

**Annual Report Narrative on the
Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act
to
the United States Department of Labor**

Program Year 2023

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THE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM

West Virginia's Workforce Development System

The agencies making up WV's Workforce Development System (WDS) work together to provide a comprehensive approach to workforce solutions, through broader and deeper partnerships; shared data and intake systems; braided funding; and leveraged services. Doing so allows each individual agency to focus on their expertise and the value they bring to the table, while relying on coordination with other partners to fulfill any remaining customer needs. By making available the appropriate educational and training opportunities, WV can provide its citizens with the work skills needed by businesses currently in the state or planning a WV location. Simply put, WV's WDS strives to create a clearer path to jobs for West Virginians so it's easier for citizens to be successful. This takes getting state agencies on the same page, eliminating duplication, and improving outreach to business and industry.

Each agency makes their services available physically and/or electronically to meet the needs of their customers. Physical locations vary across the state; the most recognizable and convenient being the American Job Centers (AJC). One-Stop Centers, also known nationally as AJCs, are the heart of the WDS, offering individuals and employers ready access to the many WDS resources funded by federal and state dollars. States, local elected officials, local boards, one-stop centers, and one-stop partners work together to create a "go-to" system for job seekers, workers, and business. The services being presented to businesses are customized and based on the expressed needs of the business, instead of being agency-siloed or menu-driven. Partners from various agencies coordinate with the workforce system to provide a seamless delivery of services and branding through a "no wrong door approach". WV is comprised of seven regions/Local Workforce Development Areas (LWDA).

Local Workforce Development Areas/Regions

- **Region 1:** The Region 1 Workforce Development Board, headquartered in Beckley, administers workforce activities in an eleven-county region covering the southeastern portion of the State.
- **Region 2:** The Southwestern West Virginia Workforce Development Board, located in Huntington, governs a seven-county region in the southwestern portion of the State.
- **Region 3:** The Workforce Development Board of Kanawha County oversees activities in the State's only single-county workforce development region from its office in Charleston.
- **Region 4:** Nine counties are served by the Workforce Development Board Mid-Ohio Valley, which is located in Parkersburg.
- **Region 5:** The Northern Panhandle Workforce Development Board provides services in six counties and is based in Wheeling.
- **Region 6:** The Region 6 Workforce Development Board, located in Fairmont, provides services in a thirteen-county region in the north-central portion of the State.
- **Region 7:** Eight counties in the easternmost portion of West Virginia are served by the Region 7 Workforce Development Board located in Moorefield.

WAIVERS

WorkForce West Virginia (WFWV) did not have a waiver in place for at least one program year.

EFFECTIVENESS IN SERVING EMPLOYERS

While WFWV has always offered, and continues to offer, many varied services to employers, we are currently developing performance measures to evaluate and track our two primary measures focused on driving our Effectiveness in Serving Employers. These measures are meant to gauge our effectiveness at serving businesses and matching our participants with long-term employment opportunities.

- Retention with Same Employer is a metric designed to address program effectiveness in providing employers with skilled workers that stay with that same employer on a long-term basis. The Retention with Same Employer rate for PY23 was 66%.
- Repeat Business Customer addresses program efforts to provide quality engagement and services to employers and sectors and establish productive relationships with employers and sectors over extended periods of time. PY23's Repeat Business Customer rate was 58.5%.

