



Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act Regional and Local Plans

Northwest Region

Program Year 2024-2027

Networks Northwest is a regional organization covering the ten counties of Northwestern Lower Michigan, Region 2, providing programs and services in the areas of Talent, Business, and Community Development. We serve as the region's economic development Collaborative Development Council, the Regional Planning organization, the Michigan Works! Agency, and the state's first Regional Prosperity Board. The Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act (WIOA) represents a significant proportion of the agency's funding and service mix; partner and correlating programs also fall under the Networks Northwest umbrella. It is the goal of the agency to leverage all funding sources for their best use, achieve efficiencies in administration, and provide the highest quality services to the individuals, employers, and other organizations in the region.

This plan outlines the regional strategies and the local area operations related to WIOA. Many of these elements are interrelated with multiple other services that are provided internally and/or externally. One hallmark of Networks Northwest is collaboration in public-private partnerships. This is certainly the case in implementing WIOA because of the process used to develop these strategies with an eye to the future of providing workforce development services.

The Networks Northwest mission is to build stronger communities and enhance the quality of life in Northwest Michigan. We accomplish this by providing a regional framework for effective collaboration among integrated service networks, and by directly providing services for talent, business, and community development. This dual role of regional leadership and convener of networks at a strategic level, along with frontline operations, makes us uniquely positioned to lead regional conversations and strategy development related to talent.

The Regional and Local Plans for Northwest Michigan's implementation of the Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act, to be implemented between program years 2024-2027, have been designed within the framework outlined by the State of Michigan's Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity instruction in Policy Issuance 24-13.

The COVID-19 Pandemic had a significant impact on our region. As the region continues its recovery from the pandemic, we will continue to design service delivery models that effectively and efficiently provide services to meet the needs of the community.

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Regional Plan

Northwest Region

Program Years 2024-2027

Planning Process

Networks Northwest engaged in a thorough exploration of local and regional workforce and economic factors to inform the WIOA Plan. Beginning in 2019, Networks Northwest board members and agency leadership embarked on a strategic planning process, assessing community needs, accessible infrastructure and support systems, diverse economic opportunities, skilled and ready workforce, and the regional culture of adaptability. Staff were enlisted to provide insight and public input was gathered from surveys with employers, community partners and job seekers.

The continued and thorough exploration of these issues along with creative collaborative brainstorming, have informed the region's workforce strategies, program design, and goals since 2020. Building off this foundation, in June 2024, the Networks Northwest board formed a Workforce Plan Ad Hoc Committee. Charged with reviewing multiple strategic plans related to workforce development, the committee identified and prioritized such strategies for the region which informed the WIOA Plan. Committee membership is composed of WIOA partner agencies, and includes representation from organizations administering all four Titles of the WIOA. Additional membership represents supportive services agencies, local units of government, and in-demand industry sectors.

The Title IV WIOA program provider, Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS), is represented on the Networks Northwest board and also participated in the Workforce Plan Ad Hoc Committee. Title II Adult Education is also represented on the board and engagement with the Regional Director of Adult Education occurs on a regular basis allowing for further WIOA Partner involvement.

Regional Analysis

Region 2, known as the Northwest Prosperity Region, comprises ten counties: Antrim, Benzie, Charlevoix, Emmet, Grand Traverse, Kalkaska, Leelanau, Manistee, Missaukee, and Wexford. The following is an examination of the region's labor market data and economic conditions. This examination encompasses established and emerging industry sectors and in-demand occupations, the employment requirements in those sectors, labor market trends, educational attainment levels, geographical considerations, and other relevant factors.

