state policy guidance on requesting a transfer, approving a transfer, and reporting a transfer is adhered to. MD Labor has additionally established an appeal process for circumstances where a LWDB wishes to appeal a denial of its transfer request. When approved by OFA, a LWDB may transfer up to and including 100 percent of a PY and FY allocation for Adult employment and training activities, and up to and including 100 percent of a PY and FY allocation for Dislocated Worker employment and training activities between the two programs. A LWDB shall request a transfer by completing the Funding Transfer Request form that includes the following information:

- The number for the grant that expenditures would be transferred from;
- The number for the grant that expenditures would be transferred to;
- The amount of the transfer;
- A justification for the transfer;
- The requested effective date of the transfer;
- An assurance that there are sufficient funds in the budget for required activities for the remainder of the PY and FY; and
- The Catalog of federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) number, which is assigned by the federal funding agency and is listed on the Notice of Obligation.

Transfer requests must be received at least 45 calendar days prior to the end of the grant. If a LWDB has an unforeseen circumstance that may require an exception, the LWDB must contact OFA immediately for further discussion and direction. If the transfer exceeds 50 percent, the LWDB must provide justification for the transfer and assurance that services will be provided to the targeted population of the transferred funding source, with details on what funding sources will be used. The effective date cannot be retroactive past the current reporting period. In other words, the transfer would not change/affect the financial reports previously submitted. LWDBs must submit completed request forms, signed by the LWDB Chair (or the Director of the Local Area or other designated signatory of the Local Area,

designated by resolution or identified in the Local Plan, as set forth above), by email to the DWDAL. In the event that the request is made by the Local Area Director, the LWDB Chair must timely affirm that he or she has been apprised of the requested transfer. No request will be reviewed by OFA until written affirmation is received. Written affirmation should be sent via email to the DWDAL Fiscal Manager.

Approving a Transfer

When determining whether a transfer request is approved or denied, OFA must consult the DWDAL Director of the OWD and review the Local Area's WIOA Adult and Dislocated Worker funding expenditures, obligations, and balances to ensure these are in support of the LWDB's request. OFA should request additional information or clarification from the LWDB, as needed. As set forth in the state's policy on the authority to transfer between WIOA Title I funds, a Local Area must provide to DWDAL an assurance that there are sufficient funds in the budget for required activities for the remainder of the PY and FY. Also, should the transfer exceed 50 percent, the Local Area must provide justification for the transfer and assurance that services will be provided to the targeted population of the transferred funding source, with details on what funding sources will be used. After reviewing the request, OFA shall email an official determination to the LWDB Chair, the Local Area Director and the Local Area Fiscal Manager, signed by the DWDAL Assistant Secretary, with the determination to approve or deny within ten business days. OFA shall file documentation in the Local Area's WIOA grant file and, when approved, the transfer amount shall be posted on the grant tracking worksheet/system. A LWDB may appeal a denial of its transfer request to the DWDAL Assistant Secretary within ten calendar days from the received date of the denial notice. The appeal must be in writing and state the grounds for the appeal.

Reporting a Transfer

When approved, Local Areas shall report the transfer to OFA on the Adult and Dislocated Worker Quarterly Status Reports (QSRs). On the Adult QSR, Local Areas shall report the transfer as "the amount of Adult funds expended on the Dislocated Worker Program." On the Dislocated Worker QSR, Local Areas shall report the transfer as "the amount of Dislocated Worker funds expended on the Adult Program." In turn, OFA shall report the transfer to the USDOL on the Quarterly Financial Report for both "Local Adult" and "Local Dislocated Worker."

(6) Describe the State's policy on WIOA and TAA co-enrollment and whether and how often this policy is disseminated to the local workforce development boards and required one-stop partners Trade Act Sec. 239(f), Sec. 235, 20 CFR 618.325, 20 CFR 618.824(a)(3)(i).

As outlined in PI 2022-02 *Trade Adjustment Assistance*, TAA participants must be co-enrolled in the WIOA Title I Dislocated Worker program. Individuals identified as TAA participants under Trade petition certifications are qualified as dislocated workers under the WIOA definition of the term. Therefore, TAA participants are eligible, by virtue of their TAA participant status, to receive benefits and services funded under the Title I Dislocated Worker program. The Dislocated Worker program offers complementary benefits not available through TAA. Co-enrollment brings valuable resources to bear that help TAA participants accelerate their reemployment process including offering supportive services and follow-up services. Additionally, TAA Participant performance outcomes improve through co-enrollment. Title I Dislocated Worker staff and state staff must establish collaborative case management and file management processes to ensure services to co-enrolled customers are optimally integrated and coordinated, duplication is avoided, and monitoring and data validation audits are successful.

In cases where the customer declines co-enrollment or the individual does not meet the eligibility requirements for WIOA Title I, TAA Case Managers must document the customer

declaration to decline as well as the reason the participant does not meet eligibility in the case management system/MWE. WIOA Title I Dislocated Worker program co-enrollment is monitored quarterly to ensure the state is meeting its co-enrollment target.

The process and purpose of TAA co-enrollment in the WIOA Title I Dislocated Worker program is reviewed and discussed during each of our annual Trade program training sessions and reinforced during each of our local training and technical assistance sessions.

(7) Describe the State's formal strategy to ensure that WIOA and TAA co-enrolled participants receive necessary funded benefits and services. Trade Act Sec. 239(f), Sec. 235, 20 CFR 618.816(c).

A formal strategy that has been established in Maryland has been the designating of at least one WIOA staff member in each local area to be the TAA program partner. This TAA WIOA partner will work closely with the TAA program case manager to co-enroll each participant in the WIOA Dislocated Worker program and assist with providing any related services as necessary. TAA WIOA partner staff are trained alongside TAA program staff on current process, procedures, strategy and documentation. This co-enrollment process will be done either simultaneously or as a joint effort between both TAA program case manager and the TAA WIOA partner case manager so that the process will be streamlined with the sharing of paperwork/documentation required and seamless on the part of the participant.

(8) Describe the State's process for familiarizing one-stop staff with the TAA program. 20 CFR 618.804(j), 20 CFR 618.305.

The Dislocation Services Unit provides both quarterly and annual training on the TAA program benefits and processes. Additional training sessions are held upon request or with the acquisition of any new TAA program staffing. TAA program handbooks are distributed to TAA program staff and are available to any staff wanting information on the TAA program for cross-training purposes. The Dislocation Services Unit offers to assist each Local Area with the elimination of barriers and formalizing a smooth process flow between programs and services provided to the individual.

(c) Youth Program Requirements. With respect to youth workforce investment activities authorized in section 129 of WIOA, States should describe their strategies that will support the implementation of youth activities under WIOA. State's must-

(1) Identify the State-developed criteria to be used by local boards in awarding grants or contracts for youth workforce investment activities and describe how the local boards will take into consideration the ability of the providers to meet performance accountability measures based on primary indicators of performance for the youth program as described in section 116(b)(2)(A)(ii) of WIOA. Further, include a description of how the State assists local areas in determining whether to contract for services or to provide some or all of the program elements directly.

WIOA outlines a broader youth vision that is grounded in evidence-based strategies to support a service delivery system that is dedicated to achieving high-levels of performance, accountability and quality in preparing young people for the workforce. Through the WIOA Title I Youth Program, WIOA places a greater emphasis on supporting the educational and career successes of Out-of-School Youth (OSY). A minimum of 75 percent of WIOA Title I Youth Program funds are required to be spent on OSY. The law also requires the Youth Program's key elements to include dropout recovery strategies and services, education offered concurrently with workforce activities and training, financial literacy education,

entrepreneurship, postsecondary transitional support, and LMI. Local Areas must spend at least 20 percent of WIOA Title I Youth Program funds on work experiences that incorporate academic and occupational education. The WIOA Youth Program is designed to support eligible youth in reaching their educational and career goals. To meet this aim, Local Areas and local providers that are awarded competitive contracts must:

- Determine youth program eligibility;
- Conduct an objective assessment of the participant's skills;
- Develop an Individual Service Strategy (ISS) with the participant; and,
- Utilize WIOA's 14 Youth Program elements to support the participant in reaching their career and academic goals.

Selecting Service Providers

LWDBs have the option to directly provide some or all of the youth workforce development activities to WIOA Title I Youth Program participants. For services not being directly provided by the LWDBs, LWDBs have the option to develop contracts to select WIOA Title I Youth Program service providers that will allow multiple agencies and organizations to fund different aspects of the WIOA Title I Youth Program. Each local system of services can be coordinated through a combination of contracts and MOUs between the participating entities.

In granting or contracting WIOA Title I Youth Program services, LWDBs must award grants or contracts according to local procurement policies. Providers must be identified based on criteria in the State Plan and take into consideration the ability of the providers to meet performance accountability measures. Any selected providers funded are recipients of Federal funds and are subject to WIOA rules.

LWDBs may determine the length of time for each provider contract as long as the contracting process follows procurement guidelines. Additionally, a LWDB may award grants or contracts on a sole-source basis only if it determines there is an insufficient number of eligible providers in the Local Area for grants or contracts to be awarded on a competitive basis.

MD Labor encourages Local Areas that grant or contract out services to include MD Labor's Disability and Youth Services Coordinator in the Request for Proposals evaluation and selection process. Once funds are awarded, Local Areas must provide MD Labor with timely copies of the selected service providers' contracts or grant agreements.

(2) Explain how the State assists local workforce boards in achieving equitable results for out-of-school and in-school youth. Describe promising practices or partnership models that local areas are implementing and the state's role in supporting and scaling those models within the state for both in-school and out-of-school youth.

WIOA outlines a broader youth vision grounded in evidence-based strategies to support a service delivery system dedicated to achieving high-levels of performance, accountability and quality in preparing young people for the workforce. Through the WIOA Title I Youth Program, WIOA places a greater emphasis on supporting the educational and career successes of OSY. The law includes the Youth Program's 14 key elements to include dropout recovery strategies and services, education offered concurrently with workforce activities and training, financial literacy education, entrepreneurship, postsecondary transitional support, and LMI. Local Areas must spend at least 20 percent of WIOA Title I Youth Program funds on work experiences that incorporate academic and occupational education. The WIOA Youth Program is designed to support eligible youth in reaching their educational and career goals.

To meet this aim, Local Areas and local providers that are awarded competitive contracts, must:

- Determine youth program eligibility;
- Conduct an objective assessment of the participant's skills;
- Develop an Individual Service Strategy (ISS) with the participant; and
- Utilize WIOA's 14 Youth Program elements to support the participant in reaching his or her career and academic goals.

Co-Enrollment

Given WIOA's focus on providing an integrated service delivery system that leverages resources across the State, MD Labor encourages Local Areas to co-enroll youth participants in both the WIOA Youth Program and other related programs when appropriate. The following list provides examples of programs where co-enrollment may make sense for the youth participant:

- WIOA Title I Adult Program;
- WIOA Title I Dislocated Worker Program;
- WIOA Title II Adult Education Program;
- WIOA Title III Wagner-Peyser Program;
- TANF Program;
- SNAP E&T;
- DORS Program;
- JVSG Program;
- TAA Program;
- John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program;
- Local Management Boards;
- Job Corps; and/or,
- Community-Based Organizations.

Additionally, MD Labor will utilize Maryland's Fostering Employment Program to focus resources towards two WIOA target populations: foster care recipients and unaccompanied homeless youth. The program provides opportunities for these two populations to access pre-apprenticeship and RA opportunities across Maryland. This program allows for OSY who fall within the eligibility guidelines of the program another option for co-enrollment.

Youth participants must meet eligibility criteria for participation within each program before co-enrollment occurs. Maryland recognizes that the WIOA system's mark of success goes beyond the measures required by Federal partners. As Maryland seeks to strengthen and enhance its workforce system through implementation of the State Plan, success requires a commitment to innovation, collaboration, and a true systems approach among the State's many workforce partners. Maryland's State Youth Services Coordinator continues to meet quarterly with the LWBs designee to the Youth Program Managers meeting to address performance results, provide training and technical assistance, offer opportunities for peer-to-peer collaboration, and obtain Local Area input and successful implementation strategies of WIOA programs.

In order to guide the WIOA Partners in this work, the Benchmarks of Success for Maryland's Workforce System set forth a clear vision, goals, and measurable achievements that continue to help define success and lay the core foundation of Maryland's workforce system. These goals and benchmarks are not mere measures, but rather provide a way of thinking systematically about how Maryland delivers services. They reflect Maryland's dedication to

focusing its efforts on people who need the system's assistance the most. To be clear, the intention of these benchmarks is not to be punitive; but rather, to be forward-thinking about what success really means in Maryland. Utilizing these benchmarks, Maryland will work to create greater opportunities for Maryland's OSY through the alignment of the State's core partner programs, as well as utilize best practices and innovative program strategies, to align statewide initiatives such as Youth Apprenticeship and the Blueprint for Success, which are primarily focused on the in-school youth (ISY) population.

(3) Describe how the State assists local workforce boards in implementing innovative models for delivering youth workforce investment activities, including effective ways local workforce boards can make available the 14 program elements described in WIOA section 129(c)(2); and explain how local areas can ensure work experience, including quality pre-apprenticeship and registered apprenticeship, is prioritized as a key element within a broader career pathways strategy.

Maryland will work alongside its Local Area partners to ensure that each area has the technical knowledge and training to provide top-notch services to the youth participants across the State. The State recently modified its State Youth Policy to reflect the State's desire to provide the Local Areas the most flexibility to be innovative in designing services to meet the needs of the participants and address the labor market needs of the Local Area. Furthermore, Federal guidance has also offered the necessary clarifications on items such as supportive services. Local Areas must ensure that each WIOA Youth Program provider consistently conducts an objective assessment of each participant's academic levels, skill levels, and service needs to properly identify the appropriate services and career pathways. The assessment must include a review of basic skills; occupational skills; prior work experience; employability; interests; aptitudes, including interests and aptitudes for nontraditional jobs; supportive service needs; and developmental needs.

If the participant has been assessed by a provider to pursue another education or training program within the last year, the WIOA Youth Program provider may use that existing assessment to fulfill program requirements. When used, the provider must retain copies of previous assessment(s) and/or assessment result(s) in the participant's case file.

The ISS serves as a guide for both the participant and staff by outlining the necessary and recommended next steps in the program. Through the ISS, staff should aim to identify the appropriate combination and sequence of services to help the participant fulfill goals and program requirements. Staff must interpret assessment results and incorporate those results into service planning and activities. This will help to ensure that youth achieve established goals and obtain desired career and educational outcomes. The ISS must map out anticipated progress taking into account individual needs, abilities and goals.

Local Areas must ensure that each WIOA Title I Youth Program provider develops an ISS with each youth participant after they have been objectively assessed. When developing the ISS, the Youth Program staff and participants must jointly take the objective assessment results into account.

The ISS must identify career pathways and must, at a minimum, include an examination of short-term and long term:

1. Education goals;
2. Employment goals;
3. Appropriate achievement objectives or benchmarks/milestones; and,
4. Appropriate services.

Once completed, Local Areas must ensure that the ISS is signed, either on paper or electronically, by the Youth Program staff and participant. Local Areas must ensure that each participant receives a signed copy of their ISS as record.

Once an ISS is completed, if a participant then pursues a different education or training program within the same quarter, the new WIOA Title I Youth Program provider may use the existing ISS to fulfill program requirements. In order to ensure ongoing review of the ISS, staff must meet with youth participants every 90 days, at a minimum, to review progress and make necessary adjustments. As the ISS is a living document that should be adjusted as the participant and case manager deem necessary, changes should be recorded, signed and dated by both the staff person and participant. At times, the most recent ISS will remain in effect with no changes. In this case, a case note should be created reflecting that the staff and participants met to review the ISS and that no changes were necessary. The date of the meeting must be listed in the case note. Examples of updates to the ISS include, but are not limited to:

1. Participant progress;
2. Completed activities or benchmarks;
3. Rewriting new goals once objectives have been met;
4. Outlining a clear direction or career pathway for the participant;
5. Changes to household status;
6. Legal name changes;
7. Address changes; and,
8. Other updates to contact information.

MD Labor has provided policy guidance to Local Areas on each program element and will continue to offer support to help Local Areas achieve related goals. MD Labor's policy on the WIOA Title I Youth Program clearly states that Local Areas must ensure that providers offer youth participants access to each of the 14 key program elements. If the WIOA Title I Youth Program provider does not directly offer all program elements, it must ensure that strong partnerships and referral mechanisms are in place to provide access to each element, as necessary. Through ongoing monitoring and technical assistance, MD Labor and the Local Areas will ensure that access is effectively provided to youth participants.

(4) Provide the language contained in the State policy for “requiring additional assistance to enter or complete an educational program, or to secure and hold employment” criterion for out-of-school youth specified in WIOA section 129(a)(1)(B)(iii)(VIII) and for “requiring additional assistance to complete an education program, or to secure and hold employment” criterion for in-school youth specified in WIOA section 129(a)(1)(C)(iv)(VII). If the state does not have a policy, describe how the state will ensure that local areas will have a policy for these criteria.

WIOA sections 129(a)(1)(B)(iii)(VIII) and 129(a)(1)(C)(iv)(VII) define eligibility criteria for the WIOA Title I Youth Program. For ISY and OSY, one criterion is that an individual is low-income and requires additional assistance to enter or complete an educational program or to secure or hold employment. Comprehensive guidance on youth programming is outlined in MD Labor's *PI 2021-14 WIOA Title I Youth Program*. Maryland's Local Areas will be required to define what it means to “require additional assistance to enter or complete an educational program or to secure or hold employment” in Local Plans and local policies. The DWDAL Monitoring and Compliance Unit will verify the existence and accuracy of these documents while conducting annual onsite and desk review activities. Additionally, the Division's Youth and Disability Coordinator will be available to provide technical assistance to Local Areas requiring support in complying with this measure.

(d) Single Area State Requirements.

This prompt is not applicable to the State of Maryland's Workforce Plan.

(e) Waiver Requests (optional). States wanting to request waivers as part of their title I-B Operational Plan must include a waiver plan that includes the following information for each waiver requested:

- (1) Identifies the statutory or regulatory requirements for which a waiver is requested and the goals that the State or local area, as appropriate, intends to achieve as a result of the waiver and how those goals relate to the Unified or Combined State Plan;
- (2) Describes the actions that the State or local area, as appropriate, has undertaken to remove State or local statutory or regulatory barriers;
- (3) Describes the goals of the waiver and the expected programmatic outcomes if the request is granted;
- (4) Describes how the waiver will align with the Department's policy priorities, such as:
 - (A) supporting employer engagement;
 - (B) connecting education and training strategies;
 - (C) supporting work-based learning;
 - (D) improving job and career results, and
 - (E) other guidance issued by the Department.
- (5) Describes the individuals affected by the waiver, including how the waiver will impact services for disadvantaged populations or individuals with multiple barriers to employment; and
- (6) Describes the processes used to:
 - (A) Monitor the progress in implementing the waiver;
 - (B) Provide notice to any local board affected by the waiver;
 - (C) Provide any local board affected by the waiver an opportunity to comment on the request;
 - (D) Ensure meaningful public comment, including comment by business and organized labor, on the waiver.
 - (E) Collect and report information about waiver outcomes in the State's WIOA Annual Report.
- (7) The Secretary may require that States provide the most recent data available about the outcomes of the existing waiver in cases where the State seeks renewal of a previously approved waiver.

1. Background

The State of Maryland is seeking a waiver from the requirements outlined in WIOA Section 134(c)(3)(H)(i) and 20 CFR 680.720(b) requiring that "employers may be reimbursed up to 50 percent of the wage rate of an OJT participant, and up to 75 percent using the criteria in § 680.730, for the extraordinary costs of providing the training and additional supervision related to the OJT." Maryland requests that the reimbursement rate for businesses with 50 or fewer employees is increased from 75 to 90 percent.

Since the implementation of WIOA, Maryland's Local Areas have worked closely with businesses in their communities to increase training opportunities for local jobseekers. While Maryland has been successful in increasing training opportunities across the State, Local Areas have regularly noted in their Local Plans the difficulties in engaging small businesses for training opportunities due to the financial burdens of participation. The U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) Office of Advocacy estimates that as of 2021, small businesses constitute 99.5% of Maryland's overall business landscape. By raising the reimbursement rate

for OJT, Local Areas will have an increased ability to support small businesses and provide more opportunities for jobseekers in their jurisdictions.

2. Statutory/Regulatory Requirements to be Waived

Federally, Maryland requests a waiver for the obligation of 20 CFR 680.720(b). There are no known State, local statutory, or regulatory barriers in Maryland related to implementing the requested waiver.

3. Actions Maryland Has Taken to Remove Local Barriers

MD Labor works closely with its local partners to ensure flexibility and to remove as many barriers as possible for implementing workforce development programs. This includes streamlining the ETPL process, working collaboratively on business services, and increasing technical assistance related to Registered Apprenticeship. However, even with these activities, Local Areas have struggled to recruit small businesses into the workforce system due to the low OJT reimbursement rate.

4. Maryland's Strategic Goals

This waiver request supports Maryland's four strategic pillars:

1. Supercharge Key Sectors;
2. Advance Equity and Access;
3. Prepare the Future Workforce; and,
4. Improve System Alignment and Accountability.

By allowing more businesses to access the workforce system, which in turn increases capacity for jobseekers to find meaningful employment, Maryland will be able to target each of the above pillars.

More specifically, increased OJT reimbursement for small businesses will:

1. Create more training and employment opportunities for all individuals, including those with barriers to employment;
2. Allow small businesses to train and customize their workforce onsite;
3. Allow small businesses to train workers with minimal risk due to the reduced cost;
4. Build a stronger pipeline for workers while simultaneously increasing retention for the business;
5. Increase State support for Minority-Owned Business Enterprises, many of which are small businesses; and
6. Lead to long-term, family-sustaining wages for workers at the conclusion of OJT.

5. Complement of USDOL Priorities

[USDOL's FY2022-2026 Strategic Plan](#) establishes ETA's Performance Goal 1.1, which is to "create customer-focused workforce solutions that serve all workers, including underserved communities." By increasing the ability for small businesses to participate in the workforce system, and in return increasing opportunities for jobseekers to access high quality training and employment, MD Labor is meeting the following ETA strategies outline in goal 1.1:

1. Preparing America's workers for the jobs of the 21st century by investing in high-quality workforce training programs and expanding access to underserved communities; and,

2. Strengthening training and employment services by supporting the workforce system to provide critical employment and training services in a rapidly changing environment.

6. Quantifiable Programmatic Outcomes

Maryland would establish a goal of increasing OJT participation by 10%.

7. Benefiting individuals and groups

The waiver will benefit all populations seeking employment. It will also benefit small businesses that engage with the workforce system.

8. Monitoring of Waiver Implementation

Several entities within MD Labor will monitor the waiver implementation in Maryland:

1. MD Labor's Office of Workforce Development will evaluate the impact implementing the waiver has on Maryland's objectives and strategic goals;
2. MD Labor's Monitoring and Compliance Unit will monitor Local Areas to ensure compliance with the new waiver requirements; and,
3. The MD Labor's Director of the Office of Workforce Development will stay abreast of waiver impact and all outcomes will be included in the WIOA Annual Report.

Title I-B Assurances

The State Plan must include assurances that:

The State Plan must include	Include
1. The State has implemented a policy to ensure Adult program funds provide a priority in the delivery of training services and individualized career services to individuals who are low income, public assistance recipients and basic skills deficient;	Yes
2. The State has implemented a policy to ensure local areas have a process in place for referring veterans with significant barriers to employment to career services provided by the JVSG program's Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) specialist;	Yes
3. The State established a written policy and procedure that set forth criteria to be used by chief elected officials for the appointment of local workforce investment board members;	Yes
4. The State established written policy and procedures to ensure local workforce investment boards are certified by the governor every two years in accordance with WIOA section 107(c)(2);	Yes
5. Where an alternative entity takes the place of a State Board, the State has written policy and procedures to ensure the alternative entity meets the definition under WIOA section 101(e) and the legal requirements for membership;	Yes
6. The State established a written policy and procedure for how the individuals and entities represented on the State Workforce Development Board help to determine the methods and factors of distribution, and how the State consults with chief elected officials in local areas throughout the State in determining the distributions;	Yes
7. The State will not use funds received under WIOA Title I to assist, promote, or deter union organizing in accordance with WIOA section 181(b)(7);	Yes

The State Plan must include	Include
8. The State distributes adult, and youth funds received under WIOA equitably throughout the State, and no local area suffers significant shifts in funding from year-to-year during the period covered by this plan;	Yes
9. If a State Workforce Development Board, department, or agency administers State laws for vocational rehabilitation of persons with disabilities, that board, department, or agency cooperates with the agency that administers Wagner-Peyser services, Adult and Dislocated Worker programs and Youth Programs under Title I;	Yes
10. The State agrees to report on the impact and outcomes of its approved waivers in its WIOA Annual Report.	Yes
11. The State has taken appropriate action to secure compliance with the Uniform Guidance at 2 CFR 200 and 2 CFR 2900, including that the State will annually monitor local areas to ensure compliance and otherwise take appropriate action to secure compliance with the Uniform Guidance under section WIOA 184(a)(3);	Yes

Adult Program Performance Indicators

Performance indicators table

Performance Indicators	PY 2024 Expected Level	PY 2024 Negotiated Level	PY 2025 Expected Level	PY 2025 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	76.0	80.0	76.5	81.0
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	74.0	77.0	74.5	78.0
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	6600.0	8400.0	6650.0	8500.0
Credential Attainment Rate	55.0	62.0	60.5	62.0
Measurable Skill Gains	60.0	65.5	61.0	66.0
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹

¹ The Departments have not issued the final rule defining Effectiveness in Serving Employers. As a result, states will not submit expected levels of performance for this indicator and the Departments will not establish negotiated levels of performance for PYs 2024 and 2025.

Dislocated Program Performance Indicators

Performance Indicators	PY 2024 Expected Level	PY 2024 Negotiated Level	PY 2025 Expected Level	PY 2025 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	79.0	80.0	79.0	81.0
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	77.5	79.5	77.5	80.5

Performance Indicators	PY 2024 Expected Level	PY 2024 Negotiated Level	PY 2025 Expected Level	PY 2025 Negotiated Level
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	8500.0	9700.0	8600.0	9900.0
Credential Attainment Rate	55.5	63.0	57.5	64.0
Measurable Skill Gains	61.0	65.0	61.5	65.0
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹

¹ The Departments have not issued the final rule defining Effectiveness in Serving Employers. As a result, states will not submit expected levels of performance for this indicator and the Departments will not establish negotiated levels of performance for PYs 2024 and 2025.

Youth Program Performance Indicators

Performance Indicators	PY 2024 Expected Level	PY 2024 Negotiated Level	PY 2025 Expected Level	PY 2025 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	72.5	78.0	73.0	79.0
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	67.0	71.0	67.5	72.0
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	3700.0	4600.0	3750.0	4800.0
Credential Attainment Rate	61.5	63.5	63.5	64.0
Measurable Skill Gains	55.5	57.0	56.0	59.0
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹

¹ The Departments have not issued the final rule defining Effectiveness in Serving Employers. As a result, states will not submit expected levels of performance for this indicator and the Departments will not establish negotiated levels of performance for PYs 2024 and 2025.

WAGNER-PEYSER ACT PROGRAM (Employment Services)

(a) Employment Service (ES) Staff.

Maryland is reviewed the flexible regulation, as released in Training and Employment Notice 13-19, "Announcing the Release of the Wagner-Peyser Act Staffing Flexibility Final Rule and Amended Information Collections Associated with this Rulemaking," released on January 13, 2020, and will continue to administer Wagner-Peyser Employment Services with State merit staff.

(1) Describe how the State will staff the provision of labor exchange services under the Wagner-Peyser Act, such as through State employees, including but not limited to state merit staff employees, staff of a subrecipient, or some combination thereof.

Maryland is reviewed the flexible regulation, as released in Training and Employment Notice 13-19, "Announcing the Release of the Wagner-Peyser Act Staffing Flexibility Final Rule and Amended Information Collections Associated with this Rulemaking," released on January 13, 2020, and will continue to administer Wagner-Peyser Employment Services with State merit staff.

Under Title III of WIOA, the Wagner-Peyser Act, a greater emphasis is placed on providing services to UI claimants with referrals to additional AJC services. This is in an effort to ensure claimants remain eligible for UI benefits and to provide meaningful assistance in their efforts to regain employment. Labor exchange services, which are the primary services provided under Wagner-Peyser, fall under the basic career services identified in WIOA. Wagner-Peyser state merit staff must use funds authorized by WIOA to provide basic career services.

As a result of increased collaboration, DWDAL and the DUI have enhanced staff training and coordination on policy implementation efforts. The two divisions will continue working to assess Title I and III AJC staff training needs and DWDAL's CLO will assist with the development and delivery of training.

As part of Maryland's WIOA Alignment Group, the CLO leads the Professional Development and Technical Assistance Committee. The committee is comprised of partners from Maryland's workforce system and contributes to the creation of professional development and training opportunities for staff across the system. The committee meets monthly to discuss the needs of staff and customers to determine the best method to deliver professional development services. For example, MD Labor has invited partners from across the system to participate in professional development opportunities when space is available.

Since February 2020, the Professional Development and Technical Assistance Committee launched a Series of eLearning modules accessible online by the staff of all mandatory partners of Maryland's Workforce System. eLearning modules in this series are released bi-monthly and are focused on informing front line staff about the Workforce System as a whole. There are currently 9 professional development training modules available and over 1,400 users spanning across more than 40 organizations in Maryland (including State agencies) that have benefited from the training. The training modules teach, refresh and test an individual's knowledge of different programs and subjects within the State's workforce system. Specifically, each of the 9 modules focus on a different aspect of the WIOA system, including topics such as the Benchmarks of Success, the GWDB, and the different WIOA Titles (Titles I-IV), with additional topics and modules regularly being developed and made available to staff. With a completion rate of 79% across users, the professional development training modules have demonstrated great success in improving understanding and collaboration across all

organizations engaged in the workforce system, allowing staff to better serve both job seekers and employers.

In October 2019, DWDAL held a three-day reemployment retreat with targeted professional development sessions for approximately 100 Wagner-Peyser and MD Labor central office staff. Topics included utilizing the MWE, resume workshops, apprenticeship, veteran services, recession planning, and accessibility. Staff from the DUI participated in the event and presented on UI eligibility and referral coordination. Other workshops on self-care, managing stress, managing change, and finding better ways to connect with our customers were provided.

In 2017, the State implemented the Reemployment Exchange (REX) module within MWE. Maryland's purchase of the REX module allows UI claimants to record and store their job search contacts and other reemployment activities. Integration of the two systems provides a centralized data system and coordinated registration for UI claimants to enter and perform necessary tasks while collecting UI benefits. Upon completion of a UI registration, a Wagner-Peyser registration is automatically created. Rather than seeking the same data elements, requiring the claimant to spend more time on entering and re-entering information into both systems, which is the case currently, the REX module allows for the claimant to focus on what is important: reemployment.

Through the purchase of the REX module, Maryland is more proactive in its reemployment activities. Jobseeker activity in the MWE creates and/or modifies a reemployment roadmap for the individual. Implementing a robust, online system facilitates the sharing of information in real time between the UI benefits system and MWE. This, in turn, ensures proper payments are made and those claimants are actually meeting the goals set for them by the State's workforce and UI staff. This requires the continued cross-training between workforce and UI staff.

(2) Describe how the State will utilize professional development activities for Employment Service staff to ensure staff is able to provide high quality services to both jobseekers and employers.

The key goals of the Professional Development work group are to develop a systems approach to professional development needs, determine best practices for the administration of professional development, and ensure partner integration and cross-training opportunities. The group aims to build a competent, cross-functional team capable of operating in a number of disciplines and able to move flexibly between roles, locations, and funding streams to provide seamless delivery of services. Recommendations generated by the work group include opportunities for WIOA partners, including Wagner-Peyser, to promote professional development.

Maryland utilizes the "The Hub" for virtual training and workforce system resources. "The Hub" is a learning management system available to all Maryland State agencies that is maintained by Maryland's Department of Budget and Management (DBM). The WIOA partners will continue to use the Hub as the platform on which state and local partners, including Wagner-Peyser staff, will be able to access a variety of training modules and resources. "The Hub" has the capacity to create two home pages: one for MD Labor DWDAL internal training content and a second for content added by external partners. The external home page presents an excellent opportunity to facilitate improved service integration across the system. For example, each partner can post a "101" module that provides other partners with the basics on that organization's mission, target audiences, resources, key initiatives, etc.

Maryland is committed to the professional development of its staff and all WIOA partners. Leveraging “the Hub” and other resources will allow the partners to learn from each other and better assist their common customers.

The CLO and Labor have provided a variety of professional development opportunities to enhance the skills of staff and to create promotional opportunities and a career pathway for state merit staff. In 2022, current Reemployment Program Directors participate in a 6-day retreat and training around the program and services provided in the AJC. The retreat provided an overview of all DWDAL programs, including correctional education, adult education, workforce development and performance among others. In 2023, the retreat was offered for interested staff in an effort to create a succession place for future leaders.

Maryland continues to offer workforce development credential training as the need arises. Staff have access to Global Career Development Facilitator and Offender Workforce development Specialist certification training, Training from the Back of the Room Certified Professional Resume Writer and Federal Job Search trainers certifications.

In an effort to remain fresh in our reemployment programs, a yearly retreat is held for all staff that provide reemployment and meaningful UI assistance in the AJC. The retreat is developed in partnership with UI staff and offers workforce development and UI topics as part of the agenda.

(3) Describe strategies developed to support training and awareness across core programs and the UI program and the training provided for Employment Services and WIOA staff on identification of UI eligibility issues and referral to DUI staff for adjudication.

Under Title III of WIOA, the Wagner-Peyser Act, a greater emphasis is placed on providing services to UI claimants with referrals to additional AJC services. This is in an effort to ensure claimants remain eligible for UI benefits and to provide meaningful assistance in their efforts to regain employment. Labor exchange services, which are the primary services provided under Wagner-Peyser, fall under the basic career services identified in WIOA. Wagner-Peyser staff must use funds authorized by WIOA to provide basic career services.

As a result of increased collaboration, DWDAL and the DUI have enhanced staff training and coordination on policy implementation efforts. The two divisions will continue working to assess Title I and III AJC staff training needs and the CLO will assist with the development and delivery of trainings.

In August 2023, DWDAL held a two-day reemployment retreat with targeted professional development sessions for over 130 Wagner-Peyser, UI, and MD Labor central office staff. Topics included utilizing the MWE, resume workshops, UI training and accessibility. Staff from the DUI participated in the event and presented on UI eligibility and referral coordination. DUI and DWDAL reemployment staff discuss issues related to adjudication informally via phone daily. In addition, DUI and DWDAL meet monthly to discuss improvements to processes in place and to make adjustments as needed. AJC staff track issues and numbers of claimants entering the center using Google sheets. Staff also report issues through Google Virtual room and Google Docs reporting.

The MWE was adapted to allow communication between workforce staff and DUI to report issues for non-Reemployment Services Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) program claimants. In addition, the current RESEA database crosswalks to DUI to report issues found during eligibility reviews. Staff also email issues to an established email address and report issues on a Google Doc for DUI to report other issues identified. BEACON will allow the two-way sharing

of data with the MWE once it is fully implemented. This will eliminate the number of interactions currently utilized.

In 2017, the State implemented the Reemployment Exchange (REX) module within MWE. Maryland's purchase of the REX module allowed the State to establish a single web-based application for both workforce registration, filing of unemployment claims, and recording the three required job contacts/reemployment activities for each week that a claimant files for UI benefits. The common registration function allows for seamless transition between UI and workforce platforms. Integration of the two systems provides a centralized data system and coordinated registration for UI claimants to enter and perform necessary tasks while collecting UI benefits. Upon completion of a UI registration, a Wagner-Peyser registration is automatically created. Rather than seeking the same data elements, requiring the claimant to spend more time on entering and re-entering information into both systems, which is the case currently, the REX module allows for the claimant to focus on what is important: reemployment.

Through the purchase of the REX module, Maryland is more proactive in its reemployment activities. Immediately after an individual files an initial UI claim or a UI weekly certification in REX, the system creates a reemployment roadmap for the individual. Implementing a robust, online system facilitates the sharing of information in real time between the UI benefits system and MWE. This, in turn, ensures proper payments are made and those claimants are actually meeting the goals set for them by the State's workforce and DUI staff. This requires the continued cross-training between workforce and DUI staff.

(b) Explain how the State will provide information and meaningful assistance to individuals requesting assistance in filing a claim for unemployment compensation through AJC centers, as required by WIOA as a career service.

In collaboration with Reemployment Program Directors, DUI staff will continue to provide training and technical assistance as needed. AJC offices have access to fact sheets, developed by DUI, that provide basic instruction on how to apply for an initial UI claim online or via telephone. For customers that need additional intensive assistance, DUI staff will be available by phone and email to answer specific questions AJC staff may not be able to provide. Claimants will be able to reach subject matter experts at 410-767-3246 or wayne.cooper@maryland.gov. Wagner-Peyser, ROW, and RESEA staff have been provided training by DUI staff to answer most common questions posed. In addition, a FAQ site will be available: <http://www.labor.maryland.gov/employment/claimfaq.shtml>.

OWD and DUI staff created a process to address UI claimant issues concerning UI claims. A whitelist was created of trusted phone contacts to DUI staff. OWD staff call the trusted numbers and allow claimants to speak to DUI staff to determine needed steps to resolve UI issues on the claim. In addition, a kiosk pilot was deployed to allow claimants video capability to discuss their issues with UI staff in four AJC's across Maryland. AJC staff have access to additional resources to assist claimants with their claim issues, including Google sheets and docs to submit requests. True ID has been implemented to assist claimants without proper technology in verifying their identity to speed processing of their claim.

(c) Describe the State's strategy for providing reemployment assistance to UI claimants and other unemployed individuals.

DWDAL and the DUI work collaboratively to provide workforce development opportunities to all UI claimants, totally and partially unemployed, in Maryland. This is accomplished utilizing a variety of strategies including initial mailers from DUI describing the requirement for

workforce enrollment and call in of claimants for RESEA or ROW activities. Under the Maryland UI law, claimants must register in Maryland's AJC system within five days of receiving the UI pamphlet. Claimants must register either in person by visiting their nearest AJC career center or via the internet at <https://mwejobs.maryland.gov/vosnet/Default.aspx>. A list of Maryland's AJCs is included as part of the mailed pamphlet.

WIOA increases connections between UI and reemployment services and the UI system. Maryland offers its full array of AJC Services, including basic and individual career services and training services under WIOA. UI claimants will benefit from the enhanced services, including the labor exchange services and career guidance that are included as career services under Title I as well as activities that assist workers in identifying and obtaining jobs in in-demand industries and occupations. Maryland utilizes permanent Wagner-Peyser staff to conduct RESEA activities under WIOA Title III. From the UI first pay list, claimants most likely to exhaust benefits are selected to take part in the RESEA program along with Unemployment Compensation for Ex-Servicemembers (UCX) claimants. The remaining claimants will be assigned to the ROW program. RESEA claimants may be referred to ROW as a result of the RESEA after the eligibility review and if determined that it will assist in reducing the length of unemployment. Historically, WPRS system identifies between 20,000-30,000 claimants annually.

Maryland's purchase of the REX module will allow the State to establish a single web-based common intake portal for both workforce registration and recording job search/reemployment activities. The common registration function will allow for seamless transition between UI and workforce platforms.

(d) Describe how the State will use W-P funds to support UI claimants, and the communication between W-P and UI, as appropriate including the following:

(1) Coordination of and provision of labor exchange services for UI claimants as required by the Wagner-Peyser Act;

The goal of reemployment in Maryland is to ensure claimants are engaged with their local AJCs beyond the initial mandatory contact for continued eligibility. Labor Exchange staff are an important part of the strategy to keep claimants engaged in the centers. As part of this strategy, Labor Exchange staff provide reemployment services to claimants during the one-on-one assessment interviews for RESEA. Staff will make appropriate referrals to programs based on assessment of need during the meeting.

The elements which comprise Maryland's RESEA are AJC Orientation, LMI provision, Individual Reemployment Plan, Referral to Reemployment and Training Services, Eligibility Review Interview, and review of their Work Search Agreement. As part of the program, claimants are required to complete two additional Reemployment Activities within 45 days of the completed initial RESEA workshop. Claimants and trainers mutually agree upon which of the array of AJC services are most beneficial to assist in a job search. Examples of AJC program referrals may include WIOA training, the POAC, and specific training for ex-offenders, CED® seekers, seniors, and other workshops (e.g. resume writing and interviewing). The mutually agreed upon service is recorded on the claimant's Individual Reemployment Plan and after completion in the MWE. The trainer follows the Individual Reemployment Plan to assure compliance with the agreement. If a claimant fails to follow through on agreed upon reemployment services within 45 days, they are referred to UI for adjudication.

In FY23, Maryland fully implemented Subsequent RESEA engagements at all AJCs. At the initial RESEA event, claimants are provided an appointment for 5 weeks after the initial RESEA

session is completed. Reemployment staff review the IRP, provide another eligibility review and Work Search check. Suggestions to overcome barriers are made and training or more intensive one-on-one sessions are recommended if needed.

ROW provides reemployment assistance to UI claimants not served by the RESEA program. ROW trainers provide services at AJCs. The goals of the program include reducing the duration of UI and connecting UI claimants to Wagner-Peyser programs. The delivery of reemployment services involves a coordinated approach, involving DUI, Wagner-Peyser, and WIOA Title I staff. ROW is open to all jobseekers, whether they are a current UI claimant or employed, depending on available space.

Each identified profiled candidate is contacted regarding participation in a job finding and career enhancing workshop for a six-hour presentation that covers, at a minimum, the job acquisition process, which includes self-assessment, career transition, resume writing, employment related correspondence, and interviewing. Local programs are encouraged to provide well-rounded information with additional topics for customers and partners. Each workshop participant will know by the end of the workshop that successful employment is the ultimate goal, and all AJC staffers are available to assist with their job search. Each workshop completer receives targeted and specific job search assistance, beginning in the workshop, with emphasis on appropriate and pertinent LMI.

Self-assessment instruments, access to supportive services and partner agencies, and individual and group counseling (career guidance) are available. The workshop includes referral and access to program staff, training, and additional resources. In addition, local training staff can access lists of workshop completers to provide follow up inquiries to potential dislocated workers. Job matching services, one-on-one conferences, follow-up activities, and meetings are used as tools to help customers obtain rapid reemployment. Each workshop participant is contacted for follow-up assistance and additional services.

Workshops are available that address interviewing skills, application preparation, résumé writing, social media, and job searches on the Internet. Participants can access information and/or receive referrals to upcoming job fairs, employer recruitment events, and links to other AJC partners. Partners participate in the RESEA and ROW programs to provide essential information on-site. Participants who need additional training to obtain employment are assisted through WIOA programs.

With increasing numbers of LEP individuals filing UI claims, Maryland is responding to the need by providing Spanish-language workshops (Spanish is the most common non-English language spoken in the state). Workshop materials have been translated into Spanish, and a Spanish-speaking workshop facilitator has been hired to provide Spanish-language workshops in the areas with the largest numbers of LEP claimants. The Spanish language facilitator will be available to the rest of the State as numbers increase to provide services to claimants. In addition, the Spanish language facilitator has developed value added workshops, such as interviewing strategies and basic computer classes, for RESEA claimants as part of follow up services.

DWDAL and the DUI continue to work collaboratively to ensure that staff questions, concerns, and challenges are quickly identified and addressed. There is great importance attributed to the fact that DWDAL and the DUI's administration meet regularly to orient themselves toward the highest standards for the RESEA program. Also, the Reemployment Program Manager and the UI Administrator jointly host regular program staff meetings to provide technical assistance, guidance, and training in such areas as UI eligibility issues, fact finding processes, data system operations and reporting, site-specific issues from a more global perspective,

and integration of the RESEA program into the AJC fabric. These ongoing meetings are designed to enhance communication, clarify RESEA/ROW reporting errors, and address any program related questions. USDOL recently cited how impressed they were by the level of communication between DUI and DWDAL as it relates to collaborative work with UI claimants.

(2) Registration of UI claimants with the State's employment service if required by State law;

DWDAL and the DUI work collaboratively to provide workforce development opportunities to all UI claimants, totally and partially unemployed, in Maryland. This will be accomplished utilizing a variety of strategies including initial mailers from DUI describing the requirement for enrollment and call in of claimants for RESEA or ROW for UI claimants. Under the Maryland UI law, claimants must enroll in Maryland's AJC system upon receiving the UI pamphlet. Claimants must enroll either in person by visiting their nearest AJC career center or via the internet at <https://mwejobs.maryland.gov/vosnet/Default.aspx>. A list of Maryland's AJCs is included as part of the mailed pamphlet.

Using the WPRS, Maryland selects all UI claimants who have received an initial payment. By identifying these claimants, DWDAL/DUI can:

1. Engage claimants sooner;
2. Provide reemployment services to more claimants faster;
3. Ensure claimants are fulfilling work search requirements; and,
4. Refer claimants who may be non-compliant with Maryland UI law for adjudication.

Maryland worked with the USDOL to update its current methodology, which was integrated in September 2020. The decision was made to begin clean and to allow focus on completion of modernization for a seamless transition. Once the methodology is fully updated, every two years it will be reviewed and adjusted to reflect current economic conditions. By having a current methodology, Maryland can provide a wide-reach of relevant reemployment services to meet customers' needs. Maryland offers its RESEA Program to claimants profiled as most likely to exhaust benefits. ROW continues to be available service for all other claimants as a path to reemployment.

By the fourth week of the initial claims filing process, profiled claimants are sent a letter, which schedules them for one of the workshops immediately after selection. The letter reinforces the requirement to register in the MWE. Follow-up emails are utilized as reminders of required attendance. MD Labor will ensure profiled claimants are fully engaged and registered within the workforce system. Claimants identified as failing to register will be directed to do so prior to completion of the workshop, and registration will be verified by the trainer.

WIOA increases connections between the job training and employment services and the UI system. Maryland will offer its full array of AJC Services as options for reemployment services to UI customers, including basic and individual career services and training services under WIOA. UI claimants will benefit from the enhanced services, including the labor exchange services and career guidance that are included as career services under Title I as well as activities that assist workers in identifying and obtaining jobs in in-demand industries and occupations. Maryland utilizes permanent Wagner-Peyser staff to conduct RESEA activities under Title III WIOA changes.

From the UI first pay list, the WPRS will profile claimants weekly, with those profiled as most likely to exhaust assigned to the RESEA program along with UCX claimants. The remaining

claimants will be assigned to the ROW program. RESEA claimants may be referred to ROW as a result of the RESEA after the eligibility review and if determined that it will assist in reducing the length of unemployment. Historically, Maryland's WPRS system profiles between 20,000-30,000 annually.

The elements which comprise Maryland's RESEA program are AJC Orientation, LMI provision, Individual Reemployment Plan, Referral to Reemployment and Training Services, and Eligibility Review Interview. Claimants and trainers will mutually agree upon which of the array of AJC services are most beneficial to assist in a job search. Examples of AJC program referrals may include WIOA training, POAC, and specific training for ex-offenders, GED® seekers, seniors, and other targeted populations.

The mutually agreed upon service is recorded in MWE and on the claimant's Individual Reemployment Plan. The trainer follows the Individual Employment Plan to assure compliance with the agreement. If a claimant fails to follow through on agreed upon reemployment services within 45 days, they are referred to UI for adjudication. The ROW program provides reemployment assistance to UI claimants not served by the RESEA program. ROW trainers provide services at AJCs. The goals of the program include shortening the duration of UI and connecting UI claimants to Employment Service programs. The delivery of reemployment services involves a coordinated approach, involving DUI, Wagner-Peyser, and WIOA Title I staff. ROW is open to all jobseekers, whether they are a current UI claimant or employed. Each profiled candidate is contacted regarding participation in a job finding and career enhancing workshop for a six-hour presentation that covers, at a minimum, the job acquisition process, which includes self-assessment, career transition, employment related correspondence, and interviewing.

Local programs are encouraged to provide well-rounded programs with additional topics for customers and partners. Each workshop participant will know by the end of the workshop that successful employment is the ultimate goal, and all AJC staffers are available to assist with their job search. Each participant who completes the workshop receives job search assistance, beginning in the workshop, with emphasis on appropriate and necessary LMI. Self-assessment instruments, access to supportive services and partner agencies, and individual and group counseling (career guidance) are available.

The workshop includes referral and access information to program staff, training, and additional resources. In addition, local training staff can access lists of workshop completers to provide follow up inquiries to potential dislocated workers. Job matching services, one-on-one conferences, follow-up activities, and meetings are used as tools to help customers obtain rapid reemployment. Each workshop participant is contacted for follow-up assistance and additional services.

Workshops are available that address interviewing skills, application preparation, résumé writing, social media, coping with job loss, and job searches on the Internet. Participants access services and attend workshops at the AJC. Participants also receive referrals to upcoming job fairs and employer recruitment events and link with other AJC partners. Partners participate in the RESEA and ROW workshops to provide on-site information pertaining to employment or essential services.

Participants who need additional training to obtain employment are assisted through WIOA programs. With increasing numbers of LEP individuals filing UI claims, Maryland is responding to the need for Spanish-language workshops. Workshop materials have been translated into Spanish, and Spanish-speaking workshop facilitators provide Spanish-language workshops in

the areas with the largest numbers of LEP claimants. Spanish-language services are available in the rest of the state as well.

DWDAL and the DUI continue to work collaboratively to ensure that staff questions, concerns, and challenges are quickly identified and addressed. There is great importance attributed to the fact that DWDAL and the DUI's administration meet regularly, to orient themselves toward the highest standards for the RESEA program. Also, the Statewide Reemployment Program Director and the UI Administrator host regular program staff meetings jointly to allow for frequent training and technical assistance in such areas as UI eligibility issues, fact finding processes, data system operations and reporting, site-specific issues from a more global perspective, and integration of the RESEA program into the AJC fabric. USDOL recently cited how impressed they were by the level of communication between DUI and DWDAL as it relates to collaborative work with UI claimants.

(3) Administration of the work test for the State unemployment compensation system, including making eligibility assessments (for referral to UI adjudication, if needed), and providing job finding and placement services for UI claimants; and

Maryland utilizes permanent Wagner-Peyser staff to conduct RESEA activities under Title III WIOA changes. From the UI first pay list, the WPRS will profile claimants weekly, with those profiled as most likely to exhaust assigned to the RESEA program along with UCX claimants. The remaining claimants will be assigned to the ROW. RESEA claimants may be referred to ROW as a result of the RESEA after the eligibility review and if determined that it will assist in reducing the length of unemployment. Historically, Maryland's WPRS system profiles between 20,000-30,000 annually.

The elements which comprise Maryland's RESEA are AJC Orientation, LMI provision, Individual Reemployment Plan, Referral to Reemployment and Training Services, and Eligibility Review Interview. Claimants and trainers will mutually agree upon which of the array of AJC services are most beneficial to assist in a job search. Examples of AJC program referrals may include WIOA training, POAC, other job search workshops, specific training for ex-offenders, GED® seekers, seniors, and other targeted populations. The mutually agreed upon service is recorded in MWE and on the claimant's Individual Reemployment Plan (IRP). DUI checks for IRP completion in MWE to assure compliance with the agreement. If a claimant fails to follow through on agreed upon reemployment services within 45 days, they will be referred for adjudication.

The ROW program provides reemployment assistance to UI claimants not served by the RESEA program. ROW trainers provide services at AJCs. The goals of the program include shortening the duration of UI and connecting UI claimants to Employment Service programs. The delivery of reemployment services involves a coordinated approach, involving DUI, Wagner-Peyser, and WIOA Title I staff. ROW is open to all jobseekers, whether they are a current UI claimant or employed. Each identified, profiled candidate is contacted regarding participation in a job finding and career enhancing workshop for a six-hour presentation that covers, at a minimum, the job acquisition process, which includes LMI, self-assessment, career transition, employment related correspondence, social media in job search and interviewing.

Prior to the pandemic ROW and RESEA sessions were provided at the AJCs. During the pandemic, Maryland switched to providing virtual services, and staff are now trained and equipped to host webinars. At present, Maryland offers a hybrid model of services where customers who prefer to attend in person can, and others can login to the live webinar. Should a disruption to services occur, Maryland will switch to providing all virtual services.

Local programs are encouraged to provide well-rounded programs with additional topics for customers and partners. Each workshop participant knows by the end of the workshop that successful employment is the ultimate goal, and all AJC staffers are available to assist with their job search. Each workshop completer receives targeted and specific job search assistance, beginning in the workshop, with emphasis on appropriate and necessary LMI. Self-assessment instruments, access to supportive services and partner agencies, and individual and group counseling (career guidance) are available. The workshop includes referral and access information to program staff, training, and additional resources. In addition, local training staff can access lists of workshop completers to provide follow up inquiries to potential dislocated workers. Job matching services, one-on-one conferences, follow-up activities, and meetings are used as tools to help customers obtain rapid reemployment. Each workshop participant is contacted for follow-up assistance and additional services.

Workshops are available that address interviewing skills, application preparation, résumé writing, social media, and job searches on the Internet. Participants access services and attend workshops at the AJC. They also receive referrals to upcoming job fairs and employer recruitment events and link with other AJC partners. Partners participate in the ROW or RESEA workshops to provide pertinent information on-site or through their websites. Participants who need additional training to obtain employment are assisted through other WIOA programs.

With increasing numbers of LEP individuals filing UI claims, Maryland is responding to the need for Spanish-language workshops. Workshop materials have been translated into Spanish, and Spanish-speaking workshop facilitators provide Spanish-language workshops in the areas with the largest numbers of LEP claimants. Spanish-language services are available in the rest of the state as well.

Maryland identifies all claimants who require assistance in Spanish and connects them with a qualified interpreter and translated documents. This is a change from the previous method of calling-in based on first payment of a claim. If a claimant does fail to report to a required reemployment activity a referral will be made to UI for review. This allows labor exchange staff to have claimants engaged within two weeks of filing for UI. Claimants that fail to report and register in the MWE are referred to unemployment staff for fact-finding and adjudication for their continued eligibility for benefits.

DWDAL and the DUI continue to work collaboratively to ensure that staff questions, concerns, and challenges are quickly identified and addressed. There is great importance attributed to the fact that DWDAL and the DUI's administration meet regularly, to orient themselves toward the highest standards for the RESEA program. The Reemployment Program Manager and the UI Administrator jointly host regular program staff meetings to allow for frequent training and technical assistance in such areas as UI eligibility issues, fact finding processes, data system operations and reporting, site-specific issues from a more global perspective, and integration of the RESEA program into the AJC fabric.

(4) Provision of referrals to and application assistance for training and education programs and resources.

DWDAL and the DUI work collaboratively to provide workforce development opportunities to all non-job attached claimants in Maryland. This will be accomplished utilizing a variety of strategies including initial mailers from DUI describing the requirement for enrollment and call in of claimants for RESEA or ROW for UI claimants. Under the Maryland UI law, claimants must enroll in Maryland's AJC system upon receiving the UI pamphlet. Claimants must enroll either in person by visiting their nearest AJC career center or via the internet

at <https://mwejobs.maryland.gov/vosnet/Default.aspx>. A list of Maryland's AJCs is included as part of the mailed pamphlet.

WIOA increases connections between the job training and employment services and the UI system. Maryland will offer its full array of AJC Services as options for reemployment services to UI customers, including basic and individual career services and training services under WIOA. UI claimants will benefit from the enhanced services, including the labor exchange services and career guidance that are included as career services under Title I as well as activities that assist workers in identifying and obtaining jobs in in-demand industries and occupations.

e. Agricultural Outreach Plan (AOP). Each State agency must develop an AOP every four years as part of the Unified or Combined State Plan required under sections 102 or 103 of WIOA. The AOP must include an assessment of need.

(1). Assessment of Need - Provide an assessment of the unique needs of farmworkers in the area based on past and projected agricultural and farmworker activity in the State. Such needs may include but are not limited to employment, training, and housing.

According to the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) National Agricultural Statistics Service, 12,429 farms were operating in the State in 2017, producing products valued at almost \$2.4 billion dollars for the year. Consistent with national statistics, 83 percent of Maryland's farms are classified as family farms.

The agricultural sector continues to flourish, but agricultural employers are finding it difficult to find local workers to work. This is leading to an increase in the numbers of farmers turning to the H2A visa program to bring workers in from abroad. Maryland's agricultural employers anecdotally report that the need for labor has resulted in a struggle to recruit qualified U.S. workers to meet their hiring needs. The employers continue to struggle with the increased complexity and costs of bringing workers to Maryland using the H2A visa program.

Per the USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Survey (NASS) definition "A farm is any place from which \$1,000 or more of agricultural products were produced and sold, or normally would have been sold, during the year." The definition was first used for the 1974 Census of Agriculture. It is consistent across current USDA surveys.⁶ As the poultry industry increases in Maryland, the number of full-time workers in the industry will rise and will no longer be eligible for the same outreach available to migrant and seasonal farm workers.

Farm workers who work in Maryland face many of the same challenges confronted by farm workers elsewhere. Access to affordable healthcare and dental services is limited for farm workers who live and work in remote locations where reduced cost services are either unavailable or require significant travel. Outreach staff will work with farm workers on an ongoing basis to identify challenges and assist in addressing issues via referrals or other assistance, as appropriate. Maryland has created new outreach materials that can be left for farm workers in places they live and work. Maryland will use outreach materials that allow workers to make contact using a mail-in request for assistance so that they can be served confidentially. This is also anticipated to provide farmworkers additional means to contact the State Monitor Advocate. The documents include a QR code that directly takes the Smartphone user to the WhatsApp number of the State Monitor Advocate.

⁶https://www.nass.usda.gov/Statistics_by_State/Maryland/Publications/Annual_Statistical_Bulletin/2016/2016-2017%20MD%20Annual%20Bulletin.pdf

During scheduled pre-season housing inspections for incoming H2A workers, the employers are encouraged to allow opportunities for outreach to their workers providing breaks for them to be available. During outreach efforts, all farm workers (H2A, MSFW, and seasonal) are offered assistance and services. Services available to farm workers include complaint resolution, known as the complaint system. There has always been a need for housing inspections and training on various safety issues such as heat stress training and safe pesticide usage. Maryland will continue to partner with its National Farmworkers Jobs Program partner, Telamon, for training to the farm workers.

(2). An assessment of the agricultural activity in the State means:

1. Identifying the top five labor-intensive crops, the months of heavy activity, and the geographic area of prime activity;

As shown below, the top five major crop activities across Maryland continue to employ a declining number of migrant and seasonal farm workers. The heaviest period of activity in Maryland is during July, August & September and the primary activity areas are the Eastern Shore and Central Maryland.

Top Five Labor-Intensive Crops for Migrant & Seasonal Farm Workers[4]

Per the NASS Report on Maryland farm products in 2020, Maryland was the nation's leader of broiler chicken production. Revenue from this commodity is more than double that of all other commodities combined.

Per the USDA 2022 Census Survey

https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/AgCensus/2022/Full_Report/Volume_1_Chapter_1_State_Level/Maryland/

Crop	Description
Grains, oilseeds, dry beans, dry peas	These are the number one crops in Maryland by value sold.
Corn	Maryland's corn crop
Soybeans	According to the USDA 2022 Census, Soybeans are the next highest crop.
Nurseries, greenhouses, floriculture	These operations are fourth in farm crop value but are more labor intensive than the three top crops.
Dairy	Milk production is the next largest farm commodity.

2. Summarize the agricultural employers' needs in the State (i.e. are they predominantly hiring local or foreign workers, are they expressing that there is a scarcity in the agricultural workforce):

Anecdotal evidence suggests that Maryland's agricultural employers are challenged by the scarcity of workers interested in the agricultural field. Historically, most Maryland farms were family owned and operated and passed down through generations. Current trends suggest that younger generations tend to leave for other employment because they do not want to continue the family farm business. When this occurs, anecdotes collected from farmers suggest that farms either go out of business or resort to hiring via the H2A Program. According to online job postings, employers hiring in the Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting industry in Maryland need workers with landscaping, agricultural, and interpersonal skills. In terms of tools and technology, employers need employees skilled in the use of cell phones, forklifts, trucks, and fertilizer spreading equipment. Farms are adapting by changing their

business models. Some farms are adding events such as school visits for fall festivals and pick your own operations.

Per the USDA:

“Along with raising crops and animals, Maryland farmers earn income from agricultural tourism, or agritourism. According to the 2017 Census of Agriculture, some 295 farms supplemented their income through agritourism, including farmers markets or farm stands, farm visits, and county fairs. Throughout Maryland, agritourism events generate over \$162 million for the economy and help support more than 1,000 jobs.”

3. Identifying any economic, natural, or other factors that are affecting agriculture in the State or any projected factors that will affect agriculture in the State.

Climate change is affecting agriculture as Maryland's Eastern Shore is increasingly being challenged by saltwater intrusion as more freshwater is being removed from the aquifers. In fact, per the USDA, “The General Assembly ordered the Department of Planning, along with the Departments of Agriculture, Environment, and Natural Resources, to devise a plan to adapt to saltwater intrusion and update it every five years (Chapter 628, Acts of 2018). In 2019, saltwater intrusion had affected 10,174 forest acres.”⁷

(3). An assessment of the unique needs of farmworkers means summarizing Migrant and Seasonal Farm Worker (MSFW) characteristics (including if they are predominantly from certain countries, what language(s) they speak, the approximate number of MSFWs in the State during peak season and during low season, and whether they tend to be migrant, seasonal, or year-round farmworkers). This information must take into account data supplied by WIOA Section 167 National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP) grantees, other MSFW organizations, employer organizations, and State and/or Federal agency data sources such as the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) Employment and Training Administration.

Previously, Maryland's MSFWs largely came from Florida and a few Southern states along the Eastern Seaboard. Florida is no longer listed as a MSFW supply state. Due to hurricane damage to citrus trees, many workers were re-trained in construction. When new citrus was ready for harvest, many workers elected to stay in their training careers rather than return to farmwork. This meant Maryland farmers/growers had to rely more heavily on H2A visas to staff their crop harvests. The H2A population is predominately Latino and Spanish-speaking, or Haitian.

The MSFW population consists of long-time migrants who have been picking crops for years. In Maryland, the MSFW growing season begins in early to mid-March when nursery workers begin to arrive. Peak season is during July and August for harvesting vegetables including tomatoes, cantaloupes, and other melons. The harvest season concludes with the fall apple harvests, mostly in the Cumberland Valley of Western Maryland. Despite a declining number of family farms overall, data from the Maryland Department of Agriculture suggest that the vast majority of Maryland farms continue to be family farms that do not employ outside labor.

Maryland farms are mostly settled in pockets, maintained by Amish and Moravian families, who are known to rely only on the labor of family and friends. Both the number of farms employing MSFWs and the number of MSFWs who are employed have annually declined. During the low season, winter, there are no known US based MSFW workers in Maryland. At the peak season, Maryland estimated there were 1,302 MSFW and H2A workers.

⁷ <https://msa.maryland.gov/msa/mdmanual/01glance/html/agri.html>

The majority of Maryland's farm workers speak Spanish or Haitian Creole, and most are located on Maryland's Lower Eastern Shore.

(4). Outreach Activities – The local offices outreach activities must be designed to meet the needs of MSFWs in the State and to locate and contact MSFWs who are not being reached through normal intake activities. Describe the State agency's proposed strategies for:

(A) Contacting Farmworkers who are not being reached by the normal intake activities conducted by the employment service offices.

There are 17 outreach workers in Maryland spread across the 13 local workforce areas. Outreach will be conducted according to federal guidance. Outreach workers employ a variety of strategies to contact MSFWs who are not being reached by the normal intake activities conducted through the State's AJC network. MD Labor's MSFW Outreach Workers regularly visit local farms to provide MSFWs with information on available employment services, offering brochures and handouts that describe where AJCs and other organizations and resources are located and how they can be accessed. Outreach workers will provide MSFWs with information related to bilingual assistance, educational and training programs, health clinics, day care services, transportation resources, and immigration assistance, as appropriate. Maryland has created new outreach materials which use QR codes to immediately provide access to information on resources to farm workers. These include a WhatsApp number for reaching the State Monitor Advocate, and immediate resources as pictured on the outreach card. Maryland is in the process of verifying farms with MSFW to target our outreach activities.

Outreach Workers monitor the MWE to identify MSFWs who register remotely. When a potential MSFW is identified through MWE, staff will contact the individual via phone, email or letter to provide information on the full array of AJC services and invite participation. In addition, FLC staff provide information on farm worker rights, the Employment Service and Employment-Related Law system, and support services to any H-2A workers and MSFWs they encounter on work site visits. Mobile job centers equipped with computers are available in some Local Areas, enabling MSFWs to use the MWE system, a job search tool designed for job seekers, employers, training providers, workforce professionals, and others seeking workforce services. MWE provides fast access, in both English and Spanish, to a complete set of employment tools.

(B) Providing technical assistance to outreach staff. Technical assistance must include trainings, conferences, additional resources, and increased collaboration with other organizations on topics such as one-stop center services (i.e., availability of referrals to training, supportive services, and career services, as well as specific employment opportunities), the Employment Service and Employment-Related Law Complaint System ("Complaint System" described at 20 CFR 658 Subpart E), information on the other organizations serving MSFWs in the area, and a basic summary of farmworker rights, including their rights with respect to the terms and conditions of employment.

Technical assistance is provided continuously to outreach workers, mainly by the State Monitor Advocate. Because the staff is small in size, the State Monitor Advocate is able to accompany local staff on outreach visits and review outreach topics, such as AJC services, career services, employment opportunities, the employment service complaint system, other organizations who serve MSFWs, and farmworker rights. Pre-season meetings are held annually with complaint system training to review program requirements. While MD Labor has not increased its number of staff who conduct outreach, the program is reviewed annually

by appropriate staff and supervisors in the AJCs. Personal interaction between the State Monitor Advocate and local workforce staff helps to ensure that technical assistance is consistent and updated as appropriate.

With the advent of the use of virtual meetings, training is more readily available and can be provided as needed. Outreach protocols and best practices are presented to outreach workers and other staff, such as staff who administer business services. To increase awareness of Human Trafficking and to help staff identify possible issues, training from the Federal DHS website will be incorporated into the pre-season training.

Staff and the State Monitor Advocate review labor law posters annually and ensure that they are posted in the places where MSFWs live and work. This seems to be the most effective method for communicating rights regarding terms and conditions for employment. Staff also visit places where H2A workers are employed, especially where field visits are conducted, to ensure that workers have been given and understand the provisions found in their terms and conditions for employment. New posters have also been provided to the AJCs by MD Labor's OFP.

During visits to agricultural worksites, Outreach Workers talk to MSFWs about farmworker rights and explain the process for registering complaints with the Employment Service and Employment-Related Law system, including assisting MSFWs in submitting complaints, as requested. Outreach Workers are trained to identify apparent violations of housing and safety regulations and can provide MSFWs with information on a range of support services. FLC staff offer training to outreach staff so they will be prepared to conduct inspections of MSFW housing, should it be required.

C. Increasing outreach staff training and awareness across core programs including the Unemployment Insurance program and the training on identification of UI eligibility issues.

Outreach workers seek out opportunities to keep current with new trends in farming, monitoring publications and newsletters related to agriculture, as well as networking through outreach to various organizations at available public meetings. For example, the small local publication, "Homegrown Frederick," reports that local small distilleries, and microbreweries are testing which grains grow best in Maryland. They are collaborating with local farmers to supply their grains and to reduce possible risks of crop failures by identifying the best varieties for local conditions.

Outreach training has been adapted to focus on the outreach workers role. The state provided five training sessions with outreach workers to review the requirements for outreach and best practices. Additionally, a handbook is being created for the outreach workers, the SMA remains always available for ongoing guidance and assistance. The outreach document card is being updated with additional information for distribution to the MSFW population.

MD Labor will seek connections with organizations that work with MSFW populations and invite these organizations to partner on outreach efforts. Organizations will be invited and encouraged to be part of AJC activities and training to ensure all partners have an awareness of programs available to assist MSFW populations.

D. Providing State merit staff outreach workers professional development activities to ensure they are able to provide high quality services to both jobseekers and employers

To ensure high quality services to both jobseekers and business, professional development opportunities are currently available and advertised through regular communications from Central Office administration. Under WIOA, through leveraging partnerships, new

professional development and training opportunities on topics relevant to all WIOA Partners will be available to staff. To ensure a positive customer experience, when MSFWs are actively working in the State, MD Labor's outreach workers provide monthly reports to the State Monitor Advocate that assist in identifying professional development needs. Maryland's State Monitor Advocate is responsible for continuously reviewing state-wide agricultural activities and the provision of labor exchange and training services to employers and employees within agricultural communities.

Additionally, MD Labor provides workforce system-wide professional development to both State staff and partner staff. While State staff receive a more comprehensive portfolio of training options, system-wide training includes eLearning on the HUB. Training deployed via the HUB includes modules on Title I, Title II, Title III, Title IV, the Benchmarks of Success, GWDB, Jobs for Veteran State Grant program. Modules planned for the future include SNAP E&T, TANF, CSBG, UI, Trade, and SCSEP.

E. Coordinating outreach efforts with NFJP grantees as well as with public and private community service agencies and MSFW groups.

Coordinating with the National Farm Workers Jobs Program & Community Service Agencies Telamon Corporation, Maryland's WIOA Title I Section 167 National Farm Workers Job Program grantee, Telamon, is co-located with multiple WIOA agencies in the Salisbury AJC. The Job Center and Telamon Corporation formalize their relationship via a Memoranda of Understanding and Resource Sharing Agreement, which ensures MSFWs receive the appropriate level of assistance and identifies how resources will be shared, and contributions will be made.

In a team approach, Telamon and MD Labor visit agricultural employers and MSFWs. Telamon provides interpretation services to allow MD Labor to communicate with the MSFWs. MD Labor offers job seeker services and referrals to supportive services. Telamon offers food bank access, clothing, heat stress and pesticide training, ESOL training, and referrals to housing. The Lower Shore Workforce Area provides the mobile one-stop to allow the MSFW's to access job opportunities, and other resources available through MWE. The other workforce partners provide literature about their services to the outreach team for distribution to the MSFWs and are available for referrals.

Maryland coordinates with Telamon to provide outreach and services to farm workers in Maryland. Telamon is co-located with the AJC in Salisbury, and provides interpretive services, as needed for that office during outreach. They also provide training services to farm workers, as requested by farmers and in coordination with outreach workers. Maryland is also working with Telamon to expand outreach and services to MSFW dependents.

Maryland works with the Maryland Farm Bureau to better communicate information to a number of farmers. The University of Maryland provides services and coordinates with the State Monitor Advocate to better identify candidates for their assistance, such as youth mental health services, and possible victims of human trafficking. Outreach workers and staff who administer business services build relationships with employers of all types and seek out opportunities to provide services. Maryland has also begun discussions with the Maryland Department of Agriculture to develop partnerships to increase outreach outcomes by partnering on visits and creating a seamless outreach approach.

5. Services provided to farmworkers and agricultural employers through the one-stop delivery system. Describe the State agency's proposed strategies for:

(A) Providing the full range of employment and training services to the agricultural community, both farmworkers and agricultural employers, through the one-stop delivery system. This includes:

(i) How career and training services required under WIOA Title I will be provided to MSFWs through the one-stop centers;

All workers and employers in the agricultural field are able to access the same services that are freely available to the public. Each of the State's AJCs is equipped with staff who provide a variety of services for both jobseekers and employers. Staff stay current on available programs and resources through staff meetings, trainings, and continuous information sharing. The full range of services to the agricultural community is provided through Maryland's AJC network. The centers and staff provide services to jobseekers such as:

- Job search workshops and resources including internet access
- Reemployment services
- Veterans services
- Distribution of federal, State & local government information
- Career planning and training programs under WIOA Title I
- Access to LMI
- Bilingual assistance
- Complaint handling

There are multiple entry points to services, and Maryland subscribes to a "no wrong door" philosophy for customer access to services. Weekly orientations, walk-ins, partner referrals, ROW, and RESEA are typical entry points for new customers.

Customers learn about various career, individualized, and/or training services that may be available to them. Customers also learn about LMI and the most effective way to begin their job search. All customers receive instruction and staff assistance on registering in the MWE.

If customers express interest in or a need for individualized services, or a staff member determines through interaction with the customer that individualized career services are the right approach, customers are paired with a counselor to determine eligibility. Individuals who desire to can begin the steps to determine edibility for Title I services. If necessary, AJC staff are able to accommodate individuals who are not able to attend the session in other ways. Referral to AJC partners and community resources is discussed for barrier removal or support, as appropriate and as needed.

MD Labor raises awareness of available services within the farm worker community through oral communication and distributing bilingual brochures specifically designed for this community. Recognizing that many MSFWs may require English services, brochures provide pictorial representations to ensure the message is effectively received.

Outreach to agricultural employers is conducted using a number of strategies. One effective strategy has been through use of the Rural Services Coordinator who provides guidance and technical assistance to local staff and works closely with individual agricultural employers across the state. This relationship with agricultural employers assists the State agency to provide a conduit to additional business services. The staff person works closely with the Rural Service Coordinator to identify and assist new agricultural employers in the state.

(ii) How the State serves agricultural employers and how it intends to improve such services.

Maryland uses a regional business service approach. This strategy utilizes a team of business professionals that are trained, flexible, and knowledgeable concerning all AJC programs. The result is a decrease in employee fatigue and a complete resource to employers. Regional business service staff are aware of the supply side of their region in working with agricultural employers as well as the resources available within their region. Agricultural Employers may utilize the MWE to advertise their available employment, allowing prospective employees to apply for agricultural jobs.

Agricultural employers in Maryland are, increasingly, turning to the H2A Visa program to find farm workers. During their quest for navigating the intricacies of the program, they turn to our FLC team. This has helped foster a positive rapport between agricultural employers that has led to a greater understanding of the benefits of outreach.

Staff who administer business services build relationships with agricultural employers to determine their employee needs, and the skill sets of prospective recruits. Using this information, job orders are created with the goal of more closely aligning the farmers' needs with job seekers. New outreach materials have been developed to provide information on services available to business and job seekers in the AJCs. Yearly outreach training is provided to the representatives so that they may better identify and serve the agricultural sector, employers and employees. Communication between staff and the State Monitor Advocate will ensure that farmworkers identified by the staff administering business services will be offered any available services. Maryland's outreach staff have increased use of in-person contacts, networking events, local office recruitment activities, job fairs, and community engagement events to improve services to agricultural employers. Historically, these have not been employers targeted for activities within the AJC. Integrating agricultural employers in this manner increases exposure to the workforce system as well as creates new pipelines of talent to the employer. During unusual situations, networking is conducted using technology, such as virtual meetings which allows the Department to maintain relationships.

B. Marketing the employment service complaint system to farmworkers and other farmworker advocacy groups.

Biannually, the State Monitor Advocate trains AJC staff on the Employment Service Complaint System. AJC staff are equipped to market the Complaint System to jobseekers and customers. The System is available through legal advocacy groups and other farmworker advocacy organizations. Upon request, the State Monitor Advocate speaks at advocacy meetings to highlight the System. MSFWs are advised of their right to file complaints during outreach visits. There are also posters providing information about specific contacts with whom to file complaints at AJCs. Additionally, the outreach workers, as well as the State Monitor Advocate provide information on filing complaints, and all are made aware that they do not have to go to an AJC to do so. Maryland does not have day-haul facilities. Advocacy groups are made aware of the complaint system at joint meetings.

Maryland has an "Ayuda en Español" link on their Maryland Labor website. Through this email, the State Monitor Advocate receives inquiries, including questions about jobs, licensing and other labor related issues. Customers are offered complaint system services, when appropriate. The State Monitor Advocate provides information on agencies that may be able to assist MSFWs with challenges.

Maryland also participates in training provided by the Regional Monitor Advocate, as well as the National Monitor Advocate. This provides opportunities to communicate with State Monitor Advocates nationwide, which leads to the ability to help MSFWs wherever they are.

Needs of workers can be identified locally, where help can be provided regardless of their location.

C. Marketing the Agricultural Recruitment System for U.S. Workers (ARS) to agricultural employers and how it intends to improve such publicity.

MD Labor markets the Agricultural Recruitment System to all agricultural employers to ensure Maryland meets the regulatory requirements associated with FLC applications and serves the full agricultural community. The majority of marketing for AJC services is accomplished by outreach staff and staff administering business services. Additionally, MD Labor employs a full-time Rural Services Coordinator who provides guidance and technical assistance to local staff and works closely with individual agricultural employers across the State.

Outreach personnel and business representatives continually seek new opportunities to market the Agricultural Recruitment System. The majority of marketing for AJC services is accomplished through relationship building with the agricultural community via in person contacts, networking events, local office recruitment activities, job fairs and community engagement events. Staff administering business services build relationships with agricultural employers to determine their workforce needs and the skill sets of prospective recruits. Using this information, job orders are created with the goal of more closely aligning the farmers' needs with job seekers. New outreach materials have been developed to provide information on services available to business and job seekers in the AJCs.

6. Other Requirements

A. Collaboration - Describe any collaborative agreements the State Workforce Agency (SWA) has with other MSFW service providers including NFJP grantees and other service providers. Describe how the SWA intends to build upon/increase collaboration with existing partners and establish new partners over the next four years (including any approximate timelines for establishing agreements or building upon existing agreements).

Maryland is collaborating with Telamon, Maryland's NFJP grantee, to increase its joint services to eligible MSFWs and their dependents. We are working together to extend services provided by the AJCs, and the NFJP office. With the use of new tools, such as remote meetings, we are increasing the frequency of meetings and adding new partners, as appropriate. For example, Salisbury University provides educational services to MSFWs and their dependents. Telamon has a dynamic youth services program which, with cooperation between our agencies, can bridge initial assistance with longer term opportunities such as RAs and secondary education.

Historically, joint meetings between multiple partners have been conducted virtually. As collaboration has progressed, there have been some in-person meetings between representatives of multiple agencies. Maryland envisions that the increased partnership will assist in identification and outreach to other partners, which, in turn, can lead to more prospects for MSFW dependents. The increased partnership has allowed various participants to identify multiple populations that can benefit from services, including farm workers. Part of the discussions include opportunities to share training for outreach workers, as well as identifying ways that the agencies can collaborate to better serve customers.

Maryland is utilizing its staff administering business services to increase communication with employers and non- profit organizations that provide farm related services and employ local workers to plant and harvest food which is then shared with families in need.

The Salisbury Job Market, Tri-county Council, and Telamon Corporation have a formally executed Memorandum of Understanding, which codifies the participation for provision of services to the Agricultural Community in that Local Area. Telamon has annually renewed its partnership with the Job Corps program, which provides the majority of pesticide training where needed across the State. The State Monitor Advocate and local staff attend periodic meetings of agencies and partner organizations, which are known to provide services to Maryland's agricultural community. It is intended that attendance and participation at such meetings will build upon long-standing relationships and provide opportunities to forge new partnerships to improve service delivery and communicate resources throughout agricultural communities.

B. Review and Public Comment. In developing the AOP, the SWA must solicit information and suggestions from NFJP grantees, other appropriate MSFW groups, public agencies, agricultural employer organizations, and other interested organizations. In addition, at least 45 calendar days before submitting its final AOP, the SWA must provide a proposed plan to NFJP grantees, public agencies, agricultural employer organizations, and other organizations expressing an interest and allow at least 30 days for review and comment. The SWA must: 1) Consider any comments received in formulating its final proposed AOP; 2) Inform all commenting parties in writing whether their comments have been incorporated and, if not, the reasons therefore; and 3) Transmit the comments and recommendations received and its responses with the submission of the AOP.

The AOP must include a statement confirming NFJP grantees, other appropriate MSFW groups, public agencies, agricultural employer organizations and other interested employer organizations have been given an opportunity to comment on the AOP. Include the list of organizations from which information and suggestions were solicited, any comments received, and responses to those comments.

As a WIOA Combined State Plan partner, MSFW releases the AOP for review and public comment via the State Plan's review and public comment period. Maryland values the feedback received during the WIOA Combined State Plan comment period, sending the plan to its WIOA listserv of over 5,000 individuals. The listserv contains partners of Maryland's workforce system, including important stakeholders such as LWDB members, program partners, and employers. Through this process, Maryland ensures that MSFW stakeholders and partners have an opportunity to provide feedback on the plan.

Additionally, the AOP was sent to Telamon (Maryland's NFJP Grantee) for comment. Telamon has opted to provide no comments on Maryland's state plan at this time.

(C) Data Assessment. Review the previous four years Wagner-Peyser Act data reports on performance. Note whether the State has been meeting its goals to provide MSFWs quantitatively proportionate services as compared to non-MSFWs. If it has not met these goals, explain why the State believes such goals were not met and how the State intends to improve its provision of services in order to meet such goals.

Data assessment in Maryland continues to be challenging as the State continuously reports low numbers of MSFWs in the MWE, which makes related quotients and ratios void of meaning. The highest quarter showed 10 MSFWs, though that number included many that proved to be inaccurate after follow-up by staff. The system is updated and inaccurate information on individuals is removed after being contacted by staff. Due to changes in reporting, USDOL reports on the numbers of MSFWs appearing in the Agricultural System.

MD Labor is committed to providing MSFWs quantitatively proportionate and qualitatively equivalent services to the targeted population. To increase the number of customers accessing AJC services, the State is committed to increasing outreach efforts and partnerships developed, especially within areas where farm workers may live and work. By engaging partners on a more regular basis to develop relationships with businesses and workers, MD Labor can increase awareness of programs and services available. Creating partnerships with community-based organizations to create a bridge to MSFWs will assist in developing trust among the population. Maryland's challenge is the loss of farms as farmers retire, or leave farming after closing due to climate challenges, and even the fluctuating market prices for their goods. Maryland continues outreach to all farm workers. All employment services are offered to the farm workers as are available to any job seeker in an AJC, as well as follow-up services. The seasonal farm workers in Maryland have not historically availed themselves of employment services and resources. Each quarter, there are few self-identified farm workers. Staff reach out to farm workers enrolled in the MWE to offer services. In many cases, it is determined they are not farm workers and incorrectly checked the box during enrollment.

Outreach staff and local office management search the MWE for individuals self-identifying as a farm worker. Contact is made via telephone to invite the farm worker to the center for additional services. If it is determined that a customer does not meet the definition of a farm worker, the designation is changed, and a case note entered describing why the change has been made. If eligible under a different designation, staff makes referrals as appropriate.

In Maryland, we are seeing a decreasing number of customers identifying as farm workers in the State seeking employment services. Individuals without a valid SSN may access self-services in the AJCs through the MWE. They are not reported as part of performance.

(D) Assessment of progress. The plan must include an explanation of what was achieved based on the previous AOP, what was not achieved and an explanation as to why the State believes the goals were not achieved, and how the State intends to remedy the gaps of achievement in the coming year.

Maryland continues to be challenged by the decline in agriculture and MSFWs across the State. As stated earlier, while agriculture remains a multi-billion-dollar industry within the State, the economic opportunity for the agricultural community continues to decline. This decline requires constant re-evaluation of the resources that can be dedicated to services to the agricultural community. Another concern is the aging population of farmers, farm workers, and staff in Maryland. In spite of these challenges, Maryland believes that it continues to provide exemplary services to its agricultural community.

Maryland has trained all AJC staff and partners on the MSFW and FLC programs. The State Monitor Advocate and the Rural Services Coordinator provide refresher training in the spring to all AJC staff as a reminder of the program and update on any changes. Also accomplished per the plan, business staff has increased outreach to employers identified as agricultural employers to provide services.

The number of traditional farms continue to decrease as aging farmers retire and their families choose other careers. Outreach continues to smaller farms that are using alternate farming models. These include using pick-your-own operations, employing individuals with disabilities, expanding revenue streams by creating events such as special events, animal interaction opportunities, and selling shares in farm products. Since the definition of farming includes anyone who sells \$1,000 of farm products, the smaller farms can easily qualify as farms.

(E) State Monitor Advocate. The plan must contain a statement confirming the State Monitor Advocate has reviewed and approved the AOP.

The State Monitor Advocate has reviewed AOP and was instrumental in its data collection and composition. The State Monitor Advocate has approved the AOP.

Wagner-Peyser Assurances

The State Plan must include assurances that:

The State Plan must include	Include
1. The Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service is co-located with one-stop centers, or a plan and timeline has been developed to comply with this requirement within a reasonable amount of time (sec 121(e)(3));	Yes
2. If the State has significant MSFW one-stop centers, the State agency is complying with the requirements under 20 CFR 653.111, State Workforce Agency staffing requirements;	Yes
3. If a State Workforce Development Board, department, or agency administers State laws for vocational rehabilitation of persons with disabilities, that board, department, or agency cooperates with the agency that administers Wagner-Peyser Act services, Adult and Dislocated Worker programs and Youth Programs under Title I; and	Yes
4. SWA officials: 1) Initiate the discontinuation of services; 2) Make the determination that services need to be discontinued; 3) Make the determination to reinstate services after the services have been discontinued; 4) Approve corrective action plans; 5) Approve the removal of an employer's clearance orders from interstate or intrastate clearance if the employer was granted conditional access to ARS and did not come into compliance within 5 calendar days; 6) Enter into agreements with State and Federal enforcement agencies for enforcement-agency staff to conduct field checks on the SWAs' behalf (if the SWA so chooses); and 7) Decide whether to consent to the withdrawal of complaints if a party who requested a hearing wishes to withdraw its request for hearing in writing before the hearing.	Yes
5. The SWA has established and maintains a self-appraisal system for ES operations to determine success in reaching goals and to correct deficiencies in performance (20 CFR 658.601).	Yes

Wagner-Peyser Program Performance Indicators

Performance Indicators	PY 2024 Expected Level	PY 2024 Negotiated Level	PY 2025 Expected Level	PY 2025 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	61.0		61.5	
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	61.0		61.5	
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	6300.0		6400.0	
Credential Attainment Rate	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Measurable Skill Gains	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹

¹ The Departments have not issued the final rule defining Effectiveness in Serving Employers. As a result, states will not submit expected levels of performance for this indicator and the Departments will not establish negotiated levels of performance for PYs 2024 and 2025.

ADULT EDUCATION AND FAMILY LITERACY ACT PROGRAM

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include a description of the following as it pertains to adult education and literacy programs and activities under title II of WIOA, the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA).

(a) Aligning of Content Standards

Describe how the eligible agency will, by July 1, 2016, align its content standards for adult education with State-adopted challenging academic content standards, as adopted under section 1111(b)(1) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended (20 U.S.C. 6311(b)(1)).

Maryland adopted the Career and College Readiness Standards for Adult Education to provide a consistent and shared expectation across all adult education programs of the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to provide a seamless transition into post-secondary education and the workforce and align with the K-12 Common Core State Standards implementation.

- MD Labor requires grant applicants to deliver instruction based on a comprehensive curriculum that is clearly articulated with the CCR Standards for Adult Education and the Maryland Content Standards for Adult ESL/ESOL and is "based on the most rigorous research available and appropriate, including scientifically-valid research and effective educational practice" (WIOA Sec. 231).
- In addition to the CCR Standards for Adult Education and the Maryland Content Standards for Adult ESL/ESOL, ESL Quality Program Standards, Professional Standards for Teachers in Adult Education, Digital Literacy Framework, and Adult Education Program Standards must be implemented in program delivery.
- All programs are monitored by the assigned MD Labor Adult Education Program Specialist and the MD Labor Monitoring and Compliance Unit in order to determine compliance with the standards and the extent to which progress is being made toward achieving the stated goals and objectives. Both desk and onsite monitoring are used.
- MD Labor adopted three Adult Literacy Priorities and corresponding Focus Areas. One of the priorities is Quality Instruction, the backbone of adult literacy programs, with a corresponding Focus Area of Standards Alignment (CCR, etc.)
- Programs offering and delivering Integrated Education and Training (IET) must align instruction with the CCR standards and integrate workforce preparation activities.
- MD Labor implemented the use of Proxy Hour Forms for instruction outside of the classroom. The forms track audience, alignment to standards, reports available to monitor proxy hours, and proxy hour type, including clock time, student mastery, and teacher verification.
- Maryland's Digital Literacy Framework for Adult Learners (2020) and its accompanying Instructor Implementation Guide (2020), continue to structure and inform technology instruction and digital integration for adult literacy and language acquisition across the State. The Framework provides the scope and guidance to integrate the essential elements and resources of digital literacy and to evaluate learner outcomes within the existing legislation, standards, and frameworks of adult education.

b. Local Activities

Describe how the eligible agency will, using the considerations specified in section 231(e) of WIOA and in accordance with 34 CFR 463 subpart C, fund each eligible provider to establish or operate programs that provide any of the following adult education and literacy activities identified in section 203 of WIOA, including programs that provide such activities

concurrently. The Unified or Combined State Plan must include at a minimum the scope, content, and organization of these local activities.

Adult Education and Literacy Activities (Section 203 of WIOA)

- Adult education;
- Literacy;
- Workplace adult education and literacy activities;
- Family literacy activities;
- English language acquisition activities;
- Integrated English literacy and civics education;
- Workforce preparation activities; or
- Integrated education and training that–
 1. Provides adult education and literacy activities, concurrently and contextually with both, workforce preparation activities, and workforce training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster; and,
 2. Is for the purpose of educational and career advancement.

Special Rule. Each eligible agency awarding a grant or contract under this section shall not use any funds made available under this title for adult education and literacy activities for the purpose of supporting or providing programs, services, or activities for individuals who are under the age of 18 and are enrolled or required to be enrolled in secondary school under State law, except that such agency may use such funds for such purpose if such programs, services, or activities are related to family literacy activities. In providing family literacy activities under this title, an eligible provider shall attempt to coordinate with programs and services that are not assisted under this title prior to using funds for adult education and literacy activities under this title for activities other than activities for eligible individuals.

The Maryland Department of Labor is the State agency that administers the Adult Education and Literacy Program through WIOA. This work is done by the Division of Workforce Development and Adult Learning, Office of Adult Education and Literacy Services (AELS). AELS conducts the multi-year grant award process to fund WIOA Title II programs. The office also facilitates and leads all state leadership activities, including professional development, program technical assistance, and programmatic and fiscal monitoring. AELS also assists local providers in technical assistance to complete local program reports in accordance with National Reporting System standards and prepares all state-level reports as required by the US Department of Education.

Competitive Application Process

Muti-year grants are awarded on a competitive basis to eligible providers within the State. In spring 2023, the State conducted an AEFLA competition in accordance with 34 CFR section 463 subpart C. A Request for Applications was released to start the competitive process to award grants for a four-year period, from July 1, 2023, through June 30, 2027. The Request for Applications was posted on the Department's website and a press release announcing the RFA was also released to promote direct and equitable access for eligible providers to obtain, apply and compete for the WIOA Title II funds. All eligible providers throughout the state had the same grant announcement and process which was made public. Funding was awarded based on jurisdictional need historical enrollment in programming that meets the goals of WIOA Title II and responses to the 13 considerations as required by WIOA . Successful grantees are required to submit continuation applicants annually for each program year in the

four-year cycle. While a part of the competitive application process, IELCE (Section 243) funding is a separate, optional application for which eligible agencies may apply.

The main application requires eligible providers to submit a cover page, application checklist, determination of eligibility, demonstrated effectiveness, the thirteen considerations, family literacy memorandum of understanding (if applying for family literacy funding), detailed budget and assurances and certifications. Additional documents are required if the eligible provider is seeking additional funds to provide services for the National External Diploma Program and Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education/Integrated Education and Training funding.

Applicants are required to respond to prompts outlining program delivery and instruction that address the following 13 AEFLA funding considerations outlined in section 231(e) of WIOA:

1. Indicators of Regional Needs and Population Type
2. Serving Individuals with Disabilities
3. Program Competency and Past Effectiveness
4. Alignment with Local Workforce Plan
5. Program Intensity and Quality
6. Research Based Instructional Practices
7. Technology
8. Learning in Context/Integrated Education & Training for Transition
9. Quality of Staff and Professional Development
10. Coordination with Other Education, Training, and Social Service Resources in the Community
11. Flexible Scheduling and Coordination
12. Management Information Systems and Measurable Outcomes
13. English Language Acquisition and Civics Education

Eligible providers who desired to apply for AEFLA funds to carry out the activities under Sections 225, 231 and 243 must submit an application in response to the competitive Request for Proposals. In the proposal, eligible providers must respond to the 13 considerations documented in the application, demonstrate how the eligible provider will provide services aligned with the Title that meets the needs of the target population of eligible individuals and provide a comprehensive and aligned budget documenting how funds awarded will be spent on allowable activities and expenditures.

The eligible provider must document in the proposal how the adult education and literacy services are aligned with the local workforce plan, how concurrent enrollment will be promoted and how the partner responsibilities to the American Job Center will occur. Agreements with partners to deliver services under the Title must be clearly documented in the proposal along with a submission of copies of agreements such as memorandums of understanding the eligible provider will have with the partner organizations.

Within the proposal, how the eligible provider intends to meet the State's performance levels must be clearly documented as well as how learner outcomes and data will be collected, and the performance indicators will be reported to the State.

The grant applications are forwarded to the appropriate Local Workforce Development Board for review. The Local Workforce Development Board was asked to review the WIOA Title II application(s) to determine whether the proposed activities are consistent with the Local Workforce Development plan in accordance with WIOA Section 107(d)(11)(B)(i)(I) and 34 CFR § 463.21(b)(1) . If the application is not aligned, the LWB must provide comments of why the application is not aligned.

Grantees will serve eligible individuals, defined as (1) having attained 18 years of age (Note: Maryland Compulsory Attendance Law requires learners to be enrolled in school until age 18. Grant funds may only serve learners above these age limits.); (2) are not enrolled or required to be enrolled in secondary school under State law; and (3) are unable to compute or solve problems, or read, write or speak English at a level necessary to function on the job, in the individual's family, or in society; Do not have a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent, and have not achieved an equivalent level of education; or are an English language learner.

Eligible providers must prove their past effectiveness in basic skills and/or English language acquisition instruction, as well as supporting students in transitioning to post-secondary education or career training by submitting documented evidence of demonstrated effectiveness of improving learners' literacy outcomes, specifically eligible individuals who are basic skills deficient in mathematics, reading, writing and English literacy. In addition, the eligible provider must provide evidence of success in achieving outcomes for participants related to employment, attainment of a high school diploma or equivalent and transition of postsecondary education and training.

Eligible provider types include: Local education agencies, community-based organizations or faith-based organizations, volunteer literacy organizations, institution of higher education, public or private nonprofit agencies, libraries, public housing authorities, nonprofit institutions that have the ability to provide literacy services to adults and families, consortia of agencies, organizations, institutions, libraries, or authorities described above, or partnerships between an employer and an entity described above.

Scope and Content of Programming

Through the application process and the guidance and technical assistance of the AELS team, Maryland ensure that:

- Adult basic education classes provide instruction for adults with low basic skills and low educational attainment, and help the most vulnerable adults gain access to the services they need;
- Adult secondary education instruction assists students functioning at the adult secondary education level to prepare for a high school diploma through the GED® or the National External Diploma Program® and transition to postsecondary education and employment;
- English language acquisition services assist eligible participants to achieve competence in reading, writing, speaking and comprehension of the English language, as well as the math skills needed to attain a high school credential and successfully transition to postsecondary education and employment;
- All educational programming incorporates evidence-based practices, including the essential components of reading instruction;
- Instruction is contextualized with the needs of adult learners as they progress along a career pathway, providing the support participants need to achieve their educational and employment goals. This includes career pathways development and contextualized and concurrent instruction through Integrated Education and Training cohorts.

Workplace Adult Education and Literacy Activities

Workplace literacy programs, offered by eligible providers in collaboration with employers or employee organizations, provide opportunities for incumbent workers to strengthen their basic skills development, contextualized to the particular needs of their own employment. Workplace literacy activities give students the tools to perform on their jobs at a higher level while also accessing basic skills development to meet their own educational goals, such as obtaining a high school diploma or improving their English proficiency. Partnerships with local Workforce Development Boards and American Job Centers are instrumental in assisting Title II providers in developing these employer partnerships.

Family Literacy Activities

Family literacy activities are those activities designed to take a collaborative two-generation approach to improving economic opportunity for Maryland families. In this model, integration between traditional adult literacy activities for parents and age-appropriate education to prepare children for success in school and in life is paramount. This includes the incorporation of interactive literacy activities between parents and their children, as well as training for parents on how to be the primary teacher for their children and full partners in their educational development.

English Language Acquisition Activities

English Language Acquisition Activities provide immigrants and English learners in improving reading, writing, speaking and comprehension and mathematics skills. In addition, ELA activities support the understanding of the American system of government, individual freedoms, and the responsibilities of citizenship. ELA activities are often contextualized to a student's individual educational and career pathway. Instruction utilizes Maryland ESOL Content Standards, as well as College and Career Readiness Standards.

Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education

Maryland awards Section 243 funding grants to eligible providers to carry out IELCE instruction through the competitive application process. English learners continue to be a growing segment of Maryland's adult education population, and demand for coursework that supports the career needs of this population grows every year. Maryland's ESOL Content Standards and taught concurrently with instruction on the rights and responsibilities of citizenship and civic participation, understanding American systems of government, education, healthcare, etc. and participation in the workforce. All programs providing IELCE instruction are required to have Integrated Education and Training cohorts available to eligible learners to continue their integrated pathway to a career.

Workforce Preparation Activities

Workforce Preparation Activities are those skills and competencies that apply to both the workplace as well as to an individual's own life, namely critical thinking, digital skills, self-management, working with others, and the understanding of information and systems. The integration of these basic academic skills are necessary for a student to be successful in a training program and on the job site itself. In Maryland, Workforce Preparation Activities are a required component of an Integrated Education and Training Programs, delivered concurrently and contextually with adult literacy and workforce training.

Integrated Education and Training

Integrated Education and Training (IET) is a service approach that provides adult education and literacy activities concurrently and contextually with workforce preparation activities and workforce training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster for the purpose of educational and career advancement. While not required, most IET courses in Maryland are offered through providers that offer WIOA 243 IELCE/IET (Section 243 funding). There are three components to IET:

- Adult education and literacy activities offered concurrently and contextually with;
- Workforce preparation activities, and
- Workforce training

Local programs that seek to provide IET as part of their service delivery have to conduct significant research and planning into the needs of the local workforce area, as well as the career goals of their adult learners. Title II providers are encouraged to work in collaboration with their local workforce development board and their local American Job Center/Title I & III providers to develop IETs that serve in-demand industries that meet the goals of students.

Some providers also offer IET to General Educational Development (GED) participants (Adult Basic Education participants who are English speakers). Specialized technical assistance and Communities of Practice to support this program type are provided by AELS throughout each program year.

Special Rule

Each eligible agency awarded a grant or contract under this section shall not use any funds made available under this title for adult education and literacy activities for the purpose of supporting or providing programs, services, or activities for individuals who are under the age of 18 and are enrolled or required to be enrolled in secondary school under State law, except that such agency may use such funds for such purpose if such programs, services, or activities are related to family literacy activities. In providing family literacy activities under this title, an eligible provider shall attempt to coordinate with programs and services that are not assisted under this title prior to using funds for adult education and literacy activities under this title for activities other than activities for eligible individuals.

c. Corrections Education and other Education of Institutionalized Individuals. Describe how the State will establish and operate programs under section 225 of WIOA for corrections education and education of other institutionalized individuals, including how it will fund, in accordance with the requirements of title II, subtitle C, any of the following academic programs for:

- Adult education and literacy activities;
- Special education, as determined by the eligible agency;
- Secondary school credit;
- Integrated education and training;
- Career pathways;
- Concurrent enrollment;
- Peer tutoring; and
- Transition to reentry initiatives and other post release services with the goal of reducing recidivism.

Each eligible agency using funds provided under Programs for Corrections Education and Other Institutionalized Individuals to carry out a program for criminal offenders within a

correctional institution must give priority to serving individuals who are likely to leave the correctional institution within 5 years of participation in the program.

The Maryland Correctional Education program provides incarcerated individuals with high quality services that facilitate successful transition into Maryland's workforce and communities. Correctional Education provides academic, library, occupational, CTE training programs, and transitional services to incarcerated students in State correctional institutions. The academic program includes Adult Basic Education, GED® Preparation, Special Education, and English for Speakers of Other Languages. The Library Services program provides informational, research, and recreational reading services. Transitional classes include life skills, financial literacy, introduction to computers, employment readiness and workforce development, and career exploration. Specific attention is given to academic and transitional students who are under 21 years of age to address their unique needs. Correctional Education prepares incarcerated students to become responsible members of their communities.

Instruction is delivered in 17 state prisons and pre-release centers through the Maryland Correctional Education Program, in partnership with the Maryland DPSCS. Funded programs will deliver academic instruction in adult basic education, adult secondary education, and English language acquisition for incarcerated individuals to provide the resources and tools needed for transition to post-secondary education and training opportunities and unsubsidized employment. Once students obtain their High School Diploma, then they may be able to participate in additional Correctional Education, such as occupational training and CTE.

The need for Correctional Education in Maryland is well documented. The average reading level of the 18,500 incarcerated individuals currently in the Maryland State prison system is between the 5th and 8th grade. Correctional Education provides a comprehensive education program designed to meet the needs of students at all educational levels.

Pursuant to COMAR 09.37.02, education for certain incarcerated individuals is a requirement. Within the State prisons, students with more than 18 months to serve on their sentence are required to participate in Adult Education classes for a minimum of 240 days if they do not have a high school diploma, unless they are exempt due to a medical, developmental, or learning disability.

Special Education is available for eligible students under the age of 21, supported by an inter-agency partnership. After earning a High School Diploma, several CTE or occupational programs and transition offerings are available.

Maryland ensures direct and equitable access to correctional education services by providing these services internally across all state correctional facilities. Education being mandatory for incarcerated individuals without a high school diploma or equivalent ensures that every eligible individual has access to educational opportunities regardless of their location or personal circumstances. The MD Labor Correctional Education Program submits a proposal in response to the multi-year AEFLA competitive request for proposals. The funds are competed in accordance with 34 CFR Section 463 Subpart C. The main application for the 231 funds requires the eligible providers to submit a cover page, application checklist, determination of eligibility, demonstrated effectiveness, the thirteen considerations, a detailed budget and assurances and certifications.

In the proposal, Correctional Education responds to the 13 considerations demonstrating the degree to which CE is responsive to the needs of low literacy level learners, English language learners and learners with disabilities in the state correctional facilities and the programs ability to effectively serve the population. The applicant for AEFLA funds to establish and

operate a correctional education program must demonstrate past effectiveness in basic skills and/or English language acquisition instruction, as well as supporting students in transitioning to available post-secondary education or career training in the institutions by submitting documented evidence of past effectiveness of improving learners' literacy outcomes, specifically eligible individuals who are basic skills deficient, including evidence of success in achieving outcomes for participants related to employment opportunities in the institutions, attainment of a high school diploma or the equivalent and transition to available postsecondary education and training. This is supported by sufficient funding, including Title II funds, allocated by the state to meet this mandate.

