



TN

Department of
**Labor & Workforce
Development**

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)

Program Year 2023 Annual Report

Tennessee Department of Labor & Workforce Development

Annual Narrative Report | December 2024



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Letter to the Governor



STATE OF TENNESSEE
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
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Bill Lee
GOVERNOR

Deniece Thomas
COMMISSIONER

December 1, 2024

The Honorable Bill Lee
State Capitol, First Floor
Nashville, TN 37243

Dear Governor Lee:

The Tennessee State Workforce Development Board is pleased to present you with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Annual Report for Program Year 2023-24. The Tennessee State Workforce Development Board and the Tennessee Department of Labor & Workforce Development continue to celebrate our success in connecting Tennesseans with promising career opportunities while providing employers with access to a skilled and capable workforce.

Our work, while traditionally federally funded, continues to be enhanced through state investments to optimize regional and local services. This annual report of activities provides an analysis of the current talent supply and demand landscape in our state. Within these pages, you will find detailed information about our strategic partnerships and how state funds are being effectively utilized across Tennessee's communities, resulting in increased earnings for job seekers and substantial cost savings for employers.

While this report highlights many significant achievements of our various partners, it represents only a fraction of the dedicated efforts made by all those involved in strengthening Tennessee's workforce. The Tennessee State Workforce Development Board is deeply appreciative of our partnerships, and we remain committed to fostering collaboration to support Tennesseans.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tim Berry".

Tim Berry
Chairman, Tennessee State Workforce Development Board

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Deniece Thomas".

Deniece Thomas
Commissioner, Tennessee Department of Labor & Workforce Development

DT:JH

Executive Summary

The Tennessee Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act (WIOA) State Plan is at the heart of the state's ambition to create the nation's leading workforce system. Tennessee's public workforce system is anchored by three main state agencies: Labor and Workforce Development, Human Services, and Education. Additionally, the Departments of Economic and Community Development and Corrections have been instrumental in shaping and coordinating both strategic and operational aspects.

Our mission is to leverage the resources within each local workforce development area to attract new businesses and support the growth of existing ones, ensuring their competitiveness. The comprehensive services we provide across the state have helped Tennesseans overcome various employment barriers. By offering services to both employers and citizens, we are building a foundation for a brighter and more prosperous future for all Tennesseans.

Throughout Program Year 2023, the work of Tennessee's workforce system focused on five key elements:

1. Increase labor force participation rate to 63% by increasing workforce training and employment services for Tennesseans.
2. Increase labor force participation rate by increasing apprenticeship opportunities and other business engagement strategies.
3. Increase labor force participation rate through workforce engagement strategies with special populations i.e., youth, senior adults, justice-involved, and transitioning military/veterans.
4. Improve safety, regulatory, and labor standard compliance throughout the State.
5. Integrate the utilization of Zendesk customer relationship platform and other systems aligned, coordinated, and improved service delivery.

This report evaluates the performance outcomes of workforce investment activities, applying performance accountability indicators to adults, dislocated workers, and youth. It also outlines progress towards achieving Tennessee's strategic vision and goals for a skilled workforce. Our collaboration with partners in Human Services, Education, Economic and Community Development, Corrections, and other stakeholders allows us to leverage additional funds for services not covered under WIOA, fostering a skilled and educated workforce.

Tennessee is committed to continually finding innovative solutions to meet the evolving needs of technology, workforce, and business. Our American Job Center partners continue to provide excellent services while pioneering new and innovative methods to advance Tennessee's mission to become the premier workforce system in the nation.

State Workforce Development Board

The Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development (TDLWD) administers all Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) funds awarded to Tennessee by the U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL). USDOL Region 3, based in Atlanta, Georgia, provides federal oversight and technical assistance to TDLWD on all programmatic and fiscal matters.

Multiple federal agencies have oversight of programs contained in the TN public workforce system including USDOL, the US Department of Education, the US Department of Agriculture, and the US Department of Health and Human Services.

Governor Bill Lee's Executive Order 69 designated the reconstitution of the State Workforce Development Board (SWDB) per Section 101 of WIOA. The Governor appointed the State Board, which, along with the TDLWD, is responsible for establishing a statewide, seamless one-stop delivery system known as the American Job Center system (Workforce System).

The SWDB comprises four committees, including an Executive Committee made up of the Chair, Vice-Chair, and committee chairs. The Executive Committee oversees the Board's affairs between business meetings and conducts necessary business to ensure compliance with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (P.L. 113-128) and applicable state and federal regulations. The Executive Committee may make recommendations to the Board and perform other duties as specified in the bylaws. The Executive Committee is subject to the Board's direction, and its actions must align with the bylaws and Board policies.

The Board has three standing committees, each chaired by an appointee of the Board Chair. These committees include a Vice-Chair, Staff Liaison, and other Board members, with the option to form ad-hoc committees involving additional partners from higher education, HUD, Community Service Block, Mental Health, and community/faith-based organizations. The committees meet at least four times per year before full Board meetings and as needed upon the advisement of the Board Chair.

Oversight Committee- the Oversight Committee has the following responsibilities:

- Advise the Governor on program and policy changes under WIOA;
- Lead the development, maintenance and modification of State, regional and local plans
- Serve as an advisor to review statewide program alignment
- Review and make recommendations on funding allocations
- Lead review of statewide Workforce System

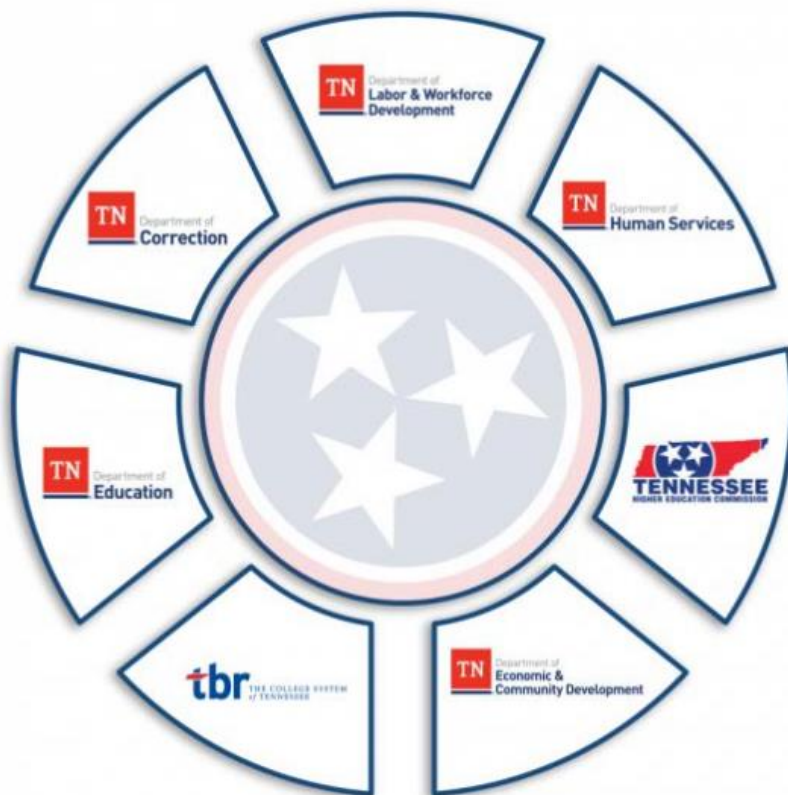
Operations Committee - the Operations Committee has the following responsibilities:

- Oversee the continuous improvement of WIOA programs and activities
- Be the lead monitor of State performance/accountability
- Be the lead coordinator of policies and provision of WIOA services
- Review and make recommendations for performance reporting, including Labor Market Information

Innovation Committee- the Innovation Committee has the following responsibilities:

- Identify and share Workforce System best practices
- Develop strategies for technology alignment and integration
- Be the lead reviewer of service-model strategies in WIOA programs
- Oversee all WIOA Youth program initiatives

Strategic Vision for Tennessee’s Workforce System



Strategic Vision

Execution of a comprehensive and cohesive workforce development strategy must account for the inherent interdependency through a formalized strategy of shared projects, shared processes, and shared metrics under centralized leadership and/or consolidation of functions. As a result, the Tennessee Workforce Development System (TNWDS) Steering Team has been formed. The team consists of members from TBR, THEC, TNECD, TDOC, DHS, & DOE and is led by TLWD.

Guided by the directives of the State Workforce Board, as

articulated in their recommendations to Governor Bill Lee, the Tennessee Department of Labor & Workforce Development has been tasked with formulating a comprehensive State plan. This plan aims to seamlessly unify the service delivery of all programs, with the overarching objective of enhancing positive outcomes for the residents of Tennessee who engage with our programs. The central focus of this initiative is to optimize co-enrollment opportunities, establish novel intake and referral processes across programs, and create a reporting system that facilitates more thorough analysis of performance and outcomes.

Aligned with the strategy of fostering tighter integration among programs, the State has initiated a Key Performance Indicator initiative. This initiative furnishes performance and planning resources to the Local Workforce Development Areas (LWDA) across all major programs. The ongoing progress has empowered LWDA to visualize opportunities for

enhancing the performance of all programs and conceptualize strategies to maximize co-enrollment.

The primary objective is to activate various programs in a more intentional and integrated manner. This approach is designed to align with the state's vision of implementing a multi-agency strategy that better serves the residents of Tennessee. Consequently, the integration of all workforce programs into the TNWDS supports the State Workforce Board's vision to boost participation and performance in a more cohesive manner.

The evolving progress underscores the efficacy of a multi-agency strategy coupled with an emphasis on streamlined program integration. The Re-Employment strategy for TNWDS has provided a platform for Title I, Title II, Title III, and Title IV programs to collaboratively develop new procedures, incorporating resources from higher education and other public programs.

The ultimate vision is to enhance the performance of each program individually by collectively augmenting service capacity through an integrated approach. The execution of department-wide strategic initiatives and goals outlined in this section supports integrated service delivery for both job seekers and employers, in line with the overarching vision.

TDLWD STRATEGIC INITIATIVES 2023-24:

- 1) Improve outreach and engagement strategies using research-based evidence and data to improve labor force participation rate.
- 2) Implementation of a new unemployment benefits insurance system that demonstrates measurable improvement in the first full year of use.
- 3) Complete first year development of a new unemployment tax insurance system.
- 4) Implementation of new alternative pathway models to a High School Equivalency diploma.
- 5) Implement recommendations from ACJ assessment and new case management system that demonstrates measurable program improvement in the first year.
- 6) Initiate first year development of rural workforce development programming, focusing on healthcare industries.

Career Pathways

In partnership with the Department of Education, our local workforce development areas promote career exploration through career pathways also known as TN Pathways allowing students to acquire educational, technical, and social skills that enhance career development. Working with regional councils and including the regional pathways coordinators, the workforce ecosystem has enhanced efforts to improve communication, coordination, and collaboration in preparing youth for post-secondary studies or the world of work. Other strategies include: incorporating career pathways system as a model to better guide youth, incorporating pre-apprenticeship programs to offer youth opportunities to gain technical skills that are best learned on the job, and disseminating information regarding future in-demand labor market needs to young adults when entering the workforce system.

Tennessee Pathways has created alignment between K-12, postsecondary education, workforce development, and employers so that students have a clear and guided pathway to gain the knowledge and experience needed to move seamlessly into the workforce. We believe that all students deserve access to high-quality careers that provide a living wage and opportunities for advancement.

Metropolitan Development Housing Agency

As an innovative approach to service delivery and immediate needs identified across the state, TDLWD – Division of Workforce Services has partnered with the Metropolitan Development Housing Agency (MDHA) and the American Job Center Network of Partners to provide on-site services at the two local housing developments in the Metro Nashville area. This pilot program provides Title I and Title III Programs, the Youth Employment Program, Homeless Veterans Program (HVRP), reverse referrals for SNAP E&T, Reentry, and Adult Education, as appropriate. Additional supportive services such as childcare, transportation, and partner program training are be provided as identified per participant.

Since January 2024, there have been a total of 196 referrals made to partner services including WIOA Title I, Vocational Rehabilitation, Adult Education, SNAP E&T, as well as non-profit agencies providing services to low-income individuals. To assist in making referrals and serving individuals at MDHA, a resident at MDHA was hired as a Career Services assistant. These partner referrals are an increase over what would have occurred within our Comprehensive and affiliate AJCs. With these additional referrals and innovative hiring practices, this pilot is proving to be a model moving forward to expand our outreach with similar projects, such as Titans Town, to support occupational training and job opportunities.

Youth Employment

Tennessee's Youth Employment Program (TYEP) links ambitious young adults aged 14-24 with employers in diverse industries across Tennessee. Participants dive into hands-on workforce experiences, gaining invaluable skills and test-driving future careers while earning up to \$4,000 along the way. This year-round program offers much more than youth job opportunities- it teaches lifelong, and life-changing skills. TYEP is a state-funded youth employment program that Governor Lee included in his Strong Families initiative and was made possible by \$15 million in funding approved by the Tennessee General Assembly. Over 4,700 Tennesseans between the ages of 14 and 24 were enrolled in the program, with more than 1,200 employers statewide. Youth were employed across many different sectors, with some of the biggest industries being education, childcare, and public service/government. The TYEP program, when complete, is projected to save employers \$12,082,183.57. To date, over 500 youth have been offered non-subsidized employment after completing the TYEP program, and that number is expected to grow as enrolled youth continue to finish the program. Also see the youth section starting on page 23 for additional information.

Workforce Reentry Tablet Program

The Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development (TDLWD) is spearheading a unique statewide program aimed at curbing recidivism, educating inmates, and creating a new pipeline of qualified workers for employers. The Workforce Reentry Tablet Program has provided funding for specially designed tablets to be placed in each of the state's county jails. The tablets have a concentrated focus on allowing persons incarcerated the opportunity to complete the required adult education coursework in preparation for the HiSET high school equivalency exam, while also making courses for career training (such as plumbing and HVAC certifications), resume building, job search support, mental health services, and substance abuse wellness and general life skills available, all at no cost to the user. TDLWD currently has tablets in 88 of the 95 county jail facilities in Tennessee. Currently over 8,630 learner accounts have been created.

As an expansion of the Workforce-Tablet Program, TDLWD recently included third-party requests for use of the tablets. Such requests can be made in two ways – 1) third parties can request workforce-reentry tablets for on-site usage in facilities that serve justice involved individuals and that have defined workforce development objectives and/or 2) third parties can also request to add content to the tablets to educate, develop, and inform the incarcerated users. The expansion of the program will further maximize the department's reach to justice involved individuals and community-based service provision.

Implementation of the Workforce Development System

Tennessee's American Job Centers

The TN American Job Center Network is intended to fulfill two primary missions. First, the AJCs are intended to assist employers in locating and training a highly skilled labor force specific to meet their operational needs. Secondly, the goal is to assist jobseekers in obtaining high-demand skills and job search tools that will lead them to long-term employment with family sustaining wages. As the backbone of the local workforce system, American Job Centers are a critical component in building a skilled and educated workforce for all Tennesseans. During Program Year 2023, Tennessee operated 21 comprehensive centers, 32 affiliate centers, 38 specialized centers, 118 access points and 5 Mobile American job centers (MAJC).

As a part of implementing workforce strategies in the AJC network, and as a component of Tennessee's AJC redesign (further discussed in Appendix 2), partners began placing a stronger emphasis on outreach efforts to enhance the relationships with employers and community partners for increased training and job placements. The objective of the outreach strategy is to increase the number of customers flowing into the AJC Network by "meeting customers where they are" and reducing the "leakage" of services. Outreach efforts have been improved through creating flexible outreach access points, utilizing the VAJC to engage customers, including

Unemployment Insurance and Adult Education customers, routed through Zendesk tickets, and increasing reverse referrals through partner agencies. Currently, our outreach efforts have opened doors to the Nashville MDHA, mentioned above, as well as Chattanooga State Community College, where AJC staff partners are available for incoming and outgoing individuals, beginning their degree for supportive services and the graduating individual for employment opportunities.

Another objective of the AJC redesign includes improved service strategies to customers while increasing return of investment from AJC locations and creating more efficiency in budget spending. For example, by reducing the number of brick-and-mortar sites, funding can be redirected to purchase mobile kits ("AJC in a box") for staff to set up in high-need areas with available resources. Realigning AJC Network staff based upon location coverage needs and skills sets have provided the additional support needed to improve the conversion rate of Wagner Peyser enrolled individuals. The conversion rate is an internal measure of reportable individuals compared to the number of Wagner-Peyser enrollments. We have seen the conversion rates improve statewide over 3% in the last quarter of PY23 alone. Increasing our number of Wagner Peyser enrollment also improve our opportunities to increased training and job placements.

Mobile American Job Centers

The mission of the MAJC is to provide employment resources and one-on-one assistance to all people across the state of Tennessee, especially those in rural areas who do not have access to our brick-and-mortar locations. Clients with barriers to employment are frequently unemployed, underemployed, skills-deficient, and/or have a lack of transportation, among other barriers.

The lack of access to staff-assisted services is and will continue to be an issue as smaller affiliate AJCs close across the state. For those who lack computer skills, access to employment services is vital. The Mobile AJCs across the state will provide a solution to these issues by bringing workforce services to the public. They are manned by Wagner-Peyser staff, as well as staff from partner programs, and can aid those who need it most. Any service that is provided in brick-and-mortar is also provided on the Mobile AJC. MAJC staff reaches out to common organizations found in every community to provide employment services. These entities include:

- Homeless Shelters
- Housing Projects
- Prisons
- Faith-Based Organizations
- DHS Offices
- YWCAs and YMCAs
- Local Food Banks
- Senior Citizens Facilities

EMPLOYER RESOURCES



The Mobile American Job Centers are an effective resource for employers who are looking for new employees or who are planning to open a new facility. The Mobile American Job Centers are great for recruitment at career and job fairs. The MAJC can be set up remotely and provide access to job seekers who may need assistance with an online application, updating their resume, or interview tips, as well as serve as a source of qualified candidates for positions that need to be filled by the company.

The Mobile American Job Centers provide services that will assist employers and employees in the event of a business closure or layoff. Tennesseans can file for their unemployment benefits online using the technology available at the Mobile American Job Centers. During PY23, the MAJC assisted at the Tennessee Titan's groundbreaking to highlight partnership between Tennessee Builders' Alliance and TDLWD to support building of their new stadium.

DISASTER RELIEF



The MAJCs have been used for disaster relief in the past, both in the state of Tennessee and some surrounding states. Examples of this include wildfires in East Tennessee, tornadoes in Middle Tennessee, flooding in West Tennessee, and hurricane assistance that Tennessee provided to South Carolina.

MAJC OUTREACH STRATEGY

The Mobile American Job Center outreach strategy is to advance workforce development in all 95 counties by:

- Meetings with local Chambers of Commerce to inform local businesses of MAJC resources.
- Allow them to tour the MAJC to increase awareness of the benefits the mobile units provide.

- Build partnerships between educational institutions and sponsoring organizations to open new pathways for growth and success and pave a better road to the future for students.
- Reach out to Community Tennessee Rehabilitation Centers to provide job services to those with disabilities, as well as providing these services to people with disabilities in the general population.
- Provide a variety of services to veterans by visiting VA hospitals to assist veterans with their workforce-related needs.
- The MAJC also plans to serve the senior citizen population by visiting retirement facilities, senior community centers, and assisted living facilities. The MAJC can assist senior citizens in finding jobs that are appropriate for their capabilities, as well as refer them to other services that might be needed.

BEST PRACTICES

During the past year, the MAJCs have strived to serve the state of Tennessee by working events to assist both public and private sectors, giving tours and talk about the services that are offered. Some examples are listed below:

TAA Open House: The MAJCs have partnered with the Trade Adjustment Assistance Program staff on multiple occasions. They have held an Open House in various regions of the state and primarily in rural areas to raise awareness and provide services for those workers who have been impacted by foreign trade and are covered under USDOL certified trade petitions.

High Schools, Colleges, Universities, TCATs: The MAJCs have an ongoing relationship with the educational population to assist high school seniors who are not college-bound, as well as seniors in higher education who are about to enter the workforce. The MAJC provided resume assistance to the interns who were a part of this years Legislative Internship Program at the Cordell Hull Building in Nashville.

Non-Profits: The MAJCs serve non-profits on a regular basis. A recent MAJC event was a community clean up at Walk of Fame Park in downtown Nashville to clean up the greenspace and community displays, as well as assist displaced citizens. We also assisted at a Day of Hope and Healing in Memphis in conjunction with the Mayor's office.

Opportunity: We presented at the Regional Convening of USDOL in November of 2023. The MAJC Assistant Director presented on the MAJC and Best Practices on Serving the Rural Communities throughout Tennessee.

Overview of Customer Service Satisfaction in Tennessee

The State of Tennessee utilizes Zendesk, a customer relationship management (CRM) tool, to efficiently manage departmental requests. Zendesk consolidates tickets, phone calls, emails, and chat messages into a single customer profile, tracking all interactions and updates. This system enhances departmental efficiency and prevents duplicate efforts on the same request.

Zendesk also features robust customer satisfaction tracking and reporting capabilities. It offers customizable options for gathering feedback through various communication channels, including tickets, emails, phone calls, and live chats. When a customer contacts the department, a time-stamped service ticket is created and updated as interactions occur. Upon resolution, a follow-up email is sent to solicit customer feedback, which can be customized to be sent immediately or after a specified period.

The satisfaction survey asks customers to rate their support experience as "Good, I'm satisfied" or "Bad, I'm unsatisfied," with an optional comment field for additional feedback. These responses are aggregated using Zendesk Explore, allowing the department to generate daily or weekly reports for executive leadership and team managers. These reports provide insights into customer satisfaction levels and include valuable comments about staff interactions and service quality. This data helps manage programs effectively from the organizational level down to individual units.

Additionally, each local board has a process for collecting customer feedback at American Job Centers. Customers can complete a paper survey or use a QR code to access an online survey. The feedback is analyzed to identify improvement opportunities, and solutions are developed and implemented accordingly.

Virtual American Job Center

The Virtual American Job Center (VAJC) provides a digital experience for Tennesseans to learn about services offered through the Department of Labor (TDLWD) and partner agencies. The goal of the VAJC is to enable a self-service model that will improve the service exploration experience. Through the VAJC website, Tennesseans are able to discover services and programs available through their local brick-and-mortar American Job Center (AJC), understand what they may be eligible for based on personal information provided, and get connected with their local AJC by scheduling an appointment online. A key feature included is the eligibility wizard which helps users understand what services they qualify for based on their demographic information. In PY23, VAJC implemented TDLWD's existing Zendesk ticketing system. This allows jobseekers who were completing the wizard assessment to seamlessly transition into submitting a ticket for an appointment with case managers. Through a triage approach, customers are assigned to available staff and assume their one-on-one services from there. The Zendesk model provides more oversight for tracking online traffic and created greater opportunity for direct referrals from Unemployment Insurance and Adult Education. Additionally, information provided by the jobseeker through the wizard assessment are included in the Zendesk ticket, giving case

managers a snapshot of potential eligibility and interest in particular services along with pertinent information to start the Wagner-Peyser process and registration into Jobs4TN.

For PY23 the VAJC had 22,187 unique visitors to the site. Of those visitors, 3,143 completed the wizard assessment and 6,400 either scheduled follow-up appointments or sought out their local American Job Center for additional services.

