


Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act



**Ohio Annual Report
Program Year 2023**
(July 1, 2023-June 30, 2024)

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Introduction

In accordance with Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Sections 136 and 185, each state that receives a funding allotment under WIOA Section 127 (Youth Activities) or Section 132 (Adult and Dislocated Worker Activities) must prepare and submit an annual report of performance progress to the U.S. Secretary of Labor. This narrative provides an opportunity for Ohio to describe progress toward its strategic vision and goals for the workforce system.

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act

The federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) is designed to help job seekers access employment, education, training, and support services so they can succeed in the labor market and to match employers with the skilled workers they need to compete in the global economy. It also establishes the structure and relationship between national, state, and local workforce investment activities to increase occupational skill attainment, employment, retention, and earnings while improving the quality, productivity, and competitiveness of the workforce and reducing individuals' needs for public assistance.

By supporting the alignment of workforce investment, education, and economic development systems, WIOA provides Ohio with the opportunity to enhance its service delivery system by coordinating activities and promoting consistency of services among the core programs. During program year (PY) 2023, Ohio continued to work toward the goal of integrating the WIOA Title I program with the Wagner-Peyser Employment Services program and other workforce programs that our OhioMeansJobs Centers deliver.

This PY 2023 WIOA Annual Report provides a summary of how Ohio has used workforce integration to support the goals of each program.

Statewide Workforce Development Initiatives

OhioMeansJobs Centers

Ohio has 88 OhioMeansJobs Centers (also known as American Job Centers), one in each county. They provide services to local businesses, as well as to individuals who are employed, underemployed, and unemployed. The 23 comprehensive and 65 affiliate OhioMeansJobs Centers connect workforce partners with one another – such as the WIOA Title I program, Wagner-Peyser Employment Services, Vocational Rehabilitation, Adult Literacy programs, and other programs – to deliver a variety of employment and training services to meet the needs of their communities. Additionally, the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) recently certified 10 specialized OhioMeansJobs Centers in seven adult correctional facilities and in three youth correctional facilities. Each center includes a virtual classroom with webcams and television monitors that allow training providers to deliver interactive workshops from remote locations. These centers also have computers that individuals can use to search for jobs, view instructional videos, and access employment resources.

Ohio's Workforce Mission

Throughout PY 2023, the Governor's Office of Workforce Transformation (OWT) continued to work in collaboration with ODJFS, InnovateOhio (IO), and the Ohio Departments of Education and Workforce, Higher Education, and the Department of Development to close the gap between growing workforce needs and the goals of job seekers. The mission of OWT is to connect Ohio's business, training, and education communities to build a dynamically skilled, productive, and purposeful workforce.

IO advances the DeWine-Husted Administration's commitment to leading an aggressive, innovative path toward a better and stronger Ohio. Its mission is to examine every state service with an eye on the customer's experience – looking at the customer's journey through different interactions with the state – to find ways Ohio can serve its customers better and at a lower cost. The IO Platform provides integrated and scalable capabilities that enable state agencies to become more customer-centric and data-driven, delivering on IO's vision to better serve Ohioans.

Systems Update

During PY 2023, more system updates were completed to better integrate the ODJFS Office of Workforce Development (OWD) systems with systems operated by other program offices, including Ohio Job Insurance (OJI), Support Enforcement Tracking System (SETS), County Finance Information System (CFIS), and several reporting tools. Trainings were provided for front-line staff and partners.

ARIES as a Case Management Tool

In PY 2023, OWD continued to partner with Monster Government Solutions in the development of Ohio's new case management system: Advancement through Resources, Information and Employment Services (ARIES). This system replaced the previous 20-year-old Ohio Workforce Case Management System.

ARIES went live on April 26, 2022. Since then, enhancements for the Participant Individual Record Layout (PIRL), Migrant and Seasonal Farm Workers (MSFW), Apprenticeship, Comprehensive Case Management and Employment Program (CCMEP), and Re-employment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) have strengthened the initial product.

OhioMeansJobs.com

IO, OWT, and ODJFS partnered with vendors G2O and Deloitte to conduct a holistic review and redesign of OhioMeansJobs.com. Changes were made to tailor the content to various audiences and to improve delivery effectiveness, information architecture, site and content heuristics, and overall format. These changes improved the ability of job seekers, businesses, and workforce professionals to use [OhioMeansJobs.com](https://ohiojobs.com) and better supported ongoing improvements and new requirements. The final phase changes went live on May 17, 2024.

In-Demand Occupations

Ohio's efforts to reform its workforce development system are driven by a commitment to meeting employers' current and projected needs. To identify those needs and define an "in-demand job," OWT and the Governor's Executive Workforce Board developed a methodology using state labor statistics and projections, business responses to Ohio's In-Demand Jobs Survey, and Ohio's economic development priorities.

Using the aforementioned methodology, Ohio identified 264 in-demand occupations. When job seekers take the Career Profile assessment on OhioMeansJobs.com, they are given a list of occupations they may be suitable for, with in-demand and critical occupations listed first to improve their chances of finding employment quickly.

Under the leadership of Governor DeWine and Lt. Governor Husted, Ohio extended its focus to prioritize both Ohio's economy and the health and well-being of Ohioans through Ohio's Top Jobs List. Consequently, 80 occupations in 8 career clusters were identified as critical in Ohio. These clusters align with the following eight goals of the DeWine-Husted Administration: 1.) Children and Community Health, 2.) Early Childhood Education, 3.) First Responders, 4.) Lead Abatement and Construction, 5.) Mental and Behavioral Health, 6.) Nurses, 7.) Physicians, and 8.) Wellness Research and Technology.

Local workforce development boards are required to spend at least 85% of their occupational skills training funds on training that leads to employment in critical and in-demand occupations. In addition, the Ohio Department of Higher Education and Ohio's two- and four-year colleges use the in-demand occupations list to analyze occupational supply and demand, plan curriculums and training programs, and determine appropriate class offerings.

The Top Jobs List is updated biennially and includes both in-demand and critical jobs. OWT and IO created a Top Jobs interactive dashboard at topjobs.ohio.gov, which was most recently updated in June of 2024. The list is a customizable, online tool to help guide Ohioans on promising career pathways. Top jobs can be viewed and sorted by region and/or industry, to allow job seekers, educators, businesses, and community leaders to make more informed decisions to solidify their short- and long-term success.

National Dislocated Worker Grants and Other Federal Grants Holistic Care Management SUPPORT Act Grant

Ohio received a \$5 million grant from the U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL) to serve individuals impacted by the opioid epidemic and substance use disorders in local Workforce Development Area 1 (Adams, Brown, Scioto, and Pike counties). Over a decade ago, these local communities were determined to be the epicenter of Ohio's opioid overdose crisis. At one time, Ohio was one of three states that led the nation in opioid overdose deaths. This grant is funding career services, training, and supportive services to help participants build a foundation of employment skills, to offer hope for recovery, and to help families in the hardest hit communities achieve economic stability.

To build the behavioral health field in these communities, the grant also funded training to eligible individuals seeking to obtain skills in professions that support individuals with substance use disorders or at risk of developing substance use disorders. Eligible participants include dislocated workers, individuals with barriers to employment, new entrants to the workforce, and incumbent workers

(employed or underemployed). Funding also allowed training to be provided for employers, first responders, and early childhood educators to help them better understand substance use disorders and trauma-informed care.

The grant began on October 1, 2020, and continued through September 30, 2024. As of mid-June 2024, 597 participants had been enrolled, and 1,546 services had been provided.

Fresh Start Grant

To continue to assist individuals and employers who are impacted by opioid use disorder, Ohio received an \$8.5 million, two-year National Health Emergency Disaster Recovery Dislocated Worker Grant from USDOL. This allowed Ohio to continue providing services that started under a prior opioid-focused USDOL grant, which ended March 2022. The new Fresh Start grant was awarded in March 2022. It allows employment services to be provided to eligible dislocated workers and long-term unemployed individuals across the state. Using the same community-identified concept, Fresh Start grant services are mirrored to provide services that are tailored to each county's local needs.

Opioid use disorder and overdose deaths continue to be pressing public health issues that cause workforce challenges. According to the Ohio Chamber of Commerce, half the businesses surveyed said they suffer the consequences of substance use disorders in the form of absenteeism, decreased productivity, and worker shortages.

The funding goals include:

- Testing innovative approaches to combating the opioid problem – for example, by supporting employers that develop second-chance policies and hire individuals in recovery.
- Providing job training, career services and supportive services to dislocated workers and long-term unemployed individuals, including those impacted directly or indirectly by the opioid crisis. Supportive services can include anything from outpatient mental health and addiction treatment to drug testing, help purchasing work clothes, or transportation assistance.
- Providing temporary disaster-relief employment to help alleviate issues caused by the opioid crisis.
- Building the addiction and substance use disorder treatment, mental health, and pain management workforce.
- Facilitating peer learning and sharing of best practices through cross-discipline learning collaboratives across partner agencies.

