

Lake County  
Workforce  
Development  
Local Plan  
2026



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## Local Plan Narrative

### Local Workforce System Overview & Governance

The Lake County Workforce Development Board serves as the strategic convener and governing body of the local workforce system, coordinating partners, resources, and strategies to meet the needs of job seekers, employers, and priority populations throughout Lake County. This Local Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Local Plan reflects statutory requirements and describes how the Board guides, coordinates, and strengthens a workforce system that responds to employer and community needs.

Operating within the Northeastern Economic Development Region, the multi-county workforce planning region that includes Lake County and surrounding workforce areas, the Board works in alignment with regional and state partners to ensure workforce strategies remain responsive to labor market conditions, economic priorities, and evolving employer demand. References to the region reflect Lake County’s participation in shared labor market dynamics that influence employment patterns, talent flow, and business needs across county boundaries.

Lake County’s regional context reinforces that workforce strategies must account for cross-county employment activity and interconnected labor markets. Unemployment trends and related labor market indicators provide insight into how economic conditions influence workforce participation and demand for services. Beyond unemployment levels, labor force participation trends provide additional perspective on workforce availability and engagement. Participation patterns are evaluated as indicators of labor market attachment and potential structural barriers to employment. Shifts in participation may reflect skill mismatches, caregiving responsibilities, retirement patterns, or other factors influencing labor supply. These conditions inform how workforce strategies balance rapid

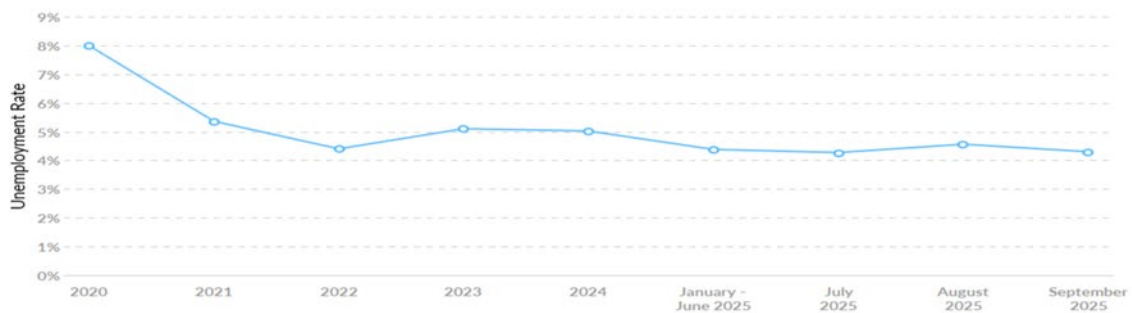
employment objectives with longer-term investments in skill development and career pathways.

Through coordinated partnerships with education providers, economic development organizations, community-based agencies, and employers, the Lake County workforce system integrates career services, training, and work-based learning strategies. Employer engagement plays a central role in shaping sector priorities, training investments, and service design, supporting alignment between workforce programs and demonstrated hiring demand while connecting individuals to opportunities that support stability and advancement.

The Workforce Development Board provides leadership, policy direction, and oversight to support alignment, accountability, and system effectiveness. Labor market information, employer input, and performance data inform strategic priorities and investment decisions. Governance responsibilities are carried out through structured committee review, partner engagement, and ongoing evaluation of system outcomes.

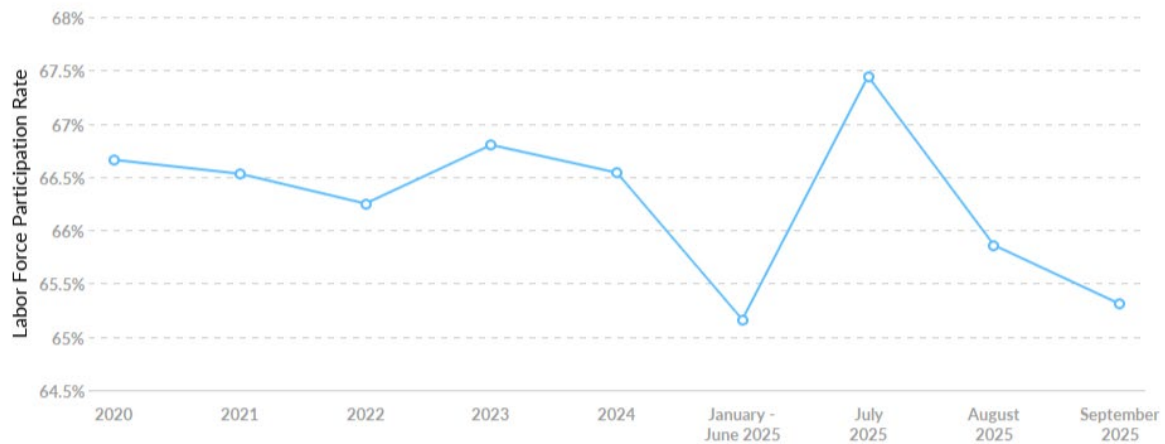
#### Unemployment Rate Trends

Lake County, IL had a September 2025 unemployment rate of 4.30%, decreasing from 7.99% 5 years before.



Implementation and administration of workforce programs are carried out by Lake County Workforce Development staff and system partners. The Board does not manage day-to-day operations, but instead provides strategic direction, policy guidance, and oversight of system performance. This structure supports clear separation of responsibilities while enabling staff and partners to deliver services efficiently and responsively.

### Labor Force Participation Rate Trends



## Role of the Local Workforce Board

The Lake County Workforce Development Board serves as the governing body for the local workforce system, providing leadership, direction, and oversight to support a system that responds to the needs of employers, workers, and the broader community. The Board's role centers on establishing vision and strategy, setting policy, and ensuring accountability for results.

Workforce strategies are guided by labor market conditions, employer engagement, performance trends, and partner input. Through regular review of data and system information, the Board shapes funding priorities, service approaches, and system-wide direction. This governance role ensures workforce investments remain aligned with economic conditions while supporting individuals navigating career transitions, reskilling, and advancement.

Program implementation and administration are carried out by Workforce Development staff and system partners consistent with Board policy and applicable requirements. Staff responsibilities include program operations, fiscal management, service delivery, and performance management. This separation of responsibilities allows the Board to focus on governance and oversight while enabling operational flexibility across the workforce system.

The Board fulfills its responsibilities through an active committee structure that supports strategic discussion, policy development, and continuous improvement. Committees review system information, elevate emerging issues, and provide recommendations to support informed decision-making across workforce strategies, employer engagement, and fiscal oversight.

Through this governance model, the Workforce Development Board functions as a systems leader and convener, aligning partners and strategies to strengthen workforce outcomes and support long-term economic resilience.

## Data-Informed Decision-Making and Continuous Improvement

The Lake County Workforce Development Board uses data to inform governance, strategic planning, and system oversight. Labor market information, program performance data, and partner feedback are reviewed regularly to guide workforce priorities, investment decisions, and service strategies.

