

# 2021 - 2024 Local Plan

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Workforce Development Board of  
Contra Costa County





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## Introduction

As the third-largest county in the San Francisco Bay Area, Contra Costa County has an estimated population of 1.1 million residents. Nearly 7.9% of households in Contra Costa live below the federal poverty line. US Census Bureau estimates show that 24% of the population is foreign-born, with 35.8% of the population five years and older speaking a language other than English in the household. Of foreign-born residents, most are from Asia (44.7%) or Latin America (40.7%). Of the 34% of the population speaking a foreign language, 52% speak Spanish and 28.4% speak Asian and Pacific Islander languages.

Contra Costa County benefits from a distinct advantage geographically due to the strength of its regional economy. Its proximity to San Francisco, Silicon Valley, and some of the top educational institutions in the country provide access to premier research and technological resources. The county's top in-demand private industries include:

- Trade;
- Transportation;
- Utilities;
- Educational;
- Health Services;
- Professional and Business Services;
- Goods Production (of which 40% is in Manufacturing and 60% is in Mining, Logging, and Construction) and;
- Leisure and Hospitality.

WDBCCC and its neighboring Workforce Development Boards (in Alameda County, the City of Oakland, and the City of Richmond) together constitute the East Bay region. This region is home to a population of 2.1 million people, and a labor market of 1.3 million. It is one of the most geographically concentrated areas of technology and research clusters in the world. With the second- and third-most populous counties in the Bay Area, the East Bay is one of the largest economic drivers in the region. Relative to the larger Bay Area, the East Bay represents more than 25% of the total jobs in the region.

## I. Local Overview

### I.a. Workforce Development Activities in the Local Area

The workforce development activities, including education and training, in the Local Area.

The WDBCCC and its service providers provide basic and individualized intensive job seeker and employer services through its AJCC One-Stop career center. Services include assessment, plan development, coaching, referrals, and more intensive services such as occupational skills training and supportive services. The WDBCCC also provides specific programs to support job seekers with barriers such as former incarceration, low income, disabilities, and low levels of literacy or language. The WDBCCC makes use of powerful workforce development strategies such as cohort-based, hands-on occupational skills training in priority sectors such as health care, warehousing, and pre-apprenticeship construction trades.

The WDBCCC prioritizes services to the following populations with barriers to employment:

Priority Populations			
Justice System - Involved Adults	Basic Skills Deficient	English Language Learners	Homeless Individuals
Low-Income Individuals	Veterans and Spouses	People with Disabilities	

### **I.b. Strengths of the Local Workforce System in Meeting Needs of Job Seekers**

#### **Collaboration with the Business Community**

Partners cite the WDBCCC's strong relationships with the business community as a valuable asset in meeting the needs of job seekers. These links are especially critical for agencies that serve populations with barriers to employment who normally would not have avenues in which to meet employers, such as those exiting prison or jail. The WDB hosts job fairs and onsite recruitments that give job seekers immediate access to employers. In addition, the WDBCCC and the AJCC host groups such as the Workforce Integration Networks (WIN) to further facilitate those connections by giving a forum in which agencies can cross-share resources and relationships. The WINs are often attended by City economic development agency representatives who know which employers in their jurisdiction are looking to hire.

An important strength mentioned in public input sessions was the role the WDBCCC plays as a convener of organizations serving businesses. Business-facing staff from the WDBCCC, the EDD, and Rubicon Programs, operator of the Concord AJCC, join together to align strategies and approaches on how to assist businesses. The Integrated Business Services Team (iBEST) serves business owners directly and refers them to other organizations such as the Employer Advisory Council, the Small Business Development Center, and the California Employer Association, whose Human Resources (HR) Hotline the WDBCCC makes available at no cost to employers.

#### **The Contra Costa Workforce Collaborative (CCWC)**

The CCWC utilizes an innovative service delivery design, operating the full-service One-Stop America's Job Center of California and delivering tailored and geographically accessible services through affiliates in the collaborative. These affiliates include adult education organizations as well as other career development community-based organizations. Leveraging the experience and resources of Rubicon Programs, and the relationships the Contra Costa Workforce Collaborative (CCWC) affiliates possess in their respective communities, the CCWC provides timely and effective services to those who need both general or intensive workforce services.

"The WDBCCC is willing to partner and work with CBOs. They're willing to collaborate and work together to reach as many people as possible who need assistance."

*--Public Input Session Participant*

#### **Human-Centered Design (HCD)**

The WDBCCC has a deep commitment to utilizing HCD strategies in service delivery models to ensure customers are provided services that are designed to reflect the needs of each individual customer. Staff have received training in HCD and have participated in a U.S. Department of Labor Customer-Centered Design Learning Exchange, resulting in a project that was selected to

be showcased at the White House. The WDBCCC is currently involved in a WAF 8.0 project on homelessness and workforce development that utilizes HCD training and strategies in the project design and goals. WDBCCC publicizes its preference for all contractors providing WIOA services to be familiar with and utilize HCD practices; current adult and youth service providers utilize HCD strategies.

### **Trauma-Informed Practices (TIP)**

WDBCCC staff have been trained on TIP through Employment and Human Services sponsored courses, and the CCWC and Rubicon Programs have been heavily invested in this training. Some WDBCCC staff involved in the WAF 8.0 project integrating homeless and workforce services have also received TIP training through the Contra Costa County Health Services Department. Content included types of trauma, body and mind reactions, how to recognize trauma responses, and how to avoid re-traumatizing people while trying to serve them.

### **Offering Virtual Access to Programs and Services**

The WDBCCC was quick to implement virtual service delivery strategies during the COVID-19 pandemic, including creating an online portal for people to quickly indicate their interest in WIOA services, holding online job seeker workshops, equipping staff with the technology needed to work from home, and providing additional resources and guidance to service providers for the purchase of technology (laptops, tablets, wifi access, routers, etc). The WDBCCC has made the Metrix online learning platform, which contains thousands of general and industry-specific courses, available to Contra Costa residents and continues to promote pilot projects with partner agencies that leverage the vast catalogue of courses. The online work-readiness curriculum is being used with WIOA Youth and youth with disabilities being served by the Department of Rehabilitation Workability program. The WDBCCC will continue to promote the use of and provide technical assistance for online classes.

### **Employment Placement and Sustainable Wages**

The WDBCCC has a strong record in participant outcomes including employment placement and median earnings. In PY 2018-19, 72.8% of participants were placed in employment and the median earnings were just under \$30,000 per year.

### **Emphasis on Justice System-Involved Community**

The WDBCCC provides programs to serve formerly incarcerated people through its partnerships with Rubicon Programs, the CCWC, Contra Costa County Probation, and the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR), which administers parole. The WDBCCC is an active partner, with other Local Boards, in the regional Prison to Employment program, funded by a coalition of state workforce and criminal justice agencies, that includes the CWDB, CWA, CDCR and CalPIA (California Prison Industry).

### **Partnerships to Serve People with Disabilities**

The WDBCCC piloted a successful program to support job seekers with disabilities through its Disability Employment Accelerator (DEA) grant, funded by EDD. The program focused on people with intellectual or developmental disabilities who, in many cases, are able to complete college but cannot obtain jobs because of lack of experience. The grant funded paid work experience and strengthened partnerships with East Bay Innovations in Alameda County and Futures Explored, two highly regarded providers of services for persons with disabilities in the East Bay. With consultation from disability community experts at the Independent Living Resource Center, the WDBCCC invested in a complete renewal of all accessibility computers, applications, and adaptive technology for the Concord AJCC.

### **Clear Industry Pathways**

The WDBCCC strives to ensure that short- and medium-term tracks to high-growth, high-demand strategic sectors are available to customers. Contra Costa County is home to a robust system of adult education programs and community colleges and is closely located near many top-tier colleges and universities, including University of California, Berkeley. WDBCCC staff serve on college and adult education advisory committees to strengthen this link and provide influence in industries such as transportation and logistics, advanced manufacturing, health care and life sciences, energy, and construction.

### **I.c. Opportunities for Improvement of the Local Workforce System**

As part of its planning process, the WDBCCC has identified a number of areas in which opportunities exist to strengthen services to address the workforce and education needs of the local community.

#### **Improving Cultural Competence of Staff**

The WDBCCC recognizes that a high degree of cultural competency is extremely important in a field in which services are provided to diverse cultures, and is committed to continuing to strengthen the cultural competence of staff in order to more effectively serve the diverse population of Contra Costa County. The WDBCCC has a long history of supporting training that increases cultural competency growth for staff and providers. WDBCCC staff and providers are well versed on HCD strategies and have received training in trauma-informed practices. The WDBCCC is fortunate to sit under the umbrella of the Contra Costa County Employment & Human Services Department (EHSD), which is committed to staff training on cultural competency. EHSD has a robust staff development training platform (SMART) that provides numerous trainings on cultural competency, most of which are required of all EHSD/WDB staff. The WDBCCC will continue to seek out and embrace training and practices that promote the cultural competency of staff and providers in both theory and practice.