Workforce Development Programs

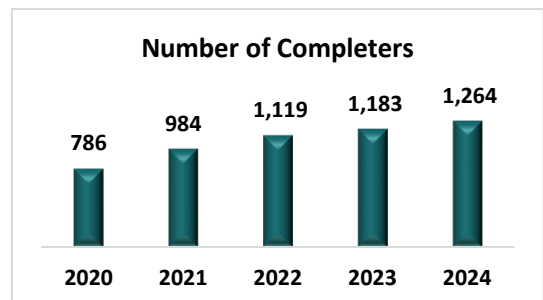
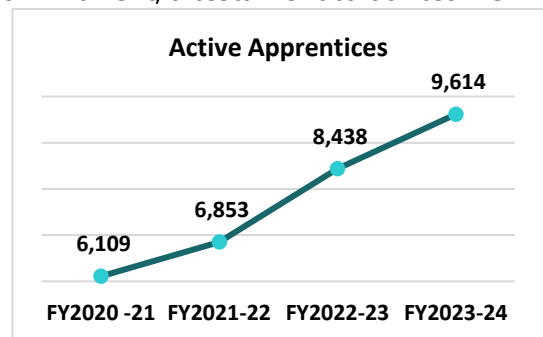
Adult and Dislocated Workers

The Title I Adult and Dislocated Worker programs serve jobseekers throughout the State of Tennessee by providing individualized employment and training services to eligible Adults and Dislocated Workers. The Adult program serves unemployed or underemployed job seekers with at least one barrier to employment, and the Dislocated Worker program serves those unemployed through no fault of their own. There were over 4,200 new enrollments across the State in the 2023 program year, plus thousands more that are still being served from the prior program year with direct assistance or follow-up services. Participants in these programs receive a wide variety of assistance, customized to their individual needs by local career counselors through Individual Employment Plans, with services including paid work experience, career training and upskilling, career guidance and planning, and supportive services. We continue to work closely with all nine local workforce areas to meet federal performance measures and state key performance indicators, while also continuously looking for best practices to share throughout the state.

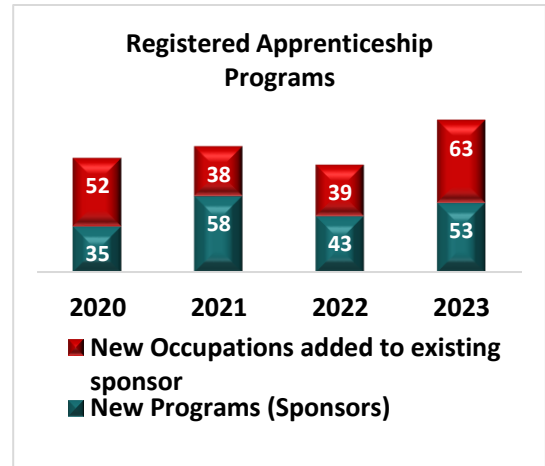
Apprenticeship TN

The Tennessee State Apprenticeship Agency, with its unwavering dedication, has significantly expanded and strengthened partnerships. This robust commitment, a testament to our team's dedication, aligns with our mission to increase registered apprenticeship programs (RAPs) in the state's three grand regions: east, middle, and west.

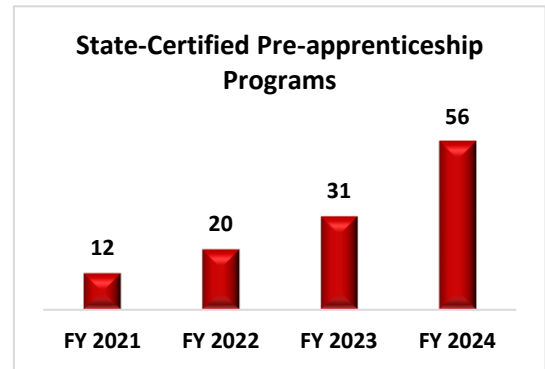
Tennessee has achieved a significant milestone with 9,600+ active apprentices, the highest number in a year. This remarkable achievement indicates the state's progress and the promising future of our apprenticeship programs. The state's progress is further evidenced by the 12% growth in FY 2024, a significant increase that underscores the promising future of our apprenticeship programs. *Our completion rates steadily increased, growing by 6% in 2024 and an impressive 129.67% since 2014, marking the highest growth rate. In FY 2024, Tennessee saw 1,264 apprentices complete their programs.



The Tennessee State Apprenticeship Agency has made significant strides, adding 53 new programs, bringing the total to 430. This expansion is a clear testament to our commitment to providing more opportunities for apprentices. Additionally, we have added 63 new occupations to existing sponsors during federal FY 2024, further diversifying our program offerings.



Tennessee's state-certified pre-apprenticeship program, established in 2021, has grown significantly. Since its inception, the state registered 120 pre-apprenticeship programs. Each program must have a direct tie to a RAP. These pre-apprenticeship partnerships, which include Tennessee's college system, adult education, Career and technical education, re-entry/justice-involved, and justice-involved youth, have been instrumental in this growth. Over 630 individuals have entered a state-certified pre-apprenticeship program, a testament to its success and the collective effort of our stakeholders.



The Tennessee State Apprenticeship Agency team values its partnership with the nine local workforce development boards to connect RAPs and pre-apprentice programs to funding options, including WIOA-braided funding, where possible. Tennessee received the USDOL SAEF base formula grant in 2023 and has utilized the nine boards to distribute the funds and state apprenticeship dollars. Our office has funded 88 apprentices with SAEF funds and 1,382 with state funds, a testament to our local partners' integral role in our program's success.

The USDOL SAE grant, which ended in June 2024, funded the apprenticeship grants program manager position. Our SAA staff has grown to nine from the original four when our office was established. It now utilizes 100% state apprenticeship funds for the Tennessee State Apprenticeship Agency staff, ensuring the sustainability of our operations.

Eligible Training Providers

The statewide Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) plays an important role in Tennessee's workforce system. The ETPL is made up of certified training providers and programs that have completed a rigorous review process by their respective Local Workforce Development Board (LWDB). Through the review process LWDBs ensure providers and programs demonstrate favorable learning outcomes as well as responsiveness to area labor market demands. LWDBs then submit all required information to TDLWD which compiles a single list of providers, including Registered Apprenticeship Programs. The ETPL is accessible through the VOS system.

Students, using WIOA funds through an Individual Training Account (ITA), select from approved training programs listed on the ETPL. This carefully crafted list helps WIOA-funded students attain their educational goals and shape their occupational aspirations.

The number of providers has grown to 232, including Registered Apprenticeships sponsors on the ETPL. The list includes:

- 85 - Private Schools
- 24 - TCATS
- 14 - Four Year Institutions
- 13 - Community Colleges
- 92 - Registered Apprenticeships
- 4 - Community-Based Organizations

All providers except Registered Apprenticeships are required to submit yearly performance participant reports to TDLWD. The report contains individual-level data for all participants in programs offered by ETPs. This report is combined to submit the yearly ETPL Federal reporting. Beginning with Program Year 2020, reporting requirements expanded to include program completion rates for all students (both WIOA and non-WIOA). This data is being used to construct a baseline of program performance which WIOA participants can access. With program performance rates at their fingertips program participants will enjoy a higher level of informed consumer choice.

Jobs for Veterans State Grant Program

The Jobs for Veterans State Grant (JVSG), or “Veterans Program” consists of 33 staff. The JVSG staff is comprised of three distinct positions within JVSG:

1. Local Veterans Employment Representative (LVER)
2. Disabled Veterans Outreach Program Specialist (DVOP)
3. Consolidated DVOP | LVER (CODL)

LVER’s conduct outreach to the employer community and facilitate employment, training, and placement services for veterans/eligible persons under the state’s employment service delivery system. States must assign LVERs duties that inform employers, employer associations, and business groups of the advantages of hiring veterans. These activities include, but are not limited to: planning, conducting, and participating in job and career fairs; employer outreach, including facility tours; assisting with job development for veterans/eligible persons; working with established unions; promote apprenticeship programs; informing federal contractors on process to recruit veterans; educating and training AJC staff on employment and training services for job-seeking veterans, and promoting initiatives such as DoD SkillBridge program and HIRE Vets Medallion Program. The tangible benefits of hiring a veteran can include tax credits for the employer through the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC), and intangible

benefits such as the veteran employee being a team player, able to follow directions, and meticulous attention to detail.

DVOPs provide individualized career services to eligible populations. Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS) expects DVOPs to use a case management approach to ensure they are delivering appropriate services designed to assist veterans/eligible persons in overcoming qualifying employment barriers and gaining employment. When conducting outreach, DVOPs should engage with service providers in the local community to maximize the number of veterans/eligible persons the service provider refers to the state's workforce delivery system; enhance outcomes for veterans/ eligible persons the DVOPs refers to other providers; strengthen community awareness the array of services available through the workforce delivery system. The DVOP must not serve any veteran/eligible persons who has not first registered in jobs4tn and been determined eligible.

The Consolidated (CODL) Position Staff serve a dual role as DVOP specialist and LVER. They provide services to both employers and veterans/eligible persons. After they have assisted their veteran/eligible person in addressing the identified QEBs through individualized career services and determined to be job ready, they move into their LVER role and conduct job searches, employer outreach, coordinate apprenticeship/OJT opportunities, schedule job clubs, and other employment opportunities for those in their caseload. Consolidated staff also provide training to other AJC staff to ensure programmatic compliance in serving the needs of veterans/eligible persons seeking our assistance.

DVOP/CODL staff members provided services to over 721 participants, including veterans, other eligible persons, and transitioning service members. The JVSG achieved a 57.2% Employment Rate 2nd Quarter after Exit, 56.1% for Employment Rate 4th Quarter after Exit for veterans, and median earnings of \$8,975.

Migrant Seasonal Farmworkers and H2A-B

The program under Foreign Labor Certification has sustained itself with referrals at 187, number of positions requested 6,309, number of inspections completed 571, amount of sleep (bedrooms) units inspected 4,833 and the total capacity of approved H2A visa's 17,059. Moreover, we have seen an increase with new employers using the H2A visa program versus last year, 29 new farms have been added. Additionally, the FLC team, in conjunction with the state advertisement department has put together a YouTube video advertising the H2A program but also telling an employer's personal success story in using the program. Furthermore, we have increased the states outreach efforts to Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker communities utilizing electronic means. We have our first State Monitoring Advocate (SMA), which is currently working with the State Monitor Advocates Federal Project Officer to ensure that the FLC and SMA programs comply with federal regulations. Concurrently, we have hired a MSFW Outreach Specialist to meet federal compliance. WFS has extended an offer for the second position and will be posting the third MSFW Outreach Specialist to satisfy federal metrics. We are also working with Evergreen to fill the State

Coordinator position for the H2A-B program. We will continue to engage, expand, and explore the opportunities for our Migrant Seasonal Farmworkers in our great State of Tennessee.

National Dislocated Workers Grant

National Dislocated Worker Grants (NDWG) are temporary federal grants designed to assist disaster-affected individuals with employment and training services, supportive services, paid work experience, and temporary disaster relief employment.

Over the 2023 program year Tennessee has had two Disaster Recovery NDWGs. The first grant assisted individuals in the Northern Middle area affected by the catastrophic Waverly flooding of August 2021. This NDWG, which ended August 2023, provided over \$500,000 in funds to serve over 30 participants by meeting crucial disaster-response needs in the area – including humanitarian aid, cleanup services, and assistance for the local school systems who were devastated by floods.

In October 2023 we were awarded \$5 million in NDWG funding for the QUEST (Quality Jobs, Equity, Strategy and Training) NDWG grant. These funds are designed to assist individuals who were disproportionately impacted by the uneven recovery in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic through worker and business engagement and connections with high-quality jobs. This grant is being carried out in 5 local areas – Northwest, Southwest, Southern Middle, Upper Cumberland and Southeast, with each area taking a unique approach to serve eligible individuals in specific target groups, such as justice-involved individuals, long-term unemployed, those affected by the opioid epidemic, and others. QUEST is a three-year grant that is designed to present longer-term solutions than typical NDWGs, so we are continuing to work with areas to adjust performance delivery models to respond to ever-changing needs in each area.

In the upcoming 2024 program year Tennessee has been awarded \$1 million in preliminary funding and \$5 million in total funding to respond to areas in Northeast and East Tennessee affected by Hurricane Helene in September 2024. NDWG funds will be used to provide temporary employment to assist in cleanup and recovery efforts, humanitarian assistance, and employment and training services.

Rapid Response

In PY23, Rapid Response activities supported 63 businesses and assisted 6,854 workers affected by layoffs or closures. These services included immediate referrals to American Job Centers (AJCs) and co-enrollment in the Dislocated Worker (DW) program, providing workers with access to retraining, job search support, and financial resources. Layoff aversion strategies, such as incumbent worker training, on-the-job training, customized skills programs, workshare initiatives (through UI), and business consultations led by local business and workforce directors, helped reduce layoffs. Early intervention efforts successfully identified at-risk companies to avoid or minimize layoffs by leveraging predictive analytics tools. These activities were aligned with state sector strategies, particularly in manufacturing, helping displaced workers transition into high-demand career pathways. Additionally, specialized workshops and

training programs were offered to both businesses and workers to enhance skills and improve employment outcomes.

Re-Employment Services and Eligibility Assessment

Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) program is designed to serve individuals who have been determined most likely to exhaust their unemployment benefits. The goal of the program is to connect these individuals to services in the AJCs that will expedite reemployment as well as determine their eligibility to receive unemployment benefits. Along with serving those most likely to exhaust their unemployment benefits, each state is required to serve transitioning veterans receiving Unemployment Compensation for Ex-Service Members. During the ongoing evaluation of the program, the claimants are being randomly assigned to a control group and a treatment group.

RESEA serves individuals across all 95 Tennessee counties and is currently operating with support from merit staff in 21 Comprehensive American Job Centers (AJCs). Orientation services are being provided virtually, allowing for more individuals to be served initially. In addition, RESEA services had previously occurred in affiliate AJCs as well. The number of referrals made from the affiliate sites were not significantly impacting the numbers being served through RESEA. So, this current year, changes were made to increase RESEA service levels in the Comprehensive AJCs. When using the affiliate AJCs, RESEA had been missing opportunities to serve more RESEA eligible participants due to the low capacity to serve in affiliate AJCs which led to lower referrals. There are additional options being considered to be implemented in the new program year, one of those options being to utilize Zendesk for staff to make calls to the claimants via the tickets that would be created.

During the initial orientation, the participants receive a program description, an eligibility review for unemployment benefits, an assessment of needs, and an Employment Development Plan (EDP). Each participant is required to participate in this orientation and a follow up session two weeks after the orientation to maintain their unemployment benefits. The orientation is automatically scheduled when selected and the subsequent visit is scheduled by the RESEA coordinator in the AJC. These meetings are held virtually unless the claimant prefers an in-person meeting.

In PY 2023, in 45 Career Centers across the state, 13,839 unemployment claimants were selected for participation in the RESEA program. Of those selected, 12,582 participated in their orientation. Of those who participated in their orientation, 9,279 participated in their follow-up RESEA sessions. There are 2318 individuals who reported finding employment while participating in the program or shortly after completion. The RESEA program continues to evolve, and some of our accomplishments are:

- Data collection for the required evaluation of RESEA has begun and will continue until sufficient data is collected. The anticipation of completion of the evaluation is late 2025 or early 2026.

- Customer service surveys to be taken by customers after the initial RESEA is completed and 30 days after the completion of the program have resumed. We are getting positive responses to these surveys and will use the responses to further refine the program.

Re-entry

The [Tennessee Office of Reentry \(TOOR\)](#), established in July of 2021, has worked to create strategies, trainings, and programs, that exist to help facilitate a more impactful environment for justice involved individuals to overcome barriers to employment, achieve successful reentry, and reduce recidivism. TOOR continues to use data driven methods, digital efficiency, and mission driven partnerships to expand a statewide ecosystem to support justice involved Tennesseans.

TOOR continues to be guided by its three main goals:

1. Advance the efforts in assisting justice involved individuals overcome barriers to employment.
2. Improve the data tracking involving justice involved individuals.
3. Increase awareness of the value justice involved individuals bring to the workforce.

Executive Summary

- During PY23, TOOR reached 8,234 total justice involved enrollments across all WIOA programs, achieving 228% of its goal of 3,617.
- TOOR also saw 3,058 new justice involved registrants in their Virtual One Stop (VOS) system, Jobs4TN.
- TOOR's efforts for PY23 could be consolidated into three main areas of focus: Trainings and Technical Assistance, Outreach, and Grants.

Trainings and Technical Assistance

- TOOR continues to provide Training and Technical Assistance to state staff and reentry stakeholders across the state. Trainings for state staff in PY23 covered topics such as PICS (Post InCarceration Syndrome), Reimagining People First Language, and included the introduction of an onboarding training, Reentry 101.
- Trainings were also conducted alongside the National Reentry Workforce Collaborative (NRWC), a non-profit organization that uses a community of practice approach to strategically collaborate and establish unified approaches that supports workforce development, education, and reentry. These included:
 - NRWC Second Chance Employer Engagement Training, designed to train community-based job developers and organizational leaders in building long-term Second Chance Hiring (SCH) relationships with employers. This training was provided to 28 participants across 16 organizations, including Non-Profits, Chambers of Commerce, and Tennessee State Departments.

- Reentry Specialist Certification Training, offering 89 TDLWD network's staff a standard of practice to better support and serve justice involved individuals with evidence-informed guiding principles.

Outreach

- TOOR expanded on its outreach efforts through the creation of a [General Brochure](#), similar to the previously created Jail Brochure, which aimed to inform Justice Involved Tennesseans about the TDLWD's efforts, their local American Job Center, and the services available to them.
- TOOR continues their monthly podcast "[Talking Second Chances](#)" with guests in PY23 that included: Caitlin Dawkins, Principal TA Consultant from the American Institutes for Research, Abigail Strait, Senior Policy Specialist from the Crime and Justice Institute, and Jeffrey Korzenik, economist and author of "Untapped Talent".
- TOOR continued to facilitate and improve provision of its reentry simulations to organizations across the state. These simulations brought together stakeholders to share a collective simulated reentry experience. For PY23 TOOR held 15 simulations for 704 attendees across 21 organizations that included employers, nonprofits, chambers of commerce, and other state agencies.



"It helped me have more empathy for my clients' shortcomings as they strive to re-enter society. Also, it gives me a better idea of how to help clients" – Reentry Simulation Participant

Grants

- TOOR continued its Customer Focused Government (CFG) grant program in PY23, which took the form of a short-term credentialing program, where 6 labor boards were tasked with identifying and serving incarcerated individuals who need preparation for employment by implementing upskilling and workforce development programs in 10 rural county jails, serving 165 participants.
- TOOR introduced a new grant program in PY23, the [Community Reentry Reinvestment Grant \(CRRG\) Program](#), a cost reimbursement grant program which requires a partnership with multiple entities to collaborate on creating a pathway to permanent

employment for Justice Involved Individuals. Grantees can be a number of stakeholders including but not limited to: local workforce development agencies, local governments, non-profit organizations, faith-based organizations, or other non-governmental entities, and served 527 participants.

- [TOOR received a \\$6.7 million federal grant](#) through the Partners for Reentry Opportunities in Workforce Development (PROWD) grant. This joint effort between the U.S. Department of Justice and U.S. Department of Labor, will allow TOOR to provide services to federally incarcerated individuals housed at the Federal Correctional Institute (FCI) in Memphis and two Federal Residential Reentry Centers in Memphis and Nashville.

Senior Community Service Employment Program

The program has expanded its outreach efforts to underserved communities, resulting in a significant increase in participant enrollment. This includes targeted efforts to engage minority populations and individuals with barriers to employment. The program continues to strengthen partnerships with local businesses, non-profits, and government agencies to allow access to more host agency partners and employers upon exit. We had 102 of the 168 slots allocated to the State filled at the end of PY23 and plan to continue to seek opportunities to fill the remaining slots.

SNAP – Employment and Training

Tennessee Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment and Training (TN SNAP E&T) is a voluntary program that helps eligible participants achieve their vocational goals and increase self-sufficiency through funded education, skills training, and supportive services. TN SNAP E&T's goal is to provide participants with the opportunity to acquire skills, training, work experience, and/or an industry-recognized credential that provides a direct link to a successful career to achieve long term self-sufficiency. TN SNAP E&T services are a combined effort between the Tennessee Department of Human Services (TDHS), Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development (TDLWD), and community partners across the state. TDHS and TDLWD collaboratively administer SNAP E&T in all 95 TN counties.

Below are some highlights as a result of intentional program design:

- 28% of newly enrolled individuals were Justice Involved.
- 30 rural counties saw an increase in SNAP E&T enrollments.
- Job Search Training enrollments saw an increase of enrollments in this individualized service delivery from 152 in FY 23 to 432 in FY 24.

Youth

Tennessee has been strengthening partnerships with several State agencies and community partners to identify Work-Based Learning (WBL) opportunities and Work Experience opportunities for Youth to support the State's goal of creating a seamless path from high school, post-secondary education, or training, into the workforce. To support work experience

for all youth in Tennessee, TNDLWD took a no wrong door approach with work experience. TNDLWD received state funding from Gov. Lee to give any youth that wanted work experience that opportunity. If the youth fit into the WIOA program, they were enrolled into WIOA. If the youth did not fit the WIOA program for work experience they could be enrolled into Tennessee Youth Employment Program (TYEP). TYEP was operated by our 9 Local Workforce Boards as well as 4 non-local workforce boards. The WIOA programs had monthly calls with the Local Workforce Board, in person monitoring by subject matter expertise to all comprehensive American Job Centers, as well as desk file monitoring each quarter. The WIOA Youth subject matter experts sit on several committees. During PY23 we served 3,813 youth through WIOA and an additional 3,584 were enrolled in Governor Lee’s program.

Work Opportunity Tax Credit

In December of 2020, Congress re-authorized the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) program through 2025. Earlier, in 2016, TDLWD completed the automation of the submission and approval process, replacing paper applications with an online WOTC portal. The portal increases efficiency, facilitating a 24-to-48-hour decision on new tax credit applications. The creation of this portal allowed for the elimination of more than 3 million pieces of paper making enough space for an additional conference room. TDLWD has continued to enhance the system using the WOTC Backlog Funding Grant. This grant facilitated essential updates to federal application forms and addressed changes in the Unemployment Insurance (UI) system. In Program Year 2023, TDLWD issued 29,836 certifications, potentially providing employers with \$77,489,000 in tax credits.

Performance and Accountability

Tennessee passed all core performance measures in 2023, exceeding 100% of the targets for all but two measures. In addition to the core measures of performance The State of Tennessee is also tracking three methods to measure effectiveness of serving employers. The first, Retention with the same employer in the 2nd and 4th quarters after exit, resulted in a 58.6% retention rate. The second method, repeat business customers, showed that 26.6% of businesses that received a service form the department returned to utilize the state’s business services team. Last is the Employer Penetration Rate which showed that the department served 6.5% of businesses in the state of Tennessee. The results of Tennessee’s other core measures of performance can be seen below.