Performance information supports monitoring of progress, identification of trends, and evaluation of workforce strategies across programs and partners. Oversight emphasizes longer-term patterns and system performance rather than isolated outcomes or short-term fluctuations.

Qualitative input from employers, partners, and frontline staff complements quantitative analysis by providing insight into service delivery, coordination practices, and customer experience. This combined approach supports identification of gaps, operational challenges, and opportunities for refinement, enabling ongoing adjustments that strengthen system effectiveness.

## Committee Structure and Strategic Engagement

The Lake County Workforce Development Board utilizes a standing committee structure to support focused strategic discussion, policy development, and informed decision-making. Committees are aligned with Board priorities and function as working bodies that review data, assess system conditions, and elevate recommendations to the full Board.

This structure promotes deeper engagement with workforce trends, sector dynamics, and operational considerations while supporting transparent and well-informed governance processes. Committee activities strengthen alignment across partners and reinforce shared accountability for workforce system performance.

## System Coordination and Regional Alignment

The Lake County Workforce Development Board coordinates workforce strategies with regional partners as part of the Northeastern Economic Development Region. Through collaboration with neighboring workforce areas, education partners, economic development organizations, and employers, the local workforce system aligns strategies across shared labor markets and regional industry priorities.

Regional coordination supports consistent approaches to employer engagement, sector strategies, and service delivery while allowing each local area to respond to its distinct community needs. Priority industries are identified and refined through shared labor market analysis, employer input, and regional planning efforts to ensure alignment with economic conditions and workforce demand.

Participation in regional planning strengthens the effectiveness of local workforce strategies by supporting shared learning, reducing duplication, and promoting coordinated responses to workforce challenges that cross county boundaries. This regional alignment

positions the Lake County workforce system as an active contributor to a cohesive regional workforce ecosystem supporting both local needs and broader economic priorities. Comparing unemployment and employment trends across surrounding counties further reinforces the importance of regional coordination and shared labor market strategies.

## Governance Practices and System Stewardship

Governance practices balance flexibility with accountability, allowing the workforce system to pilot, evaluate, and refine service strategies while maintaining alignment with applicable laws, regulations, and guidance. Through coordinated planning, data-informed decision-making, and sustained partner collaboration, the Lake County workforce system strengthens talent pipelines, supports employer competitiveness, and prepares workers for evolving employment opportunities.

## Strategic Vision and Goals

### Strategic Vision

The Lake County Workforce Development Board provides strategic leadership for the local workforce system by aligning workforce strategies with employer needs, labor market conditions, and community priorities. The Board's strategic vision is to support a workforce system that responds to economic change, promotes inclusive participation, and expands access for individuals and employers across Lake County. These principles guide how the Board evaluates system performance, investment decisions, and long-term workforce priorities.

The Board's strategic direction emphasizes coordination across workforce, education, economic development, and community partners to strengthen talent pipelines and improve employment outcomes. This coordination supports a range of workforce needs, including rapid reemployment following job loss, skill development, and longer-term career advancement aligned with evolving industry demand. The workforce system is designed to support individuals seeking employment as well as employers seeking skilled talent while maintaining a focus on reducing barriers to participation.

The Strategic Plan builds on the principles of partner coordination, talent development, and service integration across the workforce system. Labor market information, employer input, and system performance data inform these priorities, reinforcing long-term direction rather than short-term reaction. Through committee engagement and project-based initiatives, strategies continue to adapt as workforce and economic conditions evolve.

### Strategic Goals

To advance its strategic vision, the Lake County Workforce Development Board has established the following strategic goals for the local workforce system:

### **1. Strengthen Demand-Driven Workforce Strategies**

Support workforce solutions that are informed by employer demand and sector-based priorities. This includes engaging employers in the design of workforce strategies, identifying industry champions, and collaborating with education and economic development partners to address workforce challenges in high-demand industries.

### **2. Expand Access and Promote Inclusive Workforce Participation**

Expand access to workforce services by addressing barriers related to geography, transportation, language, disability, and digital access. The workforce system emphasizes coordinated service delivery and partnerships that support participation among individuals and communities facing barriers to employment.

### **3. Advance Career Pathways and Skills Development**

Strengthen career pathways that align education, training, and employment opportunities. Training investments prioritize credentials and skill development strategies that reflect labor market demand and support sustainable employment and career mobility.

### **4. Promote System Integration and Accountability**

Strengthen coordination among workforce partners to improve service alignment, system performance, and participant outcomes. This includes reinforcing performance expectations, supporting continuous improvement, and using data to inform decision-making.

### **5. Support Effective Board Leadership and Engagement**

Maintain an engaged, informed, and active Workforce Development Board. The LCWDB participates in regional and state workforce discussions and provides oversight that supports innovation, collaboration, and system effectiveness.

## **Workforce Strategies and Service Delivery**

This chapter describes how the Lake County workforce system translates strategic priorities into coordinated services for job seekers and employers. The strategies outlined reflect system-wide practices emphasizing coordination, responsiveness, and alignment with labor market conditions rather than individual program design.

### **Overview of the Local Workforce Service Model**

The Lake County workforce system operates as an integrated network of partners delivering coordinated services through the one-stop delivery system and community-based access points. Individuals and employers may enter through multiple pathways, including workforce centers, partner organizations, educational institutions, and employer

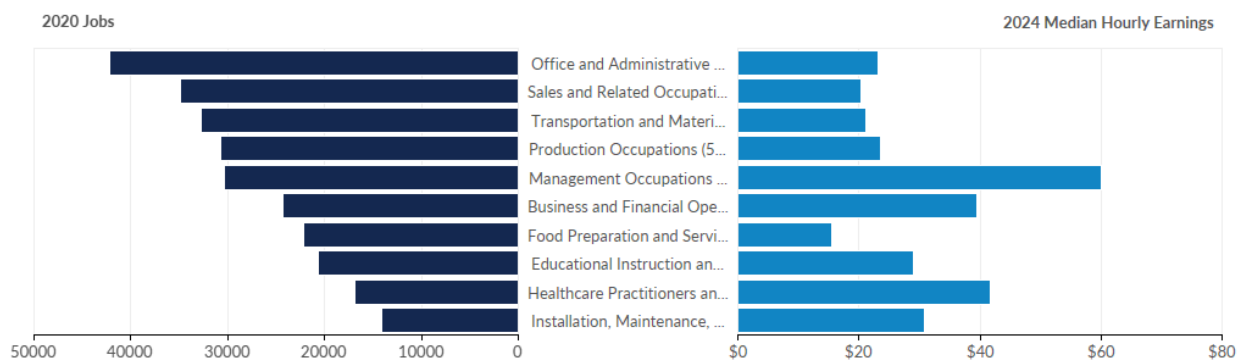
engagement activities. Regardless of entry point, services are structured to support clear navigation, reduce duplication, and align education, training, and employment strategies.

