

Imperial County Workforce Development Board

Program Year 2025- 2028 Local Plan



Contact: Priscilla Lopez, Executive Director
Phone: (442) 265-4985
E-Mail priscillalopez@co.imperial.ca.us

TABLE OF CONTENTS

		PAGE
I.	INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW	4
A.	Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act	4
B.	Imperial County Workforce Development Board	4
C.	Local Plans and the WIOA Planning Structure	5
D.	California's Strategic Workforce Priorities	6
E.	Development of the Program Year 2025-28 Local Plan	7
F.	PY 2025-28 System Priorities	7
II.	WIOA CORE AND REQUIRED PARTNER COORDINATION	
A.	Coordination with AJCC Partners and WIOA Memorandum of Understanding	8
B.	Partners' Efforts to Collaborate on Co-Enrollment and Case Management	13
C.	One-Stop System's Use of Technology and Other Remote Strategies	15
D.	Coordination of Workforce Activities and Support Services	17
E.	Physical and Programmatic Accessibility for Individuals with Disabilities	18
III.	STATE STRATEGIC PARTNER COORDINATION	
A.	Coordination with County Human Services Agency and Other Local Partners That Serve Individuals Accessing CalFresh Employment and Training Services	21
B.	Coordination with Local Child Support Agency and Other Local Partners Serving Individuals That Are Non-Custodial Parents	21
C.	Coordination with Local Partnership Agreement Partners Established in Alignment with the Competitive Integrated Employment Blueprint and Other Local Partners That Serve Individuals with Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities	22
D.	Coordination with Community-Based Organizations and Other Local Partners That Serve Individuals Who Are English Language Learners, Foreign Born, and/or Refugees	24
E.	Coordination with Local Veteran Affairs, Community-Based Organizations, and Other Local Partners That Serve Veterans	26
F.	Collaboration with the Strategic Planning Partners to Address Environmental Sustainability	27
IV.	WIOA TITLE I COORDINATION	
A.	Staff Training and Professional Development to Increase Digital Technology Skills	29

	B.	Frontline Staff Training and Professional Development to Increase Cultural Competence and Effectiveness in Working with Individuals and Groups that Have Been Exposed to Trauma	29
	C.	Coordination of Rapid Response and Layoff Aversion Activities	30
	D.	Services and Activities Available under WIOA Title I Adult and Dislocated Worker Programs	31
	E.	Services and Activities Available under WIOA Title I Youth Program	36
	F.	Entity Responsible for Disbursal of Grant Funds and the Competitive Process Used to Award Contracts for WIOA Title I Activities	37
	G.	How the Local Board Fulfills the Duties of the AJCC Operator and/or the Career Services Provider or Selection of AJCC Operators and Career Services Providers	38
V.	PROGRAM YEAR 2025-28 SYSTEM PRIORITIES		40
VI.	ATTACHMENTS		
	A.	Stakeholder and Community Engagement Summary (Attachment 1)	44
	B.	Public comments received that disagree with the Local Plan (Attachment 2)	46
	C.	Signature Page (Attachment 3)	47

I. INTRODUCTION

In accordance with the requirements of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2014 and guidance published by California Workforce Development Board (CWDB) and California Employment Development Department (EDD), the Imperial County Workforce Development Board (WDB) has developed a four-year Local Plan covering program years (PYs) 2025-2028. Following approval by state officials representing the Governor, the plan will become effective from July 1, 2025 through June 30, 2028.

It should be noted that the terms Imperial County WDB, Imperial County Workforce and Economic Development Office (ICWEDO), and America's Job Centers of California (AJCCs) are used somewhat interchangeably throughout this Plan to describe the entity operating workforce development services under Title I of WIOA.

A. Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act

Passed by Congress with a wide bipartisan majority, WIOA was signed into law on July 22, 2014. WIOA is designed to help job seekers access employment, education, training, and support services to succeed in the labor market and to match employers with the skilled workers they need to compete in a global economy. WIOA represents the most recent version of federal workforce legislation providing funding to states and local areas to administer and operate workforce development programs. WIOA was preceded by the Job Training Partnership Act (active from 1982 to 2000) and the Workforce Investment Act (active from 2000 to 2015).

WIOA promotes accountability and transparency through negotiated performance goals that are publicly available; fosters regional collaboration within states through local workforce areas; and supports a nationwide network of career centers, which are locally branded as America's Job Centers of California (AJCCs).

While the PY 2025-28 Local Plan addresses collaboration among many organizations that derive their primary funding from a wide range of federal, state, and private programs, it is WIOA that requires the development and publication of the plan and that prescribes its core content.

B. Imperial County Workforce Development Board

WIOA requires that a workforce development board (WDB) be established in each local workforce development area (LWDA). The area's chief local elected officials appoint members to the WDB. Locally, the Imperial County Board of Supervisors fulfills this function. Local workforce development boards are business-led and the majority of members must come from the business community. Required WDB members also include representatives from labor, education, economic development, and specific federally funded workforce programs. The chief local elected officials may also select

representatives from other groups, such community-based organizations, to sit on the WDB.

WDBs drive the vision for the workforce system and maintain the critical role of leading and providing oversight for local WIOA programs. WDBs also play a critical role in promoting, sustaining, and growing regional economies. They are responsible for aligning investments in job training, integrating service delivery across programs, and ensuring that workforce investments are job-driven and match skilled workers with employers.

WIOA indicates that development of the local plan, along with the associated regional plan, is a primary responsibility of the workforce development board.

C. Local Plans and the WIOA Planning Structure

The Imperial County WDB's Local Plan is best understood within the context of a three-tiered planning structure envisioned by WIOA that requires development of plans at the state, regional, and local levels.

State Plans: Under WIOA, state plans communicate the vision for the statewide workforce development system. WIOA planning requirements aim to foster effective alignment of federal investments across job training and education programs, in order to coordinate service delivery among programs for shared customers; improve efficiency; and ensure that the workforce system connects individuals with high-quality job opportunities and employers. Cross-program planning promotes a shared understanding of the workforce needs within each state. California's PY 2024-2027 Unified Strategic Workforce Development Plan represents agreement among the WIOA core program and other partners and serves as the framework for the development of public policy, fiscal investment, and operation of the state workforce and education systems.

Regional Plans: In states such as California, where Governors have established workforce planning regions encompassing one or more LWDAs, regional plans are required. Local WDBs within the region participate in a planning process that describes elements such as: analysis of regional labor market data, development and implementation of sector initiatives for targeted industries and in-demand occupations; coordination of workforce services with regional economic development services and providers; and establishment of regional service strategies, including use of cooperative service delivery agreements. Along with another local area, the Imperial County LWDA is part of the Southern Border Regional Planning Unit, which is one of California's fifteen workforce regions.

Local Plans: The local plan is intended to serve as a four-year action plan to develop, align, and integrate the local area's job-driven workforce development systems and provide a platform to achieve the local area's vision and strategic and operational goals. Features of the local plan include: coordination among economic development, education, and workforce partners to build a skilled workforce through innovation in, and alignment of, employment, training and education programs; implementation of job-driven

strategies and services through the local career center system; and delivery of education and training to ensure that individuals, including youth and individuals with barriers to employment, have skills necessary to compete in the job market and that employers have a ready supply of skilled workers.

WIOA requires that local plans be incorporated into the regional plan. Therefore, the PY 2025-28 Imperial County WDB Local Plan is officially part of the PY 2025-28 Southern Border RPU Regional Plan.

D. California's Strategic Workforce Priorities

California's Unified Strategic Workforce Development Plan describes the state's priorities for the public workforce system. Under the leadership of the Governor and the Secretary of the Labor and Workforce Development Agency, California's vision for the future of workforce development is centered on the establishment and growth of a workforce system that promotes opportunity, job quality, and environmental sustainability for all Californians. The state is committed to developing a workforce system that enables economic growth and shared prosperity for employers and employees, especially those with barriers to employment, by investing in industry partnerships, job quality, and meaningful skills attainment. One area in which the CWDB pursues these aims is through its "High Road" programming. High Road refers to a "family of strategies" for achieving a participatory economy and society by aligning workforce, economic policy, and different interests with long-term goals of environmental sustainability, high-quality jobs, and a resilient economy. High Road emphasizes the complementary nature of these aims over the long term. In practice, High Road policy builds upon areas where the interest of employers (in trained and productive workers), workers and jobseekers (in good quality and accessible jobs), and environmental protection (for a sustainable future for all) overlap to create pathways to high-quality jobs while raising the profile of existing ones.

In consideration of the practical implementation of High Road principles in workforce development policy, the CWDB describes in the current State Plan four distinct "flavors" or styles of intervention. These interventions are directly relevant to High Road projects but also inform, to a greater or lesser extent, all of CWDB's workforce efforts. They include: (1) lifting all workers to the "High Road;" (2) professionalizing precarious work (i.e., employment that is temporary, non-standard, and insecure, often with poor pay and no protection); (3) democratizing access to high-quality, middle-skill jobs; and (4) participatory planning for a low-carbon economy.

In accordance with the requirements of WIOA, both the Imperial County WDB PY 2025-28 Local Plan and the PY 2025-28 Southern Board RPU Regional Plan support the State Plan priorities by:

- Maintaining a dual focus on providing programs and services that meet the needs and support the goals of businesses and job seekers/workers.
- Concentrating on industry sectors which drive growth and prosperity within local labor markets and regional economies.

- Targeting jobs that offer career advancement opportunities and that lead to positions that pay family-sustaining wages and provide pathways to the middle class.
- Committing to the adoption and implementation of strategies and processes that support environmental sustainability and climate resilience through workforce development.

E. Development of the Program Year 2025-28 Local Plan

Imperial County WDB management held a series of discussions and a community and stakeholder forum to secure input on key issues concerning the content and focus of the Local Plan. This session is described in Attachment 1 to this Plan. Plan development also entailed a review of partnerships, services, and systems, along with an assessment of where improvements can be made. Completing the Plan took approximately five months, after which it was made available for public review and comment, prior to being forwarded to the California Workforce Development Board, as part of the Regional Plan, for approval.