PY23 WIOA Core Measures of Performance

PY23 WIOA Core Performance Measures	Targets	Tennessee			
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Adult Measures					
Exiters		4,083	4,118	3,836	3640
Participants Served		7,521	6,962	6,723	6663

Employment Rate 2nd Quarter after exit	81.5%	84.2%	83.4%	82.1%	82.1%
Employment Rate 4th Quarter after exit	81.0%	83.9%	82.8%	81.6%	81.3%
Median Earnings 2 nd Quarter after exit	\$7,025	\$8,201	\$8,123	\$8,122	\$8,259
Credential Attainment w/in 4 Quarters after exit	69.0%	70.5%	71.0%	70.5%	69.2%
Measurable Skills Gains	63.5%	67.1%	69.1%	65.8%	70.6%
Dislocated Worker					
Exiters		1,009	980	978	965
Participants Served		1,862	1,795	1,732	1677
Employment Rate 2nd Quarter after exit	81.5%	84.3%	84.6%	83.5%	84.3%
Employment Rate 4th Quarter after exit	81.0%	84.4%	83.6%	82.3%	82.4%
Median Earnings 2 nd Quarter after exit	\$7,944	\$8,706	\$8,481	\$8,405	\$8,637
Credential Attainment w/in 4 Quarters after exit	70.6%	68.3%	67.1%	66.0%	68.1%
Measurable Skills Gains	61.2%	68.9%	70.8%	70.9%	73.3%
Youth					
Exiters		1,885	2,037	1,998	1977
Participants Served		4,253	4,021	4,015	3815
Employment Rate 2nd Quarter after exit	77.5%	83.2%	83.1%	80.7%	78.1%
Employment Rate 4th Quarter after exit	77.5%	81.9%	81.3%	80.6%	81.3%
Median Earnings 2 nd Quarter after exit	\$3,800	\$5,720	\$5,752	\$5,819	\$5,849
Credential Attainment w/in 4 Quarters after exit	61.5%	65.5%	63.6%	64.3%	63.8%
Measurable Skills Gains	55.0%	53.8%	56.2%	54.0%	61.1%
Wagner-Peyser					
Exiters		27,243	29,762	32,578	32,699
Participants Served		32,812	35,176	35,412	38,720
Employment Rate 2nd Quarter after exit	59.8%	69.5%	69.0%	66.7%	67.7%
Employment Rate 4th Quarter after exit	64.3%	67.2%	67.8%	65.7%	66.6%

Median Earnings 2nd Quarter after exit	\$5,500	\$7,151	\$7,128	\$7,149	\$7,292
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Key Performance Indicators

Key performance indicators (KPIs) quantify Tennessee’s progress toward the core objectives of WIOA, listed below. Tennessee’s seeks to become “the best public workforce system in the nation.” The scope of KPIs is revised annually to best align with these objectives. Target progression is reviewed quarterly by the State Workforce Development Board (SWDB).

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Objectives

1. Increase access to education, training, and employment- particularly for people with significant barriers to employment.
2. Create a comprehensive, high-quality workforce development system by aligning workforce investment, education, and economic development.
3. Improve the quality and labor market relevance of workforce investment, education, and economic development efforts.
4. Promote improvement in the structure and delivery of services.
5. Increase family-sustaining wages, meet employer need, and enhance the productivity and competitiveness of Tennessee.

PY23 Scope and Measure

The thirteen (13) Tennessee SWDB’s KPIs and one (1) pilot KPI for the year of July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024, were as follows:

- **Apprenticeship** – State Certified Pre-Apprenticeship Programs
- **Apprenticeship** – Peak Enrollment
- **Justice-Involved Individuals** – New Enrollment
- **Wagner-Peyser** – New Enrollment
- **SNAP Employment and Training** – New Enrollment
- **Senior Employment** – New Enrollment
- **Youth (In-School Youth)** – New Enrollment
- **Jobs for Veterans** – New Enrollment
- **Adult and Dislocated Worker** – New Enrollment
- **Reemployment Services** – Co-enrollment
- **Youth** – New Enrollment
- **Youth Work Experience** – New Enrollments
- **Trade Adjustment Assistance** – Co-enrollment with Dislocated Worker
- **(PILOT) Living Wage** – WIOA participants that earn MIT living wage within 12 months of exit

Tennessee Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)						
Program	Performance Measure	Target	Actual	% of Goal	Achievement	
Apprenticeship	State certified Pre-Apprenticeship Programs	3	29	966.7%	5	
Youth- Work Experience	New Enrollment	564	1876	332.6%	5	
Justice-Involved Individuals	New Enrollment	867	2168	250.1%	5	
Wagner-Peyser	New Enrollment	5879	11121	189.2%	5	
Apprenticeship	Peak Enrollment	6774	9819	145.0%	5	
Jobs for Veterans	New Enrollment	118	159	134.7%	4	
Senior Employment	New Enrollment	16	18	112.5%	4	
Adult and Dislocated Worker	New Enrollment	1226	1336	109.0%	4	
SNAP Employment & Training	New Enrollment	725	637	87.9%	3	
Youth- In-School Youth	New Enrollment	134	111	82.8%	3	
Reemployment Services	Co-enrollment	63	50	79.4%	3	
Youth	New Enrollment	532	422	79.3%	3	
Trade Adjustment Assistance	Co-enrollment with Dislocated Worker	90	67.4	74.9%	3	

Tennessee Funding Dependent KPIs and Pilot KPIs						
Program	Performance Measure	Target	Actual	% of Goal	Achievement	
Living Wage	WIOA participants that earn MIT living wage within 12 months of exit	953	1375	144.3%	5	

Key Performance Indicator Achievement Thresholds		
5	Best Practice	110%+
4	Target Achieved	91 to 110%
3	Approaching Target	71 to 90%
2	Needs Improvement	51 to 70%
1	Needs Significant Improvement	21 to 50%
0	Unacceptable	0 to 20%

For policy information, please see the Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development Workforce Services' current **Key Performance Indicator Policy**: <https://adobe.ly/3UpBxDO>

Policy and Waivers

Common Exit Policy

The state maintains a [common exit policy](#) for Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth, Trade and Title III Wagner-Peyser. The policy is reflected in and managed by the virtual one stop website.

Waivers

In program year 2023 Tennessee had two WIOA waivers that were approved. The following identifies each waiver and the waiver's intentions to affect performance outcomes:

1. **Waiver associated with the requirement that local areas expend 75 percent of local formula youth funds on out-of-school youth.** - effective July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2024.

The approval of this waiver permits LWDBs the opportunity to determine how best to meet the educational and training needs of youth with other barriers regardless of school status, and specific to the population, geographical location, and economic and employment conditions within each LWDA. Additionally, increasing outreach to ISY while maintaining a focus on serving OSY will help develop a larger pool of young people qualified and prepared to meet the current and future needs of employers in their workforce areas and throughout Tennessee. This waiver allowed local areas to consider their demographic needs and provide direct resources to in-school youth populations determined to have the highest need; in turn creating a stronger workforce pipeline. For several of the areas, ISY enrollment has increased more than 100%.

2. **Waiver to allow WIOA Individual Training Accounts for in-school-youth** - effective July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2024.

The Youth program received a 50/50 waiver from the Department of Labor to be able to serve Out of School Youth and In-school Youth at the same percentage. Without this waiver the Youth program would have to serve 75% Out of school Youth and 25% in School Youth.

Appendix 1: Data Validation

The department conducts annual Data Element Validation (DEV) in accordance with requirements outlined in Training and Employment Guidance Letter 23-19 Change 2. DEV is a regular data integrity review of program data for errors, missing data, out-of-range variances in values reported, and other anomalies. DEV requires documentation that missing and erroneous data identified during the review process have been corrected. An additional requirement is a documentation processes for maintaining records per the Federal records retention policy on results, which may include copies of worksheets on data elements or records reviewed, frozen quarterly wage records for wage record matching used for reporting outcomes, trends in common data accuracy issues, error rates, and corrective action efforts made after data validation reviews. DOL recommends regular assessments of the effectiveness of the data validation process (at least annually) and revisions to that policy and process as needed.

PY22 DEV Findings

Adult – All Title I Adult data elements were maintained below a 5% error rate for the State. It is a priority to collect and record the proper documentation so that all data elements can be verified. With the publication of TEGl 23-19 Change 2 many data elements were updated to allow for self-attestation to facilitate service provision for the widest range of participants possible. The elements with the highest error rate were date of birth, date of program entry, date of program exit, and date completed or withdrew from training. These errors are largely due to missing participant documentation and mismatched start and end dates. Most errors were corrected upon further review by uploading paper documentation to the digital record.

Dislocated Worker – All Dislocated Worker data elements were maintained below a 5% error rate for the State. The highest error rates were in date of actual dislocation, date completed training, date attained recognized credential, and date completed an education or training program leading to a credential or employment. Upon researching these errors, we discovered that there is often a discrepancy between when an event occurs and when the documentation for that event is generated. For example, if training is scheduled to end in on May 30th but the graduation ceremony is on June 3rd, then the diploma will be dated for June 3rd. The department finds this to be an acceptable discrepancy for data validation purposes.

Youth – All Youth data elements were maintained below a 5% error rate for the State. The Youth program typically contains a wider range of data validation issues than the other programs due to the additional programmatic requirements for participation. For PY22 youth seemed to be on par with the other Title I programs, reflecting an improvement in youth service provision and data collection this program year. The highest rate of error was in date enrolled in education or training program, and the date completed training elements. As with other programs these errors are tied to discrepancies between expected dates versus documented actual dates and are an acceptable discrepancy for data validation purposes.

Wagner-Peyser – Two Wagner-Peyser data elements were not able to be corrected to maintained below a 5% error rate for the state. Participant date of birth at 8.89%, and school status at program entry at 12.44%, experienced errors that local area staff were not able to effectively correct. These elements can be self-attested to as of the release of TEGL 23-19 change 2, which will correct this issue in the future if participants have signed their program application or self-attested to the information in the application. All other elements were below a 5% error rate.

Appendix 2: Current or Planned Evaluations

RESEA

TDLWD is working with The Policy & Research Group (PRG), an experienced independent evaluator, to conduct its RESEA evaluation. The aim of this study is to determine whether offering the RESEA program to UI claimants improves their employment and earnings outcomes and reduces the number of weeks they receive UI benefits. Though RESEA is a workforce program targeted to claimants who are identified as most likely to exhaust their benefits and are most in need of assistance with reemployment, the study proposed selects claimants randomly. This evaluation is currently ongoing with an anticipated completion date of late 2025 and a results report being issued in early 2026.

Impact Study Design

The impact study is an individual-level RCT. Both the units of assignment and analysis are the individual participant. Eligible RESEA participants will be randomly assigned to the treatment or control condition at a ratio that is approximately 3:1 (treatment to control). This ratio was ultimately the decision of TDLWD staff in order to provide services to as many RESEA claimants as possible while still creating a control group. Outcomes for treatment group members who are offered the defined intervention (RESEA) will be compared with those of a control group who are subject to standard UI requirements (i.e., business-as-usual).

Intent-To-Treat Framework

We propose an intent-to-treat (ITT) study design. An ITT framework includes all participants enrolled in the impact study, within the treatment condition they were randomly assigned to, regardless of the dosage or exposure to program components. Although this approach can seem obtuse because it fails to account for the variation in participants' actual exposure, researchers adopt it because it provides the most unbiased estimate of program impact. An ITT estimate minimizes the potentially biased post-enrollment self-selection that motivates some people to engage more and others to engage less with the intervention. This estimate also has the added advantage of providing a more realistic estimate of the predicted impact of the program because it factors in the variation of exposure into the estimate, rather than controlling for it statistically.

Primary Research Question

The impact study will assess the following pre-specified primary research questions. These research questions formalize the aim of the impact study, which is to test the impact of Tennessee's RESEA program on the DOL-required outcomes.

PRIMARY RQ 1: UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION DURATION

What is the impact of the requirement to complete RESEA reemployment services (treatment) relative to standard UI benefit requirements (control) on claimants' unemployment compensation duration?

PRIMARY RQ 2: EMPLOYMENT

What is the impact of the requirement to complete RESEA reemployment services (treatment) relative to standard UI benefit requirements (control) on claimants' employment status?

PRIMARY RQ 3: EARNINGS

What is the impact of the requirement to complete RESEA reemployment services (treatment) relative to standard UI benefit requirements (control) on claimants' earnings?

COMPONENT-LEVEL RESEARCH QUESTIONS

TDLWD RESEA staff have identified several component-level research questions that they may like to investigate: (1) What effect does the length of time between a claimant's monetary determination and their selection for RESEA have on employment, earnings, and duration of UI benefits?; and (2) How effective is the profiling score at reducing UI receipt duration and improving employment and earnings outcomes? PRG will formalize component-level research questions, their proposed designs, data requirements and procedures, operational definitions, and analytic methods necessary to answer them in a future EDR.

KPMG

During program year 2023 TDLWD partnered with KPMG to evaluate the quality of business service delivery and the customer experience within our American Job Centers. This comprehensive evaluation produced recommendations that will integrate leading practices at the local, state, and national levels to support the needs of job seekers and businesses.

Quantitative Findings:

Overview of Key Findings

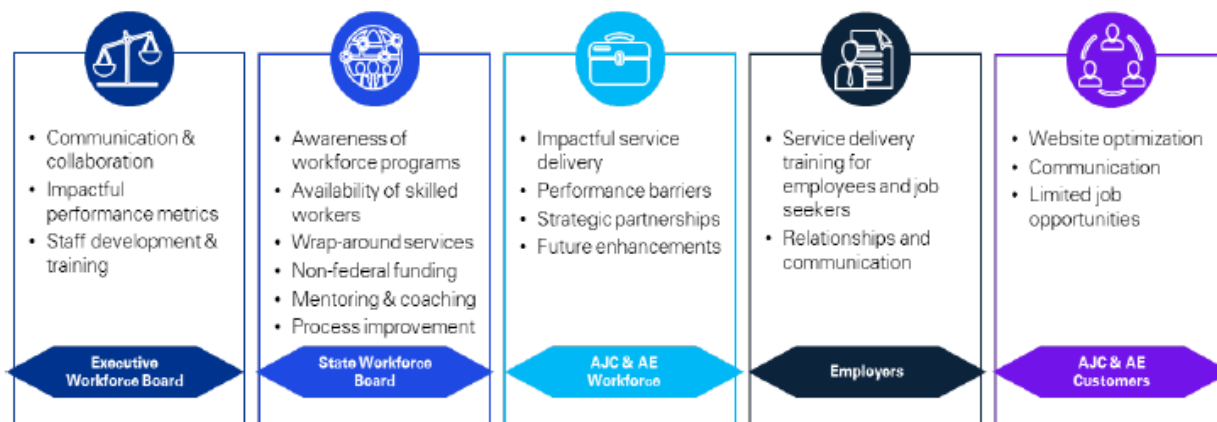
This section provides an analytical overview of service delivery gaps and areas for improvement within the State's AJCs and AE programs, underpinned by a comprehensive demographic analysis, geographic analysis, service efficiency and efficacy study, and retrospective analysis. Key quantitative findings are summarized below.

Demographic Analysis	Geographic Analysis	Service Efficiency and Effectiveness	Retrospective Analysis
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Large unreached/un-served populations with disability, homeless, and low-income status Populations with disability and JII achieved a significantly lower employment outcome than their counterparts Both Title I and Title II services are underutilized by customers in at-risk and distressed regions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High job-postings-to-applications ratio indicating unmet needs from the business communities Some counties have no AJCs or access points, making access difficult for customers Transportation and childcare pose challenges to accessing services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Long duration between Title I program intake and exit Long duration between Title I intake and receiving first primary service Long time to employment could pose challenges to fill business needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most tested services in Title I do not show a significant impact on employment outcome in 4th Quarter post-exit Programs should revisit the intensity of services and to help ensure they impact employment outcomes in a meaningful way

Qualitative Findings:

The outcomes from qualitative data collection efforts reflect both consistent themes and nuances, to varying degrees, across stakeholder groups. Overall, members of the workforce ecosystem (AJC and AE staff, workforce leaders, the business community, and TDLWD partners) express a strong mission-focused posture and an aptitude for problem solving. There are a range of shared sentiments that have echoed throughout the data gathering process. At the same time, there are distinctions within these respective groups about how to amplify the mission and the targeted support or solutions required for TDLWD to effectively deliver career services and training programs across the State. Stakeholders provided candid feedback to identify leading practices, current obstacles and service gaps, critical success factors, and recommendations for the desired future state.

The infographic below reflects high-level themes for each stakeholder group:



Upon the completion of this evaluation, TDLWD has worked to redesign and reimagine the AJC network in Tennessee. This is an on-going project that will continue to see adaptations and adjustments as we continue to improve customer service delivery within our State.

AJC Redesign: Workforce Reimagined:

Redefined Outreach and Service Strategies

- Increased “IN” flow of customers, reduced leakage of services, meet customers where they are
- Improve customer service to increase AJC foot traffic at Comprehensive Sites
- Flexible Outreach Access Points throughout the communities
- Virtual AJC engagement routed through Zendesk Tickets
- UI Claimants outreach engagement routed through Zendesk Tickets
- Reverse Referrals (AE, VR, SNAP, and RESEA Control Group)

System Training & Accountability Metrics

- Cross-training of new customer service flows
- Conversion Rates to measure high-performing AJCs
- Common Intake Assessments
- New employment metrics

Marketing Campaign

AJC Network, Apprenticeships, and Employers’ Campaigns launched October 2, 2024

Highlighting Policy Updates to Support AJC Redesign:

One-Stop System Design Policy

- Redefine “Affiliate AJC” to promote agility in service provision

One-Stop Certification Policy

- New certification process for AJCs to promote agility in service provision and outreach

One-Stop Operator and Career Service Provider Procurement Policy

- Allow for State-procured One-Stop Operator to provide LWDBs with high-quality option and promote consistency in services across the state

Minimum Participant Cost Rate (MPCR) Policy

- Add state-funded programs into MPCR calculations so LWDBs receive credit and incentive for this work

What’s Next in supporting AJC Redesign:

Staffing Realignment

- One-Stop Functional Navigation

- Roles for OSO and OSO Outreach Manager
- Redacting RESEA funding allocations at the LWDB level; redirecting to Wagner Peysner Comprehensive Centers staff
- Working with TDLWD Human Resources to redefine Career Coach roles in the AJC

Upcoming trainings

- Common intake assessments
- The AJC Customer’s journey
- Business Services Training

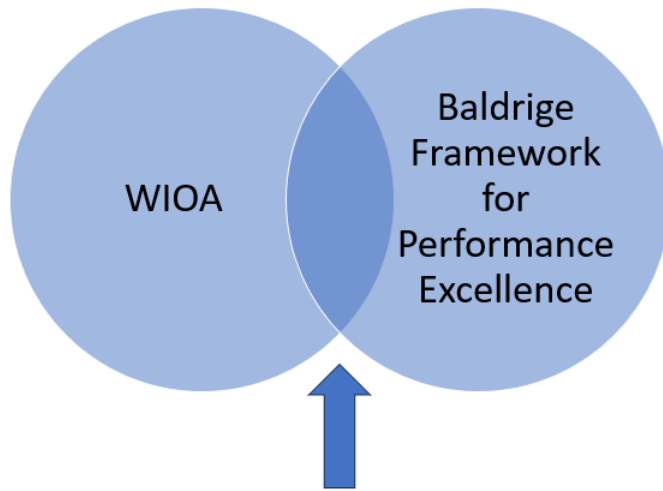
Local Board Actions

- LWDBs redesigning their AJC footprint – more affiliate (outreach) centers
- Redefining local policy/guidance to support AJC redesign
- Demonstration pilots of new service models

UTCIS

Board Excellence Certification Program Description

The Board Excellence Certification Program (the Program) is an integrated system of assessment, feedback, and professional development. It is designed to foster and sustain high performing workforce development boards and facilitate effectiveness and innovation in meeting their obligations and leading into the future. Boards that achieve Board Excellence Certification serve as role models of improvement, innovation, and excellence for the rest of the workforce organization.



Board Excellence Certification Program for Workforce Development Boards

Executive Summary of the Tennessee State Workforce Development Board Certification Program

The Tennessee State Workforce Development Board (SWDB) has successfully completed its initial Board Certification Assessment. The Certification Program was developed specifically for the SWDB by the University of Tennessee Center for Industrial Services (UT CIS).

The Board Certification Program was designed to assess compliance and competence to six Element of Governance:

- Structure, roles, relationships, and terms
- Responsibilities
- Governance System
- Strategic Insights
- Performance Management
- Legal & Ethical Behavior

The six Elements of Governance (list) serve as the intellectual and knowledge foundation for the Board Certification Program and Assessment. To promote a high performing board while also ensuring compliance to Federal rules and regulations, the elements and criteria within each element are founded upon national standards of excellence or federal regulations.

The Elements and associated criteria of Governance System, Strategic Insight, Performance Management, and Legal & Ethical Behavior are designed to promote high performance using the Baldrige Criteria for Performance Excellence for Governance, Strategy, and Performance Management. These four Elements are applicable to any board that desires to meet the highest standards of excellence in governance and are a requirement of the Board Certification Program.

The Elements and associated criteria of Structure/Roles/Relationships/Terms and Responsibilities are designed to evaluate and ensure compliance to the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2015. These two Elements are applicable to State and Local Workforce Development Boards and provide a customized analysis of the board's compliance and effectiveness.

Approximately 65% of the certification assessment is based upon the Elements founded upon the Baldrige Criteria for Performance Excellence, and approximately 35% of the certification assessment is based upon WIOA requirements.

Levels of Achievement were assigned to each Element of Governance based on an assessment of policies, procedures, surveys, and interviews. Levels of Achievement include:

Non-Compliant	Practices are not in place.
Compliant	Practices are in place. Practices are accessible or known by those responsible for its execution. Compliant is a foundational level of achievement.
Competent	In addition to meeting the components of Compliant, practices are in place and followed. Some practices may be reviewed, and some indicators or measures are identified. Competent is a more mature level of achievement.
Role Model	In addition to meeting the components of Competent, practices are evaluated for effectiveness. Practices are determined to be effective and/or continually improved. Role model is the highest level of achievement and indicates practices that others could benefit from learning and implementing.

Executive Summary of Findings and Recommendations

The overall achievement level for the initial TN SWDB Certification Process is COMPLIANT. Achievement levels and strengths and opportunities for improvement for each Element of Governance follow.