Maryland evaluates the effectiveness of its correctional education programs through the Measuring For Results (MFR) system. This system tracks key data points, including GEDs earned, occupational programs completed, transition programs completed, educational functioning level gains, and the number of students served. This data is reviewed and updated annually at the end of each fiscal year.

The Correctional Education Council (CEC) provides oversight for Maryland's correctional education programs. This council, comprising key stakeholders and co-chaired by the Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services (DPSCS), reviews program proposals and outcomes to ensure they meet state goals and address the needs of the incarcerated population. The council's review process ensures programs are aligned with best practices and state priorities.

Although Maryland's correctional education services are provided internally, Labor ensures standardized processes for any internal program development and funding allocations. New programs are first internally suggested, composed of identified key performance indicators, evaluation criteria, implementation timeline, and a detailed budget. The proposal is then considered among other Labor priorities and funding is determined based on the projected return. These proposals are then provided for review by the CEC to address proposals publicly and identify any additional funding that may come from DPSCS.

In addition to the maximum amount funds allowable under this Title for administrative activities, the state allocates funds to cover local administrative costs associated with implementing and managing educational programs. This includes expenses for personnel, materials, and training necessary to run the programs effectively.

Labor follows a standard Request for Proposals (RFP) process to work with outside partners when necessary. This process involves publicly announcing opportunities, outlining clear and consistent criteria for proposals, and evaluating submissions based on predefined public criteria to ensure transparency, fairness, and compliance with federal regulations.

Offenders are eligible for Correctional Education occupational programs or advanced education once they have earned their High School Diploma. Programs are designed to reduce recidivism by supporting incarcerated individuals' access to career pathway opportunities through innovative approaches that support academic achievement and transition to post-secondary training.

In FY22, Labor was chosen to receive a technical assistance grant from OCTAE to develop an IET program at two schools within the State prisons. The IETs were created to combine both Academic and CTE training to inmates without a High School Diploma. The two schools, located within the Maryland Correctional Institution for Women and the Maryland Correctional Training Center - The Hill, provide men and women with training in either Hospitality or Manufacturing to succeed upon release. Upon successful completion of

approved occupational programs, graduates are eligible for additional diminution credits pending DPSCS review.

Labor, in collaboration with the DPSCS, successfully piloted the use of 87 electronic tablets in academic courses at eight State prisons from 2016-2020. The tablets provide incarcerated individuals with secure, monitored access to digital education, rehabilitation, and job training and placement resources in a controlled network environment. These tablets are used to supplement and differentiate instruction.

In 2021, Labor procured an additional 400 tablets and upgraded the original 87 devices. In 2022, 236 more tablets were added to the transitional/reentry program, increasing the total to 723 tablets in the CE program. To date, all of the schools have received tablet training and have been outfitted with tablets.

Incarcerated individuals with a High School Diploma may also participate in pre-apprenticeships and nationally recognized non-union RAs. Maryland's intensive pre-release transition program, in partnership with DPSCS and MSDE's Neglected and Delinquent Grant, prepares individuals for life outside of the institution and provides job readiness in collaboration with workforce partners.

Correctional Education's Occupational Program also includes the oversight of the Joint Skills Training Partnership (JSTP) Program. This program is a collaborative effort between Labor's Correctional Education staff and various DPSCS staff members. The program documents on-the-job training for inmates who are near release and hold jobs in various departments within Maryland correctional facilities. These departments range from the Dietary, Maintenance, Library Services, and Education. Although incarcerated individuals must acquire specific skills to be successful in these roles, they often fail to recognize that these skills are valuable assets toward finding employment post-release. Labor staff trains DPSCS staff, recruits participants, and works with both Occupational and Transitional staff to educate staff and students about the connection between employment during incarceration and how it connects to lucrative career opportunities upon release.

During the 2022-2023 school year, the Correctional Education Transition Program curriculum is offered at 14 sites by nine instructors with 1,164 participants successfully completing courses during FY 2023.

The following courses are currently offered in the Transition Program:

- Personal Assessment and Career Exploration
- Employment Readiness Workshop;
- Financial Literacy;
- Health and Nutrition;
- Parenting;
- Introduction to Computers;
- Basic Keyboarding;
- Success at Work;
- Workshop Participation;
- Transition Planning for Under 21 Students;
- Life Skills for Reentry
- Internet Job Search; and,
- Reentry and Employment Resource Skills Training.

MD Labor's Office of Correctional Education-Transition and OWD collaborate to ensure CE students have information about how to access employment services offered at the AJCs. Labor hired twelve Reentry Navigators using WIOA Governor Set-Aside Funds, based at the AJCs throughout Maryland, to provide inmates with resources behind the fence. This service provides ex-offenders with a familiar point of contact once released to support their transition to employment. OWD oversees the Reentry Navigators.

d. Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education Program.

Describe how the eligible agency will, using the considerations specified in section 231(e) of WIOA and in accordance with 34 CFR 463 subpart C, fund eligible providers to establish or operate Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IELCE) programs under section 243 of WIOA. Describe how adult English language learners, including professionals with degrees and credentials in their native countries, are served in IELCE programs.

Describe how the Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education program under section 243(a) of WIOA will be offered in combination with integrated education and training activities found in 34 CFR section 463.36.

Describe how the Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education program under section 243(a) of WIOA will include instruction in literacy and English language acquisition and instruction on the rights and responsibilities of citizenship and civic participation.

Describe how the Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education program under section 243(a) of WIOA will be designed to prepare adults who are English language learners for, and place such adults in, unsubsidized employment in in-demand industries and occupations that lead to economic self-sufficiency.

Describe how the Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education program under section 243(a) of WIOA will be designed to integrate with the local workforce development system and its functions to carry out the activities of the program.

The IELCE Program under Section 243 of WIOA is included in the competitive application process for AEFLA funding and the IELCE funds are competed in according with 34 CFR section 463 subpart C. The IELCE information, application instructions and application were posted on the Department's website and a press release announcing the RFA was also released to promote direct and equitable access for eligible providers to obtain, apply and compete for the WIOA Title II funds. All eligible providers throughout the state had the same grant announcement and process which was made public. All eligible providers were able to apply for the IELCE funds.

Section 243 funds are a separate application that is in addition to the main AEFLA competitive grant application. As such, any provider that wishes to use 243 funds to deliver IELCE/IET activities is required to also apply for the full AEFLA grant funding. However, local programs that complete the main competitive application are not required to also apply for 243 funds.

Eligible providers who desired to apply for IELCE funds as part of the AEFLA application to carry out the activities under Sections 243 must submit the IELCE application in conjunction with the main AEFLA competitive Request for Proposals. The AEFLA proposal, as stated previously, requires all agencies to demonstrate past effectiveness in serving adult learners, which also applies here for their IELCE (Section 243) application. In the IELCE proposal, eligible providers must respond to the following prompts:

- In describing how the IELCE program will be delivered in combination with IET, describe how the specific occupation or occupational cluster has been chosen such that it aligns with the Local Workforce Plan. Use data to support. And how will participants access and participate in the IET?
- Describe how the contextualized academic skills, workforce preparation and workforce training of the IET will be of sufficient intensity and duration as well as having a single set of learning objectives.
- Explain how the delivery of services will allow participants to achieve competency in the English language and acquire the basic and more advanced skills needed to function more effectively.
- Describe how the civic education component of IELCE will be offered to participants. How will participants engage in activities and lessons that increase their awareness of rights and responsibilities of citizenship, civic participation and U.S history and government?
- Describe how the program plans to use technology to facilitate lessons and activities.
- How will technology be used to help prepare participants for the desired educational and occupational outcomes?
- Describe how your IET(s) will coordinate with the local workforce development system and/or Labor Market Information (LMI). How will this affect the IET choice, be the first step in a career pathway and lead to recognized industry credentials?
- Describe how the IET aligns with the intended outcomes to area employer's needs.
- Describe how the program will fund the IET. What is the driving force behind the choice and who will provide the resources or funding?
- Describe the program strategy for participant recruitment and planning for sustainability for the program year. How will the program identify eligible participants for the IELCE/IET program? What barrier removal support services will the program provide? Who will provide the support services?

In addition to the IELCE narrative, applicants must provide a comprehensive and aligned budget documenting how funds awarded will be spent on allowable IELCE activities and expenditures.

The eligible provider must document in the proposal how the IELCE adult education and literacy services are aligned with the local workforce plan, how concurrent enrollment will be promoted and how the partner responsibilities to the American Job Center will occur. Agreements with partners to deliver IELCE services under the Title must be clearly documented in the proposal along with a submission of copies of agreements such as memorandums of understanding the eligible provider will have with the partner organizations.

The applicant must document how the eligible provider intends to meet the State's performance levels must be clearly documented as well as how learner outcomes and data will be collected, and the performance indicators will be reported to the State.

The IELCE application is also forwarded to the appropriate Local Workforce Development Board for review along with the applicant's main AEFLA . The Local Workforce Development Board was asked to review the WIOA Title II application(s) to determine whether the proposed activities are consistent with the Local Workforce Development plan.

In addition to outlining issues around funding, technology integration, and learner recruitment, the IELCE application narrative requires applicants to address the following:

- Describe how the specific occupation or occupational cluster has been chosen such that it aligns with your WIOA Local Workforce Development Plan.

- Describe how IELCE participants will access and participate in the IET.
- Describe how the contextualized academic skills, workforce preparation, and workforce training of the IET will be of sufficient intensity and duration and has a single set of learning objectives.
- Explain how the delivery of services will allow adults to achieve competency in the English language and acquire the basic and more advanced skills needed to function more effectively.
- Describe how the civics education component of IELCE will be offered to participants. How will participants engage in activities and lessons that increase their awareness of rights and responsibilities of citizenship and civic participation, and U.S. History and Government?
- How local and State Labor Market Information (LMI) and employer needs will affect the IET choice, be the first step in a career pathway, and lead to recognized credentials?

The awarding of IELCE funds is contingent upon a successful awarding of the main AEFLA grant through the competitive application process. Amounts are awarded based on jurisdictional need, past performance, and cost of cohort training planned. While providers are allowed to utilize 243 funds to pay for workforce training, they are strongly encouraged to develop local partnerships and leverage other resources when possible, to defray these costs. Eligible providers whose IELCE proposals are accepted and funded may expend no less than 95 percent of the AEFLA funds to carry out the adult education and literacy service activities under the Title. Providers may use the remaining IELCE funds for planning, administration, American Job Center infrastructure costs, local workforce plan alignment activities, contribute to establishing performance accountability measures and professional development. The State does provide funds to eligible providers to offset some local administrative costs that may be used for professional development and approved provider administrative staff positions.

Maryland is fortunate to have a wealth of English learners emigrating to our State that already possess advanced degrees, certifications, and skills training from their countries of origin. The Maryland Department of Labor New American Initiatives Coordinator, in collaboration with the Maryland Office of Refugees and Asylees (MORA), organizes the Maryland Skilled Immigrant Task Force. This task force holds monthly meetings of skilled immigrant stakeholder groups, including Title II providers. This group also publishes career guides for skilled immigrants in a variety of career clusters and provides a forum for the sharing of best practices in serving this population. Our Adult education providers utilize this resource for guidance and best practices in serving the skilled immigrant population in Maryland.

e. State Leadership. Describe how the State will use the funds to carry out the required State Leadership activities under section 223 of WIOA.

Section 223 of WIOA outlines four required state leadership activities, which are detailed below.

Alignment of adult education and literacy activities with other core programs and one-stop partners to implement strategies identified in the unified or combined State plan.

Maryland's Title II services, as overseen by MD Labor DWDAL, have an equal seat at the workforce development table statewide. The State Director of Adult Education is a full member of the GWDB, and all local areas have Title II representation on their LWDBs. Title II has representation on all applicable state initiatives around workforce development, including in workforce policy planning and participation in state training initiatives.

All local Title II grantees are required to align instruction and services to the goals of the LWDBs and WIOA local plans and must report on these efforts continuously throughout the program. LWDBs also review Title II grantee applications to ensure alignment with their local goals and needs, as well as to provide formal feedback on any suggested change in alignment. The State provides technical assistance to Title II grantees when negotiating local resource sharing agreements, and State AELS staff will spend time in the field working with local grantees to improve collaboration with local workforce areas. The successful Career Pathways Connections for Adult Learners Initiative united Title I and II practitioners in the field to develop collaborative pathways to careers for our learners. Local areas that have participated in the program have developed especially strong working relationships that have been sustained long after the completion of the initiative.

In addition to general policy initiatives, Title II has taken a lead role in specific policy initiatives, such as the annual Basic Education Skills and English Language Assessments Policy and manual, which outlines NRS-approved assessments for Maryland and guidelines for each, as well as the MSG policy, which codified recent allowances in MSG attainment from the USDOE and USDOL and provided a consistent framework to be used across all four WIOA Titles in Maryland.

Establish or operate high quality professional development programs to improve adult education instruction including:

- incorporating essential components of reading instruction
- instruction related to specific needs of adult learners
- instruction provided by volunteers or other personnel
- dissemination of information about models and promising practices

High quality professional development programs are vital to ensuring that Maryland's adult learners obtain the best instruction possible. To improve the instruction provided pursuant to the four required areas of instruction, Maryland's AELS provides the following services:

- All local programs complete an annual professional development plan, in line with the four required components in the state required activities, organized into three Maryland focus areas: Quality Instruction, Learner Persistence, and Educational Access. All instructors, regardless of full or part-time status are required to complete a minimum of 10 hours of professional development per year. A vast majority of instructors complete considerably more than 10 hours.
- In addition to training and technical assistance provided to local program staff, AELS members also provide professional development opportunities directly to local instructors on a monthly basis, on a range of topics that support the three focus areas and serve as a supplement to local professional development efforts.
- The AELS office also coordinates a week-long Virtual Training Institute twice a year for all Maryland practitioners. What was created as a necessity during the COVID-19 pandemic has turned into a well attended series of webinars on various topics, including instructional strategies, program management, and wraparound services for learners. Sessions are presented by both AELS State staff, as well as by practitioners in the field in Maryland and in other states as well. These training sessions are then archived on the AELS YouTube channel, where local providers can utilize these sessions in their own LMS and local professional development plans.
- Conducts quarterly Communities of Practice (CoP) for specific leadership roles in local programs, which provide position-specific guidance and training. These CoPs, led by the State office with input and significant participation from local providers, serve as

training opportunities, a platform for technical assistance, and a forum for the sharing of best practices to improve student service delivery, instruction, and promotion. The CoPs are as follows:

- Program Administrator CoP
- Instructional Specialist CoP
- Intake and Assessment Specialist CoP
- Management Information Systems Specialist CoP
- Transition Specialist CoP
- Family Literacy CoP
- IELCE/IET CoP
- National External Diploma Program CoP
- The CLO, a position with the DWDAL, serves as a source of professional development and training on the wide scope of WIOA, having created and delivered in-depth sessions on understanding all aspects of WIOA, as well as other pertinent training sessions on areas of interest to the entire workforce system in Maryland.

Provision of technical assistance to local providers receiving funds including:

- Development and dissemination of instructional and programmatic practices based on best available research in reading, writing, speaking, mathematics, English language acquisition, distance education, and staff training
- Role of local providers as one-stop partners
- Assistance in use of technology including staff training and improving efficiencies

Robust and readily available technical assistance is a core service of the AELS Office. In addition to the documentation available to local providers via the competitive and continuation applications, AELS coordinates Quarterly Community of Practice meetings. These gatherings allow similar positions at local programs across the state to meet, ask questions, and get guidance from the State on issues that are pertinent to their needs. The local Program Administrators also participate in their own CoP, as well as quarterly meetings for all members of the local leadership teams to meet together and hear guidance from the State at the same time. All of these CoP meetings are recorded and made available for reference at a later date for local programs.

When appropriate, the partnerships between AJC and local Title II providers are emphasized to meet the needs of our adult learners. Technical assistance on these partnerships are shared at appropriate CoPs (especially the Transition Specialist CoP), the Virtual Training Institute, and in one-on-one technical assistance when programs are developing Integrated Education and Training cohorts or negotiating resource sharing agreements. The State also utilizes the CLO position to provide training on the functions of each core partner and how to utilize services between partners. This is supplemented by the WIOA State Training Series that is available through Maryland's "The Hub", which houses a series of online trainings outlining all partners and programming of WIOA and the workforce system in Maryland.

Monitoring and evaluation of the quality of, and improvement in, adult education.

Monitoring and evaluation is paramount to ensuring the quality of programming and to determine where to place improvement efforts. To that end, Maryland utilizes the LACES database for the entry and tracking of student demographic and assessment data, as well as pertinent information on staff, instructors, and classes. Each grantee is required to appoint a Management Information Systems Specialist (MIS) to be the point person for the program on all data needs and to assist the local leadership team in data analysis. Guidelines on data usage and tracking are made available through the grant application and assurances, as well

as disseminated at data trainings and through the MIS Community of Practice meetings every quarter.

Regular monitoring of program efforts is conducted through quarterly data checks, mid and end-of-year reporting, and program site visits by the assigned Adult Education Program Specialist on the AELS team. Site visits are supplemented by desk monitoring and virtual grantee team meetings. Through these efforts, regular lines of communication are kept open between the State and local teams to increase transparency and lead program improvement efforts.

The MD Labor Monitoring and Compliance Team leads annual enrollment verification and fiscal monitoring efforts. Enrollment verification matches student data and assessment information entered into LACES against local program records and reports to the State any suggestions for improvements. Fiscal monitoring verifies that programs are spending funds correctly and verifiably, in line with program guidelines. When necessary, these monitoring's can lead to the requirement of Program Improvement Plans that are closely monitored by the AELS team for compliance.

Finally, program improvement starts locally. Therefore, all programs receive training on how to read, interpret, and analyze their own data and data trends on a regular basis. This empowers programs to determine where they have areas for improvement and utilize the Community of Practice meeting structure to obtain advice and support from the entire State to drive program growth and improvement. In addition to State efforts, the AELS office also offers technical assistance for programs to create their own internal program improvement plans and activities that align with both their adult education goals and their local institutional goals.

Describe how the State will use the funds to carry out permissible State Leadership Activities under section 223 of WIOA, if applicable.

The State will carry out several State Leadership Activities that are permissible under section 223 of WIOA.

The development and implementation of technology applications, translation technology or distance education including professional development to support the use of instructional technology.

Since the COVID-19 Pandemic, synchronous and asynchronous online and hybrid instruction is fully integrated into the service delivery model of all local programs. To that end, Maryland provides local Instructional Specialist staff with the needed training and technical assistance to support this learning modality. In addition, AELS created the Maryland Digital Literacy Framework for Adult Learners Guide, which seeks to streamline legislation, standards, competencies, and frameworks used in adult education that emphasize the usage and incorporation of technology in the classroom. The Framework identifies seven interconnected, essential elements of a digitally literate adult learner. Within each element, instructors are provided with a definition, guiding questions, and situational examples of how to incorporate these digital skills in the adult literacy classroom. In addition to the Guide, the Digital Literacy Framework Learning Modules provide online, self-paced courses for instructors for additional development of these elements and assist them in using class time to develop the digital literacy skills students need to be successful in the classroom and in their lives.

In addition to digital literacy efforts in the classroom, AELS also implements Virtual Training Institutes, which provide virtual training for instructors and adult education practitioners on

various topics that seek to improve instruction and delivery of services. Approximately 700 participants take advantage of these virtual conferences twice per year.

Content and Models for Integrated Education and Training and Career Pathways

In an effort to strengthen career pathways implementation in Maryland, MD Labor launched our Career Pathways Program, which awarded up to \$250,000 per jurisdiction to increase WIOA Title II learner access to Title I training and career opportunities while addressing the needs of local businesses between 2018 and 2021. Over 190 adult learners were served in various areas, including healthcare, apartment maintenance, and diesel mechanics.

In addition to the career outcomes of the learners, the program culminated in the creation of Career Pathways Connections for Adult Learners in 2022, a guide that addresses the persistent challenge of connecting Title I and Title II clients to co-enrollment opportunities, as well as the benefits of utilizing the services of both programs to empower adult learners to advance in their careers. This guide outlined the best practices learned and a roadmap to sustainable implementation across the State. Since then, local areas have established strong partnerships between agencies and meet participants where they are, as recommended by the report. One standout jurisdiction was Howard County, in which two separate Title II providers formed a long-lasting partnership with the local AJC to serve the needs of English learners in their jurisdiction. The local partnership in Howard County has continued beyond the end of the grant, with its success being touted nationally at the EARN Economic Integration webinar and in a training at the 2023 National Association of State Directors of Adult Education. AELS continues to develop the lessons learned from this demonstration project through targeted training and professional development, especially in the work of the Transition Specialist Community of Practice.

Integration of literacy and English language instruction with occupational skill training, including promoting linkages with employers

The IELCE program, an optional component of Adult Education funding in Maryland, seeks to provide immigrants and other English learners with the occupational skills training they need to be successful along their career pathway. IELCE courses, as part of a contextualized Integrated Education and Training Model, provide English learners with English language acquisition instruction, instruction on civics and the rights and responsibilities of citizenship, and the technical skills needed to obtain certification or transition to a college program. In Maryland, AELS technical assistance assists providers in developing pathways in healthcare, information technology, and other in-demand fields as outlined by state and local LMI. Local providers are supported through targeted training, site visits, and quarterly communities of practice, where they can share successes and lessons learned with their fellow programs throughout the state.

Content and Models for Integrated Education and Training and Career Pathways

Maryland committed \$1,000,000 of WIOA funding to invest in demonstration projects that support career pathway initiatives between 2018 and 2021. The grant program, which is the first of its kind in Maryland, solicited innovative proposals from Local Areas to develop demonstration projects that increase training and employment opportunities for Marylanders lacking high school diplomas. Grant applicants were encouraged to prepare proposals for pilot interventions involving proven strategies, such as (but not limited to) pre-apprenticeship training, English Language Acquisition, distance learning, bridge programming, and pathways to employment for out-of-school youth. Community partners and adult education providers were encouraged to partner with Local Areas to participate in the opportunity.

Historically, the several programs, including the largest community colleges received funding through MD Labor and a private foundation to implement IETs through Maryland's MI-BEST program. A Workforce Innovation Grant allowed the colleges to continue to develop this program in partnership with their workforce partners. For a number of providers, additional professional development will be required to develop and implement IET programs. IELCE funding and WIOA rules that allow for a broader use of AEFLA funding have facilitated some successful projects, however, the state encourages collaboration to leverage funding.

Maryland ESOL Content Standards

Maryland has a well-adopted ESOL Content Standards for adults that are incorporated into all English language acquisition programs in the state. In 2023, AELS, in conjunction with instructors and instructional specialists across the state, began the process to update these standards to better align with the Maryland Digital Literacy Framework, updated ESL assessments, and the needs of online, asynchronous, and hybrid instruction. When completed, this new framework will provide all programs with a modern structure to base English language acquisition on, as well as serve as a guiding light for future curriculum development.

f. Assessing Quality

Describe how the eligible agency will assess the quality of providers of adult education and literacy activities under title II. Describe how the eligible agency will take actions to improve such quality, including providing the activities described in section 223(a)(1)(B) of WIOA. Describe how the eligible agency will use evaluations, data analysis, program monitoring, or other methods to improve the quality of adult education activities in the State.

Maryland assesses the quality of adult education providers using a combined desk and onsite monitoring approach. Each grantee is assigned to an Adult Education Program Specialist whose role is to provide monitoring and technical assistance to the grantees. Programs submit data every quarter, with a Mid-Year report and Final Report delivered at the second and fourth quarter. With the support of data analytics training and the MIS Community of Practice, grantees analyze their program progress on a quarterly basis. . Specialists review the reports and data (particularly NRS Tables 4 and 4B) and have follow-up discussions with the grantees. Technical assistance is offered as needed and professional development is recommended where indicated.

Annual reports are an opportunity for local programs to review their performance, especially progress towards meeting State Measurable Skill Gains targets, work with their LWDB, and other identified goals in their grant application. These reports inform both local and statewide professional development efforts for instructors and for staff. All programs must have comprehensive and robust professional development plans every year that are focused on the needs of the adult learner. Programs plan and deliver professional development that aligns with the three focus areas of the State: Quality Instruction, Learner Persistence, and Educational Access. All professional development delivered by local programs is required to align with at least one of these core focus areas. These areas ensure that programs are delivered training that covers the essential components of reading instruction for adults, addresses the needs of both instructors and volunteers, and targets what adult learners need to be successful in class and in transitioning to post-secondary education and training.

The State supports local efforts by also delivering numerous statewide professional development opportunities that are designed to support local efforts while also providing multiple options for instructors to pull from for best practices. The State also actively encourages sharing of professional development opportunities between programs as available and appropriate. The State maintains lists of these opportunities for professional development for all programs and utilizes the Instructional Specialist Community of Practice meetings to help disseminate and share these ideas.

State performance is measured against state trend data and the negotiated performance measures through the US Department of Education. Progress or lack of progress is compared to projects undertaken over the past year to determine success or failure. Adjustments are made as appropriate and the AELS team works to implement changes and seek additional professional development or technical assistance that will help the State to meet its goals. AELS works with its State WIOA partners on projects that improve all programs, including strengthening career pathways opportunities for learners and improving connections with employers to improve IET and workplace literacy outcomes.

Adult Education and Family Literacy Act Program Certifications and Assurances

The State Plan must include	Include
1. The plan is submitted by the State agency that is eligible to submit the plan;	Yes
2. The State agency has authority under State law to perform the functions of the State under the program;	Yes
3. The State legally may carry out each provision of the plan;	Yes
4. All provisions of the plan are consistent with State law;	Yes
5. A State officer, specified by title in the certification, has authority under State law to receive, hold, and disburse Federal funds made available under the plan;	Yes
6. The State officer who is submitting the plan, specified by the title in the certification, has authority to submit the plan;	Yes
7. The agency that is submitting the plan has adopted or otherwise formally approved the plan; and	Yes
8. The plan is the basis for State operation and administration of the program;	Yes

The State Plan must include	Include
1. The eligible agency will expend funds appropriated to carry out title II of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) only in a manner consistent with fiscal requirements under section 241(a) of WIOA (regarding the supplement-not-supplant requirement);	Yes
2. The eligible agency will ensure that there is at least one eligible provider serving each local area, as defined in section 3(32) of WIOA;	Yes

The State Plan must include	Include
3. The eligible agency will not use any funds made available under title II of WIOA for the purpose of supporting or providing programs, services, or activities for individuals who are not “eligible individuals” within the meaning of section 203(4) of WIOA, unless it is providing programs, services or activities related to family literacy activities, as defined in section 203(9) of WIOA;	Yes
4. Using funds made available under title II of WIOA to carry out a program for criminal offenders within a correctional institution, the eligible agency will give priority to serving individuals who are likely to leave the correctional institution within five years of participation in the program.	Yes
5. The eligible agency agrees that in expending funds made available under Title II of WIOA, the eligible agency will comply with sections 8301 through 8303 of the Buy American Act (41 U.S.C. 8301-8303).	Yes

Certification Regarding Lobbying

Certification for Contracts, Grants, Loans, and Cooperative Agreements

The undersigned certifies, to the best of his or her knowledge and belief, that:

(1) No Federal appropriated funds have been paid or will be paid, by or on behalf of the undersigned, to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of an agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with the awarding of any Federal contract, the making of any Federal grant, the making of any Federal loan, the entering into of any cooperative agreement, and the extension, continuation, renewal, amendment, or modification of any Federal contract, grant, loan, or cooperative agreement.

(2) If any funds other than Federal appropriated funds have been paid or will be paid to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with this Federal contract, grant, loan, or cooperative agreement, the undersigned shall complete and submit Standard Form-LLL, "Disclosure of Lobbying Activities," in accordance with its instructions.

(3) The undersigned shall require that the language of this certification be included in the award documents for all subawards at all tiers (including subcontracts, subgrants, and contracts under grants, loans, and cooperative agreements) and that all subrecipients shall certify and disclose accordingly. This certification is a material representation of fact upon which reliance was placed when this transaction was made or entered into. Submission of this certification is a prerequisite for making or entering into this transaction imposed by

section 1352, title 31, U.S. Code. Any person who fails to file the required certification shall be subject to a civil penalty of not less than \$10,000 and not more than \$100,000 for each such failure.

Statement for Loan Guarantees and Loan Insurance

The undersigned states, to the best of his or her knowledge and belief, that: If any funds have been paid or will be paid to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with this commitment providing for the United States to insure or guarantee a loan, the undersigned shall complete and submit Standard Form-LLL, "Disclosure of Lobbying Activities," in accordance with its instructions. Submission of this statement is a prerequisite for making or entering into this transaction imposed by section 1352, title 31, U.S. Code. Any person who fails to file the required statement shall be subject to a civil penalty of not less than \$10,000 and not more than \$100,000 for each such failure.

APPLICANT'S ORGANIZATION		Enter information in this column
Applicant's Organization		Maryland Department of Labor
PRINTED NAME AND TITLE OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE		Enter information in this column
First Name		Portia
Last Name		Wu
Title		Secretary
Email		portia.wu@maryland.gov

1. Describe how your entity's existing mission, policies, or commitments ensure equitable access to, and equitable participation in, the proposed project or activity.

Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) (20 U.S.C. 1228a) applies to a State applicant submitting a state plan for a formula grant from the US Department of Education. The State applicant is responsible for completing the GEPA Section 427 form that provides a description of the steps the State proposes to take to ensure all program beneficiaries have equitable access to, and participation in, its Federally funded, State-level project or activity. The State applicant is also responsible for ensuring that its subrecipient applicants complete the GEPA Section 427 form or a State developed form that sufficiently meets the GEPA Section 427 requirement for any local-level-project and activity and maintains the subrecipients' responses in the State office.

State applicants must respond to four questions.

The first of four questions is:

Describe how your entity's existing mission, policies, or commitments ensure equitable access to, and equitable participation in, the proposed project or activity.

The Maryland Department of Labor's Adult Education and Literacy Services (AELS) is committed to fostering inclusivity and accessibility in adult education programming. All participants in federally funded adult education programs, including students, teachers, and

beneficiaries will be provided equitable access to educational programming and resources regardless of gender, age, national origin, color, or disability.

As the demographic makeup of students in Maryland becomes increasingly diverse, AELS recognizes the importance of addressing the various needs of students to ensure they can fully engage in their education. AELS is dedicated to promoting inclusivity in all aspects of its programming, addressing potential barriers to participation, and identifying and eliminating those barriers.

The second of four questions is:

Based on your proposed project or activity, what barriers may impede equitable access and participation of students, educators, or other beneficiaries?

1. Digital equity and access – The COVID-19 pandemic brought to light disparities in equity for students who lack digital devices and internet connectivity, hindering their ability to fully engage in education. Digital equity and access apply to learners as well as instructors.
2. Language access – Maryland has experienced a significant increase in its immigrant population in recent years. Access to translated materials is imperative to ensure comprehensive understanding of crucial documents and program information for all learners.
3. 504 Compliance – Adult Education programs serve individuals with disabilities who may require special accommodations to engage fully in their education. We acknowledge the necessity of adapting numerous training materials to guarantee equitable access for all students.

The third of four questions is:

Based on the barriers identified, what steps will you take to address such barriers to equitable access and participation in the proposed project or activity?

To achieve these goals, we have developed a multi-faceted plan.

Digital equity/access – For programs with remote access, allow funding for Internet hot spots. Learners who may not have access to laptops, provide funding for programs to purchase laptops to implement a laptop loaner program. In addition, the Maryland Department of Labor has partnered with the Governor’s Office of Statewide Broadband in various meetings to discuss the impact of the National Digital Equity Act and Broadband Equity Access and Deployment Program (BEAD). Our partnership will continue to ensure that Adult Education has a seat at the table in Digital Equity Act efforts. Also, our Digital Literacy Framework provides a guide for Adult Literacy instructors on how to integrate digital literacy competencies into instruction to assist all learners in accessing and utilizing digital tools and resources.

Language access – Through orientation programs monitoring, MD Labor will ensure that programs appropriately create and implement forms and information for learners with Limited English Proficiency in other languages, in line with our Language Access Plan. To continue supporting staff from the Division of Workforce Development and Adult Learning (DWDAL/Title I) and Adult Education Grantees (Title II) with the tools and knowledge needed to deliver excellent and equitable services to the limited English proficient (LEP) population, DWDAL and DUI are also offering Quarterly Virtual Language Assistance Services training. In these trainings, there will be a review of the DWDAL/DUI Language Access Plan, instruction

on the best practices in working with limited English proficient students; and instruction on best practices in working with interpreters.

This training is designed for staff who engage with students directly or may engage with students to learn about how to provide interpretation services to individuals whose native language is not English.

Translation of Vital Documents – “Vital documents” are documents that convey information that critically affects the ability of the program recipient to make decisions about his or her participation in the program. Vital documents include applications, public notices, consent forms, letters containing important information regarding participation in a program, eligibility rules, notices pertaining to the reduction, denial, or termination of benefits, right to appeal, notices advising of the availability of language assistance, and outreach and community education materials. Programs are expected to have vital documents translated into the languages spoken by a significant number or portion of the population eligible to be served, or likely to be encountered in their jurisdiction. In addition, the Maryland Department of Labor will provide translated versions of the standard LACES Intake Form for all of the local programs to utilize and adapt to their intake processes.

504 Compliance – Provide funding for appropriate auxiliary aids where necessary to ensure an equal opportunity. Types of auxiliary aids may include braille or large print versions of materials, electronic diskettes, audiotapes, qualified interpreters or readers, telecommunications devices for deaf persons (TDDs), captioning of video, and other methods of making information available and accessible to persons with disabilities. 504 Compliance Training to ensure all training is provided in a format that is accessible for individuals with disabilities.

The final of four questions is:

What is your timeline, including targeted milestones, for addressing these identified barriers?

Digital equity/access – Maryland Department of Labor, AELS will continue to provide programs with funding for the ability to purchase necessary equipment for digital equity and access. This is an ongoing project as programs continue to secure the laptops, hot spots, and other equipment necessary for digital equity and access. We will continue to encourage programs to work towards digital equity and access.

Language access – The Department’s Language Access Plan has been in effect for several years, with an update created in PY23. During PY 23 and PY 24, the MD Labor, AELS team will continue to observe and evaluate local program’s orientation sessions and Language Access Implementation. Once all programs have been observed, a report will be shared and discussed in FY 25 at a Leadership Community of Practice and an Intake/Assessment Community of Practice. The State’s Digital Equity Act is currently being reviewed at the federal level, but once it has been approved, the Maryland Department of Labor will continue to work with the Governor’s Office of Statewide Broadband to implement the tents of the plan.

Local Programs are highly encouraged to attend one of the four Virtual Language Assistance Training sessions. Additionally, the Maryland Department of Labor AELS team will attend these sessions. The dates of those sessions are below:

- Wednesday, March 20, 2024, 10-11:30am
- Thursday, June 13, 2024, 1-2:30pm
- Tuesday, September 10, 2024, 10-11:30am

- Tuesday, October 22, 2024, 1-2:30pm

504 Compliance - Continue to provide programs with funding for the ability to purchase the necessary equipment to ensure staff and learners with disabilities have access to the same information as the general population. This is an ongoing project as programs continue to acquire the necessary equipment to provide access to instruction and instruction for individuals with disabilities comparable to the general population.

Adult Education and Literacy Program Performance Indicators

Performance Indicators	PY 2024 Expected Level	PY 2024 Negotiated Level	PY 2025 Expected Level	PY 2025 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	34.5	36.5	35.5	37.0
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	37.0	37.0	38.0	38.0
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	6200.0	6800.0	6500.0	6850.0
Credential Attainment Rate	30.0	30.0	32.0	32.0
Measurable Skill Gains	37.0	40.0	38.0	40.5
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

Program-Specific Requirements for State Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program

The Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Services Portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan must include the following descriptions and estimates, as required by sections 101(a) and 606 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by title IV of WIOA:

(a) State Rehabilitation Council. All VR agencies, except for those that have an independent consumer-controlled commission, must have a State Rehabilitation Council (Council or SRC) that meets the criteria in section 105 of the Rehabilitation Act. The designated State agency or designated State unit, as applicable, has (select A or B):

☐ (A) is an independent State commission.

☒ (B) has established a State Rehabilitation Council.

(2) In accordance with Assurance 3(b), please provide information on the current composition of the Council by representative type, including the term number of the representative, as applicable, and any vacancies, as well as the beginning dates of each representative's term.

Council Representative	Current Term Number/Vacant	Beginning Date of Term Mo./Yr.
Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC)	1	10/2024
Parent Training and Information Center	Vacant - Candidate has applied, pending approval	TBD
Client Assistance Program	2	10/2025
Qualified Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Counselor (Ex Officio if Employed by the VR Agency)	3 Ex Officio: Term 1: 2 Term 2: 1	1: 10/2023 1: 10/2023 1: 10/2024
Community Rehabilitation Program Service Provider	4 CRP Providers Term 1: 2 Term 2: 2	3: 10/2023 (1 to be removed due to lack of attendance) and 1: 10/2024
Business, Industry, and Labor	1	10/2022 - Candidate in process of reapplying
Business, Industry, and Labor	1	10/2023
Business, Industry, and Labor	21	10/202010/2023
Business, Industry, and Labor	1	10/2024
Disability Advocacy Groups	22 Term 3: 1	1: 10/2023 2: TBD

Council Representative	Current Term Number/Vacant	Beginning Date of Term Mo./Yr.
	2 - Candidates applied, pending approval	
Current or Former Applicants for, or Recipients of, VR services	Term 1: 2 Term 2: 1	1: 10/2023 and 2: 10/2024
Section 121 Project Directors in the State (as applicable)	N/A	N/A
State Educational Agency Responsible for Students with Disabilities Eligible to Receive Services under Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)	Vacant-Candidate has applied, pending approval	TBD
State Workforce Development Board	Vacant	N/A
VR Agency Director (Ex Officio)	1	10/2023
Parent/Advocate	Vacant	N/A
WIOA Partner/Maryland Labor	1	10/2022-Candidate in process of reapplying

(3) If the SRC is not meeting the composition requirements in Section 105(b) of the Rehabilitation Act and/or is not meeting quarterly as required in Section 105(f) of the Rehabilitation Act, provide the steps that the VR agency is taking to ensure it meets those requirements.

As required, the SRC holds quarterly meetings and in addition to this regular sub-committee meetings. Over the past several years, the Council has focused on increasing membership through targeted outreach efforts. Flyers were developed and promoted at the DORS 2024 conference and shared across social media platforms. As a result, the number of vacant seats has decreased. It should be noted that although there is a vacant Parent/Advocate seat, there are two parents that are actively involved in the Employment and Career Development subcommittee. The SRC continues to build membership for the full council as well as the subcommittees.

(4) In accordance with the requirements in Section 101(a)(21)(A)(ii)(III) of the Rehabilitation Act, include a summary of the Council's input (including how it was obtained) into the State Plan and any State Plan revisions, including recommendations from the Council's annual reports, the review and analysis of consumer satisfaction and other Council reports.

INPUT AND RECOMMENDATIONS BY THE STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

The Maryland State Rehabilitation Council (MSRC) was established under the 1992 Amendments to the Rehabilitation Act. The Council is made up of individuals who are interested in the success of public VR programs. Maryland State Rehabilitation Council

members are appointed by the Governor and include representatives from education, rehabilitation, employment, industry, and consumer advocacy groups.

The Council reviews, analyzes, and advises DORS about issues, such as service provision, eligibility, strategic planning, and consumer satisfaction. MSRC members meet quarterly, perform extensive committee work, and help with informal consultation. The MSRC provides year-round formal and informal consultation to DORS, particularly at scheduled quarterly full Council meetings, at committee meetings, and during an annual DORS/MSRC executive planning meeting. Meeting minutes' document discussions and recommendations.

During the current program year, MSRC has continued to meet quarterly and played an active role in many activities with and in support of DORS. These included the following:

- Assisted with and attended statewide public meetings.
- Actively participated in DORS strategic and annual planning process meetings.
- The SRC members were provided quarterly updates from DORS regarding the waiting list for consumers with significant disabilities.
- An annual retreat was held each year, during which orientation was provided to new members.
- In addition, to gain insights into how to improve the SRC, DORS sponsored two SRC members to attend the National Coalition of State Rehabilitation Councils, Inc. for the past two years. The SRC was excited to learn that two members were approved to present sessions at the conference this year. Their topics were Navigating Forward: From Mission to Measurable Impact in State Rehabilitation Councils and Putting Faces to Work: How SRCs Can Use Social Media to Strengthen Engagement, Communication, and Strategic Impact.

The Council presented the following recommendations to DORS during SCR meetings:

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Continue to review and update DORS publications and public website to ensure materials are easily understood and that plain language materials are available.
- Continue to provide updated training that will promote consistent customer service.
- The SRC supported the recommendations of the HB660 Commission to Study DORS. DORS continues to pursue implementation of the recommendations.
- The Office of Communications & Accessibility should work with SRC to update the SRC's social media presence.
- Help to improve informed choice by updating the DORS website to provide additional information about each CRP so that consumers have a better understanding of what each entity may provide.
- CRPs websites should become ADA compliant by April 2026.
- Improve the process for CRPs to be paid in a timely manner.
- Survey CRPs to understand how communication is between regional offices and CRPs and timeliness of receiving authorizations.

Based on Public comments, DORS should look to increase availability to study the delivery of Customized Employment and consider areas to improve service delivery

(5) Provide the VR agency's response to the Council's input and recommendations, including an explanation for the rejection of any input and recommendations.

List each recommendation/input followed by the VR agency response

- Continue to review and update DORS publications and the public website to ensure materials are easily understood and that plain language materials are available.
- The Office of Communications & Accessibility has made the following enhancements since the last Plan was submitted:
 - Worked with DORS management and staff to ensure that, as DORS written materials are updated or created, that plain language is used, in compliance with Governor Moore's July 2024 Executive Order, creating the Maryland Plain Language Initiative.
 - Updated or created several brochures and information sheets, including for the DHHU, Student Services, ILOB, CAP, BEP, OBVS, & Informed Choice and WTC.
 - All these updated publications are available in seven languages: English, Chinese, French, Korean, Spanish, Vietnamese, and Braille.
 - Created and posted a Request DORS Services form in Spanish
 - - Created informational videos detailing DORS services.
 - - Created or assisted with the creation and posting of four videos about DORS services (General Overview, OBVS, Student Services, & Pre-ETS) and one video about CAP.
 - All the new videos are captioned in at least two languages, several are captioned in five languages, and four are audio described for people with visual disabilities.
- Continue to provide training that will promote consistent customer service.
- DORS updated the customer service training for staff and shared it throughout the states in each region. This training is now being expanded to include case documentation and how to handle difficult conversations.
- The SRC supported the recommendations of the HB660 Commission to Study DORS and monitored that DORS continued to pursue implementation of the recommendations.
- DORS has strengthened its partnership with the Developmental Disability Administration (DDA) and is providing more training opportunities to DDA providers.
- -MOU was finalized Oct. 31, 2025, and fully signed November 14, 2025, by all parties
- Streamlined internal processes and policies to decrease the time taken to provide services.
 - Implementation of client communication software: SARA to help make communication more convenient for consumers working with DORS.
 - Implementation of online referrals helping to expediate the referral process.
 - Challenges with federal budgets have interfered with delivery of service, affecting programming. DORS pivoted procedures to align with current challenges.
- Reduce the number of vacant rehabilitation counselor positions.
 - DORS worked to fill all vacancies. Significant hiring has taken place, but new positions have not been allocated. Where appropriate, staff time was reallocated to address Pre-employment Transition Service (PreETS) service delivery.
- Increased and strengthened partnerships with local, statewide, and national employers.
- DORS Workforce & Technology Services implemented several community-based workforce programs including:
 - Established a partnership with Baltimore City Public Schools where students have been hired for food service positions, and where Western-Polytech High

School will be used as a pilot site for the food services training program train to hire internships.

- Established a new Retail Training program in Salisbury in partnership with Wor-Wic Community College and CVS.
- Established new hiring and employment training partnerships with Communicare, The National Restaurant Foundation, Sodexo, The Y of Central Maryland, 5 Below and Royal Farms.
- Two summer open houses drew close to 550 attendees, most of whom traveled more than 20 miles to attend.
- New Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) programs were offered, targeted to individuals with autism and those with visual impairments.
- The Driver's Education Program doubled capacity for driver's education classes for individuals with autism and other disabilities.
- A pilot class Driver's Education class designed for deaf consumers was successfully completed and will be repeated on an annual basis.
- Added a seventh community college, the College of Southern Maryland, to the Pathways program for students with autism. Program provides additional support with self-advocacy, communication, and organizational skills.
- The Business Relations Branch hosted an awards ceremony in recognition of National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM). They honored consumers who have maintained employment for 90 days or longer, including several who have been successfully employed for over three years. Their dedication and accomplishments were celebrated with an award presentation and luncheon. Businesses that partnered with the Business Relations Branch were also honored in recognition of providing employment opportunities and supporting the event.
- The Office of Communications & Accessibility should work with SRC to update the SRC's social media presence.
- SRC Public Relations and Quality Assurance Committee (PRQA) subcommittee worked with DORS to update the Maryland SRC website to include direct links to further outreach and awareness. In addition, direct links provide advocacy presence via social media outlets: YouTube, Facebook, and LinkedIn.
- Help to improve informed choice by updating the DORS website to provide additional information about each CRP so that consumers have a better understanding of what each entity may provide.
- The website has been in the process of mandatory updates, which delayed the process of updating the CRP information. In the meantime, DORS has created a survey that will be sent to CRPs in February 2026 to gather information that will be shared on the updated website.
- CRPs websites should become ADA compliant by April 2026.
- DORS provided training to CRPs and shared a lot of information via email on how to make updates
- Improve the process for CRPs to be paid in a timely manner.
 - A training was held at the CRP quarterly meetings on how to invoice requirements and how to properly bill DORS
 - An email address was created to contact DORS regarding unpaid invoices. This helped streamline billing for invoices that were passed by more than 30 days and allowed for better tracking of how billing issues were resolved.
 - Mandatory monthly meetings between CRPs and regional offices to ensure updates on services provided and that bills are being paid.
- Survey CRPs to understand how communication is between regional offices and CRPs and timeliness of receiving authorizations.

- A survey that was opened to all CRPs was conducted in January 2026. Responses and feedback are being analyzed to identify communication and meeting strategies that are most or least effective, as well as overall experiences with the DORS authorization process.
- Based on Public comments, DORS should look to increase availability to study the delivery of Customized Employment and consider areas to improve service delivery.
- DORS Director, Office of Field Services met with a national expert regarding Customized Employment to bring information back to DORS Policy Team to determine ways to potentially implement change within the state.
- DORS reached out to the Center for Innovative Training in Vocational Rehabilitation: Provider Advancement Through High-Quality Training (CIT-VR: PATH) to begin the process of improving training provided to CRPs and Vocational Staff.
- The Center aims to expand the number of trained personnel who support individuals with disabilities (IWD) and to strengthen the skills, effectiveness, and long-term success of current rehabilitation professionals and paraprofessionals working as Direct Service Professionals (DSPs) in Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRPs). To achieve this, CIT-VR: PATH will partner with State Vocational Rehabilitation Agencies (SVRAs) and their designated CRPs to implement an innovative, comprehensive approach to professional development and to strengthen partnerships between SVRAs and the CRP community.

* The agency does not reject any of the Council's recommendations. As a result of ongoing feedback and recommendations from the SRC, from the public, and the Maryland Client Assistance Program, DORS worked to develop a **Systemic Change Work Group** to determine concerns that are found across the system and target ways to improve the overall services provided to consumers.

The agency does not reject any of the Council's recommendations.

b.1.A Individuals with the most significant disabilities and their need for Supported Employment;

Executive Summary

DORS and the Maryland State Rehabilitation Council (MSRC) continually assess the rehabilitation needs of Maryland citizens with disabilities, as part of its state and strategic planning process. DORS and the MSRC hold annual public meetings and the MSRC regularly provides input on Agency planning, policy development and recommendations. The results of the consumer satisfaction surveys are also reviewed in order to provide insight into the rehabilitation needs of Maryland citizens with disabilities.

Expanded and Improved Version

At this time, DORS is preparing to launch the next cycle of the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA), to inform the Agency's vocational rehabilitation (VR) strategies, funding priorities, and partnership development. The CSNA serves as a foundational planning tool, enabling DORS to identify underserved and unserved populations, assess emerging needs, determine necessary supports, and strengthen coordination across education, workforce, and community systems. Findings from the CSNA directly shape how DORS aligns its resources to advance equitable access to VR services and improve employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities.

The CSNA team is composed of DORS staff, including participants in the Agency's Emerging Leaders program, as well as consultation and guidance from the Maryland State Rehabilitation Council (MSRC). The Emerging Leaders program is a key component of the DORS Leadership Development Program and is designed to cultivate future leaders within the Agency. Through structured mentorship with experienced staff, participants gain a deeper understanding of DORS operations, programs, and strategic priorities, while also exploring their own leadership interests and potential. Involving Emerging Leaders in the CSNA process provides them with hands-on experience in data analysis, stakeholder engagement, and strategic planning, while strengthening the Agency's internal capacity to conduct comprehensive statewide assessments.

DORS, in collaboration with the MSRC, undertook the triennial comprehensive needs assessment in 2022, in compliance with the Code of Federal Regulations 34 CFR § 361.29. DORS executive staff decided that not only would the agency examine the required elements, but DORS would also examine additional topics which would benefit DORS in planning for the future of our consumers.

The 35-member team consisted of DORS staff with consultation from the MSRC and staff from the National Technical Assistance Center on Transition: The Collaborative at The George Washington University Center for Rehabilitation Counseling Research and Education. The Needs Assessment team:

- Collected and analyzed relevant existing data
- Conducted and analyzed findings of supplemental surveys
- Facilitated focus groups and key informant interviews to ascertain the needs of individuals with disabilities throughout Maryland.

As a result, the teams developed a list of needs/concerns and recommendations to address such. This report outlines 113 recommendations throughout the required elements and additional topics.

Required Elements

The results of the Needs Assessment include the following required elements:

(1) Comprehensive Assessment of the Vocational Rehabilitation Needs of Individuals with Disabilities in Maryland

Individuals with Most Significant Disabilities, Including Their Need for Supported Employment Services

1. The Need of Individuals with Most Significant Disabilities for Supported Employment Services in Maryland
2. Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disability, including Section 511 Considerations; and Individuals with Severe and Persistent Mental Illness
3. The Need of Individuals with Most Significant Disabilities
 - a. Individuals who are Blind/Visually Impaired
 - b. Individuals who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Individuals with Disabilities Who Are Minorities and Individuals with Disabilities Who Have Been Unserved or Underserved by The Vocational Rehabilitation Program

1. Individuals With Disabilities Who Are Minorities – Hispanic and Asian Communities

2. Individuals with Disabilities Who Have Been Unserved, Or Who Are Underserved by the Vocational Rehabilitation Program

Individuals with Disabilities Served Through Other Components of The Statewide Workforce Investment System

1. Maryland American Job Centers – Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Partners
2. Maryland Community Colleges and Apprenticeship

Youth with Disabilities and Students with Disabilities

1. Assessment of the Needs of Students and Youth with Disabilities for Transition Services and Pre-Employment Transition Services and the Extent to Which Such Services Are Coordinated with Local Education Agencies

(2) Assessment of the Need to Establish, Develop, or Improve Community Rehabilitation

Programs within the State – Including the Workforce and Technology Center

In addition to the required elements noted above, Maryland Division of Rehabilitation Services Executive staff chose for the 2022 Needs Assessment to examine an additional area noted below which would benefit the Division of Rehabilitation Services in planning for the future of our consumers.

(3) Assessment of the utilization of existing education or vocational training programs leading to a recognized postsecondary credential or employment.

1. The Need of Individuals with Most Significant Disabilities for Supported Employment Services in Maryland

Supported Employment services have undergone a transition in the last few years with major changes to the Division of Rehabilitation Services' Supported Employment Policy, the total phase out of 14c subminimum wages, and a focus on training and quality employment outcomes as evidenced by Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Benchmarks, across all partners, that include Measurable Skills Gains, Credential Attainment, and Post Exit Outcomes. The Division of Rehabilitation Services anticipated an increase in Supported Employment consumers with the phase out of 14c subminimum wages and an increase in successful outcomes by incorporating training programs alongside job development services.

Since March 2020, the agency has seen a drastic reduction in staff and services available due to COVID-19. Now that things are slowly getting back to normal, these services, including job search and training, will be more available and many now include a hybrid or fully remote version. This allows for an increase of availability of these services across the entire state allowing participants who would normally need transportation to access services from their home or a more accessible location.

Needs/Concerns

- As an agency, the Division of Rehabilitation Services needs to examine how participants who receive Supported Employment Services have been accessing training, identify barriers, and provide support at even the lowest levels so training/post-secondary is accessible.
- The agency needs to make sure staff understand the new Supported Employment policy changes and overall focus of Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act as it pertains to quality and long-term employment.

- The successful outcomes for Supported Employment participants are lower than the agency's total successful outcomes by 10%, over the last 10 years.
- The agency averaged 28% of Supported Employment participants returning each year in the last 3 years. The more Supported Employment participants obtain long-term employment the more this rate should go down.

Recommendations

- Have the agency develop and implement training opportunities to make sure new staff are being taught correctly how to provide job search and training/post-secondary education services concurrently.
- Continue to emphasize that counselors need to complete the Natural Supports Worksheet for Supported Employment Assessment with consumers to identify and provide all services necessary to give consumers a higher chance to obtain long-term employment.
- Develop virtual training programs available through the Workforce and Technology Center which lead to industry recognized certification to allow consumers receiving Supported Employment Services to be able to participate from anywhere across the state.
- Students with low scores on placement tests have traditionally been required or encouraged to take developmental Math or English before taking college-level gateway courses. Offer these courses through the Workforce and Technology Center's Academic Services where consumers receiving Supported Employment Services will be able to access the appropriate disability supports more easily.

2. Individuals with Severe and Persistent Mental Illness and Individuals with Intellectual and Development Disabilities

For efficiency, the subtopic areas of individuals with severe and persistent mental illness and individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities under the main topic of "The Needs of Individuals with Most Significant Disabilities for Supported Employment" have been combined.

Needs/Concerns

- Community Rehabilitation Programs are reporting that they are referring consumers more than once because they are stating that the Division of Rehabilitation Services' counselor is stating that the referral has not been received. Community Rehabilitation Programs are questioning what is happening to the referral.
- Vocational training and higher education process is cumbersome and confusing.
- Community Rehabilitation Programs and Division of Rehabilitation Services' staff need to understand and support internships and other forms of vocational training.

Recommendations

- The Eligibility Determination Unit needs to determine if Behavioral Health Administration referrals can be processed through this unit to ensure consistency for these populations.
- Increase training opportunities for Division of Rehabilitation Services' staff and providers regarding services for Behavioral Health Administration/Developmental Disabilities Administration populations regarding how to support both training and employment simultaneously.
- Streamline process to support vocational training and higher education.
- Provide training opportunities for staff and providers for specific disability populations, especially autism.

- Review Closed-Rehab cases to determine how and why they are being closed successfully without job search support.

3. The Need of Individuals with Most Significant Disabilities

a. Individuals who are Blind/Visually Impaired

The Division of Rehabilitation Services' Office for Blindness and Vision Services is committed to providing quality and specialized services to Maryland citizens who are blind and visually impaired. The Office for Blindness and Vision Services operates the following programs and services for eligible participants:

- Vocational Rehabilitation counselors are located throughout the state in Division of Rehabilitation Services field offices and at the Workforce and Technology Center. The staff is providing employment and independent living services for individuals who have a goal of employment.
- Rehabilitation Teachers for the Blind are also located throughout the state in the Division of Rehabilitation Services field offices and the Workforce and Technology Center. The staff provides independent living assessments and services to individuals who have a goal of employment. Additionally, these rehabilitation teachers are providing in-home teaching for the Maryland Independent Living Older Blind grant. They assess areas such as: mobility, household management skills, and communication skills.
- The Office for Blindness and Vision Services at the Workforce and Technology Center offers services and programs for individuals who are blind and visually impaired. These services and programs address areas of independent living, mobility, technology, and communication training in a residential setting. The program works with Rehabilitation Technology Services at the Workforce and Technology Center to provide assistive technology services, including assessments and training, for blind and visually impaired consumers.

Needs/Concerns

- Lack of introductory immersion training programs for adults who are newly blind or have experienced a change in vision.
- Lack of community-based career training programs that are accessible to consumers with blindness or vision impairments.
- Lack of resources for jobs and/or a network of blind-friendly employers.
- Consumers lack knowledge and awareness of training programs available in the community.
- Counselors do not feel that they are adequately trained to handle some vision-related aspects of their jobs such as adjustment to vision loss and career counseling for the blind.
- Lack of efficiency in the service delivery and follow-up by Office for Blindness and Vision Services' staff.
- Lack of adequate communication between counselors and consumers.
- Lack of access to training programs at the Workforce and Technology Center; programs at the Workforce and Technology Center are not inclusive.
- The Workforce and Technology Center staff lack knowledge of blindness and vision impairments as well as appropriate accommodations for consumers to participate in programs at the Workforce and Technology Center.
- Consumers lack knowledge of training programs at the Workforce and Technology Center.

- Consumers return to the Office for Blindness and Vision Services primarily due to major life changes (e.g., loss of job, decline in vision).
- Consumers return to the Office for Blindness and Vision Services because they require extended training for services such as orientation and mobility and assistive technology training.

Recommendations

- Enhance and emphasize counselor role in:
 - advising consumers about the full scope of services, the rehabilitation team and process, and community resources,
 - focusing on capabilities and individualized needs and learning styles,
 - facilitating access to assistive technology services and ongoing training,
 - minimizing gaps in provision of services, and
 - increasing timeliness of the services provided.
- Provide updated case management training to Office for Blindness and Vision Services' counselors.
- Create an updated blindness and visually impaired resource book with statewide community resources for use by Office for Blindness and Vision Services' counselors and consumers, to include but not limited to mental health and housing resources, blindness resources, Social Service resources, blind-related apps for independent living and employment, and technology resources.
- Continue to foster relationships with community providers for services to Office for Blindness and Vision Services' consumers.
- Continue to offer blind awareness to community providers including understanding the value of assistive technology, assistive technology options available, and necessary accommodations.
- Require that all Division of Rehabilitation Services approved community rehabilitation programs and the Workforce and Technology Center, which offer vocational and occupational skills training programs, provide equal access to these services through available technology and accommodations.
- Continue to offer enhanced rates to community providers.
- Provide advanced training to Office for Blindness and Vision Services' consumers on software, devices, and technology used in competitive integrated employment.
- Utilize the Staff Specialist for Blind and Vision Services at the Workforce and Technology Center for the provision of increased and enhanced blind awareness training for the Workforce and Technology Center staff, especially for career training programs, CCBC staff, and employment services staff.
- Collaborate with the Staff Specialist for Blind and Vision Services at the Workforce and Technology Center when developing career training programs at the Workforce and Technology Center to ensure accessibility for all consumers.

b. Individuals Who Are Deaf and Hard of Hearing

The [Maryland Governor's Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Annual Report for 2020-2021](#) reports that there are approximately 1.2 million Marylanders who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing. For Division of Rehabilitation Services Program Years 2019, 2020, and 2021, Division of Rehabilitation Services data indicates that the Division of Rehabilitation Services has served 1,680 individuals who reported Deaf or Hard of Hearing as their primary disability.

The 2019 CSNA report provided recommendations to increase and enhance service delivery for individuals who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing. The need to update eligibility forms and provide training to rehabilitation counselors for the deaf regarding appropriate use of the forms when determining eligibility for Deaf and Hard of Hearing consumers was identified. As

a result, all eligibility documents and policies were reviewed in preparation for the creation of the Eligibility Determination Unit to ensure appropriate use of forms when determining eligibility for Deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals. One of the goals of the Eligibility Determination Unit is to ensure consistency in eligibility determination agency wide.

Needs/Concerns

- Most Community Rehabilitation Programs staff do not know American Sign Language, do not have signing staff, nor understand what Deaf individuals need including accessibility and accommodations.
- Community Rehabilitation Programs need training regarding Deaf culture, accessibility, accommodations, American Sign Language, and interpreting services.
- Rehabilitation Counselors for the Deaf may not know enough about vocational training programs or Community Rehabilitation Programs because most programs do not serve Deaf and Hard of Hearing consumers.
- The number of Deaf and Hard of Hearing consumers in training programs at the Workforce and Technology Center is insufficient.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are carried over from the 2019 CSNA report:

- Communication devices should be checked every six months to ensure that they are in working order.
- Purchase or replace communication devices, as needed, to ensure effective communication between hearing and Deaf and Hard of Hearing staff or consumers.
- All staff in each office should be trained at least once a year on the communication devices in their office to ensure effective communication with consumers.
- Data documents regarding employment information should be disseminated to appropriate staff on a regular basis.
- Employment specialists and Rehabilitation Counselors for the Deaf serving Deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals should have an employment toolbox which contains information on how to approach businesses.

The following recommendations for the 2022 CSNA are enhancements to the 2019 CSNA recommendations:

- Communication Devices that malfunction should be repaired when the issue occurs vs waiting for the six-month check. All offices should have a device to ensure effective communication between hearing and deaf or hard of hearing staff or consumers.
- The Division of Rehabilitation Services needs to expand the number of Pre-Employment Transitioning Services programs provided for deaf and hard of hearing consumers within the State of Maryland.
- A management team needs to be developed to ensure data is shared with employment specialists on a quarterly basis. The Division of Rehabilitation Services should have representation at a national level by attending the NET Summit and National Conferences Training and Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation meetings every spring in Bethesda, Maryland.

The following are new recommendations based on current information gathered:

- Provide additional training for Community Rehabilitation Program staff who serve deaf and hard of hearing consumers to learn more about deaf accessibility and accommodations, including Deaf culture and American Sign Language.
- Encourage Community Rehabilitation Programs to consider hiring staff who are fluent in American Sign Language.
- Educate Community Rehabilitation Programs about paid incentives from the Division of Rehabilitation Services for serving Deaf and Hard of Hearing consumers.

- Provide assistance and guidance to Community Rehabilitation Programs regarding interpreting services.
- Provide in-person or virtual training to Rehabilitation Counselors for the Deaf to assist them with learning about vocational training programs.
- Examine solutions which will promote the attendance of deaf and hard of hearing consumers at the Workforce and Technology Center. For example, hiring instructors who are fluent in American Sign Language or establish training designed for deaf and hard of hearing consumers.
- Educate and promote deaf and hard of hearing consumers regarding the benefits of participating in vocational training.
- Provide outreach and education to businesses on the benefits of employing deaf and hard of hearing employees.

b.1.B Individuals with disabilities who are minorities and individuals with disabilities who have been unserved or underserved by the VR program;

INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES WHO ARE MINORITIES

The 2022 Comprehensive Statewide Assessment of the Rehabilitation Needs of Individuals with Disabilities in Maryland identified a need for the Division of Rehabilitation Services to consider target outreach efforts, in collaboration with workforce and education partners, to increase services to minority individuals with disabilities with an emphasis on Hispanic and Asian individuals.

The 2019 CSNA report provided recommendations to increase accessible services for minority individuals with disabilities. The need to re-establish the Multicultural Access Committee was identified. As a result, in November 2020, the committee was re-established and renamed D.A.R.E. (Diversity, Awareness, Respect, Equity). Several cultural competency training opportunities were offered to staff by the Division of Rehabilitation Services department of Training and Professional Development including Diversity in the Workplace. Other training for all staff in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion is in development. The implementation of recommendations for both areas was delayed due to COVID-19, the closure of Division of Rehabilitation Services offices due to the pandemic, and mandatory telework.

The Division of Rehabilitation Services continues to be committed to increasing and improving services for minority populations. According to the 2020 US Census Estimates, 15.2% of the population in Maryland are foreign-born. 10.6% of the population identified as Hispanic and 6.7% of the population identified as Asian. These estimates also show that 19% of households speak a language other than English. <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/md,US/POP645220>

Needs/Concerns

Here are some highlights from the survey regarding serving non-English speaking individuals:

- Community Rehabilitation Program staff fluency in languages other than English was low. Seventy percent (70%) reported that no staff were fluent in another language; 25% were fluent in Spanish; 2.5% fluent in Chinese (Mandarin, Cantonese, other) and 2.5% were fluent in Korean.
- Communication methods used by Community Rehabilitation Program staff were reported as follows: 40.7% utilize a professional translator; 59.3% utilize a family member or friend; 33.3% utilize a staff person fluent in a specific language; 29.6% use Google translate; and 11.1% use translated printed material.
- When polled about barriers agencies have experienced in serving Latino/Hispanic and Asian populations, results were: 38.9% legal or work status in the US; 27.8% lack of access to information; and 11.1% competing demands (inconvenience, cost, lack of time and financial resources).
- Eighty percent (80%) of Community Rehabilitation Programs reported that they have not declined referrals based on language needs but of the 20% that have, they reported the following: 87.5% due to limited non-English speaking staff; 75% limited staff training on the provision of language services to limited English speakers; 75% limited knowledge of language assistance services; and 62.5% lack of reimbursement for providing interpretation and translation services.
- Eighty-two and a half percent (82.5%) of agencies polled were not aware of potentially paid incentives from the Division of Rehabilitation Services if they qualify and provide

services to individuals who need services in a different language other than English. Seventeen and a half percent (17.5%) reported they were aware of this incentive from the Division of Rehabilitation Services.

- Not all printed materials/documents are available in various languages.
- Although 79.1% of staff reported no issues with using the foreign language translation service, those that did reported issues with dropped or disconnected calls, being on hold for long periods, and lateness of the interpreter arriving for the meetings due to distance traveled.
- Lack of bilingual or multilingual staff.
- Ninety percent (90%) of staff reported no knowledge of any outreach efforts from Division of Rehabilitation Services' staff to assist individuals whose primary language is not English.
- Only 21.5% of staff reported providing information to non-citizens on how to become legally allowed to work in the United States.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are carried over from the 2019 CSNA report:

- Before developing outreach efforts to increase the number of minorities served by the Division of Rehabilitation Services, the agency needs to ensure that the resources needed by field service staff have been developed and disseminated. This will contribute to a better employment outcome for minorities served by our agency.
- Develop a resource list of available community agencies that provide assistance in completing the Application for Employment Authorization, Form I-765, which is the first step for non-citizens to become legally allowed to work in the U.S.
- Identify a resource list for each region of English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) providers.
- Publish all information developed as a result of these recommendations on InDORS (the agency's internal intranet).
- Develop a work group led by the Division of Rehabilitation Services department of Community Rehabilitation Programs to identify Community Rehabilitation Programs that provide services to non-English speaking consumers in their native language.
- DORS' Department of Training and Professional Development will continue to provide cultural competency training.
- Consider the Division of Rehabilitation Services covering the cost for use of the Language Line for Community Rehabilitation Programs as an incentive to expand service provision to this population.
- Offer placement incentives to Community Rehabilitation Programs who serve individuals with disabilities who speak a language other than English.
- Update the referral portion of the Division of Rehabilitation Services website so that it is accessible in other languages.
- Examine additional options for foreign language interpreting services.
- Examine agency protocols for when there are issues accessing foreign language interpreting services (e.g., dropped/disconnected calls, long holds).

2. Individuals with Disabilities Who Have Been Unserved, Or Who Are Underserved by The Vocational Rehabilitation Program

Individuals unserved, or underserved, by the Vocational Rehabilitation Program is a constantly evolving area of assessment, reflecting demographic changes and agency initiatives. Previous needs assessments have utilized multiple strategies to identify areas of need and to propose recommendations.

To effectively address this content area, it is necessary to first define underserved and unserved populations. For the purposes of this report, “underserved” Division of Rehabilitation Services consumers largely fall within four categories:

- Those individuals on the Division of Rehabilitation Services Waiting List,
- Those on a caseload which does not have an assigned full-time counselor (“vacant”), or the caseload is being covered by a supervisor or other staff person, or for whom the case has been transferred between multiple vocational rehabilitation counselors within a short period of time or their counselor has less than three years’ experience,
- Those individuals whose case has had little or no activity (case notes, case expenditures, referrals for service, etc.) for an extended period (defined as 6 months for the purposes of this assessment), and
- Those individuals who have been served by the Division of Rehabilitation Services but still require long-term supports and/or follow-along services, which should be identified in the Division of Rehabilitation Services Individualized Plan for Employment and appropriate referral/handoff made at case closure. This includes information and referral to Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act partners, long-term support providers such as Behavioral Health Administration and Developmental Disabilities Administration, and in the case of SSA beneficiaries, potential handoff to an Employment Network.

It is also important to identify individuals who are “unserved” by the Division of Rehabilitation Services. To address this, one must first identify individuals with a disability in Maryland who are not served by vocational rehabilitation. There are numerous data elements, outlined below, which present either a snapshot in time or trends over time. These elements can be compared to the comparable periods of service for Division of Rehabilitation Services consumers, thus identifying the total population available “to be served,” those being served by the Division of Rehabilitation Services, and the remainder being “unserved.”

Within each population noted above, there are also:

- Those individuals on Social Security Disability benefits and
- Those who have a disability but are not receiving Social Security Disability benefits

And within the Supplemental Security Income/Social Security Disability Insurance (SSI/SSDI) population, there are further subsets of individuals including:

- Those receiving and managing their own funds and
- Those who have a representative payee and often a guardian (whose wishes and decisions may impact the decisions made by and for the Division of Rehabilitation Services consumer)

While there are similarities in the needs of these populations, there are also unique differences both in what services can be provided and how best to serve an individual of a specific type depending upon their vocational rehabilitation case status and those other parties involved in the decision making. Such differences will be highlighted in needs/concerns and/or recommendations, when and as appropriate.

Needs/Concerns

Synthesizing the information gathered from literature review, data analysis, subject matter experts, and surveys, the following needs and concerns targeting unserved and underserved populations were identified.

- Staffing

- Supervisors and vocational rehabilitation counselors are assigned caseloads left “vacant” when vocational rehabilitation counselors vacate the position, in addition to maintaining their own supervisory duties and/or caseloads (consumers underserved).
- Caseload reallocation will likely remain an ongoing agency initiative, though its goals and methods may change depending upon agency needs and in response to un/underserved populations which fluctuate with staffing and referral changes statewide. Care should be taken to address the following concerns:
 - Due to staff retention and hiring barriers, what is supposed to be short term coverage by supervisors, instead results in a substantial caseload size for supervisors, contributing to un/underserved populations. Until staff hiring and retention are addressed, this will remain an area of need for future needs assessments.
 - Reallocation creates a learning curve for staff familiarity with local services, resources, providers, and job market (local counselors need a system between districts to provide training, resources, and experience in the local area for counselors serving consumers remotely).
 - Counselors must ensure consumer choice, including if an individual requests in-person/local services.
 - Delineation of responsibilities should be codified in policy.
 - Address scale of reallocation to ensure equitable distribution of workload.
- Caseload size
 - Caseload size is above the recommended size (approximately 140 per subject matter experts) to ensure effective provision of services.
- Unserved populations
 - There are far more individuals with disabilities than the Division of Rehabilitation Services has the capacity to serve.
 - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) data indicates that most high school students remain unserved.
 - Disabled individuals with barriers to employment (long-term unemployment, homeless, exhausting Temporary Assistance for Needy Families/TANF) are waiting for services from the Division of Rehabilitation Services.
 - SSA Beneficiaries
 - For 2022, only 4.25% of all SSA Ticket Holders in Maryland are receiving vocational rehabilitation services.
 - 2022: 1,157 individuals (42%) currently on the Division of Rehabilitation Services Delayed List have a Social Security “Ticket to Work,” waiting to be assigned to a Vocational Rehabilitation/EN (consumers underserved). This is unchanged from the percentage of Ticket holders on the Delayed List from previous CSNAs.
 - In 2022, only 58 individuals from the Delayed List were assigned to ENs
 - Currently 33% of consumers allowed SSI and/or SSDI at application received benefits planning services or are currently authorized to receive these services.
- Community Rehabilitation Program Needs Identified
 - There is indication in a reduction in Division of Rehabilitation Services referrals to some Community Rehabilitation Programs which may:
 - Contribute to underserved populations (may be related to vacant caseloads, or staff covering multiple or large caseloads)

- Pose a financial burden to Community Rehabilitation Programs (due to reduced revenue from the Division of Rehabilitation Services)
- Community Rehabilitation Programs indicated a change in referred individuals towards those with a most significant disability coupled with multiple barriers to employment. These changes in referrals may be attributed to: Order of Selection, an increase in referrals of populations with multiple barriers, changes in the labor market (allowing those with less significant impairments to find jobs on their own), as well as other factors such as COVID-19, Division of Rehabilitation Services staffing turn-over, and limited community resources.

Recommendations

The following are recommendations to address the needs and concerns outlined above.

- Staffing
 - Improve vocational rehabilitation staff retention
 - Offer incentives using SSA cost reimbursement funds.
 - Evaluate availability of Community Rehabilitation Programs to provide Workforce and Technology Center-type services in the local community.
 - Continue to evaluate programs at the Workforce and Technology Center to assure their effectiveness in meeting the needs of consumers and employers.
 - Reach out to retirees to see if they would be interested in working part-time as a roving counselor to help cover counselor vacancies.
 - Improve the HR hiring process to expedite the filling of vacancies
 - Collaborate with colleges to offer scholarships and increase our internship opportunities for students interested in vocational rehabilitation programs
 - Institute an internship to hire program
 - Develop a cold-case unit or other mechanism to address inactive cases to address underserved populations with no activity. Either:
 - Re-engage that individual to move them from underserved to served, or
 - Close the case
 - Closed cold cases have a ripple effect allowing cases from the delayed list (another underserved population) to be served
- Caseload reallocation
 - Identify a consistent and equitable statewide consumer/staff workload ratio (data indicates this currently varies substantially by district and region)
 - Codify a formal reallocation process to include cross-training of the counselor, establish counselor supports including toolkits, provider lists, and local resources
 - Consider specific factors in reallocation decisions such as number of cases, type of case (only active cases be reallocated), etc.
 - Establish a reallocation summary/checklist, including contacts/current supports, next steps.
- Pre-Employment Transitioning Services
 - The University of Maryland management of Pre-Employment Transitioning Services cases will require monitoring during the two-year pilot project.
 - Look for best practices that might be utilized in the vocational rehabilitation program.

- Develop a fee-based model that will enable Transitioning counselors to shift some of the case management responsibilities to a third party, such as a university or service provider.
- Eligibility Determination Unit
 - The Eligibility Determination Unit will require monitoring and potential revision, as this approach is still being implemented.
 - Establish data and accountability procedures, whereby the Division of Rehabilitation Services can track and monitor provision of services by the Eligibility Determination Unit
 - Monitor impact of this process on vocational rehabilitation eligibility to include impact to un/underserved populations once transferred to vocational rehabilitation for service delivery
 - Evaluate the effectiveness of the Eligibility Determination Unit at increasing the productivity of vocational rehabilitation field counselors. This can be done via examination of data including successful rehabilitations, reduction in numbers of cases inactive (no case notes or authorizations for 6 months), etc.
 - Analyze the effectiveness of the Eligibility Determination Unit at appropriately processing SSA beneficiaries on the Division of Rehabilitation Services waiting list.
- Waiting List
 - When individuals are placed on the Waiting List, ensure that they are given referral information to the closest and most relevant Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act partner. In the case of Social Security beneficiaries, include referral information Partnership Plus Employment Networks.
- Services
 - Consider further assessment strategies to determine whether the barriers to access vocational rehabilitation services or the lack of knowledge of vocational rehabilitation services contribute to populations being unserved/underserved (identify and examine new groups such as LGBTQ+, refugee populations, and others not elsewhere currently examined within the CSNA).
 - Continue to include benefits planning service for consumers who receive Supplemental Security Income/Social Security Disability Insurance (SSI/SSDI).
 - Track and analyze statistics regarding authorization cancellation. Identify strategies to improve referral process. Develop reports to increase referrals on cases for whom benefits planning should occur but has not.
 - Mitigate benefits planning delays by:
 - Coordination with SSA to address Benefits Planning Query delays and propose solutions, including facilitation of “mySSA” accounts for vocational rehabilitation consumers.
 - Ensure the inclusion of representative payees, legal guardians in benefits planning and other services to improve buy-in and support for vocational rehabilitation planning and employment goals.
 - Revise the Division of Rehabilitation Services Ticket to Work and benefits planning fact sheets to address consumer fears and demotivating factors identified in literature review.
 - Develop Financial Independence and Money Management training as a new service to increase and maintain independence during and after vocational rehabilitation services.

- Develop a workgroup to evaluate unsuccessful vocational rehabilitation case closure after Individualized Plan for Employment creation. Identify strategies to increase the likelihood of successful employment outcomes.
- Partners
 - Address referral changes noted in the Community Rehabilitation Program survey.
 - Reduction in referral numbers
 - Encourage collaboration between the Division of Rehabilitation Services and providers regarding services provided by Community Rehabilitation Programs and individuals referred by the Division of Rehabilitation Services.
 - Educate staff covering reallocated caseloads.
 - Create a referral screening tool, such as a questionnaire, to determine which partner may best serve amongst Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act partners.
 - Currently, Employment Networks do not wish to accept Ticket handoff candidates that are not already at or near SGA earnings. However, national and Division of Rehabilitation Services data suggest that more than 75% of beneficiaries chose part time. Many of these eventually transition above SGA, as evidenced by cost reimbursement.
 - Efforts should be made to identify those cases likely to lead to SGA, for potential Ticket handoff. Collaboration with SSA's Ticket Program Manager is needed.

b. 1. C. Individuals with disabilities served through other components of the workforce

INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES SERVED THROUGH OTHER COMPONENTS OF THE STATEWIDE WORKFORCE INVESTMENT SYSTEM

In Maryland, the following state agencies work together to develop Maryland's Combined State Workforce Plan: Maryland Department of Labor, the Department of Human Services, and Maryland State Department of Education, the Department of Housing and Community Development's Community Services Block Grant program, Maryland Labor Division of Unemployment Insurance, and the Senior Community Services Employment Program.

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act State Plan Program	Core Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Program as Determined by Law	Additional Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Program as Determined by Governor	Maryland State Agency Responsible for Oversight
Adult Program			Maryland Labor
Dislocated Worker Program			Maryland Labor
Youth Program			Maryland Labor
Wagner-Peyser Act Program			Maryland Labor
Adult Education and Family Literacy Act			Maryland Labor

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act State Plan Program	Core Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Program as Determined by Law	Additional Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Program as Determined by Governor	Maryland State Agency Responsible for Oversight
Vocational Rehabilitation Program			Maryland State Department of Education
Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Program			Department of Human Services
Trade Adjustment Assistance for Workers Program			Maryland Labor
Jobs for Veterans State Grants (JVSG) Program			Maryland Labor
Unemployment Insurance (UI)			Maryland Labor
Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP)			Maryland Labor and Senior Service America, Inc.
Reentry Employment Opportunities (REO)			Local partners
Community Services Block Grant (CSBG)			Department of Housing and Community Development

Partners for Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act State Plan as listed on the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act State plan 2020-2024 Referrals from Workforce Partners including American Job Centers to the Division of Rehabilitation Services.

During the 2022 CSNA, the following services and components of the workforce development system were evaluated:

Workforce Partner Referral Process

Needs/Concerns

- As a result of the pandemic which began in March 2020, many of our workforce partners were operating remotely and American Job Centers were not open to the public therefore causing a dramatic decrease in the number of referrals received.
- Since implementing our new online referral process at the end of 2020, Division of Rehabilitation Services' staff were no longer manually entering referral data into AWARE. Referrals are now entered directly into the system by referral sources, and they select the appropriate "Vocational Rehabilitation Referral Source" themselves.
- The list of options under "Referral Source" on our Division of Rehabilitation Services Online Referral, can be confusing for some of our workforce partners that may fall under multiple categories.

- Although we have made a lot of progress in cross-training workforce staff, including Division of Rehabilitation Services' staff, regarding services available through partners since 2019, not all areas have provided such training and the Division of Rehabilitation Services also has new staff who have not yet had such training.
- Without having an established statewide workforce partner referral tracking system, it is difficult to collect and share data related to which agencies staff are referring to and for which services.

Recommendations

- The Division of Rehabilitation Services online referral system has several selections for workforce partners to choose from when entering a referral. This section should be updated and streamlined to allow for better data collection. An example of one choice that may not be necessary would be "American Job Center/One-Stop" since staff referring from the American Job Centers identify with agencies already listed as other options.
- Once the Eligibility Determination Unit begins to process all referrals statewide, referral processes that have been established with local workforce partners which include warm handoffs will need to be revisited.
- Continuing with periodic cross-training and education of all partners at the local level will contribute to an increase in referrals as evidenced by the data.
- Referrals to workforce partners should be tracked in AWARE. Currently referrals to workforce partners that are "warm handoffs" are the only referrals accounted for in our case management system but not all referrals to workforce partners require that level of collaboration. This practice should be revisited as it does not capture all consumers being referred to partners.
- Cross-training of Division of Rehabilitation Services and workforce partners should be conducted at least twice per year in each local area to ensure that new staff are made aware of the services offered and eligibility requirements for each partner.

Apprenticeships and Maryland Community Colleges

In 2021, the Maryland Community College Apprenticeship Initiative - Maryland Apprenticeship and Training Program provided funding for expansion of registered apprenticeship opportunities into key economic hubs. Maryland Department of Labor has allocated \$750,000 of the 2020-2023 State Apprenticeship Expansion Grant for the 2021 Maryland Community College Apprenticeship Initiative. Through a Competitive Grant Process, Maryland Labor will distribute three grants of \$250,000 each to increase the integration of community colleges and registered apprenticeships into the workforce system. All apprentices served by this grant must be newly registered apprentices and must meet the criteria for registered apprentices.

While strides have been made partnering with community colleges, there are additional objectives to be met, including advancing apprenticeship as a workforce strategy. Working with community colleges to expand the scope of services provided through registered apprenticeship programs could help state and local workforce systems transform how they meet the needs of businesses and workers fully achieving the vision of Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.

Maryland Apprenticeship Think Tank

The Maryland Apprenticeship Think Tank is a network of professional organizations committed to expanding apprenticeship opportunities to individuals with disabilities. Through a diverse array of initiatives - research, education, public engagement, and on-the-ground innovation and practice - the Think Tank shares information on emerging trends and

opportunities, best practices in apprenticeship and highlight how apprenticeship can break into new industry sectors and serve a more diverse population of vocational rehabilitation individuals. The Maryland Apprenticeship Think Tank members consist of a variety of leaders from the Division of Rehabilitation Services, including Workforce and Technology Center, along with the Department of Labor, Maryland Department of Disabilities, the Community College of Baltimore County, and community program providers such as, the ARC who are collaborating to secure lasting change in Youth, Pre-Apprenticeship and Registered Apprenticeship at the state and local level.

The initial goals included efforts to re-engage existing members and invite new members to the table to help in the development of the new program and services, as well as to deepen the partnership and collaboration with the Division of Rehabilitation Services, Maryland State Department of Education/Youth Apprenticeship and Maryland community college programs, as well as other pre-apprenticeship and registered apprenticeship programs and services statewide.

Needs/Concerns

- Consumers transitioning from high school need direct assistance with exploration, remediation, and direct support in preparing for and applying to apprenticeship programs and services.
- Consumers' needs for mental health support, accommodations, securing a driver's license/transportation or passing entrance exams can be significant challenges in succeeding in the apprenticeship career path.
- Need implementation of organizational/structural changes within the Division of Rehabilitation Services to assist students transitioning from high school to Division of Rehabilitation Services programming seamlessly for those interested in apprenticeship services.
- Limited availability of statewide pre-apprenticeship programs in Construction/Electrical/Plumbing and Information Technology.
- Need for expansion of registered apprenticeship programs in collaboration with businesses and community colleges in some parts of the state.
- Lack of methods and strategies for the tracking and sharing of apprenticeship data between Division of Rehabilitation Services, community colleges, and Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act partners.
- Need representation from Maryland State Department of Education, and Career Technical Education programs specifically, for participation on the Maryland Apprenticeship Think Tank.
- Systems are limited for the collaboration and communication between Maryland State Department of Education and Division of Rehabilitation Services related to youth apprenticeship.
- Lack of consumer/family and staff knowledge regarding apprenticeship programs and services available statewide.

Recommendations

- Implement the plans for an Apprenticeship Exploration Program at Workforce and Technology Center provided through the Academic Services department, in collaboration with the Workforce and Technology Center Staff Specialist for Apprenticeship Services and other Center and agency staff, trade unions, businesses, community colleges, and community partners to create plans and pathways to effectively transition consumers into local, existing pre-apprenticeship and registered apprenticeship programs and services statewide.
- Implement the expansion of Apprenticeship Navigation Services at the Workforce and Technology Center that will be responsible for the coordination, implementation, and

documentation of apprenticeship services such as, collaboration with community colleges, Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act partners, statewide and local trainings, facilitation of consumer services related to apprenticeship consults and linkage to statewide pre-apprenticeship and registered apprenticeship training and programs.

- Finalize plans with CVS Health and the Community College of Baltimore County to conduct the first Pharmacy Technician Training program at Workforce and Technology Center and coordinate with the Maryland Department of Labor to enroll the graduates into the Registered Apprenticeship Program for Pharmacy Technician sponsored by CVS Health.
- The Division of Rehabilitation Services should continue its efforts to develop a system for data sharing agreements between Department of Labor, Community Colleges, and Division of Rehabilitation Services for apprenticeship, employment and credentialing information.
- Develop a system to enhance the collaboration and communication between Maryland State Department of Education's Career and Technology Education Instruction branch and Division of Rehabilitation Services' staff serving transitioning youth.
- Work with the Division of Rehabilitation Services Office of Public Affairs to explore and develop marketing strategies to enhance staff and consumer education and awareness about apprenticeships including but not limited to, YouTube videos for staff and consumers, Workforce and Technology Center Instagram, podcast, webinars, training sessions at various conferences and schools, information packets, etc.

Apprenticeships and the Workforce and Technology Center

Needs/Concerns

- Historically, apprenticeship opportunities for individuals with disabilities have been limited.
- There is limited collaboration, coordination, and cooperation among youth and adult service systems, state education agencies, state vocational rehabilitation and workforce development agencies, schools, and youth with disabilities and their families to assist students with disabilities in achieving their postsecondary education and career goals.
- There is a service gap between youth and adult programs to encourage and expand opportunities for students and youth with disabilities up to age 24 (e.g., dual enrollment, internships, mentorships, apprenticeships, and postsecondary training options).
- During transition planning, there is limited encouragement provided to students with disabilities to consider apprenticeship programs.
- There are limited efforts to promote apprenticeship training through community college to help reduce costs for Registered Apprenticeship sponsors and youth and adults with disabilities.
- There is a tremendous need to increase outreach and recruitment efforts and tracking of apprenticeship participation and success.
- AWARE data indicates that staff may not be aware of how-to code involvement in apprenticeships in our case management system.
- Division of Rehabilitation Services' staff indicated through survey results and the lack of data available in AWARE that overall, there is a significant knowledge gap related to registered apprenticeship programs.

Recommendations

- Complete the hiring process for the Workforce and Technology Center Staff Specialist for Apprenticeship Services and a Workforce and Technology Center Academic Teacher to develop and coordinate an Apprenticeship Exploration Program at Workforce and Technology Center and to work collaboratively to provide apprenticeship consultation and support services at the Workforce and Technology Center on behalf of consumers and staff statewide.
- Expand the collaboration with the Maryland Apprenticeship Think Tank to increase the number of individuals with disabilities participating in Youth, pre-apprenticeship and registered apprenticeship programs, and outreach to Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act partners.
- Utilize the members of the Maryland Apprenticeship Think Tank to identify community colleges and other approved labor vendors to provide training for a variety of apprenticeship programs for individuals with disabilities.
- Designate Division of Rehabilitation Services' Workforce and Technology Center staff to work in collaboration with the Maryland Department of Labor to promote and educate vocational rehabilitation staff and partners such as consumers and their families, schools, Community Rehabilitation Programs, Pre-Employment Transitioning Services' providers, career assessment providers and other Division of Rehabilitation Services' vendors about apprenticeship programs and services.
- Assign Division of Rehabilitation Services' Workforce and Technology Center staff to participate in activities such as Apprenticeship Maryland-Career and Technology Academy conferences and meetings, collaborate with Maryland Apprenticeship and Training Program partners, and represent Division of Rehabilitation Services' Workforce and Technology Center on the Youth Apprenticeship Advisory Committee, to better facilitate the transition of high school youth with disabilities into adult Department of Labor Apprenticeship services in collaboration with the Division of Rehabilitation Services.
- Utilize the agency's Business Services Representatives to increase the number of businesses offering apprenticeships in growth industries in Maryland in collaboration with Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act partners. Coordinate efforts with Workforce and Technology Center staff to align with existing and new training programs offered.

b. 1. D. Youth with disabilities, including students with disabilities and their need for pre-employment transition services. Include an assessment of the needs of individuals with disabilities for transition career services and pre-employment transition services, and the extent to which such services are coordinated with transition services provided under IDEA.

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 has mandated that the Division of Rehabilitation Services set aside 15% of the federal allotment to provide Pre-Employment Services to students with disabilities between the ages of 14 and 21 and are available to all students with disabilities regardless of the severity of their disability. To accomplish this, the Division of Rehabilitation Services partners and works with local school systems to identify students and coordinate services.

Pre-Employment Transitioning Services are very specific in nature and include the following:

- Job exploration counseling,
- Work-based learning experiences,
- Counseling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive transition or post-secondary educational programs,
- Workplace readiness training to develop social and independent living skills, and
- Instruction in self-advocacy, including peer mentoring.

The need for Pre-Employment Transitioning Services and other transition services in Maryland is most evident when reviewing the post-school outcomes of students receiving special education services, as reported on the Maryland Report Card. In 2021:

- 10.19% of students in grades 9-12 receiving special education services and 4.76% of students in grades 9-12 receiving services under a 504-plan dropped out of school, compared to 7.36% of students in regular education.
- 68.7% of students with disabilities graduated compared to 87.20% of all students.
- 37.1% of students with disabilities who received special education services in high school attended college 16 months post high school, compared to 63.1% of students served in regular education.

The Division of Rehabilitation Services saw a decrease from Program Year* 2018 in the number of students with disabilities who applied for Pre-Employment Transitioning Services from grades 9-12: 1,662 new Pre-Employment Transition Services applications in Program Year 2019; 1,333 in Program Year 2020. However, in Program Year 2021, applications from students began to rebound to 1,539. The Division of Rehabilitation Services has already seen a 33% increase in applications in the first two months of Program Year 2022 compared to Program Year 2021.

The Division of Rehabilitation Services wants to assess the current need for viable Pre-Employment Transition Services statewide and their availability coordinated by local school systems. The Division of Rehabilitation Services would like to identify where these services are needed most to engage all students with disabilities, under an Individual Education Plan, 504, or other qualifying services.

The current, statewide distribution of Pre-Employment Transition Services is as follows:

- Region 1 has 35 Pre-Employment Transitioning Services partners, 45 secondary schools, 9 colleges and 4 workforce partners.
- Region 2 has 41 Pre-Employment Transitioning Services partners, 56 secondary schools, 8 colleges and 1 workforce partners.
- Region 3 has 35 Pre-Employment Transitioning Services partners, 53 secondary schools, 15 colleges and 2 workforce partners.
- Region 5 has 54 Pre-Employment Transitioning Services partners, 72 secondary schools, 10 colleges and 2 workforce partners.
- Region 6 has 34 Pre-Employment Transitioning Services partners, 72 secondary schools, 8 colleges and 2 workforce partners.

In addition, the current caseload distribution of cases in the Division of Rehabilitation Services for students being served under the age of 22 is as follows:

- Region 1 services 1,393 students with disabilities under 22 years of age,
- Region 2 serves 2,008 students with disabilities under 22 years of age,
- Region 3 serves 1,033 students with disabilities under 22 years of age,
- Region 5 serves 2,042 students with disabilities under 22 years of age, and
- Region 6 serves 2,300 students with disabilities under 22 years of age.

The Division of Rehabilitation Services seeks to use this CSNA to acquire a better understanding of the numbers of potentially eligible students with disabilities who will be able to participate in these services, as well as which local school systems are providing these services. The Division of Rehabilitation Services seeks to understand and increase the

collaboration with local school systems, as well as identify how to administer Pre-Employment Transition Programs that are most appropriate to serve these students.

Needs/Concerns

- It is anticipated that based on data collected the number of students accessing Division of Rehabilitation Services for Pre-Employment Transitioning Services and other vocational services will increase each year.
- It is anticipated that there are 16,639 students being served under a 504 plan that the Division of Rehabilitation Services will not be able to access due to limited collaboration between the Division of Rehabilitation Services and school staff monitoring 504 plans.
- It is anticipated that the number of students with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities accessing Division of Rehabilitation Services will increase each year due to Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act requirements related to Section 511.
- It is also anticipated that the Division of Rehabilitation Services transitioning caseloads will continue to grow each year to a size difficult to manage for needed collaboration and outreach.
- Survey results indicated there needs to be a larger Division of Rehabilitation Services presence at school events, including transition fairs to promote Pre-Employment Transition and Vocational Rehabilitation. Less than 70% who responded indicated that this was occurring.
- With the number of referrals received from the school yearly, a higher focus must be on reaching students in a variety of settings (e.g., schools, community).
- When asked about receiving needed documentation/information in a timely manner, 75% of Division of Rehabilitation Services' staff indicated that this happens, while only 60% of Transition Support Teachers responded with Yes.
- Although both surveys indicated a positive response regarding collaboration, it appears there is a disconnect between collaboration and getting the information to the students to provide services.
- Vocational Rehabilitation staff are unable to attend Individual Education Plan meetings without an invitation and permission received from a parent.
- Although virtual attendance at Individual Education Plan meetings is available, Vocational Rehabilitation/Pre-Employment Transitioning Services' staff are required to meet in-person with identified students.
- There appears to be a lack of consistency throughout the state regarding attendance at Individual Education Plan meetings.

Recommendations

- State Agency Transition Collaborative of Maryland is working on consistent 504 implementation across the state. The Division of Rehabilitation Services will participate in this larger effort to identify local 504 coordinators in order to provide information about Pre-Employment Transitioning Services available.
- Explore possibilities of outsourcing the coordination and or delivery of Pre-Employment Transition Services.
- Develop a tiered plan with varying levels for the provision of Pre-Employment Transition Services programming by designing/structuring services to meet student needs.
- Each Division of Rehabilitation Services' region needs to develop a plan for an increased level of consistent contact with the Transitioning Youth School Staff.
- The Division of Rehabilitation Services needs to provide updated and accurate transition information/materials, sharing consistently with schools across the state.
- The Division of Rehabilitation Services needs to emphasize the importance of responding to school partner requests for student information.

- Formalize consistent partnerships with Local School Systems through agreements to ensure access to required Pre-Employment Transitioning Services and Transition services throughout the state.
- Consider a streamlined process for receiving invites to Individual Education Plan meetings that include parent consent as well as needed documentation for the robust discussion of Pre-Employment Transition Services and Vocational Rehabilitation Transition Services.
- Increase the provision of information about transition services. Consideration should be given to developing a video explaining services to students and parents prior to the Individual Education Plan meeting.
- The Division of Rehabilitation Services should consider partnering with transition coordinators to facilitate workshops for transitioning youth and students with disabilities to educate them regarding college or training options. Assistance with enrollment could also be provided.

2. Identify the need to establish, develop, or improve community rehabilitation programs within the State.

As noted in the prior Needs Assessment, the success of Division of Rehabilitation Services' consumers is due in many instances to the partnerships the Division of Rehabilitation Services has established with Community Rehabilitation Programs and the Workforce and Technology Center. To maintain continued positive partnerships with Community Rehabilitation Programs and the Workforce and Technology Center and to ensure that services provided meet the needs of Division of Rehabilitation Services' consumers,

Needs/Concerns

- A need to train Community Rehabilitation Programs staff regarding various disability populations.
- A need for more Community Rehabilitation Programs to provide services for consumers who are blind or visually impaired, deaf and hard of hearing, and those whose primary language is other than English.
- A need for Community Rehabilitation Programs to provide additional training services including internships (paid and unpaid).
- A need for consistent issuance of placement incentives.
- A need for additions services at the Workforce and Technology Center.
- A need for additional services at the Workforce and Technology Center available to those who are blind or visually impaired.
- A need for more training programs to meet market needs and consumer interests at the Workforce and Technology Center.
- A need for increased promotion of Workforce and Technology Center training programs to improve staff awareness of what is available and timelines for services and training.
- A need for transportation solutions to assist consumers in attending desired training and services at Workforce and Technology Center.

Recommendations

- Train Division of Rehabilitation Services' staff regarding placement incentives including eligibility and issuance to ensure consistent use across all Community Rehabilitation Programs.
- Educate and ensure Community Rehabilitation Programs are aware of all potential enhanced rates offered for services for consumers who are blind or visually impaired, deaf and hard of hearing, and those whose primary language is other than English.

- Conduct a survey which will help to determine the training needs and desires of Community Rehabilitation Programs.
- Consider additional incentives for 2nd and 4th quarter employment.
- Educate Division of Rehabilitation Services and Community Rehabilitation Program staff regarding training services available including internships, paid and unpaid.
- The Workforce and Technology Center will expand its available addictions services through the hiring of staff and the development of the Behavioral Health Services department.
- The Workforce and Technology Center will continue to offer the new pilot training program for individuals who are blind or visually impaired which focuses on mastering the application of technology for competitive integrated employment.
- The Workforce and Technology Center will explore the development of a Certified Nursing Assistant program in conjunction with existing business partners.
- The Workforce and Technology Center will use the coffee hour sessions to inform staff of upcoming trainings and service openings.
- The Workforce and Technology Center will explore transportation assistance to include travel training when needed and other accommodations to make travel more affordable.

c.1. Describe how the SRC and the VR agency jointly developed and agreed to the goals and priorities and any revisions; and

The goals and priorities provided below were jointly developed and agreed to by DORS and the Maryland State Rehabilitation Council. These two entities have also agreed to the revisions of the same.

c. 2. Goals, Priorities, and Strategies - 2

List and number each goal/priority, noting the basis, and under each goal/priority, list and number the strategies to achieve the goal/priority

- A. Support innovation and expansion activities;**
- B. Overcome barriers to accessing VR and supported employment services;**
- C. Improve and expand VR services for students with disabilities, including the coordination of services designed to facilitate the transition of such students from school to postsecondary life (including the receipt of VR services, post-secondary education, employment, and pre-employment transition services); and**
- D. Improve the performance of the VR and Supported Employment programs in assisting individuals with disabilities to achieve quality employment outcomes.**

Goal 1: Assure high-quality integrated employment outcomes for individuals with significant and most significant disabilities in Maryland through the VR program.

Objective 1.1

Provide quality Customer Service.

Strategies: DORS will

1. Ensure staff provide consistent customer service to individuals with disabilities and community partners because exceptional customer service is a priority for the Division.
2. Enhance communication between DORS staff and consumers.
3. Evaluate customer satisfaction during service delivery in partnership with the State Rehabilitation Council.

4. Conduct a Quality Assurance Review Program for VR to ensure consumer participation in development and planning of services, as well as consistency with required measures under WIOA.
5. Institute a plain language review of DORS materials to assure the information being communicated to individuals provides a clear understanding of programs, requirements, and available options.
6. Engage with consumers on the waiting list to provide information on available resources and services provided by workforce partners to assist consumers prior to potential VR services.

Performance Measures by June 30, 2026:

1. Staff will participate in customer service training activities as provided by DORS/MSDE or private providers.
2. DORS will continue utilizing SARA™ (Semi-Autonomous Research Assistant) to supplement the AWARE™ case management system, enhancing staff ability to communicate with consumers using automated text messages and emails. This includes expanding SARA™ usage to WTC staff. DORS Administration will develop policy requiring the use of SARA™, monitor usage and identify trends semiannually using available SARA™ reports and data analysis.
3. DORS will utilize SARA™ to conduct the Customer Satisfaction Survey on a continual basis to provide consumers the opportunity to provide feedback on their satisfaction with services at key points during the rehabilitation process. Achieve 85% customer satisfaction for both the Office of Field Services (OFS) and the Office for Blindness & Vision Service (OBVS).
4. DORS will conduct annual Quality Assurance Case Reviews for each office throughout the program year to strengthen statewide quality assurance practices and track improvements over time. These reviews will focus on enhancing consumer engagement and informed decision-making and may include targeted case reviews aligned with agency priorities such as Pre-ETS and post-secondary education.
5. DORS will continue the review of existing and new agency materials to minimize technical language and increase public understanding of available services and requirements. Additionally, DORS will actively seek feedback from partners to further improve clarity and accessibility.
6. DORS will leverage communication tools such as the Granicus Government Civic Engagement Platform (formerly GovDelivery) and SARA™ to maintain consistent engagement with individuals on the DORS waiting list. These tools enable the distribution of employment and training resources and allow consumers to submit additional medical documentation for reconsideration of their disability priority status.

Objective 1.2

Provide rehabilitation services for youth and students with disabilities in collaboration with local school systems, the Maryland Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA), Maryland Behavioral Health Administration (BHA), and other workforce partners that lead to successful outcomes in post-secondary education and/or employment.

Strategies: DORS will

1. Ensure that VR counselors and staff work with youth and students with disabilities, families, school personnel, business partners, and community partners to promote educational achievement and prepare for quality employment and self-sufficiency.

2. Support and emphasize the application for VR services for students and youth, to increase post-secondary education opportunities, and competitive integrated employment.
3. Increase and formalize collaboration with education agencies and workforce partners through agreements to ensure youth and students have access to transition services throughout the State.
4. Provide training and support to DORS counselors and community partners through the Transition Specialists Group, training programs, and other meetings. Training will provide tools and resources related to post-secondary education and best practices in working with families and youth with disabilities.

Performance Measures by June 30, 2026:

1. The number of youths with disabilities served will match or exceed those served in the previous program year. Increase documented services for youth with disabilities through authorizations, actual service records, educational goals, and measurable skills gains to be measured quarterly via RSA-911 reporting. There will be an increase in youth with disabilities who achieve competitive integrated employment and/or enroll in post-secondary education programs, compared with the previous program year. DORS staff will participate, as available, in transition events including 504 and IEP planning meetings. The number of youths and students with disabilities served will match or exceed those served in the previous year.
1. Increase in documented services for youth and students with disabilities through authorizations, actual service records, educational goals, and measurable skills gains to be measured quarterly via RSA-911 reporting.
2. Increase in youth with disabilities who achieve competitive integrated employment and/or enroll in post-secondary education programs, compared with the previous year.
3. DORS staff will participate in transition events, as available, including 504 and IEP planning meetings.
4. All 24 local education agencies, the Maryland School for the Blind, the Maryland School for the Deaf, and other workforce partners, will have updated and current MOUs with DORS. Regular collaboration between DORS and the MSDE: Div. of Early Intervention and Special Education Services will continue.
5. The DORS Transition Specialists Group will convene three times per year and will include relevant community partners as appropriate to support collaboration and information sharing.