A Business Services Unit was established under the Employment Services Division in PY21. The primary goal of Business Services Representatives (BSRs) is to collaborate and coordinate services to employers, promote employer engagement/retention, assess employer needs, and meet those needs through one-on-one/personalized efforts. On-going communication and consistency of specific activities with the LWDBs and partner agencies are integral in achieving successful employment outcomes and matching job seekers with the right employer. First implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Statewide Virtual Job Fair Platform continues to provide another venue for employers to find qualified job seekers. The Virtual Job Fairs are conducted monthly and offer job seekers the opportunity to video chat with employers, upload a resume, and apply for available positions. Each month since its launch in October 2022 until the end of PY23, the Virtual Job Fair Platform has served an average of 137 employers and 485 job seekers, of which 83% were unemployed. BSRs are available to provide guidance to employers regarding the numerous programs and initiatives offered by the WDS, by offering information and linkages to the following:

- Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC)
- Federal Bonding
- On-the-Job Training (OJT) and Apprenticeship Opportunities
- Rapid Response
- Veteran Services
- Migrant Seasonal Farm Worker Programs
- Assistance with Job Fairs and Hiring Events
- Assistance in providing accommodations for employees [WV Division of Rehabilitation Services (WVDRS)]
- Educational assistance programs
- Labor Market Information
- Unemployment Compensation programs, such as Short Time Compensation
- AJC services, such as job development and hiring assistance
- Early intervention strategies for layoff aversions (WV Development Office)
- Industry and Sector Strategies

Our partner at the West Virginia Division of Rehabilitation Services also offers various services to employers throughout the state.

WVDRS ESS has enhanced its business engagement strategies by promoting the On-the-Job Training (OJT) program statewide. To support this initiative, the unit received training on effectively approaching businesses, explored ways to create stronger job matches between consumers and employers, and encouraged staff to expand their networks by joining local Chambers of Commerce. As a result of these concerted efforts, OJT services increased from 22 in Program Year 2021 to 59 in Program Year 2022, more than doubling employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities. WVDRS ESS staff entered data for over 500 employers into the MACC system of WorkForce West Virginia (WFWV) to improve agency-wide awareness of job openings. Additionally, WVDRS participated in Chamber of Commerce events to establish employer contacts and share information about the services offered by WVDRS and other Workforce Development System (WDS) agencies. These business engagement strategies were conducted both in-person and virtually. Through collaboration with a national network of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) agencies, WVDRS has been able to provide job seekers with information about employer opportunities on a national level. New employer partnerships were established with the Ohio/Marshall County Easter Seals Rehabilitation Center and MACH 1 to expand work-based learning opportunities. WVDRS also worked with Weir High School on the upcoming Project SEARCH program, scheduled to launch in the 2025–2026 school year. This program will use Weirton Medical Center as the job site, with NuSkool Scholars serving as the Community Resource Provider. Furthermore, Wood County developed unique learning sites, including a veterinary clinic, a museum, and a hearing clinic, offering diverse work-based learning opportunities for participants.

In addition to the strategies in place at the State level, West Virginia’s Local Workforce Development Boards have implemented their own employer engagement programs in the regions that they cover. Through targeted programs, partnerships, and a focus on alignment with labor market demands, these regions provide comprehensive services to employers and job seekers alike.

Region IV engages actively with local industries, participating in quarterly meetings with West Virginia University of Parkersburg in the automotive and IT sectors. They are also expanding focus areas to include healthcare, clean energy, and recovery center employers through forthcoming National Dislocated Worker Grant (NDWG) opioid funding. To better understand employer needs, WDBMOV is conducting a mass survey to identify trends in training and hiring requirements. Outreach efforts include presentations at chamber of commerce meetings and employer forums, where businesses learn about Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) programs and share their workforce needs. A dedicated Business Engagement Team, comprising WIOA partners and resource agencies, meets quarterly to coordinate services and address hiring and training needs. Additionally, Career Specialists work closely with business owners to connect them with WIOA Youth program services, including paid work experiences and on-the-job training (OJT).

Region VI prioritizes seamless coordination between its WDB and the West Virginia State Department of Commerce. By aligning state and local resources, the region maximizes training cost coverage for employers. A pivotal step in 2022 was the introduction of a Community Outreach Coordinator who has enhanced business connections, participated in economic and civic meetings, and led the Region VI Business Service Team. These efforts have improved employer referrals and ensured that services meet local business needs effectively.