Element of Governance	Achievement Level
Structure, Roles, Relationships, Terms	Competent
Responsibilities	Competent
Governance System	Compliant
Strategic Insight	Compliant
Performance Management	Compliant
Legal & Ethical Behavior	Competent

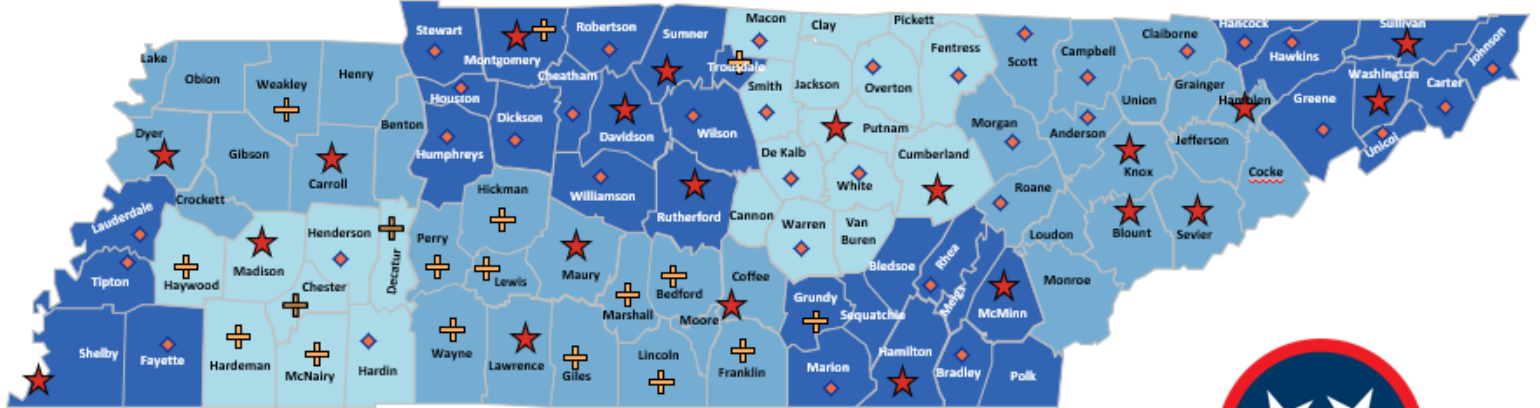
Appendix 3: Key Performance Indicators

Actuals	Tennessee	Northwest	Greater Memphis	Southwest	Northern Middle	Upper Cumberland	Southern Middle	Northeast	East	Southeast	Grand West	Grand Middle	Grand East
Key Performance Indicators - July 1, 2023 through June 30, 2024													
Adult and Dislocated Worker- New Enrollment													
PY23 Q1	1,326	62	279	50	301	104	74	44	258	154	391	479	456
PY23 Q2	758	43	121	6	125	85	52	33	235	58	170	262	326
PY23 Q3	856	33	161	12	105	96	48	51	265	85	206	249	401
PY23 Q4	1,336	54	612	19	234	65	63	52	145	92	685	362	289
PY23	4,276	192	1,173	87	765	350	237	180	903	389	1,452	1,352	1,472
Apprenticeship- Peak Enrollment													
PY23 Q1	8,333	80	1,119	148	2,693	69	77	1,543	1,034	1,570	1,347	2,839	4,147
PY23 Q2	8,828	91	1,206	176	2,710	61	79	1,078	1,632	1,795	1,473	2,850	4,505
PY23 Q3	8,869	94	1,302	184	2,685	69	73	1,592	1,105	1,765	1,580	2,827	4,462
PY23 Q4	9,819	87	1,282	201	2,741	107	73	1,118	1,553	2,657	1,570	2,741	5,328
PY23	35,849	352	4,909	709	10,829	306	302	5,331	5,324	7,787	5,970	11,257	18,442
Apprenticeship- State Certified Pre-Apprenticeship Programs													
PY23 Q1	11	0	4	0	0	0	5	1	0	1	4	5	2
PY23 Q2	21	0	13	1	1	1	1	2	0	2	14	3	4
PY23 Q3	5	0	2	0	2	0	0	0	1	0	2	2	1
PY23 Q4	29	0	9	0	19	0	0	0	1	0	9	19	1
PY23	66	0	28	1	22	1	6	3	2	3	29	29	8
Jobs for Veterans- New Enrollment													
PY23 Q1	113	6	15	0	39	3	10	11	13	16	21	52	40
PY23 Q2	97	0	21	0	31	0	9	12	10	14	21	40	36
PY23 Q3	117	1	6	0	45	3	4	17	13	28	7	52	58
PY23 Q4	159	6	46	1	50	4	8	8	21	15	53	62	44
PY23	486	13	88	1	165	10	31	48	57	73	102	206	178
Justice-Involved Individuals- New Enrollment													
PY23 Q1	2,148	15	235	49	360	165	140	159	200	170	331	670	531
PY23 Q2	1,801	41	111	26	255	122	100	131	235	154	207	482	524
PY23 Q3	2,117	25	112	31	221	226	113	169	269	153	177	570	595
PY23 Q4	2,168	25	413	51	315	225	149	171	238	161	496	702	575
PY23	8,234	106	871	157	1,151	738	502	630	942	638	1,211	2,424	2,225
Reemployment Services- Co-enrollment													
PY23 Q1	53	1	10	0	10	5	4	0	23	0	11	19	23
PY23 Q2	65	0	10	0	11	9	7	2	26	0	10	27	28
PY23 Q3	56	0	11	2	6	4	10	4	19	0	13	20	23
PY23 Q4	50	0	10	1	20	4	8	1	4	2	11	32	7
PY23	224	1	41	3	47	22	29	7	72	2	45	98	81
Senior Employment - New Enrollment													
PY23 Q1	36	1	17	8	1	7	2						
PY23 Q2	14	0	0	5	3	5	1						
PY23 Q3	14	0	2	2	7	1	2						
PY23 Q4	18												
PY23	82	1	19	15	11	13	5						

Actuals	Tennessee	Northwest	Greater Memphis	Southwest	Northern Middle	Upper Cumberland	Southern Middle	Northeast	East	Southeast	Grand West	Grand Middle	Grand East
SNAP Employment and Training- New Enrollment													
PY23 Q1	844	16	260	34	215	59	26	44	127	63	310	300	234
PY23 Q2	490	6	95	17	174	21	20	21	88	48	118	215	157
PY23 Q3	466	5	129	18	155	16	21	25	66	31	152	192	122
PY23 Q4	637	9	231	37	170	18	16	41	68	47	277	204	156
PY23	2,437	36	715	106	714	114	83	131	349	189	857	911	669
Trade Adjustment Assistance- Co-enrollment with Title I Dislocated Worker													
PY23 Q1	67.4%	33.3%	50.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	13.3%	83.3%	40.0%	84.6%	42.9%	69.0%	69.6%
PY23 Q2	67.4%	33.3%	50.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	13.3%	83.3%	40.0%	84.6%	42.9%	69.0%	69.6%
PY23 Q3	67.4%	33.3%	50.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	13.3%	83.3%	40.0%	84.6%	42.9%	69.0%	69.6%
PY23 Q4	67.4%	33.3%	50.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	13.3%	83.3%	40.0%	84.6%	42.9%	69.0%	69.6%
PY23	67%	33%	50%	100%	100%	100%	13%	83%	40%	85%	43%	69%	70%
*Beginning 10/1/2021, 90% of those Trade participants eligible to be enrolled within Title I Dislocated Worker need to be co-enrolled													
Wagner-Peyser - New Enrollment													
PY23 Q1	8,978	212	990	208	2,219	597	1,195	565	1,526	1,215	1,511	4,143	3,324
PY23 Q2	7,930	254	798	180	1,937	482	1,049	491	1,501	1,025	1,326	3,562	3,042
PY23 Q3	7,878	243	560	175	1,894	552	945	466	1,753	1,034	1,062	3,530	3,286
PY23 Q4	11,121	436	732	385	2,783	700	1,274	691	2,243	1,484	1,665	5,001	4,455
PY23	35,907	1,145	3,080	948	8,833	2,331	4,463	2,213	7,023	4,758	5,564	16,236	14,107
Youth - New Enrollment													
PY23 Q1	666	40	179	10	193	44	45	9	84	62	229	282	155
PY23 Q2	273	10	68	8	57	37	22	4	46	21	86	116	71
PY23 Q3	377	10	23	11	98	40	30	16	114	35	44	168	165
PY23 Q4	422	15	127	13	61	55	11	30	55	55	155	127	140
PY23	1,738	75	397	42	409	176	108	59	299	173	514	693	531
In-School Youth- New Enrollment													
PY23 Q1	221	30	94	4	41	2	11	4	25	10	128	54	39
PY23 Q2	92	2	54	0	13	7	6	2	5	3	56	26	10
PY23 Q3	125	6	4	1	35	3	11	10	49	6	11	49	65
PY23 Q4	111	0	6	4	16	24	2	11	30	18	10	42	59
PY23	549	38	158	9	105	36	30	27	109	37	205	171	173
Youth Work Experience - New Enrollment													
PY23 Q1	855	112	80	79	333	10	58	7	83	93	271	401	183
PY23 Q2	295	34	7	65	56	4	73	21	0	35	106	133	56
PY23 Q3	246	35	20	20	57	7	18	37	10	42	75	82	89
PY23 Q4	1,876	94	112	95	326	312	416	158	55	308	301	1,054	521
PY23	3,272	275	219	259	772	333	565	223	148	478	753	1,670	849
PY23 Pilot- Actuals													
a) Living Wage- participants who achieve MIT living wage within 1 year of exit													
PY23 Q1	1,390	54	151	46	343	66	157	69	244	260	251	566	573
PY23 Q2	977	44	118	34	263	63	111	44	180	120	196	437	344
PY23 Q3	1,392	63	118	51	356	113	179	68	299	145	232	648	512
PY23 Q4	1,375	41	131	33	373	116	186	70	265	160	205	675	495
PY23	5,134	202	518	164	1,335	358	633	251	988	685	884	2,326	1,924
Local Key Performance Indicators													
Incumbent Worker and On-the-Job Training- New Enrollment													
PY23 Q1	133	13	6	7	25	0	0	0	28	54	26	25	82
PY23 Q2	245	182	0	36	15	0	0	0	0	12	218	15	12
PY23 Q3	275	117	0	69	64	0	0	0	10	15	186	64	25
PY23 Q4					5								
PY23					109								

Key Performance Indicator Achievement Thresholds		
5	Best Practice	110%+
4	Target Achieved	91 to 110%
3	Approaching Target	71 to 90%
2	Needs Improvement	51 to 70%
1	Needs Significant Improvement	21 to 50%
0	Unacceptable	0 to 20%

	Northwest	Northern Middle	Upper Cumberland	East	Northeast
Business & Workforce Director	Dr. Sabra Bledsoe		Tyler Asher		Brian Decker
Executive Director	Jennifer Bane	Marla Rye	Becky Hull	E L Morton	Lisa Evans
CLEO	Mark Ward	Bob Rial	Randy Porter	Glenn Jacobs	Richard Venable
Board Chair	Jimmy Williamson	John Zobl	Bob Young	Julie Simpson	Jay Richardson
Fiscal Agent	Workforce Innovations	Workforce Essentials	UC LWDB	ETHRA	First TN Dev. District
Staff to the Board	Workforce Innovations	Workforce Essentials	UC LWDB	ETHRA	First TN Dev. District
OSO	Mid-Cumberland HRA	Mid-Cumberland HRA	Mid-Cumberland HRA	UTCIS	NESCC
Career Service Provider	Dyersburg State CC	EDSI/MAC	Career Team	ETSU	NESCC



Greater Memphis	Southwest	Southern Middle	Southeast
		Selina Moore	Dr. Jennifer Thacker
	Jennifer Bane	Barbara Kizer	Michele Holt
Lee Harris	Mike Creasy	Bill Newman	Weston Wamp
James D Robinson	Ben Ferguson	Mark Short	Marshall Graves
Workforce Midsouth	Workforce Innovations, Inc.	South Central TN Dev. Dist	Southeast TN Dev Dist.
Workforce Midsouth	Workforce Innovations, Inc.	South Central TN Dev. Dist	Southeast TN Dev Dist.
Ross Employment Solutions	Mid-Cumberland HRA	In The Door	In The Door
Equus Workforce Solution	Dynamic Workforce Sol.	South Central HRA	EDSI

Legend			
Comprehensive AJC	★	Affiliate AJC	◆
Specialized AJC	+		

Grand Planning Regional Staff	WEST TN	MIDDLE TN	EAST TN
Regional Apprenticeship Director	Roderick Woody	Brandon Phinx	Rob Kennedy
Regional WP Director		Georgena Wilson	Shavonne Smith

Appendix 4: LWDA Narrative



Annual Report Program Year (PY) 2023

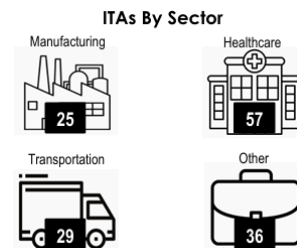
American Job Center Services

Throughout program year 2023, the Northwest Local Workforce Development Area (LWDA) provided over 10,800 services to nearly 5,800 visitors through the area's two comprehensive American Job Centers (AJCs) in Dyer and Carroll Counties and its Specialized AJC in Weakley County. Job Search / Resource Room services remained the number one service provided followed by Unemployment Insurance Assistance, and Networking Events again this year. Job Search Assistance moved ahead of Title I Services for the fourth most provided service this year. Of the 368 customer satisfaction surveys completed, 96% indicated they were completely satisfied with the services received.



To continue to reach customers where they are, the Northwest area enhanced its network of Access Points through the addition of five new partners throughout the year, bringing the total number of Access Points to fifteen. Efforts to increase the number of Access Points will continue in PY 24.

Of the 298 new Title I enrollments, 147, or 49%, participated in Occupational Skills Training, with the majority training in one of the area's top industry sectors – Manufacturing, Healthcare, and Transportation. About 60% of new Occupational Skills Training participants enrolled in training through a TN College of Applied Technology (TCAT), followed by 22% at short-term private-training providers such as Truck Driving and Electrical Lineman providers, then Community Colleges at 13%, and Universities at 5%.



Nolan Renfro, a recent high school graduate with minimal work experience, knew he needed specialized training to enter the workforce and improve his earning potential. With guidance from Career Advisor Connie Wright at the American Job Center-Huntington, Nolan secured the WIOA/Title I Needs-Based Scholarship, which allowed him to enroll in the Pre-Apprentice Lineman program at North American Lineman Training Center in McEwan, Tennessee.

During his training, Nolan earned certifications in Pole Top Rescue, Bucket Truck Operation, Digger-Derrick Truck Operation, Wood Pole-Climbing, OSHA 11.5 Hour ET&D, and CPR/First Aid. Despite completing his program in December 2023, Nolan faced initial challenges finding a lineman apprentice position and took a job as a pest technician while he awaited a position in his trained field. Shortly after, his persistence paid off when he was hired by Weakley County Municipal Electric. Nolan is now working in his trained field, enjoying his new role, and looking forward to further career growth.

Chloe Jackson graduated high school at just 17-years-old with a mixture of excitement and confusion. Unsure about her next steps, Chloe enrolled at a local community college, earning her Associate's degree in General Studies. Despite her success in college, she felt an underlying sense of dissatisfaction in her various jobs at a bank and a university billing office. "I did well wherever I went, but something always felt 'off.' I felt lost in my career," she said.



In October 2022, Chloe made a decisive move. "I made a quick decision out of nowhere, I wanted to be a nurse! This had been in my heart for a long time, but I let fear and doubt rule the decision in the past. Now, I was determined to follow my dreams." Within a month, Chloe was accepted into the LPN program at the Tennessee College of Applied Technology. With her motivation in place, Chloe faced a new challenge: financial support.

That's when Chloe reached out to Rhonda Mitchum at the American Job Center in Henry County. "With the support from WIOA (Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act), I was able to fully focus on school without having to worry about a full-time job or have the stress on how I was going to be able to afford tuition, books, and gas." Rhonda was able to further assist Chloe with other training needs including her scrubs, jacket, and shoes, and finding financial assistance for essential expenses before her clinical training began. "Ms. Rhonda is very attentive; and it was because of her that I chose to move forward with this program. Simply, because I felt that I could trust her." Additionally, Chloe appreciates Rhonda acting as an accountability partner, regularly checking in and providing access to various support resources.

Additionally, throughout the year, 16 new Title I Youth were enrolled in work experience including eight Out-of-School Youth and eight In-School Youth, plus three youth were enrolled in OJTs. Also this year, 59 youth participants received incentives for their achievements during program participation and continued success after exiting the program. With the implementation of the Tennessee Youth Employment Program (YEP), an additional 233 youth were able to participate in short-term work experiences, earning nearly \$464,000.

When **Tristen Trevathan** made the decision to move back to West TN, she worried about finding a career to fit her skillset in graphic design and interest in marketing. At the same time, **Twin Oaks Technology**, a business-to-business provider of technology solutions and digital marketing services located in Union City, was looking for assistance to hire and train a new full-time employee. Northwest TN Workforce Board Business Services Representative, Lana Wood, was able to provide help in the form of On-the-Job Training (OJT) and the Tennessee Youth Employment Program (TYEP).



Twin Oaks knew immediately when they saw Tristen's resume that she was a great fit, but they realized she would require additional training in some areas that the job required. "We were fortunate to receive the OJT TYEP Grant from the Tennessee Youth Employment Program for this training period," said Twin Oaks Technology Marketing Director, Suzanne Harper. "We were able to hire Tristen full-time immediately and get her started on various graphic design projects while simultaneously training her in the other needed digital marketing areas. Within the first three weeks, she was trained to use our IT software, our CRM software, and began her Facebook Meta training. After the first month, she was ready to start managing customer social media accounts and has been equipped to do a fantastic job.

The grant money gave Twin Oaks management the funding needed to properly train Tristen so that she could confidently operate Twin Oaks' software and take over customer accounts with the knowledge needed to be successful. Since her training, she has assumed management over all customer social media accounts with over 150,000 collective followers.

Harper states that they are thrilled to have been connected with this grant program that allowed Twin Oaks to confidently take the time to properly train a new team member. "Sometimes it is difficult to find local talent in our niche areas, so I am very excited that we were able to give this opportunity to a recent UT Martin graduate. The challenge with recent grads is them not having the opportunity to show a certain level of experience on their resume, but with these grant programs, we are able to take the time to prepare employers in the areas needed and fill those experience gaps. Tristen has been wonderful!"

Tristen felt fortunate to find her place as a Graphic Designer/Social Media Manager with Twin Oaks Technology and to be properly trained in areas she had not had an opportunity to gain experience in yet. She said, "Over three months in, I can confidently tackle digital marketing projects using the tools and platforms needed to be successful. I love working with the Twin Oaks team!"

Business Services

As the primary customer of the workforce system, the NWTNWB prioritizes services to employers. During the program year, companies in Northwest TN received wage reimbursements in excess of \$168,000 through On-Job-Training grants to train their own workers. Business Services staff and the American Job Centers developed contracts with 23 companies, placed job orders, and referred eligible job applicants to fill 96 positions. Most OJT enrollments, 48%, were in the Manufacturing sector, with an additional 34% placed in skilled trades. Statewide Funding was made available to employers to provide training for their current workforce to improve processes and upgrade skills through Incumbent Worker Training grants. Eighteen employers were awarded over \$333,000 to train 212 workers.

“Big Bore LLC, located in Henry, TN, is an example of a company who uses all our services!” stated Northwest Tennessee Workforce Board Business Services Representative, Maleia Evans. Specializing in the manufacturing and restoration of domestic and Foreign Artillery and Armor, Big Bore is a small and very specialized company. Training opportunities were constantly limited by availability and budget. Highly specialized manufacturing processes are almost always performed by larger companies due to equipment and training constraints. With the ever-growing increase in regulatory requirements, even keeping up with required training for compliance can be very time-consuming and costly.

In 2022, Maleia met with Big Bore to discuss any and all programs available to add employees and properly train them during the onboarding process. Since then, they have utilized the WIOA Work Experience program, On-the-Job Training (OJT) program, Incumbent Worker Training (IWT) program, labor market research reports provided by the Northwest TN Workforce Board, attended specialized training opportunities made available through the American Job



Centers and the Virtually Speaking webinar service, as well as taking advantage of the Job Search program through Jobs4TN.

Thanks to their partnership with the American Job Center and Northwest Tennessee Workforce Board, the company has been able to provide specialized training to each of their employees. The knowledge they gained has helped their employees become more efficient in their processes by incorporating a Quality Management System and having a goal of Continual Improvement. Job efficiency has

increased by 40%, which increases with each training employees attend.

Big Bore has successfully hired more employees due to OJT, and Incumbent Worker programs assisted with the financial burden of training employees. Owner Ira Sellers and Business Manager Jennea Jenkins both expressed how excited they are to continue working with the American Job Center and Northwest Tennessee Workforce Board. “It is only with their help that we have been able to push through some current barriers that hinder small business and remain a leader in this market. Thank You ,TEAM!”

Apprenticeships and Pre-Apprenticeships

The NWTNWB also continued to work on expanding apprenticeship opportunities by increasing awareness of employers to the benefits, assisting employers with developing apprenticeship standards, connecting qualified job seekers to employers, and facilitating access to Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and other American Job Center partner funds to support apprenticeships. Through grant funding awarded by the Apprenticeship TN Office, 37 apprentices were served, and the \$92,449 award was fully expended.

The Registered Electrical Apprenticeship Preparation (REAP) Program, a ten-week youth pre-apprenticeship program consisting of four weeks of classroom training to learn the fundamentals of basic electricity and construction applications, followed by up to eight weeks of paid work experience at Amteck’s Dyersburg facility, hosted its sixth class, consisting of record number of seventeen students enrolled and 100% completion and retention rates. Through participation in the program students can obtain employment at the Amteck Dyersburg facility upon successful completion. If hired, participants are entered into the Registered Apprenticeship program which prepares them to take the exam to become a Journeyman/Licensed Electrician and earn an estimated \$70,000 annually.



Durell Littleton is one of eight individuals who completed Amteck’s Registered Electrical Apprenticeship Preparation (REAP) in June 2023. Since being hired as part of Amteck’s apprenticeship program, Durell’s training has taken him to worksites such as Kansas and Arkansas. Connie Stewart, Executive Director of Workforce Services at Dyersburg State Community College, stated the biggest barrier for most REAP participants is working and living away from home so soon after high school graduation. Durell agreed that while the distance was definitely challenging, the paychecks made up for it! “I’ve loved my whole experience,” he said.

Amteck Instructor Jesse Contreras, who served as the Kansas Job site Safety Manager, shared that working closely with Durell for three months revealed Durell as coachable, attentive, willing to ask questions as needed, and not shying away from physical work. “These qualities are becoming hard to find in today’s youth, so I admired seeing this in him,” said Contreras. Durell’s job duties under Contreras included assisting with the inspection and documentation of safety equipment to comply with the monthly inspection program.

The apprenticeship experience has enabled Contreras to not only instruct Durell on the worksite, but has evolved into a true mentorship relationship with mutual respect. “I believe he will quickly show progress in his work on his second semester of his first year in the apprenticeship,” said Contreras. “I wish him luck and intend to keep him on track until the day I’m shaking his hand, and he has a diploma in the other.”

Virtually Speaking - Workforce Development Webinar Series

In March 2021 the Northwest TN Workforce Board (NWTNWB)’s Business Services staff launched a new quarterly webinar series to inform employers about the many resources and services available through the Board and the American Job Centers, as well as other training topics related to workforce development. The initiative was expanded to be a regional service offered by the three Local Workforce Development Areas (LWDAs) in West Tennessee. All webinars are recorded and may be found on our website at <https://tnworks.org/employers/>. Topics presented this program year included:



- Strengthening Your Talent Pipeline Using the GROWWTH Program Graduates
- Work Opportunity Tax Credit: What it is and How Employers Benefit
- Funding & Training Resources for Your Business
- Workers’ Compensation in 2024: What Employers Need to Know

Promising Practices for Target Populations

Justice-Involved Individuals (JIIs)

The NWTNWB, through grant funding provided by the Tennessee Office of Re-entry, served 112 justice-involved individuals, fully expending the \$162,000 awarded. The Board partnered with local Sheriff’s Departments and the University of Tennessee Center for Industrial Services (UTCIS) to offer Manufacturing Skills Bootcamps and OSHA 10 General Industry courses to individual incarcerated at five local county jails – Dyer, Gibson, Henry, Obion, and Weakley. The training allowed students to gain marketable skills in the Manufacturing space and graduate from the program with a Certificate of Completion and an OSHA 10 General Industry Card.