Approximately 411 dislocated workers and long-term unemployed individuals were expected to be served. As of mid-June 2024, the grant had nearly tripled the enrollment goal and served 1,070 eligible participants by providing 3,192 services across the state.

We plan to continue the numerous partnerships at the state and local level that have enabled Ohio's public workforce system to comprehensively address the education, training, mental health, health, transportation, housing, and other diverse needs of individuals served with grant funds.

Ohio's Fresh Start grant received a one-year extension that will allow services to be provided through March 30, 2025.

QUEST Grant/ Broadband and 5G Sector Partnership

The Ohio Broadband Strategy is a strategic plan to bridge the digital divide and establish high-speed internet access to unserved and underserved areas of the state. Significant investments are being made to expand broadband service to every household and business. In addition to the substantial financial resources Governor DeWine and the Ohio General Assembly have made available for broadband expansion, Ohio expects to receive nearly \$800 million in federal Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) dollars over the next several years to provide high-speed connectivity in rural communities.

Implementation of the Broadband/5G strategy is primarily funded by the Quality Jobs, Equity, Strategy, and Training (QUEST) Dislocated Worker Grant, which is supporting outreach and training efforts statewide, and by Good Jobs Challenge (GJC) funds, which was awarded to the Ohio Manufacturers' Association (OMA), the lead industry sector partner in the strategy. OMA has capitalized on existing relationships to engage Broadband/5G sector partners and employers in the statewide strategy and used GJC funds to support development of the strategic plan, curriculum development, and job placement activities. Now that implementation of the Broadband/5G strategy is well under way, QUEST and GJC funds are being braided to support statewide activities. ODJFS is establishing a memorandum of understanding with OMA to clarify each party's role in the statewide strategy and to outline the costs from each grant to ensure no duplication of efforts or expenditures.

Ohio received its \$9 million QUEST grant on September 27, 2022. Funds are being used to engage in an innovative partnership with OWT, the Ohio Association of Community Action Agencies (OACAA), OMA, The Ohio State University (OSU) College of Engineering, the Wireless Infrastructure Association (WIA), and our local OhioMeansJobs Centers. This collaborative project is prioritizing training and employment opportunities in the infrastructure and manufacturing industries with a focus on the broadband industry.

OWT has a well-developed collaboration with WIA, OSU, and other collegiate entities to train interested individuals in the critically needed 5G and Broadband Connectivity sectors. WIA is serving as the lead industry intermediary and helps the sector partnership create and produce training and curriculum solutions to meet the workforce and skills gap demand of the broadband industry.

Through the 5G and Broadband Connectivity Center, OSU and the other five colleges/universities listed below have designed curricula and programming for Ohio's Broadband and 5G Sector Partnership. The focus is to establish new career pathways, provide K-12 outreach to minority populations, and form statewide partnerships between education and industry providers in the six JobsOhio regions.

The following six colleges/universities were selected to assist with developing curricula and training in their respective JobsOhio regions: 1.) OSU, 2.) Youngstown State University, 3.) Ohio University, 4.) Miami University, 5.) University of Dayton, and 6.) University of Findlay.

Six Community Action Agencies were selected, one in each JobsOhio region, to assist with outreach and to collaborate with the OMA to connect individuals not interested in broadband opportunities with traditional manufacturing and trade-related training and job opportunities.

Outreach was designed to engage the following marginalized and underserved populations: individuals

who are Latino or African American, veterans, single mothers who are heads of their household, justice-involved citizens, and other unemployed individuals. A media consultant was engaged to develop customized outreach materials and a social media campaign that is culturally and linguistically competent. In addition, the OACAA will hire additional navigators to conduct outreach in each county. Further, community colleges have been engaged to conduct outreach to make underrepresented individuals aware of the excellent and numerous career opportunities in the broadband industry.

Since November 2023, the Community Action Agencies have made over 160 QUEST-eligible participant referrals to local OhioMeansJobs Centers for training. They expected to recruit an additional 150 by the end of the original award period, September 30, 2024. The CAAs are projected to recruit an additional 300 participants by June 30, 2025. To date, at least 74 participants had begun training, and an estimated 247 were projected to be enrolled in training classes during the fall of 2024 (beginning in August 2024).

Quest 2/WAVE

In September 2023, ODJFS was awarded a three-year, \$5 million QUEST Dislocated Worker Grant for a Workforce Advancement and Vocational Electrification (WAVE) initiative. Two sub-grantees – the Greater Ohio Workforce Board and Aspyr (formerly known as the Workforce Development Board of Central Ohio) – are leading efforts to help individuals pursue electric vehicle (EV) and advanced manufacturing pathways. Other partners include OWT and OMA, the Central Ohio Manufacturing Partnership, the Dayton Regional Manufacturing Association, Central Ohio Technical College, OSU, Tolles Career and Technical Center, and Columbus State Community College. Employer partners are Automated Tooling Systems (ATS) Automation, Electrify America, ForSee Power, American Battery Solutions, and American Honda Motor Co.

WAVE aims to serve 550 participants in western and central Ohio by identifying and reaching key communities, aligning training programs to industry needs, delivering education, and providing support and workforce onramps. Participants can earn credentials and skills for good-paying jobs. Employer partners will validate their credentials and offer opportunities at post-program hiring fairs.

Building Pathways to Infrastructure Jobs/Charged Up

In September 2023, ODJFS was awarded a five-year, \$5 million Building Pathways to Infrastructure Jobs grant to provide training and credentialing opportunities for 700 individuals in 18 northeast Ohio counties. The initiative, known as “Charged Up,” is co-managed by the Mahoning Valley Manufacturers’ Coalition (MVMC) and The Manufacturing Advocacy and Growth Network (MAGNET). The Tuscarawas Industry Sector Partnership joined the project in its second year. Partners include OWT, OMA, local workforce development boards, Lorain County Community College, Cuyahoga Community College, and the Ohio State Apprenticeship Council. Employer partners include American Honda Motor Co., Ultium Cells, Foxconn, and Lincoln Electric.

Charged Up provides an entry-level training program for EV career pathways. The initiative targets individuals who are unemployed, underemployed, or incumbent workers, focusing on women, people of color, formerly incarcerated individuals, veterans, and other underrepresented groups. It also established a Registered Apprenticeship program with the United Automobile, Aerospace, and Agricultural Implement Workers. Charged Up will enhance Ohio's EV manufacturing sector by leveraging OMA's network of industry sector partnerships, through MVMC and MAGNET, to coordinate activities statewide. These include training programs, career coaching, stackable credentials, industry

certifications, and employer-driven training for upskilling and reskilling underserved individuals.

Retaining Employment and Talent After Injury/Illness Network

Retaining Employment and Talent After Injury/Illness Network (RETAIN) began as a research project studying how to help workers with medical conditions that occurred off-the-job remain at work and avoid disability. ODJFS joined forces with Bon Secours Mercy Health and five local workforce areas to obtain an \$18.8 million grant for the implementation of innovative stay-at-work/return-to-work services in coordination with health and employment services.

The study recruited workers who were:

- eighteen to 65 years old
- Living or working in the regions of Youngstown (Columbiana, Mahoning, and Trumbull counties), Toledo (Lucas County) or Cincinnati (Butler, Clermont, Hamilton, and Warren counties)
- Patients of Bon Secours Mercy Health
- Living with non-occupational illnesses or injuries that impacted their ability to perform their jobs.

The recruitment goal was 3,500 study participants. Ohio's RETAIN team exceeded that by enrolling 4,529 patients in the study prior to the deadline in May 2024. Ohio's enrollment number exceeded that of every other participating state.

Participants were randomly assigned to either a care coordination group or comparison group. All received standard medical care. Those in care coordination were assisted by a health services coordinator who communicated with participants' employers and health care providers to increase the probability of their returning to work. Examples of solutions included transitional work assignments and physical accommodations that allowed workers to perform essential job functions prior to full medical recovery. In some cases, the coordinator referred the individual to OhioMeansJobs Center partners for employment, training, or vocational rehabilitation services. In addition, a nurse hotline, access to a social worker, and supportive services were available to the participants in care coordination.

Now that enrollment has ended, states are awaiting results from the evaluator to confirm the efficacy of these strategies in shortening work absence and decreasing long-term disability claims. Ohio has been approved to continue providing RETAIN services to ill or injured workers through May 2025, with no need for a comparison group that does not receive the RETAIN interventions. Another medical partner, the Valley View Health Centers operated by the Community Action Council of Pike County, has joined RETAIN to expand services into Adams, Jackson, Pike, and Scioto Counties and to explore lower-cost, sustainable solutions in rural locales. Ohio has also requested an extension of the RETAIN grant for an additional year until May 2026 to continue exploring sustainability.

The project's leadership team includes representatives from ODJFS, the Governor's Executive Workforce Board, the Ohio Bureau of Workers' Compensation, the Ohio Department of Health, Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities, and Workforce Development Boards in Areas 9, 12, 13, 17, and 18.