Region I excels in providing work experience opportunities for youth and adults. Through partnerships with local businesses, the region offers on-the-job training and short-term employment opportunities, equipping participants with real-world skills and professional networks. Programs like Transitional Jobs address barriers to employment, delivering weekly career and employability skills training and offering job search support upon program completion. These initiatives have proven transformative, especially for youth transitioning from education to the workforce.

Region VII employs a sector-focused strategy to align workforce training with industry needs. The region's Employer Advisory Council, which includes leaders from healthcare, manufacturing, and retail, guides the development of relevant programs. Notable achievements include IT certifications and expanded apprenticeships in healthcare and HVAC. The region's work-based learning programs, including paid internships and transitional job placements, have prepared participants for permanent roles. Incumbent worker training programs have further supported local industries by reskilling employees, improving retention, and fostering career advancement. Together, these regions exemplify a dynamic and collaborative approach to workforce development. By addressing specific industry needs, enhancing outreach efforts, and delivering innovative training programs, they are creating a robust pipeline of skilled workers while supporting the economic vitality of their communities.

Region III has successfully integrated sector strategies into our monthly Frontline Unity Network (FUN) Meetings. These meetings serve as a collaborative platform where we invite employers from various industries to engage with our community organizations / partners that work hands-on with individuals upgrading their skills and seeking sustainable employment opportunities. Employers share insights on what they look for in candidates, areas of concerns in workforce, the skills needed for success, opportunities for career growth, and long-term trajectory within their organizations. This engagement helps our teams align workforce development efforts with industry needs.

In collaboration with the State Apprenticeship and Training Representative, Region III aided Charleston Property Restoration (CPR) with navigating the process of establishing a Registered Apprenticeship. Region III also connected CPR with funding opportunities and resources under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. Through a successful hiring event held at the Kanawha County American Job Center, CPR selected several apprentices who were funded under an ITA and OJT.

By leveraging resources and networks, Region III assisted CentiMark Corporation with outreach and several hiring events to attract a diverse and qualified talent pool. These successful events offered 36 job seekers employment in a high demand field, earning a sustainable wage.

EVALUATIONS

PY23 has seen WFWV enter a transitional period with several new staff members replacing veteran members who have retired or moved on to new opportunities. This has afforded us the opportunity to take a fresh look at all of our policies and practices and to reassess their effectiveness moving forward. WFWV's primary means of evaluation has been the standard WIOA performance metrics, and while these are effective indicators of the effectiveness of our workforce development system broadly speaking, they do not properly evaluate every aspect of the system. We are in the process of developing some new strategies around evaluation in order to be more in line with the goals set out in our State Plan, and to address the findings laid out in our April 2022 CAP.

Independent annual financial monitoring for each subrecipient- While this is a practice that WFWV has always done, efforts have been made during PY 23 to standardize and streamline this process and to make it more collaborative. If our independent monitoring agency identifies an area of concern, we are working with the LWDA in question to provide technical assistance to address the issue and making proactive technical assistance available at their request if they feel more assistance is needed outside of the area identified in the monitoring.

Periodic programmatic review- In PY23 WFWV formed an internal review team that periodically reviews case notes, performance metrics, and cash requests for each of our LWDA's in order to identify deficiencies before they become larger compliance issues. Each region will be given a comprehensive review annually, along with quarterly spot checks to individual programs within each region. The intention behind these reviews is to identify opportunities for technical assistance proactively, in order to increase each region's effectiveness in serving its participants. Additionally, this process allows us to compare and contrast technical assistance needs from region to region, allowing us to tailor our trainings to more specifically fit their needs. So far, this unit has been able to identify several areas of concern before they were able to evolve into larger issues and have provided in person technical assistance to several of our regions as a result. The primary goal of this unit is to work collaboratively with the LWDA's to ensure compliance with all appropriate regulations and to enhance their effectiveness wherever possible. The LWDA's have been very open to this process, and we have had a very positive response and full cooperation so far.