Labor market, economic, and workforce data inform Board decisions related to training investments and career pathway priorities. Labor force participation trends, occupational projections, wage information, and employer hiring patterns are reviewed to assess workforce needs and identify where resources can have the greatest impact.

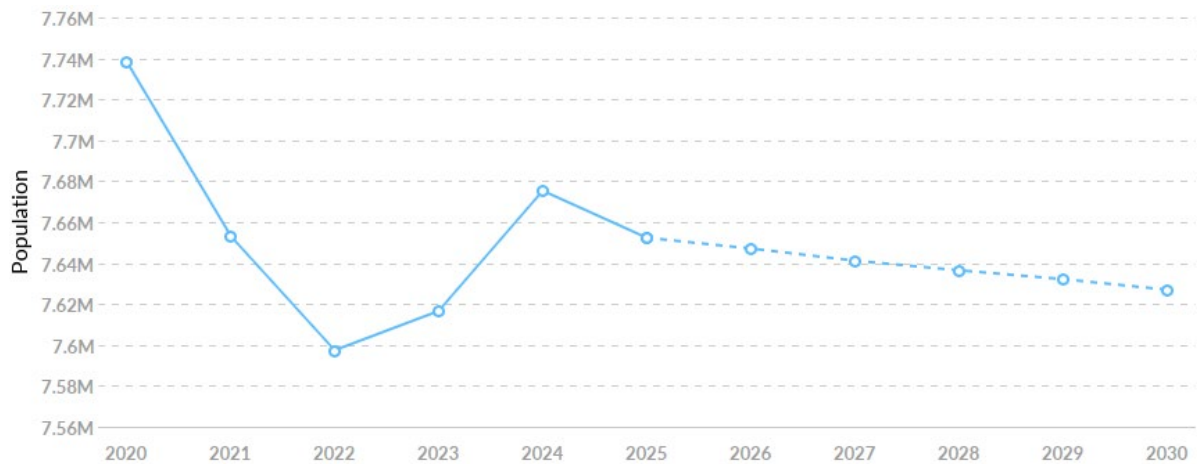
Labor market information is integrated into service design and funding decisions rather than treated as a standalone analysis. Training investments are evaluated based on occupational demand, credential value, employer engagement, and the likelihood of participants achieving employment and wage progression. This approach allows the workforce system to adapt to changing conditions while maintaining focus on outcomes benefiting both job seekers and employers.

### Community, Economic and Workforce Analysis

Workforce conditions within Lake County reflect both the scale and composition of employment across major occupational groups. Understanding which occupational categories represent the largest share of employment provides important context for workforce strategy, training investments, and employer engagement. Larger occupational groups often signal sustained employer demand, replacement hiring activity, and broad entry points across industries and skill levels.



The distribution of employment across Lake County’s largest occupational categories illustrates the diversity and structural characteristics of the local economy.



Regional population and workforce patterns highlight the interconnected nature of labor markets across the broader multi-county area. Shifts in population size, labor force participation, and age distribution influence employer talent pipelines, occupational mobility, and workforce availability. These dynamics reinforce that workforce strategies must account for cross-county employment behavior rather than relying solely on jurisdictional boundaries. Regional conditions may affect recruitment challenges, wage competition, and participant employment opportunities within Lake County.

While regional labor market dynamics shape broader employment behavior, workforce services are designed and administered locally to respond to Lake County’s specific economic and demographic conditions. Lake County Workforce Development applies labor market information, employer input, and operational experience to align services with observed participant needs and hiring demand. This localized approach ensures that regional trends inform strategy without overshadowing Lake County’s distinct workforce priorities.

Core features of the Lake County Workforce Development service model include coordinated intake and referral, individualized navigation, alignment with labor market demand, and sustained partner collaboration. These elements support a customer-centered framework while allowing workforce staff to apply professional judgment when sequencing services and supports. Labor force participation and unemployment patterns provide additional context for understanding how individuals engage with workforce programs and how services are structured to support workforce entry, retention, and advancement.

### **Career Services and Pathway Navigation**

Career services delivered through Lake County Workforce Development and the Job Center of Lake County are structured around an individualized navigation model designed to align participant goals with employment opportunities and current labor market conditions. Career specialists work directly with individuals to assess prior work experience, transferable skills, employment barriers, and readiness for training or placement. This assessment process informs development of flexible career strategies

that may emphasize immediate job search, occupational training, or work-based learning depending on individual circumstances and employer demand.

Career navigation emphasizes informed decision making and long term sustainability. Workforce staff integrate labor market information, employer hiring activity, and credential value into career counseling conversations to help participants evaluate options and understand pathways connected to regional workforce demand. Participants may move between career services, supportive service coordination, and training activities as needs and readiness evolve.

While service delivery models vary across partner programs, Lake County Workforce Development promotes consistent participant centered navigation through competitive procurement, program design, and performance expectations. Requests for Proposals and contract requirements emphasize case management, career navigation, and service coordination functions to support aligned customer experiences and workforce outcomes across funded providers.

Navigation across career pathways is intentionally flexible to reflect varied participant circumstances. Workforce staff collaborate with participants and partners to determine appropriate next steps, recognizing that individuals may require different service sequences depending on work history, skill levels, barriers to employment, and career objectives. This approach supports both rapid attachment to employment and longer term skill development. Participants may engage first in foundational skill building or supportive services prior to occupational training or work-based learning when appropriate.

## Training Strategies and Credential Pathways

Training strategies implemented through Lake County Workforce Development emphasize industry recognized credentials aligned with in demand occupations and regional workforce needs. Training investments are guided by labor market conditions, employer input, and participant readiness to reinforce alignment between skill development activities and employment outcomes. Occupational demand, hiring patterns, and projected growth trends inform how training resources are prioritized across sectors relevant to the Lake County economy.

Training pathways are designed to support multiple entry points and varying levels of participant readiness. Available options may include short term credential programs, occupational skills training, and integrated education and training models that allow individuals to build foundational or transitional skills while progressing toward employment. Workforce staff apply labor market information and employer insight to help participants evaluate credential value, anticipated outcomes, and alignment with individual career objectives.

Coordination with education and training providers supports alignment between workforce funded training and other financial aid resources where appropriate. Lake County Workforce Development works with participants and training institutions to support informed funding decisions, reduce duplication of resources, and ensure training activities

remain connected to realistic employment opportunities. While training models and instructional approaches vary across providers, procurement, eligibility, and performance frameworks reinforce the importance of credential relevance, employer demand, and measurable participant outcomes in training investments.

## Work-Based Learning and Employer Engagement

Work-based learning strategies implemented through Lake County Workforce Development serve as a primary mechanism for connecting participants to employment while supporting skill development in applied, real-world environments. These approaches align participant work experience and training activities with demonstrated employer demand and regional workforce needs. Work-based learning models may include on-the-job training, paid work experience, incumbent worker training, and apprenticeship-aligned activities designed to support both workforce entry and skill advancement.