F. Program Year 2025-28 System Priorities

During the process used to develop the PY 2025-28 Local Plan, community members, local stakeholders, and system partners were invited to participate in a discussion regarding the direction of the local workforce system over the next four years. As a result of these discussions, the following priorities have been identified:

- Emphasize the importance of workplace communication skills
- Develop job seeker's knowledge of required workplace behaviors and attitudes
- Address employee retention as a business service and a skill for job seekers
- Ensure career exploration activities include information on career entry points and progression
- Ensure job seekers have strong basic skills including digital literacy
- Acknowledge and address the profound impact of advanced technology on jobs and the economy
- Implement effective strategies to support small businesses
- Support skill development that enables job seekers to qualify for remote work
- Increase use of work-based learning models, including apprenticeships
- Promote individuals from under-resourced populations as job candidates
- Adopt a human-centered approach to service delivery
- Provide instruction on the value of social capital and networking

Section V of this plan summarizes these and other issues, strategies, approaches, and key considerations that Imperial County WDB and the system partners will examine over the four-year course of this plan.

II. WIOA CORE AND REQUIRED PARTNER COORDINATION

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act includes requirements for Local Boards to establish a framework for collaboration among state and local programs that are financially supported by nineteen distinct federal fund sources. Six of these programs constitute the four “core partners:” the WIOA Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth Programs; the WIOA Title II Adult Education and Family Literacy Act Program; the WIOA Title III Wagner-Peyser Act Program; and the WIOA Title IV State Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program.

The core partners, together with thirteen other federally supported programs, make-up the WIOA-mandated one-stop partners. The Imperial County WDB has entered into a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the organizations managing each federal program at the local level. The narrative that follows describes coordination with the WIOA core and other required program partners as prescribed by the Act.

A. Coordination with AJCC Partners and WIOA Memorandum of Understanding

Imperial County WDB has built strong and effective relationships with state and local agencies that represent the one-stop partner programs. Over the next four years, the WDB looks forward to further enhancing coordination with each of the workforce system partners.

Overview of Local One-Stop System Partners

Following is a summary of the local/regional organizations representing the federal one-stop partner programs, with which the Imperial County WDB has entered into an MOU.

Federal Partner Programs	MOU Partner
Title I Adult Title I Dislocated Worker Title I Youth	Imperial County Workforce Development Board
Title II Adult Education and Literacy	Imperial County Office of Education on behalf of the Imperial County Adult Education Consortium which represents nine education agencies
Title III Wagner-Peyser	Employment Development Department
Title IV Vocational Rehabilitation	California Department of Rehabilitation (DOR)
Carl Perkins Career Technical Education	Imperial Valley College
Title V Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP)	SER – Jobs for Progress

Job Corps	San Diego Job Corps Center
Native American Programs (WIOA Section 166)	California Indian Manpower Consortium, Inc.
Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers (WIOA Section 167)	Center for Employment Training
Jobs for Veterans State Grants	Employment Development Department
Youth Build	<i>Not applicable. There is no Youth Build program in Imperial County.</i>
Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA)	Employment Development Department
Community Services Block Grant	Campesinos Unidos
Housing and Urban Development E&T	Imperial Valley Housing Authority
Unemployment Insurance (UI)	Employment Development Department
Second Chance	<i>Not applicable. There is no Second Chance-funded program in Imperial County.</i>
Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)/CalWORKs	Imperial County Department of Social Services

Memorandum of Understanding with System Partners

The Imperial County WDB has entered into an MOU with the AJCC partners outlining their joint planning and system coordination efforts. The MOU describes the following priorities:

- Continuous relationship building among all partners
- Continuous planning in response to state and federal requirements
- Responsiveness to local and regional economic conditions, including employer needs
- Adherence to common data collection and reporting, needs, including modification and changes, as required
- Making the appropriate service(s) and applicable partner programs available to customers through the one-stop delivery system
- Participating in the operation and development of the one-stop system, consistent with the terms of the MOU and requirements of authorized laws
- Coordinating the workforce services of the AJCCs that the partners provide, either on-site or through electronic connections including those described in WIOA. These include basic career services; individualized career services; training services; follow-up services; and employer/business services
- Participating in cross-training to ensure staff develops the knowledge, capacity and ability to advocate for their customers' needs.

AJCC partners have agreed to share costs to operate within three comprehensive AJCCs, which are located in El Centro, Calexico, and Brawley. Costs for the one-stop delivery system have been agreed upon through an Infrastructure Funding Agreement (IFA) and budgets that identify partner payment methods as cash, non-cash (in-kind), and or third party contributions. The MOU contain a separate infrastructure costs budget for each AJCC. This budget serves as the basis for developing the IFA for each center. The WDB and the co-located partners have chosen to use a cost allocation formula based on each partner's square footage occupancy and duration of use. The value of each partner's owed infrastructure cost contribution is directly correlated to the percentage of AJCC space and time used by that partner per month. Costs for AJCC common areas are proportionately shared by all partners.

The roles of the partners are constantly evolving and, as continuous partnership building and collaboration occur, refinement of roles and responsibilities are likely. Expansion or changes in roles will be reflected in the future updates and amendments to the MOU.

Coordination with AJCC Partner Programs

The following information summarizes the ways in which the Imperial County WDB and the local workforce system collaborate with organizations managing the federally mandated one-stop partner programs.

WIOA Title I – Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth Programs: The three formula-funded programs are administered by the Imperial County WDB. Services are delivered at three comprehensive AJCCs and at access points in the communities of Calipatria and Winterhaven. A “mobile AJCC” that enables the provision of Title I and partner services to remote locations throughout Imperial County is also part of the service delivery structure.

WIOA Title II – Adult Education and Literacy: Acting on behalf of the Imperial County Adult Education Consortium (ICAEC), Imperial County Office of Education, which is ICAEC's lead coordinator and fiscal agent, is the designated MOU partner. The Consortium is comprised of nine entities, including: Brawley Union High School District, Calexico Unified School District, Calipatria Unified School District, Central Union High School District, Holtville Unified School District, Imperial County Office of Education, Imperial Unified School District, Imperial Valley Community College District, and San Pasqual Valley Unified School District.

Referrals are regularly made between the Title I and Title II programs and many participants are co-enrolled. When the California Department of Education requests applications for Adult Education Title II Education and Literacy Activities, Imperial County WDB staff reviews applications to determine how they will complement the Local Workforce Development Plan.

WIOA Title III – Wagner-Peyser: Wagner-Peyser staff is co-located in the comprehensive AJCCs, where staff works with EDD to fulfill the labor exchange function and to coordinate

marketing and outreach to UI claimants, ensuring full access to all available WIOA services. EDD and AJCC staff also collaborate on Rapid Response orientations and services for laid off workers.

WIOA Title IV – Vocational Rehabilitation: DOR assists individuals with disabilities with employment and related services. DOR provides job readiness services, workshops, and vocational training, resulting in employment in an integrated work setting. A specialized process has been developed for referral between the WIOA Title I and Title IV programs. Technology assistance is also provided as required to support participation in training and work. DOR staff are co-located at the comprehensive AJCCs on a part-time basis.

DOR provides training for AJCC staff on serving job seekers with disabilities. In addition, the WDB is supporting DOR in increasing access to the public workforce system under a special grant from the U.S. Department of Labor.

Carl Perkins Career Technical Education: The Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 (Perkins IV) is a principal source of federal funding to states and discretionary grantees for the improvement of secondary and postsecondary career and technical education programs across the nation. The purpose of the Act is to develop the academic, career, and technical skills of secondary and postsecondary students who elect to enroll in career and technical education programs. Imperial Valley College is the local recipient of Perkins funding.

Title V Older Americans Act: The Senior Community Services Employment Program (SCSEP) offers short-term pre-vocational services to eligible seniors who are 55+, low income, and have barriers to employment. It provides part-time, temporary on the job training through community service assignments at local nonprofits and government agencies. SCSEP services are delivered through the Imperial Valley branch of SER Jobs for Progress.

Job Corps: The San Diego Job Corps Center serves individuals ages 16-24. As part of this residential program, participants receive academic instruction, vocational training, and job readiness training. Job Corps also provides job placement assistance and follow-up services. Imperial County youth are referred to Job Corps by the AJCCs.

Native American Programs (WIOA Section 166): Imperial County WDB collaborates with California Indian Manpower Consortium (CIMC) to provide referrals and co-enrollment opportunities for Indian and Native American job seekers, along with access to all WIOA and partner services offered through the AJCC.

Migrant Seasonal Farmworker Program (WIOA Section 167): The Center for Employment Training (CET) is the migrant and seasonal farmworker program grantee for Imperial County. CET provides training for a variety of occupations at its El Centro campus. Following training, clients receive job placement assistance and follow-up services. CET also offers ESL training and assists clients in preparing for the GED exam. The relationship between WIOA Title I programs and CET are strengthened by the fact that

CET has vocational programs on the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL), the organization is represented on the workforce development board, and WDB staff regularly participate in farmworker program meetings.

Jobs for Veterans State Grants (JVSG): EDD administers the JVSG program and designated Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) and Local Veterans' Employment Representatives (LVER) Specialists are available to assist veterans seeking employment.

Trade Adjustment Assistance Act: Trade Adjustment Assistance Act (TAA) is a federal program intended to provide aid to workers who lose their jobs or whose hours of work and wages are reduced as a result of increased imports. The TAA program has offered a variety of benefits and reemployment services to help unemployed workers prepare for and obtain suitable employment. Under TAA, workers were eligible for training, job search, and other reemployment services. Coordination with TAA generally included co-enrollment into WIOA, which provided multiple benefits, including TAA funds being used to cover all training costs. While TAA is technically a required partner program, it is currently an unfunded initiative and, except for work that exhausts the final federal allocation of funds, services have been suspended.

Community Services Block Grant: Campesinos Unidos, Inc. offers a variety of community services programs. Information and services are communicated through the organization's website and by outreach advocates.

Housing and Urban Development Employment and Training Program: The Imperial Valley Housing Authority (IVHA) offers affordable housing through public units with rent based on income, section 8, non-elderly disabled section 8, senior/disabled housing, and housing for farmworkers. Under the agency's Family Self Sufficiency (FSS) Program, IVHA helps families increase their earnings and build financial capability and assets. The Case Management or Coaching component of FSS assists families in accessing services they may need to overcome barriers to employment, strengthen their financial capability, and address other challenges holding them back from achieving their goals. IVHA is committed to working with workforce system partners participating in the MOU.

