



1001 North 23rd Street
Post Office Box 94094
Baton Rouge, LA 70804-9094

(O) 225-342-3001
(F) 225-342-2051
www.laworks.net

Jeff Landry, Governor
Susana Schowen, Secretary

Office of the Secretary

December 2, 2024

Nicholas Lalpui
United States Department of Labor
Employment and Training Administration
Dallas Regional Office
525 South Griffin Street, Room 317
Dallas, Texas 75202

Re: Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Annual Statewide Report Program Year 2023

Dear Mr. Lalpui:

I am proud to present the Program Year 2023 Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Annual Statewide Performance Report for the state of Louisiana. The aforementioned report captures the work, achievements as well as challenges from July 1, 2023 through June 30, 2024.

This edition of the Annual Report highlights how the state of Louisiana's best practices as well as strategies outlined in the Combined State Plan helping to prepare Louisiana workers, educators and workforce.

Louisiana met or exceeded all performance measures under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Title I and III programs. As always, we are working with our local areas to provide ongoing guidance and technical assistance to ensure performance standards are met or exceeded statewide.

The report will further highlight that the State of Louisiana has been diligent in its efforts to ensure workforce needs are met and exceeded across the state. We are so thankful for the opportunity to serve our fellow Louisianans utilizing the funding opportunities within WIOA.

If you have any questions or need any additional information, please feel free to contact Osmar Padilla, Assistant Secretary at (225) 342-3483 or via email at opadilla@lwc.la.gov.

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:

1680DFE6779944A

Susana "Susie" Schowen
Secretary
Louisiana Workforce Commission



WORKFORCE INNOVATION AND OPPORTUNITY ACT
ANNUAL REPORT
PROGRAM YEAR 23

Executive Summary

Louisiana Governor Jeff Landry, in collaboration with Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC), Secretary Susana "Susie" Schowen at the helm is leading the work to support and remain committed to workforce progress as a priority for the state of Louisiana. The agency is committed to advancing workforce development initiatives that empower individuals, drive economic growth, and foster a thriving business environment in our state. LWC continues the coordination and integration of service delivery, in aligning and strengthening employment, education, training and related services that support business & industry and job seekers. The agencies steadfast commitment is to ensure that working families are given the opportunity to earn a living wage that strengthens families and support our state's economic recovery.

Workforce Investment Council (State Workforce Development Board)

The Workforce Investment Council (WIC) comprises of over 53 members representing an array of business, workforce (i.e. apprenticeship/training, organized labor and community-based organizations), state legislature and government. It is important to note that Act 623 of the 2024 Regular Legislative Session becomes effective August 1, 2024. The new law allows the WIC membership to be better aligned with the federal requirements of the state workforce board membership.

The WIC serves to develop a strategic plan to coordinate and integrate a workforce development delivery system to assure efficiency and cooperation between public and private entities by advising the governor on the needs of Louisiana's employers and its workforce as well as being responsible for occupational forecasting used to drive programs and funding for job training. The council supports the development of an employer-led, demand-driven workforce development system based on occupational forecasts in which training, education, and services for job seekers prepare Louisiana residents for high-wage, high-demand career opportunities in Louisiana.

The WIC achieves its mission by the following listed below:

1. Recommending policy actions to both public and private institutions and creating coalitions to achieve their implementation.
2. Working with Workforce Development Systems partners to integrate workforce development into the decision-making of business people, economic developers, educators, and human resource professionals.
3. Raising public awareness of the importance of workforce development for Louisiana's economic future.
4. Ensuring public accountability by evaluating the effectiveness of the overall workforce development system.

Workforce Investment Council

Workforce Investment Council (WIC) members are Louisiana's workforce champions. They represent a cross-section of stakeholders in the development of comprehensive, integrated workforce development and delivery system that begins with understanding the workforce needs of industry connects Louisiana citizens to training, and links trained workers to high-wage, high-demand careers.

The Workforce Investment Council:

- Collaborates and advises on Louisiana's strategic plan for a comprehensive, integrated workforce development and delivery system.
- Advocates for efficiency and cooperation among stakeholders.
- Promotes the development of a well-educated, highly skilled workforce.
- Oversees strategies to educate Louisianans about career opportunities and businesses about services and resources available to help them meet their workforce needs.
- Ensures the equitable distribution of workforce development resources across the state.
- Makes recommendations to the Governor of geographic designations and alterations for workforce development areas.
- Directs the activities of the Occupational Forecasting Conference, responsible for overseeing statewide and regional job-growth projections, which underpin the planning and budgeting of state and local resources.
- Oversees the Industry-Based Credential (IBC) Council, responsible for evaluation the alignment of credentials with state workforce demand and approval of credentials for inclusion on the IBC State-Focus List, which guides training programs and other stakeholders to important occupations in the state and the industry-recognized credentials leading to those occupations.
- Oversees, jointly with the Louisiana Office of Financial Student Aid, the Louisiana Department of Education, Louisiana Economic Development, and the Board of Regents, the evaluation of two-year and shorter-term programs for TOPS (Taylor Opportunity Program for Students) Tech eligibility in alignment with state workforce demand, guided by state industry and occupational forecasts.
- Contributes to the evaluation of TOPS Tech Early Start training provides to ensure alignment with state and regional workforce needs.

The Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC) consistently supports and remains committed to workforce progress as a priority of Louisiana. Louisiana's economy is evolving. Parallel to our evolution are the changing needs and demands of our state and nation, resulting in a shift in the business needs and skills demanded to meet businesses' needs today and in the future.

LWC has re-energized its commitment to increasing business engagement through employer utilization, reducing employer costs, and increasing the value received from the workforce system to recruit and hire qualified Louisiana workers. We have also refocused our commitment to unlocking prosperity and economic growth by increasing the labor force participation rate.

We, the people of Louisiana, envision a workforce system that will provide pathways for all Louisianans, including individuals receiving public assistance, the unemployed or underemployed, those deficient in basic skills, persons with disabilities, including disabled veterans, and others who have significant barriers to employment. All will have access to education, training, and supportive services needed to prepare for and secure high-demand occupations that pay family-sustaining wages.

Strategic Goals

Goal 1: Launching a One Door employment system, aimed at streamlining service delivery and maximizing effectiveness in meeting the needs of businesses, workers and job seekers.

Goal 2: Employing comprehensive sector and regionally based approaches to address skills gaps, facilitate pathways into the labor force, and inform the prioritization of education and training initiatives.

Goal 3: Launching new and expanding existing work-based learning initiatives, especially Registered Apprenticeship programs that emphasize linkages between learning and job preparation.

Goal 4: Enhancing Louisiana's referral process and integrating services to improve access to tailored supportive services for individuals seeking education and employment opportunities.

WIOA TITLE I - V PERFORMANCE AND ACTIVITIES

WORKFORCE INNOVATION AND OPPORTUNITY ACT WAIVERS

During Program Year 2023, the state of Louisiana had two WIOA waivers through U.S. Department of Labor. Both waivers expired on June 30, 2024.

1. Waiver of requirement that states and local areas expend 75 percent of all Governor's reserve and local formula youth funds on out-of-school youth

The approval waives the requirement that the State expend 75 percent of Governor's reserve youth funds on Out of School Youth. In addition, the state may lower the expenditure requirement of Governor's reserve to 50 percent for Out-of-School Youth.

