Susquehanna Local Workforce Plan

2024-2028

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Executive Summary

Board Background and Leadership

The Susquehanna Workforce Development Board (SWDB) serves as the leader and convening entity for workforce development in Cecil and Harford Counties. It is committed to fostering collaboration among key stakeholders, including employers, educational institutions, community organizations, and local government agencies. The Board's mission is to create an aligned and responsive workforce system that meets the needs of businesses and job seekers alike.

To develop this local plan, the SWDB engaged in robust stakeholder consultation, involving representatives from the priority industries such as logistics, healthcare, and IT, as well as educators and workforce development professionals. This process included data analysis, community input, and strategic alignment with state and federal workforce priorities.

Vision for Susquehanna's Local Workforce System

The Susquehanna Workforce Development Board (SWDB) envisions a thriving regional economy supported by a skilled and adaptable workforce. As a trusted connector for businesses and jobseekers, the Board is committed to fostering meaningful partnerships that address the evolving needs of the labor market.

The Board's vision emphasizes a holistic approach to serving jobseekers. Recognizing that jobseekers often balance family and community responsibilities while navigating multiple barriers to employment, the Board is dedicated to ensuring that Susquehanna's workforce system provides comprehensive support for the community's jobseekers. This includes the seamless integration of services across various funding streams to ensure accessible workforce solutions for all.

The Board is particularly focused on unemployed and underemployed adults and out-of-school youth. In alignment with the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, the Board provides robust career coaching services to equip in-school youth with the tools they need to explore and pursue sustainable career pathways. Through the provision of services as outlined in MOUs between the Board, the local education agencies and area's community colleges, middle and high school students are introduced to the world of work, provided opportunities to explore their interests and strengths, and interact with professionals in the community. Career counseling opens the eyes of the students to the opportunities within their communities, and provides area employers with a pipeline of students ready to engage with them as they emerge college and career ready.

Through the services provided by the Susquehanna Workforce Network (SWN) the Board invests in the human capital of its communities by promoting skill-building and employment opportunities that empower jobseekers to achieve their potential. This vision is rooted in the Board's belief that a strong workforce underpins a resilient and inclusive economy, where individuals and businesses alike have the opportunity to thrive.

Key focus industries for the region include transportation and logistics, healthcare, IT / Cybersecurity, construction, and manufacturing, reflecting both local economic drivers and labor market demands. The Board's efforts aim to address challenges such as skill gaps, workforce participation rates, and access to services.

Commitment to Aligning with the Four Core Strategic Pillars

1. Supercharge Key Sectors

The Susquehanna Workforce Development Board (SWDB) oversees the collaborative efforts of the Susquehanna Workforce Network (SWN). SWN collaborates with employers, educators, and training providers to strengthen the region's workforce pipeline in logistics, healthcare, IT, construction, and manufacturing.

Using data from labor market analyses, the Board identifies skill needs and training gaps, fostering partnerships that develop industry-aligned programs. Efforts include enhancing access to apprenticeships (both pre- and Registered Apprenticeship opportunities) and work-based learning opportunities, which connect jobseekers to family-sustaining careers in high-demand fields.

To meet the needs of local businesses, the SWDB leverages resources to promote certifications and credentials aligned with these industries. The Board's partnerships aim to anticipate future workforce needs and position the region as a leader in economic growth and innovation.

2. Advance Access

Access is at the heart of the SWDB's mission. Programming supported by the Board works to eliminate barriers to workforce participation by offering integrated services that address transportation, childcare, and other critical needs. With unemployment low in the region, and work participation rates still not at pre-pandemic levels, the focus on serving unemployed and underemployed adults, as well as in-school youth, ensures that all community members can access opportunities for meaningful employment and skills development.

The Board's holistic approach recognizes that jobseekers face diverse challenges and responsibilities. Programs are designed to meet individuals where they are, providing targeted support for those with disabilities, veterans, and other underrepresented groups. By investing in supportive services, the SWDB fosters an accessible workforce ecosystem.

3. Prepare the Future Workforce

The SWDB is committed to building pathways for the next generation of workers by partnering with local schools, community colleges, and businesses to expand access to career-connected learning. Guided by the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, the Board connects middle and high school students with career coaching, and opportunities for work-based learning and connections to area apprenticeship programs. This will ensure that students can explore and prepare for high-growth industries within the area.

Additionally, the Board's investments in skill-building programs for young people aim to increase the attainment of industry-recognized credentials and certifications. The Board has utilized a substantial amount of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds in this endeavor. These efforts ensure that the region's youth have the tools and resources they need to enter the workforce with confidence.

4. Improve System Alignment and Accountability

The SWDB champions a seamless, integrated approach to workforce services, bringing together partners from across the workforce, education, and economic development sectors. By aligning resources and leveraging funding streams, the Board ensures that jobseekers and businesses receive comprehensive, high-quality services. In short, our jobseekers and businesses do not care what funding stream is leveraged as long as they receive the assistance they need.

The Board employs data-driven performance evaluations to monitor progress and identify areas for improvement. Feedback loops with stakeholders are used to refine strategies, ensuring alignment with both state-level goals and local workforce needs. This commitment to accountability and continuous improvement strengthens the region's workforce system and enhances its impact.

Every four years, Susquehanna commissions a study to report on the state of the workforce area's economy The Sage Policy Group was chosen to complete the most recent report. In its June 2024 report, "The Utterly New Normal: Workforce Development in a Worker Empowered World," Sage provides a comprehensive analysis of existing and emerging industries and occupations within the Susquehanna region, highlighting employment needs, requisite job skills, current job openings, and sought-after certifications.

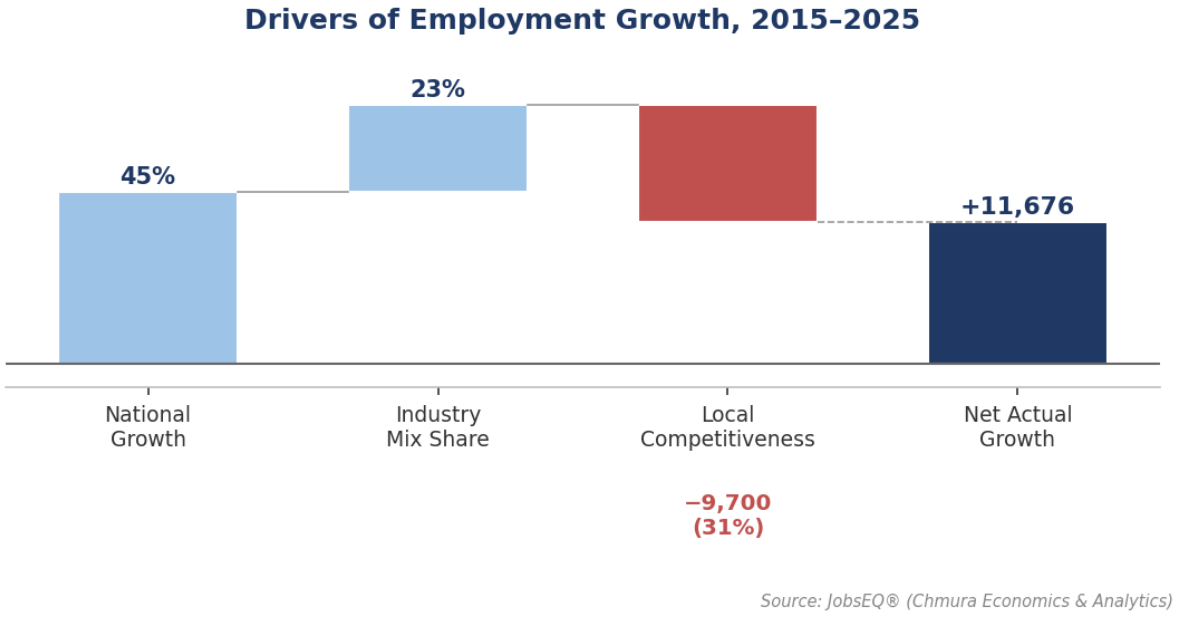
Section 1: Updated Economic Analysis

Regional Economic Conditions

The Susquehanna workforce system serves Cecil and Harford Counties and is situated within the Philadelphia–Baltimore corridor. This position offers access to one of the nation's densest labor markets while maintaining a balance between urban and rural economic drivers.

The region is home to approximately 368,717 residents (American Community Survey, 2019–2023), estimated to have grown to 373,577 in 2025 — an average annual growth rate of about 0.6%, consistent with state and national trends. The civilian labor force totals 194,274, with a labor force participation rate of 65.8%, above the national rate of 63.3%. Educational attainment is a regional strength: 39.1% of residents aged 25 to 64 hold a bachelor's degree or higher, compared with 37.3% nationally. The region's median household income of $106,489 exceeds both the Maryland ($103,678) and national ($80,734) medians, though a cost of living about 1.4% above the U.S. average modestly tempers local purchasing power.

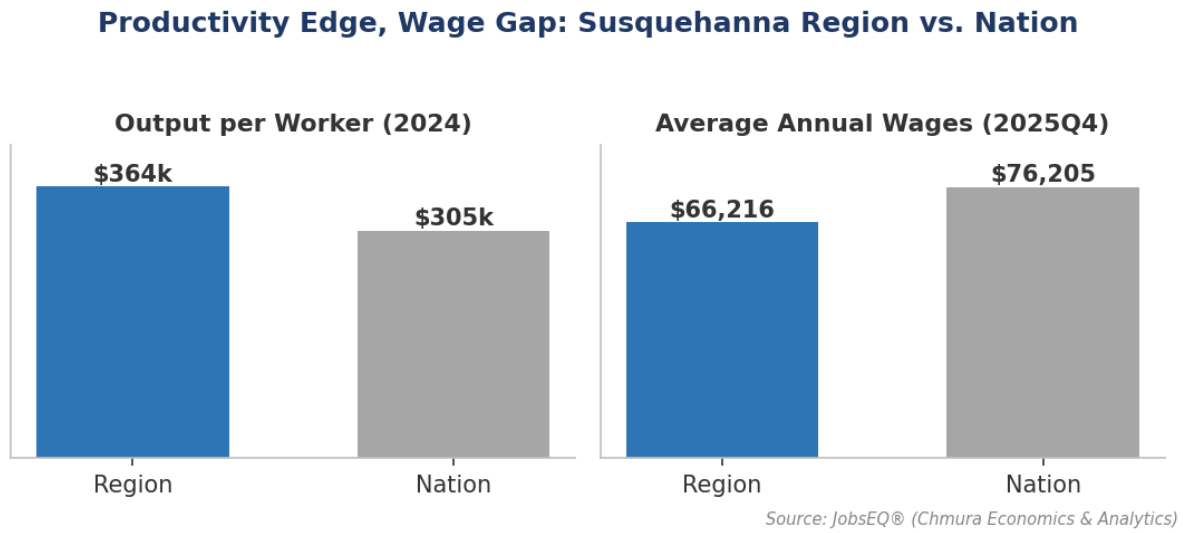
As of the fourth quarter of 2025, total employment by place of work in the region stood at 142,417 jobs, with Harford County accounting for 103,110 and Cecil County 39,307. Over the ten years ending 2025, the region added roughly 11,676 jobs — an average annual growth rate of 0.9%, slightly below the national pace of 1.0%. Employment did contract about 1.0% over the year ending 2025Q4, signaling some recent softening. A shift-share analysis points to a longer-term competitiveness challenge: while national growth and the region's industry mix would have been expected to add jobs, the portion of employment change attributable to local competitiveness was a loss of roughly 9,700 jobs over the decade, indicating the region's industries collectively grew more slowly than their national counterparts.



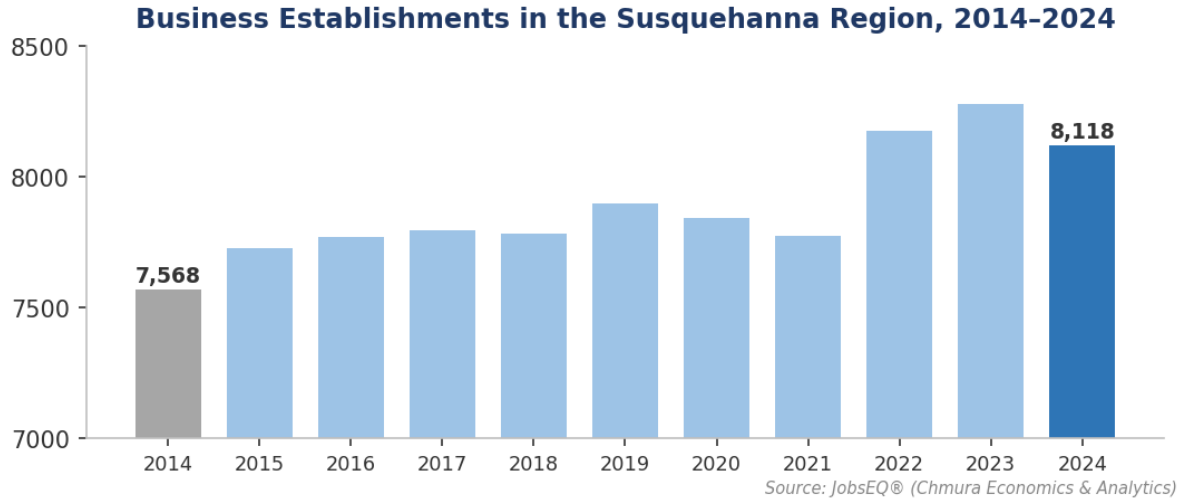
Shift-share analysis, all industries, 2015–2025. Source: JobsEQ®.

The regional unemployment rate was 4.0% as of March 2026 — below the national rate of 4.3%, but up from 3.5% a year earlier, reflecting a loosening from the exceptionally tight labor market of recent years. The average worker in the region earned annual wages of $66,216 as of 2025Q4, below the national average of $76,205, reflecting the region's concentration in lower-wage sectors such as retail, warehousing, and food service.

The regional economy produced approximately $22 billion in GDP in 2024 (about $21.8 billion), having grown 4.5% that year. Output per worker is roughly $364,000, well above the national figure of $305,000 — a productivity advantage driven in large part by the region's high-value federal, defense, and manufacturing activity. The number of business establishments grew to 8,118 in 2024, up from 7,568 a decade earlier, reflecting steady new business formation. Among the region's key assets is Aberdeen Proving Ground, a significant employer and a driver of federal and private defense-related industries.



The region out-produces the nation per worker even as average wages trail. Source: JobsEQ®.



Establishment counts per BLS QCEW. Source: JobsEQ®.

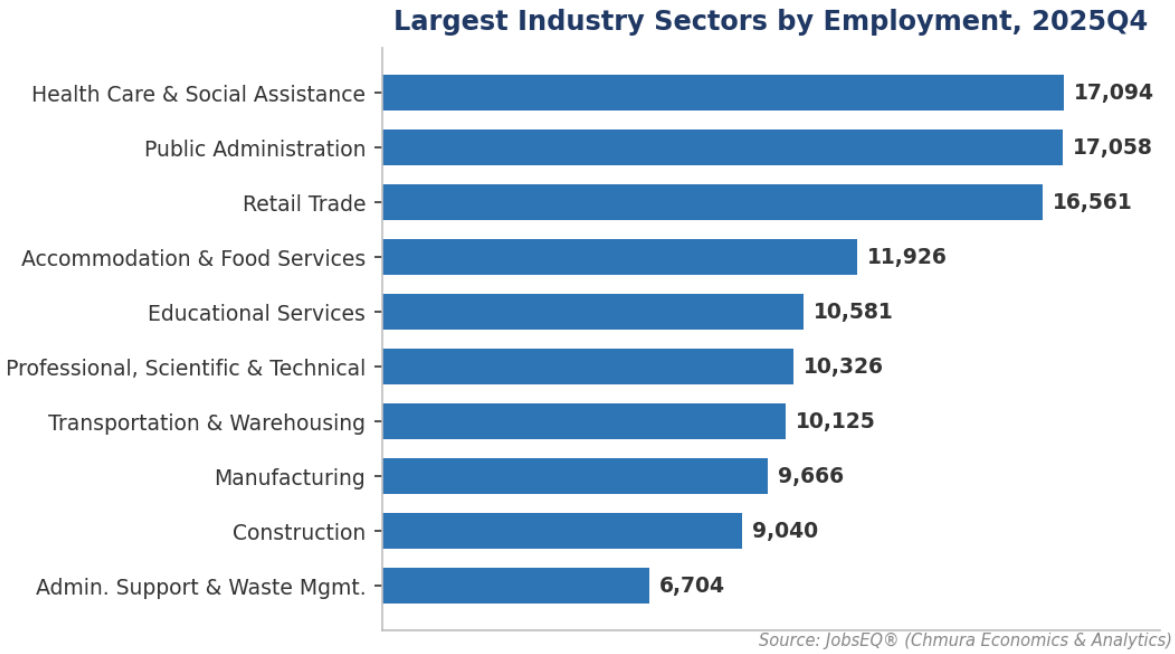
While the Susquehanna region aligns with broader state trends, it stands out in two areas:

1. **Federal Government and Defense Industry Concentration:** The region has an outsized concentration of public-sector and defense employment, anchored by Aberdeen Proving Ground. Federal government employment accounts for 14,604 workers — 10.3% of regional employment — and the Public Administration sector carries a location quotient (LQ) of 2.54, roughly two-and-a-half times the national concentration. Within this, the National Security and

International Affairs industry has an exceptionally high LQ of 19.09, nearly nineteen times the national average.

2. **Logistics and Manufacturing Presence:** The region's logistics and manufacturing sectors are bolstered by its location along the I-95 corridor and relatively lower land costs compared with urban hubs such as Baltimore. Transportation and Warehousing carries an LQ of 1.40, well above the national average, even as employment in the sector has recently declined.

The region's industry base is broad, with employment concentrated across health care, public administration, retail, and a substantial logistics and warehousing presence:



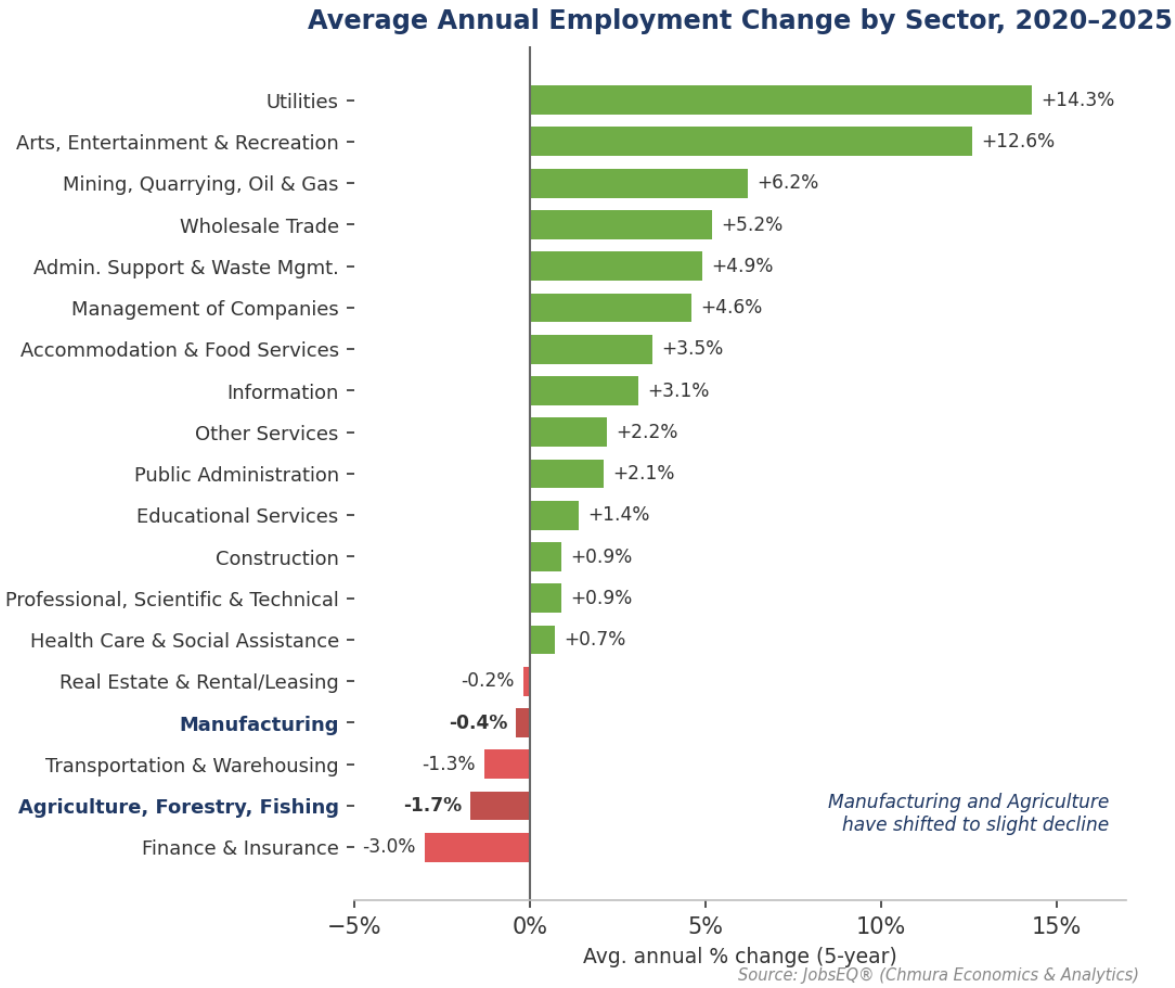
Employment by place of work, four-quarter moving average, 2025Q4. Source: JobsEQ®.

Emerging and In-Demand Industries and Occupations

The Board continues to monitor growth industry sectors and growth occupations using tools such as those provided by the Maryland Department of Labor's LMI team and JobsEQ, supplemented by the analysis in the Sage Report.

Growth & Emerging Sectors — Susquehanna Workforce Area

Based on the most recent data (2025Q4), the following sectors are highlighted for growth and emerging opportunities. Figures reflect average annual employment change over the most recent five-year period unless otherwise noted.



Average annual employment change by sector, 2020–2025. Manufacturing and Agriculture (bold) have shifted to slight decline. Source: JobsEQ®.

- **Utilities:** The region's fastest-growing sector, expanding approximately 14.3% per year, driven by infrastructure and energy demands, and offering among the highest average wages in the region ($126,494).
- **Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation:** A leading emerging sector, growing approximately 12.6% per year and adding more jobs over the past five years (+1,916) than any other sector. Attractions such as Great Wolf Lodge in Cecil County and Ripken Stadium in Aberdeen continue to anchor this growth.
- **Wholesale Trade:** Expanding approximately 5.2% per year (+1,262 jobs), tied to the region's logistics and distribution strengths.
- **Administrative and Support and Waste Management Services:** Growing approximately 4.9% per year (+1,416 jobs), reflecting demand for business and facility support services.
- **Management of Companies and Enterprises:** A small but fast-growing, high-wage sector (approximately 4.6% per year; average wages of $144,270, the highest in the region).
- **Accommodation and Food Services:** Adding 1,874 jobs over five years (approximately 3.5% per year), a major source of entry-level employment.

Two sectors previously identified as regional growth drivers warrant a revised view in light of current data. Manufacturing employment has declined modestly over the most recent five-year period (approximately −0.4%, a loss of about 200 jobs), and Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, and Hunting has also contracted (approximately −1.7%). Both remain strategically important — Manufacturing in particular offers high average wages ($85,413) and is forecast to add jobs over the coming year — but

the plan should reflect that recent employment trends in these sectors have been flat to declining rather than expanding.

Over the next year, regional employment is projected to expand only modestly (+67 jobs overall). The strongest forecast growth by number of jobs is expected in Health Care and Social Assistance (+85), Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services (+51), and Manufacturing (+22).

Harford County

Harford County accounts for the majority of regional employment (103,110 jobs). Sector strengths and emerging opportunities in the county include:

- Educational Services: A significant and steadily expanding presence, reflecting the role of institutions such as Harford Community College in workforce development.
- Professional and Technical Services: Growth driven by proximity to Aberdeen Proving Ground, supporting cybersecurity and defense-contracting roles.
- Healthcare and Social Assistance: A robust sector responding to an aging population and growing local demand for healthcare services; it is the region's largest sector overall (17,094 jobs) and carries the strongest one-year job-growth forecast.
- Arts and Recreation: Strong local engagement, with investments in community and recreational facilities supporting growth.

Cecil County

Cecil County accounts for 39,307 regional jobs. Sector strengths and emerging opportunities in the county include:

- Logistics and Warehousing: A critical sector given Cecil's location along major transportation corridors (I-95), driving demand in trucking and warehousing roles, though regional Transportation and Warehousing employment has dipped over the past five years.
- Utilities: Energy infrastructure projects contribute to growth and high wages.
- Manufacturing: Includes advanced manufacturing and traditional sectors such as machinery, benefiting from proximity to major metro areas.
- Agriculture and Food Production: Continues to be a foundational industry, bolstered by local farming and niche markets such as aquaculture.

In utilizing these tools, the Susquehanna Local Workforce Development Board has identified five priority industry sectors:

Information Technology (IT) & Cybersecurity

The Susquehanna region is witnessing growing demand for IT and cybersecurity roles, driven by technological innovation, remote-work trends, and the increasing prevalence of cyber threats. Regionally, Computer and Mathematical occupations number about 4,915 workers, carry an above-average LQ of 1.09, and are forecast to be the fastest-growing occupation group over the coming year.
Key Roles

- Software Developers: Demand driven by industries adopting custom software solutions for automation, data analysis, and customer engagement.
- Information Security Analysts: Essential to protect sensitive data across sectors such as government, healthcare, and finance.

- Network Administrators & Systems Analysts: Support organizations ’IT infrastructure, especially as businesses digitize operations.
- Cloud Computing Specialists: Growing with the adoption of cloud-based solutions.

Training & Certification Needs

Certifications include CompTIA Security+, CISSP, AWS Certified Solutions Architect, and Certified Ethical Hacker. Training partnerships continue to strengthen collaboration among local institutions of higher education and area cybersecurity employers (for example, Aberdeen Proving Ground contractors). Investment in career pathways is also critical, including early introduction of IT skills in schools and dual-enrollment partnerships in IT courses.

Healthcare

Aging demographics are driving demand for healthcare occupations, from direct patient care to healthcare administration. The sector continues to suffer from high burnout rates, with the time and financial resources required for certification acting as barriers to entry. Health Care and Social Assistance is the region’s largest sector (17,094 jobs) and carries the strongest one-year job-growth forecast (+85 jobs); Healthcare Practitioners and Technical occupations also have the region’s lowest unemployment rate (1.3%). Registered Nurses number approximately 2,296 in the region.

Key Roles

- Registered Nurses (RNs): Critical to addressing rising hospitalization and long-term care needs.
- Nursing Assistants (CNAs): Essential for eldercare facilities, in-home care, and hospitals.
- Medical Assistants: Serve as a bridge between administrative tasks and patient care.
- Healthcare Administrators: Needed for the growing complexity of healthcare systems.

Training & Certification Needs

Certifications include Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA), RN licensure, Medical Coding and Billing, and health IT. Training is available through Cecil College and Harford Community College — which together awarded roughly 192 registered-nursing credentials in the 2023–2024 year — and can be reinforced through expanded clinical training opportunities with hospitals and eldercare facilities.

Transportation & Logistics

Proximity to I-95 and port facilities supports a robust logistics sector. Transportation and Material Moving is the region’s single largest occupation group (14,772 workers, LQ 1.22), and detailed occupations such as Stockers and Order Fillers (3,125), Laborers and Freight/Stock/Material Movers (3,033), and Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers (2,145) rank among the most common jobs in the region. Notably, while these occupations remain in high demand for replacement workers, sector-wide Transportation and Warehousing employment declined approximately 1.3% over the most recent five-year period, underscoring the importance of retention and pipeline development.

Key Roles

- Truck Drivers: High demand for heavy and light truck drivers, sustained by e-commerce growth and ongoing turnover.
- Stockers and Order Fillers: Supporting warehousing and fulfillment centers.
- Logistics Coordinators: Needed to streamline supply-chain operations.

Training & Certification Needs

Certifications include the Commercial Driver’s License (CDL) and OSHA safety certifications. The Governor’s Workforce Board’s CTE Committee is developing a list of industry-recognized credentials (IRCs) such as OSHA as part of the implementation of the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future. Training opportunities can be expanded through partnerships with warehouses and local freight companies, and Maryland’s continued focus on Registered Apprenticeship supports on-the-job training programs for logistics roles.

Manufacturing

Manufacturing in the Susquehanna region is evolving toward advanced technologies and a more highly skilled workforce. Although regional manufacturing employment has been roughly flat to slightly declining over the past five years (about −0.4%, or 200 jobs), the sector remains strategically important:

it employs about 9,666 workers, pays high average wages ($85,413), and is forecast to add jobs over the coming year (+22).

Key Roles

- Welders and Machinists: Essential for precision manufacturing.
- Robotics Technicians: Growing in importance due to automation.
- Facility Maintenance Technicians: Support production continuity.
- Supply Chain Specialists: Manage inventory and vendor relationships.

Training & Certification Needs

Certifications include AWS Welding, CNC Machining, and Lean Six Sigma. Expanded advanced-manufacturing courses with local technical schools can help students obtain these credentials. The Sage Report also notes that technology integration — specifically the inclusion of robotics and AI in training curricula — should be examined.

Construction

Construction remains a key driver of local employment, supported by residential, commercial, and infrastructure projects. The sector employs approximately 9,040 workers and has grown about 0.9% per year over the past five years.

Key Roles

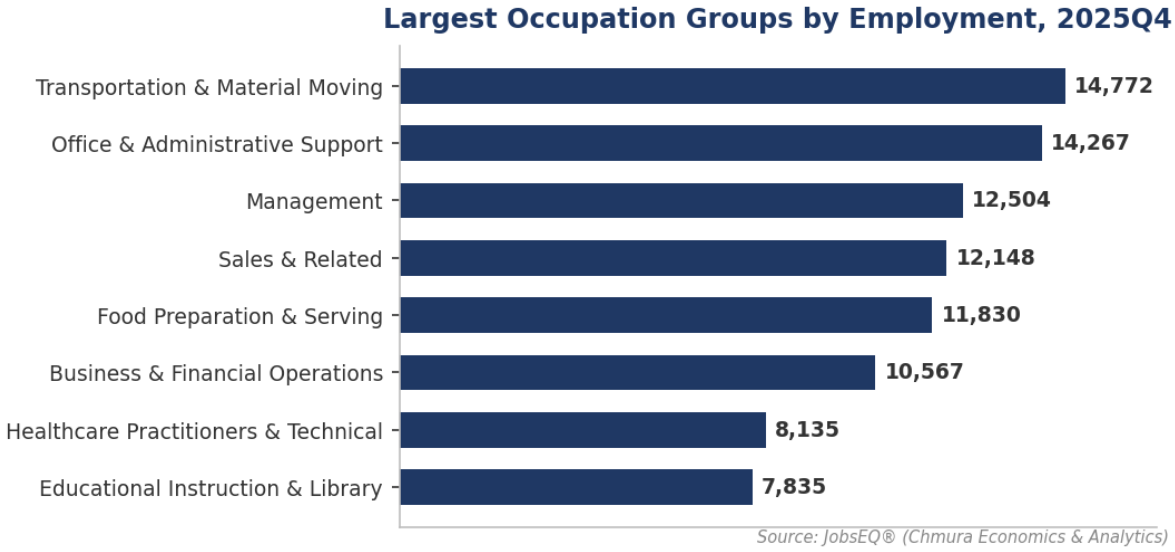
- Carpenters and Electricians: Central to residential and commercial projects.
- Heavy Equipment Operators: Essential for infrastructure projects.
- Project Managers: Oversee large-scale construction initiatives.