Objective 1.3

DORS will provide high quality services and outcomes for individuals with disabilities served by the Office of Field Services (OFS).

Strategies: DORS will

1. Provide high quality comprehensive services to eligible individuals with significant and most significant disabilities in accordance with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and Federal Regulations, the Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR), and DORS policy.
2. Collaborate with DORS Workforce & Technology Center (WTC) to assure consumers receive services offered by WTC, both on the WTC campus and in the community, in a seamless and timely manner, including evaluation of processes to improve communication in a virtual/remote environment.

3. Strengthen relationships with WIOA partners to improve competitive integrated employment outcomes for DORS consumers and improve reporting on the Common Performance Measures for DORS consumers.
4. Increase the number of job seekers who are enrolled in educational or vocational training programs that lead to recognized post-secondary credential or employment. Continue to train staff to accurately enter Educational Goals and verify Measurable Skills Gains.
5. Monitor reporting of MOU-funded services provided through the documentation of Actual Service Records (ASR) in the AWARE™ case management system.
6. Utilize data analytics to identify areas of concern and ensure accurate reporting of Division performance and enrollment

Performance Measures by June 30, 2026:

1. Meet federal performance standards for timely determination of eligibility and development of the IPE.
2. Enhance consumer employment outcomes as measured by an increase in average hourly earnings from the previous year, to be measured semiannually.
3. Provide staff training, in conjunction with WIOA partners, related to federal and State Common Measures for WIOA Core Programs. Have BSRs be part of the local WIOA Business Services Committees in each of the workforce areas to help increase awareness of local recruitment and increase employer outreach.
4. OFS will achieve 1,055 competitive integrated employment outcomes.
5. Achieve 54% successful completion of verified Measurable Skills Gains.
6. Improve Employment Retention measures over previous PY by achieving 52% of participants employed in the 2nd Quarter after program exit, and 49% of participants employed in the 4th Quarter after program exit.
7. Improve Credential Attainment measure over previous PY by achieving 30% of those participants enrolled in an educational or vocational training program who attain a recognized post-secondary credential or secondary school diploma or its equivalent, during program participation or within one year following exit.

Objective 1.4

DORS will provide high-quality services and outcomes for individuals who are blind, vision impaired and Deaf-Blind (B/VI, D-B).

Strategies: DORS will

1. Provide high-quality comprehensive services to eligible individuals who are blind, vision impaired, and deaf-blind in accordance with WIOA and federal regulations, the Code of Maryland Regulations, the Randolph Shepard Act, and DORS policy.
2. Provide independent living services to older individuals who are blind through direct services of DORS rehabilitation teachers.
3. Collaborate with WTC to enhance services and educate staff to assure that blind, vision impaired, and deaf-blind consumers have effective programming at WTC.
4. Strengthen relationships with WIOA partners to improve competitive integrated employment outcomes for DORS consumers and reporting on common performance measures for DORS consumers.
5. Expand services and outreach to individuals who are deaf-blind and provide technical assistance to staff serving this population as recommended by the Deaf-Blind Workgroup.

6. Recruit and train Maryland Business Enterprise Program for the Blind vendors and grow the program strategically.
7. Develop a standardized curriculum of activities for OBVS staff to ensure highly qualified staff provide excellent service and increase customer satisfaction.
8. Continue training and support accurate recording of Education Goals and outcomes.
9. Employ a more systematic way to extract and Analyze Data from AWARE to analyze trends and patterns to ensure the quality service delivery and outcomes for individuals who are blind, vision impaired, and deaf-blind.

Performance Measures by June 30, 2026:

1. Meet federal performance standards for timely determination of eligibility and development of the IPE.
2. OBVS will achieve 107 competitive integrated employment outcomes.
3. The Business Enterprise Program will recruit, train, and license five new managers and establish new vending sites where available.
4. OBVS will close 147 Independent Living Older Blind (ILOB) cases successful.
5. The Deaf-Blind Workgroup will meet three times per year to identify and expand services for the deaf-blind.
6. Enhance consumer employment outcomes as measured by an increase in average hourly earnings over the previous year.
7. The number of documented Educational Goals will match or exceed totals from the previous year.

Objective 1.5

Provide effective services at the Workforce & Technology Center using state-of-the-art interdisciplinary strategies.

Strategies: DORS will

1. Provide high quality in-person, virtual, and community-based services to individuals with significant or most significant disabilities to facilitate successful competitive integrated employment outcomes.
2. Develop and enhance relationships with employers utilizing agency staff who specialize in underserved populations to address service needs; as well as issues and trends related to the employment of underserved disability populations.
3. Enhance employer engagement through linkages with employers, the business community, DORS Business Services staff, Maryland state agencies and workgroups, MSDE Career Technical Education, Department of Labor, apprenticeship workgroups, WTC Business Advisory Boards, and community partners.
4. Provide comprehensive services and awareness to employers to enhance knowledge and understanding of the benefit of assistive technology at the worksite.
5. Continue to monitor WTC staff documenting measurable skills gains/ credentials for individuals served

Performance Measures by June 30, 2026:

1. Increase the number of consumers achieving competitive integrated employment outcomes compared to the previous year.
2. Increase the number of consumers who are blind, vision impaired, and deaf-blind who will receive services compared to the previous year.

3. Increase the number of consumers who are Deaf or hard of hearing who will receive services compared to the previous year.
4. Increase the number of consumers who have Autism who will receive services compared to the previous year.
5. Increase the number of customized/partnership training services compared to the previous year.
6. Increase the number of apprenticeship services for consultation or support compared to the previous year.
7. Increase the number of employer services provided through collaboration with employers, the business community, DORS Business Services staff, Maryland state agencies and workgroups, MSDE Career and Technical Education, Department of Labor, apprenticeship workgroups, WTC Business Advisory Boards, and community partners.
8. Increase the number of worksite consumers served as compared to the previous year.
9. Increase the number of documented Measurable Skills Gains/credentials for individuals served at WTC as compared to the previous year.

Goal 2: Assure high quality Pre-ETS service for qualified students with disabilities.

Objective 2.1

DORS will utilize resources to coordinate and ensure the provision of pre-employment transition services as required.

Strategies: DORS will

1. Ensure that VR counselors and staff work with students with disabilities, families, school personnel, business partners, and community partners to help these students prepare for employment and self-sufficiency.
2. Support and emphasize the application for VR services for potentially eligible students.
3. Formalize consistent partnerships with local school systems through agreements to ensure access to the required Pre-ETS and youth transition services throughout the State.
4. Utilize staff resources to implement Pre-ETS and youth transition services that promote educational achievement, independence, and long-term career success.
5. Restructuring the implementation of Pre-ETS to ensure that students with disabilities have access to the services they may need, while maintaining internal controls.
6. Support VR counselor capacity to meaningfully serve students with disabilities referred to DORS.
7. Monitor Pre-ETS programming in underserved areas to support and expand program development where services are limited.
8. Provide staff training on how to use reserve funding under VR to adequately and appropriately spend Pre-ETS funding.

Performance Measures by June 30, 2026:

1. Increase or maintain the number of students receiving Pre-ETS compared with the previous year.
2. The number of potentially eligible students receiving Pre-ETS who apply for VR services will match or exceed those who have applied for services in the previous year. Develop and implement a report showing age 16+ to prompt staff to discuss and create VR case as appropriate.

3. Enhance relationships with 24 local school systems, along with MSB and MSD, by maintaining existing MOUs. Complete outreach activities to complete agreements in need of updates as necessary.
4. Improve engagement with Local LEA, MSB and MSD. Increase in-person or virtual presentations at LEAs to provide information on DORS services and IEP attendance among TY staff, either in-person or virtually.
5. DORS will increase the total amount of staff provided Pre-ETS as documented on staff time sheet with an assigned Program Cost Account (PCA) Code ("Worktag") as compared to the previous year.
6. Re-imagine innovative ways to deliver and coordinate and delivery Pre-ETS provided by WTC or Business Relations, as measured by the number of service authorizations and documented Pre-ETS case note activities.
7. Maintain coordination and delivery of Pre-ETS provided by WTC or Business Relations, as measured by the number of service authorizations and documented Pre-ETS case note activities.
8. Continue to evaluate provider proposals for standardized Pre-ETS services and learning objectives to meet student needs during PY 2025. Evaluate provider proposals as they are received.
9. Use data analytics monthly to monitor caseload size of staff that serve both potentially eligible students and VR consumers. Work with regional and district leadership to equitably assign caseloads as necessary.
10. DORS will expand the availability of Pre-ETS services in underserved areas, aligning with the number of students with disabilities identified through census data.

Goal 3: This goal focuses on a non-VR program that is outside of WIOA and not applicable to the WIOA State Plan (Disability Determination Services).

Goal 4: Partner and collaborate with other WIOA programs, private organizations, employers, and community groups to advance the employment and independence of individuals with disabilities.

Objective 4.1

Evaluate and monitor service delivery for consistency with WIOA priorities.

Strategies: DORS will

1. DORS/WTC staff and WIOA partners will participate in joint training to learn about the benefits of services available at the State and local level.
2. Contribute to the tracking of the Benchmarks of Success for Maryland's Workforce System, including consumer success stories, to demonstrate the impact of services upon the lives of individuals with disabilities served.
3. Participate in local planning meetings regarding service provision and collaboration in American Job Centers to strengthen referral procedures and tracking of consumer involvement with WIOA partners.
4. Advance the implementation of recommendations from the Comprehensive Statewide Assessment of the Rehabilitation Needs of Individuals with Disabilities in Maryland, ensuring measurable progress toward addressing identified needs.
5. DORS will hold regular Community Rehabilitation Program (CRP) Advisory Council meetings three times per year.
6. Develop a task force with representation from each Region to identify the role/tasks of the CRP liaison, how this position is assigned to a CRP, procedures for collaboration

with the Office of Community Rehabilitation Programs and expectations from the CRPs.

7. DORS will provide training on strategies to identify appropriate employment goals with functional skills and abilities.

Performance Measures by June 30, 2026:

1. DORS will participate in training activities with WIOA partners, and develop an agency clearinghouse of training materials, including a joint calendar of events.
2. DORS data specific to the Benchmarks for Success will be shared with WIOA partners and DORS staff annually.
3. Increase number of consumers involved in services provided by WIOA partners using AWARE™ documentation, including individuals on the waiting list.
4. Continue to implement and monitor findings of the Comprehensive Statewide Assessment of the Rehabilitation Needs of Individuals with Disabilities in Maryland;
5. CRP Advisory Council will meet three times per year.
6. Develop a task force with representation from each DORS region to identify the role/tasks of the CRP liaison, how this position is assigned to a CRP, procedures for collaboration with the Office of Community Rehabilitation Programs and expectations from the CRPs.

Objective 4.2

Enhance collaboration with and services to Maryland private and public employers.

Strategies: DORS will

1. Regional Business Services Representatives (BSRs) and WTC Employment Specialists will provide, enhance, and track services to businesses including recruitment assistance; technical assistance for tax incentives; development of work-based learning opportunities, on-the-job training (OJT), and customized training; apprenticeships; retention services; and disability awareness and ADA training.
2. Engage with businesses through the CSAVR National Employment Team (NET).
3. Collaborate with WIOA partners and CRPs to develop employment strategies, share resources and expertise, and coordinate services that are beneficial to businesses and promote the employment of individuals with disabilities.
4. Collaborate with businesses to connect them with DORS job seekers through facility tours, career information sessions, job fairs, and other direct engagement strategies, including career entry opportunities for graduates of WTC training programs.
5. The Staff Specialist for Benefits Planning Quality Assurance will develop and provide recorded training for businesses and BSRs on employment for SSA beneficiaries.

Performance Measures by June 30, 2026:

1. The number of services to employers will increase as compared to the previous year and will be documented in the AWARE™ Employer module to measure effectiveness in serving employers.
2. The number of work-based learning opportunities, including, but not limited to, QUEST and OJT opportunities, will increase as compared to the previous year and be tracked through the AWARE™ case management system.

3. Communications, minutes, and agendas of CSAVR NET meetings and activities as well as business services reports will confirm activities and progress.
4. Monthly narrative reports from BSRs will show evidence of activities with agency partners; Agency BSRs will explore development of a work group to increase collaboration with CRPs to identify employment trends and employer needs.
5. Business partner activities will be tracked in the AWARE™ Employer module and increase over previous year.
6. Training from the Staff Specialist for Benefits Planning Quality Assurance will be provided at least annually to share QA findings and suggested actions.

Objective 4.3

DORS will provide support to the Maryland State Rehabilitation Council (MSRC) to maintain and enhance its leadership role in the oversight of VR service delivery in Maryland.

Strategies: DORS will

1. DORS will ensure that it works with the Maryland State Rehabilitation Council (MSRC) in accordance with federal law and regulations and SRC By-Laws.
2. MSRC members will review and comment on the Annual Agency Program Plan, DORS progress in meeting its performance goals, and DORS program accomplishments.
3. DORS staff will participate in MSRC sub-committees as assigned, including Policy and Planning, Public Relations & Quality Assurance, and the Employment & Career Development Sub-Committees.

Performance Measures by June 30, 2026:

1. The Maryland SRC will conduct four quarterly meetings.
2. The Maryland SRC and DORS will conduct annual public meetings.
3. The Maryland SRC will regularly hold sub-committee meetings and share information at MSRC quarterly meetings for further discussion.

Objective 4.4

Promote and enhance quality independent living outcomes for individuals with disabilities in Maryland through independent living programs.

Strategies: DORS will

1. Provide grant support, technical assistance, and monitoring to the Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC).
2. Manage DORS grants to Centers for Independent Living (CILs), including providing technical assistance and monitoring regarding the IL program, the IL AT program, and fiscal responsibilities.
3. Participate as an IL partner in implementation of the State Plan for Independent Living. Provide training for DORS staff on available services provided by CILs.
4. DORS Regional directors and OBVS program managers will conduct an annual meeting with the Executive Directors of the CILs within their areas to discuss issues of mutual interest.
5. Increase benefits services that CILs are providing to DORS consumers.

Performance Measures by June 30, 2026:

1. Annual reviews of grant performance will be conducted for each CIL with which DORS has a grant, and the SILC.
2. DORS Regional/Program directors will confirm annual meetings with the CIL Executive Directors.
3. DORS will increase benefits services provided to DORS consumers as compared to the previous year.

Objective 4.5

Evaluate partner connection for consumers receiving Social Security Benefits.

Strategies: DORS will

1. Implement and train on the SVES Verification checkbox tool, as well as associated policy and procedures, for field staff to request updates to SSA benefits status and associated information in AWARE™, on an automated AND as-needed basis.
2. Complete and implement SARA revisions to facilitate referrals for Social Security recipients on the waiting list to employment networks and the Work Incentives and Planning Assistance (WIPA).
3. Develop and implement DORS consumer trainings for SSI, SSDI, and concurrent benefits to replace the General Benefits Consultation service. Create a consumer referral tool for counselors. Develop and implement accessible DORS consumer training for state and federal work incentives, as well as other related benefits.
4. Revise the benefits planning service and desk reference to improve alignment with pre-ETS and VR policy. Develop in-person and pre-recorded training for staff and providers to ensure appropriate, timely, and cost-effective usage.
5. Undertake systematic Quality Assurance reviews of benefits planning fee-for-service providers.
6. Improve Ticket to Work handoffs to Employment Networks upon DORS case closure, as well as train WIOA partners on appropriate interagency beneficiary referrals.
7. Complete cost reimbursement procedural revisions for the submission, tracking, and payment of SSA approved pre-ETS criteria claims.

Performance Measures by June 30, 2026:

1. DORS counselors and supervisors will utilize Social Security benefits information provided via SVES batch process and manual inquiries when considering eligibility, order of selection, annual review and closure for all consumers.
2. DORS will contact participants with Social Security benefits in delayed status via SARA to increase referral to employment networks and/or WIPA as appropriate.
3. DORS will establish and undertake a consumer general benefits training program and schedule, as well as additional topical training recordings. DORS will track and report usage based upon referrals from counselors as well as direct recording views.
4. DORS will increase the number of Social Security beneficiaries receiving timely fee-for-service or internal benefits counseling training as compared to the previous year.
5. DORS will complete at least three Benefits Planning Quality Assurance reviews of all new providers and at least 1 review of existing providers annually.
6. DORS will track participants with Social Security benefits to monitor referrals to an Employment Network after DORS services, targeting consumers at or above Trial Work

Level or Substantial Gainful Activity earnings levels. DORS will develop and provide WIOA partner referral training (ENs, AJCs, benefits planning providers) in collaboration with the Ticket Program Manager (TPM).

7. DORS will revise Ticket Tracker software to track and report monthly and annual data on the submission and payment of pre-ETS criteria cost reimbursement claims, in addition to VR claims.

Goal 5: Provide infrastructure to promote and support the accomplishment of the DORS mission

Objective 5.1

Implement strategies in alignment with the DORS mission and in accordance with the WIOA Combined State Plan.

Strategies: DORS will

1. Implement and monitor MOUs/Resource Sharing Agreements with workforce partners required to fulfill new federal reporting requirements.
2. Expand electronic communication with DORS consumers throughout the case process, including at specific case status touchpoints and post-exit.
3. Provide DORS staff and agency partners with opportunities to collaborate on internal technical assistance and training regarding emerging workforce topics and initiatives.
4. Document consumer involvement with WIOA partner agencies in the AWARE™ case management system.
5. Continue processes and strategies for elimination of hard copy consumer case files.

Performance Measures by June 30, 2026:

1. MOUs and Resource Sharing Agreements will be completed on an as-needed basis to conform to State and federal regulations.
2. Implement tools to solicit feedback from DORS consumers at various points throughout the case process. DORS will utilize SARA™ (Semi-Autonomous Research Assistant) to ask consumers about their experience using automated text messages and emails. Responses will be reviewed quarterly and evaluated by executive staff.
3. Staff and partners will be provided with technical assistance on WIOA emerging topics, as identified.
4. Consumer involvement with WIOA partners will increase as compared to the previous year. Individual statistics will be included in staff performance evaluations, based upon case documentation.
5. Staff will continue to attach all pertinent documentation to the electronic AWARE™ case record and review materials at case closure, while following agency record retention policy.

Objective 5.2

Increase staff competency and satisfaction by providing ongoing staff training, professional development, and leadership development programs while intentionally promoting a culture of staff retention.

Strategies: DORS will

1. Establish an Internal Communications Workgroup to recommend a methodology which will ensure/verify all staff receive clear and consistent communication, including review and update of agency “Toolkits” to share resources and information via DORS internal staff network.
2. Develop position-specific training to be offered via the Canvas™ Learning Management System platform for both existing and new staff to access the learning modules using input from the New Staff Training Workgroup.
3. Enhance the supervisor training program by expanding its scope to include support with staff orientation, personnel management, fiscal oversight, performance evaluation, and case management practices
4. Promote leadership development and cross-training opportunities to ensure continuation of critical agency functions utilizing work teams from multiple program areas.
5. Continue to support DORS staff obtaining advanced degrees in VR and related fields. Reviewed data annually.
6. Conduct at least quarterly training of Business Services staff to enhance their skills and develop strategies for engaging businesses

Performance Measures by June 30, 2026:

1. Internal Communication Workgroup recommendations will be provided to executive staff and incorporated into “Toolkit” resources to be shared on InDORS.
2. The New Staff Training Workgroup will present its recommendations to executive leadership to support the rollout of virtual training modules. These recommendations include a comprehensive curriculum and standardized procedures designed to enhance the onboarding experience for new staff.
3. Management training for new DORS supervisors will be offered twice during the program year. Examples of these training courses will include staff evaluation using specific reports and exit interviews.
4. Staff use of accessible on-line/web-based learning management systems such as WINTAC, VRTAC-QM, NTACTION, NASWAL, and ADA learning centers will increase during the program year.
5. At least one multi-session leadership development program with a cross-training component will be offered during the program year.
6. Develop agency work teams to identify critical agency functions and plan for workflow based upon staff resources.
7. Staff enrollment in graduate school programs will increase from the previous program year.
8. Agendas and minutes of Business Services meetings will document training progress.

Objective 5.3

Promote strategic use of accessible technology and establish policy and internal controls to support staff effectiveness and efficiency.

Strategies: DORS will

1. Monitor and evaluate DORS Eligibility Unit capacity to centrally process all applications for service semiannually to address increased counselor workloads while promoting a consistent consumer experience.
2. Review, update, and document internal controls annually and evaluate methods to streamline case management, communication, and administrative procedures to reduce reporting errors and establish statewide consistency.
3. Develop a consistent vendor application and approval process and monitoring protocol.
4. Use an Online Referral procedure managed by Central Office staff to ensure consistent processing of initial referral contact and District assignment; Increase utilization of electronic materials unless otherwise requested.
5. Monitor and evaluate staff usage of CITRIX Right Signature accessible digital signature application annually using usage reports to improve staff efficiency and decrease time necessary to document consumer review.
6. Identify critical platforms and other technologies needed to ensure continuity of work.

Performance Measures by June 30, 2026:

1. Eligibility Unit Workgroup will be utilized to evaluate responsibilities and Unit processes to streamline case handoff to field counselor following Eligibility determination during PY 2024 and thereafter reviewed annually during Quality Assurance Case Reviews. Relevant policy information will be updated in DORS policy.
2. DORS staff will continue to use SARA™ to schedule appointments and send reminders to consumers regarding upcoming responsibilities. Regular meetings between DORS and SARA WORKS personnel support ongoing collaboration to assess staff usage, address issues, and enhance application functionality to better serve both staff and consumers.
3. Online Referral process will be evaluated at least quarterly to review effectiveness of procedures and implement efficiencies as necessary. Explore capabilities of platform to send electronic intake materials and information to minimize use of U.S. Mail to expedite referral processes.
4. Position descriptions will be reviewed and revised, as necessary, for consistency with DORS priorities to ensure appropriate distribution of DORS resources at least once during each program year during employee end-cycle performance evaluations.
5. Review and streamline DORS-required forms and administrative procedures, with an emphasis on enhancing virtual and remote accessibility. This includes converting forms to fillable formats, eliminating duplicative information, updating fact sheets, and evaluating the necessity of signatures to improve efficiency and user experience. The Communications & Accessibility office will assist with plain language review of materials, including letters initiated through the AWARE™ case management system.
6. Monitor and enforce internal control procedures for vendor application, approval, and performance evaluation processes. Implement a structured review cycle with semiannual assessments to ensure compliance and continuous improvement.

Capital Projects

The Workforce and Technology Center is a comprehensive rehabilitation facility that offers career and skills training, job placement assistance, Assistive Technology services, Pre-Employment Transition Services, and other medical and support services to consumers who are referred from the Office of Field Services and the Office for Blindness and Vision Services. The Workforce and Technology Center facility also houses the DORS Administrative offices and four district offices and the new Eligibility Determination Unit. During the next two

Program Years, DORS plans to request prior approval to invest federal funds in several facility projects, including replacement of three sections of an HVAC chiller (\$400,000) and replacement of lighting in the auditorium (\$70,000). Additionally, there may be unanticipated emergency repairs.

d. 1. Progress in achieving the goals and priorities identified for the VR and Supported Employment Programs;

List the goals/priorities and discuss the progress or completion of each goal/priority and related strategies

Goal 1: Goal 1: Assure high-quality integrated employment outcomes for individuals with significant and most significant disabilities in Maryland through the vocational rehabilitation (VR) program.

Objective 1.1

Provide quality customer service .

Strategies: DORS will

Ensure staff provide consistent customer service to individuals with disabilities and community partners because exceptional customer service is a priority for the Division.

- Customer service is a priority for the Division and will continue to be reflected as a goal in the upcoming program years.

Enhance communication between DORS staff and consumers.

- This goal will continue into next program year as DORS has implemented SARA (Semi-Autonomous Research Assistant) bi-directional communication tool to supplement the AWARE case management system.

Evaluate customer satisfaction during service delivery in partnership with the Maryland State Rehabilitation Council (MSRC).

- This goal will continue into next program year. DORS continues to discuss customer satisfaction and program efficiencies with the MSRC at quarterly meetings and subcommittee events.

Conduct a Quality Assurance Review Program for VR to ensure consumer participation in development and planning of services, as well as consistency with required measures under WIOA.

- Quality Assurance Case Reviews will continue to be completed annually and will remain an area of emphasis in the next program year.

Institute a plain language review of DORS materials to assure the information being communicated to individuals provides a clear understanding of programs, requirements, and available options/

- Goal will continue as written. DORS will continue to review both current and proposed materials to ensure they use plain language and are easy to understand.

Engage with consumers on the waiting list to provide information on available resources and services provided by workforce partners to assist consumers prior to potential VR services.

- Update DORS staff utilize SARA™ (Semi-Autonomous Research Assistant) to maintain contact and provide resources with consumers on the waiting list.

Progress in achieving the goals and priorities by June 30, 2025:

Staff will continue to participate in customer service training activities as offered.

- DORS continues to focus on ensuring high quality customer service. All DORS staff participated in Customer Service Training to ensure consumers receive quality service according to MSDE standards.

Incorporate customer service recommendations from House Bill 660: Commission to Study DORS, as well as the DORS Listening Sessions conducted by Parent's Place of Maryland. Progress to be monitored annually.

- DORS has continued to incorporate customer service recommendations from House Bill 660 during PY24. Performance data has been added to the public website, discussed at MSRC meetings, and shared on social media. Information is updated regularly. DORS has also updated public information about services to focus on easily understandable language and minimizing technical jargon. All new materials, including letters and fact sheets, are subject to plain language review prior to publication.

DORS will utilize SARA™ (Semi-Autonomous Research Assistant) to supplement the AWARE™ case management system to increase staff ability to communicate with consumers using automated text messages and emails. DORS Administration will monitor SARA™ usage and identify trends semiannually using available SARA™ reports and data analysis.

- DORS has begun utilizing SARA™ statewide in Fall 2023. Since then, staff have developed skills and abilities to increase regular communication with consumers via text messaging and email. Staff also utilize SARA™ to collect needed information, such as medical records, employment information, along with completed DORS forms and reports.

Conduct the Customer Satisfaction Survey on a semiannual basis for consumers to provide feedback on their satisfaction with services at key points during the rehabilitation process. Achieve 85% customer satisfaction for both the Office of Field Services (OFS) and the Office for Blindness & Vision Service (OBVS). DORS will also explore use of SARA™ to solicit consumer feedback immediately following case events, such as completion of the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE), to increase consumer opportunity to provide comments on their experience.

- DORS has not conducted the Customer Satisfaction Survey during PY24. Planning has begun to resume survey Customer Satisfaction Survey activities during PY25 using SARA. A workgroup will be established to determine appropriate opportunities to capture immediate consumer feedback following changes in case status. SARA™ will be used to push a short 2-3 question survey about the consumer experience at the following case statuses" Eligibility, Service, Employed, Closed-Other, and Closed-Rehabilitated. Each set of questions will be designed according to case events per

each described case status and feedback will be organized and evaluated on a quarterly basis using Alchemer survey and reporting tools.

Conduct Quality Assurance Case Reviews annually for each DORS office during the program year and improve statewide quality assurance measures in comparison to previous years, including consumer input and decision-making regarding planning and service delivery.

- Quality Assurance case reviews have been completed across all 25 OFS/OBVS districts, with staff reviewing a total of 464 individual cases during this cycle. To strengthen the review process, 10 District Supervisors have joined in the effort, bringing the total number of reviewers to 32, including Program Managers and Staff Specialists. A Quality Assurance Wrap-Up event was held on September 26, 2025, to present findings and discuss recommendations for improving the case review instrument.

Explore needs for Targeted Case Reviews to address agency priorities, including post-secondary education, career training, pre-employment transition services (Pre-ETs), and waiting list management

- A Pre-Employment Transition Services QA Review instrument has been developed to evaluate Documentation and Parental Consent, Need for Pre-ETS, Provision of Service, Authorization, Invoice, & Report Considerations, and Closure of the Service Record. In addition, a Pre-ETS Delegated Authority Review Instrument has been created to evaluate staff members with delegated authority. This tool ensures that all service authorizations are properly supported by documentation in alignment with agency policy. The need for additional targeted case reviews was discussed at the Quality Assurance Wrap-Up event on September 26, 2025.

DORS will review materials and solicit feedback to minimize technical language and increase understanding of available services and requirements on an ongoing basis

- Staff have worked in conjunction with DORS' Office of Communications & Accessibility to review materials designed to communicate with consumers and stakeholders to improve understanding to help them know what to expect and increase participation and engagement. All new materials are subject to plain language review prior to publication.

DORS will leverage communication tools such as the Granicus Government Civic Engagement Platform (formerly GovDelivery) and SARA™ to maintain regular contact with individuals on the DORS waiting list to share employment and training resources. These tools will also provide consumers the ability to submit additional medical documentation for reconsideration of disability priority and removal from the waiting list.

- DORS has continued to use Granicus Government Civic Engagement Platform along with SARA™ (Semi-Autonomous Research Assistant) to contact consumers on the wait list and provide information regarding Job Fairs, employment resources, and services offered by WIOA partners. SARA™ has also been useful to obtain updated medical records and information needed to determine eligibility/update disability priority for individuals on the DORS waiting list.

Objective 1.2

Provide rehabilitation services for youth and students with disabilities in collaboration with local school systems, the Maryland Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA),

Maryland Behavioral Health Administration (BHA), and other workforce partners that lead to successful outcomes in post-secondary education and/or employment.

Strategies: DORS will

Ensure that VR counselors and staff work with youth with disabilities, families, school personnel, business partners, and community partners to promote educational achievement and prepare for quality employment and self-sufficiency.

- Goal to continue into the next program year.

Support and emphasize the application for VR services for youth.

- Goal to continue into the next program year. DORS has solicited feedback from staff and consumers to streamline and improve application process for VR services for youth.

Increase and formalize collaboration with LEAs and Workforce Partners through agreements to ensure access to Transition services throughout the state.

- Goal to continue into the next program year. DORS will continue outreach efforts to areas who have not completed their agreements.

Provide training and support to DORS counselors and partners through the Transition Specialists Group, training programs, and other meetings. Training will provide tools and resources related to post-secondary education, and best practices in working with families and youth with disabilities.

- Goal to continue into the next program year. The DORS Transition Specialists Group will continue to meet semiannually to improve services to youth with disabilities.

Progress in achieving the goals and priorities by June 30, 2025:

The number of youths with disabilities served will match or exceed those served in the previous year.

- During PY23 DORS served 10,076 SWD, in PY24 12,164 SWD were served, representing an increase of 2,088 individuals.

Increase documented services for youth with disabilities through authorizations, actual service records, educational goals, and measurable skills gains.

- During PY23 7,478 Pre-ETS were provided to SWD, in PY24 6,600 were completed. It should be mentioned that there was a move to standardized Pre-ETS during PY24 which may have caused some delay in service delivery while new services were implemented.

There will be an increase in youth with disabilities who achieve competitive integrated employment and/or enroll in post-secondary education programs, compared with the previous year.

- During PY23, 97 SWD achieved Competitive Integrated Employment and 329 enrolled in the first year of college training. In PY24, 130 SWD achieved Competitive Integrated Employment and 274 enrolled in the first year of college training.

DORS staff will participate, as available, in transition events including 504 and IEP planning meetings.

- DORS staff regularly participate in collaborative events such as transition fairs, parent information nights, and LEA professional development. The Director of The Office of Communication and Accessibility reported DORS staff presented at 66 transition related events during PY24. It is difficult to pull reliable data for IEP or 504 meeting attendance given the way it is reported in case notes. Attendance at meetings for students already on the VR or Pre-ETS caseload is strongly encouraged by OFS management, however it is sometimes difficult to execute for counselors managing large caseloads. Counselors can rarely attend meetings for SWD that are currently or not yet referrals for services.

Monitor existing MOUs with 24 LEAs, MD School for the Blind, and Workforce Partners.

- Staff Specialist for Students and Transition Age Youth continues to collaborate with MSDE Division of Special Education to provide information to Local Education Agencies. Similarly, local DORS staff collaborate with LEA partners on a regular basis to ensure transition services. Templates for local agreements were previously provided to LEAs. 15 of the 24 agreements have been signed to date.

The DORS Transition Specialists Group will meet semiannually and include community partners as appropriate.

- In May 2025 DORS staff, LEA staff and CRP staff met for collaborative training on Work based learning experiences per staff request. SS for Youth and TAY also provided TY update video to clarify recent policies and partner updates, holds Office Hours open to all DORS staff every other week, Technical Assistance hours for Community Rehabilitation Partners monthly, and provides trainings and updates to LEA and SEA staff at quarterly Secondary Transition Steering Committee meetings. Additional trainings are provided to DORS, LEA, CRP and workforce partner staff .in areas participating in the Maryland Pathways to Partnership Initiative, Project SEARCH locations, and through conferences like Raising the Bar and the Project SEARCH conference. Recent training and update initiatives have been modified to meet the demand on counselor time and to be as integrated as possible to partners participation.

Objective 1.3

DORS will provide high quality services and outcomes for individuals with disabilities served by the Office of Field Services (OFS).

Strategies: DORS will

Provide high quality comprehensive services to eligible individuals with significant and most significant disabilities in accordance with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and Federal Regulations, the Code of Maryland Regulations, and DORS Policy.

- Goal to continue into the next program year.

Collaborate with WTC to assure consumers receive services offered at WTC in a seamless and timely manner, including evaluation of processes to improve communication in a virtual/remote environment.

- Goal to continue into the next program year with an increased emphasis on providing community-based services as offered by the Workforce and Technology Center.

Strengthen relationships with WIOA partners to improve competitive integrated employment outcomes for DORS consumers and improve reporting on common performance measures for DORS consumers.

- Goal to continue into the next program year as written.

Increase the number of job seekers who are enrolled in educational or vocational training programs that lead to recognized post-secondary credential or employment. Continue to train staff to accurately enter Educational Goals and verify Measurable Skills Gains

- Goal to continue into the next program year with additional focus on credential attainment federal performance measure.

Monitor reporting of MOU funded services provided through the documentation of Actual Service Records (ASR) in the AWARE case management system.

- DORS will continue to monitor to ensure accurate reporting of MOU funded services in the upcoming program years.

Utilize data analytics to identify areas of concern and ensure accurate reporting of Division performance and enrollment.

- Goal to continue into the next program year expanding to utilize data analytics to ensure agency staff and resources are aligned to serve consumers effectively.

Progress in achieving the goals and priorities by June 30, 2025:

Meet federal performance standards for timely determination of eligibility and development of the Individualized Plan for Employment.

- During PY 2024, OFS achieved 96.67 percent eligibility determination timeliness compliance, compared to 90.54 percent in PY 2023, and 93.31 percent Individualized Plan for Employment development timeliness compliance compared to 93.20 percent in PY 2023.

Enhance consumer employment outcomes as measured by an increase in average hourly earnings from the previous year.

- The average hourly wage of consumers who exited the program achieving an employment outcome was \$18.29, representing a \$0.09 increase from PY23 (\$18.20 8).

Provide staff training related to federal and state common measures for WIOA Core Programs.

- Increased training opportunities have been offered throughout PY 2024, including training on the various WIOA Titles sponsored by workforce partners and distributed

by the state. Adaptation of videoconferencing tools assisted ease of participation and creation of recorded sessions housed on a digital learning management system.

OFS will achieve 1,055 Competitive Integrated Employment Outcomes.

- In PY 2024, OFS achieved 1,008 successful employment outcomes, 96 percent of agency goal (1,046). 4 of 5 Regions met or exceeded their goal. Reduced outcomes resulted from increased emphasis on provision of pre-employment transition services, the DORS waiting list for VR services, along with waiting lists for vendor services and vendor staff vacancies.

Increase number of MOU funded Actual Service Records entered over previous fiscal year.

- Agency Regional Associates have provided support to monitor and reconcile MOU funded Actual Service Records for 516 unique consumers during PY 2022, down from PY 2021 (625 unique consumers). This decrease is attributed to decreased participation in summer 2021 youth employment programs.

Achieve 52 % successful completion of verified Measurable Skills Gains.

- Specific training was presented to all VR staff on measurable skills gains and supporting documentation. DORS achieved a 55.3 % MSG rate for PY 2024 (Goal 52%), a significant increase from 45.4 % in PY 2023 (Goal 44%)

Improve Employment Retention measures over previous PY by increasing the number of individuals employed in the 2nd and 4th Quarter after program exit.

- DORS did not meet federal performance measures for Employment Rate 2nd Quarter after Exit (45.57.9% achieved, goal 50%) and Employment Rate 4th Quarter after Exit (43.35.2% achieved, goal 47%) during program year 2024. Staff have begun a comprehensive data review to analyze performance, services, and outcomes to improve post-exit measures.

Improve Credential Attainment measure over previous PY by developing strategies to follow up with consumers for one year after program exit to determine those who have earned recognized post-secondary qualifications after leaving the VR program.

- DORS met federal performance measures for Credential Attainment (42.4% achieved, goal 28%) during program year 2024, representing a 19% increase over PY23 Credential Attainment (22.5%).

Objective 1.4

DORS will provide high-quality services and outcomes for individuals who are blind, vision impaired and Deaf-Blind (B/VI, D-B).

Strategies: DORS will

Provide high quality comprehensive services to eligible individuals who are blind, vision impaired and Deaf-Blind in accordance with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and Federal Regulations, the Code of Maryland Regulations, the Randolph Sheppard Act and DORS Policy.

- Goal to continue into the next program year.

Provide independent living services to older individuals who are blind through direct services of DORS rehabilitation teachers.

- Goal to continue into the next program year with emphasis on providing services according to policy.

Collaborate with WTC to enhance services and educate staff to assure that blind, vision impaired and Deaf-Blind consumers have effective programming at WTC.

- Goal to continue into the next program year.

Strengthen relationships with WIOA partners to improve competitive integrated employment outcomes for DORS consumers and reporting on common performance measure for DORS consumers.

- Goal to continue into the next program year.

Expand services and outreach to individuals who are deaf-blind and provide technical assistance to staff serving this population as recommended by the Deaf-Blind Workgroup. Goal to continue into the next program year with an emphasis upon increasing individual employment specialists to provide services.

Recruit and train Maryland Business Enterprise Program for the Blind vendors and grow the program strategically.

- Goal to continue into the next program year. BEP is continuing to re-establish pre-pandemic level of service.

Develop a standardized curriculum of activities for OBVS staff to ensure highly qualified staff to provide excellent service and increase customer satisfaction.

- Goal to continue into the next program year.

Continue training and support accurate recording of Education Goals and outcomes.

- Goal to continue into the next program year.

Utilize data analytics to identify areas of concern and ensure accurate reporting.

- Goal to continue into the next program year with an emphasis on identifying services that contribute to post-exit success and retention.

Progress in achieving the goals and priorities by June 30, 2025:

Meet federal performance standards for timely determination of eligibility and development of the Individualized Plan for Employment.

- During PY 2024, OBVS achieved 96.26 percent eligibility determination timeliness compliance, compared to 93.35 percent in PY 2023, and 95.10 percent Individualized Plan for Employment development timeliness compliance compared to 82.68 percent in PY 2023. Eligibility and Plan Development analytic reports are reviewed at least twice monthly by executive staff.
-

OBVS will achieve 107 competitive integrated employment outcomes.

- OBVS achieved 74 competitive integrated employment outcomes during PY 2024, (69.15 percent of agency goal), up from a total of 68 successful outcomes during the previous program year.

The Business Enterprise Program will recruit/train/license five new managers and establish new vending sites where available.

In PY 2024, BEP established a new Vending Route Training consistent with TAC 21-02. 24 licensed managers were trained through that program. One new consumer was accepted into the Vending Route Training. BEP established three new sites: CMS Cafeteria, Walter Reed added a new micromarket, New Gourmet coffee shop, to the existing cafe. BEP also re-opened/ renovated seven facilities during the PY. OBVS will close 174 ILOB cases as successful.

- OBVS closed 217 ILOB cases as successful by DORS teachers for the blind during PY 2024, an increase of 106 from PY 2023 (111).

The Deaf-Blind Workgroup will meet three times per year to identify and expand services for the Deaf-Blind.

- Deaf-Blind workgroup met two times during PY24 to maintain contact with the deaf-blind community and advocates regarding current and emerging issues. Deaf-Blind resources and programs have been shared with staff as available. OBVS holds quarterly staff training that includes information related to Deaf-Blindness.

Enhance consumer employment outcomes as measured by an increase in average hourly earnings from the previous year.

- The average hourly wage during PY24 was \$27.26, representing a \$1.28 increase from PY 2023 (\$25.98).
- The number of documented Educational Goals will match or exceed totals from the previous year.
- The number of documented educational goals has decreased slightly from the previous year. During PY24, OBVS documented 149 educational goals as compared to 168 during PY23, a difference of 19.

Objective 1.5

Provide effective services at the Workforce & Technology Center using state-of-the-art interdisciplinary strategies.

Strategies: DORS will

Continue to provide high quality in-person and virtual services to individuals with significant or most significant disabilities to facilitate successful competitive integrated employment outcomes.

- Goal to continue into the next program year with an increased emphasis on providing community-based services.

Continue to develop and enhance relationships with employers utilizing agency staff who specialize in underserved populations to address service needs; as well as issues and trends related to the employment of underserved disability populations.

- Goal to continue into the next program year.

Develop and enhance relationships with employers utilizing agency staff who specialize in underserved populations to address service needs; as well as issues and trends related to the employment of underserved disability populations.

- Goal to continue into the next program year.

Enhance employer engagement through linkages with employers, the business community, DORS Business Services staff, Maryland state agencies and workgroups, MSDE Career Technical Education, Department of Labor, apprenticeship workgroups, and community partners.

- Goal to continue into the next program year with a focus upon identifying employer needs that may be incorporated into services provided by WTC.

Provide comprehensive services and awareness to employers to enhance knowledge and understanding of the benefit of assistive technology at the worksite.

- Goal to continue into the next program year.

Implement and monitor WTC staff documenting measurable skills gains/credentials for individuals served.

- Goal to continue into the next program year. WTC has standardized data entry requirements to document measurable skills gains and credentials earned.

Progress in achieving the goals and priorities by June 30, 2025:

Increase the number of consumers achieving competitive integrated employment outcomes compared to the previous year.

- In PY24, 276 consumers served by WTC achieved competitive integrated employment. This was a 7% increase from PY23 when 257 consumers achieved the goal.

Increase the number of consumers who are blind/vision impaired and Deaf-Blind that will receive services compared to the previous year.

- In PY24, WTC served 550 consumers, which is an increase of 16% from PY23 when WTC served 474 consumers.

Increase the number of consumers who are deaf or hard-of-hearing that will receive services compared to the previous year.

- During PY24, WTC served 118 consumers. This is a 9% decrease as WTC served 130 consumers in PY23. The decrease occurred due to a decline in referrals.

Increase the number of consumers who have Autism that will receive services compared to the previous year.

- Six hundred twenty-seven consumers (627) were served by WTC in PY24 which is an increase of almost 17% from PY23 when 537 consumers were served.

Increase the number of customized and/or partnership trainings compared to the previous year.

- This PY24, WTC provided 23 customized/partnership training programs which was two more than provided in PY23 (21).

Increase the number of consumers receiving apprenticeship services for consult and/or support compared to the previous year.

- In PY24, WTC provided 222 services which was a 28% increase from the previous PY23 (173).

Increase the number of employer services provided through collaboration with employers, the business community, DORS Business Services staff, Maryland state agencies and workgroups, MSDE Career and Technical Education, Department of Labor, apprenticeship workgroups, and community partners.

- In PY24, WTC provided 1,278 employer services, which is a 6% increase from PY23 when 1,202 employer services were provided.

Increase the number of worksite consumers served as compared to the previous year.

- One hundred five (105) consumers were served in PY24 compared to 66 in PY23 which is a 59% increase.

Increase the number of documented measurable skills gains/credentials for individuals served at WTC as compared to the previous year.

- One hundred seventy-two (172) measurable skills gains/credentials were created in PY24. This is an increase of 65% as 104 were created in PY23.
-

Goal 2: Assure high quality Pre-ETS service for qualified students with disabilities.

Objective 2.1

DORS will utilize resources to coordinate and ensure the provision of pre-employment transition services as required.

Strategies: DORS will

Ensure that VR counselors and staff work with students with disabilities, families, school personnel, business partners, and community partners to help these students prepare for employment and self-sufficiency.

- Goal to continue into the next program year.

Support and emphasize the application for VR services for potentially eligible students.

- Goal to continue into the next program year. DORS continues to utilize feedback from staff and consumers to streamline and improve the application process for VR services for potentially eligible students.

Formalize consistent partnerships with LEAs through agreements to ensure access to the required Pre-ETS and Transition services throughout the state.

- Goal to continue into the next program year.

Restructuring the implementation of Pre-Employment Transition Services to ensure that students with disabilities have access to the Pre-ETS services they may need, while maintaining internal controls.

- Goal to continue into the next program year while incorporating standardization of Pre-Employment Transition Services learning objectives, fees, and consistent number of hours per program.

Support VR counselor capacity to meaningfully serve students with disabilities referred to DORS.

- Goal to continue into the next program year.

Progress in achieving the goals and priorities by June 30, 2025:

Increase the number of students receiving pre-employment transition services compared with the previous year.

- The number of students receiving Pre-ETS increased by 2,088. During PY 23 DORS served 10,076 SWD, in PY 24 12,164 SWD were served.

The number of potentially eligible students receiving Pre-Employment Transition Services who apply for VR services will match or exceed those who have applied for services in the previous year.

- During PY 23, 3,426 SWD receiving Pre-ETS applied for VR services, in PY 24, 3,875 SWD receiving Pre-ETS applied.

Enhance relationships with 24 local school systems by maintaining existing MOUs. Complete outreach activities to complete agreements in need of updates as necessary.

- Staff Specialist for Students and TAY continues to attend steering committee meetings for LEA transition representatives to encourage collaboration and provide DORS updates. DORS conducted a round table call for LEA transition facilitators to discuss improvements to the Pre-ETS referral and intake process as well as gather feedback on possible partnership between DORS and LEAs for Pre-ETS provision. Templates for local agreements were previously provided to LEAs. 15 of the 24 agreements have been signed to date.

Maintain coordination and delivery of Pre-ETS provided by WTC or Business Relations, as measured by the number of service authorizations and documented Pre-ETS case note activities.

- WTC and BSRs not only continue to provide previous Pre-ETS but starting in May of 2025 developed new Pre-ETS offerings including evening information sessions for students about various jobs and employment processes as well as WTC open houses for students to consider WTC training options.

Implement plan for provision of Pre-ETS programming by structuring standardized services and learning objectives to meet student needs during PY 2024. Evaluate provider proposals as they are received.

- Proposals for standardized Pre-ETS began being collected in 1/2024, review team meets on every other week basis to review proposals. To date there are 34 providers approved to provide standardized Pre-ETS with updated addendums.

Goal 3: This goal focuses on a non-VR program that is not applicable to the WIOA State Plan. (Disability Determination Services program).

Goal 4: Partner and collaborate with other WIOA programs, private organizations, employers, and community groups to advance the employment and independence of individuals with disabilities.

Objective 4.1

Evaluate and monitor service delivery for consistency with WIOA priorities.

Strategies: DORS will

DORS/WTC staff and WIOA partners will participate in joint trainings to learn about the benefits of services available at the state and local level.

- Goal to continue into the next program year.

Contribute to the tracking of the Benchmarks of Success for Maryland's Workforce System.

- Goal to continue into the next program year.

Participate in local planning meetings regarding service provision and collaboration in AJCs to strengthen referral procedures and tracking of consumer involvement with WIOA partners.

- Goal to continue into the next program year with. DORS plans to provide training on DORS services to AJC staff on a regular basis to increase collaboration.

Progress will be made on the implementation of the recommendations of the Comprehensive Statewide Assessment of the Rehabilitation Needs of Individuals with Disabilities in Maryland.

- Goal to continue into the next program year.

DORS will hold regular CRP Advisory Council meetings.

- Goal to continue into the next program year. DORS will hold 3 CRP Advisory Council meetings in PY25.

Develop a task force with representation from each Region to identify the role/tasks of the CRP liaison, how this position is assigned to a CRP, procedures for collaboration with the Office of Community Rehabilitation Programs and expectations from the CRPs

- Goal to continue into the next program year.

Develop a task force with representation from each Region to identify the role/tasks of the CRP liaison, how this position is assigned to a CRP, procedures for collaboration with the Office of CRPs and expectations from the CRPs.

- Goal to continue into the next program year, prioritize technical assistance, training and guidance, and relationship building with CRP's.

Progress in achieving the goals and priorities by June 30, 2025:

DORS will participate in training activities with WIOA partners, and develop an agency clearinghouse of training materials, including a joint calendar of events.

- DORS staff attend regional training with AJC partners as available; WIOA training series will resume on August 1, 2025, on Workday (Previously training materials were housed on the HUB- State of Maryland's Hub online learning management system).

DORS data specific to the Benchmarks for Success will be shared with WIOA partners and DORS staff.

- DORS continues to provide data to Benchmarks for Success as requested by WIOA partners.

Increase number of consumers involved in services provided by WIOA partners using AWARE™ documentation, including individuals on the waiting list. Develop a means to track WIOA partner collaboration in AWARE™ during PY 2024.

- DORS staff use AWARE™ case note category "Collaboration - WIOA Partners" to track partner collaboration. During PY24, this collaboration is measured semi-annually on staff performance evaluations (PEPs). Staff collaboration is also measured in AWARE™ with DORS Business Services Representatives, Education Partners, and IPE Meeting participation, using case note categories as described above.

Implement findings of the Comprehensive Statewide Assessment of the Rehabilitation Needs of Individuals with Disabilities in Maryland.

- Staff will continue to evaluate findings from the CSNA as applicable. Results will be shared and discussed with executive staff to determine appropriate action(s) and will also be included in the upcoming 2026 Combined State Plan update cycle.

CRP advisory council will meet 3 times per year.

- DORS' CRP Advisory Council held meetings on September 23, 2024; January 27 and May 19, 2025. During these meetings, DORS staff presented a variety of information including policy updates, upcoming program initiatives, technical assistance, employer outreach, and opportunities for training. CRP staff discussed concerns and provided information regarding program offerings.

Develop a task force with representation from each DORS region to identify the role/ tasks of the CRP liaison, how this position is assigned to a CRP, procedures for collaboration with the Office of Community Rehabilitation Programs and expectations from the CRPs.

- DORS has not completed this performance measure during PY24. This goal will be included as a priority in the PY25 Agency Program Plan.

Objective 4.2

Enhance collaboration with and services to Maryland private and public employers.

Strategies: DORS will

Regional Business Services Representatives and WTC Employment Specialists will provide, enhance, and track services to businesses including recruitment assistance, technical assistance for tax incentives, development of work-based learning opportunities, OJT and customized training, apprenticeships, retention services, and disability awareness and ADA training.

- Goal to continue into the next program year.

Reengage with businesses through the CSAVR National Employment Team (NET).

- Goal to continue into the next program year.

Collaborate with WIOA partners and CRPs to leverage business contacts, share resources and expertise, and coordinate services that are beneficial to businesses and promote the employment of individuals with disabilities.

- Goal to continue into the next program year.

Partner with businesses to connect them to DORS job seekers through tours, career information sessions, job fairs, and other direct means.

- Goal to continue into the next program year.

The Staff Specialist for Benefits Planning Quality Assurance will develop and provide training for businesses and BSRs on employment for SSA beneficiaries.

- Goal to continue into the next program year.

Progress in achieving the goals and priorities by June 30, 2025:

The number of services to employers will increase as compared to the previous year and will be documented in the AWARE™ Employer module to measure effectiveness in serving employers.

- As of June 30, 2024, the number of services provided has increased by 10%, driven by enhanced collaboration between employers and BSR initiatives. This growth reflects a rise in recruitment activity and the development of stronger employer partnerships.

The number of work-based learning opportunities, including, but not limited to, and On-the-Job Training opportunities will increase as compared to the previous year and be tracked through the AWARE case management system.

- There has been a modest increase in work-based learning experiences, particularly through volunteering and on-the-job training (OJT) placements.

Communications, minutes and agendas of CSAVR NET meetings and activities as well as business services reports will confirm activities and progress.

- Regular communication continues with CSAVR and the National Employment Team (NET) via email, conferences, and bi-monthly virtual meetings. These engagements are documented through calendar invites and meeting minutes to ensure transparency and accountability.

Monthly narrative reports from Business Service Representatives will show evidence of activities with agency partners.

- BSRs consistently submits monthly narrative reports detailing ongoing partnerships and collaborative efforts with both agency and community partners.

Business partner activities will be tracked in the AWARE™ Employer module and increase over previous year.

- Business partner activities are systematically tracked and recorded in the Aware system, supporting data-driven decision-making and program evaluation.

Training from the Staff Specialist for Benefits Planning Quality Assurance will be provided at least annually, or as needed.

- Benefits Planning Quality Assurance activities have just recently begun, including development and refinement of a review instrument using Alchemer. As this process accumulates data, training will be scheduled to share findings and suggested actions.

Objective 4.3

DORS will provide support to the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) to maintain and enhance its leadership role in the oversight of VR service delivery in Maryland.

Strategies: DORS will

DORS will ensure that it works with the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) in accordance with federal law and regulations and Council By-Laws.

- Goal to continue into the next program year with a focus on efforts to increase SRC membership.

Council members will review and comment on the Annual Agency Program Plan, DORS progress in meeting its performance goals, and DORS program accomplishments.

- Goal to continue into the next program year.

Progress in achieving the goals and priorities by June 30, 2025:

The Maryland SRC will conduct four quarterly meetings.

- During PY 24, the Maryland SRC held meetings on September 11, October 7 (SRC Retreat), November 6, 2024; February 5, April 3 (Policy Meeting), and May 7, 2025. The SRC also held a meeting on June 18, 2025 to discuss concerns related to the Department of Education's proposed FY2026 budget. There are currently 19 full members and 7 DORS liaisons to the Council, a substantial increase over PY23 SRC membership.

The Maryland SRC and DORS will conduct annual public meetings.

- DORS and the MSRC held two virtual public meetings on September 18 and 19, 2024. A call-in option was also available, and American Sign Language interpreters were at both meetings.

Objective 4.4

Promote and enhance quality independent living outcomes for individuals with disabilities in Maryland through independent living programs.

Strategies: DORS will

Analyze and promote collaboration between DORS, the CILs, and the MDSILC. Improve communication among DORS staff so they can effectively share accurate and comprehensive information with the customers they serve. Additionally, increase awareness among the CILs and the SILC about the services DORS provides, enabling them to better inform consumers who seek assistance at their agencies.

As part of this strategy, DORS will implement a monthly informal meeting titled "Let's Talk." This session will include DORS staff and a representative from a CIL in one of the regions on a rotating basis. The purpose of the meeting will be to share program updates, discuss available services, and provide an opportunity for open dialogue through a question-and-answer session to strengthen collaboration and information sharing.

Provide grant support, technical assistance and monitoring to the Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC).

- Goal to continue into the next program year.

As the designated state entity (DSE) DORS will manage grants to Centers for Independent Living (CILs), including providing technical assistance and monitoring regarding the IL program, the IL AT program, and fiscal responsibilities.

- Goal to continue into the next program year.

Participate as an IL Partner in implementation of the 2026-2029 State Plan for Independent Living.

- Goal to continue into the next program year.

Serve as the Designated State Entity (DSE) by actively participating in the development, coordination, and implementation of the yearly Annual Performance Report for the State

Independent Living Services Program (PPR), ensuring compliance with the Administration for Community Living (ACL).

- Goal to continue into the next program year.

Regional Directors and OBVS Supervisors will conduct an annual meeting with Executive Directors of CILs within their areas to discuss issues of mutual interest.

- Goal to continue into the next program year.

As the DSE annual grant performance reviews will be conducted for each CIL receiving a grant from DORS and for the Statewide Independent Living Council.

Beginning August 18th, DORS Staff Specialist for Grants along with Accounting Supervisor, will be conducting audits focused on financial checks and balances in our role as the Designated State Entity. These audits will be conducted at three CILs and Maryland SILC and are expected to conclude by late September or early October 2025.

DORS Regional/Program directors will confirm at least annual meetings with CIL Executive Directors.

- In May 2025, a statewide virtual meeting was convened to foster stronger collaboration between the Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS) and Maryland's Centers for Independent Living (CILs). Participants included DORS leadership, DORS Regional Directors and Program Managers, CIL Executive Directors, and the Executive Director of the Maryland Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC).
- Regional Meetings will be held in late Summer 2025. As a continuation of statewide collaboration efforts, DORS Regional Directors and Program Manager will hopefully plan to participate in each region's annual meeting with the CIL located in their district. The goals are to strengthen local partnerships and share DORS and CIL resources directly with supervisors and counselors. These regional meetings will build upon the momentum from the May statewide session and provide more tailored opportunities to support individuals with disabilities through collaborative service delivery.

Objective 4.5

Evaluate partner connection for consumers receiving Social Security Benefits.

Strategies: DORS will

Develop and implement a tool for field staff to request updates to SSA benefits status and associated information in AWARE™, on an as-needed basis.

- Goal modified for the next program year. DORS developed and implemented a tool for field staff to request updates to SSA benefits status and associated information in AWARE, on an as needed basis. DORS will complete rollout, training, and monitor usage of the new verification request tool to assess agency adoption, usage, and value.

Monitor updated policy and procedures for batch processing of benefits verification to ensure order of selection, eligibility, and appropriate referral for services for individuals receiving Social Security Benefits.

- Goal to continue into the next program year.

Complete referrals for Social Security recipients on the waitlist to employment networks and the Work Incentives and Planning Assistance (WIPA).

- Goal to continue into the next program year.
- Goal modified for the next program year. DORS will produce an analysis of Ticket to Work handoffs to Employment Networks upon DORS case closure, review cost reimbursement trends, and explore the relationship between Ticket handoff and cost reimbursement success, through partnership and collaboration with the Ticket to Work Program Manager and EN Partnership Plus entities.

Ensure fee for service benefits planning is completed for all appropriate Social Security recipients.

Goal modified for the next program year. DORS revised fee for service benefits planning to ensure alignment with agency policies and procedures. DORS will complete rollout, training, and adoption of revisions to fee-for-service benefits planning including timing of services, the addition of a DORS-internal General Benefits Consultation Service, and the newly established pre-ETS service. DORS will monitor usage of new and revised services for the next program year.

Progress in achieving the goals and priorities by June 30, 2025:

DORS counselors and supervisors will utilize Social Security benefits information provided via SVES batch process and medical documentation when making eligibility and order of selection determinations for all consumers.

- DORS will maintain 100% verification of cases at intake. Complex cases will result in coordination with Social Security Programs to assist in eligibility determination and recommendations for benefits planning services as needed. During this program year, DORS made revisions to the verification process rolling out new tools for verification options during case services, specifically regarding temporary SSN and pre-ETS verifications prior to receipt of SSN. Lastly, the Social Security Programs Unit developed and provided regional trainings and initiated periodic office hours to address questions and concerns regarding the verification process to facilitate appropriate usage of unit provided data for eligibility determination, etc. DORS will monitor the usage of the new verification tools to ensure appropriate usage.

DORS will track participants with Social Security benefits in delayed status to increase referral to employment networks and/or WIPA as appropriate.

- DORS developed revisions to SARA to facilitate referral to ENs and WIPAs to roll out in the coming program year. Manual (snail mail/email) contact provided minimal engagement.

DORS will track participants with Social Security benefits to increase referral to an Employment Network after obtaining employment.

- DORS and the SSA Ticket Program Manager (TPM) have begun quarterly meetings with partner ENs to review handoff referrals and strategize on methods to increase referrals. DORS has also expanded our list of EN Partner Agencies to include larger, national ENs as well as increased availability of EN providers as fee-for-service

vendors to increase seamless handoffs. Lastly, In addition to handoff tracking, DORS is currently rewriting rewrote the benefits planning fee-for-service desk reference, updated the Benefits Planning QA process to include Ticket required discussions, and will be initiating provided vendor training to ensure Ticket EN referrals are completed as part of the benefits planning fee-for-service.

The number of Social Security beneficiaries receiving timely fee-for-service benefits counseling will increase as compared to the previous year.

- DORS developed a tool to track benefits planning usage and current data indicates real time (July 2025) data of 59.3% benefits planning usage for current open VR cases. This data will be provided quarterly moving forward to track usage statistics. Statistics are available agency wide as well as by region and district. Data is also now available for average days between specific case touchpoints and the implementation of appropriate Phased services. This data will be used to ensure timeliness of the provision of the service. Lastly, quarterly benefits planning provider meetings have been reinstated and will be utilized to address service delay concerns from the provider's perspective as well.

Goal 5: Provide infrastructure to promote and support the accomplishment of the DORS mission

Objective 5.1

Implement strategies required by WIOA and in accordance with the Combined State Plan.

Strategies: DORS will

Implement MOUs/Resource Sharing Agreements with workforce partners required to fulfill new federal reporting requirements.

- Goal to continue into the next program year.

Expand electronic communication with DORS consumers throughout the case process, including at specific case status touchpoints and post-exit.

- Goal modified for the next program year to include contact at specific touchpoints throughout the case process.

Use regional workgroups to develop and implement data collection systems and data sharing agreements with WIOA partners to facilitate the collection of federal reporting requirements.

- Goal modified for the next program year to utilize regional workgroups to facilitate the collection of federal reporting requirements.

Provide DORS staff and agency partners with opportunities to collaborate on internal technical assistance and training regarding emerging workforce topics and initiatives.

- Goal modified for the next program year to include technical assistance and training on emerging workforce initiatives.

Document consumer involvement with WIOA partner agencies in the AWARE case management system.

- Goal to continue into the next program year.

Continue processes and strategies for elimination of hard copy consumer case files.

- Goal to continue into the next program year. Cases are reviewed and electronic file contents are verified at case closure.

Progress in achieving the goals and priorities by June 30, 2025:

MOUs and Resource Sharing Agreements will be completed on an as needed basis to conform to State and Federal regulations.

- MOUs and RSAs have been completed for most of the local workforce areas and are under review; several of the local workforce boards have been granted an extension.

Electronic communication procedures for requesting and collecting information and input from DORS consumers will be implemented and updated in the RSM.

- DORS has purchased SARA (Semi-Autonomous Research Assistant), a software application that operates as a virtual assistant to automate regular processing, follow-up, data entry and documentation in accordance with agency policy. Installation and staff training began in April 2023 as a staggered rollout. Staff training has continued with an expectation of completion early 2024. Policy is currently being evaluated to determine implications of data exchange and best practices for staff.

Staff will be provided technical assistance on a topic related to WIOA at least quarterly.

- Training regarding WIOA was limited other than informing staff about approved trainings that can be located on the WIOA Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL): <https://www.labor.maryland.gov/employment/train>, Goal to continue into the next program year.

Consumer involvement with WIOA partners will increase as compared to the previous year. Individual statistics will be included in staff performance evaluations, based upon case documentation.

- In PY24 an average of 6.2% of DORS consumers were involved in services provided by WIOA partners, up from an average of 5.4% in PY23. Measuring consumer involvement with WIOA partners is difficult to track because there is no standard/shared tracking system.

Staff will continue to attach all pertinent documentation to the electronic AWARE case record and review materials at case closure, while following agency record retention policy.

- Documentation attached in the electronic case record is verified through Quality Assurance Case reviews, Eligibility and Plan review and Case closure checklist completed by Supervisor, and requests for Administrative Approval completed by Senior leadership.

Objective 5.2

Increase staff competency and satisfaction by providing ongoing staff training, professional development, and leadership development programs while intentionally promoting a culture of staff retention.

Strategies: DORS will

Establish an Internal Communications Workgroup to recommend a methodology which will ensure/verify all staff receive clear and consistent communication, including evaluation of a “DORS Dashboard” to share accomplishments and information.

- Goal to continue into the next program year. Staff intranet is updated continuously to provide staff information.

Continue working towards developing position-specific training to be offered via the Canvas™ Learning Management System platform for both existing and new staff to access the learning modules using input from the New Staff Training Workgroup.

- Goal modified for the next program year to specify Canvas learning management platform.

Expand the comprehensive training series for supervisors to include staff orientation, personnel management, and case management functions.

- Goal modified for the next program year to expand current supervisor training series.

Promote leadership development and cross-training opportunities to ensure continuation of critical agency functions utilizing work teams from multiple program areas.

- Goal to continue into the next program year.

Promote leadership development and cross-training opportunities to ensure continuation of critical agency functions utilizing work teams from multiple program areas.

Continue to support DORS staff obtaining advanced degrees in VR and related fields.

- Goal to continue into the next program year.

Conduct at least quarterly training of Business Services staff to enhance their skills and develop strategies for engaging businesses.

- Goal to continue into the next program year.

Continue virtual and in-person training to strengthen and enhance engagement with business in the community. These are ongoing trainings for Business Services Staff.

Continue with ongoing trainings for Business Services staff with Title I of the ADA about employment for IWD and accommodations

Continue daily activities with businesses in the community to educate on the services of DORS and the Business Services staff of the dual customer approach

Progress in achieving the goals and priorities by June 30, 2025:

Internal Communication Workgroup recommendations will be provided to executive staff.

- Goal to continue into the next program year. An Internal Communications-Specific Workgroup was not established but a workgroup was created to update the Counselor Toolkit which is now full of relevant training materials, factsheets, desk references, guidance and worksheets. Although an official workgroup was not established, collaboratively generated insights and recommendations from staff in leadership roles are regularly communicated to the executive leadership team to inform strategic decision-making.

New Staff Training Workgroup recommendations will be provided to executive staff in order to move forward with publishing training modules, including curriculum and procedures for training new staff virtually.

- A workgroup was established to create and deliver policy training around the state. DORS has purchased usage of the VR Development Group's YesLMS system and these training modules are used to onboard incoming staff members, along with ongoing training and professional development on topics specifically related to VR, leadership, mentorship and supervision.

Management training for new DORS supervisors will be offered twice during the program year. Examples of these training courses will include staff evaluation using specific reports and exit interviews.

- DORS supported nine staff members to participate in the National Rehabilitation Leadership Institute (NRLI) during the 2024-2025 cohorts. DORS has also supported newly promoted supervisors participating in multi-session leadership programs such as "From Bud to Boss" and the "Supervisory Training Bootcamp". Supervisors were also given the opportunity to participate in supervisory specific learning tracks via online VR training resources.

Staff use of accessible on-line/web based learning management systems such as Workforce Innovation Technical Assistance Center (WINTAC), VR Technical Assistance Center - Quality Management (VRTAC-QM), National Technical Assistance Center on Transition: Collaborative (NTACT:C), National Association of State Workforce Agencies (NASWA), and ADA learning centers will increase during the PY.

- Based upon participation/completion certificates, staff participated in online web-based learning opportunities relatively the same amount as in PY24. However, DORS onboarded additional staff members during PY25 as compared to PY24, so the amount of new-staff orientation learning modules increased tremendously.

At least one multi-session leadership development program with a cross-training component will be offered during the PY.

- An internal multi-session leadership program was not offered in PY24 but Emerging Leaders is starting in October 2025. Nine staff members participated in the external leadership program, NRLI.
- DORS began the Emerging Leaders program in November 2025 with a cohort total of 19. Leadership from around the agency, including DDS, created and will deliver a total of 10 sessions by the conclusion of the program in April, 2026. Additional opportunities were created for Emerging Leaders participants such as participation in the Community Rehabilitation Program Advisory Board and Policy Review Committee. As part of their cohort project, a portion of participants are also responsible for gathering information and feedback for contribution to the Customer Satisfaction Needs Assessment survey. Additionally, a group of DDS and VR participants are responsible for developing and delivering a training and factsheet of the DDS process for determining eligibility of SSA benefits. This project is in response to a specific need of VR counselors to understand the process to aide in VR counseling.

Develop agency work teams to identify critical agency functions and plan for workflow based upon staff resources.

- During the program year, DORS developed agency work teams to address the annual planning meeting and the QA review implementation. Goal to continue into the next program year.

Staff enrollment in graduate school programs will increase from the previous PY.

- Please see the below chart for a breakdown of staff participating in the tuition reimbursement program:

Summer 2023	3
Fall 2023	5
Spring 2024	9
Summer 2024	6
Fall 2024	13
Spring 2025	16
Projected Summer 2025	10

Summer 2025 = 12. Fall 2025 = 11. Spring 2026 = 7. Total 2025 graduates: 9

Agendas and minutes of Business Services meetings will document training progress.

- Agendas and minutes of Business Service meetings have been documented and archived for staff reference.

Objective 5.3

Promote strategic use of accessible technology and establish policy and internal controls to support staff effectiveness and efficiency.

Strategies: DORS will

Monitor and evaluate DORS Eligibility Unit capacity to centrally process all applications for service semiannually to address increased counselor workloads while promoting a consistent consumer experience.

- Goal to continue into the next program year to include expected EDU progress toward statewide processing of all applications.

Review, update, and document internal controls and streamline case management, communication, and administrative procedures to reduce reporting errors and establish statewide consistency.

- Goal to continue into the next program year. Ongoing process.

Develop a consistent vendor application and approval process and monitoring protocol.

- Goal to be modified for the next program year as Vendor Coordinator Staff Specialist position has been established to standardize and monitor vendor processing.
- Update procedures for vendor credential monitoring and streamlining vendor module.
- Electronic application in development, including updates to Vendor Requirements manual.

Utilize an Online Referral procedure managed by Central Office staff to ensure consistent processing of initial referral contact and District assignment.

- Goal to continue into the next program year including ongoing monitoring of referral process.

Monitor and evaluate staff usage of CITRIX Right Signature accessible digital signature application annually using usage reports to improve staff efficiency and decrease time necessary to document consumer review.

- Goal discontinued for the next program year. CITRIX Right Signature has been implemented, and appropriate use is monitored through the Quality Assurance Case Review process.

Identify critical platforms and other technologies needed to ensure continuity of work.

- Goal to continue into the next program year. DORS uses Alchemer (formerly Survey Gizmo) to develop a variety of tools used by staff and consumers to increase efficiency and obtain necessary documentation.

Progress in achieving the goals and priorities by June 30, 2025:

Eligibility Unit Workgroup will be utilized to evaluate responsibilities and Unit processes to streamline case handoff to field counselors following Eligibility determination during PY 2024 and thereafter reviewed annually during Quality Assurance Case Reviews. Relevant policy information will be updated in DORS policy.

- During PY24, Quality Assurance Case Review evaluated cases processed by the Eligibility Determination Unit (EDU) along with District offices; EDU report has been prepared and shared with leadership to help evaluate intake and eligibility processes and handoff to field counselors. Further discussion and evaluation will take place during the Quality Assurance Wrap-up event scheduled for September 26, 2025.

Expand use of the Granicus Government Civic Engagement Platform (formerly GovDelivery) and incorporate SARA™ to supplement the AWARE™ case management system to send appointment reminders to customers and solicit post-exit follow-up.

- Staff have continued to utilize SARA™ to schedule and remind consumers of upcoming appointments and responsibilities. DORS and SARA WORKS personnel hold regular meetings to discuss staff usage, identify issues, and improve application functionality for the benefit of staff and consumers. SARA WORKS staff have been highly receptive to feedback and continuous improvement. GovDelivery has been utilized primarily for mass communication directly to consumers such sharing information for upcoming job fairs and events.

Online Referral process will be evaluated at least quarterly to review effectiveness of procedures and implement efficiencies as necessary. Explore capabilities of platform to send electronic intake materials and information to minimize use of U.S. Mail to expedite referral processes.

- The online referral instrument and process continues to be reviewed in conjunction with EDU leadership to evaluate effectiveness and seek opportunities for improvement and efficiency. Steps have been taken so that consumers referred for DORS services receive materials electronically unless otherwise requested. Recently, the Eligibility Determination Unit has revised their pre-ETS referral procedures to align resources and expedite processes.

Position descriptions will be reviewed and revised, as necessary, for consistency with DORS priorities to ensure appropriate distribution of DORS resources at least once during each program year during employee end-cycle performance evaluations.

- Position descriptions are reviewed and evaluated during all End-Cycle performance evaluations; updates are made to include assigned duties and responsibilities as necessary.

DORS-required forms and administrative procedures will be reviewed and streamlined, including focus on virtual/remote resources/fillable forms/review & reduce duplicative information/fact sheets, and evaluate need for signatures on forms.

- DORS forms and AWARE letters receive a plain language review with Office of Communications & Accessibility staff and policy development team prior to

publishing. The policy development team has continued to evaluate the need for signatures on DORS forms to reduce the burden on consumers and administrative staff. When signatures are required, DORS forms include the ability to obtain PDF digital signatures efficiently. In PY24, DORS Policy Review Committee has reviewed all AWARE letters and made recommendations to edit, retire, and improve communication with consumers and partners. This process is expected to be completed during the upcoming program year.

Establish internal control procedures for the vendor application and approval process and monitoring vendor performance during FY 2024. Enact and monitor process with semiannual review.

- Effective internal control procedures have been established for new vendor onboarding including program and administrative approval, and entry into AWARE and FMIS. Additional procedures have been established to identify vendors (quarterly) with no authorizations for (3 or 5) years, and to make those vendors Inactive in AWARE. Reports have been developed to provide monthly metrics on New Vendors and Updated Vendors. An electronic Vendor Application is in development, on both Alchemer and Smart Sheets platforms. However, back-end accessibility has been identified as a potential issue for both platforms.

2. PERFORMANCE ON THE PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY INDICATORS UNDER SECTION 116 OF WIOA FOR THE MOST RECENTLY COMPLETED PROGRAM YEAR, REFLECTING ACTUAL AND NEGOTIATED LEVELS OF PERFORMANCE. EXPLAIN ANY DISCREPANCIES IN THE ACTUAL AND NEGOTIATED LEVELS; AND

Performance Indicator	Program Year 2024 Actual Level	Program Year 2024 Negotiated Level
Employment 2nd Quarter after Exit	45.5%	50%
Median Earnings 2nd Quarter after Exit	\$4,674	\$4,500
Employment 4th Quarter after Exit	43.3%	47%
Credential Rate	42.4%	30%
Measurable Skill Gains	55.3%	52%

DORS exceeded Program Year 2024 federal performance goals for Measurable Skills Gains, Credential rate, and Median Earnings, 2nd Quarter After Exit. Specific training was presented to all VR staff on performance indicators, including regular progress updates toward goals using data analytics software. DORS has implemented SARA (Semi-Autonomous Research Assistant) bi-directional communication tool to supplement the AWARE case management system to assist counselors with the collection of supporting documentation for Measurable Skills Gains and Credential Attainment.

Although DORS did not meet PY24 negotiated levels of performance for Employment 2nd and 4th Quarter After Exit, state performance assessment scores exceeded 93% of goal. DORS continues to explore Employment 2nd and 4th Quarter After Exit results to identify issues that affect job retention following program exit. DORS has been approved to participate in the Center for Innovative Training in Vocational Rehabilitation: Provider Advancement Through High-Quality Training (CIT-VR: PATH) grant designed to expand professional development opportunities for direct support professionals and paraprofessionals working in Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRPs) and strengthen partnerships between State VR Agencies (SVRAs) and CRPs to improve outcomes for individuals with disabilities.

Additionally, DORS is partnering with the University of Wisconsin-Madison (UW-Madison) to participate in a model demonstration project to demonstrate the efficacy of a job retention program, Promoting Retention in Meaningful Employment (PRIME) program. The UW-Madison program, in collaboration with the state VR programs of Wisconsin Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, Delaware Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, Florida Vocational Rehabilitation, Maryland Division of Rehabilitation Services, and our collaborating research partners will provide a model demonstration of the PRIME program in four states. This program will focus on addressing common barriers to retention and develop capacity and planning among individuals with disabilities to retain and advance at work in select areas of each state.

These factors, along with an emphasis upon career training and higher education, have contributed to successful performance during the program year.

d. 3. The use of funds reserved for innovation and expansion activities (Sections 101(a)(18) and 101(a)(23) of the Rehabilitation Act) (e.g., SRC, SILC).

DORS continues to utilize funds reserved for innovation and expansion (I&E) activities to provide funding to support the operations of the State Independent Living Council. Their expenditures included salaries, travel and meeting cost, association dues, training, and office supplies.

e. 1. Acceptance of title VI funds:

(A) VR agency requests to receive title VI funds.

e. 2. If the VR agency has elected to receive title VI funds, Section 606(b)(3) of the Rehabilitation Act requires VR agencies to include specific goals and priorities with respect to the distribution of Title VI funds received under Section 603 of the Rehabilitation Act for the provision of supported employment services. Describe the use of Title VI funds and how they will be used in meeting the goals and priorities of the Supported Employment program.

GOALS AND PRIORITIES FOR THE PROVISION OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

Supported employment services are provided on a statewide basis through the Title VI, Part B, and also Title I funds. Supported employment is competitive integrated employment or employment in integrated work settings in which individuals are receiving ongoing support services for individuals with the most significant disabilities for whom competitive employment has not traditionally occurred, or for whom competitive integrated employment has been interrupted or intermittent as a result of a significant disability.

A State that receives supported employment funds must reserve and expend 50 percent of such allotment for the provision of supported employment services to youth with the most significant disabilities. The State is required to provide matching funds of not less than 10 percent of the costs of carrying out supported employment services provided to youth with

the most significant disabilities, as well as to ensure that no more than 2.5 percent of the State allotment is used for administrative costs. Fund allocation on a statewide basis ensures an equitable statewide service delivery. Title VI funds will be used to provide supported employment services after the individual has been placed in employment.

DORS and the Maryland Behavioral Health Administration (BHA) are finalizing an updated Memorandum of Understanding and will continue working to streamline the VR application process by identifying required data elements that may be collected prior to referral to increase efficiency. DORS has a unique relationship with Maryland's BHA Administrative Service Organization (ASO) whereby information that is collected by the provider and entered into the ASO is available for the DORS counselor at referral. This reduces redundancy and creates a streamlined path for the participant to receive DORS services.

DORS will Monitor the impact of supported employment intensive job coaching supports focused on achieving job stability and employment retention statistics on a quarterly basis using post-exit wage data.

DORS will continue to provide staff resources and staff training to support Evidence-Based Practice Supported Employment and consumers who receive Assertive Community Treatment services.

DORS and Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) have finalized an updated Memorandum of Understanding which reflects collaborative practices related to WIOA specifies the roles and responsibilities of each partner at the state and local level, as well as the appropriate referral processes.

The quality of supported employment services will continue to be assured through the Division's Quality Assurance case review process. Findings will be used to identify policies in need of clarification and staff training needs.

e. 3. Supported employment services may be provided with Title I or Title VI funds following placement of individuals with the most significant disabilities in employment. In accordance with Section 101(a)(22) and Section 606(b)(3) of the Rehabilitation Act, describe the quality, scope, and extent of supported employment services to be provided to individuals with the most significant disabilities, including youth with the most significant disabilities; and the timing of transition to extended services.

The goal of the state's supported employment program is to maintain a system whereby individuals with the most significant disabilities are afforded the opportunity to participate in competitive integrated employment.

DORS will continue to encumber Title VI, Part B funds on a fee-for-service basis. When supported employment services exhaust Title VI, Part B funds, DORS counselors are instructed to encumber Title I funds. In that way, individuals in need of supported employment services will continue to be served, even when Title VI, Part B funds are exhausted, in compliance with the Rehabilitation Act, as amended DORS additionally may provide Youth Extended Services, for a period of up to 4 years or until a youth reaches the age of 25, following up to 24 months of supported employment service. DORS-funded ongoing support services during the extended phase includes monitoring (at a minimum, twice monthly) at the work site of the individual to assess and verify continued employment stability, and coordination or provision of specific services at or away from the work site that are needed to maintain employment stability.

e. 4. Sections 101(a)(22) and 606(b)(4) of the Rehabilitation Act require the VR agency to describe efforts to identify and arrange, including entering into cooperative agreements, with other State agencies and other appropriate entities in order to provide supported employment services. The description must include extended services, as applicable, to individuals with the most significant disabilities, including the provision of extended services to youth with the most significant disabilities in accordance with 34 C.F.R. § 363.4(a) and 34 C.F.R. § 361.5(c)(19)(v).

The Division enters into cooperative agreements with the Developmental Disabilities Administration and the Behavioral Health Administration in order to provide for increased interagency cooperation, to ensure the maximum utilization of appropriate programs and resources in the provision of supported employment services to individuals with the most significant disabilities, to expand and improve services to individuals with the most significant disabilities, and to maximize the use of comparable benefits.

Formal written agreements set forth terms and conditions under which the Division and another agency or organization will cooperate in the provision of services. These formal interagency cooperative agreements will: identify policies, practices, and procedures that can be coordinated among the agencies (particularly definitions, standards for eligibility, the joint sharing and use of evaluations and assessments, and procedures for making referrals), identify available resources and define the financial responsibility of each agency for paying for necessary services (consistent with State law) and procedures for resolving disputes between agencies, and include all additional components necessary to ensure meaningful cooperation and coordination.

EVIDENCED BASED SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT

DORS has implemented a Milestone Payment system for psychiatric rehabilitation programs offering Evidence-Based Supported Employment services. The Milestone Payment system significantly streamlines provision of services for DORS and provider staff by substantially reducing preparation of authorizations and invoices, tracking of hours of services, and simplifying reporting.

EMPLOYMENT FIRST

DORS is a partner with other State agencies and CRPs in implementing Employment First, a national effort to assure that all individuals, including those with significant disabilities, consider employment on a preferred basis in planning their lives. Employment First, is consistent with DORS' belief that individuals with disabilities, even the most significant disabilities, can work in meaningful positions in integrated settings when provided with adequate, appropriate support. Supported employment is appropriate for individuals in Employment First and is the means to assure the best chance for success in employment. Benefits planning is an important part of services for individuals served through Employment First.

(f) Annual Estimates

1. Estimates for next Fiscal Year

f.1.A. VR Program

Priority Category (if applicable)	No. of Individuals Eligible for Services	No. of Eligible Individuals Expected to Receive Services under VR Program	Costs of Services using Title I Funds	No. of Eligible Individuals Not Receiving Services (if applicable)
1	19069	19000	\$52,000,000	0
2	3233	800	\$2,000,000	2500
3	33	0	0	33

f. 1. B. Supported Employment Program.

Priority Category (if applicable)	No. of Individuals Eligible for Services	No. of Eligible Individuals Expected to Receive Services under Supported Employment Program	Costs of Services using Title I and Title VI Funds	No. of Eligible Individuals Not Receiving Services (if applicable)
1	3317	3000	\$315,114	0

g. 1. Pursuant to Section 101(a)(5) of the Rehabilitation Act, this description must be amended when the VR agency determines, based on the annual estimates described in description (f), that VR services cannot be provided to all eligible individuals with disabilities in the State who apply for and are determined eligible for services.

**** VR agencies may maintain an order of selection policy and priority of eligible individuals without implementing or continuing to implement an order of selection.***

The VR agency is implementing an order of selection with one or more priority categories closed.

g. 2. A. The justification for the order

An order of selection is required under section 101 (a)(5) of the Rehabilitation Act if a rehabilitation agency determines that it is unable to provide services to all eligible individuals who apply for services. With an order of selection, services must first be provided to individuals with the most significant disabilities before they are provided to other eligible individuals.

Due to limited personnel, DORS has been unable to provide services to all eligible individuals. Based on projected fiscal and personnel resources, an order of selection will remain in effect. The Division's Order of Selection ensures that eligible individuals with the most significant disabilities receive priority.

g. 2. B. The order (priority categories) to be followed in selecting eligible individuals to be provided VR services ensuring that individuals with the most significant disabilities are selected for services before all other individuals with disabilities; and

DORS has been in an Order of Selection for a number of years. Individuals are placed in priority categories at the time of eligibility determination. Depending upon DORS resources, the categories are closed for services in ascending order beginning with Category III and proceeding to Categories II and I. Services are provided only to those individuals in an open category. However, DORS shall continue to plan for and provide services to any individual determined eligible and where an Individual Plan for Employment has been signed prior to

the date on which the Order of Selection category to which the individual has been assigned has been closed, irrespective of the severity of the individual's disability.

DORS staff are advised via formal issuance when categories are closed or reopened. Consumers are taken off the waiting list when resources are available to provide services, based on their application date.

The Order of Selection categories are as follows:

Category 1: Individuals with Most Significant Disabilities.

Category 2: Individuals with Significant Disabilities.

Category 3: Individuals with Non-Severe Disabilities.

DESCRIPTION OF PRIORITY CATEGORIES

An individual with a most significant disability is an eligible individual:

Who has a severe physical or mental impairment which seriously limits three or more functional capacities such as mobility, communication, self-care, self-direction, interpersonal skills, work tolerance, or work skills, in terms of an employment outcome;

Whose VR can be expected to require multiple VR services: at least two from the main services of guidance and counseling, medical rehabilitation services including technology services, job placement, and vocational training; and who may require extensive services over an extended period of time. It is emphasized that determination of priority category is based on the individual's disability and its impact on employment. There is clear evidence, demonstration or documentation of the limitations imposed by the disability.

An individual with a significant disability is an eligible individual:

Who has a severe physical or mental impairment which seriously limits one or two functional capacities and also meets requirements for multiple VR services over an extended period of time as described above.

An individual with a non-severe disability is an eligible individual:

Who does not meet the definition of significant or most significant disability.

g. 2. C. The VR agency's goals for serving individuals in each priority category, including how the agency will assist eligible individuals assigned to closed priority categories with information and referral, the method in which the VR agency will manage waiting lists, and the projected timelines for opening priority categories. NOTE: Priority categories are considered open when all individuals in the priority category may be served.

Eligible individuals assigned to Category 1 will be served without delay, and eligible individuals assigned to Category 2 will be moved from the waiting list to plan development and implementation, in accordance with the methods discussed below. DORS will continue to investigate methods to increase engagement of DORS consumers, including youth, while they are on the waitlist, such as by proactively providing information and referral services to WIOA partner agencies, including timely follow-up on those referrals.

The DORS Quality Assurance staff manages waiting list consumers by evaluating the monthly total number of Referrals, Applications for service, Eligibility Determinations, and number of newly eligible individuals added to the waiting list. The Division's Executive Staff will compare monthly totals to previous 12-month averages to determine availability of resources and staff capacity to remove individuals from the waiting list. Should conditions support a waitlist rollout, Quality Assurance staff will work in conjunction with Executive Staff to identify a

cohort of eligible individuals based on their application date, and make contact by mail, email and text messaging where available to invite individuals to confirm interest in receiving VR services and update personal, educational, and vocational information by completing an “Off Delayed Status” survey.

Quality Assurance staff will monitor survey responses to enter case notes and update information in DORS’ case management system as necessary and will notify the appropriate field counselors and regional leadership of any responses received to begin IPE development activities.

Unfortunately, monthly capacity evaluation has not supported a waitlist rollout during program years 24-25. Most recent waitlist rollout occurred during program year 2023. Staff continue to contact individuals on the waiting list annually to determine their continued interest in remaining on the wait list for vocational rehabilitation services. Counselors also utilize SARA™ Client Communications Software to share information about job fairs and services available through workforce partners regularly with wait list consumers.

There are no projected timelines for opening closed priority categories, as current staff caseload sizes are about one and a half times higher than the national average caseload size for a VR counselor. During the Commission to Study the DORS (House Bill 660), completed in March 2023, final recommendations included adding 74 new FTE State PINs to eliminate the waitlist and reduce the caseload levels of VR counselors to bring Maryland’s VR counselor caseloads in line with the national average. As of this writing, no additional positions have been received as recommended by the Commission.

g. 3. Has the VR agency elected to serve eligible individuals outside of the order of selection who require specific services or equipment to maintain employment?

DORS has elected not to serve eligible individuals who require specific services or equipment to maintain employment, regardless of the established order of selection.

h. Waiver of Statewideness.

The State plan shall be in effect in all political subdivisions of the State, however, the Commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration (Commissioner) may waive compliance with this requirement in accordance with Section 101(a)(4) of the Rehabilitation Act and the implementing regulations in 34 C.F.R. § 361.26. If the VR agency is requesting a waiver of statewideness or has a previously approved waiver of statewideness, describe the types of services and the local entities providing such services under the waiver of statewideness and how the agency has complied with the requirements in 34 C.F.R. § 361.26. If the VR agency is not requesting or does not have an approved waiver of statewideness, please indicate “not applicable.”

Not Applicable. The Maryland DORS has not requested a waiver of statewideness.

i. 1. Analysis of current personnel and projected personnel needs including—

- A. The number of personnel currently needed by the VR agency to provide VR services, broken down by personnel category; and
- B. The number and type of personnel that are employed by the VR agency in the provision of vocational rehabilitation services, including ratios of qualified vocational rehabilitation counselors to clients;

C. Projections of the number of personnel, broken down by personnel category, who will be needed by the VR agency to provide VR services in 5 years based on projections of the number of individuals to be served, including individuals with significant disabilities, the number of personnel expected to retire or leave the field, and other relevant factors.

Personnel Category	No. of Personnel Employed	No. of Personnel Currently Needed	Projected No. of Personnel Needed in 5 Years
Management Associates/Administrative Aides/Support Staff/Secretaries	74	78	86
VR Specialists/Technical Specialists	175	181	225
VR Supervisors	31	31	36
Staff Specialists	45	51	51
Program Managers/Administrators/Executives	31	34	40
Other (Teachers, OT, PT, etc)	18	18	21

i. 1. D. Ratio of qualified VR counselors to clients:

Non-OBVS VR caseloads have an approximate average of 1 counselor to 127 consumers. OBVS VR caseloads have an approximate average of 1 counselor to 96 consumers.

All Pre-ETS caseloads (OFS & OBVS) have an approximate caseload of 1 counselor to 94 consumers.

Please note that individual counselors may have 2 caseloads, VR and Pre-ETS, resulting in 86 dual counselors having an approximate combined caseload of 184 consumers.

i. 1. E. Projected number of individuals to be served in 5 years:

2028: 23,500, increase of 7%

i. 2. A. A list of the institutions of higher education in the State that are preparing VR professionals, by type of program; the number of students enrolled at each of those institutions, broken down by type of program; and the number of students who graduated during the prior year from each of those institutions with certification or licensure, or with the credentials for certification or licensure, broken down by the personnel category for which they have received, or have the credentials to receive, certification or licensure.

Information has been requested from the below college programs:

Institute of Higher Education	Type of Program	No. of Students Enrolled	No. of Prior Year Graduates
University of Maryland Eastern Shore	BA in Rehabilitation Counseling	32	12
CW	MA in Rehabilitation Counseling	65	28

Institute of Higher Education	Type of Program	No. of Students Enrolled	No. of Prior Year Graduates
Coppin State	MA in Rehabilitation Counseling	26	13

i. 2. B. The VR agency’s plan for recruitment, preparation and retention of qualified personnel, which addresses the current and projected needs for qualified personnel; and the coordination and facilitation of efforts between the VR agency and institutions of higher education and professional associations to recruit, prepare, and retain personnel who are qualified, including personnel from minority backgrounds and personnel who are individuals with disabilities.

The DORS Staff Development Plan includes:

- Active membership on advisory boards of colleges/universities with programs in Rehabilitation Counseling;
- Provision of job shadowing opportunities for master’s level students in their first year;
- Provision of internship opportunities in the comprehensive rehabilitation facility and field offices;
- Staff presentations to students and classes about the public rehabilitation program;
- Maintain effective partnership with historically black institutions to assure sufficient number of applicants for state agency job vacancies so that the workforce reflects the composition of the State; and
- To support retention of staff and succession planning, collaborate with universities, professional associations, and the National Rehabilitation Leadership Institute partners to provide on-going mentoring and leadership activities.

Cooperative Agreement for Hosting Interns From:

University	Program
Coppin State	Master of Ed. Rehabilitation Counseling
University of Maryland, Eastern Shore	MS Rehabilitation Counseling
The George Washington University	MA Rehabilitation Counseling
Salisbury University	Master of Social Work
Gallaudet University	Master of Social Work, MA Interpretation
Towson University	BA Deaf Studies
University of Alabama	MA Rehabilitation Counseling
Emporia State University	Clinical & Rehabilitation Counseling
Fort Valley State University	MA Clinical Rehabilitation Counseling
University of South Carolina	MA Clinical Rehabilitation Counseling
University of Massachusetts, Boston	Vision Rehabilitation Therapy & Assistive Technology Programs
University of South Florida	MA Clinical Rehabilitation Counseling

University	Program
Winston-Salem State University	MA Rehabilitation Counseling

i. 2. C. Description of staff development policies, procedures, and activities that ensure all personnel employed by the VR agency receive appropriate and adequate training and continuing education for professionals and paraprofessionals:

i. Particularly with respect to assessment, vocational counseling, job placement, and rehabilitation technology, including training implemented in coordination with entities carrying out State programs under section 4 of the Assistive Technology Act of 1998; and

ii. Procedures for the acquisition and dissemination of significant knowledge from research and other sources to VR agency professionals and paraprofessionals and for providing training regarding the amendments to the Rehabilitation Act made by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.

The Division maintains a system of staff development for staff professionals and paraprofessionals that includes the identification of training needs, developing policies and procedures, and conducting training activities. Training needs are identified based upon results of a variety of assessment instruments and methods which include:

1. The organizational Planning Process in which training areas are determined by the initiatives identified in the Division's five-year Strategic Plan, the Annual Program Plan, and the Maryland WIOA State Plan;
2. DORS Performance Appraisal, which allows each professional employee and the employee's supervisor to identify on a semi-annual basis training needs and to develop a plan to assist the employee to meet the essential functions of their position as reflected in their position description. These needs are shared with the Staff Development Specialist and training needs are prioritized, developed, implemented, and/or coordinated based on the results of the information;
3. Program Evaluation: Areas of need are identified by the DORS program evaluator, through the case review process and the RSA 107 review;
4. The triennial comprehensive assessment of the needs of individuals with disabilities, included as Attachment 4.11 (a);
5. Division's Policy Review Committee, the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC), and annual public meetings provide feedback and a continuous evaluation component identifying needs that can be addressed and/or alleviated by training which are submitted to the Staff Development Office for appropriate action;
6. Individual Staff Training Needs Survey: A training needs assessment questionnaire is distributed to all staff annually. The results are tabulated and categorized to prepare for individual and/or group training programs.

Policies and Procedures for staff development activities are maintained in the Division's Rehabilitation Services Manual I, Administrative Manual, section 700, as well as the Staff Development Site on InDORS, the Division's intranet which allows staff to access information on policies and procedures for in-service training opportunities, tuition reimbursement, reimbursement for fees related to achievement and maintenance of CRC credentials, mentoring and leadership activities, and provides a training calendar with links to brochures and registration information.

TRAINING ACTIVITIES

The Staff Development program identifies training needs from surveys and sources noted above, and it develops and provides training to professional and paraprofessional staff through quarterly, annual, and customized training activities, which include the following:

- Orientation and training on fundamental rehabilitation process and procedures is provided to all new staff through Getting Connected, the Supervisor's Guide to training new staff through the Divisions, and the Quality Rehabilitation Training program provided to all new staff;
- New staff members are assigned trainings through the VR Development Group, Yes LMS system with 315 courses which cover a large variety of training topics including: Overview of the VR process, Disability-Specific Courses, Using Labor Market Tools, Ethics, Informed Choice Counseling Strategies, Rapid Engagement, and Counselor Burnout/Self Care.
- Live, interactive trainings for special populations is provided including: blindness and vision services, deaf and hard of hearing services, services for individuals with acquired brain injury, individuals on the autism spectrum, transitioning youth, psychiatric rehabilitation, etc. throughout the year;
- Training in career assessment services is offered semi-annually;
- Rehabilitation technology training is offered throughout the year on a variety of assistive technology and worksite accommodation solutions. When possible, these Assistive Technology trainings are coordinated with the Maryland Technology Assistance program;
- Statewide prescriptive training on a variety of topics is delivered to all counselors, including career counseling, employer services, ethics, job placement, case note/case documentation training, Americans with Disabilities Act training, autism spectrum disorders;
- Staff participate in the annual Maryland Rehabilitation Conference and the annual MWA conference;
- All staff also annually participate in Sexual Harassment Prevention Training, Anti-Bullying Training, and potential Conflicts of Interest Training;
- New supervisors training and ongoing training activities for supervisors and Division administrators are provided during semi-annual statewide supervisors meetings. Staff managers participate in management and leadership training through vendors;
- Managers and Supervisors participate in an on-going, Agency-Developed Supervisory Coaching Training Series which includes the topics of: The Shift from Peer to Supervisor, Supervisory Coaching Techniques, Managing Up & Across, Conflict Management, Change Management, Building Successful Teams and HR-specific topics including: Disciplinary Actions, Leave Management, and Leave Approvals;
- Staff in all positions are also encouraged to participate in the leadership trainings available through VR Development Group's YES LMS;
- The Staff Development office creates and supports three Leadership Trainings: Emerging Leaders, Leadership Exploration of Agency Programs, and the Executive Leadership Institute;
- VR support staff participate in statewide prescriptive training throughout the year with their units, as well as an annual training activity customized to meet the needs of staff and to address agency priorities; and
- Business Services Representatives participate in various training and online courses as well as the annual Mid-Atlantic ADA Update Conference to expand their knowledge and hone their skills as ADA trainers.

The Staff Development office maintains a database of all training activities attended by Division professional staff, according to the individual staff member, unit, and Office.

i. 3. Standards that are consistent with any national or State-approved or -recognized certification, licensing, registration, or other comparable requirements that apply to the profession or discipline in which such personnel are providing VR services; and

A. Standards that are consistent with any national or State-approved or -recognized certification, licensing, registration, or other comparable requirements that apply to the profession or discipline in which such personnel are providing VR services; and

B. The establishment and maintenance of education and experience requirements, in accordance with section 101(a)(7)(B)(ii) of the Rehabilitation Act, to ensure that the personnel have a 21st century understanding of the evolving labor force and the needs of individuals with disabilities.

Standards for hiring entry-level VR specialists specify that rehabilitation counselors must have a bachelor's degree from an accredited institution and at least one year of professional experience in a behavioral or social science-related field.

DORS encourages VR Specialists to earn their master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling or a closely-related field. Upon successful completion of 36 graduate credits, VR Specialists II may be promoted to VR Technical Specialist.

A master's degree and two year's experience as a VR Technical Specialist are required for promotion to VR Supervisor.

DORS encourages and supports through reimbursement of initial certification fees, achievement of Certified Rehabilitation Counselor certification (CRCC), but does not require it. DORS also supports renewal courses and renewal fees of the CRCC.

i. 4. Method(s) the VR agency uses to ensure that personnel are able to communicate in appropriate modes of communication with or in the native language of applicants or eligible individuals who have limited English speaking ability.

DORS utilizes interpreter services through Ad Astra, the Maryland Language line tele-interpreter service, and Sign Language interpreting via State contract. Additionally, DORS has updated its public website with foreign language resources available in Spanish, Chinese, French, Korean, Haitian Creole, and Vietnamese currently.

i. 5. As appropriate, describe the procedures and activities to coordinate the designated State unit's comprehensive system of personnel development with personnel development under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

The Division has personnel who have specialized caseloads serving transitioning youth. These staff participate in quarterly training activities on current transition topics. Staff are also encouraged to participate in ongoing professional development through participation in a variety of workshops, conferences, and in-service training opportunities that are disseminated via email to all staff and posted on the Divisions InDORS intranet. Staff are also encouraged to participate in WIOA Partner training and in other activities, such as the George Washington University's Master's level 12 credit online transition certificate program. Examples of cross-training with secondary school personnel include the following:

- 1) Training on Autism Spectrum disorders provided by DORS in partnership with Pathfinders for Autism and the Maryland Rehabilitation Association. The Workforce & Technology Center supervisor of Autism Services is a certified Autism Specialist and has provided training to Workforce & Technology Center staff, to offices with the Office of Field Services, and at the Maryland Rehabilitation Association/DORS Annual Training Conference.
- 2) Training and presentations on blindness and vision services with the LEA and itinerant teachers and DORS staff are held on a regular basis.

j. Coordination with Education Officials

j. 1. Describe plans, policies, and procedures for coordination between the designated State agency and education officials responsible for the public education of students with disabilities, that are designed to facilitate the transition of the students with disabilities from the receipt of educational services in school to the receipt of vocational rehabilitation services, including pre-employment transition services.

DORS is an organizational unit of the MSDE. DORS, therefore, is a signatory and partner in implementation of the Maryland Intra-agency Cooperative Planning Agreement for Secondary Students with Disabilities. This is an agreement between the Division of Special Education (DSE) and DORS. The agreement was updated on July 2019 to reflect changes because of the WIOA of 2014. This agreement identifies the roles and responsibilities of the cooperating Divisions at the state and local level including:

- The provision for technical assistance and training to schools;
- Outreach to and identification of students with disabilities in need of transition services and Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS);
- Transition planning by VR and educational personnel that facilitates the implementation of Pre-ETS;
- Assurances for the development and completion of the Individualized Education Program (IEP) that is coordinated with the development of the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) within 90 days of an Eligibility determination or date of removal from Priority of Services/Order of Selection waiting list;
- Financial responsibilities and methods to resolve disputes; and
- Referrals, to include all students with disabilities in secondary education that may benefit from Pre-ETS.

High School students with disabilities may be referred for Student Employment Services (SES) and/or Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) as early as age 14. Schools disseminate information regarding DORS to families and secondary school students and subsequently refer students, aged at least 14 but under 22, to DORS for Pre-ETS. DORS and LEA personnel collaborate to provide cross-training on aspects of Pre-ETS and Supported Employment Services (SES), thereby ensuring effective interagency coordination. DORS maintains collaborative relationships with other youth-serving agencies, including: the DSE, the Division of College and Career Pathways, the Department of Disabilities, the Department of Labor, the Department of Health, Parents Place of Maryland, and the Department of Juvenile Services on various innovative initiatives. These topics encompass a streamlined Pre-ETS consent process, endorsements to the Maryland Certificate of Program Completion (MCOPC) Endorsements, Diploma Pathways and Career Connected Learning System Models, and two Rehabilitation Services Administration Disability Innovation Fund Grants: the Maryland Pathways to Partnership Initiative (MPPI) and Leveraging Interagency Networks for Knowledge Sharing (MDLINK).

j. 2. Coordination with Education Officials. - 2

A. Consultation and technical assistance, which may be provided using alternative means for meeting participation (such as video conferences and conference calls), to assist educational agencies in planning for the transition of students with disabilities from school to post-school activities, including pre-employment transition services and other vocational rehabilitation services;

B. Transition planning by personnel of the designated State agency and educational agency personnel for students with disabilities that facilitates the development and implementation of their individualized education programs (IEPs) under Section 614(d) of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act;

C. The roles and responsibilities, including financial responsibilities, of each agency, including provisions for determining State lead agencies and qualified personnel responsible for transition services and pre-employment transition services;

D. Procedures for outreach to and identification of students with disabilities who need transition services and pre-employment transition services. Outreach to these students should occur as early as possible during the transition planning process and must include, at a minimum, a description of the purpose of the vocational rehabilitation program, eligibility requirements, application procedures, and scope of services that may be provided to eligible individuals;

E. Coordination necessary to satisfy documentation requirements set forth in 34 C.F.R. part 397 regarding students and youth with disabilities who are seeking subminimum wage employment; and

F. Assurance that, in accordance with 34 C.F.R. § 397.31, neither the SEA nor the local educational agency will enter into a contract or other arrangement with an entity, as defined in 34 C.F.R. § 397.5(d), for the purpose of operating a program under which youth with a disability is engaged in work compensated at a subminimum wage.