#### **Long-Term Success for Individuals with Disabilities**

As described in Section III.c. of this plan, the WDBCCC has been able to significantly build its capacity to serve individuals with disabilities through a Disability Employment Accelerator grant. The WDBCCC will seek new sources of support to sustain its work with people with disabilities, providing them with job opportunities and building on the lessons learned from this effort.

#### **Enhancing Virtual Service Delivery**

The WDBCCC has rapidly expanded its virtual delivery of training, workforce, and business services since the advent of COVID-19. It is likely that a substantial portion of remote service delivery activities will continue once the pandemic has ended. The WDBCCC looks forward to enhancing and strengthening its strategies for remote work and training, and to finding innovative ways to bridge the digital divide so that all participants are able to access and benefit from these resources.

#### **Expanding Skills-Development Services**

The WDBCCC will pursue new strategies for providing support for basic skills-deficient and English Language Learner job seekers in order to enable them to get on pathways to life sustaining employment and career advancement. The WDBCCC will support its partners that work directly with these populations in order to develop well-informed approaches that are relevant to the needs of the community. In particular, the WDBCCC will draw upon the expertise of its Adult Education partners who have a particular focus on serving this community.

### **Expansion of Supportive Services**

The COVID pandemic has resulted in a dramatic expansion in the need for supportive services among those served by the WDBCCC. WIOA funds have met a portion of this need, but the WDBCCC has had to seek additional funding to fill the gap. The WDBCCC will continue to pursue additional resources to provide more supportive services or subsidized employment opportunities to facilitate successful participation by low-income participants.

### **Workforce Accelerator 8.0 Integration of Homelessness and Workforce Service Delivery**

The WDBCCC is leading a Workforce Accelerator-funded initiative focused on using the Human-Centered Design approach to strengthen the integration of homelessness and workforce service delivery. The project has exposed the need for the two service systems to learn more about how the other operates, and the importance of finding more effective ways to collaborate in order to best help insecurely housed people gain and retain employment. The outcome of the project will be the design of more effective strategies

### **Job and Employer Search Assistance**

The WDBCCC aims to increase the visibility of quality careers and help job seekers understand the breadth of available career opportunities.

The pool of employers connected with the workforce system needs to be increased in order to expand access to work experience and employment opportunities for the people of Contra Costa County. The WDBCCC has added job developers to its contract with the CCWC to provide additional outreach to employers to provide OJT, work experience, and actual jobs for job seekers.

### **Racial Equity and Justice**

Increased awareness of issues of racial equity and justice throughout the country has raised the importance of addressing these challenges directly within the workforce system. The WDBCCC views its work through an equity lens and will weave this perspective throughout future WDBCCC programs and activities. The WDBCCC has participated in a number of local, regional, and state-level efforts around equity and justice. In a new partnership with Contra Costa Health Services, the WDBCCC launched a Health Ambassador Pilot project that focuses on the communities that have been disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Dislocated workers are hired and trained to conduct public education and outreach on pandemic precautions, vaccine awareness and promotion, and other recovery activities. The project was designed using an equity framework.

WDBCCC staff have participated in Implicit Bias Training and Cultural Competency Training mandated by Contra Costa County. The WDBCCC Executive Director is a member of the core team of the Equity and Inclusion group of the County's Employment and Human Services Department. Also at the county level, the WDBCCC has helped to lead the Economic Equitable Recovery Task Force, which engages local business, CBOs, and public agencies to develop data driven strategies to forge an equitable recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. WDBCCC participated in a WAF 7.0 grant, titled Bay Area Workforce Solutions, which brought together workforce system and other leaders from around the Bay Area to develop strategies for closing racial and gender income and wealth gaps for the most vulnerable members of the community. The WDBCCC has also engaged with the Equity Task Force of the California Workforce Association. The WDBCCC will continue to explore additional opportunities to learn and to further integrate racial equity and justice into its practices and policies.



### **Reinvigoration of Workforce Integration Networks**

Prior to the COVID-19 shutdown, the WDBCCC operated Workforce Integration Networks (WINs), monthly convenings of education, workforce, and supportive service providers in West, Central, and East county that networked and shared information. These networks have been an extremely important resource for enabling service providers in the county, including multiple County departments, to access information and connect individuals to needed services. Coordination of the WINs is included in the WDBCCC's contract with Rubicon Programs. Though the WINs have been on hold during the pandemic, an important future strategy will be to initiate conversations about how best to reinvigorate this valuable resource when in-person meetings are not possible.

## **II. Strategic Vision**

### **Vision**

To support a network that creates and promotes a dynamic education system, high-performing businesses, and a prosperous local economy with an abundance of high quality jobs and skilled workers to fill them.

With communities facing unprecedented job loss and business closures as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is imperative that the Workforce Development Board of Contra Costa County seek to address both the immediate needs of workers and businesses, as well as longer-term structural challenges that relate to equitable economic opportunity and economic growth. The strategies identified below address both immediate and longer-term challenges faced by the local economy.

### **Create Earn and Learn Opportunities**

Earn and Learn strategies will offer businesses an increased and easily accessible incentive to recruit and retain employees. The WDBCCC will expedite access to training and resources to get job seekers into careers with livable wages. The WDBCCC will increase and leverage financial and human capital resources to support business retention and expansion. The WDBCCC will also support system alignment, service integration and continuous improvement, using labor market data to advance evidence-based policymaking.

### **Implement Strategic Communication**

The WDBCCC will increase its social media presence to reach a wider population. The WDBCCC has begun a partnership with a new contractor to strengthen communication channels and will continue to prioritize improving its website design and social media capacity. The WDBCCC will build a strong, recognizable brand in the community by positioning the strategic work of the Board to meet these goals: 1) capture market share of job seekers, youth, and businesses who utilize services to meet or exceed performance metrics; 2) expand partnerships with those organizations that can help the WDBCCC bring its latest strategic plan to fruition; and 3) proactively garner discretionary funding needed to meet key performance metrics that are outside the scope of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.

### **Explore the Incorporation of Racial Justice and Equity into the Vision Statement**

While racial justice and equity are key priorities of the WDBCCC, they are not explicitly included in the current vision statement. As part of its efforts during the initial year of the strategic

planning period, the WDBCCC will develop a process for engaging community stakeholders in the re-imagining of the vision and mission statements to ensure that they are inclusive and communicate a clear message about the WDBCCC's commitment to this work.

### **II.a. Supporting Economic Growth and Economic Self-Sufficiency**

In accordance with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), the WDBCCC has developed this plan to guide the county toward fostering a dynamic, sustainable, equitable, and balanced workforce. The WDBCCC will empower Contra Costa's residents and support their pursuit of economic self-sufficiency through the following activities:

- Work with Contra Costa's most vulnerable residents to implement human-centered employment and training plans to meet unique needs, challenges, and aspirations;
- Connect job seekers to employment opportunities with sustainable wages to support themselves and their families;
- Strive for all workers to be in positions that have the opportunity for career advancement and upward mobility;
- Support access to resources not evenly distributed throughout the county and readily available to all;
- Strategically provide supportive services that are necessary for workers to succeed on the job; and
- Prioritize investments in Earn & Learn opportunities to ensure individuals can enroll in education and/or training while continuing to earn needed income.

The WDBCCC will pursue economic growth by supporting local businesses, employers, and community-based organizations to help them thrive and grow through these activities:

- Create community resource centers that can support all businesses, with an emphasis on minority-owned and micro businesses, gain greater access to appropriate resources;
- Proactively work with all partners (including EDD, CBOs, etc.) to respond to the needs of the community accordingly and appropriately;
- Encourage diversity, equity, and inclusion in all outreach and resource sharing with local businesses and organizations;
- Invest in analysing and identifying the skill needs (occupations) of high-demand industries and optimize investments in these skills and occupations; and
- Develop and expand relationships to leverage knowledge and resources.

### **II.b. Service Delivery Strategies to Ensure Equitable Access to Regional Sector Pathways**

The WDBCCC is committed to leading and operating with an equity lens, to actively engaging community and partners in decisions that affect them directly, and to promoting equity and inclusion with dignity and respect. The WDBCCC will pursue the following primary service delivery strategies to allow all community members to participate fully and realize their full potential, valuing individual and community expertise.

#### **Strengthening Partnerships**

The WDBCCC will seek to identify and build meaningful local and regional partnerships that promote equitable and necessary investments in equitable access to pathways in priority sector industries. The WDBCCC will also establish stakeholder engagement best practices and processes to guide its work in these partnerships.

### **Data Collection and Planning**

The WDBCCC will use data collection and analysis to identify unique needs and existing access to services across the County. This information will in turn inform the development of strategies to address and ensure equitable access. In addition, the WDBCCC will explore ways to better monitor demographic data and deploy necessary resources in relationship to changing community needs. WDBCCC staff will work with partners to create decision making criteria that includes diverse and innovative ideas and strategies that promote equity. Finally, the Board will consider the implementation of a continuous evaluation and improvement process to assess and address work in this area.