Unemployment Compensation: The Unemployment Insurance program is generally represented at the AJCCs by EDD's Wagner-Peyser staff. AJCC staff works with EDD to coordinate marketing and outreach to UI claimants, ensuring full access to all available WIOA services.

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families/CalWORKs: The Imperial County Department of Social Services (DSS) provides essential basic needs assistance to individuals by connecting them to critical benefits including General Relief, referrals to Medi-Cal, CalFresh, CalWORKs, and other social service programs. WDB and DSS staff collaborate on various programs, initiatives, and cross-referrals. Co-enrollment between the agencies is common.

B. Partners' Efforts to Collaborate on Co-enrollment and Case Management

The Imperial County workforce development system partners have collaborated on a number of strategies to strengthen program alignment, leverage resources, and coordinate service delivery for job seekers who are eligible across multiple programs and may benefit from services offered by two or more partners.

Collaborative Recruitment and Cross Referral Process

System partners co-located at the AJCCs have agreed to:

- A standard initial intake process;
- Use of CalJOBS; and
- A common process for cross-referring applicants and participants across partners and programs.

These processes promote consistency when gathering and recording customer information and matching job seekers to resources that may meet their needs. A common referral form authorizes the release of basic information, which facilitates the co-enrollment of participants and co-case management by system partners.

Co-Enrollment of Job Seekers

Assessment of WIOA Title I program participants (and individuals being served by other programs) is the first step in determining the services an individual needs to prepare for employment. This process, which includes the development of an individual employment plan, reveals a participant's basic skill levels, past education attainment, job-specific skills, work history, special skills and abilities, life circumstances, and potential barriers to employment. To address job/career goals and barriers, staff may suggest services that are available through WIOA and from other programs, which are operated by system partners. A referral is made to the partner(s) identified as capable of providing the required service(s), thereby triggering a co-enrollment. If the partner utilizes CalJOBS, the co-enrollment status is recorded in the system. If not, the partners share information, as permissible and practicable.

While WDB management and direct services staff are familiar with state guidance on strategic co-enrollment of WIOA participants in other programs, many of the local partners have been collaborating for decades on providing services to job seekers. A few examples of these efforts with one-stop partners and local stakeholders include the following:

- Veterans seeking WIOA services often have a wide range of needs, including various health-related matters. Therefore, they may be referred to services provided by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' Imperial Valley Clinic, Imperial County

Behavioral Health Services, or DOR. AJCC representatives participate in the EDD-led Veterans Employment Committee.

- Job seekers who have not earned a high school diploma or equivalency are commonly co-enrolled in programs offered by the Central Union High School District and other adult education providers.
- Job Seekers with disabilities regularly apply for employment services provided by the AJCCs. When a customer requires support in terms of assistive technology or other accommodations to be able to participate in training or to qualify for employment, he or she will be referred to DOR, which frequently co-enrolls such individuals to provide necessary supportive services.
- Youth and young adults who are seeking skills training, employment services, assistance in completing high school, and other services are provided information on WIOA and other local programs geared towards younger individuals. Many clients between the ages of 16-24 are referred to the San Diego Job Corps Center, where they participate in multiple services and activities that will help them complete their secondary education and prepare for a career. As they are completing Job Corps services, individuals returning to Imperial County may be co-enrolled in WIOA services for assistance in finding employment related to the skills they have acquired in Job Corps.
- Based on individual needs and circumstances, some individuals between the ages of 18 and 24 may be co-enrolled in both the WIOA Title I Adult and Youth programs, receiving unduplicated services through each.
- Individuals receiving TANF-funded and other services from the Imperial County Department of Social Services, may also participate in WIOA. Such individuals may receive support from both agencies that facilitates their participation in training and career services and their placement in unsubsidized employment.

Case Management

Partners that have access to CalJOBS can share data and intake information after securing the informed consent of a common customer. This allows staff from two or more programs to track progress that has been recorded in CalJOBS. Not all partners use CalJOBS. In these cases, the partners agree to a process (and often a schedule) for communicating about a client's progress by phone, email, and a selective sharing of records. Over the course of the four-year period represented by this plan, Imperial County WDB will promote the adoption of CalJOBS by the full range of WIOA-required partners.

Cross-Training of System Partners and Coordination of Partner-Led Events

The more that partner staff knows about other programs, the greater the chance that effective referrals will be made, including those leading to co-enrollment. Cross training sessions will be held during quarterly “Community Partner Alliance” meetings led by the AJCC Operator. Such presentations will ensure that all WIOA staff and partners remain up to date on programs and services of system partners and other local stakeholders. Partner meetings also provide a venue for agencies to work together to plan coordinated job fairs, workshops, and business outreach, along with other multi-agency strategies.

C. One-Stop System’s Use of Technology and Other Remote Strategies

Imperial County is home to approximately 180,000 residents, who primarily live and work within its seven geographically dispersed incorporated cities (Brawley, Calexico, Calipatria, El Centro, Holtville, Imperial, and Westmorland) and eight widespread unincorporated communities (Bombay Beach, Heber, Niland, Ocotillo, Palo Verde, Salton City, Seeley, and Winterhaven), along with various colonias. In terms of land mass, the county is the ninth largest in California, encompassing 4,284 square miles. Due to the size of the county and its scattered population centers, many individuals living in remote communities regularly travel an hour or more to access public services. Compounding this hardship is that fact that many people living in these areas are low-income and have limited access to transportation. The WDB and the workforce system partners continue to work to make employment, education, training, and related services accessible to remote communities.

Remote Service Delivery Sites

There are currently two service access points that serve remote communities: Winterhaven in the far eastern part of the county, and Calipatria, in the north-central region of the county. At these locations, individuals have access to computers in order to conduct job search using CalJOBS, work on resumes, and access resources to prepare for interviews. Because of its proximity to the Arizona border, individuals in Winterhaven also frequently access workforce development and other services in Yuma, Arizona and are likely to be employed there. To support residents of several small communities that dot the western shoreline of the Salton Sea, the WDB periodically conducts job fairs in Salton City.

Mobile Service Delivery

The WDB has acquired a “mobile AJCC” to better serve remote communities throughout the county. The mobile unit represents a cutting-edge workforce development service delivery strategy to meet the needs of job seekers and businesses lacking easy access to services. A turnkey, 38 foot long coach unit has been equipped to offer a wide range of workforce services. The mobile unit enables the WDB to reach residents in remote communities, including, but not limited to, Niland, Salton City, Palo Verde, and other distant locations and to provide one-stop services through the unit’s computer lab, which features internet access. The unit can be used to host various workshops on job search

techniques, resume development, and interviewing skills, and orientations to systemwide services and vocational training opportunities. In addition, the unit is available to serve employers by supporting recruitment, interviewing, and training for new employees.

Technology Resources to Communicate with Remote Customers

Over the last several years, the WDB has worked to enhance virtual services, in part, to increase access for individuals who live beyond a reasonable commuting distance to an AJCC.

Various methods for providing and enabling services other than in-person, include the following:

Telephone: Appointments with AJCC staff can be conducted via telephone. If an individual does not have access to a telephone, referrals can be made to local community service agencies to obtain one.

WDB Website: A few years ago, the WDB modernized its website. Because of this update, businesses are able to post jobs online more easily, thereby making these listings more accessible to job seekers. In addition, new features enable participants to submit applications online. The WDB is procuring workshops and webinars that will further expand online offerings, such as sessions on resume building and interviewing skills.

Zoom: System partners and AJCC staff use Zoom and other videoconferencing platforms to conduct meetings and facilitate one-on-one conversations.

Social Media: The Imperial County Workforce and Economic Development Office has an active Facebook page in order to keep the public up to date on available services.

Electronic signatures: The AJCCs accept electronic signatures on some documentation to eliminate the need for in-person contact.

Technology Access: The WDB and workforce system partners have assisted job seekers who lack hardware and/or internet access in obtaining laptop computers and hot spots. In addition, some organizations providing instruction through individual training accounts (ITAs) are providing students with technology tools. Again, the mobile unit features state of the hardware technology and community access points provide job seekers with access to computers and the web.

System Partners' Efforts to Serve Customers in Remote Communities

Driven by the circumstances of the pandemic, many AJCC partners increased their reliance on technology and have since delivered many services online. This increased the availability of services in remote areas. As some services are better suited to in-person service delivery, some partner agencies provide such services on a by

appointment basis. Examples of approaches that partners are using to increase web-based and other remote services include the following:

- CET, the Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker program grantee, can provide shuttle service to its El Centro campus.
- EDD staff generally makes bi-weekly visits to the Winterhaven access point, and makes scheduled visits to CBO locations, partner offices, and employer sites in remote communities. Zoom or Adobe Connect workshops and one-on-one sessions with staff can be made available to customers.
- Imperial County Department of Social Services supports a multi-access system with regional offices. It also outstations staff at Family Resource Centers in remote communities and reaches outlying rural areas through a mobile unit. In addition, the department's transitional services can be accessed in-person, by phone, and online.
- DOR uses a variety of technological strategies to deliver services to individuals in remote areas. These include the use of Zoom, FaceTime, DUO, MS Teams, and email to provide virtual services including: orientation; intake and assessment; eligibility determination; developing Individual Plans of Employment (IPEs); and other Vocational Rehabilitation services.
- Equus Workforce Solutions, a current WIOA Title I Youth Program service provider utilizes RingCentral to communicate with participants, employers, and partners, and finds that this approach provides rapid, quality support to address participants' program needs.
- As part of its Programmatic Environmental Impact Report (PEIR), Imperial County contracted with several community-based organizations to seek meaningful public input and involvement in the County's decision making in connection with Lithium Valley-related activities.

D. Coordination of Workforce Activities and Support Services

Supportive services are made available to eligible individuals enrolled in the WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs. Supportive services are provided to address a participant's needs and barriers as identified during initial and on-going individual assessment processes. Services are provided to enable an individual to participate in activities authorized under WIOA Title I. To qualify for WIOA-funded support, all efforts to secure supportive services from other sources must first be exhausted and documented in the participant's case file.