(A) Consultation and technical assistance between DORS, LEAs, and DSE are provided at both the state and local level.

At the state level, activities include (but aren't limited to):

- Participation in statewide initiatives and work groups related to improving post-school outcomes for students with disabilities;
- Technical assistance to LEAs and local DORS office, including joint training of school districts and DORS staff;
- Training on agency specific procedures and services;
- Leadership meetings by Assistant State Superintendents of both divisions, including a triennial review of the MOU;
- Sharing of information regarding policies, procedures, guidelines, programs and services for the purpose of improving access to and availability of transition services;
- Promoting employer participation in providing opportunities for work-based learning for students with disabilities;
- Conducting professional development activities to enhance the quality of services provided.
- Enhanced collaboration across diverse DIF grants to expand the scope of services and improve access for youth with disabilities and strengthen data sharing practices among participating agencies.

At the local level, Maryland State Law requires that DORS assign a counselor to each public high school in the state to promote effective transition. DORS and LEA's develop Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) which clarify their policies and procedures regarding services and responsibilities to Students with Disabilities (SWD), as well as outlining

local collaborative practices. The MOU is to be consistent with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), 20 U.S.C. §1400 et. seq. and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) 29 U.S.C. §720 et. seq. The purpose of the MOU is to facilitate the smooth transition of Students with Disabilities (SWD) from secondary school to post-secondary education and training and/or Competitive Integrated Employment through the receipt of Pre-ETS, SES, and other VR services, in the local jurisdiction.

(B) Transition planning by personnel of the designated State agency and educational agency personnel for students with disabilities that facilitates the development and implementation of their individualized education programs (IEPs) under section 614(d) of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act;

Transition Planning: MOU between DORS and MSDE, DSE confirms shared principles of the parties and note that each division intends to provide needed transition services in a timely, effective, and appropriate ways without a break in service through teamwork, coordinated planning and shared responsibility. See below for specific responsibilities of each division required by this agreement for collaborative transition planning:

DSE serves as the lead agency in Maryland for carrying out Federal and State policies relating to the program under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). IDEA ensures all children with disabilities have available to them a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) that emphasizes special education and related services. Developing and executing a meaningful transition plan is required to ensure that students with Individualized Education Program (IEP) are prepared for post- high school challenges they will encounter. A transition plan will address instruction, related services, community experiences, and the development of employment and other post- school adult living objectives. Each student with an IEP beginning at age 14 and annually thereafter, must include documentation of the following to be included as part of the transition plan:

- Evidence of age- appropriate transition assessment;
- Appropriate measurable postsecondary goals in employment, education/ training, and independent living, if appropriate;
- Annual IEP goals related to the student's transition needs;
- Transition Services;
- Courses of study;
- Evidence that the student was invited to the IEP Team meeting where transition services are to be discussed;
- Evidence that the parent, or the student who has reached the age of majority, provided consent to invite a representative of any participating agency, if appropriate, and was invited to the IEP meeting; and
- Evidence that the representative of any participating agency was invited to the IEP team meeting following receipt of consent.
- Development of the Certificate of Program Completion Endorsements designations to identify achievement in Post-Secondary Education, Work Readiness and Career, and/or Community & Citizenship.

DORS serves as the lead agency in Maryland for carrying out Federal and State policies relating to the program under the Rehabilitation Act. Upon referral, and with parent/ guardian consent, DORS provides/ coordinates VR services to students with disabilities including Pre-ETS. DORS specific roles in transition planning include, but are not limited to:

- Management of referrals of students with disabilities during the transition process for the provision of Pre- Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) and/ or Student Employment Services within 10 days of receipt;
- Provision and/or coordination of Pre-ETS in collaboration with LEA to qualifying students with disabilities made known to DORS;
- Determination of eligibility, Severity of Disability and Order of Selection for Student Employment Services within 60 days of receipt of completed and signed DORS Intake form for Rehabilitation Services;
- Facilitate the development of the IPE, consistent with the IEP or 504 plan, with eligible students who can be served under order of selection and can benefit from DORS services to assist the student in preparing for competitive, integrated employment; and
- Coordinate with the SEA to ensure students with disabilities in the Juvenile Services Education system and Maryland's Career Technology Education Program are referred for services.

(C) The roles and responsibilities, including financial responsibilities, of each agency, including provisions for determining State lead agencies and qualified personnel responsible for transition services and pre-employment transition services;

DORS, DSE, and the LEAs will provide needed transition services and supports in timely, effective, and appropriate ways without a break in service through teamwork, coordinated planning and shared responsibility. DORS has agreed to not supplant any responsibilities of the educational agencies under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

DSE: Federal and state statutes and regulations require MSDE to be primarily responsible for providing educational, career preparation, and transition services to students with disabilities. Roles and Responsibilities beyond the development of the transition plan within the IEP include:

- In collaboration with local DORS, development of a local communication process regarding submitting referrals to DORS, following up with DORS referrals, and assistance to student/ family as needed in the process;
- With parent/ legal guardian consent submit referrals, national clearinghouse number, and background information to DORS of students with disabilities, who may benefit from Pre-ETS or Student Employment Services. Referrals can be submitted at 14 years old;
- Invitation to DORS to transition fairs, annual IEP meeting with parent consent, or other forums to disperse information to students and families;
- Planning, coordination, delivering, and evaluation of transition education and services at the school system level, in conjunction with other educators, families, students, and representatives or community organizations and agencies; and
- Collaboration with a range of state and community organizations to ensure appropriate supports and opportunities are available to students as they prepare for career, college, and/or community experiences.

DORS serves as the lead agency in Maryland for carrying out Federal and State policies relating to the program under the Rehabilitation Act. Upon referral, and with parent/ guardian consent, DORS provides/coordinates VR services to students with disabilities including Pre-ETS. Specific roles are as follows:

- Provision or arrangement of Pre-ETS and/or SES;

- Attendance, in person or remotely, at transition fairs, annual IEP meetings, with parent consent, or other forums to disperse information to students and families as staff are available;
- In collaboration with LEA, development of a local communication process regarding submitting referrals to DORS, following up with DORS referrals, and assistance to student/ family as needed in the process;
- Development of a streamlined consent process to expedite qualification for Pre-ETS; and
- Development and maintenance of service agreements for supported employment with the Developmental Disabilities Administration and Behavioral Health Administration.

DORS maintains a Staff Specialist for Students and Transition-aged Youth position to lead the following activities:

- Coordinate all SES and Pre-ETS activities and projects with other WIOA partners.
- Coordinate and facilitate access to WIOA Programs, such as the Youth Program, the career pathways system, and apprenticeship programs. Also coordinate with other state agencies, community organizations, public and private facilities, local DORS field offices, and employers.
- Collaborate with the DORS Grants Administrator and WIOA partners in responding to federal and state transition requests for proposals and in implementing cooperative agreements.
- Develop, update, and monitor transition documents in collaboration with WIOA partners in responding to federal and state transition requests for proposals and in implementing cooperative agreements.
- Leadership Team member for the State Agency Transition Collaborative (SATC), partnership to improving the state-level coordination of transition services leading to an increase in employment, postsecondary education and community outcomes for all students and youth with disabilities in Maryland.
- Engage in initiatives with the SEA including: MCOPC endorsements. Diploma pathway developments, and Career-connected learning programs
- Provide program information to state level transition personnel and to the LEAs through in-service training and publications.
- Facilitate an intra-agency transition group for counselors who provide transitioning services for the purpose of information sharing and ongoing training.
- Provide guidance to CRPs and providers submitting proposals for the provision of student employment and pre-employment transition services.
- Provide opportunities for program growth for the provision of services to students and youth to ensure inclusion and choice for Pre-ETS and Student Employment Services.
- Participate in various DIF grant initiatives including acting Project Director of MPPI.

(D) Procedures for outreach to and identification of students with disabilities who need transition services and pre-employment transition services. Outreach to these students should occur as early as possible during the transition planning process and must include, at a minimum, a description of the purpose of the VR program, eligibility requirements, application procedures, and scope of services that may be provided to eligible individuals;

Secondary transition educators support students and their families by connecting them to various opportunities such as higher education, independent living, employment, and community participation. Student outreach and identification procedures include home schooled students, at-risk youth, youth in juvenile justice who receive alternative education classes, students with disabilities under section 504, and students receiving IDEA

services. This outreach also includes students in Maryland Association Non-Public schools, Maryland School for the Deaf, Maryland School for the Blind, and students with English as a second language. In accordance with the cooperatively developed MOU, DORS and LEAs will identify students with disabilities and potentially eligible students who may benefit from delivery of Pre-ETS. DORS and LEAs provide information to students and families regarding Pre-ETS and SES available to students, including qualification and eligibility requirements, application procedures, and scope of services. For Pre-ETS, this includes job exploration counseling, work-based learning experiences, counseling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive transition or post-secondary educational programs, workplace readiness training to develop social skills and independent living, and instruction in self-advocacy.

Information regarding DORS is provided to students and their families at IEP meetings, transition fairs, career fairs and is publicly available on the DORS website. DSE has developed procedures within the IEP for LEAs, with parental/guardian consent, to refer identified students with disabilities directly to DORS. Anyone can refer students for DORS services including various LEA personnel working with 504 students, parents, and student self-referrals. New materials such as videos explaining Pre-ETS and SES have been made available to LEAs and have been encouraged for use in middle schools where some 14-year-olds attend. DORS consulted with SEA and LEA partners to develop a streamlined consent and qualification process for Pre-ETS referrals. DORS provides designated staff to work with the LEA to coordinate, identify students and implement Pre-ETS.

DORS and LEAs will serve on local education and community committees for the purpose of information sharing, collaboration, coordination of services, and potential student identification. Additionally, DORS and LEAs will work with local businesses and agencies as needed for student outreach, and expand opportunities for internships, mentoring, and summer employment experiences to prepare students for viable careers.

(E) Coordination necessary to satisfy documentation requirements set forth in 34 CFR part 397 regarding students and youth with disabilities who are seeking subminimum wage employment; and

The Maryland Ken Capone Equal Employment Act (EEA), Labor and Employment Article 3-314, abolished payment of subminimum wages to people with disabilities in Maryland. However, students and their parent/guardian may wish to seek subminimum wage with a 14c entity in another state. Section 511 of the Rehabilitation Act requires that anyone age 24 or younger may not start at a subminimum wage unless it is documented the student received Pre-ETS or transition services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), has applied for VR services and was unsuccessful, and has been provided counseling and a referral to other resources with the goal of competitive integrated employment. These requirements are shared with the student, family, guardians, school staff, and staff at the Developmental Disabilities Administration Regional Centers. DORS and the LEAs share documentation of these steps, as well as sharing the documentation with the student and parent/guardian. Documentation of the completion of this process contains: the student's name, the determination made, name of individual making the determination or the provider of the service/activity, date of determination, applicable signatures and date by DORS or SEA making the determination, signature of DORS personnel transmitting documentation to the youth, and date and method of transmittal. DORS and SEA retain copies of all documentation.

Students and youth may choose to pursue subminimum wage employment in another state, or the parent/guardian may refuse, through informed choice, to participate in the activities outlined in section 511. In these instances, the documentation requirements remain

applicable, and documentation must be provided to the student/family/guardian within 10 calendar days of the student's decision.

(F) Assurance that, in accordance with 34 CFR 397.31, neither the SEA nor the local educational agency will enter into a contract or other arrangement with an entity, as defined in 34 CFR 397.5(d), for the purpose of operating a program under which youth with a disability is engaged in work compensated at a subminimum wage.

Neither the SEA, DORS, nor the LEAs will enter into a contract or other arrangement with an entity, as defined in 34 CFR 397.5(d), for the purpose of operating a program under which youth with a disability are engaged in work compensated at a subminimum wage. This statutory and regulatory requirement applies to any 14c entity, regardless of geographic location.

k. Coordination with Employers

In accordance with the requirements in Section 101(a)(11)(E) of the Rehabilitation Act, describe how the VR agency will work with employers to identify competitive integrated employment and career exploration opportunities in order to facilitate the provision of VR services; and transition services for youth and students with disabilities, including pre-employment transition services for students with disabilities.

Businesses must play a central role in the workforce system and, in coordination with its WIOA Partners, DORS continues to expand engagement with businesses to assist them with their workforce needs and provide for quality VR services and employment outcomes. Like its WIOA Partners, DORS has embraced the dual-customer model and has dedicated staff tasked with employer outreach and engagement, as well as technical assistance to VR counselors and consumers.

The DORS Business Relations Branch includes a Program Manager and seven regional Business Services Representatives. This organizational structure ensures statewide oversight, information sharing and collaboration, and a team approach to employer engagement. The Business Relations Branch works closely with the agency's Workforce and Technology Center (WTC) Employment Services to coordinate services to employers that enhance services and employment outcomes for consumers. WTC's training advisory committees engage employers in specific industries to ensure training programs are in line with industry needs and standards, and WTC's Work Readiness Programs work with community employers to develop worksites for students. Additionally, the Workforce and Technology Center's Rehabilitation Technology Services is a key component to serving employers through its worksite services.

DORS Business Services Representatives collaborate with MD Labor and local workforce business services representatives for business outreach and quality services. The WIOA Partners and their Business Services teams agree to work together to ensure quality customer service to businesses. Through frequent communication and collaborative efforts, the WIOA Business Services Team members have developed a deeper understanding of the services each partner offers, and, after understanding a business's needs, connections are made with appropriate team members to ensure the workforce needs are met. Additionally, the local Business Services Teams collaborate and sponsor events beneficial to businesses, such as trainings, business summits, and job fairs.

DORS Business Service Representatives facilitate and conduct training for WIOA partners and staff by the DORS BSR Workforce Alliance Meetings on the benefits of partnering and collaboration. These trainings also includes services offered by DORS.

The DORS Business Relations Branch and WTC Employment Services meet and participate in training to enhance team capacities in working with employers to expand employment and work-based learning experiences. Employer services are documented and tracked in the Employer Module of the AWARE case management system.

These structures and collaborative activities ensure that DORS is prepared and able to effectively engage with businesses to meet their workforce needs. The activities also provide the best information on careers, business needs, LMI, and opportunities to jobseekers so that they can make informed choices on their employment goals and access programs and services that lead to successful outcomes.

DORS will build relationships with businesses that result in improved career development and competitive-integrated employment outcomes for consumers through the following activities:

- Promoting and marketing the employment of persons with disabilities by networking and developing active partnerships with businesses and business-related organizations, such as Chambers of Commerce, Society of Human Resource Managers, Business Leadership Networks, WIOA Partners in the AJCs, MD Labor, State and LWDBs, and state and local economic development offices. Regional Business Services Representatives will be visible and available to area businesses and will serve as a single-point-of-contact, leading to improved business relations and access.
- Training and technical assistance to employers and WIOA Partners to promote the awareness of the skills and benefits that people with disabilities can bring to their workforce. Types of training include information on DORS services and training programs, disability awareness, requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act, and federal contractor compliance with Section 503. Group training opportunities for businesses will be offered, as well as individual consultation and need-driven training for specific employers. The Business Service team will support the Department of Disability in training employers about the benefits of hiring individuals with disabilities.
- Providing consultation on and support to remove disability-related obstacles to employment and the provision of reasonable accommodations for recruitment, work-based learning activities, and on-boarding and retention of employees, including assistive technology and worksite assessments. Business Services Representatives will serve as points of contact for businesses needing guidance, and the Workforce and Technology Center Rehabilitation Technology Services unit will provide specific and applicable worksite services for consumers and employers.
- Providing information and resources on hiring incentives, including tax credits and OJT wage reimbursements. Business Services Representatives will provide technical assistance to businesses in completing any required forms to access incentives.
- Facilitating and coordinating recruitment activities for business partners who are interested in hiring DORS consumers, including advertisement, pre-screening, and interview preparation of consumer applicants, providing interview venues, referrals and follow-up. Job openings and recruitment activities will be shared via email with counselors, consumers, and CRPs, and recruitment services will be tracked in the AWARE Employer module.
- Collaborating with WIOA Partners, including staff administering business services and economic development partners to leverage business contacts, share resources and

expertise, and coordinate services that are beneficial to businesses and promote the employment of individuals with disabilities.

- Coordinating with the staff administering business services and AJCs in recruitment events and job fairs, including recruiting businesses and facilitating the inclusion of DORS consumers in the talent pool.
- Engaging with businesses interested in hiring people with disabilities through VR National Employment Team (NET) connections and activities. This includes NET conference calls, webinars and events with business partners and facilitating the inclusion of Maryland consumers in the national Talent Acquisition Portal.
- Partnering with CRPs to facilitate communication and collaboration among business services representatives and employment specialists in sharing business contacts, job openings, and strategies on job placement for consumers; this includes expansion of regional job developer alliance groups.
- Providing business and industry-specific career information, training sessions, and tours for consumers and counselors.
- Developing and monitoring of work-based learning and resume-building opportunities, such as internships, job shadowing, disability employment awareness month activities, volunteering and OJT, including expanding programs already in place, such as the Governor's QUEST Internship Program, and federal agency VR internship programs. DORS is striving for QUEST to become a paid internship that leads directly to full time employment in State agencies.
- Promoting the federal Workforce Recruitment Program to businesses and consumers.
- Engaging businesses in Training Program Advisory Committees at WTC to ensure training programs meet business and industry needs and standards and to facilitate work-based learning and employment opportunities, including apprenticeships.
- Coordinating with businesses to develop community worksites for students in Workforce and Technology Center's Work Readiness 2 and Workforce Training Programs. Students spend a portion of their day during the six-week program at a business worksite learning and performing job tasks.
- Developing customized and business-driven training programs for DORS consumers
- Leading and participating with MD Labor, workforce partners, and businesses in the Maryland Apprenticeship Think Tank to expand apprenticeship opportunities for individuals with disabilities.
- Developing Apprenticeship Exploration activities and Pre-Apprenticeship programs at WTC and with partners to education and prepare DORS consumers for careers through apprenticeship.
- Providing Apprenticeship Navigation services for consumers; the WTC Apprenticeship Navigator will work with MD Labor's Apprenticeship and Training Program staff and businesses to help consumers along the path to an apprenticeship.
- Collaborating with strategic partners, such as the Maryland Department of Disabilities, colleges and universities, and federal, state and local governments to connect employers and consumers.
- Supporting and promoting state industry-led workforce training initiatives of the WIOA system, such as apprenticeship programs and Maryland's EARN program to DORS consumers.
- Connecting DORS consumers with businesses and employment opportunities through the MWE.

DORS Business Services Representatives will provide technical assistance to both counselors and consumers related to job readiness, career information, labor market analysis, and real-time and projected employment opportunities gleaned through active engagement with businesses, business-related organizations, and WIOA Partners.

DORS will work with employers and community partners to develop and expand work-based learning for students and youth with disabilities through the following activities:

- Awareness opportunities for students and youth on careers, industries, LMI, and workforce needs, including workshops or other training that includes employer speakers and presentations, career fairs, and workplace tours;
- Preparation activities for students and youth that teach workplace skills, job readiness, interview skills and practice, and self-advocacy in application and employment processes;
- Exploration and skill-building opportunities for students and youth to include job shadowing and mentoring, volunteering, internships, OJT, and employment;
- Continued development and coordination of pre-employment transition services through community colleges, school systems, CRPs, and AJCs;
- Availability of pre-employment transition services in rural and underserved areas to increase work-based learning experience opportunities for students and potential partnering businesses.
- Expansion of internship programs, such as QUEST, to include students and transitioning youth; and,
- Continued partnership with school systems, and work force partners to provide summer youth employment opportunities and year-round work-based learning experiences to businesses and students.

I. 1. State programs (designate lead agency(ies) and implementing entity(ies)) carried out under Section 4 of the Assistive Technology Act of 1998;

The Maryland Technology Assistance Program (TAP) is a program of the Maryland Department of Disabilities. The mission of the program is to enhance the lives of Marylanders with disabilities and their families by helping support access to Assistive Technology devices and services. The program assists people with disabilities in obtaining assistive devices and remaining independent in their communities by providing services, such as information and referral, Assistive Technology demonstrations, option to borrow assistive technologies for a limited time, Assistive Technology reuse program, and low-interest rate loans for purchase of Assistive Technology devices.

- The Maryland Technology Assistance Program and DORS partner in demonstrating Assistive Technology devices.
- DORS serves as a member of the Maryland TAP Advisory Committee.
- Maryland TAP and DORS are members of the Governor's Interagency Transition Council for Youth with Disabilities.
- DORS partners with Maryland TAP to coordinate and provide Assistive Technology training to DORS staff.

I. 2. Programs carried out by the Under Secretary for Rural Development of the Department of Agriculture;

The Maryland DORS does not carry out any programs for Rural Development of the Department of Agriculture

I. 3. Non-educational agencies serving out-of-school youth;

DORS provides vocational services to out-of-school youth with disabilities in collaboration with CRPs licensed or certified through the Maryland Department of Health for either

Developmental Disabilities Administration and/or the Behavioral Health Administration employment services as well as CRPs that are DORS approved. Examples of these programs and services include:

Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS), Employee Development Services (EDS), Job Development, and Job Coaching.

Behavioral Health Administration:

- Cornerstone Montgomery. Cornerstone Montgomery collaborates with DORS in the provision of Mental Health Supported Employment Services for consumers referred to them from DORS, which includes out of school youth. Services available to out of school youth also include the Career Academic Psych Rehab Program, a long-term program to support young adults as they transition to independence and focus on personal employment, education, and career exploration goals.
- Johns Hopkins EPIC RAISE program. This is an early intervention program for youth who have experienced their first psychotic episode. Services may be provided to individuals both in school and out of school youth, beginning at age 13. DORS collaborates with this program in the provision of Supported Employment Services

DORS Accredited:

- Sunflower Bakery. Pastry Arts Employment Training Program trains young adults with learning differences for job success in pastry arts, baking and related food industries. Additional services include internship and Short-Term Job Coaching.
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Developmental Disabilities Administration:

In addition to providing Job Development, Job Coaching (short-term and Supported Employment), Transition to Natural Supports, Youth Extended Services, examples of agencies providing services to out of school youth with developmental disabilities include:

- Chimes, Inc.: Program provides employee development services geared to the individual's aptitudes and interests.
- The League for People with Disabilities: Provides individuals with paid community-based "internship" experiences through employee development services, where they receive mentoring and training from an on-site supervisor, in addition to support and job coaching from The League's Training Specialist.

I. 4. State use contracting programs;

DORS does not have an interagency cooperation with any state use contracting programs.

I. 5. State agency responsible for administering the State Medicaid plan under title XIX of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1396 et seq.);

DORS does not have an interagency cooperation with the State agency responsible for administering the State Medicaid plan at this time.

I. 6. State agency responsible for providing services for individuals with developmental disabilities;

In Maryland, individuals with developmental disabilities are served by the Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA); DORS and DDA have a Memorandum of Understanding to promote increased interagency cooperation, to ensure the maximum utilization of

appropriate programs and resources in the provision of services to individuals with disabilities, to expand and improve services to individuals with significant disabilities, and to maximize the use of comparable benefits.

The agreement sets forth terms and conditions under which DORS and DDA will cooperate in providing services. The formal interagency cooperative agreement identifies policies, practices, and procedures that are coordinated between DORS and DDA (particularly definitions, standards for eligibility, the joint sharing and use of evaluations and assessments, and procedures for making referrals). It also identifies available resources and defines the financial responsibility of each agency for paying for necessary services, consistent with State law and procedures for resolving disputes between agencies and includes all additional components necessary to ensure meaningful cooperation and coordination.

I. 7. State agency responsible for providing mental health services; and

In Maryland, individuals with behavioral health disabilities are served by the Behavioral Health Administration (BHA); DORS and BHA have a Memorandum of Understanding which addresses each agency's roles, responsibilities, and processes to collaborate with the goal of developing opportunities for community-based employment in integrated settings.

DORS and BHA have a collaborative partnership based on the belief that the best use of federal and state resources is on programs and services that evidence-based research shows successful outcomes effectively and efficiently. Both agencies are committed to a streamlined service delivery system that facilitates the recovery process and the employment goals of persons with severe and persistent mental illness and includes the braiding of responsibilities and funding of each agency in providing supported employment services for individuals with serious mental illness, while ensuring complementary, non-duplicative services and fiscal accountability.

A key element in the facilitation of service provision to all eligible individuals referred from Behavioral Health Supported Employment Programs to DORS for vocational rehabilitation services and supported employment includes established timelines and DORS staff guest access in the BHA Administrative Service Organization's (ASO; currently, Carelon) electronic case management system, which provides immediate access to DORS referral, application and eligibility information. This also includes supporting documentation related to disability, and Local Behavioral Health Authority (LBHA) approval for long-term funding. The agreement also maintains a statewide network of DORS counselors with specialized expertise in behavioral health who are assigned as liaisons to community rehabilitation programs and mental health supported employment programs to provide technical assistance and actively participate as joint members of treatment teams in the discussion and planning of EBP in SE plans with consumers.

I. 8. Other Federal, State, and local agencies and programs outside the workforce development system.

The Division maintains cooperative agreements, Memoranda of Understanding, and membership on Interagency Councils and Local Committees, as well as other collaborative initiatives and projects with agencies and organizations outside the workforce development system.

- **Workers' Compensation Commission**– This agreement describes the referral process and the procedure for submitting rehabilitation plans to the Commission to determine if costs will be covered by an insurer.

- MSDE- the Intra-Agency Cooperative Agreement on Transitioning specifies areas of cooperation among the Divisions of Student, Family, and School Support Services; Early Intervention and Special Education Services; Career and College Readiness; and Rehabilitation Services specific to transitioning students and youth with disabilities.
- An MOU for the State Agencies Transitioning Collaborative of Maryland between, DORS, the Maryland Department of Disabilities, the MSDE Divisions of Early Intervention and Special Education and Career and College Readiness, the Behavioral Health Administration, the Developmental Disabilities Administration and MD Labor which focuses on transition services that lead to increase employment outcomes, postsecondary education, and community outcomes for all students and youth with disabilities in Maryland.

Interagency Councils and Local Committees

DORS regional and field offices, the Workforce and Technology Center, and the Office for Blindness and Vision Services also maintain active working relationships with many local committees and initiatives. Examples include:

Statewide:

- Maryland Statewide Independent Living Council
- Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council
- Maryland Mental Health Advisory Board
- Department of Health, Traumatic Brain Injury Advisory Board
- Maryland State Library for the Blind & Print Disabled Advisory Board
- Local Coordinating Councils
- Maryland Special Education State Advisory Committee

Other Collaborative Initiatives and Projects

DORS collaborates with the Department of Disabilities, a cabinet level agency, on a variety of employment policy and transitioning youth activities and initiatives.

There are also agreements with the Maryland School for the Blind and the Maryland School for the Deaf covering referral procedures, evaluation, individualized planning, and follow-up.

The Office for Blindness and Vision Services (OBVS) sponsors summer programs with the Maryland School for the Blind.

Other collaborations:

- Blind Industries and Services of Maryland – DORS provides state-aided grants support services to individuals with vision loss, including rehabilitation teachers, aids and devices, and Braille production.
- Community Colleges - Autism Supports – DORS has agreements with certain Maryland Community Colleges for designated Workforce and Technology Center staff to work collaboratively on their campuses with the college Disability Support Services staff to provide supports required by students with Autism spectrum disabilities. DORS has expanded the Pathways program to include Anne Arundel Community College, Montgomery College, Howard Community College, and the three campus sites of Community College of Baltimore County. WTC will continue to develop and expand this program to other Maryland colleges.
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I. 9. Other private nonprofit organizations.

DORS purchases a wide variety of services that assist people with disabilities to reach independence and employment. These may include pre-employment transition services, assistive technology services, employee development services, job coaching, skills training, and specialized services such as those for individuals with acquired brain injury.

DORS may also purchase job-coaching services from CRPs that have supported employment programs approved by the Behavioral Health Administration and the Developmental Disabilities Administration. DORS also purchases career assessment services which include community-based assessment provided by private vendors who are Certified Vocational Evaluators or Professional Vocational Evaluators.

Cooperative Agreements are developed between DORS and approved CRPs in order to assure a mutual understanding of the services to be provided to DORS consumers, referral procedures, expectations, and responsibilities of all parties. The Division utilizes CRPs to the maximum extent feasible to provide a wide range of highly skilled VR services to individuals with disabilities around the State. DORS continually assesses the needs of individuals with disabilities and recruits new organizations and expands services with existing ones in order to meet those needs.

CRPs must hold accreditations from a national organization such as the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) or may also be licensed or certified by other Maryland government agencies, such as the Maryland Department of Mental Health, Behavioral Health Administration or the Developmental Disabilities Administration. The DORS Staff Specialists for CRPs perform onsite monitoring reviews every three years. The specialists, along with a local DORS staff, advises the CRPs on what is required and then conducts an onsite review to examine all resource documents, randomly selected consumer files, and details about programs. As appropriate, CRPs staff may attend the overview and exit conferences.

(D) Procedures for outreach to and identification of students with disabilities who need transition services and pre-employment transition services. Outreach to these students should occur as early as possible during the transition planning process and must include, at a minimum, a description of the purpose of the VR program, eligibility requirements, application procedures, and scope of services that may be provided to eligible individuals;

Secondary transition educators support students and their families by connecting them to various opportunities such as higher education, independent living, employment, and community participation. Student outreach and identification procedures include home schooled students, at-risk youth, youth in juvenile justice who receive alternative education classes, students with disabilities under section 504, and students receiving IDEA services. This outreach also includes students in Maryland Association Non-Public schools, Maryland School for the Deaf, Maryland School for the Blind, and students with English as a second language. In accordance with the cooperatively developed MOU, DORS and LEAs will identify students with disabilities and potentially eligible students who may benefit from delivery of Pre-ETS. DORS and LEAs provide information to students and families regarding Pre-ETS and SES available to students, including qualification and eligibility requirements, application procedures, and scope of services. For Pre-ETS, this includes job exploration counseling, work-based learning experiences, counseling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive transition or post-secondary educational programs, workplace readiness training to develop social skills and independent living, and instruction in self-advocacy.

Information regarding DORS is provided to students and their families at IEP meetings, transition fairs, career fairs and is publicly available on the DORS website. DEI/ SES has developed procedures within the IEP for LEAs, with parental/guardian consent, to refer

identified students with disabilities directly to DORS. Anyone can refer students for DORS services including various LEA personnel working with 504 students, parents, and student self-referrals. New materials such as videos explaining Pre-ETS and SES have been made available to LEAs and have been encouraged for use in middle schools where some 14-year-olds attend. DORS provides designated staff to work with the LEA to coordinate, identify students and implement Pre-ETS.

DORS and LEAs will serve on local education and community committees for the purpose of information sharing, collaboration, coordination of services, and potential student identification. Additionally, DORS and LEAs will work with local businesses and agencies as needed for student outreach, and expand opportunities for internships, mentoring, and summer employment experiences to prepare students for viable careers.

Assurances

The State Plan must include
1. Public Comment on Policies and Procedures: The designated State agency assures it will comply with all statutory and regulatory requirements for public participation in the VR Services Portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, as required by section 101(a)(16)(A) of the Rehabilitation Act.
2. Submission of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and Its Supplement: The designated State unit assures it will comply with all requirements pertaining to the submission and revisions of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement for the State Supported Employment Services program, as required by sections 101(a)(1), (22), (23), and 606(a) of the Rehabilitation Act; section 102 of WIOA in the case of the submission of a Unified State plan; section 103 of WIOA in the case of a submission of a Combined State Plan; 34 CFR 76.140.
3. Administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan: The designated State agency or designated State unit, as appropriate, assures it will comply with the requirements related to:
3.a. the establishment of the designated State agency and designated State unit, as required by section 101(a)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act.
3.b. either a State independent commission or State Rehabilitation Council, as required by section 101(a)(21) of the Rehabilitation Act.
3.c. consultations regarding the administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, in accordance with section 101(a)(16)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act.
3.d. the financial participation by the State, or if the State so elects, by the State and local agencies, to provide the amount of the non-Federal share of the cost of carrying out the VR program in accordance with section 101(a)(3).
3.e. as applicable, the local administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, in accordance with section 101(a)(2)(A) of the Rehabilitation Act.
3.f. as applicable, the shared funding and administration of joint programs, in accordance with section 101(a)(2)(A)(ii) of the Rehabilitation Act.
3.g. statewideness and waivers of statewideness requirements, as set forth in section 101(a)(4) of the Rehabilitation Act.
3.h. the requirements for cooperation, collaboration, and coordination, as required by sections 101(a)(11) and (24)(B); and 606(b) of the Rehabilitation Act.

The State Plan must include
3.i. all required methods of administration, as required by section 101(a)(6) of the Rehabilitation Act.
3.j. the requirements for the comprehensive system of personnel development, as set forth in section 101(a)(7) of the Rehabilitation Act.
3.k. the compilation and submission to the Commissioner of statewide assessments, estimates, State goals and priorities, strategies, and progress reports, as appropriate, and as required by sections 101(a)(15), 105(c)(2), and 606(b)(8) of the Rehabilitation Act.
3.l. the reservation and use of a portion of the funds allotted to the State under section 110 of the Rehabilitation Act for the development and implementation of innovative approaches to expand and improve the provision of VR services to individuals with disabilities, particularly individuals with the most significant disabilities as set forth in section 101(a)(18)(A).
3.m. the submission of reports as required by section 101(a)(10) of the Rehabilitation Act.
4. Administration of the Provision of VR Services: The designated State agency, or designated State unit, as appropriate, assures that it will:
4.a. comply with all requirements regarding information and referral services in accordance with sections 101(a)(5)(E) and (20) of the Rehabilitation Act.
4.b. impose no duration of residence requirement as part of determining an individual's eligibility for VR services or that excludes from services under the plan any individual who is present in the State in accordance with section 101(a)(12) of the Rehabilitation Act.
4.c. provide the full range of services listed in section 103(a) of the Rehabilitation Act as appropriate to all eligible individuals with disabilities in the State who apply for services or, if implementing an order of selection, in accordance with criteria established by the State for the order of selection as set out in section 101(a)(5) of the Rehabilitation Act.
4.d. determine whether comparable services and benefits are available to the individual in accordance with section 101(a)(8) of the Rehabilitation Act.
4.e. comply with the requirements for the development of an individualized plan for employment in accordance with section 102(b) of the Rehabilitation Act.
4.f. Comply with requirements regarding the provisions of informed choice for all applicants and eligible individuals in accordance with section 102(d) of the Rehabilitation Act
4.g. provide vocational rehabilitation services to American Indians who are individuals with disabilities residing in the State, in accordance with section 101(a)(13) of the Rehabilitation Act.
4.h. comply with the requirements for the conduct of semiannual or annual reviews, as appropriate, for individuals employed either in an extended employment setting in a community rehabilitation program or any other employment under section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, as required by sections 101(a)(14) and 511 of the Rehabilitation Act.
4.i. meet the requirements in sections 101(a)(17) and 103(b)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act if the State elects to construct, under special circumstances, facilities for community rehabilitation programs.
4.j. With respect to students with disabilities, the State,
4.j.i. has developed and will implement,
4.j.i.A. strategies to address the needs identified in the assessments; and

The State Plan must include
4.j.i.B. strategies to achieve the goals and priorities identified by the State, to improve and expand vocational rehabilitation services for students with disabilities on a statewide basis; and
4.j.ii. has developed and will implement strategies to provide pre-employment transition services (sections 101(a)(15), 101(a)(25) and 113).
4.j.iii. shall reserve not less than 15 percent of the allocated funds for the provision of pre-employment transition services; such funds shall not be used to pay for the administrative costs of providing pre-employment transition services.
5. Program Administration for the Supported Employment Title VI Supplement to the State plan:
5.a. The designated State unit assures that it will include in the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan all information required by section 606 of the Rehabilitation Act.
5.b. The designated State agency assures that it will submit reports in such form and in accordance with such procedures as the Commissioner may require and collects the information required by section 101(a)(10) of the Rehabilitation Act separately for individuals receiving supported employment services under title I and individuals receiving supported employment services under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act.
6. Financial Administration of the Supported Employment Program (Title VI):
6.a. The designated State agency assures that it will expend no more than 2.5 percent of the State's allotment under title VI for administrative costs of carrying out this program; and, the designated State agency or agencies will provide, directly or indirectly through public or private entities, non-Federal contributions in an amount that is not less than 10 percent of the costs of carrying out supported employment services provided to youth with the most significant disabilities with the funds reserved for such purpose under section 603(d) of the Rehabilitation Act, in accordance with section 606(b)(7)(H) and (I) of the Rehabilitation Act.
6.b. The designated State agency assures that it will use funds made available under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act only to provide supported employment services to individuals with the most significant disabilities, including extended services to youth with the most significant disabilities, who are eligible to receive such services; and, that such funds are used only to supplement and not supplant the funds provided under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act, when providing supported employment services specified in the individualized plan for employment, in accordance with section 606(b)(7)(A) and (D), of the Rehabilitation Act.
7. Provision of Supported Employment Services:
7.a. The designated State agency assures that it will provide supported employment services as defined in section 7(39) of the Rehabilitation Act.
7.b. The designated State agency assures that the comprehensive assessment of individuals with significant disabilities conducted under section 102(b)(1) of the Rehabilitation Act and funded under title I of the Rehabilitation Act includes consideration of supported employment as an appropriate employment outcome, in accordance with the requirements of section 606(b)(7)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act an individualized plan for employment that meets the requirements of section 102(b) of the Rehabilitation Act, which is developed and updated with title I funds, in accordance with sections 102(b)(3)(F) and 606(b)(7)(C) and (E) of the Rehabilitation Act.

Do you attest that these assurances will be met?

Yes

Certifications

1. Enter the name of designated State agency or designated State unit, as appropriate

The Maryland Department of Labor, on behalf of the Maryland State Department of Education Division of Rehabilitation Services, is authorized to submit the VR services portion of the Combined State Plan under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Rehabilitation Act), as amended by WIOA, and its supplement under Title VI of the Rehabilitation Act.

2. Enter the name of designated State agency

As a condition for the receipt of Federal funds under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act for the provision of VR services, the Maryland State Department of Education Division of Rehabilitation Services agrees to operate and administer the State VR Services Program in accordance with the VR services portion of the Combined State Plan, the Rehabilitation Act, and all applicable regulations, policies, and procedures established by the Secretary of Education. Funds made available under section 111 of the Rehabilitation Act are used solely for the provision of VR services and the administration of the VR services portion of the Combined State Plan.

3. Enter the name of authorized representative below

The Acting Assistant State Superintendent of Maryland State Department of Education's Division of Rehabilitation Services, Jody Boone, has the authority under State law to receive, hold, and disburse Federal funds made available under the VR services portion of the Combined State Plan and its supplement.

4. Enter the title of authorized representative below

The Executive Director of the Governor's Workforce Development Board at the Maryland Department of Labor Rachael Stephens Parker has the authority to submit the VR services portion of the Combined State Plan and the supplement for Supported Employment services.

Certification Signature

Signatory information	Enter Signatory information in this column
Name of Signatory	Jody Boone
Title of Signatory	Acting Assistant State Superintendent
Date Signed	March 25, 2024

Vocational Rehabilitation Program Performance Indicators

Performance Indicators	PY 2026 Expected Level	PY 2026Negotiated Level	PY 2027 Expected Level	PY 2027 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	52.0%	%	52.0%	%
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	47.0%	%	49.0%	%

Performance Indicators	PY 2026 Expected Level	PY 2026Negotiated Level	PY 2027 Expected Level	PY 2027 Negotiated Level
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	\$4,750	\$	\$4,850	\$
Credential Attainment Rate	33.0%	%	36.0%	%
Measurable Skill Gains	55.0%	%	56.0%	%
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹

¹ The Departments have not issued the final rule defining Effectiveness in Serving Employers. As a result, states will not submit expected levels of performance for this indicator and the Departments will not establish negotiated levels of performance for PYs 2024 and 2025.

1. Describe how your entity's existing mission, policies, or commitments ensure equitable access to, and equitable participation in, the proposed project or activity.

Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) (20 U.S.C. 1228a) applies to a State applicant submitting a state plan for a formula grant from the US Department of Education. The State applicant is responsible for completing the GEPA Section 427 form that provides a description of the steps the State proposes to take to ensure all program beneficiaries have equitable access to, and participation in, its Federally funded, State-level project or activity.

State applicants must respond to four questions.

The first of four questions is:

Describe how your entity's existing mission, policies, or commitments ensure equitable access to, and equitable participation in, the proposed project or activity.

Our shared vision is that the State of Maryland is the best place in our nation for persons with disabilities to live, work and raise a family. Individuals with disabilities are welcome, fully included and actively participate in all Maryland communities. The Maryland Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS) does not discriminate based on age, ancestry, color, creed, gender identity or expression, genetic information, marital status, mental or physical disability, national origin, race, religious affiliation, belief or opinion, sex, or sexual orientation in matters affecting employment or in providing access to its programs and activities. DORS provides leadership and support in promoting the employment, economic self-sufficiency and independence of individuals with disabilities. The agency is committed to fostering a skilled workforce that reflects the diversity of Maryland's communities and the people we serve.

The second of four questions is:

Based on your proposed project or activity, what barriers may impede equitable access and participation of students, educators, or other beneficiaries?

Barriers that may impede equitable access to vocational rehabilitation services include low income, transportation, various means of communication including foreign languages, accessible materials and alternative formats, accessibility needs and assistive technology, and availability of supports and services.

The third of four questions is:

Based on the barriers identified, what steps will you take to address such barriers to equitable access and participation in the proposed project or activity?

Maryland DORS makes every effort to ensure the accessibility of services for all individuals by providing a variety of services to reduce barriers to employment and increase accessibility including:

- accessible options to apply for and participate in services using virtual online means
- transportation assistance including public and private services
- ensuring that public information materials (both printed and electronic) are accessible to individuals with cognitive, motor or sensory disabilities, including an ongoing plain language review of documents to assure that information being communicated is clear
- ongoing partnerships with schools, public agencies, private organizations, employers and community groups to provide information to underserved populations of the State about DORS services and programs
- expansion of training and other services provided by the DORS' Workforce and Technology Center to allow students and families to have other options and opportunities to remain in their communities and improve statewide access
- accessible technologies and software to address individual needs
- partnerships with community employers and American Job Centers to provide on-the-job training opportunities, work-based learning experiences, and internships
- incentives to Community Rehabilitation Programs who serve individuals with disabilities who speak a language other than English.

Based on feedback received from the Commission to Study the Division of Rehabilitation Services (MD House Bill 660, 2022) DORS is supporting the creation of a new position within DORS to focus on Individual and Community Engagement. The role of this office is to actively engage and seek feedback from the various disability communities that are served by DORS. This position will work within communities to improve overall communications and to identify systemic issues that affect individuals with disabilities and their support systems. The office will also collect data to improve overall services provided by DORS through training, improved communications, or policy changes.

The final of four questions is:

What is your timeline, including targeted milestones, for addressing these identified barriers?

DORS will continue to evaluate and identify barriers to equitable access and participation on an ongoing basis and will incorporate findings into strategic planning and program evaluation activities. It is expected that the new position for individual and community engagement will begin within the current program year. DORS' Workforce and Technology Center will continue to explore and develop community-based training and services to expand statewide opportunities.

1. Describe how your entity's existing mission, policies, or commitments ensure equitable access to, and equitable participation in, the proposed project or activity.

State applicants must respond to four questions.

The first of four questions is:

Describe how your entity's existing mission, policies, or commitments ensure equitable access to, and equitable participation in, the proposed project or activity.

Supported employment is competitive employment or employment in integrated work settings in which individuals are working toward competitive employment, with ongoing support services for individuals with the most significant disabilities for whom competitive employment has not traditionally occurred, or for whom competitive employment has been interrupted or intermittent as a result of a significant disability. Supported employment services are provided without regard to age, ancestry, color, creed, gender identity or expression, genetic information, marital status, mental or physical disability, national origin, race, religious affiliation, belief or opinion, sex, or sexual orientation in matters affecting employment or in providing access to its programs and activities. DORS allocates supported employment funds on a statewide basis to ensure equitable statewide service delivery for supported employment services.

The second of four questions is:

Based on your proposed project or activity, what barriers may impede equitable access and participation of students, educators, or other beneficiaries?

Historically, participants in supported employment focused upon job placement and the provision of on-the-job support designed to assist individuals to learn the functions of their job. As an agency, the Division of Rehabilitation Services needs to examine how participants who receive Supported Employment Services have been accessing training, identify barriers, and provide support at even the lowest levels so training/post-secondary education is accessible.

Within the last several months, a number of vendors within the Maryland Department of Health, Behavioral Health Administration (BHA) have discontinued employment services providing Evidence-Based Practice (EBP) in Supported Employment, resulting in reduced capacity to provide necessary support employment services statewide.

Additional barriers to participation in supported employment services include individuals without access to long-term funding and an ongoing need for services where natural supports are unavailable or insufficient to meet the individual's needs.

The third of four questions is:

Based on the barriers identified, what steps will you take to address such barriers to equitable access and participation in the proposed project or activity?

DORS will offer training opportunities for Division of Rehabilitation Services' staff and providers regarding services for individuals who receive long-term funding from the Behavioral Health Administration or Developmental Disabilities Administration regarding how to support both training and employment simultaneously. The agency is also working to develop virtual training programs available through the Workforce and Technology Center that leads to industry recognized certification to allow consumers receiving Supported Employment Services to be able to participate from anywhere across the state.

To address the loss of supported employment providers, DORS' Staff Specialists for Community Rehabilitation Programs will work with community providers to identify additional vendors who may provide supported employment services, including opportunities for service delivery outside of traditional catchment areas.

The quality of supported employment services will continue to be evaluated through the Division's Quality Assurance case review process. Findings will be used to identify policies in need of clarification and staff training needs.

DORS has developed policy and procedures to assist individuals with unmet need for long-term support to access supported employment services and will continue to review and evaluate Individuals without access to long-term funding for extended supported employment services.

The final of four questions is:

What is your timeline, including targeted milestones, for addressing these identified barriers?

The agency will continue to ensure staff understand Supported Employment policy and overall focus of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act as it pertains to quality and long-term employment. DORS will emphasize focus on training and quality employment outcomes as evidenced by Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Benchmarks, including Measurable Skills Gains, Credential Attainment, and Post Exit Outcomes. Progress will be reviewed quarterly with each submission of the RSA-911 Case Services Report.

DORS Workforce and Technology Center staff will continue to explore and develop programming that leads to industry recognized credentials and certification, to be provided in manners that allow individuals receiving supported employment services to participate. Services will be added as soon as they become available.

DORS' Staff Specialists for Community Rehabilitation Programs will work with community providers on an ongoing basis to locate additional vendors with the ability to provide supported employment services. Appropriate programs and services will be added to the fee schedule as identified.

VII. Program-Specific Requirements for Combined State Plan Partner Programs

States choosing to submit a Combined State Plan must provide information concerning the six core programs—the Adult program, Dislocated Worker program, Youth program, Wagner-Peyser Act program, Adult Education and Family Literacy Act program, and the Vocational Rehabilitation program— and also submit relevant information for any of the eleven partner programs it elects to include in its Combined State Plan. When a State includes a Combined State Plan partner program in its Combined State Plan, it need not submit a separate plan or application for that particular program. Plan partner programs are subject to the “common planning elements” in Sections II-IV of this document, where specified, as well as the program-specific requirements for that program. If included, Combined State partner programs are subject to the “common planning elements” in Sections II-IV of this document, where specified, as well as the program-specific requirements for that program.

TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE FOR NEEDY FAMILIES (TANF) PROGRAM

(OMB Control Number: 0970-0145)

States that include TANF in the Combined State Plan must outline how the State will meet the requirements of section 402 of the Social Security Act including how it will:

(a) Conduct a program designed to serve all political subdivisions in the State (not necessarily in a uniform manner) that provides assistance to needy families with (or expecting) children and provides parents with job preparation, work, and support services to enable them to leave the program, specifically cash assistance, and become self-sufficient (section 402(a)(1)(A)(i) of the Social Security Act).

Overview of TANF Programs

The federal TANF program provides states (which includes DC and territories for this purpose) with flexibility in operating programs designed to help low-income families with children achieve economic self-sufficiency. The federal government does not provide TANF cash assistance directly to the public. Instead, states use their TANF grants to fund monthly cash assistance payments to low-income families with children, as well as a wide range of services that are designed to address one or more of the program’s four broad purposes:

1. Provide assistance to needy families so that children can be cared for in their own homes or in the homes of relatives;
2. Reduce the dependency of needy parents on government benefits by promoting job preparation, work, and marriage;
3. Prevent and reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies; and

4. Encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families.

These purposes were outlined in the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA), the law that created TANF, replacing the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) and related programs.

At the federal level, the Office of Family Assistance (OFA) administers the TANF and tribal TANF programs. OFA operates within the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), an agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). TANF is administered at the State and Local levels. In Maryland, the TANF program is called Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA). The State of Maryland's Department of Human Services (DHS) Family Investment Administration (FIA), through its 24 local departments of social services, administers the TCA program. The FIA Program consists of services and cash assistance to eligible individuals. The assistance program components under the FIA Program include TANF, Welfare Avoidance Grants, Emergency Assistance for Children and Families, Child Care and, as well as a full range of programs targeted at special issues and populations.

The TANF Federal Block Grant funds designated for workforce development are allocated to Maryland's 24 local jurisdictions. Each local department submits a plan defining the program for their jurisdiction, which includes the core program components. The requirements and procedures may be tailored to fit the unique population of the jurisdiction.

Financial and technical eligibility criteria are the same for all programs, including those funded by state maintenance of effort, unless otherwise noted in program descriptions. The financial (income and resource) eligibility criteria for the Family Investment Program (FIP) core components are found in the Code of Maryland Regulations section [07.03.03.11](#) and [07.03.03.13](#). (FIP) non-core programs are programs that provide non-assistance aimed at providing short-term support, skills development, or addressing specific needs rather than ongoing financial aid for basic necessities. Unless otherwise stated in their program descriptions, (FIP) non-core programs that are described as serving needy families have income criteria but do not have resource criteria. Examples of non-core programs include: 1) the Maryland emergency food program: this program provides cash grants to assist emergency food providers, such as soup kitchens and food pantries, in purchasing food for needy families, 2) summer youth employment program: this program provides work subsidies for summer work placements, focused on basic skills enhancement and the opportunity to learn marketable work skills, and 3) post adoption services: these services provide support to adoptive parents and children. Services include individual and group support, child or family mentoring, marriage support, information and referral, crisis intervention, community and recreational services, and educational support such as tutoring and educational plan development

TANF Family Investment Program SCHEDULE
Effective January 1, 2026

Household Size	Allowable TCA Payment	Used for Stepparent Deemed Income 50% of the Monthly Poverty Level	Total Children with One Needy Caretaker
1	\$348	\$665	0
2	\$612	\$902	1
3	\$773	\$1,138	2
4	\$926	\$1,375	3
5	\$1,074	\$1,612	4
6	\$1,180	\$1,848	5
7	\$1,327	\$2,085	6
8	\$1,459	\$2,322	7
9	\$1,574	\$2,558	8
10	\$1,701	\$2,795	9
11	\$1,855	\$3,032	10
12	\$1,940	\$4,925	11
13	\$2,059	\$5,162	12
14	\$2,179	\$5,398	13
15	\$2,304	\$3,978	14
16	\$2,450	\$4,215	15
17	\$2,675	\$4,452	16
18	\$2,823	\$4,688	17
19	\$2,971	\$4,925	18
20	\$3,119	\$5,162	19
21	\$3,269	\$5,398	20

TANF Partnership with WIOA for Enhanced Workforce Development Services

Currently, Maryland's TANF workforce programs are built on connecting individuals to work participation activities that ultimately result in permanent employment. Local Department of Social Services (LDSS) workforce programs are operated through pay-for-performance vendors, vendors, or the LDSS themselves. This allows the LDSS to achieve the federal TANF performance measure of 50 percent for WPR. DHS will continue to deploy an "employment first" model, but with TANF's mandated partnership in the WIOA system, DHS can leverage the myriads of opportunities that the WIOA Partners offer to improve upon the employment and training trajectories of TANF customers in Maryland.

DHS has integrated TANF into the WIOA system as a full partner, thus increasing meaningful access to WIOA services for TANF Work Eligible Individuals (WEI) who are determined to be ready, supported, and eligible.

A few WIOA Priority of Service populations, within the WEI TANF group, may include work ready TANF customers; TANF customers between the ages of 18-24 who may be able to take advantage of the new focus on older, out-of-school youth services; individuals receiving or who have exhausted UI and may need TANF; and/or, non-custodial parents. All of these groups fit into Maryland's overall list of targeted populations for Priority of Service. In addition, TANF will be able to offer potential services and supports to other eligible customers within the WIOA system, thus providing value to the entire system as a whole.

DHS leaders continue to serve on as integral partners within the Systems Governance Committee and the Access and Equity Committee to ensure an ongoing active TANF voice. Further, the WIOA Partners in the Alignment Group created under this Plan have ensured that high level leaders from the LDSS, and other decision makers from partnering agencies, have adequate representation on LWDBs. This has ensured local TANF representation for alignment, effective operations, compliance, evaluation, and partnership purposes. As a general framework, based on a strong individualized assessment, TANF customers will receive appropriate services through one of three portals: (1) the LDSS only; (2) through a combined effort between the LDSS and WIOA system; or (3) through the WIOA system only.

All services delivered to TANF Customers should focus on: (1) meeting the WPR by placing TANF Customers in federally countable work activities for sufficient hours each week and (2) achieving the WIOA performance measures, as applicable. The ultimate goal is for TANF Customers to achieve employment that leads to long-term independence from public assistance. Throughout participation in these activities, the LDSS will provide supportive services that may include: childcare, medical assistance, transportation, food assistance, emergency assistance, clothing assistance, and employment retention services.

Through the WIOA system, TANF Customers may:

- Receive LMI, recruitment, job development, and placement services through WIOA, in partnership with LDSS business services staff;
- Participate in training programs such as short-term credentialing training programs, work based learning programs, on-the-job training programs, MD Labor's EARN industry-led training programs, Career Pathways training programs, and/or apprenticeships; and/or
- Participate in Adult Basic Education (ABE), Adult Secondary Education (ASE), or English Language Acquisition (ELA).

In order to strengthen this partnership, DHS will continue to:

- Consider co-location of LDSS and/or WIOA Partners at AJCs or LDSS, depending on the nature of local partnerships and operations to:
 - Monitor the progress of TANF WEI and keep them countable for the federal WPR;
 - Become an integrated part of the WIOA Partners and serve customers collaboratively;
 - Become an integrated member of the WIOA Partners Business Services teams in order to engage with the business community collaboratively and provide the best customer service to businesses and jobseekers alike;
 - Develop common intake and assessment strategies; and
 - Braid and blend funding as appropriate.
- Leverage existing financial and in-kind contributions to the WIOA system:
 - Analyze existing LDSS vendor contracts with the WIOA System and possibly re-tool to create more meaningful access and integration into the WIOA system;
 - Explore partnership models that leverage existing funding to increase TANF Customers' participation in WIOA system programs;
 - Analyze existing co-location contracts or consider co-location of staff or shared space;
 - Provide training and access to DHS' online benefits application and access system, MD Benefits; and
 - Offer TANF and other LDSS services as needed.
- Contribute outcomes data to the WIOA system:
 - Provide and report on performance data for some of the proposed WIOA Common Measures and
 - Use the data to evaluate the TANF/WIOA partnership.
- Participate in Statewide WIOA Partners activities:
 - Serve on the statewide Systems Governance Committee and the Access and Equity Committee;
 - Participate in the planning of Maryland's WIOA Convenings; and
 - Contribute to the Jobseeker Advisory Groups to ensure the inclusion and participation of TANF Customers on the Advisory Groups.

Maryland will leverage DHS' research partner to research, track, and evaluate the TANF partnership with the WIOA system throughout the life of this WIOA Combined Plan. As Maryland continues the partnerships regionally and statewide, a research partner will provide the WIOA Partners with data and recommendations of how the partnerships are working regarding such components as performance, types of WIOA services for TANF Customers, collaborative policies and procedures, shared funding, administration, alignment of program missions, and cross-program staff training and knowledge.

Whole-Family Approach

This TANF state plan adopts a whole-family approach to serving families. Whole-family approach is an intentional philosophy toward how systems, programs, and services engage with families.

A Whole-family approach seeks to support one or more of the building blocks of a stable family – social capital, postsecondary education & employment, health & well-being, economic assets, K-12 education, or early childhood education – while equally privileging the experiences and well-being of the whole family. t

Maryland's TANF program inherently employs a Whole-family approach that is driven by the needs of Maryland's families. Families are able to inform decisions at both the State and local

level, via a direct link to service providers, policy makers, and funders through a streamlined, electronic feedback loop. The customer service survey is vital to the success of Maryland's Whole-family approach and TANF program as it identifies areas of need, opportunities for improvement, and gaps in services.

Current TANF Workforce Programs

DHS, through the local departments, provides workforce related services and referrals to all applicants or customers of TANF assistance. The local departments have the responsibility and some flexibility, within state and federal guidelines, to develop the systems, processes, and programs necessary to implement the work requirements of the TANF law. Annually, the local departments submit their local plans called the Partnership for Achieving Self-Sufficiency (PASS) Plans. These plans describe the activities that local departments will operate to implement the work requirements of the TANF law. **The PASS plans focuses on the below six (6) target populations.**

DHS Special Target Populations

Families with disabilities: DHS is committed to strengthening a diverse workforce and connecting TANF customers and their families with disabilities to the supports necessary so that they may fully participate in the state's economy. Central to this effort is the Department's ongoing implementation of a three-year Voluntary Resolution Agreement (VRA) with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office for Civil Rights, which was established on August 13, 2024, to ensure full compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. As of October 2025, DHS has made significant progress under the VRA, including the completion of Phase 1 system enhancements to the Eligibility and Enrollment (E&E) system, which now features visual alerts for staff to identify customers with disabilities and dedicated screens for processing reasonable accommodation requests. To ensure equitable access, DHS has issued notifications to nearly 6,000 customers regarding the availability of free assessments and evaluations for modifications, and it is currently drafting revisions to COMAR regulations to permanently align state policy with federal disability standards. Moving forward, DHS will continue to enhance staff knowledge through mandatory annual civil rights training and will leverage the expertise of WIOA partners—including MSDE, DORS, and MD Labor—to connect customers with disabilities to career pathways tailored to their specific family situations.

Returning citizens: Maryland currently sees approximately 6,000 to 7,000 individuals released from state correctional facilities each year. Within three years of release, the recidivism rate has improved to approximately 31.6 percent, a notable decrease from previous years. However, the unemployment rate among those released remains a critical challenge, with estimates still exceeding 50 percent during the initial years of reentry. While research shows that a previously incarcerated individual who is employed is less likely to commit crimes and return to prison, a criminal record is the greatest barrier to employment, creating a vicious cycle where affected individuals become dependent on criminal activity for living. The State is intentional in providing returning citizens training opportunities, access to expungement services, and career pathways that are accessible to those with criminal records.

Non-Custodial Parents: DHS will maximize the impact the TANF Block Grant has on a family by supporting non-custodial parents (NCP). Non-custodial parents eligible to participate include those with children who receive TANF, SNAP, SSI, Medicaid, and/or Maryland Children's Health Program (MCHP). Expanding the eligible population for workforce and training services with the goal of increasing earnings for NCP's will reduce caseloads and prevent TANF leavers from returning to assistance. Supporting NCPs also means that they will be more equipped to meet child-support obligations- decreasing the likelihood that their children will also become welfare customers. Complementing these efforts, Maryland will begin phasing in a requirement under HB0881 - Family Investment Program Child Support (2025) that all child support collected in a month must pass through to the family and be disregarded when computing assistance. Starting in Fiscal Year 2028, the state will gradually increase the percentage of child support that reaches families until Fiscal Year 2031, at which point 100% of all collected child support will pass through directly to the household. Additionally, local departments are prohibited from considering collected child support when calculating Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits.

Limited English Proficiency (LEP): 16 percent of Maryland's population is foreign-born. DHS is committed to TANF programming that is nimble and responsive to the changing needs of the States' diverse population. Maryland will use TANF to address the needs of families with LEP by creating programs that address barriers to the population such as low English language literacy, lack of U.S. work experience, unrecognized education and training credentials, limited professional networks, cultural differences and more.

Substance Abuse: DHS remains vigilant regarding the impact of the evolving substance use crisis in Maryland. While the state has seen a significant downward trend in overdose fatalities—reaching a 10-year low in 2025 with a 53 percent decrease since 2021—the Department continues to address a shifting caseload characterized by high rates of children residing with kinship caregivers and an increased demand for integrated mental health and substance use disorder (SUD) services. Recognizing that current trends increasingly involve polydrug use and significant racial disparities in access to care, DHS is committed to providing comprehensive, culturally sensitive support. Through our whole-family approach, the Department ensures that both adults and children in families impacted by SUD are screened for physical and mental health needs, meeting the whole family's needs to ensure long-term stability. DHS provides necessary referrals and supportive services not only to individuals experiencing a disorder but also to family members impacted by a loved one's addiction, with the ultimate goal of removing barriers to successful, sustained employment and family well-being.

Youth

DHS is committed to the success of Maryland's youth by providing tailored workforce and supportive services that address their unique developmental and economic needs. Across the state, local departments have operationalized this commitment through targeted Opportunity Youth Engagement Plans that provide intensive navigation for young adults disconnected from both school and work. These strategies are reinforced by high-impact summer youth employment initiatives, specialized case management for vulnerable

populations, and access to vocational and entrepreneurial training in high-growth industries. By applying a whole-family approach, the Department ensures that youth services are integrated into a whole-family strategy that prioritizes educational attainment, trauma-informed care, and long-term career pathways, empowering the next generation to achieve sustained social and economic independence.

Local departments also have to outline in their PASS plans how they will meet each of the plan goals listed below:

Plan goals include:

- Maintain current TANF Work Program goals:
 - A minimum WPR of 50 percent – This goal is important because WPR is a key benchmark that the federal government uses to evaluate the effectiveness of Maryland’s TANF program,
 - Universal Engagement (All TANF Customers must be engaged in a federal or State defined activity unless otherwise exempted), and
 - Job placements ;
- Improve outcomes for all workforce development vendor contracts;
- Develop meaningful partnerships that advance DHS goals, to include partnership with the WIOA system; and
- Leverage local, state, and federal resources to assist individuals with moving towards self-sufficiency.

The Local PASS Plans also include the state-defined work activity of substance abuse treatment for the purposes of section [402\(a\)\(1\)\(A\)\(ii\) of the Social Security Act](#) as well as any additional locally defined work activities that are also incorporated as state defined activities for the purposes of that section of the law. As long as the individual is participating with substance abuse requirements and is not able to participate in a work activity, the substance abuse treatment is considered the individual’s activity for a specified length of time.

In order to monitor and ensure that TANF Customers are engaging in work activities, DHS uses key reports from the Eligibility and Enrollment (E&E) system, WORKS, and University of Maryland School of Social Work reports to obtain a snapshot view of a local department’s performance. These reports capture three critical metrics that indicate the overall levels of performance local departments made in engaging TANF Customers in work activities and moving them into employment. These measures include: the universal WPR, universal engagement, and clients placed in employment.

In addition to workforce development, Maryland’s TANF program provides a broad range of other services. The Department’s FIA formed partnerships with other administrations within DHS, including the Child Support Administration and Social Services Administration , and with other State agencies and community organizations. DHS’ FIA works with these partners to promote DHS’ goal to protect children by assisting their families to become independent through work, personal and family responsibility, and community involvement.

The Department expanded its goal to include support for low income working families. This new edition to the TANF portion of Maryland’s Combined State Plan continues to strengthen

those partnerships by empowering staff in offices across the State to work together to provide employment and training activities, supportive services, and benefits that enable customers to get jobs and improve their economic circumstances. Additionally, Maryland is committed to providing targeted services to customers facing multiple barriers to employment, including LEP and disabilities.

This Plan includes a full range of programs targeted at special problems and needy populations in every jurisdiction throughout the State. These programs are:

Core Family Investment Program Components

TANF

Individuals may apply for TANF when available resources and referrals do not fully address their families' needs. Applicants must satisfy child support requirements and substance abuse screening before their applications for TANF are approved. Medical Assistance eligibility is determined in a separate determination and system for each member of an active TANF assistance unit. DHS contracts with vendors who are qualified to implement TANF/workforce programs for refugees and/or asylees. In order to qualify as a provider for refugee services, vendors must be authorized through the Department of Homeland Security, Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services, and the United States Department of State, Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration. This program provides assistance.

Diversion Programs

Maryland operates a diversion program, the Welfare Avoidance Grant (WAG). A local department may offer a WAG following the same financial eligibility criteria for TANF/TCA. A WAG is a one-time only, short-term cash benefit to a family with children, which is paid based on an agreement signed by the applicant or customer and the local department. Following the intent of [§407 of the Social Security Act](#), WAG is a non-assistance TANF diversion program that provides for a specific family episode of need, rather than a chronic or continuing situation. The WAG provides funding to meet that need so that the breadwinner may take a job or return to a job. A WAG payment is not intended to cover a family's on-going needs. Applicants or customer may not receive TANF during any period covered by a WAG. An application for TANF is denied during the period covered by the WAG. Any on-going TANF case would be closed. This program provides non-assistance.

Caretaker Relatives

DHS recognizes and prioritizes the strength of diverse family arrangements through a "Kin-First" lens, moving beyond a focus on any single crisis to support the long-standing tradition of Maryland families caring for their own. The Department acknowledges that contemporary family structures often involve non-parent caretaker relatives stepping in to provide 24-hour care and guidance when a parent is unable to do so. In alignment with Family Investment Administration (FIA) policy, a caretaker relative is defined as a parent or other person related by blood, marriage, or adoption who lives with and cares for a minor child. To support these

vital household arrangements, DHS intentionally screens caretaker relatives to identify opportunities for enhanced supports that address secondary trauma and help families navigate the complexities of the assistance system. By fostering these permanent connections, the Department ensures children remain in familiar, loving environments while receiving the technical and financial supports necessary for the whole family to thrive. Due to the current drug crisis, DHS has noted a trend of increased cases where grandparents and/or other relatives are caring for minors. These trends are most notable in areas with higher

Emergency Assistance to Families with Children

Maryland's Emergency Assistance to Families with Children program uses TANF funds to operate. Funds are allocated to local departments to meet emergencies for families with children. The financial eligibility criteria for this component differ from the other components, in that the family is needy if they have an emergency situation, as defined in the local plan, and do not have income or readily available liquid assets to meet that emergency. The family must have at least one child under the age of 21, and the emergency cannot have been created by quitting a job. A couple examples of an emergency situation, as defined in the local plan are listed below. These examples are not an exhaustive list.

- A pending foreclosure or eviction; or
- A lack of or insufficient supply of heating fuel, lack of utilities, or threat of imminent utility turn-off.

Transitional Support Services

The Transitional Support Services (TSS) initiative began in July 2019. The purpose of the initiative is to help TANF leavers to smoothly transition to self-sufficiency. Through TSS, a TANF household is able to continue to receive cash assistance for a period of time after their TANF case closes due to income over-scale. A TANF leaver may receive up to three consecutive months of a cash benefit equal to the TCA grant amount at the time of case closure. DHS will continue to enhance the program to include additional support services (i.e. case management and post-job placement) assistance to ensure that TANF leavers are able to not only maintain employment, but also, they thrive. DHS is currently developing a process to automatically refer TSS customers to the SNAP Employment & Training Program to access additional services that will lead to increased household income and improved overall economic well-being.

Extended the Allowable Time Period for Vocational Education and Education Program

Beginning July 1, 2020, the State will allow a customer to meet the work activity requirement for a maximum of 24 months by either:

1. Engaging in a minimum of 20 hours per week of vocational education training that is directly related to employment and education that leads to an associate degree, a diploma or a certificate; or

2. Engaging in an average of at least 20 hours per week of education directly related to employment, which may include an adult basic education program, an English as a second language program or a GED® program.

Program Requirements

The following section outlines requirements for the state's TANF Program:

Assessment

Within 30 days after a case has been approved for a Family Investment Program, an assessment is completed to consider the individual's reasons for applying for, or continuing to rely on, assistance, educational level, job skills and readiness, identifying potential impairments, disabilities, and interests to enable evaluation for appropriate program activities, and any available personal and family resources to facilitate independence. Based on the assessment of needs, the local department offers supportive services to the individual which may include, but are not limited to:

- Child support services;
- Job services;
- SNAP E&T / Food Supplement Program;
- Medical Assistance;
- Social services;
- Referral to Family Planning and Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment Services;
- Child care;
- Transportation; and
- Other appropriate services.

The customer signs a Family Independence Plan with the local department specifying the requirement to comply with requests for cooperation, participation in work activities, and supportive services which the local department provides. The customer's actions may include, but are not limited to, participating in child support activities, job search activities, skills training activities, employment activities, community service, and substance use disorder treatment programs, if appropriate.

Application Decision

A decision on an application for any Family Investment Program component is made as promptly as possible, within 30 calendar days from the date the signed application is received.

Residence

The applicant and all customer shall be residents of the State of Maryland. A resident of the State is one who is living in the State voluntarily, and not for a temporary purpose, and has no immediate intention of moving from the State and is not receiving assistance from another State.

Citizenship Status

A Family Investment Program customer must be a U.S. citizen, or a qualified alien as defined in §8 USC 1611 et seq., as amended. A state program for other qualified legal immigrants who are not eligible under federal law has been developed and is paid with 100 percent State maintenance of effort (MOE) funds.

Employment and Education Requirements

Each adult in the assistance unit, and each child aged 16 years or older in the assistance unit who is not enrolled full-time in school, must participate as requested in a work activity which is approved by the local department and is likely to result in unsubsidized employment. The participation requirement is based on the concept of universal engagement within 30 days of application approval and is compliant with the 24-month work rule found in [§402\(a\)\(1\) A \(ii\) of the Social Security Act](#).

Federal and State exemptions from the work activity requirements are:

Federal Exemptions

- A single custodial parent who is required to care for a child under age one who is a member of the assistance unit (This exemption applies for a cumulative total of 12 months for a parent's lifetime and does not apply to each child);
- A child under age 16;
- A teen parent (either head of household or included as a child on an adult's TANF case) who has not finished secondary school may not be exempt to care for a child younger than one year old;
- A non-parent caretaker relative in the assistance unit who accepts responsibility to provide care and guidance to a minor child of a relative has demonstrated need and has no dependent children of his or her own in the assistance unit; and/or,
- An immigrant, parent/caretaker relatives who are not eligible for federal TANF assistance, with the exception of adult only qualified immigrant households for which TANF eligibility is based on an unborn child.

State Exemptions:

- A single custodial parent who is required to care for a child under age one who is a member of the assistance unit. There is no limit to the number of times a single custodial parent can use this exemption as long as they have a child under the age of one.
 - Note: This exemption is used once the Federal exemption has been exhausted.
- A new customer receiving TCA for the first time is exempt from work requirements from month 1 to and through month 6.

Failure of any non-exempt adult to cooperate in a work requirement without good cause, including failure to accept offered employment, shall result in a reduction in benefits for the adult household members until the household members cooperate.

Work Requirements

Maryland provides comprehensive work-related services and referrals to all TANF applicants and recipients. These services are initiated at the local department level, where agencies are granted the flexibility to design systems, processes, and programs tailored to their specific jurisdictions. This local autonomy ensures that work requirements are implemented effectively while remaining strictly aligned with state and federal guidelines. **Quitting a Job**

When an adult applicant voluntarily quits a job within 30 days of their TANF application date, the entire assistance unit is ineligible for TANF for 30 days after the quit. When a 16–17 year old child applicant who is not enrolled in school voluntarily quits a job within 30 days of the TANF application date, the child is ineligible, and the child’s incremental portion of the TANF grant is not paid. To be eligible, the adult or child must work at a new job or wait 30 days after the quit date to apply for TANF.

When an adult active voluntarily quits a job without good cause, the entire assistance unit is ineligible after conciliation and sanction procedures are applied. When a 16–17-year-old child active customer who is not enrolled in school voluntarily quits a job without good cause, that child is sanctioned, and the child’s incremental portion of the TANF grant is reduced per Maryland’s sanctioned policies. Work sanctions are imposed on both adults and children over age 16 and must be cured before benefits are paid. Good cause reasons are stated in the Code of Maryland Regulations at [07.03.03.07-1](#).

Participation Rates

Under the authority of federal law, the State of Maryland elects the option to exclude single custodial parents caring for a child under the age of 12 months from the federal Work Participation Rate (WPR) calculation. For federal reporting purposes, this exclusion is limited to a cumulative lifetime total of 12 months per parent, regardless of the number of children.

Separately, under Maryland State policy, these individuals are granted a "Child Under One" exemption from mandatory work requirements and activities. While the federal exclusion from the participation rate is capped at 12 months in a lifetime, the state maintains the discretion to provide local supportive services and engagement opportunities to these families during an additional exemption period.

Child Support Requirements

Eligibility for the Family Investment Program (FIP) requires that all applicants and recipients comply with state and federal child support regulations to ensure that families receive the maximum available resources. At the time of application, the household must file for child support enforcement services and assign to Maryland the right to any support payments due to a child in the assistance unit during the period they receive benefits. Unless a "Good Cause" exemption is granted—specifically in cases where cooperation might result in physical or emotional harm to a child or adult—the household must cooperate with the Child Support Administration to identify and locate absent parents, establish paternity, and secure support payments. Under Maryland’s compliance policy, a determination of non-cooperation without

good cause at application results in the ineligibility of the entire assistance unit. A determination of non-cooperation without good cause while the TCA case is active results in a reduction of the full TCA grant by 25% until the household complies. In alignment with HB0881- Family Investment Program Child Support (2025), while cooperation remains a requirement, Maryland is modernizing this process by phasing in a 100% "pass-through" policy. This ensures that child support collected on behalf of the child is increasingly directed to the family and disregarded as income, thereby enhancing the household's total economic stability

The Assistance Unit

Composition of the Assistance Unit

The TCA assistance unit is composed of parents (including married same-gender adults), caretaker relatives acting in loco parentis, minor children, or pregnant women. In Maryland, a caretaker relative is defined as an individual who assumes responsibility for the care and guidance of a relative's minor child. This definition is broad and includes any degree of relationship—such as grandparents, aunts, uncles, or cousins—as outlined in COMAR [07.03.03.06](#). To be included in the unit, a minor child must be under the age of 18, or under 19 if they are expected to complete secondary education or equivalent vocational training before their 19th birthday.

Equitable Treatment and Time Limits

To encourage the formation and maintenance of stable households, Maryland treats one-parent and two-parent assistance units identically under state regulations. While one-parent units are federally funded and two-parent units are state-funded, both are subject to the same eligibility standards. However, assistance is generally limited to a cumulative total of 60 months for households with an adult head of household or spouse. Exceptions to this lifetime limit are only granted for individuals living in Indian Country (per §408 of the TANF law) or those meeting the "hardship" criteria, which applies to up to 20 percent of the state's caseload.

Behavioral and Regulatory Compliance

In addition to time limits, eligibility is contingent upon compliance with specific behavioral and legal requirements. For example:

- **Educational Requirements:** The unit may not include teen parents who are not pursuing a high school diploma or its equivalent, nor can it include children aged 16 or older (who are not heads of household) if they are not full-time students and fail to comply with work requirements without good cause.
- **Substance Use and Legal Status:** The needs of any individual failing to comply with required substance use disorder treatment are removed from the grant. Furthermore, individuals are excluded from the unit if they are fugitive felons, in violation of probation or parole, or have misrepresented their residence to receive duplicate benefits (the latter resulting in a ten-year ban).

Specific Populations and Special Circumstances

Maryland further refines the assistance unit based on citizenship and household dynamics:

- **Non-Parent Caretakers:** The assistance unit excludes caretaker relatives who care for a child but have not demonstrated financial need or do not have dependent children of their own in the same unit.
- **Immigrant Households:** Parents or caretaker relatives who are ineligible for federal TANF due to immigration status are generally excluded from the unit. However, Maryland maintains a Separate State Program (SSP) for "adult-only" qualified immigrant households where eligibility is based on an unborn child. In federally funded units where adults are ineligible due to status, a "room and board" payment is issued for the children only.
- **Support for 19-Year-Old Students:** Any household with a dependent 19-year-old student and demonstrated financial need will qualify for 100 percent state-funded TANF.
- **Disability Advocacy:** Maryland remains committed to families where a parent or child has a disability expected to last more than 12 months. Such individuals are required to apply for Supplemental Security Income (SSI). While the SSI application is approved, pending, or in the appeal stage, the family receives TCA, which includes specialized services to help the individual successfully navigate the SSI eligibility process.

60-Month Time Limit

Families that reach their 60-month time limit and are granted a hardship exemption remain eligible for TANF. Families that reach their 60-month time limit and are not meeting one or more of the Family Investment Program requirements are not eligible for TANF. Maryland emphasizes that conversations regarding the 60-month time limit start the day of initial application. TANF case managers work with families to identify a family centered plan from day one. The plan ensures that customers are engaged early on in activities that will help them achieve self-sufficiency. Criteria for granting a hardship exemption are stated in the Code of Maryland Regulations at [07.03.03.20](#). Penalties for not meeting Family Investment Program requirements are stated in Code of Maryland Regulations at [07.03.03.19](#).

Primary Prevention Initiative

As part of the plan to both reduce infant mortality and encourage children to remain in school, Maryland requires TANF Customers with children aged seven and under to provide medical documentation of annual health checkups. TANF Customers with children aged seven and over must verify their children are registered in and attending school at least 80 percent of the time. Children not meeting either the health verification requirement or the school attendance requirement cause a TANF disallowance or reduction in the TANF benefit of \$25 per child, per month. When the child is back in compliance, the full benefit is reinstated.

Families Served in a Separate State TANF Program

Because of their special circumstances, the state of Maryland serves the following families in a Separate State TANF Program funded with 100 percent TANF Maintenance of Effort funds. The eligibility requirements are the same as for federally funded TANF families:

- For families where there are qualified immigrant adults (admitted to the country on or after August 22, 1996) who are not eligible under federal law but meet all other TANF eligibility requirements and include a pregnant adult, but no other children, a separate state program will serve these families until the child is born.
- For families consisting of a parent (or parents) or a non-parent caretaker relative (or non-parent caretaker relatives) with the only child (or children) in the household who is a full-time student in a secondary school or an equivalent program and expected to graduate in the year the child turns 19, eligibility ends the month after the month of the child's graduation.
- Adult parents in families that are determined by the local department to be exempt for reason of hardship and who meet all other TANF technical and financial eligibility requirements, who are not eligible under federal law because of the 20 percent hardship exemption limit.

Families Served in a Segregated State TANF Program

Because of their special circumstances, the state of Maryland will serve the following families in a TANF Program funded with state funds segregated within the TANF program. The eligibility requirements are the same as for TANF/TANF-MOE funded families:

- Families with at least one assistance unit member who is employed,
- Has countable earned income, and
- Receives Maryland's 40 percent income disregard.

These families are not subject to the 60-month time limits but are subject to all other TANF requirements.

Because of their special circumstances, the state of Maryland serves the following families in a Segregated TANF Program funded with federal TANF funds. Maryland uses TANF funds to provide adoption services (that do not constitute "assistance") to a needy family in which an unrelated adult is in the process of adopting a child. An example of an adoption service is providing a non-recurring adoption expense subsidy as a one-time payment. Reimbursement for the non-recurring expenses is provided specifically for reasonable and necessary

expenditures that are not reimbursable from another source, including but not limited to the following:

1. Adoption fees;
2. Court costs and attorney fees;
3. Transportation costs;
4. Food and lodging costs incurred during pre-placement visits; and
5. Supervision of the placement.

To qualify on the basis of income:

- The annual adjusted gross income, as defined by the Internal Revenue Service, of the prospective adoptive family may not exceed 80 percent of the latest published figure for the median income for a family of that size for the state, as set forth in Schedule A under COMAR 07.02.04.11;
- The adoptive child is included in determining the family size; and
- The annual adjusted gross income of the family shall be the latest figure that was reported to the Internal Revenue Service. In this circumstance, Maryland cannot provide income support (i.e., assistance) to the family prior to adoption because the family would not include a child living with a parent or adult relative. Maryland uses segregated Federal TANF funds to pay for the services because the family would not be an "eligible family" for Maintenance of Effort purposes. Funds used for this program are for services and are non-assistance, outside the purview of the IV-E (child welfare) program and meet the first purpose of TANF.

Families Served with State General Funds Not Counted Toward the TANF Maintenance of Effort Requirement

Maryland opts to serve families with two able-bodied parents, including same gender married couples, in the assistance unit in a program with its own funds and will not count these funds toward its TANF Maintenance of Effort requirement. Such families are subject to the work requirements of the TANF program.

Minor Children Who Are Absent From the Home for a Significant Period

States may opt out of paying TANF for a child who has been or expected by a parent or other caretaker relative to be absent from the home for a period of 45 consecutive days, or at the option of the state, a period of no less than 30 and not more than 180 consecutive days (if in a verifiable program).. The state of Maryland elects the option to continue assistance for a child absent from the home fewer than 180 consecutive days. The state of Maryland elects the option to establish a good cause exception to allow children to exceed this 180-day limit: when the absence is for educational or treatment purposes, approved by the Secretary, the parent does not relinquish responsibility for the child.

Unmarried Minor who is a Parent or Pregnant

When TANF is granted for a minor who is an unmarried parent or pregnant, the minor shall reside in the household of the minor's parent, legal guardian, other adult relative, or in a supportive living arrangement in order to receive assistance. The parent, legal guardian, or the adult supervisor in a supportive living arrangement is the authorized representative for the unmarried parent or pregnant minor.

Relative of a Minor Child who is Absent for a Significant Period of Time

Assistance may not be provided for a period of three months, to a parent (or other caretaker relative) of a minor child, who fails to notify the local department of the absence from the home of the minor child, by the end of the 5-day period that begins with the date it becomes clear to the parent that the minor child will be absent longer than 180 days.

Child Care Allowance

A disregard of out-of-pocket childcare payments from earned income may not exceed \$200 per month for the care of each child in the assistance unit when the caretaker is employed 100 hours or more per month, or \$100 per child in the assistance unit when the caretaker works less than 100 hours per month.

Income Calculations

The TANF income calculations are stated in the Code of Maryland Regulations at [07.03.03.13](#). Eligibility for benefits is measured against a payment standard at [07.03.03.17](#), which is reviewed each year. These income calculations apply to both members of an assistance unit and non-members whose income is countable to the assistance unit. Each member of the assistance unit is considered to be a customer of the Family Investment Program, even though no cash assistance is paid. The income countable to TANF from a stepparent is determined by excluding income which falls below 50 percent of the official poverty level established under the Federal Community Services Block Grant, adjusted for family size, and counting as available to the TANF benefit, income which equals or exceeds 50 percent of the poverty level established under the Federal Community Services Block Grant, adjusted for family size.

Benefit Amount

The local department determines the TANF benefit payment amount by deducting the net countable income, rounded down to the nearest dollar, from the allowable amount for the assistance unit size. The period of time covered by the TANF benefit is a calendar month. The assistance unit budget is determined for the length of the eligibility period or until there is a change in circumstances. At the end of the eligibility period, the family's eligibility for assistance is re-determined and the budget is re-calculated. The eligibility period is usually four, six, or 12 months, set by the local department based on the family's circumstances.

TANF Family Investment Program SCHEDULE

Effective January 1, 2026

Household Size	Allowable TCA Payment	Used for Stepparent Deemed Income 50% of the Monthly Poverty Level	Total Children with One Needy Caretaker
1	\$348	\$665	0
2	\$612	\$902	1
3	\$773	\$1,138	2
4	\$926	\$1,375	3
5	\$1,074	\$1,612	4
6	\$1,180	\$1,848	5
7	\$1,327	\$2,085	6
8	\$1,459	\$2,322	7
9	\$1,574	\$2,558	8
10	\$1,701	\$2,795	9
11	\$1,855	\$3,032	10
12	\$1,940	\$4,925	11
13	\$2,059	\$5,162	12
14	\$2,179	\$5,398	13
15	\$2,304	\$3,978	14
16	\$2,450	\$4,215	15
17	\$2,675	\$4,452	16
18	\$2,823	\$4,688	17
19	\$2,971	\$4,925	18
20	\$3,119	\$5,162	19
21	\$3,269	\$5,398	20

Assets

Effective May 1, 2010, the state of Maryland chose to exclude all assets for the financial determination of TANF benefits.

Drug Felonies

In order to receive assistance, individuals convicted of drug kingpin or volume drug dealer felonies must agree to random drug testing and treatment if necessary. Individuals who fail to comply with drug testing or treatment are denied TANF and SNAP benefits. Individuals convicted of a drug kingpin or volume drug dealer felony after receiving assistance are ineligible for TANF and SNAP for one year from the date of conviction and are subject to substance use disorder testing for a period of two years from the date of:

- Release from incarceration
- Completion of probation
- Completion of parole or mandatory supervision
- Sanctions for Noncompliance with Program Requirements

Maryland does not sanction or withhold benefits from any individual due to the results of a drug test. A denial and/or sanction is only applied in situations where an individual does not comply with their drug testing and treatment plan. The failure of a drug test is not linked to program eligibility. Additionally, a drug test and/or treatment plan is only required of individuals who have screened positive through a series of questions asked by a professional trained in substance use disorder counseling.

Failure to Comply with Program Requirements

Once a Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA) case is approved, the household must maintain ongoing compliance with all program requirements to receive their full benefit. For newly approved customers, compliance with work requirements must be established within 30 days of the date the case is approved. Failure to meet these requirements or other program rules results in a reduction of benefits according to Maryland's specific sanction protocols

When an adult does not comply with program requirements, the benefit is reduced in accordance with Maryland's sanction policy. The adult(s) and/or minor parent's portion of the grant is reduced by 30%. The Family Investment Program case manager investigates the reasons for noncompliance and helps the individual comply by sending a letter to schedule a conciliation conference and by following up through telephone or personal contact to the extent appropriate and feasible. A sanction is not imposed less than 30 days from the start of the conciliation process. For noncompliance with any program requirement TANF is resumed upon compliance with the program requirement. When a 16-17-year-old child, who is not enrolled in school, does not comply with a work activity, the child's needs are removed and the child remains a member of the assistance unit. The TANF grant for the family is therefore reduced by the child's incremental portion. For noncompliance with a work activity, TANF is resumed immediately upon compliance. States may elect to allow Medical Assistance eligibility to adults who fail to comply with work requirements until compliance is met. For

noncompliance with the requirement for prohibited use of an electronic benefits transfer card for federally funded cash assistance programs, Maryland elects to warn customers in violation the first time that their EBT card is in danger of being revoked. After a second instance of using the electronic benefits transfer card to access TANF benefits, it will be revoked. Customers whose electronic benefits transfer cards have been revoked will be required to either provide checking or savings account information for direct deposit of their assistance benefits or accept a paper check.

Sanctions for Intentional Program Violations

An individual who has waived the right to an administrative hearing, or was found to have committed an intentional program violation, is ineligible to participate for a period of 12 months after the first finding of fraud or until full repayment of any overpayment of TANF benefits, 24 months after the second finding of fraud or until full repayment of any overpayment of TANF benefits, and permanently after the third finding of fraud. Allegations of potential TANF fraud must be reported by any individual or entity working with the TANF program.

Fraud Under Means-Tested Welfare and Public Assistance Programs

If an individual's benefits under federal, state, or local law relating to a means-tested welfare or a public assistance program are reduced because of an act of fraud by the individual under the law or program, the individual may not, for the duration of the reduction, receive an increased benefit under any other means- tested program.

Other Sanctions

Maryland elects to sanction a family, which fails to ensure that minor dependent school age children attend school, and minor dependent preschool children receive preventive health care. The sanction is a disallowance of \$25 per child not meeting the attendance or health care requirement.

Timely Notice of Termination or Reduction

The local department mails or hand delivers advance, written notice at least ten calendar days before the date of reduction, termination, or suspension action.

Local Department Waivers

Any LDSS may submit a request for a waiver of Family Investment Program regulations to the Secretary of DHS. The waiver(s) may be granted for up to two years if the Secretary determines that the waiver:

- Promotes more efficient, effective, and appropriate management and delivery of Family Investment Program services and benefits;
- Improves opportunities for Family Investment Program customers to gain self-sufficiency;

- Provides more flexibility to the LDSS in administering the Family Investment Program; and
- Remains cost neutral for the duration of the waiver.

A waiver that violates federal law or regulations may not be granted to any local department unless prior approval has been received from the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). The Secretary has the authority to terminate a waiver by written notice to the LDSS 30 days prior to the effective date of the termination.

Demonstration Projects

Demonstration projects are developed through grants to non-profit organizations in partnership with local departments and approved by DHS. The Department may also contract with non-profit organizations including charitable, private, and faith-based organizations, and institutions of post-secondary education to develop demonstration projects. Faith-based organizations may participate in the Family Investment Program demonstration projects on the same basis as any other non-governmental entity. The funds allocated to demonstration projects may not be used to further sectarian religious instruction or worship. An individual may not be required to accept assistance from a faith-based organization if acceptance would violate the individual's bona fide religious beliefs and practices.

All demonstration projects are subject to prescribed outcomes consistent with the Department's mission, goals, and objectives. All demonstration projects must meet specified performance measures as developed by the Department as prescribed by the state's Managing for Results guidelines. The Secretary of DHS will award grants for these demonstration projects through a competitive bid process which includes the issuance of a request for a proposal in accordance with the requirements of the Human Service Article §5-319 Annotated Code of Maryland, and establishment of an evaluation panel to review competing proposals and to recommend to the Secretary of DHS those proposals which have the greatest programmatic and financial merit. Multi-year awards based on program performance may also be considered. The request for demonstration project proposals requires applicants to specify the ways in which the proposed demonstration projects create incentives for increased employment and job retention.

Formula for Disbursement of Funds

While TANF cash assistance is distributed centrally through an Electronic Benefits Transfer system, the Department allocates funds to local departments for childcare, work activities, welfare avoidance, emergency funds, administration, and other services that the Secretary of DHS deems appropriate for the program.

Displaced Workers Grievance Procedure

Maryland has established and maintains grievance procedures to resolve complaints concerning the displacement of workers by an adult in a work activity associated with the Family Investment Program. The procedures can be found in COMAR 07.03.03.24

Non-Custodial, Non-Supporting Minor Parents

Maryland does not currently provide activities for non-custodial, non-supporting minor parents within its TANF program.

Other options

Maryland does not have Tribal Family Assistance as a category of assistance.

Programs Funded by Commingled Funds

Maryland has developed a broad array of services for families and children that are reasonably calculated to accomplish the first and second purposes of the TANF law. These are funded out of federal TANF and TANF Maintenance of Effort funds or other sources. Maryland has designed these programs to be as effective and efficient as possible. Using the flexibility in the statute and regulations, Maryland will report the exact amount of federal TANF and/or TANF Maintenance of Effort funds charged to these programs using the appropriate federal mechanisms. Unless otherwise noted, for the purposes of this Plan and federal reporting, eligibility for the following programs is generally limited to those families with incomes under 300 percent of the federal poverty level at the time-of-service delivery.

SB 512 – Substance-Exposed Newborns (SEN)

The SB 512 Program (enacted via 1997 Md. Laws, Chapter 367) focuses on the identification and support of newborns exposed to controlled substances, including heroin, cocaine, and other opioids. In alignment with federal CARA (Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act) standards, Maryland hospitals notify the Local Department of Social Services (LDSS) of substance-exposed newborns to initiate a Plan of Safe Care.

The program's primary goal is to provide supportive services and refer parents to drug treatment to mitigate risks of child abuse or neglect. If a parent is deemed high-risk and refuses or fails to complete treatment, and neither parent can provide adequate care, the LDSS may initiate Child In Need of Assistance (CINA) proceedings, which can lead to the termination of parental rights if the child's safety remains at risk.

While the program historically targeted 300 women across seven key jurisdictions, its reporting and assessment framework now functions statewide, with intensive coordination services concentrated in high-need areas such as Baltimore City, Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Montgomery, Prince George's, Washington, and Cecil Counties. Services are available to both TANF and non-TANF recipients with incomes up to 300% of the federal poverty level. The program provides "non-assistance" (supportive services rather than direct cash payments) and does not serve individuals whose parental rights have already been severed.

Post-Employment Retention Services

The 24 Local Departments of Social Services (LDSS) provide Post-Employment Retention Services to former Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA) customers to support their transition to long-term financial independence. These services are available for up to 12 months following the family's final TCA grant. Tailored to the whole-family approach, these supports focus on the well-being of the entire family, providing individualized case management and referrals to prevent a return to public assistance.

Supportive services are specific to the needs of the household and may include transportation assistance (such as car repairs or transit passes), work-related expenses (such as uniforms,

tools, or licensing fees), and child care referrals. The program's core objective is to reduce dependency by promoting job stability, career advancement, and family preservation. Eligibility is generally limited to families with a gross household income within 300 percent of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL). As of recent policy updates, Maryland has moved toward eliminating asset limits for many of these supportive categories to encourage savings; however, specific local plans may still evaluate resources to ensure the family meets "needy family" criteria. This program is classified as "non-assistance," meaning it does not count toward the 60-month federal lifetime limit for cash benefits.

Job Skills Enhancement for Non-TANF Families Program

The Job Skills Enhancement for Non-TANF Families Program provides comprehensive job skills enhancement services to low-income working families whose employed members' lack of job skills consigns the family to inadequate income and little opportunity for improved earnings in the future. Such families are at risk of welfare dependence. By enhancing the job skills of these wage earners, this program improves participants' incomes and their capacity for long term financial self-sufficiency. The Job Skills Enhancement for Non-TANF Families Program offers comprehensive workforce support services including, but not limited to, childcare, transportation, skills training, and more. The program provides non-assistance services and not payments. Close interagency cooperation and extensive involvement of the business community, from whom skill enhancement services are procured, characterize the program.

Participants, all of whom are voluntary, receive a menu of services tailored to meet their individual needs. Recruitment and orientation is followed by an individual assessment to assist program participants in defining skills, aptitudes, and interests. Assessment results are used to identify and develop the participant's Individual Training Plan. The Individual Training Plan identifies the participant's goals, action steps, outcome measures, and specific time frames - not to exceed one year. This jointly developed plan outlines appropriate training and education to meet the state's career objectives. Job skill enhancement activities may include experiential learning and/or formal training.

In addition, the program's multi-agency configuration and its close links with the business community affords participants the opportunity to enroll in on-the-job training, job shadowing, career exploration, business tours, mentoring activities, and more. Information pertaining to job openings, industry projections, labor market analyses, and job skill demand are utilized to assist participants in developing their Individual Training Plan. The program is a diversion program intended to assist Maryland families in avoiding welfare dependency by improving their job skills, and thus, their capacity for achieving long-term financial self-sufficiency.

For program purposes, "family" also includes a pregnant woman or a parent with one or more minor children or a caretaker relative with one or more minor children. Targeted customers are Maryland families whose adult wage earners have been employed for a minimum of six months for not less than 30 hours per week in entry-level and other positions with limited

potential for advancement and whose income meets the program's eligibility criteria. Participant families are limited to those with an annual earned income up to 300 percent of the federal poverty guidelines, adjusted for family size and \$5,000 or less in assets. The program will also exclude one vehicle for each working person in the family. This program provides non-assistance.

Family Preservation

Family Preservation represents a variety of programs available to families to provide supportive services to promote safety and well-being of children and their families. This includes families with identified stresses around family life, including disruption, child abuse and neglect issues, domestic violence, homelessness, substance abuse, mental health, physical health, and educational concerns, who are within 200 percent of the poverty level. The principal purpose behind these programs is to enable children to continue to live and thrive in their home with their parents or relatives. Each program is child safety based, goal oriented, family focused, flexible, provided in the home or community, culturally relevant and sensitive, and designed to build on family strengths and unity. Manageable caseload sizes and a team approach of social worker and case associates are an integral part of all services. Each service has designated timeframes, with the possibility for limited extensions when service goals have not been realized. Employment and self-sufficiency are program goals and part of the mutually agreed upon family service agreement. This program provides non-assistance.

The Eviction Assistance Program

To prevent homelessness, this program provides funds to local jurisdictions to hire staff to work with households with income under 300 percent of the poverty level who are facing imminent eviction. The customer of a grant must show that the grant will resolve the issue.

The Maryland Emergency Food Program

This program provides cash grants to assist emergency food providers (including soup kitchens and food pantries) in purchasing food for needy families with income under 300 percent of the poverty level. This program provides non-assistance. LDSSs make referrals to these programs. Only TANF customers who are referred are funded with TANF funds.

Summer Youth Employment Program

The summer youth employment program is designed to provide work subsidies for work placements focused on basic skills enhancement and the opportunity to learn marketable work skills. These summer programs can operate in partnership with WIOA Partners, thus creating robust work experiences for youth. Program counselors help youth develop positive work habits and attitudes and can reinforce the relationship between the skills acquired on the job and what is learned in an educational setting. Transportation for youth to travel to and from the work site may also be provided. Summer youth employment programs reduce the risk of welfare dependency by improving the youths' capacity to obtain employment that leads to long-term financial self-sufficiency. This program serves youth ages 14 through 21

that are members of a family whose total family income is up to 300 percent of the federal poverty level. This program provides non-assistance.

Informal Kinship Care Services

These services are provided to children who live with their relative caregiver through an informal arrangement made between family members. The child is not in the care, custody, or guardianship of the LDSS. Both the child and the relative caregivers receive informal kinship care supports through Kinship Navigation, including specialized training through the National Training and Development Curriculum (NTDC), referrals to the Maryland Department of Aging for senior providers, and access to the #MDKinCares 2-1-1 texting platform. These services are designed to stabilize the placement, preserve the child's cultural identity, and prevent the need for entry into the formal foster care system. Caregivers in informal arrangements are eligible to apply for a "Child-Only" Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA) grant also referred to as non-needy TCA, which is based solely on the child's income and resources, not the caregiver's. This program provides assistance.

Post Adoption Services

Post Adoption Services provide supportive services to adoptive parents and children with income under 300 percent of the poverty level. Services provided include but are not limited to: individual and group support, child or family mentoring, marriage support, information and referral, crisis intervention, community and recreational services (i.e. community-based therapeutic services, and community events), and educational support, such as tutoring and educational plan development. Benefits under this program meet the definition of non-assistance under the TANF program. This program is reasonably calculated to meet the first goal of the TANF statute.

Independent Living (Ready by 21) Program

The Independent Living Program is a critical component of the foster care continuum administered by the Social Services Administration and delivered by the 24 Local Departments of Social Services (LDSS). The program's primary objective is to prepare older foster care youth for a successful transition to self-sufficiency. Beginning at age 14, youth participate in the Ready by 21 framework, which focuses on developing basic life skills and building enduring "permanency" connections—networks of supportive adults and community resources that last beyond their time in care.

Each of Maryland's 24 jurisdictions features at least one Independent Living Coordinator (ILC). These coordinators work directly with youth and their caseworkers to navigate five key benchmarks:

- **Safe & Stable Housing:** Identifying stable, safe living arrangements, including Semi-Independent Living Arrangements (SILA).
- **Well-being and Civic Engagement:** Ensuring continuity of care and transitioning to independent health management (youth in Maryland foster care at age 18 are eligible

for Medical Assistance until age 26). Able to navigate community resources to provide for their needs.

- Education & Employment: College and career readiness pathways that include accessing the Maryland Tuition Waiver and Education and Training Vouchers (ETV), job placement and workforce development opportunities.
- Financial Empowerment: Budgeting, credit building, and managing "transition funds."
- Permanent & Supportive Connections: Build healthy, positive relationships and create supportive personal networks.

Eligibility and Re-Entry

Youth typically remain in foster care until age 18, but Maryland allows youth to remain in or up to age 21 if they are enrolled in school, a vocational program, employed at least 80 hours a month, or have a documented disability. Maryland also provides an Enhanced Aftercare Voluntary Placement Agreement that allows a youth to re-enter care if they were in care at 18, left foster care prior to their 21st birthday and are not over the age of 20 years and 6 months. Financial maintenance payments and eligibility standards are governed by COMAR [07.02.11.26](#) and [07.02.11.34](#). This program provides direct assistance and case management.

Kinship/Foster Care Maintenance Payment

This program serves children who are under age 21, who are not eligible for Foster Care IV-E (child welfare) funds and who can no longer reside in their home of origin because of abuse or neglect. These children were determined to be a Child in Need of Assistance through the court system, committed to an LDSS, and placed in the home of a relative. The targeted population is relative caregivers of children committed to a LDSS and the Child in Need of Assistance children living with that relative who is a licensed Kinship Caregiver. The purpose of the program is to provide assistance to families so children may live with their relatives. Relative caregivers in this program are supported by the LDSSs with completed home studies and supplemental financial assistance for the care of the children. The children for whom payment is made must have income below 300 percent of the poverty level. The complete financial and eligibility criteria for the foster care maintenance payment are in the Code of Maryland Regulations at [07.02.09](#) and the schedules against which payment is measured are at [07.02.11.34](#). Foster care maintenance payments are made to the caregiver on behalf of the child. This program provides assistance.