Ohio Pathway Home Program

Since July 2021, the Ohio Pathway Home program has provided evidence-based employment services to

justice-involved individuals while they were incarcerated. The program has concluded its active recruiting period and is now in the final one-year follow-up period. The program will terminate on December 31, 2024. During the follow-up period, reentry navigators are continuing to provide job referral and supportive services to participants.

The grant submission proposed that Ohio would serve up to 540 adults transitioning from state correctional facilities to six of Ohio's largest urban counties: Cuyahoga, Franklin, Hamilton, Montgomery, Stark, and Summit. By the end of the enrollment period in December 2023, the program had over 682 participants. After their release, services continue at the OhioMeansJobs Centers in the counties where participants live.

The Pathway Home program made it possible for ODJFS to certify 10 specialized OhioMeansJobs Centers in the following facilities: the Northeast Reintegration Center, the Ohio Reformatory for Women, and the Grafton, Noble, Trumbull, Pickaway, Lake Erie, Lorain, Marion, and Belmont Correctional Institutions. These centers improve the quality of workforce services available to incarcerated individuals, help them find their OhioMeansJobs Centers after their release, and create continuity between the services they receive before and after their release.

Statewide Fund Activities

ODJFS utilized WIOA statewide funding for a variety of special projects during the program year. Statewide funding is available to local workforce areas that wish to pursue innovative workforce development ideas and employment and training initiatives – especially projects and activities that promote increased enrollment in WIOA programs employment and training services, improved business engagement services, and the advancement of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Some of the projects funded during PY 23 include the following:

- To support Ohio's commitment to the EV industry, funding was provided to create a recruitment center to hire 2,200 employees for a new lithium-ion battery plant. This included funds to develop EV training programs and to purchase equipment (e.g. charging stations) to train new electricians and auto technicians.
- To create a three-year apprenticeship program to train workers to install low-voltage voice and data wiring for the broadband industry, funding was provided for an Electrical Training Academy.
- WIOA funds supported the "Welcoming Workforce" initiative, which is designed to help local workforce areas overcome talent shortages through outreach to international newcomers (i.e. immigrants, refugees, international students, and other community members born outside the United States).
- To assist job seekers who have significant barriers to employment – such as justice involvement, lack of housing, and mental health and recovery issues – funds were provided to develop employment navigators to help them access support and find employment.
- Funding was provided for the Child Protective Services Fellowship, which assists 12 participating counties with the recruitment, training, and work experience for college students interested in becoming children services workers.
- Funding was provided for the Columbus Promise project, which provides scholarships covering tuition and fees for Columbus City Schools graduates to attend Columbus State Community College.

- Statewide funds were used to purchase a mobile unit to increase customer access to OhioMeansJobs Center services, job fairs, interviews, trainings, and other employment events.
- Statewide funds were used to purchase virtual reality headsets to help students and adults explore careers and consider enrolling in certificate programs or post-secondary education.

Business Resource Network Subgrant

For the third year in a row, OWD offered the local workforce areas the opportunity to submit applications for the Business Resource Network (BRN) Subgrant. The purpose of BRN funding is to expand business services teams, business outreach, and employer engagement. This is an opportunity for local areas to get creative and engage employers in new and exciting ways.

The BRN set-aside was \$4.5 million. All 20 local workforce areas applied. Some were approved as submitted; others were requested to be modified to ensure that all costs were allowable. OWD ultimately approved all 20 applications, allocating over \$4.4 million. One local workforce area returned funding and did not participate early in the program year.

The WIOA Adult and Dislocated Worker (ADW) and Rapid Response (RR) program manager managed the award, along with fiscal management and executive leadership. Quarterly funding review calls were held to ensure obligation requirements were met and metrics submitted. A lot of great work was done with the funding. Examples included local transportation programs for employers, career exploration, business intelligence, outreach, virtual reality, and training. As of June 21, 2024, local areas had expended \$3.2 million, which was 72% of the total award through May 2024. Funds had a service end date of June 30, 2024, but there was a 90-day liquidation period through September 30, 2024. The expenditure rate was 95.6% by the end of liquidation.

Veterans' Employment Services

OhioMeansJobs Centers offer a full range of individualized employment and training services for veterans and eligible spouses who are unable to obtain employment through basic career services. All veterans and their eligible spouses receive priority of service access to the full range of OhioMeansJobs Center services. Emphasis is placed on meeting the employment needs of veterans who are economically or educationally disadvantaged, especially disabled veterans and those with barriers to employment. The Veterans Program continues to deploy a strong social media presence with @OMVetJobs (Ohio Means Veteran Jobs) to promote OhioMeansJobs Center services, including job fairs, other events, and veteran community resource information.

Program staff continue to conduct Transition Assistance Program briefings at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base. They also attend Ohio Inter-Service Family Assistance Committee meetings to target transitioning service, National Guard, and Reserve members. All transitioning service members receiving unemployment benefits are given priority of service in the RESEA program to help them transition to civilian life. Wagner-Peyser staff also identify military veterans and their spouses on registration reports, providing reemployment services and partner program referrals.

Additionally, state workforce staff continue to utilize [OhioMeansJobs.com](https://ohioMeansJobs.com) as an outreach priority of service mechanism for transitioning military service members, veterans, and military spouses. Users with a military affiliation are prompted to complete a brief questionnaire to see if they would like to

receive one-on-one help from an employment professional. Completed questionnaires are routed in real time to staff to reach out for assistance. Non-registered OhioMeansJobs.com users can also request individualized assistance with an employment professional by completing a veteran questionnaire survey located on the [OhioMeansJobs.com](https://ohioMeansJobs.com) “Military Service One-on-One Assistance” resource page. Additionally, an “Entering the Military Service” page was created to promote and provide information on joining or rejoining the military for the public. Lastly, veterans’ resumes are given priority of service in [OhioMeansJobs.com](https://ohioMeansJobs.com). Resumes of veterans are highlighted with a “V,” and resumes of military spouses are now highlighted with an “S” to increase visibility for military-friendly employers.

The Veterans Program promoted its annual “Hire-a-Veteran Month” in November. Military veteran staff received recognition for their military service and continued public service. Online trainings were shared with WIOA partners to promote consistency in the veteran intake process and to increase their awareness of community resources for veterans. A list of Ohio employers that were recognized for their investments in recruiting, employing, and retaining our nation’s heroes through the U.S. DOL’s HIRE Vets Medallion Program was also shared with Ohio’s workforce community. Additionally, an @OMVetJobs social media campaign ran to increase awareness of available employment services to members of the military community.

Each year, the Jobs for Veterans State Grant (JVSG) Program sets aside 1% of the funds available under the grant for the purpose of performance incentive awards. The Vets Ohio Network for Employment (Vets O.N.E.) Incentive Award recognizes OhioMeansJobs Centers who have made a substantial improvement in the delivery of services to veterans, or others who provided exemplary service to veterans during the program year. OWD Senior Leadership and the Veterans Services program team formally presented the awards to each of the following winning OhioMeansJobs Centers:

- **Gold level - OhioMeansJobs Greene County** received **\$39,621.00** to provide supportive services such as transportation and car repairs for veterans looking for a job or to help them retain a job. Greene also used the funds to send staff to training and to support the Greene County Veterans Services Warrior Resiliency Team.
- **Silver level - OhioMeansJobs Columbus Franklin County** received **\$19,810.50** to provide supportive services such as housing, transportation, and assistance with ID documents to veterans.
- **Bronze level - OhioMeansJobs Defiance and Paulding Counties** received **\$6,603.50** to publicly partner with local veterans’ organizations to promote their services for veterans.

Through the efforts of Ohio’s Disabled Veterans’ Outreach Program specialists, the JVSG program served 2,068 veterans in PY 2023. More than 55% (55.1%) of participants were employed in the second quarter after they left the program. More than 53% (53.1%) were employed during the fourth quarter after they left the program. Furthermore, the median earnings of these participants in the second quarter after they left the program was \$10,130. All performance measures exceeded standards negotiated with the USDOL.

Labor Market Information

The Ohio Bureau of Labor Market Information (OhioLMI) is the primary source for labor market measures in Ohio. In PY 2023, OhioLMI’s strategic initiatives in outreach, data visualization, partnerships, and

workforce information accessibility highlighted its commitment to empowering stakeholders to make informed workforce decisions.

OhioLMI expanded its outreach efforts by collaborating with the ODJFS Office of Communications to promote new and updated materials through email announcements and the agency's social media platforms. Among the new materials was an analysis titled "The Impact of Unemployment: High and Low Unemployment Counties in Ohio" and a quarterly newsletter, "Labor Market Matters." Social media posts included infographics about women in the labor force and "Pi-related" occupations, in honor of Pi Day on March 14. Furthermore, OhioLMI staff played a crucial role in developing several interactive data dashboards. These included dashboards on Occupational Employment Projections, Ohio's Labor Force Statistics, Industry Employment, Ohio's Employment Status, the Work Opportunity Tax Credit, an Unemployment Rate Map, OhioMeansJobs Center Services, and a dashboard illustrating the tightness of Ohio's labor market using data from the Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey. Additionally, OhioLMI staff ensured the Statewide Registered Apprenticeship Dashboard was updated with the latest available data.