### **Staff Training**

An important tool for ensuring equitable access to sector partnership opportunities includes strengthening the equity and inclusion knowledge and skills of staff. The WDBCC will develop and deliver training for staff and provider partners to ensure equity competency and advocacy.

### **Equity-Focused Industry-Sector Partnerships**

The East Bay Health Workforce Partnership, in which the WDBCCC is a partner, is particularly interested in promoting equity and connecting training with communities of color, and the WDBCCC will actively support these strategies. The WDBCCC will also support the health care sector goal focused on ensuring that workers in the sector are more reflective of the population as a whole. The WDBCCC will work with sector partnerships to assess regional system capacity to address disparate outcomes related to race and equity.

### **Supportive Services**

The WDBCCC will expand need-related payments to support people while they are taking part in training so that low income participants in particular can support themselves during training.

### **Targeted Training for Participants**

The WDBCCC will support investment in preparation programs for long-term career development in high-demand industries, focusing on narrowing the gap between high- and low-skilled labor. This will include support for investments/agreements in infrastructure, pre-apprenticeships, and apprenticeships that move toward equity. In addition, the WDBCCC will seek to expand access to short-term certificate and credential programs.

## **III. Core Program Partner Coordination**

### **III.a. Coordination with Adult Education and Literacy Activities Established Under WIOA Title II**

The WDBCCC continues to actively engage and collaborate with adult education, including the Contra Costa County Adult Education Consortium and literacy services providers, to coordinate WIOA Title I and Title II activities in order to strengthen the provision of education and employment services that help individuals develop the basic skills and literacy proficiency required to thrive in sustainable employment. Adult education providers are key partners in the Contra Costa Workforce Collaborative, which provides a network of access to WIOA services throughout Contra Costa County.

The WDBCCC will continue to coordinate its efforts with organizations that deliver literacy programs for adults, such as Mt. Diablo Adult Education, which offers adult literacy and English

as a second language programs. The diverse population of the county makes these programs particularly important. As an example, the student body of Martinez Adult Education includes individuals from 48 different countries. The WDBCCC maintains a strong relationship with adult schools in the local area, referring staff to aid with training offerings such as the Business and Medical Office Academy at Liberty Adult Education in Brentwood and the Career and Technical Education Center at Mt. Diablo Adult Education in Concord.

Adult Education organizational staff are represented on the WDBCCC Board, which facilitates information sharing and more effective coordination of services in the local area. Board members include a highly engaged representative of the adult education system and member of the Contra Costa County Adult Education Consortium. The WDBCCC has been actively involved in local applications for Adult Education providers (per WSIN 19-34) participating in extensive review of these applications to ensure that their plans align with WDBCCC Local Plan. The WDBCCC has participated in the Western Association of Schools and Colleges certification process for Liberty Adult Education, a CCWC partner.

The WDBCCC continues to collaborate with Adult Education and Literacy programs to deliver services to special populations in the county. WDBCCC's adult education partners provide robust programming for people with disabilities, English Language Learners, individuals with basic skills deficiencies, and youth. In the area of youth services, the WDBCCC intends to strengthen referrals between the WIOA youth program (which serves ages 16-24) and Adult Education for young people who need to complete secondary education equivalency. The WDBCCC will also provide training to staff who provide direct services related to existing articulation agreements between high schools, adult education, and community colleges.

The WDBCCC will continue to work to strengthen relationships with Adult Education, Literacy Programs, including ELL programs and providers, by creating a catalog of organizations providing services, the services provided, and what languages are supported. The WDBCCC anticipates having an on-site provider at the comprehensive AJCC as soon as COVID restrictions have eased, we will actively research, apply for, and dedicate resources (funding) to increase the level of support and services to English Language Learners.

### **III.b. Coordination with Employment Services Established Under WIOA Title III**

The Employment Development Department (EDD) is the WDBCCC's core partner for the Wagner- Peyser Act. Regional EDD staff members are co-located at the Concord Comprehensive AJCC and, in collaboration with WDB and AJCC staff, have created and provide regular workshops for Unemployment Insurance (UI) claimants, Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) service recipients, RESEAs (Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment), California Training Benefits, WIOA eligibility and services, and Rapid Response services.

WDB and AJCC staff have collaborated with EDD business services staff to create the Integrated Business Services Team (iBEST) to coordinate, align, and leverage resources in supporting businesses in Contra Costa. iBEST's goals include: improving and streamlining the recruitment process; convening and hosting forums to educate employers on the value of hiring special populations; providing comprehensive information on resources and incentives to employers including how to access these resources/incentives; and providing an opportunity for input from businesses to ensure processes are not duplicative, are business friendly, and address the real needs of businesses. WDBCCC will continue to support and grow this innovative approach to provide services to the business community.



Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, unemployment insurance workshops were provided on a weekly basis alongside an opportunity for claimants to meet individually with staff from EDD. WIOA and EDD AJCC staff members have regular meetings to ensure that they are working together strategically to serve UI recipients. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, WDBCCC staff have established a business and employee hotline to serve as the first point of contact for individuals in need of UI information and other community resources such as referrals to public benefits, food banks, and rental assistance programs. The WDBCCC has served as the first point of contact for individuals in need of UI information and other community resources, such as referrals to public benefits, food banks, and rental assistance programs, and thus ensures that community members are able to access the services and referrals they need during this crisis.

In response to the pandemic, WDBCCC staff have also developed a bi-monthly laid-off/furloughed employee webinar in collaboration with EDD staff, AJCC service providers, and multiple resource agencies throughout the county, to provide community members the opportunity to connect directly with those who can meet their needs.

### **III.c. Coordination with Vocational Rehabilitation Programs Established Under WIOA Title IV**

The WDBCCC will continue to strengthen its ongoing partnerships with state and local organizations in order to more effectively serve individuals with disabilities. The WDBCCC is part of the Contra Costa Local Partnership Agreement (LPA) that meets regularly to strategize ways to implement the Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE) Blueprint. At this writing, the WDBCCC is attending planning meetings on a virtual job seeker forum.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Department of Rehabilitation (DOR) had a weekly presence at the Comprehensive AJCC. Currently, services are offered remotely and referrals continue to be made. DOR staff were also regular attendees at the WIN, which was on hold during the pandemic but will host meetings virtually in the future. The DOR also has a seat on the WDBCCC Board and on the WDBCCC Youth Committee. The WIOA Youth Program and DOR Workability program have teamed up on a pilot project that provides work-readiness training using Metrix online learning followed by paid work experience.

In 2018, the WDBCCC was awarded a California Employment Development Department (EDD) Disability Employment Accelerator (DEA) Grant to provide work experience to people with disabilities and facilitate employer-education forums spotlighting the skills of people with disabilities and the supports/government incentives they come with. The project successfully achieved its employment training and outcomes.

A primary achievement of the DEA grant project was the WDBCCC becoming a greater part of the disability advocacy community. The grant increased staff awareness of the challenges faced by persons with disabilities, along with the strengths they bring as employees. It has also expanded understanding the resources available to persons with disabilities and prioritized the work of connecting them with employment. Moving forward, the WDBCCC will continue to implement best practices that were developed in coordination with vocational rehabilitation partners through the DEA grant.

The WDBCCC will use the expertise it has gained through the DEA grant to support services for specific populations with disabilities, including the unsheltered population. Contra Costa County's *2020 Point-in-Time Count Report* on homelessness in the county determined that 80% of survey respondents reported having at least one disabling condition. The WDBCCC is currently partnering with the County's Health, Housing, and Homeless (H3) Services

Department on a WAF 8.0 grant focused on integrating homeless and workforce services, and will contribute its expertise to H3's efforts to strengthen the provision of workforce services to unsheltered and precariously housed persons with disabilities. (It should be noted that chronically homeless individuals by definition have a disability, and individuals in Permanent Supportive Housing must have a disability.) The Council on Homelessness, the governing board of H3, also created a Workforce seat in 2020, which is filled by a WDBCCC staff member and will offer additional opportunities for collaboration.

## IV. AJCC System Partner Coordination

### IV.a. Roles and Resource Contributions of the Local Board and its AJCC MOU Partners

Current AJCC MOU partners for the Local Area and the service areas they represent are listed below:

- **Title 1 Adult/Title 1 Dislocated Worker/Title 1 Youth:** Workforce Development Board of Contra Costa County,
- **Adult Education/Literacy:** Martinez Unified School District – Adult Education/Literacy; Mt. Diablo Unified School District – K12 and Adult Education; West Contra Costa Unified School District – Adult Education; Liberty Union High School District – Liberty Adult Education; Pittsburg Adult Education Center; Contra Costa Office of Education – Contra Costa Adult School (schools in jails)
- **Career/Technical Education:** Career/Technical Education
- **Wagner-Peyser/Veterans/Trade Adjustment Assistance/Unemployment Insurance:** Employment Development Department (EDD)
- **Vocational Rehabilitation:** California Department of Rehabilitation-Greater East Bay District
- **Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP):** Contra Costa County Employment and Human Services Department (EHSD)
- **Job Corps:** Job Corps
- **Native American (Section 166):** Northern California Indian Development Council, Inc.-Scotts Valley Tribal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)
- **Migrant/Seasonal (Section 167):** California Human Development
- **YouthBuild:** There are no YouthBuild programs in operation in this region
- **Community Action:** Contra Costa County, Employment and Human Services Department (EHSD) – Community Services Bureau
- **Housing Authority:** Contra Costa County Housing Authority
- **Second Chance Act:** Contra Costa County Probation Department
- **TANF/CalWORKS:** Contra Costa County Employment and Human Services Department (EHSD)

The WDBCCC relies on its AJCC partners to foster a service delivery system that is integrated, comprehensive, customer-focused, and performance-based. This collaboration offers universal access to employment, training, and educational services for all which includes employers, trainers, and job seekers. The AJCC MOU partners meet regularly to ensure that all partners are engaged and that the MOU is revisited and honored. While only a handful of the AJCC Partners are co-located at the comprehensive AJCC, there are established referral processes for all partners, including Title I, Title III, DOR-Title V, Senior Program, and Job Corps.