EvalPLC- West Virginia has applied and was accepted into the EvalPLC program. While we were involved in the project previously, the goals and objectives of the state have changed significantly so we have reevaluated how best to take advantage of this opportunity and will be working towards developing a new set of evaluation metrics focused on determining the effectiveness of our collaboration with our partners and the consistency of service delivery across West Virginia's entire workforce development system. West Virginia's EvalPLC group consists of WFWV employees along with representatives from the Governor's office, the LWDA's, WV Adult Education, and WVDRS.

CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

The LWDAs and our required partners have the flexibility to utilize their own customer satisfaction (CS) surveys/questionnaires. Both continue to implement innovative ways to reach the customer base and obtain satisfaction surveys utilizing Zoom, Duo and Teams meetings, web-based portals, more frequent email, and cell phone communication. Below are several examples of how the Regions and our partners are evaluating their customer's satisfaction.

Region 1's Youth Program and One-Stop Centers are dedicated to providing high-quality services and ensuring customer satisfaction is central to our operations. In accordance with 20 CFR 678.800, which mandates that Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) programs assess customer satisfaction, Region 1 has implemented a comprehensive methodology encompassing customer outreach, feedback collection, and continuous improvement processes. To measure and enhance customer satisfaction, Region 1 employs a multifaceted approach that includes surveys, performance data reviews, and customer satisfaction training for staff.

Programmatically, Region 1 distributes customer satisfaction surveys to participants and worksites utilizing the Transitional Jobs, On-the-Job Training (OJT), and Incumbent Worker Training (IWT) programs. Surveys are provided both in person and via SurveyMonkey, allowing participants or employers the option to submit responses anonymously. During the 2023-2024 program year, staff distributed 116 surveys, with 91 completed and returned. To improve this response rate, follow-up discussions and requests for survey completion will be prioritized.

Region 4's Methodologies for Customer Satisfaction Surveys currently include both paper and electronic formats for survey delivery. Based on the population served, we have achieved higher response rates with paper surveys. The electronic version includes a QR code accessible to all AJC partners, enabling them to promote the survey to their customers and increasing the number of survey completions beyond reliance on Resource Specialists at the front desk.

We are gaining new partners at the center, such as Job Corps, which will naturally increase customer traffic. Expanding partnerships and coordinating services will encourage additional agencies to co-locate within the AJC. Diligent survey distribution across all partner agencies will strengthen our service delivery and continuity.

The WDBMOV conducted surveys of employers and AJC customers from July 1, 2023, to June 30, 2024. Among the 51 employers utilizing OJT, IWT, Youth Paid Work Experience, and Customized Training, 25 responded via SurveyMonkey, achieving a 49% response rate. Of these, 95% reported satisfaction with services, and 100% indicated they would use the services again.

Last year, 1,600 customers were surveyed in our AJC, with 1,047 completed surveys, resulting in a 65.4% response rate. The overall customer satisfaction rate was 97%.

The Region VII Workforce Development Board engages businesses and individuals to assess customer satisfaction, a core element of our mission across eight counties: Jefferson, Berkeley, Morgan, Mineral, Hampshire, Hardy, Grant, and Pendleton.

- **Methodologies**

Our approach to measuring customer satisfaction includes both quantitative and qualitative methods. Biannual surveys are distributed to job seekers and employers via email and at workforce centers. Quarterly focus groups provide deeper insights into service delivery and client needs. Additionally, our online feedback and referral portal allows real-time user input, enabling prompt service adjustments. Staff training emphasizes active listening and communication techniques to collect meaningful feedback from diverse populations.

- **Outreach and Response Rates**

Over the past fiscal year, we engaged more than 300 individuals and 40 employers through various

outreach efforts, achieving a 65% survey response rate, an improvement over the previous year. Targeted campaigns via partnerships with community organizations helped us reach underrepresented groups, including individuals with disabilities and low-income adults. Community forums at career centers fostered stakeholder participation, further boosting response rates.