Local Programs Administered by the LDSS

This includes a wide variety of programs that have funds in them coming from a wide variety of sources, such as county and local governments, contributions from churches and other non-profit organizations, and philanthropic entities. Because of the nature and history of the service delivery system in Maryland, many of these groups view their LDSS as the best vehicle to deliver help to low-income families, beyond that available through the principal programs administered by the department. LDSSs make referrals to these programs. Only TANF customers who are referred are funded with TANF funds. These programs are sometimes stand-alone and at other times supplement some of the programs mentioned elsewhere in this Plan. They provide eligible families with income under 300 percent of the poverty level

with the following kinds of services, which are all considered to be non-assistance for TANF purposes:

- Emergency Food Programs;
- Local supplemental funding for welfare to work programs, including funding for additional space, staff, services, etc.;
- Emergency relief services to help families attain safe and affordable housing, which include the provision of emergency shelter, relocation assistance, homeownership counseling, home repairs, utility restoration, or shut-off prevention;
- Information and referral;
- Medical supplies and services, of an emergency nature, that are not covered by medical assistance or for those ineligible for medical assistance (only state funds are used for costs associated with this program);
- Substance Use Disorder Services to include substance use disorder assessments, consultation, and Peer Recovery Support Services;
- Family Support Services, which are primarily community-based preventive activities designed to promote parents' ability to successfully nurture their children; enable families to use other resources and opportunities available in the community; and create supportive networks to enhance the child-rearing abilities of parents;
- Family Preservation Services that help families alleviate crises that might lead to the out-of-home placement of children, maintain the safety of children, support families preparing to reunite, and assist families in obtaining services and other supports necessary to address their needs (they include, but are not limited, to parent skill training and crisis intervention services);
- Assist families with access to transportation to work, training, job interviews or to access other needed services;
- Provide clothing that is lost in an emergency, is needed for work preparation, or which the family cannot afford because of their present circumstances, which includes such disposable items as diapers;
- Domestic Violence programs that offer services to victims of domestic violence and their families (services include, but are not limited to:, linkage to community domestic violence shelter(s) or housing partner programs, hotline counseling, advocacy accompaniment and abuser intervention);
- Boys Club/Girls Club support, including nutrition meal planning education, health and well-being education, and participation in sports activities;
- After school programs;
- Screening for local department services; and
- Grants to Food Bank Services.

Assistance to Individuals with Disabilities

Maryland provides assistance to individuals and families with disabilities applying for or receiving TANF. Maryland: (1) ensures equal access to people with disabilities; (2) reasonably modifies policies, practices, and procedures for people with disabilities where necessary; and (3) ensures that methods of administration do not discriminate on the basis of disability.

Applicants and customers are provided special accommodations and auxiliary aids, such as interpreters for the hearing impaired, large type reading materials for visually impaired, and telephone interviews for those customers whose impairment prevents them from coming into the department of social services.

English Language Learners

The Local Department of Social Services provides language and other services needed by families with LEP in applying for or receiving TANF or TANF-MOE funded benefits. Examples of services include, but are not limited to, interpreter services. refer to English Language Acquisition classes. This program serves those with incomes under 300 percent of the federal poverty level and provides non-assistance.

Adoption Assistance

Maryland provides adoption benefits that include a monthly subsidy and other non-financial services to parents of an adopted child who is not eligible for title IV-E (child welfare) adoption assistance. Families are able to receive non financial services such as community referrals, support and education, and therapeutic services. Medical Assistance is another benefit for families who have adopted from Out of Home Care. In this instance, the final adoption establishes a parental relationship even if no blood relationship exists.

Electric Universal Service Program (EUSP)

The Electric Universal Service Program (EUSP) is a state-mandated energy assistance program geared towards bill payment affordability which ensures that low-income households can maintain safe and reliable electric service. The program is administered by the Office of Home Energy Programs (OHEP) within the Department of Human Services. The EUSP provides two critical types of support: bill payment assistance (a benefit applied to the current bill), arrearage retirement (a grant to pay off past-due balances of \$300 or more, typically available once every five years).

To meet the rising cost of living, Maryland increased the income eligibility threshold to 200 percent of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL). Furthermore, under 2026 "Automatic Enrollment" policies, households that receive Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA) are categorically eligible and may be automatically enrolled without a separate application. The program targets vulnerable populations—including families with children. Categorically eligible applicants who are over 200% of the FPL also qualify for a nominal benefit of \$25 and arrearage assistance if eligibility is met.

Refundable Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) Refunds

The Earned Income Tax Credit Refund Program provides a state paid earned income credit that is refundable to eligible low-income taxpayers with one or more dependents. "Eligible low income taxpayer" means an individual, or an individual and individual's spouse if taxes are filed jointly, whose federal adjusted gross income does not exceed the applicable poverty income level and has applied for these benefits. The "applicable poverty income level" is defined as the amount specified in the poverty income standard that corresponds to the number of exemptions to which the taxpayer is entitled to claim. Poverty income standard means the most recent poverty income guidelines published by HHS, as of July 1 in the taxable year. The EIC can be claimed against state and local income tax. In addition, EIC Support Services include, but are not limited to, Volunteer Tax Preparation, Public Awareness Campaigns, and a 24-Hour Hotline. The purpose is to increase the income levels in low-income families and end dependence of low-income, needy parents on government benefits by promoting job preparation, work, and marriage. This program provides non- assistance.

PROGRAMS FUNDED BY SEGREGATED FEDERAL TANF FUNDS

Maryland has developed a broad array of services to families and children that are reasonably calculated to, collectively, accomplish all four purposes of the TANF law. Not all these programs are means tested (Maryland has designed these programs to be as effective and efficient as possible. This has the effect that certain specific services and/or beneficiaries of some of the services of some of these programs may not be eligible for federal TANF or MOE. Maryland will determine the exact amount using the appropriate federal mechanisms outlined in its Cost Allocation Plan.). These programs provide non-assistance. Departments of Social Services make referrals to these programs. Only TANF customers who are referred are funded with TANF funds.

Transportation Assistance Program

The Transportation Assistance Program (TAP) empowers TANF families with financial challenges to achieve economic self-sufficiency and personal independence through car ownership and meets TANF purposes one and two.. This program affords customers the ability to purchase a used Maryland state-inspected vehicle at or below the vehicle's market value through Vehicles for Change (VFC), a vendor that serves all of Maryland. FIA anticipates providing vehicles to 100-120 families per year at an estimated cost to FIA of \$4,400 per car. Each customer receiving a vehicle is responsible for paying a flat fee of \$800 (the customer's portion of the vehicle's cost). The customer may pay part of the fee or the entire portion at the time of vehicle selection. In order to be eligible for TAP, VFC applicants:

- The customer is assessed for TCA eligibility and for being able to pay the insurance for the selected vehicle. Customers may also be eligible for a loan to pay their portion of the cost of the vehicle which prompts additional eligibility requirements
- Must be currently receiving TANF (or if no longer on TANF, must have been a TANF customer within the last 12 months), a youth aging out of foster care age 18-21, a current TANF-connected non-custodial parent, or a non-custodial parent connected to a TANF case that has closed within the last 12 months;
- Must be employed or have a verified job offer working an average of 30 hours per week or greater;
- Must have a valid Maryland Driver's License;
- Does not have access to any other vehicles in the household; and
- Does not have a driving while intoxicated (DWI) or driving under the influence (DUI) citation on his or her driving record.

Family Support Center Network

Family Support Centers were developed to establish preventive support for families during the early formative years and to encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families. The Family Support Centers are community-based programs that provide services to assist mothers and/or fathers with children ages birth to three, particularly those in high-risk communities, raise healthy children, and build productive futures. Comprehensive services are provided either on-site or through referral, and existing programs coordinate to benefit mothers and/or fathers and their children and develop new resources to satisfy unmet

needs Local Departments of Social Services make referrals to the Family Support Center Network. Only TANF customers who are referred are funded with TANF funds.

Services include parenting skills, outreach, peer support and recreational activities, infant and child stimulation, employability and literacy opportunities, health education, and referral for services. This program also includes services developed using this same, successful model. For example, the Family League of Baltimore has also developed a similar set of services based on this Family Support Center Model called "Success by Six," which also includes home visitors, many of whom are former TANF customers.

There is no income criteria required to participate in the Family Support Center program, although a significant number of participants receive TANF. Others may need cash assistance but choose not to receive TANF. There are also participants who are financially capable of attending to their basic daily life needs but need Family Support Center services to enhance their parenting skills. The objective is to develop a cadre of services appropriate for each family. This program provides non-assistance.

Maryland Fatherhood/Motherhood Initiatives (NPEP)

The Maryland Fatherhood and Motherhood Initiatives, delivered through Non-Custodial Parent Employment Programs (NPEP), provide specialized workforce development and family engagement services to non-custodial parents. The program targets individuals with active child support cases—specifically those whose children currently receive or have recently received Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA), as well as those owing state-assigned arrears. By integrating employment services with the Child Support Administration, the initiative helps parents overcome barriers to consistent financial support through job-driven training in high-demand industries like healthcare, green construction, and hospitality.

Across the 24 local jurisdictions, these initiatives utilize diverse models such as Winning Fathers (Baltimore County), and Parents as Partners (Caroline County). These programs offer more than just job placement; they provide intensive case management, legal resources for expungement, and "Healthy Marriage/Healthy Families" counseling to foster emotional and physical engagement with their children. A key feature of programming is the Arrears Forgiveness incentive, where participants who successfully complete the program and maintain consistent payments can earn a reduction in debt owed to the state. These services are classified as "non-assistance," as they focus on supportive services and workforce entry rather than direct cash benefits.

The Justice Involved Workforce Initiative

The Justice Involved Workforce Initiative is designed to target three specific populations:

- Temporary Assistance to Needy (TANF) related non-custodial parents with child support obligations;
- Non-custodial parents with a child support obligation who have not had a TANF connection within 12-months;

- and Non-custodial parents with an active child support obligation who are participating in an existing re-entry program associated with a county government or local detention center

These collaborations and partnerships prepare and support inmates and justice involved individuals (ex-offenders) to re-integrate into the community, become productive wage earners, and lead personally satisfying and fulfilling lives. Collaboration with various federal, state, local, business, and community partners ensures that soon to be released inmates have the necessary career training, work habits, teamwork, conflict resolution skills, and interview techniques that will enable them to land and keep good jobs with a self-sustaining salary. Workforce development professionals and career development facilitators work with individuals on financial literacy and communication strategies. They support efforts to reunify family members and encourage custodial and non-custodial parents to be “responsible” parents. Staff works with recommended offenders until job placement occurs and continues with post-employment follow-up. The goal is to encourage the ex-offenders’ adjustment to living and working in a non-restrictive environment and to be competitively employed in an economically viable career pathway. The initiative reduces inmate recidivism and supports the formulation and maintenance of two-parent families. This program provides non-assistance.

Block Grant Programs

Maryland provides an extensive array of services to families and children under its Social Services Block Grant, Community Action Block Grant, Title IV-B State Plan, the Child and Maternal Health Block Grant, and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Block Grant plans that are reasonably calculated to accomplish the third and fourth purposes of TANF. For example, programs that provide sex education or abstinence education and family planning services to individuals, couples, and families in an effort to reduce out-of-wedlock pregnancies. Programs that aim to promote responsible fatherhood and/or encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families. For example, activities within these programs may include marriage education, marriage and relationship skills, fatherhood skills programs; parent skills workshops; public advertising campaigns on the value of marriage and responsible fatherhood; education regarding how to control aggressive behavior; financial planning seminars; and divorce education and reduction programs. To the extent that the state expends state or local funds on these services that exceed available block grant funds, the state reserves the option to use TANF funds or TANF-MOE as appropriate and reported in the state's fiscal reports subject to federal limitations. The funds claimed for these will be for non-assistance.

PROGRAMS FUNDED BY COMMINGLED FUNDS

Maryland has developed a broad array of services for families and children that are reasonably calculated to accomplish the third and fourth purposes of the TANF law. The changes brought by the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 allow these programs to be funded with federal TANF dollars or count toward the state's MOE requirement. Maryland has designed these programs to be as effective and efficient as possible. This has the effect that certain specific services and/or beneficiaries of some of the services of some of these programs may not be eligible for federal TANF or MOE. Maryland will determine the exact amount using the appropriate federal mechanisms outlined in its Cost Allocation Plan. These programs provide non-assistance.

Means Tested Programs

Child First Authority Extended School Day Programs

The Child First Authority (CFA) Extended School Day Program provides high-quality out-of-school time (OST) activities for children in low-income families across Baltimore City Public Schools. Operating as a lead agency for the Community Schools strategy, CFA currently serves students in over 11 elementary and middle school sites, where students qualify for free or reduced-price meals. The program targets families with incomes up to 300 percent of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL). Students are typically referred by teachers or principals if they are identified as being at risk of chronic absenteeism or poor academic performance. A hallmark of the CFA model is deep parental engagement; parents are encouraged to participate in leadership development and school-based activities throughout the year to foster a whole-family approach support system.

The extended school day (typically 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.) provides a safe, enriching environment that allows parents to maintain employment or attend job training. The curriculum focuses on social-emotional learning (SEL), character development, and rigorous educational enrichment in core subjects. CFA fills critical gaps in school funding by providing sessions in visual arts, music, dance, and STEM, often partnering with local institutions like the Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA) and the Maryland Center for History and Culture. Recognized nationally for its contribution to school reform, CFA's mission is to enhance student self-esteem and motivation, which indirectly supports the long-term goal of reducing teen pregnancy and intergenerational dependency. This program is a community partnership and is not a mandate of the free public school system. It is classified as "non-assistance".

B'more for Healthy Babies (BHB)

B'more for Healthy Babies (BHB) is a citywide initiative, led by the Baltimore City Health Department (BCHD) with the support of Family League and HealthCare Access Maryland, to reduce infant mortality and improve the health of mothers and babies. Family League serves as the co-lead with BCHD for the home-visiting strategy and BHB Communities. The Initiative has a strong community outreach and mobilization program that operates in Upton/Druid Heights, Park Heights, Patterson Park, and other neighborhoods., an initiative focused on two Baltimore neighborhoods, Upton/Druid Heights, and Patterson Park North and East and School Readiness. A few examples of the services this program provides is as follows: Educating and linking families to resources that promote behavior changes, educating youth on reproductive health, providing the community with resources on co-parenting and promoting healthy relationships, and Sleep safe campaign to eliminate sleep-related infant deaths. This initiative serves TANF purposes 1, 3 and 4.

Substance Use Disorder Treatment and Services Program

The Welfare Innovation Act of 2000 and HB 1024 of the 2005 Session of the Maryland General Assembly required the hiring and placement of addiction specialists in LDSS to conduct screening, testing, assessments, referrals, and reporting for TANF adults and minor parents, and certain SNAP applicants and customer (custodial and non-custodial parents who are convicted drug felons). The program requirements and possible sanctions for TANF adults and minor parents are mentioned above as part of the Family Investment Program Core Components. This program provides non-assistance to TANF eligible individuals and certain SNAP applicants and customer whose income is less than 130 percent of the Federal Poverty Level.

After School Programs

The basic after school program is available statewide for school age children in families at or below 300 percent of poverty. This also includes local programs that provide the same or similar services. Vendors chosen to operate within the statewide program must incorporate

features that will have a positive measurable impact on one or more of the conditions of well-being for children and youth identified by a report of Maryland results and indicators of child wellbeing. One of the results and indicators is “Babies Born Healthy,” which includes a measure for “the rate of births to adolescents less than 18 years of age.” Another is “Stable and Economically Self-Sufficient Families,” which includes a measure of “the percent of single parent households.”

Additionally, local providers offer a variety of after school opportunities to Maryland’s youth using their own or combinations of state and local funds. Programs include those housed in local schools that have an academic focus in addition to traditional recreation programs and those based in the community, in a church, recreation center, or similar facility, which stress academics, recreation, and artistic skill development equally as well as programs providing skill development activities around a particular artistic activity. Some pair older youth in a tutoring relationship with younger youth, an experience geared to prepare for the work world. Outcomes sought by these activities include increased school attendance, increased school achievement, reduction in delinquent behavior, reduction in substance abuse, and reduction in teen pregnancy. Therefore, this program is reasonably calculated to achieve purposes three and four of the TANF statute. This program provides non-assistance.

Programs Funded and Administered by Entities Other than the LDSS

This may include a wide variety of programs in receipt of funds from a wide variety of sources, such as county and local governments, contributions from churches and other non-profit organizations, and philanthropic entities. In accordance with Policy Announcement TANF-ACF-PA-2004-01, the State will claim as MOE only those expenditures made under agreements between the State and these third-party entities that permit the State to count those expenditures toward its MOE requirement. These programs provide eligible families under 300 percent of the poverty level, with the following kinds of services which are all non-assistance for TANF purposes:

- Emergency Food Programs;
- Local supplemental funding for welfare to work programs, including funding for additional space, staff, services etc.;
- Emergency relief services to help families attain safe and affordable housing, which include the provision of emergency shelter, relocation assistance, homeownership counseling, home repairs, utility restoration, or shut-off prevention;
- Information and referral;
- Medical supplies and services, of an emergency nature that are not covered by medical assistance or for those ineligible for medical assistance (only state funds are used for costs associated with this program);
- Substance Abuse Services to include substance abuse assessments, consultation, and Peer Recovery Support Services;
- Family Support Services, which are primarily community-based preventive activities designed to: promote parents’ ability to successfully nurture their children, enable families to use other resources and opportunities available in the community, and create supportive networks to enhance the child-rearing abilities of parents;

- Family Preservation Services that help families alleviate crises that might lead to the out-of-home placement of children, maintain the safety of children, support families preparing to reunite, and assist families in obtaining services and other supports necessary to address their needs (they include but are not limited to parent skill training and crisis intervention services);
- Assist families with access to transportation to work, training, job interviews, or to access other needed services;
- Provide clothing to replace that was lost in an emergency, is needed for work preparation, or which the family cannot afford because of their present circumstances, which includes such disposable items as diapers;
- Domestic Violence programs that offer services to victims of domestic violence and their families (services include but are not limited to safe accommodations, hotline counseling, advocacy accompaniment, and abuser intervention);
- Boys Club/Girls Club support;
- After school programs;
- Screening for local department services;
- Grants to Food Banks; and
- Food Bank Services.

Non-Means Tested Programs

Responsible Fathers Programs

These programs provide services to custodial and non-custodial fathers such as parenting education, family planning, GED® instruction, job training, employment- search assistance, and self-esteem building. Sites throughout the state serve young fathers, age 16+, who have one or more children. The program's main goal is to reduce subsequent out-of-wedlock pregnancies among participants through family-planning counseling. Program objectives seek to increase parent-child interaction, emotional support, financial responsibility, and the development of two parent families.

These programs also encourage co-parenting for non-custodial fathers. Although participation in the program is voluntary, participants are required to comply with Child Support Enforcement, if not currently doing so. Programs serve fathers who are initially unemployed. Though not a requirement of program enrollment, participant referrals are actively solicited from LDSS' TANF and child support enforcement rolls. This program provides non-assistance.

The Maryland Healthy Marriage / Healthy Families Initiative

The Maryland Healthy Marriage / Healthy Families Initiative serves as an umbrella for multiple evidence-based programs designed to strengthen family structures and improve child outcomes. Operating under the philosophy that children thrive in stable, supportive environments, the initiative provides a continuum of services for expectant parents, never-married parents, and "fragile families" in transition. Its core mission is to equip participants

with the skills necessary for effective co-parenting and healthy relationship management, whether they choose to marry or remain as separate co-parents.

Through the 24 Local Departments of Social Services and partners like the Maryland Department of Health, participants access resources including parenting skills enhancement, conflict resolution (anger management), financial literacy, and career development. The initiative is closely linked with the Non-Custodial Parent Employment Program (NPEP), ensuring that economic self-sufficiency is a primary pillar of family stability.

A key clinical partner in this initiative is The Center for Healthy Families at the University of Maryland, College Park. As the non-profit Couple and Family Therapy clinic for the Department of Family Science, the Center provides high-quality, affordable therapy to approximately 500 families annually. In 2026, the Center offers both in-person and HIPAA-compliant teletherapy (available to all Maryland residents) to address concerns such as adolescent adjustment, substance use, and family violence. Services are delivered by graduate student therapists under the supervision of licensed faculty, ensuring culturally attentive care for Maryland's diverse populations. These services are classified as "non-assistance".

The Responsible Fathers, Healthy Marriage and Healthy Families Programs

These programs include activities that are enumerated in sections [403\(a\)\(2\)\(A\)\(iii\)](#) and [403\(a\)\(2\)\(C\)\(ii\)](#) of the Social Security Act. States may claim these pro-family expenditures for non-assistance benefits provided to or on behalf of an individual or family as MOE, regardless of financial need or family composition, unless a limitation, restriction or prohibition under 45 CFR 263 Subpart A applies.

There are instances when the following programs that are not means tested serve eligible families. The State will count these expenditures for services received by needy families as TANF-MOE expenditures only when an audit trail can be established that links the non-means tested service to needy families.

One example is when a program supplies an enrollment list and it is matched to the TANF caseload. If the list shows that five percent of families served were needy, then five percent of the non-federal expenditures for that FY may be claimed as TANF-MOE.

The following commingled funded programs will use this or a similar methodology if TANF-MOE expenditures are claimed.

Community Partnerships

These programs are locally defined and based on indicated needs to help families by providing family support through projects such as home visiting, after school programs, and family preservation. The program objectives seek to reduce out-of-wedlock pregnancies, increase parent-child interaction, emotional support, and financial responsibility, and promote the development of two parent families. This program provides non-assistance.

Safe and Stable Families

There are a variety of programs available to families to provide supportive services to promote safety and well-being of children and their families, promote stability and permanency, preserve family unity, and build empowerment, self-sufficiency, and psychosocial well-being. This includes families with identified stresses around family life, including disruption, child abuse and neglect issues, domestic violence, homelessness, substance abuse, mental and/or physical health, and educational concerns. These programs help families by providing: protective services or potential protective services to families, family support through projects such as parenting classes and after school programs, and family preservation, through grants for Interagency Family Preservation Services and through other means as appropriate, such as counseling families in crisis, referring them to other existing services, and providing a wide range of services to the family to maximize the chances the children grow up in safe, stable, and loving homes. The programs include, but are not limited to, Families Now, Intensive Family Services, Continuing Protective Services, Services to Families with Children, Kinship Care, Parent Aide Services, and those provided through Inter-Agency Agreements such as the Family Recovery Program. These programs prevent or reduce out-of-wedlock pregnancies and encourage the formation and maintenance of two parent families, since the ultimate goal of all of them is to provide a safe home for children in a stable, two-parent environment. These programs provide non-assistance and are reasonably calculated to accomplish TANF purposes 1, 3 and 4.

Baltimore City Public Schools After-School Program

In a coordinated effort between the Baltimore City Department of Social Services (BCDSS), the Governor's Office for Children, and Baltimore City Public Schools, Maryland's after-school infrastructure has been modernized to provide high-impact enrichment for low-income youth. These programs are now primarily delivered through the Community Schools model and the Public School Opportunities Enhancement Grant (PSOEG). As required by recent legislation, all vendors and lead agencies must align their services with the Maryland Children's Cabinet indicators of well-being, which prioritize economic mobility and child safety.

A core metric of success remains "Babies Born Healthy," which includes reducing the rate of births to adolescents. By providing quality after-school experiences for at-risk students—specifically those in families with incomes up to 300 percent of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL)—the city aims to foster academic success and decrease negative behaviors such as juvenile crime and substance use. These programs offer a whole-family approach benefit: children receive academic support and character development in a safe environment, while parents are supported in maintaining full-time employment or completing vocational training.

Current initiatives focus on "Early Warning" indicators such as attendance and GPA, providing students with access to arts, STEM, and leadership clubs that are often unavailable during the standard school day. Strategically calculated to achieve the federal

goal of reducing out-of-wedlock pregnancies through empowerment and education, these services are classified as non-assistance.

Enhancement Grants for Local School Systems (LSS)

Enhancement Grants for Local School Systems support the state's transition to universal, high-quality early childhood education as mandated by the [Blueprint for Maryland's Future](#). These grants enable local school systems (LSS) to provide full-day, year-round early childcare and educational programs, moving away from the limited "half-day" models of the past. Funds are primarily used to:

- Provide wrap-around before and after-care services for students in public pre-kindergarten and kindergarten.
- Expand the availability of full-day slots for three- and four-year-olds through a "mixed-delivery system" (partnerships between public schools and private community-based providers).
- Support Judy Centers and Family Support Centers that promote intensive parental involvement and early intervention.

Eligibility is prioritized for "Tier 1" families with household incomes up to 300 percent of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL). For these families, full-day Pre-K is provided at no cost. TANF-MOE (Maintenance of Effort) funds are leveraged to ensure that needy families, who might otherwise face waitlists or "childcare deserts," have guaranteed access to these full-day programs. The initiative is designed to ensure children are "ready to learn" by grade one while allowing parents to participate in the workforce. This program provides non-assistance. Services.

Methodology for TANF-MOE Claiming

Maryland continues to use a rigorous data-matching methodology for any MOE funds claimed. The enrollment lists from local school systems are matched against the statewide TANF/TCA caseload. If the data indicates that a specific percentage (X%) of the families served meet the "needy family" criteria, that same percentage (X%) of the non-federal expenditures for that fiscal year is claimed as TANF-MOE to meet federal spending requirements.

Child Support Pass-Through Initiative

The Child Support Pass-Through Initiative began July 2019, ensures that child support paid by non-custodial parents directly benefits their children rather than being retained by the state as "cost recovery." Effective July 1, 2026, Maryland will begin phasing in a full pass-through of all current child support payments to families receiving TCA. Under this updated 2026 framework, the amount passed through to a family's Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) card has increased from the previous fixed caps (\$100 for one child; \$200 for two or more) to a minimum of 25% of all support collected in a month, or the previous fixed caps—whichever is greater.

By Fiscal Year 2031, Maryland will pass through 100% of all child support collected, including arrears. Additionally, any amount passed through to the family is fully disregarded (not

counted as income) when calculating the household's TCA benefit amount. This policy is designed to incentivize non-custodial parents to pay support—knowing the money reaches their children—and to provide an immediate economic boost to families living in deep poverty. While disregarded for TCA, these payments are typically counted as unearned income for SNAP benefit calculations.

Separate State Programs

Maryland has developed a broad array of services to families and children that are reasonably calculated to accomplish the first and second purposes of the TANF law. These are means tested and are funded out of 100 percent TANF Maintenance of Effort funds in a Separate State Program or other sources that are not federal TANF or TANF Maintenance of Effort. Maryland has designed these programs to be as effective and efficient as possible. This has the effect that certain specific services and certain specific beneficiaries of some of the services of some of these programs may not be eligible for federal TANF or that Maryland will not find it necessary to claim all of the TANF funds that could be claimed for the program because of its own substantial investment in it.

Using the flexibility in the statute and regulations, Maryland will report the exact amount of state funds for MOE charged to these programs using the appropriate federal mechanisms. Unless otherwise noted, for the purposes of this Plan and federal reporting, eligibility for the following programs is limited to those families with incomes under 300 percent of the federal poverty level in effect at the time-of-service delivery.

Job Access and Reverse Commute

While the standalone federal JARC program was repealed and consolidated into Section 5307 (Urban) and Section 5311 (Rural) formula grants, Maryland has maintained and expanded its commitment to bridging the "transportation gap" for low-income workers. Recognizing that entry-level positions often involve non-traditional hours (nights and weekends) and "reverse commutes" to suburban employment hubs, the Maryland Department of Human Services (DHS) and the 24 Local Departments of Social Services (LDSS) provide a multi-tiered support system. This includes direct transit subsidies, vanpool coordinations via Commuter Choice Maryland, and the Guaranteed Ride Home program, which ensures workers are not stranded during emergencies or late-shift changes.

Maryland continues to support its families with transportation-related assistance. More details about how Maryland provides transportation assistance can be found in the Local Programs Administered by the LDSS section of this report. These transportation supports are classified as non-assistance.

Rental Assistance Program (RAP) to Work

The RAP to Work provides critical housing subsidies to families currently receiving TCA, former TCA recipients who transitioned off the program within the last 12 months, and families who received a Welfare Avoidance Grant (WAG). To qualify, families must be actively engaged in a work activity or competitively employed. The program offers monthly

rental assistance for a primary period of up to 12 months, with the possibility of six-month extensions for families demonstrating a continued path toward self-sufficiency. Eligibility is restricted to families with a gross household income at or below 30 percent of the Area Median Income (AMI), ensuring that support is targeted toward those in the most significant need.

The primary goal of RAP to Work is to provide the housing stability necessary for parents to obtain and maintain employment, effectively preventing a return to cash assistance. By lowering the "rent burden" for low-wage earners, the program allows families to allocate more of their income toward other essential needs like childcare and transportation. This program provides assistance

Judith P. Hoyer Early Child Care and Family Education Centers (Judy Centers)

The Judy Center Early Learning Hubs are a premier statewide model of whole-family approach support, designed to ensure that every child in Maryland enters kindergarten ready to succeed. Established in Maryland law and significantly expanded by the [Blueprint for Maryland's Future](#), these hubs provide an integrated "one-stop" approach for children from birth through age five and their families. Located primarily in Title I schools or high-need communities, Judy Centers coordinate a comprehensive range of services—including full-day Pre-K, Head Start, early intervention (Infants and Toddlers), and family literacy—all within a single, accessible framework.

The Judy Center model emphasizes a "mixed-delivery" system, bridging the gap between public schools and private community-based childcare providers. Families with incomes up to 300 percent of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) are prioritized for these services, which include onsite healthcare (immunizations, vision/hearing screenings), mental health support, adult education, and crisis intervention. By providing these essential "wraparound" services, Judy Centers allow parents to maintain employment or training while their children receive high-quality developmental care. The program is strategically calculated to achieve the first and second goals of the TANF statute (supporting children in their own homes and ending dependency on government benefits). As these are integrated social and educational services, the program is classified as non-assistance. .

Adoption Benefits Funds

This provides funds for adoption benefits to needy parents of an adopted child who is not eligible for title IV-E adoption assistance. Families are eligible if their annual adjusted gross income, as defined by the Internal Revenue Service, does not exceed 80 percent of the latest published figure for the median income for a family of that size for the state, as set forth in Schedule A under COMAR [07.02.04.08](#). The adoptive child is included in determining the family size. The annual adjusted gross income of the family shall be the latest figure that was reported to the Internal Revenue Service. Funds are available to pay for benefit payments. The final adoption establishes a parental relationship even if no blood relationship exists. This program is reasonably calculated to meet the first goal of the TANF statute. Benefits under this program meet the definition of assistance under the TANF program.

(b) Require a parent or caretaker receiving assistance to engage in work (defined by the State) once the State determines the parent or caretaker is ready to engage in work, or once he or she has received 24 months of assistance, whichever is earlier, consistent with the child care exception at 407(e)(2) (section 402(a)(1)(A)(ii) of the Social Security Act).

Each adult in the TANF assistance unit, and each child aged 16 years or older in the assistance unit who is not enrolled full-time in school must participate in a work activity approved by the local department that is likely to result in unsubsidized employment.

Local departments follow the 12 approved core and non-core work activities set forth by the law (the participation requirement is based on universal engagement 30 days after the TCA case is approved and is compliant with the 24-month work rule found in [§402\(a\)\(1\) A \(ii\) of the](#) Social Security Act

Maryland also statutorily provides “good cause” for any single parents caring for a child younger than 6 years old who is unable to obtain childcare for one or more of the following reasons:

1. Unavailability of appropriate childcare within a reasonable distance from the parent's home or work site.
 - a. Appropriate childcare is defined as a formal licensed center or home or informal provider identified by the parent to care for the child(ren).
 - b. Reasonable distance is defined at the local level dependent upon availability of childcare)
2. Unsuitability of informal childcare by a relative or others.
 - a. Unsuitability of informal care is defined as inappropriate or unfit childcare); or
 - i. A couple examples of inappropriate or unfit childcare are:
 1. A child under the age of 13 providing childcare for a baby or infant by themselves,
 2. Someone with a known substance use disorder who is actively using providing care for children,
3. Unavailability or unsuitability of an appropriate and affordable formal childcare arrangement.
 - a. Affordable childcare arrangements are defined as customers receiving child care scholarship with or without a co-pay).

Maryland also requires that before sanctioning any individual for non-compliance with a work program, the case manager must investigate good cause prior to sending a notice of adverse action.

Federal and State exemptions from the work activity requirements are:

- A single custodial parent who is required to care for a child under age one who is a member of the assistance unit (this exemption applies for a cumulative total of 12 months for a parent's lifetime) and children under age 16.

- A teen parent (either head of household or included as a child on an adult's TANF case) who has not finished secondary school may not be exempt to care for a child younger than one year old.
- A non-parent caretaker relative in the assistance unit who accepts responsibility to provide care and guidance to a minor child of a relative has demonstrated need and has no dependent children of his or her own in the assistance unit; and/or,
- An Immigrant parent or caretaker relative who is not eligible for federal TANF assistance.
- A single custodial parent who is required to care for a child under age one who is a member of the assistance unit. There is no limit to the number of times a single custodial parent can use this exemption as long as they have a child under the age of one (State Exemption).
 - Note: This exemption is used once the Federal exemption has been exhausted.
- A new customer receiving TCA for the first time is exempt from work requirements from month 1 to and through month 6 (State Exemption)..

Failure of any non-exempt adult to cooperate in a work requirement without good cause, including failure to accept offered employment, shall result in reduction of benefits until the household cooperates.

(c) Ensure that parents and caretakers receiving assistance engage in work in accordance with section 407 (section 402(a)(1)(A)(iii) of the Social Security Act). Consistent with the required strategic elements discussed in section II (a)(2) herein, provide a specific analysis of how the State's workforce development activities are addressing employment and training services for parents or caretakers receiving assistance.

State policy and procedures are in place to identify TCA Work Eligible Individuals (WEI). WEIs are identified by case managers or employment specialists in the Local Department of Social Services (LDSS) and coded in the Eligibility and Enrollment (E&E) system as such. Work Eligible Individuals are an adult or minor child head of household receiving assistance under TANF or SSP or a non-customer parent living with a child receiving assistance.

When identifying WEIs within its TCA caseload, Maryland first removes from consideration its solely state-funded households, as these cases are neither in TANF nor in SSP-MOE. Then the WEI exempt cases are sorted in the following categories: Parent headed SSI (and SSDI parent headed cases in which the SSDI was awarded after the family received assistance and that the State opts not to include in the denominator), caretaker relative headed child-only cases, and caring for a disabled household member cases. Teen parents who are not heads of household will not be defined as WEIs. Maryland will opt to include in the WEI numerator and denominator, on a case-by-case basis, SSI or SSDI parent headed cases where the parent is engaged in a work activity 30 or more hours per week or 20 or more hours for single parents with a child under six years of age. Maryland will also opt to include child under one, cases where the parent is engaged in a work activity for 20 or more hours per week. We will make an on-going review of possible changes in the work status of the WEI. These can occur when the family member leaves the household. All TCA customers are required by our current regulations to report changes in household composition and other factors that affect program requirements. All WEIs are assessed and assigned to participate in appropriate Federal core

and non-core activities and approved state defined activities. All participation hours are tracked via weekly attendance sheets the WEIs must turn in. The case managers and/or employment specialists verify the hours of participation.

To ensure that individuals receiving assistance are engaging in work, there is a conciliation and sanctioning process in place for noncompliance. Refer to Section (a), Failure to Comply with Program Requirement. Also, Section (a) refers to the TANF Workforce Development Programs description that discusses how LDSS workforce development activities are addressing employment and training services for individuals receiving assistance.

(d) Take such reasonable steps as the State deems necessary to restrict the use and disclosure of information about individuals and families receiving assistance under the program attributable to funds provided by the Federal Government (section 402(a)(1)(A)(iv) of the Social Security Act).

To restrict the use and disclosure of information, the Secretary of DHS and the Executive Director of the FIA, or their designees, develop partnership agreements for the exchange of information to assist in the verification of cash assistance eligibility. The agreements are in writing and include procedures for requesting, obtaining, and examining the information and specify the Secretary's designee for requesting and receiving information by title or position. Additionally, customers sign a consent form to share information needed for the verification of cash assistance eligibility. The state of Maryland elects the option to collect data on a monthly basis and report on a quarterly basis, a sample of the caseload as prescribed by the Secretary, to produce statistically valid estimates of the performance of the program. Sampling will be used only when the universe is large enough to comply with established sampling methodology. Maryland does not comment on or provide information to the media about any individual or their TANF case. Aggregate data may be provided to external stakeholders under special circumstances and only when a memorandum of understanding or court order has been secured. All MOUs are vetted by the assistant attorney general. Maryland does not provide information about individual customers to external stakeholders unless requested through a valid court order.

(e) Establish goals and take action to prevent and reduce out-of-wedlock pregnancies, with special emphasis on teenage pregnancies (section 402(a)(1)(A)(v) of the Social Security Act)

The state of Maryland developed a comprehensive approach to the adolescent pregnancy problem including:

- Improvements in education, such as providing sexuality education, access to contraceptives and other health promotion services to reach out-of-school adolescents;
- Community based programs, such as local multimedia promotion of responsible decision-making on sexual matters;
- Enhanced social services, such as physical and sexual abuse prevention at primary, secondary, and tertiary levels;
- Employment development, such as school-to-work opportunities in partnership with private business and public agencies; and

- Health initiatives, such as improved access to birth control counseling and services for sexually active adolescents and parenting classes for every pregnant teenager and her partner. Programs and services for people in this age group will be improved or added, as needed.

(f) Conduct a program designed to reach State and local law enforcement officials, the education system, and relevant counseling services, that provides education and training on the problem of statutory rape so that teenage pregnancy prevention programs may be expanded to include men (section 402(a)(1)(A)(vi) of the Social Security Act)

The state of Maryland recognizes that effective campaigns to reduce incidences of statutory rape are needed. Currently, Maryland's TCA program indirectly supports efforts related to statutory rape prevention, domestic violence screening and support services, potentially involving law enforcement to ensure participant safety. While child welfare is primarily handled by child protective services, TCA administration may overlap with law enforcement in cases where neglect or abuse stems from economic hardship. TCA funds also support child support services, which can involve law enforcement collaboration to locate parents and enforce orders, indirectly assisting in statutory rape cases where child support is needed. Furthermore, DHS collaborates with justice partners through interagency councils and workgroups to enhance communication and coordination on statutory rape prevention and education.

Our referral partners the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) and the MSDE developed and implemented programs targeted to reducing teen pregnancy and includes the following:

- An awareness campaign targeted to reach the male population that is likely to commit these crimes;
- A program of education/training for law enforcement officials;
- A plan that increases awareness through public schools; and
- Enhancement of existing programs that provide counseling to both adolescent females and males. Maryland supports agencies and community groups that serve high risk populations that need abstinence education.

The goal is to prevent unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV/AIDS in youth ages 10–19 who meet the following criteria:

- Live in geographic areas with high teen birth rates;
- Youth currently in or aging out of foster care or the juvenile justice system;
- Homeless, runaway, or Out-of-School Youth;
- Pregnant or parenting youth; and
- Youth with HIV/AIDS.

As part of the state's campaign to reduce infant mortality, the reduction of teen pregnancy means fewer infants are born who might die before they reach one year old.

Maryland recognizes the importance of a multi-faceted approach to address statutory rape and remains committed to working with law enforcement and other partners to protect vulnerable individuals and families.

(g) Implement policies and procedures as necessary to prevent access to assistance provided under the State program funded under this part through any electronic fund transaction in an automated teller machine or point-of-sale device located in a place described in section 408(a)(12), including a plan to ensure that customers of the assistance have adequate access to their cash assistance (section 402(a)(1)(A)(vii) of the Social Security Act)

Currently Maryland's DHS operates an electronic benefits transfer system under agreement with the United States Department of Health and Human Services and pursuant to United States Department of Agriculture regulations. Maryland will begin phasing in Europay, Mastercard, and Visa (EMV) chip technology in July 2026. A TANF grant is typically paid via the electronic benefits transfer system. The Middle-Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act of 2012 (P.L. 112-96), provides that individuals and families who are receiving federally funded cash assistance may not use an electronic benefits transfer card for any purpose at a liquor store, adult entertainment venue, or gambling casino.

Maryland provides all applicants and customers the opportunity to receive their assistance through multiple channels such as direct deposit, paper check, and Electronic Benefits Transfer cards. Benefits on EBT cards are available for use at any location that accepts card payments as well as any ATM machine. Applicants and recipients are also provided with the number to call in the event their EBT card is lost, stolen, or destroyed. This number can be found on the DHS website and approval notices as well as the customer portal website.

The state of Maryland provides penalties for non-compliance with program requirements that include the suspension of the use of the cash access portion of the card for specific time periods. Effective October 1, 2014, all TANF applicants and customers are required to sign an acknowledgement that they understand the prohibition against using their electronic benefits transfer cards at an establishment whose primary purpose is gambling, the sale of liquor, or an adult entertainment venue where individuals or groups disrobe for an audience.

Customers who violate the prohibition against using their cards at unauthorized locations will receive a warning notice that a subsequent violation may result in the use of their electronic benefits transfer cards for cash assistance being suspended. Customers who have twice violated federal law and state policy prohibiting the use of EBT cards at unauthorized locations will no longer have their cash assistance payments put onto their electronic benefits transfer cards. While the cards will still be active for use at SNAP retailers for those customers, DHS will deliver cash assistance payments by direct deposit or check. Suspension of the card for cash benefits is for a minimum of one year for the second violation and permanently for a subsequent violation after electronic benefits transfer use has been reinstated.

Maryland DHS offers TANF customers a means to report EBT theft claims online or via paper applications. The paper application may be mailed or submitted in-person at any of our local department of social services locations across the state. Online EBT theft claims may be submitted via the current Eligibility and Enrollment (E&E) system Consumer Portal (CP). TANF funds will be used to replace validated stolen TANF benefits. TANF funds will also be used to replace stolen SNAP benefits, with children in the household under the age of 21, which were denied due to receiving the maximum times of replacement.

(h) Ensure that customers of assistance provided under the State program funded under this part have the ability to use or withdraw assistance with minimal fees or charges, including an opportunity to access assistance with no fee or charges, and are provided information on applicable fees and surcharges that apply to electronic fund transactions involving the assistance, and that such information is made publicly available (section 402(a)(1)(A)(viii) of the Social Security Act)

Individuals and families may incur fees and charges when withdrawing funds from ATMs that are not in the state vendor's network. DHS will provide customers with recommendations on how to access funds in a way that minimizes ATM fees or additional surcharges, such as using ATMs that do not charge a usage fee or using the ATMs from the state vendor who manages the electronic benefits transfer funds accounts. DHS will continue to explore additional methods of reducing fees for customers and provide them with notifications via the DHS website where a link to the information will be available. In addition, information will be provided in the LDSS. If families or individuals are unable to access TANF benefits due to card restrictions, DHS will advise them of other payment options available including mailing a paper check or direct deposit into the customer's checking or savings account.

(i) Indicate whether it intends to treat families moving from another State differently from other families under the program, and if so how (section 402(a)(1)(B)(i) of the Social Security Act)

Families moving into Maryland from another state will be treated no differently than any other family residing in Maryland. The number of months of TANF used by residents of another state who move to Maryland will be counted in the number of months of TANF received.

(j) Indicate whether it intends to provide assistance to non-citizens, and if so include an overview of the assistance (section 402(a)(1)(B)(ii) of the Social Security Act)

DHS' Citizenship Status policy for the Family Investment Program states that a Family Investment Program customer must be a United States citizen, or a qualified alien as defined in §8 USC 1611, et seq., as amended. Qualified immigrants, including humanitarian entrants such as refugees, certified Victims of trafficking, Cuban and Haitian parolees, and asylees, who meet the federal technical and financial TANF eligibility requirements, may be referred to one or more of the following Family Investment Program components when applying for assistance:

- Welfare Avoidance Grant,
- TANF,
- Emergency Assistance to Families with Children, and/or
- Disaster Assistance.

Local departments may develop Alternative Programs tailored to fit the unique needs of that jurisdiction. To assist English Language Learners in meeting the TANF work requirements, DHS contracts with local resettlement agencies which are qualified to implement TANF/workforce programs for humanitarian immigrants.

(k) Set forth objective criteria for the delivery of benefits and the determination of eligibility and for fair and equitable treatment, including an explanation of how it will provide

opportunities for customers who have been adversely affected to be heard in a State administrative or appeal process (section 402(a)(1)(B)(iii) of the Social Security Act)

Refer to Section (a) for a description of Maryland's delivery of benefits and the determination of benefits eligibility. Regarding fair and equitable treatment, Maryland uses a combined application and thus follows the guidelines established by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The LDSS, all vendors, and contractors must also follow state and federal non-discrimination requirements. The local departments will provide persons with disabilities individualized treatment and effective and meaningful opportunity to educational or employment activities as they are provided to others. The local department will make reasonable accommodations and provide auxiliary aids for persons with disabilities, such as but not limited to: interpreters, note takers, and materials in alternate formats to the extent that it does not cause a fundamental alteration with the program or result in undue financial or administrative burden.

Appeals and Complaints of Discrimination- A Family Investment Program applicant or customer may request an agency conference for an explanation of the reasons for proposed actions and present information to show that the proposed action is incorrect. The local department gives each applicant or customer written notification of the right to and procedures for requesting and obtaining a hearing as set forth in Code of Maryland Regulations [07.01.04.04](#). All applicants and customers are notified of their right to file an appeal at any time. When appeals are filed and submitted through the LDSS office an appeal liaison reaches out to the customer to first try and resolve the complaint. If the complaint cannot be resolved the full appeal process moves forward. An applicant or customer may file a written complaint by contacting the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The complaint must set forth the events and circumstances of alleged discrimination if he or she thinks that DHS or LDSS has discriminated against them. **Non-Discrimination Assurances -** The state of Maryland assures that the following provisions of law will apply to programs and activities funded under TANF:

- The Age Discrimination Act of 1975 (42 U.S.C. §§ 6101 et seq.;
- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. § 794);
- The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. §§ 12101 et seq.); and
- Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (42 U.S.C. §§ 2000d et seq.)

The state of Maryland assures that persons with disabilities will be provided with individualized treatment and effective and meaningful opportunity to the extent that it does not cause a fundamental alteration with the program or result in undue financial or administrative burden.

(l) Indicate whether the State intends to assist individuals to train for, seek, and maintain employment (Section 402(a)(1)(B)(v) of the Social Security Act)–

- providing direct care in a long-term care facility (as such terms are defined under section 1397j of this title); or
- in other occupations related to elder care, high-demand occupations, or occupations expected to experience labor shortages as, determined appropriate by the State for

which the State identifies an unmet need for service personnel, and, if so, shall include an overview of such assistance.

As a WIOA Partner, DHS is connected with the State's workforce system to stay informed about high-demand occupations. DHS accomplishes this in these ways:

- DHS' Secretary serves on the Governor's Workforce Development Board (GWDB) . This access to the GWDB provides DHS with knowledge about high-demand occupations, industry sector initiatives, and business workforce development needs.
- DHS' Office of Cash Programs Workforce Development has a team member that is tasked with business engagement through DHS' Hiring Agreements program, for both private and public employers. Companies contracted to provide services or goods to the state are required to sign Hiring Agreements which declare DHS as the "first source" in filling positions that may be created as a result of the contract. Further, companies work with DHS to develop specific training to equip eligible TANF customers to fill vacancies. In addition, this team member works closely with the WIOA Partners' statewide business services team, integrating into the larger workforce development system's team that addresses business workforce development needs. This team member leverages the relationships with these employers to receive "first-notice" of new job opportunities and forwards them to the local departments.
- The local department staff that work with businesses to place TANF customers in employment, internships, or on-the-job training opportunities are also connected to the WIOA Partners' business services teams. This creates a coordinated and integrated system of business engagement. Additionally, the local department staff will begin taking advantage of the quarterly WIOA Partners business services training. Additionally, some local departments have contracts and Memoranda of Understanding with local community colleges to assist customers with vocational skills training and credentialing programs that will allow them to obtain employment at wages that will support their families. These programs include training in the healthcare related field, such as CNA, GNA, Medical Billing, and Coding. The current demand for skilled workers in these positions is high. These positions will increase in demand as the population of "baby boomers" continues to age. The state will continue to support training for careers in elder care as well as provide job search and job placement assistance for careers in the elder care field.

(m) Provide for all MOE-funded services the following information: the name of the program benefit or service, and the financial eligibility criteria that families must meet in order to receive that benefit or service. In addition, for TANF MOE-funded services (co-mingled or segregated MOE) describe the program benefit provided to eligible families (SSP services do not have to include a description, but the Department of Health and Human Services encourages it) (§263.2(b)(3) & §263.2(c) preamble pages 17826-7)

Refer to Section (a) for detailed descriptions of MOE-funded services.

TANF OPTIONS SELECTED

Maryland has opted for the following:

- The option to assist all legal immigrants who lived in the U.S. before August 22, 1996, in the same way U.S. citizens are treated.
- In 2000, the Maryland General Assembly chose to opt out of the PRWORA Section 115 requirement to disqualify custodial parents convicted of a drug-related felony involving possession, use, or distribution of a controlled substance on or after August 22, 1996, from receiving TANF or SNAP benefits. Mandatory and recurrent drug testing is a condition for receiving TANF and SNAP benefits for these custodial parents. The department developed regulations in consultation with the Department of Health regarding testing methods and intervals.
- The option to not require an individual who is a single custodial parent caring for a child who has not attained 12 months of age to engage in work.
- The option to disregard the single custodial parent exempt from work due to caring for a child under the age of 12 months in determining the participation rates for work requirements for not more than 12 months.
- The option to reduce assistance to family where individual receiving assistance refuses to engage in work requirements, subject to good cause.
- The option to deny assistance to a family where an individual is not cooperating with the establishment of paternity or obtaining child support.
- The option to exempt from the 60-month limitation a family by reason of hardship, not to exceed a total of 20 percent of the average monthly number of families to which assistance is provided.
- The option to continue assistance for a child absent from the home fewer than 180 consecutive days.
- The option to develop a family independence plan. The plan sets forth an employment goal and a plan for moving the individual into employment; sets forth the obligations of the individual which may include a requirement to attend school, keep school aged children in school, immunize children, and attend parenting and money management classes; set other requirements which will result in unsubsidized employment; and describe the services the state will provide to assist the individual to attain self-sufficiency.
- The option to comply with the above option within 180 days after the effective date of this part for a customer of assistance and within 90 days after the effective date of this part after the individual is determined to be eligible for assistance.
- The option to apply a reduced benefit to a family that includes an individual who fails, without good cause, to meet the action items listed in the family independence plan.
- The option to use a sampling method using the procedures the Secretary deems to be necessary to produce statistically valid estimates of the performance of state programs funded under this part.
- The option to sanction a family that fails to ensure that minor dependent school-age children attend school and minor dependent pre-school children get preventive health care.
- The option to screen and identify victims of domestic violence. Refer such individuals to counseling and supportive services. Waive, pursuant to a determination of good cause, other program requirements outlined in Section 402

- (a), (7), (A), (I), (ii), and (iii) of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996.
- The option to exempt a family from the 60-month limitation when a family includes an individual who has been battered or subject to extreme cruelty.
 - The option to establish good cause reasons for a minor to be absent from the home for longer than 180 consecutive days.
 - The option to screen customers of assistance for use of controlled substances or sanction customers who test positive for controlled substances.

TANF CERTIFICATIONS

States that include TANF in the Combined State Plan must provide a certification by the chief executive officer of that State, that during the FY, the State will:

1. Operate a child support enforcement program under the State Plan approved under part D. (section 402(a)(2) of the Social Security Act);
2. Operate a foster care and adoption assistance program under the State Plan approved under part E, and that the State will take such actions as are necessary to ensure that children receiving assistance under such part are eligible for medical assistance under the State Plan under title XIX. (section 402(a)(3) of the Social Security Act);
3. Specify which State agency or agencies will administer and supervise the program referred to in paragraph (1) for the FY, which shall include assurances that local governments and private sector organizations (section 402(a)(4) of the Social Security Act)–

(A) have been consulted regarding the plan and design of welfare services in the State so that services are provided in a manner appropriate to local populations; and

(B) have had at least 45 days to submit comments on the plan and the design of such services;

4. Provide each member of an Indian tribe, who is domiciled in the State and is not eligible for assistance under a tribal family assistance plan approved under section 412, with equitable access to assistance under the State program funded under this part attributable to funds provided by the Federal Government. (section 402(a)(5) of the Social Security Act);
5. Establish and enforce standards and procedures to ensure against program fraud and abuse, including standards and procedures concerning nepotism, conflicts of interest among individuals responsible for the administration and supervision of the State program, kickbacks, and the use of political patronage. (section 402(a)(6) of the Social Security Act);
6. (optional) Establish and Enforcing standards and procedures to (section 402(a)(7) of the Social Security Act).–

(i) screen and identify individuals receiving assistance under this part with a history of domestic violence while maintaining the confidentiality of such individuals;

(ii) refer such individuals to counseling and supportive services; and

(iii) waive, pursuant to a determination of good cause, other program requirements such as time limits (for so long as necessary) for individuals receiving assistance, residency requirements, child support cooperation requirements, and family cap provisions, in cases where compliance with such requirements would make it more difficult for individuals receiving assistance under this part to escape domestic violence or unfairly Penalize such individuals who are or have been victimized by such violence, or individuals who are at risk of further domestic violence.

SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING (SNAP E&T)

(a) General Requirements²⁷: The State agency must prepare and submit an Employment and Training (E&T) Plan to its appropriate Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) Regional Office. The E&T Plan must be available for public inspection at the State agency headquarters. A State agency may include its plan for the SNAP E&T program in a Combined Plan under WIOA but will require FNS approval prior to implementation and must continue to make a copy of the plan available for public inspection. If a State includes SNAP E&T in a Combined Plan under WIOA, the State agency will detail the following for each year covered by the Combined Plan:

(1) The nature of the E&T components the State agency plans to offer and the reasons for such components, including cost information. The methodology for State agency reimbursement for education components must be specifically addressed. If a State agency plans to offer supervised job search in accordance with paragraph (e)(2)(i) of this section, the State agency must also include in the E&T plan a summary of the State guidelines implementing supervised job search. This summary of the State guidelines, at a minimum, must describe: The criteria used by the State agency to approve locations for supervised job search, an explanation of why those criteria were chosen, and how the supervised job search component meets the requirements to directly supervise the activities of participants and track the timing and activities of participants;

Non-Education, Non-Work Components

Non-Education, Non-Work Component Details: Supervised Job Search

Details	Supervised Job Search (SJS)
Summary of the State guidelines implementing SJS	Staff-assisted job search component requires participants to make a predetermined number of inquiries to prospective employers over a specified period. Job search components should entail a minimum of 12 contacts with employers per month for two months. Supervised job search may be conducted independently or within a group setting, and may also be conducted remotely, in-person, or a combination of both. Please note that SJS is not a standalone and must be offered in conjunction with at least one other component. The locations of the SJS were chosen based on the partners that are providing the service as well as the Local Department of Social Services (LDSS) that are offering in-house SNAP E&T programs. Each of the partners and LDSS has provided a plan for the SJS and a description and required specification of the component is outlined in our proposal submission guidelines.
Direct link	SJS will provide the participants with guidance in navigating the labor market by someone who has the necessary knowledge and skills to guide and support the participant through a successful job search, increasing their opportunities to gain employment or better employment.
Target population	Individuals who are Able-Bodied And Without Dependents (ABAWDs) and Voluntary SNAP recipients, Individuals Previously Incarcerated, Homeless, Non-custodial parents.

Details	Supervised Job Search (SJS)
Criteria for participation	Criteria for participation is determined by case managers (LDSS or SNAP E&T Third Party Partners) through the completion of an assessment which may include the following measures: Literacy Level; Communication Skills (including English proficiency); Education Level; Employment History; Employment Related Skills; Abilities and Interests; Employment Barriers and Steps Necessary to Overcome Barriers; and the creation of an Individual Employment Plan (IEP).
Geographic area	Wicomico, Worcester, Somerset, Dorchester, Talbot, Caroline, Queen Anne's, Kent, Frederick, Allegany, Garrett, Charles, St Mary's, Calvert, Prince George's, Howard, Carroll, Baltimore County, Harford, and Cecil Counties and Baltimore City.
E&T providers	Baltimore City Community College (BCCC), Baltimore Cyber Range (BCR) Cyber, Byte Back, Bugg Hardnett and Associates, Civic Works, Community College of Baltimore County (CCBC), International Rescue Committee (IRC), I'm Still Standing Community Corporation (ISSCC), Jane Addams Resource Corporation (JARC), Lifestyles, Lighthouse, Living Classrooms, Maryland New Directions, Maryland Center for Veterans Education and Training (MCVET), National Center on Institutions and Alternatives (NCIA), Per Scholas, Roca, The Work First, and Vehicles for Change
Projected annual participation	1443
Estimated annual component costs	\$1,728,450

Non-Education, Non-Work Component Details: Job Search Training

Details	Job Search Training (JST)
Description of the component	A component that strives to enhance the job search skills of participants by providing instruction in job seeking techniques and increasing motivation and self-confidence. The component may consist of job placement services, employability assessments, or other direct training or support activities. Other activities may include resume writing workshops and learning how to use online job search tools. The job search training component may combine job search activities with other training and support activities.
Target population	ABAWDs and Voluntary SNAP recipients, Individuals Previously Incarcerated, Individuals Experiencing Homelessness, and Non-custodial parents.
Criteria for participation	Criteria for participation is determined by case managers (LDSS or SNAP E&T Third Party Partners) through the completion of an assessment which may include the following measures: Literacy Level; Communication Skills (including English proficiency); Education Level; Employment History; Employment Related Skills; Abilities and Interests; and Employment Barriers and Steps Necessary to Overcome Barriers; and the creation of an IEP
Geographic area	Wicomico, Worcester, Somerset, Dorchester, Talbot, Caroline, Queen Anne's, Kent, Frederick, Allegany, Garrett, Charles, St Mary's, Calvert, Prince George's, Howard, Baltimore City, Carroll, Baltimore County, Harford, and Cecil Counties.

Details	Job Search Training (JST)
E&T providers	BCR Cyber, BCCC, Bugg Hardnett and Associates, Center For Urban Families (CFUF), Civic Works, CCBC, Goodwill Chesapeake, Humanim, IRC, ISSCC, It Works, LightHouse, Living Classrooms, Maryland New Directions, MCVET, NCIA, New Destiny Health Career Center, The Work First, Vehicles for Change.
Projected annual participation	2273
Estimated annual component costs	\$3,083,289

Non-Education, Non-Work Component Details: Job Retention

Details	Job Retention (JR)
Description of the component	Job Retention Services to include periodic staff check-ins with program participants and employers, ongoing career counseling, life management guidance, and provision of support services. For up to 90 days, services are provided to program participants who have secured employment after receiving SNAP E&T services. Job Retention services are provided and tracked for a minimum of 30 days and a maximum of 90 days.
Target population	ABAWDs and Voluntary SNAP recipients, Individuals Previously Incarcerated, Individuals Experiencing Homelessness, and Non-custodial parents.
Criteria for participation	Participants who obtain employment after participating in E&T and must maintain employment for a minimum of 30 days. Participants are monitored for up to 90 days.
Geographic area	Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Calvert, Carroll, Charles, Frederick, Garrett, Harford, Howard, Montgomery, Prince George's, St. Mary's, Washington, Wicomico Counties, and Baltimore City.
E&T providers	BCR Cyber, Byte Back, BCCC, CFUF, IRC, Living Classrooms, NCIA, Bugg, Hardnett, and Associates, Civic Works, Goodwill Chesapeake, Humanim, IRC, ISSCC, IT Works, Jewish Council for Aging (JCA), JARC, Lighthouse, Living Classrooms, MCVET, Maryland New Directions, Roca Baltimore, The Work First, Union Kitchen, and Vehicles for Change
Projected annual participation	1729
Estimated annual component costs	\$3,006,000

Non-Education, Non-Work Component Details: Self-Employment Training

Details	Self-Employment Training (SET)
Description of the component	Component that improves the employability of participants by training them to design and operate a small business or another self-employment venture. Through the Small Business Development Center (SBDC), program participants will receive technical assistance in developing business plans and in creating financial marketing plans; learning how to access small business

Details	Self-Employment Training (SET)
	grants and other business support services; and working with other small business owners as mentors.
Target population	ABAWDs and Voluntary SNAP recipients, Individuals Previously Incarcerated, Individuals Experiencing Homelessness, and Non-custodial parents. Criteria for participation is determined by case managers (LDSS or SNAP E&T Third Party Partners) through the completion of an assessment which may include the following measures: Literacy Level; Communication Skills (including English proficiency); Education Level; Employment History; Employment Related Skills; Abilities and Interests; and Employment Barriers and Steps Necessary to Overcome Barriers; and the creation of an IEP.
Criteria for participation	Criteria for participation is determined by case managers (LDSS or SNAP E&T Third Party Partners) after the completion of an assessment and the creation of an IEP. Qualified participants for Self Employment are referred to a SET program.
Geographic area	Washington, Wicomico, Worcester, Somerset, Dorchester, Talbot, Caroline, Queen Anne's, Kent, Frederick, Allegany, Garrett, Charles, St Mary's, Calvert, Prince George's, Howard, Carroll, Baltimore County, Harford, Cecil County, and Baltimore City.
E&T providers	Bugg Hardnett and Associates, Living Classrooms, NCIA, and the Public Assistance to Entrepreneurship Program (PA2E).
Projected annual participation	305
Estimated annual component costs	\$162,000

Non-Education, Non-Work Component Details: Workfare

Details	Workfare
Description of the component	Work experience in the public sector for program participants, targeted to those who lack work experience or recent work experience. ABAWDs/participants with limitations in the number of hours that they can participate. The workfare component must not exceed the value of the monthly allotment divided by the higher of the applicable State or Federal minimum wage. Upon initial assessment by the LDSS, participants are placed in public service entities, institutes of higher learning, Community Based Organizations (CBO) and Faith Based Organizations (FBO). Upon successful completion of the Workfare assignment, skills obtained by the participant may lead to employment. When developing Workfare sites, LDSS staff ensures that

Details	Workfare
	Workfare assignments provide the same benefits and working conditions provided to regular employees performing comparable hours. Job search activities that may precede a workfare assignment are considered part of the Workfare component and do not have to be supervised. Job search hours offered through an E&T program count toward meeting ABAWD requirements, so long as they are part of another E&T component and make up less than half of the total required time spent in the component. [7 CFR 273.7(e)(1) and 273.24(a)(3)(iii).]
Target population	ABAWDs
Criteria for participation	Criteria for participation is determined by case managers (LDSS or SNAP E&T Third Party Partners) after the completion of an assessment and the creation of an IEP. Qualified participants for Workfare lack work experience or recent work experience.
Geographic area	Allegany, Anne Arundel, Baltimore County, Calvert, Caroline, Carroll, Cecil, Charles, Dorchester, Frederick, Garrett, Harford, Howard, Kent, Montgomery, Queen Anne's, St. Mary's, Talbot, and Washington Counties.
E&T providers	Lifestyles, Lighthouse, Living Classrooms, MCVET, Roca, Union Kitchen, and The Work First.
Projected annual participation	3000
Estimated annual component costs	\$2,500,000

Educational Program Details: Basic/Foundational Skills Instruction

Details	Basic/Foundational Skills Instruction (includes High School Equivalency Programs) (EPB)
Description of the component	Participants in need of Basic Education, basic literacy, English as a Second Language, GED, and post-secondary education. In order for program participants to enter into certain vocational training programs, participants must show proficiency in adult basic education. Further, this will also increase competencies for participants entering the workforce.
Target population	ABAWDs and Voluntary SNAP recipients, Individuals Previously Incarcerated, Individuals Experiencing Homelessness, Non-custodial parents, and Disconnected Youth.
Criteria for participation	Criteria for participation is determined by case managers (LDSS or SNAP E&T Third Party Partners) through the completion of an assessment which may include the following measures: Literacy Level; Communication Skills (including English proficiency); Education Level; Employment History; Employment Related Skills; Abilities and Interests; and Employment Barriers and Steps Necessary to Overcome Barriers; and the creation of an IEP.
Geographic area	Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Calvert, Carroll, Charles, Frederick, Garrett, Howard, Montgomery, Prince George's, St. Mary's, Washington, Wicomico, and Baltimore City.

Details	Basic/Foundational Skills Instruction (includes High School Equivalency Programs) (EPB)
E&T providers	BCCC, Goodwill Chesapeake, Humanim, IRC, LightHouse, Living Classrooms, MCVET, Maryland New Directions, and The Work First.
Projected annual participation	440
Estimated annual component costs	\$932,800
Not supplanting	SNAP E&T program staff monitor all program costs and review documentation of leveraged funding to ensure funded component activities do not supplant non-Federal funds for existing educational services and activities. A detailed explanation of this requirement is included in the grant agreement, covered at the Onboarding Session, and frequently discussed during monthly SNAP E&T Workgroup meetings.
Cost parity	SNAP E&T program staff monitor all program costs and review documentation of leveraged funding to ensure that costs charged to E&T do not exceed costs charged to other funding sources. A detailed explanation of this requirement is included in the grant agreement, covered at the Onboarding Session, and frequently discussed during monthly SNAP E&T Workgroup meetings.

Educational Program Details: Career/Technical Education Programs or other Vocational Training

Details	Career/Technical Education Programs or other Vocational Training (EPC)
Description of the component	Participants are trained in job-specific technical training for work in the trades of their choice. These programs/training will focus on providing students with hands-on instruction and can lead to industry-recognized credentials/certifications, or certificates such as Commercial Driver's License (CDL), Certified Information Systems Security Professional certification (CISSP), Comp TIA certification, Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA), Geriatric Nursing Assistant (GNA), Heating, Ventilating, and Air Conditioning (HVAC) certifications, Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) certifications, etc. Students will be prepared for jobs and/or training to build upon their current skill set(s).
Target population	ABAWDs and Voluntary SNAP recipients, Individuals Previously Incarcerated, Individuals Experiencing Homelessness, and Non-custodial parents
Criteria for participation	Criteria for participation is determined by case managers (LDSS or SNAP E&T Third Party Partners) through the completion of an assessment which may include the following measures: Literacy Level; Communication Skills (including English proficiency); Education Level; Employment History; Employment Related Skills; Abilities and Interests; and Employment Barriers and Steps Necessary to Overcome Barriers; and the creation of an IEP.
Geographic area	Wicomico, Worcester, Somerset, Dorchester, Talbot, Caroline, Queen Anne's, Kent, Frederick, Allegany, Garrett, Charles, St Mary's, Calvert, Prince George's,

Details	Career/Technical Education Programs or other Vocational Training (EPC)
	Harford, Howard, Carroll, Baltimore County, Harford, and Cecil Counties and Baltimore City.
E&T providers	BCR Cyber, Baltimore City Community College, Bugg, Hardnett, and Associates, Center for Urban Families, Civic Works, Community College of Baltimore County, Goodwill Industries of the Chesapeake, Humanim, International Rescue Committee, I'm Still Standing Community Corporation, It Works, Jane Addams Resource Center, LightHouse, Living Classrooms, MCVET, Maryland Food Bank, New Destiny Health Career Center, MD New Directions, Roca Baltimore, The National Center on Institutions and Alternatives, Per Scholas, The Work First, Union Kitchen, and Vehicles for Change.
Projected annual participation	2463
Estimated annual component costs	\$6,662,415
Not supplanting	SNAP E&T program staff monitor all program costs and review documentation of leveraged funding to ensure funded component activities do not supplant non-Federal funds for existing educational services and activities. A detailed explanation of this requirement is included in the grant agreement, covered at the Onboarding Session, and frequently discussed during monthly SNAP E&T Workgroup meetings
Cost parity	SNAP E&T program staff monitor all program costs and review documentation of leveraged funding to ensure that costs charged to E&T do not exceed costs charged to other funding sources. A detailed explanation of this requirement is included in the grant agreement, covered at the Onboarding Session and frequently discussed during monthly SNAP E&T Workgroup meetings

Educational Program Details: English Language Acquisition

Details	English Language Acquisition (EPEL)
Description of the component	The education component includes a wide range of activities that improve basic skills and the employability of SNAP participants. ESL classes that provide Childcare services are offered to parents of young children unable to attend mainstream ESL classes due to childcare responsibilities. Classes work to develop the client's English language ability and reduce barriers to employment.
Target population	Humanitarian immigrant job seekers with children and individuals whose native language is a language other than English.
Criteria for participation	Criteria for participation is determined by case managers (LDSS or SNAP E&T Third Party Partners) through the completion of an assessment which may include the following measures: Literacy Level; Communication Skills (including English proficiency); and Education Level.
Geographic area	Baltimore City, Montgomery County, and Prince George's County.
E&T providers	BCCC, IRC, Community Engagement & Consultation Group, Grow Home, Pass It On

Details	English Language Acquisition (EPEL)
Projected annual participation	200
Estimated annual component costs	\$460,000
Not supplanting	SNAP E&T program staff monitor all program costs and review documentation of leveraged funding to ensure funded component activities do not supplant non-Federal funds for existing educational services and activities. A detailed explanation of this requirement is included in the grant agreement, covered at the Onboarding Session, and frequently discussed during monthly SNAP E&T Workgroup meetings.
Cost parity	N/A

Educational Program Details: Work Readiness Training

Details	Work Readiness Training (EPWRT)
Description of the component	Work readiness skills may include both foundational cognitive skills such as reading for information, applied mathematics, locating information, problem-solving, and critical thinking and non-cognitive skills, or soft skills, which are defined as personal characteristics and behavioral skills that enhance an individual's interactions, job performance, and career prospects such as adaptability, integrity, cooperation, and workplace discipline.
Target population	ABAWDs and Voluntary SNAP recipients, Individuals Previously Incarcerated, Individuals Experiencing Homelessness, and Non-custodial parents.
Criteria for participation	Criteria for participation is determined by case managers (LDSS or SNAP E&T Third Party Partners) through the completion of an assessment which may include the following measures: Literacy Level; Communication Skills (including English proficiency); Education Level; Employment History; Employment Related Skills; Abilities and Interests; and Employment Barriers and Steps Necessary to Overcome Barriers; and the creation of an IEP.
Geographic area	Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Calvert, Carroll, Charles, Frederick, Garrett, Harford, Howard, Montgomery, Prince George's, St. Mary's, Washington, Wicomico Counties, and Baltimore City.
E&T providers	BCR Cyber, Bugg, Hardnett, and Associates, Civic Works; CFUF, Goodwill Chesapeake, Humanim, It Works, IRC, ISSCC, JARC, LightHouse, Living Classrooms, MCVET, MD Food Bank (FoodWorks, Inc), Maryland New Directions, NCIA, The Work First, and Union Kitchen.
Projected annual participation	2408
Estimated annual component costs	\$6,513,640
Not supplanting	SNAP E&T program staff monitor all program costs and review documentation of leveraged funding to ensure funded component activities do not supplant non-Federal funds for existing educational

Details	Work Readiness Training (EPWRT)
	services and activities. A detailed explanation of this requirement is included in the grant agreement, covered at the Onboarding Session, and frequently discussed during monthly SNAP E&T Workgroup meetings.
Cost parity	SNAP E&T program staff monitor all program costs and review documentation of leveraged funding to ensure that costs charged to E&T do not exceed costs charged to other funding sources. A detailed explanation of this requirement is included in the grant agreement, covered at the Onboarding Session, and frequently discussed during monthly SNAP E&T Workgroup meetings.

Work Experience: Work Activity

Details	Work Activity (WA)
Description of the component	Work experience in the private sector provides individuals with an opportunity to gain work experience and useful workplace skills at a supervised work site. Work experience may be combined with job search, job search training, or other components. Upon successful completion of the workfare assignment, skills obtained by the participant may lead to employment.
Target population	ABAWDs and Voluntary SNAP recipients, Individuals Previously Incarcerated, Individuals Experiencing Homelessness, and Non-custodial parents.
Criteria for participation	Criteria for participation is determined by case managers (LDSS or SNAP E&T Third Party Partners) through the completion of an assessment which may include the following measures: Literacy Level; Communication Skills (including English proficiency); Education Level; Employment History; Employment Related Skills; Abilities and Interests; and Employment Barriers and Steps Necessary to Overcome Barriers; and the creation of an IEP.
Geographic area	Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Calvert, Carroll, Charles, Frederick, Garrett, Howard, Montgomery, Prince George's, St. Mary's, Washington, Wicomico Counties, and Baltimore City.
E&T providers	CFUF, Living Classrooms, NCIA, Goodwill Chesapeake, JARC, LightHouse, and Maryland New Directions.
Projected annual participation	858
Estimated annual component costs	\$960,960

Work Experience: Pre-Apprenticeship

Details	Pre-Apprenticeship(WBLPA)
Description of the component	Preparation for on-the-job training and related instruction in which workers learn the practical and theoretical aspects of a skilled occupation. Pre-Apprenticeship Programs provide individuals with the basic and technical skills necessary to enter an apprenticeship program and should be directly linked to an apprenticeship program.
Target population	ABAWDs and Voluntary SNAP recipients, Individuals Previously Incarcerated, Individuals Experiencing Homelessness, and Non-custodial parents.
Criteria for participation	Criteria for participation determined by case managers (LDSS or Third Party SNAP E&T Third Party Partners) after completion of assessment and creation of independence plan.
Geographic area	Baltimore City
E&T providers	Goodwill Chesapeake -Will provide in house pre-apprenticeship training
Projected annual participation	30
Estimated annual component costs	\$140,625

Work Experience: Apprenticeship

Details	Apprenticeship (WBLA)
Description of the component	On-the-job training and related instruction in which workers learn the practical and theoretical aspects of a skilled occupation. Apprenticeship programs can be sponsored by individual employers, joint employer and labor groups, and/or employer associations.
Target population	ABAWDs and Voluntary SNAP recipients, Individuals Previously Incarcerated, Individuals Experiencing Homelessness, and Non-custodial parents.
Criteria for participation	Criteria for participation determined by case managers (LDSS or Third Party SNAP E&T Third Party Partners) after completion of assessment and creation of independence plan.
Geographic area	Baltimore City

Details	Apprenticeship (WBLA)
E&T providers	Goodwill Chesapeake- Will refer out for Apprenticeships- Estimated Cost Cover case management, employment specialists, and barrier removal.
Projected annual participation	30
Estimated annual component costs	\$16,000

Work Experience: On-the-Job Training

Details	On-the-Job-Training (WBLOJT)
Description of the component	A work placement is made through a contract with an employer or a RA program sponsor in the public, private non-profit, or private sector. An OJT contract must be limited to the period of time required for a participant to become proficient in the occupation for which the training is being provided. In determining the appropriate length of the contract consideration should be given to the skills requirements of the occupation, the academic and occupational skill level of the participant, prior work experience, and the participant's individual employment plan.
Target population	ABAWDs, Voluntary SNAP recipients, customers impacted by the criminal justice system, and Individuals Experiencing Homelessness.
Criteria for participation	Criteria for participation is determined by case managers (LDSS or SNAP E&T Third Party Partners) through the completion of an assessment which may include the following measures: Literacy Level; Communication Skills (including English proficiency); Education Level; Employment History; Employment Related Skills; Abilities and Interests; and Employment Barriers and Steps Necessary to Overcome Barriers; and the creation of an IEP.
Geographic area	Anne Arundel Baltimore City, Baltimore County, Harford, Howard, and Wicomico Counties.
E&T providers	Civic Works, Horizon Goodwill, MCVET, and Vaccines For Children (VFC).
Projected annual participation	126
Estimated annual component costs	\$340,830

(2) A description of the case management services and models, how participants will be referred to case management, how the participant's case will be managed, who will provide case management services, and how the service providers will coordinate with E&T providers, the State agency, and other community resources, as appropriate. The State plan should also discuss how the State agency will ensure E&T participants are provided with targeted case management services through an efficient administrative process;

Case Management is a requirement; all approved E&T providers are responsible for providing case management services. Each approved SNAP E&T provider is responsible for their own case management and service model, but they must include the following: comprehensive intake assessments, individualized service plans, progress monitoring, referral to other community resources and educational remediation services that prepare individuals for the workforce. DHS meets with the providers monthly to provide oversight to the group as a whole and meets with the providers individually annually to monitor progress. Technical assistance is offered as needed/requested and third party partners provide quarterly reports which are reviewed and assessed by the SNAP E&T Contract managers. Contract Managers review data entered in the Work Opportunity Record Keeping System (WORKS) to verify case management is being conducted and review outcomes listed on quarterly reports and at Technical Assistance monitoring visits.

(3) An operating budget for the Federal fiscal year with an estimate of the cost of operation for each Federal fiscal year covered by the Combined Plan. Any State agency that requests 50 percent Federal reimbursement for State agency E&T administrative costs, other than for participant reimbursements, must include in its plan, or amendments to its plan, an itemized list of all activities and costs for which those Federal funds will be claimed, including the costs for case management and casework to facilitate the transition from economic dependency to self-sufficiency through work. Costs in excess of the Federal grant will be allowed only with the prior approval of FNS and must be adequately documented to assure that they are necessary, reasonable and properly allocated. A State must submit a plan amendment to request budget adjustments at least 30 days prior to planned implementation;

The total operating budget for FY 2024 is \$ 27,423,435.00.

\$ 24,852,305.00 Administrative Cost

\$ 2,571,130.00 Participant Reimbursements

The total anticipated operating budget for FY'25 and FY'26 is \$30,000,000.00

\$25,000,000.00 Administrative Cost per Federal Fiscal Year

\$5,000,000.00 Participant Reimbursements per Federal Fiscal Year

(4) The categories and types of individuals the State agency intends to exempt from E&T participation, the estimated percentage of work registrants the State agency plans to exempt, and the frequency with which the State agency plans to reevaluate the validity of its exemptions;

A) Anticipated number of work registrants.	400,000
B) List State exemptions from E&T and the number of work registrants expected to be exempted under each category. A State operating a voluntary program would show that all work registrants are exempt. Alternatively, a State may exempt only certain populations from SNAP E&T participation, such as individuals experiencing homelessness.	1. Age 55/Over with No Work History: 2,596 2. Multiple Barriers: 16,454 3. Child Care Difficulties: 3,653 4. Family Problems: 2,114 5. Homeless: 9,540 6. Temporary Illness/Disability: 2,209 7. Job-related: 1,301 8. Transitional Living Arrangement: 8 9. Migrant/Seasonal Worker: 149 10. Convicted Offender: 24 11. Pregnancy: 1,025 12. Lives in Remote Area: 6,335 13. Transportation Difficulties: 160 Total: 45,568
C) Total estimated number of work registrants exempt from mandatory E&T	400,000
D) Percent of all work registrants exempt from E&T (line C /line A * 100).	100%
E) Anticipated number of ABAWDs in the State during the FY.	80,000
F) Anticipated number of ABAWDs in waived areas of the State.	0
OG) Anticipated number of ABAWDs to be exempted under the State's ABAWD discretionary exemption allowance.	17,063
H) Number of potential at-risk ABAWDs expected in the State during the FY (line E - (lines F +G)).	0

(5) The characteristics of the population the State agency intends to place in E&T;

A primary focus for Maryland's SNAP E&T program will be SNAP recipients with limited training and skills to overcome barriers to economic self-sufficiency. The State program will also be characterized with programs supporting special populations such as homeless veterans, disabled veterans, individuals who have LEP, and single parents.

(6) The estimated number of volunteers the State agency expects to place in E&T;

Maryland is a volunteer State and expects to place 6,000 volunteer participants during the Federal FY.

(7) The geographic areas covered and not covered by the E&T Plan and why, and the type and location of services to be offered;

The SNAP E&T program will be implemented Statewide. SNAP E&T participants are assessed to identify their strengths (i.e. education, training, and work history) and barriers (i.e. limited education, illiteracy, lack of childcare, lack of transportation, having a criminal background). The Third-Party Partners use information collected during intake and assessment to develop an Individual Self-Sufficiency Plan - a roadmap to address barriers and help the customer achieve economic self-sufficiency. Maryland's Third-Party Partners and the 24 Local Department of Social Services provide SNAP E&T participants with case management and a combination of the following services: job readiness, basic education, job placement and retention services, vocational training, and work experience.

(8) The method the State agency uses to count all work registrants as of the first day of the new fiscal year;

DHS determines work registration requirements at SNAP certification or recertification. This data is collected on an ongoing basis as part of the eligibility process. A recipient's work registration exemption status must be redetermined at least annually and must be coded on the Eligibility & Enrollment (E&E) system.

The number of work registrants is the count of all SNAP recipients minus those who meet the criteria of a statutory work exemption. Note, SNAP recipients granted an individual temporary exemption are listed as registrants. The E&E system transmits the work registrant data over into the Work Programs System (WORKS) as soon as the case is decisioned; this information is reflected on the FNS-583 report.

(9) The method the State agency uses to report work registrant information on the quarterly Form FNS-583;

The Eligibility And Enrollment (E&E) system transmits the work registrant data as soon as the case is decisioned; this information is reflected on the FNS-583 report.

(10) The method the State agency uses to prevent work registrants from being counted twice within a Federal fiscal year. If the State agency universally work registers all SNAP applicants, this method must specify how the State agency excludes those exempt from work registration under 7 C.F.R. §273.7(b)(1). If the State agency work registers nonexempt participants whenever a new application is submitted, this method must also specify how the State agency excludes those participants who may have already been registered within the past 12 months as specified under 7 C.F.R. §273.7(a)(1)(i);

The State's report of work registrants is computer generated. The State is able to prevent duplication by assigning each registrant a unique identifier. Work registrants are entered into the Maryland Benefits Access platform through WORKS. At the time of registration, the registrant is assigned a unique identifier that will prevent duplicate counting. Registration status is renewed every 12 months when applicable.

(11) The organizational relationship between the units responsible for certification and the units operating the E&T components, including units of the Statewide workforce development system, if available. FNS is specifically concerned that the lines of communication be efficient and that noncompliance by the participant be reported to the certification unit within 10 working days after the noncompliance occurs;

DHS administers the SNAP E&T program in partnership with Third-Party Partners. SNAP eligibility is determined through the 24 LDSSs. LDSSs are responsible for screening SNAP recipients for eligibility for SNAP E&T services. Once deemed eligible for SNAP E&T, a customer is then referred to a Third-Party Partner in their jurisdictions based on their specific circumstances.

Third-Party Partners are responsible for conducting individual customer assessments to identify their strengths (i.e. education, training, and work history) and barriers (i.e. limited education, illiteracy, lack of childcare, lack of transportation, having a criminal background). The Third-Party Partners use information collected during intake and assessment to develop an Individual Self-Sufficiency Plan - a roadmap to address barriers and help the customer achieve economic self-sufficiency.

Data entry in WORKS must be done for all SNAP participants enrolled in the program for each month that they are active. . As Maryland is a voluntary state, if there is a failure of noncompliance, the Third-Party Partners are held responsible. If a Third-Party Partner is found to be in noncompliance, they will be required to enter into a Corrective Action Plan (CAP) to rectify the noncompliance issues. The Partner would need to develop and implement a process to actively track participants' data and accurately include all of the applicable information. DHS will provide additional training as necessary and encourage the Partner to develop strategies around on-going case management services.

DHS coordinates SNAP E&T services in coordination with WIOA programs. The Department sits on the WIOA Alignment Group and WIOA Executive Committees. The WIOA Alignment Group consists of operations staff from the MD Labor, Maryland State Department of Education, Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development, and DHS. Each of these Departments administers workforce development programs. The Alignment Group is charged with coordinating services to prevent duplication, the development of a process for staff training and professional development and aligning outcome measurements.

The WIOA Executive Committee consists of the Secretaries of the Departments mentioned above and their executive leadership. The committee provides the vision and direction of WIOA programming.

(12) The relationship between the State agency and other organizations it plans to coordinate with for the provision of services, including organizations in the Statewide workforce development system, if available. Copies of contracts must be available for inspection; The State agency must document how it consulted with the State workforce development board. If the State agency consulted with private employers or employer organizations in lieu of the State workforce development board, it must document this consultation and explain the determination that doing so was more effective or efficient. The State agency must include in its E&T State plan a description of any outcomes from the consultation with the State workforce development board or private employers or employer organizations. The State agency must also address in the E&T State plan the extent to which E&T activities will be carried out in coordination with the activities under title I of WIOA;

The SNAP E&T Program is now part of the State's WIOA plan. This integration is in the workforce development system at large. Additionally, SNAP E&T participates in the Governor's Workforce Development Board meetings to hear about in demand fields and ensure that our programs are aligned with economic trends. The additional third-party partners, incorporation into the WIOA State Plan, and consultation with the Governor's Workforce Board will provide SNAP recipients with more opportunities to gain skills that will catapult them into self-sufficiency.

DHS is currently in compliance with Title I programs under WIOA by partnering, Statewide, with the American Job Centers (AJC). Our Local Departments of Social Services have partnerships and are referring all SNAP recipients to a SNAP E&T Provider, to a local AJC, or other workforce boards. Our partnerships allow SNAP E&T to offer an array of workforce training, educational and career opportunities.

These partnerships assist the SNAP E&T program by:

- Providing our program with service delivery strategies and opportunities for our SNAP/ABAWD participants to transition into the industry of their choice
- Allowing SNAP E&T to stretch SNAP E&T funds statewide along with other WIOA resources
- Leveraging and/or braid funding of non-federal funds to focus on adding complementary enriched service delivery models
- Providing a diverse training and service delivery model that builds the capacity of serving a large number of clients, simultaneously
- Giving us the ability to collaborate and share data, and outcomes so that we can manage our delivery methodologies and revisit areas where our participant needs are not being met and/or best practices

DHS uses Third-Party Partner Programs (50/50 SNAP E&T) to provide direct SNAP E&T services to customers statewide. For FFY 24, the 33 Third-Party Partners include: Baltimore City Community College, BCR Cyber, Bugg and Hardnett, Byte Back, Center for Urban Families, Civic Works, Community College of Baltimore County, Community Engagement & Consultation Group, Inc., Goodwill Industries of the Chesapeake, Inc, Grow Home, Horizon Goodwill Industries, Humanim, I'm Still Standing Community Development Corporation, International Rescue Committee, It Works, Jane Addams Rescue Corporation Baltimore, Lifestyles, LightHouse, Living Classroom, Maryland Food Bank- Food Works Program, MCVET, National Center on Institutions and Alternatives Vocational Training, New Destiny Health, Npower, Pass It On, Paul's Place, Per Scholas, Roca, Inc., The Maryland Center for Hospitality Training, Union Kitchen, Vehicles For Change, Work First Foundation, PA2E, and Carroll Community College.

DHS coordinates SNAP E&T services in coordination with WIOA programs. The Department sits on the WIOA Alignment Group and WIOA Executive Committees. The WIOA Alignment Group consists of operations staff from the MD Labor, Maryland State Department of Education, Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development, and DHS. Each of these Departments administers workforce development programs. The Alignment Group is charged with coordinating services to prevent duplication, the development of a process for staff training and professional development and aligning outcome measurements.

The WIOA Executive Committee consists of the Secretaries of the Departments mentioned above and their executive leadership. The committee provides the vision and direction of WIOA programming.

Third-Party Partners include: For FFY 26, the number of partners increased (from 33 to 47 and consists of the following Partners Third-Party Partners include: Allegany College of Maryland , Baltimore City Community College , Baltimore Cyber Range dba BCR Cyber , Baltimore's Promise II , BioTechnical Institute of Maryland (BTI) , C&J MIGRANT SOLUTIONS FOUNDATION, , Captiva Solutions, LLC , CitiLife Development, LLC , City of Refuge Baltimore , Civic Works , CodeX Academy Technologies LLC , Community College of Baltimore County (CCBC) , Community Engagement and Consultation Group Inc , Difference Makers Christian

Busnisess Alliance , Dwyer Workforce Development , Employ Prince George's , Esphero LLC DBA Vigilantics , Goodwill Industries of the Chesapeake, Inc , Grow Home Inc , Horizon Goodwill Ind , Hunger Free America , International Rescue Committee , It Works Learning Center, Inc. , Jane Addams Resource Corporation , LifeStyles of Maryland Foundation, Inc. , Living Classrooms , Maryland Center for Hospitality Training , Maryland New Directions , Maryland Reentry Resource Center , Maryland Center for Veterans Education and Training , National Center on Institutions and Alternatives, Inc. (NCIA) , NPower Maryland , Pass IT On, Inc. , Public Assistance to Entrepreneurship (PA2E) , Paul's Place , PER SCHOLAS , Phase3 Training Corporation , Robinson's Allied Health Professionals , Roca Inc , Soul of Medicine Training Center , The Center for Urban Families , The Greater Baltimore Black Chamber of Commerce , The Light House, Inc , The Work First Foundation , UK Consulting LLC DBA Union Kitchen , Vehicles for Change , and VETWorkS

DHS coordinates SNAP E&T services in coordination with WIOA programs. The Department sits on the WIOA Alignment Group and WIOA Executive Committees. The WIOA Alignment Group consists of operations staff from the MD Labor, MSDE, Maryland DHCD, and DHS. Each of these Departments administers workforce development programs. The Alignment Group is charged with coordinating services to prevent duplication, the development of a process for staff training and professional development, and aligning outcome measurements. The WIOA Executive Committee consists of the Secretaries of the Departments mentioned above and their executive leadership. The committee provides the vision and direction of WIOA programming.

(13) The availability, if appropriate, of E&T programs for Indians living on reservations after the State agency has consulted in good faith with appropriate tribal organizations;

N/A

(14) If a conciliation process is planned, the procedures that will be used when an individual fails to comply with an E&T program requirement. Include the length of the conciliation period; and

The State of Maryland does not observe a conciliation process because participation in SNAP E&T is voluntary.

(15) The payment rates for childcare established in accordance with the Child Care and Development Block Grant provisions of 45 CFR 98.43, and based on local market rate surveys.

For individuals who need dependent care assistance, local programs reimburse individuals according to the Federal Day Care Block Grant rate structure for dependent care costs for those months the individual is participating in a SNAP/SNAP E&T activity. Program staff requires verification of expenses. Verification must be in the form of a signed statement from the dependent care provider specifying the hours of service. Payment for these supportive services can be incurred and provided to participants by the 3rd Party Partner in advance of the anticipated 50% reimbursement. More detailed information about participant reimbursement is included in an Action Transmittal for LDSS staff as well as in Maryland's SNAP E&T 3rd Party Partner Handbook.

(16) The combined (Federal/State) State agency reimbursement rate for transportation costs and other expenses reasonably necessary and directly related to participation incurred by E&T participants. If the State agency proposes to provide different reimbursement amounts to account for varying levels of expenses, for instance for greater or lesser costs of transportation in different areas of the State, it must include them here.

The State of Maryland SNAP E&T Program incorporates transportation costs reimbursement as a service in its programs. In the 2026 SNAP E&T State Plan, the Third Party Partners are required to provide transportation for SNAP participants. The State does not have a cap on the reimbursement levels – SNAP E&T providers determine the reimbursement based on the individual customer needs.

(17) Information about expenses the State agency proposes to reimburse. FNS must be afforded the opportunity to review and comment on the proposed reimbursements before they are implemented.

Allowable Participant Reimbursements	Participant Reimbursement Caps (optional)	Who provides the participant reimbursement?	Method of disbursement
Tuition and course registration fees	Maryland does not have any reimbursement caps, however; each partner may develop individual reimbursement caps determined by the number of participants and the budget cost per person.	Third Party Partners	Maryland provides participant reimbursements to our approved Third-Party partners who provide supporting documentation for allowable items and/or services that are reasonably necessary and directly related to participation in the E&T program. Partners are reimbursed at 50%.
Books	same as above	Third Party Partners	Maryland provides participant reimbursements to our approved Third-Party partners who provide supporting documentation for allowable items and/or services that are reasonably necessary and directly related to participation in the E&T program. Partners are reimbursed at 50%.
Testing Fees	same as above	Third Party Partners	Maryland provides participant reimbursements to our approved Third-Party partners who provide supporting documentation for allowable items and/or services that are reasonably necessary and directly related to participation in the E&T program. Partners are reimbursed at 50%.

Allowable Participant Reimbursements	Participant Reimbursement (optional)	Caps	Who provides the participant reimbursement?	Method of disbursement
Clothing, personal safety items, tools or uniforms to participate in a SNAP E&T component or to be used for a job	same as above		Third Party Partners	Maryland provides participant reimbursements to our approved Third-Party partners who provide supporting documentation for allowable items and/or services that are reasonably necessary and directly related to participation in the E&T program. Partners are reimbursed at 50%.
Licensing and bonding fees for a work experience program	same as above		Third Party Partners	Maryland provides participant reimbursements to our approved Third-Party partners who provide supporting documentation for allowable items and/or services that are reasonably necessary and directly related to participation in the E&T program. Partners are reimbursed at 50%.
Vision correction (such as eyeglasses, bifocals, eye exam)	same as above		Third Party Partners	Maryland provides participant reimbursements to our approved Third-Party partners who provide supporting documentation for allowable items and/or services that are reasonably necessary and directly related to participation in the E&T program. Partners are reimbursed at 50%.
Dental work (such as teeth cleaning)	same as above		Third Party Partners	Partner pays the dentist for services rendered and invoices DHS for 50% reimbursement.
Legal services	same as above		Third Party Partners	Maryland provides participant reimbursements to our approved Third-Party partners who provide supporting documentation for allowable items and/or services that are reasonably necessary and directly related to participation in the E&T program. Partners are reimbursed at 50%.

Allowable Participant Reimbursements	Participant Reimbursement (optional)	Caps	Who provides the participant reimbursement?	Method of disbursement
Dependent care	same as above		Third Party Partners	Maryland provides participant reimbursements to our approved Third-Party partners who provide supporting documentation for allowable items and/or services that are reasonably necessary and directly related to participation in the E&T program. Partners are reimbursed at 50%.
Transportation to and from the SNAP E&T component	same as above		Third Party Partners	Maryland provides participant reimbursements to our approved Third-Party partners who provide supporting documentation for allowable items and/or services that are reasonably necessary and directly related to participation in the E&T program. Partners are reimbursed at 50%.

Dependent Care

Local programs reimburse SNAP E&T participants for dependent care expenses according to the Federal Day Care Block Grant rate structure for dependent care costs for those months the individual is participating in a SNAP /SNAP E&T activity. Program staff requires verification of expenses. Verification must be in the form of a signed statement from the dependent care provider specifying the hours of service. Payment for these supportive services can be incurred and provided to participants by the Third-Party Partner in advance of the 50% reimbursement.

(18) For each component that is expected to include 100 or more participants, reporting measures that the State will collect and include in the annual report in paragraph (c)(17) of this section. Such measures may include:

(A) The percentage and number of program participants who received E&T services and are in unsubsidized employment subsequent to the receipt of those services;

The percentage of program participants who receive E&T services and are in unsubsidized employment subsequent to the receipt of those services is 74% or and the number of program participants who receive E&T services and are in unsubsidized employment subsequent to the receipt of those services is 244 participants.

Work experience in the private sector provides individuals with an opportunity to gain work experience and useful workplace skills at a supervised work site. Work experience may be combined with job search, job search training, or other components. Upon successful completion of the workfare assignment, skills obtained by the participant may lead to

employment. The projected outcome measure, 858, reflects the number of estimated participants served.

(B) The percentage and number of participants who obtain a recognized credential, a registered apprenticeship, or a regular secondary school diploma (or its recognized equivalent), while participating in, or within 1 year after receiving E&T services;

The percentage of program participants who obtained a recognized credential, a registered apprenticeship, or a regular secondary school diploma (or its recognized equivalent), while participating in, or within 1 year after receiving E&T services is 68% ; the number of program participants who obtained a recognized credential, a registered apprenticeship, or a regular secondary school diploma (or its recognized equivalent), while participating in, or within 1 year after receiving E&T services is 2648 participants.

Preparation for on-the-job training and related instruction in which workers learn the practical and theoretical aspects of a skilled occupation. Pre-Apprenticeship Programs provide individuals with the basic and technical skills necessary to enter an apprenticeship program and should be directly linked to an apprenticeship program. The projected outcome measure, 30, reflects the number of estimated participants served.

(C) The percentage and number of participants who are in an education or training program that is intended to lead to a recognized credential, a registered apprenticeship an on-the-job training program, a regular secondary school diploma (or its recognized equivalent), or unsubsidized employment;

The percentage of program participants who are in an education or training program that is intended to lead to a recognized credential, a registered apprenticeship an on-the-job training program, a regular secondary school diploma (or its recognized equivalent), or unsubsidized employment is 56% or and the number of program participants who are in an education or training program that is intended to lead to a recognized credential, a registered apprenticeship an on-the-job training program, a regular secondary school diploma (or its recognized equivalent), or unsubsidized employment is 542 participants.

A work placement is made through a contract with an employer or a registered apprenticeship program sponsor in the public, private non-profit, or private sector. An OJT contract must be limited to the period of time required for a participant to become proficient in the occupation for which the training is being provided. In determining the appropriate length of the contract consideration should be given to the skills requirements of the occupation, the academic and occupational skill level of the participant, prior work experience, and the participant's individual employment plan. The projected outcome measure, 126, reflects the number of estimated participants served.

(D) Measures developed to assess the skills acquisition of E&T program participants that reflect the goals of the specific components including the percentage and number of participants who are meeting program requirements or are gaining skills likely to lead to employment; and

Each SNAP E&T vendor reserves the discretion to develop mechanisms for assessing skill gains for E&T participants. We have 47 SNAP E&T providers with varying programs (some with subprograms) that have specific measurement tools tailored to their unique programs. They report this data to the State by inputting this information into the WORKS portal which measures and aggregates the skills acquisition of E&T program participants and reflects the goals of the specific components including the percentage and number of participants who

are meeting program requirements or are gaining skills likely to lead to employment.

Work readiness skills may include both foundational cognitive skills such as reading for information, applied mathematics, locating information, problem-solving, and critical thinking and non-cognitive skills, or soft skills, which are defined as personal characteristics and behavioral skills that enhance an individual's interactions, job performance, and career prospects such as adaptability, integrity, cooperation, and workplace discipline.

The projected outcome measure, 2408, reflects the number of estimated participants served.

(E) Other indicators approved by FNS in the E&T State plan.

N/A

(b) Able-bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWD)

b.1. Its pledge to offer a qualifying activity to all at-risk ABAWD applicants and recipients;

N/A

b.2. Estimate costs of fulfilling its pledge;

N/A

b.3. A description of management controls in place to meet pledge requirements;

N/A

b.4. A discussion of its capacity and ability to serve at-risk ABAWDs;

N/A

b.5. Information about the size and special needs of its ABAWD population; and

N/A

b.6. Information about the education, training, and workfare components it will offer to meet the ABAWD work requirement

Supervised Job Search (SJS)

Job Search Training (JST)

Job Retention (JR)

Workfare (W)

Self-Employment (OSE)

Basic/Foundational Skills Instruction (includes High School Equivalency Programs) (EPB)

Career/Technical Education Programs or other Vocational Training (EPC)

Work Readiness Training (EPWRT)

Work Activity (WA)

Pre-Apprenticeship (WBLPA)

Apprenticeship (WBLA)

On-the-Job-Training (WBLOJT)



TRADE ADJUSTMENT ASSISTANCE

There are no program-specific state planning requirements for TAA. If the State includes TAA in a Combined State Plan, the state must incorporate TAA in its responses to the common planning elements in sections II, III, IV, and V of the WIOA State Plan requirements instrument.

JOBS FOR VETERANS STATE GRANT (JVSG)

(OMB Control Number: 1225-0086)

The JVSGs are mandatory, formula-based staffing grants to States (including DC, PR, VI and Guam). The JVSG is funded annually in accordance with a funding formula defined in the statute (38 U.S.C. 4102A (c) (2) (B) and regulation and operates on a FY (not PY) basis, however, performance metrics are collected and reported (VETS-200 Series Reports) quarterly (using four “rolling quarters”) on a PY basis (as with the ETA-9002 Series). Currently, VETS JVSG operates on a five-year (FY 2015-2019), multi-year grant approval cycle modified and funded annually.

In accordance with 38 U.S.C. § 4102A(b)(5) and § 4102A(c), the Assistant Secretary for Veterans' Employment and Training (ASVET) makes grant funds available for use in each State to support Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) specialists and Local Veterans' Employment Representatives (LVER) staff. As a condition to receive funding, 38 U.S.C. § 4102A(c)(2) requires States to submit an application for a grant that contains a State Plan narrative, which includes:

(a) Describe how the state intends to provide employment, training, and job placement services to veterans and eligible persons under the JVSG program (i.e., virtually and in-person).

To meet the training and employment needs of Veterans, MD Labor coordinates across two USDOL agencies—VETS and ETA. In collaboration with VETS, MD Labor administers the Jobs for Veterans State Grants (JVSG) program, which funds dedicated staff to provide individualized career services to eligible Veterans and eligible persons with qualifying employment barriers, and to conduct employer outreach to increase employment opportunities for job-seeking Veterans. This approach aligns with VPL 05-24, which consolidates and clarifies JVSG roles and responsibilities and reinforces that JVSG staff must focus on their statutory duties while maximizing integration across the American Job Center (AJC) system.

MD Labor also administers ETA programs, including WIOA Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth, and Wagner-Peyser Employment Services (WIOA Title III). These programs are universally accessible to eligible job seekers and delivered through Maryland's AJCs.

Veterans' Priority of Service (Statewide Standard)

Pursuant to 38 U.S.C. § 4215 and implementing regulations (20 C.F.R. Part 1010), covered persons receive Priority of Service for all DOL-funded employment and training programs. Maryland's AJCs ensure covered persons are identified at entry and provided priority in access to services, including workshops, training enrollment, and job referrals. VPL 05-24 reiterates that Priority of Service requirements remain in effect and that AJC staff continue to provide priority services to veterans and covered persons, including those who are not DVOP-eligible.

JVSG Service Delivery Model (In-person + Virtual/Hybrid)

Maryland provides JVSG services through a hybrid delivery model (in-person, virtual, and phone-based options), ensuring access for Veterans across the state, including rural areas and individuals with transportation or scheduling barriers. DVOP specialists and Consolidated DVOP/LVER staff provide individualized career services using a case-management approach (assessment, employment planning, barrier mitigation, referrals, and follow-up). Consistent with VPL 05-24, Maryland emphasizes that DVOP services are delivered to individuals who (1) want/need individualized career services and (2) meet JVSG eligibility and qualifying barrier requirements.

Employer Outreach and Placement Support

LVERs and Consolidated DVOP/LVER staff conduct employer outreach and engagement to increase opportunities for job-seeking Veterans, including promoting work-based learning, apprenticeships, and targeted hiring events. This employer-facing work complements DVOP individualized services and supports timely placement outcomes.

VETS Expectations and Maryland Operating Commitments (Explicit)

Maryland will operate the JVSG program consistent with VPL 05-24 expectations, including:

- Role fidelity: JVSG staff will perform only statutorily permitted JVSG duties and will avoid tasks that detract from serving eligible populations with qualifying employment barriers.
- DVOP service intensity expectation: Maryland will manage DVOP service delivery consistent with VETS' expectation that at least 90% of participants served by DVOP specialists receive individualized career services.
- Screening and referral at intake: AJC intake staff will screen customers and refer appropriately so DVOP specialists can focus on eligible customers needing individualized services; customers not eligible for DVOP services (or who do not want/need them) will be served by other AJC programs with Priority of Service applied.

(b) List the populations to be served by Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) and consolidated position staff, including the eligibility criteria for referral for DVOP services.

1. THE NOMINATION AND SELECTION PROCESS FOR ALL PERFORMANCE INCENTIVE AWARDS TO INDIVIDUALS AND/OR OFFICES;

Veterans Program Incentive Compensation Plan (VPICP)

The purpose of Maryland's Veterans Program Incentive Compensation Plan (VPICP) is to motivate and reward eligible staff and/or offices for excellence and measurable improvement in the provision of quality employment, training, and placement services to Veterans, consistent with 38 U.S.C. § 4112 and VETS guidance.