The WIN is another innovative practice used to facilitate information sharing, cross-training, and referrals throughout the system. The WIN is comprised of all AJCC MOU Partners and an

extensive list of additional community-based organizations and public agencies. Meetings are held every other month to establish a robust network of providers that are knowledgeable about resources throughout Contra Costa. WIN meetings also ensure agencies understand eligibility requirements for other agency resources, and have a referral process in place to eliminate undue frustration and hardship on customers being referred to agencies that will not be able to meet their needs.

The WDBCCC's collaboration with its Community College and Adult Education partners has included focused work over the past year. The WDBCCC, through its alliance with Rubicon Programs, worked with Contra Costa Community Colleges and Adult Education to identify priority high demand sectors which include advanced manufacturing, health and life sciences, information technology, and energy. The WDBCCC also works with Diablo Valley College and Los Medanos College to ensure that the workforce system is participating in the development of upcoming pathway programs at the community colleges. The WDBCCC will continue to help Adult Education students assess and develop essential soft skills such as critical thinking and problem solving.

#### **IV.b. Ensuring Continuous Improvement of Eligible Providers**

The WDBCCC previously contracted out the monitoring of the local ETPL, but has recently brought this in-house. The WDBCCC is in the process of monitoring all ETPL providers for the Americans with Disabilities Act and WIOA Section 188 compliance, and establishing criteria for ensuring that Contra Costa has a robust network of providers that meet the needs of employers and job seekers in the region. The WDBCCC recognizes that the current state process for ETPL eligibility has placed an undue burden on many providers, thereby reducing the number of options for customers on the local ETPL. To address this barrier, the WDBCCC recently developed a policy to ensure customer choice and access to skills upgrading/ retraining and job readiness activities for programs that meet certain criteria but are not on the ETPL. The WDBCCC researches labor market data at regular intervals to ensure it is advising providers and workforce about the most current trends in the local and regional economy. WDBCCC also invests in innovative cohort training opportunities that are employer-driven, and supports Earn and Learn models.

#### **IV.c. Strengthening Linkages Between the One-Stop Delivery System and Unemployment Insurance Programs**

The WDBCCC has a unique and enduring relationship with EDD Workforce Services. EDD Workforce Services has been co-located at the Concord Comprehensive AJCC since the inception of WIA One-Stop Career Centers. WIOA staff and EDD - WFS staff collaboratively operate the AJCC, providing workshops on a variety of topics including applying for unemployment insurance and California Training Benefits.

The WDBCCC has collaborated with EDD to provide training on the UI online system and process to WDB and AJCC staff and partners. Training has also included ways to support people going through the unemployment insurance process and help them understand the online system. Trainings will continue to be provided at regular intervals to all WDBCCC and AJCC staff and partners to ensure that customers have a seamless experience as they receive services related to their UI needs.

Providing training on how to navigate the unemployment insurance process is particularly important during the COVID-19 pandemic, given the extent of job loss and need for unemployment support among county residents. The WDBCCC established a hotline to support

laid off individuals and businesses impacted by the pandemic: the main service requested from callers was help with unemployment insurance. WDBCCC staff provided support to callers with filing claims, following up with claims and making contact with a representative from EDD, as well as multiple resource providers. The WDBCCC hosted a bi-monthly live webinar through which individuals could connect directly with support staff from EDD and other support organizations.

EDD is co-located at the comprehensive AJCC and is an important contributing partner in the AJCC MOU Partnership and in the WINs. EDD regularly shares information and offers training to all AJCC MOU partners. Partners will continue to participate in regularly offered EDD UI training to ensure they provide a seamless system of services to our community.

#### **IV.d. Coordination of Relevant Secondary and Postsecondary Education Programs & Activities**

The WDBCCC has a long history of partnership and collaboration with the community colleges and adult education providers in Contra Costa County, with significant representation on the Local Board. Prior to the AJCC Required Partner MOU, the WDBCCC had resource sharing agreements with several adult schools and the community colleges. The community colleges and adult schools had a permanent presence at all of the WIOA One-Stop Career Centers. The adult schools provided assessments, career exploration, workshops on career technical pathways, customer service, and other cohort trainings to customers. The community colleges provided career counseling, and workshops on labor market information, financial aid, and career technical education.

Under the new service delivery model in Contra Costa, four of the adult schools and all three of the community colleges are members of the Contra Costa Workforce Collaborative, linking and leveraging resources throughout the county. Currently, six of the eight adult education providers in Contra Costa County have also signed the AJCC Partner MOU. The WDBCCC Executive Director is an honorary member of the Contra Costa County Adult Education Consortium, which consists of all the adult education providers in Contra Costa County, the Contra Costa County Office of Education, and the county's three community colleges. WDBCCC staff participated in the adult education and community college strategic planning and are partners on several Strong Workforce K-12 grants within Contra Costa and regionally. These multiple interconnected partnerships make for extremely strong collaborations across the post-secondary education and workforce systems in the county.

#### **IV.e. Coordination of Workforce Development Programs and Economic Development Activities**

Coordination between the workforce development system and local and regional economic development activities is essential to ensure that employers and job seekers receive the maximum benefit from these investments. The WDBCCC is an active member of several local and regional economic development organizations, which allows the workforce system to engage in advocacy and strategy development on issues related to economic growth. This involvement includes membership in the East Bay Leadership Council, whose task forces focus on various areas of economic development in the county and the larger region. The WDBCCC is a member of the East Bay Economic Development Alliance, which includes representatives of regional businesses and industries, local government, education providers, and community-based organizations and advocates for a strong workforce and economy.



In addition to coordination with economic development organizations, the WDBCCC conducts direct outreach to economic development managers of local governments throughout Contra Costa County to collect information on city-level economic development initiatives and priorities. This strategy enables the WDBCCC to offer support to these initiatives and meet the needs of each constituent city. This level of outreach also allows the WDBCCC to be informed of new employers entering the area, creating an opportunity to reach these businesses with workforce services at the hiring stage. The WDBCCC will continue to work in close partnership with Contra Costa cities with the goal of improving coordination with economic development activities at the local level.

The WDBCCC Business & Economic Development (BED) Committee is a key structure for coordinating workforce development economic development activities in the local area. The primary objective of the BED Committee is to meet the workforce needs of high-demand sectors of the local and regional economies, and it brings together leaders from business, economic development, education, labor, community-based organizations, and the public sector to achieve its goals. The BED Committee co-chairs include business and economic development directors who are members of the WDBCCC Executive Committee, and all members of the BED Committee hold a seat on the Workforce Development Board.

The BED Committee and the WDBCCC work on behalf of the Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors and the businesses and residents of Contra Costa County. The WDBCCC and the BED Committee often draw upon the knowledge and expertise of other individuals and organizations that are not members of the WDBCCC, and occasionally form ad hoc committees to complete specific work. The WDBCCC and the BED Committee provide and support convening and networking functions to draw together a wide spectrum of stakeholders that contribute to the health of the local economy and prepare residents for effective participation in the workforce. These include local and regional businesses, economic development experts and organizations, public agencies, education, labor, and community-based organizations.

Examples of collaboration on economic development include: employer forums, career fairs, resource fairs, and workshops and webinars hosted in collaboration with career services providers, economic development, CBOs, elected officials and employers. Workshop topics have included Fair Chance hiring, disability awareness, and recruitment support. The BED Committee collaborates with the California Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development (GO-Biz), Employment Training Panel, Small Business Administration, and the Small Business Development Center to promote entrepreneurial skills training and microenterprise.

As introduced above, the WDBCCC formed iBEST to coordinate and leverage resources in providing services to businesses and job seekers in the county. iBEST coordinates employer and community forums to bring workforce, education, CBOs, economic development, and business together. The WDBCCC has also invested resources to create and co-lead an Equitable Economic Recovery Task Force to develop strategies to support economic recovery in Contra Costa County.

Future economic development priorities for the WDBCCC include continuing to engage and educate businesses on the benefits of hiring priority populations, and providing resources to link to them. These benefits range from the tangible (e.g., tax credits) to the intangible (diversifying their workforce). The WDBCCC will also strive to increase the number of businesses that report that the workforce system consistently supplies the talent they need.