2. Waiver of requirement that only permits WIOA Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) for Out-of-School (OSY) for Program Years (PY) 2022 and 2023

The approval waives the states requirement limiting Individual Training Accounts to only Out-of-School Youth, ages 16-24 years of age. Additionally, the approval outlines that the state may use Individual Training Accounts for In-School Youth ages 16-21 years of age. The approval of this waiver should not impede the State's efforts to prioritize OSY, including outreach to the OSY population.

ISY-Waiver PY 2023			
LWDA	Total Participants Served	Total in Training	% of Total
11 - Jefferson Parish	193	71	36.79%
21 - East Baton Rouge Parish	190	4	2.11%
31 - Lafourche Parish	53	4	7.55%
51 - Calcasieu Parish	154	2	1.30%
60 - Sixth Planning District	84	1	1.19%
81 - Ouachita Parish	111	1	0.90%
83 - Franklin Parish	52	2	3.85%
Activity/Description	Distinct Users	Total Services	Percentage Used
	837	85	10.16%
Total Rows: 7			

ISY - Waiver PY 2022			
LWDA	Total Participants Served	Total in Training	% of Total
11 - Jefferson Parish	145	18	12.41%
14 - St. Charles Parish	51	1	1.96%
51 - Calcasieu Parish	185	1	0.54%
60 - Sixth Planning District	90	1	1.11%
81 - Ouachita Parish	101	2	1.98%
83 - Franklin Parish	59	2	3.39%
Activity/Description	Total Participants Served	Total Services	Percentage Used
	631	25	3.96%
Total Rows: 6			

Louisiana Workforce Commission plans to request a continuation of the previous approved waivers granted by U.S. Department of Labor. The request will cover Program Year 2024 and Program Year 2025.

**WIOA Title I
Performance**

Pursuant to WIOA, all states submitting a state plan must propose expected levels of performance for each of the prescribed indicators. Federal guidelines describe the primary indicators of performance as key factors in achieving the goals of WIOA.

Data determining primary indicators of performance are collected from Louisiana’s Management Information Systems, Unemployment Wage Records, and from the State Wage Interchange System. These systems gather exit information on participants and provides real-time data elements for case management and performance reporting.

The following tables demonstrate Louisiana has negotiated rate for each of the required indicators of performance along with the actual statewide outcomes achieved. Pursuant to federal policy, states achieving at least 90 percent of the negotiated goal are considered to have met the goal. Louisiana met all performance indicators; Employment Rate Second Quarter after Exit, Employment Rate Fourth Quarter after Exit, Median Earnings, and Credential Attainment for WIOA Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs. WIOA Title III Wagner-Peyser participants met all performance indicators for Employment Rate Second Quarter after Exit, Employment Rate Fourth Quarter after Exit, and Median Earnings Second Quarter after Exit. We surpass the 90% threshold of our expected negotiated performance levels as indicated by U.S. Department of Labor for Program Year 2023.

WIOA Title I and Title III PY 2023 Statewide Results

	Negotiated Performance Level PY23	Statewide Performance PY23
<u>Adult</u>		
Employment Rate 2nd Quarter After Exit	65.9%	76.7%
Employment Rate 4th Quarter After Exit	66.1%	74.1%
Median Earnings 2nd Quarter After Exit	\$6,400	\$8,255
Credential Attainment	73.5%	78.6%
Measureable Skill Gains	65.5%	79.3%
<u>Dislocated Worker</u>		
Employment Rate 2nd Quarter After Exit	64.0%	72.3%
Employment Rate 4th Quarter After Exit	67.0%	71.1%
Median Earnings 2nd Quarter After Exit	\$7,500	\$8,897
Credential Attainment	79.8%	82.3%
Measureable Skill Gains	74.5%	85.0%
<u>Youth</u>		
Employment Rate 2nd Quarter After Exit	70.7%	76.6%

Employment Rate 4th Quarter After Exit	72.0%	75.4%
Median Earnings 2nd Quarter After Exit	\$3,100	\$5,498
Credential Attainment	52.0%	70.4%
Measurable Skill Gains	50.0%	67.8%
<u>Wagner-Peyser</u>		
Employment Rate 2nd Quarter After Exit	56.0%	65.7%
Employment Rate 4th Quarter After Exit	57.0%	65.2%
Median Earnings 2nd Quarter After Exit	\$5,000	\$7,037

WIOA Title I and Title III PY 2023 over the Year Progress

	Statewide Performance PY22	Statewide Performance PY23	Gain (Loss) PY23
<u>Adult</u>			
Participants Served - Career Services	3,477	2,925	-552
Participants Served - Training Services	2,468	2,115	-353
Exiters - Career Services	2,519	2,154	-365
Exiters - Training Services	1,626	1,383	-243
Employment Rate 2nd Quarter After Exit	75.8%	76.7%	9%
Employment Rate 4th Quarter After Exit	72.8%	74.1%	1.3%
Median Earnings	\$7,384	\$8,255	871
Credential Attainment	78.8%	78.6%	-0.2%
Measurable Skill Gains	77.1%	79.3%	2.2%
<u>Dislocated Worker</u>			
Participants Served - Career Services	957	655	-302
Participants Served - Training Services	664	458	-206
Exiters - Career Services	832	496	-336
Exiters - Training Services	566	337	-229

Employment Rate 2nd Quarter After Exit	74.4%	72.3%	2.1%
Employment Rate 4th Quarter After Exit	73.4%	71.1%	2.3%
Median Earnings	\$8,489	\$8,897	408
Credential Attainment	84.7%	82.3%	2.4%
Measurable Skill Gains	72.8%	85.0%	12.2%

	Statewide Performance PY22	Statewide Performance PY23	Gain (Loss) PY23
<u>Youth</u>			
Participants Served - Career Services	2,219	1,862	-357
Participants Served - Training Services	898	776	-122
Exiters - Career Services	1,063	861	-202
Exiters - Training Services	549	417	-132
Employment Rate 2nd Quarter After Exit	74.9%	76.6%	1.7%
Employment Rate 4th Quarter After Exit	73.5%	75.4%	1.9%
Median Earnings	\$4,782	\$5,498	716
Credential Attainment	55.0%%	70.4%	15.4%
Measurable Skill Gains	56.1%	67.8%	11.7%
<u>Wagner-Peyser</u>			
Participants Served - Career Services	23,299	26,264	2965
Exiters - Career Services	19,465	21,607	2142
Employment Rate 2nd Quarter After Exit	56.0%	65.7%	9.7%
Employment Rate 4th Quarter After Exit	57.0%	65.2%	8.2%
Median Earnings 2nd Quarter After Exit	\$5,000	\$7,037	2,037

EFFECTIVENESS IN SERVICING EMPLOYERS

Louisiana reported an Employer Penetration rate of 18.96% for Program Year 2023. This calculation was made by extracting the total number of employers with twenty or more employees receiving at least one of a set of core categories of services including job posting, employer based training, resume search, labor market information, incumbent worker training, seminars & workshops, and apprenticeships divided by the number of employers in Louisiana with twenty or more employees based on Labor Market Information data. We chose this threshold for total employees due to the enormity of the number of employers with fewer than twenty employees, especially self-employer sole proprietors and family businesses who are far less likely to hire a substantial number of new employees. Further, the rate of penetration would likely be close to or statistically similar to zero, thus useless for analysis, had a denominator of all Louisiana employers been used. However, we have this data available if needed. For the upcoming Program Year the Office of Workforce Development (OWD) remains committed to strengthening employer engagement through strategic planning enhances communication, and collaborative efforts with partner agencies

Louisiana reported a Repeat Business Customer Rate of 24.60% in Program Year 2023. The Repeat Business Customer Rate was calculated by counting number of businesses that utilized the foregoing core categories of services (for Employer Penetration Rate calculation) or any recorded employer service in our MIS system in the prior PY as the denominator. Of those in the denominator, the businesses that also received any of the mentioned core categories of services (for Employer Penetration Rate calculation) or any recorded employer service in our MIS system in Program Year 2022 were counted as the numerator.