Within the Job Center of Lake County service framework, work-based learning strategies are informed by labor market conditions, employer hiring activity, and occupational skill requirements. Workforce staff work directly with employers to identify workforce needs, develop training structures, and align participant opportunities with workplace expectations. This employer-connected approach supports hiring, retention, and skill progression while providing participants with practical experience in active work settings.

Employer engagement plays a central role in shaping and refining work-based learning activities. Employers inform training design, communicate occupational skill requirements, and evaluate participant readiness. These partnerships support immediate business needs while strengthening longer-term talent pipeline development across industries relevant to the Lake County economy. Insights gathered through employer interaction and hiring patterns guide ongoing adjustments to work-based learning strategies to maintain alignment with evolving workforce demand.

Procurement, contracting, and performance expectations reinforce the importance of employer relevance, occupational alignment, and measurable participant outcomes in work-based learning investments. While program structures may vary across participating employers and providers, Lake County Workforce Development prioritizes models that demonstrate clear connections to employment, skill development, and business demand.

## Apprenticeship and Earn-and-Learn Strategies

Registered Apprenticeship and apprenticeship-informed earn-and-learn models represent a key component of workforce strategies advanced through Lake County Workforce Development. These approaches create structured opportunities for participants to obtain paid work experience, progressive skill development, and industry-recognized competencies while supporting employers in developing talent aligned with occupational and industry requirements. Apprenticeship-related models reinforce the workforce system's emphasis on practical skill acquisition, wage progression, and long-term attachment to the labor market.

Within the Job Center of Lake County service framework, apprenticeship strategies are pursued as part of a broader set of work-based learning and demand-driven training approaches. Workforce staff work directly with employers, training providers, and partner organizations to identify apprenticeship opportunities, expand employer awareness of apprenticeship as a workforce solution, and connect participants to available programs where appropriate. These activities are informed by labor market conditions, employer demand, and occupational skill needs observed across priority sectors.

The Lake County Workforce Development Board provides strategic direction and oversight supporting apprenticeship expansion and alignment with regional and state workforce initiatives. Board and committee discussions consider apprenticeship as a high-impact workforce strategy, particularly within industries facing persistent skill shortages or requiring structured occupational progression. Apprenticeship investments and partnerships are evaluated in relation to employment outcomes, employer engagement, credential value, and broader workforce system priorities.

Apprenticeship strategies are intentionally integrated within work-based learning models, sector strategies, and training investments rather than implemented as stand-alone initiatives. This structure supports alignment with employer demand while allowing flexibility in how apprenticeship-related approaches are developed and applied across industries.

## Targeted Strategies for Priority Populations

- **Immigrants and migrants:** The workforce system coordinates language access, navigation assistance, and referrals with community-based and education partners to reduce barriers and strengthen workforce participation for immigrants, migrants, and individuals with limited English proficiency.
- **SNAP recipients:** Workforce staff coordinate with SNAP Employment and Training-related activities and partner supports to help eligible participants meet participation requirements and connect to career services, training, and employment pathways.
- **Workforce Pell Grant recipients (2026–27):** Lake County Workforce Development coordinates with training providers and postsecondary institutions to help participants understand eligibility, sequencing, and alignment of WIOA funding with Pell-supported training pathways where applicable, minimizing duplication and supporting efficient funding use.

Lake County Workforce Development implements targeted service strategies to support individuals and populations who may face barriers to employment, training participation, or career advancement. These populations include, but are not limited to, youth, dislocated workers, veterans, individuals with disabilities, individuals with limited English proficiency, and individuals participating in public benefit or assistance programs. Service approaches recognize that barriers to workforce participation vary across individuals and

frequently require flexible sequencing of career services, training activities, and supportive resources.

Within the Job Center of Lake County service framework, workforce staff support individuals navigating employment and training pathways that may intersect with programs such as SNAP Employment and Training, adult education, and other publicly supported services. Coordination and referral practices are structured to help individuals access appropriate workforce activities while maintaining alignment with program eligibility requirements, participation conditions, and individual readiness.

Workforce strategies account for the needs of immigrants, migrants, and individuals with limited English proficiency. Service delivery emphasizes language access, navigation assistance, and coordination with community-based and education partners to strengthen workforce participation and labor market attachment. These approaches prioritize reducing structural and communication barriers while connecting individuals to employment and skill development opportunities aligned with local and regional labor market demand.

Training and career pathway strategies are designed to complement broader education and financial aid systems. While the Lake County Workforce Development Board does not administer Pell Grants or other federal student aid programs, Lake County Workforce Development coordinates with training providers and postsecondary institutions to support participant understanding of funding alignment, eligibility considerations, and sequencing of available resources. This coordination helps participants leverage multiple funding sources where appropriate while minimizing duplication of support.

The Lake County Workforce Development Board provides strategic direction and oversight to ensure workforce strategies remain responsive to population needs, labor market conditions, and observed participation patterns. Considerations related to access, participation, and outcomes inform policy guidance, program design, and continuous improvement efforts across the local workforce system.

## Business Services and Talent Pipeline Development

Lake County Workforce Development delivers business services through the Job Center of Lake County to provide employers with responsive workforce solutions aligned with real hiring, retention, and skill development needs. Employer engagement emphasizes relationship-based support, ongoing communication, and service strategies designed to address recruitment challenges, occupational skill gaps, and evolving workforce demands across industries.

Business services include recruitment assistance, labor market information, incumbent worker training, work-based learning partnerships, and coordination of workforce resources that support employer competitiveness. These services are shaped by direct employer interaction, hiring activity, and observed workforce conditions rather than standardized program models. Employers are engaged as active partners in identifying skill

requirements, informing training strategies, and developing practical pathways connecting job seekers to employment opportunities.

Through sustained employer engagement, Lake County Workforce Development strengthens alignment between workforce investments and business demand while supporting development of local talent pipelines. This approach supports both immediate hiring objectives and longer-term workforce stability by encouraging employer participation in training, work-based learning, and skill development strategies.

## Continuous Improvement and System Learning

Lake County Workforce Development applies performance information, operational insight, and employer feedback to support continuous improvement of workforce strategies and service delivery practices. Information gathered through program outcomes, service interactions, and business engagement activities informs adjustments to coordination methods, training investments, and participant support approaches.

Continuous improvement functions as an ongoing operational responsibility rather than a periodic evaluation activity. Workforce staff regularly assess service effectiveness, identify participation barriers, and refine practices to improve system responsiveness and customer experience. Employer perspectives, participant experiences, and frontline staff observations collectively inform this learning process.

The Lake County Workforce Development Board provides governance oversight by reviewing patterns and trends over time to guide strategic refinement. Emphasis is placed on system performance, service effectiveness, and alignment with labor market conditions, ensuring workforce strategies evolve based on evidence, practitioner experience, and employer demand.