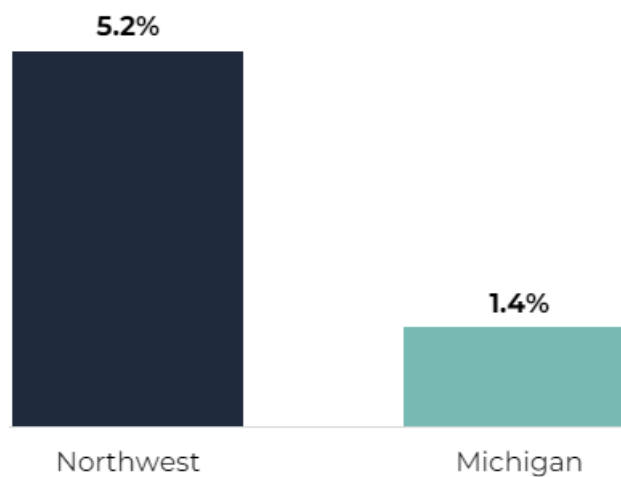
Workforce Analysis

Population

According to the US Census, between 2012 and 2022, the total population in the Northwest Michigan Prosperity Region was 315,200. The local population increased by 5.2 percent between 2012 and 2022 due to a gain of 15,700 residents. During the same timeframe, Region 2's population growth outpaced Michigan overall, which increased by 135,800 (1.40%). Over the decade, the population nationwide expanded by more than 6%.¹

The growth rate in the Northwest area was the second highest of all Michigan Works! areas. Nationwide, the population rose by more than six percent over this period.¹

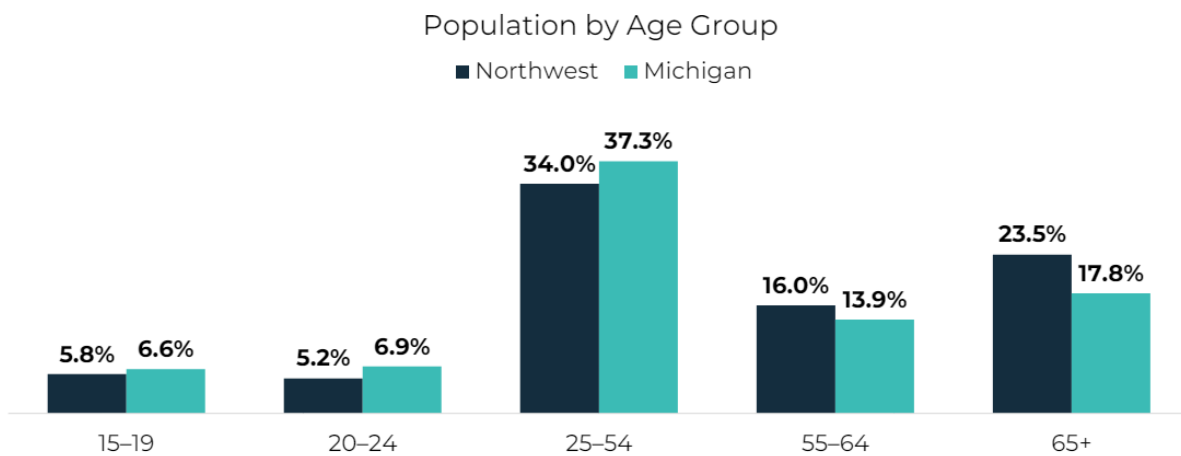
Population Change, 2012–2022



Population Estimates Program, U.S. Census Bureau (Table 1)

Grand Traverse and Leelanau counties saw the largest increases in population in the region, growing by 8.1% and 7%, respectively.¹

The nature of the increases in population is important because it has significant ramifications for the workforce. The region is home to a larger share of older residents compared to the state. Of the total regional population, 39.0% are aged 55 or older. This is compared to 32% for the entire state. The region’s population continues to age, suggesting the region has a higher demand for services. Yet, there are fewer workers to meet that demand. Attracting working-age talent should help balance services with demand. Notably, the working age population remains strong, comprising almost 50% of individuals who call Northwest Lower Michigan home.¹