OhioLMI maintained and strengthened partnerships across the national, state, and local levels. At the national level, OhioLMI remained involved in key committees such as the Wage Record Pilot Advisory Committee, which advises the Bureau of Labor Statistics on priorities, strategic planning, and the responsible utilization of wage record data to promote growth. Additionally, OhioLMI actively participated in organizations like the Council for Community and Economic Research and the National Association of State Workforce Agencies, including their Workforce and Labor Market Information Committee.

OhioLMI collaborated with multiple state and county agencies and workgroups to analyze and report on Ohio's labor market and economic activity. Collaborations included entities such as the Ohio Department of Transportation, Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities, the Ohio Department of Medicaid, the Ohio Workforce Association, IO, JobsOhio, an Economic Data Workgroup, county workforce development organizations, and a Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment and Training Workgroup.

OhioLMI also works with local areas to provide local businesses information using the Workforce Information Database. As part of the bureau's training and outreach efforts, staff presented information to the workforce development community, discussed labor market data resources and initiatives, and spoke to business associations about changes in the labor market. The Bureau of Labor Market Information also conducted the following activities to present information in a user-friendly manner:

- Continuously provided information for the monthly statewide employment situation news release.
- Published monthly job posting reports.
- Updated industry and occupational employment projections, including projected annual openings for occupations.
- Published the 2022 Annual Economic Report, which reviewed Ohio's employment situation, past employment trends, and employment outlook.
- Updated the annual county economic profiles, the county occupational estimates, and the county inflow-outflow reports.

- Produced monthly Ohio leading economic indicators to predict employment changes over a six-month horizon.
- Developed an OhioLMI Resource Guide for finding local data.
- Designed numerous data dashboards.

Employment Services

WIOA

The primary goal of WIOA is to increase employment opportunities for individuals through an organized and efficient delivery system that aligns Ohio's workforce investment, education, and economic development resources. These opportunities are designed to increase access to, and opportunities for, the employment, education, training, and support services that individuals need to succeed in the labor market, particularly those with barriers to employment. WIOA also plays a key role in increasing the success of workers and employers by equipping our business community with a skilled workforce. This skilled-workforce focus strengthens the state's economy while also improving and expanding employment opportunities for workers.

Collaboration

To support and strengthen Ohio's workforce delivery system, WIOA program administration involves significant collaboration.

WIOA Services in ARIES

A strong system foundation is important in the delivery of WIOA services. ARIES, Ohio's case management system, has been in place since April 2022. Efforts are under way to review services, ensure that services aligning with WIOA policy are properly located in ARIES, and provide a more streamlined menu of services, when appropriate. The goal is to improve data entry efficiency and timeliness for the community of local area case managers and partners. The following OWD program areas are participating in this review: WIOA, Performance and Reporting, Systems, and Policy.

Gen Z Virtual Job Fair

Ohio's Wagner-Peyser Business Services team is committed to identifying new and innovative ways to connect employers and job seekers. In May 2024, the WIOA and Rapid Response teams participated for the first time in a Gen Z Virtual Career Fair hosted by CCMEP. Staff collaborated with other OWD programs and various employers to assist job seekers ages 16 to 27. Program staff were available to answer questions and to help individuals take advantage of services. A total of 216 job seekers participated in this four-hour event, which was on the Brazen platform. Based on this event's success, similar events are planned for the future.

TAA/WIOA Dislocated Worker Co-Enrollment

Per WIOA Policy Letter 22-1 (Guidance on Trade Adjustment Assistance and WIOA Dislocated Worker Co-Enrollment), to ensure the availability of a comprehensive array of services, all Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) participants must be referred and co-enrolled into the WIOA Dislocated Worker program unless the TAA recipient is not eligible for the WIOA Dislocated Worker program or opts out of the co-enrollment opportunity. As of the date of this report, Trade was pending re-authorization. However,

ODJFS has been working with Trade partners to improve our co-enrollment participation. Support and information have been provided to local case workers to emphasize the importance of co-enrollment so participants can access more comprehensive services. Currently, Ohio has a 33% co-enrollment rate.

OWD Statewide Local Area Training Project

As part of the 2023 Public Interest Audit, the WIOA Program Administration team led a training sub-workgroup focused on better understanding local area system and program training needs. A statewide survey was open from June 26 through July 25, 2024, with 241 surveys submitted to date. The most-requested training topics were for the ARIES system, OhioMeansJobs.com, and the County Finance Information System, as well as for WIOA and CCMEP. The training sub-work group was comprised of WIOA, CCMEP, [OhioMeansJobs.com](https://ohioMeansJobs.com), and ARIES Systems team members. Trainings will be provided using a universally accessible platform for the local areas. Soft skills training also is being considered. The team also is investigating systems to capture training completions to gauge skill progression.

New WIOA Team Structure

The WIOA Adult and Dislocated Worker (ADW) Training and Technical Assistance team was established to provide guidance in support of our American Job Centers (in Ohio, called OhioMeansJobs Centers). This team acquired a new supervisor in the spring of 2024 to support the four Employment Services coordinators who previously reported directly to the WIOA and Rapid Response program manager. This new structure improves the alignment and implementation of processes and best practices as we strive to deliver quality training and technical assistance to local area communities. We are excited to begin offering individualized and customized technical assistance and training to our local areas in a face-to-face environment in 2025.

The WIOA Question and Answer mailbox and phone line support both local area WIOA policy and system questions, as well as inquiries from constituents regarding WIOA programs and services. The mailbox received over 5,000 emails with questions about policies, systems, OhioMeansJobs Center services, unemployment benefits, and other topics. Our phone line received over 1,400 calls from individuals asking questions or seeking reemployment assistance.

Training

Another essential responsibility of the WIOA ADW Training and Technical Assistance team is to support local area staff by strengthening their ability to deliver career, training, and supportive services through training creation and delivery. Training topics come from a variety of sources, including OWD leadership, the workforce development board directors, the Ohio Workforce Association, the WIOA training feedback surveys sent to those who attended WIOA trainings, and through the WIOA mailbox. Feedback from the Statewide Local Area Training Project mentioned above will also identify new WIOA training and resources in the future.

Between July 1, 2023, and June 30, 2024, the WIOA ADW Training and Technical Assistance Team accomplished the following:

- Trainings delivered: 36 modules covering 14 topics.
- New training modules created: 7, including Individual Training Accounts; Incumbent Worker Training; Supervisor in ARIES; Serving Applicants with a Close Relationship; WIOA Career Services; WIOA Training Services; CFIS Conference.

- Total: 1,383 Training attendees.

Rapid Response

RR Team Protocol Meetings

Rapid Response (RR) is a federally mandated reemployment program. In Ohio, RR is state-administered but delivered in partnership with our local workforce areas. During this program year, the RR team continued to focus on strengthening our partnerships with local areas. RR team protocol meetings were held for all 20 workforce areas where state and local RR team members met face to face for the first time in over five years. Meeting attendees included the RR program manager, supervisor, state coordinator, local coordinator, and workforce development board director, among others. Topics covered during these meetings included an RR program overview, policies, funding applications, the Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification (WARN) Act, process flow, websites, and resources. In addition, each area participated in an exercise to create a RACI (responsible, accountable, consulted, and informed) responsibility matrix. They outlined the 14 steps involved in the RR process and determined roles and responsibilities. These meetings were highly participative and resulted in a better understanding of how the RR program works and the roles of state and local partners.

Layoff Aversion Efforts/Plans

RR assists employers and workers during layoffs or closure. For workers, the goal is reemployment. However, RR also works with employers proactively to prevent layoffs. This is known as layoff aversion. Ohio dedicated efforts in 2024 to enhance its layoff aversion engagement. In February 2024, the RR program manager presented to employers and local partners at a Layoff Aversion and RR Mini-Forum held at Sinclair Community College in Mason, Ohio. This was at the request of the workforce development board director in Area 12. The purpose of the forum was to educate participants about the Layoff Aversion Program and let them know about the various services that Rapid Response could provide during expansions and contractions in their business cycle.

In May 2024, the RR program manager presented about layoff aversion services at the Ohio Job and Family Services Directors' Association Annual Conference. The program manager provided an overview of the RR program, introduced layoff aversion, and discussed layoff aversion strategies for state and local partners to assist employers.

Increased Efforts with RR and OUIO Coordination

RR has been working closely with the Office of Unemployment Insurance Operations (OUIO) to provide pertinent and up-to-date information to dislocated workers on how to file for and maintain unemployment benefits. Updates were made to materials and a presentation to help laid-off workers understand the unemployment process and file their claims successfully.

Rapid Response Emergency Assistance Funding Grants (RREAF)

RREAF Grant Funding is available to local areas that exhaust or have insufficient WIOA formula funds to assist workers impacted by layoffs and closures. These funds also can be used to provide layoff aversion assistance to employers. During the program year, RR approved two local area requests for funding. Area 12 assisted four employers and provided training services to impacted workers. Area 7 helped an employer avoid laying off 40 workers by upskilling them instead. To date, we have awarded \$358,050 for these projects. The following OWD program areas assisted in the creation, maintenance, and support of these grants for local areas: WIOA, Grants Management, Performance, Workforce Training and

Compliance, RR, and the ARIES System team.