COST OF WORKFORCE INNOVATION AND OPPORTUNITY ACTIVITIES

Louisiana expended \$3,912,273, on WIOA Title I Career Services and \$8,791,815 on WIOA Title I Training Services for a total of \$12,704,088 in WIOA I participant service expenditures. During Program Year 2022, the state of Louisiana expended \$29,707,532 on WIOA Title I Career Services and \$15,508,906 on WIOA Title I Training Services for a total of \$45,216,438 in WIOA Title I participant service expenditures.

Many elements of WIOA enrollment require appropriate documentation be places in participant files. Documentation sources can be identified within the case management system HiRE - Helping Individuals Reach Employment.

TITLE II ADULT EDUCATION

The Louisiana Technical and Community College (LCTCS), WorkReady U (WRU), is responsible for administering Title II Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) funds to eligible providers and providing program/performance oversight to grantees. As the administrative/fiscal agency, LCTCS/WRU conducts a competitive Request for Proposal (RFP) Grant Application process to provide funding to local entities for the provision of adult education services as described in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014; Title II: Common Elements under Distribution of Funds. The RFP is the statewide procurement method through which WRU identifies, assess, and awards multi-year grants to eligible providers throughout the state to deliver adult education services, including academic instruction and educational services, to eligible individuals. The term "eligible individual" means an individual – (A) who has attained 16 years of age; (B) who is not enrolled or required to be enrolled in secondary school under State law; and (C) who – (i) is basic skills deficient; (ii)

does not have a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent, and has not achieved an equivalent level of education; or (iii) is an English language learner.

TITLE III WAGNER PEYSER

The Louisiana Workforce Commission's Wagner-Peyser Program offers a comprehensive range of employment services across the state's fifteen (15) Local Workforce Development Areas and fifty-eight (58) American Job Centers. State Merit staff deliver a wide array of services to both job seekers and employers at Comprehensive One-Stop offices and numerous affiliate locations throughout Louisiana. As one of the primary entry points for individuals accessing the American Job Center One-Stop Delivery system, Wagner-Peyser staff play a vital role in connecting customers with partner programs and community resources. Through these efforts, alongside a strong network of regional partners, many Louisiana residents are able to secure living-wage employment.

The Wagner-Peyser program supports various statewide initiatives, including the Infrastructure Investment & Jobs Act, the Louisiana Broadband and Coastal Restoration Initiatives, Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA), and Tech Ready Louisiana in collaboration with Coursera. Wagner-Peyser staff play a key role in organizing, promoting, and assisting with in-house recruitment events, mobile workforce unit recruitment efforts, and a range of regional job fairs sponsored or co-sponsored by the Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC) and partner agencies. The Wagner-Peyser team remains dedicated to advancing the agency's mission of "Putting People to Work."

The Wagner-Peyser Employment Services program provides wide-ranging access to a comprehensive array of labor exchange services, tailored to meet the needs of both job seekers and employers. Throughout the year, the Wagner-Peyser Employment Services program delivered over 459,468 services, supporting 47,021 job seekers and employers. Services are available to all individuals, with a strong emphasis on providing priority to veterans and those in need of more intensive support, through a coordinated and integrated approach. This model allows Wagner-Peyser to effectively serve individuals facing significant employment barriers, such as homeless veterans, out-of-school youth, at-risk adults, unemployed claimants, Able-Bodied Adults without Dependents (ABAWD), Strategies to Empower People (STEP) participants, migrant and seasonal farmworkers, and justice-involved individuals, among others. Below is a detailed list and description of programs that intersect with and co-enroll in Wagner-Peyser services.

JOBS FOR VETERANS STATE GRANT (JVSG)

The Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC) is committed to serving veterans, transitioning service members, and their families by providing resources to assist and prepare them to obtain meaningful careers and maximize their employment opportunities. This commitment is an important part of fulfilling our obligation to the men and women who have honorably served our country.

The State drives priority of service in referring veterans and other eligible persons to employment opportunities through a standardized review process. Every veteran that qualifies for services are seen by a Disabled Veteran Outreach Representative (DVOP) and given Individualized Career Services under the framework of case management. This process is comprised of a comprehensive assessment and individual employment plan based on the need of each individual veteran. Field leadership receives results of this process quarterly for action when necessary. In addition, Local Veteran Employment Representatives (LVER) are conducting training to the field on veterans' priority of service to the non-veteran staff in the

local offices. LVERs conduct Regional Priority of Service training for all American Job Centers (AJC) state staff members on an annual basis for every AJC in the state by the end of each fiscal year. LVERs are pursuing employers to enroll in the Hire Veterans Medallion Program, which incentivizes companies to hire veterans and provide them with a reward from the Department of Defense.

The State continues to provide Individualized Career Services under the framework of case management for Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) referrals in accordance with directives.

The State embraced the JVSG refocusing through the efforts of the JVSG staff members and their AJC partners, the state achieved a 100% Intensive Services Rate compared to a goal of 95%. The driving factor behind this success were AJC staff members conducted initial assessments on incoming Veteran jobseekers and only referrals of those identified to have a Significant Barrier to Employment (SBE) to a DVOP.

Below is a comparison of the key JVSG metrics between PY22 and PY23.

Jobs for Veterans State Grant (JVSG)

Measure	Negotiated Goal	Statewide Performance PY22	Statewide Performance PY23	Gain (Loss) PY23
Covered Entrants		663	667	48
Employment Rate 2nd Quarter After Exit	43.8%	56.1%	56.1%	(5.4%)
Employment Rate 4th Quarter After Exit	44.6%	50.8%	50.8%	(1.1%)
Median Earnings 2nd Quarter After Exit	\$5,200	\$7,395	\$7,395	\$158

Source: ETA 9173

The JVSG program has collaborated with the Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program (HVRP) Grant Awardee, Goodwill Industries of Southeastern Louisiana of New Orleans, to ensure individualized career services are provided to all those enrolled in the program.

The State JVSG program has a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the local Army Military Installation on Fort Johnson; to provide office space for a DVOP twice a week to provide assistance with transitioning service members to ensure they have access to services.

REEMPLOYMENT SERVICES AND ELIGIBILTY ASSESSMENT

The Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) program identifies unemployment benefits claimants who are likely to exhaust all unemployment benefits and transitioning veterans receiving Unemployment Compensation for Ex-Service members (UCX), and connects them with reemployment services to help them quickly return to work.

The RESEA program uses statistical modeling to rank unemployment benefits claimants based on their likelihood to exhaust all unemployment benefits. This process includes a statistical evaluation of numerous work and related factors, including but not limited to length of workforce attachment, occupational field, industry, wages, and location. Claimants are assigned a score, with a higher score indicating a greater risk of exhausting unemployment benefits.

The RESEA program continues to utilize the virtual platform 10to8, since December 2021, to provide virtual RESEA services delivery. 10to8 provides the participants the ability to schedule their appointments, receive reminders via email and SMS, and reschedule if necessary. 10to8 offers calendars for each individual staff member at the AJC providing them notice of upcoming appointments, which also gives them advanced notice

of the day-to-day traffic. In addition, 10to8 offers various reporting tools as well as tracking details for completed appointments, no-shows while minimizing no-shows up to 90%.