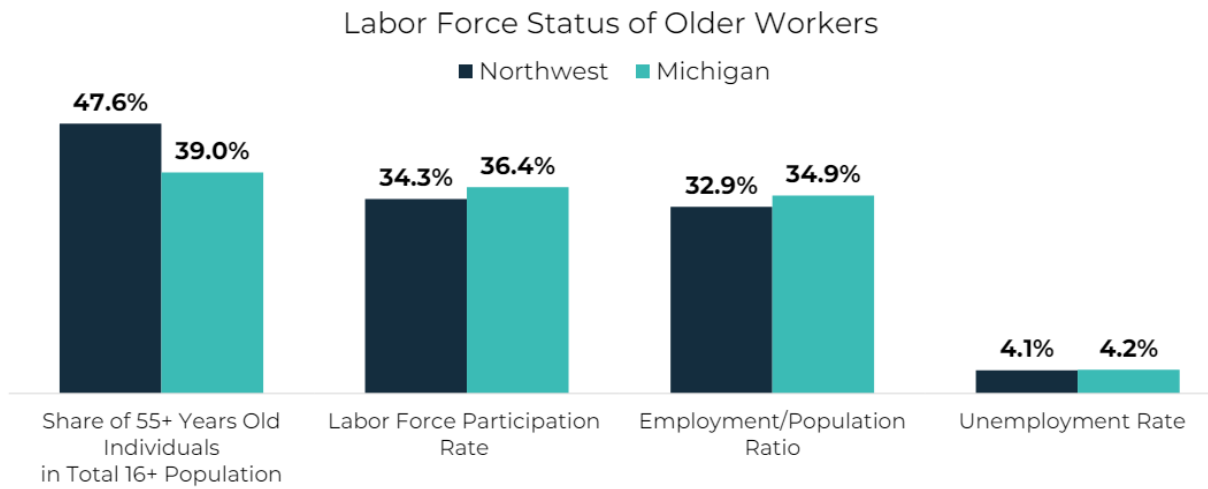
Source: 2018-2022 Five-Year Estimates, American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau (Table 2)

Labor Force Participation

In Northwest Michigan, the labor force measured 151,818 individuals in 2023, up about 2,341, (1.6%) from 2017. While the trend is positive, this number does not meet employer demand for workers. Lack of workers in the region is one reason that employers are struggling to find qualified candidates for their open positions.¹

With many workers in the region aged 55 and older, labor force participation rates in this demographic are of particular interest. The share of older individuals in the area was greater

than the statewide average. However, these individuals had a lower labor force participation rate than what was seen statewide.¹



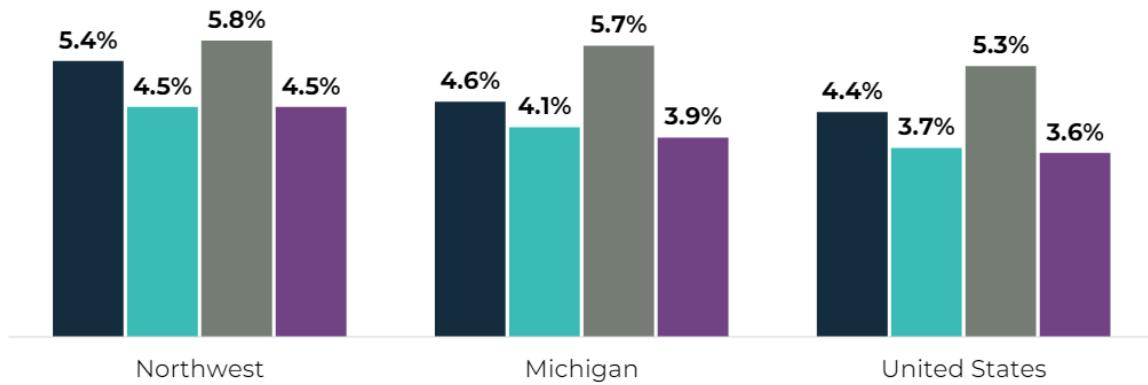
Source: 2018-2022 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates, U.S. Census Bureau (Table 9)

Unemployment

The area’s jobless rate was consistently higher compared to Michigan and the United States. Since 2017, the number of unemployed in the area decreased by 1,200 individuals (15.3%).¹