Determining the Need for WIOA-Funded Supportive Services

WIOA Title I supportive services are only provided when they are determined to be necessary, reasonable, and allowable. The need for supportive services must be based on an objective assessment and must be described and justified in an Individual Employment Plan for adults or an Individual Development Plan (IDP) for youth. To receive services:

- An individual must be participating in a program with activities authorized under WIOA. Priority of service is established at the time of eligibility determination.
- An individual is unable to obtain supportive services through other programs.
- A Supportive Services Request Form has been completed.

Participants can receive a lifetime maximum of \$2,000 in WIOA-funded supportive services. The limit may be exceeded only following a documented needs assessment and approval by the WDB Director. Childcare and mileage expenses are not included in the lifetime limit and are calculated separately. For individuals enrolled in ITA-funded training, up to an additional \$500 may be provided for employment-related expenses.

Services Available to WIOA Participants

A wide range of supportive services is available to participants, including:

Transportation assistance is available for individuals participating in training and job search. Transportation expenses for eligible WIOA participants, including round trip expenses to and from a childcare provider, are authorized, but limited to usual and customary public/community transportation, such as bus lines, or on a mileage reimbursement basis. Supportive services for transportation may continue to assist a participant in retaining employment no longer than the point of exit from the program.

Housing Assistance: Only under extraordinary circumstances may supportive services be used to pay for housing. Such circumstances may include a notice of eviction or a complaint filed in a local court of law. Funds may only be used to pay monthly rental costs.

Ancillary Expenses: These include costs necessary to participate in services, such as books, tools, clothing, background checks, testing fees, application fees, drug tests and other costs. An ancillary expense may also include those costs directly related to obtaining employment, including clothing, an employment-related physical or eye exam, or eyeglasses.

Child Care Assistance: Participants with children 12 years of age or younger are eligible for childcare when it is determined other funding sources are not available to pay for such services.

E. Physical and Programmatic Accessibility for Individuals with Disabilities

Imperial County WDB ensures contracts, cooperative agreements, job training plans, policies, and procedures are ADA compliant and fully meet the nondiscrimination and equal opportunity provisions of WIOA. The WDB has a designated Equal Opportunity (EO) Officer, who is responsible for coordinating its obligations under these regulations.

The EO Officer's responsibilities include the following:

- Serving as the liaison with the EDD EEO Office.
- Investigating and monitoring the Local Area's and its sub-recipients' WIOA Title I funded activities and programs.
- Reviewing the Local Area's organizations' and its sub-recipients' written policies.
- Developing, publishing, and enforcing the Local Area's discrimination complaint procedures.
- Conducting outreach and education about equal opportunity and nondiscrimination requirements and how an individual may file a complaint.
- Participating in continuing training and education.
- Informing participants, employees, and program beneficiaries of their equal opportunity rights and responsibilities, and how the discrimination complaint process works.
- Establishing a logging system to record discrimination complaints.
- Providing a copy of the complaint log annually to the EDD EEO Office.
- Developing and publishing procedures (including alternative dispute resolution) for resolving allegations for noncompliance with applicable nondiscrimination and equal opportunity provisions.
- Developing and publishing procedures for resolving allegations against service providers for noncompliance with applicable nondiscrimination and equal opportunity provisions.

All clients are notified of the "Equal Opportunity Law" along with the right to file a complaint under "What to do If You Believe You Have Experienced Discrimination." The Discrimination Complaint Form is readily available to customers. This information is shared with clients during initial meetings, as well as during new participant and new employer orientations, whether they be conducted in person, via telephone, or through teleconference. The WDB ensures that, during presentations, individuals are notified of their rights and responsibilities under the nondiscrimination and equal opportunity provisions of WIOA, including a right to file a complaint with the WDB or the Director of the DOL's Civil Rights Center. Contact information is provided to clients.

Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities

All AJCC buildings are ADA compliant. The WDB ensures that all new facilities or alterations will comply with the applicable federal accessibility standards, such as the *ADA Standards for Accessible Design* (1991 or 2010) or the *Uniform Federal Accessibility Standards*. No qualified individual with a disability is excluded from participation in or denied the benefits of a recipient's service, program, or activity or is subjected to discrimination because the facilities are inaccessible or unusable by individuals with

disabilities. The WDB permits individuals with mobility disabilities to use wheelchairs and manually powered mobility aids, such as walkers, crutches, canes, braces, or other similar devices designed for use by individuals with mobility disabilities, in any areas open to pedestrian use.

The WDB ensures that all WIOA-funded programs and activities are programmatically accessible. This includes providing reasonable accommodations for individuals with disabilities, making reasonable modifications to policies, practices, and procedures, administering programs in the most integrated setting appropriate, communicating with persons with disabilities as effectively as with others, and providing appropriate auxiliary aids or services, including assistive technology devices and services, when necessary to afford individuals with disabilities an equal opportunity to participate in and enjoy the benefits of programs or activities.

Assistive Technology and Accessible Materials

The WDB informs customers that auxiliary aids and services for individuals with disabilities are available upon request. Language assistance (oral or written) is available at all AJCC locations. Interpretation services (in person and via phone) and Braille services are also available.

Computer workstations can be adjusted to larger fonts when needed. Printed materials indicate that AJCCs and the WDB may be reached by voice telephone and provide the TTY number. Additionally, the WDB ensures that all publications in the news media, on the county website, or social media pages are ADA compliant. For example, when a picture or PDF is published online, the WDB provides a detailed description following the image.

Imperial County has identified the need for more assistive technology devices for individuals with disabilities. Priorities include touch screen monitors, more adjustable workstations, speech recognition software, narrators on computers, and Braille Sense Plus and translator.

Staff Training

Staff participate in yearly training on the Equal Opportunity Law, nondiscrimination and equal opportunity policy. Annual training includes disability awareness and etiquette, effective communication strategies, access to technology, access to employment, racial equity, dealing with individuals who are limited English Proficient (LEP), and reinforcing an LEP Plan. These training sessions are vital for staff to effectively work with customers and connect them with the best services available. DOR has provided training for WDB and AJCC staff on the needs of customers with disabilities, various categories of disabilities, and assistive technology. DOR will provide WDB and direct services staff with an orientation to DOR services and offer its well-regarded Windmills training.

III. STATE STRATEGIC PARTNER COORDINATION

In 2018, the State completed and published a biennial modification to California's Unified Strategic Workforce Development Plan for Program Years 2016-19. Within that modification, the California Workforce Development Board identified several new strategic partnerships with state-level agencies and initiatives. Guidance issued by the State Board in 2018 to Local Boards regarding two-year modifications to their PY 17-20 Plans required that WDBs pursue these partnerships within their jurisdictions. In the 2019 modification to the Local Plan, Imperial County WDB described these local level relationships, some of which were in an early stage of development. State guidance published in 2024 added requirements for two new partnerships.

Following is a summary of the evolution and status of these strategic partnerships as well as approaches under consideration to further strengthen collaboration with local providers and programs.

A. Coordination with County Human Services Agency and Other Local Partners That Serve Individuals Accessing CalFresh Employment and Training Services

The Imperial County Department of Social Services (DSS) is responsible for CalWORKS and other public welfare programs, including: Medi-Cal, Welfare to Work, General Assistance, and CalFresh. DSS is a one-stop partner and, therefore, is part of the network of agencies that comprise the local workforce development delivery system. CalFresh participants are diverse. They include families, some led by single parents, and individuals. Many are unemployed, while others are low wage earners. In Imperial County, many CalFresh participants live in poverty and rely on other forms of public assistance and social support services. Because the group consists of individuals with many distinct needs, participants are served by all types of educational resources, social services, and support organizations in the county, including the AJCCs.

Early discussion with DSS revealed that its leadership was considering the implementation of a CalFresh Employment and Training program to complement the other services provided by the organization. However, during the development of the Imperial County WDB's PY 2025-28 Local Plan, DCSS leadership indicated that, as the state does not require that the county implement the program, Imperial County DSS is not currently providing these services.

B. Coordination with Local Child Support Agency and Other Local Partners Serving Individuals That Are Non-Custodial Parents

During the 2019 development of the biennial Modification to the Local Plan, the WDB and Imperial County Child Support Services (CSS) agreed to formalize and further structure their existing relationship. This enhancement to the workforce system's partnership with CSS represented an extension of an existing relationship among the WDB, the AJCCs,

and Child Support. For many years, referrals had been made from Child Support to the AJCCs pursuant to court orders requiring non-custodial parents (NCPs) to participate in job search in exchange for credit in meeting specified obligations and the reinstatement of revoked licenses. While this approach had yielded some success, CSS and the WDB agreed to develop an MOU outlining a structured relationship for cross-referrals. The WDB, CSS, and the entire network of one-stop partners expressed their full commitment to using the MOU to build a stronger partnership to improve employment outcomes for NCPs with child support orders.

Current Collaboration between the WDB and Child Support and Plan Going Forward

The WDB and CSS are currently making cross referrals and are working together on a regular basis. CSS refers clients to the AJCCs for workforce services. Child Support clients are tracked by WDB staff and information is shared with the CSS case manager. AJCC staff work with clients to develop short-, mid- and long-range employment goals. As the client is participating in services, the case manager follows-up with service providers (e.g., schools, support agencies) to track progress. Staff from both agencies regularly follow-up with clients through their completion of services.

The relationship with CSS has been very successful, with many child support clients completing training and obtaining employment, moving them toward a living wage. A renewed MOU is currently pending execution.

C. Coordination with Local Partnership Agreement Partners Established in Alignment with the Competitive Integrated Employment Blueprint and Other Local Partners That Serve Individuals with Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities.

As the Imperial County WDB convened local stakeholders to support the development of the 2019 Modification to our Local Plan, WDB leadership and staff first became aware of the state-level blueprint for competitive integrated employment (CIE) that was crafted by and led to the formalization of a partnership among DOR, the California Department of Development Services (DDS) and the California Department of Education (CDE). An agreement among the partners makes employment in an integrated setting at a competitive wage for individuals with intellectual disabilities and developmental disabilities (ID/DD) its highest priority. WDB representatives also learned of the requirement that local agencies representing the state level partners develop agreements to meet CIE goals. State Workforce Board guidance indicated that local boards must connect to these partnerships to support CIE objectives. The following information summarizes the WDB's efforts in the area.