Training & Certification Needs

Certifications such as OSHA 30, NCCER, and heavy-equipment operation top the list. While WIOA does not consider basic safety training a recognized credential on its own, these can be stacked with other credentials in building Registered Apprenticeship standards. Partnerships with unions and contractors — with a specific focus on welding, masonry, and plumbing — can help address workforce shortages.

In-Demand Occupations

The region's largest occupation groups are Transportation and Material Moving (14,772 workers), Office and Administrative Support (14,267), and Management (12,504). At the detailed level, the most common occupations include General and Operations Managers (4,201), Retail Salespersons (3,671), Cashiers (3,351), Stockers and Order Fillers (3,125), Laborers and Freight/Stock/Material Movers (3,033), and Fast Food and Counter Workers (2,979). Both the Sage Report and Maryland Department of Labor data identify a number of occupations considered "in demand," which fall into three general categories:



Largest occupation groups by employment, 2025Q4. Source: JobsEQ®.

- **Transportation and Material Moving:** Heavy and light truck drivers are top-growing roles. The Sage Report notes that several of these occupations require either only a high-school diploma or a post-secondary non-degree award and short-term on-the-job training (for example, heavy and tractor-trailer truck drivers; light truck or delivery drivers; passenger-vehicle drivers; and stockers and order fillers).
- **Healthcare:** Registered nurses and nursing assistants are consistently in demand. Healthcare-related occupations continue to top Maryland's overall projected in-demand occupations, and the region's Healthcare Practitioners group has its lowest unemployment rate.
- **Education:** Growth in teaching roles, including elementary and secondary teachers, aligns with population trends. With reforms such as the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, demand and wage increases are likely to continue absent legislative changes. The Sage Report notes these occupations usually require a bachelor's degree or at least some college, with median wages ranging from about $30,000 (teaching assistants) to $62,000 (elementary and secondary teachers).

Four of the ten in-demand occupations require at least a bachelor's degree — with General and Operations Managers, IT specialists, and healthcare managers representing opportunities for advanced-degree holders. Notably, the plurality of in-demand occupations require only a high-school diploma or some additional post-secondary training.

Employment Needs of Businesses

Local employers in the Susquehanna region consistently report challenges in meeting demand for skilled workers across key industries, including healthcare, logistics, IT, and advanced manufacturing. These challenges are multifaceted and directly affect the region's economic growth and workforce readiness. The Susquehanna Workforce Development Board (SWDB) is committed to addressing these barriers through targeted strategies and initiatives. The scale of replacement need is significant: even with only modest projected job growth, the region is expected to generate roughly 15,280 annual job openings, the large majority of which stem from retirements and workers transferring between occupations rather than net new positions.

Labor Supply Gaps

The healthcare and logistics industries — two of the region's largest economic drivers — are particularly affected by labor shortages. For example:

- **Healthcare:** Demand for healthcare professionals such as Registered Nurses (RNs) and Certified Nursing Assistants (CNAs) has surged due to an aging population and increased healthcare utilization, yet local training pipelines have struggled to produce enough qualified candidates. The sector is also especially subject to burnout.

- **Logistics:** Given the region's strategic location along the I-95 corridor and proximity to major ports, logistics and transportation employers face critical shortages of truck drivers, stockers, and supply-chain specialists — pressures compounded by recent net employment declines in the sector.

These gaps underscore the urgency of strengthening workforce pipelines, expanding access to training, and creating career pathways to attract and retain talent in high-demand fields.

Training and Certifications

Employers increasingly require specific credentials and certifications to meet industry standards and maintain competitiveness. For instance:

- **IT & Cybersecurity:** Certifications such as CompTIA Security+, Certified Ethical Hacker (CEH), and AWS Solutions Architect are essential for IT and cybersecurity roles.

- **Healthcare:** The sector values credentials such as Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA), Registered Nurse (RN), and health-information-management certifications.

- **Advanced Manufacturing:** Employers seek workers certified in advanced manufacturing technologies, such as AWS Welding, Lean Six Sigma, and CNC Machining.

Despite growing demand, many jobseekers face challenges accessing and completing these certification programs. Employers report that a lack of credentialed workers delays operations and hampers their ability to meet market demand. The SWDB is working with local training providers, community colleges, and industry leaders to expand access to credentialing programs and promote work-based learning such as apprenticeships and on-the-job training (OJT).

Barriers to Workforce Participation

In addition to labor shortages and training gaps, employers highlight significant barriers that prevent jobseekers from entering or remaining in the workforce. These include:

- **Transportation:** Many jobseekers lack reliable transportation, making it difficult to reach job sites, training programs, or interviews.

- **Childcare:** For working parents, limited access to affordable, flexible childcare significantly affects their ability to work or pursue training.

- **Mental Health and Supportive Services:** Mental health challenges and limited access to support services hinder participation and program completion.

- **Health:** Physical health can be a barrier, forcing jobseekers to choose between work and medical appointments, or to miss work due to illness.

- **Age:** Age can be a barrier as more workers continue past retirement age or seek additional employment after retiring from a prior role.

As noted above, the SWDB is interested in pursuing programming that addresses the whole jobseeker, not just the immediate job need. To address these barriers, the SWDB prioritizes integrating supportive services into workforce programs. Examples include:

- Transportation stipends or partnerships with local transit providers.
- Access to affordable childcare through Referral to DSS for childcare scholarship and subsidy as appropriate.
- Expanded a accessibility of mental health resources and counseling services through community referrals

By reducing these barriers, the SWDB aims to improve workforce participation rates, ensure access to employment opportunities, and empower jobseekers to complete training programs and enter family-sustaining careers.

The Susquehanna Workforce Development Board recognizes the pressing need to address these employer-reported challenges. Through strategic partnerships, expanded training opportunities, and enhanced supportive services, the SWDB is committed to strengthening the region's talent pipeline, meeting the demands of local businesses, and fostering an inclusive, resilient workforce ecosystem.

Data sources: *JobsEQ® (Chmura Economics & Analytics) — Economic Overview, Susquehanna Region, and Industry Spotlight: Total – All Industries, Susquehanna Region. Employment and wage figures as of 2025Q4; unemployment as of*

March 2026; GDP and establishment counts as of 2024; postsecondary awards for the 2023–2024 academic year. Figures may not sum due to rounding.

Section 2: Strategic Planning

Part 1: Aligning Maryland's Strategic Pillars

The Susquehanna Workforce Development Board (SWDB) envisions a thriving regional economy driven by a skilled, adaptable, and inclusive workforce. As a key intermediary between businesses and jobseekers, the SWDB prioritizes building partnerships that address dynamic labor market needs while fostering resiliency.

A. A Strategic Vision for Susquehanna's Workforce System

1. A Holistic Approach
The SWDB recognizes the multifaceted barriers jobseekers face, such as family responsibilities, lack of transportation, childcare challenges, and skills deficits. The Board aims to bridge these gaps by overseeing a system that offers **Comprehensive Support Services.** These include access to transportation vouchers, childcare subsidies, and mental health resources to mitigate barriers and ensure workforce participation.

Further, by **Integrated Service Delivery,** Susquehanna's system seeks to align resources across funding streams ensures jobseekers benefit from seamless, accessible support, regardless of their entry point into the workforce system. **Susquehanna's system** will focus on unemployed and underemployed adults, individuals with disabilities, veterans, and other historically underserved groups as identified as priority populations under WIOA.

2. Engaging Youth and Building Career Pathways
Aligned with the **Blueprint for Maryland's Future**, the SWDB collaborates with local education agencies and community colleges to ensure that middle and high school students. Through career counseling, interest surveys, and interactive opportunities with professionals, students gain early exposure to local industries and career options. Work-based learning, apprenticeships, and summer employment programs are tailored to prepare students for high-demand industries such as healthcare, IT, logistics, and manufacturing. Finally, by aligning with the work of the Governor's Workforce Development Board's CTE Committee, Susquehanna will incentivize trainings that lead to the attainment of industry-recognized credentials that provide students with tangible qualifications to succeed in the workforce upon graduation.

3. Pipeline Development & Investing in Regional Talent
The SWDB's partnerships with schools and employers create a robust talent pipeline, connecting youth with sustainable career pathways. These efforts not only address labor shortages but also foster long-term economic stability. The SWDB's investments in **human capital** underscore its belief that workforce development is the foundation of economic resilience. Programs are designed to **empower Jobseekers** by funding skill-building initiatives focus on equipping individuals with in-demand technical and essential skills to secure family-sustaining careers. Finally, the SWDB will **support business growth by** aligning training with employer needs, ensuring the local workforce is ready to meet evolving demands in critical sectors.

Aligning with Maryland's Four Core Strategic Pillars

To that end, SWDB's vision aligns with Maryland's Four Core Strategic Pillars as articulated in the Governor's Workforce Development Board's 2024-2028 Maryland State Workforce Development Plan.

1. Supercharge Key Sectors

Though **data-driven workforce planning,** Susquehanna's workforce system utilizes labor market data from tools like the Sage Report and state resources inform strategies to identify skill gaps and target training investments. As ambassadors of the workforce system, the Board demonstrates the need for deep and lasting employer partnerships. In short, collaborations with industry leaders ensure training aligns with real-world needs, from certifications to pre-and Registered Apprenticeship opportunities. Finally, **work-based learning opportunities** for youth and adults continues to expand offerings of practical, hands-on experience for jobseekers in logistics, healthcare, IT, and manufacturing.

2. Advance Access

Susquehanna's workforce system will advance access by **targeting outreach** efforts and developing programs specifically engineered to engage underrepresented populations, including veterans, women, and individuals with disabilities. By continuing to focus on **holistic program design,** initiatives and grant proposals will continue to combine supportive services with training ensures jobseekers can complete programs despite barriers like childcare or transportation.

3. Prepare the Future Workforce

Through its work under the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, the Susquehanna workforce system is championing school-to-work pathways through partnerships with local schools and community colleges, students are exposed to career options early and gain the skills necessary for success in high-demand fields. Additionally, utilizing remaining American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds, Susquehanna's workforce system will promote **credential attainment** with an emphasis on certifications that are in-demand and industry recognized.

4. Improve System Alignment and Accountability

System alignment and accountability stretches scarce resources and ensures that jobseekers and businesses receive the support they need and deserve from the public workforce system. By aligning workforce, education, and economic development resources, the SWDB ensures comprehensive support for jobseekers and businesses alike. **Performance monitoring** through data-driven evaluations and stakeholder feedback refine strategies to align with regional and state goals.

Additionally, jobseekers and employers benefit from **simplified processes**, ensuring assistance is both timely and impactful.

B. Career Pathway Development and Co-Enrollment

The Susquehanna Workforce Development Board (SWDB) is committed to developing robust career pathways in high-growth industries such as healthcare, IT, logistics, manufacturing, and construction. These pathways aim to equip jobseekers with the skills, credentials, and experience needed to access sustainable careers while addressing the talent needs of regional employers. To achieve this, the SWDB is implementing a multi-faceted strategy that integrates educational partnerships, co-enrollment initiatives, and direct collaboration with industry leaders.

Partnering with Providers

A cornerstone of the SWDB's approach is fostering strong partnerships with local training providers and educational institutions, including Harford Community College and Cecil College. By working closely with these institutions, the SWDB ensures that academic and vocational training programs are aligned with the region's economic priorities and labor market demands.

Leveraging community college support, tailored curriculum can be developed by creating academic programs that are updated to reflect current industry standards, incorporating certifications such as CompTIA Security+ for IT, CNC Machining for manufacturing, and Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) for healthcare. Additionally, vocational training and degree programs have been designed by the community colleges in the area to complement one another, providing seamless pathways for jobseekers to advance from entry-level roles to higher-paying, skilled positions.

These partnerships not only enhance the quality and relevance of training but also expand access to opportunities for jobseekers across the region.

Co-Enrollment Initiatives

To maximize the impact of workforce development programs, the SWDB promotes co-enrollment across core programs under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).

This approach ensures that jobseekers benefit from a comprehensive suite of services, including:

- Supportive Services: Addressing barriers to participation, such as childcare, transportation, and digital access, to enable individuals to focus on their training and career goals.

- Skills Training: Providing access to industry-aligned training programs that equip participants with the technical and soft skills required for high-demand roles.

- Academic Education: Offering pathways that integrate adult education, GED attainment, and postsecondary coursework to prepare individuals for long-term success.

Through co-enrollment, jobseekers experience a more seamless and holistic journey from training to employment, while employers benefit from a well-prepared workforce.

Industry Partnerships
The SWDB prioritizes collaboration with employers and industry associations to co-design training programs that meet the specific needs of high-growth industries. This collaboration involves:

- Workforce Needs Assessment: Engaging employers to identify skill gaps and emerging workforce requirements in sectors such as advanced manufacturing, cybersecurity, and logistics.

- Customized Training Solutions: Developing programs that address these needs, incorporating hands-on learning opportunities such as apprenticeships, internships, and on-the-job training (OJT).

- Employer Involvement: Inviting industry leaders to participate in curriculum development, mentorship programs, and sector-based partnerships to ensure that training initiatives remain responsive to market trends.

By aligning workforce development efforts with industry needs, the SWDB creates career pathways that are not only accessible but also lead directly to high-quality job opportunities.

Through partnerships with educational institutions, co-enrollment initiatives, and direct engagement with industry, the SWDB is building dynamic career pathways that empower jobseekers to succeed in high-growth industries. This collaborative approach ensures that workforce development programs are responsive to the region's economic needs while providing businesses with the skilled talent required for sustained growth.

C. Support for the Strategic Vision

The Susquehanna Workforce Development Board (SWDB) plays a critical role in supporting Maryland's strategic vision of fostering an inclusive, competitive workforce ecosystem. Through targeted training, comprehensive supportive services, and employer engagement, SWDB ensures that local workforce programs address regional skill shortages while promoting economic growth.

Local workforce development programs align with Maryland's strategic goals through the following initiatives:

1. Targeted Training - SWDB addresses skill shortages in key sectors, including healthcare, IT, and logistics, by offering customized training solutions tailored to the unique needs of these industries. Programs are developed in collaboration with local employers to ensure alignment with labor market demands.

2. Supportive Services - Recognizing the challenges many jobseekers face, SWDB expands access to critical supportive services such as childcare, transportation, and mental health resources. These services enable individuals to successfully participate in training programs and secure meaningful employment.

3. Employer Engagement - SWDB collaborates with businesses to assist in hiring and retaining talent. Initiatives like incumbent worker training and diversity-focused hiring programs equip employers with the tools needed to build resilient, inclusive workforces.

D. Ensuring Consistent Implementation of Maryland's Four Core Strategic Pillars

1. Supercharge Key Sectors

To meet the workforce needs of high-demand sectors, SWDB implements strategies to map skills and training assets:

- **Workforce Analyses**: Regularly conduct workforce analyses to identify skill gaps and anticipate future training needs.
- **Industry Growth Tools**: Utilize tools such as the Growth Industry Tool (GIT) to analyze sector trends and align training programs with emerging job opportunities.
- **Sector Partnerships**: Establish partnerships with industry leaders to provide insights into technological advancements and evolving workforce requirements.

2. Advance Access

SWDB supports efforts to reduce barriers to employment:

- **Outreach Programs**: Targeted outreach efforts focus on increasing workforce participation among women, minorities, justice involved individuals, and other underrepresented groups.
- **Supportive Services Expansion**: The Board continues to promote partnerships with community organizations to provide transportation subsidies, childcare assistance, and other critical resources for individuals facing barriers to employment.

3. Prepare the Future Workforce

To build a robust talent pipeline, SWDB focuses on enhancing youth engagement and credential attainment:

- **Apprenticeships and Dual Enrollment:** Through its Blueprint work, SWN collaborates with middle and high schools to introduce students to Registered Apprenticeship (RA) opportunities, and careers in IT, cybersecurity, and skilled trades. Pillar 3 of the Blueprint also requires that students consider dual-enrollment programs as a way to become college and career ready. SWN's career coaches support, and work with our partners in the local education agencies and community colleges to ensure that students have opportunities to earn both high school diplomas and industry-recognized credentials.

- **Work-Based Learning:** SWDB continues to facilitate summer and part-time employment programs in high-demand fields, providing young people with hands-on experience and early exposure to career opportunities.

4. Improve System Alignment and Accountability

SWDB ensures seamless alignment of resources and consistent delivery of workforce services:

- **Resource Alignment**: SWDB continues to support the establishment of a centralized referral and case management system to streamline access to training and employment resources, ensuring that participants receive coordinated support.

- **Monitoring and Evaluation**: Data tells the story of impact. SWDB continues to support the development of a performance dashboard to track program outcomes such as employment rates, wage gains, and employer satisfaction. The Board also conducts quarterly evaluations of resource utilization and program effectiveness to identify areas for improvement and ensure alignment with state and regional goals.

Innovation and Bridging the Gap

SWDB is committed to developing innovative solutions to address workforce gaps and ensure that underserved populations have access to meaningful opportunities. Through obtaining funding outside of WIOA, like SWDB's successful pursuit of EARN Maryland funding, SWN has been able to innovate outside of the federally-mandated requirements placed by WIOA.

- **Justice Involved Individuals:** SWDB continues to promote the establishment of targeted training programs, such as cybersecurity training and IT apprenticeships, to support individuals transitioning from incarceration in securing sustainable careers. To that end, SWDB will work with the Maryland Workforce Association, Harford Community College, and Cecil College to develop cyber apprenticeships in occupations like SOC Analyst.

- **Women in Non-Traditional Roles:** SWDB will continue to promote campaigns and initiatives to increase women's participation in advanced manufacturing, IT, and logistics, challenging traditional gender norms in these industries.

Through targeted training and strategic partnerships, the SWDB ensures that local workforce programs align with Maryland's Four Core Strategic Pillars. By addressing the needs of both jobseekers and employers, SWDB enhances workforce system effectiveness, strengthens regional economic competitiveness, and fosters inclusive growth across the Susquehanna region.

Part 2: Sector Strategies for Emerging and In-Demand Industries

A. Knowledge and Skills Needed to Meet Local Business Needs

Knowledge and Skills to Support In-Demand Industries in the Susquehanna Region
The Susquehanna Workforce Development Board (SWDB) has identified the critical knowledge and skills required to meet the growing demands of the region's in-demand industries. These industries—healthcare, cybersecurity and information technology (IT), logistics and manufacturing, and construction—serve as key drivers of the local economy, offering significant opportunities for jobseekers and employers alike. By aligning workforce programs with these industries 'needs, the SWDB aims to strengthen the region's talent pipeline and support economic growth.

1. Healthcare
Healthcare continues to be one of the region's fastest-growing industries, fueled by an aging population and increasing demand for healthcare services. The following skills and certifications are essential to support this sector:

- Skills:
  - Patient care and bedside manner for direct-care professionals, including nursing assistants and registered nurses.
  - Proficiency in diagnostic procedures and medical technology operation to address the growing use of advanced medical equipment.
  - Expertise in health informatics and data management, reflecting the healthcare industry's shift toward digital systems.

- Certifications:
  - **Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA)** and **Registered Nurse (RN)** credentials, which are fundamental for delivering high-quality patient care.
  - Certifications in **health information technology**, enabling workers to manage and analyze healthcare data effectively.

The SWDB partners with local healthcare providers and training institutions, such as Harford and Cecil Community Colleges, to expand access to healthcare training programs and meet the industry's workforce needs.

2. Cybersecurity and Information Technology (IT)
The increasing reliance on technology and the prevalence of cyber threats have made cybersecurity and IT integral to the region's economy. The following skills and certifications are critical for this high-demand sector:

- Skills:
  - **Network Security**: Protecting systems and data from unauthorized access.
  - **Cloud Computing**: Managing cloud infrastructure to support remote work and scalable IT systems.
  - **Software Development**: Designing and maintaining custom applications for businesses.
  - **Data Analytics**: Using data to inform business decisions and strategies.

- Certifications:

    - CompTIA Security+ and Certified Information Systems Security Professional (CISSP) for cybersecurity professionals.
    - AWS Certified Solutions Architect for cloud computing specialists.
    - **Certified Ethical Hacker (CEH)** for individuals specializing in identifying and mitigating vulnerabilities.

Through partnerships with employers, government entities, and educational providers, the SWDB is advancing programs that provide hands-on training and certifications for IT professionals. Initiatives like work-based learning and Registered Apprenticeships in cybersecurity are helping to address talent shortages in this field.

3. Logistics and Manufacturing
The Susquehanna region's strategic location along the I-95 corridor and its proximity to major transportation hubs make logistics and manufacturing essential to the local economy. The skills and certifications required in this sector include:

- Skills:
    - **Supply Chain Management**: Planning and optimizing the flow of goods to meet consumer demand.
    - **Automation Systems**: Operating and maintaining advanced manufacturing technologies.
    - **Welding and CNC Machining**: Core technical skills for precision manufacturing and facility maintenance.

- Certifications:
    - **OSHA 10/30** safety certifications to ensure workplace safety compliance.
    - **Six Sigma** for process improvement and efficiency.
    - Industry-specific credentials in **advanced manufacturing**, such as CNC Machining and robotics certifications.

To support logistics and manufacturing, the SWDB collaborates with training providers to develop industry-aligned programs. Partnerships with local businesses ensure that training curricula reflect evolving technologies and workforce needs, preparing jobseekers for sustainable careers in these high-demand fields.

4. Construction
The construction industry remains a critical economic driver in the Susquehanna region, encompassing residential, commercial, and heavy highway/infrastructure projects. The skills and certifications required for this sector include:

- Skills:
    - **Carpentry and Masonry**: Building and repairing structures for residential and commercial projects.
    - **Heavy Equipment Operation**: Safely and efficiently operating machinery like excavators, bulldozers, and cranes for infrastructure development.
    - **Project Management**: Overseeing construction projects, ensuring they are completed on time and within budget.
    - **Blueprint Reading and Electrical Systems Installation**: Understanding technical schematics and electrical systems for a variety of construction projects.

- Certifications:

- **OSHA 10/30** for workplace safety compliance in construction.
- NCCER (National Center for Construction Education and Research) certifications for specialized trades.
- Certifications in heavy equipment operation, welding, and plumbing.

The SWDB partners with unions, contractors, and training providers to expand apprenticeship opportunities and pre-apprenticeship programs, ensuring a steady pipeline of skilled workers for the construction sector. Special emphasis is placed on connecting young adults and individuals transitioning careers to these opportunities, promoting long-term industry growth. By identifying the critical skills and certifications needed in healthcare, cybersecurity and IT, logistics and manufacturing, and construction, the Susquehanna Workforce Development Board is addressing the region's workforce needs and strengthening its economic foundation. These efforts ensure that jobseekers are equipped to succeed in high-demand fields while local employers have access to a skilled, prepared workforce.

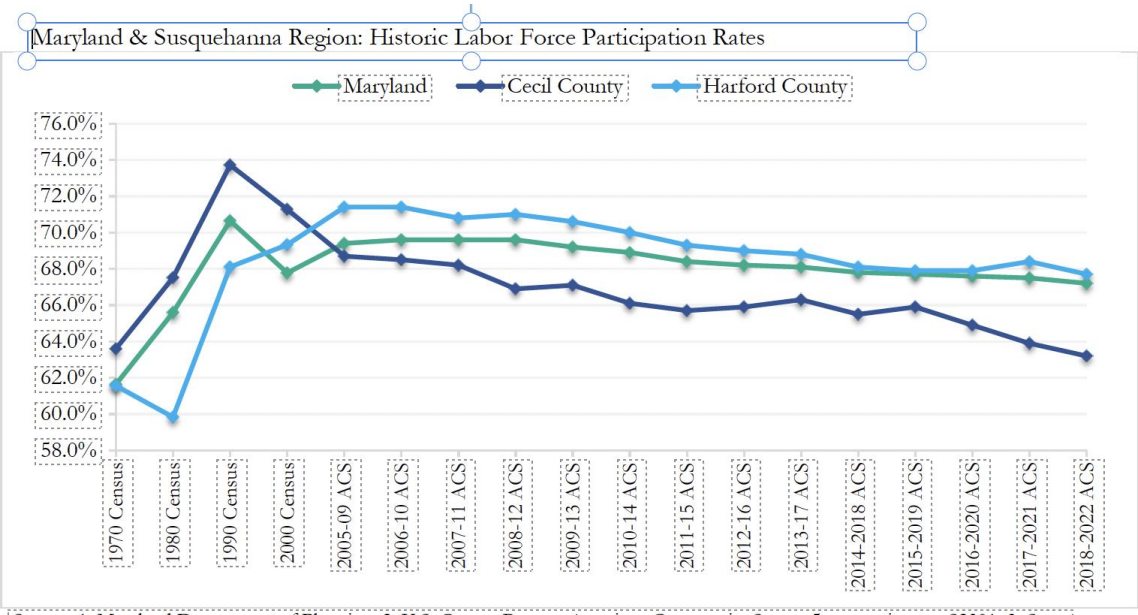
B. Workforce Analysis

1. Labor Market Trends

The Susquehanna region has experienced a low unemployment rate. The Unemployment Rate for the region in 2023 was between 2.0–2.2%. Maryland has also seen record low unemployment rates coming out of the global pandemic. Both figures indicate a tight labor market.

Additionally, with over 152,000 employed residents in the Susquehanna region, the labor market reflects high engagement; however, the labor force participation still remains relatively

low in both Maryland and the Susquehanna region. As noted, in the Sage Report, this has



Source: 1. Maryland Department of Planning, 2. U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-year estimates: S2301. 3. Sage.
Note: population ages 16 and over.

much to do with aging populations
As the Sage Report notes:

> In Harford County the labor force participation rate declined by 1.6 percentage points to 67.7 percent and in Cecil County it declined 2.5 percentage points to 63.2 percent. While retirement is a major factor shaping the data, many other workers left the labor force during and after the pandemic. Some left early during the pandemic, perhaps to avoid infection, and never returned. Others may feel empowered to remain out of the workforce because someone in their circle has experienced a sizeable increase in compensation, allowing them to engage in other activities (e.g., graduate studies).[1]

The Sage Report also notes a number of important trends for the region that the Board is continuing to monitor. First, the report notes that labor force participation has declined in Susquehanna region between 2017 and 2022. Specifically, labor force participation as more sharply declined in Cecil County. The Report notes:

> In 2022 the labor force participation rate for the 20 to 64 age group was 76 percent in Cecil County and almost 84 percent in Harford County. At the time of the previous workforce analysis, the most recent data were for 2017 and indicated that the labor force participation rate for this age group was almost 81 percent in Cecil County, suggesting a nearly 5 percentage point decline in participation between the 2017 and 2022 ACS surveys.[2]

[1] Sage Report, p. 50.
[2] Sage Report, p. 51.

Second, the Report notes a gap in labor force participation between genders. While this is a

Labor Force Participation Rate by Gender, Population Ages 20-64, 2022

	Total	Male	Female
Maryland	82.4%	86.0%	78.9%
Susquehanna Region	81.5%	87.1%	76.0%
Cecil County, MD	76.0%	81.9%	70.3%
Harford County, MD	83.7%	89.2%	78.3%
Baltimore County, MD	82.5%	86.4%	78.8%
Baltimore City, MD	77.1%	77.8%	76.4%
New Castle County, DE	82.7%	86.1%	79.5%
Wilmington City, DE*	78.0%	82.6%	74.2%
Chester County, PA	84.0%	89.1%	78.7%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey—2022 ACS 1-year Estimates: C23001; Sage.
Note: *New Castle County, DE figures include Wilmington City, DE.

trend statewide, the gap is particularly apparent in the Susquehanna Region. As noted in the below chart and further in the Report, males 20-64 are participating in the labor market at a higher rate than females. This is disparity is over eleven percent (11%) throughout the region compared to the State's nearly seven percent (7%) difference. This data reflects the need for activities to align with Maryland's strategic pillar regarding access to services.

Educational and Skill Levels in the Susquehanna Workforce Area

The Susquehanna Workforce Development Board (SWDB) recognizes the vital role that education and skills development play in building a robust workforce. Regional colleges such as Cecil College and Harford Community College are integral to the workforce development ecosystem, offering targeted programs that align with the region's economic drivers and industry needs. However, barriers to education and employment, as well as workforce diversity, underscore the need for strategic interventions to ensure access to opportunities.

Higher Education and Workforce Development

The region boasts strong enrollment in its higher education institutions, particularly in programs designed to support high-demand sectors:

- **Healthcare**: Programs such as Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) and Registered Nurse (RN) certifications address the growing need for healthcare professionals.

- **Information Technology (IT)**: Courses in cybersecurity, software development, and data analytics prepare students for roles in one of the fastest-growing industries.

- **Skilled Trades**: Programs in welding, machining, and construction trades support the region's manufacturing and infrastructure sectors.

These programs play a critical role in equipping jobseekers with the skills and certifications required to succeed in today's competitive labor market. The SWDB actively partners with these institutions to align training programs with employer needs and ensure a seamless transition from education to employment.

Barriers to Employment

Despite the strength of the region's educational offerings, certain populations face significant barriers to employment that limit their ability to access and benefit from these opportunities. These barriers include:

- **Transportation**: Many jobseekers, especially those in rural areas, lack reliable transportation, making it difficult to attend training programs or secure employment.

- **Childcare Access**: Single parents often struggle to balance childcare responsibilities with the demands of training and work.

- **Skills Gaps**: Individuals returning to the workforce, including ex-offenders and those with limited formal education, may lack the foundational skills needed to succeed in training programs or qualify for in-demand jobs.

The SWDB addresses these challenges by promoting the integration of supportive services into workforce programs. This includes transportation stipends, childcare assistance, and pre-apprenticeship programs that provide foundational skills training to prepare jobseekers for more advanced certifications and employment opportunities.
Diversity in Workforce

The Susquehanna region is home to a diverse workforce, which includes significant populations of low-income individuals, veterans, and individuals with limited literacy or English proficiency. While this diversity enriches the workforce, it also highlights the need for tailored supportive services to address unique challenges faced by different groups:

- **Low-Income Individuals**: Often require financial support to participate in training programs, such as tuition assistance or stipends for essential needs.
- **Veterans**: May benefit from specialized job placement services that leverage their transferable skills and connect them with veteran-friendly employers.
- **English Language Learners**: Require English as a Second Language (ESL) programs to enhance their communication skills and access a broader range of employment opportunities.

To ensure that all individuals have access to workforce development programs, the SWDB emphasizes a holistic approach that combines training with wraparound services. This includes collaboration with community organizations and employers to create inclusive pathways that empower underserved populations to achieve sustainable careers.

The SWDB's focus on educational attainment, reducing employment barriers, and embracing workforce diversity is central to its mission of fostering an inclusive and resilient economy. By addressing the unique needs of jobseekers and leveraging the strengths of regional

educational institutions, the SWDB ensures that all residents can access meaningful opportunities and contribute to the region's economic growth.

C. Workforce Development Activities

The Susquehanna Workforce Development Board (SWDB) leverages its strengths and addresses existing weaknesses to enhance the region's workforce system and meet the evolving demands of the labor market. With a strong foundation of partnerships, programs, and supportive services, the SWDB is well-positioned to build a skilled workforce. However, targeted efforts are needed to address gaps and prepare for growth in emerging industries.

Strengths

The SWDB's workforce development system is underpinned by several key strengths:

1. Comprehensive Programs:
    - The SWDB has established robust partnerships with community colleges, training providers, and industry stakeholders. These collaborations focus on delivering high-quality training in key sectors such as healthcare, IT, and logistics.
    - Programs are designed to align with industry needs, ensuring that jobseekers are equipped with the skills and certifications required for in-demand occupations.
2. Employer Collaboration:
    - The SWDB maintains strong relationships with regional employers, fostering engagement in workforce development initiatives such as apprenticeships and on-the-job training (OJT) programs.
    - These partnerships enable jobseekers to gain hands-on experience while addressing employers 'immediate talent needs, creating a mutually beneficial pipeline of skilled workers.
3. Supportive Services:
    - Recognizing the barriers that many jobseekers face, the SWDB has implemented a wide range of supportive services, including transportation assistance, childcare subsidies, and mental health resources.
    - These services are integrated into workforce programs to ensure that participants can fully engage in training and employment opportunities.