Unemployment Rates by Area and Year

■ 2017 ■ 2019 ■ 2021 ■ 2023

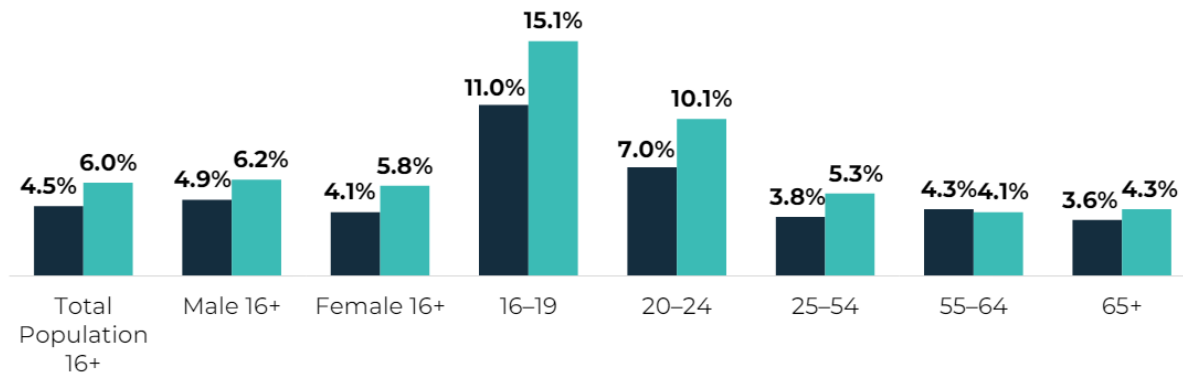


Source: Local Area Unemployment Statistics, Michigan Center for Data and Analytics (Table 6)

Regional jobless rates were lower for many demographic groups than the statewide rate. The area’s jobless rates by age and gender were lower than statewide averages. Like Michigan, the highest unemployment rate was for those ages 16 to 19.¹

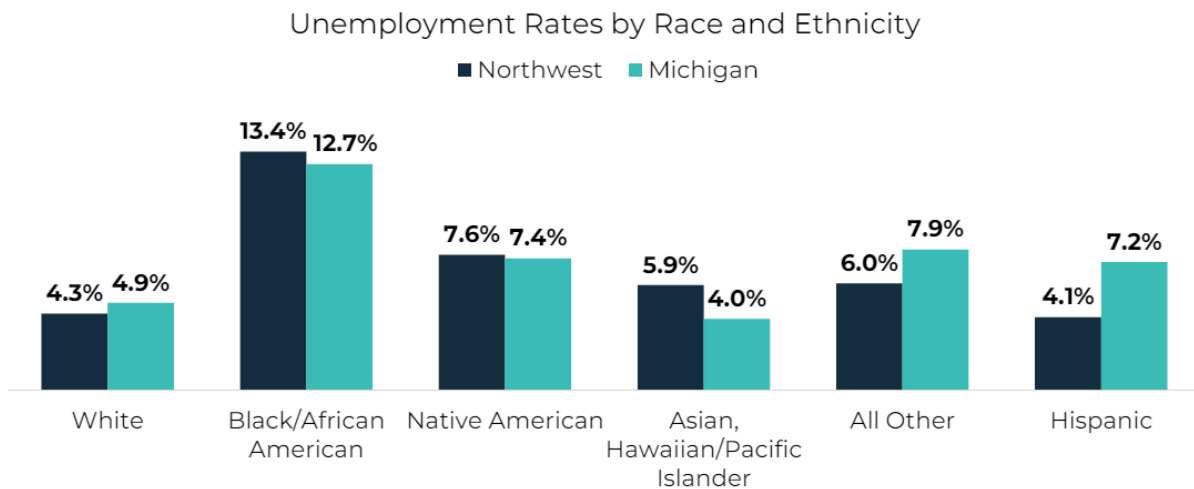
Unemployment Rates by Age and Gender

■ Northwest ■ Michigan



Source: 2018-2022 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates, U.S. Census Bureau (Table 8)

The unemployment rate for those who are Black/African American was notably higher than all other demographic groups in the Northwest area and Michigan.¹