Low Income Parents

The Growing Relational and Occupational Wealth in West Tennessee Households (GROWWTH) program is an innovative workforce initiative designed to empower individuals across West TN by eliminating key barriers and moving their families to self-sufficiency and economic mobility. *Part of a study funded by the Tennessee Department of Human Services, GROWWTH is serving low-income parents in the 21 counties that make up West Tennessee through a collaboration led by the Center for Regional Economic Enrichment at the University of Memphis, a variety of units within the University.* The grant funding will allow GROWWTH to work toward its goal of eliminating key barriers to self-sufficiency for low-income wage earners in the West Tennessee region through access to needed resources for economic mobility, a holistic approach to improving the personal and professional well-being of families, strengthening the existing system through partner resources, and inspiring families to appreciate the value of growth and lifelong learning. The program begins with the GROWWTH Academy, an accelerated workforce readiness program designed in direct response to the needs of local businesses and the target population. As of the end of the program year, a total of 96 individuals had been served through the GROWWTH program in the Northwest area.



Emily Burton is proud to share how the GROWWTH program transformed her career and life. She had initially enrolled in the program while working as a temporary contract employee at the American Job Center. Her goal was to enhance her skills and secure high-quality employment to build a successful career.

Through the GROWWTH program, Emily participated in the GROWWTH Academy, where she acquired invaluable skills and insights into career development. The knowledge she gained was not only practical but also instrumental in shaping her professional journey. Emily proudly added the GROWWTH Academy certification to her resume, which proved to be a game-changer. Within a month of completing the program, Emily applied for a position with the State of Tennessee. To her delight, she was offered the job, achieving the career milestone she had set for herself. An added benefit of the GROWWTH program was the financial reward associated with each milestone Emily reached, which was a fantastic bonus.

"This program has changed my life for the better and I cannot thank the GROWWTH staff enough for informing me about this program and helping me through every step of the process," said Emily. "I would like to thank Joy Cooper and Marcia Fields for working with me and giving me such a wonderful opportunity!"

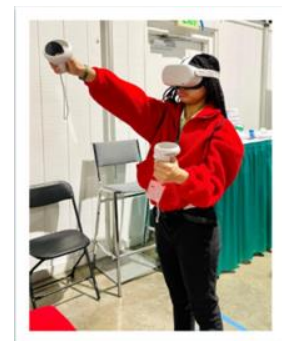
Dislocated Workers and COVID-19 Relief

As part of the state of Tennessee's QUEST National Dislocated Worker Grant (DWG), the Northwest area was awarded an additional \$615,978 to provide career and training services to an estimated 100 participants during the three-year grant period. A total of 48 individuals were enrolled during PY 23, the first of the grant period.

Promoting Career Pathways and Developing the Youth Talent Pipeline

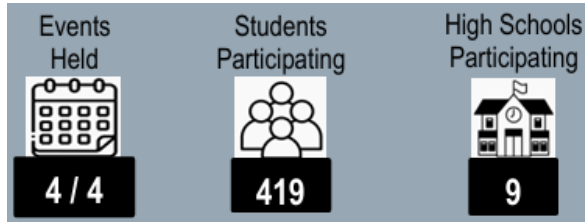
Virtual Career Exploration

TRANSFVR software, a virtual reality-based education and training workforce development platform, helps students and job seekers get on a path to middle skills employment. TRANSFVR helps educators, workforce development professionals, economic development organizations, and employers provide simulations that allow students and job seekers to explore career pathways including Manufacturing, Automotive, Public Safety, Skilled Trades, Warehousing & Storage, Healthcare, and Hospitality & Tourism. New modules continue to be added. During the program year, 637 students across 10 high schools were able to experience over 1,000 simulations.



Healthcare Pathways

Through the Health Resources & Services Administration’s (HRSA) Delta Region Rural Health Workforce Training Program, a partnership between Baptist in Union City and Huntingdon, Dyersburg State Community College (DSCC), Jackson State Community College (JSCC), Priority EMS, and the Northwest TN Workforce Board (NWTNWB) was formed to promote two healthcare career opportunities and pathways - EMT/Paramedics and Respiratory Therapists. The three-year grant will provide full tuition



assistance to eligible students in the nine Northwest counties, as well as a \$1,000 stipend for students, paid internship opportunities, and job placement assistance. The NWTNWB’s role in the grant is to promote the pathways and grant opportunities to area high school students through career exploration events. The events held in PY 22 and 23 have

contributed to all grant classes being full and having a waiting list for additional interested applicants.

Manufacturing Pathways

Organized nationally by the Manufacturing Institute, National Manufacturing (MFG) Day is manufacturing’s biggest annual opportunity to inspire the next generation, positively shift perceptions about the industry, and build the foundation for the manufacturing workforce of the future. Each year the Northwest area works with area high schools and employers to celebrate by arranging in-person tours of local manufacturing facilities for area students in order to promote local career opportunities within the manufacturing industry.



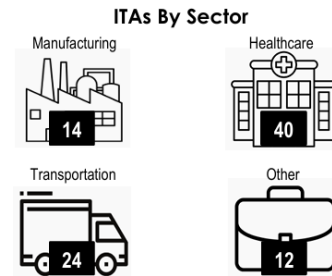
American Job Center Services

Throughout program year 2023, the Southwest Local Workforce Development Area (LWDA) provided over 8,000 services to nearly 6,500 visitors through the area’s one comprehensive, two affiliate, and five specialized American Job Centers (AJCs). Job Search / Resource Room services remained the number one service provided, and was followed by Title I Career Coaching and then Job Search Assistance.

Unemployment Insurance Assistance increased this year to the fourth most provided service. Of the 636 customer satisfaction surveys completed, 94% indicated they were completely satisfied with the services received.



Of the new Title I enrollments, 152, or 59% participated in Occupational Skills Training, with the majority training in one of the area’s top industry sectors. About 48% of new Occupational Skills Training participants enrolled in training through a TN College of Applied Technology (TCAT), followed by 31% at short-term private-training providers such as Truck Driving and Electrical Lineman providers, then Community Colleges at 18%, and Universities at 3%.



Randarian Richardson began receiving WIOA Title I services in August 2022 while attending TCAT Whiteville in the Industrial Maintenance Technician program. One year later when he graduated with his Industrial Maintenance diploma, Randarian immediately reenrolled at TCAT Whiteville to begin the HVAC/Refrigeration program and will graduate in August 2024.

Randarian began work with Griffith’s Heating and Air in September 2023 and remained employed while attending school. He competed at SkillsUSA at the State level in Nashville and won 4th place in the HVAC/Refrigeration contest. Lisa Robinson, Hardeman County Career Advisor, pictured to the left with Randarian, shared, “I am so proud of Randarian and glad we were able to help him achieve his goals by providing transportation assistance.”

Through the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP), a community service and work-based job training program for older Americans, 18 participants gained work experience in a variety of community service activities at non-profit and public facilities. Over 92% of the awarded program funds were expended, and the area continued to be recognized as a best practice in the State.

Additionally, throughout the year, 24 youth participated in work experience – 7 In-School Youth and 6 Out-of-School Youth. Also this year, incentives was awarded to 12 youth participants for their achievements during program participation and continued success after exiting the program. With the implementation of the Tennessee Youth Employment Program (YEP), an additional 183 youth were able to participate in short-term work experiences, earning over \$430,000.



The Henderson County Chamber of Commerce has greatly benefited from the involvement of the Tennessee Youth Experience Program (TYEP) during the past two summers. Kristina Anderson, Executive Director of the Chamber, noted, "Their fresh perspectives and enthusiasm brought new energy to our projects." The interns played a crucial role by assisting with community outreach, event planning, social media, and daily operations. Their contributions allowed the Chamber to expand its impact and reach within the community during its busy season.

The experience was mutually beneficial. According to Anderson, "Their work experience not only supported our ongoing initiatives, but also provided the interns with valuable professional skills and insight into the local business environment and government, creating an awesome experience for all."

TYEP participant **Tristen King** said, "This summer, my experience working for the Henderson County Chamber of Commerce provided me with insights into the local business community. I was able to gain hands-on experience in event planning, networking, and supporting small businesses, all while developing skills that will help benefit me in my future career."

Another TYEP participant, **Catie Rice**, shared, "Working at the Henderson County Chamber of Commerce this summer was one of the best experiences I've ever had. I was able to experience everything my community had to offer, learn and strengthen my skills, support businesses in Henderson County, and meet the people who help our community come together and grow!"

Rylee Smith, who participated in the Youth Work Experience program last summer and is now a Member Services/Assistant at the Chamber, remarked, "It was an incredible experience because it allowed me to connect with driven entrepreneurs, support local businesses, and see firsthand how our efforts impact the community. Every day felt rewarding and filled with purpose!" Anderson highlighted that Smith's performance and the skills she developed during her internship were instrumental in her successful application for a permanent position at the Chamber. She praised the TYEP program's effectiveness in preparing young individuals for future career opportunities.



TYEP Participants from left to right: Tristen King, Rylee Smith (now Member Services Manager), Catie Rice are pictured at the Groundbreaking Ceremony for HTeaO, a new business in Henderson County.

Business Services

As the primary customer of the workforce system, the Southwest TN Workforce Board (SWTNWB) prioritizes services to employers. During the program year, companies in Southwest TN received wage reimbursements of over \$219,000 through On-Job-Training grants to train their own workers. Business Services staff and the American Job Centers developed contracts with nine companies, placed job orders, and referred eligible job applicants to fill 77 positions. The majority of OJT enrollments, 84%, were in the Manufacturing sector. Statewide Funding was made available to employers to provide training for their current workforce to improve processes and upgrade skills through Incumbent Worker Training grants. Sixteen employers were awarded over \$235,000 to train 206 workers.



Monogram Refrigeration (GE Appliances, a Haier company) has been a key partner for the On-the-Job Training (OJT) program in the Southwest Tennessee region. Their commitment to employ often underserved populations, such as youth and the justice-involved, led to over 60 individuals receiving OJT opportunities at Monogram Refrigeration in the 2023-2024 program year.

Through partnership with the Southwest Tennessee Workforce Board (SWTNWB), Monogram provides work opportunities for local high school students with programs such as OJT and Paid Work Experience. They also offer career exploration opportunities during Manufacturing Day tours of their facilities. This collaboration, along with partnership from the TN Office of Reentry, enabled 18 justice-involved individuals to secure OJT for high-paying positions at Monogram during the 2023-2024 program year.

Tyler, a participant in the OJT program at Monogram, shared that the experience greatly eased his transition into his role and provided the support he needed to succeed. "I was nervous to get started in this line of work, but OJT has helped me be a better employee and get into the swing of the job," Tyler said. "Having a supportive employer makes all the difference." When asked what advice he would give to others about the program, he responded, "Don't be afraid to try something new."

Monogram has also participated in the Incumbent Worker Training (IWT) program and received grants for training their existing workforce. These IWT grants have been utilized to train employees on new equipment and to enhance skills for employees at their Selmer location. Christina Rhea, HR Generalist, noted, "Monogram takes pride in fostering the growth and success of its employees within the organization."

Apprenticeships and Pre-Apprenticeships

The SWTNWB also continued to work on expanding apprenticeship opportunities by increasing awareness of employers to the benefits, assisting employers with developing apprenticeship standards, connecting qualified job seekers to employers, and facilitating access to Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and other American Job Center partner funds to support apprenticeships. Through grant funding awarded by the Apprenticeship TN Office, 43 apprentices were served, and the \$105,758 award was fully expended.

Delta Electrical, Inc. is grateful to be a part of the **Tennessee Youth Employment Program (TYEP)**. “The opportunity for this group of participants has been extremely successful,” said Leigh Ann Mendoza, HR Manager at Delta Electrical, Inc. “This has given them the chance to gain knowledge in the Electrical trade and look at what career paths are available to them.”

Mendoza explained that the participants were exposed to classroom learning opportunities ranging from communication, employability, OSHA 10, excavation training, forklift training, and hazardous communication training. “At this point, they were prepared to go straight to several job assignments and work on projects in our commercial division.”

Delta Electrical, Inc. was happy to share that they hired all six of the participants in this group for full-time employment. “All participants showed initiative, excitement for the trade, excellent attendance, and gratitude for the opportunity they had been given,” said Mendoza. “Delta Electrical, Inc. gained more employees who will continue to enter our Apprenticeship Program in January 2025. We look forward to watching this group grow and be a part of the Delta Electrical family.”



Virtually Speaking - Workforce Development Webinar Series

In March 2021 the Northwest TN Workforce Board (NWTNWB)’s Business Services staff launched a new quarterly webinar series to inform employers about the many resources and services available through the Board and the American Job Centers, as well as other training topics related to workforce development. The initiative was expanded to be a regional service offered by the three Local Workforce Development Areas (LWDAs) in West Tennessee. All webinars are recorded and may be found on our website at <https://tnworks.org/employers/>. Topics presented this program year included:

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- Work Opportunity Tax Credit: What it is and How Employers Benefit
- Funding & Training Resources for Your Business
- Workers’ Compensation in 2024: What Employers Need to Know



Promising Practices for Talent Pipelines

Justice-Involved Individuals (JIIs)

The SWTNWB, through grant funding provided by the Tennessee Office of Re-entry, served 149 justice-

involved individuals, exceeding the proposed goal of 146, and expending over \$203,000. The Board partnered with local Sheriff's Departments and the University of Tennessee Center for Industrial Services (UTCIS) to offer Manufacturing Skills Bootcamps and OSHA 10 General Industry courses to individuals incarcerated at six of the area's eight county jails in Chester, Decatur, Hardin, Haywood, Madison, and McNairy counties. The training allowed students to gain marketable skills in the Manufacturing space and graduate from the program with a Certificate of Completion and an OSHA 10 General Industry Card. Additionally, 18 JIIs participated in OJT. All 18 successfully completed their 320 hours of OJT and remained employed with the employer.



Low Income Single Parents

The Growing Relational and Occupational Wealth in West Tennessee Households (GROWWTH) program is an innovative workforce initiative designed to empower individuals across West TN by eliminating key barriers and moving their families to self-sufficiency and economic mobility. Part of a study funded by the Tennessee Department of Human Services, GROWWTH is serving low-income parents in the 21 counties that make up West Tennessee through a collaboration led by the Center for Regional Economic Enrichment at the University of Memphis, a variety of units within the University. The grant funding will allow GROWWTH to work toward its goal of eliminating key barriers to self-sufficiency for low-income wage earners in the West Tennessee region through access to needed resources for economic mobility, a holistic approach to improving the personal and professional well-being of families, strengthening the existing system through partner resources, and inspiring families to appreciate the value of growth and lifelong learning. The program begins with the GROWWTH Academy, an accelerated workforce readiness program designed in direct response to the needs of local businesses and the target population. As of the end of the program year, a total of 56 individuals had been served through the GROWWTH program in the Southwest area.



Ella Harris has worked in the real estate finance industry over four decades, mainly because it has never felt like work. "When I considered retiring, I realized my passion for the industry is still very strong and my desire to continue growing, learning, supporting and participating in the industry is equally strong." With the support of the Crews Microbusiness Center and as a Cohort 2 participant with

GROWWTH, Harris transitioned into solopreneurship in April 2024, becoming owner and principal of ECH Consulting Services, LLC.

According to Harris, ECH Consulting Services aims to foster sustainable growth in homeownership, estate planning, and cultural collaboration within historically underserved communities. Their vision focuses on enhancing diversity and inclusiveness in the real estate finance and sales industries.

On June 22, during National Homeownership Month, ECH Consulting Services collaborated and hosted a Homebuyer Expo with THDA, NAREB, and sponsored participants Century

C21 Action Realty, Madison County District 2 Councilman Johnny Dodd, First Bank, First Horizon, Hiller, Bank of England, Leaders Credit Union, and Regions Bank. According to Harris, "Several attendees expressed a desire to be homeowners within the next 12-24 months. We will work with them to pursue this goal." In addition to helpful information, the expo also included free lunch, prizes, and a Proclamation presented from the Madison County Mayor's office by Councilman Richard Donnell.

Harris expressed her gratitude to GROWWTH for the support, opportunity, and resources. "GROWWTH helped me realize a dream!"



Promoting Career Pathways and Developing the Youth Talent Pipeline

Virtual Career Exploration

TRANSFVR software, a virtual reality-based education and training workforce development platform, helps students and job seekers get on a path to middle skills employment. TRANSFR VR helps educators, workforce development professionals, economic development organizations, and employers provide simulations that allow students and job seekers to explore career pathways including Manufacturing, Automotive, Public Safety, Skilled Trades, Warehousing & Storage, Healthcare, and Hospitality & Tourism. New modules continue to be added. During the program year, 1,256 students across 14 high schools and other organizations were able to experience over 1,900 simulations.



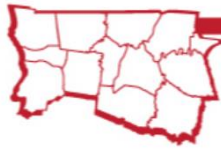
Healthcare Pathways

Through the Health Resources & Services Administration’s (HRSA) Delta Region Rural Health Workforce Training Program, a partnership between Jackson State Community College (JSCC), Jackson-Madison County General Hospital, Rural Health Association of Tennessee, and the Southwest and Northwest Tennessee Workforce Boards was formed to support the \$1.2 million grant awarded to JSCC for its Medical Coding program. The grant is supplying training, scholarships, and support to students in West Tennessee. Approximately, 60% of the grant will directly benefit students with the remaining funds covering administrative and program enhancements. Scholarships from the grant funding will cover tuition, program fees, books, certification exam fees, and a stipend for additional educational expenses for upwards of 90 students over the four-year grant.

Manufacturing Pathways

Organized nationally by the Manufacturing Institute, National Manufacturing (MFG) Day is manufacturing’s biggest annual opportunity to inspire the next generation, positively shift perceptions about the industry, and build the foundation for the manufacturing workforce of the future. Each year the Southwest area works with area high schools and employers to celebrate by arranging in-person tours of local manufacturing facilities for area students in order to promote local career opportunities within the manufacturing industry.





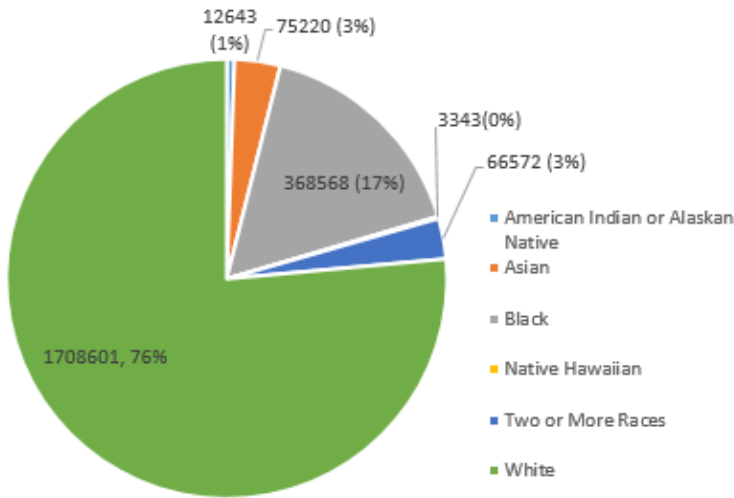
Northern Middle Tennessee
Workforce Board Inc.

Annual Report

2023-2024



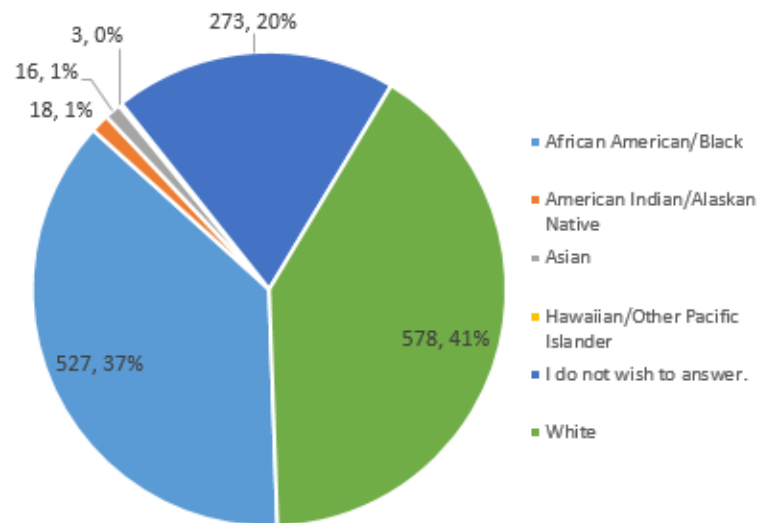
Statistics



Enrolled Individuals- By Race

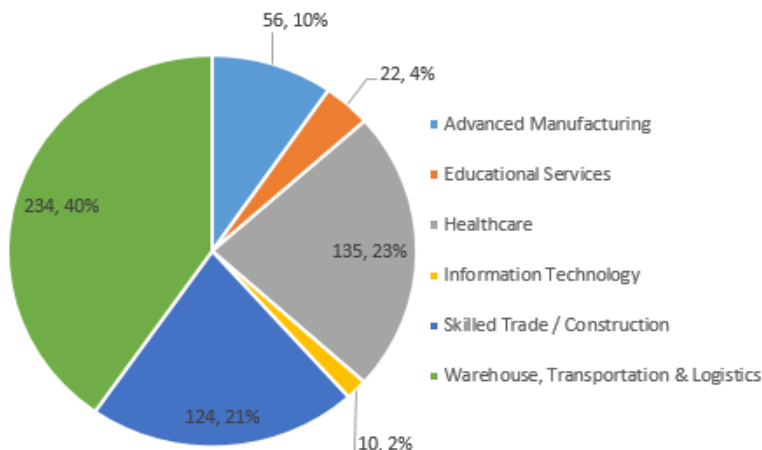
The chart on the right reflects the race of clients enrolled in the 23-24 program year and receiving assistance. While 17% of the total population is black, over 37% of the WIOA participants are minorities. Targeting the most in need is a priority in Northern Middle.

The chart below shows the in-demand skills for which participants receive training in sector strategies defined by the board. The information reflects the Board's commitment to assisting the equity-challenged and moving them toward self-sufficiency with training in high-demand occupations.



In-Demand Skills Training

The Board's Local and Regional Plan focuses its efforts and partner resources on developing career pathways in the six in-demand sectors listed in the chart on the left. Over 40% of the trainees enroll in the transportation/logistic sector.



Target Populations

Tennessee Youth Employment Program

The Northern Middle Workforce Board was awarded the Youth Employment Program (YEP) grant to place youth ages 14-24 in various occupations to gain valuable experience. In the Northern Middle Workforce Area, 634 youth were afforded employment, saving employers over \$1.7 million in wages.

Success Stories



14 year old Laiklan with Montgomery County Mayor Golden

From YEP participant, Laiklan: When asked if he enjoyed his experience at the Montgomery County Trustee's office, he replied that he did enjoy it and was able to learn how to type checks, he sent out letters for tax relief and learned that the Trustee's office helps disabled veterans. He recommended that other youths apply for the program as it was a good experience for those with no job experience.

His supervisor described him as an absolute joy to work with who never asked for a day off and came in happy every day with an eagerness and readiness to work. She thanked Mayor Golden for recommending the program and is looking forward to taking on more youths next summer.



15 year old Monica at Plato's Closet

From YEP Supervisor: As the owners of a small business in town, we are always trying to find ways to make our dollars stretch and still provide a great income for our staff. YEP has provided us an opportunity through this season to employ additional staff, and teach skills that help qualify them for their future careers.