Weaknesses

While the SWDB has made significant strides, certain challenges remain:

1. Access Gaps:
    - Program availability in rural areas is limited, which disproportionately affects jobseekers who lack reliable transportation. Addressing these gaps is critical to ensuring access to workforce development resources.

    - Rural communities face unique challenges in accessing training and employment opportunities, requiring targeted outreach and service delivery solutions.

2. Dependence on Federal Funding:
    - The Susquehanna workforce system is heavily dependent on WIOA funds. While SWN has been successful in obtaining state funding for workforce development through programs like EARN Maryland, there is a need for flexible funding without the programmatic requirements of WIOA.

Capacity

The region has a solid foundation of training capacity to meet current workforce demands:

1. Existing Capacity:
    - Community colleges such as Harford Community College and Cecil College play a pivotal role in training jobseekers for careers in healthcare, IT, logistics, and the skilled trades.
    - Employer-led initiatives, such as apprenticeships and industry-specific training programs, further enhance capacity by providing hands-on learning opportunities.

2. Future Needs:
    - While current capacity meets the demand in established sectors, the growth of emerging industries like clean energy and advanced manufacturing requires additional investment.
    - Expanding the roster of Eligible Training Providers (ETPs) and developing innovative programs will be essential to prepare the workforce for these high-growth industries.

The Susquehanna Workforce Development Board's strengths in partnerships, employer engagement, and supportive services provide a strong foundation for regional workforce development. However, addressing weaknesses such as rural access gaps and the skills mismatch in emerging sectors is critical to ensuring long-term economic growth. By investing in capacity-building initiatives and expanding access to training in new and evolving industries, the SWDB will continue to drive innovation and inclusivity within the regional workforce system.

D. Career Pathways Model

Aligning Workforce Programs to a Career Pathways Model

The Susquehanna Workforce Development Board (SWDB) is committed to implementing a comprehensive career pathways model that addresses the needs of jobseekers and employers while fostering economic growth across the region. This model emphasizes sector-specific strategies, robust employer engagement, collaborative partnerships, and innovative training programs to equip the workforce with the skills and credentials required for sustainable careers.

1. Sector-Specific Strategies

To align workforce programs with the needs of key industries, the SWDB will focus on targeted sector-specific strategies:

- **Cybersecurity and IT**: The Board will collaborate with local employers to develop apprenticeship pathways that provide hands-on learning opportunities. Certifications such as CompTIA Security+ and AWS Certified Solutions Architect will be integrated into high school curricula, enabling students to gain industry-recognized credentials early in their career journeys.

- **Healthcare**: In partnership with regional healthcare providers, the SWDB will expand clinical training opportunities and implement stackable credential programs. These initiatives will create seamless pathways for jobseekers to advance within the healthcare sector, from entry-level roles to advanced practice positions.

- **Infrastructure and Manufacturing**: Training programs will focus on advanced manufacturing technologies, including 3D printing and robotics, as well as emerging fields like electric vehicle systems. These efforts will ensure that the workforce is prepared to meet the demands of evolving industries.

2. Employer Engagement

Active employer engagement is a cornerstone of the SWDB's career pathways model. To ensure alignment with workforce needs:

- **Employer Surveys and Roundtables**: Regular surveys and discussions with employers will provide valuable insights into skill requirements, training gaps, and emerging industry trends.

- **Sector Partnerships**: By collaborating with key employers in critical industries, the SWDB will co-design training programs that are directly aligned with business needs, ensuring that jobseekers are equipped for in-demand roles.

3. Collaboration with Partners

The SWDB recognizes the importance of partnerships in delivering effective workforce solutions. Strategies include:

- **Expanding the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL)**: By recruiting training providers and apprenticeship sponsors, the SWDB will increase access to high-quality training programs and credentials.

- **Contextualized Learning Programs**: Partnerships with educational institutions will support the delivery of tailored learning programs that integrate academic and technical skills, preparing jobseekers for specific industries and occupations.

4. Encouraging Employer Participation

To incentivize employer involvement in workforce development initiatives, the SWDB will:

- **Financial Incentives**: Provide funding support for employers participating in on-the-job training (OJT), Registered Apprenticeships, and incumbent worker training programs.

5. Support for On-the-Job Training (OJT)

The SWDB is dedicated to expanding and improving OJT opportunities through:

- **Employer-Friendly Design**: Streamlining administrative processes and creating standardized templates to make OJT programs accessible and manageable for employers.

- **Outcome Monitoring**: Regularly evaluating OJT programs to measure their effectiveness and demonstrate return on investment (ROI) for participating businesses, ensuring continued employer engagement and program sustainability.

By implementing these strategies, the SWDB aims to create a dynamic, inclusive workforce system that prepares jobseekers for in-demand careers and supports employers in meeting their workforce needs. This career pathways model not only enhances opportunities for individual success but also drives economic growth and innovation throughout the Susquehanna region.

Section 3: American Job Center Delivery System

A. List the AJCs in your area, including address and phone numbers. Provide the One-Stop Operator for each site and whether it is a comprehensive or satellite center.

The Susquehanna Workforce Development Board operates two comprehensive American Job Centers (AJCs), serving Cecil and Harford Counties. These centers provide a full range of workforce development services to job seekers and businesses.

1. Susquehanna Workforce Center – Swan Creek
   - **Address:** 2129-Suite 101 Pulaski Highway, Havre de Grace, Maryland 21078
   - **Phone:** (410) 272-5400
   - Hours of Operation:
     - Monday to Friday: 8:00 AM - 4:30 PM
     - Saturday and Sunday: Closed
   - **One-Stop Operator:** Pinnacle Strategies, LLC
   - Center Type: Comprehensive

2. Susquehanna Workforce Center – Elkton
   - **Address:** 1275 W. Pulaski Highway, Elkton, Maryland 21921
   - **Phone:** (410) 996-0550
   - Hours of Operation:
     - Monday to Friday: 8:00 AM - 4:30 PM
     - Saturday and Sunday: Closed
   - **One-Stop Operator:** Pinnacle Strategies, LLC
   - Center Type: Comprehensive

These centers ensure that job seekers and employers in the region have access to valuable resources and services to meet their workforce development needs.

B. Describe your customer flow system and process used in the Local Area. This description should include eligibility assessment, individualized training plans, and case management. *DWDAL s policy on assessments can be found here: https://labor.maryland.gov/employment/mpi/mpi10-21.pdf*.

The Susquehanna Workforce Development Board (SWDB) is committed to delivering seamless, customer-centered workforce services to job seekers and businesses. The customer flow system in the Susquehanna Local Area is designed to provide a comprehensive, efficient, and supportive experience for individuals accessing the workforce centers in Harford and Cecil Counties.

Customer Flow Overview
The customer flow system encompasses the following stages:

1. **Initial Contact and Welcome** - Customers are greeted upon arrival at the workforce center or virtual entry point. Staff provide an orientation to services, including workshops, training opportunities, and partner programs. Basic intake information is collected to understand the customer's goals and needs.

2. **Eligibility Assessment** - Workforce center staff conduct an initial eligibility assessment to determine the customer's qualifications for Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title I programs or other funding streams. Eligibility criteria include age, employment status, income, and other relevant factors as outlined in DWDAL's policies.

3. **Assessment and Career Planning** - Customers complete a comprehensive assessment to identify their skills, interests, barriers to employment, and career aspirations. This includes tools such as:

    1. **Basic Skills Assessment:** To evaluate literacy and numeracy skills.
    2. **Occupational Interest Inventories:** To align career pathways with customer interests.
    3. **Support Services Assessment:** To identify potential needs for childcare, transportation, or other wraparound services.

    Assessments comply with DWDAL's **Policy Issuance MPI 10-21** guidelines to ensure standardization and consistency.

4. **Development of Individualized Training Plans** - Based on the assessment results, an Employment Specialist / Career Specialist collaborates with the customer to create an Individualized Employment Plan (IEP) or Individualized Service Strategy (ISS) for youth. The plan includes short- and long-term career goals, identified skills gaps, and specific training or services needed to achieve employment objectives. Customers are referred to training providers on the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) for programs aligned with high-demand occupations.

5. **Training and Services Enrollment** - Customers may enroll in skills training, apprenticeships, or on-the-job training (OJT) programs tailored to their career pathways. Supportive services, such as transportation payments or childcare assistance, are integrated into the plan as needed.

6. **Case Management and Follow-Up (if customer attends training)** - Customers who attend training are assigned a Case Manager who provides ongoing support, monitors progress, and adjusts plans as necessary. Case Managers use a centralized case management system to track service delivery and outcomes, ensuring a data-driven approach to workforce development. Regular follow-ups are conducted for up to 12 months post-placement to ensure job retention and address any challenges.

Collaboration and Integration

The customer flow system integrates services across multiple funding streams and partner agencies, ensuring that job seekers experience a **no wrong door** approach. Partners include:

- Adult Education providers for GED preparation and literacy services.
- Vocational Rehabilitation services for individuals with disabilities.
- Economic assistance programs for those needing additional financial support.

Emphasis on Continuous Improvement

To enhance service delivery:

- Customer feedback is regularly collected to refine processes and improve service quality.
- Staff receive ongoing training to stay updated on DWDAL policies and labor market trends.

This structured and customer-centered approach ensures that job seekers in the Susquehanna region receive the support they need to achieve sustainable employment and career advancement.

C. Describe the process your Board intends to use for the solicitation and selection of a One Stop Operator. *(Section 107 of WIOA)*

The Susquehanna Workforce Development Board (SWDB) is committed to a transparent and competitive process for the solicitation and selection of a One-Stop Operator, in alignment with Section 107 of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and relevant guidance from the U.S. Department of Labor and the Maryland Department of Labor (DWDAL).

The One-Stop Operator is responsible for coordinating service delivery among the partners within the American Job Center (AJC) system. This includes ensuring integration and collaboration across programs and funding streams to provide seamless, customer-centered services to job seekers and businesses.

The SWDB employs the following process to solicit bids for a One-Stop Operator.

1. The SWDB issues a formal **Request for Proposal (RFP)**, clearly outlining:
   - Roles and responsibilities of the One-Stop Operator.

- Minimum qualifications, including experience with workforce systems and WIOA compliance.
- Performance expectations, including metrics related to service integration, customer satisfaction, and system outcomes.
- Budgetary and contractual requirements.

2. **Public Notification** - The RFP is widely disseminated through various channels, including: SWDB and partner websites; State procurement systems (if necessary); direct notification to potential bidders, including community organizations, educational institutions, and workforce development entities; and, notifications ensure all interested and qualified parties have equal opportunity to participate.

3. **Bidder Inquiries and Technical Assistance** - SWDB holds a pre-bid conference or webinar to provide technical assistance, clarify requirements, and address questions from potential bidders. Responses to inquiries are documented and shared with all interested parties to ensure transparency.

4. **Proposal Review and Selection Process -** The SWDB utilizes a rigorous and objective review process. Proposals are evaluated based on predefined criteria. Proposals are scored using a standardized evaluation rubric. The review committee selects the highest-scoring bidder and submits its recommendation to the full SWDB for final approval. The selected bidder is notified, and contract negotiations are initiated.

This process ensures that the selection of the One-Stop Operator is competitive, transparent, and focused on identifying the best-qualified entity to serve the workforce development needs of Cecil and Harford Counties. By adhering to WIOA requirements and emphasizing collaboration and innovation, the SWDB guarantees the continuous improvement of its workforce delivery system.

D. Describe how your Board will ensure the continuous improvement of eligible providers of services through the system and ensure that such providers meet the employment needs of local businesses, workers, and jobseekers. ***DWDAL s policy on the Eligible Training Provider List can be found here: https://labor.maryland.gov/employment/mpi/mpi11-21.pdf.***

The Susquehanna Workforce Development Board (SWDB) employs a collaborative and strategic approach to ensure the continuous improvement of eligible service providers within the local workforce development system. This approach leverages the expertise of the Board's standing and ad-hoc committees, WIOA partners, and feedback from businesses, workers, and job seekers to maintain a responsive and high-performing workforce ecosystem.

The SWDB utilizes its standing committees to drive the continuous improvement of service delivery. In addition, **ad-hoc committees** are formed as needed to address specific challenges or opportunities for innovation within the provider network.

The SWDB ensures that the selection process for eligible providers prioritizes effectiveness and alignment with the needs of local businesses, workers, and job seekers. A Training Specialist monitors Eligible Training Providers through interviews with participants and monitors rates of completion and certification. Criteria for selecting providers include:

- **Program Design Requirements:** Providers must demonstrate the ability to deliver services that align with WIOA objectives and address identified workforce needs.
- **Labor Market Relevance:** Occupational training programs must be driven by labor market data and business demand, focusing on high-growth and in-demand industries.
- **Cost-Effectiveness:** The cost of training programs must be reasonable and justified relative to the outcomes they deliver.
- **Past Performance and Integrity:** Providers must show a strong track record of achieving outcomes such as credential attainment, job placement, and retention.
- **Operational Capacity:** Providers must possess the technical skills, financial resources, and controls necessary to perform the work and achieve measurable success.
- **Pathways to Employment:** Programs must lead directly to employment opportunities in the region's priority sectors, such as healthcare, IT, manufacturing, logistics, and construction.

Labor market and business demand are central to the SWDB's approach to continuous improvement. Occupational training programs are designed to address regional workforce needs identified through labor market data and employer input. Training programs also provide industry-recognized certifications and credentials that lead to sustainable employment.

The SWDB works closely with WIOA partners to integrate services and enhance provider performance. This collaboration ensures a coordinated approach to addressing workforce challenges. The delivery of customer-centered services meet the needs of local businesses and job seekers. Through working closely with the partners, the SWDB has the ability to adapt to changing labor market conditions and economic demands.

By focusing on collaboration, accountability, and data-driven decision-making, the SWDB ensures that eligible providers continuously improve their services and outcomes. This commitment strengthens the regional workforce system, supports economic growth, and empowers job seekers and businesses in Cecil and Harford Counties.

E. Describe how your will facilitate access to services provided through the AJC delivery system, including in remote areas, through the use of technology and through other means.

The Susquehanna Workforce Development Board (SWDB) is committed to facilitating access to workforce development services across Cecil and Harford Counties, recognizing the unique challenges posed by a mix of suburban and rural communities. The SWDB prioritizes increasing awareness, leveraging technology, and enhancing service delivery to ensure access for all residents, particularly those facing barriers such as transportation limitations.

The SWDB fosters collaboration among workforce system partners to ensure a comprehensive understanding of available services and address service gaps. Regular partner meetings identify available services and any unmet needs within the region. Through these meetings,

partners develop strategies to fill service gaps and ensure a seamless customer experience. Additionally, public awareness campaigns, workshops, and events are conducted to promote the availability of workforce resources. Information is disseminated through local libraries, schools, and community organizations to reach underserved areas.

Cecil and Harford Counties encompass both suburban and rural areas, with many residents living outside major population centers. The SWDB takes proactive steps to mitigate these challenges. The SWDB collaborates with local agencies to enhance public transportation options. The Board recognizes that private transportation remains a necessity for many residents and partners with organizations to explore alternative transportation support, such as ride-sharing subsidies. Workforce services are extended to affiliate sites and library locations, ensuring that residents in remote areas have access to essential resources.

The SWDB encourages the use of technology to expand access to services and reduce barriers for residents in rural areas.

- The **SWN website (www.SWNetwork.org)** provides a starting point for career exploration, offering tools like a basic assessment instrument for youth and adults, overviews of available services, and listings of recent job opportunities.
- The **Maryland Workforce Exchange (MWE)** is promoted as a key resource for job search assistance, training opportunities, and uploading required documents for WIOA programs.

Virtual seminars and one-on-one meetings allow job seekers to access personalized guidance and services from anywhere in the region. SWN staff provide assistance with uploading required documents and collecting e-signatures for WIOA documentation, streamlining the customer experience. Social media campaigns and email newsletters keep the community informed about upcoming events, workshops, and job fairs.

While technology plays a significant role, the SWDB ensures that personal interaction remains central to service delivery. In addition to virtual services, in-person assistance is available at the workforce centers, maintaining accessibility for those preferring face-to-face engagement.

By combining collaborative partnerships, technology, and innovative service delivery methods, the SWDB ensures that all individuals—regardless of location or barriers—can access the resources they need to achieve their career goals. This approach aligns with the Board's commitment to efficiency, responsiveness in the workforce system and availability to all job seekers and businesses.

F. Describe the roles and resource contributions of the AJC partners. (See DWDAL's policy on Memoranda of Understanding and Resource Sharing Agreements) https://labor.maryland.gov/employment/mpi/mpi4-21.pdf.

The Susquehanna Workforce Development Board (SWDB) ensures that all workforce center partners comply with their roles and responsibilities as outlined in **WIOA Section 121(b)(1)(A)**. These responsibilities include providing comprehensive workforce services, contributing resources to maintain the AJC system, and operating in alignment with Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) and applicable federal laws.

Each workforce center partner plays a crucial role in delivering services through the one-stop delivery system. Partners ensure that their programs and services, including career services described in WIOA Section 134(c)(2), are accessible at the workforce centers. This includes: job search assistance, career counseling, and skills assessments; training opportunities and employment services aligned with local labor market demands;

Services may be offered in person, virtually, or through co-located staff to ensure seamless access for customers. Cost-sharing is documented and agreed upon through the **Resource Sharing Agreement (RSA)**. Partners allocate a portion of their program funds to maintain Susquehanna's workforce system, including:

- Contributing to infrastructure costs, such as facility expenses, utilities, and technology systems.

- Providing staff and resources to deliver high-quality services.

Each partner enters into an MOU with the SWDB, outlining their roles, responsibilities, and resource contributions to the system. The MOU ensures alignment with WIOA requirements, promote collaboration, and establish accountability for service delivery. Partners actively participate in the operation of the system, adhering to the terms of the MOU and applicable federal laws. This includes attending partner meetings, contributing to shared goals, and supporting system-wide initiatives to enhance service delivery.

The SWDB and its partners are dedicated to creating a unified, customer-centered workforce system. By integrating services, leveraging resources, and adhering to WIOA requirements, workforce partners ensure that businesses, workers, and job seekers receive the support they need to succeed in the Susquehanna region.

G. Describe how your Board will use Individualized Training Accounts based on high-demand, difficult to fill positions identified within local priority industries identified in *(Section 1(A)).*

The Susquehanna Workforce Development Board (SWDB) strategically uses **Individualized Training Accounts (ITAs)** to support eligible individuals pursuing occupational-specific training programs in **in-demand occupations** and within the region's **priority industries**, as determined by the Local Board. ITAs are designed to ensure that job seekers have access to high-quality training opportunities that align with local labor market demands, promote career growth, and address the workforce needs of the region.

ITAs are targeted toward training programs in high-demand occupations across the Board's priority industries, which include healthcare, information technology (IT) and cybersecurity, logistics, manufacturing, and construction. These sectors represent critical areas of growth in Cecil and Harford Counties.

- **Healthcare:** ITAs support training for roles such as Certified Nursing Assistants (CNAs), and Medical Assistants, addressing demand driven by an aging population and increased healthcare utilization.

- **Information Technology and Cybersecurity:** High-demand certifications such as CompTIA Security+, ITF cert, and A+ certifications are eligible for ITA funding.

- **Logistics:** ITAs are used for training programs like Commercial Driver's License (CDL) and logistics coordination certifications, aligning with the region's strong transportation and warehousing sectors.

- **Manufacturing:** Training for advanced manufacturing and skilled trades, including certifications like AWS Welding, and NCCER credentials, is prioritized.

- **Construction:** Construction remains a key driver of local employment, supported by residential, commercial, and infrastructure projects.Carpenters and Electricians, heavy equipment operators, and project managers are central to residential and commercial projects.

The SWDB has established policies to ensure the effective use of ITAs. ITAs are available to eligible individuals, including adults, dislocated workers, and youth, as determined by WIOA requirements and local policies. Participants must select training programs from providers listed on the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) to ensure quality and compliance with workforce system standards. To expand customer choice, the SWDB pursues reciprocal agreements with bordering states, allowing access to their ETPLs for training programs in high-demand occupations. The SWDB has currently capped ITAs at **$5,000**, but this amount may be adjusted at the discretion of the Local Board to better serve the customer and address the needs of local priority occupations. ITAs may be used for programs lasting up to **two years** or until the dollar cap is reached, ensuring flexibility to accommodate various training needs. Exceptions to standard ITA policies are reviewed and approved by the Executive Director, ensuring that the policy remains adaptable while maintaining accountability.

By focusing ITAs on occupational-specific training programs in high-demand sectors, the SWDB ensures that individuals are equipped with the skills and credentials necessary to secure meaningful employment. This approach strengthens the region's workforce system and supports the economic vitality of Cecil and Harford Counties.

H. Describe how your Board will provide priority of service that conforms to the State Plan. This should include a description of additional local requirements or discretionary priorities including data to support the need and how the local requirement and/or priority will be documented and implemented for the adult program.

The Susquehanna Workforce Development Board (SWDB) ensures full compliance with WIOA's priority of service requirements, as outlined in **Training and Employment Guidance Letter (TEGL) No. 7-20** and Maryland's state policies, including Policy Issuance 2016-04. The SWDB also applies locally defined priorities based on regional workforce needs. These priorities ensure that services are provided to the populations most in need, with a focus on veterans, dislocated workers, and individuals facing barriers to employment.

Priority of Service Tiers

The SWDB provides priority of service to WIOA Title I Adult Program participants in the following order:

1. **Veterans and Eligible Spouses** who are also recipients of public assistance, low-income individuals, or individuals who are basic skills deficient.

Veterans are defined in 38 USC § 101(2) as a "person who served in the active military, naval, air, or space service, and who was discharged or released therefrom under conditions other than dishonorable." It is important to note that this definition does not include a minimum number of days of service; only that their discharge must not be dishonorable.

When past income is an eligibility determinant for Federal employment or training programs, any amounts received as military pay or allowances by any person who served on active duty, and certain other specified benefits must be disregarding for the Veteran and for other individuals for whom those amounts would normally be applied in making an eligibility determination. Military earnings are not to be included when calculating income for veterans or transitioning service members for this priority, in accordance with 38 USC § 4213.

Further, 38 USC §101(24) and relevant guidance, the inclusion of "active" in the definition of a Veteran means any of the following:

- Active duty;
- Any period of active duty for training during which the individual concerned was disabled or died from a disease or injury incurred or aggravated in the line of duty;
- Any period of inactive duty training during which the individual concerned was disabled or died: (1) from an injury incurred or aggravated in the line of duty; or (ii) from an acute myocardial infarction, a cardiac arrest, or a cerebrovascular accident occurring during such training.

An "Eligible Person" as defined in 38 USC § 4101(5) and 38 USC § 4101(5) is:

(1) The spouse of any person who died of a service-connected disability;

(2) The spouse of any member of the Armed Forces serving in active duty who, at the time of application for assistance under this chapter, is listed, pursuant to Section 556 of Title 37 and regulations issued thereunder, by the Secretary concerned in one or more of the following categories and has been so listed for a total of more than ninety (90) days:

a) missing in action;
b) captured in the line of duty by a hostile force, or
c) forcibly detained or interned in the line of duty by a foreign government or power; or,

(3) The spouse of any person who has a total disability permanent in nature resulting from a service-connected disability, or the spouse of a veteran who died while a disability so evaluated was in existence.

2. **Non-Covered Persons** who fall into WIOA statutory priority groups, including recipients of public assistance, low-income individuals, and those who are basic skills deficient.

WIOA also establishes the following individuals with barriers to employment as targeted populations for WIOA Title I services.

Target Populations: Individuals with Barriers to Employment
Displaced homeworkers
Eligible migrant and seasonal farmworkers
Ex-Offenders
Homeless individuals
Individuals facing substantial cultural barriers
Individuals with disabilities, including youth with disabilities
Individuals within two years of exhausting lifetime eligibility under Part A of the Social Security Act
Individuals who are English language learners
Individuals who are unemployed, including the long-term unemployed
Individuals who have low levels of literacy
Individuals without a High School Diploma
Low income individuals (including TANF and SNAP recipients)
Long-term unemployed individuals
Native Americans, Alaskan Natives, and Native Hawaiians
Older individuals
Single parents (including single pregnant women and non-custodial parents)
Veterans
Youth who are in or have aged out of the foster care system

3. **Veterans and Eligible Spouses** who are not included in WIOA's statutory priority groups.

4. **Local Priority Populations** identified by the LWDB or the Governor.

5. **Non-Covered Persons** outside the priority groups specified under WIOA.

The SWDB's structured and inclusive approach to priority of service ensures that veterans, low-income individuals, and those with barriers to employment are given the support they need to succeed. By incorporating local priorities such as low-income employed adults, the SWDB addresses specific regional challenges while remaining aligned with the State Plan. This ensures that Susquehanna's workforce system is responsive to the community's needs.

The SWDB fully aligns its priority of service policies with **TEGL No. 7-20**, WIOA requirements, and Maryland's State Workforce Plan. This ensures a consistent, fair, and impactful approach to serving the most in-need populations while supporting the region's economic growth.

I. Describe how your Board will utilize funding to create incumbent worker training opportunities.

The Susquehanna Workforce Development Board (SWDB) collaborates with local businesses, workforce partners, and economic development organizations to address the skill development needs of incumbent workers. Through the **Business Engagement Team**, the Board identifies training needs and allocates resources to strengthen the region's workforce, supporting business growth and competitiveness. These initiatives are employer-driven, leveraging multiple funding sources and cost-sharing models to maximize impact.

The SWDB's **Business Engagement Team** plays a central role in identifying the training needs of local businesses.

- **Outreach and Employer Engagement** - Monthly business contacts conducted by the team help uncover specific skill gaps and training requirements necessary for businesses to remain competitive.Outreach activities focus on industries and occupations prioritized by the Board, in collaboration with workforce and economic development partners.

- **Sector and Occupational Priorities** - Based on labor market data and employer input, the SWDB may prioritize high-demand sectors such as healthcare, IT, logistics, manufacturing, and construction, tailoring incumbent worker training opportunities to meet these demands.

The SWDB utilizes a combination of funding streams to support incumbent worker training. Up to **20% of WIOA Adult and Dislocated Worker funds** are allocated to support employer-driven training initiatives for incumbent workers. This funding is directed toward training programs that address skill shortages and improve business productivity. SWN and its partners leverage funding through Maryland Business Works administered by the Maryland Department of Labor to supplement local WIOA funds and expand incumbent worker training opportunities for businesses in the region. Additionally, partnerships with local economic development offices provide additional funding options, ensuring businesses can access tailored training solutions. The Board also identifies and applies non-WIOA resources, such as grants and private sector investments, to meet specific business needs.

Incumbent worker training programs are designed with employer cost-sharing requirements to ensure shared investment in workforce development. To access local incumbent worker training, employers are required to contribute a portion of the training costs based on the size of their business:

- **10% match** for businesses with 50 or fewer employees.
- **25% match** for businesses with 51-100 employees.
- **50% match** for businesses with more than 100 employees.

These match rates may be adjusted based on regional economic conditions, ensuring accessibility for small and medium-sized businesses. Training expenses are reimbursed to employers through a cost-reimbursement methodology, ensuring transparency and accountability in fund utilization.

By leveraging diverse funding streams, prioritizing employer-driven solutions, and tailoring programs to meet local needs, the SWDB ensures that incumbent worker training opportunities support both business growth and worker advancement. This approach strengthens the region's workforce and enhances the economic competitiveness of Cecil and Harford Counties.

J. Describe how your Board will train and equip staff to provide excellent, WIOA-compliant customer service.

The Susquehanna Workforce Development Board (SWDB) is committed to ensuring that staff across the region's workforce centers are well-trained, equipped, and supported to deliver exceptional customer service that is fully compliant with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). Through a customer-centered approach, the SWDB emphasizes continuous improvement, professional development, and the adoption of innovative practices to meet the needs of job seekers and employers.

Staff providing direct services to job seekers and business customers are encouraged to pursue and maintain industry-recognized credentials, such as:

- Certified Workforce Development Professional (CWDP)
- Federal Job Application Certification
- Certified Career Services Provider (CCSP)
- Global Career Development Facilitator (GCDF)

SWDB leverages professional development opportunities through the Maryland Workforce Association. The Association is providing Maryland's workforce professionals with opportunities to obtain credentials and supplement their professional training opportunities. This includes attendance at the Association's annual conference, Raising the Bar.

Additionally, the SWDB invests in staff development training to enhance proficiency in areas such as: customer engagement and triage; workforce program compliance; and, use of the Maryland Workforce Exchange (MWE) system for case management and service tracking. Regular cross-training sessions are held with WIOA partners to ensure all staff are knowledgeable about available services, eligibility requirements, and referral processes across programs.

The SWDB operates a "customer-centered" service delivery system that prioritizes meeting customer needs efficiently while maintaining compliance with WIOA requirements. Workforce Centers collect feedback through customer satisfaction surveys, allowing customers to rate their experiences and suggest improvements. Triage, intake, and documentation processes are regularly evaluated to ensure they are efficient and responsive to customer needs without unnecessary delays. Staff are trained to provide empathetic, solution-oriented support, ensuring customers feel welcomed and supported. Efforts are made to minimize wait times

and streamline processes for job seekers and employers. Training enables staff to serve customers from diverse backgrounds effectively.

By prioritizing staff training, leveraging technology, and maintaining a focus on customer-centered service delivery, the SWDB ensures that customers receive efficient, high-quality, and WIOA-compliant support. These efforts reinforce the Workforce Centers ’role as a trusted resource for job seekers and employers in the Susquehanna Workforce Area.

Section 4: Title I – Adult, Youth, and Dislocated Worker Functions

A. Describe description and assessment of the type and availability of adult and dislocated worker employment and training activities in the Local Area.

The Susquehanna Workforce Development Board (SWDB) ensures the delivery of a comprehensive array of employment and training services for adults and dislocated workers through its Workforce Centers in Cecil and Harford Counties. These services, aligned with the requirements of Title I of WIOA, are designed to meet the needs of job seekers and employers in the region. The SWDB leverages the partnerships in Susquehanna’s workforce system to integrate and enhance services, ensuring high levels of customer satisfaction and effective workforce outcomes.

The region’s Workforce Centers provide a consistent and comprehensive menu of career and training services, as outlined in WIOA. These services are delivered in collaboration with WIOA-required partners and other community stakeholders. Key activities include:

<u>Career Services</u>
- Outreach, intake, and orientation to available services.
- Initial assessments to identify skills, interests, and barriers to employment.
- Labor exchange services, including job search assistance and job matching.
- Eligibility determination for WIOA services and referrals to appropriate programs.
- Access to labor market information and financial literacy services.
- Assistance with unemployment insurance and financial aid resources.

<u>Training Services</u>
- Comprehensive assessments and development of individual employment plans.
- Career counseling and planning for career advancement.
- Short-term pre-vocational training and internships.
- Occupational skills training, on-the-job training (OJT), and incumbent worker training.
- Customized training programs and entrepreneurial training.
- Programs combining workplace training with related instruction.
- English language acquisition, adult education, and literacy activities.

<u>Supportive Services</u>
- Information on supportive services, such as childcare and transportation.
- Job readiness training and follow-up services to ensure sustained employment.

The SWDB collaborates with workforce partners to integrate services and maximize the resources available to job seekers and businesses. Susquehanna's workforce partners include representatives from education, social services, housing, rehabilitation services, and other key partners. The services provided by the partners are generally on-site at Susquehanna's workforce centers and through partner affiliate locations where feasible. These workforce centers have the capacity to expand partner on-site presence and services, allowing for seamless access to a variety of programs.

The Workforce Centers in the Susquehanna region have demonstrated the ability to deliver effective and innovative workforce services. Regular customer feedback highlights the efficiency, accessibility, and quality of services provided at the centers. It also demonstrates the customer-centric approach of the workforce system. Susquehanna's workforce centers also incorporate technology, virtual service delivery, and hybrid models to ensure accessibility for all individuals, including those in remote areas. Programs are also customized to address the specific needs of adults and dislocated workers, with a focus on high-demand occupations in priority industries such as healthcare, IT, logistics, manufacturing, and construction.