Wagner-Peyser

Reemployment continues to be a priority in Ohio. The state remains committed to developing strong connections between the unemployment insurance programs and the OhioMeansJobs Centers while strengthening partnerships with other state agencies. During PY 2023, Wagner-Peyser Employment Services staff members continued to prioritize meeting customers where they are and providing services in a way that makes them most comfortable. Although in-person services are still available, the state's OhioMeansJobs Centers now also hold virtual job fairs, workshops, and appointments. Wagner-Peyser staff also prioritized the following initiatives:

Targeted Outreach

An extensive outreach effort was undertaken to help Ohio's veterans and military spouses obtain employment. In addition, Wagner-Peyser staff have collaborated with other departments and offices, including the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections (ODRC) and the ODJFS Office of Child Support to offer reemployment services. Those incarcerated at ODRC facilities complete a pre-release questionnaire and are contacted by Wagner-Peyser staff at the time of their release to inform them of services available within the OhioMeansJobs Centers. Child support obligors with seek-work orders are identified and contacted to provide case management and reemployment services.

Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers (MSFW)

Agriculture continues to be a leading industry in Ohio. During the program year, the MSFW team implemented [OhioMeansJobs.com](https://ohioMeansJobs.com) enhancements to simplify agriculture-related job applications for less tech-savvy job seekers. These enhancements included the development of a job interest questionnaire tailored to identify farmworkers' needs. An [OhioMeansJobs.com](https://ohioMeansJobs.com) webpage also was created, with critical information and interactive features in English and Spanish for employers and job seekers. Ohio's MSFW team hosted USDOL for a federal audit and strengthened partnerships with the nonprofit organization PathStone and other significant partners. The MSFW team continued efforts to streamline the referral process for migrant workers and developed a QR code leading to a form for farm workers to complete, which identifies needed services. This allows the outreach staff to spend more time on providing services and less on administrative functions.

Foreign Labor Certification (FLC)

The FLC unit has been working to improve the quality of housing provided by employers for H2A workers by strengthening the inspection process. The housing inspection checklist was updated to require window screens and screen doors to be free from rips and holes and in good working order. Also removed was language allowing for self-attestation by the owner of rental housing stating the housing meets the minimum requirements to be approved. Instead, Ohio now requires the Ohio Department of Health to conduct inspections of housing for foreign labor. The FLC team became fully staffed, with the addition of a customer service assistant. The team now consists of two customer service representatives and one account executive, who shares his time with the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) program.

Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC)

During the program year, the WOTC program developed an interactive map that allows data related to WOTC certifications to be viewed in near-real time. Results can be filtered by county or workforce area,

certification status, occupations, and/or status groups. The WOTC team continued to process applications for designated community resident group members, veterans, ex-felons, and long-term-unemployed individuals. Certification amounts exceeded \$350 million (estimated based on the lowest award amount of \$2,400). The WOTC unit operated with a full staff, including seven full-time and two part-time employees. To streamline the approval of applications involving veterans, the team conducts a quarterly crossmatch with Service Member Civil Relief Act data to obtain military service records and automate part of the approval process.

In addition, the WOTC website was updated to ensure correct links to forms and resources. Other ongoing projects included updating internal and external forms and systems, developing an out-of-state adjudication process, and enhancing the application queue to allow for more automation.

CCMEP Youth

Ohio's CCMEP program is designed to help young adults (ages 14-24) who are generally low-income and face barriers to employment. The program integrates funding from both the WIOA Youth program and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) to offer a range of services aimed at improving employment and education outcomes. During PY 2023, CCMEP continued its expansion of implementing Goal4 It!, which was developed by Mathematica. Local workforce areas also worked with youth services providers to encourage outreach to youth eligible for either WIOA Youth or TANF.

Here are some of the key employment services provided through the CCMEP:

1. **Assessment and Planning:**

- Comprehensive assessment of participants' skills, interests, and needs.
- Development of an Individual Opportunity Plan (IOP) tailored to each participant's goals.

2. **Education and Training:**

- Access to high school completion programs, General Education Development (GED) Test preparation, and post-secondary education.
- Occupational skills training aligned with local labor market needs.
- Work-based learning opportunities, including internships and apprenticeships.

3. **Employment Services:**

- Job search assistance and placement services.
- Resume writing, interview preparation, and career counseling.
- Job readiness training to develop soft skills such as communication and teamwork.

4. **Supportive Services:**

- Transportation assistance to enable participation in program activities and employment.
- Child care assistance for young parents participating in the program.

5. **Work Experience:**

- Subsidized employment opportunities to gain practical work experience.
- Job shadowing and mentorship programs with local employers.

6. **Business Services:**

- Connecting with employers to learn more about their needs for skilled workers and willingness to serve as a work experience site and/or to accept youth participants as candidates for job openings.
- Hosted a Gen Z Virtual Career Fair for job seekers 27 years old and younger as part of youth and business outreach. The event had 182 booths represented by employers and program areas, and 258 job seekers participated.

7. **Financial Literacy:**

- Financial literacy education and assistance with managing budgets.

8. **Follow-up Services:**

- Continued support and coaching after employment to ensure job retention and career advancement.
- Ongoing access to supportive services to address any barriers that arise.

Waiver Usage

Ohio tracks waiver usage for reporting and evaluation purposes. Listed below are the approved waivers with supporting documentation collected from the state's database and fiscal reports. Ohio completed a comprehensive evaluation of the CCMEP program in early 2024. This evaluation provided some additional insight regarding the success of waivers, as well as the potential need for technical assistance.

Waiver: Allow TANF funds to count toward the 75% expenditure requirement for out-of-school youth and allow the expenditure requirement to be calculated on a statewide basis.

This waiver supports the implementation of Ohio's expanded youth program, CCMEP, by using both WIOA and TANF funding sources to support the unique needs of the same customer while easing administrative burdens associated with managing two federal funding streams. The large infusion of TANF dollars allows WIOA Youth dollars to have a greater impact, and it also allows more disconnected youth to be served. Additionally, by allowing the expenditure rate to be calculated statewide, the waiver gives local workforce development areas more flexibility to address the unique needs of participants in their communities.

To recognize the TANF dollars invested in WIOA out-of-school youth under CCMEP, ODJFS includes the amount of TANF dollars spent on co-enrolled WIOA out-of-school youth during a program year in both the numerator and denominator of the out-of-school youth rate calculation.

Using this waiver, the out-of-school youth expenditure statewide rate for the PY 2022 funds was 86.9%, and for the PY 2023 funds, it was 80.9%. For PY 2023, the rate will likely increase when all the spending is complete at the end of June 2025. The number of WIOA participants co-funded with TANF dollars was 5,353, which was an increase from the previous program year (4,821 participants). Also, the overall percentage of co-funded participants increased from 25.7% to 27.1% in PY 2023.

Waiver: Allow the use of individual training accounts for in-school youth.

The intent of individual training accounts for the WIOA out-of-school youth program is to expand training options, increase program flexibility, enhance customer choice, and reduce paperwork. Ohio desired the same benefits for the in-school youth program. This waiver encourages in-school youth to explore in-

demand occupations and career pathways and to take responsibility for planning their futures. Ohio is working to achieve the following goals and programmatic outcomes:

- Improve the ability of local workforce development boards, youth program providers, and CCMEP lead agencies to respond quickly to the needs of in-school youth.
- Increase the quality of learning opportunities.
- Increase employment and training opportunities.
- Improve coordination by reducing fragmentation of service delivery.
- Improve customer choice and empower youth to make responsible career choices.
- Reduce unnecessary paperwork.
- Develop an emerging workforce of prepared candidates ready for work.
- Increase accountability.

Using this waiver, the overall usage of individual training accounts increased over the past three years. For PY 2020, 841 youth used individual training accounts, whereas in PY 2023, 1,344 used individual training accounts. The breakdown for the in-school youth and out-of-school youth individual training accounts was 157 (ISY) and 684 (OSY) for PY2020 and was 342 (ISY) and 1,002 (OSY) for PY 2023. The waiver usage led to an overall increase of 503 individual training accounts.

Waiver: Allow TANF funds to count toward the 20% work experience expenditure requirement.

The purpose of this waiver is to increase participant enrollment in work experiences by having TANF-funded, co-enrolled participants count toward the 20% requirement defined in 20 CFR 681.590. The waiver supports the principles of streamlining services and increasing accountability and accessibility, state and local flexibility, and ease of administration.

Both WIOA Youth and TANF expenditures will count toward the 20% expenditure requirement for paid or unpaid work experience for youth co-enrolled in those programs. In addition to WIOA local youth program funds spent on paid and unpaid work experiences – including wages and staff costs for developing and managing work experiences – local areas in Ohio may include TANF work experience expenditures in the calculation of the 20% work experience expenditure requirement.