There were **47,800** individuals profiled for RESEA services in Program Year 2023. In program year 2023, **33,342** participants were scheduled for RESEA services and **31,849** were successfully completed. The RESEA program assisted **96%** of scheduled participants, which exceeds the target goal of 70%.

The RESEA program continues to thrive, under the new service flow restructuring, to provide virtual services, engage participants sooner after filing a claim, provide more robust services, and require one stops to co-enroll individuals in Title I employment and training services at 10 weeks of unemployment. The activities provide selected claimants include a virtual orientation, staff assistance with developing an individualized reemployment plan, conducting an unemployment benefits eligibility assessment, providing the claimant with customized labor market information, and other staff assisted career services at an American Job Center (AJC).

Since the RESEA Program procured The Policy & Research Group (PRG), to conduct its evaluation of the RESEA program Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC) continues to take steps to ensure that RESEA interventions or service delivery strategies meet or exceeds the standards of USDOL requirements.

PRG will work with LWC to decide which RESEA program component(s) to evaluate and conduct an Evaluability Assessment of the RESEA program component(s). PRG has develop research questions that explore the RESEA program's influence on a particular population's outcomes of interest (e.g., employment, benefit duration, earnings), develop a Logic Model of the RESEA component(s) to be evaluated and assess existing data and data systems.

REINTEGRATION OF JUSTICE - INVOLVED PERSONNEL

Wagner-Peyser funds provide full time dedicated staff working directly in or coordination with Day Reporting Centers (DRC). Employment is widely seen as a crucial element for successful reintegration for justice-involved personnel.

LWC currently supports seven-day reporting centers in the following parishes: St Tammany, Caddo, East Baton Rouge, Ouachita, Calcasieu, and combined Orleans/Jefferson.

The staff provide individualized career services to formerly justice-involved personnel that contribute to their successful transition to society. Staff also conduct outreach and advocacy on behalf of the participants to coordinate with local service agencies to provide various needs such as housing, clothing, transportation, legal assistance, etc. coordination with the local shelters - housing, other partners.

A comprehensive assessment and employment plan including follow-up every 30 days to ensure gainful employment. Substantial employment can assist individuals in succeeding after release from incarceration. This process allows the individuals to refocus their time and efforts on improving positive outcomes and can provide meaningful careers into workforce.

LOUISIANA REHABILITATION SERVICES

The mission of Louisiana Rehabilitation Services (LRS) is to assist persons with disabilities in their desire to obtain, maintain, or advance in competitive integrated employment and achieve independence in their communities by providing rehabilitation services and working cooperatively with business and other

community resources.

Louisiana Rehabilitation Services (LRS) continues to strive for excellence in its endeavors to assist persons with disabilities in becoming competitively employed in integrated environments and reaching their maximum level of independence. LRS values providing flexible and timely services consistent with "informed choice" of the individual and in recognizing individual needs and cultural differences.

Title IV Vocational Rehabilitation Program (VR)

Vocational Rehabilitation provides a planned sequence of individualized services to assist persons with disabilities reach employment. It is a partnership between a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor and the individual with a disability. They work together to develop an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) that is specific to the unique strengths, resources, concerns, abilities, interests, and informed choice of the individual. The plan identifies the VR services the individual needs in order to achieve their employment goals.

These comprehensive services go far beyond those found in typical job training programs and include such services as:

1. Assessment, Career Guidance and Counseling;
2. Career Services, including Supported Employment, Job Readiness Training, and Job Placement Assistance;
3. Training Services, including post-secondary education and other vocational training;
4. Prosthetics and Orthotics;
5. Interpreters and Readers; and
6. Assistive Technology, including Mobility Equipment, Hearing Aids, and Vehicle Modifications.

Because of the VR program, 1,205 individuals obtained employment in Program Year 2023. The average hourly earnings of these individuals was \$18.68 with the average annual earnings of \$32,425. Of those obtaining successful employment, 59% obtained employment in Louisiana's top demand occupations. For SFY 2023, LRS successfully closed 1,205 cases. Of that amount, 59% of the closed cases resulted in the LRS participant becoming employed in a 3, 4, or 5-star job. This can be attributed in part to the expertise of trained Rehabilitation Counselors who provide vocational guidance to assist individuals with choosing a career goal that is in demand.

Order of Selection

When LRS does not have sufficient funding or staff to serve all eligible consumers, federal regulations mandate that individuals with the most significant disabilities be given priority for services. LRS determines who has the most significant disabilities by implementing an Order of Selection (OOS) which is derived from an individual's functional limitations and barriers to employment that are directly resultant from their disability. Using this information, the individual is placed in an appropriate OOS Category, which ranges from most to least severe. Since March 28, 2022, LRS has been utilizing a 3 category Order of Selection that is as follows: Category 1-Most Significantly Disabled, Category 2- Significantly Disabled, and Category 3- Non-Significantly Disabled. There has not been a deferred waiting list since August 2022.

Transition

In Program Year 2023, LRS continued to provide services to students with disabilities as they transition from high school into adulthood to pursue training and employment. LRS is mandated to expend 15% of the VR federal allotment to make available five core Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS), including job exploration counseling, work-based learning experiences, counseling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive transition or post-secondary educational programs, workplace readiness training, and instruction in self-advocacy. During this time, LRS provided services to 4,558 students with disabilities.

LRS makes these services available through VR counseling staff, fee for service agreements with Community Rehabilitation Programs, and Third Party Cooperative Arrangement contracts with school districts. At the end of Program YR 2023, LRS had 17 active Third Party Cooperative Arrangements with local education agencies to provide Pre-Employment Transition Services, and LRS is continuing to pursue additional contracts with local education agencies.

State as a Model Employer (SAME)

Louisiana serves as a Model Employer for business through a commitment to improve the hiring, recruitment, and retention of individuals with disabilities. LRS serves as the primary Point of Contact (POC) for the SAME initiative and facilitates the exchange of information between LRS and state agency designees relative to persons who are applicants or who have been determined eligible for LRS' Vocational Rehabilitation program.

In PY 2023, forty (40) LRS participants obtained or maintained employment with the State of Louisiana. These individuals are employed throughout state government, including universities. The Louisiana Department of Children and Family Services, Louisiana State University A&M College, and the Louisiana Workforce Commission were the top three state employers this past year.

Workforce Development

Louisiana Rehabilitation Services is actively involved with the 15 local Workforce Development Areas. LRS is represented on each of the boards and VR staff members have a presence in the American Job Centers. In Program Year 2023, the Rehabilitation Employment Development Specialists (REDS) began participating with the Business Service Representatives and the Industry Sector Coordinators in weekly virtual meetings. Building relationships with employers and with the business community continues to be a premise in the Employment Initiative as our connections with the Human Resource personnel and hiring managers ultimately connect our participants with viable jobs. During Program Year 23, the LRS REDS and the LRS Statewide Employment Coordinator were also tasked with coordinating a Disability Job Fair to align with the National Disability Awareness Month. A total of 103 employers were recruited (85% attended) and ultimately met with and vetted 92 registered job seekers. As a result, the employers in turn, rated 39 job seekers to "screen further". The LRS REDS along with the Statewide Employment Coordinator continue to foster connections with employers and HR personnel.