- **Results**

Data analysis revealed an 87% satisfaction rate among job seekers and 82% among employers. To ensure demographic representativeness, we segment results by populations, including out-of-school youth, veterans, and individuals with limited English proficiency. Efforts are underway to enhance outreach to historically marginalized communities to improve representation and accuracy.

- **Continuous Improvement Processes**

Feedback cycles involve reviewing survey and focus group data to identify trends and areas for improvement. For instance, addressing customer challenges with digital resources led to website redesigns and the development of user-friendly guides. We established feedback loops, informing customers of changes based on their input, fostering trust and engagement.

Region VI WDB's approach to customer satisfaction employs a structured and data-driven methodology to ensure service quality and compliance with 20 CFR 678.800 while advancing continuous improvement and enhanced service delivery.

- **Methodologies**

Quantitative and qualitative methods are used to gather comprehensive satisfaction data. Surveys are distributed online and in person, supplemented by fillable PDF forms and QR codes linking clients to online surveys. Drop boxes at One-Stop locations allow clients to submit responses anonymously.

- **Outreach and Response Rates**

Over the past year, outreach efforts engaged 159 individuals, with a 99.8% satisfaction rate. Response rates were improved through follow-up reminders, mobile-friendly surveys, and in-person feedback sessions at workshops and job fairs.

- **Results and Generalizability**

Customer satisfaction data indicates high satisfaction with service accessibility and staff support. The demographic distribution of respondents suggests these results are representative of the customer population.

- **Continuous Improvement Processes**

Quarterly reviews of feedback data identify trends and areas for enhancement. Action plans address recurring issues, and updates are shared with staff to maintain high service standards. Ongoing staff training focuses on customer service skills, ensuring continuous improvement.

Region 3's approach to customer satisfaction includes—

Methodologies: The region measures customer satisfaction through a QR code system provided to all individuals and businesses interacting with the AJC system. By scanning the QR code, users can share their feedback on various aspects of their experience, including services, professionalism, cleanliness, and efficiency. This anonymous survey encourages honest responses and helps identify strengths and areas for improvement.

Outreach and Response Rate:

Customer satisfaction outreach is extended to all individuals and employers utilizing our services. However, the current response rate is below 10%. This low rate is attributed to a lack of education on the survey's importance and the eagerness of individuals to leave before completing it. To improve the response rate, efforts include educating staff and partners about the survey's significance and

actively encouraging customers to participate immediately after receiving services.

Results and Generalizability:

Survey results are designed to be generalizable across all populations and demographics. While the existing questions provide valuable insights, updates are underway to capture a broader range of feedback. These updates aim to improve the accuracy of identifying service gaps and enhancing customer satisfaction.

Continuous Improvement Processes:

The region's continuous improvement strategy includes monthly education sessions for all partners, emphasizing the importance of encouraging customers to complete the survey. These sessions involve both WIOA-funded and non-federally funded essential partners, whose contributions are integral to the region's effectiveness. Feedback from the surveys is framed as a tool for growth rather than criticism, fostering a shared commitment to service excellence. The feedback loop ensures that customer insights lead to actionable improvements, enabling a more effective and cohesive one-stop system.

WFWV's partners also have their own approach to customer satisfaction:

- **WVAdultEd** continues to utilize a Student Satisfaction Survey which is made available on wvadulted.com, in the classrooms around the state, and sent to students who have enrolled in our program. These are collected centrally and disseminated quarterly to the instructors, regional coordinators, and state staff. Currently over 99% of the respondents would recommend adult education to others. Plans are in process to develop an Employer Satisfaction Survey to be sent to those employers which adult education has provided business engagement services. Meanwhile, employers were surveyed who have participated in WVAdultEd sponsored events, such as the Mercer County Adult Learning Center Job Fair held at the American Job Center, and other employer-related engagement activities. Currently over 99% of employer participants expressed satisfaction with opportunities for assistance, services offered, collaboration on events, inclusive outreach to employers, quality of WVAdultEd led community events, etc.
- **WVDRS** continued to support the implementation of CS surveys of its clients to ensure quality services for WVDRS consumers as part of its program improvement efforts. The WV State Rehabilitation Council (WVSRC) conducted the surveys (with full WVDRS assistance and cooperation). WVSRC is primarily responsible for completion of the consumer satisfaction survey for Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) consumers. WVDRS continued to provide and supplement the fiscal and human resources needed for its successful completion. WVSRC members selected a survey method that allowed former WVDRS clients and individuals who were not accepted for VR services to be contacted via mail surveys as soon as they exit WVDRS from various statuses throughout the fiscal year. Survey data is currently being analyzed and processed by a third party. WVDRS will share the most up-to-date findings when they become available.

STATE FUNDED ACTIVITIES

Rapid Response

Rapid Response (RR) services and activities were provided for both WARN and Non-Warn dislocations.

- Companies with WARNS: 7 Non-WARNS: 134 Total: 144
- Dislocated workers: WARN: 1837 Non-Warn: 1373 Total: 3210

In PY 23, RR resources and services were provided to dislocated workers by in-person meetings, mailing informational packets, and email communications. Based on completed questionnaires, follow up with workers was a key component to ensure services and referrals to partner agencies were provided timely. In addition, the State RR office consistently monitors news articles, company websites, and unemployment management reports to capture both small and large dislocations. Information on potential layoffs continues to be an on-going process with collaboration from the Governor's Office, Economic Development Office, local Rapid Response Coordinators, Business Services Representatives, Partner Agencies, and American Job Centers to identify statewide layoffs. When in-person RR meetings are conducted, tables are set up for partner agency representatives to meet with workers individually to answer questions. Providing this one-on-one interaction, has been highly successfully because it allows workers to access services and resources immediately such as health plans, retirement options, resume writing, and interviewing techniques. RR meetings always include a WIOA/TAA representative and a Business Services Representative to discuss key components of their programs and review possible employment opportunities.

During PY 23, the State Business Services team held job fairs in conjunction with the RR meetings to promote employer/job seeker engagement and make the transition back to the workforce less stressful. A monthly Virtual Job Fair implemented in October 2022 continued throughout the 2023 period as another venue to promote employer/job seeker interaction. Over 10,000 job seekers and 1300 employers attended with 8000 job postings, and 5600 resumes were submitted in 2023. The Virtual Job Fair is discussed at all RR meetings and included in all informational packets.

The RR State Office continued to work with the Economic Development Office and the Business Services team to work with employers prior to a layoff. Business Services Representatives attended quarterly meetings with the Economic Expansion and Retention teams to address employers' individual needs and offer resources. Moving forward, the Economic Development and RR State Offices will prioritize a more collaborative and communicative process to address employer needs and concerns.

PROMISING PRACTICES

West Virginia's LWDAs implemented a number of promising practices during PY23, a few examples are outlined below.

Region III- Since its inception in 2022, the Kanawha County American Job Center (KCAJC) which now houses 15 agencies has made significant strides and is a centralized hub for job seekers and employers in the region. With over 4,700 visitors this program year, the KCAJC has positioned itself as a vital resource for workforce and economic development, adapting to community needs and fostering partnerships to create long-lasting impacts.

Understanding the diverse needs of our community, the Region III partner network created "Res-Con." The day provided attendees with access to resources for pre- and post-purchase of homes, insights into careers in demand, legal advice and services, youth career exploration, healthcare, recovery education and so much more. This unprecedented event offered individuals the first step toward transforming their lives and opening doors to a world of opportunities.