For PY 2021, Ohio’s youth programs (TANF, WIOA, and co-enrolled) had a total of 18,779 participants. Of those, 8,022 (42.7%) were enrolled in work experience programs. For PY 2022, Ohio’s youth programs had a total of 18,845 participants. Of those, 7,872 (41.8%) were enrolled in work experience programs. For PY 2023, Ohio’s youth programs had a total of 19,754 participants. Of those, 7,081 (35.8%) were enrolled in work experience programs.

The number of work experiences decreased for PY 2023 due to local workforce areas struggling with several challenges. These included a tight labor market that made youth less likely to be interested in subsidized employment opportunities and workforce areas needing time to adjust wages provided in work experiences.

All three waivers’ indirect effects on performance and various at-risk priority populations served.

A review of the PY 2023 WIOA Youth participants identified the following: 9.4% were justice-involved;

8.4% were homeless or runaways; 19.8% had disabilities; 15.2% were single parents; and 6.3% were in foster care.

The percentage of WIOA youth who obtained employment or enrolled in training and were able to maintain employment or training was 74.3%, which was an increase from PY 2022 (72.4%).

Effectiveness in Serving Employers

In accordance with WIOA sec. 116(b)(2)(A)(i) (VI), the USDOL and the U.S. Department of Education are required to establish a primary indicator of performance for effectiveness in serving employers. The departments have determined that this indicator will be measured as a shared outcome across all six core programs within each state to ensure a holistic approach to serving employers.

All “effectiveness in serving employers” performance measures remained in pilot for PY 2023. As described in the Joint WIOA Final Rule and the Joint WIOA Performance ICR (OMB Control No. 1205-0526), the departments have developed three approaches for measuring effectiveness in serving employers, although only two approaches are required. Ohio has chosen the following two measures – Retention (retention with the same employer) and Repeat Business Customers (percentage of repeat employers using services within the previous three years) – and is awaiting further guidance from the USDOL.

Common Exit

Ohio has a common exit process. Titles I and III, TAA, JVSG, and RESEA are all included in the common exit process. Within ARIES (the ODJFS case management system), state administrators determine if a program should be included in the common exit. When a new program or grant is created, the system asks the program manager if it should be included as part of the common exit. The exit date calculation uses the USDOL definition. If no services have been provided within the last 90 days across all programs included in the common exit group, the case will exit, and the most recent service date will be reported as the exit date.

Statistical Adjustment Model

WIOA section 116, Performance Accountability System, requires the use of a statistical adjustment model when establishing negotiated levels of performance. WIOA requires that performance levels be negotiated for each of the primary statewide performance indicators. State-level performance outcomes are a function of the following:

1. The characteristics of the participants being served.
2. The labor market conditions in which those participants are being served.

WIOA specifically requires that both factors be taken into consideration. The use of a statistical model when negotiating performance levels is intended to account for these variations. A properly specified statistical model appropriately adjusts performance goals for states serving harder-to-serve populations and/or in economies facing more difficult labor market conditions. The statistical model objectively quantifies how, and to what extent, each of these factors affects performance levels – in other words,

actual outcomes. The goal of the statistical approach is to account for these factors and separate them from factors that program administrators can control.

Using similar methodology, Ohio adjusts the performance standards for each WIOA local workforce area after the close of the program year, following guidance set forth in Training and Employment Guidance Letter (TEGL) 11-19, Change 1. The final evaluation is made against these adjusted standards to determine if each area performed successfully. Failure of any WIOA performance measure by a local workforce area will result in technical assistance and a program improvement plan. Failure of the same performance measure two years in a row may impact a subsequent local workforce area designation. Following guidance from TEGL 11-19, Change 1, after the close of PY 2022, a statistical adjustment model was used to adjust the PY 2022 negotiated levels of performance for the actual economic conditions experienced and actual characteristics of participants served, creating the adjustment factors and adjusted levels of performance.

During PY 2023, OWD finalized and published the Adjusted WIOA Performance Report for the prior program year (PY 2022) using the adjustment factors specified by the state's statistical model. Following guidance in Training and Employment Notice (TEN) 04-23, the following WIOA performance measures were adjusted and evaluated for PY 2022: Employment 2nd Quarter after Exit (Employment, Education, or Training 2nd Quarter after Exit for Youth), Median Earnings 2nd Quarter after Exit, Employment 4th Quarter after Exit (Employment, Education, or Training 4th Quarter after Exit for Youth), and Credential Attainment.

Data Validation

WIOA's goal is to help participants enter suitable employment. States submit data to USDOL to provide information on programs, participants served, and outcomes. Data validation is a series of internal controls and quality assurance techniques established to verify the accuracy, validity, and reliability of the data submitted to USDOL.

For PY 2023, the ODJFS Office of Fiscal and Monitoring Services' Bureau of Monitoring and Consulting Services performed data validation reviews of the local areas. In addition to monitoring, the bureau provided training and resources to state and local staff on the methodology and process for monitoring, as well as for the completion of data validation reviews. Training included discussions and presentations via videoconferences and in-person meetings whenever possible. The monitoring tools were made available to local areas to be referenced or adopted for use in their own data validation reviews.

The sample size for this validation was 500 PY 2023 WIOA participants. Participants were randomly selected from a list of closed and active WIOA core and Dislocated Worker Grant case files entered into the ARIES data reporting system.

Elements targeted for validation consisted of those noted in USDOL TEGL 23-19, Change 2, and were reported to OWD. The state required local areas to respond with continuous improvement plans on issues of significant concern. A written summary of the local areas' data validation results included issues of significant concern and a spreadsheet with elements that needed to be corrected for each participant reviewed. Validation monitoring results were shared with the

local areas and OWD. OWD's Program Measures and Performance Outcomes Unit, Operations Unit, the CCMEP Unit, and/or the OWD Systems Unit, were responsible for resolving any issues identified within the reports. They also provided any training and/or technical assistance as deemed appropriate.

The bureau provided follow-up training and resources to state and local staff on the methodology and process for data validation monitoring, as well as any areas of concern that were identified. Trainings included discussions and presentations via video conferences and in-person meetings whenever possible.

The Bureau of Monitoring and Consulting Services maintains results and records in accordance with the agency's records retention policy. OWD relies on the Office of Unemployment Insurance Operations to ensure wage record data is maintained in accordance with USDOL requirements.

The state follows established monitoring and evaluation protocols to ensure reported data is accurate. These protocols include:

- Annual monitoring of each local area, including quality case file reviews to verify documentation, timeliness, and accuracy of reported information. These reviews utilize written procedures and monitoring guides to ensure consistency, accuracy, and quality in the state's monitoring efforts. Reviews are documented with written reports that are shared with OWD and the local areas. Areas of significant concern require a continuous improvement plan.
- Monitoring staff participate in monthly webinars and other trainings provided by OWD to keep informed on updated state rules, policy, and guidance. Staff also participate in USDOL webinars and training to gain additional insight and guidance. The program monitoring unit manager provides training to staff when updates occur and also trains new staff, provides refresher training, and observes staff and their work, as needed. Peer reviews are performed on regular monitoring reviews to detect any issues prior to exit conferences and the issuance of reports. Peer reviews have been beneficial to ensure the quality of the monitors' work and/or to detect issues with interpretation of law, rule, or policy.
- The bureau reviews the prior year's data validation results and incorporates that information into the next year's regular monitoring reviews. Areas of high error are included in the program reviews. The prior year's data validation results are reviewed and assessed in comparison to current data validation results, to identify any changes and/or anomalies to include in the local area training sessions and discussions.
- OWD participates in the Quarterly Report Analysis and uses this information to implement procedure and system enhancements to improve data quality. In addition, OWD performs edit checks against USDOL's Workforce Integrated Performance System to help ensure data quality and that the correct logic is being used to calculate performance measures and demographics.

Evaluative Studies

Helping Ohioans Pursue Employment (HOPE) Program

In PY 2021, the ODJFS Office of Transformation commissioned McKinsey & Company to survey Ohioans who had recently either applied for unemployment benefits or registered on [OhioMeansJobs.com](https://www.ohiojobs.com/). In

response to survey results, Wagner-Peyser staff developed the HOPE initiative. In calendar year 2022, the department began emailing unemployment applicants extensive information about the free in-person employment services available at the state's 88 OhioMeansJobs Centers, in addition to the self-service features available at [OhioMeansJobs.com](https://ohiojobs.com).

In calendar year 2023, the department began a pilot of Phase II, which includes three additional touchpoints after a customer's unemployment benefit application is approved. These touchpoints include videos related to services available at OhioMeansJobs Centers, as well as a needs questionnaire. Completing the needs questionnaire allows the customer to be connected to an employment professional in an OhioMeansJobs Center within one business day. The pilot encompassed 10 counties in three workforce development areas.

In the first quarter of 2024, Phase II of HOPE was implemented statewide. Since that time, more than 250,000 correspondences have been sent to unemployment claimants. These correspondences provided claimants with information related to services available at OhioMeansJobs Centers. Additionally, the letters gave customers the opportunity to request one-on-one job search assistance from a Wagner-Peyser employment professional in their area.