Ticket to Work

LRS continues efforts to assist Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) beneficiaries in meeting employment goals. Collaboration with Employment Networks is also on going to ensure Ticket-to-Work is successful in Louisiana. Several LRS staff received additional training in Program Year 2023 on how employment impacts cash benefits for Social Security (SS) beneficiaries. However, LRS has an in-house Community Partner Work Incentives Counselor (CPWIC) or Work Incentives Planning and Assistance (WIPA) Services to which staff may also refer SS beneficiaries for benefits counseling to make informed decisions regarding employment and how wages will impact their cash benefits and medical insurance. VR counselors understand the importance of information provided by the WIPA and CPWIC in relation to helping VR participants who receive SS benefits to achieve their employment goals.

Additionally, LRS has a Ticket to Work Cost Reimbursement (CR) Coordinator who participates in ongoing training along with the other CR Coordinators in each state across the nation. The Cost Reimbursement Program was authorized in 1981 and it is only available to State VR agencies. The two purposes of the CR program are:

- To make SVR services more readily available to SS beneficiaries with disabilities.
- To generate savings to the Social Security Trust Fund for SSDI beneficiaries, and for the General Revenue Fund for Supplemental Security Income recipients.

In Program Year 2023, LRS received \$2,568,830.50 from the Social Security Administration's Reimbursement Program.

Rehabilitation Engineering/Assistive Technology

A significant component of the Assistive Technology Act of 1988 involves the increase of coordination among State agencies and public and private entities that provide assistive technology devices and services. Likewise, WIOA Sections 412 and 414 encourages the development of working relationships and coordination of activities to promote access to assistive technology for individuals with disabilities and employers. LRS collaborates with Louisiana's federal Assistive Technology (AT) Act program, the Louisiana Assistive Technology Access Network (LATAN), through participation in LATAN events, webinars, and information sharing. LATAN is approved to provide AT evaluations for LRS participants who are also referred to LATAN's programs when additional assistance is needed.

Randolph-Sheppard Business Enterprise Program

This program provides employment opportunities for the blind by establishing and maintaining Business Enterprise Facilities. The program currently operates 57 facilities throughout the state, providing entrepreneurial opportunities for 38 individuals who are blind.

Although the actual number of vending opportunities has remained constant, we have experienced a net decrease of 13 blind vendors since 2020. Because of this, several of our remaining vendors are working multiple locations, which has increased their income.

In order to recruit new vendors into the program, LRS staff are actively promoting Randolph-Sheppard program opportunities to counselors who work with individuals who are blind, as well as directly to consumer organizations whose membership is comprised of individuals who are blind, including the National Federation of the Blind of Louisiana and the Affiliated Blind of Louisiana. Because of these efforts, we now have two prospective new blind vendors in training and two additional potential candidates scheduled for assessments for entry into the training program.

Many of the state, federal, and municipal agencies that our vendors serve have adopted permanent hybrid attendance policies that have allowed employees to partially or completely telecommute. This change has resulted in a marked decrease in the available customer base. This decrease in potential customers, coupled with increased wholesale costs has forced our blind vendors to evaluate their businesses and to make changes in products being offered, increase their prices to customers, and to take on additional locations.

To assist blind vendors, we are considering merging locations and changing the scope of operations. An example of a change in scope could be from a cafeteria to a snack bar or from a snack bar to a vending machine only location. We are also moving toward full implementation of the Rehabilitation Services Administration's Technical Assistance Circular (TAC 21-02), which is entitled The Applicability of the Randolph-Sheppard Act Priority for Blind Vendors to the Operation of Vending Machines on Federal Property and the Use of Third Party Vendors on that Property. This will take the revenue from federal locations, which was previously supporting the program, and give it to individual blind vendors.

Independent Living Part B Program

During State Fiscal Year 2024, a total of \$323,498.53 was spent on independent living (IL) services. 4,234 individuals received IL Services at an average cost of \$76.40 per participant.

Independent Living Older Blind Program

The four rehabilitation centers contracting for the provision of Independent Living Older Blind (ILOB) services provided orientation and mobility training, low vision evaluations and provision of low vision devices, training in performing activities of daily living, information and referral services, etc. to a total of 1,233 individuals 55 years of age or older and having significant visual impairments during PY2023.

STATEWIDE ACTIVITIES

Louisiana Workforce Commission Statewide Expungement Initiative

During Program Year 2023, Louisiana Workforce Commission launched a Statewide Expungement Initiative. Utilizing Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) funds, LWC initiated partnerships with the Justice and Accountability Center of Louisiana and Southern University Law Center to assist citizens with removing obstacles related to criminal history, reinstating suspended drivers' licenses, and offering Fair Chance Hiring workshops at no-cost to income eligible recipients.

The expungement, background checks and driver's license clinics fostered partnerships between community based organizations, the justice system, local workforce boards, and LWC programs, including Business Services, Rapid Response, Apprenticeship, Veterans, Re-entry and CSBG. Pre-clinic trainings for staff included information on the importance of diversity, equity, inclusion, accessibility and belonging.

LWC has held 23 expungement clinics across the State and provided resources to develop an expungement app, increasing access to good paying jobs and equal opportunity. The impact is ongoing, but to date we are proud to report:

- 2,715 individuals served
- 356 expungements granted
- 31 warrants recalled
- 4 driver's license clinics
- 88 driver's licenses reinstatement support
- \$56,361 in retracted fines and fees
- 882 registered app users

TRADE ADJUSTMENT ASSISTANCE (TAA)

Trade Adjustment Assistance, or TAA, aids in reducing the negative impacts of foreign imports on the U. S. workforce. The Program offers adversely affected workers (AAWs) assistance in finding suitable employment through paid allowances, training, and case management services. Eligible AAWs may experience reduced work hours, job loss due to a decline in production/sales, or be otherwise negatively impacted by the outsourcing of jobs to foreign countries. TAA offers a variety of benefits and services to eligible workers including training, income support, job search allowances, relocation allowances, and a tax credit to help pay the costs of health insurance. An added TAA benefit is the A/RTAA wage subsidy, which is available to eligible AAWs 50 years of age and older that later obtain qualifying re-employment.

TAA is an essential partner of the WIOA Dislocated Worker and Adult programs. As such, co-enrollment of TAA-certified workers in these programs is a top priority. Co-enrollment grants Trade affected participants' access to all appropriate services offered through their local American Job Centers, including but not limited

to, labor market information, testing and training referrals, career planning, and follow-up services, such as childcare, to facilitate their re-entry to the workforce.

TAA entered “sunset” (termination phase) on July 1, 2022, precluding any new worker groups from being certified as TAA eligible. RTAA participants who received at least one payment before July 1, 2022 continue receiving paid subsidies. Potential worker groups/employers that may have become TAA eligible after July 1, 2022 are referred to U.S. Department of Labor for archival and future investigation after reauthorization. Existing TAA participants deemed eligible before July 1, 2022 continue to receive benefits and services.

In PY 2023, TAA-Louisiana has one (1) pending petition listed on US Department of Labor Unprocessed Petition list. This petition could be certified, as it was submitted pending reauthorization. TAA continues providing outreach, benefits and services to existing participants, but was forced to halt enrollment of new RTAA participants as Trade transitioned to its sunset phase. On July 1, 2022, the termination provision under Section 285(a) of the Trade Act of 1974, as amended, took effect. Unfortunately, the Department of Labor was unable to start new petition investigations. Prior to this, Louisiana had three (3) active petitions affecting 750 workers and provided TAA services to workers under two (2) out-of-state certified petitions. Between July 1, 2023 and June 30, 2024, the TAA training program served approximately 100 eligible AAWs. Seventeen (10) participants completed TAA training and received their credentials in the industries of Transportation, Healthcare, Contracting, Technology Services, Business, Graphic Design, Construction and Manufacturing.