Through the program we were able to hire Monica, a college student, and a young adult. She has expanded her skills tremendously with customer service, communication & teamwork. She came into this program scared to talk to people and timid around her peers. By the end of her third week of training, she could walk up to complete strangers and volunteer her services. She has learned valuable work ethics that will take her far in her career.

Re-Entry

Expungement Clinics

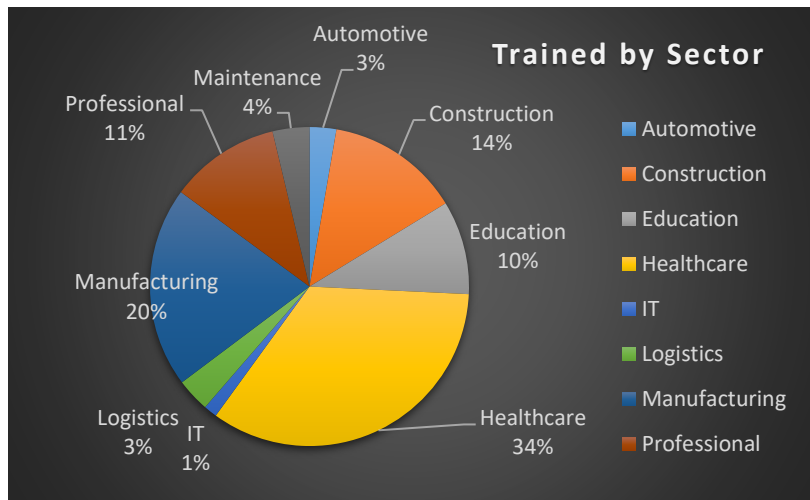
The Northern Middle Workforce Board partnered with the Wilson County American Job Center and Justice For All to coordinate and offer an expungement clinic. This event assists justice-involved persons in removing the criminal record barrier that prevented them from gaining employment, housing, and access to other opportunities in their community. During this specific clinic, **243 files were retrieved** during the general sessions expungement clinic, and **51 files were retrieved** for the criminal expungement clinic affording better opportunities for employment. Removing participant barriers is a priority for the Northern Middle Board.



Business Services

Incumbent Worker Training & Apprenticeships

The cornerstone of the Northern Middle Workforce Board is service to business and industry. The Board has appropriated **\$513K in funding** for incumbent worker training and apprenticeships during 2023-2024. Over **295 incumbent workers successfully training** across key sectors like healthcare, manufacturing, construction, and education. This initiative has equipped workers with the skills needed to keep pace with industry changes, reduce turnover, and enhance productivity. The funding has directly contributed to strengthening the workforce and addressing critical skills gaps, ensuring businesses remain competitive and employees can advance in their careers.



Adult Education

Grant Successes

The Northern Middle Workforce Board’s Title II Adult Education provider, Workforce Essential’s services ten counties. The area includes rural, suburban, and urban communities, reflecting our region's geographic and demographic diversity. The program served **4,964 students in ABE** and did so with the lowest cost per participant in the state. It also reached an all-time high of **629 graduates** and had a **measurable skills gains adjusted number reaching 55.95%**.

Workforce Development Initiative Programs

The Title II provider has a long history of strong employer partnerships and is a proud state leader with Workforce Development Initiatives. During the program year, **642 WDI programs** were conducted and services were provided in more than 50 different locations.

Taylor Farms

Taylor Farms, an employer of 1,650 people in Smyrna that is well known on grocery shelves for its fresh-packaged salads, is supporting their employees’ continuing education. Nineteen Taylor Farms employees received their High School Equivalency Diplomas during the 2024 graduation ceremonies in Wilson and Rutherford counties.

Their employees participated in classes that took place at the work site or at convenient locations in Rutherford and Wilson counties.



Senior Community Service Employment Program

Overview

The Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) is a federal initiative that provides job training and employment opportunities for older adults, enhancing their skills and helping them re-enter the workforce. There was **a total of 138 unduplicated individuals** earning over **\$894,054 in participant wages**.

Meeting Seniors Where They Are



Cyber-Seniors is a vital component of Digital Literacy for Seniors, a series of programs offered by Nashville Public Library's Digital Inclusion team in partnership with SCSEP. Through this collaboration, the Nashville Public Library delivered the fourth 10-week Digital Literacy class and has had **36 graduates in 23-24** so far. Thanks to a generous grant, the library can

conduct these classes and provide each participant with a laptop, a certificate of completion, and a laptop case. Enrollment in SCSEP and full attendance in the classes were required.

Our Chance

The Our ChanceTN pilot transforms the way the state assists families in moving out of poverty and into opportunities **across 16 counties**. The program is designed to showcase a new vision for the Tennessee Safety Net that could be expanded statewide and potentially serve as a national model. The grant is funded by funds from the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF).



The grant was **tasked with serving 900** but **served 979**, providing one of three levels of Family Coaching services and delivering **over \$517,151 in client assistance**. For the families that reached a benefit cliff, Our Chance has assisted with over **\$400,000 in transitional benefit payments** to further assist families in overcoming the immediate loss of financial public benefits.

Success Stories



Meet Ricky, whose transformative experience through the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) exemplifies resilience and personal growth. Over his two-year tenure in SCSEP, Ricky secured permanent employment at his host agency and embarked on a profound personal development journey. Working closely with his advisor, he significantly enhanced his self-confidence and self-esteem.

Despite facing a daunting battle with throat cancer, Ricky demonstrated remarkable determination and is now proudly cancer-free. Inspired by discussions with his advisor, he pursued and achieved his high school equivalency, earning his diploma in May 2024. His exceptional efforts were recognized when he was honored as the Student of the Year - an accolade that marks his academic and personal achievements.

Meet Chris, who came into the AJC as a Dislocated Worker due to his company moving their department out of state.

Although he struggled to find work due to his specialized skill set and lack of formal education, the AJC staff assisted Chris in a job search which led to a job that directly feeds his passion for using his skills and gifts to help people.

Chris is now working with the Omni Family Foundation to help foster children who have aged out of the system transition into a productive, independent, sustainable life.

Looking ahead, Chris is eager to leverage his experience with the WIOA program to guide his clients toward a successful transition.





Meet Paige, who came to the AJC for assistance with her job search as a re-enrollment.

She was eligible for the WIOA Out-of-School Youth program as an individual with a disclosed disability, justice-involved background, and is currently on probation. She attended our job fair on 4/5, and applied for employment at a local restaurant.

Paige is currently experiencing homelessness and living with a friend. She does not have a vehicle, but her friend provides transportation to employment.

She has since entered the Youth Employment Program and has been given a gas card and work clothes/shoes to maintain employment to get back on her feet after a sporadic work history. Her goal is to gain valuable work experience and maintain self-sufficient employment.

Meet Meagen, a dedicated mother of four who enrolled in the Tennessee College of Applied Technology LPN program as a low-income adult student.

Over the past year, Meagen demonstrated remarkable resilience and unwavering commitment, overcoming numerous obstacles that culminated in her graduating with Honors on August 22nd.

Throughout her academic journey, the AJC staff had the privilege of supporting Meagen with essential services such as transportation and childcare, ensuring she could focus on her studies while attending classes in Dickson. Moving forward, she hopes to gain valuable experience as a LPN and eventually become a registered nurse.



WIOA Performance

Overview

The Northern Middle Workforce Board prioritizes efficiency in operations and performance management. During the 2023-2024 program year, the Northern Middle Workforce Board achieved success by developing strategic partnerships to help support the Board’s goals and objectives. Focusing on priority populations, outreach, and enrollment of marginalized and underserved populations promoted success. Working with local community-based organizations allowed us to reach participants where they reside. The Board achieved all federal performance measures operating with fiscal integrity and focusing on performance management. Twelve standards were achieved at 100% or greater, and the remaining three objectives were achieved at well above 90%. The final cornerstone of success was the Board’s commitment to serving business and industry by allocating formula funds and target grants **totaling over \$500,000** to support incumbent worker and apprenticeship training.

PY23 Q4 WIOA Core Performance Measures		47140 Northern Middle	
Adult Measures	Pass/Fail		Pass
	Negotiated	Actual	% of Goal
Exiters		504	
Participants Served		1862	
EER 2nd Qtr after exit	81.50%	82.80%	101.6%
EER 4th Qtr after exit	81.00%	77.00%	95.1%
Med. Earnings	\$ 7,025	\$ 9,000	128.1%
Cred. Attainment	69.50%	68.40%	98.4%
MSG	63.50%	68.30%	107.6%
Dislocated Worker	Pass/Fail		Pass
	Negotiated	Actual	% of Goal
Exiters		221	
Participants Served		699	
EER 2nd Qtr after exit	83.50%	85.60%	102.5%
EER 4th Qtr after exit	81.00%	79.50%	98.1%
Med. Earnings	\$ 7,944	\$ 10,893	137.1%
Cred. Attainment	65.50%	68.90%	105.2%
MSG	61.20%	71.40%	116.7%
Youth	Pass/Fail		Pass
	Negotiated	Actual	% of Goal
Exiters		496	
Participants Served		1125	
EER 2nd Qtr after exit	78.00%	83.50%	107.1%
EER 4th Qtr after exit	77.00%	83.10%	107.9%
Med. Earnings	\$ 3,800	\$ 6,171	162.4%
Cred. Attainment	65.50%	73.10%	111.6%
MSG	55.00%	65.10%	118.4%

**Southern Middle
Local Workforce Development Board
PY23 Annual Narrative**

The mission of the Southern Middle Local Workforce Development Board (SMLWDB) is to build a high-quality workforce system that effectively addresses the needs of local employers and job seekers. Our WIOA program is designed to enhance the workforce system through innovation and service alignment, fostering both individual and economic growth. SMLWDB aims to meet the needs of businesses and industries in our region while supporting the recovery of workforce potential in our distressed counties.

Through the One-Stop Delivery Model, AJC staff and regional partners collaborate to deliver seamless, coordinated services, helping job seekers and employers achieve their economic goals. By aligning services across all AJCs, we ensure that participants receive the same high-quality support in the counties where they reside.

Representing thirteen counties across Southern Middle Tennessee, the SMLWDB ensures that all areas, including those classified as At-Risk and Distressed, are served by an American Job Center (AJC). These centers provide top-tier services to both job seekers and employers, offering valuable resources and support. The AJCs are committed to serving all job seekers, with a special focus on those facing significant barriers, such as high school dropouts, justice-involved individuals, low-income populations, people with disabilities, the homeless, and single parents. Our centers offer a wide range of programs to assist these underserved groups, including Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth, Adult Education, Vocational Rehabilitation, SCSEP, Wagner-Peyser, SNAP Employment & Training, RESEA, and Re-entry-focused case management services. In addition, job seekers have access to essential services like job search assistance, resume and interview coaching, and employer networking opportunities through the Wagner-Peyser Program. AJCs also benefit from strong partnerships with local employers and community resources throughout the region.

Career Advisors and Specialists across all AJC programs in the Southern Middle region actively engage in outreach efforts to meet customers where they are. Once contact is made, AJC staff assess each individual's needs and direct them to the most appropriate program, providing personalized pathways and ongoing guidance for successful program enrollment and career development. The presence of AJCs in all thirteen counties has been a key factor in our success. Especially in rural and distressed areas, the availability of these services is vital for increasing workforce participation across the region. Southern Middle takes pride in working alongside partners to create client- and employer-centered services within a transparent, financially accountable workforce development system.

Participants Served by County

COUNTY	SERVED IN AJC	TITLE I New Enrollments
BEDFORD	788	42
COFFEE	2104	47
FRANKLIN	60	39
GILES	2576	57
HICKMAN	57	10
LAWRENCE	4451	43
LEWIS	302	35
LINCOLN	773	25
MARSHALL	289	9
MAURY	5351	55
MOORE	1	3
PERRY	46	5
WAYNE	754	12
TOTAL	17552	382

Apprenticeship

Southern Middle’s apprenticeship program specifically targeted individuals aspiring to become teachers within a local school district. Over the past year, we successfully engaged seven participants, offering them a blend of classroom instruction and practical experience under the guidance of experienced mentors. This program not only equips apprentices with essential teaching skills but also fosters a deep understanding of the educational landscape and the challenges students face.

Quest National Dislocated Work Grant

The Southern Middle Local Workforce Development Board received \$1,673,917.72 in funding through the Quest National Dislocated Worker Grant (NDWG). This three-year grant, which extends through 2026, has provided over \$67,302.44 in paid work experience wages to NDWG participants as of June 30, 2024.

RESEA Cares Grant

The Southern Middle Tennessee Local Workforce Development Board (SMLWDB) was awarded a special grant funded by RESEA Cares. Through this grant, 1,318 individuals participated in RESEA orientation sessions, 26 participants were co-enrolled in Title I services, and 333 individuals successfully secured employment after completing the program.

Reentry Grant

Southern Middle Tennessee was awarded Reentry Grant funding to provide specialized training for incarcerated individuals. With this funding, 32 justice-involved individuals were enrolled in paid training programs aimed at improving employment opportunities and reducing recidivism in

Southern Middle Tennessee and surrounding counties. The pilot counties for the Reentry Grant were Franklin, Maury, and Wayne. In Franklin County, incarcerated individuals participated in Certified Production Technician training, while Maury and Wayne counties offered customer

Youth Employment Program

Southern Middle Tennessee was awarded the Youth Employment Program (YEP) grant to serve youth ages 14-24. Initially granted \$1,000,000 to enroll 282 youth from July 1, 2023, to August 31, 2024, the program exceeded expectations. Due to its success, Southern Middle requested and received an additional \$742,845 to enroll 165 more youth. As of July 2024, 843 youth have participated in the program—396 more than the original target.

Across 13 counties, 235 businesses employed youth, with 135 of those participants being between the ages of 14 and 16. One distressed county in the region enrolled 114 youth in the YEP program. Governor Bill Lee visited Perry County to meet with youth participants and business owners, discussing the opportunities the program has created for both local youth and employers.

Southern Middle Success Stories

1. Title I Adult

Southern Middle worked with a single mother who had spent much of her life in retail but was determined to create a better future for herself and her child. Seeking a career change, she enrolled in training through Title I Adult funding. After completing her studies at the Dental School, she secured a position at a local dentist's office. Her long-term goal is to eventually assist an orthodontist, fulfilling her dream of advancing in the healthcare field.

2. Youth Employment Program

Southern Middle enrolled 66 youth participants at a local manufacturing facility. Upon completing the program, the company offered continued employment to those interested, with about 25% of the youth choosing to stay on. The facility employed youth from several schools, including Lawrence County High School, Loretto High School, Summertown High School, Collinwood High School, Wayne County High School, and Clifton High School.

3. Quest National Dislocated Worker Grant

Southern Middle enrolled a single mother of four into the Quest National Dislocated Worker Grant (NDWG) program after she relocated to a county in the Southern Middle area. NDWG funds were used to place her in a manufacturing job, and upon completing the program, the company reached out to the Career Service Provider to share positive feedback. They expressed that she was an excellent fit for their workforce and offered her a full-time position.

Executive Summary

The Upper Cumberland Local Workforce Development Board, which serves 14 counties in the region, had a year with both successes and challenges. Although there were issues like high employee turnover and skill gaps among job candidates, the teamwork between our partners—such as the Workforce Board, American Job Center, and the Upper Cumberland Human Resource Agency—through the Empower program helped us provide excellent services to employers and support people as they worked to rejoin the workforce.

Key Accomplishments in the Upper Cumberland

- There was an increase in enrollments and services provided to participations by the American Job Centers.
- Upper Cumberland businesses received \$333,000 across 12 counties, assisting 541 employees with Apprenticeship and Incumbent Worker Training funding.
- The Work 1st initiative made great progress in sending job seekers directly to businesses with job openings.



Yearly Overview

American Job Center

The American Job Center consists of the Title partners under the WIOA law and the One Stop Operator who focus on providing the best services for the local individuals across Upper Cumberland counties.

During the program year, 12,109 services were provided to participants. This was an increase of 19% from the previous program year. Of the services provided 56% of the participants came to the American Job Center needing employment assistance. With the ever-changing needs of the participants of the American Job Center, the Title partners remained willing to connect participants and employers for the overall benefit of the Upper Cumberland workforce.

56 % of individuals that came to an AJC needed employment assistance

During the program, the American Job Center in Putnam County moved to a new location at 620 South Jefferson Ave, Ste 202, Cookeville, TN 38501. This new spot is in a more central area, making it easier for people to find and access the center. The move will help the American Job Center be more visible and accessible to those passing by.



*American Job Center Grand Opening at New Location

The Title I program helped a total of 564 people, including 368 adults, 31 dislocated workers, and 165 youth. The Career Team worked hard to enroll 325 youth into the TYEP program, offering them jobs and experience in areas like schools, small businesses, government agencies, and even aviation. After completing the program, 36 youth were hired by local companies, with one company hiring five youth to help open a new location. The Career Team

also supported 31 people through a special NDWG grant, helping them train to become licensed truck drivers. This program focused on helping people who were coming out of incarceration.

In addition, the Career Team worked on Reentry efforts with courts in Smith and Macon counties. In Macon County, they helped pay the wages for two incarcerated individuals to work



through a partnership with the sheriff's department and a company called Baby Nov. After completing the program, the two individuals were hired by Babynov at a higher wage. Babynov was so impressed that they want to do the work-release program again. In Smith County, a Career Advisor worked closely with the court to help people explore career options, get school help, and find support services.

*Career Advisor, Jessica Miller, featured with Smith County Judge Bellar

The Wagner-Peyser staff in the Upper Cumberland region had a positive impact on the community. They helped 2,084 people by providing 24,367 services, such as job assessments, resume building, interview preparation, job referrals, and more. These services reached many people, especially in rural areas, through outreach efforts. The team worked closely with local Chambers of Commerce to connect job seekers with employers. They also partnered with local schools, including TCATs, high schools, and Career and Technical Education (CTE) directors. This year, they made plans to expand their work with high schools and introduce the Industry 4.0 Diploma in the future.



Wagner-Peyser's work has helped individuals find better jobs and has strengthened communities in the Upper Cumberland region. They remain focused on meeting the area's workforce needs and are committed to making a positive difference in the lives of the people they serve.

Business Services

Building on the success of the previous year, business services under the local workforce board were able to assist more employers and provide more funding than before. With the funding opportunity provided by the State of Tennessee businesses within the Upper Cumberland region received \$333,000 which spread across 12 of the 14 counties within the area.

*UCLWDB spent
\$333,000 in businesses
in 12 of the 14 Upper
Cumberland counties in
2023-2024*

Under the partnership with the Department of Apprenticeships, the Upper Cumberland was able to assist in the development of several new programs. The programs were designed to develop the company's current workforce for retention and to also attract new talent to grow



the company. In total, 10 companies received funding that provided training for 33 employees. One of these companies, Madiston Powertel in Cannon County, TN, was able to use their new electrician and fiber optics technician apprentice program to grow their workforce by 25 employees in one year.

*Madiston Powertel Inc. pictured with Staff to the Board

The Incumbent Training funding had a major impact on the counties in the Upper Cumberland. Twelve companies and 503 employees across the Upper Cumberland received funding to assist in upskilling training employees to either build a stronger workforce with training or create opportunities for the companies to develop better practices within to create growth opportunities. Macon County Community Hospital used the funding to assist in the



*Macon Community Hospital IWT Check Presentation

training in the region's first high E3 Emergency Management System. This system is hospital hospital-wide emergency system that can alert or lock down a section of the hospital from a computer or phone during weather or active shooter emergency situations.

Work 1st

As we address the employment needs of our community, our Work 1st initiative has proven to be instrumental in placing trained participants from the American Job Center into gainful employment. Over the past program year, the American Job Center facilitated 5,719 application referrals to employers, providing a vital link between program participants and local businesses. This initiative has not only empowered individuals seeking employment but also allowed employers to connect with qualified candidates through the expert services of our staff.

In the last program year, the Upper Cumberland has demonstrated a 188% increase in successful full and part time job placements.



In the past program year, the Upper Cumberland Local Workforce Development Board achieved significant milestones in its business services. We established 54 new recruiting profiles and provided 451 recruitment services, a remarkable 1002%

rise from the previous program year. A total of 5,719 referrals were made for both full- and part-time positions, marking a 2623% increase. We successfully placed 274 local individuals in full- and part-time jobs, resulting in a 188% improvement. Our work experience program saw a substantial increase as well, with 160 participants, a 2000% rise. Overall, the Upper Cumberland region was able to serve 726 employers, which is 110% of our goal, and delivered a total of 11,334 business services, also exceeding our target at 110%.

What's next?

The Upper Cumberland Local Workforce Development Board intends to continue providing employment services to job seekers and business services to local employers. We will implement and improve upon the Work 1st model in our region.

Upper Cumberland
WORK 1ST



PY 23 WIOA Annual Report

The Southeast Tennessee Local Workforce Development Board (STLWDB) continued its mission to empower job seekers and support local businesses across 10 counties through services at six American Job Centers (AJCs). These include comprehensive centers in Athens and Chattanooga, affiliate centers in Cleveland, Dayton, Marion County, and a specialized center in Tracy City. Through collaborative relationships with WIOA partners and strategic area-wide partnerships, STLWDB achieved significant successes and identified new opportunities for growth and innovation in programming.

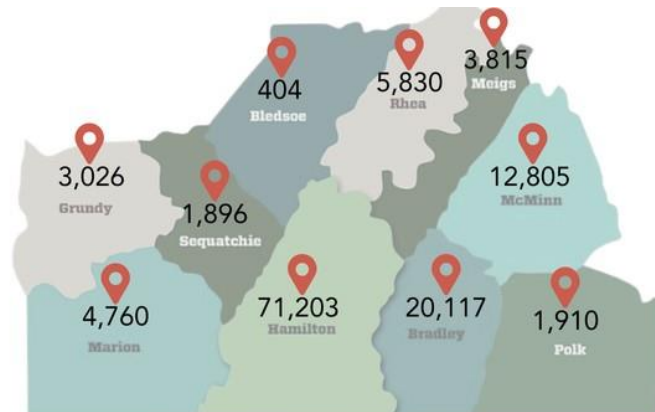
Key Successes and Challenges

Successes: STLWDB expanded the Transitional Youth Employment Program (TYEP), providing hundreds of local youth with work experience and skills. Rapid Response services supported displaced workers, and specialized services helped justice-involved individuals reintegrate into the workforce.

Challenges: Recruiting participants, especially in underserved populations, remains challenging. STLWDB is addressing this with new outreach methods, community partnerships, and digital marketing. The board is also enhancing remote service options to improve accessibility and adapt to evolving job seeker needs.

Southeast Tennessee American Job Center Services

From July 1, 2023, to June 30, 2024, the Southeast Tennessee workforce system supported a vibrant, diverse community by providing essential career services, skill-building resources, and support for individuals navigating unemployment. Across the area’s 10 counties, the American Job Centers (AJCs) served as pivotal resources, meeting the varied needs of **14,920 individuals** through **125,766 service interactions**.



While total traffic is still below pre-pandemic levels, we saw a 3% increase in physical AJC visits over last year, with **4,420 unique visitors**. 21,868 individuals created Jobs4TN accounts in our area, gaining access to statewide job search tools, career exploration resources, and labor market information.

Our area’s AJCs address a variety of needs, with **computer room access (26%)** and **unemployment insurance assistance (22%)** ranking as the top two services sought by visitors. For many, AJCs offer an indispensable link to digital tools that foster career advancement and job search success.