Imperial County Local Partnership Agreement

An LPA has been implemented in Imperial County. The purpose of the Imperial County Local Partnership Agreement (ICLPA) is to enhance and strengthen partnerships that promote career preparation and successful placement of youth and adults with disabilities into competitive, integrated employment. This primarily includes youth and adults identified as having an intellectual and/or developmental disability and may include others whose disability creates similar barriers to employment. The participating core partners are:

- El Centro Branch of the California Department of Rehabilitation (DOR)
- San Diego Regional Center (SDRC)
- Imperial County SELPA (Special Education Local Plan Area), which is a consortium formed by 17 school districts: Brawley Elementary School District, Brawley Union High School District, Calexico Unified School District, Calipatria Unified School District, Central Union High School District, El Centro Elementary School District, Heber School District, Holtville Unified School District, Imperial County Office of Education, Imperial Unified School District, Magnolia Union School District, McCabe Union School District, Meadows Union School District, Mulberry School District, San Pasqual Valley Unified School District, Seeley Union School District, and Westmorland Union School District.

The ICLPA also identifies community partners, which are defined as local entities whose mission, goals, and primary purpose are aligned with that of the ICLPA, thereby increasing opportunities for youth and adults with disabilities to be successfully employed in an integrated setting while earning a competitive wage, and in a career or job that meets their vocational desires or goals. Among the community partners listed in the LPA is the *America's Job & Career Center System*.

Current Collaboration with the LPA Partners

Imperial County WDB and AJCC representatives currently collaborate with DOR to serve customers with disabilities. Supporting DOR's and the LPA's business outreach efforts to expand the use of CIE would be a natural extension of our current, productive working relationship. WDB staff has envisioned being able to support DOR's efforts in several ways. These include:

- Identifying businesses within the County that employ individuals in jobs that would be suitable for CIE, ensuring that opportunities are identified that complement the various capabilities of individuals in the ID/DD target group;
- Developing a CIE-specific business outreach plan for the County;
- Establishing a unified strategy for promoting CIE candidates to local businesses, again taking into consideration individual capabilities and needs;
- Making direct contact with business representatives on behalf of LPA customers; and
- Orienting employers to CIE, developing a work-based learning agreement and ensuring the necessary services and supports are in place to promote successful job placement.

Moving Forward

Imperial County WDB staff and managers and staff representing the system partners have expressed interest in training from the LPA partners about the workforce-related needs and barriers of individuals with ID and DD, as the workforce system, overall, has limited experience working with this target group. The local board and its partners have significant experience serving individuals with disabilities, but many providers acknowledge the need for CIE-specific training. The partners identified several topics for training. These include navigating the workforce system on behalf of individuals with disabilities; primer in disabilities resources for employment and related services; understanding reasonable accommodations; managing family dynamics; working with clients through adult transition; and understanding social security benefits and the effect of employment on these benefits.

D. Coordination with Community-Based Organizations and Other Local Partners That Serve Individuals Who are English Language Learners, Foreign Born, and/or Refugees

In Imperial County, more than eighty-five percent of the population is Hispanic or Latino, with nearly a third being foreign born. Imperial County offers extensive services to individuals who are English language learners (ELL) to ensure they have equal access to programs. All staff is trained on the WDB's Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Plan in order to ensure identified ELL individuals receive necessary language skills training along with other workforce services.

Based on the demographic composition of Imperial County, Spanish is the only language other than English spoken by a significant portion of residents. Several bilingual staff members are available at the AJCCs at all times and all written documents are available in Spanish. While our staff is sensitive to the needs of ELLs, we also understand the importance of providing training in order to improve English language skills. Acquisition of English fluency is critical to workers' opportunities for better jobs and higher wages that will lead to self-sufficiency. Our local workforce development strategy emphasizes the importance of studying English concurrent with training for and securing employment.

Collaboration with Public and Private Partners to Serve ELLs and Immigrants

Because such a large percentage of the population is made up of immigrants, many of whom are ELLs, serving this population is central to the work of the WDB, the AJCCs, and local workforce system partners. AJCC staff works closely with many local agencies to secure support services for customers.

Public agencies are critical partners in providing support services to job seekers served by the AJCCs and other organizations that make up the local workforce development system. Among these are the county's Department of Social Services; Public Health Department; Behavioral Health Department; Imperial Valley Transit; and the Imperial

Valley Housing Authority. Supplementing these services is a network of non-profit organizations including: Imperial Valley Food Bank; the LGBT Center; SER-Jobs for Progress; United Way; Calexico Neighborhood House; and the Sister Evelyn Mourey Center, which provide a wide range of support services, such as emergency shelter, food and clothing. Faith-based organizations are also crucial partners. Justice for Our Neighbors, a project of the United Methodist Immigration Ministry, provides services, such as legal assistance to the asylum-seekers and undocumented children.

Some examples of the critical forms of services and support provided to ELLs and immigrants by system partners include the following:

Center for Employment Training: CET, which administers the WIOA Section 167 Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker grant program, offers ESL services and assistance to clients earning a GED. CET has also had great success in securing employment for participants in jobs that lead to self-sufficiency wages. While many participants may not have a high school education, CET works with those who have a high school degree from Mexico, accepting a *Certificado de Preparatoria* as a substitute for a high school diploma. CET is very active within the AJCCs, with representatives constantly communicating with AJCC staff so they remain aware of the programs CET offers.

Office of Education: The Imperial County Office of Education (ICOE) is the leader of the adult education consortium consisting of Brawley Union High School District, Calexico Unified School District, Calipatria Unified School District, Central Union High School District, Holtville Union School District, Imperial Unified School District, Imperial Valley College District, ICOE Alternative Education/Imperial County Jail and San Pasqual Unified School District. Services offered by the Consortium are ESL, Career Technical Education Courses, Bus Driver Courses, Medical Classes, and Welding Classes. Consortium agencies assist individuals in obtaining a High School Diploma or GED. Staff also provides students with career and education counseling. The WDB works closely with Central Union High School District, as it is an MOU partner. However, WDB staff also works with other education partners across the county. This collaboration with all adult education providers enables AJCC staff to refer clients to services in and around their communities.

Sister Evelyn Mourey Center: The non-profit Sister Evelyn Mourey Center (SEMC) places an emphasis on serving individuals and immigrant families with language barriers. Imperial County is home to many individuals who were born in Mexico and only speak Spanish. The AJCCs refer individuals to the Evelyn Mourey Center when clients are in need of daily translation services. SEMC assists families and individuals with various applications. These can include job applications or applications for services, such as electricity or prescriptions for eyeglasses.

SEMC staff makes daily presentations to customers, which are offered in both English and Spanish, to make participants aware of current issues and services in the community. Topics have included women's health, diabetes, family nutrition, financial literacy, and community resources available through local providers.

The SEMC is a partner with Central Union High School District's Adult Education and offers access to ESL classes. These classes assist with reading, writing and conversational skills to help students qualify for better job opportunities. Each individual is evaluated and placed in an appropriate level of instruction from beginning, intermediate, to advanced. SEMC hosts English Conversational Groups to assist individuals in practicing their speaking skills. SEMC also collaborates with Imperial Valley College to provide access to Computer Literacy Classes. The goal of these classes is to provide fundamental computer skills that increase participants' access to job opportunities and higher education.

As many in this population are non-citizens, the SEMC offers a citizenship class. SEMC stresses that obtaining U.S. citizenship is critical for many low-income populations in order to receive benefits and obtain better jobs. SEMC classes assist individuals to prepare and pass the citizenship test.

The Center for Family Solutions (aka Woman Haven): Woman Haven has a very close relationship with the WDB, as well as other agencies in the community. Many Woman Haven clients have little or no work experience and do not speak English. Some clients may have left an abusive relationship in Mexico and are looking to start a new life for themselves and their families. Woman Haven will often make referrals for clients to attend ESL or citizenship classes. The agency aims to assist their clients with skill building for day-to-day life and to obtain jobs to care for their families. Woman Haven offers computer skills programs, which helps clients prepare for employment. Many clients also receive services from local agencies such as County Behavioral Health, legal services, and the AJCCs.

Justice for our Neighbors: The organization provides low cost immigration and legal services to low-income immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers. Staff assists clients with obtaining authorization to work. Once authorized, these individuals can receive services from many other local agencies. The AJCCs can refer them to obtain their GED, attend ESL classes, and participate in programs to obtain their citizenship.

E. Coordination with Local Veteran Affairs, Community-Based Organizations, and Other Local Partners That Serve Veterans

More than two decades ago, the Jobs for Veterans Act (JVA) was signed into law to improve employment, training, and job placement services available to veterans. JVA mandates priority of service for veterans and eligible spouses who otherwise meet the eligibility requirements for participation in programs administered by the U.S. Department of Labor. California has consistently assured that the public workforce system focus on outreach and the delivery of services and support to veterans, and, in 2019, EDD issued a Workforce Services Directive on "*Priority of Services for Veterans and Eligible Spouses*," which updated guidelines to correspond to requirements published in WIOA. Imperial County WDB has adopted the full range federal and state mandates by publishing its own policy on priority services for veterans.

As stated in Section II of this plan, *WIOA Core and Required Partner Coordination*, Imperial County WDB coordinates with the Jobs for Veterans State Grant program operated by EDD. In addition to maintaining a strong working relationship with EDD, the WDB coordinates with other veterans-serving organizations. This includes attending regular meetings of the Veterans Employer Committee and sharing information about training programs and opportunities.

The WDB holds quarterly partner alliance meetings facilitated by the AJCC Operator. At these meetings, approximately 80 organizations are invited to collaborate and discuss their services. Agencies serving veterans are among those attending. This includes the Imperial County Veterans Service Office, which supports veterans and their family members in various ways including, but not limited to connection to medical benefits, compensation for service-related disabilities, employment and job search resources, service member life insurance, educational benefits, California College fee waivers, vocational rehabilitation, and home loan certification. Imperial Valley College and the Callexico Campus of San Diego State University also have staff and resources that specialize in supporting the educational interests and goals of veterans.

Over the course of program years 2025 through 2028, Imperial County WDB will look to strengthen relationships with existing partners, seek out new partnerships to improve services for veterans, and continuously assess opportunities to improve services and increase outcomes for this important target group.