## Chapter 4. Operating Systems and Policies

This chapter describes the operating systems, governance structures, and policy framework through which the Lake County Workforce Development Board provides oversight and strategic direction for the local workforce system under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act within Local Workforce Innovation Area 1. These systems define how workforce activities are organized, coordinated, and evaluated while supporting consistent and accountable service delivery through the Job Center of Lake County.

Operating systems establish the structure for partner coordination, service alignment, policy implementation, and performance oversight. Required planning and governance documents clarify roles, responsibilities, and expectations across workforce programs and partners. Together, these elements support compliance with federal and state requirements while reinforcing a coordinated and customer-centered workforce system designed to respond to employer demand and participant needs.

This framework also supports alignment with state workforce strategies, including initiatives associated with the Climate and Equitable Jobs Act. CEJA-related workforce activities are incorporated within sector strategies, training investments, and employer engagement efforts to ensure clean energy pathways remain integrated within the broader workforce system.

#### 4.A. Coordination of Planning Requirements

Local Workforce Innovation Area 1 maintains required planning and governance documents describing the structure and operation of the one stop delivery system. These documents support service integration, define partner roles, and guide coordination across workforce programs operating within Lake County.

Key system documents include the Memorandum of Understanding and the Service Integration Self Assessment Tool, both of which are incorporated by reference into this Local Plan.

##### **Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)**

The Local Workforce Innovation Area 1 Memorandum of Understanding describes the design and operation of the one stop delivery system and elements required under Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act regulations at 20 CFR 678.705. The Memorandum of Understanding, including subsequent modifications, is incorporated by reference into this Local Plan.

##### **Service Integration Self-Assessment**

The Local Workforce Innovation Area 1 Service Integration Self Assessment Tool describes how workforce partners align, coordinate, and continuously improve service delivery under State of Illinois Service Integration Policy. The Self Assessment Tool, including subsequent updates, is incorporated by reference into this Local Plan. Supporting documentation is included as an appendix.

#### 4.B. Designation and Role of the One-Stop Operator

The Lake County Workforce Development Board designates a One Stop Operator through a competitive procurement process conducted in accordance with the Lake County Purchasing Ordinance and Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act requirements. The designation is documented within the Local Workforce Innovation Area 1 Memorandum of Understanding and is reviewed periodically to ensure alignment with operational needs and regulatory guidance.

The One Stop Operator is responsible for coordinating service delivery among required one stop partners within the Job Center of Lake County. The One Stop Operator supports partner communication, facilitates service alignment, and promotes consistent customer flow across programs while maintaining neutrality and independence from direct service delivery responsibilities.

### **Scaling Integrated Education and Training Models**

The Lake County workforce system supports expansion of integrated education and training models enabling adults to build foundational skills while progressing toward industry recognized credentials. Collaboration with adult education providers and training partners supports pathways aligned with occupational goals.

Integrated education and training approaches reinforce alignment with employer demand and regional workforce priorities while supporting instructional quality and participant success.

### **Leveraging Coordinated Business Services to Support Employers**

Under the strategic framework established by the Lake County Workforce Development Board, workforce programs coordinate business services to provide consistent and streamlined employer support. Workforce partners align engagement strategies, share information, and reduce duplication to strengthen responsiveness.

Business service strategies address employer needs related to recruitment, retention, and workforce development while strengthening connections between employers and the local talent pipeline.

### **One-Stop Operator Oversight and Accountability**

The Lake County Workforce Development Board provides oversight of the One Stop Operator to ensure effective coordination of services, compliance with federal and state requirements, and alignment with local workforce system priorities. Oversight responsibilities emphasize performance, service integration, and adherence to the roles and expectations defined within the Local Workforce Innovation Area 1 Memorandum of Understanding.

The Workforce Development Board monitors One Stop Operator activities through structured reporting, review of coordination efforts, and assessment of outcomes associated with customer access, partner alignment, and system efficiency. Performance information is reviewed by the Board and relevant committees to identify strengths, address operational challenges, and support continuous improvement.

The Board maintains clear separation between coordination functions and direct service delivery. Consistent with Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act requirements, the One Stop Operator does not provide career services, training services, or employer services. These responsibilities remain with Workforce Development staff and required partners. This separation supports operator neutrality, regulatory compliance, and system accountability.

## **4.C. System Coordination and Service Integration**

The Lake County workforce system is structured to support coordinated and integrated service delivery through the one stop delivery system. The Job Center of Lake County

serves as the primary access point where required one stop partners and workforce programs align services, referral practices, and customer flow.

Service integration is guided by the Local Workforce Innovation Area 1 Memorandum of Understanding and the Service Integration Action Plan. These documents define partner roles, coordination methods, and shared expectations for service delivery and continuous improvement. Both documents are incorporated by reference into this Local Plan and are reviewed periodically.

The one stop delivery system emphasizes coordinated intake, referral, and case management practices designed to connect customers to appropriate services efficiently. Partners collaborate within established guidelines to align processes, share information where permitted, and reduce duplication. Day to day coordination relies on staff expertise and professional judgment to balance program requirements with individual participant needs. In practice, this includes applying discretion in service sequencing based on factors such as language development, caregiving responsibilities, military obligations, or readiness for training.

System partners participate in regular coordination activities, including operational discussions and joint planning efforts facilitated by the One Stop Operator. These activities support consistency, strengthen communication, and reinforce shared accountability for system performance.

The Workforce Development Board maintains governance oversight of the one stop delivery system to ensure alignment with local priorities, regulatory expectations, and statewide workforce strategies.

#### 4.D. Responsiveness, Inclusivity, and Accessibility in System Operations

All workforce services are delivered under Workforce Development Board oversight in compliance with Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Section 188 and applicable federal and state nondiscrimination and accessibility requirements, including physical, programmatic, and digital accessibility standards.

The Lake County Workforce Development Board embeds principles of responsiveness, inclusivity, and accessibility within system design, policy development, and oversight practices. Considerations related to participation, service access, and outcomes are integrated across operating systems and service strategies to support individuals and populations facing barriers to employment.

Data informed decision making supports this approach through regular review of demographic, geographic, and performance information used to guide policy direction, resource allocation, and service refinement.

The one stop delivery system expands access through multiple service modalities, including community based locations, mobile workforce services, and virtual or hybrid

delivery options. Community based service delivery enables workforce staff to connect individuals to services in familiar settings such as libraries, schools, and community centers, reducing structural and logistical barriers to participation.

Expectations for system partners, training providers, and contractors reinforce these priorities through requirements related to accessibility, nondiscrimination, and service quality.