AJCs are committed to addressing the unique needs of special populations, including veterans, justice-involved individuals, youth, and individuals impacted by substance use disorders. With designated programs and staff, AJCs provided tailored support, including access to transitional job opportunities, co-enrollment options for enhanced service delivery, and recovery-to-work programs designed to aid individuals in reentering the workforce. During the year, staff served these target populations:

Veterans: 206
Individuals seeking re-entry support: 658
People experiencing homelessness: 224
Single parents: 397
Individuals who are basic skills deficient: 1,793



Southeast Tennessee Recovery to Work Programs

208 individuals were served through **13 new community partnerships**. We provided 11 work readiness sessions to an average of 12 participants each month. We deployed **\$54,477** to support transportation, childcare, and housing stability to QUEST NDWG participants impacted by substance-use disorders.

Community-Focused Grants:
Services delivered in two county jails (Bradley & Grundy) to 40 people. Of those, 36 obtained ServSafe certification.

Southeast Tennessee Business Services

Partnerships with local employers, training providers, and community organizations were critical to the success of AJC services. By hosting **56 hiring events** and making **1,968 job referrals**, AJCs facilitated direct connections between job seekers and regional employers. This collaborative approach fosters a robust pipeline between employers and qualified candidates, ultimately strengthening the local economy and workforce ecosystem.

The Business Services Team (BST) engaged **701 local businesses**, creating **218 job orders** and delivered **14,514 services** across key industries, including manufacturing (29%), retail trade (15%), and administrative support (10%).

Training Investment: STLWDB awarded \$362,000 in training grants to upskill 405 employees across 26 companies.

Rapid Response Initiatives: Following Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notifications (WARN) from seven companies, BST hosted targeted job fairs and Rapid Response orientations, addressing a job loss of 349 positions.

Southeast Tennessee Participant Training

456 individuals were enrolled in WIOA Title I training with **419** obtaining employment and **233** earning credentials during the year. Southeast invested **\$1.1M** in individual training accounts (ITA) with an additional **\$219,000** in direct funding provided to help individuals in training overcome financial barriers to success in their chosen program.

Southeast Tennessee Youth Services

In PY 23-24, **171 youth** received comprehensive support through career exploration, assessments, and career planning. Among them, 33 engaged in paid work experiences, 106 participated in training, and 72 received financial aid to overcome personal barriers.

TYEP Impact: 511 youth placed across 85 worksites, with total earnings reaching \$643,513 at an average hourly wage of \$16.40.

Southeast Tennessee Success Stories

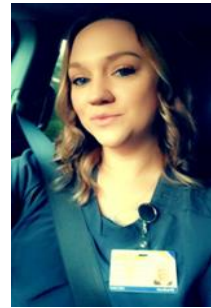


Eddy has been part of Our Masters Camp in Bledsoe County for the last 10 months and joined the QUEST program in March 2024. When he's not in classroom workshops, Eddy takes care of the camp's 100-acre grounds, tending to the garden and lawn. Thanks to the support from QUEST, Eddy is making great strides toward getting his driver's license. He's already met all the financial requirements and passed the knowledge test. Next month, he's set to take the driving test to finally get his license. Having lived in Bledsoe County his whole life, Eddy is excited about the new job opportunities that will open up once he's able to drive.

Since mid-2023, Chattanooga Football Club (CFC) has expanded its full-time staff from 8-10 employees to over 40, driven by the move to the MLS NextPro League and the acquisition of the Youth Academy. Many of these new hires are early in their careers, and CFC has prioritized extensive training to develop their skills. With support from an Incumbent Worker Training Grant, CFC provided training to 14 employees, covering essential topics like leadership, communication, and diversity. This training has enhanced team collaboration, professionalism, and community engagement, positioning CFC to host over 100 community events this year and contribute to the growth of youth soccer and education in Chattanooga.



Jennifer, a single mother of two, came to the Marion AJC through the WIOA Program while facing long-term unemployment and relying on SNAP benefits. With WIOA support, she completed training and earned certifications as a Certified Electronic Health Records Specialist and Certified Medical Administrative Assistant in August 2023. Within two months, she added her Clinical Medical Assistant credential. Today, she is employed at Erlanger Primary Care in Lookout Mountain, GA, where she embraces her new career path.



Charles discovered the NDWG QUEST Grant while attending soft skills workshops at the Chattanooga Day Reporting Center. After a period of long-term unemployment, Charles enrolled in the QUEST program in July 2024, where he received housing assistance and support as he worked through Project Return and his training. By August 2024, Charles had secured full-time employment at Novonix, marking a fresh start in his career journey.

Southeast Tennessee Key Performance Indicators

Program	KPI Target	Attained	Percentage
A/DW	421	345	82%
Youth	205	148	72%
<i>In-School Youth</i>	62	38	61%
TYEP (SYEP) Enrollment	150	482	321%
Jobs for Veterans	26	62	238%
Justice-Involved Individuals	341	919	270%
RESEA	30	3	10%
SNAP E&T	187	134	72%
Wagner Peyser	2631	4760	181%

I. Promising Practices:

Sector Strategy Development

TOURISM: In cooperation with state Business and Workforce Developers, LWDA East Staff coordinated industry-wide efforts to assess gaps, training needs, recruitment and other strategies alongside industry partners.

Objectives include advancing career exploration, career pathway development, compensation growth and investment.

HEALTH: In coordination with The TDLWD Rural Initiative; established framework to initiate working group development in December 24 and January 25 to begin needs assessment and coalition development. We anticipate hospitals, ambulance services, tele-medicine, vocational trainers and many other sector participants.

ENERGY: With the arrival of Orano Energy, (the single largest direct foreign investment in Tennessee history), the Small Module Nuclear Reactor generator on the Clinch River and The Fusion electric generator coming to the TVA Bull Run Former Steam Plant site, LWDA East has gained some new energy businesses that will drive energy development worldwide. They bring requirements for worker skills that do not currently exist. Building this working group is planned for spring/summer 2025.

Justice Involved Training

Staff to the board continues training in Anderson County Jail to teach job ready skills. TDLWD Justice Involved Grants were awarded to various non-profits for 2024 and 2025, so LWDA East One Stop Operator and Career Service Provider maintain liaison with Knox Leadership Foundation and Men of Valor Recovery Program to provide services to the incarcerated once they are released from jail or prison.

The Local Board will participate in Office of Re-Entry and Apprenticeship Office for field activities during Apprenticeship month and other public awareness campaigns to integrate Career Services.

The Knox Comprehensive AJC offer monthly Justice Involved Job Fairs, while the other nine AJCs offer services and job fairs periodically to serve a wider population, but certainly inclusive of Justice Involved Individuals.

Our attempts to attract Justice Involved Trainees through Day Reporting Centers proved unfruitful. Transportation and the 10-day commitment were barriers to training. Many Day Reporting Center Clients have large time requirements for Recovery Courts and some have secured part time or full-time employment to satisfy Court payment mandates.

ETHRA continues to operate a Day Reporting Center program and refer clients, LWDA East will expand County jail training, subject to the next OOR budget cycle.

Co-enrollment with AJC Partners

This continues to be the strength of our AJC operations. Clear communications and deliberate, regular information exchanges among partners ensure success for clients and AJC staff. Referrals and co-enrollment also optimize every shrinking budgets.

Virtual Reality Workforce Pipeline Development

Year 2 of Tranfr VR Goggle programming proved very beneficial with multiple segments. Our Career Service Provider joined Staff to the Board for tremendous success in Middle School classrooms and High School career days across LWDA East. The team provided over 2000 students with 7-12-minute virtual vignettes in welding, paint booth operations, electrical line work, hotel clerking and surgery. Staff to the Board extended these services within the Anderson County Jail for a well-received orientation again this year for 20 inmates. Based upon experiences there, VR goggles can easily be incorporated into future Justice Involved Training.

Staff Training and Development

University of Tennessee Center for Industrial Services is currently the LWDA East One-Stop Operator. Additionally, UT-CIS brings significant staff training capabilities beyond contracted OSO services. These services include economic development training courses which yield state level certifications. Five LWDA East Staff to the Board members have enrolled and are pursuing these certifications. As many as three staffers may obtain certification this year.

UT-CIS also has plans to provide a dedicated Workforce Development Course and accompanying certification in 2025. The potential to invest in front line case workers is a tremendous boost to current training capabilities. Professionally trained Career Specialists are at a premium and some have taken jobs elsewhere. Dedicated education and training for Workforce developers will most certainly enhance retention, promotion potential and improve for all Tennesseans.

Tennessee Youth Employment Program

Currently 226 of 180 originally planned Youth served with \$565,000 (95%) of the grant expended. 37 TYEP Employers across the LWDA served. (Forecasting 500+ TYEP Youth for 2025; pending legislative appropriation).

Incumbent Worker Training

These grants remained a staple for Business Services in 2024. LWDA East served 15 employers, 491 individual workers through \$184,587 in state and federal funding.

Apprenticeship

In 2023/4 LWDA East served 11 companies and 255 Apprentices totaling \$228,626

Rapid Response

In 2023/4 LWDA East served 4 companies and 453 displaced workers

Access points

In 2023/4 LWDA East operated 14 access points within local businesses, non-profits, libraries and other sites designed to extend the reach of AJC services. Outreach continues in the effort to expand further.

II. LWDA East Performance:

Performance remained strong, meeting or exceeding all elements of Q4 PY 24 WIOA Title I WIOA Core Performance Measures in all categories while serving one of every five adult, dislocated worker and youth customers (combined totals) throughout Tennessee's Workforce Services delivery network.

III. East's Success

BLOUNT COUNTY

Blount County – RESEA participant (Title III)

A RESEA participant worked with their RESEA Career Specialist and was able to start their own business. They reported that the support and resources they received helped them move forward.

Blount County – Titles I and III co-enrollment

Ms. J co-enrolled with SNAP E&T and Title I as a single mother of four children. She was working part time and asked for assistance with her last two semesters of nursing school. She graduated from a local university, passed the NCLEX, and received her license as a Registered Nurse in July 2023. She started working full time in a hospital at over \$25/hour.

CAMPBELL COUNTY

Campbell – Titles I, II, and III Co-enrollment

“Kay” was a long-term unemployed individual receiving public assistance (SNAP plus other benefits) who wanted to return to the workforce. She had worked in the home health field for 15 years prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. She successfully completed Adult Education and gained her HiSET in preparation of entering the Practical Nursing program at TCAT-Jacksboro. She was co-enrolled with SNAP E&T, as well as the WIOA Title I Adult program through the American Job Center in Jacksboro to provide travel and other supportive service needs throughout participation. She successfully completed her Nursing, obtained her license from the State of Tennessee as a Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN), and gained employment on 07/17/2023 earning over \$35/hour working full time as an LPN. She is currently “living her best life” working as an LPN, and traveling the country as her schedule allows. She is proud to have overcome and returned to the workforce without need for any additional public assistance. “Kay” continues to keep in touch and remains appreciative of the WIOA Services that made her dream job a reality.

Campbell County – Titles I and III Co-enrollment

T. is a young single mother of 3 children. She came to SNAP E & T asking for help to attend training for needed skills to gain employment to raise her 3 children. Prior to training T. was a waitress but had been let go. T. received training for Phlebotomy and is currently employed full time as a lab tech making \$15/hour with benefits. T. was co-enrolled with Title I and SNAP E&T.

CLAIBORNE COUNTY

Claiborne – Youth (Title I)

Mr. C enrolled with Title I, was unemployed and had no prior work history. He successfully completed Welding training at TCAT-Morristown in fall 2023 earning a diploma as a welder and secured full-time employment soon after earning \$18/hour.

COCKE COUNTY

Cocke County Titles I and III Co-enrollment

Mr. D. had not worked in many years and overcame a disability. He co-enrolled with Title I and SNAP E&T to assist with costs and fees. He successfully completed CDL training in March 2024 and started a job as a truck driver at an area company. During his first 4-6 weeks of training there, earnings are \$600/week. When he starts hauling, he will make .50 a mile.

Cocke County Titles I and III Co-enrollment

Ms. H successfully graduated from TCAT and obtained her LPN license in July 2023 and started working at a local health care facility as an LPN making over \$15/hour. As a single mother of 3, Title I and SNAP E&T helped her to pursue a job in healthcare, a dream of hers.

GRAINGER COUNTY

Grainger County Title I and Title III Co-enrollment

“Amy,” co-enrolled with Title I and SNAP E&T, graduated from WSCC in winter 2023 with her AS in Nursing. She started work as an RN at a local hospital making over \$25/hour.

HAMBLEN COUNTY

Hamblen – Title I and Title III Co-enrollment

AB enrolled with Title I and was co-enrolled with SNAP E&T with plans to successfully complete her nursing degree at WSCC. As a single mother, she graduated from WSCC in winter 2023 with an A.S. in Health Sciences. In spring 2024, she passed the NCLEX-RN earning her Registered Nurse license. She is now a registered nurse for a local hospital, working full-time

and earning \$30+ per hour, is no longer reliant upon public assistance, and is self-sufficient supporting herself and her child.

Hamblen – Adult Title I

AB was enrolled in Title I in October 2023 with plans to obtain her CNA certification. At enrollment, she was experiencing homelessness, living at a local homeless shelter, and 8 months pregnant. Her determination and perseverance helped her complete training, pass her exam, and obtain employment with a local rehab facility working full time at over \$18/hour. She is now out of the shelter, and a self-sufficient mother who is caring for the needs of others.

Hamblen – Youth Title I

AA enrolled with Title I and began training at TCAT-Morristown in digital graphics. She successfully completed her training with a high GPA in Fall 2023 earning a diploma. She secured full-time employment with a local employer before graduation and earns \$17/hour.

Hamblen County Title I and SNAP E&T Co-enrollment

Ms. H. completed truck driving training at TCAT and obtained her CDL license in Fall 2023. She was co-enrolled with SNAP E&T and Title I who braided funds to assist the customer. She started work as a full-time local truck driver soon after obtaining her CDLs at a local employer making \$26/hour.

Hamblen County Title I and SNAP E&T Co-enrollment

Ms. S. graduated from CNA class at Goodwill in fall 2023, obtained her CNA license soon afterwards and started employment as a CNA in late fall 2023 at a local senior care facility making \$16.00 a hour. SNAP E&T assisted with all costs and travel for Sarah to complete training. She was co-enrolled with Title I and SNAP E&T.

Hamblen County SNAP E&T

Ms. W., a single mother and previous caregiver, graduated from CNA class at Goodwill in Fall 2023 and was hired on as a CNA at healthcare facility nearby soon after making \$15/hour.

JEFFERSON COUNTY

Jefferson County Title I and Title III Co-enrollment

Ms. A. co-enrolled with Title I and SNAP E&T to help her with training to obtain her RN license. She graduated from the Nursing program at WSCC in winter 2023 and obtained her

RN license in early 2024. She obtained full time employment in March 2024 at a local healthcare center making over \$80,000 a year.

KNOX COUNTY

Knoxville – Business Service Team Success

Roadsafe Traffic Systems, Inc., Knoxville, TN, hired eight (8) individuals from job fairs in PY 23. “We would like to thank the Department of Labor and Workforce Development for helping us to gain several new hires from previous job fairs. It is always an honor to work with you and your astounding team. We look forward to continuing to connect with you and add additional employment opportunities for the job seekers that come to you and your job fairs.” - Andrea Wingfield, representative of Roadsafe, Knoxville Job Fair employer participant.

Knox County RESEA Success (Title III)

RESEA customer received help from Career Specialist with a resume, and obtained a new job.

Knox County AJC Services

From Aspiration to Achievement: The Impact of American Job Center Services

(story originally appeared on the ET AJC Website at <https://ajc.cis.tennessee.edu/aspiration-achievement-impact-american-job-center-services>)



Navigating the transition from educational aspirations to a fulfilling career can be challenging. Shaelyn Ward, MSN, RN, the Director of Patient Care Services at Parkwest Medical Center in Knoxville, Tennessee is a testament to how American Job Center (AJC) services can play a pivotal role in bridging this gap. In a recent interview, Ward recounts her journey, showcasing how the East Tennessee AJC’s support was instrumental in her becoming a successful healthcare professional.

Nearly a decade ago, Shaelyn Ward was at a crossroads. With a clear passion for healthcare but unsure of where to start, she faced the daunting task of turning her aspirations into reality. It was during this uncertain period that a friend introduced her to the American Job Center, an encounter that would change her life.

“I knew I wanted to be a nurse, but I didn’t really have any direction from there. So I just literally stumbled into the main lobby and was like, ‘hi, I need some help,’ and kind of went from there.”

Upon walking into the AJC, Ward found more than just career advice. She was met with a wealth of resources and a dedicated mentor who provided both practical and emotional support. “I didn’t really have funds. So it was super helpful, really just having somebody to kind of help with what your next steps are,” Ward shared. This mentor helped Ward navigate the complexities of entering a nursing program at Lincoln Memorial University, offering guidance and resources to help with financial assistance that covered not just tuition, but also crucial expenses like NCLEX exam fees.

Balancing full-time work with nursing school, Ward faced numerous challenges. The support from AJC was not just financial; it extended to personal mentorship. “It was basically like a mentor. We talked on the phone a lot,” Ward recalls. This continuous support helped her stay focused and motivated, proving invaluable as she juggled multiple responsibilities.

Ward’s journey saw her moving to Ohio after graduation, where she began working at a large healthcare facility. Despite the distance, the support from her AJC mentor continued, reinforcing the long-term commitment of AJC services. This unwavering support helped Ward excel in her career, eventually rising to leadership positions, including unit supervisor and nurse manager.

Returning to Tennessee after several years, Ward now finds herself in a position to give back. She recently participated in a hiring event at AJC, this time as a recruiter for Parkwest Medical Center. This event highlights the enduring impact of AJC services. “It was a full circle moment for me,” she said, reflecting on her journey from a beneficiary of AJC services to a leader looking to provide opportunities to others.

Ward’s story is a powerful example of how AJC services can transform lives. By offering a combination of connection to financial aid, career counseling, and personal mentorship, AJCs provide a comprehensive support system for individuals seeking to improve their lives through education and employment.

“You just walk in and they’re like, ‘here are all the things we can do for you.’ And it’s just so helpful, especially when you want to work, you have that good work ethic, but you don’t necessarily know what your next steps are, what to do or how to get out of whatever funk you may be in,” Ward emphasized, underscoring the extensive resources available at AJCs.

Shaelyn Ward’s journey from a nursing student to a director at a major medical center illustrates the profound impact of the American Job Center’s services. Her story serves as an inspiration, showing that with the right support, determination and resources, individuals can achieve their professional dreams.

“I love Parkwest! I love the culture and the people that I get to see every day. It’s really been huge for me to be back in Tennessee and in a really good place where now I can hopefully make a difference in someone else’s life.”

Knox County Business Service Team Successes

- An Amazon recruiter said they received 17 applicants from a June 2024 Knoxville AJC Job Fair.
- A small business was able to work with their LVER to set up an employer account, attended their first job fair, and made a successful hire from that job fair to fill their one open position.
- A local auto parts retail store reported they were very happy that they received 18 applicant candidates from a February 2024 Knoxville AJC Job Fair.

Knox County Title I and SNAP E&T Co-enrollment

Ms. D, a single mother, was co-enrolled in Title I and SNAP E&T and completed dental training in Fall 2023. She started a job as a dental assistant at over \$17/hour.

Knox County SNAP E&T

Mr. A. enrolled in SNAP Employment and Training to obtain his CDLs. He completed training in late fall 2023 and obtained employment at a local bus company for a school district earning \$24,000 annually with summers off. He is excited to be working and plans on continue to looking for fulltime employment over the road but right now this is getting him the experience he needs and he is happy that things are looking brighter in the future.

Knox County Successful Veteran who worked with DVOPs

- A veteran who was experiencing homelessness, was referred to VOA, attended an AJC Job Fair, and obtained employment at a local financial institution at more than \$19/hour.
- A veteran with barriers to employment obtain a job through a local agency assisting other veterans at over \$21/hour.
- A veteran with barriers to employment obtained a driving job at over \$18/hour.
- A veteran experiencing homelessness obtained temporary employment while resolving some issues with potential to go fulltime. DVOP staff helped him find housing with a local veteran organization.

Knox County Resource Room successes

- Two customers who regularly completed job search in the Knoxville Resource Room, attended a single employer job fair in Knoxville and were hired in June 2024.
- One resource room regular job seeker obtained a job in the fitness industry in May 2024.
- Customer was at the January 2024 Knoxville AJC Job fair and she got a job at a local hospital as a Director.
- A customer came into the resource room in February 2024 stating he recently moved from the West to Tennessee. Customer stated how thankful he was for the use of computers and customer service he received as staff helped him complete background information for his new job with a federal agency.

Knox County SNAP E&T

Mr. G. is a justice involved individual who came to SNAP Employment and Training for help to pay for school to obtain a CDL. He graduated in fall 2023 and is now able to work. This opportunity has put him in a great position to move forward and not let incarceration hold him back. He expressed his gratefulness to SNAP Employment and Training for giving him a chance to succeed in life.

Knox County Title I and SNAP E&T Co-enrollment

“Debbie” wanted to obtain her CDL, completed training and is now employed as a Truck Driver starting in Fall 2023 working 40 hours a week earning almost \$27/hour. She is closed out as successfully employed and has a bright future. SNAP E&T co-enrolled with Title I to help the participant have the opportunity to gain skills to become employed.

Knox County Title I and SNAP E&T Co-enrollment

Ms. C. needed help with Job Search and staff helped her put together a resume. She stated she needed childcare to do job search and was referred to DHS. She was approved, went on an interview and was hired at a local retail store at \$15/hour. Since she became employed and had childcare, she had nothing to hold her back. She was co-enrolled with SNAP E&T and Title I Work First to receive travel expense assistance. She can now provide for her family.

Knox County Title I and Title III (SNAP E&T) Co-enrollment

S. is a single mother of 1 child and wanted to obtain her CDL. She co-enrolled with SNAP E&T and Title I who braided funding to cover costs of training and support services. She successfully completed in August 2023 and is currently employed as a truck driver full time earning an average of \$50,000.00+ annually. She is very excited that she was able to complete the CDL training and excited that she can successfully support her and her child with a great wage.

Knox County SNAP E&T

Ms. C. is a single mother who enrolled in SNAP E&T in Fall 2023 for help to attend dental training. She completed the training and was employed at a local surgery as a Registered Dental Assistant making \$17/hour. She was not used to doing things on her own but taking this course and becoming employed has increased her confidence and put her on the path to self-sufficiency.

Knox County SNAP E&T

Ms. H came to the SNAP Employment and Training program asking for help to pay for dental training. She is a single parent of 1 child. She graduated in Fall 2023 and has become

employed as a dental assistant at a local dental office soon after graduation making \$14/hour at 25 hours per week to get experience with a wage increase after the probation period. Prior to training, she worked as a cook at a low wage that did not support her family.

Knox County Title I and SNAP E&T Co-enrollment

Ms. D. is a single mother with 1 child. She was an unemployed caregiver and was looking for a way to get experience and skills to better support her and her child. She completed dental assistant training in Fall 2023 after co-enrolling with SNAP E&T and Title I She got a job as a Registered Dental Assistant at a local dentist office being hired the same day she finished school. She earns \$17/hour, for 32 hours per week set to increase once she passes probation period. She is very excited to have the opportunity to have a career in which she can provide for her and her child successfully.