In accordance with VPL 01-24 and Attachment #5 (Incentive Award Plan Technical Assistance Guide)—the most current guidance referenced in this State Plan—Maryland's incentive award program will:

- Recognize excellence and demonstrable improvement in Veteran service delivery;

- Encourage modernization and continuous improvement of services for Veterans and covered persons; and
- Maintain compliance with JVSG role requirements and Priority of Service implementation across the AJC system.

Eligible recipients (as allowed by VETS guidance) may include:

- DVOP specialists;
- LVER staff;
- Consolidated DVOP/LVER staff (if approved);
- Individuals providing employment, training, and placement services to Veterans under WIOA/Wagner-Peyser; and/or
- An employment service team or office, consistent with VETS criteria and the State's approved plan.

Nomination and selection process (state implementation standard):

Maryland will establish (and maintain) written VPICP procedures aligned to VPL 01-24, Attachment #5, to include: (1) nomination criteria tied to objective performance/service measures and compliance expectations; (2) a documented review and approval process (regional and state-level); (3) internal controls to ensure awards are equitable, auditable, and based on measurable results; and (4) communication to staff/regions on timelines, eligibility, and documentation requirements.

2. THE APPROXIMATE NUMBER AND VALUE OF CASH AWARDS USING THE ONE PERCENT INCENTIVE AWARD ALLOCATION;

Per 38 U.S.C. § 4102A(c)(7) and VETS guidance (VPL 01-24, Attachment #5), one percent (1%) of the JVSG allocation each state receives must be designated for cash performance incentive awards for eligible employees or employment service offices, consistent with the State's approved incentive award plan and applicable State policies.

Maryland will annually determine the approximate number and value of cash awards based on:

- the State's final JVSG award amount for the applicable fiscal year;
- eligible nomination volume and quality; and
- Department of Budget and Management (DBM) requirements governing cash award issuance.

3. THE GENERAL NATURE AND APPROXIMATE VALUE OF NON-CASH PERFORMANCE INCENTIVE AWARDS TO BE CHARGED TO THE BASE ALLOCATION; AND

Maryland may provide non-cash performance incentive awards (as permitted) charged to the base allocation in alignment with VPL 01-24, Attachment #5, and State policy. Non-cash awards may include formal recognition and other allowable non-monetary incentives supported by documented criteria and internal controls consistent with the VPICP.

4. ANY CHALLENGES THE STATE MAY ANTICIPATE TO CARRYING OUT A PERFORMANCE INCENTIVE AWARD PROGRAM AS MANDATED BY 38 U.S.C. § 4102A(C). THIS SHOULD INCLUDE ANY STATE LAWS OR POLICIES THAT PROHIBIT SUCH AWARDS, IF APPLICABLE. DESCRIBE THE STATE'S EFFORTS IN OVERCOMING THOSE CHALLENGES.

Maryland's Department of Budget and Management allows "Incentive Performance Awards" under certain guidelines. MD Labor will maintain a VPICP that aligns with DBM requirements and VPL 01-24, Attachment #5. If State laws, policies, or labor agreements restrict implementation of cash awards, MD Labor will document the restriction and outline mitigation steps within the State Plan and/or required modifications in coordination with VETS/DVET.

(c) Describe the roles and responsibilities assigned to Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) specialists, Local Veterans' Employment Representative (LVER) staff, and consolidated DVOP/LVER positions by the state. These must be consistent with 38 U.S.C. 4103A and 4104.

Maryland is dedicated to serving Veterans, particularly those with qualifying employment barriers who will benefit from individualized career services. Consistent with VPL 05-24, DVOP specialists and Consolidated DVOP/LVER staff will provide DVOP services only to eligible populations who:

1. are interested in receiving one or more individualized career services, and
2. meet at least one of the following:
 - are an eligible veteran or eligible person experiencing at least one qualifying employment barrier; or
 - are part of an additional population authorized by the current annual appropriations act (as applicable).

1. Qualifying Employment Barriers (DVOP-Eligible)

To receive DVOP services, an eligible veteran or eligible person must affirm they are experiencing at least one of the following qualifying employment barriers (VPL 05-24):

a. Has a disability, which may include:

- Special disabled veteran (as defined in 38 U.S.C. § 4211(1));
- Disabled veteran (as defined in 38 U.S.C. § 4211(3));
- Other disability (self-identified disability consistent with ADA definition).
 - b. Vietnam-era veteran (as defined in 38 U.S.C. § 4211(2) and 38 U.S.C. § 101(29)).
 - c. Recently separated veteran (discharged/released from active duty within the last three years).
 - d. Referred to employment services by a representative of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).
 - e. Experiencing homelessness (McKinney-Vento definition).
 - f. Justice-involved (WIOA "offender" definition).
 - g. Ages 18-24 at time of enrollment.
 - h. Educationally disadvantaged (lacks a high school diploma or equivalent).
 - i. Economically disadvantaged, including:
 - Low-income (WIOA definition);
 - Unemployed;
 - Head of a single-parent household with at least one dependent child.

Eligible persons: Maryland will ensure that an eligible person must personally meet eligibility criteria and cannot claim DVOP eligibility based solely on a spouse's veteran-era status (e.g., Vietnam-era).

2. Additional Populations (As Authorized in Annual Appropriations)

If authorized by the applicable annual appropriations act, Maryland may provide services consistent with federal direction to additional non-veteran populations (e.g., certain transitioning service members and certain caregivers/spouses of wounded, ill, or injured service members), and will review appropriations language annually in consultation with the DVET to ensure only eligible populations are served.

Veterans and covered persons who do not meet DVOP eligibility criteria remain eligible for services through Wagner-Peyser, WIOA Title I programs, and other AJC partner services, with Priority of Service applied.

(d) Demonstrate the manner in which DVOP, LVER and consolidated DVOP/LVER staff are integrated into the state's employment service delivery systems or American Job Center (AJC). This demonstration should show active engagement between JVSG and other AJC staff, such as through participation in staff meetings and cross-training opportunities.

MD Labor recognizes that serving Veterans is a shared responsibility across the AJC system. JVSG-funded positions exist to supplement—not supplant—AJC staff, and to ensure Veterans with qualifying employment barriers receive appropriate individualized services and that employers have access to Veteran talent.

DVOP Specialists (and DVOP Function of Consolidated Positions)

Consistent with 38 U.S.C. § 4103A and VPL 05-24, DVOP specialists provide individualized career services using a case-management approach to eligible veterans and eligible persons with qualifying employment barriers. VETS expects DVOP specialists to focus service delivery so that **at least 90%** of participants served receive individualized career services.

DVOP specialists:

- Provide comprehensive assessments, employment planning, counseling, and job-search assistance.
- Coordinate referrals to partner programs (WIOA, Wagner-Peyser, VA/VR&E, community supports).
- Maintain complete and compliant case documentation in the state MIS.
- When not actively providing individualized services, focus on case management and building referral pipelines to locate eligible populations with qualifying employment barriers.

LVER Staff (and LVER Function of Consolidated Positions)

Consistent with 38 U.S.C. § 4104 and VPL 05-24, LVERs conduct employer outreach and engagement to increase employment and training opportunities for job-seeking Veterans. This includes coordinating with business services teams, organizing employer-focused activities, and promoting Veteran hiring.

Consolidated DVOP/LVER Positions

Where approved, consolidated positions perform DVOP and LVER functions consistent with federal guidance and role restrictions. Any consolidated staff must adhere to the requirements applicable to both roles.

Role Fidelity and Prohibited Activities (Statewide Standard)

Maryland will ensure JVSG staff perform duties consistent with statute and VPL 05-24 and avoid work that detracts from serving eligible populations with qualifying employment barriers.

(e) Describe the State's performance incentive award program to encourage individuals and/or employment service offices to improve and/or achieve excellence in the provision of services to veterans, including:

e.1. the nomination and selection process for all performance incentive awards to individuals and/or offices

MD Labor integrates JVSG staff into AJCs through coordinated intake, referral, and service delivery processes that protect DVOP capacity for intensive services while ensuring Priority of Service across all programs.

1. AJC Intake, Screening, and Referral (Customer Flow)

Consistent with VPL 05-24:

- AJC intake staff identify covered persons and apply Priority of Service.
- Prior to DVOP referral, intake staff must confirm the customer wants/needs individualized career services and must ascertain eligibility for DVOP services.
- Customers who are not DVOP-eligible (or who do not want/need DVOP individualized services) are served through other AJC programs with Priority of Service applied.
- If a DVOP specialist is unavailable, AJC staff provide appropriate services and referrals to meet needs and satisfy Priority of Service, while offering an option to schedule DVOP services when available.

2. Cross-Training and Team Integration

Maryland will continue to integrate JVSG staff by:

- Including JVSG staff in AJC operational meetings, case conferencing (where appropriate), and coordinated service planning.
- Providing cross-training for AJC staff on: (1) Priority of Service, (2) JVSG eligibility and qualifying barriers, (3) appropriate referral procedures, and (4) role boundaries to support audit readiness.

3. VR&E Integration and Coordination (NEW—VPL 01-26 Requirement)

Maryland will implement/maintain procedures to coordinate employment services for VA Veteran Readiness and Employment (VR&E) participants in alignment with VPL 01-26:

- Maintain a shared electronic mailbox to receive VR&E referrals and monitoring requests; the mailbox will be jointly monitored by a JVSG program manager and non-JVSG-funded staff to ensure continuity regardless of DVOP eligibility.

- Ensure referrals received through the mailbox are assigned to appropriate staff for contact, screening, and services consistent with applicable law and guidance.
- Ensure monthly progress reporting is completed and sent to VR&E as required for applicable participants, and participate in ongoing coordination meetings (e.g., quarterly) to improve service delivery.
- Enforce role restrictions from VPL 01-26:
 - LVERs may not perform VR&E mailbox monitoring functions.
 - DVOP staff may not receive VR&E referrals directly from VR&E staff; referrals must route through the shared mailbox process.
 - Time spent screening applicants for program eligibility cannot be charged to JVSG (screening is an intake function).
- Notify the DVET and VETS as required of the shared mailbox contact and maintain up-to-date information.

b.2. the approximate number and value of cash awards using the one percent incentive award allocation;

MD Labor's OWD will develop a plan that aligns with current State guidance and submit it to DBM for review and approval. If approved, Maryland will implement the approved plan under the FY 2024 grant immediately. If approval is denied, OWD will provide the updated guidance indicating the state's inability to implement the incentive award under Veterans Program Letter 01-22.

e.3. the general nature and approximate value of non-cash performance incentive awards to be charged to the base allocation; and

MD Labor's OWD will develop a plan that aligns with current State guidance and submit it to DBM for review and approval. If approved, Maryland will implement the approved plan under the FY 2024 grant immediately. If approval is denied, OWD will provide the updated guidance indicating the state's inability to implement the incentive award under Veterans Program Letter 01-22.

e.4. any challenges the state may anticipate to carrying out a performance incentive award program as mandated by 38 U.S.C. § 4102A(c). This should include any state laws or policies that prohibit such awards, if applicable. Describe the state's efforts in overcoming those challenges.

Maryland's Department of Budget and Management allows for "Incentive Performance Awards" under certain guidelines. MD Labor's OWD has developed a plan that aligns with current State guidance. The plan is currently under review by the Office of the Secretary and If approved, Maryland will implement the approved plan under the FY 2024 grant immediately. If approval is denied, OWD will provide the updated guidance indicating the state's inability to implement the incentive award under Veterans Program Letter 01-24.

(f) List the performance targets for direct services to veterans provided by JVSG staff, as measured by participants':

employment rate in the second quarter after exit from the program; Negotiated Rate = **51%**
 employment rate in the fourth quarter after exit; Negotiated rate = **50%**
 median earnings in the second quarter after exit; Negotiated rate = **\$6,800**



UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

a. Contents of a Complete UI SQSP Package

a.1. Transmittal Letter

October 27, 2023

Via electronic delivery to: friedman.jennifer@dol.gov, basile.mark.d@dol.gov, Pasquale.Karen@dol.gov, riendeau.arlene.l@dol.gov, R2-SQSP@dol.gov

Jennifer Friedman
Regional Administrator for Region 2
U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration
1835 Market Street, Suite 2100
Philadelphia, PA 19103-2968

RE: Transmittal Letter for Maryland's FY 2024 SQSP Alternate Submission

Dear Ms. Friedman:

Attached is Maryland's State Quality Service Plan (SQSP) Federal Fiscal Year 2024 Alternate report for the DUI. Included in this submittal are the following documents:

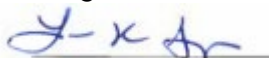
- The State Narrative Plan for DUI
- MD FY 24 SQSP Biennial Excel Workbook
- DUI's Organizational Chart

Per guidance from the Northeast Region's SQSP Unit, Budget Forms SF 424 and SF 424 (B) was submitted by the submittal date of October 13, 2023. Also, per the Northeast Region, the signature page will not be provided until the Alternate Year workbook is accepted.

Questions concerning information within this submission may be directed to myself at (410) 767-2483 or Alexis Braun at (443) 253-6376 or by email sent to Alexis.Braun@maryland.gov.

Thank you for your guidance and technical assistance. We look forward to our ongoing partnership with your Regional Office and the National USDOL ETA.

Best Regards,



Likivu Speaks
Acting Assistant Secretary

cc: Portia Wu, Secretary of Maryland Department of Labor
Jason Perkins-Cohen, Deputy Secretary of Maryland Department of Labor
Karen Pasquale, Chief Division of Workforce Security

a.2. Budget Worksheets/Forms

Budget worksheets/forms and plan for program administration based on projected allocations received from the Federal partner. These forms include Worksheet UI-1 and SF 424, SF 424A and SF 424B. The SF 424A is only required if the State vary the quarterly distribution of base claims activity staff years.

UI-1

Maryland

Measures/Programs to be Addressed For Alternate SQSP Fiscal Year (FY) 2024

Corrective

Measures/Programs to be Addressed

(Each Measure Below is Hyperlinked to the CAP Worksheet)

Acceptable Level of Performance Action Plan (ALP) (CAP)

Narrative Required

(In Word Doc.)

N E

SQSP 2024 Performance Year Data

First Payment Promptness

B First Payment Promptness (IntraState 14/21 Days) E First Payment Promptness (InterState 14/21

Days) N

E First Payment Promptness (IntraState 35 Days)

F First Payment Promptness (InterState 35 Days)

T Nonmonetary Determination Timeliness

S

Nonmonetary Determination Quality - Separations

Nonmonetary Determination Quality - Nonseps

A Lower Authority Appeals (30 Days)

P Lower Authority Appeals (45 Days)

P

E Average Age of Pending Lower Authority Appeals

A

L Average Age of Pending Higher Authority Appeals

S Lower Authority Appeals Quality

New Employer Status Determinations Timelapse

≥ 87% X

≥ 87% X

≥ 70% X

≥ 93% X

≥ 78% X

≥ 80% X

≥ 75% X

≥ 75% X

≥ 60% X

≥ 80% X

≤ 30 days X

≤ 40 days

≥ 80%

≥ 70%

54.17%

54.53%

41.64%

64.00%
 51.26%
 48.14%
 ^19.5%
 ^63.3% 0.65%
 2.35%
 204.0
 13.0
 92.73%
 82.5%
 Tax Quality (Part A)
 T A
 X Tax Quality (Part B)
 TPS Sample Reviews Effective Audit Measure Improper Payments Measure
 I
 N Detection of Overpayments - 3 Year Measure
 T Overpayment Recovery Measure
 E
 G
 R Data Validation - Benefits (All Submitted & Passing)
 I T
 Y Data Validation - Tax (All Submitted & Passing) NDNH BAM Compliance

 No more than 3 tax functions failing TPS in a year
 The same tax function cannot fail for 3 consecutive years
 Pass
 Pass 4 factors/score ≥ 7
 < 10% X
 $\geq 50\% \text{ \& } \leq 95\%$ X
 $\geq 68\%$ X
 All Benefit Pops Submitted &
 Passing X
 All Tax Pops Submitted & Passing X
 Pass
 Pass
 Pass
 Pass Pass 13.26%
 137.96%
 5.63%
 Fail: Benefits 3a, 4, 12-14
 Fail: Tax 2 & 4
 Pass
 B A M
 BAM Operations Compliant Pass All M&P X
 Fail:
 Did not meet Paid sample selection - 469
 Paid: 60 day timeliness= 56.08%
 Paid 90 day timeliness= 83.80%
 Paid 120 day timeliness= 88.06%
 Denied (Monetary):
 60 day timeliness = 54.19%
 90 day timeliness = 83.87%
 120 day timeliness = 87.10%

Denied (Separation) : 60 day timeliness = 47.44%

90 day timeliness = 82.69%

120 day timeliness = 85.26%

Denied (Non-Sep):

60 day timeliness = 46.71%

90 day timeliness = 78.95%

120 day timeliness = 84.21%

Denial Monetary Comparison Report = 95.57%

Denial Non-Separation Comparison Report = 99.27%

Incorrect Recording of Issue Detection Date Incorrect Recording of Determination Date UI Reporting Requirements

G Percent of Intrastate Payments Made Timely

P Detection of Recoverable Overpayments

A Percent of Employer Tax Liability Determinations Made Timely

95% X

95% X

Pass X

87%

57.5%

90%

55.56%

1.11%

Fail 54.53%

190.55%

83.22%

Integrity Action Plan (IAP) Top Three Root Causes - Payment Integrity Information Act (PIIA) Year

Data

1. Benefit Year Earnings: Percent of Dollars OP 31.615%

2. Abe+Available: Percent of Dollars OP 27.678%

3. Separation Issues: Percent of Dollars OP 25.808%

Monitoring Findings/Audit Resolution

Benefit Accuracy Measurement (BAM) Annual Determination Letter (ADL): Issued May 10, 2023

CARES Act Monitoring Report Issued: March 7, 2022

SF 424B

ASSURANCES - NON-CONSTRUCTION PROGRAMS

OMB Number: 4040-0007

Expiration Date: 02/28/2025

Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 15 minutes per response, including time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding the burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (0348-0040), Washington, DC 20503.

PLEASE DO NOT RETURN YOUR COMPLETED FORM TO THE OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET. SEND IT TO THE ADDRESS PROVIDED BY THE SPONSORING AGENCY.

NOTE: Certain of these assurances may not be applicable to your project or program. If you have questions, please contact the awarding agency. Further, certain Federal awarding agencies may require applicants to certify to additional assurances. If such is the case, you will be notified.

As the duly authorized representative of the applicant, I certify that the applicant:

1. Has the legal authority to apply for Federal assistance and the institutional, managerial and financial capability (including funds sufficient to pay the non-Federal share of project cost) to ensure proper planning, management and completion of the project described in this application.
2. Will give the awarding agency, the Comptroller General of the United States and, if appropriate, the State, through any authorized representative, access to and the right to examine all records, books, papers, or documents related to the award; and will establish a proper accounting system in accordance with generally accepted accounting standards or agency directives.
3. Will establish safeguards to prohibit employees from using their positions for a purpose that constitutes or presents the appearance of personal or organizational conflict of interest, or personal gain.
4. Will initiate and complete the work within the applicable time frame after receipt of approval of the awarding agency.
5. Will comply with the Intergovernmental Personnel Act of 1970 (42 U.S.C. §§4728-4763) relating to prescribed standards for merit systems for programs funded under one of the 19 statutes or regulations specified in Appendix A of OPM's Standards for a Merit System of Personnel Administration (5 C.F.R. 900, Subpart F).
6. Will comply with all Federal statutes relating to nondiscrimination. These include but are not limited to:

(a) Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (P.L. 88-352) which prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color or national origin; (b) Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, as amended (20 U.S.C. §§1681- 1683, and 1685-1686), which prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex; (c) Section: i 504 of the Rehabilitation

Act of 1973, as amended (29 U.S.C. §794), which prohibits discrimination on the basis of handicaps; (d) the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, as amended (42 U. S.C. §§6101-6107), which prohibits discrimination on the basis of age; (e) the Drug Abuse Office and Treatment Act of 1972 (P.L. 92-255), as amended, relating to nondiscrimination on the basis of drug abuse; (f) the Comprehensive Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism Prevention, Treatment and Rehabilitation Act of 1970 (P.L. 91-616), as amended, relating to nondiscrimination on the basis of alcohol abuse or alcoholism; (g) §§523 and 527 of the Public Health Service Act of 1912 (42 U.S.C. §§290 dd-3 and 290ee- 3), as amended, relating to confidentiality of alcohol and drug abuse patient records; (h) Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act of 1968 (42 U.S.C. §§3601 et seq.), as amended, relating to nondiscrimination in the sale, rental or financing of housing; (i) any other nondiscrimination provisions in the specific statute(s) under which application for Federal assistance is being made; and, G) the requirements of any other nondiscrimination statute(s) which may apply to the application.

7. Will comply, or has already complied, with the requirements of Title II and III of the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970 (P.L. 91-646) which provide for fair and equitable treatment of persons displaced or whose property is acquired as a result of Federal or federally-assisted programs. These requirements apply to all interests in real property acquired for project purposes regardless of Federal participation in purchases.
8. Will comply, as applicable, with provisions of the Hatch Act (5 U.S.C. §§1501-1508 and 7324-7328) which limit the political activities of employees whose principal employment activities are funded in whole or in part with Federal funds.

Previous Information Usable

Authorized for Local Reproduction

Standard Form ,t2'8 (Rev. 7-971 Prescribed by OMB Circular A-102

9. Will comply, as applicable, with the provisions of the Davis Bacon Act (40 U.S.C. §§276a to 276a-7), the Copeland Act (40 U.S.C. §276c and 18 U.S.C. §874), and the Contract Work Hours and Safety Standards Act (40 U.S.C. §§327- 333), regarding labor standards for federally-assisted construction sub agreements.
10. Will comply, if applicable, with flood insurance purchase requirements of Section 102(a) of the Flood Disaster Protection Act of 1973 (P.L. 93-234) which requires recipients in a special flood hazard area to participate in the program and to purchase flood insurance if the total cost of insurable construction and acquisition is \$10,000 or more.
11. Will comply with environmental standards which may be prescribed pursuant to the following: (a) institution of environmental quality control measures under the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (P.L. 91-190) and Executive Order (EO) 11514; (b) notification of violating facilities pursuant to EO 11738; (c) protection of wetlands pursuant to EO 11990; (d) evaluation of flood hazards in floodplains in accordance with EO 11988; (e) assurance of project consistency with the approved State management program developed under the Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972 (16 U.S.C. §§1451 et seq.); (f) conformity of Federal actions to State (Clean Air) Implementation Plans

under Section 176(c) of the Clean Air Act of 1955, as amended (42 U.S.C. §§7401 et seq.); (g) protection of underground sources of drinking water under the Safe Drinking Water Act of 1974, as amended (P.L. 93-523); and, (h) protection of endangered species under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (P.L. 93- 205).

12. Will comply with the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968 (16 U.S.C. §§1271 et seq.) related to protecting components or potential components of the national wild and scenic rivers system.
13. Will assist the awarding agency in assuring compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended (16 U.S.C. §470), EO 11593 (identification and protection of historic properties), and the Archaeological and Historic Preservation Act of 1974 (16 U.S.C. §§469a-1 et seq.).
14. Will comply with P.L. 93-348 regarding the protection of human subjects involved in research, development, and related activities supported by this award of assistance.
15. Will comply with the Laboratory Animal Welfare Act of 1966 (P.L. 89-544, as amended, 7 U.S.C. §§2131 et seq.) pertaining to the care, handling, and treatment of warm blooded animals held for research, teaching, or other activities supported by this award of assistance.
16. Will comply with the Lead-Based Paint Poisoning Prevention Act (42 U.S.C. §§4801 et seq.) which prohibits the use of lead-based paint in construction or rehabilitation of residence structures.
17. Will cause to be performed the required financial and compliance audits in accordance with the Single Audit Act Amendments of 1996 and OMB Circular No. A-133, Audits of States, Local Governments, and Non-Profit Organizations."
18. Will comply with all applicable requirements of all other Federal laws, executive orders, regulations, and policies governing this program.
19. Will comply with the requirements of Section 106(g) of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) of 2000, as amended (22 U.S.C. 7104) which prohibits grant award recipients or a sub-recipient from (1) Engaging in severe forms of trafficking in persons during the period of time that the award is in effect (2) Procuring a commercial sex act during the period of time that the award is in effect or (3) Using forced labor in the performance of the award or subawards under the award.

SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED CERTIFYING OFFICIAL
Likivu Speaks
Title
Acting Assistant Secretary
APPLICANT NAME
Likivu Speaks
<u>DATE SUBMITTED</u>
11/06/23

SF 424

OMB Number: 4040-0004

Expiration Date: 11/30/2025

* 1. Type of Submission: Application

2. Type of Application: New

* 3. Date Received: 10/12/2023

4. Applicant Identifier:
5a. Federal Entity Identifier: 526002033
5b. Federal Award Identifier:
6. Date Received by State:
7. State Application Identifier:
* a. Legal Name: Maryland Department of Labor
* b. Employer/Taxpayer Identification Number (EIN/TIN): 526002033
c. UEI: DW31LGJ3RLU7
* Street1: 1100 N Eutaw Street
Street2: Room 508
* City: Baltimore
County/Parish:
* State: Maryland
Province:
* Country: USA: United States
* Zip / Postal Code: 21201-2225
Department Name: Maryland Department of Labor
Division Name: Unemployment Insurance
Prefix: Mr.
First Name: Likivu
Middle Name: K.
* Last Name: Speaks
Suffix:
Title: Acting Assistant Secretary of Unemployment Insurance
Organizational Affiliation:
* Telephone Number: 410-767-0001
Fax Number: 410-350-7099
* Email: likivu.speaks@maryland.gov
* If Revision, select appropriate letter(s):
* Other (Specify):
State Use Only:

* 9. Type of Applicant 1: Select Applicant Type: State Government
Type of Applicant 2: Select Applicant Type:
Type of Applicant 3: Select Applicant Type:
* Other (specify):
* 10. Name of Federal Agency: Employment and Training Administration
11. Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number: 17.225
CFDA Title: Unemployment Insurance
* 12. Funding Opportunity Number: ETA-UIPL-13-23
* Title: Maryland Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 State Workforce Agency Unemployment Insurance (UI)
Resource Planning Targets and Guidelines
13. Competition Identification Number: ETA-UIPL-13-23
Title: Maryland Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 State Workforce Agency Unemployment Insurance (UI)
Resource Planning Targets and Guidelines
14. Areas Affected by Project (Cities, Counties, States, etc.):
* 15. Descriptive Title of Applicant's Project: MD State Quality Service Plan Biennial FY 2024
16. Congressional Districts of:
Applicant: 7
Program/Project: US-ALL
17. Proposed Project State Date: 10/01/2023
b. End Date: 09/30/2026
18. Estimated Funding (\$): Federal - 57,488,539.00

Total: 57,488,539.00

19. Program is not covered by E.O. 12372 X

20. Is the Applicant Delinquent on Any Federal Debt? NO X

21. *By signing this application, I certify (1) to the statements contained in the list of certifications** and (2) that the statements herein are true, complete and accurate to the best of my knowledge. I also provide the required assurances** and agree to comply with any resulting terms if I accept an award. I am aware that any false, fictitious, or fraudulent statements or claims may subject me to criminal, civil, or administrative penalties. (U.S. Code, Title 18, Section 1001)
** The list of certifications and assurances, or an internet site where you may obtain this list, is contained in the announcement or agency specific instructions.

Authorized Representative:

.

Prefix: Mr.

First Name: Likivu

Middle Name: K.

* Last Name: Speaks

Suffix:

* Title: Acting Assistant Secretary of Unemployment Insurance

* Telephone Number: 410-767-0301

* Email: likivu.speaks@maryland.gov

Fax Number: 410-333-7099

* Signature of Authorized Representative: Likivu Speaks

Date Signed: 10/7/2023

a.3. State Plan Narrative

State Plan Narrative is a vital element of the SQSP that provides a vehicle for sharing with the Federal partner State-specific efforts that affect the administration of the UI Program. The State Plan Narrative allows the State to describe in a single narrative: a) State performance in comparison to the Government Performance Review Act goals; b) actions planned to correct deficiencies regarding UI programs, UI program reviews and reporting requirements; and c) results of customer satisfaction surveys (optional).

Maryland Department of Labor Division of Unemployment Insurance State Quality Service Plan Alternate Fiscal Year 2024

A. Overview

1. State priorities and the strategic direction the state has adopted to ensure continuous improvement.

The Maryland Department of Labor's Division of Unemployment Insurance ("The Division" or "DUI") continues to balance several important interests, including but not limited to: ensuring that eligible claimants receive benefits as quickly as possible; protecting the integrity of Maryland's UI program; providing excellent customer service to claimants, employers, and third parties; and preventing and detecting fraud in the UI system. Over the past federal fiscal year, DUI has continued efforts to ensure continuous improvement. In addition to these core objectives, DUI also actively supports reemployment through services such as the RESEA program.

Modernization Update

On September 21, 2020, the Maryland Department of Labor, DUI launched BEACON 2.0 ("BEACON"), a fully modernized system which integrated benefits, appeals, and contributions functionalities. The launch of BEACON was the result of more than six years of planning, testing, and development and, in the past year, DUI has continued to work with its BEACON vendor to make improvements to the new system.

Trust Fund Solvency

Maryland DUI's trust fund is not solvent. The trust fund had a balance of \$ \$1,871,961,707.23 as of September 30, 2023.

Total State Revenue as of June 30, 2023	\$564,738,708.34
Total Benefits Paid as of June 30, 2023	\$326,057,711.83 (reflects only Regular UI benefits paid)
Total Trust Fund Balance as of September 30, 2023	\$1,871,961,707.23 (Excluding EUISAA, UI Modern Incentive Fund and Reed Act Funds)

Employers have been taxed under the Table C tax rate schedule for the 2023 calendar year as a result of federal funding allocated to replenish the Maryland Unemployment Insurance Trust Fund. Table C includes rates that range from 1.00% to 10.50%. The rate for new employers in 2023 is 2.30%. The rate for a foreign contractor (new construction employers headquartered in another state) is 5.10%. The standard (employer) rate is 10.50%. Maryland's taxable wage

base for 2023 is \$8,500. The same Table C rate application was also applied to employers in the previous calendar year

Remaining dedicated to our goals and mission

DUI remained committed to the following actions to improve the Division's capacity to administer and operate the UI program effectively: (1) developing and implementing staff training to maximize BEACON's efficiencies, (2) improving reemployment outcomes among claimants by educating them on and holding them accountable to work search requirements, (3) ensuring equitable access to the State's UI program, (4) combating fraud to ensure the integrity of the UI program, (5) preventing overpayments and recovering overpayments when required to ensure the Division is acting as a good steward of the trust fund, (6) implementing the permanently authorized RESEA program, (6) reducing the improper payment rate, and (7) continuing to provide excellent customer service to our stakeholders.

2. Assessment of past performance and expected future performance. Includes, at state discretion, a discussion of external factors that may have performance implications:

a. Assessment of past performance revealed the following primary factors contributing to overall program operations and performance:

i. Rebuilding and Improving program performance by addressing the workload created by the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on the UI system

Continued Efforts to Improve Customer Service

During the COVID-19 pandemic, DUI contracted with a vendor to assist with the dramatic increase in claims filed. This vendor continues to support DUI by answering calls and, between October 1, 2022, and June 30, 2023, helped DUI handle a total of approximately 1,537,056 inbound telephone calls. In addition, DUI's Virtual Agent (launched May 1, 2020) assisted in answering certain questions from claimants, employers, and others throughout the fiscal year, but which allows staff to answer more complex questions and issues that the Virtual Agent is not able to assist with. Funds granted to DUI as part of the equity grant have been used to create a customer service survey that is gathering feedback from individuals using DUI's website or BEACON. (See "Ensuring Equitable Access to UI" below for more information regarding the grant.)

Legislative Updates/Changes

House Bill 253 (Unemployment Insurance - Federal Extended Benefits for Long-Term Unemployment, 2022 Legislative Session): This bill, which passed in the 2022 Legislative Session, amended Md. Labor and Employment Code Ann. § 8-1103, to add a Total Unemployment Rate (TUR) trigger for extended benefits and also provided an extra trigger for EB benefits during a "high unemployment period." The bill became effective on June 1, 2022. House Bill 4 (Unemployment Insurance - Recovery of Benefits - Refund of Payments, 2022 Legislative Session): This bill, which passed in the 2022 Legislative Session, imposed new requirements on the DUI concerning the investigation of UI claims when DUI recovers UI benefits in excess of the amount included in the overpayment notice provided to a claimant. DUI requested and received a conformity opinion on the bill prior to the bill's passage. The bill became effective on October 1, 2023.

Senate Bill 136/House Bill 140 (Unemployment Insurance - Recovery of Benefits - Limitation and Methods, 2023 Legislative Session): This bill, which passed and was approved by the Governor in the 2023 Legislative Session, amended Md. Labor and Employment Code Ann. §

8-809 to limit the amount that DUI may offset from UI benefit payments to recover non-fraud overpayments of UI benefits. DUI requested and received a conformity opinion on the bill prior to the bill's passage. The bill will become effective on April 1, 2024.

Delinquent Employer Contributions

Effective March 1, 2023, the Division established a new policy for handling and collecting delinquent employer contributions. Interests now accrues on delinquent contributions each day past the deadline and additional financial penalties may apply. Employers who do not take action to pay their contributions receive a delinquency notice either 15 or 30 days past the quarterly due date. After 45 days, employers who have not taken action will receive an additional notice. Employers must pay in full or establish a payment plan within 30 days of receiving the delinquency notice to avoid collection activities. Depending on the amount owed, collection tools may include a lien, flagging an employer's license, garnishment, and/or revoking an employer's charter.

ii. Changes in State Leadership/Staffing Challenges

Staffing of critical functions continued to be a challenge for DUI in the past year. In response to the departure of key subject matter experts from the workforce and the transition of employees to new employment opportunities within or outside the agency, DUI is continuing to recruit and hire top talent to fill open positions, to allow substitution of applicable work experience in lieu of a college degree, and to cross-train staff.

On January 18, 2023, Maryland removed the four-year college degree requirement for certain skilled job positions and a workforce development program to recruit qualified workers who do not hold college degrees. Maryland recognizes that other qualifications can be considered acceptable in lieu of a college degree for open government positions. Other qualifications can include relevant work experience, training, or community college education. These types of qualifications will be given equal weight for many state government positions in IT, administrative work, and customer service. This has allowed state agencies, including the Maryland Department of Labor, to fill government positions left vacant during the pandemic.

iii. Reduction of Adjudication and Appeals Claims Backlog

The volume of claims received during the pandemic assistance period created a backlog of claims adjudications and appeals. While Maryland has made progress on the backlog, staff continue to work diligently to complete all adjudications and appeals remaining in the backlog. DUI has made process improvements to allow for quicker resolution of claims that are under potential fraud investigation (UPFI) and continues to analyze a variety of metrics in order to reduce backlogs. On the 10th of every month, Maryland provides data to USDOL regarding its adjudication and appeals backlog.

b. Expected Future Performance: Administrative Performance Improvement Strategies

i. BEACON 2.0, In-House Call Center, Grants Awarded, and Staff Training

BEACON 2.0

Since BEACON was implemented in September 2020, DUI has continued to collaborate with its vendor to improve the functionality of BEACON. DUI staff meet with vendor staff to discuss problem incident reports (PIRs) and the progress on those PIRs on a weekly basis. The PIRs vary in complexity and length of time to complete.

In-House Call Center

DUI has begun planning for and investing in the creation of an in-house call center that will reduce the Division's reliance on vendors for call answering. While the project moves forward, vendor agents continue to answer incoming calls.

Grants Awarded in September 2023

Maryland was awarded an ARPA UI Integrity Grant on September 13, 2023, and the State's full project plan is due by November 13, 2023. Maryland is participating in the Tiger Team consultative project offered by USDOL ETA. Maryland was awarded a Tiger Team grant on September 15, 2023, and the State's full project plan is due by November 14, 2023. Maryland was awarded an Information Technology (IT) Modernization Grant on September 22, 2023, and the State's full project plan is due by December 21, 2023.

Staff Training

DUI's training unit continues to offer training for staff on a variety of topics. Staff can access training videos in the Division's training department Learning Management System (LMS), also known as Knowtion. Currently, the training department is developing virtual learning classes on the following topics: the importance of maintaining integrity, the soon to be implemented TrueID tool, and accommodations available to UI claimants with disabilities

ii. Ensuring Equitable Access to UI

DUI has made ensuring equitable access a priority. The Division understands that it is imperative to reduce barriers caused by technology, language, literacy or disability in order to provide unemployment services to eligible claimants who may be a part of underserved/marginalized communities.

Of particular concern to DUI is that modernization efforts do not create barriers to access for individuals with limited knowledge or access to technology. Claimants may file initial claims, complete their weekly certifications, and complete other actions over the phone rather than via BEACON if preferred.

During this past federal fiscal year, DUI continued to collaborate with the DWDAL, Local Areas and MD Labor's OFP to adhere to the WIOA State Plan and the "Equal Access to Public Services for Individuals with LEP" statute enacted by the Maryland General Assembly.

On June 16, 2022, Maryland's application for a UI equity grant was approved by USDOL. The application proposed three separate projects: (1) conducting a customer service evaluation of the State's UI program in order to develop processes to improve customer service and reduce or eliminate administrative barriers to improve access (and updating communications to claimants based on that customer service evaluation); (2) upgrading the functionality and focusing on improving equitable access to UI through Maryland's BEACON 2.0 system and the BEACON Mobile Unemployment Application (Mobile App) for Claimants (including by providing an application status tracker for claimants); and (3) the translation of mobile application screens, BEACON screens, and communications into Spanish. These projects are focused on improving equitable access to the UI system for two particular groups: (1) LEP

individuals, and (2) individuals with limited or no access to technology. In the past federal fiscal year, DUI has requested a modification to details of and the period of performance for the projects to allow for further flexibility in completing the project goals.

DUI is dedicated to helping individuals with disabilities receive the accommodations needed to access Maryland's UI system. The Division has been reviewing and improving policies related to the accommodations available to claimants with disabilities and is planning training to ensure that staff are knowledgeable about those available accommodations.

iii. Combating Fraud

Maryland continues to use several tools that help to ensure the integrity standards of the State's UI program. For detailed information regarding fraud prevention and detection, see Maryland's Integrity Action Plan Narrative for Alternate Year State Plan FY2024.

System Enhancements to Combat Fraud

Since the launch of BEACON, DUI has continued to invest in additional tools to prevent and detect fraud. On August 2, 2023, DUI installed a firewall which prevents users with a foreign IP address or those using a virtual private network (VPN) to avoid having their origins detected from accessing BEACON. Throughout the federal fiscal year, DUI continued to prepare for the implementation of a LexisNexis tool, TrueID, which is shortly to be implemented.

Ways for Marylanders to Report Fraud

DUI continues to communicate with and educate stakeholders regarding the various means available to report suspected fraud. Anyone who believes that their information was used to file a fraudulent unemployment insurance claim can report that to DUI by e-mailing ui.fraud@maryland.gov, and claimants requesting more information can be referred to the following website: at <https://www.labor.maryland.gov/employment/uistopfraud.shtml>.

Marylanders can also report fraud by completing a "Request for Investigation of Unemployment Insurance Fraud" form and returning it to the Division. Suspected unemployment insurance fraud can also be reported to the DOL-OIG Hotline by visiting the website or by calling 1-800-347-3756.

In addition, DUI developed a process to assist individuals who receive a 1099-G tax form but never applied for unemployment insurance benefits. These individuals are asked to complete an Affidavit ("Affidavit for Correction of Form 1099-G") and submit it along with a picture ID to the Benefit Payment Control Unit. Employers that believe a fraudulent claim was charged to their account can file a benefit charge protest through the BEACON employer portal or by calling the employer call center.

Messaging About Fraud

DUI continues to message internal and external stakeholders about the important role that they play in maintaining the integrity of the UI system. This messaging is delivered through emails, desk guides, BEACON portal messaging, and on the Division's website. DUI staff are regularly informed about fraud schemes via emails.

The Division has uncovered scams in which fraudsters are impersonating the Division in emails and text messages. In response, the Division continues to educate claimants, employers, and third parties about ways to distinguish between legitimate assistance from Division staff and potential scams and how to report potential scams to the Division.

3. Coordination with Plans, Including WIOA

a. Supporting the Reemployment of UC Claimants through RESEA, Short-Time Compensation (STC), Robust Work Search Activities, and Other Targeted Initiatives

During the year, DUI continued to work with DWDAL to execute the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). Under WIOA, DUI connects UI claimants to a full range of reemployment services offered through DWDAL's AJCs and their MWE. DUI also continued to collaborate with Maryland's RESEA evaluation team and AJC staff to evaluate and improve the RESEA program in Maryland.

On August 15-16, 2023, both DWDAL and DUI participated in the third annual Maryland Reemployment Summit. The theme of the summit was to foster and promote communication amongst collaborating co-workers in order to successfully implement and carry out the vision of getting Marylanders back to work after separation from employment. Throughout the federal fiscal year, DUI and DWDAL staff met on a monthly basis in order to collaborate on issues of importance to both Divisions.

RESEA/ROW Beginning December 01, 2022, Maryland now requires a secondary RESEA workshop for any individuals who remain unemployed 10 weeks after completing their RESEA workshop.

Maryland's Work Search Requirement

To be eligible for UI benefits, claimants must be able to work, available for work, and actively search for work each week. Claimants should upload or create a résumé in MWE, make the résumé viewable to employers in MWE, and maintain an up-to-date résumé in MWE while they are collecting UI benefits. Claimants must complete at least three valid reemployment activities per week, which must include at least one job contact. Claimants should enter their completed reemployment activities in the Job Contact and Reemployment Activity Log in MWE or keep a paper log if they do not have access to a computer. Valid reemployment activities are actions that may reasonably lead to a claimant becoming reemployed, including activities that remove barriers to reemployment.

Short-Time Compensation/Work Sharing Program

Maryland continues to participate in the short-time compensation (STC) benefits program. Maryland has a full-time Work Sharing Program team, which is led by the Manager of the Reemployment and Trade Unit (RTU). RTU trains employees to use BEACON, including how to enter hours into the system at the request of their employer. RTU staff use a dedicated mailbox (only for Work Sharing purposes) to communicate with employers to address questions/concerns and to share information about the status of Work Sharing applications, plans, and issues.

Benefit Accuracy Measurement Unit (BAM) Maryland DUI continues to seek guidance and use technical assistance provided by USDOL's National and Regional offices. DUI's BAM staff is working with USDOL to correct the issues regarding the timeliness of case completion for both paid and denied claims to meet federal performance requirements.

Since the implementation of BEACON, the BAM unit has experienced issues relating to universe pulls and the uploading of completed cases. In addition to the technical issues with BEACON, the BAM unit experienced difficulties with the SUN System throughout this federal fiscal year. The BAM unit supervisor continues to work with the BEACON vendor and the SUN System Help Line as issues arise.

Regarding the timeliness performance measures, to ensure cases are signed off to meet the 60-day, 90-day and 120-day timelapse, BAM Investigators are now required to complete cases within the 45-day time frame. The 45-day completion time frame allows time for the BAM supervisor to review cases, return the cases for correction when required, and sign off on those cases within 60 days. The BAM Supervisor will continue to monitor the 60- and 90-day timelapse to ensure cases are submitted to the supervisor and signed off in the SUN System timely.

B. Federal Emphasis (GPRA goals)

This chart shows Maryland performance compared to the GPRA goal:

	Maryland FY2023	Maryland FY-2024
Percent of IntraState Payment Made Timely (ALP 87%)	45.13%	54.13%
Detection of Recoverable Overpayments (ALP 57.5%)	301.59%	190.55%
% of Employer Tax Liability Determinations Made Timely (ALP (90%))	81.98%	83.22%

1. GPRA - Percent of Intrastate Payments Made Timely

DUI fell short of this goal. During this federal fiscal year, issues of backdating, backlogs, and fraud prevention and detection continued to affect the Division's ability to meet this goal. Maryland will continue to take steps to address this deficiency in the current federal fiscal year.

2. GPRA - Detection of Recoverable Overpayments

Maryland fell short of this goal. The historic high volume of claims received during the pandemic, as well as the need to get benefits to claimants quickly, led to the creation of considerable overpayments. Since the CARES Act programs have ended in Maryland, the Division is working to resolve any outstanding high dollar overpayments. A goal has been set to meet federal performance goals during the next SQSP narrative biennial submission.

3. GPRA - Percentage of Employer Tax Liability Determinations Made Timely

Maryland fell short of this goal by 6.78%, an improvement from the previous biennial year submission. In 2022, the Division discovered that the email prompt to notify employers to register for their BEACON employer account was not always being sent to newly-registered employers. The email notification has since been tested to make sure that employers are receiving the appropriate notification to register in the BEACON employer portal. BEACON has the functionality to allow employers to register and establish accounts on the same day with limited human intervention. In October 2022, BEACON was updated to enable a weekly crossmatch that identifies employers who have not registered with the Division.

Another tool being used to help employers with account activation is the dedicated employer hotline (launched on August 24, 2020). DUI will continue to take steps to address this deficiency.

a.4. Corrective Action Plans

CAPs are expected as a part of the SQSP when State's annual performance does not meet the established criteria for core measures, Secretary's Standards, UI program, assurances, and other program deficiencies identified in the annual SQSP guidance provided by the Department. The CAP must list both specific milestones for key corrective actions or improvement activities, and the completion date for each milestone.

C. Program Review Deficiencies

1. Benefits

Program Measure	Acceptable Level of Performance (ALP)	Maryland's Performance Level FFY 23	Maryland's Performance Level FFY 24
"First Payment Promptness	≥ 87%	44.18%	54.17%
"First Payment Promptness (IntraState 14/21 Days)	≥87%	45.13%	54.53%
First Payment Promptness (InterState 14/21 Days)	≥70%	32.10%	41.64%
First Payment Promptness (IntraState 35 Days)	≥93%	51.77%	64.00%
First Payment Promptness (InterState 35 Days)	≥78%	37.21%	51.26%
Nonmonetary Determination Timeliness	≥80%	5.79%	48.14%
"Nonmonetary Determination Quality - Separations	≥75%	0.00%	19.5%
Nonmonetary Determination Quality - Nonseps	≥75%	0.00%	63.3%

First Pay Promptness

DUI continued to focus on improving first pay promptness during this federal fiscal year and does not feel that the Division's performance level properly reflects that time and effort nor accurately reflects the time it took for most claimants to receive a payment of benefits during the pandemic after they filed their initial claims.

Because Maryland continues to backdate claims and resolve issues in its backlog and due to the Division's continued dedication to preventing identity theft fraud, its first-pay timeliness numbers do not reflect how fast it is paying initial claimants or resolving issues on new claims. In order to improve the first pay promptness rate, Maryland intends to institute faster identity

verification procedures, end liberal backdating of claims, and continue to work through the pandemic backlog

Nonmonetary Determination Timeliness and Quality

Maryland experienced data conversion issues after the implementation of BEACON in 2020, which affected Maryland's 9056 universe. These issues prevented BTQ reviews from being conducted for several quarters. The issue has since been resolved, and the BTQ staff have now completed BTQ reviews for Calendar Year (CY) 2021, CY 2022, and the first and second quarter of CY 2023. Staff were able to complete the backlog of BTQ cases from 2022 by reviewing the most recent quarter and then working backwards. BTQ staff are currently working on the third quarter of CY 2023.

2. Appeals

Lower Authority Appeals (LAA)

USDOL's acceptable level of performance was not met by LAA during this measurement period because of the backlog of cases resulting from the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. Staffing levels and issues with BEACON continued to affect LAA's ability to meet the acceptable level of performance this federal fiscal year. LAA continues to conduct nine (9) fraud-related proof of identity appeals per docket or other single party appeals per docket instead of six (6) appeals which continue to assist in decreasing the number of proof of identity appeals and other single party appeals LAA hears. LAA is working with the BEACON vendor to develop a system that will dispose of even more-fraud related proof identity appeals per docket by attempting to schedule District Court style dockets. If the 2024 budget permits, LAA will offer Hearing Examiners additional dockets in 2023 to meet the ALP for a time lapse of within 30 days. For example, LAA also has a team of five (5) Senior Hearing Examiners conducting twelve (12) fraud-related proof of identity and other single party appeals per scheduled docket instead of six (6) appeals. If the 2024 budget permits, LAA will offer Hearing Examiners additional dockets on Saturdays and/or evenings in an effort to meet the ALP for time lapse of 45 days.

3. Tax

TPS Sample Reviews

Maryland has performed the Cashiering sample process for Validation Year 2023. Now that lockbox operations have returned to pre-COVID-19 procedures, Cashiering duties will be able to be performed in adherence with Federal operating standards. A goal has been set to complete the cashiering sample process Validation for Federal Fiscal Year 2024.

Effective Audit Measure (EAMS): Addressing Worker Misclassification

Maryland successfully met the ALP for this program during this measurement period by resuming pre-pandemic auditing procedures. Additionally, Maryland was the only state in Region 2 to pass all EAMs, and among the fifteen (15) states that passed EAMs in the entire nation. The training program for auditors consists of in-depth training regarding the laws and regulations, which includes a review of case studies. During the training, specific emphasis is given to worker misclassification as independent contractors. All auditors receive continuous training in staff meetings, and managers provide updates on evolving new business practices like worker classification issues relating to gig economy employers.

a.5. UI Program Integrity Action Plan (UI IAP)

The UI IAP outlines the strategies the State will undertake during the planning period regarding the prevention reduction and recovery of UI improper payments.

State Quality Service Plan (SQSP)
Integrity Action Plan (IAP)
State Name Maryland – Fiscal Year (FY) 2024
Accountable Agency Official(s).

List the person or persons accountable for ensuring integrity in the state’s unemployment insurance (UI) program.

Name: Likivu Speaks
Title: Acting Assistant Secretary for Unemployment Insurance (UI Director)
Email: Likivu.Speaks@Maryland.gov
Phone: 410-767-0301

***Note:** Unemployment Insurance Program Letter (UIPL) No. 09-23, issued on June 30, 2023, refers to UIPL No. 22-21, Change 2, throughout the guidance. However, on July 13, 2023, the Employment and Training Administration (ETA) issued UIPL No. 10-23, which rescinded UIPL No. 22-21, Change 2. UIPL No. 11-23, also issued on July 13, 2023, changed the amount of the integrity grant funding originally issued under UIPL No. 22-21, Change 2, but maintained the guidance on required and recommended fraud prevention and detection and overpayment recovery activities.

National Priority– Ensuring UI program integrity by assessing and evaluating fraud risks, implementing, and maintaining sufficient controls to effectively mitigate the likelihood and impact of fraud, and reducing improper payments. In evaluating fraud risks, states should consider both eligibility fraud risks and identity (ID) fraud risks. Maryland continues to consider both eligibility fraud risks and ID fraud risks in evaluating fraud risks. The Maryland Department of Labor (MD DOL) is committed to ensuring that the Maryland UI system is effectively safeguarded against those who seek to abuse and to manipulate the system.

State plans to evaluate UI fraud risks and implement and maintain sufficient controls to effectively prevent fraud and reduce improper payments, including state actions to develop their own state-specific antifraud strategy.

Key elements of an antifraud strategy include:

Establish roles and responsibilities of those involved in fraud risk management activities, such as the antifraud entity and external parties responsible for fraud controls and communicate the role of the Office of Inspector General (OIG) to investigate potential fraud.

Describe the program’s activities for preventing, detecting, and responding to fraud, as well as monitoring and evaluation.

Create timelines for implementing fraud risk management activities, as appropriate, including monitoring and evaluations.

Demonstrate links to the highest internal and external residual fraud risks outlined in the fraud risk profile.

Communicate the antifraud strategy to employees and other stakeholders, and link antifraud efforts to other risk management activities, if any.

See A Framework for Managing Fraud Risks in Federal Programs at <https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-15-593sp.pdf> for additional information.

The **MD DOL Division of Unemployment Insurance (DUI)** continues to implement and use several tools to meet its high integrity standards. A leadership team of DUI staff, headed up by the Director of BEACON and the BEACON Project Manager, is constantly evaluating fraud risks, considering new fraud risk management activities, and monitoring data to ensure that the agency is doing all it can to prevent fraud, both eligibility fraud and ID fraud. The tools currently in use by the agency are explained below.

State use of tools, services, strategies, process improvements, and/or procedural changes adopted by the state to combat fraud, verify identities, and enhance recovery efforts. States must identify which tools, solutions, and service provider(s) are used in the state's fraud management operations, including but not limited, to the following areas: data analysis, risk-based ID verification, fraud prevention and detection, and cybersecurity.

Include strategies, solutions, and/or activities using funds the Department has made available to states for combatting fraud and strengthening UI program integrity under UIPL Nos. 28-20; 28-20, Change 1; 28-20, Change 2; 28-20, Change 4; 22-21; 11-23; and 02-22.

Provide details on overpayment recovery efforts including:

- **Actions with banks, financial institutions, and with Federal law enforcement's forfeiture and seizure efforts.**
- **Information on how the state is using waivers of recovery of overpayments both for regular UI and temporary UC programs created by the CARES Act, including if the state is using approved blanket waivers as described in UIPL No. 20-21, Change 1.**
- **How the state is using the Treasury Offset Program (TOP) for benefit overpayment recovery, how the state is ensuring covered debts are being submitted, and any barriers and challenges in working with TOP. Strategies, solutions, and/or activities for combating fraud and strengthening UI program integrity.**

DUI has a contract with LexisNexis for fraud detection and prevention services. Since 2021, DUI has integrated several LexisNexis tools into its BEACON system in two phases. The integration is currently in Phase 2. All claimants who file an initial or additional claim or reopen a claim are required to go through this identity verification process (knowledge-based questions followed by a one-time passcode verification if the user cannot answer the knowledge-based questions). If the user cannot pass this process, they must call DUI to speak with a live agent. In May 2022, Maryland implemented Step-Up Authentication with LexisNexis to prevent fraudsters from accessing claimants' portals on BEACON and redirecting UI benefits to other bank accounts. When claimants attempt to change information in their BEACON portal, including demographic and bank account information, they are put through the same ID verification process described above for initial applicants. The agency is continuing to test TrueID, an additional fraud barrier.

DUI has implemented an additional process to combat fraud utilizing the SDN. Dedicated staff are manually reviewing and checking the legitimacy of required claimant

uploaded identity verification documents. This internal review is triggered when a financial institution rejects and/or returns UI benefit payments issued to a claimant, indicating that the claimant's name appears on the SDN. DUI verifies if the claimant actually appears on the SDN and documents the search. If there is a valid match against the U.S. Department of Treasury, Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) SDN list, then DUI must report the match directly to OFAC. If there is no valid match, DUI investigates whether the claim is otherwise fraudulent. This process has uncovered several hundred fraudulent claims.

Maryland's prevention tools screen for: (1) claimants that filed from temporary or disposable email addresses, (2) multiple claimants that filed using the same email address, (3) multiple claimants that applied using the same phone number, and (4) multiple claimants that applied from the same IP address. In addition, Maryland screens for claimants (1) whose business address is the same as their residential address, and (2) whose address is correct save for the listed state. These tools were part of BEACON 2.0's integrated functionalities and were implemented with the launch of BEACON 2.0 in September 2020. After Maryland transitioned to payment benefits via direct deposit in the Spring of 2021, we screened for multiple claimants that selected direct deposit as their payment method and entered the same bank account information. Other prevention tools were implemented with the Lexis/Nexis project in May 2021, including screening for: (1) claimants who are deceased and (2) multiple claimants filing using the same telephone number in their profile information.

On July 3, 2020, DUI added a "human verification" requirement, which requires the claimant to enter letters and numbers that are displayed in an image on the screen. These are generally called "CAPTCHA" and are required when claimants login to their account, reset their passwords, begin an initial claim application, return to an unfinished claim application, activate their account, retrieve their username, or retrieve or reset their password. MD DOL receives tips regarding fictitious employers and employees via their fraud email ui.fraud@Maryland.gov. In addition, staff are trained to notice suspicious activity such as new claims from newly-registered employers. In August 2023, DUI deployed a Web Application Firewall that prevents BEACON access from foreign IP addresses (except for Canada & US territories). Actions with banks, financial institutions, and with federal law enforcement's forfeiture and seizure efforts.

In 2021, Maryland transitioned to providing benefits through direct deposit (or by paper check if the claimant prefers). In order to receive payment by direct deposit, claimants provided their bank account information, and some financial institutions required confirmation of a claimant's account through a micro deposit transaction (two deposits of less than one dollar into the claimant's account that allowed confirmation of deposits into the proper account). Transitioning from the use of debit cards to direct deposit presented an opportunity to verify if a bank account was fraudulent.

MD DOL is in contact with the Department of Labor's Office of Inspector General, Office of Investigations (DOL-OIG) regularly, assisting with their investigations and/or referring cases to them for investigation as required. UI claims data is shared with OIG per a subpoena, and they are sent subsequent refreshed data dumps as requested. Maryland has a single POC at OIG.

Waivers of Recovery of Overpayments

DUI's Benefit Payment Control (BPC) Unit continues to review and process requests for waivers of overpayments received, both for regular (non-pandemic) UI benefits and for

federal pandemic UI benefits.

MD DOL is using Scenarios 2 (Group 2) and 6 (Group 4) from UIPL 20-21, Change 1, for the blanket waivers. Maryland currently has two pending blanket waiver scenarios under review; they relate only to payments of FPUC benefits.

Treasury Offset Program (TOP)

Due to a settlement agreement entered into as part of litigation, Maryland has suspended use of TOP. Maryland hopes to resume use of TOP this year but does not have an estimate at this time.

State use of UI Integrity Center resources, with a particular focus on state connection to the Integrity Data Hub (IDH) and use of its datasets to cross-match unemployment compensation (UC) claims and aid in the prevention and detection of fraud and improper payments (see Training and Employment Notice (TEN) No. 24-21);

- Discuss the state's connection to the IDH, including frequency of IDH use.
- Does the state submit all initial and continued claims for IDH cross-matching? If not, what is preventing the state from sending all claims? If the state is not connected to the IDH and/or is connected but not regularly submitting UI claims data through a webservice/real-time connection to IDH, provide details on the state's plan for how to increase usage and an anticipated timeline to:
 - Connect to the IDH.
 - Increase frequency of IDH use.
 - Fully leverage all available IDH capabilities. IDH capabilities include:
 - Suspicious Actor Repository (SAR)
 - Multi-State Cross-Match (MSCM)
 - Identity Verification (IDV)
 - Bank Account Verification (BAV)
 - Fraud Alerting
 - Foreign Internet Protocol (IP) Address Detection
 - Suspicious Email Domains and Patterns
- Update the IDH connection to a webservice/real-time connection.
- Identify barriers to using any of the available IDH capabilities.

If the state has not executed IDH Participation Agreement - Version 5.0 (see TEN No. 24-21), provide details on the anticipated timeline to update to IDH Participation Agreement - Version 5.0.

 - Discuss the state's use of the UI National Integrity Academy's virtual trainings and/or eLearning lessons.
 - Discuss the state's use of UI Integrity Knowledge Exchange Library resources, including the Behavioral Insights Toolkit (see TEN No. 15-21).
 - Discuss the state's participation in State Consultative Services.

Note: The IDH Team has a one-page dashboard report for each state summarizing current IDH utilization and areas where IDH use might be expanded. Please reach out to IDHTeam@naswa.org to request a copy of your state's IDH utilization dashboard report. MD DOL has signed a Memorandum Of Agreement (MOA) with NASWA to integrate Integrity Data Hub (IDH) applications into the claims processes. Once implemented, initial, additional, and continued claims will be submitted for a cross-match of IP addresses, email addresses, mailing addresses, and banking information with other states to detect and alert states of suspicious claim activity that may be crossing state lines.

Maryland continues to use the Suspicious Actor Repository (SAR). SAR acts as an exchange of information among states that provides details needed to identify fraud and stop or reduce improper payments. This database application provides Maryland with fraud alerts such as IP addresses and phone numbers of claimants and employers that are associated with identity theft and interstate fraud schemes. DUI receives fraud alerts to detect potential criminal activity. If flagged by SAR, the claims are automatically blocked, pending review by DUI staff.

In addition, Maryland is working with Tiger Teams pursuant to UIPL 02-22. Integration of IDH applications was part of the Tiger Teams' "quick fixes" proposal presented to Maryland on September 26, 2022. Maryland will be working with the Tiger Teams to prioritize the recommended "quick fixes," including integrating the IDH applications. Maryland intends to begin using all IDH tools in the future. This process has been slowed by the issuance of UIPLs 10-23 and 11-23 (requiring resubmission of application for Tiger Teams grant).

- **(Topic #1) - State use of required and recommended integrity controls and overpayment recovery activities as outlined in UIPL No. 11-23, including any additional effective cross-matching and overpayment recovery activities and identified best practices.**

Provide details regarding the state's use of each cross-match/integrity control and overpayment recovery activity (required and recommended) as outlined in UIPL No. 11-23. Include details on the frequency of crossmatch/integrity controls use (e.g., conducted on all initial claims, all continued claims, only when suspicious activity is identified?) and frequency of overpayment recovery activities.

Cross-matches/integrity controls and recovery activities include:

- Cross-matches/Integrity Controls
- ID Verification;
- National Directory of New Hires (NDNH);
- Quarterly Wage Records Cross-match;
- Systematic Alien Verification for Entitlement (SAVE);
- Referral of allegations reasonably believed to constitute UC fraud, waste, abuse, mismanagement, or misconduct to DOL-OIG;
- UI Integrity Center's IDH;
- Digital Authentication, such as Multifactor Authentication (MFA);
- Device Fingerprint/Reputation Management;
- Fraud Risk Scoring (i.e., Case Management Prioritization);
- Comparisons and cross-matches that detect shared characteristics;
- Social Security Administration cross-matches (i.e., Unemployment Insurance Query (UIQ), Prisoner Update Processing System (PUPS), Death Master File);
- Federal, state, and local incarceration cross-matches;
- Deceased Records cross-matches;
- Vital Statistics cross-matches;
- State Directory of New Hires (SDNH);
- Department of Motor Vehicle cross-match;
- Interstate Benefits (IB) cross-match;
- State Identification Inquiry (SID) and IB8606 enhancements made to the Interstate Connection (ICON) network cross-match to prevent concurrent claim filing in multiple states;
- Use of a unique identifier to identify claimants instead of using the full SSN;
- Fictitious employer cross-matches;

- Periodic IT security assessments and audits consistent with National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST)-compliant information technology security guidelines;
 - Adequate internal controls to protect the integrity and security of state assets;
 - Implement a cross-functional integrity task force to develop and implement state-specific action plans to reduce UI improper payments.
 - Overpayment Recovery Activities
 - Benefit Offsets;
 - TOP;
 - Cross Program Offset Recovery Agreement (CPORA);
 - Interstate Reciprocal Offset Recovery Arrangement (IPORA);
 - Negotiating repayment plans;
 - Accepting repayments through various methods (e.g., online, via debit/credit card);
 - State Income Tax Offset Program;
 - Wage garnishments;
 - Property liens and assessments;
 - Offsets of lottery winnings, homestead exemptions, and other benefits;
 - Active participation in probate and/or bankruptcy proceedings;
 - Skip tracing;
 - Work proactively and collaboratively with banks and financial institutions;
 - Civil actions;
 - Credit bureau referrals;
 - State/federal prosecution;
 - Penalties and interest on overpayments in compliance with state and federal law;
 - Collection agency referrals;
 - Implementing a voluntary fraud self-disclosure program;
 - Other recovery methods as determined by state law or policy.
- **Identify any additional integrity controls or recovery activities the state uses that are not listed in UIPL No. 11-23.**
 - **Provide promising practices.**
 - **Identify challenges with cross-matches or in overpayment recovery activities.**
 - **If the state does not currently use one of the integrity controls or recovery activities listed in UIPL No. 11-23, provide the state's plan and anticipated timeline to request and obtain access to the cross-match/integrity control or to implement the overpayment recovery activity.**

Note: If the state does not plan to obtain access to a cross-match/integrity control or implement a specific recovery activity, please explain.

Crossmatches/Integrity Controls

ID Verification: See above for information regarding LexisNexis fraud detection and prevention services DUI uses for ID verification (initial claims and Step-Up Authentication).

National Directory of New Hires (NDNH): MD DOL received frequent hiring data from NDNH. Information from NDNH reports are automatically assigned as a daily work item within the BEACON staff portal to appropriate staff.

Quarterly Wage Records Crossmatch: Maryland crossmatches quarterly wage information with UI payment information to identify whether claimants are eligible for regular UI and to detect benefit year earnings. The crossmatch is used for each claimant filing a claim.

Systematic Alien Verification for Entitlement (SAVE): Maryland uses SAVE to verify claimants' employment eligibility and able and available status. SAVE verification is performed for each claimant filing a claim.

Referral of allegations reasonably believed to constitute UC fraud, waste, abuse, mismanagement, or misconduct to DOL-OIG: MD DOL assists DOL-OIG with investigations and refers cases to them for investigation.

UI Integrity Center's IDH: See above section for information regarding Maryland's planned future integration of IDH applications.

Digital Authentication, such as Multifactor Authentication (MFA): See above for multifactor authentication used by DUI during ID verification (knowledge-based questions and/or a one-time passcode verification if the user cannot answer the knowledge-based questions).

Device Fingerprint/Reputation Management: LexisNexis tools integrated into BEACON recognizes new devices and/or networks from where a user is logging in and uses the information (email address, telephone number, IP address) as part of fraud risk scoring. Fraud Risking Scoring (i.e., Case Management Prioritization): Maryland has a contract with LexisNexis for fraud detection and prevention services. Several applications integrated into BEACON as part of that contract include fraud risk scoring (ThreatMatrix, FlexID, FlexID Digital, and LexisNexis's Emailage Network).

Comparisons and crossmatches that detect shared characteristics: BEACON has built-in scripts to detect the following used on multiple claims: same IP address, same direct deposit or banking information, same mailing address, and same email address.

Social Security Administration Crossmatches (i.e., Unemployment Insurance Query (UIQ), Prisoner Update Processing System (PUPS), Death Master File): Maryland uses SSA UIQ data. Maryland is updating its information exchange agreements with the Social Security Administration in order to change the method by which it will receive PUPS data. Maryland's new system does not interface with PUPS data as currently received. The request to amend the agreements is pending with SSA.

Federal, state, and local incarceration crossmatches: Maryland uses data from a Maryland State Department of Corrections prison crossmatch for state incarceration data.

Deceased Records crossmatches: The Vital Statistics crossmatch described below contains deceased records data.

Vital Statistics crossmatches: DUI receives data from the Maryland Department of Health, Vital Statistics Administration, and crossmatches claimant data against it. State Directory of New Hires (SDNH): MD DOL received frequent hiring data from SDNH. Information from SDNH reports are automatically assigned as a daily work item within the BEACON staff portal to appropriate staff.

Department of Motor Vehicle Crossmatch: DUI does not currently use a DMV crossmatch. DUI staff do have access to DMV driver records to verify the validity of Maryland driver's licenses and state IDs.

Interstate Benefits (IB) crossmatch: Maryland is unable to verify if this is a crossmatch which is used, but please refer to the statement above regarding the State's use of the Quarterly Wage Records Crossmatch.

State Identification Inquiry (SID) and IB8606 enhancements made to the Interstate Connection (ICON) network crossmatch to prevent concurrent claim filing in multiple states: The IB8606 form is completed (the determination is scanned and attached) in the UI-ICON system and sent electronically. DUI staff manually enters the IB8606 forms that are sent to Maryland for recovery into BEACON which creates an overpayment. The UI-Icon system is used daily.

Use of a unique identifier to identify claimants instead of using the full SSN: Maryland identifies claimants with a unique claimant ID number (generated by BEACON), rather than through the use of their SSN.

Fictitious employer crossmatches: Maryland does not use a fictitious employer crossmatch at this time. However, DUI has provided training to agency staff on how to identify fictitious employer schemes. DUI is working to institute a FEIN and name verification process to catch fictitious employers before they file wages so that claims cannot be filed using those wages. In addition, Maryland is planning to work with Tiger Teams pursuant to UIPL 02-22 on a project relating to fictitious employers.

Periodic IT security assessments and audits consistent with National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST)-compliant information technology security guidelines: DUI performs IT security assessments and audits consistent with Division policies modeled on NIST IT security guidelines.

Adequate internal controls to protect the integrity and security of state assets: BEACON has separate portals for claimants, employers, and staff. Within the staff portal, DUI staff have access to new features in BEACON that are determined by their job functions and security level. Staff receive training and sign an ethical agreement to ensure compliance with security measures. DUI performs IT security assessments and audits consistent with Division policies modeled on NIST IT security guidelines.

Implement a cross-functional integrity task force to develop and implement state-specific action plans to reduce UI improper payments: While DUI does not have a formal task force, DUI staff constantly collaborate to reduce improper payments.

Overpayment Recovery Activities

Benefit Offsets: Due to a settlement agreement entered into as part of litigation, Maryland has suspended benefit offsets. Maryland hopes to resume offsets this year but does not have an estimate at this time.

TOP: Due to a settlement agreement entered into as part of litigation, Maryland has suspended use of TOP. Maryland hopes to resume use of TOP this year but does not have an estimate at this time.

Cross Program Offset Recovery Agreement (CPORA): Maryland is unable to locate any records relating to its participation in CPORA but believes it is likely to be a party to the agreement since Maryland is a participant in IRORA. Interstate Reciprocal Offset Recovery

Agreement (IRORA): Maryland is part of the Interstate Reciprocal Overpayment Recovery Arrangement (IRORA) under which participating states recover overpayments for each other. Due to the Interstate Reciprocal Overpayment Recovery Arrangement (IRORA), Maryland offsets state or federal benefits to repay CARES Act overpayments in other states. Maryland reduces CARES Act payments to recover overpayments from a state or federal UI program when a cross-program offset agreement is in place that requires Maryland to do so and in accordance with federal law and policy.

Negotiating repayment plans: DUI does negotiate and establish payment plans with claimants unable to repay the full amount of an overpayment.

Accepting repayments through various methods (e.g., online, via debit/credit card): Claimants may send repayments via check or money order.

State Income Tax Offset Program: Due to a settlement agreement entered into as part of litigation, Maryland has suspended use of the State Refund Intercept Program (TRIP). Maryland hopes to resume use of TRIP this year but does not have an estimate at this time.

Regarding the other recovery methods (i.e., wage garnishments, civil actions, property liens, collection agency referrals, credit bureau referrals), DUI is not currently collecting on overpayments. This pause is pursuant to the lawsuit settlement agreement referenced above as the reason DUI is not currently offsetting and due to issues with billing/overpayments experienced after the Division implemented its new system, BEACON. Any overpayments currently being recovered via these collection methods are overpayments created prior to BEACON/Pandemic Assistance Period. The Division anticipates being able to resume recovery of overpayments via these methods in the next several months.

Implementing a voluntary fraud self-disclosure program: Claimants may self-report fraud in the way they would report alleged fraud of others, but DUI does not have any separated voluntary self-disclosure program or forms.

Other recovery methods as determined by state law or policy: All used recovery methods are described and covered above.

State use and employer participation in State Information Data Exchange System (SIDES) (see TEN No. 12-16).

Provide details on the state's current usage of SIDES.

If the state does not currently use all available SIDES exchanges, provide the state's plan for how to connect to all SIDES exchanges and an anticipated timeline to implement each SIDES exchange. Sides Exchanges include:

- **Separation Information**
- **Monetary & Potential Charges**
- **Additional Fact-Finding**
- **Determinations & Decision**
- **Earnings Verification**
- **Benefit Charges**

Identify any barriers to SIDES exchange participation, either in state promotion or in employer adoption.

Maryland offers employers the option to submit reporting information through the State Information Data Exchange System (SIDES). Employers can use SIDES for requests and responses to requests for separation information. When claimants refuse employment, employers can report job refusals within their respective employer portals available within the BEACON system. Because the system is entirely online, employers can report job refusals 24 hours a day, which shortens the response time for the initial request for separation information from employers. The information from SIDES is then reported back to BEACON which allows for seamless integration into the adjudication process. Maryland was one of twelve states recognized by the National Association of State Workforce Agencies (NASWA) for "Dedication to UI Integrity by their Commitment to Utilizing SIDES." Maryland has used SIDES since March 28, 2012.

(Topic # 1) - State strategies designed to facilitate claimants' compliance with state work search requirements while also supporting their reemployment such as adoption of the work search requirements in the Model Work Search Legislation (see TEN No.17-19).

- **Outline the state's work search requirement and explain state challenges with work search improper payments.**
- **Discuss the state's plan to improve work search compliance by reducing work search errors and strengthening reemployment.**

Unless exempt, Maryland UI claimants are required to complete a registration with the Maryland Workforce Exchange (MWE), complete at least three valid reemployment activities per week (one of which must be a job contact), and enter their completed reemployment activities in the Job Contact and Reemployment Activity Log located in the MWE. MD DOL's Division of Workforce Development and Adult Learning (DWDAL) and Reemployment and Trade collaborated to create a list of Valid Reemployment Activities for the MWE system in preparation for the reinstatement of the active search for work requirement. Valid reemployment activities are intended to help a claimant become reemployed and remove potential barriers to employment. Qualifying activities include but are not limited to: activities completed through the Maryland Workforce Exchange (MWE), such as setting up a virtual recruiter or completing a skills self-assessment; attending networking events; creating a résumé in MWE; and attending employment events (e.g., job fairs, hiring events) held by the Maryland Division of Workforce Development and Adult Learning (DWDAL).

Job contacts refer to actions a claimant takes to contact employers in an attempt to secure

employment. Acceptable job contacts include submitting a job application to an employer (in person, email, online, fax); interviewing for a job; or completing a pre-screening for a job interview; among other actions. Maryland continues to allow claimants who do not have access to technology file proof of reemployment activities by other means, but the use of MWE is intended to make it easier for claimants to comply with state work search requirements and thereby become reemployed more quickly.

(Topic #2) – State plans and actions to address the state's top three improper payment root causes in Payment Integrity Information Act (PIIA) 2022.

- Identify the state's top three improper payment root causes.
- Explain the state's challenges in reducing improper payments in the top three root cause categories.
- Discuss the state's plan to reduce improper payments in each root cause category.

The top three root causes for the improper payment rate are:

1. Benefit Year Earnings,
2. Other Eligibility Issues,
3. Separation Issues.

In its efforts to address improper payments relating to benefit year earnings (BYE) issues, Maryland continues to use quarterly, monthly and some weekly cross-matches to help detect benefit year earnings. Hits generated from the National Directory of New Hires (NDNH) and State Directory of New Hires (SDNH) are automatically assigned as a daily work item within the BEACON staff portal to appropriate DUI staff. Also, Maryland has amended the weekly certification questions to elicit more information from claimants and emphasize the consequences of failing to report earnings. Individuals can also report suspected fraud (BYE/wage earning fraud or Identity theft) by emailing ui.fraud@maryland.gov or by visiting the DOL-OIG Hotline on their website or by calling 1-800-347-3756.

In its efforts to address improper payments relating to other eligibility issues, Maryland has contracted vendor LexisNexis to assist with our fraud detection and identity theft efforts. See above for details regarding LexisNexis tools that have been integrated in the BEACON system's claims taking process that run seamlessly behind the scenes to flag claims that may be potentially fraudulent. The BEACON system also has built in security protocols to flag potentially fraudulent claims. DUI continues to monitor feedback from the Claim Centers, BAM audits, BTQ reviews, and the American Job Centers to revise instructions to its staff and technology contractors to further reduce other eligibility errors.

In its efforts to address improper payments relating to separation issues, Maryland is continuing to train its staff to improve both the fact-finding and the adjudication processes for non-monetary determinations. BEACON 2.0 will help DUI staff with better system prompts for efficient fact-finding and easier documentation incorporation. Maryland has also instituted further review of claims adjudication cases which will aid in training of DUI staff to ensure complete and detailed fact findings of nonmonetary determinations. DUI is continuing to encourage employers to participate in the SIDES program while also educating them about the new features of BEACON. DUI has also trained its staff and communicated with employers on the new updates to SIDES regarding fraud reporting. DUI has posted tutorials, videos, and frequently asked questions about BEACON on its website and on social media regarding SIDES.

Maryland is committed to seek new ways to improve communications with its stakeholders so that they know their responsibilities.

(Topic #3) – State coordination and collaboration with the DOL-OIG and other state and Federal law enforcement agencies to investigate and prosecute UI fraud and recover overpayments. This should also include state plans to continue providing all confidential UC information to DOL-OIG for purposes of both investigating fraud and performing audits.

MD DOL is in contact with the Department of Labor's Office of Inspector General, Office of Investigations (DOL-OIG) regularly, assisting with their investigations and/or referring cases to them for investigation as required. UI claims data is shared with OIG per a subpoena, and they are sent subsequent refreshed data dumps as requested. Maryland has a single POC at OIG.

(Topic #4) – State plans to strengthen program integrity in UI tax operations, including current activities and plans to identify and prevent worker misclassification, State Unemployment Tax Act (SUTA) Dumping, and fictitious employer schemes, and development/use of effective employer audit strategies (i.e., use of remote audits).

- Identify current activities and plans to address:
 - Worker Misclassification
 - SUTA Dumping
 - Fictitious employer schemes
- Development/use of effective employer audit strategies (including, but not limited to, use of remote audits).

Maryland employers submit their quarterly wage reports via their BEACON portal. BEACON then crossmatches these records with employees who are collecting UI benefits. If an employee earned wages during a quarter in which they requested UI benefits, the BEACON system will create an issue to be adjudicated. Employer forms are sent through the employer portal, which claimants do not have access to. If the claimant sends in information or documentation, we check to see if the return address is the employer's or, for example, the address on the W2 is the employer's. Because employers and claimants have access to BEACON through different portals, they use different functionalities within the system. This separation of powers and duties protects UI integrity from collusion between fraudulent employers and claimants in a way that the older legacy system did not. Employers who learn that employees have filed for UI benefits (when they receive a questionnaire about a separation) are encouraged to contact MD DOL to report the potential fraud.

DUI has invested in computer software to detect SUTA dumping, and Maryland law penalizes an employer who knowingly withholds or provides false information regarding the transfer of workforce/payroll from one business entity to another. DUI defines "SUTA Dumping" on its website and provides information on the best way to avoid penalties for SUTA dumping (to voluntarily notify the Division when workforce/payroll is shifted from one business entity to another and to provide information to the Division as required).

DUI has provided training to agency staff on how to identify fictitious employer schemes. DUI is working to institute a FEIN and name verification process to catch fictitious employers before they file wages so that claims cannot be filed using those wages. In addition, Maryland is planning to work with Tiger Teams pursuant to UIPL 02-22 on a project relating to fictitious employers. DUI continues to collaborate with other Divisions of MD DOL to address worker misclassification.

- **(Topic #5) – State plans and actions to strengthen internal security and ensure that all appropriate internal controls and processes are in place and are adequate to assess internal risks and threats, ensure program integrity, and minimize program vulnerabilities (see UIPL No. 14 17).**

In September 2021, BEACON replaced Maryland’s decades-old legacy system, the Maryland Automated Benefits System (MABS). BEACON has separate portals for claimants, employers, and staff. Within the staff portal, DUI staff have access to new features in BEACON that are determined by their job functions and security level. Staff receive training and sign an ethical agreement to ensure compliance with security measures. DUI performs IT security assessments and audits consistent with Division policies modeled on NIST IT security guidelines.

- **(Topic #6) – State plans and actions to evaluate the effectiveness and equity of fraud prevention and detection, ID verification, and improper payment reduction activities. State should include strategies to ensure that processes used to detect and prevent fraud are effective and do not limit the ability for a legitimate claimant to apply for and become eligible for UC. States implementing or using facial recognition technology in their ID proofing processes must also report findings from bias testing and provide updates on efforts to mitigate biases or barriers in this section of the IAP.**

- Identify potential barriers that are created by fraud prevention and detection functions for legitimate claimants. Provide plans and actions designed to mitigate such risks.
- As required in UIPL No. 11-23, states must ensure there is at least one timely, effective, and accessible non-digital alternative to online ID verification, which should not be overly burdensome on applicants, limit access to public benefits programs or the timely receipt of benefits or stigmatize members of the public in any way. Provide details on the state’s non-digital ID verification option(s).
- Include how the state flags cases for suspected fraudulent activity and how investigation resources are assigned, including:
 - What risk scoring elements and/or prioritization elements are used?
 - How the risk scoring elements and/or prioritization elements are weighted?
 - How the state evaluates the weights based on false positives and negatives?
 - How risk scoring elements and/or prioritization elements are updated?
 - How the state ensures the fraud risk scoring and/or prioritization of cases does not negatively affect legitimate claimants?
- Include details on how the state measures claimants’ usage of both digital and non-digital identity verification options, how the state reviews digital services for false positive and false negatives, and how the state ensures legitimate claimants have alternative paths to prove their identity and/or resolve issues, including providing a possible recourse.

DUI Leadership is constantly evaluating fraud risks, considering new fraud risk management activities, and monitoring data to ensure that the agency is doing all it can to prevent fraud, both eligibility fraud and ID fraud. Maryland has participated in national efforts to address UI fraud resulting from organized identity theft. Staff from the Benefit Payment Control (BPC), Benefit Accuracy Measurement (BAM), and UI Contributions (TAX) units have attended and completed Fraud Investigator Training. MD DOL has sought and continues to seek funding to contract services to conduct fraud investigations and other fraud detection-related activities. Funding will also be targeted to implement further tools to increase prevention, detection, and recovery of fraudulent improper payments. While fraud prevention has increasingly been a focus of MD DOL’s implementation of the State’s UI

program, the agency is aware of equity issues relating to various means and methods of preventing fraud. MD DOL continues to look for ways to improve equity in the UI program in the State, including by ensuring there are options for claimants who do not have access to technology resources to provide identity verification documents in person at Maryland's American Job Centers that are located throughout the State. Maryland does not use facial recognition technology in their ID proofing processes.

- **(Topic #7) – State plans and actions to mitigate negative consequences for victims of UI ID fraud, including ensuring simplified processes to remove the victim's liability for overpayments resulting from ID fraud.**
 - Include details regarding how the state provides a reporting mechanism for UI ID fraud on their websites, communicates status updates for such investigations, and takes action to protect the victim when the state determines that UI ID fraud has occurred (see UIPL No. 11-23 for more details on protecting victims of ID fraud).
 - Include the state's procedures for mitigating negative impacts on the UI ID fraud victim (e.g., establishing a pseudo claim record, temporarily marking the overpayment as "uncollectible", etc.).

DUI's website contains information regarding how to report suspected identity theft fraud and resources for individuals who suspect they may be a victim of identity theft. If an individual contacts DUI and states they did file a claim that was filed in their name or using their SSN, staff verify the caller's identity and investigate the claim of identity theft. If the Division determines that the individual did not file the claim (that identity theft did occur), the false claim filed is moved to a "dummy SSN," so that the actual claimant is able to file a claim if needed. DUI has participated in national efforts to address UI fraud resulting from organized identity theft. Staff from the Benefit Payment Control (BPC), Benefit Accuracy Measurement (BAM), and UI Contributions (TAX) units have attended and completed Fraud Investigator Training.

(Topic #8) – If the state has not provided complete and accurate overpayment reporting on the ETA 227 reports (Overpayment Detection and Recovery Activities), and the ETA 902P report (Pandemic Unemployment Assistance Activities), the state must provide information on plans for improvement, including timeframes and milestones, for addressing the issue and ensuring complete, accurate, and timely reporting in FY 2024.

If the state has submitted all data for the ETA 227 or 902P reports, this section is not applicable, and the state can input "N/A". Reports are being submitted timely.

a. 6. Organizational Chart

The organization chart must conform to the requirement for delivery of service through public employment offices, or such other designated providers as the Secretary may authorize; show the State's configuration from the Governor of the State down to the point of Employment Service and UI customer service delivery; and provide sufficient detail to show each organizational unit involved and the title of the unit manager.

<https://www.labor.maryland.gov/employment/wioadllrduiorgchart.pdf>

a. 7. SQSP Signature Page

The State administrator must sign and date the SQSP Signature Page. By signing the Signature Page, the State administrator certifies that the State will comply with all the assurances and activities contained in the SQSP guidelines.

Though a State needs to submit the complete SQSP package on a 2-year cycle, there are certain documents contained in the SQSP package which are required to be submitted by States annually as part of the off-year submission. The documents which are required to be submitted annually are considered a modification to the complete SQSP submitted the previous year. Since funds for State UI operations are appropriated each year, each State is required to annually submit the transmittal letter, budget worksheets, organizational chart and the signature page. The modification may also include CAPs for new identified performance deficiencies, and any required modifications to existing CAPs.

Since the UI program is a required one-stop partner, States have the option of including UI in the Combined State Plan authorized by WIOA sec. 103.

U.S. Department of Labor
SQSP SIGNATURE PAGE
OMB Control No.: 1205-0132
Expiration Date: 2/28/2026
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR Employment and Training Administration
FEDERAL FISCAL YEAR 24
STATE MD
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE
STATE QUALITY SERVICE PLAN
SIGNATURE PAGE

This Unemployment Insurance State Quality Service Plan (SQSP) is entered into between the Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, and the Maryland Department of Labor.

The Unemployment Insurance SQSP is part of the State's overall operating plan, and, during this Federal fiscal year, the State agency will adhere to and carry out the standards set forth in Federal UI Law as interpreted by the DOL, and adhere to the Federal requirements related to the use of granted funds.

All work performed under this agreement will be in accordance with the assurances and descriptions of activities as identified in the SQSP Handbook and will be subject to its terms.

TYPED NAME AND TITLE	SIGNATURE	DATE
Likivu K. Speaks		

STATE ADMINISTRATOR (print name)

DOL - REGIONAL OFFICE APPROVING
OFFICIAL (print name)

DOL - NATIONAL OFFICE APPROVING
OFFICIAL (print name)
(if required)

b. 1. A. If a State is in the first year of their 2-year cycle, the State is required to submit the most recently approved complete SQSP package. A complete SQSP package will include the Transmittal Letter, Budget Worksheets/Forms, State Plan Narrative, CAPs (including the milestones and the completion date for each milestone), the UI IAP, Organizational Chart, and the SQSP Signature Page. One of the key goals for the UI program is to ensure that claimants are able to successfully return to work. As such, the SQSP State Plan Narrative must provide a discussion of the plan coordination with other WIOA Combined Plan programs to ensure a coordinated effort and integrated service delivery.

The Maryland DUI SQSP is included in the following sections, including the Transmittal Letter, Budget Worksheets/Forms, State Plan Narrative, CAPs (including the milestones and the completion date for each milestone), the UI IAP, Organizational Chart, and the SQSP Signature Page.

I. Transmittal Letter

October 27, 2023

Via electronic delivery to: friedman.jennifer@dol.gov, basile.mark.d@dol.gov, Pasquale.Karen@dol.gov, riendeau.arlene.l@dol.gov, R2-SQSP@dol.gov

Jennifer Friedman
Regional Administrator for Region 2
U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration
1835 Market Street, Suite 2100
Philadelphia, PA 19103-2968

RE: Transmittal Letter for Maryland's FY 2024 SQSP Alternate Submission

Dear Ms. Friedman:

Attached is Maryland's State Quality Service Plan (SQSP) Federal Fiscal Year 2024 Alternate report for the DUI. Included in this submittal are the following documents:

- The State Narrative Plan for DUI
- MD FY 24 SQSP Biennial Excel Workbook
- DUI's Organizational Chart

Per guidance from the Northeast Region's SQSP Unit, Budget Forms SF 424 and SF 424 (B) was submitted by the submittal date of October 13, 2023. Also, per the Northeast Region, the signature page will not be provided until the Alternate Year workbook is accepted.

Questions concerning information within this submission may be directed to myself at (410) 767-2483 or Alexis Braun at (443) 253-6376 or by email sent to Alexis.Braun@maryland.gov.

Thank you for your guidance and technical assistance. We look forward to our ongoing partnership with your Regional Office and the National USDOL ETA.

Best Regards,

Likivu Speaks
Acting Assistant Secretary

cc: Portia Wu, Secretary of Maryland Department of Labor
Jason Perkins-Cohen, Deputy Secretary of Maryland Department of Labor
Karen Pasquale, Chief Division of Workforce Security

III. State Plan Narrative

Maryland Department of Labor Division of Unemployment Insurance State Quality Service Plan Alternate Fiscal Year 2024

A. Overview

1. State priorities and the strategic direction the state has adopted to ensure continuous improvement.

The Maryland Department of Labor's Division of Unemployment Insurance ("The Division" or "DUI") continues to balance several important interests, including but not limited to: ensuring that eligible claimants receive benefits as quickly as possible; protecting the integrity of Maryland's UI program; providing excellent customer service to claimants, employers, and third parties; and preventing and detecting fraud in the UI system. Over the past federal fiscal year, DUI has continued efforts to ensure continuous improvement. In addition to these core objectives, DUI also actively supports reemployment through services such as the RESEA program.

Modernization Update

On September 21, 2020, the Maryland Department of Labor, DUI launched BEACON 2.0 ("BEACON"), a fully modernized system which integrated benefits, appeals, and contributions functionalities. The launch of BEACON was the result of more than six years of planning, testing, and development and, in the past year, DUI has continued to work with its BEACON vendor to make improvements to the new system.

Trust Fund Solvency

Maryland DUI's trust fund is not solvent. The trust fund had a balance of \$ \$1,871,961,707.23 as of September 30, 2023.

Total State Revenue as of June 30, 2023	\$564,738,708.34
Total Benefits Paid as of June 30, 2023	\$326,057,711.83 (reflects only Regular UI benefits paid)
Total Trust Fund Balance as of September 30, 2023	\$1,871,961,707.23 (Excluding EUISAA, UI Modern Incentive Fund and Reed Act Funds)

Employers have been taxed under the Table C tax rate schedule for the 2023 calendar year as a result of federal funding allocated to replenish the Maryland Unemployment Insurance Trust Fund. Table C includes rates that range from 1.00% to 10.50%. The rate for new employers in 2023 is 2.30%. The rate for a foreign contractor (new construction employers headquartered in another state) is 5.10%. The standard (employer) rate is 10.50%. Maryland's taxable wage base for 2023 is \$8,500. The same Table C rate application was also applied to employers in the previous calendar year

Remaining dedicated to our goals and mission

DUI remained committed to the following actions to improve the Division's capacity to administer and operate the UI program effectively: (1) developing and implementing staff training to maximize BEACON's efficiencies, (2) improving reemployment outcomes among claimants by educating them on and holding them accountable to work search requirements, (3) ensuring equitable access to the State's UI program, (4) combating fraud to ensure the integrity of the UI program, (5) preventing overpayments and recovering overpayments when required to ensure the Division is acting as a good steward of the trust fund, (6) implementing the permanently authorized RESEA program, (6) reducing the improper payment rate, and (7) continuing to provide excellent customer service to our stakeholders.

2. Assessment of past performance and expected future performance. Includes, at state discretion, a discussion of external factors that may have performance implications:

a. Assessment of past performance revealed the following primary factors contributing to overall program operations and performance:

- i. Rebuilding and Improving program performance by addressing the workload created by the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on the UI system

Continued Efforts to Improve Customer Service

During the COVID-19 pandemic, DUI contracted with a vendor to assist with the dramatic increase in claims filed. This vendor continues to support DUI by answering calls and, between October 1, 2022, and June 30, 2023, helped DUI handle a total of approximately 1,537,056 inbound telephone calls. In addition, DUI's Virtual Agent (launched May 1, 2020) assisted in answering certain questions from claimants, employers, and others throughout the fiscal year, but which allows staff to answer more complex questions and issues that the Virtual Agent is not able to assist with. Funds granted to DUI as part of the equity grant have been

used to create a customer service survey that is gathering feedback from individuals using DUI's website or BEACON. (See "Ensuring Equitable Access to UI" below for more information regarding the grant.)

Legislative Updates/Changes

House Bill 253 (Unemployment Insurance - Federal Extended Benefits for Long-Term Unemployment, 2022 Legislative Session): This bill, which passed in the 2022 Legislative Session, amended Md. Labor and Employment Code Ann. § 8-1103, to add a Total Unemployment Rate (TUR) trigger for extended benefits and also provided an extra trigger for EB benefits during a "high unemployment period." The bill became effective on June 1, 2022. House Bill 4 (Unemployment Insurance - Recovery of Benefits - Refund of Payments, 2022 Legislative Session): This bill, which passed in the 2022 Legislative Session, imposed new requirements on the DUI concerning the investigation of UI claims when DUI recovers UI benefits in excess of the amount included in the overpayment notice provided to a claimant. DUI requested and received a conformity opinion on the bill prior to the bill's passage. The bill became effective on October 1, 2023.

Senate Bill 136/House Bill 140 (Unemployment Insurance - Recovery of Benefits - Limitation and Methods, 2023 Legislative Session): This bill, which passed and was approved by the Governor in the 2023 Legislative Session, amended Md. Labor and Employment Code Ann. § 8-809 to limit the amount that DUI may offset from UI benefit payments to recover non-fraud overpayments of UI benefits. DUI requested and received a conformity opinion on the bill prior to the bill's passage. The bill will become effective on April 1, 2024.

Delinquent Employer Contributions

Effective March 1, 2023, the Division established a new policy for handling and collecting delinquent employer contributions. Interests now accrues on delinquent contributions each day past the deadline and additional financial penalties may apply. Employers who do not take action to pay their contributions receive a delinquency notice either 15 or 30 days past the quarterly due date. After 45 days, employers who have not taken action will receive an additional notice. Employers must pay in full or establish a payment plan within 30 days of receiving the delinquency notice to avoid collection activities. Depending on the amount owed, collection tools may include a lien, flagging an employer's license, garnishment, and/or revoking an employer's charter.

ii. Changes in State Leadership/Staffing Challenges

Staffing of critical functions continued to be a challenge for DUI in the past year. In response to the departure of key subject matter experts from the workforce and the transition of employees to new employment opportunities within or outside the agency, DUI is continuing to recruit and hire top talent to fill open positions, to allow substitution of applicable work experience in lieu of a college degree, and to cross-train staff.

On January 18, 2023, Maryland removed the four-year college degree requirement for certain skilled job positions and a workforce development program to recruit qualified workers who do not hold college degrees. Maryland recognizes that other qualifications can be considered

acceptable in lieu of a college degree for open government positions. Other qualifications can include relevant work experience, training, or community college education. These types of qualifications will be given equal weight for many state government positions in IT, administrative work, and customer service. This has allowed state agencies, including the Maryland Department of Labor, to fill government positions left vacant during the pandemic.

iii. Reduction of Adjudication and Appeals Claims Backlog

The volume of claims received during the pandemic assistance period created a backlog of claims adjudications and appeals. While Maryland has made progress on the backlog, staff continue to work diligently to complete all adjudications and appeals remaining in the backlog. DUI has made process improvements to allow for quicker resolution of claims that are under potential fraud investigation (UPFI) and continues to analyze a variety of metrics in order to reduce backlogs. On the 10th of every month, Maryland provides data to USDOL regarding its adjudication and appeals backlog.

b. Expected Future Performance: Administrative Performance Improvement Strategies

BEACON 2.0

Since BEACON was implemented in September 2020, DUI has continued to collaborate with its vendor to improve the functionality of BEACON. DUI staff meet with vendor staff to discuss problem incident reports (PIRs) and the progress on those PIRs on a weekly basis. The PIRs vary in complexity and length of time to complete.

In-House Call Center

DUI has begun planning for and investing in the creation of an in-house call center that will reduce the Division's reliance on vendors for call answering. While the project moves forward, vendor agents continue to answer incoming calls.

Grants Awarded in September 2023

Maryland was awarded an ARPA UI Integrity Grant on September 13, 2023, and the State's full project plan is due by November 13, 2023. Maryland is participating in the Tiger Team consultative project offered by USDOL ETA. Maryland was awarded a Tiger Team grant on September 15, 2023, and the State's full project plan is due by November 14, 2023. Maryland was awarded an Information Technology (IT) Modernization Grant on September 22, 2023, and the State's full project plan is due by December 21, 2023.

Staff Training

DUI's training unit continues to offer training for staff on a variety of topics. Staff can access training videos in the Division's training department Learning Management System (LMS), also known as Knowtion. Currently, the training department is developing virtual learning classes on the following topics: the importance of maintaining integrity, the soon to be implemented TrueID tool, and accommodations available to UI claimants with disabilities

ii. Ensuring Equitable Access to UI

DUI has made ensuring equitable access a priority. The Division understands that it is imperative to reduce barriers caused by technology, language, literacy or disability in order to provide unemployment services to eligible claimants who may be a part of underserved/marginalized communities.

Of particular concern to DUI is that modernization efforts do not create barriers to access for individuals with limited knowledge or access to technology. Claimants may file initial claims, complete their weekly certifications, and complete other actions over the phone rather than via BEACON if preferred.

During this past federal fiscal year, DUI continued to collaborate with the DWDAL, Local Areas and MD Labor's OFP to adhere to the WIOA State Plan and the "Equal Access to Public Services for Individuals with LEP" statute enacted by the Maryland General Assembly.

On June 16, 2022, Maryland's application for a UI equity grant was approved by USDOL. The application proposed three separate projects: (1) conducting a customer service evaluation of the State's UI program in order to develop processes to improve customer service and reduce or eliminate administrative barriers to improve access (and updating communications to claimants based on that customer service evaluation); (2) upgrading the functionality and focusing on improving equitable access to UI through Maryland's BEACON 2.0 system and the BEACON Mobile Unemployment Application (Mobile App) for Claimants (including by providing an application status tracker for claimants); and (3) the translation of mobile application screens, BEACON screens, and communications into Spanish. These projects are focused on improving equitable access to the UI system for two particular groups: (1) LEP individuals, and (2) individuals with limited or no access to technology. In the past federal fiscal year, DUI has requested a modification to details of and the period of performance for the projects to allow for further flexibility in completing the project goals.

DUI is dedicated to helping individuals with disabilities receive the accommodations needed to access Maryland's UI system. The Division has been reviewing and improving policies related to the accommodations available to claimants with disabilities and is planning training to ensure that staff are knowledgeable about those available accommodations.

iii. Combating Fraud

Maryland continues to use several tools that help to ensure the integrity standards of the State's UI program. For detailed information regarding fraud prevention and detection, see Maryland's Integrity Action Plan Narrative for Alternate Year State Plan FY2024.

System Enhancements to Combat Fraud

Since the launch of BEACON, DUI has continued to invest in additional tools to prevent and detect fraud. On August 2, 2023, DUI installed a firewall which prevents users with a foreign IP address or those using a virtual private network (VPN) to avoid having their origins detected from accessing BEACON. Throughout the federal fiscal year, DUI continued to prepare for the implementation of a LexisNexis tool, TrueID, which is shortly to be implemented.

Ways for Marylanders to Report Fraud

DUI continues to communicate with and educate stakeholders regarding the various means available to report suspected fraud. Anyone who believes that their information was used to file a fraudulent unemployment insurance claim can report that to DUI by e-mailing ui.fraud@maryland.gov, and claimants requesting more information can be referred to the following website: at <https://www.labor.maryland.gov/employment/uistopfraud.shtml>.

Marylanders can also report fraud by completing a “ Request for Investigation of Unemployment Insurance Fraud form and returning it to the Division. Suspected unemployment insurance fraud can also be reported to the DOL-OIG Hotline by visiting the website or by calling 1-800-347-3756.

In addition, DUI developed a process to assist individuals who receive a 1099-G tax form but never applied for unemployment insurance benefits. These individuals are asked to complete an Affidavit (“Affidavit for Correction of Form 1099-G”) and submit it along with a picture ID to the Benefit Payment Control Unit. Employers that believe a fraudulent claim was charged to their account can file a benefit charge protest through the BEACON employer portal or by calling the employer call center.

Messaging About Fraud

DUI continues to message internal and external stakeholders about the important role that they play in maintaining the integrity of the UI system. This messaging is delivered through emails, desk guides, BEACON portal messaging, and on the Division’s website. DUI staff are regularly informed about fraud schemes via emails.

The Division has uncovered scams in which fraudsters are impersonating the Division in emails and text messages. In response, the Division continues to educate claimants, employers, and third parties about ways to distinguish between legitimate assistance from Division staff and potential scams and how to report potential scams to the Division.

3. Coordination with Plans, Including WIOA

a. Supporting the Reemployment of UC Claimants through RESEA, Short-Time Compensation (STC), Robust Work Search Activities, and Other Targeted Initiatives

During the year, DUI continued to work with DWDAL to execute the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). Under WIOA, DUI connects UI claimants to a full range of reemployment services offered through DWDAL’s AJCs and their MWE. DUI also continued to collaborate with Maryland’s REASE evaluation team and AJC staff to evaluate and improve the RESEA program in Maryland.

On August 15-16, 2023, both DWDAL and DUI participated in the third annual Maryland Reemployment Summit. The theme of the summit was to foster and promote communication amongst collaborating co-workers in order to successfully implement and carry out the vision of getting Marylanders back to work after separation from employment. Throughout the

federal fiscal year, DUI and DWDAL staff met on a monthly basis in order to collaborate on issues of importance to both Divisions.

RESEA/ROW Beginning December 01, 2022, Maryland now requires a secondary RESEA workshop for any individuals who remain unemployed 10 weeks after completing their RESEA workshop.

Maryland's Work Search Requirement

To be eligible for UI benefits, claimants must be able to work, available for work, and actively search for work each week. Claimants should upload or create a résumé in MWE, make the résumé viewable to employers in MWE, and maintain an up-to-date résumé in MWE while they are collecting UI benefits. Claimants must complete at least three valid reemployment activities per week, which must include at least one job contact. Claimants should enter their completed reemployment activities in the Job Contact and Reemployment Activity Log in MWE or keep a paper log if they do not have access to a computer. Valid reemployment activities are actions that may reasonably lead to a claimant becoming reemployed, including activities that remove barriers to reemployment.

Short-Time Compensation/Work Sharing Program

Maryland continues to participate in the short-time compensation (STC) benefits program. Maryland has a full-time Work Sharing Program team, which is led by the Manager of the Reemployment and Trade Unit (RTU). RTU trains employees to use BEACON, including how to enter hours into the system at the request of their employer. RTU staff use a dedicated mailbox (only for Work Sharing purposes) to communicate with employers to address questions/concerns and to share information about the status of Work Sharing applications, plans, and issues.

Benefit Accuracy Measurement Unit (BAM) Maryland DUI continues to seek guidance and use technical assistance provided by USDOL's National and Regional offices. DUI's BAM staff is working with USDOL to correct the issues regarding the timeliness of case completion for both paid and denied claims to meet federal performance requirements.

Since the implementation of BEACON, the BAM unit has experienced issues relating to universe pulls and the uploading of completed cases. In addition to the technical issues with BEACON, the BAM unit experienced difficulties with the SUN System throughout this federal fiscal year. The BAM unit supervisor continues to work with the BEACON vendor and the SUN System Help Line as issues arise.