F. Collaboration with the Strategic Planning Partners to Address Environmental Sustainability

The Imperial County WDB's PY 2025-28 Local Plan marks the first formal statement of intent by the WDB to work in collaboration with system partners to address environmental sustainability through workforce development system programs and services. Over the period covered by the Plan, Imperial County WDB intends to initiate work in this area through several key efforts including:

Implementation of Planned Initiatives Connected to Environmental Sustainability

Imperial County WDB is working on several workforce development projects that have connections to and/or are impacted by environmental and climate issues. One such project is a proposed program that would provide training to increase the number of nurses working in the public health arena, which in Imperial County often involves issues of air quality and their links to conditions such as asthma and related respiratory conditions. Another project area is the WDB's efforts in the emerging local lithium and rare mineral extraction industry, where workforce and education leaders are working to align programs with environmentally sustainable practices and to prepare the workforce to meet the demands for a green economy.

Research, Learning, and Adoption of Local Priorities

Imperial County WDB leadership intends to focus more intensively on, engage with, and participate in state-administered projects and programs that are tied to environmental and climate issues, thereby increasing the organization's knowledge and capacity in this area. Other efforts to improve system capacity will include participation of management, staff, and board members in state and regional conferences and in online seminars and training. WDB representatives will actively seek opportunities to gain insight from organizations able to share models and best practices for adapting workforce development services to meet work requirements associated with environmental sustainability.

Coordination with Local Partners and Their Efforts

As expressed throughout this plan, Imperial County WDB's programs operate within a complex network of organizations, programs, and services. WDB representatives are privileged to lead regular discussions among system partners and stakeholders. The exchange of information during such sessions provides those participating with details on the priorities and activities of their counterparts. Increasingly, issues pertaining to climate and the environment, and their impacts on jobs and the economy are topics discussed by the partners. WDB leadership will remain open to collaborating with partner-led programs and initiatives that support communities and industries in achieving environment-related goals.

IV. WIOA TITLE I COORDINATION

The following narrative addresses services, activities, and administrative requirements of Imperial County WDB under the WIOA Title I formula programs, along with strategies for staff preparation, training, and ongoing professional development to effectively respond to participant needs.

A. Staff Training and Professional Development to Increase Digital Technology Skills

Most WDB and AJCC staff currently demonstrate moderate to high competency levels in the use of digital technology in their daily performance of job duties, which include assisting job seekers in understanding and using hardware, software, and web-based applications and platforms. Training on the following technology-related topics has been provided:

- Using Zoom for meetings and one-on-one interactions;
- CalJOBS uses and functionalities; and
- Retrieving and storing files while engaged in remote work.

To ensure that AJCC staff members are fully prepared to not only meet the requirements of their own jobs, but also support customers who will be increasingly reliant on the use of digital skills in the workplace, Imperial County WDB will continue to provide opportunities for staff members to improve and/or remain up-to-date with their work-related digital/technology skills. The WDB offers staff access to LinkedIn Learning, which has a catalog of hundreds of courses that could meet the technological needs of staff.

B. Frontline Staff Training and Professional Development to Increase Cultural Competency and Effectiveness in Working with Individuals and Groups that Have Been Exposed to Trauma

Imperial County WDB encourages and supports staff development. Training is frequently made available to staff to increase their awareness and knowledge on matters related to service delivery and compliance. However, training is also provided on topics that increase staff's effectiveness in serving key customers, including job seekers and businesses. Training of this type is especially important for frontline team members who work directly with customers.

Topics dealing with cultural competency and trauma-exposed populations that would likely be beneficial to frontline staff may include: understanding trauma; signs of depression; recognizing post-traumatic stress; justice-informed employment retention; building resiliency in communities; mental health awareness; sexual harassment; and domestic violence.

On-Going Efforts to Support Staff Development

Over the period covered by the local plan, WDB leadership will continue to identify training opportunities on topics such as customer-centered design, customer service excellence, WIOA compliance and best practices, employer engagement and business services, career coaching, and technology integration. Annually, the WDB will budget for staff and board members to attend conferences hosted by the California Workforce Association, the National Association of Workforce Development Boards, the National Association of Workforce Development Professionals, and other organizations with a focus on workforce and economic development. Such events are ideal venues to learn about key issues and trends affecting the workforce development system. In addition, the AJCC Operator will provide and organize training throughout the year for AJCC and Business Services staff.

C. Coordination of Rapid Response and Layoff Aversion Activities

Imperial County WDB has been providing Rapid Response services to displaced workers for more than 30 years. Staff participate in the Southern California Rapid Response Roundtable meetings, and attend related training provided by organizations such as the California Labor Federation.

Working with state and local partners, Business Services staff provides the following Rapid Response and Layoff Aversion services.

Layoff Aversion Services

The Rapid Response Coordinator works closely with state and local agencies (such as the Imperial Valley Economic Development Corporation, the Small Business Development Center, and the local Chamber of Commerce) to monitor the health of businesses and leverage relationships to support continued business operations. Upon receipt of a WARN notice or other information indicating a company is experiencing hardship, the Coordinator makes immediate contact with the company to propose Layoff Aversion assistance.

Business Services staff has established ongoing relationships with local employers, creating an environment that enables them to provide services to businesses in order to prevent or reduce layoffs. Layoff aversion tools and strategies that are used to support businesses in distress include economic analysis, incumbent worker training, EDD's Work Share Program, and various forms of work-based training.

Rapid Response Services

When the Business Services Coordinator receives a WARN notice or similar communication regarding a business closure or significant layoff, the business is contacted to verify the information provided in the notice. If this notice is active, staff will start coordinating a Rapid Response Orientation for affected employees. Typically, these

orientations are held at the business site (if the business is still operating). Once the date and time for the orientation is confirmed, members of the Rapid Response Team, which includes staff from the AJCCs and EDD, are contacted. During the orientation, the team disseminates information about the WIOA Dislocated Worker Program and Unemployment Insurance benefits. Depending on the nature of the layoff, dislocated workers may be eligible for a wide range of other services.

The Imperial County WDB collaborates with various agencies to bring as many services as possible to workers that have been laid off. Such agencies include the Department of Social Services, Inland Fair Housing and Mediation Board, the Imperial Valley Food Bank, Center for Employment Training, Imperial County Behavioral Health, Imperial County Child Support Services, and DOR. When specialized services are needed, the WDB may contract with organizations that have unique expertise, such as California Manufacturing Technology Consulting.

At times, WARN notices are received late and business are no longer operating. When this occurs, Business Services staff work with EDD to locate affected workers through their RESEA activities.

D. Services and Activities Available under WIOA Title I Adult and Dislocated Worker Programs

Imperial County WDB provides an extensive range of services for job seekers enrolled under the WIOA Title I Adult and Dislocated Worker programs. Services meet the needs of individuals with varying levels of education and work experience, including job seekers from vulnerable populations who may have one or more barriers to employment. Services are designed to prepare participants for entry-level and higher positions with businesses in Imperial County, including those in priority sectors that are identified in the Southern Border Regional Planning Unit's PY 2025-28 Regional Plan.

Service Delivery through the AJCCs and Other Methods

The delivery of career services at Imperial County WDB's AJCCs takes place alongside a wide range of training and services provided by the one-stop partners. Customers may participate exclusively in basic career services, or they may need additional assistance and be subsequently enrolled in individualized career services.

The WDB's AJCC system includes three comprehensive AJCCs (Brawley, Calexico and El Centro), along with community access points in Calipatria and Winterhaven. Brick and mortar site are supplemented by a mobile unit and services that are available online.

Registration and Enrollment in Adult and Dislocated Worker Programs

Adults and dislocated workers who receive services funded under WIOA Title I are registered following a certification of eligibility and are classified as participants. For individuals to be registered into a WIOA program, the following must occur:

- Individuals must complete an application/eligibility determination process;
- Individuals must provide the documentation required to substantiate eligibility; and
- An appropriate activity code for the individual must be entered into the CalJOBS system.

Career Services for Adult and Dislocated Worker Participants

WIOA Title I Adult and Dislocated Worker Program basic and career services are available to job seekers using any of the WDB's six AJCCs or mobile services.

Basic Career Services: Universally available WIOA basic career services include the following:

- Determinations of whether the individual is eligible to receive assistance from the adult, dislocated worker, or youth programs.
- Outreach, intake (including identification through the state's Worker Profiling and Reemployment Services system of unemployment insurance claimants likely to exhaust benefits), and orientation to information and other services available through the one-stop delivery system.
- Initial assessment of skill levels including literacy, numeracy, and English language proficiency (using TABE), as well as aptitudes, abilities (including skills gaps), and supportive service needs. Career Scope is used to assess participants' interests and attitudes.
- Labor exchange services, including the following: job search and placement assistance, and, when needed by an individual, career counseling; provision of information on in-demand industry sectors and occupations; provision of information on nontraditional employment; and provision of referrals to and coordination of activities with other programs and services, including those within the one-stop delivery system and, when appropriate, other workforce development programs.
- Provision of workforce and labor market employment statistics information, including the provision of accurate information relating to local, regional, and national labor market areas, including the following: job vacancy listings in labor market areas; information on the job skills necessary to obtain the vacant jobs listed; and information relating to local occupations in demand and the earnings, skill requirements, and opportunities for advancement for those jobs.
- Provision of performance information and program cost information on eligible providers of training services by program and type of providers.
- Provision of information about how Imperial County is performing on local performance accountability measures, as well as any additional performance information relating to the area's one-stop delivery system.
- Provision of information relating to the availability of supportive services or assistance, and appropriate referrals to those services and assistance, including child care; child support; medical or child health assistance available through the state's Medicaid program and Children's Health Insurance Program; benefits under the SNAP program; assistance through the earned income tax credit; housing counseling and assistance

services sponsored through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development; and assistance under the CalWORKS program along with supportive services and transportation provided through that program.

- Assistance in establishing eligibility for programs of financial aid assistance for training and education programs not provided under WIOA.
- Provision of information and assistance regarding filing claims under UI programs, including meaningful assistance to individuals seeking assistance in filing a claim.