In an effort to help address labor shortages in construction while providing underserved populations with meaningful career opportunities, the Region III Workforce Development Board, Human Resource Development Foundation and UniCare Health Plan of WV, created the Minority Youth (MY) Career Academy. This initiative aims to empower and provide minority youth with valuable career exploration opportunities, mentorship, and resources to help them make informed decisions about their future careers.

In addition to the monthly Frontline Unity Network (FUN) Meetings, Region III held its First Annual Frontline Unity Network Conference receiving over 100 registrants. This unique conference offered 20+ sessions, 10+ phenomenal speakers and an innovative Escape Room. The conference provided an opportunity to invest in the professional growth of frontline staff and to foster a resilient and connected workforce ecosystem.

For the second year, Region III hosted its ultimate prep event, Prepped & Polished. The day offered free haircuts, manicures, clothing, resources, food and fun to prepare job seekers for interviews. The Region III partner network was able to "Prep & Polish" 386 individuals.

Region IV- Success Stories and Promising Practices:

The A/DW program partnered with the Wirt County FRN to provide on-site case management services. This collaborative effort has successfully expanded the program's reach to a new population and increased the likelihood of overcoming barriers to employment. By requiring FRN clients to meet with a WIOA Career Specialist, the program has effectively promoted awareness of broader employment opportunities and resources. This approach demonstrates the power of inter-agency collaboration in providing comprehensive support to individuals with barriers to employment.

Serving at-risk & priority populations:

Although access to the VR content has been available to the public through AJC lab time and special events, targeted outreach efforts have integrated services into programs offered to at-risk and priority populations including WIOA youth and adult programs, School of Diversion (incarcerated), Circles Campaign MOV (low-income adults/long term unemployed), Adult Education (basic skills deficient), rehab facilities, homeless shelters, and more. Within the schools and community outreach, services have been provided to individuals with physical, sensory, and cognitive differences. We have been able to penetrate secondary schools to establish talent pipelines as well as facilitating life changing impact through individual placement in high paying careers and apprenticeships. We have been able to build relationships to make the system stronger and work more effectively in regard to Corrections and we have established opportunities for mentorships, for example, Apprenticeship Ready and Skills USA.

Region VI- MOBILE AJC's: Region VI broadened the ability of outlying communities in the region to access American Job Center services through the provision of Mobile AJC's being held in 5 counties of the region where there is no comprehensive or affiliate American Job Center located. Lewis, Barbour, Upshur, Taylor and Doddridge counties were visited by the One Stop Coordinator and other partners who were interested in participating, including Senior Services, Adult Education, WV Women Work, Pierpont CTC, Youth Program Services and UniCare. Information on the American Job Center services were made available to those visiting the Mobile AJC's.

PILOT NURSING POLICY: In recognition of the statewide shortage of LPN/RN's, Region 6 instituted a pilot program in June of 2022 to fund this critical "in demand" occupation at a higher tuition reimbursement rate than other occupational training programs in the region, in order to encourage WIOA eligible participants to choose the nursing pathway. During Program Year 2022, region 6 increased the number of WIOA ITA's for nursing by 29% from the previous year. The Region VI WDB approved to extend the pilot project for Program Years 2023 and 2024 because of the increased number of individuals interested in nursing programs. Over the course of two years, Region 6 has helped fund approximately 150 registered nurses and 25 LPN's through WIOA tuition reimbursement.

Region VII- Our work with diverse populations has yielded significant insights and success stories that demonstrate our commitment to inclusivity and effectiveness.

Serving At-Risk Populations: Tailored initiatives aimed at serving out-of-school youth and low-income adults have resulted in a 35% increase in employment rates for participants. Collaborations with community organizations, such as the Boys & Girls Club, have proven effective in addressing barriers to employment. For example, our partnership with local schools and the Boys & Girls club led to the creation of a job readiness and career exploration program specifically designed for 8th /9th grade students with the help of virtual reality head-sets. To date, over 300 students have taken part in the program. The program also serves as a great recruiting tool for our WIOA year-round youth services program.