Source: 2018-2022 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates, U.S. Census Bureau (Table 8)

Although Michigan’s economy, workforce, and community support structures continue to be impacted by the aftereffects of the global pandemic, unemployment rates reflect what is termed as full employment. Current unemployment rates (April 2024) for the 10-county region are below:

Antrim County	5.7%
Benzie County	4.9%
Charlevoix County	5.2%
Emmet County	7.0%
Grand Traverse County	3.3%
Kalkaska County	5.6%
Leelanau County	3.8%
Manistee County	6.2%
Missaukee County	5.2%
Wexford County	5.3%
Regional Average	4.8%

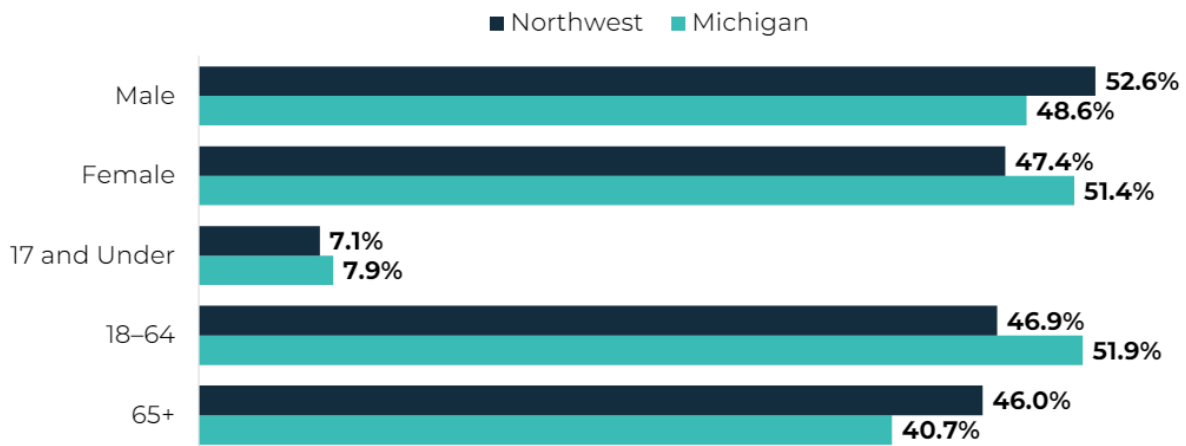
According to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, the average unemployment rate for Region 2 is 4.8%, which is 1% higher than the State of Michigan rate of 3.8%, and slightly higher than the national rate of 3.5%.¹

With the region at essentially full employment, employers, education providers, and the vast network of workforce development partners in the region will need to work together to attract and retain new talent.

Disability

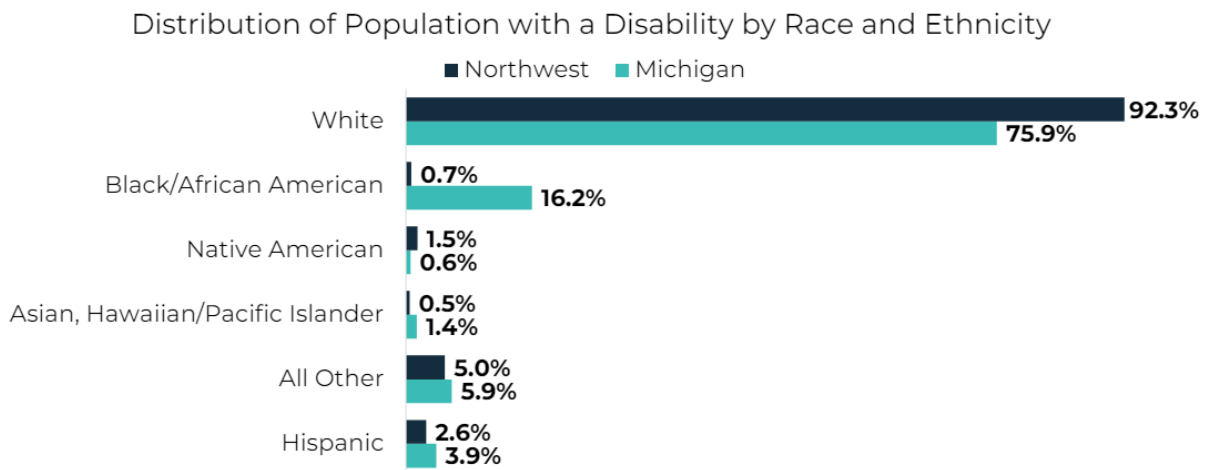
Disability is one of several factors that can lead to poverty and other economic distress. Disability increases with age. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, about 46,000 people (14.6%) in Northwest Michigan reported a disability. Those with a disability in the region were more likely to be male (52.6%), compared to the state at 48.6%.¹