Individualized Career Services: WIOA individualized career services consist of the following:

- Comprehensive and specialized assessments of the skill levels (such as typing) and service needs of adults and dislocated workers, which may include the following: diagnostic testing and use of other assessment tools; and In-depth interviewing and evaluation to identify employment barriers and appropriate employment goals.
- Development of an individual employment plan to identify the employment goals, appropriate achievement objectives, and appropriate combination of services for the participant to achieve his or her employment goals, including the list of, and information about, eligible training providers.
- Group and/or individual counseling and mentoring.
- Career planning (e.g., case management).
- Short-term pre-vocational services, including the development of learning skills, communication skills, interviewing skills, punctuality, personal maintenance skills, and professional conduct to prepare individuals for unsubsidized employment or training. In some instances, pre-apprenticeship programs may be considered as short-term pre-vocational services.
- Internships and work experiences that are linked to careers.
- Workforce preparation activities that help an individual acquire a combination of basic academic skills, critical thinking skills, digital literacy skills, and self-management skills, including competencies in utilizing resources, using information, working with others, understanding systems, and obtaining skills necessary for successful transition into and completion of postsecondary education, training, or employment.
- Financial literacy services. The WDB uses a curriculum published by the FDIC.
- Out-of-area job search assistance and relocation assistance.
- English language acquisition and integrated education and training programs.
- Transitional jobs.

To supplement the full range of basic and career services outlined above, the AJCC system utilizes Career Edge, which is a learning management system allowing WIOA services to be more accessible online to all residents of Imperial County. Users do not need to be a WIOA client in order to access this platform. The platform offers career services, professional development, and online training options. The Career Edge platform is interactive and focuses on teaching users how to become job ready through easy to understand instructions and videos. Users can complete sample job applications, resumes, cover letters, and mock interviews with assistance from modules that visually walk a user through the process.

Training Services

Participants who require training to qualify for employment can take advantage of several options. WIOA training services include the following:

- Occupational skills training, including training for nontraditional employment.
- On-the-job training.
- Incumbent worker training.
- Programs that combine workplace training with related instruction, which may include cooperative education programs.
- Training programs operated by the private sector.
- Skill upgrading and retraining.
- Entrepreneurial training.
- Job readiness training provided in combination with another training service.
- Adult education and literacy activities, including activities of English language acquisition and integrated education and training programs, provided concurrently or in combination with another training service.
- Customized training conducted with a commitment by an employer or group of employers to employ an individual upon successful completion of the training.

The WDB has been working to expand its Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) for commercially available, off-the-shelf training programs. Eligible job seekers that enroll in a training program provided by those on the ETPL are able to have their services paid for by the WDB through the use of an individual training account (ITA) for program costs up to \$12,500. If program costs exceed \$12,500, the participant must find additional sources of funding to cover the remaining costs. Training currently available through ITAs includes:

- Imperial Valley Regional Occupational Program (IVROP) Certified Medical Assistant
- IVROP Certified Nursing Assistant
- IVROP Security Guard (No Fire Arm)
- IVROP Security Guard with Fire Arm
- IVROP Truck Driving Class A
- CET Truck Driver
- American Beauty Academy (ABA) Aesthetics
- ABA Barber
- ABA Cosmetology
- ABA Manicurist

In addition, registered apprenticeships, such as the one for Electricians that is led by the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW), are on the ETPL.

Priority of Service

Priority of service must be given to recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals, or individuals who are basic skills deficient. Basic career services are not subject to the priority of service requirement. However, individualized career services and training services are subject to the requirement. Priority of service status is established at the time of eligibility determination and does not change during the period of participation.

Basic skills deficient status is determined at time of eligibility as stated above. An individual who is basic skills deficient is unable to compute or solve problems, or read, write, or speak English at a level necessary to function on the job, in the individual's family, or in society. Criteria used to determine whether an individual is basic skills deficient includes the following:

- Lacks a high school diploma or high school equivalency and is not enrolled in postsecondary education.
- Enrolled in a Title II Adult Education/Literacy program.
- English, reading, writing, or computing skills at an 8.9 or below grade level.
- Determined to be Limited English Skills deficient through staff-documented observations.

Veterans Priority of Service

Veterans and eligible spouses continue to receive priority of service among all eligible individuals. However, they must meet the WIOA program eligibility criteria and other applicable criteria under WIOA.

Priority must be provided in the following order:

1. Veterans and eligible spouses who are recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals, or individuals who are basic skills deficient;
2. Individuals who are the recipient of public assistance, other low-income individuals, or individuals who are basic skills deficient;
3. Veterans and eligible spouses who are not included in WIOA's priority groups;
4. Other individuals not included in WIOA's priority groups. Individuals included in this group are older worker (55 and older), former foster youth, individuals with disabilities, school dropouts, and offenders who are not economically disadvantaged (i.e., not recipients of public assistance or low-income individuals).
5. Underemployed workers who do not fall under numbers 1 to 4 and are in need of WIOA individualized services. Individuals who are underemployed may include, but are not limited to:

- a. Individuals whose family income does not exceed the self-sufficiency guidelines.
- b. Individuals employed less than full-time who are seeking full-time employment;
- c. Individuals who are employed in a position that is inadequate with respect to their skills and training;
- d. Individuals who are employed who meet the definition of a low-income individual described in WIOA;
- e. Individuals who are employed, but their current job earnings are not sufficient compared to their previous earnings from their previous employment.

E. Services and Activities Available under WIOA Title I Youth Program

Imperial County WDB provides a broad array of workforce development and training services to youth and young adults, ages 14 to 24. Services are currently delivered under contracts with two providers.

Imperial County WDB's Youth Committee is responsible for planning and other issues relating to the provision of workforce services to youth. In addition, the committee is responsible for the oversight of the WIOA Youth Program. Goals of the committee include increasing awareness of the importance of youth issues; leveraging funds for youth programs; and motivating communities to improve the quality and effectiveness of youth services.

WIOA Youth Programs and Services

WIOA Youth Programs administered by the Imperial County WDB serve both in- and out-of-school youth and focus on educational attainment, career planning, job readiness, and development of leadership skills. Participants also receive intensive guidance and counseling and may receive supportive services to enable their participation in the program. The WIOA Youth Program provides all 14 mandatory WIOA Youth Program elements including the following:

1. Tutoring, study skills training and instruction leading to secondary school completion or attainment of an equivalency credential
2. Alternative education
3. Paid work experience
4. Occupational skills training
5. Education offered concurrently with workforce preparation
6. Leadership development opportunities
7. Supportive services
8. Adult mentoring
9. Follow-up services
10. Comprehensive guidance and counseling

11. Financial literacy education
12. Entrepreneurial skills training
13. Services that provide labor market information
14. Postsecondary preparation and transition activities

Youth participate in work-based learning and work toward attainment of industry-recognized degrees or certificates. They also increase their literacy and numeracy skills, and improve their long-term labor market skills.

Services to Increase the Digital Skills of Youth

During workshops and tutoring activities, staff delivers lessons in effective methods for using video conference technology. This includes assisting participants with navigating technology devices and software, such as computers and smartphone devices; the Zoom videoconferencing platform; Google Meet and Google docs; Microsoft office; and email. Staff also assists and guides participants through the process of downloading digital apps to use for program activities. Staff provides participants with video tutorials and resources to expand their digital literacy and fluency skills. The WDB is considering the implementation of a structured basic computer skills courses for all youth participants.

Services for Youth with Disabilities

WIOA Youth Program participants with disabilities who require accommodations are provided supportive services and linkages to resources that will support their successful completion of the program. For example, if a youth participant requires an English or Spanish sign language interpreter, providers will hire or recruit a volunteer to provide interpreter services to assist the participant with program activities (e.g., educational workshops, community service, tutoring, work experience). If specialized equipment is required for a participant with disabilities, the program will utilize WIOA funds to purchase specialized equipment. Services meet all equal opportunity program requirements.

F. Entity Responsible for Disbursal of Grant Funds and the Competitive Process Used to Award Contracts for WIOA Title I Activities

Imperial County WDB has policies and procedures in place for disbursement of grant funds and the competitive award of sub-grants and contracts.

Disbursement of Grant Funds

The entity responsible for the disbursement of WIOA grant funds is the Imperial County Board of Supervisors (ICBOS) through administration of the Imperial County Workforce and Economic Development Office (ICWEDO), which houses the Workforce Development Board staff. The ICWEDO Director is authorized to review and approve payment transactions. Imperial County WDB administers WIOA grant funds within the

local workforce development area in compliance with the requirements of the statute and applicable federal regulations and state requirements.

Award of Sub-Grants and Contracts

The WDB uses a competitive process for the award of all sub-grants and contracts for employment and training services. The process adheres to the procurement requirements specified in the OMB Circulars, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) policies and procedures, EDD Procurement Directives, and the Procurement Policy developed by the WDB. Under the approved process, a Request for Proposals (RFP) document is approved by the ICWDB's Executive Committee and recommended to the full board. The document is then forwarded for formal approval to the Board of Supervisors. Once approved, a public notice advertising the RFP is posted in various newspapers and periodicals in Imperial, Riverside, and San Diego counties for a minimum of 30 days. Generally, at least four weeks is provided for the receipt of proposals. Typically, a workshop is held to provide technical assistance and guidance to eligible applicants. To ensure transparency, all questions that arise as a result of these sessions are documented in a "question and answer" format and are posted on the WDB's website. After the submission deadline closes, proposals are reviewed by the Fiscal and Program Compliance Departments to ensure that all mandated documentation has been submitted. ICWDB's administrative analysts ensure compliance with RFP instructions. Proposals are scored by a review panel, which consists of individuals from public and private organizations, who have subject matter expertise. Each reviewer is provided a Request for Proposal Evaluator Guide and Scoring Rubric document before the formal reading and scoring of proposals occurs. Final scores are tallied and the most qualified proposal is recommended to the WDB Executive Committee and the full board for funding. After WDB approval, a formal recommendation for funding is presented to the Board of Supervisors by the Director.

The two main procurements conducted by the Imperial County WDB are Adult Training Services and Youth Services. Contracts awarded for Adult Training services are for a period of one year. Contract awards for Youth services are generally for a period of three years. All contracts are eligible for a two-year extension contingent on available funding and the successful completion of established performance outcomes. AJCC/One-Stop Operator services are also competitively procured. For procurement of specialized services, the WDB generally utilizes a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) format. The review process for RFQ responses is similar to that utilized for RFPs.

G. How the Local Board Fulfills the Duties of the AJCC Operator and/or the Career Services Provider or Selection of AJCC Operators and Career Services Providers

The responsibilities of the AJCC/One-Stop Operator (OSO) are met by a competitively procured contractor, while Imperial County WDB fulfills the role of the career services provider for the Title I WIOA Adult and Dislocated Worker programs.