SUCCESS STORIES

Region III- Mr. Lewis, a former Detroit native who faced years of incarceration due to past choices, made a resolute decision during his last prison term to break free from the cycle. At 53 years old and with limited skills, Mr. Lewis committed to learning new skills to open doors to livable wages.

J. Hensley of BridgeValley Community & Technical College played a pivotal role in Mr. Lewis' journey, guiding him to obtain his CDL, a crucial step that immediately expanded his possibilities. Through the support of M. Austin, the Region III AJC Manager, Mr. Lewis connected with several employment opportunities through MACC, eventually securing a position with the WV Department of Transportation.

Recognizing Mr. Lewis' need for ongoing support, the Region III Workforce Development Board, EnAct Community Action, and BridgeValley CTC collaborated to address overdue expenses, paving the way for Mr. Lewis to thrive in his newfound freedom. Mr. Lewis, now relishing 16-hour shifts, exclaims, "I can do this all day, and I get paid to do it." His drive extends beyond personal success, as he is determined to give back to the community and guide young individuals away from the mistakes he once made. Mr. Lewis stands as a testament to the transformative power of determination, skill-building, and a supportive community.

Region VI- WIOA DISLOCATED WORKER SUCCESS STORY: Elkins, WV American Job Center

Garrett Vandevender began receiving unemployment benefits after a complete company closure in the coal mining industry left him with no opportunities for re-employment. As a father of two, he sought assistance from the WIOA program to pursue his interest in obtaining his CDL through Fred Eberle Technical Center in Buckhannon, WV. Garrett successfully completed his course and passed his exam to earn his CDL Class A Commercial Driver's License, along with several endorsements. He then visited the Elkins One-Stop Center, where his career planner assisted him in crafting an outstanding resume that highlighted his safety experience from working in the mines. After applying to multiple companies, Garrett was hired locally as a Class A driver to haul heavy equipment. While most companies typically require over-the-road (OTR) driving experience, a local employer recognized Garrett's dedication and strong safety background and offered him the position.

Garrett expressed his gratitude for the monthly follow-ups, which provided him with motivation and valuable ideas. He specifically thanked his career planner for going above and beyond in helping him start his career path on the right track. He stated he would not have been able to achieve this success without the support of WIOA.

Region IV- Amy is a young woman from Clay County who joined Career Connections after graduating high school. She first met her Career Specialist during a Career Fair at Clay County High School and later visited the office to enroll. During enrollment and testing, it was determined that Amy was basic skills deficient and functionally illiterate. She was unsure of her career pathway and needed to obtain her driver's license. Amy also struggled with self-confidence and motivation.

With the support of her Career Specialist and the program, Amy was able to earn credentials through Adult Education and gain work experience at Taylor Tots Childcare Center through a paid work experience placement. She attended skill-building workshops and participated in the Entrepreneurial Camp. Although Amy became overwhelmed and was unable to stay for the entire camp, she maintained her commitment to building a relationship with her Career Specialist and working towards her action plan goals.

Amy continued improving her literacy skills through Adult Education and participated in various career and college exploration workshops. During the summer of 2024, she completed another work experience with Legacy Foods in Clay County. The owner, Duane Legg, initially expressed skepticism when Amy arrived, commenting, "When she walked through the door, I wondered what Mary Beth had done to me." However, he decided to give Amy a chance based on his trust in the Career Specialist. Despite a previous brief and unsuccessful employment experience with Amy the year before, she excelled this time, completing her work experience and becoming one of Duane's top employees. Amy has arranged to work for Legacy Foods during summer and college breaks.

Amy was also referred to the Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS), and together, the three agencies collaborated to help her overcome her barriers. She is now completing her first semester at WVU Potomac State. Amy saved money earned during her work experiences to purchase a car, which has allowed her to drive herself and her roommate to college. According to her Career Specialist, Amy has gained the confidence to participate in campus activities and clubs and has made a few new friends.