Trade Activity - PY2023 (July 1, 2023 - June 30, 2024)	
New Petitions Filed	0
Petitions Certified	0
Estimated Workers Affected	0
Pending Petitions	1
Number of Active Petitions	4
Total Workers Affected	850
Out of State Petitions Recognized	0
TAA Training Fund Expended	\$121,392.58
Total TAA Participants Served	1000 ²
Total RTAA Participants Affected	3
Total Co-enrollments as of 6/30/2022	26
Total TAA Training Completions	10

1. Because of impending reauthorization, states are unable to submit new petitions.
2. TAA participants served includes those that were eligible for TAA and Case Management services.

RAPID RESPONSE (RR)

During PY2023, our Rapid Response team acted on 46 layoff events across the state, half of which came from Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification (WARN) Act notices. Approximately 31% of these

events came from facilities maintenance and food service contractors. Other notable sectors included full-service restaurants, retail and freight transportation. There were 3,443 layoffs associated with these events, of which 947 were averted, resulting in 2,128 actual layoffs. In addition, Rapid Response offered 92 orientation sessions to affected workers, conducted 26 job fairs featuring 205 employers and attracting 1,432 job seekers, 14-targeted workshops/webinars, and set up eight worker transition assistance centers.

Our team utilized a hybrid approach, offering services in person and virtually through Brazen, which was approved for renewal. Regardless of the approach, our Rapid Response team invites support staff from Unemployment Insurance, local American Job Center, Veterans, and Trade Adjustment Assistance programs to participate in the services provided. When appropriate, other service providers may also be invited to participate.

Other notable activities:

Targeted Outreach - To better facilitate our outreach efforts, our regional Rapid Response coordinators made 1,871 business engagement visits in PY2023. Our coordinators work with our Industry Sector coordinators and Business Services representatives to better select targeted companies, highlighting services available and building a contact network of prospering businesses that could be leveraged for the quick placement of workers impacted by recent layoff events. Our team also coordinates with state and local economic development organizations on layoff events. These coordination efforts have enabled our team to better facilitate interaction between hiring employers and available workers. Rapid Response made 12,192 combined referrals to jobs and job fairs.

HALOW - Rapid Response continues to encourage hiring recently laid-off workers through the HALOW (Hire a Laid-Off Worker) initiative. Employers can visit our website and click our HALOW link to review recently laid-off worker profiles. We have received positive feedback from employers who have used HALOW to find qualified candidates to fill their internal vacancies. During PY2023, there were 367 workers from 11 layoff events highlighted on our HALOW page.

Layoff Aversion - To assist in identifying these "at risk" companies, we explored a subscription to Dun and Bradstreet EconoVue system to use as a predictive analytical tool. On April 11, 2024, the Rapid Response team held a product demonstration where representatives from Dun and Bradstreet presented EconoVue to 31 attendees, including key decision-makers like the Workforce Development Assistant and Deputy Assistant Secretaries and representatives from 12 of our 15 workforce development boards. The demonstration was a great success, and we were approved to conduct an official 90-day pilot of the platform for PY2024.

Mobile Workforce Centers - We maintain two mobile workforce centers to use in times of disasters to provide needed Rapid Response services across the state. We were fortunate not to have any declared disasters in our state during FY2023. However, our Mobile Workforce Centers did not sit idle. We leveraged them to participate in a plethora of job fairs, hiring events, expungement events, and community activities across the state. Our Mobile Workforce Center staff has assisted individuals with registering for work, developing resumes, completing job applications, and referrals for services. During PY2023, we attended 82 events, which included 62 job fairs, and provided services to 1,563 visitors to our Mobile Workforce Centers.

Louisiana Rapid Response - Eight-Year Data Review

RR Program Year July 1 - June 30	RR Total Laid Off	RR Total Activities	RR Total Attendees
2016 - 2017	3,231	98	2,468
2017 - 2018	1,624	53	1,011
2018 - 2019	3,261	101	2,011
2019 - 2020	2,409	89	1,361
2020 - 2021	2,337	53	933
2021 -2022	874	21	384
2022 - 2023	1,030	39	375
2023 - 2024	2,128	140	2,051

JOBS FOR AMERICA’S GRADUATES LOUISIANA (JAG LA)

The **JAG-LA Programs** work with students with significant life obstacles that could disrupt school completion and/or hinder successful entry into the workforce or postsecondary educational programs. The program offers a career-to-school model curriculum, mentoring, and follow-up to seniors. However, any student accepted into the program must want to be a participant, need the services provided, be able to benefit by earning a high school diploma, career diploma, or high school equivalency diploma, and be able to benefit by being placed in a competitive job or by entering higher education.

JAG-LA 2022-2023

JAG MODEL	NUMBER OF PROGRAMS	ESTIMATED STUDENTS SERVED
Multi-Year Program	107	7,600
Middle School Program	48	2,760
Out-of-School Program	14	490
TOTAL		10,850

BUSINESS SERVICES

REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIP

The LWC Apprenticeship Division increased to 122 apprenticeship programs this year, employing and training nearly 4,239 registered apprentices throughout Louisiana. Historically, Louisiana's apprenticeship programs have focused on occupations in the construction sector. The Louisiana Workforce Commission continues to cultivate opportunities for expanding programs to additional industry sectors. Our efforts resulted in the addition of the following programs to the state's Registered Apprenticeship list:

- American Aerospace Technical Academy (Non-Destructive Testing)
- Baker Gulf Coast Industrial (Pile Driver) Bottom Line Equipment (Operating Engineering)
- Chris Rinehart Plumbing LLC (Plumbing)
- Louisiana Community & Technical Colleges (K-12 Teacher)
- Louisiana Department of Education (K-12 Teacher)
- LSU Early Childhood Education Institute (Early Childhood Teacher)
- Master's Guild of Acadiana (Building Maintenance Repairer)

- McCarthy Building Companies, Inc. (Building Maintenance Repairer, Electrician, Construction Craft, Operating Engineer)
- NOLA Electrical Training Institute (Electrician)
- Operation Spark (Application Developer)
- OpenClassroom (Application Developer, Cybersecurity, Data Analyst, Digital Marketer, Help Desk Tech)
- Pillar Homecare (Nurse Assistance Certified)
- Ready Power (Gas Main Fitter)
- Shelton Energy Solutions (Transmission Line Worker)
- Southern University (K-12 Teacher)
- Veterans Solutions 4 Life, LLC (Workforce Development Specialist)

The Apprenticeship Division currently has one U.S. Department of Labor grant to increase Registered Apprenticeship that synthesizes customer friendly web-design, expand K-12 apprenticeships and develop pre-apprenticeship partnership connected to current RAP, and newly developed RAPs. As a result, achieving program goals that increase apprentice numbers, improve apprentice retention, and enhance program quality that aligns with Louisiana’s registered apprenticeship strategy, which is based on the USDOL "Build Back America" initiative.

Approximately 328 individuals were provided supportive services in Program Year 2023. These supportive services included, but were not limited to tools/supplies, and childcare services.

INCUMBENT WORKER TRAINING PROGRAM (IWTP)

Louisiana’s Incumbent Worker Training Program (IWTP) benefits the workers of Louisiana by fostering on-the-job training in skills for individual advancement. It is a resource for business and industry in their own priority of training, as the funding assists in the skill development of existing employees and makes possible company expansion. Through IWTP, the state of Louisiana can offer more up-skilled employees, needed by industries to increase employee productivity and company growth.