Since Phase II implementation, employment professionals have assisted more than 500 individuals with services related to resumes, interviewing, and labor market information. Additionally, they provide customers with information on services available through OhioMeansJobs Center partners. This includes, but is not limited to, veteran services, occupational skills training, supportive services, and services specifically designed for youth and older job seekers.

Phase III of the HOPE initiative will allow questionnaire and survey data to be entered into the ARIES system to ensure that all services and referrals are accurately tracked and reported.

CCMEP Evaluation

In 2023, the Ohio Workforce Association organized an evaluation of the CCMEP program, which ODJFS funded. The consulting firm ICF International was selected through a competitive bidding process to evaluate the program's performance for PY 2017 through PY 2021. This evaluation, scheduled for completion by December 2023, received an extension and was completed in spring 2024. The evaluation employs a mixed-methods approach, including both a participant outcomes study and an implementation study.

Key Components of the Evaluation:

- **Implementation Study:** Included state and county-level document reviews, surveys, interviews with staff, and focus groups with staff and participants. This study assessed program fidelity, identified best practices, uncovered challenges, presented expansion opportunities, and documented solutions.
- **Outcome Evaluation:** Examined data to identify the characteristics, types of services offered and received, and outcomes of CCMEP participants. This analysis provided insights into how well the program recruited and served young adults.

- **Focus on Equity:** Special attention was given to specialized groups, including racial groups and cash assistance recipients, to identify opportunities to improve equity. The evaluation also examined Ohio’s coaching case management model, which was implemented statewide, and which over half the counties were using.
- **Challenges and Limitations:** The evaluation timeframe was limited to five years due to the unavailability of PY 2022 data, stemming from issues with the new ARIES case management system.

Key Findings:

- **Service Utilization:** Work experience opportunities and supportive services were the most utilized, with 64% and 61% of participants using these services, respectively. Less-used services included youth follow-up services and entrepreneurial skills training (Table 23; [ICF Evaluation](#)).
- **Demographics:** The largest proportion of participants identified as Black or African American (48%), with a significant portion being female (65%) (Tables 24 & 26; [ICF Evaluation](#)).
- **Educational Outcomes:** Participants still in secondary school exhibited higher graduation rates compared to those not in school (Table 38; [ICF Evaluation](#)). However, participants with disabilities and pregnant or parenting participants faced additional challenges in achieving educational and employment goals compared to their peers (Pgs. 77-78; [ICF Evaluation](#)).
- **Employment Outcomes:** Two quarters after exit, 63% of participants with disabilities were employed or in school, compared to 70% of those without disabilities. Median wages for participants with disabilities were also lower compared to their peers without disabilities (Table 42; [ICF Evaluation](#)).
- **Challenges:** Transportation, child care, and housing assistance were significant barriers. Additionally, the transition from a summer to a year-round employment program for youth faced resistance in some counties due to increased complexity and outcome reporting requirements (Table 13; [ICF Evaluation](#)).

Key Recommendations:

- **Continuation of Case Management and Coaching Model:** The evaluation showed positive feedback from both participants and staff using the model. The statewide expansion of implementation should be continued ([ICF Evaluation](#)).
- **Maintain Momentum:** Continue focusing on relationship building, sharing best practices, and finding innovative ways to provide meaningful work experiences for youth ([ICF Evaluation](#)).
- **Improve Program Awareness:** Increase advertising efforts using diverse methods such as billboards, social media, and partnerships with local organizations to enhance program visibility ([ICF Evaluation](#)).
- **Address Barriers:** Enhance supportive services to mitigate barriers such as transportation, child care, and housing ([ICF Evaluation](#)).

This comprehensive evaluation will provide valuable insights and recommendations for enhancing the

CCMEP program's effectiveness and efficiency in serving Ohio's young adults.

RESEA Program

USDOL contracted with Abt Associates to provide technical assistance and guidance to states to help them adopt a culture of evidence and align their fiscal year 2023 and fiscal year 2024 RESEA State Plans and program design with federal evaluation and evidence-based requirements. OWD's RESEA Section is responsible for managing this evaluation in Ohio. We hope to learn whether there are differences between unemployment claimants who: 1) received traditional RESEA services, 2) received RESEA services with enhanced workshop experiences, and 3) did not receive any RESEA services.

A randomized controlled trial was used to evaluate the effectiveness of the RESEA program, including an implementation and impact study. A 12-week pilot study was conducted from April 22, 2024 to July 12, 2024. This helped identify training needs, streamline workflows, and provide a better understanding of what data needs to be extracted for analyzing. The statewide randomization of data for 30,000 unemployment claimants placed into treatment and control groups began on July 15, 2024. This initiative is expected to take 18 to 24 months. A final report will follow shortly after that. A team from OSU was serving as the evaluator.

Ohio's RESEA Program Office meets one-on-one monthly with Abt Associates, as well as on a quarterly basis as part of a multi-state cohort to learn more about evidence-based studies and how they can benefit Ohio's RESEA program.

A workgroup was formed to develop a workshop that will be added to Ohio's RESEA delivery model and piloted soon. Members include RESEA program administrators, OSU staff, and local WIOA delivery staff and leadership. The goal of the workgroup is to help job seekers understand the job market and undertake more impactful job searches.

The cost of this study is \$953,000: \$469,000 for 2023 and \$484,000 for 2024. For 2023, Ohio set aside \$720,145.90 and continued to follow DOL's guidance for the 2024 RESEA grant award. For more information on this study, please see the RESEA Statement of Work found in Appendix A.

Customer Service Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction is vital to Ohio's workforce strategies. The OhioMeansJobs Center certification requirements include an assessment of the center's process to obtain customer feedback on services received. The assessment also examines the way services were received and how customer feedback was used to inform the center's workflow. As part of the certification, ODJFS has conducted "mystery shopping" to gather feedback. The local workforce development boards will next certify the centers in PY 2024.

In PY 2022, the Ohio Auditor of State conducted a performance audit of Ohio's reemployment programs. This review included an examination of local workforce area operations, including the services offered at the OhioMeansJobs Centers. Additionally, the Auditor of State examined the success of [OhioMeansJobs.com](https://ohiojobs.com), the state's online job board, as it relates to effectively helping Ohioans obtain meaningful employment.

The resulting report was released in February 2023. Throughout PY 2023, Ohio has been diligently implementing the report's recommendations. An interactive dashboard was created to provide job seekers and employers with information on each OhioMeansJobs Center in Ohio. This information includes location, hours of operation, and all services provided in the center. This dashboard can be accessed through OhioMeansJobs.com. ODJFS has also increased the number of program and policy trainings available to the OhioMeansJobs Centers and has placed a training calendar on OWD's website. Other efforts are underway to improve communication between ODJFS and the OhioMeansJobs Centers and to improve access to and delivery of services.

ODJFS continues to examine ways to measure customer service satisfaction. A series of customer service trainings were offered to ODJFS staff. Through this training, the Wagner-Peyser Employment Services program is revising its customer service survey process to ensure that staff are utilizing the strategies learned.

Appendix A – Ohio RESEA Evaluation Statement of Work

1. Project Description

In this project, we will conduct a randomized controlled trial (RCT) to evaluate the effectiveness of the Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) program. The program provides job search assistance to Unemployment Insurance (UI) claimants who are likely to exhaust their benefits. In the summer of 2023, the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) will include a series of upgraded workshops as part of the RESEA services, which aim to help disadvantaged UI claimants (such as low-income or elderly workers) adapt to the fast-changing job market. Our goal is to examine whether the overall enhanced RESEA program can reduce the number of weeks UI claimants staying on UI benefits (UI weeks) and whether it can increase UI claimants' employment rate two quarters after receiving the first UI benefits (Q2 Employment).

In order to obtain statistically meaningful results and to meet the Department of Labor's (DOL) standard for high-rating evaluation designs, we aim to randomize at least 30,000 UI claimants statewide in one year. Roughly half of them will be assigned to the treatment group, i.e., required to receive RESEA services, including the new workshops, and half will be assigned to control group, i.e., receive no services or alternative services. The specific number of eligible UI claimants and allocations between the treatment and control groups will depend on the labor market condition during the randomization year and the capacities of RESEA offices across counties.

2. Project Activities

This project will have four stages, including pre-evaluation assessment, pilot study, implementation study, and impact study. There will also be administrative activities during each stage. We will provide a draft Evaluation Design Report (EDR) by the end of summer 2023. The EDR will include literature review, detailed randomization procedures, evaluation design, and data requirements. We will use the EDR as a roadmap throughout the project.

2.1 Pre-evaluation Assessment

The purpose of the pre-evaluation assessment is to investigate the characteristics and outcomes of prior RESEA service recipients, to understand and adjust the selection model for RESEA service recipients, and to check data quality and address any data issues. Information obtained during the assessment will help us design the randomization model and prepare for any uncertainties during the randomization. We will start the assessment during the summer of 2023. Conditional on acquiring access to necessary datasets, we expect to finish by winter 2024. We will write our findings during the pre-evaluation assessment in a report.