Distribution of Population with a Disability by Age and Gender



Source: 2018-2022 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates, U.S. Census Bureau (Table 20)

The area distribution of individuals with disabilities by race and ethnicity differs from Michigan averages for most groups. White and Black/African American individuals show the largest differences.



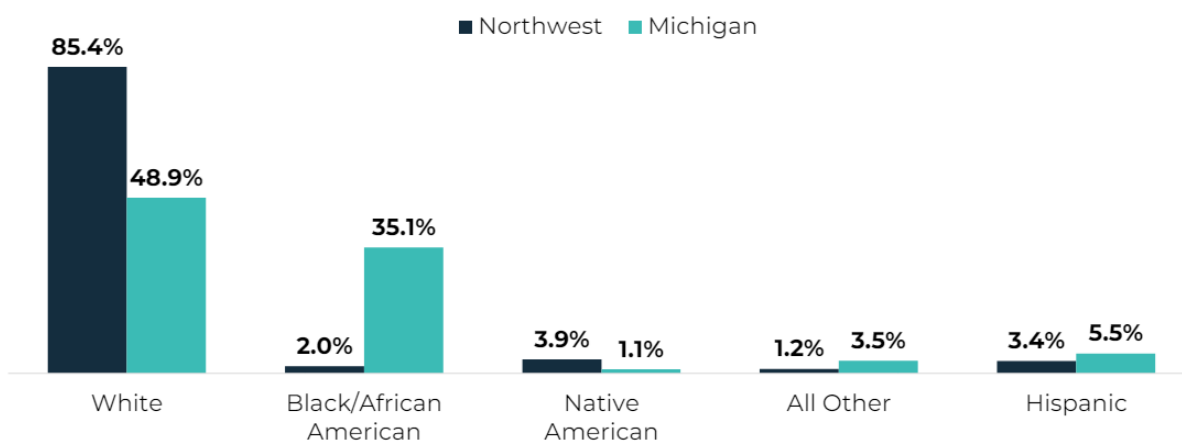
Source: 2018–2022 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates, U.S. Census Bureau (Table 20)

This data indicates opportunity to provide employment to those with a disability, and to assist employers in filling open positions.

Public Assistance

Public assistance includes food assistance, child welfare, utility support, and cash assistance. The area had nearly 8,100 program recipients in December 2023. Of these, a large majority were White residents (85.4%) compared to just half statewide (48.9%). Those who were Native American had the next largest share in the area (3.9%).¹