The SWDB and workforce partners remain committed to enhancing the workforce center system. Through collaborative planning, the Board and workforce partners ensure that services remain responsive to the needs of job seekers and employers. By leveraging a wide range of services and fostering strong partnerships, the SWDB ensures that the Workforce Centers meet the employment and training needs of adults and dislocated workers. This comprehensive and integrated approach strengthens the local workforce, supports regional economic growth, and delivers lasting outcomes for job seekers and employers.

B. Describe how your Board will coordinate workforce development activities in the Local Area with statewide rapid response activities. *(Section 134(a)(2)(A).*

The Susquehanna Workforce Development Board (SWDB) ensures the effective coordination and implementation of Rapid Response activities through its **Business Services Team** and collaboration with the Maryland Department of Labor's Dislocated Worker Services Unit.

The SWDB, through the Susquehanna Workforce Network's (SWN's) Business Services staff and Business Services Team lead the coordination of Rapid Response activities, ensuring timely and comprehensive support for employers and employees affected by layoffs or closures. SWN works closely with the Maryland Department of Labor's Dislocated Worker Services Unit, local elected officials, and other stakeholders to deliver Rapid Response services. Local partners, including economic development officials, education and training representatives, veteran program staff, and community organizations, are engaged to provide holistic support. The Business Services Team leverages established relationships with local enterprises to facilitate customized Rapid Response solutions tailored to the specific needs of affected companies and their workers.

Through SWN's Business Services staff, the SWDB delivers a wide range of services to employers and workers affected by job losses:

1. **Employer-Focused Services** - Business Services staff coordinate with employers to plan and deliver customized Rapid Response services in collaboration with company officials. Services include strategies to mitigate layoffs, such as incumbent worker training, short-time compensation, and connecting businesses to local and state assets.

2. **Worker Support Services -** Affected employees are provided with information and assistance on:

- **Unemployment Insurance (UI):** Guidance on filing claims and understanding benefits.
- **Health Insurance Options:** Including COBRA and other healthcare programs.
- **Financial Assistance:** Access to financial counseling and supportive services.
- **Career and Training Services:** Information about Workforce Center resources, training opportunities, and job placement services.
- **Labor Market Information (LMI):** Insight into regional employment trends and opportunities.

Rapid Response activities are recorded in the Maryland Workforce Exchange (MWE). However, per the Final Rule issued by the United States Department of Labor on November 24, 2023, only state merit staff can deliver Wagner-Peyser services in Susquehanna. This includes the recording of Wagner-Peyser services into MWE.

The SWDB's collaborative approach ensures that Rapid Response activities are comprehensive and effective. Services are planned jointly with company officials to address the unique needs of each business and its workforce. The Business Services Team and Dislocated Worker Services Unit collaborate to design and implement tailored solutions. The Business Services Team includes representatives from workforce and economic development, education, veteran services, and other partner programs. This multi-disciplinary team ensures the availability of a full array of resources and expertise to support affected workers and businesses.

The SWDB adopts a proactive approach to identifying and responding to potential layoffs and closures. Through **early detection**, the Business Engagement Team monitors local economic conditions and maintains close communication with employers to identify at-risk businesses. The team is prepared to respond quickly to WARN Act notifications and other indicators of workforce disruptions. In addition, **layoff aversion strategies** are explored with employers to explore layoff aversion options, including retraining, business diversification, and other interventions.

By leveraging its Business Engagement Team and strong partnerships with state and local stakeholders, the SWDB ensures that Rapid Response activities are timely, coordinated, and effective. This collaborative approach minimizes the impact of workforce disruptions, supports economic resilience, and helps affected workers transition to new employment opportunities.

C. Provide a description and assessment of the type and availability of youth workforce development activities in your area, including activities for youth who are individuals with disabilities. Include successful models of such youth workforce development

The Susquehanna Workforce Development Board (SWDB) delivers a comprehensive range of youth workforce development activities designed to meet the diverse needs of young job seekers, including those with disabilities. These activities align with WIOA requirements, ensuring that all youth participants have access to the 14 required program elements, while fostering career readiness, skill development, and successful employment outcomes.

Youth workforce development activities begin with an **objective assessment** to identify the specific needs, skills, and interests of each participant. The assessment process includes: academic levels, skill levels, and work experience; employability, interests, and aptitudes; and, supportive service needs to address barriers to participation. SWN youth training providers and/or SWN Career Specialists utilize a number of tools to complete the objective assessment:

(1) **CASAS** (Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment Systems) or **TABE** (Test of Adult Basic Education) - These tools assess basic reading and math functioning levels to identify skill gaps.

(2) **Traitify Personality and Career Assessment** - This interactive tool identifies personality traits and career options, serving as the primary resource for career planning.

The comprehensive assessment informs the development of individualized service strategies (ISS), ensuring tailored support for each youth participant. The SWDB places a strong emphasis on serving youth with disabilities, working closely with the Maryland Department of Education's Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS) to provide tailored support. SWN's youth staff work in conjunction with DORS to ensure that youth with disabilities receive the accommodations and services they need. Youth with disabilities may receive career exploration, work readiness training, and self-advocacy skills through Pre-ETS programs.

Youth services are integrated across the workforce system to maximize accessibility and impact. The SWDB coordinates with schools, community organizations, and training providers to deliver holistic and cohesive services. Youth have access to career exploration, skills training, and job placement support at AJCs, which serve as central hubs for workforce development services.

The SWDB has expanded its services to youth through the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. Under this state legislation, Maryland's local workforce boards are tasked with leading career counseling (also referred to as "coaching") efforts in Middle and High Schools throughout the state. Individualized career exploration allows students to access the "world of work" while becoming college and career ready. SWN-hired career coaches work within Cecil and Harford school systems and interface with the public school systems in those counties along side Harford Community College and Cecil College staff.

In short, both under the Blueprint and WIOA funded youth programming, the SWDB is committed to continuous innovation and improvement in youth workforce development. Through outreach efforts, SWDB and its workforce partners focus on engaging underserved and at-risk youth populations, including those with disabilities. Through enhanced collaboration

with DORS, local school systems, community colleges, and businesses within Susquehanna's communities, SWDB and its partners expand the range of opportunities available to youth. Continued use of digital tools like Traitify ensures that youth receive cutting-edge support in career exploration and planning.

By delivering robust and accessible youth workforce development activities, the SWDB equips young individuals with the skills, confidence, and resources needed to succeed in the workforce. This commitment ensures that all youth, including those with disabilities, are empowered to achieve their career goals and contribute to the region's economic growth.

D. Describe how your local area will coordinate education and workforce development activities carried out in your area with relevant secondary and postsecondary education programs and activities to coordinate strategies, enhance services, and avoid duplication of services.

The Susquehanna Workforce Development Board (SWDB) works collaboratively with secondary and postsecondary education institutions to align education and workforce development activities, ensuring they meet local labor market needs and avoid duplication of services. Through the Susquehanna Workforce Network (SWN), the Board leverages its expertise in labor market analysis, its relationships with educational institutions, and its leadership in Blueprint for Maryland's Future career counseling initiatives to enhance workforce development across the region.

The SWDB uses data-driven insights to align educational programs with regional workforce needs. Since 2000, SWN and the Board has commissioned the development of a comprehensive labor market analyses through the Sage Policy Group. These reports provide key insights into industry growth, trends, and workforce demands. The Labor Market Analysis serves as a cornerstone for aligning education and training programs with high-demand occupations in sectors such as healthcare, IT, logistics, manufacturing, and construction.Labor market data is shared with economic and workforce development partners, local governments, and education providers to shape program offerings and ensure they address critical skill gaps.

The SWDB also plays a critical role in advancing career counseling initiatives under the **Blueprint for Maryland's Future.** SWN provides career counseling services to middle and high school students, offering tools and resources to explore career pathways aligned with their interests and local labor market demands. Students are introduced to high-demand industries and occupations, enhancing their readiness for sustainable careers. In collaboration with local schools and community colleges, SWN ensures that students gain early exposure to work-based learning opportunities, dual enrollment programs, and industry-recognized certifications. This career counseling initiative is designed to create a pipeline of skilled workers ready to meet the needs of local employers. These efforts also provide employers with access to a robust talent pool of young, career-ready individuals.

The SWDB works closely with local postsecondary education providers to align academic programs with workforce needs. Partnerships with **Cecil College** and **Harford Community College** ensure that courses and certifications are aligned with industry demands. Programs focus on priority sectors and include work-based learning opportunities such as apprenticeships and internships. Title I program staff connect students with employment and

training opportunities in in-demand occupations. Workshops and job fairs help students prepare for entry into the workforce.

Susquehanna's workforce partners meet quarterly to align strategies, share resources, and identify opportunities for collaboration. Frontline staff across partner organizations are trained to understand services offered by other agencies, enabling seamless referrals and coordinated support for job seekers.

By leveraging its expertise in labor market analysis, fostering collaboration through the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, and aligning education with workforce needs, the SWDB ensures that the region's talent pipeline remains responsive to economic demands. These efforts create a cohesive system that prepares individuals for meaningful careers and supports economic growth in Cecil and Harford Counties.

E. Describe how your Board will coordinate workforce development activities carried out under this title in your area with the provision of transportation, including public transportation, and other appropriate supportive services in the Local Area.

The Susquehanna Workforce Development Board (SWDB) prioritizes the integration of transportation and supportive services into its workforce development activities to address barriers that may prevent individuals from fully participating in training or employment. Through partnerships with community organizations, WIOA-required partners, and local agencies, the Board ensures that participants have access to the resources necessary to achieve their career goals.

Workforce Centers in Cecil and Harford Counties are staffed with knowledgeable partner representatives who are well-versed in the supportive services available through community and partner agencies. These services are guided by the **Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)** established with the Local Board. A flat rate system has been established for Title I supportive services. This system uses a tiered approach that is regularly reviewed and adjusted.

Supportive services defray transportation and childcare expenses for eligible participants. Other supportive services are provided to participants whose employment plans indicate they would be unable to participate in a training program or employment without such assistance. These may include:

- Training or placement physical examinations
- Uniforms or other work-related attire
- Driver education or license application fees
- Other training or employment entry requirements

Additional Supportive Services recognizes that unique needs occasionally arise, the Board may provide other services allowable under WIOA, contingent upon identified needs and available funds. All supportive service needs are determined through the results of an objective assessment and documented in the participant's employment plan.

The SWDB actively engages with local transportation initiatives and partners to address the mobility needs of job seekers and program participants. Financial assistance is offered to help participants cover transportation costs. A taxi service can also be used for participants who need it. Efforts are made to connect participants with public or alternative transportation options, including ride-sharing programs, where public transit may be limited. SWN staff actively participate in transportation advisory groups and planning initiatives to identify gaps in local transit services and advocate for solutions that improve accessibility for job seekers.

The SWDB leverages its relationships with local agencies to enhance the availability and coordination of supportive services. The SWDB collaborates with the Department of Social Services, Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS), local management boards, and community organizations to identify participant needs and align resources. Services not directly provided by the workforce system, such as housing assistance or specialized healthcare, are accessed through referrals to local human service agencies.

The SWDB may provide additional supportive services as needed to address specific barriers, ensuring that financial assistance is limited to necessary payments required for participation. To that end, the Board reserves the option to revise its supportive service policies to better meet the needs of customers and align with program goals.

Through engagement with local transportation initiatives and collaboration with community partners, the SWDB continues to identify and address barriers to workforce participation. This includes strengthening partnerships with transportation providers to improve service availability and align transit routes with Workforce Centers and major employment hubs. Exploring innovative transportation solutions, such as shared mobility programs, fill service gaps in rural and underserved areas.

By integrating transportation and supportive services into its workforce development activities, the SWDB ensures that participants have the resources they need to succeed. This approach enhances the overall effectiveness of the workforce system in Cecil and Harford Counties.

F. Describe how your Board will utilize Local Adult Funding, based on adult priority groups as specified in the State Plan.

The Susquehanna Workforce Development Board (SWDB) strategically utilizes WIOA Title I Adult Funding to provide services that target the priority groups. The Board focuses on serving the region’s most vulnerable workers, expanding access to education and training opportunities, and integrating supportive services to help adults achieve sustainable careers. These efforts are aligned with WIOA priorities and ensure the delivery of comprehensive workforce development services.

The SWDB allocates Local Adult Funding to provide targeted services for individuals who face significant barriers to employment. Adults with limited skills, lack of work experience, or other barriers to economic success are prioritized. Funding supports employment and training activities that help individuals transition into high-demand occupations and achieve long-term economic stability. Recipients of public assistance, low-income individuals, and adults who are basic skills deficient, as outlined in the Maryland State Plan.

WIOA Title I Adult services include a robust array of career and training activities designed to meet the diverse needs of job seekers:

Career Services

- Outreach, intake, and orientation.
- Initial and comprehensive assessments to determine skills, interests, and barriers.
- Labor exchange services, including job search assistance and referrals to employment opportunities.
- Career planning, counseling, and development of Individual Employment Plans (IEPs).
- Access to labor market information and financial aid resources.

Training Services

- **Occupational Skills Training:** ITAs for industry-recognized credentials in high-demand sectors such as healthcare, IT, manufacturing, and logistics.
- **Work-Based Learning:** Internships, work experience, and on-the-job training (OJT) opportunities.
- **Customized and Incumbent Worker Training:** Programs tailored to employer needs, supporting upskilling and retention.
- **Adult Education and Literacy Activities:** English language acquisition, basic skills training, and GED preparation.

Supportive Services

- Assistance with transportation, childcare, and other resources necessary to enable participation in training and employment activities.

Additional Services

- Job readiness training, financial literacy education, entrepreneurial training, and out-of-area job search assistance.

The SWDB ensures that Local Adult funding is used to integrate and align services across WIOA core and required partners, as well as other partner organizations. The SWDB facilitates coordination among WIOA partners to ensure seamless access to services and avoid duplication. Programs are designed to align with career pathway approaches and sector initiatives that promote postsecondary education and training. Services are available in-person at workforce centers, over the telephone, through virtual seminars, and via online platforms to accommodate participants ’needs.

The SWDB encourages the development and implementation of career pathways and sector-based strategies to support participants ’advancement. Programs are designed to provide clear, accessible routes from entry-level to advanced positions in high-demand industries. Initiatives focus on aligning training with the needs of key sectors in the region, such as healthcare, IT, and manufacturing.

By targeting priority groups, offering a wide range of career and training services, and aligning efforts with regional workforce strategies, the SWDB ensures that Local Adult Funding is used effectively to empower individuals to achieve meaningful employment and advance in their careers. These efforts strengthen the region’s workforce system and promote economic growth in Cecil and Harford Counties.

G. Describe how the Local Board will utilize Local Dislocated Worker Funding.

The Susquehanna Workforce Development Board (SWDB) utilizes Local Dislocated Worker Funding to provide comprehensive Title I Dislocated Worker services for individuals affected by layoffs, downsizings, and business closures. The focus is on delivering re-employment services that connect dislocated workers to career-oriented, in-demand occupations, enabling them to achieve self-sufficiency and long-term career growth.

These resources are strategically allocated to expand education and training opportunities, provide supportive services, and implement sector-based strategies and career pathways that align with the region's economic priorities.

The SWDB prioritizes re-employment services designed to support dislocated workers in transitioning to new careers. Services aim to return dislocated workers to career-oriented, growing occupations that align with their skills and interests, particularly in high-demand sectors such as healthcare, IT, manufacturing, and logistics. The SWDB leverages Dislocated Worker Funding to expand access to education and training that supports re-employment and career advancement:

- **Occupational Skills Training** - Funded through Individual Training Accounts (ITAs), enabling participants to earn industry-recognized credentials in high-demand fields.

- **On-the-Job Training (OJT)** - Hands-on training opportunities that provide practical experience while earning wages.

- **Work-Based Learning** - Includes internships, apprenticeships, and transitional job placements that offer real-world experience.

- **Short-Term Training** - Rapid training programs tailored to meet the immediate needs of regional employers.

- **Key Support Services** - Transportation assistance, childcare support, and financial aid for job-related expenses such as tools, uniforms, and licensing fees.

- **Customized Support** - Services are tailored to meet the unique needs of dislocated workers, ensuring they can fully engage in training and employment activities.

- **Career Pathways** - Structured pathways help dislocated workers transition from entry-level positions to advanced roles in their chosen fields.

- **Sector Initiatives** - Programs focus on aligning training with the needs of key industries to ensure that workers are prepared for roles in high-growth sectors.

The SWDB ensures that services funded through Dislocated Worker resources are accessible and flexible. Services are available in person at workforce centers, via telephone, through virtual seminars, and in online meetings to accommodate participants 'needs. Service delivery methods are adjusted based on the needs of the region, ensuring continuity and accessibility in changing circumstances.

The SWDB collaborates with its workforce partners to maximize the impact of Dislocated Worker Funding. Partnerships with Vocational Rehabilitation, Adult Education, and community organizations ensure that dislocated workers receive comprehensive support. Collaboration with local employers creates opportunities for direct job placement, OJT, and customized training programs.

By focusing on re-employment services, education and training, supportive services, and sector-based strategies, the SWDB ensures that Local Dislocated Worker Funding is used effectively to help individuals overcome workforce disruptions and achieve career success. These efforts strengthen the region's workforce system and promote economic resilience in Cecil and Harford Counties.

H. Describe how your Board will define "self-sufficiency" for employed Adult and employed Dislocated Worker participants.

The Susquehanna Workforce Development Board (SWDB) defines **"self-sufficiency"** for employed Adult and Dislocated Worker participants using specific income and wage thresholds that reflect regional economic realities and align with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). These definitions ensure participants achieve financial independence and are tailored to the unique needs of Adult and Dislocated Worker populations.

For Adult participants, self-sufficiency is defined as an annualized income level equal to at least 150% of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Poverty Guidelines or the Lower Living Standard Income Level (LLSIL), whichever is higher, based on family size. This definition may be updated by Board Action. For Dislocated Workers, the self-sufficiency definition is equal to at least 80% of the worker's wage at the time of dislocation.

By defining self-sufficiency for Adult and Dislocated Worker participants based on these clear, measurable thresholds, the SWDB ensures that its programs effectively support individuals in achieving economic stability and contributing to the local workforce and economy

I. Describe your Board's definition of "unlikely to return to previous industry or occupation" when required for eligibility for Dislocated Worker services.

The Susquehanna Workforce Development Board (SWDB) defines **"unlikely to return to previous industry or occupation"** as a determination that a dislocated worker's ability or desire to re-enter their prior industry or occupation is limited due to specific circumstances that affect their re-employment potential. This definition ensures that Dislocated Worker services are directed toward individuals who need assistance transitioning to new, sustainable career opportunities.

A customer is considered "unlikely to return to previous industry or occupation" if any of the following conditions exist:

1. **Declining Industry -** The individual's previous occupation was in an industry experiencing significant reductions in demand due to economic downturns, automation, outsourcing, or other factors.

2. **Obsolete Skill Sets** - The individual's skills or certifications are no longer relevant or in demand within their prior industry or occupation, requiring significant retraining to align with current labor market needs.

3. **Health or Physical Limitations** - The individual is unable to continue working in their previous industry or occupation due to illness, injury, or other health-related issues.

4. **Lack of Interest** - The individual expresses a lack of interest or motivation to return to their previous industry or occupation, supported by documented discussions with a career counselor.

5. **Labor Market Saturation** - The labor market is saturated with workers possessing similar skills, making job acquisition in the individual's prior occupation highly competitive and difficult.

6. **Retraining Benefits** - Career services, skill upgrades, or retraining would significantly increase the individual's likelihood of securing employment in a different industry or occupation.

By applying this definition of "unlikely to return to previous industry or occupation," the SWDB ensures that Dislocated Worker services are provided to individuals who would benefit most from career counseling, training, and support to achieve sustainable employment in a new field.

J. Describe how your Board will interpret and document eligibility criteria for in-school youth. *(Maryland Youth Policy and WIOA Sections 129(a)(1)(B)(iii)(VII) and (a)(1)(C)(iv)(VII)*

The Susquehanna Workforce Development Board (SWDB) prioritizes services for **out-of-school youth** as outlined in WIOA and the Maryland Youth Policy. While the region currently prioritizes services to out of school youth, SWN's increased role in the school system under the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, the Board has agreed that services may be provided to in school youth under eligibility criteria in WIOA.

K. Describe how your Board will interpret and document eligibility criteria for out of school youth. *(Maryland Youth Policy and WIOA Sections 129(a)(1)(B)(iii)(VII) and (a)(1)(C)(iv)(VII).*

The Susquehanna Workforce Development Board (SWDB) defines **out-of-school youth (OSY)** in alignment with Maryland law and WIOA guidelines. In accordance with Maryland Compulsory Age law, a student must be no younger than 18 years of age to dropout of high school.

To qualify for OSY services, individuals must meet the following requirements, and SWDB will utilize the following documentation to ensure that eligiblity has been met.

Eligibility	Documentation
(1) **Age** - 16 to 24 years old at the time of enrollment	• Age Verification: ◦ Acceptable documents: Birth certificate, driver's license, state ID, or school records.
(2) **School Status** - Must be not enrolled in school at the time of enrollment, including: • High school dropouts. • Graduates who are not pursuing postsecondary education or training.	◦ School withdrawal records, transcripts showing dropout status, or a self-attestation form verified by an AJC counselor.
(3) The participant must meet one or more of the following criteria: • **School Dropout** - An individual who has not completed high school or obtained a GED. • **Age 16-24 and Not Attending Postsecondary Education** - A youth who has completed high school but is not engaged in college or training programs. • **Basic Skills Deficient** - Scoring below a 9th-grade level in literacy or numeracy based on assessments such as the TABE. • **English Language Learner (ELL)** - An individual with limited English proficiency that hinders their ability to participate in education or employment. • A youth **involved in the juvenile or adult justice system.** • **Homeless, Runaway, or Foster Youth** including youth who lack stable housing, are in foster care, or have aged out of the foster care system. • **Pregnant or Parenting** Including expectant mothers, fathers, and parenting youth. • **Youth with physical, mental, or learning disabilities**. • **Requires Additional Assistance** - Youth facing significant barriers to completing education or securing employment (as defined locally).	• **School Dropout** - Documentation from the local school district, transcript, or self-attestation. • **Basic Skills Deficiency** - Assessment results (e.g., TABE) or school records indicating low proficiency levels, or self-attestation. • **English Language Learner** - School records, test scores, or a signed statement from a language instructor or community organization, or self-attestation. • **Justice System Involvement** - Court records, probation documents, or a letter from a probation officer, or self-attestation. • **Homeless or Runaway Youth** - Written statement from a shelter, social service agency, or a self-attestation form. • **Foster Care** - Documentation from the child welfare agency or a foster care statement, or self-attestation. • **Pregnant or Parenting** - Physician's note, WIC records, or a self-attestation form. • **Disability** - Verification from DORS, an IEP or 504 plan, or a physician's statement. • **Requires Additional Assistance** - Written explanation from a case manager, social worker, or other professional detailing the need.

The SWDB and its staff will document eligibility in the Maryland Workforce Exchange.

The SWDB includes an expanded definition of "requires additional assistance" for OSY to ensure services reach those with significant barriers. For out-of-school youth, this may include individuals who are:

- **Low-Income with Limited Employment Skills** - Youth who lack the foundational skills or experience necessary for meaningful employment.
- **No Significant Work History** - Individuals with little to no formal job experience.
- **Recently Fired or Displaced** - Youth who have been terminated from a job within the past 12 months.
- **Lacking Occupational Skills** - Youth who do not possess the technical or professional skills required to gain or sustain employment.

This expanded definition allows services to be provided to **low-income high school graduates** who struggle to maintain steady employment and need support beyond what is typically available through the adult program.

By interpreting and documenting OSY eligibility in alignment with WIOA and Maryland guidelines, the SWDB ensures that services are effectively targeted to youth facing the greatest challenges. This approach empowers young people to overcome barriers, achieve their career goals, and contribute to the regional workforce.

L. Describe the documentation that is required to demonstrate a "need for training."

The Susquehanna Workforce Development Board (SWDB) defines **"Need for Training"** as a comprehensive and individualized determination based on a collaborative discussion with the job seeker. This process involves an in-depth assessment of the participant's skills, employment history, barriers, and career goals, ensuring that any recommended training aligns with labor market needs and contributes to the individual's progression toward self-sufficiency and an improved quality of life.

Determining the need for training is a multifaceted process that includes:

1. <u>Collaborative Discussion</u>
   - Career specialists engage the job seeker in a detailed discussion to identify their career goals, barriers, and potential training needs.
   - This discussion is documented in the individual's **Employment Plan** and recorded in case notes for future reference.

2. <u>Comprehensive Assessment</u>
   - **Skill Levels -** Basic skills, occupational skills, and credentials are evaluated to determine readiness for available jobs in the local labor market.
   - **Interests and Capabilities -** Interest inventories, career assessments, and ACINET tools are used to align the job seeker's interests with labor market opportunities.
   - **Work History and Job Search Activity** - Analysis of prior work experience, job search efforts, and tactics, including competencies and understanding of the labor market.
   - **Barriers to Employment -** Identification of potential barriers such as lack of transportation, childcare needs, or other obstacles to workforce participation.

Training plans are evaluated based on their ability to support the job seeker's goals and progress toward self-sufficiency. Utilizing, Labor Market Information ensures that training is aligned with high-demand occupations in the region, supported by labor market research and tools like ACINET and employer inquiries. The training plan should address identified skills gaps and provide credentials or certifications that improve employability. Finally, training must have the potential to lead to a better quality of life and financial independence.

The SWDB employs a range of tools and resources. Labor market research provides an analysis of local job trends, employer needs, and high-demand occupations. Career assessments and inventories align training with participant goals. Finally, employment planning tools like ACINET and other occupational research platforms identify viable career paths and training opportunities.
By using a holistic, evidence-based approach to document the "need for training," the SWDB ensures that training resources are directed toward individuals who will benefit most. This process supports participants in achieving meaningful employment, self-sufficiency, and a higher quality of life while aligning workforce programs with local labor market demands.

M. Describe how your board will provide access to the 14 required program elements for the WIOA Youth program design and whether the Local Board has contracted with youth services provider.

The Susquehanna Workforce Development Board (SWDB) ensures that youth participants enrolled in the WIOA Youth Program have access to all **14 required program elements**, delivered through a combination of services provided by the Susquehanna Workforce Network (SWN), contracted youth service providers, and community resources. This integrated approach ensures that youth receive comprehensive support to achieve educational, career, and personal success.

Program Element	Services
Tutoring, Study Skills Training, and Dropout Prevention	• Provide tutoring, academic enrichment, and study skills training. • Offer dropout prevention strategies through school-based partnerships.
Alternative Secondary School Services or Dropout Recovery	• Offer GED preparation, high school equivalency programs, and re-engagement initiatives.
Paid and Unpaid Work Experiences	• Provide internships, summer jobs, pre-apprenticeships, and on-the-job training (OJT).
Occupational Skills Training	• Offer training aligned with in-demand occupations, resulting in industry-recognized credentials.

Program Element	Services
Leadership Development Opportunities	• Facilitate workshops on communication, teamwork, and decision-making. • Engage youth in community service and civic engagement projects.
Supportive Services	• Provide transportation, childcare, housing assistance, and other supports.
Mentoring	• Pair youth with adult mentors who provide guidance and career advice.
Follow-Up Services	• Offer 12 months of follow-up support, including check-ins, career counseling, and referrals.
Counseling	• Provide mental health counseling, substance abuse treatment referrals, and career guidance.
Concurrent Education and Workforce Preparation Activities	• Providing contextualized learning opportunities
Financial Literacy Education	• Deliver workshops on budgeting, credit management, and financial planning.
Entrepreneurial Skills Training	• Offer training in business planning, marketing, and entrepreneurship.
Labor Market and Employment Information	• Provide youth with real-time labor market data and career exploration tools.
Preparing for Postsecondary Education and Training	• Offer college readiness workshops, FAFSA assistance, and campus tours.

The SWDB competitively procures youth services through a Request for Proposal (RFP) process. The RFP requires proposers to demonstrate their capacity to deliver all 14 elements or identify community resources that will support their delivery. Additionally, proposers outline how local partnerships will enhance the provision of required elements.

Additionally, SWN Career Specialists play a vital role in delivering key program elements. Career Specialists provide work experience opportunities, entrepreneurial training, and career counseling directly to youth participants. Career Specialists work with contracted providers and community resources to ensure seamless delivery of services.

By combining direct service provision through SWN staff, competitive procurement of youth service providers, and robust partnerships with community organizations, the SWDB ensures that all youth participants have access to the 14 required program elements. This approach

fosters a comprehensive, youth-centered program design that prepares participants for success in education, employment, and life.

N. Describe the steps your Board will take to ensure at least 20% of Youth Funds are used for work-based training activities.

The Susquehanna Workforce Development Board (SWDB) is committed to meeting and exceeding the WIOA requirement to allocate at least **20% of Youth Funds** for work-based training activities. These activities provide valuable hands-on experience, foster workplace readiness, and help youth transition into sustainable employment. The SWDB employs a structured approach to achieve this requirement, leveraging the expertise of the SWN Youth/Young Adult Career Specialist and partnerships with local employers.

The SWN Youth/Young Adult Career Specialist plays a critical role in developing and delivering work-based learning opportunities. The specialist conducts employability skills training, such as resume writing, interview preparation, and workplace etiquette, to prepare youth for work experiences. The specialist collaborates with local employers to create meaningful work experience opportunities, including internships, job shadowing, and summer employment programs. Youth are transitioned to Susquehanna's workforce centers for additional employability development activities, including career counseling and access to labor market information. When in-person work experiences are not feasible, the specialist provides employability skills training and virtual resources to ensure continued skill development.

The SWDB invests Youth Funds in a variety of work-based training activities to meet the 20% requirement.

1. **Paid and Unpaid Work Experiences**
   - Includes internships, externships, summer employment, and pre-apprenticeships aligned with career goals.
   - Collaborations with local employers ensure opportunities are relevant to regional labor market needs.
2. **On-the-Job Training (OJT)**
   - Provides youth with hands-on experience and the opportunity to earn wages while learning essential job skills.
3. **Apprenticeships and Pre-Apprenticeships**
   - Partnerships with apprenticeship sponsors introduce youth to career pathways in high-demand industries.
4. **Job Shadowing**
   - Short-term opportunities that expose youth to specific industries and careers, helping them make informed career choices.
5. **Entrepreneurial Training**
   - Programs that teach youth the fundamentals of starting and managing a business.

By prioritizing work-based learning through the efforts of the SWN Youth/Young Adult Career Specialist, employer partnerships, and a robust monitoring system, the SWDB ensures that at least 20% of Youth Funds are used for impactful work-based training activities. This commitment supports youth in gaining critical skills, exploring career pathways, and transitioning to meaningful employment.

O. Describe your board's plan goal to serve out of school youth and identify specific steps that have been taken to meet this goal. If your board's goal is under 75 percent describe how you will implement the waiver and how you will enhance connections to Youth Apprenticeship programming, increase DORS co-enrollment, and make changes for In-School-Youth (ISY) services.

The Susquehanna Workforce Development Board (SWDB) has maintained a commitment to serving **100% out-of-school youth (OSY)** since 2006. However, based on the role the SWDB has taken in the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, some in school youth (ISY) may be identified as needing additional services. For those In School Youth who are eligible under WIOA requirements, may be enrolled within WIOA guidelines and requirements. At this time there are no in school youth enrolled. This focus aligns with the Board's strategic priorities to address the unique barriers faced by OSY and ensure they receive comprehensive support to achieve educational, career, and personal success. The Board's approach leverages strong partnerships with local organizations, proven strategies, and alignment with WIOA requirements.