2.2 Pilot study

We propose to conduct a pilot study in two to three counties before the statewide randomization. The pilot study will help us identify the challenges and potential problems we may face during the randomization. This way, we can adjust the evaluation design and prepare coping strategies for the

more expensive statewide study. The pilot study also allows ODJFS to check the format and attendance rates of the new RESEA workshops. Moreover, we will use the data collected during the pilot study to estimate the expected impacts of RESEA services. Given the small sample size of the pilot study, the results may not be statistically significant. However, we can still utilize the expected program impacts to conduct power analysis, which will inform us of a more precise minimum sample size for the statewide randomization.

The counties selected for the pilot study should have UI claimants who are representative of the overall Ohio UI claimants. We expect to include a mix of rural, urban, and Appalachian counties. These counties should also represent a mix of OhioMeansJobs Centers. We will provide descriptive statistics which compare the pilot counties' and statewide UI claimants' characteristics and local economic conditions.

The specific starting date of the pilot study depends on when the enhanced RESEA workshops become available and when the selected counties agree to participate in the study. We aim to start the pilot randomization around late summer or early fall of 2023. The randomization and the treatment (RESEA services) will last about two to three months. We will submit the pilot study report in two deliverables because the UI weeks outcome will become available much sooner than Q2 employment outcome. We expect to deliver the first part of the report during the summer of 2024 and the second part of the report during summer of 2025.

A potential drawback of conducting a short-term pilot study for this project is that the job opportunities for summer/fall UI claimants are seasonal. For example, it's likely that some of the UI claimants in the randomization had summer jobs and would not return to work until the next spring or summer. Depending on the timing of the pilot study randomization, we will discuss in the report how the estimated impacts of RESEA services may be different from true impacts.

2.3 Implementation study

Our research team will conduct a qualitative study to evaluate the design and the implementation of the upgraded RESEA workshop. We will use multiple qualitative evaluation methods, such as interviews, focus groups, and document review, to obtain comprehensive information from state and county RESEA program staff, ODJFS, and other stakeholders. The results will inform and improve the randomization evaluation process. We will provide a brief report of the qualitative study by winter of 2024.

2.4 Impact Study (Statewide Randomization)

After we test the randomization process in the pilot counties and obtain the preliminary results, such as show-up and completion rates of RESEA services and UI weeks outcome, we can start to randomize eligible UI claimants for RESEA services statewide. Based on Abt's 2022 report, the statewide randomization process for a large state can take at least one year to detect an impact. Specifically, according to DOL Employment and Training Administration (ETA) 9128 reports, in fiscal year (FY) 2019, when the US (United States) economy was in its longest expansion, around 10,000 UI claimants were selected for RESEA services in Ohio. This number increased to 18,000 in FY2021, when the economy was recovering from the pandemic recession and labor shortage. If we assume that around half of eligible UI claimants were selected for RESEA services, as suggested in the 2022 Abt report, we should be able to reach the 30,000-sample size in about one to one and half years. However, the specific number of eligible UI claimants will depend on the economic condition in the next two years and the expected program impacts. The smaller the program impacts, the larger sample size we need to detect the impacts.

This proposed research focuses on evaluating the impacts of the whole program, i.e., are there any differences between outcomes of UI claimants who received RESEA services and those who did not receive RESEA services? Evaluations of specific RESEA services, such as whether the new workshops are effective, and evaluations of specific RESEA services for specific groups, such as whether the new workshops are effective for UI claimants without bachelor's degrees, are not in the scope of this research, because they require much larger sample size and longer evaluation time.

Moreover, based on Abt's 2022 report, the most appropriate and the least time-consuming evaluation method is the RCT design. The alternative evaluation methods either require a much larger sample size or do not apply to the RESEA program. For example, the regression discontinuity design will require a sample size of around 200,000 and the interrupted time series design will need the state to relaunch the RESEA program on a rolling basis to fit the requirements for this design. Therefore, it is important to conduct the pilot study to ensure that the randomization process is implemented at the county level correctly and the treatment and control groups receive services based on their assignments. We will include more details of the randomization process in the EDR.

We plan to start the statewide randomization around fall 2024 (after we have preliminary UI weeks results from the pilot study). The randomization process will take about a year. Given that UI claimants can receive benefits up to 26 weeks (about 6 months) and they also need time to receive RESEA services, we expect that the UI weeks outcome of the earliest randomization groups occur around spring 2025. We will monitor the sample during the entire process. Around winter 2026, we can start to conduct preliminary analysis and check if the sample size is large enough for us to detect an impact on UI weeks. If our sample size is large enough after one year of randomization, we will analyze UI weeks outcome and draft the report during spring and summer 2026. We will send the report to ODJFS for review and feedback during fall 2026. The Q2 employment outcome occurs later, and the associated UI wage records data has a three to six months delay. We expect to conduct Q2 employment analysis and write the report during fall 2026 and winter 2027. The final report will be delivered to ODJFS for review and feedback by spring 2027. However, if the sample size is not large enough after one year of randomization, we expect there will be at least a six-month delay for each step.

2.5 Administrative Activities

There will be administrative activities throughout the project. First, we will need more administrative data to conduct the analysis. Ohio Longitudinal Data Analytics (OLDA) staff will work with ODJFS on the data sharing agreement, contract, and data delivery process. Second, we will file an Institutional Review Board (IRB) application at The Ohio State University (OSU) to ensure that the proposed research complies with the regulations on human subjects' research. Finally, the research team will meet with state and county RESEA program staff to learn the details of the program and to coordinate the randomization process. We will also meet with ODJFS regularly to report on the evaluation progress.

3. Project Timeline and Deliverables

This contract started on July 1, 2023. The table below provides an estimated timeline for the various tasks and deliverables:

Tasks & Deliverables	Expected Time	Notes
1. EDR	July – November 2023	
EDR draft	September 2023	
Final EDR	November 2023	Depend on review time
2. Implementation Study	July – December 2023	Given new workshops become available by summer 2023
Implementation Study Report	Winter 2024	
3. Pre-Evaluation Assessment	July 2023 – February 2024	Given data delivered to OSU on time
Pre-evaluation assessment report	February 2024	
4. Pilot Study	July 2023 – March 2025	Given pilot counties get onboard on time
Pilot Study Report 1 (UI weeks)	Summer 2024	
Pilot Study Report 2 (Q2 Employment)	Summer 2025	
5. Impact Study	October 2024 – July 2027	Expect at least a six-month delay if we do not have enough study participants within one year of randomization
Impact Study Report 1 (UI weeks)	Fall 2026	
Impact Study Report 2 (Q2 employment)	Spring 2027	
Final Impact Study Report	Spring – Summer 2027	Depend on review time

4. Dissemination

The project will initially be registered as an RCT in the Open Science Framework (OSF) or the American Economic Association (AEA) Registry for trials. Following that, we will provide the initial evaluation design report, the pre-evaluation design and final study results to the OSF project associated with this trial. Secondly, we expect to disseminate the results on an annual basis through our state and national research network, such as through the Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management (APPAM) or other research networks. Finally, we are open to working with the ODJFS staff to prepare regular updates for the team working on RESEA, and to state-wide communities of practice with an interest in Unemployment Insurance.

5. Project Administration

The project will be administered through OSU according to rules set up by the Office of Sponsored Projects. Dr. Tian Lou and Josh Hawley will serve as co-principal investigators on all tasks for the project. Each month we will prepare a short briefing and report for the agency showing progress and deliverables.

The data management for the project will occur in collaboration with the Center for Human Resource Research (CHRR) at OSU. CHRR is a large social science research unit at OSU. Dr. Hawley is the Associate Director, and Dr. Lou is a Research Scientist. While InnovateOhio Platform (IOP) security rules are maintained by the Department of Administrative Services, the CHRR systems are under separate security rules. This will come into play when data are analyzed under tools that are required but unavailable from the IOP. The following paragraphs briefly summarize our IT security system at the center.

CHRR maintains an enterprise security program for all components of its information systems that is compliant with National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) 800-53. CHRR's security program is based on a risk management framework that addresses security control selection based on a Federal Information Processing Standards 199 worst-case impact analysis. CHRR information systems are considered 'Moderate' under the NIST impact categorization system. Therefore, CHRR has implemented the applicable security controls under the moderate baseline from the NIST Special Publication 800-53B, revision 5. The security program covers the 19 operational, managerial, and technical NIST control families. CHRR maintains comprehensive security and privacy procedures in its Security Manual.

6. Budget

	Year 1	Year 2
Personnel Costs	\$420,000	\$435,000
Travel	\$10,000	\$10,000
Computing Fees	\$31,000	\$31,000
Training Costs	\$8,000	\$8,000
Total	\$469,000	\$484,000

Total Cost Years 1 & 2: \$953,000

We propose years 1 and 2 at this time. Future years would have an expected increase in personnel costs like the costs reflected above. However, staff utilization in future years will depend on assigned tasks. The tasks themselves will change after the project data collection is done and we are monitoring in years

3-5. Therefore, we should expect less staff hours in future budgets.