Regarding the timeliness performance measures, to ensure cases are signed off to meet the 60-day, 90-day and 120-day timelapse, BAM Investigators are now required to complete cases within the 45-day time frame. The 45-day completion time frame allows time for the BAM supervisor to review cases, return the cases for correction when required, and sign off on those cases within 60 days. The BAM Supervisor will continue to monitor the 60- and 90-day timelapse to ensure cases are submitted to the supervisor and signed off in the SUN System timely

B. Federal Emphasis (GPRA goals)

This chart shows Maryland performance compared to the GPRA goal:

	Maryland FY2023	Maryland FY-2024
Percent of IntraState Payment Made Timely (ALP 87%)	45.13%	54.13%
Detection of Recoverable Overpayments (ALP 57.5%)	301.59%	190.55%
% of Employer Tax Liability Determinations Made Timely (ALP (90%))	81.98%	83.22%

1. GPRA - Percent of Intrastate Payments Made Timely

DUI fell short of this goal. During this federal fiscal year, issues of backdating, backlogs, and fraud prevention and detection continued to affect the Division's ability to meet this goal. Maryland will continue to take steps to address this deficiency in the current federal fiscal year.

2. GPRA - Detection of Recoverable Overpayments

Maryland fell short of this goal. The historic high volume of claims received during the pandemic, as well as the need to get benefits to claimants quickly, led to the creation of considerable overpayments. Since the CARES Act programs have ended in Maryland, the Division is working to resolve any outstanding high dollar overpayments. A goal has been set to meet federal performance goals during the next SQSP narrative biennial submission.

3. GPRA - Percentage of Employer Tax Liability Determinations Made Timely

Maryland fell short of this goal by 6.78%, an improvement from the previous biennial year submission. In 2022, the Division discovered that the email prompt to notify employers to register for their BEACON employer account was not always being sent to newly-registered employers. The email notification has since been tested to make sure that employers are receiving the appropriate notification to register in the BEACON employer portal. BEACON has the functionality to allow employers to register and establish accounts on the same day with limited human intervention. In October 2022, BEACON was updated to enable a weekly crossmatch that identifies employers who have not registered with the Division.

Another tool being used to help employers with account activation is the dedicated employer hotline (launched on August 24, 2020). DUI will continue to take steps to address this deficiency.

C. Program Review Deficiencies

1. Benefits

Program Measure	Acceptable Level of Performance (ALP)	Maryland's Performance Level FFY 23	Maryland's Performance Level FFY 24
"First Payment Promptness	≥ 87%	44.18%	54.17%
"First Payment Promptness (IntraState 14/21 Days)	≥87%	45.13%	54.53%
First Payment Promptness (InterState 14/21 Days)	≥70%	32.10%	41.64%
First Payment Promptness (IntraState 35 Days)	≥93%	51.77%	64.00%
First Payment Promptness (InterState 35 Days)	≥78%	37.21%	51.26%
Nonmonetary Determination Timeliness	≥80%	5.79%	48.14%
"Nonmonetary Determination Quality - Separations	≥75%	0.00%	19.5%
Nonmonetary Determination Quality - Nonseps	≥75%	0.00%	63.3%

First Pay Promptness

DUI continued to focus on improving first pay promptness during this federal fiscal year and does not feel that the Division's performance level properly reflects that time and effort nor accurately reflects the time it took for most claimants to receive a payment of benefits during the pandemic after they filed their initial claims.

Because Maryland continues to backdate claims and resolve issues in its backlog and due to the Division's continued dedication to preventing identity theft fraud, its first-pay timeliness numbers do not reflect how fast it is paying initial claimants or resolving issues on new claims. In order to improve the first pay promptness rate, Maryland intends to institute faster identity verification procedures, end liberal backdating of claims, and continue to work through the pandemic backlog

Nonmonetary Determination Timeliness and Quality

Maryland experienced data conversion issues after the implementation of BEACON in 2020, which affected Maryland's 9056 universe. These issues prevented BTQ reviews from being conducted for several quarters. The issue has since been resolved, and the BTQ staff have now completed BTQ reviews for Calendar Year (CY) 2021, CY 2022, and the first and second quarter of CY 2023. Staff were able to complete the backlog of BTQ cases from 2022 by

reviewing the most recent quarter and then working backwards. BTQ staff are currently working on the third quarter of CY 2023.

2. Appeals

Lower Authority Appeals (LAA)

USDOL's acceptable level of performance was not met by LAA during this measurement period because of the backlog of cases resulting from the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. Staffing levels and issues with BEACON continued to affect LAA's ability to meet the acceptable level of performance this federal fiscal year. LAA continues to conduct nine (9) fraud-related proof of identity appeals per docket or other single party appeals per docket instead of six (6) appeals which continue to assist in decreasing the number of proof of identity appeals and other single party appeals LAA hears. LAA is working with the BEACON vendor to develop a system that will dispose of even more-fraud related proof identity appeals per docket by attempting to schedule District Court style dockets. If the 2024 budget permits, LAA will offer Hearing Examiners additional dockets in 2023 to meet the ALP for a time lapse of within 30 days. For example, LAA also has a team of five (5) Senior Hearing Examiners conducting twelve (12) fraud-related proof of identity and other single party appeals per scheduled docket instead of six (6) appeals. If the 2024 budget permits, LAA will offer Hearing Examiners additional dockets on Saturdays and/or evenings in an effort to meet the ALP for time lapse of 45 days.

3. Tax

TPS Sample Reviews

Maryland has performed the Cashiering sample process for Validation Year 2023. Now that lockbox operations have returned to pre-COVID-19 procedures, Cashiering duties will be able to be performed in adherence with Federal operating standards. A goal has been set to complete the cashiering sample process Validation for Federal Fiscal Year 2024.

Effective Audit Measure (EAMS): Addressing Worker Misclassification

Maryland successfully met the ALP for this program during this measurement period by resuming pre-pandemic auditing procedures. Additionally, Maryland was the only state in Region 2 to pass all EAMs, and among the fifteen (15) states that passed EAMs in the entire nation. The training program for auditors consists of in-depth training regarding the laws and regulations, which includes a review of case studies. During the training, specific emphasis is given to worker misclassification as independent contractors. All auditors receive continuous training in staff meetings, and managers provide updates on evolving new business practices like worker classification issues relating to gig economy employers.

4. Integrity

Improper Payments Measure

The top three root causes for the improper payment rate were: (1) Benefit Year Earnings, (2) Able and Available eligibility issues, and (3) Separation Issues. See Maryland's Integrity Action

Plan for details about the improper payments measure and actions which will be undertaken to achieve the acceptable level of performance.

Detection of Overpayments - 3 Year Measure

Due to the unprecedented amount of potentially fraudulent cases that Maryland detected after the CARES Act programs were rolled out, DUI's Benefit Payment Control (BPC) Unit's main focus was preventing and detecting all fraudulent activity. The unit worked with its vendor to implement aggressive security protocols within the BEACON system in order to detect and flag those potentially fraudulent claims for investigation. This focus on fraud created a backlog of potentially fraudulent investigations for the BPC unit. Now that Maryland has contracted with vendor LexisNexis to provide identity verification, fraud prevention, and fraud detection services, BPC can refocus its efforts towards detecting and recovering overpayments and expects to meet the Detection of Overpayments Measure in the upcoming reporting year.

Overpayment Recovery Measure

Due to a settlement agreement entered into pursuant to litigation, Maryland suspended offsets, the Treasury Offset Program (TOP), and the State Tax Refund Intercept Program (TRIP). In addition, Maryland was faced with unprecedented identity theft fraud, much of which has proven difficult to recover. Maryland expects to resume offsets and TOP and TRIP intercepts in the coming months, which should improve DUI's UI Overpayment Recovery Measure performance.

Data Validation - Benefits (DV Benefits)

Maryland has continued to experience technical difficulties in accessing and downloading DV files from the SUN system. This, in addition to the technical issues that have been occurring since the launch of the new BEACON system, has affected several programs, including gathering data to create DV extract files. The validation and reported counts differ by more than 2%. Discrepancies such as data entry errors and incorrect data pulls, in addition to the timeframe that extract files are compiled, are some of the causes of the deficiencies in the failing Populations. One of the newly implemented strategies that should aid Maryland in meeting USDOL's acceptable level of performance is requesting on a monthly basis for DV extract files to be reviewed and compared to the UIRRs for all populations. With the sampling of a smaller universe, the DV Coordinator anticipates recognizing and resolving issues prior to the creation of the quarterly file. The DV Coordinator will also continue to work with IT staff and the Division's federal reporting staff to resolve the differences in the Reported and Validation Counts.

Data Validation - Tax (DV Tax)

There were several issues with formatting the DV Tax extract file, such as when and what data should be retrieved to create the extract file, which caused the universe of TPS acceptance sampling to differ from the 581 reported count by more than 2%. In order to meet the ALP for this program, monthly and/or weekly DV extract files will be requested, reviewed, and compared to the UIRRs for all Populations. The Data Validation Coordinator will work closely with the BEACON vendor and the Division's federal reporting staff to resolve and correct any discrepancies prior to the compiling of the quarterly extract files to ensure repeated

discrepancies will not occur. The DV Coordinator will communicate with the BEACON vendor and the Division's federal reporting staff through email, in person, or video conference on an as needed basis. Problem Incident Reports (PIRs) will be created to expedite the correction of the variances relating to the DV extract files.

5. Benefit Accuracy Management (BAM)

BAM Operations Compliant

The BAM unit will be implementing some new procedures to ensure that BAM meets the federal acceptable level of performance. BAM Supervisors will continue to work with the BEACON vendor to review and resolve discrepancies within the rec1 and sfsun files. BAM Supervisors will also work with federal agency personnel, Maryland IT staff, and the BEACON vendor to review the data gathered and the BAM universe created to ensure that the reasons for the failing comparison population are corrected.

D. Program Deficiencies

Incorrect Recording of Issue Detection Date

Maryland is aware of and has been working to address and correct its issue detection error rate. Maryland will continue to work with its BEACON vendor and internal staff to understand the error rate and make any necessary corrections in this federal fiscal year.

Incorrect Recording of Determination Date

Maryland is aware of this issue and has identified that it is caused by a technical system defect. Currently, The Division and the BEACON vendor is working on a resolution to correct this issue.

UI Reporting Requirements

Reporting Deficiencies: Ensuring Accurate and Complete Filing and Reporting of ETA Required Reports

ETA 586 (1 report sent late): The report was late due to operator error (the report was entered and saved within the Sun System prior to the due date but not transmitted).

ETA 204b (1 report sent late): Prior to the due date for the 204b, a technical issue with the SUN System would not allow for the report to be entered, via upload or manually entry. An email was sent to the SUN System Hotline and the issue was resolved, but not until after the due date lapsed.

ETA 9129 (1 report sent late): On 8/19, DUI was unable to submit the ETA 9129 due the following day because of a technical issue with the SUN System. An email to USDOL was sent on 8/19 requesting assistance in entering and submitting the ETA 9129. Division staff were told that someone from the Hotline would make contact in a few days, but that contact never occurred and the due date lapsed.

ETA 9048 and 9049 (12 missing): Maryland is exempt from having to submit a report for the ETA 9048 and ETA 9049.

ETA 9056 (6 sent late): Maryland experienced data conversion issues after the implementation of BEACON in 2020, which affected Maryland's 9056 universe. These issues prevented BTQ reviews from being conducted for several quarters. The issue has since been resolved, and the BTQ staff have now completed BTQ reviews for Calendar Year (CY) 2021, CY 2022, and the first and second quarter of CY 2023. Staff were able to complete the backlog of BTQ cases from 2022 by reviewing the most recent quarter and then working backwards. The reports were late due to the inability to conduct BTQ reviews during that time.

ETA 9057 (1 missing, 3 sent late): Lower Appeals was granted "exceptions" from USDOL for each period that is showing as "missing." During the measurement period Also, all submissions were considered "up to date per the Regional Manager"

E. Customer Service Surveys

DUI does not have any customer service surveys to submit at this time, but the Division has contracted with a vendor to create customer service surveys that are currently published on the agency's website, on BEACON, and on the claimant mobile applications. Thousands of claimants have provided feedback by taking the surveys.

F. Other

For more information, see Maryland's Integrity Action Plan Narrative for Biennial Year State Plan.

G. Assurances

Pursuant to UIPL No. 17-22, by signing the SQSP Signature Page, the Maryland Department of Labor certifies that it will comply with the assurances listed in ET Handbook No. 336, 18th Edition, Change 4. The Maryland Department of Labor will institute plans or measures to comply with the requirements for each of the assurances.

Assurance of Contingency Planning

UIPL No. 24-21 requires the Maryland Department of Labor to provide the dates that its IT Contingency Plan was implemented, reviewed/updated, and tested.

- Information Technology (IT) Contingency Plan Implemented: August 24, 2023
- IT Contingency Plan Reviewed/Updated: August 24, 2023
- IT Contingency Plan Tested: August 24, 2023

Assurance of Automated Systems Security

UIPL No. 24-21 requires the Maryland Department of Labor to provide the dates that it conducted a risk assessment and on which it reviewed/updated its system security plan.

- Risk Assessment Conducted: March 29, 2023
- System Security Plan Reviewed/Updated: March 29, 2023

Assurance of Disaster Unemployment Assistance (DUA)

UIPL No. 24-21 requires the Maryland Department of Labor to answer whether it conducted annual DUA training for staff (and if so when), and whether it developed and/or maintained a standard operating procedure for use during a major disaster declaration.

Conducted Annual DUA Training for DUA Staff: ☒ Yes ☐ No Date of Training: March 16, 2023
Developed and/or Maintained a Standard Operating Procedure for use during a major disaster declaration: ☒ Yes ☐ No

b. 1. B. If a State is in the second year of the 2-year cycle, the State is required to submit the most recently approved complete SQSP package with a modification that must include the Transmittal Letter, Budget Worksheets/Forms, Organizational Chart, and the SQSP Signature page. The modification may also include CAPs for new identified performance deficiencies, and any required modifications to existing CAPs. The CAP must list both specific milestones for key corrective actions or improvement activities, and the completion date for each milestone.

The Maryland DUI SQSP is included in the following sections, including the Transmittal Letter, Budget Worksheets/Forms, State Plan Narrative, CAPs (including the milestones and the completion date for each milestone), the UI IAP, Organizational Chart, and the SQSP Signature Page.

I. Transmittal Letter

October 27, 2023

Via electronic delivery to: friedman.jennifer@dol.gov, basile.mark.d@dol.gov, Pasquale.Karen@dol.gov, riendeau.arlene.l@dol.gov, R2-SQSP@dol.gov

Jennifer Friedman
Regional Administrator for Region 2
U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration
1835 Market Street, Suite 2100
Philadelphia, PA 19103-2968

RE: Transmittal Letter for Maryland's FY 2024 SQSP Alternate Submission

Dear Ms.Friedman:

Attached is Maryland's State Quality Service Plan (SQSP) Federal Fiscal Year 2024 Alternate report for the Division of Unemployment Insurance. Included in this submittal are the following documents:

➤ The State Narrative Plan for DUI

- MD FY 24 SQSP Biennial Excel Workbook
- DUI's Organizational Chart

Per guidance from the Northeast Region's SQSP Unit, Budget Forms SF 424 and SF 424 (B) was submitted by the submittal date of October 13, 2023. Also, per the Northeast Region, the signature page will not be provided until the Alternate Year workbook is accepted.

Questions concerning information within this submission may be directed to myself at (410) 767-2483 or Alexis Braun at (443) 253-6376 or by email sent to Alexis.Braun@maryland.gov.

Thank you for your guidance and technical assistance. We look forward to our ongoing partnership with your Regional Office and the National USDOL ETA.

Best Regards,

Likivu Speaks
Acting Assistant Secretary

cc: Portia Wu, Secretary of Maryland Department of Labor
Jason Perkins-Cohen, Deputy Secretary of Maryland Department of Labor
Karen Pasquale, Chief Division of Workforce Security

III. State Plan Narrative

Maryland Department of Labor Division of Unemployment Insurance State Quality Service Plan Alternate Fiscal Year 2024

A. Overview

1. State priorities and the strategic direction the state has adopted to ensure continuous improvement.

The Maryland Department of Labor's Division of Unemployment Insurance ("The Division" or "DUI") continues to balance several important interests, including but not limited to: ensuring that eligible claimants receive benefits as quickly as possible; protecting the integrity of Maryland's UI program; providing excellent customer service to claimants, employers, and third parties; and preventing and detecting fraud in the UI system. Over the past federal fiscal year, DUI has continued efforts to ensure continuous improvement. In addition to these core objectives, DUI also actively supports reemployment through services such as the Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) program.

Modernization Update

On September 21, 2020, the Maryland Department of Labor, DUI launched BEACON 2.0 ("BEACON"), a fully modernized system which integrated benefits, appeals, and contributions functionalities. The launch of BEACON was the result of more than six years of planning,

testing, and development and, in the past year, DUI has continued to work with its BEACON vendor to make improvements to the new system.

Trust Fund Solvency

Maryland DUI's trust fund is not solvent. The trust fund had a balance of \$ \$1,871,961,707.23 as of September 30, 2023.

Trust Fund Solvency	
Total State Revenue as of June 30, 2023	\$564,738,708.34
Total Benefits Paid as of June 30, 2023	\$326,057,711.83 (reflects only Regular UI benefits paid)
Total Trust Fund Balance as of September 30, 2023	\$1,871,961,707.23 (Excluding EUISAA, UI Modern Incentive Fund and Reed Act Funds)

Employers have been taxed under the Table C tax rate schedule for the 2023 calendar year as a result of federal funding allocated to replenish the Maryland Unemployment Insurance Trust Fund. Table C includes rates that range from 1.00% to 10.50%. The rate for new employers in 2023 is 2.30%. The rate for a foreign contractor (new construction employers headquartered in another state) is 5.10%. The standard (employer) rate is 10.50%. Maryland's taxable wage base for 2023 is \$8,500. The same Table C rate application was also applied to employers in the previous calendar year

Remaining dedicated to our goals and mission

DUI remained committed to the following actions to improve the Division's capacity to administer and operate the UI program effectively: (1) developing and implementing staff training to maximize BEACON's efficiencies, (2) improving reemployment outcomes among claimants by educating them on and holding them accountable to work search requirements, (3) ensuring equitable access to the State's UI program, (4) combating fraud to ensure the integrity of the UI program, (5) preventing overpayments and recovering overpayments when required to ensure the Division is acting as a good steward of the trust fund, (6) implementing the permanently authorized Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) program, (6) reducing the improper payment rate, and (7) continuing to provide excellent customer service to our stakeholders.

2. Assessment of past performance and expected future performance. Includes, at state discretion, a discussion of external factors that may have performance implications:

a. Assessment of past performance revealed the following primary factors contributing to overall program operations and performance:

i. Rebuilding and Improving program performance by addressing the workload created by the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on the UI system

Continued Efforts to Improve Customer Service

During the COVID-19 pandemic, DUI contracted with a vendor to assist with the dramatic increase in claims filed. This vendor continues to support DUI by answering calls and, between October 1, 2022, and June 30, 2023, helped DUI handle a total of approximately 1,537,056 inbound telephone calls. In addition, DUI's Virtual Agent (launched May 1, 2020) assisted in answering certain questions from claimants, employers, and others throughout the fiscal year, but which allows staff to answer more complex questions and issues that the Virtual Agent is not able to assist with. Funds granted to DUI as part of the equity grant have been used to create a customer service survey that is gathering feedback from individuals using DUI's website or BEACON. (See "Ensuring Equitable Access to UI" below for more information regarding the grant.)

Legislative Updates/Changes

House Bill 253 (Unemployment Insurance - Federal Extended Benefits for Long-Term Unemployment, 2022 Legislative Session): This bill, which passed in the 2022 Legislative Session, amended Md. Labor and Employment Code Ann. § 8-1103, to add a Total Unemployment Rate (TUR) trigger for extended benefits and also provided an extra trigger for EB benefits during a "high unemployment period." The bill became effective on June 1, 2022. House Bill 4 (Unemployment Insurance - Recovery of Benefits - Refund of Payments, 2022 Legislative Session): This bill, which passed in the 2022 Legislative Session, imposed new requirements on the DUI concerning the investigation of UI claims when DUI recovers UI benefits in excess of the amount included in the overpayment notice provided to a claimant. DUI requested and received a conformity opinion on the bill prior to the bill's passage. The bill became effective on October 1, 2023.

Senate Bill 136/House Bill 140 (Unemployment Insurance - Recovery of Benefits - Limitation and Methods, 2023 Legislative Session): This bill, which passed and was approved by the Governor in the 2023 Legislative Session, amended Md. Labor and Employment Code Ann. § 8-809 to limit the amount that DUI may offset from UI benefit payments to recover non-fraud overpayments of UI benefits. DUI requested and received a conformity opinion on the bill prior to the bill's passage. The bill will become effective on April 1, 2024.

Delinquent Employer Contributions

Effective March 1, 2023, the Division established a new policy for handling and collecting delinquent employer contributions. Interests now accrues on delinquent contributions each day past the deadline and additional financial penalties may apply. Employers who do not take action to pay their contributions receive a delinquency notice either 15 or 30 days past the quarterly due date. After 45 days, employers who have not taken action will receive an additional notice. Employers must pay in full or establish a payment plan within 30 days of receiving the delinquency notice to avoid collection activities. Depending on the amount owed, collection tools may include a lien, flagging an employer's license, garnishment, and/or revoking an employer's charter.

ii. Changes in State Leadership/Staffing Challenges

Staffing of critical functions continued to be a challenge for DUI in the past year. In response to the departure of key subject matter experts from the workforce and the transition of employees to new employment opportunities within or outside the agency, DUI is continuing to recruit and hire top talent to fill open positions, to allow substitution of applicable work experience in lieu of a college degree, and to cross-train staff.

On January 18, 2023, Maryland removed the four-year college degree requirement for certain skilled job positions and a workforce development program to recruit qualified workers who do not hold college degrees. Maryland recognizes that other qualifications can be considered acceptable in lieu of a college degree for open government positions. Other qualifications can include relevant work experience, training, or community college education. These types of qualifications will be given equal weight for many state government positions in IT, administrative work, and customer service. This has allowed state agencies, including the Maryland Department of Labor, to fill government positions left vacant during the pandemic.

iii. Reduction of Adjudication and Appeals Claims Backlog

The volume of claims received during the pandemic assistance period created a backlog of claims adjudications and appeals. While Maryland has made progress on the backlog, staff continue to work diligently to complete all adjudications and appeals remaining in the backlog. DUI has made process improvements to allow for quicker resolution of claims that are under potential fraud investigation (UPFI) and continues to analyze a variety of metrics in order to reduce backlogs. On the 10th of every month, Maryland provides data to USDOL regarding its adjudication and appeals backlog.

b. Expected Future Performance: Administrative Performance Improvement Strategies

i. BEACON 2.0, In-House Call Center, Grants Awarded, and Staff Training

BEACON 2.0

Since BEACON was implemented in September 2020, DUI has continued to collaborate with its vendor to improve the functionality of BEACON. DUI staff meet with vendor staff to discuss problem incident reports (PIRs) and the progress on those PIRs on a weekly basis. The PIRs vary in complexity and length of time to complete.

In-House Call Center

DUI has begun planning for and investing in the creation of an in-house call center that will reduce the Division's reliance on vendors for call answering. While the project moves forward, vendor agents continue to answer incoming calls.

Grants Awarded in September 2023

Maryland was awarded an ARPA UI Integrity Grant on September 13, 2023, and the State's full project plan is due by November 13, 2023. Maryland is participating in the Tiger Team

consultative project offered by USDOL ETA. Maryland was awarded a Tiger Team grant on September 15, 2023, and the State's full project plan is due by November 14, 2023. Maryland was awarded an Information Technology (IT) Modernization Grant on September 22, 2023, and the State's full project plan is due by December 21, 2023.

Staff Training

DUI's training unit continues to offer training for staff on a variety of topics. Staff can access training videos in the Division's training department Learning Management System (LMS), also known as Knowtion. Currently, the training department is developing virtual learning classes on the following topics: the importance of maintaining integrity, the soon to be implemented TrueID tool, and accommodations available to UI claimants with disabilities

ii. Ensuring Equitable Access to UI

DUI has made ensuring equitable access a priority. The Division understands that it is imperative to reduce barriers caused by technology, language, literacy or disability in order to provide unemployment services to eligible claimants who may be a part of underserved/marginalized communities.

Of particular concern to DUI is that modernization efforts do not create barriers to access for individuals with limited knowledge or access to technology. Claimants may file initial claims, complete their weekly certifications, and complete other actions over the phone rather than via BEACON if preferred.

During this past federal fiscal year, DUI continued to collaborate with the Division of Workforce Development and Adult Learning (DWDAL), Local Workforce Development Areas (LWDAs), and the Maryland Department of Labor's Office of Fair Practices (OFP) to adhere to the WIOA State Plan and the "Equal Access to Public Services for Individuals with Limited English Proficiency" statute enacted by the Maryland General Assembly.

On June 16, 2022, Maryland's application for a UI equity grant was approved by USDOL. The application proposed three separate projects: (1) conducting a customer service evaluation of the State's UI program in order to develop processes to improve customer service and reduce or eliminate administrative barriers to improve access (and updating communications to claimants based on that customer service evaluation); (2) upgrading the functionality and focusing on improving equitable access to UI through Maryland's BEACON 2.0 system and the BEACON Mobile Unemployment Application (Mobile App) for Claimants (including by providing an application status tracker for claimants); and (3) the translation of mobile application screens, BEACON screens, and communications into Spanish. These projects are focused on improving equitable access to the UI system for two particular groups: (1) individuals with limited English proficiency and (2) individuals with limited or no access to technology. In the past federal fiscal year, DUI has requested a modification to details of and the period of performance for the projects to allow for further flexibility in completing the project goals.

DUI is dedicated to helping individuals with disabilities receive the accommodations needed to access Maryland's UI system. The Division has been reviewing and improving policies related to the accommodations available to claimants with disabilities and is planning training to ensure that staff are knowledgeable about those available accommodations.

iii. Combating Fraud

Maryland continues to use several tools that help to ensure the integrity standards of the State's UI program. For detailed information regarding fraud prevention and detection, see Maryland's Integrity Action Plan Narrative for Alternate Year State Plan FY2024.

System Enhancements to Combat Fraud

Since the launch of BEACON, DUI has continued to invest in additional tools to prevent and detect fraud. On August 2, 2023, DUI installed a firewall which prevents users with a foreign IP address or those using a virtual private network (VPN) to avoid having their origins detected from accessing BEACON. Throughout the federal fiscal year, DUI continued to prepare for the implementation of a LexisNexis tool, TrueID, which is shortly to be implemented.

Ways for Marylanders to Report Fraud

DUI continues to communicate with and educate stakeholders regarding the various means available to report suspected fraud. Anyone who believes that their information was used to file a fraudulent unemployment insurance claim can report that to DUI by e-mailing ui.fraud@maryland.gov, and claimants requesting more information can be referred to the following website: at <https://www.labor.maryland.gov/employment/uistopfraud.shtml>.

Marylanders can also report fraud by completing a "Request for Investigation of Unemployment Insurance Fraud" form and returning it to the Division. Suspected unemployment insurance fraud can also be reported to the DOL-OIG Hotline by visiting the website or by calling 1-800-347-3756.

In addition, DUI developed a process to assist individuals who receive a 1099-G tax form but never applied for unemployment insurance benefits. These individuals are asked to complete an Affidavit ("Affidavit for Correction of Form 1099-G") and submit it along with a picture ID to the Benefit Payment Control Unit. Employers that believe a fraudulent claim was charged to their account can file a benefit charge protest through the BEACON employer portal or by calling the employer call center.

Messaging About Fraud

DUI continues to message internal and external stakeholders about the important role that they play in maintaining the integrity of the UI system. This messaging is delivered through emails, desk guides, BEACON portal messaging, and on the Division's website. DUI staff are regularly informed about fraud schemes via emails.

The Division has uncovered scams in which fraudsters are impersonating the Division in emails and text messages. In response, the Division continues to educate claimants, employers, and

third parties about ways to distinguish between legitimate assistance from Division staff and potential scams and how to report potential scams to the Division.

3. Coordination with Plans, Including WIOA

a. Supporting the Reemployment of UC Claimants through RESEA, Short-Time Compensation (STC), Robust Work Search Activities, and Other Targeted Initiatives

During the year, DUI continued to work with DWDAL to execute the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). Under WIOA, DUI connects UI claimants to a full range of reemployment services offered through DWDAL's American Job Centers (AJCs) and their Maryland Workforce Exchange (MWE). DUI also continued to collaborate with Maryland's Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) evaluation team and AJC staff to evaluate and improve the RESEA program in Maryland.

On August 15-16, 2023, both DWDAL and DUI participated in the third annual Maryland Reemployment Summit. The theme of the summit was to foster and promote communication amongst collaborating co-workers in order to successfully implement and carry out the vision of getting Marylanders back to work after separation from employment. Throughout the federal fiscal year, DUI and DWDAL staff met on a monthly basis in order to collaborate on issues of importance to both Divisions.

RESEA/ROW Beginning December 01, 2022, Maryland now requires a secondary RESEA workshop for any individuals who remain unemployed 10 weeks after completing their RESEA workshop.

Maryland's Work Search Requirement

To be eligible for UI benefits, claimants must be able to work, available for work, and actively search for work each week. Claimants should upload or create a résumé in MWE, make the résumé viewable to employers in MWE, and maintain an up-to-date résumé in MWE while they are collecting UI benefits. Claimants must complete at least three valid reemployment activities per week, which must include at least one job contact. Claimants should enter their completed reemployment activities in the Job Contact and Reemployment Activity Log in MWE or keep a paper log if they do not have access to a computer. Valid reemployment activities are actions that may reasonably lead to a claimant becoming reemployed, including activities that remove barriers to reemployment.

Short-Time Compensation/Work Sharing Program

Maryland continues to participate in the short-time compensation (STC) benefits program. Maryland has a full-time Work Sharing Program team, which is led by the Manager of the Reemployment and Trade Unit (RTU). RTU trains employees to use BEACON, including how to enter hours into the system at the request of their employer. RTU staff use a dedicated mailbox (only for Work Sharing purposes) to communicate with employers to address questions/concerns and to share information about the status of Work Sharing applications, plans, and issues.

Benefit Accuracy Measurement Unit (BAM) Maryland DUI continues to seek guidance and use technical assistance provided by USDOL's National and Regional offices. DUI's BAM staff is working with USDOL to correct the issues regarding the timeliness of case completion for both paid and denied claims to meet federal performance requirements.

Since the implementation of BEACON, the BAM unit has experienced issues relating to universe pulls and the uploading of completed cases. In addition to the technical issues with BEACON, the BAM unit experienced difficulties with the SUN System throughout this federal fiscal year. The BAM unit supervisor continues to work with the BEACON vendor and the SUN System Help Line as issues arise.

Regarding the timeliness performance measures, to ensure cases are signed off to meet the 60-day, 90-day and 120-day timelapse, BAM Investigators are now required to complete cases within the 45-day time frame. The 45-day completion time frame allows time for the BAM supervisor to review cases, return the cases for correction when required, and sign off on those cases within 60 days. The BAM Supervisor will continue to monitor the 60- and 90-day timelapse to ensure cases are submitted to the supervisor and signed off in the SUN System timely

B. Federal Emphasis (GPRA goals)

This chart shows Maryland performance compared to the GPRA goal:

	Maryland FY2023	Maryland FY-2024
Percent of IntraState Payment Made Timely (ALP 87%)	45.13%	54.13%
Detection of Recoverable Overpayments (ALP 57.5%)	301.59%	190.55%
% of Employer Tax Liability Determinations Made Timely (ALP (90%))	81.98%	83.22%

1. GPRA - Percent of Intrastate Payments Made Timely

DUI fell short of this goal. During this federal fiscal year, issues of backdating, backlogs, and fraud prevention and detection continued to affect the Division's ability to meet this goal. Maryland will continue to take steps to address this deficiency in the current federal fiscal year.

2. GPRA - Detection of Recoverable Overpayments

Maryland fell short of this goal. The historic high volume of claims received during the pandemic, as well as the need to get benefits to claimants quickly, led to the creation of

considerable overpayments. Since the CARES Act programs have ended in Maryland, the Division is working to resolve any outstanding high dollar overpayments. A goal has been set to meet federal performance goals during the next SQSP narrative biennial submission.

3. GPRA - Percentage of Employer Tax Liability Determinations Made Timely

Maryland fell short of this goal by 6.78%, an improvement from the previous biennial year submission. In 2022, the Division discovered that the email prompt to notify employers to register for their BEACON employer account was not always being sent to newly-registered employers. The email notification has since been tested to make sure that employers are receiving the appropriate notification to register in the BEACON employer portal. BEACON has the functionality to allow employers to register and establish accounts on the same day with limited human intervention. In October 2022, BEACON was updated to enable a weekly crossmatch that identifies employers who have not registered with the Division.

Another tool being used to help employers with account activation is the dedicated employer hotline (launched on August 24, 2020). DUI will continue to take steps to address this deficiency.

C. Program Review Deficiencies

1. Benefits

Program Measure	Acceptable Level of Performance (ALP)	Maryland's Performance Level FFY 23	Maryland's Performance Level FFY 24
"First Payment Promptness	≥ 87%	44.18%	54.17%
"First Payment Promptness (IntraState 14/21 Days)	≥87%	45.13%	54.53%
First Payment Promptness (InterState 14/21 Days)	≥70%	32.10%	41.64%
First Payment Promptness (IntraState 35 Days)	≥93%	51.77%	64.00%
First Payment Promptness (InterState 35 Days)	≥78%	37.21%	51.26%
Nonmonetary Determination Timeliness	≥80%	5.79%	48.14%

Program Measure	Acceptable Level of Performance (ALP)	Maryland's Performance Level FFY 23	Maryland's Performance Level FFY 24
"Nonmonetary Determination Quality - Separations	≥75%	0.00%	19.5%
Nonmonetary Determination Quality - Nonseps	≥75%	0.00%	63.3%

First Pay Promptness

DUI continued to focus on improving first pay promptness during this federal fiscal year and does not feel that the Division's performance level properly reflects that time and effort nor accurately reflects the time it took for most claimants to receive a payment of benefits during the pandemic after they filed their initial claims.

Because Maryland continues to backdate claims and resolve issues in its backlog and due to the Division's continued dedication to preventing identity theft fraud, its first-pay timeliness numbers do not reflect how fast it is paying initial claimants or resolving issues on new claims. In order to improve the first pay promptness rate, Maryland intends to institute faster identity verification procedures, end liberal backdating of claims, and continue to work through the pandemic backlog

Nonmonetary Determination Timeliness and Quality

Maryland experienced data conversion issues after the implementation of BEACON in 2020, which affected Maryland's 9056 universe. These issues prevented BTQ reviews from being conducted for several quarters. The issue has since been resolved, and the BTQ staff have now completed BTQ reviews for Calendar Year (CY) 2021, CY 2022, and the first and second quarter of CY 2023. Staff were able to complete the backlog of BTQ cases from 2022 by reviewing the most recent quarter and then working backwards. BTQ staff are currently working on the third quarter of CY 2023.

2. Appeals

Lower Authority Appeals (LAA)

USDOL's acceptable level of performance was not met by LAA during this measurement period because of the backlog of cases resulting from the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. Staffing levels and issues with BEACON continued to affect LAA's ability to meet the acceptable level of performance this federal fiscal year. LAA continues to conduct nine (9) fraud-related proof of identity appeals per docket or other single party appeals per docket instead of six (6) appeals which continue to assist in decreasing the number of proof of identity appeals and other single party appeals LAA hears. LAA is working with the BEACON vendor to develop a system that will dispose of even more-fraud related proof identity appeals per docket by attempting to schedule District Court style dockets. If the 2024 budget

permits, LAA will offer Hearing Examiners additional dockets in 2023 to meet the ALP for a time lapse of within 30 days. For example, LAA also has a team of five (5) Senior Hearing Examiners conducting twelve (12) fraud-related proof of identity and other single party appeals per scheduled docket instead of six (6) appeals. If the 2024 budget permits, LAA will offer Hearing Examiners additional dockets on Saturdays and/or evenings in an effort to meet the ALP for time lapse of 45 days

3. Tax

TPS Sample Reviews

Maryland has performed the Cashiering sample process for Validation Year 2023. Now that lockbox operations have returned to pre-COVID-19 procedures, Cashiering duties will be able to be performed in adherence with Federal operating standards. A goal has been set to complete the cashiering sample process Validation for Federal Fiscal Year 2024.

Effective Audit Measure (EAMS): Addressing Worker Misclassification

Maryland successfully met the ALP for this program during this measurement period by resuming pre-pandemic auditing procedures. Additionally, Maryland was the only state in Region 2 to pass all EAMs, and among the fifteen (15) states that passed EAMs in the entire nation. The training program for auditors consists of in-depth training regarding the laws and regulations, which includes a review of case studies. During the training, specific emphasis is given to worker misclassification as independent contractors. All auditors receive continuous training in staff meetings, and managers provide updates on evolving new business practices like worker classification issues relating to gig economy employers.

4. Integrity

Improper Payments Measure

The top three root causes for the improper payment rate were: (1) Benefit Year Earnings, (2) Able and Available eligibility issues, and (3) Separation Issues. See Maryland's Integrity Action Plan for details about the improper payments measure and actions which will be undertaken to achieve the acceptable level of performance.

Detection of Overpayments - 3 Year Measure

Due to the unprecedented amount of potentially fraudulent cases that Maryland detected after the CARES Act programs were rolled out, DUI's Benefit Payment Control (BPC) Unit's main focus was preventing and detecting all fraudulent activity. The unit worked with its vendor to implement aggressive security protocols within the BEACON system in order to detect and flag those potentially fraudulent claims for investigation. This focus on fraud created a backlog of potentially fraudulent investigations for the BPC unit. Now that Maryland has contracted with vendor LexisNexis to provide identity verification, fraud prevention, and fraud detection services, BPC can refocus its efforts towards detecting and recovering overpayments and expects to meet the Detection of Overpayments Measure in the upcoming reporting year.

Overpayment Recovery Measure

Due to a settlement agreement entered into pursuant to litigation, Maryland suspended offsets, the Treasury Offset Program (TOP), and the State Tax Refund Intercept Program (TRIP). In addition, Maryland was faced with unprecedented identity theft fraud, much of which has proven difficult to recover. Maryland expects to resume offsets and TOP and TRIP intercepts in the coming months, which should improve DUI's UI Overpayment Recovery Measure performance.

Data Validation - Benefits (DV Benefits)

Maryland has continued to experience technical difficulties in accessing and downloading DV files from the SUN system. This, in addition to the technical issues that have been occurring since the launch of the new BEACON system, has affected several programs, including gathering data to create DV extract files. The validation and reported counts differ by more than 2%. Discrepancies such as data entry errors and incorrect data pulls, in addition to the timeframe that extract files are compiled, are some of the causes of the deficiencies in the failing Populations. One of the newly implemented strategies that should aid Maryland in meeting USDOL's acceptable level of performance is requesting on a monthly basis for DV extract files to be reviewed and compared to the UIRRs for all populations. With the sampling of a smaller universe, the DV Coordinator anticipates recognizing and resolving issues prior to the creation of the quarterly file. The DV Coordinator will also continue to work with IT staff and the Division's federal reporting staff to resolve the differences in the Reported and Validation Counts.

Data Validation - Tax (DV Tax)

There were several issues with formatting the DV Tax extract file, such as when and what data should be retrieved to create the extract file, which caused the universe of TPS acceptance sampling to differ from the 581 reported count by more than 2%. In order to meet the ALP for this program, monthly and/or weekly DV extract files will be requested, reviewed, and compared to the UIRRs for all Populations. The Data Validation Coordinator will work closely with the BEACON vendor and the Division's federal reporting staff to resolve and correct any discrepancies prior to the compiling of the quarterly extract files to ensure repeated discrepancies will not occur. The DV Coordinator will communicate with the BEACON vendor and the Division's federal reporting staff through email, in person, or video conference on an as needed basis. Problem Incident Reports (PIRs) will be created to expedite the correction of the variances relating to the DV extract files.

5. Benefit Accuracy Management (BAM)

BAM Operations Compliant

The BAM unit will be implementing some new procedures to ensure that BAM meets the federal acceptable level of performance. BAM Supervisors will continue to work with the BEACON vendor to review and resolve discrepancies within the rec1 and sfsum files. BAM Supervisors will also work with federal agency personnel, Maryland IT staff, and the BEACON vendor to review the data gathered and the BAM universe created to ensure that the reasons for the failing comparison population are corrected.

D. Program Deficiencies

Incorrect Recording of Issue Detection Date

Maryland is aware of and has been working to address and correct its issue detection error rate. Maryland will continue to work with its BEACON vendor and internal staff to understand the error rate and make any necessary corrections in this federal fiscal year.

Incorrect Recording of Determination Date

Maryland is aware of this issue and has identified that it is caused by a technical system defect. Currently, The Division and the BEACON vendor is working on a resolution to correct this issue.

UI Reporting Requirements

Reporting Deficiencies: Ensuring Accurate and Complete Filing and Reporting of ETA Required Reports

ETA 586 (1 report sent late): The report was late due to operator error (the report was entered and saved within the Sun System prior to the due date but not transmitted).

ETA 204b (1 report sent late): Prior to the due date for the 204b, a technical issue with the SUN System would not allow for the report to be entered, via upload or manually entry. An email was sent to the SUN System Hotline and the issue was resolved, but not until after the due date lapsed.

ETA 9129 (1 report sent late): On 8/19, DUI was unable to submit the ETA 9129 due the following day because of a technical issue with the SUN System. An email to USDOL was sent on 8/19 requesting assistance in entering and submitting the ETA 9129. Division staff were told that someone from the Hotline would make contact in a few days, but that contact never occurred and the due date lapsed.

ETA 9048 and 9049 (12 missing): Maryland is exempt from having to submit a report for the ETA 9048 and ETA 9049.

ETA 9056 (6 sent late): Maryland experienced data conversion issues after the implementation of BEACON in 2020, which affected Maryland's 9056 universe. These issues prevented BTQ reviews from being conducted for several quarters. The issue has since been resolved, and the BTQ staff have now completed BTQ reviews for Calendar Year (CY) 2021, CY 2022, and the first and second quarter of CY 2023. Staff were able to complete the backlog of BTQ cases from 2022 by reviewing the most recent quarter and then working backwards. The reports were late due to the inability to conduct BTQ reviews during that time.

ETA 9057 (1 missing, 3 sent late): Lower Appeals was granted "exceptions" from USDOL for each period that is showing as "missing." During the measurement period Also, all submissions were considered "up to date per the Regional Manager"

E. Customer Service Surveys

DUI does not have any customer service surveys to submit at this time, but the Division has contracted with a vendor to create customer service surveys that are currently published on the agency's website, on BEACON, and on the claimant mobile applications. Thousands of claimants have provided feedback by taking the surveys.

F. Other

For more information, see Maryland's Integrity Action Plan Narrative for Biennial Year State Plan.

G. Assurances

Pursuant to UIPL No. 17-22, by signing the SQSP Signature Page, the Maryland Department of Labor certifies that it will comply with the assurances listed in ET Handbook No. 336, 18th Edition, Change 4. The Maryland Department of Labor will institute plans or measures to comply with the requirements for each of the assurances.

Assurance of Contingency Planning

UIPL No. 24-21 requires the Maryland Department of Labor to provide the dates that its IT Contingency Plan was implemented, reviewed/updated, and tested.

- Information Technology (IT) Contingency Plan Implemented: August 24, 2023
- IT Contingency Plan Reviewed/Updated: August 24, 2023
- IT Contingency Plan Tested: August 24, 2023

Assurance of Automated Systems Security

UIPL No. 24-21 requires the Maryland Department of Labor to provide the dates that it conducted a risk assessment and on which it reviewed/updated its system security plan.

- Risk Assessment Conducted: March 29, 2023
- System Security Plan Reviewed/Updated: March 29, 2023

Assurance of Disaster Unemployment Assistance (DUA)

UIPL No. 24-21 requires the Maryland Department of Labor to answer whether it conducted annual DUA training for staff (and if so when), and whether it developed and/or maintained a standard operating procedure for use during a major disaster declaration.

Conducted Annual DUA Training for DUA Staff: ☒ Yes ☐ No Date of Training: March 16, 2023
Developed and/or Maintained a Standard Operating Procedure for use during a major disaster declaration: ☒ Yes ☐ No

b. 2. Submit the required off-year SQSP components as a modification to the Combined State Plan on the same cycle as the regular SQSP process which must be approved by September 30th each year

The Maryland DUI SQSP is included in the following sections, including the Transmittal Letter, Budget Worksheets/Forms, State Plan Narrative, CAPs (including the milestones and the

completion date for each milestone), the UI IAP, Organizational Chart, and the SQSP Signature Page.

I. Transmittal Letter

October 27, 2023

Via electronic delivery to: friedman.jennifer@dol.gov, basile.mark.d@dol.gov, Pasquale.Karen@dol.gov, riendeau.arlene.l@dol.gov, R2-SQSP@dol.gov

Jennifer Friedman
Regional Administrator for Region 2
U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration
1835 Market Street, Suite 2100
Philadelphia, PA 19103-2968

RE: Transmittal Letter for Maryland's FY 2024 SQSP Alternate Submission

Dear Ms.Friedman:

Attached is Maryland's State Quality Service Plan (SQSP) Federal Fiscal Year 2024 Alternate report for the Division of Unemployment Insurance. Included in this submittal are the following documents:

- The State Narrative Plan for DUI
- MD FY 24 SQSP Biennial Excel Workbook
- DUI's Organizational Chart

Per guidance from the Northeast Region's SQSP Unit, Budget Forms SF 424 and SF 424 (B) was submitted by the submittal date of October 13, 2023. Also, per the Northeast Region, the signature page will not be provided until the Alternate Year workbook is accepted.

Questions concerning information within this submission may be directed to myself at (410) 767-2483 or Alexis Braun at (443) 253-6376 or by email sent to Alexis.Braun@maryland.gov.

Thank you for your guidance and technical assistance. We look forward to our ongoing partnership with your Regional Office and the National USDOL ETA.

Best Regards,

Likivu Speaks
Acting Assistant Secretary

cc: Portia Wu, Secretary of Maryland Department of Labor

Jason Perkins-Cohen, Deputy Secretary of Maryland Department of Labor
Karen Pasquale, Chief Division of Workforce Security

III. State Plan Narrative

Maryland Department of Labor Division of Unemployment Insurance State Quality Service
Plan Alternate Fiscal Year 2024

A. Overview

1. State priorities and the strategic direction the state has adopted to ensure continuous improvement.

The Maryland Department of Labor’s Division of Unemployment Insurance (“The Division” or “DUI”) continues to balance several important interests, including but not limited to: ensuring that eligible claimants receive benefits as quickly as possible; protecting the integrity of Maryland’s UI program; providing excellent customer service to claimants, employers, and third parties; and preventing and detecting fraud in the UI system. Over the past federal fiscal year, DUI has continued efforts to ensure continuous improvement. In addition to these core objectives, DUI also actively supports reemployment through services such as the Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) program.

Modernization Update

On September 21, 2020, the Maryland Department of Labor, DUI launched BEACON 2.0 (“BEACON”), a fully modernized system which integrated benefits, appeals, and contributions functionalities. The launch of BEACON was the result of more than six years of planning, testing, and development and, in the past year, DUI has continued to work with its BEACON vendor to make improvements to the new system.

Trust Fund Solvency

Maryland DUI’s trust fund is not solvent. The trust fund had a balance of \$ \$1,871,961,707.23 as of September 30, 2023.

Trust Fund Solvency	
Total State Revenue as of June 30, 2023	\$564,738,708.34
Total Benefits Paid as of June 30, 2023	\$326,057,711.83 (reflects only Regular UI benefits paid)
Total Trust Fund Balance as of September 30, 2023	\$1,871,961,707.23 (Excluding EUISAA, UI Modern Incentive Fund and Reed Act Funds)

Employers have been taxed under the Table C tax rate schedule for the 2023 calendar year as a result of federal funding allocated to replenish the Maryland Unemployment Insurance Trust Fund. Table C includes rates that range from 1.00% to 10.50%. The rate for new employers in 2023 is 2.30%. The rate for a foreign contractor (new construction employers headquartered in another state) is 5.10%. The standard (employer) rate is 10.50%. Maryland's taxable wage base for 2023 is \$8,500. The same Table C rate application was also applied to employers in the previous calendar year

Remaining dedicated to our goals and mission

DUI remained committed to the following actions to improve the Division's capacity to administer and operate the UI program effectively: (1) developing and implementing staff training to maximize BEACON's efficiencies, (2) improving reemployment outcomes among claimants by educating them on and holding them accountable to work search requirements, (3) ensuring equitable access to the State's UI program, (4) combating fraud to ensure the integrity of the UI program, (5) preventing overpayments and recovering overpayments when required to ensure the Division is acting as a good steward of the trust fund, (6) implementing the permanently authorized Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) program, (6) reducing the improper payment rate, and (7) continuing to provide excellent customer service to our stakeholders.

2. Assessment of past performance and expected future performance. Includes, at state discretion, a discussion of external factors that may have performance implications:

a. Assessment of past performance revealed the following primary factors contributing to overall program operations and performance:

i. Rebuilding and Improving program performance by addressing the workload created by the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on the UI system

Continued Efforts to Improve Customer Service

During the COVID-19 pandemic, DUI contracted with a vendor to assist with the dramatic increase in claims filed. This vendor continues to support DUI by answering calls and, between October 1, 2022, and June 30, 2023, helped DUI handle a total of approximately 1,537,056 inbound telephone calls. In addition, DUI's Virtual Agent (launched May 1, 2020) assisted in answering certain questions from claimants, employers, and others throughout the fiscal year, but which allows staff to answer more complex questions and issues that the Virtual Agent is not able to assist with. Funds granted to DUI as part of the equity grant have been used to create a customer service survey that is gathering feedback from individuals using DUI's website or BEACON. (See "Ensuring Equitable Access to UI" below for more information regarding the grant.)

Legislative Updates/Changes

House Bill 253 (Unemployment Insurance - Federal Extended Benefits for Long-Term Unemployment, 2022 Legislative Session): This bill, which passed in the 2022 Legislative Session, amended Md. Labor and Employment Code Ann. § 8-1103, to add a Total Unemployment Rate (TUR) trigger for extended benefits and also provided an extra trigger

for EB benefits during a “high unemployment period.” The bill became effective on June 1, 2022. House Bill 4 (Unemployment Insurance – Recovery of Benefits – Refund of Payments, 2022 Legislative Session): This bill, which passed in the 2022 Legislative Session, imposed new requirements on the DUI concerning the investigation of UI claims when DUI recovers UI benefits in excess of the amount included in the overpayment notice provided to a claimant. DUI requested and received a conformity opinion on the bill prior to the bill’s passage. The bill became effective on October 1, 2023.

Senate Bill 136/House Bill 140 (Unemployment Insurance - Recovery of Benefits - Limitation and Methods, 2023 Legislative Session): This bill, which passed and was approved by the Governor in the 2023 Legislative Session, amended Md. Labor and Employment Code Ann. § 8-809 to limit the amount that DUI may offset from UI benefit payments to recover non-fraud overpayments of UI benefits. DUI requested and received a conformity opinion on the bill prior to the bill’s passage. The bill will become effective on April 1, 2024.

Delinquent Employer Contributions

Effective March 1, 2023, the Division established a new policy for handling and collecting delinquent employer contributions. Interests now accrues on delinquent contributions each day past the deadline and additional financial penalties may apply. Employers who do not take action to pay their contributions receive a delinquency notice either 15 or 30 days past the quarterly due date. After 45 days, employers who have not taken action will receive an additional notice. Employers must pay in full or establish a payment plan within 30 days of receiving the delinquency notice to avoid collection activities. Depending on the amount owed, collection tools may include a lien, flagging an employer’s license, garnishment, and/or revoking an employer’s charter.

ii. Changes in State Leadership/Staffing Challenges

Staffing of critical functions continued to be a challenge for DUI in the past year. In response to the departure of key subject matter experts from the workforce and the transition of employees to new employment opportunities within or outside the agency, DUI is continuing to recruit and hire top talent to fill open positions, to allow substitution of applicable work experience in lieu of a college degree, and to cross-train staff.

On January 18, 2023, Maryland removed the four-year college degree requirement for certain skilled job positions and a workforce development program to recruit qualified workers who do not hold college degrees. Maryland recognizes that other qualifications can be considered acceptable in lieu of a college degree for open government positions. Other qualifications can include relevant work experience, training, or community college education. These types of qualifications will be given equal weight for many state government positions in IT, administrative work, and customer service. This has allowed state agencies, including the Maryland Department of Labor, to fill government positions left vacant during the pandemic.

iii. Reduction of Adjudication and Appeals Claims Backlog

The volume of claims received during the pandemic assistance period created a backlog of claims adjudications and appeals. While Maryland has made progress on the backlog, staff continue to work diligently to complete all adjudications and appeals remaining in the backlog. DUI has made process improvements to allow for quicker resolution of claims that are under potential fraud investigation (UPFI) and continues to analyze a variety of metrics in order to reduce backlogs. On the 10th of every month, Maryland provides data to USDOL regarding its adjudication and appeals backlog.

b. Expected Future Performance: Administrative Performance Improvement Strategies

i. BEACON 2.0, In-House Call Center, Grants Awarded, and Staff Training

BEACON 2.0

Since BEACON was implemented in September 2020, DUI has continued to collaborate with its vendor to improve the functionality of BEACON. DUI staff meet with vendor staff to discuss problem incident reports (PIRs) and the progress on those PIRs on a weekly basis. The PIRs vary in complexity and length of time to complete.

In-House Call Center

DUI has begun planning for and investing in the creation of an in-house call center that will reduce the Division's reliance on vendors for call answering. While the project moves forward, vendor agents continue to answer incoming calls.

Grants Awarded in September 2023

Maryland was awarded an ARPA UI Integrity Grant on September 13, 2023, and the State's full project plan is due by November 13, 2023. Maryland is participating in the Tiger Team consultative project offered by USDOL ETA. Maryland was awarded a Tiger Team grant on September 15, 2023, and the State's full project plan is due by November 14, 2023. Maryland was awarded an Information Technology (IT) Modernization Grant on September 22, 2023, and the State's full project plan is due by December 21, 2023.

Staff Training

DUI's training unit continues to offer training for staff on a variety of topics. Staff can access training videos in the Division's training department Learning Management System (LMS), also known as Knowtion. Currently, the training department is developing virtual learning classes on the following topics: the importance of maintaining integrity, the soon to be implemented TrueID tool, and accommodations available to UI claimants with disabilities

ii. Ensuring Equitable Access to UI

DUI has made ensuring equitable access a priority. The Division understands that it is imperative to reduce barriers caused by technology, language, literacy or disability in order to provide unemployment services to eligible claimants who may be a part of underserved/marginalized communities.

Of particular concern to DUI is that modernization efforts do not create barriers to access for individuals with limited knowledge or access to technology. Claimants may file initial claims, complete their weekly certifications, and complete other actions over the phone rather than via BEACON if preferred.

During this past federal fiscal year, DUI continued to collaborate with the Division of Workforce Development and Adult Learning (DWDAL), Local Workforce Development Areas (LWDAs), and the Maryland Department of Labor's Office of Fair Practices (OFP) to adhere to the WIOA State Plan and the "Equal Access to Public Services for Individuals with Limited English Proficiency" statute enacted by the Maryland General Assembly.

On June 16, 2022, Maryland's application for a UI equity grant was approved by USDOL. The application proposed three separate projects: (1) conducting a customer service evaluation of the State's UI program in order to develop processes to improve customer service and reduce or eliminate administrative barriers to improve access (and updating communications to claimants based on that customer service evaluation); (2) upgrading the functionality and focusing on improving equitable access to UI through Maryland's BEACON 2.0 system and the BEACON Mobile Unemployment Application (Mobile App) for Claimants (including by providing an application status tracker for claimants); and (3) the translation of mobile application screens, BEACON screens, and communications into Spanish. These projects are focused on improving equitable access to the UI system for two particular groups: (1) individuals with limited English proficiency and (2) individuals with limited or no access to technology. In the past federal fiscal year, DUI has requested a modification to details of and the period of performance for the projects to allow for further flexibility in completing the project goals.

DUI is dedicated to helping individuals with disabilities receive the accommodations needed to access Maryland's UI system. The Division has been reviewing and improving policies related to the accommodations available to claimants with disabilities and is planning training to ensure that staff are knowledgeable about those available accommodations.

iii. Combating Fraud

Maryland continues to use several tools that help to ensure the integrity standards of the State's UI program. For detailed information regarding fraud prevention and detection, see Maryland's Integrity Action Plan Narrative for Alternate Year State Plan FY2024.

System Enhancements to Combat Fraud

Since the launch of BEACON, DUI has continued to invest in additional tools to prevent and detect fraud. On August 2, 2023, DUI installed a firewall which prevents users with a foreign IP address or those using a virtual private network (VPN) to avoid having their origins detected from accessing BEACON. Throughout the federal fiscal year, DUI continued to prepare for the implementation of a LexisNexis tool, TrueID, which is shortly to be implemented.

Ways for Marylanders to Report Fraud

DUI continues to communicate with and educate stakeholders regarding the various means available to report suspected fraud. Anyone who believes that their information was used to file a fraudulent unemployment insurance claim can report that to DUI by e-mailing ui.fraud@maryland.gov, and claimants requesting more information can be referred to the following website: at <https://www.labor.maryland.gov/employment/uistopfraud.shtml>.

Marylanders can also report fraud by completing a “ Request for Investigation of Unemployment Insurance Fraud form and returning it to the Division. Suspected unemployment insurance fraud can also be reported to the DOL-OIG Hotline by visiting the website or by calling 1-800-347-3756.

In addition, DUI developed a process to assist individuals who receive a 1099-G tax form but never applied for unemployment insurance benefits. These individuals are asked to complete an Affidavit (“Affidavit for Correction of Form 1099-G”) and submit it along with a picture ID to the Benefit Payment Control Unit. Employers that believe a fraudulent claim was charged to their account can file a benefit charge protest through the BEACON employer portal or by calling the employer call center.

Messaging About Fraud

DUI continues to message internal and external stakeholders about the important role that they play in maintaining the integrity of the UI system. This messaging is delivered through emails, desk guides, BEACON portal messaging, and on the Division’s website. DUI staff are regularly informed about fraud schemes via emails.

The Division has uncovered scams in which fraudsters are impersonating the Division in emails and text messages. In response, the Division continues to educate claimants, employers, and third parties about ways to distinguish between legitimate assistance from Division staff and potential scams and how to report potential scams to the Division.

3. Coordination with Plans, Including WIOA

a. Supporting the Reemployment of UC Claimants through RESEA, Short-Time Compensation (STC), Robust Work Search Activities, and Other Targeted Initiatives

During the year, DUI continued to work with DWDAL to execute the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). Under WIOA, DUI connects UI claimants to a full range of reemployment services offered through DWDAL’s American Job Centers (AJCs) and their Maryland Workforce Exchange (MWE). DUI also continued to collaborate with Maryland’s Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) evaluation team and AJC staff to evaluate and improve the RESEA program in Maryland.

On August 15-16, 2023, both DWDAL and DUI participated in the third annual Maryland Reemployment Summit. The theme of the summit was to foster and promote communication amongst collaborating co-workers in order to successfully implement and carry out the vision of getting Marylanders back to work after separation from employment. Throughout the federal fiscal year, DUI and DWDAL staff met on a monthly basis in order to collaborate on issues of importance to both Divisions.

RESEA/ROW Beginning December 01, 2022, Maryland now requires a secondary RESEA workshop for any individuals who remain unemployed 10 weeks after completing their RESEA workshop.

Maryland's Work Search Requirement

To be eligible for UI benefits, claimants must be able to work, available for work, and actively search for work each week. Claimants should upload or create a résumé in MWE, make the résumé viewable to employers in MWE, and maintain an up-to-date résumé in MWE while they are collecting UI benefits. Claimants must complete at least three valid reemployment activities per week, which must include at least one job contact. Claimants should enter their completed reemployment activities in the Job Contact and Reemployment Activity Log in MWE or keep a paper log if they do not have access to a computer. Valid reemployment activities are actions that may reasonably lead to a claimant becoming reemployed, including activities that remove barriers to reemployment.

Short-Time Compensation/Work Sharing Program

Maryland continues to participate in the short-time compensation (STC) benefits program. Maryland has a full-time Work Sharing Program team, which is led by the Manager of the Reemployment and Trade Unit (RTU). RTU trains employees to use BEACON, including how to enter hours into the system at the request of their employer. RTU staff use a dedicated mailbox (only for Work Sharing purposes) to communicate with employers to address questions/concerns and to share information about the status of Work Sharing applications, plans, and issues.

Benefit Accuracy Measurement Unit (BAM) Maryland DUI continues to seek guidance and use technical assistance provided by USDOL's National and Regional offices. DUI's BAM staff is working with USDOL to correct the issues regarding the timeliness of case completion for both paid and denied claims to meet federal performance requirements.

Since the implementation of BEACON, the BAM unit has experienced issues relating to universe pulls and the uploading of completed cases. In addition to the technical issues with BEACON, the BAM unit experienced difficulties with the SUN System throughout this federal fiscal year. The BAM unit supervisor continues to work with the BEACON vendor and the SUN System Help Line as issues arise.

Regarding the timeliness performance measures, to ensure cases are signed off to meet the 60-day, 90-day and 120-day timelapse, BAM Investigators are now required to complete cases within the 45-day time frame. The 45-day completion time frame allows time for the BAM supervisor to review cases, return the cases for correction when required, and sign off on those cases within 60 days. The BAM Supervisor will continue to monitor the 60- and 90-day timelapse to ensure cases are submitted to the supervisor and signed off in the SUN System timely

B. Federal Emphasis (GPRA goals)

This chart shows Maryland performance compared to the GPRA goal:

	Maryland FY2023	Maryland FY-2024
Percent of IntraState Payment Made Timely (ALP 87%)	45.13%	54.13%
Detection of Recoverable Overpayments (ALP 57.5%)	301.59%	190.55%
% of Employer Tax Liability Determinations Made Timely (ALP (90%))	81.98%	83.22%

1. GPRA - Percent of Intrastate Payments Made Timely

DUI fell short of this goal. During this federal fiscal year, issues of backdating, backlogs, and fraud prevention and detection continued to affect the Division's ability to meet this goal. Maryland will continue to take steps to address this deficiency in the current federal fiscal year.

2. GPRA - Detection of Recoverable Overpayments

Maryland fell short of this goal. The historic high volume of claims received during the pandemic, as well as the need to get benefits to claimants quickly, led to the creation of considerable overpayments. Since the CARES Act programs have ended in Maryland, the Division is working to resolve any outstanding high dollar overpayments. A goal has been set to meet federal performance goals during the next SQSP narrative biennial submission.

3. GPRA - Percentage of Employer Tax Liability Determinations Made Timely

Maryland fell short of this goal by 6.78%, an improvement from the previous biennial year submission. In 2022, the Division discovered that the email prompt to notify employers to register for their BEACON employer account was not always being sent to newly-registered employers. The email notification has since been tested to make sure that employers are receiving the appropriate notification to register in the BEACON employer portal. BEACON has the functionality to allow employers to register and establish accounts on the same day with limited human intervention. In October 2022, BEACON was updated to enable a weekly crossmatch that identifies employers who have not registered with the Division.

Another tool being used to help employers with account activation is the dedicated employer hotline (launched on August 24, 2020). DUI will continue to take steps to address this deficiency.

C. Program Review Deficiencies

1. Benefits

Program Measure	Acceptable Level of Performance (ALP)	Maryland's Performance Level FFY 23	Maryland's Performance Level FFY 24
"First Payment Promptness	≥ 87%	44.18%	54.17%
"First Payment Promptness (IntraState 14/21 Days)	≥87%	45.13%	54.53%
First Payment Promptness (InterState 14/21 Days)	≥70%	32.10%	41.64%
First Payment Promptness (IntraState 35 Days)	≥93%	51.77%	64.00%
First Payment Promptness (InterState 35 Days)	≥78%	37.21%	51.26%
Nonmonetary Determination Timeliness	≥80%	5.79%	48.14%
"Nonmonetary Determination Quality - Separations	≥75%	0.00%	19.5%
Nonmonetary Determination Quality - Nonseps	≥75%	0.00%	63.3%

First Pay Promptness

DUI continued to focus on improving first pay promptness during this federal fiscal year and does not feel that the Division's performance level properly reflects that time and effort nor accurately reflects the time it took for most claimants to receive a payment of benefits during the pandemic after they filed their initial claims.

Because Maryland continues to backdate claims and resolve issues in its backlog and due to the Division's continued dedication to preventing identity theft fraud, its first-pay timeliness numbers do not reflect how fast it is paying initial claimants or resolving issues on new claims. In order to improve the first pay promptness rate, Maryland intends to institute faster identity

verification procedures, end liberal backdating of claims, and continue to work through the pandemic backlog

Nonmonetary Determination Timeliness and Quality

Maryland experienced data conversion issues after the implementation of BEACON in 2020, which affected Maryland's 9056 universe. These issues prevented BTQ reviews from being conducted for several quarters. The issue has since been resolved, and the BTQ staff have now completed BTQ reviews for Calendar Year (CY) 2021, CY 2022, and the first and second quarter of CY 2023. Staff were able to complete the backlog of BTQ cases from 2022 by reviewing the most recent quarter and then working backwards. BTQ staff are currently working on the third quarter of CY 2023.

2. Appeals

Lower Authority Appeals (LAA)

USDOL's acceptable level of performance was not met by LAA during this measurement period because of the backlog of cases resulting from the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. Staffing levels and issues with BEACON continued to affect LAA's ability to meet the acceptable level of performance this federal fiscal year. LAA continues to conduct nine (9) fraud-related proof of identity appeals per docket or other single party appeals per docket instead of six (6) appeals which continue to assist in decreasing the number of proof of identity appeals and other single party appeals LAA hears. LAA is working with the BEACON vendor to develop a system that will dispose of even more-fraud related proof identity appeals per docket by attempting to schedule District Court style dockets. If the 2024 budget permits, LAA will offer Hearing Examiners additional dockets in 2023 to meet the ALP for a time lapse of within 30 days. For example, LAA also has a team of five (5) Senior Hearing Examiners conducting twelve (12) fraud-related proof of identity and other single party appeals per scheduled docket instead of six (6) appeals. If the 2024 budget permits, LAA will offer Hearing Examiners additional dockets on Saturdays and/or evenings in an effort to meet the ALP for time lapse of 45 days

3. Tax

TPS Sample Reviews

Maryland has performed the Cashiering sample process for Validation Year 2023. Now that lockbox operations have returned to pre-COVID-19 procedures, Cashiering duties will be able to be performed in adherence with Federal operating standards. A goal has been set to complete the cashiering sample process Validation for Federal Fiscal Year 2024.

Effective Audit Measure (EAMS): Addressing Worker Misclassification

Maryland successfully met the ALP for this program during this measurement period by resuming pre-pandemic auditing procedures. Additionally, Maryland was the only state in Region 2 to pass all EAMs, and among the fifteen (15) states that passed EAMs in the entire nation. The training program for auditors consists of in-depth training regarding the laws and regulations, which includes a review of case studies. During the training, specific emphasis is given to worker misclassification as independent contractors. All auditors receive continuous

training in staff meetings, and managers provide updates on evolving new business practices like worker classification issues relating to gig economy employers.

4. Integrity

Improper Payments Measure

The top three root causes for the improper payment rate were: (1) Benefit Year Earnings, (2) Able and Available eligibility issues, and (3) Separation Issues. See Maryland's Integrity Action Plan for details about the improper payments measure and actions which will be undertaken to achieve the acceptable level of performance.

Detection of Overpayments - 3 Year Measure

Due to the unprecedented amount of potentially fraudulent cases that Maryland detected after the CARES Act programs were rolled out, DUI's Benefit Payment Control (BPC) Unit's main focus was preventing and detecting all fraudulent activity. The unit worked with its vendor to implement aggressive security protocols within the BEACON system in order to detect and flag those potentially fraudulent claims for investigation. This focus on fraud created a backlog of potentially fraudulent investigations for the BPC unit. Now that Maryland has contracted with vendor LexisNexis to provide identity verification, fraud prevention, and fraud detection services, BPC can refocus its efforts towards detecting and recovering overpayments and expects to meet the Detection of Overpayments Measure in the upcoming reporting year.

Overpayment Recovery Measure

Due to a settlement agreement entered into pursuant to litigation, Maryland suspended offsets, the Treasury Offset Program (TOP), and the State Tax Refund Intercept Program (TRIP). In addition, Maryland was faced with unprecedented identity theft fraud, much of which has proven difficult to recover. Maryland expects to resume offsets and TOP and TRIP intercepts in the coming months, which should improve DUI's UI Overpayment Recovery Measure performance.

Data Validation - Benefits (DV Benefits)

Maryland has continued to experience technical difficulties in accessing and downloading DV files from the SUN system. This, in addition to the technical issues that have been occurring since the launch of the new BEACON system, has affected several programs, including gathering data to create DV extract files. The validation and reported counts differ by more than 2%. Discrepancies such as data entry errors and incorrect data pulls, in addition to the timeframe that extract files are compiled, are some of the causes of the deficiencies in the failing Populations. One of the newly implemented strategies that should aid Maryland in meeting USDOL's acceptable level of performance is requesting on a monthly basis for DV extract files to be reviewed and compared to the UIRRs for all populations. With the sampling of a smaller universe, the DV Coordinator anticipates recognizing and resolving issues prior to the creation of the quarterly file. The DV Coordinator will also continue to work with IT staff and the Division's federal reporting staff to resolve the differences in the Reported and Validation Counts.

Data Validation - Tax (DV Tax)

There were several issues with formatting the DV Tax extract file, such as when and what data should be retrieved to create the extract file, which caused the universe of TPS acceptance sampling to differ from the 581 reported count by more than 2%. In order to meet the ALP for this program, monthly and/or weekly DV extract files will be requested, reviewed, and compared to the UIRRs for all Populations. The Data Validation Coordinator will work closely with the BEACON vendor and the Division's federal reporting staff to resolve and correct any discrepancies prior to the compiling of the quarterly extract files to ensure repeated discrepancies will not occur. The DV Coordinator will communicate with the BEACON vendor and the Division's federal reporting staff through email, in person, or video conference on an as needed basis. Problem Incident Reports (PIRs) will be created to expedite the correction of the variances relating to the DV extract files.

5. Benefit Accuracy Management (BAM)

BAM Operations Compliant

The BAM unit will be implementing some new procedures to ensure that BAM meets the federal acceptable level of performance. BAM Supervisors will continue to work with the BEACON vendor to review and resolve discrepancies within the rec1 and sfsun files. BAM Supervisors will also work with federal agency personnel, Maryland IT staff, and the BEACON vendor to review the data gathered and the BAM universe created to ensure that the reasons for the failing comparison population are corrected.

D. Program Deficiencies

Incorrect Recording of Issue Detection Date

Maryland is aware of and has been working to address and correct its issue detection error rate. Maryland will continue to work with its BEACON vendor and internal staff to understand the error rate and make any necessary corrections in this federal fiscal year.

Incorrect Recording of Determination Date

Maryland is aware of this issue and has identified that it is caused by a technical system defect. Currently, The Division and the BEACON vendor is working on a resolution to correct this issue.

UI Reporting Requirements

Reporting Deficiencies: Ensuring Accurate and Complete Filing and Reporting of ETA Required Reports

ETA 586 (1 report sent late): The report was late due to operator error (the report was entered and saved within the Sun System prior to the due date but not transmitted).

ETA 204b (1 report sent late): Prior to the due date for the 204b, a technical issue with the SUN System would not allow for the report to be entered, via upload or manually entry. An email was sent to the SUN System Hotline and the issue was resolved, but not until after the due date lapsed.

ETA 9129 (1 report sent late): On 8/19, DUI was unable to submit the ETA 9129 due the following day because of a technical issue with the SUN System. An email to USDOL was sent on 8/19 requesting assistance in entering and submitting the ETA 9129. Division staff were told that someone from the Hotline would make contact in a few days, but that contact never occurred and the due date lapsed.

ETA 9048 and 9049 (12 missing): Maryland is exempt from having to submit a report for the ETA 9048 and ETA 9049.

ETA 9056 (6 sent late): Maryland experienced data conversion issues after the implementation of BEACON in 2020, which affected Maryland's 9056 universe. These issues prevented BTQ reviews from being conducted for several quarters. The issue has since been resolved, and the BTQ staff have now completed BTQ reviews for Calendar Year (CY) 2021, CY 2022, and the first and second quarter of CY 2023. Staff were able to complete the backlog of BTQ cases from 2022 by reviewing the most recent quarter and then working backwards. The reports were late due to the inability to conduct BTQ reviews during that time.

ETA 9057 (1 missing, 3 sent late): Lower Appeals was granted "exceptions" from USDOL for each period that is showing as "missing." During the measurement period Also, all submissions were considered "up to date per the Regional Manager"

E. Customer Service Surveys

DUI does not have any customer service surveys to submit at this time, but the Division has contracted with a vendor to create customer service surveys that are currently published on the agency's website, on BEACON, and on the claimant mobile applications. Thousands of claimants have provided feedback by taking the surveys.

F. Other

For more information, see Maryland's Integrity Action Plan Narrative for Biennial Year State Plan.

G. Assurances

Pursuant to UIPL No. 17-22, by signing the SQSP Signature Page, the Maryland Department of Labor certifies that it will comply with the assurances listed in ET Handbook No. 336, 18th Edition, Change 4. The Maryland Department of Labor will institute plans or measures to comply with the requirements for each of the assurances.

Assurance of Contingency Planning

UIPL No. 24-21 requires the Maryland Department of Labor to provide the dates that its IT Contingency Plan was implemented, reviewed/updated, and tested.

- Information Technology (IT) Contingency Plan Implemented: August 24, 2023
- IT Contingency Plan Reviewed/Updated: August 24, 2023

- IT Contingency Plan Tested: August 24, 2023

Assurance of Automated Systems Security

UIPL No. 24-21 requires the Maryland Department of Labor to provide the dates that it conducted a risk assessment and on which it reviewed/updated its system security plan.

- Risk Assessment Conducted: March 29, 2023
- System Security Plan Reviewed/Updated: March 29, 2023

Assurance of Disaster Unemployment Assistance (DUA)

UIPL No. 24-21 requires the Maryland Department of Labor to answer whether it conducted annual DUA training for staff (and if so when), and whether it developed and/or maintained a standard operating procedure for use during a major disaster declaration.

Conducted Annual DUA Training for DUA Staff: ☒ Yes ☐ No Date of Training: March 16, 2023
Developed and/or Maintained a Standard Operating Procedure for use during a major disaster declaration: ☒ Yes ☐ No

SENIOR COMMUNITY SERVICE EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM

(OMB Control No. 1205-0040)

(a) Economic Projections and Impact

(1) Discuss long-term projections for jobs in industries and occupations in the state that may provide employment opportunities for older workers. (20 CFR 641.302(d))(May alternatively be discussed in the economic analysis section of strategic plan.)

The projections for Maryland are developed in OWIP within MD Labor. This section will discuss long-term projections for industries and occupations in the state that have the most potential to benefit older workers seeking unsubsidized employment. Further, it will provide current and future strategies to identify and coordinate training opportunities to improve the employment prospects of the Program-eligible population.

Long-term projections for jobs in industries and occupations in Maryland

Maryland's job market has reached a historic milestone. Maryland has the lowest unemployment rate in American history, at just 1.6%. The mid-Atlantic state registered a record unemployment rate of 1.6% in September, 2023 Labor Department data shows. This is recorded as the lowest seasonally adjusted unemployment rate of any state on records going back to 1976.

Source: <https://www.cnn.com/2023/11/15/economy/maryland-lowest-unemployment-rate-ever/index.html>

According to the latest LMI, the long-term projections of employment in Maryland are promising through 2026 with the exception of agricultural, government and mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction.

Table: Maryland Industry Projections 2020-2030

Maryland Industry Projections - 2020 - 2030

Industry	Employment 2020	Employment 2030	Employment Change `	Percent Change
Total All Industries	2,840,779	2,745,450	194,453	7.6%
Agricultural, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	6,304	5,612	-692	-1.2%
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	1,225	1,118	-107	-0.09%
Utilities	14,688	17,261	2,573	1.6%
Construction	192,724	206,437	13,713	0.79%
Manufacturing	118,833	125,562	6,729	0.06%
Wholesale Trade	92,448	98,871	6,423	0.7%
Retail Trade	275,062	281,649	6,587	0.02%
Transportation and Warehousing	125,403	127,732	2,329	0.2%
Information	36,102	40,317.	4,215.	1.1%

Industry	Employment 2020	Employment 2030	Employment Change `	Percent Change
Finance and Insurance	106,520	118,348	11,828	1.1%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	451,928	53,282	1,354	0.3%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	305,378	328,328	22,950	0.7%
Management of Companies and Enterprises	31,829	41,601	9,772	2.7%
Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	186,316	215,679	29,363	3.5%
Educational Services	161,026	175,541	14,515	0.9%
Healthcare and Social Assistance	467,950	556,243	88,293	1.7%
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	36,200	53,068	16,868	3.9%
Accommodation and Food Services	198,820	225,942	27,122	7.3%
Other Services (Except Government)	140,530	144,662	4,132	0.3%
Postal Service	12,409	12,156	-253	0.2%
Government	279,084	298,584	19,500	0.7%

Source: <http://www.labor.maryland.gov/lmi/iandoproj/>

Maryland's diversified economy offers employment opportunity to individuals with low, high, or specialized skills. The table above illustrates the importance of isolating and targeting those industries most conducive to the provision of solid and viable employment to individuals at various levels of skill. MD SCSEP works with local employment partners to collaborate on best practices to engage, train, and ultimately place low-income seniors in jobs within industries that have the most potential for job growth. Currently, MD SCSEP is experiencing training assignment success within the following areas:

- Hospitality and Food Services,
- Administrative and Support Services,
- Healthcare and Social Assistance, and
- Civic, Professional, and similar organizations.

In addition to state and local government, these aforementioned areas are where the bulk of MD SCSEP trainees declare interest, receive training, and are ultimately placed for unsubsidized employment.

(2) Discuss how the long-term job projections discussed in the economic analysis section of strategic plan relate to the types of unsubsidized jobs for which SCSEP participants will be trained and the types of skill training to be provided. (20 CFR 641.302(d))

The long-term employment job projection between 2020 and 2030 in hospitality, food services, healthcare, administrative and support services, healthcare and social assistance, civic, professional and similar organizations emphasize the capacity for hard and soft skill

training. Soft skills such as communication, teamwork, job responsibility, and problem solving are an integral part of employment developed with participants in the non-profit sector serving the public. This training opportunity optimizes the capacity for unsubsidized employment for SCSEP enrollees in long-term employment.

Hard skill diversified training placements in reception personnel, food service workers, healthcare, instrument and lab coats inventory and delivery, case management and assistance, professional office administration assistance in civic, professional are in practice. Current training opportunities such as Computer Lab Monitor and assistance, hospital transporters, dietary aides, case management and assistance, receptionists, event program scheduling, library assistance, hospital lab coat/instrument inventory stocker/delivery training and support in government and local council offices increase the target goal of unsubsidized employment.

American Job Center referrals of SCSEP participants to WIOA Title I training and case management will provide additional opportunities to connect to training identified in the WIOA local plan as in demand.

Extended training for participants through the Department of Rehabilitation Services (DORS) in Job Access With Speech (JAWS) software training; a computer screen reader that allows blind and visually impaired users to read the screen either with text-to-speech output or by a refreshable Braille display; and independent Computer Foundation courses have also been utilized to increase employment opportunities.

Aligning MD SCSEP with High Growth Industries in Maryland

The long term projections in the areas of healthcare, administrative and support services, computer technology/training services, and food service, are industries of interest to MD SCSEP, as these are the industries in which the majority of the community service assignments are being developed.

Table: High-Growth Industries in Maryland 2020-2030

Of all the total industries in Maryland Industry Projections 2020 - 2030 , the chart below summarizes the industries of interest to MD SCSEP with increased growth potential and employment percent:

Industry	Employment 2020	Employment 2030	Percent Change
Ambulatory Health Care Services	176,555	186,330	0.5%
Warehousing and Storage	32,380	47,249	3.8%
Healthcare and Social Assistance	467,950	556,243	2.3%
Waste Management and Remediation Service	10,332	12,714	2.1%
Nursing Assistants	37,033	43,603	17.74%
Hospital/healthcare Orderlies	1,207	1,441	19.39%
Motion Picture and Sound Recording Industries	2,954	2,998	0.1%
Construction of Buildings	43,452	45,484	0.5%
Social and Human Service Assistants	11,197	14,192	26.75%

Industry	Employment 2020	Employment 2030	Percent Change
Social and Community Service Managers	4,563	5,560	21.85%
Sales Representatives, services	47,295	53,442	13%
Security Guards	26,819	32,070	19.58%
Stockers and Order Fillers	45,172	52,976	17.28%
Water Transportation Workers	1,354	1,433	5.83%

Source: <http://www.labor.maryland.gov/lmi/iandoproj/>

Occupational growth, which occurs by job without regard to specific industry, will also continue to factor into how MD SCSEP establishes and executes job development partnerships.

Table: Occupational Growth Projections 2020-2030

Occupational Code	Occupational Title	Employment 2020	Employment 2030	Projected Annual Percent Growth Rate
35-0000	Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations	198,384	221,573	11.69%
15-0000	Computer and Mathematical Occupations	165,712	192,508	16.17%
15-1100	Computer Occupations	155,003	178,976	15.47%
29-0000	Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations	217,084	245,077	12.92%
25-0000	Education, Training, and Library Occupations	189,141	213,743	13.01%
13-0000	Business and Financial Operations Occupations	230,281	253,080	9.90%
35-3000	Food and Beverage Serving Workers	105,345	115,845	9.97%
11-0000	Management Occupations	214,738	240,738	11.95%
13-1000	Business Operations Specialists	164,287	180,972	10.16%
53-0000	Transportation and Material Moving Occupations	239,426	262,910	9.81%
29-1000	Health Diagnosing and Treating Practitioners	148,959	167,924	12.73%
47-0000	Construction and Extraction Occupations	164,375	178,250	8.44%
39-0000	Personal Care and Service Occupations	88,388	111,090	25.68%

Occupational Code	Occupational Title	Employment 2020	Employment 2030	Projected Annual Percent Growth Rate
41-0000	Sales and Related Occupations	283,596	292,628	3.18%
43-0000	Office and Administrative Support Occupations	383,629	386,514	0.75%
37-0000	Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance Occupations	109,784	124,005	12.95%

Source: <http://www.labor.maryland.gov/lmi/iandoproj/maryland.shtml>

(3) Discuss current and projected employment opportunities in the state (such as by providing information available under §15 of the Wagner-Peyser Act (29 U.S.C. 491-2) by occupation), and the types of skills possessed by eligible individuals. (20 CFR 641.325(c))

Opportunities in Maryland's Healthcare Economy

Maryland has emerged as an international leader in healthcare, support services, and medical innovation. MD SCSEP participants increasingly are seeking training assistance that will help them qualify for healthcare industry-related jobs; therefore, the program will be intensely focused on cultivating and expanding training partnerships throughout the entire service area. Maryland has about 70 hospitals.

Table: Maryland Hospitals within the MD Labor SCSEP Service Area

Hospitals	Location
Western Maryland Regional Medical Center	Allegany County
Anne Arundel Medical Center	Anne Arundel County
Baltimore VA Medical Center	Baltimore City
Bon Secours Hospital	Baltimore City
The Johns Hopkins Hospital	Baltimore City
Johns Hopkins Bayview Medical Center	Baltimore City
Kennedy Krieger Institute	Baltimore City
Levindale Hebrew Geriatric Center and Hospital	Baltimore City
MedStar Good Samaritan Hospital of Maryland	Baltimore City
MedStar Harbor Hospital	Baltimore City
MedStar Union Memorial Hospital	Baltimore City
Mercy Medical Center	Baltimore City
Mt. Washington Pediatric Hospital	Baltimore City
St. Agnes Hospital	Baltimore City
Sinai Hospital of Baltimore	Baltimore City
University of Maryland Medical Center	Baltimore City
University of Maryland Medical Center Midtown Campus	Baltimore City
University of Maryland Rehabilitation and Orthopedic Institute	Baltimore City

Hospitals	Location
University of Maryland University Specialty Hospital	Baltimore City
VA Maryland HealthCare System Baltimore VA Medical Center	Baltimore City
MedStar Franklin Square Medical Center	Baltimore County
Greater Baltimore Medical Center	Baltimore County
Northwest Hospital	Baltimore County
Sheppard & Enoch Pratt Hospital	Baltimore County
University of Maryland, St. Joseph Medical Center	Baltimore County
Calvert health Medical Center	Calvert County
Carroll Hospital	Carroll County
Union Hospital	Cecil County
University of Maryland Charles Regional Medical Center	Charles County
University of Maryland Shore Medical Center at Dorchester	Dorchester County
Frederick Health Hospital	Frederick County
Garrett Regional Medical Center	Garrett County
University of Maryland Harford Memorial Hospital	Harford County
University of Maryland Upper Chesapeake Medical Center	Harford County
Howard County General Hospital	Howard County
University of Maryland Shore Medical Center at Chestertown	Kent County
Adventist Healthcare Germantown Emergency Center	Montgomery County
Adventist Healthcare Rehabilitation	Montgomery County
Adventist Healthcare Shady Grove Medical Center	Montgomery County
Adventist Healthcare Washington Adventist Hospital	Montgomery County
Holy Cross Germantown Hospital	Montgomery County
Holy Cross Hospital	Montgomery County
Montgomery Medical Center	Montgomery County
National Institutes of Health (NIH) Clinical Center	Montgomery County
Suburban Hospital	Montgomery County
Walter Reed National Military Medical Center	Montgomery County
Doctor's Community Hospital	Prince George's County
Fort Washington Medical Center	Prince George's County
Saint Luke Institute	Prince George's County
University of Maryland Prince George's Hospital Center	Prince George's County
Southern Maryland Hospital Center	Prince George's County
University of Maryland Bowie Health Center	Prince George's County
University of Maryland Laurel Medical Center	Prince George's County
University of Maryland Shore Emergency Center at Queenstown	Queen Anne's County
MedStar St. Mary's Hospital	St. Mary's County

Hospitals	Location
Edward W. McCready Memorial Hospital	Somerset County
University of Maryland Shore Medical Center at Easton	Talbot County
Meritus Medical Center	Washington County
Peninsula Regional Medical Center	Wicomico County
Atlantic General Hospital	Worcester County

<https://msa.maryland.gov/msa/mdmanual/01glance/html/hospital.html#hospital>

The University of Maryland Medical Center (UMMC), located in Baltimore, provides a full range of healthcare services to the Mid-Atlantic Region. The flagship academic medical center for the state, UMMC is comprised of 13 hospitals that make up the University of Maryland Medical System. As one of Baltimore's larger employers, UMMC provides workforce development programs for adults and teens. The University of Maryland Medical System employs over 9,000 people in Baltimore City alone. Currently, MD SCSEP participants assigned to UMMC are being trained in the patient registration, transport, hospitality, and administrative departments at UMMC. The goal is to expand the partnership with UMMC and other area medical centers and hospitals.

The table below further illustrates the projected job development (and need for skilled workers) in healthcare industry occupations.

Occupation Code	Occupational Title	2020	Employment 2030	Percentage Change	Education Value
29-2021	Dental Hygienists	4,702	4,716	0.30%	Associate's degree
31,991	Dental Assistants	6,140	6,187	0.77%	Postsecondary non-degree award
31-2022	Physical Therapist Aides	1,825	2,161	18.41%	High school diploma or equivalent
31-2021	Physical Therapist Assistants	5,470	6,973	27.48%	Associate's degree
31-9092	Medical Assistants	16,479	18,457	10.00%	Postsecondary non-degree award
31-2011	Occupational Therapy Assistants	1,025	1,371	33.76%	Associate's degree
31-2012	Occupational Therapy Aides	61	73	19.67%	High school diploma or equivalent

Occupation Code	Occupational Title	2020	Employment 2030	Percentage Change	Education Value
29-2035	Magnetic Resonance Imaging Technologists	1700	1,848	8.71%	Associate's degree
31-1011	Home Health and Personal Care Aides	42,564	56,785	33.41%	High school diploma or equivalent
29-2099	Health Information Technologists, Medical Registrars, Medical Assistants	3,332	3,650	9.54%	Postsecondary non-degree award
29-2081	Opticians, Dispensing	1,317	1,373	42.5%	High-school diploma or equivalent
29-2034	Radiologic Technologist	5,255	5,956.	13.34%	Associate's degree
29-2055	Surgical Technologists	2,664.	3,093	16.10%	Postsecondary non-degree award
31-9094	Medical Transcriptionists	1,168	1,239	6.08%	Postsecondary non-degree award
31-1014	Nursing Assistants	37,033	43,603	17.74%	Postsecondary non-degree award
29-2041	Emergency Medical Technicians and Paramedics	6,147	7,019	14.1%	Postsecondary non-degree award
29-2071	Medical Records and Health Information Technicians	3,332	3,650	9.54%	Postsecondary non-degree award

Source: <http://www.labor.maryland.gov/lmi/iandoproj/maryland.shtml>

Employment estimates by occupation are specific to the Healthcare and Social Assistance Sector industries.

Other Employment Opportunities in Maryland

Almost all of the occupations in Maryland that are projected to grow require either specialized long-term training, such as a secondary or postsecondary academic certificate or Bachelor's degree, or short-term OJT. MD SCSEP anticipates that as more high-skilled baby boomers age in the state, the program will experience the need to develop higher-level training assignments to attract and place older adults with college degrees who may also be experiencing poverty. However, the majority of current participants have no college degree and are therefore prime candidates for training opportunities that occur on the job or have shorter-term qualifying certification periods. The occupations that require short-term OJT include food preparation and service-related occupations including culinary training and certification, medical assistant training, transportation and material moving occupations,

office administration, personal care and service occupations, and building and grounds cleaning and maintenance occupations.

Occupations in the food service industry such as hosting, wait staff, food prep workers, and cooks require limited education and generally compensation tends to be on the lower end of the wage spectrum. The Maryland General Assembly increased minimum wage to \$ 15.00 per hour effective January 1, 2024 rather than waiting until 2025 under previous law. (This minimum wage increase excludes certain food service occupations.) Under MD SCSEP, participants are currently training at senior centers, veteran education and training center, hospital cafeterias, and restaurants as dietary aides, food preparers, and food handlers, and cooks, roles that traditionally are paid at least minimum wage. MD SCSEP plans to enroll eligible participants in training opportunities in culinary and ServSafe food handlers' certification programs. The completion of certification programs strengthens the participants' ability to secure and maintain unsubsidized employment.

Maryland's economic activity is strongly concentrated in the service sector, and this sector is a critical partner in helping workers gain unsubsidized employment. One major service activity is with the healthcare industry and nursing and orderly assistants with Baltimore, MD as being named as a metropolitan area with one of the highest employment levels in Orderlies. The health sector employment experienced a large drop in early 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic but has rebounded since. As of October 2023, the health sector added 58,400 jobs over the previous month. Jobs in the health sector are 3.9% higher than in February 2020 (the previous peak), compared to 2.9% in all other sectors.

Sources:

<https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes311132.htm#st>

<https://www.kff.org/coronavirus-covid-19/issue-brief/what-impact-has-the-coronavirus-pandemic-had-on-health-care-employment/>

Overall job opportunities for personal care and service are expected to grow. A large number of job openings will stem from the need to replace workers who transfer to other occupations, retire, or leave the occupation for other reasons.

Where appropriate, MD SCSEP will make an effort to ensure participants interested in pursuing these occupations can train at hospitals and nursing home facilities. Once trained these participants can seek unsubsidized employment with long term care facilities, such as rehabilitative facilities, nursing home facilities, and private assisted living homes.

Current and Projected Employment Opportunities in the State of Maryland

For a glance of Maryland's current employment opportunities see the chart below:

Table: Maryland Economy at a Glance

Data Series Labor Force Data	October 2024	November 2023	December 2023	January 2024	February 2024	March 2024
Civilian Labor Force ⁽¹⁾	3,198.0	3,194.7	3,195.5	3,192.8	3,191.1	3,193.4
Employment ⁽¹⁾	3,124.8	3,123.2	3,125.0	3,119.9	3,114.9	3,113.2
Unemployment ⁽¹⁾	73.2	71.6	70.5	72.8	76.2	80.2
Unemployment Rate ⁽²⁾	2.3	2.2	2.2	2.3	2.4	(p)2.5
Nonfarm Wage and Salary Employment						

Data Series Labor Force Data	October 2024	November 2023	December 2023	January 2024	February 2024	March 2024
Total Nonfarm	2,740.6	2,739.2	2,735.4	2,741.4	2,743.6	2,743.5
12-month percent change	0.6	0.5	0.6	0.2	0.2	(p)0.1
Mining, Logging and Construction ⁽³⁾	159.7	159.7	159.0	156.9	157.2	(p)157.6
12-month percent change	-1.8	-1.5	-1.7	-3.9	-3.3	(p)-3.0
Manufacturing ⁽³⁾	110.4	109.1	109.0	110.0	109.7	(p)109.6
12-month percent change	-1.2	-2.4	-2.4	-1.7	-2.1	(p)-2.2
Trade, Transportation and Utilities ⁽³⁾	467.9	468.7	466.2	466.4	465.0	(p)462.4
12-month percent change	-1.5	-0.8	-0.3	-1.1	-1.3	-1.8
Information ⁽³⁾	33.6	34.0	33.8	33.5	33.6	33.7
12-month percent change	-6.7	-5.6	-5.8	-5.9	-5.1	(p)-5.1
Financial Activities ⁽³⁾	137.9	138.3	138.2	138.0	137.4	(p)137.5
12-month percent change	1.9	-1.4	-1.1	-1.5	-1.9	(p)-1.7
Professional and Business Services ⁽³⁾	472.3	472.5	472.8	473.0	471.9	(p)470.3
12-month percent change	-1.9	-1.7	-1.2	-1.2	-1.5	(p) -1.8
Education and Health Services ⁽³⁾	465.4	464.8	464.2	465.9	470.3	(p)471.6
12-month percent change	3.8	3.5	3.4	2.5	3.2	(p) 3.4
Leisure and Hospitality ⁽³⁾	263.0	260.9	258.3	260.5	262.5	(p)262.7
12-month percent change	4.1	2.6	1.6	1.0	1.4	(p)1.0
Other Services ⁽³⁾	105.1	104.3	105.1	104.7	105.2	(p)105.6
12-month percent change	1.8	0.8	1.3	0.2	0.4	(p) 0.5
Government ⁽³⁾	525.3	526.9	528.8	532.5	530.8	532.5
12-month percent change	2.4	2.2	2.1	2.7	2.3	(p)2.2

Footnotes:

(1) Number of persons, in thousands, seasonally adjusted.

(2) In percent, seasonally adjusted.

(3) Number of jobs, in thousands, seasonally adjusted.

(p) Preliminary.

(r) Revised

Source: <http://www.bls.gov/regions/mid-atlantic/maryland.htm#tab-1>- Revised May 2024

MD SCSEP anticipates that it will be able to continue to assist older workers in gaining new skills and employment opportunities in line with the economic projections for the state. The program will utilize industry and occupational growth information to recruit new host agencies and develop new training partnerships; better allocate and prioritize the use of training funds across a broad spectrum of participant training needs; and to recruit effective employment partners in public and private industries and organizations.

b. Service Delivery and Coordination

1. A description of actions to coordinate SCSEP with other programs. This may alternatively be discussed in the State strategies section of the strategic plan, but regardless of placement in document, must include:

b.1.A. Service Delivery and Coordination

The SCSEP, as administered by the state and national grantee, respectively, is the main focal point of service delivery in job training for low-income older workers. SCSEP plays a vital role with regard to employment of the State's older population as 16.9 percent of Maryland residents are age 65 and older (US Census and the KFF). Despite a low national and state unemployment rate, Americans age 55+ suffer from higher rates of job loss and unemployment than other job seekers and many are postponing retirement due to choice or need. For all job seekers age 55+, the average job search takes 27.1 weeks or almost seven months (AARP PI). The labor force participation rate is expected to increase fastest for the oldest segments of the population through 2024 (Bureau of Labor Statistics).

As such, it is important that MD SCSEP closely coordinate the program activities with WIOA Title I and Title III programs; programs under the Older Americans Act (OAA); private and public entities; labor market and job training initiatives; community organizations; and other state programs. Program coordination ensures the reduction of barriers to participation for full spectrum analysis and resource referral process to participants receiving services.

MD SCSEP is in contact with the Baltimore City Community College regarding their education program for senior citizens and the University of Maryland's Golden ID Program that allows eligible unemployed seniors aged 60 and older to take advantage of the wide variety of courses at the University of Maryland in addition to certain privileges as determined by eligibility. Golden ID students who are enrolled at the university and are registered in a state-supported program will have their tuition automatically waived.

Planned actions taken to coordinate SCSEP with other programs

MD SCSEP plans to coordinate activities with other WIOA Title I and Title III programs, community and faith-based initiatives, and programs authorized under the Older Americans Act.

Specific actions are being taken to integrate the program into MD Labor's workforce development system and AJCs. Currently SCSEP Employment Specialists) are co-located with the AJC staff in Baltimore City, Southern Maryland, Western Maryland, and in the Upper Shore Local Areas. The Job Service Supervisors (who manage the daily operation of the AJC's local programs) and the Employment Specialists report directly to the Reemployment Programs Directors. SCSEP has coordinated activities with the AJC staff by engaging applicants into the workforce development system before being vetted into the program and

MD SCSEP will collaborate with AJC staff to ensure that issues of employment and training for older mature adults are considered in the local area plans. MD DOL will continue to build awareness through the AJCs and outreach to inform the senior population of the opportunities through SCSEP.

Additionally, both the MD SCSEP and National SCSEP have entered into Memoranda of Understanding that includes resource sharing agreements with AJCS in each county of operation, per WIOA regulations. All applicants must register in the MWE and complete orientation. Integration meetings were held and the key positions are implementing the following duties

Reemployment Program Directors/Job Service Supervisors Duties:

- Overseeing the local program.,
- Referring applicants to Title I for assessments,
- Matching SCSEP participants to AJC staff to assist with job coaching services, and
- Educating the Employment Specialists on all of AJCs programs and the MWE.

Program Manager Duties

- Provide technical assistance to the Employment Specialists and Directors of Reemployment to develop a system to exceed the program performance goals and targets and to transition participants from subsidized to unsubsidized employment.
- Lead, direct, supervise, and monitor the work activities of the Assistant Program Manager, and Employment Specialists. Train recent Employment Specialist hires.
- Assure maximum participation in the program among minorities and individuals with priorities of service.
- Plan and facilitate training to the Employment Specialists on new work processes.
- Prepare and submit an annual grant application, including program narrative, equitable distribution report, minority report, and organizational structure and chart.
- Prepare and submit the quarterly narrative reports, equitable distribution reports, and the SCSEP portion of the State's four year strategic plan.
- Collaborate with the Fiscal Manager to monitor the grant funds and expenditures to ensure compliance with cost allocations in the regulations. Ensure the 9130 report and close out reports are submitted in a timely manner.
- Share SCSEP updates, new work processes, and policies and procedures to the SCSEP staff to ensure coordinated efforts and continuous improvement of each local program.

Assistant Program Manager Duties

- Provide technical assistance to the Employment Specialists with managing and entering data in the national web-based system, SCSEP Performance and Results QPR System (GPMS) including intakes, exits and participant recertifications.
- Ensure Employment Specialists collect and report all the required data and are familiar with the latest instructions for data collection, including ETA administrative issuances (e.g. TEGLS, Data Collection and Data Validation Handbooks).
- Manage the data entry for other aspects of the national web-based entry system for SCSEP including host agency recertifications, host agency transfers, and follow-ups.
- Assist the Program Manager with the day to day operation of the SCSEP Program including generating reports, field staff training, staffing and special projects.
- Establish and maintain excellent contacts with the Department of Labor, Charter Oak, host agencies, participants and potential participants.
- Collaborate with the project manager, the operations supervisor, job service specialist and executive assistant at the AJCs.

- Maintain the local participant files.
- Check the accuracy of the GPMS management reports.
- Ensure all required payments for participant payroll and pay workers' compensation premiums are timely.

Employment Specialist Duties:

- Assist the Reemployment Program Directors in achieving and exceeding the performance goals and targets each program year and implementing the program directives in Allegany, Garrett, Charles, Calvert, St. Mary's, Washington, Caroline, Kent, Queen Anne's, Talbot counties, and Baltimore City.
- Organize, and facilitate orientations and outreach events throughout counties to recruit and select eligible individuals with priority service and/or minorities to ensure maximum participation in the program.
- Develop and implement an Individual Employment Plan (IEP) for each participant. Update and modify IEP twice per year to reflect the participant's progress and new goals.
- Collaborate with workforce investment boards, AJCs, VR, and disability service providers to maximize opportunities and co-enrollment for participants to obtain workforce development, education, and supportive services to help participants move into unsubsidized employment.
- Establish an initial goal of unsubsidized employment for participants and promote and facilitate job placement with host agencies or other organizations.
- Identify and recruit new 501(c)(3) organizations or public agencies as Host Agencies to provide a variety of training options that enable participants to increase their skill level and transition to unsubsidized employment.
- Orientate and train program participants and host agency supervisors and related personnel and offices on the program goals, objectives and policies, and procedures.
- Process and verify time and attendance in the State payroll system.
- Process payroll related requests.
- Plan and participate in job fairs, older worker conferences, training seminars, and other planned older worker events.
- Ensure program standards and goals are maintained through recruitment, placement and follow up, and individual durational limit exit.
- Recertify the income and program eligibility parameters of each participant at least once every 12 months.
- Train program participants and host agency supervisors on State's payroll system, Workday, and program procedures.
- Service and advise participants and host agency supervisors on SCSEP guidelines and procedures.
- Identifying, recruiting and engaging new applicants into the workforce development system and ensuring proper exit procedures;
- Establishing and cultivating partnerships with government and nonprofit organizations
- Monitoring participation in SCSEP and AJC training opportunities and activities;
- MD SCSEP staff will collaborate with AJC staff to coordinate activities

Business Service Representative Roles:

1. Conducting outreach to local businesses and promoting the program and the participants.

Coordination with other WIOA Programs

Maryland operates its Title I activities through its AJCs. All programs and services that are offered in the AJCs are available to SCSEP participants. At the present, MD SCSEP and the MD Labor, DWDAL are in active partnership with the AJCs located across Maryland. The AJCs provide comprehensive services to both job seekers and businesses. For the 11 regions that MD SCSEP serves, partnerships exist at five full service AJCs including:

1. Allegany County AJC (Allegany and Garrett counties);
2. Southern Maryland Job Source region (Charles, Calvert and St. Mary's counties);
3. Talbot County AJC (Caroline, Kent, Queen Anne's & Talbot counties);
4. Washington County AJC (Washington County); and
5. Baltimore City (Eastside Career Center and Northwest Career Center).