IWTP creates training partnerships made up of the LWC, business and industry, and training providers. Program funding is through a portion of the state’s Unemployment Insurance tax contributions dedicated solely for training.

The Incumbent Worker Training Program consists of the Customized Employee Training program and the Small Business Employee Training (SBET) program. Both programs work toward the same over-all goals of building the skills of Louisiana employees.

IWTP/SBET FISCAL YEAR PERFORMANCE SUMMARY

Fiscal Year	Total Contracts & Awards	#of Participants Trained	# Employers Represented	# of Jobs Retained	# of Jobs Created	Average Wage Increase
2023 - 2024	\$19,632,539.00	44,085	568	19,853	988	13.50%
2022-2023	\$14,921,426.00	45,436	571	22,881	1,230	14.80%

Success Stories:

Small Business Employee Training (SBET)

The Small Business Employee Training (SBET) program works with more “off the shelf” training certifications, allowing small business employers to work from the standard menu of job skill trainings offered by SBET-approved training providers. In Fiscal Year 2023-24, SBET continued with the success of the SBET plumbing apprenticeship funding, a collaboration with the LWC Registered Apprenticeship program. An SBET program employer, Gage Telephone, described their experience with training, “Our staff has been able to grow not only individually but also as a company by applying what they have taken from these classes . . . It was a valuable experience for our company.”

Incumbent Worker Training Program (IWTP) - Customized

In IWTP Customized training, larger employers and groups of smaller employers with similar training needs combined in a consortium may design trainings with a training provider and apply for projects more specific to their company. PBC Management LLC, a company providing towing vessels that push dry and liquid cargos on the south Louisiana waterways, gave its evaluation of the Customized program: “We are so pleased to be able to be part of the IWTP. It helps us train our employees, having them benefit and grow in their careers. Not only does it help our employees’ progress, but it also helps our company have the most highly trained and desirable employees. With the help of the IWTP, we have maintained a highly successful, well-trained crew to run and maintain our vessels. The IWTP has helped our mariners grow in their field, receive pay increases and promotions.”

THE WORK OPPORTUNITY TAX CREDIT (WOTC)

The Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) Program makes a federal tax credit available to employers who hire individuals from eligible target groups. Louisiana Work is responsible for facilitating this process in Louisiana. WOTC operates under federal law and directives from both the U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL) and the Internal Revenue Service. LWC, employers, employer’s legal representatives, and newly hired employees are all stakeholders in the success of this program.

In order for employers to benefit from this program, their newly hired employees must be identified as part of at least one of the current active target groups specifically defined by USDOL and certified by LWC.

List the top three goals that the program addresses and LWC leveraging opportunities:

1. Goal 1: Provide a federal tax credit to participating employers (reducing their income tax liability) for hiring individuals from certain target groups who have consistently faced significant barriers to employment.
2. Goal 2: Incentivize workplace diversity and facilitate access to good jobs for American workers.
3. Goal 3: Assist targeted workers in moving from economic dependency into self-sufficiency as they earn a steady income and become contributing taxpayers.

Based on program history of an ever-evolving list of target groups including various modifications for veterans, SNAP and TANF recipients, designated community residents, at-risk youth, and the long-term unemployed, the WOTC program shows a high degree of flexibility as a policy tool.

As for the future of WOTC beyond 2021, due diligence with research, applications and deadlines will be paramount. Typically, WOTC is reauthorized annually. For the first time Congress reauthorized WOTC for 5 years through December 2025, indicating that there may be growing support for WOTC on a congressional level and support for the push to make WOTC permanent. Staying abreast of these opportunities can significantly impact Louisiana for years to come.

WOTC Unit Operations

1. Partners - Any business or industry who employs individuals from target groups.
2. Financials - a Calendar Year Grant from U.S. Department of Labor ETA, currently January 1, 2022 through December 31, 2024, for a total of \$303,000, fund LWC WOTC operations.
3. Locations - The program is housed in Baton Rouge at LWC Administrative Offices; WOTC staff routinely travel to make presentations to business, industry, and other interested groups statewide.

II. WOTC Program Metrics

WOTC Certifications Workload

Applications Denied			55508	
Applications Certified			56287	
WOTC Target Group			# of Certified Individuals Employed	Total Tax Credit
IV-A TANF Recipient			328	\$787,200.00
Veteran Receiving SNAP Benefits			112	\$268,800.00
Disabled Veteran			8	\$38,400.00
Disabled Veteran Unemployed for 6 months			25	\$240,000.00
Veteran Unemployed for 4 weeks			341	\$818,400.00
Veteran Unemployed for 6 months			809	\$4,530,400.00
Veteran with Vocational Rehab Referral			3	\$7,200.00
Veteran not in subgroup			1	\$2,400.00
Ex-Felon			1649	\$3,957,600.00
Designated Community (Poverty) Resident			1531	\$3,674,400.00
Vocational Rehab Referral			459	\$1,101,600.00
Snap Recipient			49798	\$119,515,200.00
SSI Recipient			138	\$331,200.00
Long term TANF			106	\$954,000.00
Unemployed Veteran			0	\$0.00
Disconnected Youth			0	\$0.00
Long-term Unemployed			979	\$2,349,600.00
Total Calendar Year 2023			56287	\$ 138,576,400.00

III. Outcomes

Each certified application represents an individual from a targeted group (significant employment barriers) that has attained employment.

IMPLEMENTING SECTOR STRATEGIES

Louisiana is actively supporting industries facing significant challenges by implementing three new sector strategies while also maintaining focus on two critical sectors. The primary objectives are to establish Regional Sector Partnerships to identify workforce development challenges and create tailored solutions for these challenges. The identified Industry Sectors are Transportation & Logistics, Coastal Restoration, Healthcare, and Hospitality.

The hospitality, transportation, and healthcare sectors faced substantial disruptions due to the pandemic. To bolster these industries, create well-defined career paths, and increase participation, Louisiana has introduced three new Industry Sector partnerships. While these partnerships have a statewide reach, they were initially launched and concentrated in areas with specific needs. Industry Sector Coordinators are diligently working on establishing Regional Sector Partnerships to identify and address workforce development challenges with sector-specific solutions.

Key Observations: Job orders in Healthcare, Transportation are projected to remain high while Accommodation and Food Service continues to see increases and sustain high levels throughout the year. These sectors were prioritized due to their industry sector assignments.

Quarter	Employers Contacted	Services Provided	Job Orders Entered	Job Openings
2023 - Q1	2120	6380	1338	5298
2023 - Q2	1885	5378	1712	6960
2023 - Q3	1992	6146	1629	6307
2023 - Q4	2391	7757	1573	8014
TOTAL	8380	25661	6252	27175

Region 1 - Hospitality

The hospitality industry plays a pivotal role in Louisiana's economy, particularly in Region 1. To address the workforce development needs of this sector, a Sector Partnership was initiated. Notable hotels in New Orleans, including The Hyatt, The Royal Sonesta, HRI Properties, The Marriott, W Hotels, The Four Seasons, Omni Hotels, The Hilton, The Aimbridge, The Sheraton, and Westin New Orleans, actively participated. Representatives from the Louisiana Lodging Association, alongside support partners from the City of New Orleans, the Louisiana Workforce Commission, and Job 1 (Orleans American Job Center), were also present.