The SWDB's primary goal is to dedicate all WIOA Youth Program resources to serving OSY, recognizing their critical need for targeted services. OSY are prioritized due to their higher likelihood of facing significant barriers, including lack of a high school diploma, limited work experience, homelessness, or justice involvement. The Board plans to continue utilizing successful strategies and partnerships to deliver impactful services tailored to the needs of OSY.

The SWDB has implemented the following steps to ensure the successful delivery of OSY services:

1. **Collaborative Partnerships**
   - **Public Schools:** Collaboration with local school systems ensures effective outreach to youth at risk of dropping out or those who have already exited the education system.
   - **Community Colleges (Adult Education):** Partnerships with Cecil College and Harford Community College provide access to GED preparation, adult education, and career pathways.
   - **Departments of Social Services:** Joint efforts support OSY with access to housing, transportation, and other supportive services.
   - **Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS):** Coordination with DORS ensures co-enrollment for youth with disabilities, providing additional resources and accommodations.
   - **Community-Based Organizations:** These partnerships extend the Board's reach to underserved populations and enhance service delivery.
2. **Tailored Program Design**
   - Services are customized to meet the needs of OSY, focusing on high-demand career pathways, work-based learning, and supportive services.

- Employability skills training, labor market information (LMI), and leadership development opportunities are integrated into program offerings.

Although the SWDB is currently dedicated to serving OSY, it recognizes the need for flexibility should regional circumstances change. If the Local Board decides to include **In-School Youth (ISY)** services. The region would serve less than 25% ISY, in compliance with WIOA regulations. If a waiver is required, the Board will submit the necessary documentation to justify the adjustment and ensure compliance with state and federal guidelines.

By continuing to prioritize out-of-school youth services and leveraging proven strategies, the SWDB ensures that OSY participants receive the resources and support necessary to achieve meaningful educational and career outcomes. This focused approach strengthens the regional workforce and empowers youth to build successful futures.

P. Describe how your Board will provide basic and individualized career services to customers and how services will be coordinated across program/partners in the AJCs.

The Susquehanna Workforce Development Board (SWDB) ensures the delivery of **basic and individualized career services** to job seekers through a seamless, accessible, and coordinated approach. Services are provided at Workforce Centers, WIOA partner locations, and through virtual platforms, aligning with WIOA requirements and leveraging strong partnerships to maximize effectiveness and avoid duplication.

The SWDB provides the following categories of career services to job-seeking customers:

Basic Career Services available to all job seekers, these services include:

- Outreach, intake, and orientation to Workforce Center services.
- Initial skills assessments to identify career interests and needs.
- Job search assistance and labor market information.
- Access to online tools, such as job matching systems and career planning resources.
- Information on supportive services and referrals to partner programs.

Individualized Career Services are tailored services for individuals needing more comprehensive support, including:

- Comprehensive assessments to evaluate skills, aptitudes, and barriers.
- Development of Individual Employment Plans (IEPs) to outline career goals and action steps.
- Career counseling and guidance for career transitions or advancements.
- Short-term pre-vocational training to enhance job readiness.
- Assistance with job placement, including resume development and interview preparation.

Career services are accessible through multiple channels to meet diverse customer needs and adapt to local conditions. Basic and individualized career services are offered in-person at Susquehanna's workforce centers in the region, providing direct support for job seekers. Virtual seminars, one-on-one meetings, and online tools ensure continuity of services for customers who cannot visit in person. Services may also be provided at WIOA partner locations, such as adult education centers, libraries, or community-based organizations, as capacity and capabilities allow.

The SWDB ensures coordination of services across programs and partners through the following strategies:

1. **Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) and Resource Sharing Agreements (RSAs)**
   - The SWDB collaborates with WIOA partners to develop and execute MOUs and RSAs that outline roles, responsibilities, and resource allocations.
   - These agreements ensure alignment of services, access for customers, and efficient use of resources to prevent duplication.

2. **Integrated Service Delivery**
   - Partner staff are trained to provide consistent, high-quality services and refer customers to appropriate programs, creating a “no wrong door” approach.
   - Shared case management systems and data-sharing agreements enhance coordination and support holistic service delivery.

3. **Joint Planning and Collaboration**
   - Regular meetings with WIOA partners facilitate the alignment of goals, the identification of gaps, and the development of solutions to improve service quality and access.

By providing accessible, comprehensive career services and fostering strong coordination across programs and partners, the SWDB ensures job seekers receive the support they need to achieve meaningful employment. This approach strengthens the region’s workforce system and promotes collaboration and efficiency.

Q. Describe the Local Board’s follow-up services policy. This should include follow-up requirements, frequency of contact, and required documentation.

The Susquehanna Workforce Development Board (SWDB) provides follow-up services to support customers in maintaining and advancing their employment outcomes after program completion. These services are available for up to **12 months after the first day of employment** and are designed to assist participants in navigating challenges, retaining employment, and achieving long-term career success.

Title I-funded staff or designated follow-up specialists deliver follow-up services through various methods, including:

1. **Direct Contact -** Regular communication via telephone, email, virtual meetings, and in-person interactions to maintain engagement and assess progress.

2. **Job Retention Support** - Assistance with navigating workplace challenges, such as conflict resolution or understanding workplace policies.

3. **Referrals to Additional Services** - Connecting participants with supportive services, including childcare, transportation, and financial literacy resources, as needed.

4. **Career Development** - Guidance on pursuing further education or training to support career growth and advancement.

Follow-up services are provided at least **quarterly** for up to one year following the participant's exit from the program. The frequency of contact may be adjusted based on the individual's needs, with more frequent communication provided for participants facing significant challenges or at higher risk of job loss.

By providing consistent, responsive, and well-documented follow-up services, the SWDB ensures participants are supported in retaining employment, addressing challenges, and advancing their careers. This comprehensive approach strengthens the region's workforce system and promotes sustained success for program participants.

Section 5: Title II – Adult Education and Family Literacy Functions

A. Describe how your Board will coordinate workforce development activities in your Area integrating the provision of adult education and literacy activities under Title II of WIOA, including, but not limited to, the implementation of the career pathways model.

The Susquehanna Workforce Development Board (SWDB) has prioritized the alignment and collaboration between workforce development and adult education services since 2011, leveraging the **Consolidated Adult Education and Family Literacy Service Grant** to drive integration. This initiative aims to coordinate Title II services with workforce activities, including Career Pathways initiatives, to ensure participants maximize available opportunities and achieve meaningful employment.

The SWDB fosters alignment between Title II adult education services and workforce development activities through strategic planning and partnership. The SWDB collaborates with Title II providers, such as **Cecil College** and **Harford Community College**, to align adult education programs with workforce development goals. Integration ensures Title II participants have access to a comprehensive range of services, including GED preparation, literacy training, and English language acquisition, in conjunction with career development resources.

Adult education services are embedded in Career Pathways models that combine basic skills training with occupational training to prepare participants for high-demand careers. Pathways are developed in close collaboration with local employers, ensuring programs meet labor market demands in industries such as healthcare, IT, logistics, and advanced manufacturing.

The SWDB follows the Maryland Department of Labor's Division of Workforce Development and Adult Learning's guidance to review Title II applications for alignment with local workforce priorities. Title II applications are evaluated to ensure they align with this Plan and support the Board's strategic goals, including the promotion of Career Pathways and the integration of core partner services.The review process includes input from core partners to ensure programs reflect regional workforce needs and provide seamless access to educational and employment resources.

The SWDB works to ensure that Title II participants benefit from an integrated service delivery model. Title II participants are connected to Susquehanna's workforce centers where they can access career counseling, labor market information, and supportive services alongside their educational activities. Coordination with Title I and III programs ensures that Title II participants can transition from education to training and employment without service gaps.

The SWDB supports the development and implementation of Career Pathways to create seamless transitions from education to employment. Adult education services are paired with workforce preparation and technical training to help participants gain credentials and skills required in high-demand industries. Programs emphasize the attainment of stackable credentials, enabling participants to progress from basic certifications to advanced career opportunities. Local employers provide input on curriculum design, host work-based learning opportunities, and offer direct employment pathways for program graduates.

By leveraging the Consolidated Adult Education and Family Literacy Service Grant, fostering collaboration with Title II providers, and implementing a robust review process for alignment with workforce goals, the SWDB ensures that adult learners receive the education and training they need to achieve self-sufficiency. This integrated approach strengthens the regional workforce system and supports the broader objectives of WIOA.

B. Describe how your Board will coordinate efforts with Title II providers to align basic skills and English language assessments and include the following:

- **An outline of the steps to align basic education skills and English language assessments within you Area, including, but not limited to, any MOU entered into by the workforce development and adult learning partners;**
- **How assessment scores will be shared among WIOA Title I areas and Title II providers (Consideration must be given to the Federal Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA));**
- **Who will conduct which of the approved assessments (including for Trade Participants) and when will such assessments be conducted, consistent with this policy;**
- **How will your area coordinate testing between workforce development and adult education providers; and**
- **How will your will ensure that test administrators are trained? (See MD Labor's policy and applicable testing guidelines) (*DWDAL s policy on assessments*)**

***All bullet points must be addressed**

The Susquehanna Workforce Development Board (SWDB) collaborates with Title II providers to align basic education skills and English language assessments, ensuring a coordinated and effective approach for adult learners and job seekers. This partnership integrates assessments into the regional workforce development system, aligning with WIOA priorities and MD Labor's policies, while addressing privacy concerns under the **Federal Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)**.

The SWDB and Title II providers work collaboratively to ensure assessment alignment through the following:

1. **Development of Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs)**
   - MOUs are negotiated with adult education providers, outlining roles and responsibilities for assessment, advising, and instructional services.
   - MOUs include agreements on the use of compatible and approved assessment instruments across workforce and education programs.

2. **Integration of Assessment Tools**
   - The workforce system and Title II providers utilize common and approved assessments, such as TABE (Test of Adult Basic Education) and CASAS (Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment Systems), to evaluate basic education and English language skills.

3. **Training and Cross-Training**

- Workforce and Title II staff receive training on administering assessments to ensure consistency and accuracy.
- Annual training sessions are provided by the Title II provider staff, testing service representatives, or through online certificate trainings.

To facilitate service coordination, the SWDB and Title II providers establish protocols for the secure sharing of assessment scores. Customers are required to sign **FERPA-compliant release forms**, allowing educational records and assessment scores to be shared between Title I and Title II programs.A formal agreement between the SWDB and Title II providers governs the sharing of assessment data, ensuring compliance with federal and state privacy regulations.Current practices, such as sharing scores in youth-funded programs, provide a framework for expanding data sharing to adult and dislocated worker populations.

Assessments are administered by trained staff from Title II providers and Susquehanna's workforce partners.

1. **Adult Education Providers**
   - Title II providers conduct assessments for adult basic and secondary education skills and English language learners.
   - Initial assessments are typically administered during program intake to determine instructional needs.

2. **Susquehanna's Workforce Partners**
   - Workforce staff conduct basic education, career, and skills assessments for customers accessing Workforce Center services.
   - Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) participants receive assessments facilitated by Wagner-Peyser staff based on their training needs.

3. **Occupational Training Providers**
   - Training providers administer occupational-specific assessments as part of their program requirements after a customer's Individual Employment Plan (IEP) is finalized.

The SWDB ensures streamlined coordination of testing between workforce and adult education providers. Through referral systems, staff refer customers to Title II providers for initial or additional assessments, ensuring alignment with career pathways and training goals.Testing schedules are coordinated to minimize delays and duplication, enabling customers to access services efficiently. Assessment results are shared securely and promptly between providers to support seamless service delivery.

The SWDB ensures that all test administrators are properly trained to maintain assessment integrity. Workforce staff and Title II provider staff are trained annually, or as needed, on administering TABE, CASAS, and other approved assessments. Training is provided by Title II providers, college staff, or directly through the testing systems, including online certification opportunities. Online training options provide flexibility to accommodate staff schedules and ensure all administrators remain current on testing protocols.

By aligning basic education skills and English language assessments with Title II providers, establishing secure data-sharing practices, and ensuring staff are well-trained, the SWDB fosters a coordinated approach to supporting adult learners and job seekers. This integration

enhances the efficiency and effectiveness of workforce development activities while meeting the diverse needs of participants in the region.

C. Describe how your Board will ensure that the individual appointed to represent Title II services on the Board will coordinate with all Title II Grant Administrators in the Local Area in a uniform, regular, and consistent manner.

The Susquehanna Workforce Development Board (SWDB) has established a comprehensive framework to ensure that the individual appointed to represent **Title II services** on the Board coordinates effectively and consistently with all Title II Grant Administrators in the Local Area. This approach leverages strong relationships with the region's two community colleges, active participation in Board subcommittees, and structured communication channels to promote alignment and collaboration.

The presidents of **Cecil College** and **Harford Community College**, the region's Title II providers, are appointed to the Board, ensuring direct representation of adult education services. The SWDB promotes routine coordination between Title II Representatives and Grant Administrators. Title II representatives are required to attend all local WIOA Partner meetings, fostering consistent collaboration with other core and required partners. Regular meetings between the Title II representative and Grant Administrators ensure that updates on Title II activities, workforce needs, and service alignment are shared in a uniform and timely manner. Title II representatives remain accessible through standard communication methods, including phone, email, and in-person meetings, enabling ongoing dialogue and issue resolution.

Multiple levels of coordination exist between Title II providers and workforce system staff. Susquehanna's workforce center staff regularly engage with the Deans of Career and Continuing Education and other program staff from the community colleges to align services and refer participants to appropriate programs. Youth vendors maintain both direct and indirect relationships with workforce staff and Title II providers, ensuring seamless support for youth participants requiring adult education services.

By ensuring robust participation on the Board, fostering open communication channels, and requiring regular engagement in WIOA Partner meetings, the SWDB provides a structured framework for the Title II representative to coordinate effectively and consistently with all Title II Grant Administrators. This approach strengthens alignment between adult education and workforce development, supporting the shared goal of preparing individuals for meaningful employment and economic self-sufficiency.

D. Describe how adult education services will be provided in the AJC system within the Local Area.

The Susquehanna Workforce Development Board (SWDB) ensures that **adult education services** are fully integrated into the American Job Center (AJC) system through established referral systems, collaborative partnerships, and ongoing cross-training of staff. This approach ensures seamless access to Title II services, fosters alignment across WIOA programs, and supports adult learners in achieving their educational and career goals.

Adult education services are delivered through a structured referral process designed to connect participants with Title II services effectively. AJC staff make direct referrals to Title II providers, such as **Cecil College** and **Harford Community College**, based on participants ' educational needs. Workforce staff ensure referrals are tailored to individual participants, directing them to GED preparation, English language acquisition, or basic literacy programs. Regular communication between AJC staff and Title II providers ensures timely referrals and feedback on participant progress.

The SWDB emphasizes collaboration and engagement among partners to support the integration of adult education services. Regularly scheduled partner meetings provide opportunities to share updates, address challenges, and enhance coordination between AJCs and Title II providers. The MOU for Susquehanna's workforce system clearly define the responsibilities of Title II providers and AJC staff, ensuring accountability and alignment with workforce development goals.

Cross-training initiatives ensure that AJC staff are well-equipped to identify participants ' educational needs and refer them to appropriate services. AJC staff receive training on the range of adult education services available, including basic skills instruction, English language acquisition, and GED preparation.Cross-training improves staff understanding of Title II services, enabling them to explain options to participants effectively and facilitate referrals.

Adult education services are fully integrated into the AJC system to ensure participants can access comprehensive support. While WIOA Title II services are primarily delivered at community colleges and other designated sites, the AJC system provides participants with access to additional resources, such as career counseling and supportive services, in a centralized location.Participants referred to Title II programs remain connected to the AJC system for career readiness activities, labor market information, and job placement assistance.

The SWDB ensures that adult education services align with the needs of participants and local labor market demands. AJC staff conduct assessments to identify participants 'educational and employment needs, ensuring appropriate referrals to Title II services. Adult education services are aligned with career pathways, enabling participants to transition from basic skills training to occupational training and employment in high-demand industries.

By leveraging established referral systems, fostering strong partnerships, and providing staff with cross-training opportunities, the SWDB ensures that adult education services are fully integrated into the AJC system. This approach enhances access, supports participant success, and strengthens the alignment between adult education and workforce development efforts in the region.

E. Describe how adult education providers in your Area will use the Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IELCE) program to prepare adults who are English language learners for, and place such adults in, unsubsidized employment in in-demand industries and occupations that lead to economic self-sufficiency. If there are no IELCE providers in your area, the response should note how the area refers to job seekers looking for IELCE services. *(See WIOA Section 243(a))*

In the Susquehanna Workforce Area, **Cecil College** and **Harford Community College**, the region's primary Title II adult education providers, have not applied for IELCE funding and,

therefore, do not currently offer Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IELCE) programs.

Section 6: Title III – Wagner-Peyser Functions

A. Describe your plans and strategies for maximizing the coordination of services provided by the State employment service under the Wagner-Peyser Act *(29 U.S.C. 49 et seq.)* and services provided in your Area through the AJC delivery system to improve service delivery and avoid duplication of services.

The Susquehanna Workforce Development Board (SWDB) has a long history of effective collaboration between Susquehanna Workforce Network (SWN) staff and Wagner-Peyser (WP) staff employed by the Maryland Department of Labor. This established coordination is

supported by structured processes, agreements, and partner engagement to ensure the seamless delivery of services, avoid duplication, and enhance the overall quality of services provided through the American Job Center (AJC) system.

The SWDB employs an integrated approach to service delivery, leveraging the strengths of Wagner-Peyser and WIOA Title I staff to provide comprehensive support for job seekers and employers. With the exception of the center at Swan Creek, WP staff and SWN Career Specialists co-locate in Susquehanna's workforce centers, facilitating communication and coordination of career services. Both staff groups facilitate access to all workshops, ensuring a unified experience for customers.

WP staff focus on providing **Basic Career Services** as defined under Title I, including:

- Job search assistance.
- Resume development and interview preparation.
- Provision of labor market information.

SWN Career Specialists complement these services with **Individualized Career Services**, such as comprehensive assessments, Individual Employment Plans (IEPs), and connections to training programs.

The SWDB takes proactive measures to avoid duplication and maximize efficiency in service delivery. The MOUs between Susquehanna's workforce partners clearly delineate service delivery roles, ensuring that each partner's functions are complementary rather than redundant.

In accordance with 20 CFR Section 652.207, Wagner-Peyser staff provide labor exchange services that are available to all employers and job seekers, including Unemployment Insurance claimants, veterans, migrant and seasonal farmworkers, and individuals with disabilities. In accordance with federal law, Wagner-Peyser staff must deliver labor exchange services to job seekers as described in the Wagner-Peyser Act, through: (i) self-serve, through virtual services; (ii) facilitated self-help service; and (iii) staff-assisted service.

Per the Final Rule issued by the United States Department of Labor on November 24, 2023, only state merit staff can deliver Wagner-Peyser services in Susquehanna.

Staff development opportunities emphasize cross-training and flexibility, enabling Wagner-Peyser staff to operate effectively across various disciplines and funding streams. Wagner-Peyser staff collaborate with SWN's Business Services staff to engage local employers, promoting job openings, work-based learning opportunities, and hiring events.

By fostering a collaborative and integrated service delivery model, adhering to clearly defined roles in MOUs, and continuously improving through monitoring and feedback, the SWDB ensures that Wagner-Peyser functions are coordinated with other WIOA funded programs. This approach enhances service quality, minimizes duplication, and supports job seekers and employers throughout the Susquehanna Workforce Area.

B. Describe how your Board will coordinate with the Wagner-Peyser program to provide migrant and seasonal farm workers in its Local Area will be provided employment services.

The Susquehanna Workforce Development Board (SWDB) is committed to ensuring that Migrant and Seasonal Farm Workers (MSFWs) in the Local Area have access to the full range of services provided through the American Job Center (AJC) system. Coordination with the Wagner-Peyser program is formalized through the **Memoranda of Understanding (MOU)** and **Resource Sharing Agreements (RSA)** that outline service delivery, referral processes, and reporting mechanisms. These efforts align with state and federal policies to support MSFWs in achieving employment stability and accessing necessary resources.

The SWDB coordinates with the Wagner-Peyser program to provide MSFWs with comprehensive employment services. The MOU and RSA detail the responsibilities of Wagner-Peyser staff and partners in delivering MSFW services, ensuring alignment with WIOA priorities and local workforce strategies. The Migrant and Seasonal Farm Worker Program is monitored by the **State Monitor Advocate**, ensuring compliance with state and federal requirements. A **Maryland Department of Labor (MD Labor) staff member**, based in Cecil County, provides localized support for MSFW services and acts as the primary point of contact for outreach and coordination.

MSFWs receive the same services afforded to non-migrant job seekers, as well as specialized support tailored to their unique needs. Through Susquehanna's workforce centers, MSFWs receive job search assistance, career counseling, and referrals to training programs. They also have access to office equipment, such as computers, fax machines, and printers, for job application purposes. Written materials on AJC locations, community resources, and educational opportunities, available in multiple languages to address potential language barriers. Translation and interpretation services are provided as needed to ensure MSFWs can fully access available resources.

Wagner-Peyser staff conduct targeted outreach and field visits to ensure MSFWs are aware of available services. Staff make visits to farms and agricultural work sites to distribute information about AJC services and community resources. Field visits include inspections of migrant housing camps to ensure living conditions meet standards and to inform workers of available services. Housing inspections are conducted for farm owners/operators participating in the **H-2A temporary agricultural worker program**, ensuring compliance with housing regulations.

In addition to supporting MSFWs, Wagner-Peyser staff provide services to agricultural employers. H-2A Clearance Orders are entered into the state system to ensure compliance with regulations and efficient hiring processes. Wagner-Peyser staff connect farm operators with qualified workers and facilitating access to local talent pools. Pre-season housing inspections are also conducted to verify compliance with federal and state standards.

By leveraging established partnerships, conducting targeted outreach, and adhering to state and federal guidelines, the SWDB ensures that Migrant and Seasonal Farm Workers in the Susquehanna Workforce Area receive the comprehensive support they need to achieve economic stability and success.

C. Explain who is responsible for conducting migrant and seasonal farmworker housing inspections.

In the Susquehanna Workforce Area, **MSFW housing inspections** are conducted by the **Maryland Department of Labor Supervisor** based in **Elkton**. These inspections are conducted as needed to ensure compliance with housing standards and to support the safety and well-being of migrant and seasonal farmworkers.

Housing inspections are carried out in coordination with other relevant parties to maximize efficiency and ensure thoroughness. Inspections may be conducted in collaboration with the **State Rural Services Coordinator** to streamline processes, share resources, and enhance service delivery. Inspections are coordinated with farm operators who participate in the **H-2A Temporary Agricultural Worker Program**, ensuring pre-season housing meets required standards.

The Maryland Department of Labor Supervisor conducts inspections to verify that housing provided to MSFWs meets federal and state regulations, including safety, sanitation, and occupancy standards. The Supervisor identifies and addresses housing deficiencies to ensure the safety and well-being of MSFWs. Farmworkers are also informed about available workforce system services during inspections, including career counseling, community resources, and educational opportunities.

Section 7: Title IV – Vocational Rehabilitation Functions

A. Describe the cooperative agreements that have been replicated between your Board or other local entities and the local office of a designated State agency or unit administering programs under Title I of the Act. Explain your efforts to improve services may include cross-training of staff, technical assistance, information sharing, cooperative work with employers, and other collaborative and coordinated initiatives. (Rehabilitation Act, 29 U.S.C. 721(a)(11)(B), 29 U.S.C. 720 et seq., 29 U.S.C. 732, 741).

The Susquehanna Workforce Development Board (SWDB) collaborates with the **Maryland State Department of Education's Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS)** to provide comprehensive services to youth and adults with disabilities. This partnership ensures access to vocational rehabilitation services and promotes employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities. The cooperative agreements between the SWDB and DORS formalize roles and responsibilities, align service delivery with WIOA requirements, and foster integration with the regional workforce development system.

In accordance with 29 U.S.C. 721(a)(11), DORS delivers the following services to individuals with disabilities in the Susquehanna Workforce Area:

- Provide intake, orientation, and assessments for disabled job seekers;
- Promote employment of persons with disabilities;

- Based on a comprehensive assessment of an individual's disabilities, determine an individual's eligibility for services in accordance with the Division's Order of Selection criteria;
- Develop an Individualized Employment Plan;
- Provide guidance and counseling, physical restoration, and training to eligible persons with disabilities;
- Provide follow-up services to enhance job retention;
- Provide other services as may be available and appropriate;
- Provide Pre-Employment Transitioning Services for students with disabilities, as defined by WIOA;
- Provide Supported Employment Services for youth and adults with disabilities as defined by WIOA;
- Provide independent living services to enhance the capacity of persons with disabilities to live unaided in the community;
- Provide performance information as required by WIOA;
- Provide cross-training of workforce staff on disability related issues;
- Provide technical assistance on disability related issues and on assistive technology;
- Engage employers through the Division's Business Services Representatives;
- Work in a collaborative manner to coordinate services among the Workforce Partners for youth and adults with disabilities.

DORS works collaboratively with the SWDB and other workforce partners to coordinate and deliver services seamlessly. DORS staff co-locate in AJCs to ensure individuals with disabilities can access a full array of workforce services, including career counseling and training. DORS coordinates with Susquehanna's workforce center staff to align vocational rehabilitation services with other WIOA programs. DORS Business Services Representatives work with employers to promote inclusive hiring practices, identify job opportunities, and provide workplace accommodations.

DORS supports the professional development of workforce staff to improve service delivery for individuals with disabilities. Regular training sessions for AJC staff cover disability-related issues, assistive technologies, and best practices for serving individuals with disabilities. DORS provides ongoing technical support on accessibility, accommodations, and compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

DORS collaborates with workforce partners to deliver employment-focused services that address the unique needs of individuals with disabilities. Services include job search assistance, resume development, interview preparation, and employer matching. DORS facilitates internships, apprenticeships, and on-the-job training for individuals with disabilities. Follow-up services and guidance are provided to help individuals retain employment and pursue career advancement.

The SWDB and DORS work together to align vocational rehabilitation services with regional workforce priorities. Services are integrated into career pathways that provide individuals with disabilities opportunities for advancement in high-demand industries. Collaborative efforts focus on engaging employers to create inclusive workplaces and expand opportunities for individuals with disabilities.

By formalizing cooperative agreements, integrating services, and providing comprehensive support, the SWDB and DORS ensure individuals with disabilities have access to the

resources they need to achieve meaningful employment and economic self-sufficiency. This collaboration strengthens the inclusivity and effectiveness of the regional workforce system.

B. Describe how individuals with disabilities will be served through the AJC system in the Local Area.

The Susquehanna Workforce Development Board (SWDB) ensures that individuals with disabilities receive comprehensive, accessible, and inclusive services through the **American Job Center (AJC) system**. This approach integrates adaptive resources, collaborative partnerships, and ongoing training to address the unique needs of individuals with disabilities, promoting access to workforce services and opportunities.

The SWDB employs a universal design approach to ensure that all services are accessible to individuals with disabilities. A standardized referral form enables individuals to self-identify their service needs and preferences, promoting autonomy and choice. All materials, resources, and services are designed to be fully accessible, regardless of disability, ensuring inclusivity across the AJC system.

The SWDB has equipped Workforce Centers with adaptive tools and resources to support individuals with disabilities. Adaptive equipment such as screen readers, magnifiers, and alternative input devices. Assistive software to support digital accessibility and enable individuals with visual or motor impairments to navigate job search platforms. Individuals with specialized equipment needs beyond those available at the Workforce Centers are referred to the **Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS)** for additional support.

DORS plays a key role in providing direct support and enhancing services for individuals with disabilities. DORS maintains a part-time presence at the Cecil County and Harford County Workforce Centers. This physical presence facilitates collaboration, warm transfers, and seamless service delivery. DORS collaborates with the SWDB to provide training, referrals, and support tailored to the needs of individuals with disabilities.

The SWDB and DORS collaborate to engage youth with disabilities in workforce activities. Two DORS staff serve on the SWDB's Youth Committee, contributing expertise on disability services and youth engagement. DORS youth are informed about and encouraged to participate in local workforce programs, including youth job fairs and career exploration events.

Strong referral and collaboration systems ensure individuals with disabilities receive comprehensive and coordinated support. Individuals referred to DORS or other partners are supported through warm handoffs, ensuring a smooth transition between services. Regular meetings and information-sharing sessions among WIOA partners enhance coordination and streamline referrals.

DORS and the SWDB work together to connect individuals with disabilities to employment opportunities. Joint outreach to employers promotes disability inclusion and highlights the benefits of hiring individuals with disabilities. Opportunities such as internships, apprenticeships, and job shadowing are tailored to meet the needs of individuals with disabilities.

By integrating adaptive resources, collaborating with DORS, and fostering inclusive practices, the SWDB ensures that individuals with disabilities receive effective services through the AJC system. This commitment strengthens workforce opportunities and supports individuals in achieving their career goals and economic self-sufficiency.

Section 8: Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Functions

FFY2020 QUARTER 1 (Jan - Mar)	SUSQ (CECIL, HARFORD)	Total Work Eligible Individuals - Unduplicated 335

TIER I		TIER II		TIER III	
JOB READY TODAY		SHORT TERM BARRIERS		SIGNIFICANT BARRIERS TO WORK	
121	WEJ (Unsubsidized Employment)	0	BER (Education)	3	JBT (Substance Abuse Treatment)
1	WSU (Subsidized Emp. Private Sector)	0	BED (Secondary Education)	1	JBM (Mental Health Treatment)
1	WSP (Subsidized Emp. Public Sector)	1	OTO (Court Ordered Appearance)	3	JBR (Rehabilitation Services)
49	WEX (Work Experience)	1	OTJ (Temporary Incarceration)	84	OTM (Short Term Medical)
0	OJT (On-the-Job-Training)	4	OTF (Family Services/Counseling)	0	OTS (Substance Abuse Referral)
15	WEM (Community Service)	8	OTL (Pursuit of Income Support)	130	OTD (Long Term Disabled)
0	WEC (Child Care for WEM Customer)	6	OTQ (Transferring Customer)	221	Total
113	JBS (Job Search/Readiness)	3	OTZ (Seeking Child Care)		
15	BEV (Vocational Education)	0	OTT (Seeking Transportation)	GENERAL DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION	
0	IST (Job Skills Training)	8	OTP (Prenatal Needs)	100	29,9 % No High School Diploma
315	Total	0	OTU (Under Appeal)	6	1,8 % English Not Primary Language
		31	Total	39	11,6 % Post College/University

FEDERAL EXEMPTION	
78	OTB (Child < 1)
30	OTG (Caring for a Disabled Household Member)
3	OTV (Domestic Violence Counseling)
111	Total

A. Describe of how TANF is integrated in the AJC system (e.g., customer intake, service coordination, client monitoring and tracking, targeting employment services to low-skill, low-wage workers, etc.).

The Susquehanna Workforce Development Board (SWDB) ensures effective integration of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)[3] services into the American Job Center (AJC) system through tailored approaches for Cecil and Harford Counties. These strategies enhance coordination between the Department of Social Services (DSS) and the Susquehanna Workforce Network (SWN), leveraging partnerships, data-sharing systems, and direct referrals to support TANF customers in achieving employment and self-sufficiency.

Cecil County

In Cecil County, TANF customers can access SWN services independently, similar to the general public, by contacting SWN directly to request services. TANF customers are referred informally, with DSS and Workforce Center staff providing guidance on accessing SWN services.

Harford County

In Harford County, all work-eligible TANF customers are referred to SWN upon approval of their TANF case due to an existing contract between Harford County DSS and SWN. DSS uses the **Works system**, along with phone calls and emails, to refer customers to SWN for employment services. Regular and ongoing communication between SWN and DSS ensures coordinated support to assist TANF customers in obtaining and retaining employment. Formal referral processes connect TANF customers to SWN services immediately after TANF case approval, ensuring seamless access to workforce development resources.