The WDBCCC is in the process of monitoring the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic on small and micro-businesses, and has chosen to invest resources to address the needs of these businesses. The WDBCCC will support strategies that emerge from the Equitable Economic Recovery Task Force related to small business and entrepreneurship. The WDBCCC will also explore renewed engagement with the local SBDC in order to strategically and intentionally support and invest in entrepreneurial skills training.

“There has not been that big a push to look at how entrepreneurship can lead to and support self sufficiency - [for example a] young person working with developing his own video game - they have a passion and could greatly benefit from a mentor with these skills to help them along the way”

- Non profit organization staff, Public Input meeting participant

#### **IV.f. Transitioning to an Integrated, Technology-Enabled Intake and Case Management Information System**

The WDBCCC has invested in upgrading its website to ensure maximum virtual access, including creating video workshops and webinars on a variety of topics such as WIOA enrollment. The WDBCCC is working closely with both adult and youth providers to support their efforts to provide virtual services to the community. All programs are accessible by completing a short Interest Form on each provider’s website.

The WDBCCC has transitioned all of its providers to electronic case files. Documents used to substantiate eligibility, participant activities, and records are all uploaded and housed in the CalJOBS system. Due to the limits on in-person activities during the COVID-19 pandemic, the WDB has also encouraged use of electronic signatures. The WDBCCC acknowledges that different communities have very different levels of access to online technology, and that strategies for virtual service delivery need to be developed that address questions of equitable access.

The WDBCCC will pursue a new approach to coordination between the Adult program and Youth Program when an 18-24 year old is seeking services, determining how participants in this age span should be classified to ensure the best fit for services. The Youth programs focus heavily on career exploration and early career pathway work-based learning activities while the Adult Programs focus on training and family sustaining wage gains.

The WDBCCC is currently working with all of its AJCC partners to address the challenges involved in creating a technology-enabled intake and case management information system related to co-enrollment. There is a robust referral and resource sharing system across all partners to ensure that participants are able to access all of the services that they need.

#### **IV.g. Facilitating Access to the One-Stop Delivery System Through Technology and other Means**

The WDBCCC is pursuing multiple strategies to facilitate virtual access to services provided through the one-stop delivery system. The WDBCCC website has been fully updated to enable job seekers and businesses to access needed services online. Online marketing and enrollment tools have been expanded and enhanced. Providers have hosted virtual job fairs and virtual work experience opportunities and continue to grow their online services and ensure that customers have the knowledge and the technology to access these services. The WDBCCC’s hotline enables

job seekers to reach support staff during business hours. During off hours, participants can leave a message 24 hours a day, and their call will be returned within a day. The website for Rubicon Programs, which manages and runs the comprehensive one-stop, is connected to the website for the WDBCCC, and provides opportunities for virtual enrollment. CalJOBS online offers access to a wide array of virtual services. As introduced above, the WDBCCC has a contract for the Metrix online learning platform, a catalogue of thousands of industry-aligned virtual trainings. In addition to being made available to job seekers and businesses, the system is being used to pilot curated projects in work readiness, Microsoft Office, Quickbooks, and other tools. Finally, the WDBCCC is actively seeking ways to incorporate additional industry tracks into its virtual offerings. All virtual resources are provided without cost to the Contra Costa community.

#### **IV.h. Providing Accessible Facilities, Programs and Services, Technology and Materials for Individuals with Disabilities (WIOA Section 188)**

In the Fall of 2019, WDBCCC staff did a complete facility and equipment assessment utilizing funds from a DEA grant, including updating outdated tools/equipment and reaching out to local agencies to ensure it had the most updated and accessible high quality technology and equipment. The WDBCCC also took advantage of California Workforce Association and other trainings on serving individuals with disabilities, sharing and encouraging service providers to take advantage of these trainings as well.

The WDBCCC will continue to seek out and work with partner organizations working with individuals with disabilities to ensure that it is providing the most up-to-date resources/equipment, regularly monitoring its facilities to ensure optimal accessibility, and making training available to service providers on best practices for serving this population.

#### **IV.i. Providing Indian and Native Americans with Equal Access to AJCC Services**

The WDBCCC will work with relevant partners in the local area to facilitate equal access to AJCC services for Native American residents. The local Tribal TANF office in Contra Costa County is operated through the Scotts Valley Tribal TANF (SVTT) program, and has actively participated in WIN meetings in the past, though communication has been reduced during the temporary hiatus of in-person WIN meetings. The WDBCCC is in the process of developing new post-pandemic communication strategies with the SVTT to provide information about available workforce and other services, and to identify opportunities for co-enrollment in WIOA. The reinvigoration of the WINs, described elsewhere in this plan, will also be an important tool for engaging the Native American community in needed workforce development services.

#### **IV.j. Providing Eligible Migrant Seasonal Farmworkers with Equal Access to AJCC Services**

Though there are a limited number of migrant and seasonal farmworkers in the local area, Liberty Adult Education (an AJCC MOU partner and member of the CCWC) has provided space for a Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker representative at their site. Liberty Adult Education, an AJCC MOU partner in the local system, in collaboration with the Corporation for Human Development (CHD), serves Migrant Farm Workers in East Contra Costa County. Services include food, COVID-19 personal protective equipment (PPE), health education, technology assistance, and information, along with continued immigration resources. Many members of this community lack the knowledge and tools to access the Internet for online workforce service delivery. After temporarily closing in March 2020, the career center at Liberty Adult Education re-opened for in-person services in August and has been providing job seekers assistance with job search, resume writing, and access to computers for those needing to file or access UI.

The most significant current needs for this population, in light of the challenges created by the COVID-19 pandemic, are Internet technology equipment, free or low-cost Internet service, and training in how to learn, work, and access services online. In order to address this need, the WDBCCC will collaborate with Liberty Adult Education and CHD to help provide the following resources: hybrid training (in-classroom and remote), online videos, referral to programs that provide low-cost computer equipment (desktops, laptops, and tablets), low-cost Internet service, and personal hotspot loan programs. The WDBCCC will also host trainings via Zoom on job skills (soft skills) in partnership with Brentwood library.

## **V. State and Local Strategic Partner Coordination**

### **V.a. Coordination with County Health and Human Services and Other Local Partners to Serve Local CalFresh Populations**

CalFresh recipients in Contra Costa County who are able to work face multiple challenges to success in the regional and local labor market. Many have a limited work history, lack a high school diploma or GED, lack stable housing, have been formerly incarcerated, have limited English proficiency, or have physical or mental health challenges. The CalFresh population thus requires specific workforce services. While optimal outcomes can be obtained by participating in sector-based training, many CalFresh participants need a more basic level of workforce and other supportive services that can include remedial education, basic/essential skills training, and social emotional skills required to navigate the workplace.

The WDBCCC has been a core participant in a strategic planning process for increasing information, outreach, and enrollment in CalFresh Employment & Training (Fresh Success) in Contra Costa County. There are currently two providers for Fresh Success, Rubicon Programs and Opportunity Junction, which are both part of the CCWC and serve as access points for WIOA services through that partnership. The WDBCCC has strong ongoing collaboration with both of these partners.

As a result of the strategic planning process, a strategy was developed for increasing the number of providers for CalFresh E&T, and are in the process of onboarding two new providers. A planned program at Diablo Valley College (through Rubicon Programs) will offer CalFresh E&T services to students at the college. The second new provider partner will be iFoster, a national nonprofit that provides services and resources to foster youth. Year Up Bay Area, an organization that prepares students for professional success through sponsored internships, is also seeking to become a CalFresh E&T provider.

Providers in Contra Costa served 141 CalFresh E&T participants in the last federal fiscal year (2019-2020) and have served 58 since October 1, 2020. The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted the number of people served and the types of services that were offered. Providers converted services to a virtual format, but there were significant time periods during which providers were unable to take on new clients. The pandemic also impacted the launch of Calservices scheduled to be offered at Diablo Valley College. The WDBCCC continues to be involved in planning for the expansion of CalFresh E&T opportunities in the county, and is exploring WIOA co-enrollment strategies with current partners for CalFresh E&T participants.

As indicated in the two-year modifications of the PY 2015-2020 Local Plan, the WDBCCC will continue to build upon these strengthened relationships to better provide WIOA services to CalFresh E&T participants. This will include the exploration of WIOA co-enrollment strategies with current partners for CalFresh E&T participants. The WDBCCC will build upon and expand



its collaboration and information sharing with staff in Contra Costa County Employment and Human Services Department and with the California Community College Foundation, the backbone organization for CalFresh E&T in Contra Costa County, regarding continued expansion of CalFresh E&T capacity in the county. This will enable the WDBCCC to determine how it can best provide support to CalFresh E&T participants through WIOA-funded services. Given the substantial increase in food insecurity as a result of the pandemic, this will be a particularly important time to strengthen information sharing regarding needed services.