Assistance Program Recipients by Race and Ethnicity

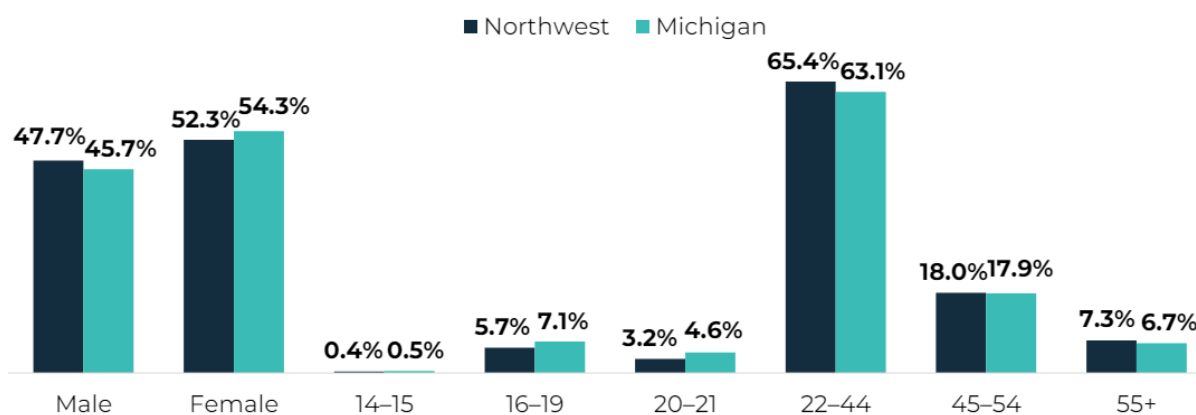


Source: Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (Table 18)

Note: Race data does not sum to 100 percent due to some recipient information being unknown.

Most program recipients were white and of working age. Females made up more than half of assistance recipients compared to males in both the region and the state. Those ages 22 to 44 were the largest demographic (by age group) to be recipients.¹

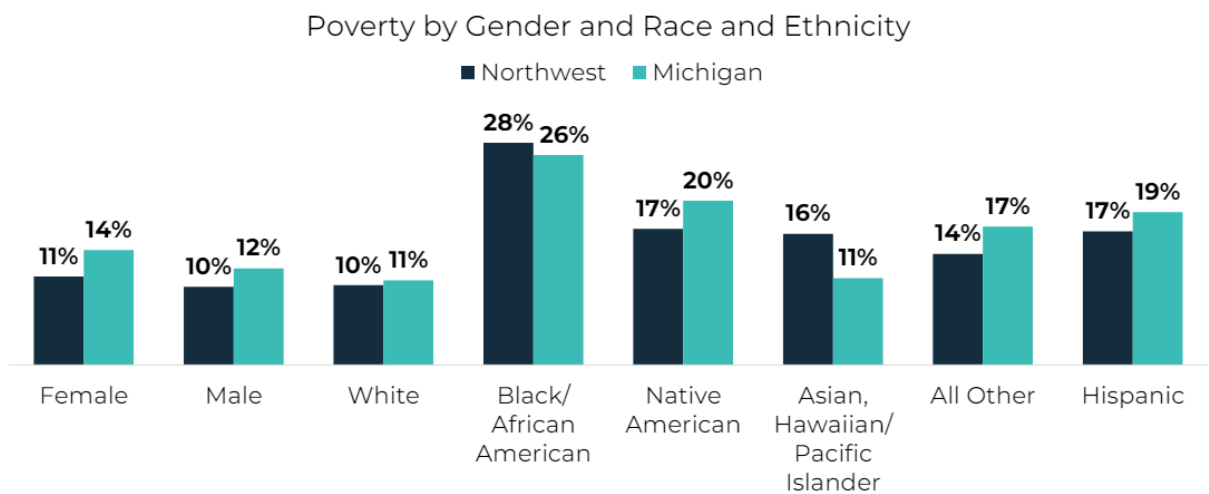
Assistance Program Recipients by Gender and Age



Source: Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (Table 18)