TANF customers referred to SWN have access to a comprehensive range of services, including career counseling, job placement, training opportunities, and supportive services. SWN provides tailored workforce development services to TANF customers, focusing on building skills and achieving self-sufficiency. This includes:

- **Career Services** such as resume development, interview preparation, and job search assistance. Individualized Employment Plans (IEPs) designed to align with customer goals and labor market needs.
- **Work-Based Learning Opportunities** allow TANF customers to access to internships, apprenticeships, and on-the-job training.
- **Training Programs** provide occupational training and credentialing programs in high-demand industries.
- **Supportive Services** includes transportation assistance, childcare support, and help with other barriers to workforce participation.

The SWDB fosters collaboration between TANF partners to ensure effective service delivery. DSS staff actively participate in meetings with Susquehanna's workforce partners where best practices are shared and discussions are had regarding alignment strategies to support TANF

[3] In Maryland, TANF is called Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA). However, for purposes of clarity and uniformity, TANF is still used in this prompt.

customers. SWN and DSS staff participate in regular training sessions to enhance understanding of each other's programs and ensure coordinated service delivery.

By leveraging strong partnerships, formal referral processes, and collaborative initiatives, the SWDB ensures that TANF customers in Cecil and Harford Counties have access to comprehensive workforce development services. This approach supports their transition to employment and long-term self-sufficiency.

B. Describe your implementation and coordination process to enhance the provision of services to individuals on TANF that includes: ▪ Potential co-location of LDSS and/or WIOA Partners at AJCs or LDSS depending on the nature of local partnerships and operations; Leveraging existing financial and in-kind contributions to the WIOA system to ensure coordination of services provided by multiple programs, creating a seamless approach to delivering services; ▪ Cross training and providing technical assistance to all WIOA Partners about TANF; ▪ Ensuring that activities are countable and tracked for the TANF Work Participation Rate; ▪ Access to business services and employer initiatives to attract and better serve employers by marketing joint services, minimizing the burden on employers who use the centers, and provide employer-focused services through a single point of entry rather than through all partnering programs; and ▪ Contributing and providing outcomes data to the WIOA system through strategies for collecting and reporting varied program reporting requirements. Describe the LDSS representation on the Local Board to ensure that TANF expectations, roles, and responsibilities are addressed in the Local Area.

The Susquehanna Workforce Development Board (SWDB) collaborates closely with the Local Departments of Social Services (LDSS) to enhance the integration and provision of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) services. Building on established relationships and service coordination, the SWDB ensures that TANF recipients have access to comprehensive workforce development services and opportunities for economic self-sufficiency

Susquehanna Workforce Network (SWN) staff provide work-based training, job placement, and follow-up services funded through DSS in Harford County. Activities, including job placements and work experience opportunities, are recorded and narrated in the CARES and WORKS systems, ensuring alignment with DSS requirements. TANF customers across the region are referred to Workforce Centers and participate in career counseling, training, and recruitment activities. LDSS representatives are actively involved in the Business Engagement Committee of the SWDB and are informed of regional employer recruitment activities and workforce needs through SWN's Business Services Team.

The development of the local Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) and Resource Sharing Agreements (RSA) formalizes and expands the integration of TANF services into the AJC system. Referral Mechanisms establish clear referral pathways to TANF services and Workforce Center programs, ensuring seamless access for participants. Cross-training and technical assistance ensure familiarity with TANF requirements, best practices, and available resources.

LDSS and the SWN's Business Services Team connect TANF participants with job openings, internships, and employer-driven training programs. This also includes LDSS contributions to

the shared infrastructure costs of the workforce system, including space, technology, and administrative support. Joint marketing and outreach to employers streamline recruitment efforts and connect TANF participants with internships, apprenticeships, and on-the-job training opportunities.

The partners will explore opportunities for co-locating DSS staff within Workforce Centers or enhancing access to Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA) services through virtual platforms and outreach events. They will also continue to pursue protocols for secure data sharing between Workforce Centers and DSS to streamline performance tracking, reporting, and compliance with TANF work participation requirements.

Workforce Center staff track TANF customer activities, including training participation, job placements, and engagement in work-based learning, in the MWE system. TANF customers are responsible for gathering participation data and submitting documentation to DSS for monitoring in CARES, WORKS, and the Work Participation Rate system.

LDSS representation on the SWDB ensures alignment between TANF services and regional workforce goals. LDSS representatives participate in SWDB meetings and committees, contributing insights on TANF program requirements and implementation. Through their involvement, LDSS representatives help shape strategies for integrating TANF services into the broader workforce system.

By leveraging existing partnerships, formalizing agreements, and enhancing data sharing and collaboration, the SWDB and LDSS will continue to provide TANF recipients with comprehensive, coordinated services. This approach ensures that individuals and families achieve meaningful employment and long-term economic stability.

C. Describe the LDSS representation on the Local Board to ensure that TANF expectations, roles, and responsibilities are addressed in the Local Area.

The Susquehanna Workforce Development Board (SWDB) ensures that Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) expectations, roles, and responsibilities are addressed in the Local Area through active and structured representation from the Local Departments of Social Services (LDSS). This collaboration fosters integration, alignment, and accountability across workforce and TANF programs to support the needs of TANF participants effectively.

The SWDB includes a designated seat for TANF representation. This ensures that TANF-related priorities and perspectives are incorporated into Board discussions and decision-making processes. The LDSS representative is appointed in accordance with WIOA requirements and the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between the Chief Local Elected Officials (CLEOs) and the SWDB.

LDSS representatives from **Cecil County** and **Harford County** actively participate in the meetings with Susquehanna's workforce partners, which meets quarterly to share updates on programs, funding, and resources; discuss opportunities for enhanced service delivery and alignment; and, address emerging needs and challenges in serving TANF participants. LDSS representatives contribute to coordinated strategies with other WIOA partners, including Title I providers, DORS, and adult education programs, ensuring a seamless and comprehensive approach to service delivery.

LDSS representatives are encouraged to participate on SWDB subcommittees to influence specific areas such as:

- **Youth Services:** Addressing the needs of TANF youth participants.
- **Business Engagement:** Aligning TANF customer training with employer needs and job opportunities.
- **Economic Competitiveness:** Ensuring TANF programming aligns with regional workforce priorities.

LDSS representatives are apprised of the SWDB meeting schedule and are active participants in Board discussions. LDSS representatives provide updates on TANF services and initiatives, ensuring alignment with workforce system goals and identifying opportunities for improvement. LDSS representation ensures that TANF expectations, roles, and responsibilities are integrated into the Local Workforce Plan. LDSS representatives collaborate with SWDB and Susquehanna's workforce partners to align TANF services with workforce development programs, addressing barriers to employment and supporting self-sufficiency. The LDSS works with SWDB and partners to design training programs that meet employer demands and equip TANF participants with in-demand skills. LDSS representatives contribute to the development of reporting mechanisms that monitor TANF participant outcomes, ensuring accountability and continuous improvement.

By ensuring active representation from LDSS on the Local Board, engaging in subcommittees and partner meetings, and aligning TANF and workforce goals, the SWDB fosters an integrated system that effectively supports TANF participants in achieving meaningful employment and economic stability.

D. Describe what strategies your Board employs to support TANF recipients in accessing skills and credentialing, life management skills, and employment to improve the financial status of those exiting the TANF program.

The Susquehanna Workforce Development Board (SWDB) employs a range of strategies to support Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) recipients in accessing skills training, credentialing, life management skills, and employment opportunities. These efforts aim to improve financial stability for individuals exiting the TANF program while addressing barriers to workforce participation and fostering long-term self-sufficiency.

In partnership with Cecil County DSS, Cecil College, and other WIOA partners, the SWDB develops training programs that focus on:

- **Soft Skills and Job Readiness:** Programs designed to enhance employability by improving communication, teamwork, and workplace etiquette.
- **High-Demand Fields:** Training aligned with regional labor market needs, such as healthcare, IT, manufacturing, and logistics.

Cecil County DSS partners with Cecil College and the Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS) to offer on-site GED preparation classes and credentialing programs. These programs provide TANF recipients with the educational foundation needed to pursue higher-paying, career-oriented roles. TANF customers receive one-on-one job coaching and mentoring to support their career development and address specific employment challenges.

Cecil County DSS collaborates with WIOA partners to address systemic and individual barriers, including:

- **Transportation Solutions:** Exploring expanded options to ensure TANF recipients can access training and job opportunities.
- **Mental Health Services:** Connecting customers to counseling and support programs to improve emotional well-being.
- **Legal Assistance:** Organizing bonding and expungement clinics to help customers overcome legal barriers to employment.

As part of Harford County's Family Investment Program, the SWN provides life management skills training to TANF recipients participating in work-based training programs. These include:

- **Time Management and Financial Literacy:** Building practical skills to manage work schedules and personal finances.
- **Stress Management and Resilience:** Helping individuals navigate the challenges of balancing work, training, and family responsibilities.

Harford County DSS and SWN have established a transition plan to connect TANF recipients with Workforce Center services after fulfilling their work requirements. This plan provides ongoing career counseling and job search support.

TANF customers participate in non-paid work experiences to develop employability skills, gain real-world experience, and build professional networks. A Job Placement Specialist works with TANF recipients to identify job opportunities, prepare resumes, and navigate the application process for unsubsidized employment. The SWDB engages local employers through the Business Engagement Committee to identify job openings and create pathways for TANF recipients to access high-demand roles.

Finally, regular meetings provide a forum for sharing resources, identifying gaps, and coordinating services to better assist TANF recipients. WIOA partners are working to create a common intake and assessment form to streamline service delivery and ensure consistent support across programs.

By focusing on skills training, credentialing, life management, and job placement, the SWDB supports TANF recipients in achieving financial stability and long-term independence. These strategies ensure that TANF participants are equipped with the tools and resources needed to succeed in the workforce and contribute to the regional economy.

Section 9: Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment and Training (SNAP E&T)

A. Describe the process the local WIOA partners utilize, or plan to utilize, to support SNAP work registrants in accessing available support and workforce development programs and how many SNAP work registrants currently exist in your area.

The Susquehanna Workforce Development Board (SWDB) collaborates with Susquehanna's workforce partners and the Local Departments of Social Services (LDSS). Now, with the integration of **SNAP Employment and Training (E&T)** participants, also known as **SNAP work registrants**, the partnership between the SWDB, workforce partners and the LDSSs serving Cecil and Harford Counties will continue to grow deeper.

SNAP E&T training programs are free of cost to SNAP participants, run for an average of 12 to 16 weeks, and train participants for employment in industries that include, but are not limited to, welding, construction, machine operation, manufacturing, healthcare, hospitality, and computer technology/IT. Many SNAP E&T programs also offer job placement, retention and support services that help program graduates find and keep employment.

In Maryland, Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWDs) can volunteer to meet the work requirements for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). As additional information is provided regarding program requirements, Susquehanna's workforce partners look forward to building on the relationship with the Cecil and Harford County Department of Social Services in implementing SNAP work requirements.

B. List the available SNAP E&T third party partners in your local area and describe how the third-party partners are being engaged to ensure they are aware of all workforce development programs available in the WIOA system, streamline resources, and prevent duplication of services.

According to the Maryland State Workforce Plan, there are 33 third-party providers of SNAP E&T training. DHS uses Third-Party Partner Programs (50/50 SNAP E&T) to provide direct SNAP E&T services to customers statewide. These 33 Third-Party Partners include: Baltimore City Community College, BCR Cyber, Bugg and Hardnett, Byte Back, Center for Urban Families, Civic Works, Community College of Baltimore County, Community Engagement & Consultation Group, Inc., Goodwill Industries of the Chesapeake, Inc, Grow Home, Horizon Goodwill Industries, Humanim, I'm Still Standing Community Development Corporation, International Rescue Committee, It Works, Jane Addams Rescue Corporation Baltimore, Lifestyles, LightHouse, Living Classroom, Maryland Food Bank- Food Works Program, MCVET, National Center on Institutions and Alternatives Vocational Training, New Destiny Health, Npower, Pass It On, Paul's Place, Per Scholas, Roca, Inc., The Maryland Center for Hospitality Training, Union Kitchen, Vehicles For Change, Work First Foundation, PA2E, and Carroll Community College.

Many of these third-party providers are in Baltimore City. Susquehanna's workforce partners will work with SNAP work registrants to determine if these services are appropriate and accessible.

Section 10: Community Service Block Grant Functions

A. List the Community Service Block Grant (CSBG) providers in your service area and whether they provide employment and training activities.

The Susquehanna Workforce Area, comprising Cecil and Harford Counties, is served by the following CSBG providers. These organizations address poverty reduction and economic self-sufficiency, with varying degrees of focus on employment and training activities.

1. Harford Community Action Agency (HCAA)
Location: Harford County, Maryland

Employment and Training Activities:
- **Job Readiness Support -** Workshops on resume development, interview skills, and workplace professionalism.
- **Referral Services -** Coordination with the Susquehanna Workforce Network (SWN) and American Job Centers (AJCs) to connect participants with training opportunities and job placement resources.
- **Supportive Services -** Assistance with transportation, childcare, and other barriers to workforce participation.
- **Community Collaboration -** Partnerships with local employers and organizations to create employment pathways for participants.

2. **Maryland Rural Development Corporation (MRDC)**
Location: Cecil County, Maryland

Employment and Training Activities:
- MRDC **does not** directly provide employment and training services but collaborates with local partners to address barriers to economic stability.
- However, the MRDC offers housing support; access to basic needs, including food and energy assistance; and referrals to workforce development services offered by Susquehanna's workforce partners.

B. Describe your implementation and coordination process to enhance the provision of workforce development services for individuals receiving CSBG-supported services that includes:

- Potential co-location of CAAs and/or WIOA Partners at AJCs or CAAs depending on the nature of local partnerships and operations;
- Leveraging existing financial and in-kind contributions to the WIOA system to ensure coordination of services provided by multiple programs, creating a seamless approach to delivering services;
- Cross training and providing technical assistance to all WIOA Partners about CSBG;
- Ensuring that activities are countable and tracked for CSBG performance metrics;
- Access to business services and employer initiatives to attract and better serve employers by marketing joint services, minimizing the burden on employers who use the centers, and provide employer-focused services through a single point of entry rather than through all partnering programs; and

- Contributing and providing baseline outcomes data to the WIOA system through strategies for collecting and reporting varied program reporting requirements.

*All bullet points must be addressed

The Susquehanna Workforce Development Board (SWDB), in partnership with the **Harford Community Action Agency (HCAA)** and other WIOA partners, has established a coordinated approach to improve workforce development services for individuals receiving **Community Service Block Grant (CSBG)-supported services**. This strategy leverages co-location opportunities, in-kind contributions, and collaborative data-sharing practices to streamline resources and deliver impactful services.

HCAA provides office space at its **1010 Gateway Road location in Edgewood, MD**, enabling **SWN** staff to deliver training sessions and conduct one-on-one case management. Co-location enhances access to workforce services for CSBG participants and facilitates coordination between HCAA and SWN. HCAA's on-site **case manager** provides initial triage and referrals to SWN, ensuring seamless entry into workforce programs.

HCAA contributes office space and staff time for case management and referrals, supporting SWN's workforce development activities. This collaboration ensures efficient use of CSBG and WIOA resources, reducing duplication and maximizing the impact of available services. HCAA provides **Results Oriented Management and Accountability (ROMA)** training, facilitated by its on-staff ROMA Implementer, to SWN and other WIOA partners. This training focuses on:

- Implementing the **2-Generation/Whole Family approach**, a model that addresses the needs of parents and children simultaneously to break the cycle of poverty.

- Enhancing understanding of CSBG goals and performance metrics among workforce staff.

Cross-training sessions foster stronger relationships between HCAA, SWN, and other WIOA partners, ensuring aligned service delivery.

SWN reports customer progress to HCAA for input into **CAP60**, HCAA's CSBG performance metrics tracking system. HCAA assists SWN in collecting and reporting data for CSBG participants, creating a feedback loop that supports continuous improvement. Data-sharing protocols ensure accurate tracking of customer outcomes while maintaining compliance with privacy regulations.

SWN serves as the **primary point of contact for employer communication**, simplifying engagement for businesses and ensuring consistency in service delivery. HCAA refers participants to SWN for access to business services and employer opportunities, including job placement and work-based learning programs. HCAA leverages its website and other communication channels to promote SWN's workforce programs, broadening outreach and participant engagement.

By utilizing co-location, in-kind contributions, ROMA-based training, and coordinated data-sharing systems, the SWDB and HCAA effectively align CSBG and WIOA services to support workforce development for CSBG participants. This partnership ensures that individuals have access to the training, resources, and employment opportunities necessary to achieve economic self-sufficiency.

C. Describe the CAA representation on your Board to ensure that CSBG expectations, roles, and responsibilities are addressed in the Local Area. *(Refer to GWDB s Local Board certification policy)*

The Susquehanna Workforce Development Board (SWDB) ensures that **Community Action Agency (CAA) representation** is integrated into its structure to address **Community Service Block Grant (CSBG) expectations, roles, and responsibilities** effectively. This representation aligns with the requirements outlined in the **GWDB's Local Board certification policy** and ensures that national CSBG goals and local workforce priorities are collaboratively addressed.

Harford Community Action Agency (HCAA) designates a representative, typically the CEO, to serve on the Local Board. This appointment is in accordance with SWDB bylaws and WIOA regulations regarding Board composition. The HCAA representative articulates and advocates for the **national CSBG goals**, including:

- Supporting individuals and families with low incomes to achieve stability and economic security.
- Promoting healthy communities with economic opportunities for people with low incomes.
- Encouraging engagement and active participation of people with low incomes in building community opportunities.

The HCAA representative actively participates in the SWDB's **committee structure**, including subcommittees focused on business engagement, economic competitiveness, and youth services. This involvement ensures alignment of workforce development initiatives with CSBG goals and fosters collaboration between CAA and WIOA programs. The HCAA representative engages with the Susquehanna's workforce partners that meets quarterly to share resources, address challenges, and align services.

The HCAA representative coordinates with the tripartite CSBG Board to align workforce development efforts with the priorities and strategies identified through HCAA's governance structure. This collaboration ensures that issues, goals, and plans discussed during Local Board meetings reflect the needs and objectives of the CSBG community. The representative provides updates from the Local Board to the HCAA tripartite Board, ensuring continuous communication and integration of workforce and CSBG goals.

The HCAA representative ensures that the Local Board's activities align with CSBG expectations. The representative advocates for programs and policies that support training, employment, and financial literacy services for low-income individuals and families. He or she collaborates on initiatives that enhance economic opportunities and create healthier communities where low-income individuals reside. Finally, the representative encourages active participation of low-income individuals in workforce development and community-building activities.

The HCAA representative provides insights on challenges and opportunities specific to the CSBG population, informing the Local Board's decision-making process. The representative

supports the integration of performance tracking and reporting for CSBG-supported workforce development initiatives, ensuring accountability and alignment with national and local goals. The representative also works with other Local Board members to promote policies and programs that address barriers to employment and economic self-sufficiency for individuals with low incomes.

By designating an HCAA representative to serve on the Local Board and fostering active participation in its committees and partnerships, the SWDB ensures that CSBG expectations, roles, and responsibilities are effectively integrated into regional workforce strategies. This collaboration supports economic security, community development, and active engagement for individuals and families with low incomes.

Section 11: Jobs for Veterans State Grants (JVSG) Functions

A. Describe how your Board will provide priority of service to veterans and their eligible spouses.

The Susquehanna Workforce Development Board (SWDB) implements a comprehensive process to ensure **Priority of Service** is provided to **veterans** and their **eligible spouses** in alignment with the **Jobs for Veterans Act of 2002**, the **Veterans' Benefits, Health Care, and Information Technology Act of 2006**, and **Maryland's WIOA State Plan**. This process ensures that covered individuals receive first consideration for program participation and access to employment and training services across all federally funded programs.

Priority of service means that Veterans and eligible spouses receive first access to: Job search assistance; Career counseling and skills assessments; WIOA Title I-funded training programs; including occupational skills training, apprenticeships, and on-the-job training (OJT); and, Supportive services, including transportation, childcare, and housing assistance.

Veterans are defined in 38 USC § 101(2) as a "person who served in the active military, naval, air, or space service, and who was discharged or released therefrom under conditions other than dishonorable." It is important to note that this definition does not include a minimum number of days of service; only that their discharge must not be dishonorable.

When past income is an eligibility determinant for Federal employment or training programs, any amounts received as military pay or allowances by any person who served on active duty, and certain other specified benefits must be disregarded for the Veteran and for other individuals whose amounts would normally be applied in making an eligibility determination. Military earnings are not to be included when calculating income for veterans or transitioning service members for this priority, in accordance with 38 USC § 4213.

Further, 38 USC §101(24) and relevant guidance, the inclusion of "active" in the definition of a Veteran means any of the following:

- Active duty;
- Any period of active duty for training during which the individual concerned was disabled or died from a disease or injury incurred or aggravated in the line of duty;
- Any period of inactive duty training during which the individual concerned was disabled or died: (1) from an injury incurred or aggravated in the line of duty; or (ii) from an acute myocardial infarction, a cardiac arrest, or a cerebrovascular accident occurring during such training.

An "Eligible Person" as defined in 38 USC § 4101(5) and 38 USC § 4101(5) is:

1. The spouse of any person who died of a service-connected disability;
2. The spouse of any member of the Armed Forces serving in active duty who, at the time of application for assistance under this chapter, is listed, pursuant to Section 556 of Title 37

and regulations issued thereunder, by the Secretary concerned in one or more of the following categories and has been so listed for a total of more than ninety (90) days:

a) missing in action;
b) captured in the line of duty by a hostile force, or
c) forcibly detained or interned in the line of duty by a foreign government or power; or,

3. The spouse of any person who has a total disability permanent in nature resulting from a service-connected disability, or the spouse of a veteran who died while a disability so evaluated was in existence.

Federal law and interpretation (i.e., TEGL 10-09), the defines a "veteran" as a person who served at least one day in the active military, naval, or air service, and who was discharged or released under conditions other than dishonorable, as specified in 38 U.S.C. 101(2). Active service includes full-time Federal service in the National Guard or a Reserve component. This definition of "active service" does not include full-time duty performed strictly for training purposes (i.e., that which often is referred to as "weekend" or "annual" training), nor does it include full-time active duty performed by National Guard personnel who are mobilized by State rather than Federal authorities (State mobilizations usually occur in response to events such as natural disasters).

"Eligible spouse" as defined at section 2(a) of the JVA (38 U.S.C. 4215[a]) means the spouse of any of the following:

1. Any veteran who died of a service-connected disability;

2. Any member of the Armed Forces serving on active duty who, at the time of application for the priority, is listed in one or more of the following categories and has been so listed for a total of more than 90 days:

   a. Missing in action;
   b. Captured in the line of duty by a hostile force; or
   c.. Forcibly detained or interned in the line of duty by a foreign government or power;

3. Any veteran who has a total disability resulting from a service-connected disability, as evaluated by the Department of Veterans Affairs; or

4. Any veteran who died while a disability was in existence. A spouse whose eligibility is derived from a living veteran or service member (i.e., categories b. or c. above) would lose his or her eligibility if the veteran or service member were to lose the status that is the basis for the eligibility (e.g. if a veteran with a total service-connected disability were to receive a revised disability rating at a lower level). Similarly, for a spouse whose eligibility is derived from a living veteran or service member, that eligibility would be lost upon divorce from the veteran or service member.

The priority of service regulations refer to those veterans and spouses who are eligible for priority of service as "covered persons" and refer to those not eligible for priority of service as "non-covered persons."

In accordance with TEGL 10-09, this means that “a veteran or an eligible spouse either receives access to a service earlier in time than a non-covered person or, if the resource is limited, the veteran or eligible spouse receives access to the service instead of or before the non-covered person.”

In accordance with the State Workforce Plan and TEGL 10-09, some programs have certain priority requirements for certain groups of people. In that event, priority must be given in this order:

1. Veterans and eligible spouses who meet the mandatory priorities or spending requirement or limitation must receive the highest level of priority for the program or service;

2. Non-covered persons who meet the program’s mandatory priority or spending requirement or limitation then receive the second level of priority for the program or service;

3. Veterans and eligible spouses outside the program-specific mandatory priority or spending requirement or limitation then receive the third level of priority for the program or service; and

4. Non-covered persons outside the program-specific mandatory priority or spending requirement or limitation then receive the fourth level of priority for the program or service.

Customer Service Flow for Veterans

AJC staff provides core services and initial assessments to veterans. The receptionist or other AJC staff who work at the front desks are trained to determine whether any customers are veterans. Information can also be gathered on veteran status when the AJC front desk has customers complete their county’s “Customer Activity Sheet”. Customers who self-attest to veteran status shall receive priority of service from this point forward.

In Swan Creek, where no WP staff is present, veteran customers are linked to WP staff by phone or virtually, since WP services are needed to refer to DVOPs. This makes the overall process more efficient for the client. WP staff complete veteran screenings through staff in the Swan Creek office have also been cross trained to conduct Qualifying Barriers to Employment (QBE) assessments in cases where WP staff is not available.

AJC staff conduct the initial Personalized Needs Assessment with customers (including veterans) that need it. If a customer self-attests to veteran status, AJC staff complete MD Labor’s Qualifying Barrier to Employment (QBE) Checklist to determine whether the veteran qualifies as having one or more QBE.

When the Personalized Needs Assessment is completed, veterans choose from the following options:

1. If the customer qualifies as SBE and requires intensive services to overcome a barrier to employment, AJC staff assists in setting up an appointment for them to meet with a Disabled Veteran Outreach Program (DVOP) Specialist.

2. If the customer does not require intensive services, they are then referred to Basic Career Services resources, WIOA Title I resources, an AJC Workforce Development Specialist, or other resource as determined appropriate based on the Personalized Needs Assessment.

Note: When a veteran seeks services at an AJC where the DVOP is not currently available because of their rotation schedule, the receptionist provides the customer with the card and contact information of the DVOP and contacts the DVOP via email to provide them with the contact information of the customer so the two can coordinate a meeting time when the DVOP will be stationed at the AJC, if desired. Additionally, if needs, DVOP services may be accessed virtually using the statewide veterans virtual kiosk.

Verifying Veteran Status

Any individual self-identifying as a covered person should be provided immediate priority in the delivery of employment and training services. It is neither necessary nor appropriate to require an individual self-identifying as a veteran or eligible spouse to verify their status at the point of entry unless the individual who self-identifies as a covered Veteran or eligible spouse:

1. Is to immediately undergo eligibility determination and must be registered or enrolled in a program; or,

2. The applicable Federal program rules require verification of covered Veteran or eligible spouse status at that time.

Similarly, a covered person will not be denied access on a priority basis to any services provided by program staff in order to verify covered person status. Rather, an individual self-identifying as a Veteran or eligible spouse will be enrolled and provided immediate priority and then be permitted to follow-up subsequently with any required verification of his or her status as a Veteran or eligible spouse.

For services that require eligibility verification, such as classroom training, verification only needs to occur at the point at which a decision is made to commit the use of outside resources. For example, to receive training services under WIOA Title I programs, veteran status must be verified. In cases, such as these verifications is only necessary where a decision is made to commit outside resources to a covered person over another individual. For all other purposes, covered persons should be enrolled and provided immediate priority before providing verification as a covered person.

To receive Priority of Service for career services, covered persons may self-attest their veteran or eligible spouse status.

Veterans and Spouses who are Dislocated Workers

To receive services under the WIOA Title I - Dislocated Worker program, a dislocated worker is someone who:

1. Has been terminated or laid off, or received a notice of termination or layoff from employment;

2. Is eligible for, or has exhausted, Unemployment Insurance (UI) benefits;

3. Has demonstrated an appropriate attachment to the workforce, but is not eligible for UI and is unlikely to return to a previous industry or occupation;

4. Has been terminated or laid off, or received notification of termination or layoff from employment as a result of a permanent closure or substantial layoff;

5. Is employed at a facility where the employer has made the general announcement that the facility will be closed within 180 days;

6. Was self-employed, but is unemployed as a result of general economic conditions in the community or because of a natural disaster;

7. Is a displaced homemaker as defined by WIOA 3(16); or,

8. Is the spouse of a member of the Armed Forces on active duty (as defined in section 101(d)(1) of Title 10 U.S.C.), and who has experienced a loss of employment as a direct result of relocation to accommodate a permanent change in duty station of such member; or is the spouse of a member of the Armed Forces on active duty and is unemployed or underemployed and is experiencing difficulty in obtaining or upgrading employment.

Generally, service members exiting the military, including, but not limited to, recipients of Unemployment Compensation for Ex-Military members (UCX), qualify as dislocated workers. Active duty service members who separate by retirement may also qualify as dislocated workers. However, an active duty service member taking early retirement as an incentive must be taken on a case by case basis. In some cases, this type of separation may be the only choice a service member may have. Thus, the service member's retirement could be considered a dislocation. However, if the service member's separation is voluntary, then the service member would not qualify as a dislocated worker.

For WIOA Title I programs, Priority of Service is available to any Veteran who has served at least one day in the active military, naval, or air service, and who was discharged or released under conditions other than dishonorable. AJCs may consider documentation of a service member's release from active duty on a specific date as equivalent to a layoff notice for WIOA

Dislocated Worker Program eligibility. In the case of separating service members, because they may be on a terminal leave from the military, a separating service member may begin to receive career services while the service member may still be part of the Active Duty military, but has an imminent separation date. It is appropriate to provide career services to separating service members who will be imminently separating from the military, provided that their discharge will be anything other than dishonorable.

Partnerships with Veteran-Specific Programs

JVSG funded personnel are co-located within Susquehanna's workforce center. These employees of the Maryland Department of Labor serve qualifying veterans and their spouses.

Disabled Veterans Outreach Program (DVOP) specialists are co-located at the AJC to provide intensive case management, career counseling, and support to veterans with qualifying barriers to employment, including disabilities, homelessness, or justice involvement in accordance with 38 U.S.C. Section 4103A(a).

Local Veterans Employment Representatives (LVERs) engage with local employers to identify job opportunities and promote the hiring of veterans. They organize veteran-specific hiring events and job fairs in accordance with 38 U.S.C. Section 4104(b).

Monitoring and Accountability

The periodic monitoring reviews of services provided at Susquehanna's workforce centers is conducted by the Regional Local Veterans Employment Representative (RLVER) and/or designated staff assigned to the program by the Maryland Department of Labor. These reviews ensure compliance with priority of service requirements. Data on veterans 'participation and success in workforce programs is regularly reported to ensure effectiveness and inform program enhancements.

B. Describe how your Board will engage Local Veterans Employment Representatives in engaging and providing services to local businesses.

The Susquehanna Workforce Development Board (SWDB) actively collaborates with **Local Veterans Employment Representatives (LVERs)** to promote veteran hiring and engage with local businesses. LVERs play a critical role in advocating for veterans and building relationships with employers to create employment opportunities tailored to veterans 'skills and experiences.

Local Veterans Employment Representatives (LVERs) to engage businesses and create employment opportunities for veterans. LVERs are critical in bridging the gap between employers seeking skilled talent and veterans looking for meaningful employment. LVERs provide employers with information on:

- Incentives for hiring veterans, such as the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC);
- The benefits of participating in veteran-focused programs; and,
- Best practices for recruiting and retaining veteran employees.

The Local Board will support the LVER by promoting LVER services through social media, job fairs and email blasts.

Section 12: Trade Adjustment Assistance for Workers Program Functions

A. Describe how Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) services will be provided in the AJC system within your Area.

The **Susquehanna Workforce Development Board (SWDB)** ensures the seamless provision of **Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA)** services through the **American Job Center (AJC) system**. The TAA program provides aid to workers who lose their jobs or experience reduced hours and wages due to increased imports, exports, or production transfers abroad. The primary goal of TAA is to return trade-affected workers to suitable employment as quickly as possible by delivering coordinated resources, support, skills training, and employment services.