Knox County SNAP E&T

Ms. K. graduated from phlebotomy training in early fall 2023. She is a young single mother of 2 children, was unemployed, and was a caregiver of a family member. Since completing school, Ms. K. has had several job offers, is very grateful for the help she received from SNAP Employment and Training and she is looking forward to what the future holds.

Knox County Title I and SNAP E&T Co-enrollment

Mr. M. was referred to SNAP E&T from DHS and wanted to obtain his CDL. When he was scheduled to start class, his car broke down and he did not have the money to get it fixed, and was feeling shut down and defeated. When the CS reached out, SNAP E&T provided resource provider information so he could repair his car. When he planned to start class again, he did not have gas money, so was co-enrolled with Title I. He stated he has never had anyone try to help him as much as the AJC staff had so he was very encouraged. Staff reached out with encouraging emails and follow ups. He had another setback and again felt defeated so he did not start class, and also had difficulty paying living expenses. So, he wanted to start class after he got his tax refund. He was informed he would need to start class this time as staff were doing all they could to assist. He completed his CDL training and is now employed at a local trucking company making around \$50,000/year. He is very grateful and happy that he was able to complete his CDL and now he can make more money to support his family moving forward.

SCOTT COUNTY

Scott County Title I

“Kristy” contacted AJC for help with travel and uniforms to start work at an area recovery center. The customer was experiencing homelessness, had been justice-involved, and received benefits. Not having a driver’s license or vehicle, she had to rely on paid transportation as her work hours were outside the hours when free transportation was available. She began working full time at over \$13/hour and continues to work toward her dream job.

SEVIER COUNTY

Sevier County Title I

A family moved to TN from the Midwest and were referred to the AJC by a local community resource. The young man and his mother enrolled in Winter 2023 and by the next week were working at local retail stores in the area. As they shared a vehicle, the two employers worked with them on schedules so they could both work full time.

Sevier County Title I

Hopeless No More (originally appeared in Our Tennessee on 10/13/23)



“I was homeless, jobless and hopeless.” Jonathan Stewart says that about a lifetime of loss and depression that led to self-medication with drugs and alcohol. But, through a brush with law enforcement and a court mandate, Stewart found hope. Ordered to a Sevier County recovery home operated by the McNabb Center—the region’s leading nonprofit provider of mental health, substance use, social and victim services—Stewart worked toward a new future.

At the recovery home, Stewart met with an American Job Center career specialist and told her that he wanted to obtain his high school equivalency diploma. After passing the test on the first try, he set his sights on going to trade school. He enrolled in the collision repair program at the Tennessee College of Applied Technology (TCAT) in Knoxville. The job center supplied him with gas cards to help him make the trip between Sevier County and Knoxville.

“The American Job Center connects multiple partners and resources with Tennesseans to help them move forward toward meaningful work and a living wage. Our goal is to help customers, whether job seekers or employers, meet their needs,” says Jennifer Eppley, of the center’s one stop program.

The [Center for Industrial Services \(CIS\)](#), an agency of the UT Institute for Public Service, joined forces with the East Tennessee Local Workforce Development Area in 2022. As the operator, CIS coordinates multiple job center partners and service providers throughout East Tennessee.

“We are proud to be working with the American Job Center team to serve job seekers and employers to further strengthen our workforce development system and to contribute to the region’s economic success,” CIS Executive Director Paul Jennings says.

While training in collision repair, Stewart started work at a co-op at Boatmate Trailers in Maryville, and the company hired him full time once he completed his certification.

“The job center gave me every resource I needed,” he says. “They helped me find the information I needed to get my high school equivalency diploma, paid my gas expenses to get to TCAT, and they purchased the tools I needed for school. I hope to get some of my guys in the recovery house to connect with the job center.”

In addition to his job with Boatmate, he also works as a property manager for the McNabb Center, where he continues to live in the recovery house. He hopes one day to become a peer recovery specialist and work full time with the McNabb recovery program.

“My life is so much better. It is night and day compared to what it used to be,” says Stewart, who married in the spring. “The job center has so many resources that people don’t know about. They are the type of people who will do anything to help you succeed. Until the people at Sevier County Workforce Probation put me in touch with it, I didn’t know it existed. They completely changed my life.”



Northeast Tennessee Annual Narrative – PY23

American Job Center Services

The local area has eight (8) American Job Centers (AJCs). One AJC is in each of the eight (8) most northeastern counties in TN. The Northeast has two (2) comprehensive and six (6) affiliate centers. The comprehensive centers are located in Kingsport (Sullivan County) and Johnson City (Washington County). It has become increasingly difficult to recruit potential participants who would normally visit one of the AJC for services. In the past couple of years, traffic counts in the Northeast AJCs have seen significant declines from pre-pandemic numbers. The comprehensive centers in Northeast saw a steady climb in people returning to the centers; however, some of the affiliate sites that are located in the most rural areas continue to struggle to see walk-in customers and continue to have low traffic counts. The one-stop operator and team leads are working on outreach strategies to all counties in the Northeast area to improve usage of the AJCs.

County	Individuals
Carter	1,214
Greene	1,207
Hancock	317
Hawkins	278
Johnson	151
Sullivan	3,214
Unicoi	36
Washington	3,928
Total	10,345

WIOA Programs

Since assuming both fiscal and board staff responsibilities for the region's Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act (WIOA) programs and the Northeast Tennessee Local Workforce Development Board in 2022, the First Tennessee Development District has been working with partners across the region to build and sustain a workforce development system that promotes economic development, meets employer needs, and is responsive to the changing demands of the labor market.

County	Carryover Participants	New Enrollments	Total Served
Carter	45	22	67
Greene	19	19	38
Hancock	12	32	44
Hawkins	23	32	55
Johnson	21	27	48
Sullivan	40	48	88
Unicoi	7	1	8
Washington	110	321	431
Total	277	502	779

A New Career Service Provider

In compliance with state and federal law, the FTDD was required to issue requests for proposals for the career service provider, youth services provider, and one-stop operator for the region.

An independent review by a committee of stakeholders from across Northeast Tennessee representing employers, educators, and economic development professionals reviewed RFPs and recommended that a bid by Northeast State Community College be accepted to provide career services for the region. Northeast began staffing up and providing services in July, and the transition continues as they begin fulfilling their mandate. The contracted services include adult, dislocated worker, and youth career services. These services are delivered through American Job Centers (AJC), located in each county.

One-Stop Operator

The request for proposals that secured Northeast State Community College's as the Career Service Provider for the region included a request for one-stop operator services as well.

Since no vendor submitted a proposal for One-Stop services, the FTDD requested and received permission to deliver those services directly. The One-Stop Operator is a vital component of the region's workforce development system and is responsible for the coordination and management of customer flow within the American Job Centers. The primary goal of the Operator is to create a seamless system of partners among workforce development, economic development, business, and community agencies in order to meet the needs of employers and job seekers in the area.

Since July 1, 2023, the FTDD has assumed these duties, and it now working closely with state staff and Northeast State to serve the region through the American Job Centers with a renewed focus on communication and customer service.

Business Services

Johnson City AJC participates in Appalachian Veteran Fair

Bristol Motor Speedway was the setting for the second annual Appalachian Veteran Fair on March 26, 2024. Johnson City American Job Center (AJC) made its presence felt as well during the gathering of area veterans, their families, veteran service agencies, local businesses and others.

The AJC manned its own table at the veteran fair, which was organized as a collaborative effort by local community partners to increase networking between regional veteran service groups in Tennessee and bordering Virginia.

The American Job Center utilizes staff from the Jobs for Veterans State Grants program (or JVSG), which supplies funding to state workforce agencies across the U.S. to hire dedicated staff who provide individualized career services to eligible veterans with significant barriers to employment and eligible spouses. Those services include resume assistance, skills assessments, job search through the Tennessee State Jobs4TN website, and job preparation workshops.

The Veteran Fair presented an opportunity for Johnson City's Disabled Veteran Opportunity Specialist (DVOP), Ed Thomas, Local Veterans Employment Representative (LVER), Mario Cardoza, in addition to Kingsport's Consolidated JVSG, Terrell Vereen, to encourage current veteran jobseekers to meet local resource agencies and potential employers as part of their job search. They shared a table with Kingsport's American Job Center, as fair attendees had questions answered and were given information about the available services in both locations.

JVSG staff used the opportunity to solidify working relationships with existing employers who provide work opportunities for screened vets, who are often referred by the center, and establish contact with over 130 more who signed up for vendor tables at the Speedway events building. The AJC teams were also able to compare notes with their JVSG counterparts from Virginia who were in attendance, in an effort to plan future collaborative regional events in the Tri-cities area where gaps in service coverage sometimes occur.

As is their normal approach to assisting Northeast Tennessee, the veterans' services staff from Johnson City American Job Center utilized the 2024 Appalachian Veteran Fair as a way to build another layer of a network of opportunities and open doors for veterans seeking gainful employment.

Promising Practices

Tennessee Youth Employment Program (TYEP)

In April 2024, the Tennessee Department of Labor launched TYEP, connecting youth aged 14-24 with employers across various industries. Participants gained hands-on experience, built resumes, and developed soft skills while earning wages. Employers benefit from funded staffing and have the opportunity to mentor young workers, potentially retaining them long-term. The FTDD has served over 220 youth and over 70 employers through TYEP funding in the 8-county area.

Customer Hire Database

Brief Description

The idea of starting to track customers who were hired because of services at the NETAJC was conceptualized during the early part of PY 2023 - 2024. This gave birth to the **Customer Hire Database**, the first of its kind in NETLWDA. The database is a Google Sheet that tracks customers who obtained unsubsidized employment because of services at the Northeast TN AJCs. All NETAJC partners have permission to update the database once information is available. Data are extracted from case notes entered in VOS/Jobs4TN.Gov by Career Specialists from WIOA Programs

Benefits

Evidence-based: The Customer Hire Database is a work in progress and has so far documented over 420 customers who have been hired during PY2023 – 2024 because of services at the AJC. This number is expected to grow to about 500 by the end of PY2023 – 2024. This database is a measure of our efficiency and effectiveness and is also an outreach and marketing tool.

Technical Compatibility: The database is a Google “MS Excel” sheet. Because MS Excel is compatible with all database platforms, integration should not be a problem if considerations are made by all partners to use the tool systemwide within Tennessee.

Challenges and Solutions

Challenge: *Rollout of the Innovation-* The process of getting all partners on board was slow. Some saw the initiative as additional work.

Solution: *Because this innovation was new, we used the OSO staff to grow the database whilst engaging other partners to see the value of the tool. All partners are now on board.*

Challenge: *Retrospective data gathering-* Some customers acquired credentials during PY2022 – 2023 and were in follow-up. Most obtained unsubsidized employment during PY2023 – 2024.

Solution: *OSO and AJC Partner staff had to go back into case notes and use the information to update the database.*

Impact on Workforce Development

- The Customer Hire Database answers the question: “*How many persons are hired as a result of the services that we provide at the AJCs*”? This information did not exist in one spot prior to this innovation.
- The Customer Hire Database reflects successful coordination and collaboration between all AJC partners. The reason is the tool is updated by all AJC partners who have expressed how valuable the database is to workforce development.
- The Customer Hire Database has the potential to become valuable systemwide. If adopted, the database would assist politicians, directors and managers with information that could be used in funding requests and at speaking engagements.

Outreach Team

Brief Description

The Johnson City AJC Outreach Team was formed in fall of 2023 to establish community partnerships in the 4 surrounding counties: Washington, Carter, Greene, and Unicoi. The team consists of WP Team Lead and representatives from SNAP E&T, Re-entry, Business Services, and Veteran Services. The goal is to have an outreach meeting or event in every county once a month. The team meets monthly to review and discuss the outcomes from the current month and then plan for the next month. In an effort to better meet the needs of our community and increase services provided, the team identified non-profits, community resource agencies, and local work groups to connect with and share the benefits of AJC services. This has helped the AJC become more intentional and strategic in community outreach.

Benefits

After 7 months of implementation, the team has established new connections with a total of 42 local agencies and community partners (11 in Washington, 13 in Greene, 8 in Carter, and 10 in Unicoi). Some of

these new connections turned into reoccurring monthly visits and outreach events. These efforts have helped increase Wagner Peyser participations and services in rural communities. When comparing the same 7-month timeframe to the previous program year, WP participation has seen a 27% increase.

Challenges and Solutions

Challenge: Maintaining AJC staffing and a duplication of efforts by partner staff.

Solution: By meeting monthly to discuss where and when staff plan on conducting outreach, we have been able to coordinate schedules. We have taken a divide and conquer approach to ensure that all of the desired targeted outreach locations are contacted by the appropriate AJC staff member, who shares the benefits of all of the AJC services. This allows us to send specific people out of the office, while others maintain daily operations at the AJC.

Challenge: One opportunity for growth and improvement is in the inclusion of Title I, VR, and Adult Ed representatives on the Outreach Team.

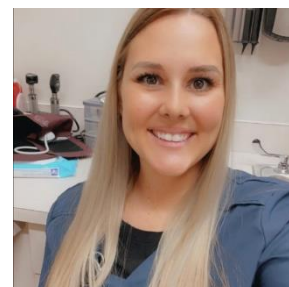
Solution: Currently when the team conducts outreach, they notify partner staff with an invitation to the meeting/event. By having all partner staff represented, we can further increase outreach efforts and collaboration, which could lead to more referrals and co-enrollments.

Impact on Workforce Development

By establishing an Outreach Team, a local area can develop a strategic plan that coordinates the collective efforts of staff from multiple programs to reach a shared objective. This can reduce the silo mentality and increase the sharing of resources, the expansion of activities to underserved populations, and the AJC's credibility within the community.

Success Stories

Surviving college is hard, but the American Job Center (AJC) made it possible for me. My name is **Chrystal Humphreys**, and I visited the Kingsport AJC to get assistance with paying for school and its required material. I used the Kingsport AJC previously to obtain my License Practical Nurse (LPN). However, I quickly realized that I needed to go further in my education.

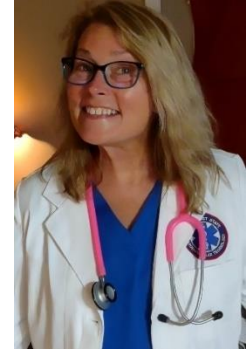


As the cost of living rose and my salary stayed the same, I felt the urgency to go back for my RN. However, I didn't know how I was going to afford it. Because of the rigor of the program, a student can barely work 1-2 days a week whilst enrolled. I remembered the AJC and immediately got in contact with Ashlei Jackson, a Career Specialist at the Kingsport, AJC.

During our interactions at the Kingsport AJC, Ashlei was aware that time was of the essence, and she worked extremely hard to get everything going. There were days I didn't know if I could do it, but she was always there with words of encouragement, and financial resources, which was my biggest stressor. Once enrolled, I received tuition assistance, reimbursement for gas each month, vouchers for uniforms and equipment, and payment for the State Board Nursing Test. I passed the test, and I am now working as an RN, recently married, and thriving in my field. I am pursuing my nurse practitioner through Radford currently, and "I know for sure I wouldn't be where I am today without the American Job Center!" I have gained a career, financial freedom, and did not accrue any debt while doing this. The American Job Center

was life changing for me. I highly recommend the program to struggling parents needing a better life for their families, students that are stuck in the middle with little to no assistance from financial aid, and to people who are in competitive programs that require you to work little to no hours!

Amanda, a single mom with two sons, graduated from the Kingsport Christian High School in 1991 and believed she had her life figured out. However, she was wrong. As her sons became older, Amanda realized she wanted more out of her life. She realized that to reach the goals she set forth for herself, she needed to further her education and obtain a degree. To achieve that whilst caring for her two young sons, she quit her full-time job as an Office Manager at a local car dealership.



Amanda knew her return to school wasn't going to be easy. However, she had the desire to begin this exciting yet terrifying new journey with hopes of a better future for herself and the boys. Amanda sought enrollment in the Northeast State Community College (NeSCC) Cardiovascular Program and was accepted. Because she did not have the resources to cover the cost of training, she applied for federal financial aid and was deemed eligible to receive assistance through the TN Reconnect program. Through the program, she received tuition assistance. However, she needs to source additional support to cover books, supplies, and other requirements. Amanda, a resident of Sullivan County was referred to the American Job Center in Kingsport by a fellow classmate.

Upon her initial assessment and intake interview, the Title I Career Specialist in Kingsport found Amanda eligible to receive assistance through the Title I WIOA program. One of the requirements of the program is to establish an Individual Employment Plan (IEP) for participants. Within that IEP, individual goals are set for the participant to achieve throughout the program. Amanda successfully completed the Cardiovascular Tech training program at the Northeast State Community College and has full time employment as a Cardiovascular Tech with Ballad Health at Johnson City Medical Center. “

The Title I WIOA Career Specialist at the Kingsport American Job Center was so kind. She explained how the program worked and gave me comfort that I wasn't alone on this adventure. This program has helped me in many more aspects than I thought. It would have been very difficult without the assistance, motivation and information that I am grateful to have received. It has been a journey I will never forget and the sense of accomplishment on graduation day lives on” – Amanda “Mandi” Love.

Clio Rodriguez is a single mom of three who came into the Kingsport American Job Center (AJC) looking for additional financial assistance to defray the cost of Cosmetology training at Tennessee College of Applied Technology (TCAT) in Elizabethton. During her visit, Clio met with the Title I WIOA Career specialist, Ashlei Jackson and indicated that she was interested in makeup, nail art, and hair. Ashlei stressed how important it was for her to continue her course work in cosmetology and subsequently acquire a degree in Cosmetology. Clio was previously enrolled at TCAT-Elizabethton but had to withdraw due to personal reasons.



The speed at which she completed all necessary paperwork was a testimony of her readiness and commitment to acquire credentials in cosmetology. Ashlei also determined that Clio was also eligible for services offered by another AJC partner program, SNAP E&T since she receives SNAP benefits.

After re-enrolling at TCAT Elizabethton, Clio had 300 hours left to complete her training and take her state boards. As a recipient of WIOA services, Clio received tuition assistance and help with purchasing uniforms, books, and supplies. She also received supportive services of \$15 daily as travel reimbursement upon submitting her duly signed attendance sheet. With these services, Clio didn't have to worry about the expenses for her training. She received additional assistance through the SNAP E&T program.

Clio graduated from TCAT-Elizabethton in INSERT DATE with her Cosmetology degree and as of January 2024, she has taken all her required state boards and has passed each test. She is now a licensed Cosmetologist and has accepted full-time employment with Diamond Nail Lounge in Kingsport. Yes! WIOA Can!

Jaylon Fudge is a sports fanatic, cooking wiz, movie enthusiast, two-time spelling bee champion, and marketing mastermind. He was selected by the Northeast Tennessee Tourism Association (NETTA) in collaboration with the Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) to be their Winter Intern.



Fudge reflected on his time at NETTA with fondness stating he, “enjoyed every second at NETTA and honestly would've loved to work their full time if it were an option.” Alicia Phelps, NETTA Executive Director, left a lasting impression on Fudge as he proudly claimed his recommendation of Phelps, “as a mentor to anyone. She has been my favorite boss I've ever had the pleasure of working for.”

Fudge's next stop in his professional career will be Edison Report in Brentwood, TN. He believes SYEP helped him to gain this new position by allowing him, “work experience and... [to be surrounded by] professional people who are passionate about what they do.” His SYEP placement with NETTA gave Fudge the chance to, “create relationships and connections that will now last forever.” This program allowed him to gain real-life experience which Fudge deftly spun into his forthcoming position as an Audience Development Manager.

Fudge took NETTA and SYEP by storm. He took his brief time with the program and turned it into the opportunity of a lifetime. Phelps gave Fudge the guidance and support he needed to flourish and move beyond. Fudge went above and beyond and showed that with determination, hard work, and eagerness to learn you can turn three months into a foundation of experience that he will cherish for years to come.

James Brown II, US Army Veteran James Brown, a US Army Veteran arrived in Johnson City in May 2023 as a homeless veteran. After numerous failed attempts at finding housing in Johnson City, he finally succeeded in finding short term housing assistance through



the Volunteers of America (VOA). In February 2024, Brown II visited the Johnson City American Job Center (AJC) for an appointment with the Disabled Veteran

Outreach Program Specialist (DVOP), Ed Thomas. During the visit, he also met JT Lovelace, a WIOA Career Specialist. After a referral from Ed to Title I WIOA Program, followed by an objective assessment, James learned he was also eligible and subsequently enrolled in Title I WIOA Adult Program. Because of this, he currently attends the Tennessee Professional Training Institute for Medical Billing and Coding. Over several touchpoints with the AJC, James developed the courage to inform JT that his risk of homelessness was increasing, and he was still struggling to find employment while finishing up training. With his assistance from VOA was expiring at the end of March 2024 James worried he would struggle to cover rent and become homeless once more. JT, who has prior experience in homeless prevention and previously worked with the Appalachian Regional Coalition for Homelessness (ARCH) sprang into action and contacted a few churches to assist James. During the interactions, he was able to secure rent payments from two churches to cover the rent for April 2024. Even though the rent assistance from the churches allows James to breathe a sigh of relief, he is still at risk of becoming homeless if a more long-term solution is not identified and utilized. Through assistance from the Johnson City AJC, James has obtained temporary employment through Staffmark, and he is assigned at AO Smith as Manual Labor Specialist. He is also wrapping up training at the Tennessee Professional Training Institute for Medical Billing and Coding. Upon graduation, the potential for James to gain meaningful employment and put the threat of homeless in the past for good.

As a lifelong resident of Hancock County, **Sam Davis** recently visited the Sneedville AJC in search of opportunities. Whilst there, he informed the NESCC Career Specialist, Tonyia that he wanted to find a career that he could make a good living at, while serving his community. Sam was interested in enrolling in the lineman program at TCAT Oneida. Based on his circumstances and age, Sam qualified for Title I WIOA as an adult.



Hancock County is one of the most rural counties in Tennessee, with one of the highest poverty rates in the state, lacks industry.

Sam chose to get his certification as a lineman hoping that once completed, he could find employment with Powell Valley Electric company that serves Hancock County. Sam was accepted into the program at TCAT Oneida and successfully completed his training. He was given assistance from WIOA to help cover the cost of tuition, books and tools. Sam reported that this program played a tremendous part of him being able to complete this training and without WIOA assistance he might not have been able to attend TCAT Oneida. Sam was hired at full-time at Powell Valley Electric and has been employed there since March 2023, recently celebrating his one-year anniversary on the job.

Deborah Johnson, a chemical manufacturing engineer with Continental Automotive Systems was laid off on April 14, 2022, after 12 years. Upon attending the Rapid Response and being informed of the benefits of returning to school with TAA, her dream of passing her knowledge of chemistry onto the next generation seemed within reach.



However, due to the layoff she was forced to relocate back to TN where she visited the Johnson City American Job Center and was successfully enrolled in the Trade Adjustment Assistance Program. The TAA Program worked in collaboration with North Carolina TAA and the TN WIOA Title I Program to successfully enroll Ms. Johnson with East Tennessee State University (ETSU) Master's Program in Secondary Education. Over the last two years, she maintained above average GPA throughout her training while balancing both TN and NC TAA requirements. On May 04, 2024, she successfully graduated ETSU and is currently seeking assistance at the American Job Center to obtain employment in education at local schools. While Ms. Johnson found her journey to be challenging at times, she was also overjoyed upon obtaining her Master's degree and the future prospect of passing on the love of chemistry to future generations.