### **V.b. Coordination with Local Child Support Agencies and Partner CBOs to Serve Local Non-Custodial Parents**

A key challenge for non-custodial parents in Contra Costa County is the ability to earn a high enough salary to keep their child support commitments and maintain their own self-sufficiency, in a region with an extremely high cost of living. Historically, non-custodial parents have been over-represented among the unemployed and underemployed, and the COVID-19 pandemic has increased the challenges they face. Low skill levels, limited education, and a severely contracted economy have made securing a quality job at a good wage extremely challenging for this group. Justice-involved non-custodial parents face the added burden of unpaid support payments that have accumulated during incarceration.

The WDBCCC and its partners provide services that benefit individuals participating in the Employment and Human Services Department Child Support Program (CSP), such as reentry and financial mobility services. The WDBCCC is continuing to seek ways to strengthen coordination with the CSP in order to more effectively serve non-custodial parents. The CSP will continue to work on improved identification of non-custodial parents who would benefit from workforce services, and referrals to the appropriate supportive services. The WDBCCC and partners will also continue to explore the tracking of non-custodial parents to improve communication and coordination with the CSP and make it easier for the CSP to track individual's employment status.

While a loss of funding and resultant decrease in staffing at Child Support Services in Contra Costa County has made it difficult to sustain the coordination of services for non-custodial parents, the WDBCCC will continue to seek to strengthen this relationship. To best evaluate the needs of this population, the CSP will identify individuals that would benefit from training and employment support and will connect those individuals with WDBCCC and other partners for assessment and delivery of needed workforce services. The WDBCCC will also continue to work with the CSP to establish a communication pathway for updating CSP staff on the progress of clients in workforce training, employment, and retention. To support this, the WDBCCC will amend the intake process to track whether CSP is working with a non-custodial parent and will get necessary permission from participants so they can share information with CSP, depending on confidentiality requirements. The WDBCCC has participated in initial conversations with the CSP about setting up a system to enable those who are working towards employment to get temporary relief on their child support payments.

The WDBCCC will also explore the following strategies to address the needs of this population, in coordination with local CBO partners:

- Coordinate with Adult Education partners to support non-custodial parents in obtaining a GED or other educational credentials that can help them to improve their income.
- As needed, work with education partners to deliver English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction for those whose lack of English proficiency is a barrier to employment.
- Provide training to improve basic skills and acquire soft skills needed to thrive in the workplace.

- Work with sector-based partnerships to facilitate access for non-custodial parents to sector-based pathways that lead to higher paying jobs.
- Coordinate with local CBOs to offer access to legal assistance in renegotiating the terms of their child support commitment so that it is an amount appropriate to their financial circumstances.
- Coordinate with local CBOs on the provision of financial literacy and planning services for non-custodial parents to enable them to better manage and save the money they earn.
- Work with the Fidelity Bonding Program through the EDD, which can help individuals who are not commercially bondable to remove a barrier to employment and become more attractive to employers.

### **V.c. Coordination with Local Partners to Improve Services for Jobseekers with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities**

The WDBCCC sits on the regional committee charged with implementing California's Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE) Blueprint. Comprised of the relevant State agencies (California Department of Rehabilitation [convener], California Department of Education, and California Department of Developmental Services), the Blueprint prioritizes employment in an integrated setting, at a competitive wage, for individuals with intellectual disabilities and developmental disabilities (ID/DD). The key role of the WDBCCC is to provide the workforce, and in particular, an employer perspective on how to better employ ID/DD individuals, from recruitment and onboarding to development and retention.

The WDBCCC is particularly well-equipped to serve in this role, as a result of expertise gained through participation in a DEA grant with high capacity local CBOs that work with the ID/DD population. This work is described in greater detail in Section III.c. A primary focus of the DEA grant-funded project was convening and educating employers about the benefits of hiring persons with ID/DD, as well as the accommodations that could be made to ensure their success in the workplace.

The WDBCCC is an invited partner to the Local Partnership Agreement (LPA) for the region. The WDBCCC will support the work of the LPA to foster collaboration in order to streamline service delivery, engage communities, and increase CIE opportunities for individuals with ID/DD. The WDBCCC will continue to strengthen its coordination with LPA-participating organizations to more effectively serve persons with disabilities through the CIE model, including by developing new partnerships with CBOs receiving Regional Center funds.

At the local government level, the WDBCCC will collaborate with Contra Costa County EHSD programs focused specifically on employment opportunities for persons with ID/DD. The WDBCCC will coordinate referral and workforce services delivery with the BRIDGES to Success program, which provides an alternate route to specific County jobs for people with ID/DD. The WDBCCC will also refer persons with ID/DD to the EHSD Navigators program, which connects individuals to services within EHSD and beyond.

The WDBCCC will continue to build on partnerships at the state level to more effectively serve persons with disabilities, including working with the DOR point of contact to facilitate access of ID/DD participants to direct services upon referral from WDBCCC service providers. The WDBCCC will also engage the DOR point of contact in their capacity as a subject matter expert, to provide presentations to employers regarding best practices in hiring and employing individuals with ID/DD, and to serve as a resource for linking clients to further services. The WDBCCC will seek to facilitate presentations of the Windmills Disability Etiquette best practice

training for employers and identify employer champions willing to share their experience hiring this population with other employers.

#### **V.d. Coordination with Local Partners to Improve Service Delivery for English Language Learners, Foreign Born and/or Refugees**

The WDBCC is committed to working strategically with local organizations to expand its impact on services for English language learners (ELLs), foreign born residents, and refugees in Contra Costa County. The WDBCCC will continue to engage CBO and local government partners in activities to encourage coordination and the braiding of resources. WDBCCC will facilitate the co-enrollment of clients in workforce programs and supportive services to leverage support for potential barriers to progress such as housing, transportation, job training, and child care. The WDBCCC will work with partners to facilitate warm hand-offs and referrals, and will convene CBOs and relevant stakeholders to coordinate additional resources and support for this population.

The COVID-19 pandemic has created particular challenges in providing services to the ELL, foreign born, and refugee population, since many lack access to the technology tools and skills needed to connect virtually. A lack of facility with English creates additional barriers to online participation. The WDBCCC will continue to seek resources to help support its adult education and CBO partners in the provision of digital tools and training as a component of workforces services delivery.

In the area of refugee services, the WDBCCC is coordinating efforts with the International Rescue Committee (IRC), an international refugee-serving nonprofit with offices in Oakland, Alameda County. Work with the IRC will focus on services to the relatively large population of refugees that reside in Contra Costa County, which has limited access to services. The WDBCCC has worked on several grant applications with IRC that include a workforce services role for the WDBCCC, and will continue to seek out further opportunities for funding. The WDBCCC has also committed to hosting staff from the IRC to provide services at the Concord Comprehensive AJCC. This strategy has been delayed as a result of the pandemic, but will be implemented as soon as the AJCC is able to reopen for in-person services.

The WDBCCC will also continue its collaboration with a number of partners in the CCWC that provide services to the ELL, foreign born, and refugee population. These include LAO Family Services and adult education organizations, which offer high quality services directed to specific immigrant and refugee populations.

### **VI. Title I Services**

“Title I services should maintain the focus on virtual and online delivery after the pandemic. The virtual process could be a powerful tool for increasing access and equity--the younger population can do a lot of things on tablets and set up services to take advantage of those platforms.”

-Los Medanos Community College staff, participant in public input meeting

#### **VI.a. Type and Availability of Adult and Dislocated Worker Employment and Training Activities in the Local Area**

The WDBCC is committed to accelerating employment and improving efficiencies through shared resources that can be leveraged to create new, relevant, and innovative opportunities that serve the needs of all stakeholders, ensuring that all customers have access to the full array of

services allowable under WIOA. The WDBCCC has spent considerable time and effort training staff in trauma-informed practices and human-centered design, to ensure that customers are met where they are and provided services that meet their needs.

The current AJCC operator and adult and dislocated service provider has a unique and comprehensive model for delivering services, represented by the acronym ACTION (Action Through Innovation, Opportunities, and Networking). This model for client flow and services reflects a joint commitment to a human-centered approach that addresses the unique needs of Contra Costa County job seekers and employers.

“An important improvement would be to make the Dislocated Worker application process faster for people - for someone who is a DW, the application is quite a process; they need help doing it and it should not be so difficult. It asks a lot of them and it should be quicker. It can take 3 months, by which time they could be halfway through their UI claim.”

- Adult Education provider, Public Input Session

Based upon feedback from our public input session, in which participants expressed concerns regarding delays in the process of applying for Dislocated Worker services, the WDBCCC will examine the process to determine where bottlenecks exist and develop strategies to streamline the process for application and enrollment. Feedback from the public input session identified a lack of information or understanding about the process, and the WDBCCC will seek to expand outreach and education about the Dislocated Worker program.