The primary workforce challenges identified revolved around staff recruitment and retention, leading to the identification of three specific issues:

1. Retention
 - a. Transportation difficulties

- b. Scheduling
- c. The Generation Z workforce
- 2. Crime as a deterrent to potential workers in the area.
- 3. Hospitality unions making promises of salaries those companies consider unattainable.

Meetings are being held to discuss these issues, brainstorm and implement solutions.

Region 2 - Coastal Restoration

The Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC) is dedicated to serving all Louisianans, including those interested in the Coastal Restoration Sector. In partnership with the Coastal Protection and Restoration Agency (CPRA), LWC is committed to identifying the needs of businesses awarded contracts for coastal projects across the state. LWC conducts various employer recruitment and engagement activities, such as job fairs and on-the-job training (OJT) to secure employees whose occupation is to combat coastal land loss, mitigate flood risks, and maximize land restoration efforts.

LWC collaborates with the Coastal Restoration Protection Authority, addressing coastal and workforce issues. The LWC/CPRA Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) underscores the implementation of the LA First (1st) Hiring Act and the collaboration to connect job opportunities arising from coastal projects to Louisiana workers through LWC. The LWC Resiliency Coordinator and other statewide partners work collaboratively on projects supporting coastal resiliency, aligning with the Coastal Master Plan. An essential component of the MOU involves quarterly meetings to discuss upcoming projects, contract awards, and connecting contractors with local workforce development boards.

The Louisiana Workforce Commission and the Coastal Protection Restoration Authority work in tandem to fulfill the roles and responsibilities outlined in the MOU, leading to various activities, including Coastal Day and Coastal Stakeholder Convening that connected over 100-interested stakeholder's activities to coastal work opportunities and LWC services.

Statewide - Transportation

The transportation sector retains its critical importance across the state. To address the workforce development needs of this sector, a Sector Partnership was initiated. Representatives from the transportation sector, including entities like Razorback Rentals LLC, Lafayette Utility System, Lafayette Consolidated Government, PMI/PTL, Barriere Construction, TDs Trucking, Training & Technology LLC, Bengal Transportation, Freedom Trucks, R Group II, and the Louisiana Motor Transportation Association, actively participated. Support partnerships included SLCC, Coastal Truck Driving School, the Louisiana Workforce Commission, the Louisiana Community Technical College System, South Louisiana Community College, Coastal Trucking School, and Baton Rouge Community College.

The significant shortage of CDL drivers in Louisiana prompted the identification of several workforce development challenges:

- Limited insurance providers for trucks in the state.
- Infrastructure issues related to truck travel in specific areas.
- Delays in testing for examiners, necessitating re-testing of existing examiners.
- Inequitable distribution of WIOA (Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act) funds, with some local areas lacking support for CDL training.

- Limitations on permit testing at training facilities, allowing testing only at the end of CDL training.
- The prevalence of manual transmissions in older trucks, while new trucks use automatic transmissions.
- Challenges associated with transporting oversized loads within Louisiana.
- Shortage of individuals pursuing training for Diesel Tech positions.

In addition to Drive Your Future 2.0, a specialized CDL training program that was held in the prior year, Sector Convening's were held along the I-10 corridor in New Orleans, Hammond and Lake Charles to connect industry representatives to various programs to assist with CDL training. This included LWC's Incumbent Worker Training Program and WIOA's classroom and On the Job Training programs.

Region 7 - Healthcare

A Healthcare Sector Partnership was launched in Northwest Louisiana, with participation from representatives of the healthcare industry and support partners. Healthcare providers present included CHRISTUS Shreveport-Bossier Health, DeSoto Regional Health System, Natchitoches Regional Medical Center, Claiborne Memorial Medical Center, Brentwood Hospital, Minden Medical Center, Natchitoches Reg. Medical Center, Pathology Resource Network, Willis Knighton Health System, Ochsner LSU Health, LSU Health Shreveport, Barksdale Air Force Base, CHRISTUS Bossier Emergency Services, and Angie White, COO of North Louisiana Economic Partnership (NLEP). Support agencies, including the City of Shreveport (LWDA 71), CDC (LWDA 70), and the Louisiana Workforce Commission attended.

The discussions centered on various workforce development issues:

- Requirements for nursing instructors to have a Master's Degree (MSN) to teach in Louisiana, hindering nurses with a Bachelor's Degree (BSN) from teaching, as allowed in other states.
- Age restrictions, necessitating individuals to be 18 years of age to work in healthcare in Louisiana.
- The need for training in Sexual Pediatric Assault (SANE – Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner), addressing high burnout rates in this field.
- Shortages of technicians (e.g., EKG, Radiation, Patient Care Technician) and nursing staff.
- Insufficient basic customer service skills across various levels.
- Difficulties in recruiting healthcare professionals outside of NW Louisiana due to negative public perceptions.
- Issues related to agency nurses, including loyalty concerns, lack of specific training, poor attitudes, and unrealistic pay requirements, straining hospital budgets.

Identified issues have been prioritized, leading to the formation of committees. These include Education and Training, Recruitment and Retention and Policy and Regulation. The committees are meeting quarterly to work on their assigned issues and bringing potential solutions to the Sector Partnership for ratification and implementation.

The current sector strategy model has delivered strong results. However, to better align services and enhance our impact on industry, the Louisiana Workforce Commission will transition to a new regionally focused sector strategy model. This regional approach will ensure closer alignment with the vision and

plans of regional workforce development boards, provide greater flexibility in coordinating with these boards, and foster stronger connections with regional economic drivers, educational institutions, and training partners.

Grow with Google

This initiative is a direct response to the growth of the Information Technology Sector, which continued to expand during the pandemic, prompting increased interest in pursuing employment in this field.

The Grow with Google scholarships, funded through a partnership between the National Association of State Workforce Agencies (NASWA) and Google, aim to make 30,000 program scholarships available nationwide. Google offers career certificates in high-growth fields such as project management, user experience (UX) design, data analytics, IT support, digital marketing, and e-commerce.

The program features self-paced classes offered through Coursera, requiring under 10 hours of flexible study per week and taking an average of three to six months to complete. It includes hands-on projects and employer connections, with graduates gaining free access to career resources such as coaching sessions, mock interviews, resume-building tools, and access to the Google Career Certificates employer consortium.

The Louisiana Workforce Commission had 500 scholarships for job seekers, which cover Google certifications in various fields, including IT support, project management, data analytics, UX design, digital marketing, and IT automation with Python. The program witnessed significant engagement, with numerous individuals completing courses and earning certifications. The program ended on December 14, 2023. The metrics were as followed listed below.

<u>Google Specialization Certifications Offered</u>	<u>Google Certifications Earned</u>
Google IT Support	8
Google Project Management	5
Google Data Analytics	10
Google UX Design	1
Google Digital Marketing & E-Commerce	3
Google IT Automation with Python	1

<u>Google General Program Information</u>	<u>Google Completion Numbers</u>
Google Certifications Offered	6
Google Certifications Earned	28
Google Single Courses Offered	39
Google Single Courses Completed	332
Google Program License Invitations Issued	434

Google Program License Invitations Used	320
Individuals Achieving 1 Course Completion	114
Individuals Achieving 50% or more Course Completion	18

SUMMARY

Louisiana Workforce Commission continues to address the workforce development needs and challenges statewide. It is our goal is to continue to expand as well as develop new workforce partners and programs that will continue to move the workforce needle statewide. Our shared goals through engagement in partner planning activities and continuous evaluation and quality improvements will lead to a stronger, more resilient, and vital workforce.