#### 4.E. Use of Technology and Alternative Means of Service Delivery

Technology and alternative service delivery methods support communication, service coordination, and customer access across the Lake County workforce system. Workforce staff and partners regularly assess intake, case management, and service delivery practices to ensure technology tools are used effectively and in ways that strengthen accessibility, efficiency, and customer experience. These efforts emphasize flexibility and alignment across programs so individuals and employers can engage with workforce services through multiple channels.

Workforce staff provide direct assistance to customers navigating technology enabled services, including individuals participating in SNAP Employment and Training activities, adult education programs, and Pell Grant eligible training pathways. Support is designed to prevent exclusion related to digital access, digital skills, or familiarity with online systems. Staff routinely assist customers with virtual platforms, documentation processes, and service navigation to maintain equitable participation.

The one stop delivery system offers multiple options for orientations, workshops, and ongoing engagement, including in person, virtual, and hybrid formats. Virtual services expand flexibility for individuals facing transportation, scheduling, or geographic constraints while preserving access to workforce center and community based services.

Technology tools also support employer engagement and system coordination. Online platforms are used for employer meetings, hiring events, and workforce activities connecting businesses with job seekers. Digital communication methods support timely information sharing, appointment coordination, and participant engagement. Technology enabled strategies also strengthen language access, supporting participation by individuals with limited English proficiency.

Alternative delivery strategies extend workforce services beyond traditional locations. Through initiatives such as Job Center on the Move, workforce staff provide consultations, workshops, and employment related services within community settings. These approaches increase service visibility, reduce logistical barriers, and expand engagement among individuals who may not otherwise access the workforce system.

#### 4.F. Alignment with State Strategies and Expansion of Access

The Lake County Workforce Development Board provides strategic direction and oversight to align the local workforce system with priorities identified in the Illinois WIOA State Plan

and related statewide workforce strategies. Coordination with workforce, education, economic development, and community partners supports expanded access to services, strengthened career pathways, and workforce investments responsive to regional labor market conditions.

The local workforce system prioritizes access to employment, education, training, and supportive services for eligible individuals, particularly those facing barriers to workforce participation. Partnerships with postsecondary institutions and training providers support coordinated access to academic advising, career counseling, and credential pathways aligned with in demand occupations. Coordination between WIOA funded training and other financial aid resources supports efficient use of funding and reduces duplication. Workforce staff assist participants in understanding eligibility, funding alignment, and sequencing of available resources, including Pell Grant supported pathways where applicable.

Supportive services are used to address barriers that may limit participation in training or employment activities. These services may include transportation assistance, childcare support, and other resources necessary to enable engagement in workforce strategies. Coordination across partners supports alignment between participant needs and available supports.

Targeted strategies support individuals and populations who benefit from integrated education and employment services, including youth, individuals with disabilities, individuals with limited English proficiency, dislocated workers, and SNAP participants. Service approaches emphasize coordinated access, clear navigation, and alignment across programs to support stable workforce attachment and career progression.

### **Scaling Integrated Education and Training Models**

The Lake County workforce system supports expansion of integrated education and training models that allow adults to build foundational skills while progressing toward industry recognized credentials. Collaboration with adult education providers and training partners supports pathways for individuals to strengthen basic skills, develop English language proficiency, and pursue secondary or postsecondary credentials aligned with occupational goals.

Integrated education and training approaches support attainment of credentials aligned with employer demand and regional workforce priorities. Labor market information and employer engagement inform program alignment, while education partners support instructional quality and participant success. These models also support emerging sector strategies, including clean energy and climate aligned career pathways.

### **Leveraging Coordinated Business Services to Support Employers**

Under the strategic framework established by the Lake County Workforce Development Board, workforce programs coordinate business services to provide consistent and streamlined support to employers. Workforce partners align employer engagement

strategies, share information, and reduce duplication to strengthen responsiveness and service quality.

Business service strategies address employer needs related to recruitment, retention, and workforce development. Coordination across workforce, education, and partner programs strengthens connections between employers and the local talent pipeline while supporting regional economic competitiveness.

## 4.G. Local Policies and Agreements

The Lake County Workforce Development Board adopts and maintains required local workforce policies and agreements in accordance with federal and state Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act requirements. These policies establish the framework governing service delivery, eligibility, priority of service, training investments, nondiscrimination, fiscal accountability, and system operations. Policies are reviewed, updated as necessary, and approved by the Workforce Development Board.

### **Adult and Dislocated Worker Employment and Training Activities**

#### **Service Design and Delivery Approach**

Adult and dislocated worker services are administered by Lake County Workforce Development and delivered through the Job Center of Lake County using a flexible, customer centered service model. Services are structured to accommodate multiple pathways to employment and advancement, including immediate job search, occupational training, and work-based strategies that combine employment and skill development. Workforce staff assess participant goals, work history, readiness, and labor market conditions to determine appropriate service sequencing. This approach emphasizes practical alignment between individual circumstances and workforce opportunities rather than a fixed program sequence.

#### **Individualized Career Services and Navigation**

Adults and dislocated workers receive individualized career services that support informed employment and training decisions. Services include assessment, career planning, and ongoing career navigation aligned with participant goals and regional labor market conditions. Career specialists work directly with participants to evaluate transferable skills, identify realistic employment opportunities, and determine next steps, which may include job placement, training, work-based learning, or supportive services. Career navigation is structured to ensure participants enter training or employment activities at appropriate points based on readiness and likelihood of success.

#### **Demand-Driven Occupational Training and Credential Pathways**

Occupational training investments are administered primarily through Individual Training Accounts and are aligned with in demand industries and occupations identified through labor market analysis and employer engagement. Training decisions are guided by

occupational demand, credential value, participant readiness, and employment outcomes. Workforce staff apply labor market information and employer insight to support participant training selection and evaluate the relevance of proposed credentials. Training relevance and effectiveness are evaluated through credential attainment, employment outcomes, wage progression, and alignment with workforce demand. Targeted training partnerships illustrate how Lake County Workforce Development translates labor market information and employer engagement into concrete training opportunities that expand participant access to industry aligned credentials while addressing workforce needs within priority sectors.

### **Work-Based Learning and Employer-Connected Strategies**

Work-based learning strategies are actively used within adult and dislocated worker programs to connect participants to employment while supporting applied skill development. Lake County Workforce Development utilizes approaches including on the job training, paid work experience, and incumbent worker training to address both participant and employer needs. These models allow participants to develop occupational skills in workplace settings while enabling employers to shape training and evaluate talent. Incumbent worker training investments support skill upgrading, retention, and advancement within existing workforces.

### **Apprenticeship Strategies and Earn-and-Learn Models**

Registered Apprenticeship and apprenticeship informed earn and learn models represent a central component of Lake County's work-based learning strategy. Apprenticeship pathways provide structured opportunities for participants to earn wages while progressing through defined skill development and credential attainment. These models support long term career mobility and provide employers with reliable workforce development mechanisms. Lake County Workforce Development advances apprenticeship through employer partnerships, coordination with training providers, and alignment with regional and state initiatives. Apprenticeship expansion is guided by employer demand, occupational needs, and workforce conditions.