#### **VI.b. Coordination of Workforce Investment Activities with Statewide Rapid Response Activities**

The WDBCCC works with local and regional partners to implement its Rapid Response strategy. The Bay Area Rapid Response Round Table (BARRR) is the main forum for the regional Rapid Response team. The WDBCCC participates in quarterly meetings and communicates frequently to stay updated on policies and best ways to serve displaced workers. The WDBCCC also works closely with Labor representatives to support related activities. The WDBCCC has pivoted Rapid Response services to virtual platforms in collaboration with the California Employment Development Department (EDD) in response to the COVID-19 shutdown. The WDBCCC provides Laid-Off worker webinars two times a month and partners that provide American Job Center Career Services on behalf of WDB, Department of Labor, and others are invited to participate. Employer outreach was also offered virtually during the statewide Shelter in Place order. Once businesses open to the public, the WDBCCC will keep a combination of in person and virtual services for both Rapid Response and Lay Off Aversion.

The goal of the WDBCCC's Rapid Response Team is to work proactively with cities and other entities in the region in advance of any anticipated business downsizing or closure events to leverage the resources of local governments for layoff prevention. If this is not possible, the WDBCCC will coordinate activities to achieve rapid reemployment for the impacted workforce. To achieve these goals, the WDBCCC will take the steps detailed below to coordinate Rapid Response activities in the local area.

The WDBCCC will establish a proactive layoff aversion strategy. In the event of downsizing or closures, the WDBCCC will engage key partners, including local and regional economic development agencies and industry trade associations, to develop an understanding of business supply chains and potentially impacted industries, with the goal of acting preemptively to prevent additional layoff events following the loss of a single employer. To mitigate the impact of



layoffs across supply chains, the WDBCCC will promote the use of the federal Work Share program and other incentives to help businesses reduce the number of employees affected. In addition to responding to layoffs proactively, the WDBCCC will seek to implement effective data collection and analysis and establish early warning systems. The WDBCCC will strengthen these efforts by educating staff on the resources available to prevent layoffs, including training to increase the skills and efficiency of the incumbent workforce, so that they can share this information with the employers they serve. Combining this type of training with available federal resources like the Work Share program will allow businesses to withstand economic contraction without shedding their workforce, enabling them to take full advantage of future growth opportunities.

The WDBCCC will also collaborate with the SBDC, California Employer Association, and other partners to target training and consulting services including workshops, technical assistance, and coaching to small businesses in high priority industries to facilitate access to information or workforce services to promote business stabilization and growth. This type of training can be used by entrepreneurs and small business owners to improve their business practices and prevent job loss.

The WDBCCC will continue to leverage its partnerships with the business community to facilitate the swift re-employment of laid-off workers in positions requiring similar skills at other local or regional employers. Following the receipt of a Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification (WARN), the WDBCCC will work with businesses to profile the skill sets of employees at risk of being laid off in order to identify opportunities to transfer these skills into similar positions in priority industry sectors.

To facilitate this type of response, the WDBCCC utilizes all resources and connections available to respond to closures. This includes the coordination of rapid response activities with EDD, Rubicon Programs, Covered California, and other AJCC and workforce system partners. Upon receipt of a WARN notice, Business Service Representatives contact the businesses to discuss the services available and to schedule a transition orientation for the impacted workers. Due to the ongoing Shelter In Place order due to COVID-19, Business Services Representative and EDD partners meet virtually to coordinate these services and will continue with virtual services until businesses return to in-person meetings. They deliver the orientation, which includes a panel of representatives that provide information on workforce services, unemployment insurance, and other resources available to dislocated workers.

For individuals eligible for Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA), the WDBCCC will continue to provide assessments, transition, training, and access to AJCC and other services to facilitate a rapid transition to new employment, including career counseling, job search assistance, resume preparation, interviewing skills workshops, and information about the local labor market, unemployment insurance, and local education and training.

#### **VI.c. Type and Availability of Youth Workforce Investment Activities in the Local Area**

The full range of WIOA Youth Services/14 Youth Elements are available to Contra Costa Youth including youth with disabilities:

- Tutoring, study skills training, and instruction leading to secondary school completion, including dropout prevention strategies;
- Alternative secondary school offerings;

- Education Concurrent with Workforce Preparation;
- Labor Market and Employment Information for Local Area;
- Paid and unpaid work experiences, including internships and job shadowing;
- Occupational skill training;
- Financial Literacy;
- Leadership development opportunities, which may include community service and peer-centered activities encouraging responsibility and other positive social behaviors during non-school hours;
- Entrepreneurial Skills;
- Adult mentoring for the period of participation and a subsequent period, for a total of not less than 12 months;
- Comprehensive guidance and counseling, which may include drug and alcohol counseling and referral;
- Supportive services;
- Follow-up services for not less than 12 months after completing participation; and
- Activities that prepare Youth to Transition to post-secondary education and training.

COVID-19 shelter-in-place provisions pushed WIOA Youth Programs in the county to quickly implement tech-based strategies for services delivery. Providing youth with access to technology was a key priority for the programs, which included loaning laptop computers to students in partnership with school districts, with a focus on ensuring that technology resources were available to both in-school and out-of-school youth. The program also includes a Youth Incentives component, which converts the loaner laptops to an outcome-based incentive, linked to participation.

Summer internships for students were also shifted from in-person experiences to virtual. This resulted in a number of challenges for youth participants, including a lack of access to real-time tech support and a lack of appropriate space in their homes that was conducive to virtual work. Providing the necessary supervision, support, and structure for the youth also proved to be a challenge for the business hosts. The WDBCC will continue to identify ways to support and enhance virtual internships in occupations that lend themselves to remote work. Implementing a more virtual approach will require the WDBCCC identify resources to increase supportive services for technology (such as laptops, wifi, and routers).

Some of the new pandemic-related strategies may be incorporated into Youth Programs permanently. The WDBCCC's school partners have reported that while student attendance initially declined when classes went online, one positive outcome of the virtual environment was the reduction in bullying and intimidation. With access to technology and training in its appropriate use, virtual instruction can be used as a strategy to help address equity issues.

Paid work-experience/internships aligned with a youth's interests continues to be a central component of the WIOA Youth Program. The WDBCCC firmly believes in the effectiveness of Earn and Learn models and has encouraged providers to extend the duration and hours of the paid work experience component. Prior to the pandemic, most internships lasted for 120 hours. Providers have increased internship hours up to 500 and all work-experience interns are paid. WDBCC will continue to maximize the funding available for earn and learn strategies.

Two exciting apprenticeship opportunities have recently emerged in the East Bay: a coding and web development apprenticeship aligned with information and communications technology (ICT) industry needs and a Marine Technology Apprenticeship with connections to a wide range of trade-related learning opportunities.

While many Youth Committees and Local Boards have reserved 100% of their WIOA Youth funds for out-of-school youth, Contra Costa will continue to use a portion of its WIOA funds to support bridge programming, wrap-around services, and other strategies that support the connection of in-school youth/young adults to a career pathway.

The WDBCCC recognizes the significant barriers that system-involved youth and young adults experience in connecting to workforce services and career pathways, and eventual entry and advancement in gainful employment. These populations include current and former foster youth, those involved with the justice system, and young adults experiencing homelessness.

The WDBCCC will seek to increase the engagement of and provide meaningful opportunities to these populations in WIOA and other program services through the application of emerging and innovative strategies and approaches, the adoption and replication of quality practices from across the state and country, and active participation in regional efforts to address challenges faced by these populations.

#### **VI.d. Providing Training Through Individual Training Accounts**

Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) are an important tool that can be made available to eligible participants when it has been determined the individual will be unlikely or unable to obtain or retain employment that leads to self-sufficiency from previous employment or through career services alone. ITAs may also be provided to eligible participants who have been assessed and determined to have specific skill-related barriers to employment. A key feature of ITA-related training programs is that they be connected to in-demand occupations, based on current labor market information, and emphasize employment opportunities within the Local Board's priority industry sectors. It is expected that ITA training will lead to an industry recognized certificate, competency, or skill recognized by employers.

The WDBCCC will build upon its robust history and policy supporting skill-upgrading and income mobility through the use of ITAs. While the WDBCCC provides policy guidelines and criteria, service providers are encouraged to use Human-Centered Design practices to meet every individual where they are, to counsel and advise them on relevant and current labor market information, and to ensure that customer choice is honored at all times. While the Local ETPL providers are shrinking, there are multiple providers on the local ETPL as well as additional relevant training and skill upgrading opportunities. The WDBCCC has policies and procedures established for the use of ITAs: for example, Policy #01-17 establishes the local policy for the use of ITAs in accordance with WIOA regulations.

The WDBCCC will continue to support WIOA service providers in assisting participants to make well-informed training decisions and to provide guidance in selecting a training facility and specific program from vendors currently on the ETPL, as required by WIOA. Exceptions to the ETPL requirements may occur when special grant funding allows flexibility or the Local Board has approved other providers based on the local need within the guidelines of WIOA criteria established by the state.

#### **VI.e. Ensuring Priority for Adult Career and Training Services will be Given to Recipients of Public Assistance, Low Income Individuals and Those who are Basic Skills Deficient**

The WDBCCC has a local Priority of Service Policy that is in line with EDD Workforce Services Directive #WSD 15-14 regarding WIOA Adult Program Priority of Service. This policy

establishes locally defined additional priority target populations as Re-entry/ Returning Citizens/Justice Involved and Individuals with Disabilities, and establishes a local defined minimum threshold percentage of 51% of priority individuals to be served. However, the WDBCCC works to exceed the EDD WSD 15-14 minimum threshold and consistently serves a much higher percentage of individuals that meet the definition of priority population. Data from PY 2015-19 show that 70% of all WIOA adult participants were low-income.