The Center for Workforce Inclusion, the national SCSEP grantee and its subgrantees, have partnerships with the following 12 counties to provide SCSEP services:

1. Baltimore City,
2. Baltimore County,
3. Anne Arundel County,
4. Carroll County,
5. Cecil County,
6. Dorchester County,
7. Harford County,
8. Howard County,
9. Montgomery County,
10. Prince George's County,
11. Somerset County,
12. Wicomico County, and
13. Worcester County.

Each SCSEP participant works with a SCSEP employment specialist and an AJC staff person to identify the services that would best assist with career goals and movement toward unsubsidized employment. The staff search for opportunities to utilize services provided under WIOA and other related programs available in the local job center. It is the goal of SCSEP to provide and utilize services and programs that are available in the AJCs to assist participants to attain individual and program goals. Participants are assessed and referred to additional services available in each AJC that will aid in reaching employment goals of their Individual Employment Plan (IEP).

MD SCSEP has integrated into MD Labor's AJCs. To strengthen these partnerships, MD SCSEP staff periodically schedule joint meetings with the Reemployment Programs Directors at these AJCs to find ways to work together more efficiently. Joint meetings will also ensure that all participants receiving services within the local AJCs become informed of the wealth of supportive services.

b. 1. B. Planned actions to coordinate activities of SCSEP grantees with the activities being carried out in the State under the other titles of the Older Americans Act (OAA). (20 CFR 641.302(h))

Coordination with other OAA Programs

Congress passed the Older Americans Act (OAA) in 1965 in response to concerns by

policymakers about a lack of community social services for older adults. Under Title V, the OAA also included community service training and employment for low-income, older Americans. Maryland Department of Aging (MDoA) administers and provides oversight of numerous programs that are authorized by the Older Americans Act. To help coordinate activities, the Secretary and the Deputy Secretary of the Maryland Department of Aging are fully aware of the agency activities conducted under other titles of OAA and will ensure that all opportunities for cooperation and leverage of resources are maximized.

In addition, the MD SCSEP Program Manager will make an effort to collaborate with the program managers from other titles of OAA such as the Aging and Disability Resource Center (known as Maryland Access Point), the Long-Term Ombudsman Program and the State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP) to better serve the same population. SHIP is a MD DOL SCSEP partner host currently training a participant in Medicare administrative duties. Participants in this customized training partnership will learn Medicare and Medicare supplemental policies, Medicare prescription drug programs, long-term care insurance, and private health insurance to answer questions and provide assistance to older Marylanders.

This training may also lead SCSEP participants to train as ombudsman representatives. MD SCSEP anticipates that each participant selected for this opportunity will become certified to visit residents in the long-term care facilities by receiving adequate training and preparation to effectively carry out the responsibilities of the training assignment. Calendar coordination for outreach programming at the senior management level of MDoA will also be implemented to maximize any opportunities for shared staffing and service recruitment resources statewide. If these activities occur outside of the MD SCSEP service area, the program manager will make a standard referral or request, as needed, for participation and follow-up.

(A) Planned actions to coordinate activities of SCSEP grantees with WIOA title I programs, including plans for using the WIOA AJC delivery system and its partners to serve individuals aged 55 and older. (20 CFR 641.302(g), 641.325(e))

Coordination with other WIOA Programs

Maryland operates its Title I activities through its AJCs. All programs and services that are offered in the AJCs are available to SCSEP participants. At the present, MD SCSEP and the MD Labor, DWDAL are in active partnership with the AJCs located across Maryland. The AJCs provide comprehensive services to both job seekers and businesses. For the 11 regions that MD SCSEP serves, partnerships exist at five full-service AJCs including:

1. Allegany County AJC (Allegany and Garrett counties);
2. Southern Maryland Job Source region (Charles, Calvert and St. Mary's counties);
3. Talbot County AJC (Caroline, Kent, Queen Anne's & Talbot counties);
4. Washington County AJC (Washington County); and
5. Baltimore City (Eastside Career Center and Northwest Career Center).

The Center for Workforce Inclusion, the national SCSEP grantee and its subgrantees, have partnerships with the following 12 counties to provide SCSEP services:

1. Baltimore City,
2. Baltimore County,
3. Anne Arundel County,
4. Carroll County,
5. Cecil County,
6. Dorchester County,

7. Harford County,
8. Howard County,
9. Montgomery County,
10. Prince George's County,
11. Somerset County,
12. Wicomico County, and
13. Worcester County.

Each SCSEP participant works with a SCSEP employment specialist and an AJC staff person to identify the services that would best assist with career goals and movement toward unsubsidized employment. The staff search for opportunities to utilize services provided under WIOA and other related programs available in the local job center. It is the goal of SCSEP to provide and utilize services and programs that are available in the AJCs to assist participants to attain individual and program goals. Participants are assessed and referred to additional services available in each AJC that will aid in reaching employment goals of their Individual Employment Plan (IEP).

MD SCSEP has integrated into MD Labor's AJCs. To strengthen these partnerships, MD SCSEP staff periodically schedule joint meetings with the Reemployment Programs Directors at these AJCs to find ways to work together more efficiently. Joint meetings will also ensure that all participants receiving services within the local AJCs become informed of the wealth of supportive services.

b. 1. C. Planned actions to coordinate SCSEP with other private and public entities and programs that provide services to older Americans, such as community and faith-based organizations, transportation programs, and programs for those with special needs or disabilities. (20 CFR 641.302(i))

Coordination with Public and Private Organizations

Through MD SCSEP and Center for Workforce Inclusion participants gain new employment training experience in a variety of community service activities at government agencies, nonprofits, and public facilities, including government offices, schools, hospitals, senior centers, churches, and community action centers.

Table: MD SCSEP Current Host Agencies

Current Host Agencies	County	Type
Allegany College of Maryland	Allegany	Not-for-profit
Allegany County Human Resources Development Commission (HRDC)	Allegany	Not-for-profit
Cumberland YMCA	Allegany	Not-for-profit
Embassy Theatre	Allegany	Not-for-profit
One-Stop Job Center	Allegany	Government
Western Maryland Food Bank, Inc.	Allegany	Not-for-profit
Baltimore City Council President's Office	Baltimore City	Government

Current Host Agencies	County	Type
Baltimore City Health Dept. (Division of Aging and Care Services)	Baltimore City	Government
Harford Senior Center	Baltimore City	Not-for-profit
MD Labor DWDAL/Apprenticeship Program	Baltimore City	Government
Eastside Career Center, Mayor's Office of Employment Development (MOED)	Baltimore City	Government
Maryland Center of Veterans and Education Training (McVet)	Baltimore City	Not-for-profit
Maryland State Library for the Blind and Print Disabled	Baltimore City	Government
Maryland & City Council - Recreation and Parks Division	Baltimore City	Government
Northwest Career Center (MOED)	Baltimore City	Government
Paul's Place	Baltimore City	Not-for-profit
SHIP- BC Health Department	Baltimore City	Government
University of Maryland Medical Center	Baltimore City	Not-for-profit
Waxter Senior Center BC Health Department	Baltimore City	Not-for-profit
Zeta Center BC Health Department	Baltimore City	Government
Calvert County Office on Aging	Calvert	Government
Meals On Wheels	Calvert	Not-for-profit
Tri-County Youth Services Bureau	Calvert/Charles/St. Mary's	Government
The Arc Southern Maryland	Calvert	Not-for-profit
Wags Workshop	Calvert	Not-for-profit
Caroline County Medical Adult Day Care	Caroline	Not-for-profit
Caroline Senior Center	Caroline	Government
Sudlersville Senior Center	Caroline	Government
Divine by Design	Charles	Not-for-profit
Humane Society of Charles County	Charles	Not-for-profit
Lifestyles of Maryland, Inc.	Charles	Not-for-profit
Loving Care Senior Services	Charles	Not-for-profit
MD Labor Job Source of Southern MD	Charles	Government

Current Host Agencies	County	Type
Pleasant Grove Missionary Baptist Church	Charles	Not-for-profit
Poiema Movement	Charles	Not-for-profit
Pure Play Every Day, Inc.	Charles	Not-for-profit
Redeeming Life Ministries	Charles	Not-for-profit
Senior Network Inc./Fenwick Landing	Charles	Not-for-Profit
Spring Dell Center, Inc.	Charles	Not-for-profit
The Arc Southern Maryland	Charles	Not-for-profit
Appalachian Parent Association, Inc.	Garrett	Not-for-profit
Garrett County Community Action Committee, Inc.	Garrett	Not-for-profit
Garrett County Public Schools	Garrett	Government
The Salvation Army	Garrett	Not-for-profit
Western Maryland Consortium	Garrett	Government
Westernport Senior Center	Garrett	Government
Amy Lynn Ferris Adult Activity Center	Kent	Government
PercyThomas-Kent Senior Center	Kent	Government
Grasonville Senior Center	Queen Anne's	Government
Sudlersville Senior Center	Queen Anne's	Government
Patuxent Habitat for Humanity	St. Mary's	Not-for-Profit
Three Oaks Center	St. Mary's	Not-for-profit
AJC of Talbot County	Talbot	Government
Aaron's Place	Talbot	Not-for-profit
Housing Commission of Talbot County	Talbot	Government
St. Michaels' Community Center	Talbot	Not-for-profit
Neighborhood Senior Center	Talbot	Not-for-profit
AJC of Washington County	Washington	Government
Boys & Girls Club of Washington	Washington	Not-for-profit
Gatekeepers	Wahington	Not-for-profit

Current Host Agencies	County	Type
Habitat for Humanity	Washington	Not-for-profit
Hagerstown Housing Authority	Washington	Government
Horizon Goodwill Industries-Hagerstown	Washington	Not-for-profit
Robert W. Johnson Community Center, Inc.	Washington	Not-for-profit
SAN MAR-Boster Community of Hope Office	Washington	Not-for-profit
Senior Living Alternatives, Inc.	Washington	Not-for-profit
The Interfaith Service Coalition	Washington	Not-for-profit
The Salvation Army	Washington	Not-for-profit
Washington County Commission of Aging	Washington	Not-for-profit
YMCA - Hagerstown	Washington	Not-for-profit

The participants train an average of 20 hours a week at their on-site training position and are paid the current state minimum wage. This training serves as a bridge to unsubsidized employment opportunities for participants.

Table: Center for Workforce Inclusion SCSEP Current Host Agencies

Current Host Agencies	County
AAWDC - Linthicum Heights	Anne Arundel
AAWDC - Arnold One Stop	Anne Arundel
Annapolis Housing Authority	Anne Arundel
Department of Aging	Anne Arundel
Department of Aging - Brooklyn Senior Center	Anne Arundel
Housing Authority of the City Annapolis	Anne Arundel
Lutheran Mission Society	Anne Arundel
Mead Village	Anne Arundel
Stanton Community Center	Anne Arundel
AAWDC Arnold One Stop	Baltimore City
ACS-Hope Lodge	Baltimore City
AIRS	Baltimore City
Baltimore City Health Department Care Services	Baltimore City
Baltimore City Health Dept. Chronic Dis. Dept.	Baltimore City
Baltimore City Health Dept. - Chronic Dis. Div.	Baltimore City
Baltimore Teacher's Network	Baltimore City

Current Host Agencies	County
Banner Neighborhoods	Baltimore City
Basilica Place	Baltimore City
Beans & Bread	Baltimore City
Coppin State University	Baltimore City
Coppin State University Dept. of Applied Psychology and Rehab. Counseling	Baltimore City
Coppin State University of Professional Studies, RCP Health & Human Service	Baltimore City
DORS - Towson	Baltimore City
Eastside Career Center One Stop	Baltimore City
Eubie Blake Central Center	Baltimore City
Fifth Regiment Army	Baltimore City
Forest Park Senior Center	Baltimore City
Generations Family Services	Baltimore City
Greenmount Senior Center	Baltimore City
HABC - Primrose	Baltimore City
HABC - Housing Application Office	Baltimore City
Harbor City Unlimited (Active)	Baltimore City
Harford County Office on Aging	Baltimore City
HEBCAC	Baltimore City
Leonard E. Hicks Community Center	Baltimore City
Levindale Adult Daycare Center	Baltimore City
Levindale Geriatric Center	Baltimore City
Light Health and Wellness	Baltimore City
Maryland Library For the Blind	Baltimore City
Mayor's Office of Constituent Services	Baltimore City
Mayor's Office of Human Services-Homeless Services Program	Baltimore City
McKim Community Association	Baltimore City
Next of Kin Supportive Housing, Inc.	Baltimore City
Project T.O.O.U.R.	Baltimore City
Sandtown Winchester Senior Center	Baltimore City
St. Ambrose Housing	Baltimore City
St. Ann's Adult Daycare	Baltimore City
Volunteers of America	Baltimore City

Current Host Agencies	County
Zeta Senior Center	Baltimore City
Alzheimers Association	Baltimore County
American Cancer Society	Baltimore County
AJC at Hunt Valley	Baltimore County
American Red Cross - MD	Baltimore County
American Red Cross Blood Services Division	Baltimore County
Baltimore County Department of Aging Division of Senior Centers	Baltimore County
Baltimore County Department of Aging Program and Resource Development	Baltimore County
Baltimore County Department of Aging, Senior Employment	Baltimore County
Baltimore County Dept. of Aging Home Team	Baltimore County
Baltimore County Dept. of Aging MAP	Baltimore County
Baltimore County Dept. of Aging, Senior Health Insurance Program	Baltimore County
Baltimore County Office of Child Support	Baltimore County
BCDA Ombudsman Office Parkville Office	Baltimore County
BCDA, Ombudsman Office	Baltimore County
Catholic Charities Nottingham	Baltimore County
Cedermere Elementary School	Baltimore County
Chimes Inc.	Baltimore County
Columbia Workforce Center	Baltimore County
Community Assistance Network Inc.	Baltimore County
Community Assistance Network - Randallstown	Baltimore County
Department of Health & Mental Hygiene - Office Of Health Care Quality	Baltimore County
Department of Social Services - Catonsville	Baltimore County
Department of Social Services - Dundalk	Baltimore County
Department of Social Services - Essex Office	Baltimore County
Department of Social Services - Reisterstown	Baltimore County
Department of Social Services - Townson	Baltimore County
Department of Social Services - (MEAP)	Baltimore County

Current Host Agencies	County
Dept. of Social Services – Day Resource Program Center	Baltimore County
DHMH – Office of Health Care Quality	Baltimore County
Diversified Housing Development Incorporated	Baltimore County
DORs Owings Mills	Baltimore County
Dundalk Renaissance Corporation	Baltimore County
Easter Seals Adult Day Care	Baltimore County
Eastpoint Workforce Development Resource Ctr.	Baltimore County
Eastside Community Development Corps.	Baltimore County
Essex Senior Center	Baltimore County
Fire Museum of Maryland	Baltimore County
Fleming Senior Center	Baltimore County
Greenmount Senior Center	Baltimore County
Liberty Senior Center	Baltimore County
Middle River Middle School	Baltimore County
Northwest Academy of Health Sciences	Baltimore County
Overlea Senior Center	Baltimore County
Parkville Senior Center	Baltimore County
Pearlstone Center	Baltimore County
Pikesville Adult Day Care	Baltimore County
Progressive Steps	Baltimore County
Unified Community Connections	Baltimore County
Windsor Mill Middle School	Baltimore County
Zeta Senior Center	Baltimore County
Carroll County Business & Employment Resource Center	Carroll County
McDaniel College	Carroll County
Westminster MVA	Carroll County
Cecil County Government	Cecil County
Cecil County Help Center	Cecil County
Goodwill Ind. of the Chesapeake, Inc.	Cecil County
On Our Own of Cecil County, Inc.	Cecil County
Union Hospital of Cecil County	Cecil County
Harriet Hunter Nutritional Center	Charles County
Delmarva Community Service Inc. Hurlock	Dorchester County
Delmarva Community Services Inc. Cambridge	Dorchester County
Division of Parole and Probation Dorchester County	Dorchester County
MD Labor Frederick	Frederick County
Frederick Branch Maryland Motor Vehicle Administration	Frederick County

Current Host Agencies	County
JCA SCSEP #66A	Frederick County
Motor Vehicle Administration - Frederick Branch	Frederick County
Goodwill Ind. of the Chesapeake, Inc.	Harford County
Habitat for Humanity Susquehanna - Aberdeen ReStore	Harford County
Harford County Office on Aging	Harford County
Havre de Grace Activity Center	Harford County
Perry Point VA Medical center	Harford County
DORS	Howard County
M.D.O.T. Columbia DMV	Howard County
Meals on Wheels - Howard County	Howard County
Patuxent Research Refuge	Howard County
Winter Growth, Inc.	Howard County
#661 JCA/SHIP	Montgomery County
Adventist Community Services of Greater Washington - #100	Montgomery County
America-China International Foundation - #114	Montgomery County
Asbury Methodist Village #49	Montgomery County
Catholic Charities - Montgomery County Family Center #108-1	Montgomery County
DHHS Income Support - Germantown #20	Montgomery County
DORS - Wheaton #122	Montgomery County
Easter Seals of Greater Washington #98 1	Montgomery County
Ethiopian Community Center - #137	Montgomery County
Holiday Park Senior Center	Montgomery County
Housing Initiatives Partner (HIP)	Montgomery County
Interfaith Clothing Center #70B	Montgomery County
JCA SCSEP #66A	Montgomery County
JCA/Connect-A-Ride - #663	Montgomery County
Jewish Coalition Against Domestic Abuse (JCADA)	Montgomery County
Jewish Community Center of Greater Washington #65	Montgomery County
Kensington Club #66C	Montgomery County
Misler Adult Day Care Center - #55	Montgomery County
MVA Gaithersburg Branch Office #99	Montgomery County
MVA Glenmont #23	Montgomery County
MVA White Oak- #127	Montgomery County
Phoenix Computers, Inc. - #162	Montgomery County
Silver Spring Regional Center - #18	Montgomery County
Social Security Administration - Rockville #30	Montgomery County
Social Security Administration - Silver Spring - #29	Montgomery County

Current Host Agencies	County
Thorne Kensington Club – Germantown	Montgomery County
Town Center Apartments – 348	Montgomery County
Bowie Nutrition Center	Prince George’s County
Crescent Cities Jaycees Foundation, Inc.	Prince George’s County
Department of Family Services	Prince George’s County
Department of Family Services Aging CARE Management Unit	Prince George’s County
Department of Family Services – Nutrition Program	Prince George’s County
Department of Family Services SCSEP Program	Prince George’s County
DHCD	Prince George’s County
Evelyn Cole Center	Prince George’s County
Galilee Community Development Corp	Prince George’s County
Guardian Angel Transforming Christian Counseling	Prince George’s County
Inclusion Services Inc.	Prince George’s County
Maryland Motor Vehicle Administration	Prince George’s County
Maryland Motor Vehicle Administration Largo	Prince George’s County
DORS	Prince George’s County
Office of Central Services	Prince George’s County
Prince George’s County Fire and EMS Landover	Prince George’s County
Prince George’s County Health Department	Prince George’s County
Prince George’s County Housing and Community Development	Prince George’s County
Prince George’s County SCSEP Program	Prince George’s County
Town of Capitol Heights	Prince George’s County
Town of Fairmont Heights	Prince George’s County
William Seymour College	Prince George’s County
Mac Inc. – SCSEP – Ringgold	Somerset County
Somerset County Commission On Aging	Somerset County
Board of Education Wicomico County	Wicomico County
Christian Shelter Inc.	Wicomico County
Deers Head Medical Center	Wicomico County
Goodwill Career Center and Retail Store	Wicomico County
Hope and Life Outreach	Wicomico County
Joseph House Workshop Homeless Shelter	Wicomico County
Lower Shore Shelter	Wicomico County
Mac Inc. – Senior Services – Administration	Wicomico County
Mac. Inc. – SCSEP Ringgold	Wicomico County
Wicomico County Free Library	Wicomico County
Ocean City Senior Center	Wicomico County

During the course of the next two years, MD SCSEP and Center for Workforce Inclusion will continue to promote collaboration and coordination among private and public organizations. MD SCSEP and Center for Workforce Inclusion's SCSEP will add more state and local government departments and agencies as new host agencies. To support the mandate to better serve minority populations, host agencies that serve in languages other than English will be sought as both MD SCSEP and prepares to expand job training activities amongst older Asian and Hispanic populations. MD SCSEP has further promoted services with multi-lingual information distributed throughout the regions.

MD SCSEP and the Center for Workforce Inclusion's SCSEP will continue to coordinate support services information with the representatives of both the State chapter of AARP as well as the following local AARP Maryland Chapters located throughout the service area:

State Chapter	AARP Maryland200 St. Paul Place, Suite 2510Baltimore, MD 21202
Allegany County	AARP Chapter 2400 Allegany County St. Lutheran Church 1601 Frederick Street Cumberland, MD 21502-1035
Baltimore City	AARP Chapter 4636 Baltimore City Baltimore Community College 6764 Reisterstown Road, Room 133A Baltimore, MD 21215-2306
Caroline County	AARP Chapter 0915 Caroline County Church of the Nazarene 10660 Greensboro Road Denton, MD 21629-3309
Charles County	AARP Chapter 3845 Jaycees Community Center 3090 Crain Highway Waldorf, MD 20601-2800
Kent County	AARP Chapter 3635 Kent County Upper Shore for the Aging 100 Schaubert Road Chestertown, MD 21620-1148
Talbot County	AARP Chapter 1601 Talbot County 400 Brookletts Avenue Easton, MD 21601-3404

MD SCSEP and SCSEP will continue to engage with AARP to make participants aware of AARP member benefits available in their communities. Further, MD SCSEP and SCSEP will identify the local employers in each of the county jurisdictions that signed the AARP Employer Pledge. Employers that have signed the pledge do so to reflect value of experienced workers and a belief in equal opportunity for all workers, regardless of age. For example, in Baltimore City, the Maryland Women's Heritage Center and DLA Piper, a national law firm, are two of the employers that signed the AARP Employer Pledge. To establish and inform their

recruitment of older workers in Maryland, MD SCSEP will partner with these employers in support of targeting these workers for current and future staffing needs.

Under the guidance and oversight of Maryland Department of Aging, the 19 Area Agencies on Aging (AAA) administer Older Americans Act programs at the local level; however, eight of the 19 AAAs are in the SCSEP service area. Of these eight, currently six AAAs serve as host agencies for the participants. These local agencies advocate for older adults, deliver services, and offer advice and feedback on aging issues. The community service assignments are mostly office and administrative support, food preparation, and service and community and social services. On a few occasions, the AAA hired participants upon the completion of their current training assignments.

b.1.D. Planned actions to coordinate SCSEP with other labor market and job training initiatives. (20 CFR 641.302(j))

SCSEP and Current Labor Market and Job Training Initiatives

MD Labor's Reemployment Program Directors will work directly with the SCSEP staff to analyze current labor market in each of the respective counties. They will increase the SCSEP staff's program knowledge about MD Labor's initiatives such as Apprenticeship, EARN Maryland, Wagner-Peyser, and other WIOA Programs. The goal is for the SCSEP staff to learn how to assess the participants' needs and select the right job training initiative.

The SCSEP staff will regularly attend the local and online staff workshops and trainings with job seekers to share job leads and potential participants actively seeking jobs.

b.1.E. Actions to ensure that SCSEP is an active partner in the AJC delivery system and the steps the state will take to encourage and improve coordination with the AJC delivery system. (20 CFR 641.335)

SCSEP and Maryland's AJC Service Delivery System

SCSEP remains a partner under WIOA and is a viable part of the AJC delivery system. The MD SCSEP staff, who are co-located in the AJCs, will continue to provide the career services, including determination of eligibility; outreach, intake, and orientation; initial assessment of skills, aptitudes, abilities, and supportive service needs; and job search and job placement.

On a regular basis, MD SCSEP will encourage and improve coordination in the AJC delivery system in the following ways:

- Identify and collaborate with workforce development professionals who can assist with Title III service delivery and other employment-related services, training referrals, job openings, resume writing, mock interviews, and career counseling.
- Screen and inform all new SCSEP applicants and current participants about MD Labor's AELS. The Office of Adult Learning helps Maryland adults who lack a high school diploma, basic reading, writing, and mathematical skills; and/or do not speak English as their first language.
- Register new applicants and participants in MWE and case manage applicants and participants progress using MWE.
- Partner with the Business Service Representatives in the AJCs to conduct outreach to local businesses to promote the program and the current participants.

b.1.F. Efforts to work with local economic development offices in rural locations.

Efforts the state will make to work with local economic development offices in rural locations

MD SCSEP continues to improve service delivery in rural areas. To further support local economic development in those areas, MD SCSEP will utilize program staff to collaborate and join local leaders in informing the business community of human capital and job training resources. MD SCSEP will also advocate for the expansion of support services in transportation to specifically connect older workers residing in rural areas with local employment opportunities. Coordination with other OOA programs will ensure that MD SCSEP maintains and expands its presence as an employment related service provider in rural areas. Where feasible, MD SCSEP will seek to be the employment partner of choice for businesses as well as older workers in rural Maryland.

b.2. The state's long-term strategy for engaging employers to develop and promote opportunities for the placement of SCSEP participants in unsubsidized employment. (20 CFR 641.302(e)) (May alternatively be discussed in the state strategies section of strategic plan.)

Long-term Strategies for Unsubsidized Employer Engagement for SCSEP in Maryland

MD Labor will make SCSEP participants a part of their pipeline of talent identified by staff administering business services. Staff administering business services will be trained to understand the program and participants as potential candidates for openings.

MD SCSEP will also continue to cultivate and grow relationships with host agency partners who have demonstrated their commitment to employing older workers by hiring SCSEP participants. Proper exit and follow-up procedures are critical to this area of employer engagement and will be measured as a job performance standard of MD SCSEP staff. The program aims to develop an internal network of training and job referrals completely comprised of proven hiring and training partners. These partners will assist MD SCSEP in advocating for older workers as viable human capital for Maryland businesses and agencies, and the program will rely on them to increase host agency, training partner, and employer recruitment and retention.

The Center for Workforce Inclusion Inc. Long-Term Strategy for Engaging Employers

The Center for Workforce Inclusion's sub grantees have well-established partnerships with local Chambers of Commerce. Sub grantees often attend meetings in order to network with local business representatives. Through training, sub grantees regularly get on a Chamber's agenda to engage employers by promoting both SCSEP and job ready participants.

To promote employer outreach, in attention to the AJCs, Center for Workforce Inclusion Program Officers also work with sub grantees to identify other employer organizations in order to increase the visibility of SCSEP. For example, Center for Workforce Inclusion promotes subgrantee engagement with local chapters of the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), a professional association of human resources professionals from various employers. These professionals are usually involved with hiring and tend to be focused on ensuring a diverse workforce, including mature workers. In addition, many of these SHRM chapters have a committee of volunteers willing to give their time to nonprofits. They can be a great resource for educating participants about what their companies look for in a new employee, helping prepare for interviews, and writing résumés that will get read.

Other Center for Workforce Inclusion employer outreach training focuses on showing sub grantees how to approach the hidden job market by establishing relationships with their local, county, and state economic development councils and accessing their press releases of

future or growing business announcements. Center for Workforce Inclusion staff trains sub grantees to approach these employers with the goal of establishing relationships as business partners. Job Development training of sub grantees will remain multi-focused. One area of focus will be to continue to promote the identification and targeting of local employers by using the internet, especially in rural areas. Another focus will be on the basics of how to conduct employer outreach. The training to be provided includes group activities, role playing, and videos about job development. Another area of focus will be to provide technical assistance geared towards developing advanced networking skills of both sub grantees and SCSEP participants.

Furthermore, as MD SCSEP increases employer engagement, the Center for Workforce Inclusion will also increase exploration of on-the-job-experience (OJE) as a method of expanding employer engagement. While OJE has not been widely utilized by the sub grantees in the past, the Program Officers will actively promote OJE as a tool for sub grantees to use in future PYs to gain more unsubsidized jobs for participant job seekers.

Source: Center for Workforce Inclusion

Center for Workforce Inclusion's Strategies for Preparing Participants for Unsubsidized Jobs

The Center for Workforce Inclusion's Program Officers will further expand sub grantees capabilities to use a multi-pronged approach to prepare participants for unsubsidized jobs. Center for Workforce Inclusion Program Officers develop turnkey tools that a subgrantee may use when meeting with participants. For example, a presentation has been developed on how to navigate a job fair that a subgrantee can deliver at a participant meeting. Additionally, Program Officers provide sample agendas and activities as well as facilitate job club meetings at subgrantee locations. Program Officers are often asked to present at participant meetings. Topics may vary and can include interviewing techniques, résumé writing tips, approaching the hidden job market, using social media in a job search, and completing online job applications.

Source: Center for Workforce Inclusion

b.3. The state's long-term strategy for serving minority older individuals under SCSEP. (20 CFR 641.302 (c))

The Long-term Strategy for Serving Minorities under MD SCSEP

Service to minorities under SCSEP is measured annually by USDOL. The Service to Minorities data report helps guide and inform efforts to engage diverse low-income seniors in job training activities.

Maryland state grantee enrollment levels for Asians, Native American Indians and individuals with two or more races have remained unchanged from PY 2019 to PY 2020. On the other hand, there has been a slight decrease in enrollment of Hispanic, Latino or Spanish origin.. Black and White Americans comprise the majority of the participant trainees in both PYs. Of all the race groups, Black Americans are enrolled at a higher percentage and White Americans are the second highest group to be enrolled in MD SCSEP as shown in the following table.

MD SCSEP and SCSEP have gaps in their respective programs reaching American Indian, Asian, Hispanic, Native Hawaiian and individuals who identify with two or more races. In response, both MD SCSEP and SCSEP will increase efforts to target these populations. The

local MD SCSEP staff will use faith based and social organizations as recruitment sources since minority groups who experience a language barrier often look to these organizations to connect with people of similar backgrounds.

The State of Maryland grantee will identify and target community organizations with demonstrated expertise in serving minorities and individuals with LEP. Specifically, targeting these organizations will expand the availability of training options for older adults who experience LEP as a barrier to employment. The MD Labor Reemployment Program Directors will help the program operators to identify and build partnerships with community leaders and organizations that are known and trusted by members of underserved communities. These organizations can then assist and support the program operators' targeted recruitment efforts.

Table: Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity

Race/Ethnicity	*PY 2021 YTD No.	*PY 2021 YTD %	** PY 2022 YTD No.	** PY 2022 YTD%
Native American or Alaska Native	0	0%	0	0%
Asian	0	0%	0	0%
Black or African American	44	68.75%	45	63.38%
Hispanic, Latino or Spanish Origin	1	1%	0	0%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0	0%	0	0%
White	20	31.25%	21	29.58%
Two or More Races	0	0%	0	0%

Source: *GPMS - Final PY 2021 Final End of Year-SCSEP Quarterly Progress Report

**GPMS - Final PY 2022 Final End of Year-SCSEP Quarterly Progress Report

Based on the 2020 American Community Service (ACS) data set, overall the entire State of Maryland consisted of 59.6 percent White alone, 30.5 percent Black Alone, 9.5 percent Hispanic or Latino, 6.5 percent Asian alone, 2.7 percent two or more races, 0.6 percent Native American alone, and 0.1 percent Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander alone in descending order. The low enrollment of Native American, Asians, Hispanics, Native Hawaiians, and individuals with two or more races in the MD SCSEP is in direct proportion with the total county population percentage by race/ethnicity in 2020 as shown in the following table.

Table: Total County Population Percentage by Race/Ethnicity, 2020

County	Native American or Alaska Native	Asian	Black or African American	Hispanic or Latino	Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	White	Two or More Race
Allegany	0.2%	1.1%	7.8%	1.8%	0.1%	88.3%	2.5%
Anne Arundel	0.3%	3.4%	15.5%	6.1%	0.1%	75.4%	2.9%
Baltimore City	0.3%	2.5%	61.6%	2.2%	0.1%	29.2%	2.1%

County	Native American or Alaska Native	Asian	Black African American	Hispanic or Latino	Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	White	Two or More Race
Baltimore County	0.3%	5.0%	26.1%	4.2%	0.0%	64.6%	2.4%
Calvert	0.5%	2.0%	14.2%	5.2%	0.2%	79.5%	3.6%
Caroline	1.0%	1.2%	13.8%	8.9%	0.3%	80.7%	3.0%
Carroll	0.2%	1.4%	3.2%	2.6%	0.0%	92.9%	1.5%
Cecil	0.3%	1.1%	6.2%	3.4%	0.0%	89.2%	2.2%
Charles	0.8%	3.5%	53.3%	7.5%	0.1%	38.2%	4.1%
Dorchester	0.3%	0.9%	27.7%	3.5%	0.0%	67.6%	1.9%
Frederick	0.3%	3.8%	8.6%	7.3%	0.0%	81.5%	2.8%
Garrett	0.3%	0.5%	1.0%	1.4%	0.0%	97.1%	1.1%
Harford	0.3%	2.4%	12.7%	3.5%	0.1%	81.2%	2.5%
Howard	0.3%	14.4%	17.5%	5.8%	0.0%	62.2%	1.7%
Kent	0.5%	1.5%	14.2%	5.0%	0.1%	81.5%	2.3%
Montgomery	0.4%	13.9%	17.2%	17%	0.1%	57.5%	4.0%
Prince George's	0.5%	4.1%	64.5%	14.9%	0.1%	19.2%	3.2%
Queen Anne's	0.5%	1.3%	6.2%	4.9%	0.1%	89.6%	2.2%
Somerset	0.3%	0.7%	42.3%	3.3%	0.0%	53.5%	1.7%
St. Mary's	0.5%	3.0%	15.6%	6.0%	0.1%	77%	3.7%
Talbot	0.5%	1.5%	12.8%	7.9%	0.3%	82.8%	2.2%
Washington	0.4% %	2.1%	13.5%	7.2%	0.01%	80.4%	3.5%
Wicomico	0.2%	2.5%	24.2%	4.5%	0.0%	68.7%	2.5%
Worcester	0.3%	1.1%	13.6%	3.2%	0.0%	82%	1.7%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau American Factfinder

For a comparison analysis of race and ethnicity for the state of Maryland versus the National Grantees, Center for Workforce Inclusion's and the state grantees, see the following tables. Source: SCSEP Analysis of Service to Minority Individuals, PY 2020 and PY 2021 Methodology: Unlike previous reports, this year's report covers two program years, PY 2020 and PY 2021. These analyses are based on the data that were used to construct the Final PY 2020 and PY 20220 and PY 2021 QPRs for SCSEP.

Table: American Indian Grantees

	SCSEP Percent Native American	Census Percent Native American	*Percent Difference	Less Than 80%	Significant(P<=.05)	Less Than 80%, Sig
National Grantees	2.3%	0.9%	255.6%	2	1	1

	SCSEP Percent Native American	Census Percent Native American	*Percent Difference	Less Than 80%	Significant(P<=.05)	Less Than 80%, Sig
Center for Workforce Inclusion (MD National Grantee)	1.6%	0.8%	200.0%	0	0	0
State Grantees	2.3%	2.0%	13.04%	8	0	0
Maryland State Grantee	0%	0%	0%	0	0	0

Source: <https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/ETA/seniors/pdfs/Volume1%20PY2021>.
SCSEP Performance Status Report PY 2021

Table: Asian Grantees

	SCSEP Percent Asian	Census Percent Asian	*Percent Difference	Less Than 80%	Significant(P<=.05)	Less Than 80%, Sig
National Grantees	3.4%	3.0%	113.3%	17	16	16
Center for Workforce Inclusion (MD National Grantee)	3.9%	3.6%	108.3%	0	0	0
State Grantees	2.0%	4.9%	40.8%	31	32	32
Maryland State Grantee	0.0%	0.0%	00.0%	0	0	0

Source: <https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/ETA/seniors/pdfs/Volume1%20PY2021>.
SCSEP Final Performance Report PY2021.PY2019 SCSEP Minority Report Vol Final 8.3.21.

Table: Black Grantees

	SCSEP Percent Black	Census Percent Black	*Percent Difference	Less Than 80%	Significant(P<=.05)	Less Than 80%, Sig
National Grantees	42.0%	17.5%	240.0%	1	1	1
Center for Workforce Inclusion (MD National Grantee)	45.3%	20.7%	218.8%	0	0	0
State Grantees	42.7%	16.4%	61.59%	8	0	0
Maryland State Grantee	63.38%	37.9%	40.20%	0	0	0

Source: <https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/ETA/seniors/pdfs/Volume1%20PY2021>.

SCSEP Performance Status Report PY 2021 .

Table: Hispanic Grantees

	SCSEP Percent Hispanic	Census Percent Hispanic	*Percent Difference	Less Than 80%	Significant(P<=.05)	Less Than 80%, Sig
National Grantees	12.2%	9.9%	123.2%	12	12	11
Center for Workforce Inclusion (MD National Grantee)	4.3%	7.3%	58.9%	1	1	1
State Grantees	10.9%	13.5%	19.26%	15	0	0
Maryland State Grantee	1.7%	1.9%	11.76%	0	0	0

Source: <https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/ETA/seniors/pdfs/Volume1%20PY2021>.

Table: Pacific Islander Grantees

	SCSEP Percent Pacific Islander	Census Percent Pacific Islander	*Percent Difference	Less Than 80%	Significant(P<=.05)	Less Than 80%, Sig
National Grantees	0.20%	0.10%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Center for Workforce Inclusion (MD National Grantee)	0.10%	0.00%	NA	NA	NA	NA
State Grantees	0.4%	0.00% %	N/A	2	1	1
Maryland State Grantee	0%	0.00%	NA	NA	NA	NA

Source: <https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/ETA/seniors/pdfs/Volume1%20PY2021>.

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Factors in SCSEP Employment Outcomes

The SCSEP Analysis of Service to Minority Individuals, PY 2020 and PY 2021 analyzed the employment outcomes achieved by SCSEP minority participants in PY 2021. In the tables 8-10 below, the analysis reviewed the common measures, entered employment, employment retention and average earnings between various race groups.

Table: Employment in Q4 Nationwide and for National and State Grantees by Race. In 2021, the overall unemployment rate for the United States averaged 5.3 percent, but the rate varied across race and ethnicity groups.

Maryland	Native American	Asian	Black	Pacific Islander	White
Employed	23.7%	25.8%	25.3%	6.1%	25.2%
Unemployed	8.2% %	5.0%	8.6%	6.9%	4.7%

<https://www.bls.gov/opub/reports/race-and-ethnicity/2021/home.htm>

Chart::

Maryland	Native American	Asian	Black	Pacific Islander	White
Retained	0.0%	0.0%	71.4%	0%	75.0%

Table: Common Measures Average Earnings: Race

Maryland	Black	White
Median Weekly Earnings	950.	1,231.

Based on this analysis, Asians and Blacks were employed more often than Native Americans, Whites and Pacific Islanders. Whites and Blacks retained employment with resulting higher average earnings than other race groups.

Source: <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/wkyeng.t03.htm>

Steps to address under-service or disparities

The Maryland State Grantee recognizes the disparity in minority enrollment and will be continuing to take steps to address an increase in enrollment, service, and support to minority communities and partnering nonprofits, potential partner nonprofits, and seniors seeking enrollment. Each regional SCSEP staff member will first review cultural competencies and actively outreach to communities, partner programs, government offices, and nonprofits. Both MD SCSEP and SCSEP recognize there are gaps in the program to reach Native American, Asian, Hispanic, Native Hawaiian and individuals who identify with two or more races. MD DOL SCSEP and SCSEP will continue to increase efforts to target these populations. The local MD SCSEP staff will use faith based and social organizations as recruitment sources since minority groups who experience a language barrier often look to these organizations to connect with people of similar backgrounds.

The State of Maryland grantee will identify and target community organizations with demonstrated expertise in serving minorities and individuals with LEP. Specifically, targeting these organizations will expand the availability of training options for older adults who experience LEP as a barrier to employment and MD Labor will support these efforts by utilizing resources of interpreters and translators under the DWDAL-DUI 2022 Language Access Plan. MD Labor's Reemployment Program Directors s will assist the program operators to identify and build partnerships with community leaders and organizations that are known and trusted by members of underserved communities and support the program operators' targeted recruitment efforts.

Source: Grant Application - Minority Report

b.4. A list of community services that are needed and the places where these services are most needed. Specifically, the plan must address the needs and location of those individuals most in need of community services and the groups working to meet their needs. (20 CFR 641.330)

Exact Placement of Most Needed Community Services

Community services that support employment activity continue to be of critical need to the MD SCSEP service area. The most needed community support service throughout the MD SCSEP service area is for transportation. While Baltimore City MD SCSEP participants

experience a variety of public and private transportation options, many low-income seniors residing in the remaining areas do have access to a regional interconnected transportation system. MD SCSEP participants experience a limitation in training options and future placement due to unmet transportation needs in the community.

Other services that are needed throughout the service area, based on United Way and other area needs assessments, include: the availability of fresh, affordable food; access to affordable and accessible healthcare; the availability of food service to persons who are homebound or limited mobility; the availability of affordable housing for seniors; the availability of postsecondary training options, e.g. certification and community college programs; and the availability of programs to support literacy and English proficiency. These services are needed in all 11 counties in the MD SCSEP service area. In many regions, a primary need is affordable senior housing in lieu of the established transportation resources. The lack of access to computers and internet is also a detriment to job seeking resources for many participants.

b.5. The state's long-term strategy to improve SCSEP services, including planned long-term changes to the design of the program within the state, and planned changes in the use of SCSEP grantees and program operators to better achieve the goals of the program. This may include recommendations to the Department as appropriate. (20 CFR 641.302(k))

Long-term Strategies to Improve MD SCSEP Services, including Planned Long-term Changes to the Design of the Program with the State

The State's long-term strategy to improve its MD SCSEP services is to integrate the program into MD Labor's workforce delivery system. New applicants interested in the program are oriented to the AJC by registration in the MWE and become job seekers immediately. SCSEP participants have access to Job Service Specialists to help them find employment and assist participants to access necessary services to move the recipient to unsubsidized employment.

The Reemployment Programs Directors will oversee the local programs and staff to ensure integration occurs. The Employment Specialists will report directly to the Reemployment Program Directors or the Job Service Supervisors. The SCSEP Program Manager will monitor and provide technical assistance to the local SCSEP team to ensure they meet and exceed federal requirements. The SCSEP Program Manager will also ensure that all current participants in the program rotate after reaching their training benchmarks in a training assignment.

SCSEP concentrated on the intake (participant onboarding), participant departures, and host agency re-certification processes. Each of these processes was mapped out and a standardized process was developed for all SCSEP staff and continues following the national database rollover in July 2022 from SPARQ to GPMS - Grantee Performance Management System. The state developed one standardized process for all work processes with the goal of improving work efficiency.

Mostly with partnerships with local WIOA programs, SCSEP will continue to better align with community colleges to expand training opportunities for older workers throughout the service area. MD SCSEP is in contact with the Baltimore City Community College regarding their reduced tuition education program for senior citizens and the University of Maryland's Golden ID Program which allows eligible unemployed seniors age 60 and older to take advantage of the wide variety of courses at the University of Maryland at a reduced or no cost. WIOA partners have an ongoing partnership with the local community colleges and

SCSEP will encourage participants to enroll in classes through WIOA. If WIOA eligible, then WIOA will pay for the class.

The Maryland SCSEP program will continuously assess ways to improve SCSEP service delivery including measuring the effectiveness of staff, quality of host agency partnerships and training outcomes, and placement performance. Semi-annually, Maryland staff are regularly evaluated on their work performance in accordance with the standards of their agency as well as in relation to program performance goals as articulated by USDOL. MD Labor is exploring and will continue to explore resources to benefit local programs where SCSEP programs are best served. MD Labor is in the process of exploring additional workshops and resources on a local level such as “Dress for Success”, that might assist participants. In addition, MD DOL SCSEP partners with the nonprofit Phoenix Computers which sells refurbished computer equipment with basic programming at a nominal cost to eligible persons referred by MD DOL. This promotes the training of participants on their own computers at home and accessing free training modules through Alison.com and CGF Global.org.

Further, MD SCSEP will continue to explore coordinating a combined employer engagement initiative with SCSEP to highlight SCSEP operations in Maryland. The goal of this initiative is to ensure that both SCSEP grants in Maryland meet the “entered employment” performance goal annually in every jurisdiction in the state.

b.6. The state’s strategy for continuous improvement in the level of performance for SCSEP participants’ entry into unsubsidized employment, and to achieve, at a minimum, the levels specified in OAA Section 513(a)(2)(E)(ii). (20 CFR 641.302(f))

As authorized under Title V of the Older Americans Act (OAA), [42 U.S.C. 3056](#) *et seq.*, and the Older Americans Act Reauthorization Act of 2016, [Public Law 114-144](#) (Apr. 19, 2016), Congress amended the Older American Act giving new performance measures to SCSEP. In PY 2021-2022, both the MD and SCSEP will continue to use existing, effective strategies to meet the performance targets for service level, most-in-need, and community service hours. Below is a chart of the strategies that MDS and SCSEP will utilize to meet the following new SCSEP performance measures:

The percentage of project participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the project. Strategies:

- Both MD and SCSEP will focus on developing robust follow-up systems for connecting with exited participants to collect this performance data.
- To ensure the ability to contact participants after exit, SCSEP will collect release forms from participants at initial orientation.
- The median earnings of project participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the project. Strategies:
- Both MD and SCSEP will continue to focus on developing robust follow-up systems for connecting with exited participants to collect this performance data.
- To ensure the ability to contact participants after exit, both SCSEP programs will collect release forms from participants at initial orientation.
- Both SCSEP programs will continue to build their relationships with employers as a means of increasing their ability to collect earnings data from employers, in addition to following up with exited participants.
- The percentage of project participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the 4th quarter after exit from the project. Strategies:

- Both MD and SCSEP will continue to focus on developing robust follow-up systems for connecting with exited participants to collect this performance data until such time as MD Labor succeeds in providing access to UI records to SCSEP providers.
- To ensure the ability to contact participants after exit, both SCSEP programs will collect release forms from participants at initial orientation.
- Both SCSEP programs recognize that this measure is applicable to all participants who have exited SCSEP, not just those that exited for unsubsidized employment. Without access to UI data, successful attainment of this measure will mean that both programs develop follow-up contact touch points at regular intervals with those who exited prior to the 4th quarter after exit.
- Effectiveness in serving participants. Strategy:
- Both SCSEP programs in MD will implement the established annual participant satisfaction survey process to attain this goal.
- Effectiveness in serving host agencies. Strategy:
- Both SCSEP programs in MD will implement the established MD Labor host agency satisfaction survey process to attain this goal.
- Effectiveness in serving participants. Strategy:
- Both SCSEP programs in MD will implement the established MD Labor Employer Satisfaction survey process to attain this goal.
- Effectiveness in customer satisfaction. Strategy:
- Both SCSEP programs in MD will strive to improve customer satisfaction including participants and host agencies by consulting with other State and National grantees on their best practices

Strategies for Continuous Improvement in Unsubsidized Placement Performance for MD SCSEP Participants

- To maximize a participant's opportunity to enter into unsubsidized employment, MD SCSEP intends to implement several strategies to improve placement performance, including:
-
- Educate and empower host agencies to value older workers and where possible, hire MD SCSEP participants;
- Encourage MD SCSEP participants to pursue and participate in community college courses and/or certificate training programs;
- Provide programmatic information sessions for local businesses and potential employers to increase awareness of the MD SCSEP brand in the counties within the service area; and
- Charge local MD SCSEP staff with cultivating relationships with local businesses as potential OJE partners in each jurisdiction.

c. Location and Population Served, including Equitable Distribution

c.1. A description of the localities and populations for which projects of the type authorized by title V are most needed. (20 CFR 641.325 (d))

Maryland is a unique state comprised of 23 counties and the City of Baltimore, bordering the District of Columbia, Delaware, Pennsylvania, and Virginia. The majority of Maryland's population is concentrated in the cities and suburbs surrounding Washington, D.C., and Maryland's most populous city, Baltimore.

Every PY, USDOL employs a formula to determine the number of SCSEP participant slots to be awarded to a state or national grantee, by county and by population distributed over urban

and rural areas of a particular state. That number seeks to provide the grantee with a balanced number of slots for participation in areas that are defined as urban or rural by the United States Census. “Equitable Distribution” refers to the grantees’ ability to administer SCSEP fairly and equitably amongst older workers residing in urban and rural zip codes within their service area over the duration of the PY.

c. 2. List the cities and counties where the project will be conducted. Include the number of SCSEP authorized positions and indicate where the positions changed from the prior year.

Table: State Grantee & National Grantee Authorized Position by County:

State Grantee Authorized Positions

County	PY 2022	PY 2023	PY 2022 - 2023 Change
Allegany	12	12	0
Anne Arundel	38	38	0
Baltimore County	0	0	0
Baltimore City	38	38	0
Calvert	6	6	0 +
Caroline	5	5	0
Carroll	14	10	-4
Cecil	0	0	0
Charles	11	11	0
Dorchester	0	0	0
Frederick	0	0	0
Garrett	5	5	0
Harford	0	0	0
Howard	0	0	0
Kent	2	3	+1
Montgomery	0	0	0
Prince George's	0	0	0
Queen Anne's	3	3	0
St. Mary's	9	9	0
Somerset	0	0	0
Talbot	5	5	0
Washington	17	17	0
Wicomico	0	0	0
Worcester	0	0	0

The total PY 2022 - PY 2023 Change for State grantee authorized position is +1 .

National Grantee Authorized Positions

County	PY 2016	PY 2017	PY 2016 - PY 2017 Change
Allegany	0	0	0
Anne Arundel	0	0	0
Baltimore County	94	81	-13
Baltimore City	110	91	-19
Calvert	0	0	0
Caroline	0	0	0
Carroll	0	0	0
Cecil	12	11	-1
Charles	0	0	0
Dorchester	6	5	-1
Frederick	14	16	2
Garrett	0	0	0
Harford	19	18	-1
Howard	17	14	-3
Kent	0	0	0
Montgomery	68	70	2
Prince George's	59	60	1
Queen Anne's	0	0	0
St. Mary's	0	0	0
Somerset	5	5	0
Talbot	0	0	0
Washington	0	0	0
Wicomico	14	12	-2
Worcester	9	7	-2
Total	427	390	-63

The table above illustrates the reduction in the total authorized positions in Maryland as a result of Congressional budget cuts to SCSEP for the PY starting on July 1, 2017.

c. 3. Describe current slot imbalances and proposed steps to correct inequities to achieve equitable distribution.

To monitor and correct inequities on an ongoing basis, both MD SCSEP and SCSEP will implement the following strategies on behalf of achieving equitable distribution for all statewide SCSEP positions:

Use USDOL “Tables by State” from www.scseped.org to regularly check equity status focusing on addressing counties that are under equity by 50 percent or more and over equity by 150 percent or more. Where counties are under equity, both MD SCSEP and SCSEP will focus project staff to enroll being mindful of the SCSEP priorities of service. Where counties are over equity, both MD SCSEP and SCSEP will focus their respective project staff to curtail enrollment and focus on exiting participants into unsubsidized placement to bring equity into alignment.

If appropriate both programs will strategize and maximize opportunities to collaborate effectively on the transfer of positions where such an action will put both grantees on track to achieve equitable distribution with the least disruption to the participant.

Table: PY 2023 Q1 Maryland Equitable Distribution Status

FIPS	County	No. of MD SCSEP Modified Positions	No. of MD SCSEP Current Enrollments	MD SCSEP Variance	No. of Modified Positions	No. of Current Enrollments	Variance
24001	Allegany	6	6	0	0	-	-
24003	Anne Arundel	-	-	-	27	13	-14 (-52%)
24005	Baltimore County	-	-	-	-	-	-
24009	Calvert	3	2	-1	-	-	-
24011	Caroline	3	3	-0	-	-	-
24013	Carroll	-	-	-	7	3	-4 (-57%)
24015	Cecil	-	-	-	8	16	8 (200%)
24017	Charles	6	4	-2	-	-	-
24019	Dorchester	-	-	-	-	-	-
24021	Frederick	-	-	-	12	5	-7
24023	Garrett	3	3	0	-	-	-
24025	Harford	-	-	-	13	4	-9 (-69%)

FIPS	County	No. of MD SCSEP Modified Positions	No. of MD SCSEP Current Enrollments	MD SCSEP Variance	No. of Modified Positions	No. of Current Enrollments	Variance
24027	Howard	-	-	-	10	5	-5 (-50%)
24029	Kent	1	0	-1 (	-	-	-
24031	Montgomery	-	-	-	-	-	-
24033	Prince George's	-	-	-	-	-	-
24035	Queen Anne's	2	0	-2	-	-	-
24037	St. Mary's	5	5	0	-	-	-
24039	Somerset	-	-	-	4	2	-2
24041	Talbot	3	1	-2	-	-	-
24043	Washington	8	8	0	-	-	-
24045	Wicomico	-	-	-	-	-	-
24047	Worcester	-	-	-	5	1	-4
24510	Baltimore City	20	18	-2	-	-	-

For PY 2023 , MD SCSEP will refer to the Equitable Distribution Report and closely monitor the equitable distribution throughout the State. The report will be shared with the Reemployment Programs Directors Employment Specialists, and sub grantees. MD SCSEP will continue to participate in SCSEP Sponsors Meeting with the Center for Workforce Inclusion and to discuss best practices for improving equitable distribution.

For the Maryland counties that are under serviced, recruitment efforts will be concentrated on community groups and social nonprofit organizations to identify potential participants. Both programs will reemphasize the importance of equity with the number of modified positions per county and provide the necessary training. Training will be conducted on an individual basis and on a group basis.

List the cities and counties where the project will be conducted. Include the number of SCSEP authorized positions and indicate where the positions changed from the prior year.

Table: State Grantee & National Grantee Authorized Position by County:

State Grantee Authorized Positions

County	PY 2022	PY 2023	PY 2022 - 2023 Change
Allegany	12	12	0
Anne Arundel	38	38	0

Baltimore County	0	0	0
Baltimore City	38	38	0
Calvert	6	6	0 +
Caroline	5	5	0
Carroll	14	10	-4
Cecil	0	0	0
Charles	11	11	0
Dorchester	0	0	0
Frederick	0	0	0
Garrett	5	5	0
Harford	0	0	0
Howard	0	0	0
Kent	2	3	+1
Montgomery	0	0	0
Prince George's	0	0	0
Queen Anne's	3	3	0
St. Mary's	9	9	0
Somerset	0	0	0
Talbot	5	5	0
Washington	17	17	0
Wicomico	0	0	0
Worcester	0	0	0

The total PY 2022 - PY 2023 Change for State grantee authorized position is +1 .

National Grantee Authorized Positions

County	PY 2016	PY 2017	PY 2016 - PY 2017 Change
Allegany	0	0	0
Anne Arundel	0	0	0
Baltimore County	94	81	-13
Baltimore City	110	91	-19
Calvert	0	0	0
Caroline	0	0	0
Carroll	0	0	0
Cecil	12	11	-1
Charles	0	0	0
Dorchester	6	5	-1
Frederick	14	16	2
Garrett	0	0	0
Harford	19	18	-1
Howard	17	14	-3
Kent	0	0	0

Montgomery	68	70	2
Prince George's	59	60	1
Queen Anne's	0	0	0
St. Mary's	0	0	0
Somerset	5	5	0
Talbot	0	0	0
Washington	0	0	0
Wicomico	14	12	-2
Worcester	9	7	-2
Total	427	390	-63

The table above illustrates the reduction in the total authorized positions in Maryland as a result of Congressional budget cuts to SCSEP for the PY starting on July 1, 2017.

c.4. The State's long-term strategy for achieving an equitable distribution of SCSEP positions within the State that:

c.4.A. Moves positions from over-served to underserved locations within the State in compliance with 20 CFR 641.365.

To monitor and correct inequities on an ongoing basis, MD SCSEP and SCSEP will implement the following strategies:

Prepare and review EDR quarterly and discuss variances with Reemployment Program Directors, Employment Specialists, and sub grantees during quarterly conference calls and meetings.

Review EDR semi-annually and develop strategies needed to achieve equitable distribution.

Monitor local equity distribution status using a variance measurement of +/- 50 percent. SCSEP local staff and sub-grantees will be informed of their current status and provided technical assistance to ensure that they serve the appropriate number of authorized positions per county by the end of each PY.

c.4.B. Equitably Serves Rural and Urban Areas

To monitor and correct inequities on an ongoing basis, MD SCSEP and SCSEP will implement the following strategies:

Prepare and review EDR quarterly and discuss variances with Reemployment Program Directors, Employment Specialists, and sub grantees during quarterly conference calls and meetings.

Review EDR semi-annually and develop strategies needed to achieve equitable distribution.

Monitor local equity distribution status using a variance measurement of +/- 50 percent. SCSEP local staff and sub-grantees will be informed of their current status and provided technical assistance to ensure that they serve the appropriate number of authorized positions per county by the end of each PY.

The intent to equitably serve rural and urban counties is ongoing throughout our Maryland jurisdiction. American Job and Career Centers are a segue to both communities and a source of potential enrollees requesting SCSEP services through our regional workforce partner referrals and Center visits. Those seeking employment and training show commitment to their goals by visiting our Centers, registering with the Maryland Workforce Exchange, and meeting with the regional SCSEP Employment Specialist. There is also opportunity for SCSEP informational presentations in the events and workshops, and scheduled SCSEP open house sessions in the Centers advertised in establishments around the areas frequented by seniors. In addition, servicing our partner Host Agencies in both urban and rural areas also offers many opportunities for potential hosts and enrollees seeking services and on-site informational sessions. Many offer invitations to their regularly scheduled non-profit sessions to introduce SCSEP.

c.4.C. Serves individuals afforded priority for service under 20 CFR 641.520. (20 CFR 641.302(a), 641.365, 641.520)

To monitor and correct inequities on an ongoing basis, MD SCSEP and SCSEP will implement the following strategies:

Prepare and review EDR quarterly and discuss variances with Reemployment Program Directors, Employment Specialists, and sub grantees during quarterly conference calls and meetings.

Review EDR semi-annually and develop strategies needed to achieve equitable distribution.

Monitor local equity distribution status using a variance measurement of +/- 50 percent. SCSEP local staff and sub-grantees will be informed of their current status and provided technical assistance to ensure that they serve the appropriate number of authorized positions per county by the end of each PY.

Maryland SCSEP addresses the needs of those receiving priority of service through long-term strategy supported by our regional workforce partners. There are many facets to the priority of service SCSEP persons receive. Referrals are through our local Job and Career Centers, local workforce partners, and partner host agencies offering supportive services. There is also an influx of calls from outside organizations seeking SCSEP services for their clients.

- To provide Veteran SCSEP enrollees employment opportunities, the Maryland Workforce Exchange and regional veteran employment representatives refer local businesses and employer organizations for career opportunities. The Disabled Veterans Outreach Program (DVOP) staff also provides referrals to SCSEP eligible veterans who require training to reenter the workforce.
- The homeless are referred to SCSEP by numerous partner host agencies and shelter organizations that offer support services and, with enrollment and SCSEP stipend wages, many have been able to secure subsidized housing which greatly benefits their emotional and physical well-being.
- The SCSEP team members conduct outreach to the local detention centers and, following enrollment and training, refer to those employers with hiring policies conducive to the formerly incarcerated.
- Together, with our Job and Career Centers, SCSEP coordinates with local colleges offering educational support for those who wish to continue their education.
- In addition, our partnering hosts offer disabled persons the needed support to move forward with their employment goals during their training. Our Maryland Department

of Disabilities (MDOD) offers guidance on service delivery for individuals with disabilities.

- To serve those with limited English proficiency SCSEP has access to interpreters and translators using resources available through the DWDAL 2022 Language Access Plan.

This intertwining of SCSEP servicing to those receiving priority service is crucial to their training placement and reentry into the workforce.

c. 5. The ratio of eligible individuals in each service area to the total eligible population in the State. (20 CFR 641.325(a))

Ratio of Eligible Individuals in Each Service Area to Total Eligible Population in the state

The population for the state of Maryland by the U.S. Census in July 2022 was 6,164,660.

Table: Limited Maryland Population and Poverty Chart, by county

County	Total Estimate County Population (2022-year Population Estimate)	Total Estimate Male 65 years and older	Total Estimate Female 65 years and older	Total Estimate 55 - 59 years	Total Estimate 60-64 years	Total Estimate 65-69 years	Total Estimate 70 -74 years	Total Estimate 75-79 years
Allegany	67,267	7,451	6,742	4,713	4,566	3,606	3,994	2,398
Anne Arundel	576,031	12,845	14,767	41,285	35,320	35,320	22,718	15,491
Baltimore County	828,431	20,339	24,711	58,482	55,356	4,505	34,359	23,611
Calvert	94,573	7,771	7,834	7,695	6,467	4,900	3,535	2,751
Caroline	33,433	2,894	3,024	1,267	1,133	766	774	506
Cecil	102,826	2,699	2,964	8,112	7,143	5,663	4,383	2,807
Charles	170,102	11,443	12,201	12,653	10,204	7,289	5,663	3,394
Dorchester	31,998	983	1,149	2,520	2,459	2,132	1,833	1,287
Frederick	255,648	5,806	6,404	19,001	15,604	12,210	9,574	6,432
Garrett	28,579	5,453	3,451	2,199	2,581	2,030	1,765	1,245
Harford	253,956	6,408	7,159	19,620	16,887	13,567	10,930	7,504
Howard	323,196	7,142	7,949	23,086	19,119	15,091	12,188	7,943
Kent	19,320	1,979	2,297	1,186	863	1,788	1,353	461
Montgomery	1,052,567	24,183	28,317	72,809	65,294	52,500	40,161	27,871
Prince George's	909,308	19,070	25,198	63,955	54,097	44,268	31,714	20,482

County	Total Estimate County Population (2022-year Population Estimate)	Total Estimate Male 65 years and older	Total Estimate Female 65 years and older	Total Estimate 55 - 59 years	Total Estimate 60-64 years	Total Estimate 65-69 years	Total Estimate 70 -74 years	Total Estimate 75-79 years
Queen Anne's	51,711	4,463	5,058	4,283	3,653	2,952	2,724	1,837
Somerset	25,675	737	738	1,737	1,635	1,475	1,050	761
St. Mary's	114,877	6,845	9,921	8,425	6,912	4,771	4,087	2,427
Talbot	37,932	4,858	6,062	2,643	3,162	2,860	2,980	1,763
Washington	155,590	11,801	14,493	11,172	9,852	8,551	6,603	4,750
Wicomico	103,195	2,485	2,800	6,602	6,498	5,285	4,333	2,979
Worcester	51,823	1,999	2,230	4,170	4,186	4,229	3,879	2,756
Baltimore City	569,931	37,849	42,511	37,992	37,705	29,707	21,508	13,579

Source: 1. American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, U.S. Census Bureau
2. <https://www.neilsberg.com/insights-md-population-by-age/>

Total Estimate 65 years and older less than 150 percent of poverty level.

Counties	65+	< 150% of poverty level
Anne Arundel County	83,933	8,249
Baltimore City	80,360	21,380
Baltimore County	141,770	19,443
Frederick County	36,849	3,363
Lower Shore	34,938	5,021
Mid-Maryland	72,366	6,438
Montgomery County	164,153	17,089
Prince George's County	119,595	14,854
Southern Maryland	56,015	7, 230
Susquehanna	57,961	6,303
Upper Shore	30,635	4,6892
Western MD	49,391	8,120

The general population of Maryland has increased according to the 2020 census. Maryland's population is 6,177,224, ranked 18th in the nation. Maryland's population continues to grow by at least 7% each decade. However, the applicable minimum wage has increased in the state since 2018. This has caused a decrease in the number of positions allocated to the state SCSEP

program. It has also caused an increase in the number of seniors residing in the service area in need of SCSEP services and who may be qualified to participate. This creates difficulty in finding adequate and diversified placement partners for training and supportive services. These realities demonstrate the need for senior services under the MD SCSEP program. Conversely, they also reflect ongoing widening gaps in the only federally-funded employment safety net designed for low income older Marylanders.

c.6. The relative distribution of eligible individuals who:

c. 6. A. Reside in urban and rural areas within the State

Table: Distribution of Individuals within MD SCSEP Service Area

Counties	Population Estimates as of July 1, 2022	Urban / Rural	Persons in Poverty%	Minorities,%	Language other than English spoken at home (LEP)%	Formerly Incarcerated Individuals
Allegany	67,267	Rural	16.4%	7.8% Black 0.2% Native American 1.1% Asian .01% Native Hawaiian 2.2% Hispanic/Latino	3.6%	1
Anne Arundel	550,269	Urban	5.9%	15.7 Black, 0.2% Native American, 3.5% Asian, 0.1% Native Hawaiian, 6.7% Hispanic Latino	10.7%	0
Baltimore County	817,720	Urban	9.1%	26.8% Black, 0.2% Native American, 5.4% Asian, 0.0% Native Hawaiian, 4.6% Hispanic Latino	13.9%	0
Baltimore City	569,931	Urban	20.3%	61.6% Black 0.3% Native American 2.5% Asian 0.0% Native Hawaiian 5.6% Hispanic/Latino	10.3%	0
Calvert	94,573 92,783	Urban	5.8%	14.2% Black 0.5% Native American 2.0% Asian	4.6%	0

Counties	Population Estimates as of July 1, 2022	Urban / Rural	Persons in Poverty%	Minorities,%	Language other than English spoken at home (LEP)%	Formerly Incarcerated Individuals
				0.2% Native Hawaiian 5.2% Hispanic/Latino		
Caroline	33,433	Urban	13.5%	13.5% Black 0.4% % Native American 1.2% Asian 0.3% % Native Hawaiian 8.9% Hispanic/Latino	8.4%	0
Carroll	167,39	Urban	5.5%	3.2% Black, 0.2% Native American, 1.6% Asian, 0.0% Native Hawaiian, 2.8% Hispanic Latino	6.2%	0
Charles	170,102	Urban	6.7%	53.3% Black 0.8% Native American 3.4% Asian 0.1% Native Hawaiian 7.5% Hispanic/Latino	9.4%	0
Dorchester	32,614	Urban	16.9%	28.9% Black 0.1% Native American 1.2% Asian 0.0% Native Hawaiian	5.7%	0

Counties	Population Estimates as of July 1, 2022	Urban / Rural	Persons in Poverty%	Minorities,%	Language other than English spoken at home (LEP)%	Formerly Incarcerated Individuals
				2.3% Hispanic/Latino		
Frederick	239,253	Urban	6.2%	8.7% Black 0.4% Native American 4.2% Asian 0.1% Native Hawaiian 7.9% Hispanic/Latino	12.6%	0
Garrett	28,579	Rural	11%	1.0% Black 0.3% Native American 0.5% Asian 0.0% Native Hawaiian 1.4% Hispanic/Latino	2.8%	0
Hartford	248,029	Urban	7.7%	13.2% Black 0.2% Native American 2.6% Asian 0.0% Native Hawaiian 3.9% Hispanic/Latino	6.9%	0
Howard	299,269	Urban	5.1%	18.1% Black 0.2% Native American, 15.6% Asian 0.0% Native Hawaiian 6.1% Hispanic/Latino	24.1%	0

Counties	Population Estimates as of July 1, 2022	Urban / Rural	Persons in Poverty%	Minorities,%	Language other than English spoken at home (LEP)%	Formerly Incarcerated Individuals
Kent	19,320	Rural	12.0%	14.2% Black 0.5% Native American 1.5% Asian 0.1% Native Hawaiian 5.0% Hispanic/Latino	5.4%	0
Montgomery	1,005,087	Urban	6.9%	17.4% Black 0.3% Native American 14.3% Asian, 0.0% Native Hawaiian, 17.9% Hispanic/Latino	39.8%	0
Prince George's	684,764	Urban	9.7%	63.8% Black 0.3% Native American 4.3% Asian 0.0% Native Hawaiian 15.9% Hispanic/Latino	23.3%	0
Queen Anne's	51,711	Rural	8.0%	6.2% Black 0.5% Native American 1.3% % Asian 0.1% Native Hawaiian 4.9% Hispanic/Latino	5.1%	0
St. Mary's	114,877	Urban	7.8%	15.6% Black 0.5% Native American 3.0% Asian 0.1% Native Hawaiian 6.0% Hispanic/Latino	6.9%	0

Counties	Population Estimates as of July 1, 2022	Urban / Rural	Persons in Poverty%	Minorities,%	Language other than English spoken at home (LEP)%	Formerly Incarcerated Individuals
Somerset	26,197	Urban	23.7%	41.6% Black 0.0% Native American 1.2% Asian 0.0% Native Hawaiian 3.6% Hispanic/Latino	7.4%	0
Talbot	37,932	Rural	9.4%	12.8% Black 0.5% Native American 1.5% Asian 0.3% Native Hawaiian 7.9% Hispanic/Latino	8.0%	0
Washington	155,590	Urban	14.5%	13.5% Black 0.4% Native American 2.1% Asian 0.1% Native Hawaiian 7.2% Hispanic/Latino	7.7%	0
Wicomico	100,376	Urban	17.4%	24.3% Black 0.3% Native American 2.9% Asian 0.0% Native Hawaiian	10.9%	0

Counties	Population Estimates as of July 1, 2022	Urban / Rural	Persons in Poverty%	Minorities,%	Language other than English spoken at home (LEP)%	Formerly Incarcerated Individuals
				4.9% Hispanic/Latino		
Worcester	51,558	Urban	24.2%	14.35% Black 0.1% Native American 1.2% Asian 0.1% Native Hawaiian 3.3% Hispanic Latino	5.2%	0

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 7-2022

<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/MD>

c. 6. B. Have the greatest economic need

Table: Distribution of Individuals within MD SCSEP Service Area

Counties	Population Estimates as of July 1, 2022	Urban/Rural	Persons in Poverty%	Minorities,%	Language other than English spoken at home (LEP)%	Formerly Incarcerated Individuals
Allegany	67,267	Rural	16.4%	7.8% % Black 0.2% Native American 1.1% Asian .01% % Native Hawaiian 2.2% Hispanic/Latino	3.6%	1
Anne Arundel	550,269	Urban	5.9%	15.7 Black, 0.2% Native American, 3.5% Asian, 0.1% Native Hawaiian, 6.7% Hispanic Latino	10.7%	0
Baltimore County	817,720	Urban	9.1%	26.8% Black, 0.2% Native American, 5.4% Asian, 0.0% Native Hawaiian, 4.6% Hispanic Latino	13.9%	0
Baltimore City	569,931	Urban	20.3%	61.6% Black 0.3% Native American 2.5% Asian 0.0% Native Hawaiian 5.6% Hispanic/Latino	10.3%	0
Calvert	94,573 92,783	Urban	5.8%	14.2% Black 0.5% Native American 2.0% Asian 0.2% Native Hawaiian 5.2% Hispanic/Latino	4.6%	0

Counties	Population Estimates as of July 1, 2022	Urban/Rural	Persons in Poverty%	Minorities,%	Language other than English spoken at home (LEP)%	Formerly Incarcerated Individuals
Caroline	33,433	Urban	13.5%	13.5% Black 0.4% % Native American 1.2% Asian 0.3% % Native Hawaiian 8.9% Hispanic/Latino	8.4%	0
Carroll	167,39	Urban	5.5%	3.2% Black, 0.2% Native American, 1.6% Asian, 0.0% Native Hawaiian, 2.8% Hispanic Latino	6.2%	0
Charles	170,102	Urban	6.7%	53.3% Black 0.8% Native American 3.4% Asian 0.1% Native Hawaiian 7.5% Hispanic/Latino	9.4%	0
Dorchester	32,614	Urban	16.9%	28.9% Black 0.1% Native American 1.2% Asian 0.0% Native Hawaiian 2.3% Hispanic/Latino	5.7%	0

Counties	Population Estimates as of July 1, 2022	Urban/Rural	Persons in Poverty%	Minorities,%	Language other than English spoken at home (LEP)%	Formerly Incarcerated Individuals
Frederick	239,253	Urban	6.2%	8.7% Black 0.4% Native American 4.2% Asian 0.1% Native Hawaiian 7.9% Hispanic/Latino	12.6%	0
Garrett	28,579	Rural	11%	1.0% Black 0.3% Native American 0.5% Asian 0.0% Native Hawaiian 1.4% Hispanic/Latino	2.8%	0
Hartford	248,029	Urban	7.7%	13.2% Black 0.2% Native American 2.6% Asian 0.0% Native Hawaiian 3.9% Hispanic/Latino	6.9%	0
Howard	299,269	Urban	5.1%	18.1% Black 0.2% Native American, 15.6% Asian 0.0% Native Hawaiian 6.1% Hispanic/Latino	24.1%	0
Kent	19,320	Rural	12.0%	14.2% Black 0.5% Native American 1.5% Asian	5.4%	0

Counties	Population Estimates as of July 1, 2022	Urban as / Rural	Persons in Poverty%	Minorities,%	Language other than English spoken at home (LEP)%	Formerly Incarcerated Individuals
				0.1% Native Hawaiian 5.0% Hispanic/Latino		
Montgomery	1,005,087	Urban	6.9%	17.4% Black 0.3% Native American 14.3% Asian, 0.0% Native Hawaiian, 17.9% Hispanic/Latino	39.8%	0
Prince George's	684,764	Urban	9.7%	63.8% Black 0.3% Native American 4.3% Asian 0.0% Native Hawaiian 15.9% Hispanic/Latino	23.3%	0
Queen Anne's	51,711	Rural	8.0%	6.2% Black 0.5% Native American 1.3% % Asian 0.1% Native Hawaiian 4.9% Hispanic/Latino	5.1%	0
St. Mary's	114,877	Urban	7.8%	15.6% Black 0.5% Native American 3.0% Asian 0.1% Native Hawaiian 6.0% Hispanic/Latino	6.9%	0

Counties	Population Estimates as of July 1, 2022	Urban/Rural	Persons in Poverty%	Minorities,%	Language other than English spoken at home (LEP)%	Formerly Incarcerated Individuals
Somerset	26,197	Urban	23.7%	41.6% Black 0.0% Native American 1.2% Asian 0.0% Native Hawaiian 3.6% Hispanic/Latino	7.4%	0
Talbot	37,932	Rural	9.4%	12.8% Black 0.5% Native American 1.5% Asian 0.3% Native Hawaiian 7.9% Hispanic/Latino	8.0%	0
Washington	155,590	Urban	14.5%	13.5% Black 0.4% Native American 2.1% Asian 0.1% Native Hawaiian 7.2% Hispanic/Latino	7.7%	0
Wicomico	100,376	Urban	17.4%	24.3% Black 0.3% Native American 2.9% Asian 0.0% Native Hawaiian 4.9% Hispanic/Latino	10.9%	0
Worcester	51,558	Urban	24.2%	14.35% Black 0.1% Native American 1.2% Asian 0.1% Native Hawaiian	5.2%	0

Counties	Population Estimates as of July 1, 2022	Urban / Rural	Persons in Poverty%	Minorities,%	Language other than English spoken at home (LEP)%	Formerly Incarcerated Individuals
				3.3% Hispanic Latino		

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 7-2022

<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/MD>

c. 6. C. Are minorities

Table: Distribution of Individuals within MD SCSEP Service Area

Counties	Population Estimates as of July 1, 2022	Urban / Rural	Persons in Poverty%	Minorities,%	Language other than English spoken at home (LEP)%	Formerly Incarcerated Individuals
Allegany	67,267	Rural	16.4%	7.8% % Black 0.2% Native American 1.1% Asian .01% % Native Hawaiian 2.2% Hispanic/Latino	3.6%	1
Anne Arundel	550,269	Urban	5.9%	15.7 Black, 0.2% Native American, 3.5% Asian, 0.1% Native Hawaiian, 6.7% Hispanic Latino	10.7%	0
Baltimore County	817,720	Urban	9.1%	26.8% Black, 0.2% Native American, 5.4% Asian, 0.0% Native Hawaiian, 4.6% Hispanic Latino	13.9%	0
Baltimore City	569,931	Urban	20.3%	61.6% Black 0.3% Native American 2.5% Asian	10.3%	0

Counties	Population Estimates as of July 1, 2022	Urban / Rural	Persons in Poverty%	Minorities,%	Language other than English spoken at home (LEP)%	Formerly Incarcerated Individuals
				0.0% Native Hawaiian 5.6% Hispanic/Latino		
Calvert	94,573 92,783	Urban	5.8%	14.2% Black 0.5% Native American 2.0% Asian 0.2% Native Hawaiian 5.2% Hispanic/Latino	4.6%	0
Caroline	33,433	Urban	13.5%	13.5% Black 0.4% % Native American 1.2% Asian 0.3% % Native Hawaiian 8.9% Hispanic/Latino	8.4%	0
Carroll	167,39	Urban	5.5%	3.2% Black, 0.2% Native American, 1.6% Asian, 0.0% Native Hawaiian, 2.8% Hispanic Latino	6.2%	0
Charles	170,102	Urban	6.7%	53.3% Black 0.8% Native American 3.4% Asian	9.4%	0

Counties	Population Estimates as of July 1, 2022	Urban / Rural	Persons in Poverty%	Minorities,%	Language other than English spoken at home (LEP)%	Formerly Incarcerated Individuals
				0.1% Native Hawaiian 7.5% Hispanic/Latino		
Dorchester	32,614	Urban	16.9%	28.9% Black 0.1% Native American 1.2% Asian 0.0% Native Hawaiian 2.3% Hispanic/Latino	5.7%	0
Frederick	239,253	Urban	6.2%	8.7% Black 0.4% Native American 4.2% Asian 0.1% Native Hawaiian 7.9% Hispanic/Latino	12.6%	0
Garrett	28,579	Rural	11%	1.0% Black 0.3% Native American 0.5% Asian 0.0% Native Hawaiian 1.4% Hispanic/Latino	2.8%	0
Hartford	248,029	Urban	7.7%	13.2% Black 0.2% Native American 2.6% Asian 0.0% Native Hawaiian 3.9% Hispanic/Latino	6.9%	0
Howard	299,269	Urban	5.1%	18.1% Black	24.1%	0

Counties	Population Estimates as of July 1, 2022	Urban / Rural	Persons in Poverty%	Minorities,%	Language other than English spoken at home (LEP)%	Formerly Incarcerated Individuals
				0.2% Native American, 15.6% Asian 0.0% Native Hawaiian 6.1% Hispanic/Latino		
Kent	19,320	Rural	12.0%	14.2% Black 0.5% Native American 1.5% Asian 0.1% Native Hawaiian 5.0% Hispanic/Latino	5.4%	0
Montgomery	1,005,087	Urban	6.9%	17.4% Black 0.3% Native American 14.3% Asian, 0.0% Native Hawaiian, 17.9% Hispanic/Latino	39.8%	0
Prince George's	684,764	Urban	9.7%	63.8% Black 0.3% Native American 4.3% Asian 0.0% Native Hawaiian 15.9% Hispanic/Latino	23.3%	0
Queen Anne's	51,711	Rural	8.0%	6.2% Black 0.5% Native American 1.3% % Asian 0.1% Native Hawaiian 4.9% Hispanic/Latino	5.1%	0
St. Mary's	114,877	Urban	7.8%	15.6% Black	6.9%	0

Counties	Population Estimates as of July 1, 2022	Urban / Rural	Persons in Poverty%	Minorities,%	Language other than English spoken at home (LEP)%	Formerly Incarcerated Individuals
				0.5% Native American 3.0% Asian 0.1% Native Hawaiian 6.0% Hispanic/Latino		
Somerset	26,197	Urban	23.7%	41.6% Black 0.% Native American 1.2% Asian 0.0% Native Hawaiian 3.6% Hispanic/Latino	7.4%	0
Talbot	37,932	Rural	9.4%	12.8% Black 0.5% Native American 1.5% Asian 0.3% Native Hawaiian 7.9% Hispanic/Latino	8.0%	0
Washington	155,590	Urban	14.5%	13.5% Black 0.4% Native American 2.1% Asian 0.1% Native Hawaiian 7.2% Hispanic/Latino	7.7%	0
Wicomico	100,376	Urban	17.4%	24.3% Black 0.3% Native American 2.9% Asian	10.9%	0

Counties	Population Estimates as of July 1, 2022	Urban / Rural	Persons in Poverty%	Minorities,%	Language other than English spoken at home (LEP)%	Formerly Incarcerated Individuals
				0.0% Native Hawaiian 4.9% Hispanic/Latino		
Worcester	51,558	Urban	24.2%	14.35% Black 0.1% Native American 1.2% Asian 0.1% Native Hawaiian 3.3% Hispanic Latino	5.2%	0

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 7-2022

<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/MD>

c. 6. D. Are Limited English Proficient

Table: Distribution of Individuals within MD SCSEP Service Area

Counties	Population Estimates as of July 1, 2022	Urban / Rural	Persons in Poverty%	Minorities,%	Language other than English spoken at home (LEP)%	Formerly Incarcerated Individuals
Allegany	67,267	Rural	16.4%	7.8% % Black 0.2% Native American 1.1% Asian .01% % Native Hawaiian 2.2% Hispanic/Latino	3.6%	1
Anne Arundel	550,269	Urban	5.9%	15.7 Black, 0.2% Native American, 3.5% Asian, 0.1% Native Hawaiian, 6.7% Hispanic Latino	10.7%	0

Counties	Population Estimates as of July 1, 2022	Urban / Rural	Persons in Poverty%	Minorities,%	Language other than English spoken at home (LEP)%	Formerly Incarcerated Individuals
Baltimore County	817,720	Urban	9.1%	26.8% Black, 0.2% Native American, 5.4% Asian, 0.0% Native Hawaiian, 4.6% Hispanic Latino	13.9%	0
Baltimore City	569,931	Urban	20.3%	61.6% Black 0.3% Native American 2.5% Asian 0.0% Native Hawaiian 5.6% Hispanic/Latino	10.3%	0
Calvert	94,573 92,783	Urban	5.8%	14.2% Black 0.5% Native American 2.0% Asian 0.2% Native Hawaiian 5.2% Hispanic/Latino	4.6%	0
Caroline	33,433	Urban	13.5%	13.5% Black 0.4% % Native American 1.2% Asian 0.3% % Native Hawaiian 8.9% Hispanic/Latino	8.4%	0
Carroll	167,39	Urban	5.5%	3.2% Black, 0.2% Native American,	6.2%	0

Counties	Population Estimates as of July 1, 2022	Urban / Rural	Persons in Poverty%	Minorities,%	Language other than English spoken at home (LEP)%	Formerly Incarcerated Individuals
				1.6% Asian, 0.0% Native Hawaiian, 2.8% Hispanic Latino		
Charles	170,102	Urban	6.7%	53.3% Black 0.8% Native American 3.4% Asian 0.1% Native Hawaiian 7.5% Hispanic/Latino	9.4%	0
Dorchester	32,614	Urban	16.9%	28.9% Black 0.1% Native American 1.2% Asian 0.0% Native Hawaiian 2.3% Hispanic/Latino	5.7%	0
Frederick	239,253	Urban	6.2%	8.7% Black 0.4% Native American 4.2% Asian 0.1% Native Hawaiian 7.9% Hispanic/Latino	12.6%	0
Garrett	28,579	Rural	11%	1.0% Black 0.3% Native American 0.5% Asian 0.0% Native Hawaiian 1.4% Hispanic/Latino	2.8%	0

Counties	Population Estimates as of July 1, 2022	Urban / Rural	Persons in Poverty%	Minorities,%	Language other than English spoken at home (LEP)%	Formerly Incarcerated Individuals
Hartford	248,029	Urban	7.7%	13.2% Black 0.2% Native American 2.6% Asian 0.0% Native Hawaiian 3.9% Hispanic/Latino	6.9%	0
Howard	299,269	Urban	5.1%	18.1% Black 0.2% Native American, 15.6% Asian 0.0% Native Hawaiian 6.1% Hispanic/Latino	24.1%	0
Kent	19,320	Rural	12.0%	14.2% Black 0.5% Native American 1.5% Asian 0.1% Native Hawaiian 5.0% Hispanic/Latino	5.4%	0
Montgomery	1,005,087	Urban	6.9%	17.4% Black 0.3% Native American 14.3% Asian, 0.0% Native Hawaiian, 17.9% Hispanic/Latino	39.8%	0
Prince George's	684,764	Urban	9.7%	63.8% Black 0.3% Native American 4.3% Asian 0.0% Native Hawaiian	23.3%	0

Counties	Population Estimates as of July 1, 2022	Urban / Rural	Persons in Poverty%	Minorities,%	Language other than English spoken at home (LEP)%	Formerly Incarcerated Individuals
				15.9% Hispanic/Latino		
Queen Anne's	51,711	Rural	8.0%	6.2% Black 0.5% Native American 1.3% % Asian 0.1% Native Hawaiian 4.9% Hispanic/Latino	5.1%	0
St. Mary's	114,877	Urban	7.8%	15.6% Black 0.5% Native American 3.0% Asian 0.1% Native Hawaiian 6.0% Hispanic/Latino	6.9%	0
Somerset	26,197	Urban	23.7%	41.6% Black 0.% Native American 1.2% Asian 0.0% Native Hawaiian 3.6% Hispanic/Latino	7.4%	0
Talbot	37,932	Rural	9.4%	12.8% Black 0.5% Native American 1.5% % Asian 0.3% Native Hawaiian 7.9% Hispanic/Latino	8.0%	0

Counties	Population Estimates as of July 1, 2022	Urban / Rural	Persons in Poverty%	Minorities,%	Language other than English spoken at home (LEP)%	Formerly Incarcerated Individuals
Washington	155,590	Urban	14.5%	13.5% Black 0.4% Native American 2.1% Asian 0.1% Native Hawaiian 7.2% Hispanic/Latino	7.7%	0
Wicomico	100,376	Urban	17.4%	24.3% Black 0.3% Native American 2.9% Asian 0.0% Native Hawaiian 4.9% Hispanic/Latino	10.9%	0
Worcester	51,558	Urban	24.2%	14.35% Black 0.1% Native American 1.2% Asian 0.1% Native Hawaiian 3.3% Hispanic Latino	5.2%	0

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 7-2022

<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/MD>

c. 6. E. Have the greatest social need. (20 CFR 641.325(b))

Table: Distribution of Individuals within MD SCSEP Service Area

Counties	Population Estimates as of July 1, 2022	Urban / Rural	Persons in Poverty%	Minorities,%	Language other than English spoken at home (LEP)%	Formerly Incarcerated Individuals
Allegany	67,267	Rural	16.4%	7.8% % Black 0.2% Native American 1.1% Asian .01% % Native Hawaiian 2.2% Hispanic/Latino	3.6%	1
Anne Arundel	550,269	Urban	5.9%	15.7 Black, 0.2% Native American, 3.5% Asian, 0.1% Native Hawaiian, 6.7% Hispanic Latino	10.7%	0
Baltimore County	817,720	Urban	9.1%	26.8% Black, 0.2% Native American, 5.4% Asian, 0.0% Native Hawaiian, 4.6% Hispanic Latino	13.9%	0
Baltimore City	569,931	Urban	20.3%	61.6% Black 0.3% Native American 2.5% Asian 0.0% Native Hawaiian 5.6% Hispanic/Latino	10.3%	0

Counties	Population Estimates as of July 1, 2022	Urban / Rural	Persons in Poverty%	Minorities,%	Language other than English spoken at home (LEP)%	Formerly Incarcerated Individuals
Calvert	94,573 92,783	Urban	5.8%	14.2% Black 0.5% Native American 2.0% Asian 0.2% Native Hawaiian 5.2% Hispanic/Latino	4.6%	0
Caroline	33,433	Urban	13.5%	13.5% Black 0.4% % Native American 1.2% Asian 0.3% % Native Hawaiian 8.9% Hispanic/Latino	8.4%	0
Carroll	167,39	Urban	5.5%	3.2% Black, 0.2% Native American, 1.6% Asian, 0.0% Native Hawaiian, 2.8% Hispanic Latino	6.2%	0
Charles	170,102	Urban	6.7%	53.3% Black 0.8% Native American	9.4%	0

Counties	Population Estimates as of July 1, 2022	Urban / Rural	Persons in Poverty%	Minorities,%	Language other than English spoken at home (LEP)%	Formerly Incarcerated Individuals
				3.4% Asian 0.1% Native Hawaiian 7.5% Hispanic/Latino		
Dorchester	32,614	Urban	16.9%	28.9% Black 0.1% Native American 1.2% Asian 0.0% Native Hawaiian 2.3% Hispanic/Latino	5.7%	0
Frederick	239,253	Urban	6.2%	8.7% Black 0.4% Native American 4.2% Asian 0.1% Native Hawaiian 7.9% Hispanic/Latino	12.6%	0
Garrett	28,579	Rural	11%	1.0% Black 0.3% Native American 0.5% Asian 0.0% Native Hawaiian 1.4% Hispanic/Latino	2.8%	0
Hartford	248,029	Urban	7.7%	13.2% Black 0.2% Native American	6.9%	0

Counties	Population Estimates as of July 1, 2022	Urban / Rural	Persons in Poverty%	Minorities,%	Language other than English spoken at home (LEP)%	Formerly Incarcerated Individuals
				2.6% Asian 0.0% Native Hawaiian 3.9% Hispanic/Latino		
Howard	299,269	Urban	5.1%	18.1% Black 0.2% Native American, 15.6% Asian 0.0% Native Hawaiian 6.1% Hispanic/Latino	24.1%	0
Kent	19,320	Rural	12.0%	14.2% Black 0.5% Native American 1.5% Asian 0.1% Native Hawaiian 5.0% Hispanic/Latino	5.4%	0
Montgomery	1,005,087	Urban	6.9%	17.4% Black 0.3% Native American 14.3% Asian, 0.0% Native Hawaiian, 17.9% Hispanic/Latino	39.8%	0
Prince George's	684,764	Urban	9.7%	63.8% Black 0.3% Native	23.3%	0

Counties	Population Estimates as of July 1, 2022	Urban / Rural	Persons in Poverty%	Minorities,%	Language other than English spoken at home (LEP)%	Formerly Incarcerated Individuals
				American 4.3% Asian 0.0% Native Hawaiian 15.9% Hispanic/Latino		
Queen Anne's	51,711	Rural	8.0%	6.2% Black 0.5% Native American 1.3% % Asian 0.1% Native Hawaiian 4.9% Hispanic/Latino	5.1%	0
St. Mary's	114,877	Urban	7.8%	15.6% Black 0.5% Native American 3.0% Asian 0.1% Native Hawaiian 6.0% Hispanic/Latino	6.9%	0

Counties	Population Estimates as of July 1, 2022	Urban / Rural	Persons in Poverty%	Minorities,%	Language other than English spoken at home (LEP)%	Formerly Incarcerated Individuals
Somerset	26,197	Urban	23.7%	41.6% Black 0.0% Native American 1.2% Asian 0.0% Native Hawaiian 3.6% Hispanic/Latino	7.4%	0
Talbot	37,932	Rural	9.4%	12.8% Black 0.5% Native American 1.5% % Asian 0.3% Native Hawaiian 7.9% Hispanic/Latino	8.0%	0
Washington	155,590	Urban	14.5%	13.5% Black 0.4% Native American 2.1% Asian 0.1% Native Hawaiian 7.2% Hispanic/Latino	7.7%	0
Wicomico	100,376	Urban	17.4%	24.3% Black 0.3% Native American 2.9% Asian 0.0% Native Hawaiian	10.9%	0

Counties	Population Estimates as of July 1, 2022	Urban / Rural	Persons in Poverty%	Minorities,%	Language other than English spoken at home (LEP)%	Formerly Incarcerated Individuals
				4.9% Hispanic/Latino		
Worcester	51,558	Urban	24.2%	14.35% Black 0.1% Native American 1.2% Asian 0.1% Native Hawaiian 3.3% Hispanic Latino	5.2%	0

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 7-2022

<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/MD>

c. 6. F. Formerly incarcerated individuals, as defined in TEGL 17-20

Table: Distribution of Individuals within MD SCSEP Service Area

Counties	Population Estimates as of July 1, 2022	Urban / Rural	Persons in Poverty%	Minorities,%	Language other than English spoken at home (LEP)%	Formerly Incarcerated Individuals
Allegany	67,267	Rural	16.4%	7.8% Black 0.2% Native American 1.1% Asian .01% Native Hawaiian 2.2% Hispanic/Latino	3.6%	1
Anne Arundel	550,269	Urban	5.9%	15.7 Black, 0.2% Native American, 3.5% Asian, 0.1% Native Hawaiian, 6.7% Hispanic Latino	10.7%	0
Baltimore County	817,720	Urban	9.1%	26.8% Black, 0.2% Native American, 5.4% Asian, 0.0% Native Hawaiian, 4.6% Hispanic Latino	13.9%	0

Counties	Population Estimates as of July 1, 2022	Urban as / Rural	Persons in Poverty%	Minorities,%	Language other than English spoken at home (LEP)%	Formerly Incarcerated Individuals
Baltimore City	569,931	Urban	20.3%	61.6% Black 0.3% Native American 2.5% Asian 0.0% Native Hawaiian 5.6% Hispanic/Latino	10.3%	0
Calvert	94,573 92,783	Urban	5.8%	14.2% Black 0.5% Native American 2.0% Asian 0.2% Native Hawaiian 5.2% Hispanic/Latino	4.6%	0
Caroline	33,433	Urban	13.5%	13.5% Black 0.4% % Native American 1.2% Asian 0.3% % Native Hawaiian 8.9% Hispanic/Latino	8.4%	0
Carroll	167,39	Urban	5.5%	3.2% Black, 0.2% Native American, 1.6% Asian, 0.0% Native Hawaiian, 2.8% Hispanic Latino	6.2%	0
Charles	170,102	Urban	6.7%	53.3% Black 0.8% Native American 3.4% Asian 0.1% Native Hawaiian 7.5% Hispanic/Latino	9.4%	0
Dorchester	32,614	Urban	16.9%	28.9% Black 0.1% Native American 1.2% Asian 0.0% Native Hawaiian 2.3% Hispanic/Latino	5.7%	0
Frederick	239,253	Urban	6.2%	8.7% Black 0.4% Native American 4.2% Asian 0.1% Native Hawaiian 7.9% Hispanic/Latino	12.6%	0

Counties	Population Estimates as of July 1, 2022	Urban as / Rural	Persons in Poverty%	Minorities,%	Language other than English spoken at home (LEP)%	Formerly Incarcerated Individuals
Garrett	28,579	Rural	11%	1.0% Black 0.3% Native American 0.5% Asian 0.0% Native Hawaiian 1.4% Hispanic/Latino	2.8%	0
Hartford	248,029	Urban	7.7%	13.2% Black 0.2% Native American 2.6% Asian 0.0% Native Hawaiian 3.9% Hispanic/Latino	6.9%	0
Howard	299,269	Urban	5.1%	18.1% Black 0.2% Native American, 15.6% Asian 0.0% Native Hawaiian 6.1% Hispanic/Latino	24.1%	0
Kent	19,320	Rural	12.0%	14.2% Black 0.5% Native American 1.5% Asian 0.1% Native Hawaiian 5.0% Hispanic/Latino	5.4%	0
Montgomery	1,005,087	Urban	6.9%	17.4% Black 0.3% Native American 14.3% Asian, 0.0% Native Hawaiian, 17.9% Hispanic/Latino	39.8%	0
Prince George's	684,764	Urban	9.7%	63.8% Black 0.3% Native American 4.3% Asian 0.0% Native Hawaiian 15.9% Hispanic/Latino	23.3%	0
Queen Anne's	51,711	Rural	8.0%	6.2% Black 0.5% Native American 1.3% % Asian 0.1% Native Hawaiian 4.9% Hispanic/Latino	5.1%	0
St. Mary's	114,877	Urban	7.8%	15.6% Black 0.5% Native American 3.0% Asian 0.1% Native Hawaiian 6.0% Hispanic/Latino	6.9%	0
Somerset	26,197	Urban	23.7%	41.6% Black 0.0% Native American 1.2% Asian 0.0% Native Hawaiian 3.6% Hispanic/Latino	7.4%	0

Counties	Population Estimates as of July 1, 2022	Urban as / Rural	Persons in Poverty%	Minorities,%	Language other than English spoken at home (LEP)%	Formerly Incarcerated Individuals
Talbot	37,932	Rural	9.4%	12.8% Black 0.5% Native American 1.5% % Asian 0.3% Native Hawaiian 7.9% Hispanic/Latino	8.0%	0
Washington	155,590	Urban	14.5%	13.5% Black 0.4% Native American 2.1% Asian 0.1% Native Hawaiian 7.2% Hispanic/Latino	7.7%	0
Wicomico	100,376	Urban	17.4%	24.3% Black 0.3% Native American 2.9% Asian 0.0% Native Hawaiian 4.9% Hispanic/Latino	10.9%	0
Worcester	51,558	Urban	24.2%	14.35% Black 0.1% Native American 1.2% Asian 0.1% Native Hawaiian 3.3% Hispanic Latino	5.2%	0

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 7-2022

<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/MD>

c.7 A description of the steps taken to avoid disruptions to the greatest extent possible, when positions are redistributed, as provided in 20 CFR 641.365; when new Census or other reliable data become available; or when there is over-enrollment for any other reason. (20 CFR 641.325(i), 641.302(b))

MD SCSEP has a dual responsibility to USDOL as well as its participants. Therefore, in the event that MD SCSEP has to redistribute positions in accordance with a new Census, or other reliable data, the program will seek to comply with equitable distribution while avoiding disruption to current program participants. This may mean pausing enrollments, monitoring exits for cause as well as durational limit, monitoring hours, or changing waiver policies. Participants retain their right to grievances throughout their duration in the program.

COMMUNITY SERVICES BLOCK GRANT

Note: Below is information about the employment and training activities carried out under the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) (42 U.S.C. 9901 et seq.) that is included in the WIOA Combined State Plan. The complete CSBG State Plan is submitted directly to the Federal agency that administers that program and is collected under OMB Control Number: 0970-0382. Where CSBG is included in the Combined State Plan, the State CSBG Lead Agency (as designated by the chief executive of the State under the requirements of section 676(a) of the CSBG Act (42 U.S.C. 9908(a)) will coordinate plans for employment and training activities under CSBG as part of a larger antipoverty and workforce development strategy.

As part of the Combined State Plan, the State CSBG Lead Agency must: (a) Describe how the State and the eligible entities will coordinate the provision of employment and training activities through Statewide and local WIOA workforce development systems; and may (b) Provide examples of innovative employment and training programs and activities conducted by eligible entities or other neighborhood-based organizations as part of a community antipoverty strategy.

The Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), as the State CSBG Lead Agency, provides statewide leadership, coordination, and oversight of CSBG-funded workforce activities. DHCD participates in the State's WIOA Alignment Group to strengthen coordination between CAAs and workforce system partners, including the Maryland Department of Labor and the Governor's Workforce Development Board.

DHCD also plays a key role in aligning workforce services with housing and supportive service systems. As the administrator of HUD-funded programs addressing homelessness – such as the Balance of State Continuum of Care and Emergency Solutions Grants – DHCD ensures that individuals experiencing homelessness have access to employment and training opportunities as part of a comprehensive, wraparound service approach.

Additionally, DHCD facilitates collaboration across partners by participating in regional and statewide meetings, disseminating information about workforce funding and training opportunities, and supporting strategic alignment between workforce development and broader antipoverty initiatives.

Maryland's 17 Community Action Agencies (CAAs) play a central role in delivering employment and training services at the local level. CAAs coordinate closely with American Job Centers and other WIOA workforce partners, sharing common customers and facilitating referrals for job training, placement, and supportive services. Through Memoranda of Understanding with Local Workforce Development Boards and partnerships with the Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS), CAAs expand access to vocational rehabilitation and workforce opportunities.

CAAs implement a Whole Family Approach, addressing employment needs alongside related barriers such as housing, childcare, and financial stability. Their integration into local workforce systems is reinforced through participation in Local Workforce Development Boards.

In addition to system coordination, CAAs design and implement innovative, community-based employment programs tailored to local needs. Examples include sector-based training (e.g., healthcare and cybersecurity), youth employment initiatives, workforce services for individuals with disabilities, and partnerships with employers to provide on-the-job training and industry-recognized certifications. These efforts collectively support career advancement and long-term economic mobility for low-income residents.

The following examples highlight employment and training programs and activities conducted by CSBG Eligible Entities as part of a community antipoverty strategy:

- Harford Community Action Agency (HCAA)**
HCAA actively participates in the workforce development ecosystem under WIOA. Through its partnership with the Susquehanna Workforce Network, HCAA refers clients to workforce training and employment opportunities, promotes programs via agency channels, and supports equitable access to job readiness and placement services, connecting low-income individuals to career pathways and long-term economic stability.
- United Communities Against Poverty, Inc. (UCAP)**
UCAP coordinates with Prince George's County's Workforce Development Board and local workforce training systems to provide clients with training in Cyber Security,

Certified Medical Assistant, and Medical Coding & Billing. UCAP's weatherization program partners with a local HVAC company to deliver classroom instruction, on-the-job training, and BPI certification, offering job placement opportunities for low-income participants.

- **Delmarva Community Services, Inc. (DCS)**
DCS provides employment and training activities through its Delmarva Works day services program for persons with disabilities, connecting participants to community employment opportunities. The agency coordinates job fairs and "Walk-in Wednesdays" to expand access to employment, and its Summer Youth Employment Program helps foster care youth find work experiences during the summer break.
- **Washington County Community Action Council, Inc. (WCCAC)**
WCCAC coordinates WIOA-aligned workforce development services in partnership with Horizon Goodwill Industries and the Western Maryland Consortium. The agency refers clients to career training and workforce development opportunities, including through a place-based initiative in Hancock, MD, embedding referrals across programs to connect participants to employment pathways that support long-term economic stability.
- **Montgomery County Community Action Agency (MCCAA)**
MCCAA coordinates with the local Department of Housing and Community Affairs and community partners - including Catholic Charities and Impact Silver Spring - to deliver employment and training services. The agency maintains an MOU with WorkSource Montgomery and holds a seat on its board, connecting participants to workforce training and career opportunities as the local WIOA fiscal agent.
- **Community Assistance Network, Inc. (CAN)**
CAN provides employment and training activities through its Workforce Development department, connecting residents with employment opportunities, skill-building resources, and targeted employer partnerships. The agency offers individualized career coaching, resume and application assistance, interview preparation, and job matching services. CAN also provides technology access and digital literacy training, and hosts small, resource-focused employment fairs to link participants with employers. Partnerships with local workforce agencies, training providers, and Baltimore County programs support diverse pathways to sustainable employment for individuals facing a range of barriers.