### **Integrated Supportive Services and Community-Based Partnerships**

Adult and dislocated worker services incorporate coordination with community based organizations that provide supportive and stabilization resources. Lake County Workforce Development maintains partnerships with organizations such as United Way of Lake County and SGA Youth and Family Services to support participants facing barriers related to transportation, childcare, financial stability, and housing. Supportive service coordination allows workforce staff to align employment and training activities with participant stability needs, improving persistence and completion outcomes.

### **Flexible, Community-Based, and Technology-Enabled Service Delivery**

Lake County Workforce Development utilizes alternative and community based delivery methods to expand service access and reduce participation barriers. Mobile service strategies, virtual appointments, and hybrid engagement models extend workforce

services beyond traditional Job Center locations. Through initiatives such as Job Center on the Move, workforce staff deliver services within community settings including libraries, community centers, and partner locations. Virtual orientations, workshops, and appointments provide additional flexibility while preserving in person access for participants who benefit from face to face services.

### **Coordination with Statewide Rapid Response Activities**

Lake County Workforce Development coordinates with statewide Rapid Response partners to ensure workers affected by layoffs or business closures receive timely reemployment support. Collaboration with the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity and the Illinois Department of Employment Security supports alignment between Rapid Response activities and locally available workforce services. Rapid Response strategies emphasize early intervention, career guidance, and rapid connection to employment and training resources. Rapid Response engagement frequently serves as an entry point to individualized career services, training opportunities, supportive services, and work-based learning strategies.

### **Data-Informed Access, Outreach, and Service Strategies**

Lake County Workforce Development applies demographic, geographic, and performance information to evaluate participation patterns, service effectiveness, and workforce outcomes. Data analysis informs outreach strategies, service design adjustments, and resource allocation decisions. Service delivery models incorporate community based, mobile, and virtual strategies designed to expand access and reduce structural barriers. Communication and outreach efforts support these strategies by promoting awareness of workforce services and encouraging participation across diverse populations.

## **Chapter 5. Performance Goals and Evaluation**

The Lake County Workforce Development Board approaches performance and evaluation as core tools for governance, learning, accountability, and responsible stewardship of public resources. Performance information is used to understand system effectiveness, identify trends, and guide strategic decisions that strengthen outcomes for job seekers, employers, and the broader workforce system. Evaluation is not treated solely as a retrospective compliance activity, but as an ongoing feedback mechanism integrating performance data, employer input, practitioner experience, and partner insight. Findings are regularly reviewed by the Workforce Development Board and its standing committees to inform policy direction, funding priorities, and system level strategy refinement. Performance trends are evaluated over time to distinguish systemic patterns from short term fluctuations and guide strategic adjustments. Data and visualizations supporting required planning elements are integrated throughout this plan to align with relevant narrative sections and improve clarity for reviewers and the public.

## 5.A. Local Levels of Negotiated Performance

There are six primary indicators of performance for the Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs authorized under Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Title IB, as defined in WIOA Final Rule Section 677.155(a)(1). The first five indicators are negotiated for each Title IB program, while no negotiated performance level is required for the indicator Effectiveness in Serving Employers. Negotiated performance levels are established through the annual state negotiation process for each program year.

Within Lake County, negotiated performance indicators function not only as compliance measures but as core management tools used by Lake County Workforce Development and the Job Center of Lake County to guide program strategy, service design, and resource alignment. Performance trends are monitored throughout the program year to identify participation patterns, support early intervention when outcomes deviate from expectations, and inform operational adjustments.

Performance indicators are reviewed by the Lake County Workforce Development Board and its standing committees as part of routine oversight and system stewardship responsibilities. This structure supports continuous improvement, reinforces accountability across service providers and partners, and ensures workforce investments remain aligned with participant outcomes, employer demand, and regional labor market

conditions.

**Workforce Development Activities (Title IB of WIOA)**  
**Negotiated Levels of Performance for PY 2024 and 2025**

**LWIA #1 – Lake County Workforce Development Department**

	PY 2024	PY 2025
<b><u>Adult</u></b>		
Employment Rate 2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter after Exit	76.5%	76.5%
Employment Rate 4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter after Exit	72.0%	72.0%
Median Earnings 2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter after Exit	\$10,400	\$10,400
Credential Attainment within 4 Quarters after Exit	80.0%	80.0%
Measurable Skill Gains	68.0%	70.0%
<b><u>Dislocated Worker</u></b>		
Employment Rate 2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter after Exit	78.0%	78.0%
Employment Rate 4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter after Exit	76.0%	76.0%
Median Earnings 2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter after Exit	\$12,000	\$12,500
Credential Attainment within 4 Quarters after Exit	85.0%	85.0%
Measurable Skill Gains	67.0%	69.0%
<b><u>Youth</u></b>		
Employment or Education Rate 2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter after Exit	73.0%	73.0%
Employment or Education Rate 4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter after Exit	74.0%	74.0%
Median Earnings 2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter after Exit	\$5,000	\$5,000
Credential Attainment within 4 Quarters after Exit	70.0%	71.0%
Measurable Skill Gains	67.0%	68.0%

### 5.B. Additional Performance Measures

While no additional negotiated performance measures exist beyond those established through the state negotiation process, the Lake County Workforce Development Board evaluates effectiveness in serving employers through qualitative and system-level indicators reflecting employer engagement, service utilization, and workforce outcomes associated with business services and work-based learning strategies. These indicators include employer participation in workforce initiatives, repeat utilization of workforce services, engagement in sector partnerships, and employer feedback regarding service quality and responsiveness. Information related to employer engagement and satisfaction is periodically reviewed by the Lake County Workforce Development Board and relevant

committees to inform strategic discussions, continuous improvement, and alignment with employer workforce needs.

## 5.C. Evaluation, Return on Investment, and Strategy Refinement

The Lake County Workforce Development Board applies evaluation as a governance and system stewardship practice used to assess service effectiveness, inform strategic priorities, and support responsible resource allocation. Evaluation activities emphasize return on investment, alignment with employer demand, participant outcomes, and overall system impact.

Evaluation functions as an ongoing learning and improvement process rather than a retrospective exercise. Performance information, operational insight, employer feedback, and practitioner experience collectively inform adjustments to workforce strategies, funding priorities, and service design. This approach supports system adaptability while reinforcing alignment between workforce investments, labor market conditions, and community needs.

### **Existing Service Delivery Strategies to Be Expanded Based on Return on Investment**

Work-based learning strategies consistently demonstrate strong outcomes related to employment, wage progression, and employer engagement and remain priority investment areas within Lake County Workforce Development programs. Strategies including on-the-job training, paid work experience, incumbent worker training, internships, and apprenticeship-aligned models support skill development while strengthening employer connections.