#### **VI.f. Coordination of Workforce and Education Activities with Provision of Supportive Services**

Throughout its history, the WDBCCC has had a robust policy related to the provision of needs-based support services for individuals enrolled in training and education, including support for training-related books and other materials, the cost of transportation to attend education or training, and childcare. With the decrease in WIOA funding over the past several years, the WDBCCC has found the need to reduce its provision of some of these support services using WIOA dollars.

As a result, a new priority has been to expand collaboration with partners to leverage these much needed services. This has been particularly critical in the area of youth services and support for adult and dislocated workers through the CCWC. In order to ensure the adequate provision of supportive services in the future, the WDBCCC will seek to develop a system to collect and report detailed information on the delivery of supportive services on a regular basis, which is now included as a single line item in the budget. This system will include information available in each contract that the WDBCCC participates in, including coordination with CalFresh and CalWORKs, homeless shelters, child care subsidy programs, and other efforts.

Data from CalJOBS indicates that the majority of services delivered to participants by WDBCCC over the past year have fallen into the following categories: transportation assistance, housing assistance, support for utility payments, work clothing and tools, linkages to community services, and other unclassified services. The majority of people who are provided with supportive services are those who are in an education and training program, with the goal of helping them to achieve success.

### **VII. Title I Administration**

#### **VII.a. Entity Responsible for Disbursal of Grant Funds**

The Employment and Human Services Department (EHSD) of Contra Costa County has been designated as the fiscal agent for the WDBCCC, and as such is responsible for the dispersal and reporting of all grant funds. EHSD has rigorous fiscal standards that they follow and employ for management of the WDBCCC. The WDBCCC continues to meet standards for all fiscal and procurement monitoring by the state and other entities.

#### **VII.b. Competitive Process that will be Used to Award Sub-Grants and Contracts for WIOA Title I Activities**

EHSD is the Fiscal Agent for the WDBCCC, and WIOA funds for Adults, Dislocated Workers, and Youth are awarded according to the process prescribed by Contra Costa County. All Requests for Information (RFIs) and Requests for Proposals (RFPs) are issued through the Contracts and Grants Unit of the Administrative Services Bureau within EHSD. RFPs and RFIs are published online on the EHSD website and the Contra Costa Purchasing portal and are also distributed via the WDBCCC mailing list. RFI and RFP postings clearly indicate the response

due date and criteria for qualified responses, and RFIs and RFPs also include an Optional Bidders Conference when appropriate.

### **VII.c. Responsibility for AJCC Operations**

In early 2018, the WDBCCC, in accordance with WIOA and state regulations, put the operation of the comprehensive AJCC and the delivery of adult and dislocated worker career services out for procurement. Based on this procurement, as of August 2018, the WDBCCC has a contract with Rubicon Programs, Inc. for the operation of the comprehensive AJCC and the delivery of all adult and dislocated worker career services. Rubicon Programs, Inc. has robust partnerships with CBOs, education, and training providers to ensure the delivery of services throughout the expanse of Contra Costa County, providing multiple onramps to the workforce system. The RFP process for the AJCC will be coming up again in Spring 2021.

### **VII.d. Copies of Executed Cooperative Agreements Regarding Service Delivery for the Local One-Stop System**

The WDBCCC has MOUs with all of the mandated partners of the AJCC that contribute to the delivery of required services for all participants through the local one-stop delivery system. These documents are attached to the narrative.

## **VIII. Staff Training and Capacity Building**

### **VIII.a. Training and/or Professional Development for Targeted Sectors and Promoting Job Quality**

The WDBCCC has invested time and energy in creating educational workshops for both staff and partners in Contra Costa's identified priority sectors. These workshops are in varying stages of completion, with some on hold due to the inability to gather in person as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Regional sector partnerships in advanced manufacturing (Advanced Manufacturing Bay Area-AMBayArea) and health (East Bay Health Workforce Partnership-EBHWP) are developing resource tools on job openings, training, and stackable credentials in these fields and are engaging service delivery and front line staff in best practices for creating and implementing these tools. Through the advanced manufacturing sector partnership, workshops were developed for staff and customers to learn about occupations, training, and opportunities in this field. Workshops were held at the Concord AJCC with a focus on delivering this information to veterans in particular, though all were welcome.

The WDBCCC is working with these sector partnerships in advanced manufacturing and health to engage service providers and ensure that information for participants is accessible and integrated into service delivery. The WDBCCC is also focusing on COVID-19 recovery strategies and regional system capacity building to address disparate outcomes related to race and equity in priority sectors. A key strategy will include the development of training for frontline staff to identify the key features of each of these sectors, LMI data, wages, and where sector-based job training can be accessed. An orientation to enable staff to use the AMBayArea Online Course Catalogue and Career Exploration site as tools for working with clients will also be provided.

### **VIII.b. Training and/or Professional Development to Ensure Cultural Competency and Understanding of Experiences of Trauma-Exposed Populations**

The WDBCCC has benefitted from Contra Costa County's history of investment and training in trauma-informed practices. WDBCCC staff participate in ongoing opportunities for trauma-informed and human-centered design training through the County's Employment and Human



Services Department. Rubicon Programs, a primary WDBCCC adult and dislocated worker career service provider, has a deep commitment and understanding of trauma-informed care and provides services that meet their clients where they are and engage them in the process. Rubicon is committed to hiring those they serve and has a diverse staff that reflects the demographics of their service populations.

As part of a WAF 8.0 grant focused on the integration of the workforce and homeless services systems, WDBCCC staff and partners participated in a trauma-informed training to ensure that the design of integration tools will include a trauma-informed perspective. This training included information on the impact of chronic trauma on body, behavior, and health; types of trauma; antidotes to trauma (self-care, community care, and healing); and primary factors in resilience (supportive connections and healthy relationships). Included were how trauma responses show up in providers and clients, shifting the perspective from “What’s wrong with you?” to “What happened to you?” and recognizing how problematic behavior can also be seen as normal responses to trauma.

The WDBCCC is also committed to training staff on equity and inclusion, a commitment that also exists at the county level. The WDBCCC will participate in two levels of Implicit Bias training provided by Contra Costa County Employment and Human Services Department. Line staff receive a three-hour training on implicit bias and a methodology of addressing biases. Online training in workplace diversity and completing the Implicit Association Test (IAT) are required prerequisites. This training will include the following topics:

- The definition of implicit bias
- The difference between implicit bias and diversity
- How implicit bias influences our decisions
- The distinction between implicit and explicit bias
- The different types of biases
- Microaggressions
- Techniques for reshaping biased perceptions

Managers and supervisors receive training in the same topics but in the added context of hiring, evaluations, and promotions, and other judgments.

In addition to the strategies described above, the WDBCCC Executive Director serves on the California Workforce Association’s Equity and Inclusion Task Force, and a member of WDBCCC staff is on the EHSD Equity and Inclusion Task Force. Each of these roles provide an opportunity for the WDBCCC to learn about current efforts and best practices in the area of equity and inclusion, while providing input into the work of these groups.

### **VIII.c. Training and/or Professional Development to Provide Proficiency in Digital Fluency and Distance Learning**

The capacity to use current technology and applications is key to effective functioning for front line staff, in particular in the era of COVID-19. The WDBCCC intends to explore a set of training sessions that would be most helpful for front line staff, and will contract for the delivery of training in relevant skills such as online case management, online interviewing, and the use of online conferencing platforms such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams. The professional development budget for staff can be used to provide training in digital skills apart from training contracted for by WDBCCC.

EHSD is committed to improving the skills of County staff, and the WDBCCC will identify content for these training events that will best align with its needs. Management staff will review all of the options for training and identify a subset of specific training that would be most beneficial for the team. These include trainings offered by entities such as GPS Workforce, DOLETA, and CWA. Training will also be highlighted as a quarterly agenda item for WDBCCC staff meetings. The WDBCCC will also explore access to training resources for subrecipients to help increase their capacity.

#### **VIII.d. Training and/or Professional Development on Common Case Management and Co-Enrollment Strategies**

Training in Common Case Management, CalJOBS, WIOA, and other effective practices and tools is provided to all staff as part of their orientation when they begin employment at the WDBCCC. The WDBCCC also shares and promotes training provided by the State, California Workforce Association (CWA), and other organizations regarding Common Case Management and Co-Enrollment strategies with staff and partners. The WDBCCC has also received support in strategic planning for Co-Enrollment from the CWA at the state level. The WDBCCC will use the Workforce Integration Networks (WINs), once they are reinvigorated virtually or in person post-COVID-19, to develop and provide training on a shared co-enrollment process and a shared intake form to track all of the services an individual is receiving. Partner collaboration and staff training will be necessary for the development of this strategy, including the development of an online tracking system that could be used while the COVID-19 shutdown endures.