AJCC/One-Stop Operator

The Imperial County WDB has competitively procured and selected ProPath, Inc. as the OSO. ProPath, Inc. has more than forty years of experience managing and operating workforce development programs and now functions as the OSO for several of California's local workforce development areas. The role of the AJCC Operator is to:

- Convene to one-stop partners in regular meetings;
- Coordinate training for and among the partners;
- Coordinate the service delivery of required AJCC partners and service providers;
- Ensure the implementation of partner responsibilities and contributions agreed upon in the MOU;
- Provide reports regarding operations, performance, and continuous improvement recommendations;
- Assist with the implementation of policies established by the WDB; and
- Adhere to all applicable federal and state guidance.

Career Services Provider

With state approval, the Imperial County WDB directly provides career services for the WIOA Title I Adult and Dislocated Worker programs. The WDB has functioned in this capacity for more than twenty years throughout the operation of local workforce programs under the Workforce Investment Act and, subsequently, WIOA. In 2021, the WDB submitted an application to the California Workforce Development Board (CWDB) requesting approval to continue to operate as the career services provider, which was officially approved in March 2022. The application highlights unique experience and qualifications of the WDB, including staff skills and abilities; resources as a county agency; and a broad spectrum of partnerships that include dozens of public, private, and non-profit organizations throughout Imperial County. In 2025, the WDB is submitting an application for re-approval to function as career services provider, the implementation of which will coincide with that of this plan.

V. PROGRAM YEAR 2025-28 SYSTEM PRIORITIES

As the Local Plan concerns not just the work of the WIOA Title I programs administered by the Imperial County WDB, but all of the organizations, programs, and services that comprise the local workforce development system, WDB leadership sought input from a range of system partners and stakeholders. As described in Attachment I, a public input session was held to gather input on key issues affecting the delivery of services to job seekers and businesses.

The priorities described below capture key issues, ideas, and recommendations expressed during the community input session. These twelve priority areas will be addressed by Imperial County WDB and partner representatives throughout the four-year period covered by this plan.

A. Emphasize the Importance of Workplace Communication Skills

Many local employers find that applicants, including younger workers, have difficulty communicating in work environments. Such workers may face challenges in using appropriate language and terminology, communicating clearly, dealing with customers, or communicating in writing. WDB and partner services should include content that addresses the importance of effective communication and that builds job candidates' competency in workplace communication skills.

B. Develop Job Seeker's Knowledge of Required Workplace Behaviors and Attitudes

With the disruption to business operations that occurred during the pandemic and fewer job opportunities generally available to high school age youth, many job applicants, including young workers, require intensive support in preparing for the requirements and rigors of the workplace. The workforce system partners should update and revise strategies to familiarize new workers about behaviors, attitudes, and interpersonal skills required by employers. Additional preparation in terms of candidates' labor market research and participation in mock interviews is also needed.

C. Address Employee Retention as a Business Service and a Skill for Job Seekers

Businesses are experiencing rapid turnover of workers at unprecedented levels. The cost of such turnover is significant, considering investments that businesses make to recruit, hire, orient, and train new workers. However, as workforce system professionals are essential in connecting workers to jobs, they are uniquely positioned to advise both job seekers and business representatives on the advantages of job retention and strategies to promote workers' longevity with companies that hire them.

D. Ensure Career Exploration Activities Include Information on Career Entry Points and Progression

The variety of jobs for which businesses are recruiting continues to grow. Job seekers may be unfamiliar with many of the careers that are available across a wide range of industries that dominate the regional economy. WIOA and partner programs should develop various strategies for increasing and simplifying access to career information and providing opportunities to experience work at locations where jobs are done. Career exploration activities should incorporate information that informs job seekers about pathways in which they may be interested, including descriptions of entry-levels positions and requirements for career advancement.

E. Ensure Job Seekers Have Strong Basic Skills Including Digital Literacy

In a labor market where the demand for talent often outstrips availability, many businesses are willing to train workers lacking job specific skills. However, job seekers will compete more successfully for work and experience greater success on the job, when they have strong basic skills, including literacy and numeracy skills, as well as digital literacy and proficiency in various software and web-based applications.

F. Acknowledge and Address The Profound Impact of Advanced Technology on Jobs and the Economy

Across the network of stakeholders that comprise the workforce development system in Imperial County, there is across-the-board recognition that advanced technology is changing jobs in multiple industries at a more accelerated rate than ever before. WDB leadership, education, business, and community partners must continue to assess how technology is changing jobs and needs to develop strategies and programs that will enable workers and businesses to keep pace with these changes.

G. Implement Effective Strategies to Support Small Businesses

While the focus of the WDB's workforce program and services on is Imperial County's predominant industries, the local board and system stakeholders recognize the critical role that small businesses play throughout the county and how important they are to the economy. The workforce system should examine opportunities to strengthen and diversify the services that it makes available to small businesses.

H. Support Skill Development that Enables Job Seekers to Qualify for Remote Work

Efforts to attract businesses to Imperial County are stronger than ever, especially in view of economic opportunities associated with the Lithium Valley. However, the

Imperial County workforce is one that could qualify for remote work opportunities if candidates have the skills and credentials that businesses employing remote workers are looking for. The WDB and workforce system partners should consider how technology, customer service, research and other skills will be provided to residents to increase opportunities to secure well-paid remote jobs.

I. Increase Use of Work-Based Learning Models, Including Apprenticeships

While high quality job training programs offered by postsecondary education institutions and community-based organizations are available in Imperial County, these programs do not prepare residents for every job for which local businesses are hiring. However, the opportunities to learn job-specific skills is nearly limitless with the use of work-based learning models. On-the-job training, customized training for one or more companies, and registered apprenticeships are just some of the models that the WDB and system partners can utilize to assist job seekers in preparing for in-demand careers in growth industries.

J. Promote Individuals from Under-Resourced Populations as Job Candidates

Various individuals face significant barriers to employment based on their status, background, and circumstances. These include, but are not limited to, formerly incarcerated and justice-involved individuals, persons with disabilities, English Language Learners, older workers, and disconnected youth. The workforce system partners should collaborate on the development of strategies to promote these individuals as job candidates by focusing on their value as potential employees, which may include their skills, attitudes, and current behaviors.

K. Adopt a Human-Centered Approach to Service Delivery

Workforce system providers should utilize a human-centered approach to the provision of all services. This starts with customer-centered design, where each program, service, and activity is created to meet the needs, preferences, and the priorities of customers, including job seekers and businesses. Such an approach will lead to the development of stronger, more effective service plans and the delivery of services that treat customers holistically.

L. Provide Instruction on the Value of Social Capital and Networking

As part of the employment preparation and job readiness process, AJCC and partner staff should provide job seekers with information about the value of developing social capital and of networking. Individuals preparing for job search should receive instruction on how to develop a social network to support their professional goals. Information should highlight the value of both web-based networks (e.g. LinkedIn) and community relationship with individuals and organizations.

VI. ATTACHMENTS

The following Items are included as part of the Local Plan.

- Attachment 1: Stakeholder and Community Engagement Summary
- Attachment 2: Public Comments Received that Disagree with the Local Plan
- Attachment 3: Signature Page

Stakeholder and Community Engagement Summary

To facilitate the engagement of stakeholders in planning for the local workforce development delivery system and in the development of the PY 2025-2028 Local Plan, the Imperial County WDB hosted a community and stakeholder forum focused on topics affecting strategies and services across the system. The topic for the forum was *"Priorities for Developing the Local Workforce."*

Questions/topics addressed include, but were not limited to:

- What services are most needed by individuals who are new to the workforce and those who are unemployed and looking to return to work?
- What are the training programs of most interest to local job seekers and how do these align with jobs available in the local labor market?
- Are there opportunities for local workforce, education, and community service agencies to work together to more effectively serve job seekers?
- In what ways do services need to be "modernized" to meet the evolving needs of workers and businesses?
- Other ideas about the development of the local workforce.

This forum was held in-person on October 28, 2024

The table below summarizes participation in the community and stakeholder engagement process to develop the Imperial County WDB PY 2025-28 Local Plan

Mode of Outreach	Target of Outreach	Summary of Attendance	Comments
Email	Organizations and individuals who serve the public, including job seekers and businesses, and who have firsthand knowledge of the challenges employers face today.	Thirty-seven (37) individuals representing workforce development agencies, community based organizations, labor/unions, economic development and local government were in attendance	<p><u>Talking Point #1</u> Generation Gaps and Workplace Expectations</p> <p><u>Talking Point #2</u> Addressing Soft Skills Deficiencies and Generational Workforce Challenges</p> <p><u>Talking Point #3</u> ICWDB needed as Workforce Intermediary</p> <p><u>Talking Point #4</u> Public Sector</p>

Imperial County WDB

PY 2025-2028 Local Plan

			<p>Workforce Challenges</p> <p><u>Talking Point #5</u> MC3 Program and collaboration between Apprenticeship, Community College and WDB</p> <p><u>Talking Point #6</u> Human Centered Approach when Hiring</p> <p><u>Talking Point #7</u> Importance of Social Capital for Job Seekers</p>
--	--	--	---

Public Comments Received That Disagree With The PY 2025-28 Local Plan
--

1.	From:	Date:
Comment:		

2.	From:	Date:
Comment:		

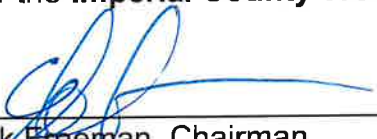
The public comment period for the Local Plan in Imperial County began on February 26, 2025, and ended on March 30, 2025. Notices were published in the *Imperial Valley Press* on February 26, March 1, and March 14, and the plan was also made available online at: <https://www.ivworkforce.com/about/workforce-development-board/workforce-development-plans>.

No public comments were received during the comment period.

Signature Page

The signatures on the following pages represent approval of the Local Plan by Imperial County Workforce Development Board and the Chief Elected Official for the Imperial County Local Workforce Development Area.

For the **Imperial County Workforce Development Board:**



Erik Freeman, Chairman
Imperial County Workforce Development Board

4/14/2025
Date

For the **Imperial County Local Workforce Development Area:**



John Hawk, Chairman
Imperial County Board of Supervisors

4-22-25
Date