The TAA program provides a number of comprehensive employment and case management services to trade-affected workers, this includes:

Employment and Case Management:
- Conduct interviews and review training opportunities for each trade-affected worker.
- Inform workers about services and allowances available under the TAA program.
- Register participants in the **Maryland Workforce Exchange (MWE)** and assist with completing TAA applications.
- Perform initial assessments to determine needs, skills, and barriers to employment.

Individualized Employment Plans:
- Develop customized **Individual Employment Plans (IEPs)** in collaboration with trade-affected workers.
- Identify and secure appropriate training opportunities to enhance employability.

Training Support:
- Monitor training progress and provide guidance to ensure successful completion.
- Implement a **training waiver process** for participants unable to attend training due to specific circumstances.

Workshops and Employment Resources:
- Provide access to workshops, job fairs, and other employment-related events to facilitate reemployment.
- Offer access to supportive services, including transportation and childcare, through WIOA and partner programs.

Coordination with Partner Programs:
- Facilitate co-enrollment with **Adult, Dislocated Worker**, or other partner programs to deliver comprehensive, wrap-around services and reduce barriers to success.

Outreach and Rapid Response Services:
- Conduct outreach to affected workers and provide intake and orientation sessions for adversely affected workers.

- Include Rapid Response services to inform workers of available resources immediately following layoffs or plant closures.

Follow-Up Services:

- Deliver follow-up services to monitor reemployment success and address any lingering challenges.

This ensures timely outreach to affected workers to begin intake and orientation. TAA services are integrated into AJCs, allowing trade-affected workers to access a full array of employment and training services in one location. AJCs provide coordinated resources, ensuring TAA participants receive uninterrupted support throughout their journey to reemployment.

TAA participants are co-enrolled in WIOA Title I Dislocated Worker programs or other relevant partner programs to provide access to additional services and support. Partners coordinate to address barriers such as transportation, childcare, and housing. Proactive outreach ensures trade-affected workers are informed of their eligibility and the resources available under TAA. Employer engagement assists with the transition of affected workers and ensure awareness of TAA services.

By integrating TAA services into the AJC system and collaborating with WIOA partners, the SWDB ensures that trade-affected workers receive comprehensive, timely, and effective support. These efforts help participants acquire the skills, training, and resources needed to secure meaningful reemployment and achieve long-term economic stability.

B. Describe how Title I staff will provide the TAA services listed above in an integrated manner.

The Susquehanna Workforce Development Board (SWDB) ensures that **Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA)** services are delivered in an integrated and coordinated manner through the American Job Center (AJC) system. Title I staff and TAA-specific staff collaborate to provide seamless, participant-centered support, addressing the needs of trade-affected workers and ensuring compliance with program requirements.

Partner staff in Susquehanna's workforce centers conduct initial meetings with trade-affected workers to assess their needs, skills, and employment goals. Staff ensure participants are enrolled in the **Maryland Workforce Exchange (MWE)** and provide initial labor market information to guide career planning. If not already provided, partner staff deliver **Rapid Response services** to inform workers about available resources and the benefits of the TAA program. Participants are made aware of all available TAA services and allowances, including training, supportive services, and income supports.

TAA staff assist participants in exploring training options complete the TAA application in MWE, and ensure they meet the six criteria for training eligibility. TAA staff approve all training programs, training contracts, and training waivers in accordance with TAA program policies. Participant training progress is monitored to address any barriers that arise during the training period.

Partner staff and TAA staff coordinate all employment and case management activities to ensure participants receive comprehensive and consistent support. Assistance is provided to

help participants transition into suitable employment through career counseling, job search resources, and employer engagement. Follow-up services are conducted to monitor job placement outcomes, address post-employment needs, and provide additional support as necessary.

Roles and Responsibilities

1. Workforce Center Partner Staff
   - Conduct initial assessments and enroll participants in MWE.
   - Provide labor market information and Rapid Response services.
   - Ensure participants are informed of all TAA services and allowances.

2. TAA Staff
   - Facilitate training approvals, applications, and waivers.
   - Monitor progress and provide regular benchmarks and updates.
   - Address barriers, manage case activities, and coordinate follow-up services.

Partner staff and TAA staff meet regularly to ensure alignment of efforts and seamless delivery of services. All activities are designed to support the specific needs and goals of trade-affected workers, providing them with the tools and resources needed to achieve reemployment and economic stability. By integrating TAA services into the AJC system and fostering collaboration between Title I and TAA-specific staff, the SWDB ensures that trade-affected workers receive comprehensive, effective, and timely support throughout their journey to reemployment.

C. Describe how Trade participants will be co-enrolled in other programs.

Susquehanna's workforce centers follow a defined process to ensure that Trade-affected workers are evaluated for co-enrollment in programs such as WIOA Adult and Dislocated Worker. The process ensures alignment of services between TAA and WIOA programs, enabling participants to access a broader range of training, career, and supportive services. All participants are informed about the co-enrollment process and its benefits, such as enhanced access to resources, training opportunities, and wrap-around services.

In cases where a Trade-affected worker declines co-enrollment or is deemed ineligible, documentation must be provided and maintained in the participant's case file. Documentation ensures transparency and compliance with program requirements. Declining co-enrollment does not affect a participant's eligibility for TAA benefits and services. All eligible Trade-affected workers retain full access to TAA services regardless of their decision on co-enrollment.

Co-enrollment decisions and service delivery are documented and tracked within the **Maryland Workforce Exchange (MWE)** to ensure consistency and compliance with state and federal guidelines. Workers are informed of their rights and responsibilities under TAA, including the option to accept or decline co-enrollment without impacting their TAA eligibility.

Regular reviews of the co-enrollment process are conducted to identify opportunities for improvement and ensure alignment with program goals. WFC staff receive ongoing training on the importance of co-enrollment, documentation procedures, and compliance with TAA and WIOA policies.

By implementing a structured process for co-enrollment and maintaining flexibility for participant choice, the SWDB ensures that Trade-affected workers receive comprehensive, integrated services that support their transition to reemployment and economic stability.

Section 13: Unemployment Insurance Functions

A. Describe how WIOA Title I and Title III partners will support Unemployment Insurance claimants and provide meaningful access to Unemployment Insurance claimants, as required by WIOA.

The Susquehanna Workforce Development Board (SWDB) integrates services for **Unemployment Insurance (UI) claimants** into the **American Job Center (AJC) system**

through collaboration with **Maryland Department of Labor (MD Labor)** staff and WIOA Title I and Title III partners. These efforts ensure meaningful access to UI claimants and facilitate their connection to workforce development services.

Wagner-Peyser program staff lead efforts to disseminate information about UI throughout the local workforce system, ensuring claimants are aware of available resources and services. WP staff play a critical role in facilitating access to workforce services for UI claimants, acting as the primary provider of **Basic Career Services** for all job seekers at the region's Workforce Centers.

MD Labor staff ensure UI claimants participating in the **RESEA program** are connected to workforce system services, including career counseling, training programs, and supportive services. RESEA emphasizes a proactive approach, linking profiled UI recipients to services that expedite their return to suitable employment.

MD Labor staff conduct ROW sessions for profiled UI recipients, providing them with essential job search strategies, labor market information, and an overview of available workforce development resources. ROW serves as an entry point for connecting UI claimants to AJC services, including job placement assistance and training opportunities.

Susquehanna's AJCs provide virtual access points for UI claimants, ensuring availability of computers and internet to assist with claim filing and navigation of UI resources. MD Labor staff facilitate referrals for UI claimants to local workforce development services, including Title I programs and supportive services, creating a seamless transition between UI and reemployment support.

MD Labor staff provide job search assistance, resume development, interview preparation, and access to labor market information. UI claimants are referred to Title I staff for additional support, including:

- Development of Individual Employment Plans (IEPs).
- Referrals to training programs, such as occupational skills training and on-the-job training (OJT).
- Access to supportive services, including transportation and childcare.

WP staff engage with local employers to identify job opportunities suitable for UI claimants, ensuring a direct connection to the labor market. Job fairs and recruitment events are organized to facilitate interactions between claimants and employers.

B. Describe how your Board will utilize the Wagner-Peyser program and the RESEA and ROW programs to provide access to local workforce development services for Unemployment Insurance claimants.

The Susquehanna Workforce Development Board (SWDB) ensures that **Wagner-Peyser (WP)** staff, in coordination with **Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA)** and **Reemployment Opportunity Workshop (ROW)** programs, provide comprehensive support for **Unemployment Insurance (UI)** claimants. These efforts align with **Training and**

Employment Guidance Letter (TEGL) No. 11-23 and prioritize seamless integration of services through the American Job Center (AJC) system.

RESEA and ROW customers are classified as **dislocated workers**, making them eligible for specialized services under WIOA programs. WP staff assess ROW and RESEA participants to identify their skills, career goals, and barriers to reemployment. Participants are introduced to the full range of workforce system services, including career counseling, training opportunities, and partner program resources.

WP staff ensure that RESEA and ROW customers are familiar with the workforce system's resources, including training programs, supportive services, and job placement assistance. WP staff refer participants to WIOA Title I programs or other partner services when additional support is required to achieve reemployment goals. Participants receive career counseling, labor market information, and job search assistance to expedite their return to suitable employment.

During in-person meetings, WIOA staff provide individualized support to RESEA and ROW participants, including:

- **Training Services:** Access to occupational skills training, certifications, and apprenticeships.
- **Supportive Services:** Assistance with transportation, childcare, or other barriers to workforce participation.
- **Partner Referrals:** Coordination with programs such as adult education, vocational rehabilitation, or community organizations.

WIOA staff enhance reemployment activities initiated during RESEA and ROW participation, offering ongoing support to help participants achieve long-term career success. Services are accessible through both in-person sessions at AJCs and virtual platforms, ensuring flexibility for participants. The integration of WP, RESEA, and ROW ensures participants receive support, addressing immediate job search needs and long-term career planning.

By integrating Wagner-Peyser services with RESEA and ROW programs, and supplementing these efforts with WIOA resources, the SWDB ensures comprehensive support for UI claimants. This approach enhances reemployment opportunities, reduces barriers, and aligns with federal and state workforce priorities.

Section 14: Senior Community Service Employment Program Functions

A. List the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) providers in your Area and how SCSEP is administered, including grantee and subgrantee information, if applicable.

The **Center for Workforce Inclusion, Inc.** (the **Center**) is the designated provider of the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) in the Susquehanna Workforce Area. SCSEP services are administered through the Center's direct oversight and are

implemented in collaboration with local organizations and host agencies that support program participants.

B. Describe how SCSEP services will be integrated within the AJC system in your area, including key components of the SCSEP program available locally.

The Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) services provided by the Center for Workforce Inclusion, Inc. are seamlessly integrated into the American Job Center (AJC) system within the Susquehanna Workforce Area. This collaboration ensures that SCSEP participants and older workers have access to comprehensive workforce development resources, supportive services, and employment opportunities.

1. **Information and Referral Services**
   - SCSEP-Ineligible Customers - Customers who do not meet SCSEP eligibility criteria are referred to AJCs or other appropriate service providers for alternative workforce development services.

   - SCSEP-Eligible Customers - Eligible customers are referred to SCSEP-related programs for enrollment; supportive services such as transportation, housing, or healthcare assistance; and, community-based resources to address additional needs.

2. Assignment of SCSEP Participants to AJCs
   - SCSEP participants may be assigned to AJCs, where they assist with expanding services and supporting the mission of the Centers.

   - Participants gain work experience in customer service, administrative support, or other roles while helping AJCs enhance their service delivery capacity.

   - Assignments at AJCs provide participants with exposure to the broader workforce development system, preparing them for unsubsidized employment.

3. Collaboration on Data and Performance
   - The Center provides SCSEP performance metrics, including participant outcomes, training completion, and job placements, to support workforce system planning and evaluation.
   - SCSEP data is used to identify service gaps, refine strategies, and ensure alignment with local labor market needs.

4. Expertise in Serving Older Adults
   - SCSEP staff contribute expertise in working with older adults, a priority population in the workforce system, by providing insights into barriers faced by older workers; and offering guidance on tailoring services to meet the needs of older adults.

   - SCSEP staff participate in AJC cross-training initiatives to enhance collaboration and improve service delivery for older adults.

5. Participation in Workforce Board Activities
   - SCSEP staff actively participate in the SWDB's **Business Engagement Committee** and other workforce development committees to promote the hiring of older workers; and, share knowledge and resources that support the inclusion of older adults in workforce initiatives.

- Collaboration on specialized projects and activities, such as job fairs and employer outreach events, enhances opportunities for SCSEP participants to transition into unsubsidized employment.

6. Key Components of SCSEP Locally
The SCSEP program provides the following core services to older adults in the Susquehanna Workforce Area:

- **Community Service Assignments** - Participants are placed with local nonprofit and public agencies to gain part-time work experience that builds skills and contributes to community development.

- **Job Training and Career Development** - Participants receive training tailored to local labor market needs, including digital literacy, customer service, and other in-demand skills.

- **Career Counseling and Supportive Services** - Participants are provided with individualized career counseling and referrals to supportive services to address barriers to employment.

- **Job Placement Assistance** - SCSEP staff work with the SWDB's Business Services Team to connect participants with local employers and facilitate their transition to unsubsidized employment.

7. Continuous Improvement
- Input from SCSEP participants and host agencies is used to refine program services and address emerging needs.

- Regular communication and coordination between SCSEP staff, AJC partners, and the SWDB ensure effective integration of services and alignment with local workforce priorities.

By embedding SCSEP services within the AJC system, leveraging the expertise of the Center for Workforce Inclusion, Inc., and aligning with local workforce goals, the SWDB ensures that older workers in the Susquehanna Workforce Area receive comprehensive support to enhance their skills, reenter the workforce, and achieve economic stability.

Section 15: WIOA Section 188 and Equal Opportunity Functions

A. Provide the designation of the local Equal Opportunity Officer, including their name, location, email, phone number, and TTY (or equivalent).

The Equal Opportunity Officer is Sheatiel Harris. She is located at the SWN Administrative Office, 410 Girard Street, Havre de Grace, Maryland 21078. Her email address is sharris@SWNetwork.org and her telephone number is 410-939-4240. Connect using MD Relay by dialing 7-1-1 or 800-201-7165.

B. Explain how AJC operators and partners will ensure physical and programmatic accessibility for individuals with disabilities and Limited English Proficiency. Include plans for staff training and support to address these needs. (See WIOA Section 188, 29 CFR Part 38, and the Americans with Disabilities Act)

The Susquehanna Workforce Development Board (SWDB), in collaboration with American Job Center (AJC) operators and WIOA partners, ensures that all services are physically and programmatically accessible to individuals with disabilities and those with **Limited English Proficiency (LEP)**. These efforts comply with **WIOA Section 188**, **29 CFR Part 38**, and the **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)**.

Each Workforce Center conducts an **annual assessment** of physical and programmatic accessibility to ensure compliance with ADA standards and WIOA Section 188. Assessments are reviewed by SWDB staff and Maryland Department of Labor representatives to identify and address any deficiencies.

The **Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS)** plays a key role in ensuring accessibility by:

- Providing eligible job seekers with disabilities access to specialized employment-related services.
- Assisting Workforce Centers in identifying needs and developing strategies to enhance accessibility.

A streamlined referral process is in place between Workforce Centers, DORS, and other specialized organizations to ensure seamless service delivery for individuals with disabilities. Susquehanna's workforce centers are equipped with adaptive technologies, such as screen readers, magnifiers, and accessible computer workstations, to support individuals with disabilities in accessing resources and services.

Workforce Centers utilize **LanguageLine Solutions** and other interpretation services to ensure LEP individuals can effectively access all services and resources. Written materials, including key program information, are available in multiple languages as required by local demographics. Centers strive to hire bilingual staff and provide cultural competency training to ensure staff can effectively communicate with LEP customers. Centers also adhere to WIOA Section 188 regulations to ensure LEP individuals can access programs and services without language barriers.

AJC staff receive regular training on ADA requirements, Section 188 regulations, and strategies for serving individuals with disabilities and LEP individuals. Topics include:

- Disability etiquette training
- Use of assistive technology and interpretation services
- Best practices for serving diverse populations

DORS provides technical assistance to Workforce Center staff on implementing accessibility strategies and accommodating specific needs. Ongoing professional development opportunities ensure staff are up to date on evolving regulations and best practices. By

adhering to ADA standards, leveraging partnerships with DORS, and providing staff training and accessible tools, the SWDB ensures that all Workforce Centers deliver high-quality services to individuals with disabilities and LEP. These efforts reflect a commitment to access and compliance with federal regulations.

C. Provide an acknowledgment that the Local Board understands that, while Section 188 of WIOA and 29 CFR Part 38 ensures equal opportunity for individuals with disabilities, sub-recipients may also be subject to the requirements of:

- **Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, which prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities by recipients of Federal financial assistance;**
- **Title I of the ADA, which prohibits discrimination in employment based on disability;**
- **Title II of the ADA, which prohibits State and local governments from discriminating on the basis of disability;**
- **Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act; and**
- **Maryland Anti-Discrimination laws, including 5 Md. STATE GOVERNMENT Code Ann. §10-1101, which stipulates that oral language services must be delivered on-site for those in frequent contact with a service provider.**

***All bullet points must be addressed**

As a condition of financial assistance under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014, the grant applicant assures, with respect to operation of WIOA funded programs or activities and all agreement or arrangements to carry out the WIOA funded programs or activities, that it will comply fully with the nondiscrimination and equal opportunity provisions and requirements o f Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, which prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities by recipients of Federal financial assistance; Title I of the ADA, which prohibits discrimination in employment based on disability; Title II of the ADA, which prohibits State and local governments from discriminating on the basis of disability; Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act; and Maryland Anti-Discrimination laws.

D. Describe how your Board will ensure meaningful access to all customers.

The Susquehanna Workforce Development Board (SWDB) is committed to providing **meaningful access** to workforce development services for all customers, including individuals with disabilities, those with Limited English Proficiency (LEP), and those pursuing non-traditional employment goals. The Board's approach leverages **American Job Centers (AJCs)**, system affiliate sites, and collaborative partnerships to deliver accessible services while continually striving to enhance system effectiveness.

The majority of services are provided through the region's Workforce Centers (WFCs) and affiliate sites, which serve as central hubs for job seekers and employers. Centers are equipped with adaptive technology and resources to ensure accessibility for all customers.

Language interpretation services and technology, such as **LanguageLine Solutions**, are deployed to ensure LEP individuals can fully access programs and services. Workforce Centers provide assistive technologies, such as screen readers and accessible workstations, to ensure individuals with disabilities can navigate and utilize services. Technology is used to connect customers pursuing non-traditional career paths with specialized training programs and labor market information.

Partner access strategies, including those for specific populations, are outlined and formalized in **Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)** between the SWDB and workforce partners. The MOU specifies roles, responsibilities, and procedures for ensuring accessibility and integrating services across the workforce system. The SWDB uses the local MOU as a flexible and adaptive mechanism to enhance system access, allowing for regular revisions and updates based on best practices and emerging needs.

The SWDB regularly reviews partner compliance with MOU provisions to ensure alignment with access strategies and federal requirements, such as **WIOA Section 188** and the **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)**. Partner organizations share best practices, which are incorporated into system-wide strategies to improve service delivery and customer access.

The SWDB acknowledges that the full development of a comprehensive workforce system is an ongoing effort, with a focus on continuously improving access and service delivery. Through collaboration with partners, technology integration, and adherence to MOUs, the SWDB strives to increase the effectiveness of the workforce system over time.

Partners have identified key components essential to building a comprehensive and accessible system, including:

- Collaboration and alignment of services.
- Investment in technology to support diverse customer needs.
- Training and resources for staff to deliver high-quality services.

By utilizing Workforce Centers, deploying technology, leveraging Partner MOUs, and maintaining a focus on continuous improvement, the SWDB ensures that all customers—regardless of background or barriers—can access meaningful workforce development services. This approach reflects the Board's commitment to accessibility and compliance with WIOA and ADA standards.

E. Describe your Board's procedure for handling grievances and complaints from participants and other interested parties affected by the local AJC system, including partners and service providers. (29 CFR 38.69-97) Provide a separate description for the following:

- **Complaints of discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, political affiliation, or belief, as well as citizenship or participation in WIOA Title I-funded programs.**

- **Complaints and grievances unrelated to discrimination, including labor standards violations.**

- **Remedies for WIOA Title I violations may include suspension or termination of payments, barring placement with non-compliant employers, reinstatement of employees, payment of lost wages/benefits, and other equitable relief where applicable.**

The Susquehanna Workforce Development Board (SWDB) has established detailed grievance and complaint procedures to address concerns from participants, partners, and other interested parties involved in the **American Job Center (AJC) system**. These procedures

ensure compliance with **WIOA Section 188**, **29 CFR Part 38**, **20 CFR Part 683.60**, and the **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)** while promoting resolution of all complaints.

1. Complaints Alleging Discrimination

Complaints alleging discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, political affiliation or belief, citizenship, or participation in WIOA Title I-funded programs are handled as Type I complaints under the SWDB's grievance policy.

Filing the Complaint

- **Eligibility:** All individuals enrolled in WIOA-funded programs are entitled to civil rights under federal law, including protections against discrimination.
- **Submission Timeline:** Complaints must be filed within **180 days** of the event that triggered the grievance.
- Complaints are documented using the **Complaint Procedures Form** and can be submitted to the SWN Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Officer; the State Equal Opportunity Officer; or, the **Civil Rights Center (CRC)** of the U.S. Department of Labor.
- The complainant is encouraged to attempt informal resolution by discussing concerns with the involved parties before pursuing a formal grievance.

Upon receipt of a written complaint, the EEO Officer will convene a hearing within **15 days**, presided over by an impartial hearing officer. A written decision, including recommendations for resolution, will be issued within **30 days** of the initial filing. A complainant may file directly with the CRC at any time without waiting for a local hearing or resolution.

Subrecipients must notify the SWDB EEO Officer of any written discrimination complaints they receive. The SWDB will inform the Maryland Department of Labor and initiate monitoring of the case.

2. Complaints Not Alleging Discrimination

Non-discrimination complaints, classified as Type II complaints, include grievances related to labor standards violations, program administration, and participant employment conditions. Complaints must be filed within **one year** of the event triggering the grievance. Complaints must be submitted to either the subrecipient managing the program or the SWDB EEO Officer and documented using the **Complaint Documentation Form**.

The EEO Officer will convene a hearing within **30 days** of receiving the complaint, with written notice provided to all parties involved. A written decision will be issued within **60 days** of the complaint's filing. If a satisfactory resolution is not achieved, the complainant may request a review by the Maryland Department of Labor within **10 days** of the decision.

Complaints arising from investigations or monitoring reports of subgrantees, contractors, and employers will follow the Type II process. Employers hosting WIOA participants are required to have grievance procedures available for issues related to employment terms and conditions.

3. Remedies for WIOA Title I Violations

If violations of WIOA Title I requirements are identified, the following remedies may be applied:

- **Suspension or Termination:** Payments to non-compliant employers or entities may be suspended or terminated.

- **Employer Exclusion:** Employers failing to meet compliance standards may be barred from hosting participants.
- **Reinstatement:** Wrongfully terminated employees may be reinstated.
- **Compensation:** Lost wages, benefits, and other equitable relief may be provided to affected participants.

4. Dissemination of Procedures

The SWDB ensures that grievance and complaint procedures are communicated to all relevant parties:

- **Participants:** Procedures are provided at enrollment or upon first contact with WIOA services.
- **Subrecipients and Contractors:** Procedures are shared prior to contract execution.
- **Interested Parties:** Procedures are made available upon request.

5. Monitoring and Accountability

- **Annual Review:** Complaint procedures and records are reviewed annually to ensure compliance with federal regulations.
- **Documentation:** Records of grievances and resolutions are maintained for monitoring and reporting purposes.

By adhering to these grievance and complaint procedures, the SWDB ensures fairness, transparency, and compliance while addressing the concerns of all stakeholders in the workforce development system.

F. Describe how an individual can request accommodation.

The Susquehanna Workforce Development Board (SWDB) is committed to ensuring that all services provided through the **American Job Center (AJC) system** are accessible to qualified individuals with disabilities in full compliance with the **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)**. Individuals can request accommodations at any point in their interaction with the workforce system to ensure their needs are met in a timely and effective manner.

Accommodations can be requested at the **first point of contact** with Workforce Center staff, whether in person, via phone, or email. Customers may request accommodations at any time during their participation in workforce development programs or activities. Individuals can submit accommodation requests through the **Susquehanna Workforce Network (SWN) website**, providing an accessible and convenient option. Susquehanna's workforce center partners and collaborating agencies can assist individuals in submitting accommodation requests as part of a **coordinated referral process**.

Workforce Center staff collaborate with partner organizations, including the **Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS)** and other disability-focused organizations, to ensure that individuals with disabilities receive the specialized services they need. Referrals are streamlined to reduce delays and ensure individuals are connected to appropriate resources and support systems.

Workforce Center staff are trained to provide **appropriate and reasonable accommodations** based on individual needs, as required under the ADA. Examples include:

- Assistive technology, such as screen readers or magnifiers.
- Physical accessibility modifications, such as wheelchair-accessible workstations.
- Communication aids, including sign language interpreters or real-time captioning services.

Staff work closely with individuals to identify and implement accommodations tailored to their specific requirements. Workforce Center staff receive regular training on ADA compliance and best practices for accommodating individuals with disabilities. Staff are equipped to respond to accommodation requests with empathy, efficiency, and professionalism, ensuring a welcoming and inclusive environment for all customers.

Feedback from individuals who request accommodations is collected to evaluate the effectiveness of services and identify opportunities for improvement. The SWDB conducts annual accessibility assessments to ensure that facilities, programs, and services remain fully compliant with ADA standards.

By offering multiple channels for requesting accommodations, fostering collaboration with partners, and maintaining a commitment to ADA compliance, the SWDB ensures that individuals with disabilities can fully access and benefit from workforce development services.

G. Describe your Board's policy on providing aid, benefits, services, training, and employment, including assurance of reasonable accommodation for qualified individuals with disabilities unless it poses undue hardship.

The Susquehanna Workforce Development Board (SWDB) is committed to ensuring that all programs, activities, services, training, and employment opportunities under its jurisdiction are accessible to qualified individuals with disabilities, in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and applicable federal regulations.

The Local Board assures that all programs and activities, when viewed in their entirety, will be accessible to qualified individuals with disabilities. Services, benefits, and training opportunities are designed and implemented to ensure meaningful participation for individuals with disabilities.

The SWDB ensures that **reasonable accommodations** are made for qualified individuals with disabilities to enable them to access aid, benefits, services, training, and employment.Accommodations may include, but are not limited to:

- Modifications to facilities for physical accessibility.
- Provision of assistive technology or equipment.
- Availability of sign language interpreters or other communication aids.
- Flexible scheduling or task modifications for employment or training activities.

Accommodations will be provided unless doing so would result in **undue hardship** to the organization.

Definition of Undue Hardship: While accommodating someone's disability may pose some difficulty, unless the burden is **undue or unreasonable**, the Local Board prioritizes the need to accommodate. Factors considered for undue hardship include: the nature and cost of the accommodation; and the overall resources and operation of the program or activity.

The SWDB ensures that individuals with disabilities receive equal access to all programs and services without discrimination or barriers. Modifications are made to policies, practices, or procedures where necessary to accommodate individuals with disabilities, unless such changes would fundamentally alter the nature of the program or service.

Individuals with disabilities can request accommodations at any time through Workforce Centers, partner organizations, or online via the Susquehanna Workforce Network (SWN) website. Upon receiving a request, SWN staff will evaluate the accommodation needs in collaboration with the individual to ensure effective implementation without undue delay.

By ensuring reasonable accommodations, maintaining accessibility, and adhering to ADA standards, the SWDB reaffirms its commitment to fostering an inclusive workforce development system that empowers individuals with disabilities to access meaningful opportunities without unnecessary barriers.

H. Describe how your Board will comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act, including providing reasonable accommodation for materials, technology, and facility accessibility. Also, outline how staff will be trained and supported in addressing the needs of individuals with disabilities.

The Susquehanna Workforce Development Board (SWDB) is committed to ensuring that all programs, services, materials, technology, and facilities provided through the American Job Centers (AJCs) are accessible to qualified individuals with disabilities, in full compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). This includes providing reasonable accommodations and staff training to address the needs of individuals with disabilities effectively.

Materials such as brochures, training guides, and informational resources will be available in alternative formats, such as large print, Braille, and digital formats compatible with screen readers. AJCs will be equipped with assistive technologies, such as:

- Screen readers.
- Magnification software.
- Adaptive keyboards and mouse devices.
- Speech-to-text and text-to-speech software.

All AJC facilities will comply with ADA standards for physical accessibility, ensuring:

- Wheelchair-accessible entrances, restrooms, and workstations.
- Clearly marked pathways and signage.

A coordinated referral process between Workforce Centers, the **Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS)**, and other disability-focused organizations will ensure that individuals with disabilities receive specialized employment-related services tailored to their needs. DORS will provide eligible job seekers with individualized services, including:

- Vocational assessments
- Career counseling
- Workplace accommodation assistance.

Workforce staff will provide **appropriate and reasonable accommodations** to individuals with disabilities, including:

- Interpreters for individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing.
- Adjustments to program schedules or service delivery methods.
- Access to auxiliary aids and services, such as captioning or note-taking assistance.

AJCs will work with DORS and other partners to identify and implement accommodations that meet individual needs effectively.Workforce staff will participate in training provided by DORS and other experts, focusing on:

- Programmatic and physical accessibility
- Disability etiquette
- Best practices for serving individuals with disabilities.

Ongoing training opportunities will ensure that staff stay updated on ADA compliance requirements and emerging accessibility tools and practices. Staff will have access to technical assistance and resources to address accessibility challenges and provide high-quality services to individuals with disabilities.

By prioritizing accessibility, coordinating with DORS and other partners, and investing in staff training, the SWDB ensures that all individuals with disabilities can fully participate in the workforce system.

I. Describe your Board's policy and strategy to ensure effective communication with individuals with disabilities, including those with visual or hearing impairments, equal to that with others.

The Susquehanna Workforce Development Board (SWDB) is committed to ensuring effective communication with all individuals, including those with visual or hearing impairments, that is equal to communication provided to others. This strategy is designed to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and ensure that individuals with disabilities have full access to Workforce Center services and programs.

The SWDB collaborates with the **Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS)** to ensure services are fully accessible to individuals with disabilities, including those with visual or hearing impairments. DORS provides the SWDB with technical assistance and guidance on best practices for effective communication and accessibility. A streamlined referral process between Workforce Centers and DORS facilitates the delivery of specialized services to individuals with disabilities.

Workforce Center staff ensure that communications with individuals with disabilities, including those with visual or hearing impairments, are equivalent in quality, timeliness, and effectiveness to those provided to other customers. Appropriate accommodations are made to support communication needs, including:

- Hearing Impairments - Provision of sign language interpreters; use of assistive listening devices; and, real-time captioning services

- Visual Impairments - Materials in alternative formats, such as Braille, large print, or accessible digital formats; use of screen readers or text-to-speech software; staff assistance with navigating written materials.

Workforce Centers are equipped with adaptive technologies to ensure communication accessibility for individuals with visual or hearing impairments.

Workforce Center staff receive regular training, in collaboration with DORS, on:
- Effective communication techniques for individuals with visual or hearing impairments.
- Use of assistive technologies and adaptive tools.
- Disability etiquette and sensitivity.

Staff participate in workshops and seminars to stay informed about new technologies and practices for accessible communication.

The SWDB prioritizes the needs of individuals with disabilities, ensuring they receive personalized support and accommodations that enable full participation in workforce programs. Collaboration with organizations such as DORS enhances the capacity of Workforce Centers to provide accessible communication services. By coordinating with DORS, training staff, and utilizing adaptive technologies, the SWDB ensures that individuals with visual or hearing impairments experience effective communication equal to that of all other customers.