Evaluation findings and operational experience indicate that work-based approaches accelerate labor market attachment, improve participant persistence, and align training with employer expectations. These strategies will continue to be expanded where participant outcomes, employer demand, and system performance support additional investment.

### **Existing Service Delivery Strategies to Be Curtailed or Modified**

Evaluation findings inform identification of service strategies requiring modification, redesign, or discontinuation. Approaches demonstrating limited effectiveness, weak alignment with labor market demand, or consistently low participant outcomes may be adjusted to improve system performance and ensure responsible stewardship of public resources.

When modifications occur, resources are redirected toward higher-impact strategies demonstrating stronger outcomes, improved employer alignment, or greater responsiveness to participant needs. Operational evidence and practitioner experience guide these determinations.

### **New Service Strategies Informed by Evaluation and Labor Market Demand**

New and enhanced workforce strategies are shaped by evaluation findings, labor market conditions, employer engagement, and operational insight from Lake County Workforce Development. Strategy development reflects practical responses to observed participant needs, participation patterns, and employment outcomes within the Job Center of Lake County rather than theoretical planning constructs.

Evaluation activities and staff experience frequently identify opportunities to refine service sequencing, strengthen engagement practices, and introduce more accessible entry points into training and employment. When patterns indicate barriers related to skills, work history, language proficiency, or life stability, Lake County Workforce Development prioritizes strategies supporting readiness, persistence, and incremental progress.

For example, operational observations have reinforced the importance of flexible service sequencing for individuals benefiting from foundational skill development, short-term training, or supportive service coordination prior to full occupational training. This approach allows staff to align service timing with participant readiness, employer demand, and long-term employment potential.

Employer engagement and industry interaction further inform development of new strategies. Hiring trends, skill gaps, and business feedback guide design of training pathways, work-based learning opportunities, and sector-focused initiatives.

Consistent with its governance role, the Lake County Workforce Development Board reviews broader system trends and outcomes, while Lake County Workforce Development applies evaluation findings operationally through program design, service adjustments, and pilot initiatives.

### **Data Collection and Use in Evaluation**

Lake County Workforce Development applies both quantitative and qualitative information to evaluate service effectiveness, participant outcomes, and overall system performance. Quantitative measures include employment outcomes, wage progression, credential attainment, program completion, and participation patterns observed across workforce programs.

Quantitative analysis is complemented by qualitative insight gathered through routine interaction with participants, employers, workforce staff, and system partners. Practitioner observations, customer experiences, and employer feedback provide context for understanding service effectiveness and identifying opportunities for improvement.

Together, these information sources support continuous improvement, guide operational adjustments, and inform refinement of workforce strategies and service delivery practices.

## **5.D. Cost-Effective Approaches and System Efficiency**

Cost effectiveness is evaluated as a component of system performance, resource stewardship, and program strategy. Lake County Workforce Development prioritizes

approaches that reduce duplication, leverage partnerships, and expand service access when those strategies demonstrate positive outcomes for participants and employers.

Operational and fiscal considerations are assessed alongside performance results to ensure workforce investments generate meaningful impact. Strategies improving service reach, participant persistence, or employment outcomes without unnecessary administrative burden are emphasized.

Collaborative planning with education providers, employers, and workforce partners supports efficient use of resources while maintaining service quality, accessibility, and responsiveness.

## 5.E. Incorporating Access and Responsiveness into Evaluation

Evaluation activities include analysis of participation, service utilization, and outcome patterns across population groups. Disaggregated information is reviewed to understand service reach, identify potential disparities, and assess how workforce strategies support individuals with varying needs and barriers.

Observed differences in engagement or outcomes inform adjustments to outreach practices, service design, and delivery methods. These insights support operational decision-making by Lake County Workforce Development and inform Lake County Workforce Development Board oversight.

Access, participation, and outcomes are treated as integrated components of system performance embedded within routine evaluation and continuous improvement practices.

*Through this Local Plan, the Lake County Workforce Development Board affirms its role as a strategic steward of the local workforce system, committed to continuous learning, collaboration, and alignment with evolving community and labor market needs.*

# CHAPTER 6: TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS AND ASSURANCES

## 6.A. Fiscal Management

Lake County Workforce Development has been identified by the Chief Elected Official (CEO) of Lake County as the entity responsible for the disbursement of grant funds. Fiscal administration follows Lake County government financial requirements and the Lake County purchasing ordinance, with processes and internal controls supporting allowability, allocability, documentation, and audit readiness.

The Workforce Development Board sets budget policy consistent with Lake County budget policies and maintains governance oversight through standing committee review. The Board has

established a **Finance and Compliance Committee** that provides financial analysis, advice, and oversight to ensure the organization is operating with the financial resources needed to provide programs and services to the community.

## 6.B. Procurement Policies and Procedures

The Workforce Development Board and Lake County Workforce Development follow Lake County's Purchasing Ordinance. The Lake County Purchasing Division leads the procurement process. Competitive procurement used to award subrecipients and contracts for WIOA Title I activities is conducted pursuant to Lake County procurement policies and procedures.

The Workforce Development Board works with Lake County Purchasing when releasing requests for proposals for youth services and one-stop operator procurement and when issuing requests for quotes for professional services.

## 6.C. Physical and Programmatic Accessibility

The Job Center of Lake County Memorandum of Understanding defines how entities within the one-stop delivery system—including the one-stop operator and one-stop partners—comply with WIOA Section 188 and applicable ADA requirements regarding physical and programmatic accessibility of facilities, programs and services, technology, and materials for individuals with disabilities.

LWIA 1's accessibility approach includes routine compliance monitoring and local review activities, including:

- The Job Center is reviewed for facility and programmatic accessibility by an EO Officer from DCEO on a routine basis (e.g., annually or semi-annually).
- Lake County Workforce Development has a trained EO Officer who reviews the Job Center and external partner sites where services are provided (e.g., College of Lake County campus locations, youth provider sites, and training providers accepting ITAs).
- The Job Center layout supports a culture of inclusiveness in compliance with WIOA Section 188, the ADA, and applicable statutory and regulatory requirements.
- The Job Center is accessible via public transportation and includes accessible parking accommodations, including marked accessible spaces near the entrance and accessible garage parking.
- Assistive technology equipment is available to support customer access.

Partners co-located at the Job Center cooperate with compliance monitoring to ensure that one-stop centers, programs, services, technology, and materials are accessible and available to all.

## 6.D. Plan Development and Public Comment

LWIA 1 developed the PY26 Local Plan through partner coordination, committee discussion, and incorporation of operational input from workforce system stakeholders. As required, the plan was posted for a public comment period not to exceed 30 days prior to submission. **No public comments were received** during the public comment period.

## 6.E. Referenced Attachments / Supporting Documentation

Supporting documentation is provided with the submission package, including:

- Service Integration Self-Assessment documentation
- Local policies and agreements / service policy packet (provided as a submission appendix).