J. Describe how your Board will meet the language needs of individuals with Limited English Proficiency who seek services or information. Include how your Board will disseminate information to individuals with Limited English Proficiency, including using oral interpretation and written translation services. (See the Maryland Anti-Discrimination law, including 5 MD. STATE GOVERNMENT Code Ann. §10-1101)

Refer to Maryland Labor's Nondiscrimination Plan:
http://www.labor.maryland.gov/employment/ndp/
Refer to Maryland Labor's Language Access Plan:
http://www.labor.maryland.gov/employment/wioa-access.pdf

The Susquehanna Workforce Development Board (SWDB) ensures that individuals with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) can access services and information through a range of measures designed to support effective communication. These efforts align with the Maryland Anti-Discrimination Law, Maryland Labor's Nondiscrimination Plan, and Maryland Labor's Language Access Plan to provide meaningful access to workforce programs and activities.

The SWDB and Title I programs take reasonable steps to provide access to all workforce services, programs, and activities for individuals with limited English skills, ensuring their ability

to participate and interact fully. Susquehanna's workforce centers strive to employ bilingual staff capable of providing oral interpretation services for customers with limited English proficiency.
Multilingual materials and signage are prominently displayed in Workforce Centers, including:

- **"I Speak" posters** to help individuals identify their preferred language.
- **LanguageLine posters** listing 38 identifiable languages near entry points.

Oral interpretation services are available through:

- Bilingual Workforce Center staff.
- Free or low-cost interpreters obtained through **MD Labor/DWDAL**, community colleges, or other local resources.
- **LanguageLine Solutions**, which provides professional interpretation in multiple languages.

Key program information, brochures, and signage are translated into the most commonly spoken languages in the region to ensure accessibility. LEP individuals are referred to English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes provided by:

- **Cecil College** and **Harford Community College** through their Continuing Education Departments.
- Local Adult Education providers.

Signage and informational materials in multiple languages are displayed at Workforce Centers to inform LEP individuals of available services. Targeted outreach is conducted in LEP communities to raise awareness of workforce services and resources. The SWDB ensures that the **Susquehanna Workforce Network (SWN)** website and online resources are accessible to LEP individuals, including translation options for key pages and materials.

Workforce Center staff receive regular training on cultural competence and best practices for serving LEP customers. Staff are trained to identify language needs, use interpretation tools like LanguageLine, and refer individuals to appropriate language services. The SWDB works with **MD Labor/DWDAL** to provide technical assistance and ensure compliance with state and federal language access requirements.

By employing bilingual staff, utilizing interpretation and translation services, and collaborating with ESOL providers and community colleges, the SWDB ensures that individuals with limited English proficiency have access to workforce services. This commitment supports meaningful engagement with LEP communities and compliance with state and federal regulations.

Section 16: Fiscal, Performance, and Other Functions

A. **Provide an identification of the entity responsible for the disbursal of grant funds as determined by the chief elected official or the Governor.** ***(WIOA Section 107(d)(12)(B)(i)(III) and Section 107(d)(12)(B)(i))***

The Chief Local Elected Officials, Harford County Executive and the Cecil County Executive, executed a Memorandum of Agreement that establishes Harford County Government as the Grant Recipient and the Susquehanna Workforce Network, Inc. as the Fiscal Agent and Administrative Entity authorized to oversee and manage WIOA resources on behalf of the CLEO's.

The SWN Board of Directors oversees workforce area operations and establishes policy through subcommittees. The day-to-day operation of the Local Board is provided through a hired staff. The Executive Director is directly responsible to the Board of Directors, has signature authorities as designated by the Susquehanna Board and supervises and manages employment and training services and activities in the Workforce Area.

B. Describe the financial sustainability of the AJC services with current funding levels, and a description of the ability to adjust should funding levels change.

WIOA allocation formula(s) are a significant factor in the sustainability of the region's Workforce Centers. MOU's/RSA's with WIOA Partners will also support Center operations. The Susquehanna Workforce Network evaluates the sustainability of the Workforce Centers on an annual basis and monitors revenues and expenses on a monthly basis to determine if

adjustments need to be made. Adjustments are made by examining all options to include analyzing costs, budget availability, and availability of additional resources and appropriateness of cost distribution/allocation methodologies. This may result in adjustments to the budget and/or services as necessary.

C. Describe the competitive process used to award the subgrants and contracts in your Area for activities carried out under this title, including risk assessment of potential subgrantees and contractors.

The SWN has established a Service Provider selection process that conforms with acceptable procurement standards. The primary solicitation instrument that will be utilized is a Request for Proposal (RFP). This RFP and its corresponding evaluation criteria will ensure a competitive process that includes:
• Demonstrated performance is a primary consideration
• Non-duplication of facilities or service
• Opportunity to provide educational services by appropriate education agencies
• Employment and training services which meet SWN guidelines

In determining "demonstrated performance," the SWN primarily will utilizes the following evaluation criteria:

Points	Award Criteria
5	Consistent ability to exceed contractually required outcomes and performance standards, as demonstrated by success for 3 or more consecutive years.
4	Consistent ability to exceed contractually required outcomes and performance standards, as demonstrated by success for one or two years.
3	Has met contractually required outcomes and performance standards for at least two years.
2	Has met contractually required outcomes and performance standards during the previous year of operation.
1	Sporadic ability in meeting required outcomes and performance standards.
0	Consistent failure to meet performance expectations.

The primary consideration in selecting providers will be the effectiveness of the agency or organization in delivering comparable or related services, based on the above. Additional evaluation criteria will include, but not be limited to, ability to meet program design requirements; relevance and reasonableness of costs and cost justification; past performance and experience; adequacy of financial resources; satisfactory record of integrity, business ethics, and fiscal accountability; necessary organization, experience, accounting and operational controls; the technical skills to perform the work.

In using the RFP process, which provides for notification of its availability through the development of RFP mailing lists of those agencies wishing to receive the RFP, the S WN will provide for the opportunity for community-based organizations to be considered, as well as

providing the opportunity for appropriate education agencies in the Region to provide educational services.

Appeals Procedure
Respondents dissatisfied with any SWN procurement recommendation who seek to appeal the matter to the SWN Executive Committee must file a written appeal with the SWN Executive Director. All appeals must be received by dates and times specified in the relevant Request for Proposal. The Executive Committee, at its discretion, will decide whether to grant the appellants an open hearing.

Youth Services Providers
The selection of youth service providers is primarily conducted through a RFP process. The RFP will reflect the eligibility categories and program models that reflect Best Practices. This competitive process will allow for the specific delivery of services, targeted to a specific youth segment, identified by the Youth Committee. Final approval of the proposals will rest with the Local Board, upon recommendations from the Youth Committee.

Adult and Disclosed Worker Service Providers
With the CLEO's and Local Board's approval, the SWN will provide career services. The SWN has responsibility for identifying eligible providers of services. The State administers the list of eligible training providers. Due to circumstances in the local area the "training exceptions" as identified in TEGL 19-16 will be utilized to fulfill customer choice requirements and access to training programs in demand occupations. The Local Board will use Training Agreements consistent with 20 CFR 680.320, 680.340 and 680.530 and the Local Boards procurement procedures. The Local Board has determined that there are an insufficient number of Eligible Training Providers in the local area to accomplish the purpose of a system of IT As. The Local Board utilizes the public comment period of the Local Plan for interested providers to provide comment.

D. Describe your strategy to become or remain a high-performing board. Describe of the process used by your Board to review and evaluate performance of the local AJC(s) and the One-Stop Operator.

The Susquehanna Workforce Network's Board has a significant history of strategic leadership, accountability, financial performance and reputation for aligning services and programs to execute effective solutions addressing local priorities. SWN is a member for the National Associations of Workforce Boards (NAWB) and routinely will access the assets and best practices that this membership provides. In previous years, the Board assessed their capabilities as compared with NAWBs Gold Standard Board criteria that included:

- Strategic Management
- Financial Diversification
- Strategic Convening and Partnerships
- Labor Market Analysis
- Communications, Advocacy and Outreach
- Performance Measurement

In Dec 2014, the Board once again developed an Action Plan that focused on five similar categories that included:

- System Capacity Building
- Financial Diversification
- Strategic Convening and Partnerships
- Labor Market Information
- Communications, Advocacy and Outreach

The 2020 Susquehanna Region Labor Market Analysis was released in June, Subsequently, the Local Board engaged in strategic planning sessions that resulted in an Employment Blueprint to strengthen the region's response to the pandemic, identify priority goals and expand opportunities for job seeking populations.

The Local Board has utilized both Federal performance and local metrics to evaluate performance of the region's Workforce Centers and operations.The One-Stop Operator was procured utilizing SWN's procurement procedure in selecting a contractor's services.

E. Describe you Area's Individual Training Account policy. Include information such as selection process, dollar limits, duration. *(WIOA Section 101(d)(6))*

The SWN shall enter into a financial agreement with each vendor that it will be using for IT A programs. This agreement will describe the roles and responsibilities of the vendor, including dollar limits, duration, type of training, name of participant, payment terms and approvals. After the agreement is received by vendor, invoice can be submitted to the SWN. Payment for properly charged amounts shall be made by the SWN in a timely manner.

Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) will be provided to eligible individuals through the one-stop delivery system for occupational specific training programs aligned with "in-demand" occupations. Participants will have completed services, which may include an initial assessment, basic skill and aptitude assessments, interest inventories, labor market research, support needs and/or job search and placement assistance, which has resulted in or identified the participant's inability to retain employment. Additionally, the participant will develop an employment plan that identifies training as a necessary service to gain or retain employment. Financial assistance options are provided to participants such as Pell Grants and other forms of financial assistance.

ITAs may be used to access training from vendors who are listed on the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL). Currently, the Board has identified $5,000 as the dollar limitation for an ITA. Exceptions to the policy (dollar limitation and ETPL) will be allowed for certain occupations that are in high demand and for occupations that are designated priority industries in the local area. The Executive Director approves exceptions to this policy on a case-by-case basis. ITAs will be allowed for programs that are occupational specific. Degreed programs beyond an Associate's Degree will not be eligible for an ITA. Exceptions may be made for completion of certifications in high demand occupations. The length of training can be up to two years or until the cap is reached. Participants shall maintain good academic standing and be making satisfactory progress to remain in their selected program.

The Board reserves the right to adjust the aforementioned IT A dollar limitations during the term of this Plan if it would be deemed in the best interest of the customer and the Local Board.

F. Describe how training services will be provided, including the coordination of training contracts with individual training accounts, and how your Board ensures informed customer choice in selecting training programs, regardless of the service delivery method. *(Chapter 3 of Subtitle B, Section 134(c)(3)(G))*

The delivery of training services will be made to eligible customers in a manner that will ensure customer choice and is consistent with priority and/or demand industries and occupations in the region. Individuals may benefit from training services that may include:

- Training Vouchers and Agreements/Contracts for Occupational Skills Coursework
- On-the-Job Training
- Customized Training
- Cohort Training for in-demand sectors and occupations
- Incumbent Worker Training
- Transitional Employment
- Training by Community Based Organizations or other organizations to serve individuals with
- barriers to employment
- Internships and Work Experience
- Training through Pay for Performance Contracts

G. Describe how the AJCs is utilizing the Maryland Workforce Exchange as the integrated, technology enabled intake and case management information system for programs carried out under WIOA and programs carried out by AJC partners.

The Maryland Workforce Exchange (MWE) is the labor exchange, case management and performance accountability platform for the Workforce Centers. MOU discussions and development will include utilization of MWE capabilities by all MOU Partners, and other employment and training partners who have a written data sharing agreements. The Local Board will encourage the integration of labor exchange, case management and performance accountability toward MWE as a common technology platform.

H. Describe your Board's process for conducting oversight and monitoring of its WIOA activities and those of its subgrantee and contractors.

All subrecipients' agreements and contracts will be monitored on-site at least annually. The purpose of the monitoring will be to determine compliance with the agreements and WIOA rules and regulations. The monitoring will consist of a desk and/or on-site review, and a fiscal monitoring. Monitoring may occur more frequently based on subrecipient risk factors including years of service, A-133 audit results, appropriate policies and procedures in place, weakness of internal controls, performance deficiencies or major changes in program or operations.

The procedure for determining that expenditures have been made against the cost categories and within the cost limitations specified in the Act and WIOA regulations are as follows:

1. A fiscal desk monitoring occurs every time a payment is made to subrecipients, vendors or contractors. Expenses are compared to approved budgets before payments are made. All costs are evaluated to determine whether expenditures are in compliance with the applicable uniform cost principles included in the appropriate circulars of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), for the type of entity receiving the funds. Supporting documentation such as invoices, ITAs and time sheets are collected and reviewed to ascertain compliance and validity. The Operations Manager and then the Fiscal Manager review and approve all requests for payment before submission to the Executive Director. The Executive Director is responsible for final approval of all payments. When discrepancies arise, they are addressed and resolved prior to compensation. When a question arises regarding the proper allocation and/or allowability of costs, the Executive Director will make the final decision.

2. Monthly financial reports are processed from the accounting system for all expenses incurred for the period by title, grant or funding source and sub-item.

3. The Executive Director, as well as other management staff, analyzes the fiscal reports prepared by the Fiscal Manager on a monthly basis. Any problems that are identified are corrected immediately. The Treasurer and Board of Directors also review the monthly reports.
4. The computer-generated monthly fiscal report reflecting expenditures through the end of each quarter is used to prepare the Maryland Department of Labor/DWDAL WIOA Quarterly Status Reports. All other financial reports required by the Maryland Department of Labor are completed utilizing the accounting information system as described, which is in full compliance with State requirements. Financial reports for the Maryland Department of Labor will be completed in the format requested by the Maryland Department of Labor and furnished to the Maryland Department of Labor in a timely manner.
5. As required, the Fiscal Manager, under the authority of the Executive Director, will assign control and assignment of new general ledger accounts.

Monitoring will be accomplished through the Local Board's staff. The Local Board sub committees, through assigned staff, are responsible for reviewing overall performance for their respective areas of oversight. This may be completed via staff input at sub-committee meetings, at Local Board meetings, or committee on-site visits. Specific contract or subrecipient monitoring may be initiated if routine oversight indicates a need.

Desk Monitoring
For program monitoring, the desk review includes review of contract, required subgrantee documents, submitted invoices and due dates.

On-Site and/or Desk Monitoring
The on-site review includes review and testing of subgrantee expenditures submitted against their book of accounts, allowable back up for expenditures and an adequate and appropriate quality control system. A review of subgrantee's audit and the testing of expenditures allow for the monitoring of any risk factors.

A written monitoring report will be forwarded to the recipient. If there are findings through the monitoring, the monitoring report will specify the findings and provide a timetable for corrective action. The contractor will be required to submit a written response indicating the corrective

actions that will be instituted to address deficiencies and a time-frame for instituting the corrective actions. The plan will be reviewed by the Local Board and mutually agreed upon between the Local Board and provider.

SWN leadership routinely monitors WIOA program, administrative and financial activities, as well as performance metrics and indicators. This is accomplished through ongoing oversight and monthly reports. Program and financial reports are provided to the Workforce Board through the committee structure and updates are provided as part of meeting agendas.

SWN will notify the Maryland Department of Labor regarding technical assistance needs relative to the implementation and operation of WIOA. Technical assistance will be provided by SWN staff to subrecipients and WIOA partners as needed. Cross-disciplinary training will be provided in WIOA regulations.

I. Describe your Board's policy and procedures for safeguarding and handling personally identifiable and confidential information (ex., physical and electronic files), including the incident response plan for loss of records.

SWN utilizes a Confidentiality Certification Policy/Form which states and informs all SWN staff that they may be exposed to certain confidential data which could include data related to participants and businesses and such data may not be discussed with or revealed to anyone, in any manner, except to other persons also having authorization to the same data. Information is to be used only for purposes of performing duties on the job.

The Local Board's procedures will comply with TEGL 39-11 and MD Policy Issuance 2019-04. Local WIOA Partners will ensure referral processes, data sharing, case records and other PII data and processes being jointly developed comply with partner agency requirements. Upon discovery of a security breach whether physical or electronic, SWN will make appropriate notifications consistent with MD Policy Issuance 2019-04.Local file backup details include the use of a backup server. In addition, monthly full backups take place at least once every four hours. Backup jobs and files are encrypted.

J. Describe your Board's procurement system, and how you will assure you're your procedures meet the standards in USDOL regulations Include details on how your Board would award emergency contracts when current contracts have been eliminated for just cause. *(See 29 CFR Part 95, Part 97 and 2 CFR 200)*

The Local Board assures the its procurement procedures conform to the standards in US DOL regulations set forth in 29 CFR Part 95, Part 97 and 2 CFR 200.

Policy for Purchasing Supplies, Equipment and Services
The Executive Committee is designated Procurement Authority, within the policies stated herein, and is authorized to delegate this responsibility to the Executive Director. The procurement authority of the Executive Director shall be limited to the approved budget amount for each category and shall not be exceeded without the approval of the Executive Committee. Such authority includes the right and responsibility to question specific quantities, quality and necessity for items requested, in order that the best interests of the SWN may be served.

It is the objective to procure necessary supplies, equipment and services at reasonable prices, in adequate quantities, of satisfactory quality and on schedule from reliable suppliers. Supplies, construction, lease/rental, equipment and services, including policies of insurance or surety company bonds, services of members of the medical or legal profession, or other personal services involving professional expert advice, costing less than $10,000 may be purchased without solicitation of competitive quotations if the price is determined reasonable based on research, experience or purchase history.

Policy for Purchasing Small Purchase Items
Supplies, construction, lease/rental, equipment and services, including policies of insurance or surety company bonds, services of members of the medical or legal professionals, or other personal services involving professional expert advice, costing $10,000 or more, but less than the Simplified Acquisition Threshold, may be purchased after soliciting quotations from two (2) or more qualified suppliers. Purchases of equipment of $5,000 or more require written approval from the Maryland Department of Labor.

Bid Solicitation
Competitive bids, as appropriate, will be based on local written procurement policy. A designated staff person shall prepare the bid specification and general conditions.

Policy for Purchasing by Sealed Bids
Typically Sealed Bids are for fixed price amounts, either lump sum or unit prices. Supplies, construction, lease/rental, equipment and services, including policies of insurance or surety company bonds, services of members of the medical or legal professionals, or other personal services involving professional expert advice, costing the Simplified Acquisition Threshold, or more may be purchased by Sealed Bid from the lowest responsible bidder meeting specifications after advertising for bids.

Whenever bids are advertised and solicited in accordance with these regulations, the bid proposals must be received by the Executive Director or his/her designee in sealed form. The bids will be opened publicly in accordance with the general conditions and specifications prepared by the SWN. After they are opened, they will be referred to the appropriate SWN committee by the Executive Director for final analysis and recommendation for awarding and will be subsequently awarded by the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee shall accept the lowest bid or bids, kind, quality, and materials being equal, but have the authority to reject any or all bids or select a single item from any bid.

Policy for Procurement by Competitive Proposals
Typically, Competitive Proposals are for cost reimbursement amounts or fixed price contracts. Supplies, construction, lease/rental, equipment and services, including policies of insurance or surety company bonds, services of members of the medical or legal professionals, or other personal services involving professional expert advice, costing the Simplified Acquisition Threshold, or more may be purchased by appropriately publicized Competitive Proposals. Contracts will be awarded to the responsible firm whose price and other factors are considered most advantageous.

Advertisement shall mean a notice published at least ten (10) days before the award date of any contract in one or more newspapers qualified to accept legal advertising, of general circulation in the Susquehanna Workforce Area. In addition to public advertisement, bids may

be solicited directly from such persons as may be deemed reliable and competent to furnish the item or items required.

Notwithstanding the other provisions of this policy, the Executive Committee may, upon affirmative vote of the majority of the Committee, permit advertisement for bids on an emergency basis at such times as the Executive Committee determines that the best interest of the SWN warrants the shortening of the time for advertisements of bids otherwise provided. In such circumstances, bids may be solicited by advertisements published and made available electronically at least two (2) separate days prior to the opening of bids.

Exceptions to Bid Solicitation Requirements/Sole Source Procurements
Provisions as to advertising and bidding set forth above shall not apply to the following classes of purchases or others as the SWN may from time to time adopt:

1. Lease/Rental of real property.
2. Purchase of potential or manufactured products offered for sale on a non-competitive market or solely by a manufacturer's authorized dealer.
3. Purchases made through the State or against Federal purchase contracts.
4. Contracts with public utility service companies under tariffs on file with the Public Utility Commission, contracts made with another subdivision of the State of Maryland, the Federal Government, and any agency of the State of Maryland or any municipal or county authority.
5. Purchase of supplies and equipment requiring parts or components being procured as replacement parts in support of equipment specifically designed by the manufacturer, where data available is not adequate to assure that the part or component is identical with the part it is to replace or where contemplated procurement is to match or complement equipment or components previously purchased.
6. Purchase of technical, non-personal services in connection with the assembly, installation or servicing, or instruction of personnel therein, of equipment of a highly specialized or technical nature.

K. Describe your process to document and demonstrate that the acquisition, management, and disposition of property adhere to the Property Management Procedures. *(USDOL regulations 29 CFR Part 97 and 29 CFR Part 95.)*

The SWN assures that procedures related to the contracts for acquisition, management and disposition of property adhere to the standards in the Property Management Procedures taken from DOL regulations 29 CFR Part 97 and 29 CFR Part 95. All property is tagged and logged into inventory that contain; description, serial number, acquisition date and cost, location, funding and vendor from which purchased.

L. Describe your policies and procedures for avoiding conflicts of interest or the appearance of such conflicts in the exercise of their responsibilities, particularly those related to the awarding of contracts.

No officer, employee or agent of the Local Board shall:

- Solicit or accept gratuities, favors or anything of monetary value, except meals, from suppliers or participate in the selection or award of procurement where to the individual's knowledge of the following has a financial or other substantive interest in any organization which may be considered for an award:

- The officer, employee or agent, any member of his/her family, his/her partner, a person or organization which employs any of the above with whom any of the above has an arrangement concerning prospective employment.

Local Board members must:
- Recuse themselves from participation if there is a real or perceived conflict of interest;
- Advise the Board of any potential or perceived conflicts of interest;
- Ask the Board for guidance if there is doubt as to whether a specific situation involves or
- constitutes a real or perceived conflict of interest;
- Complete and sign the Board conflict of interest policy and acknowledgement form annually.

M. Describe your Board or fiscal agent's accounting procedures, including the procedures used in preparing reports to the State.

The SWN, as the fiscal agent, utilizes the SAGE AccPac ERP accounting system. The system tracks grants by cost center numbers. This system tracks assets, liabilities, expenditures and program income. Obligations are tracked by supplemental Excel worksheets. Stand-in costs and leveraged funds tracked manually. Financial reports will be processed on the accounting system for all expenses incurred by the grant or funding source and by sub-item. State required financial reports are prepared based upon the monthly financial reports.

N. List the key staff who will be working with WIOA funds.

The Local Board staff working with WIOA funds will include a Fiscal Manager, a Fiscal Specialist and an Executive Administrative Specialist. The oversight of all fiscal functions is the responsibility. of the Executive Director.

O. Describe how your Board's (or fiscal agent's) financial system will permit tracing of funds to a level adequate to establish that funds have not been used in violation of WIOA standards or USDOL regulations.

The Local Board's financial system will permit tracking of funds to a level adequate to establish that funds have not been used in violation of WIOA standards or DOL regulations by the following established procedures:

REVENUE: When revenue is received, it is recorded by Executive Administrative Specialist then forwarded to fiscal department. Fiscal Manager codes the item to the appropriate cost center and enters it into the system.

PURCHASE ORDERS: SWN utilizes a purchase order system which includes review and approval by the Department Manager, the Fiscal Manager and the Executive Director.

ACCOUNTS PAYABLE: SWN utilizes an accounts payable system whereby purchase orders are matched to invoices by the Fiscal Specialist. The invoices are then checked for accuracy by the Fiscal Manager and entered into the accounting system by the Fiscal Specialist. Each batch is then checked by the Fiscal and Human Resource Manager before the checks are generated. The checks, invoices and related purchase orders are forwarded to the Executive Director for review and approval. Upon signature, the Fiscal Specialist prepares the checks to be mailed and files the backup. Non-purchase order items (i.e. contract payments) are processed similarly except invoices are matched to original contracts instead of purchase orders.

P. Provide a description of the following:

- **Fiscal reporting system,**
- **Obligation control system,**
- **ITA payment system,**
- **Chart of account system,**
- **Accounts payable system,**
- **Staff payroll system,**
- **Participant payroll system, and**
- **Participant stipend payment system.**

Obligations are tracked monthly by utilizing an Excel spreadsheet which identifies the amount of funds restricted for training and each obligation. The report is prepared by the Fiscal Specialist and reviewed by the Fiscal Manager. Copies are available to be shared on a monthly basis. The Fiscal Manager is responsible for the obligational control.

The Local Board's obligational control system provides the ability to compare, on a monthly basis, actual accrued expenditures and current budgeted amounts for each of its MD Labor DWDAL funded grants.

All journal entries are approved by Management and entered into the system by the Fiscal Department. Periodically during the year, the Executive Director will review all journal entries. Deobligation requests are generated by staff and reviewed, approved and coded by the appropriate manager/coordinator. The documents are forwarded to the Fiscal Manager, who then reviews the deobligation for accuracy and completeness. The Fiscal Manager then forwards the requests to the Fiscal Specialist to enter into the Excel obligational control spreadsheet.

The SWN shall enter into a financial agreement with each vendor that it will be using for ITA programs. This agreement will describe the roles and responsibilities of the training provider, including the ITA payment system. Upon the enrollment of a WIOA client into a training program with an eligible ITA training provider, the SWN will provide the selected training provider with an authorization form for that individual. The authorization form will include the total amount of costs for tuition and fees that will be paid by the SWN. After the authorization form is received, the training provider can submit an invoice form to the SWN, which sets forth all approved tuition and fees for the WIOA client. Payment for properly charged tuition and fees shall be made by the SWN in a timely manner.

The chart of accounts is set up by cost center. Each grant has The chart of accounts is set up by cost center. Each grant has its own cost center code. In addition, each grant has a revenue and program income account. The chart of accounts is structured as follows:

Account Series	Description
1000	Assets
2000	Accounts Payable / Liabilities
3000	Payroll
4000	Fund Balances
5000	Revenues
6000-9000	Expenses

The Fiscal Department verifies that invoices are accurate according to the quantity received as compared to the quantity invoiced. The prices charged are checked against the purchase order. The Fiscal Manager verifies the accuracy of codes and computations on all vouchers. The vouchers are entered into the computer system, after which the accounts payable batch is checked and verified by the Fiscal Manager, and checks are then printed and forwarded to the Executive Director for signature. The batches are then posted to the General Ledger.

Time and attendance reports are completed by each employee and verified by the employee's supervisor. All leave requests are approved by the supervisor. The time and attendance report is entered into the computer payroll system and a payroll register is generated by the Fiscal Specialist. The payroll register is then checked by the Fiscal Manager. The checks are generated by computer payroll system. Payroll is then posted to General Ledger. Periodically during the year, the Executive Director reviews the Payroll Control Sheet, Payroll Register and the Direct Deposit Deduction Summary.

Any participant payroll will be processed in the same manner as staff payroll.

Upon enrollment of the participant, the counselor completes support services determination form. An obligation and expenditure record is established for the participant. Timesheets, signed by the participant and the instructor, are forwarded to the Fiscal Specialist. The payments are calculated based on actual attendance. The information is then entered into the accounts payable system and checks are processed according to the accounts payable system. The checks are mailed to the participants. Financial reporting will be processed on SWN's accounting system (SAGE AccPac ERP) for all expenses incurred by the grant or funding source and by sub-item. State required financial reports are prepared based upon monthly financial reports.

Q. Describe your Board's (or fiscal agent's) cash management system and how you will assure that no excess cash will be kept on hand, and that procedures are in place to monitor cash.

The Fiscal Manager generates and reviews status of funds reports several times each week. The review of the status of funds on a monthly basis by the Fiscal Manager, Executive Director, and Chair of the Local Board's Finance Committee will ensure that no excessive cash will be held by the Local Board, in accordance with Federal and State regulations. Bank statements are reconciled by the Fiscal Manager and approved by the Executive Director. Outstanding checks are resolved and/or written off after 2 years.

The Local Board requisitions funds from the State on an as-needed basis. The requisitions are completed by the Fiscal Manager and submitted on behalf of the Harford County Government to the Maryland Department of Labor. State funds are received through ACH (Automatic Clearing House) by Harford County Government, who then releases funds by ACH to the Local Board based on a direct payment request completed by the Fiscal Manager. Vendors are paid on a weekly basis; staff payroll is paid on a bi-weekly basis. All vendors and subgrantees are paid on a reimbursement basis. Certain subgrantees may be paid using a cash advance method. Payments are reimbursed in accordance with the terms outlined in each specific Agreement.

R. Describe your Board's cost allocation procedures including:

- **Identification of different cost pools,**
- **Distribution of staff costs between cost categories (Administrative cost, program cost and indirect cost),**
- **Distribution of funds from each cost pool,**
- **Description of funds included in each cost pool, and**
- **Description of cost allocation plans for AJCs.**

Cost Pools

The Local Board currently has the following cost pools: Administrative, Program, fringe benefit, and building cost pools. The Local Board reserves the right to develop additional cost pools as needed consistent with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles.

Distribution of staff costs

Personnel serving one funding source are directly charged to that funding source. The personnel costs that cannot be directly charged to one funding source are distributed to the cost pools.

The distribution of staff costs from the cost pools is determined by the hours reported on time sheets. Staff salaries will be charged to the appropriate funding source based on hours worked. Leave will be distributed using the same percentage as hours worked for the period.

Fringe benefits will be pooled and a monthly distribution of costs will be made to each funding source based on the percentage of hours worked in each month. The percentage of the staff hours will be used to determine the distribution of the cost of operating the Administrative Office and Counseling Offices.

Distribution of funds from each cost pool

Administrative Cost Pool: On a monthly basis, program expenditures for each funding source are totaled. These expenditures are then divided into categories, which consist of the aggregate of all program expenditures for each individual funding source. The totals of these expenditures are then utilized to determine the percentage each individual WIOA and non-WIOA funding source will be charged. After the percentage of program expenditures is determined, the administrative costs are then tracked to each funding source on a monthly basis. On an annual basis, the administrative cost pool department is allocated to the various funding sources.
Program Cost Pool: Like administrative costs, the program costs are captured in a separate department in the automated accounting system. The procedure for allocating the program costs will consist of one of the following methods:

The procedure currently in use for allocating program costs is based on percentage of direct program expenditures for each grant.

Program costs may be charged based on total number of participants. A percentage for each grant is calculated and indirect costs allocated accordingly.

Funds included in each cost pool
Both Administrative and Program cost pools include WIOA funds and all other funds.

Cost allocation plans for Workforce Center

1. Costs will be allocated proportionally across funding sources.
2. Once the total cost of the system has been determined, each partner's financial obligation is assessed. Costs are proportionally distributed among partners who may pay their fair share:
    - in cash
    - through contributions, or
    - through a combination of cash and contributions.
3. A three-step process to allocate system costs, including costs of services:
    - Shared system and service costs will be allocated by an appropriate methodology as outlined in the Partner Agreement, to assign costs to partners.
    - Assess affordability, resources, etc. If costs do not appear to be affordable, review service plan to determine potential adjustments. If costs can be covered, proceed with allocation from partners.
    - Conduct periodic reviews of the cost of operating the workforce center system and how costs are being allocated. Revise the allocation plan as appropriate.

S. Describe your Board's (or fiscal agent's) procedure for collecting debts involving WIOA funds.

In the event that a debt is established with a subcontractor as a result of an audit or error, the first preference is to collect cash. Such a request will be made by a registered letter if collection cannot be made via informal means. The second preference will be through a reduction in payment if the subcontractor is still providing services. However, if debt cannot be collected through both preferences, the Local Board will forward the case to its attorney for collection proceedings.