Poverty Rate

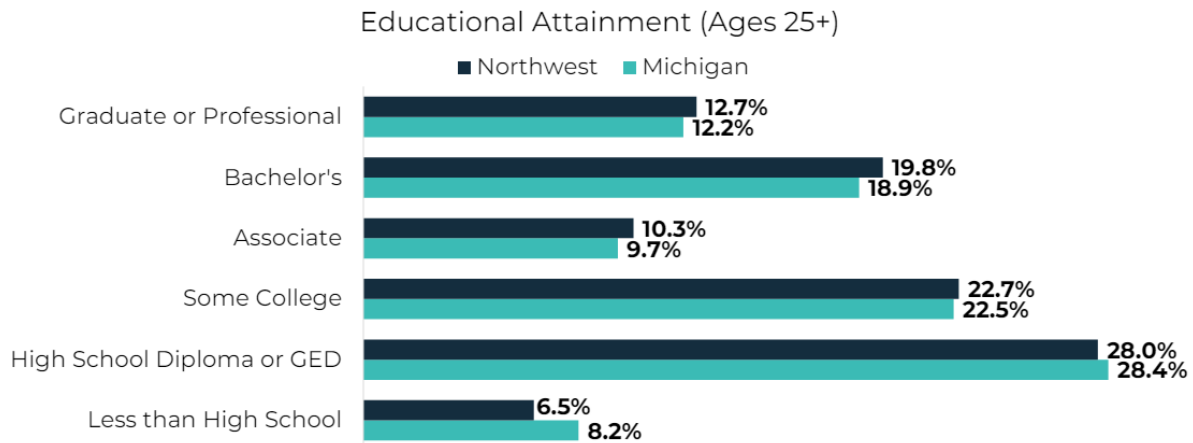
Almost 32,000 individuals live under the poverty rate across the 10-county region (American Community Survey, 2018–2022 Five-Year Estimates, U.S. Census Bureau). The 10-county poverty rate was 10.4% compared to 13.1% across Michigan. The area’s Black/African American residents had a notably high rate of poverty (28%) compared to all other groups and Michigan.¹



Source: 2018–2022 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates, U.S. Census Bureau (Table 14)

Education

The skills and abilities of the region’s workforce are influenced by several factors, including educational attainment. Educational attainment is based on the number of residents 25 years and older for each level of education. The region slightly outperformed the state in high school diploma or GED, associates degree, and bachelor’s degree attainment. The Northwest region is generally on trend with state averages for the attainment of educational milestones. Northwest Michigan had a smaller share of its population with less than a high school diploma than the Michigan average.¹



Source: 2018-2022 Five-Year Estimates, American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau (Table 3)

Geographic Factors

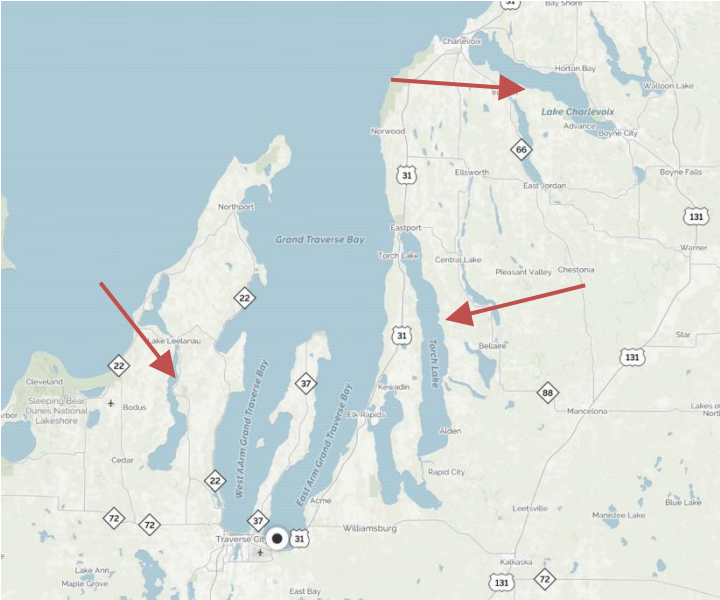
The ten-county region of Northwest Michigan is rural and geographically expansive. It totals more than 4,700 square miles, not including a multitude of inland lakes and rivers. The local area has divided the region into subregions, as follows:

- North: Charlevoix and Emmet Counties;
- East Central: Leelanau, Grand Traverse, Kalkaska, and Antrim Counties;
- South: Wexford and Missaukee Counties; and
- West: Benzie and Manistee Counties.

These subdivisions allow for more manageable planning and program delivery. The counties assigned to each subdivision follow the labor shed and commuting patterns for the area.

Commuting and transportation in the region are complicated by scattered bodies of water. For instance, Lake Charlevoix in Charlevoix county runs Northwest to Southeast across the county, Torch Lake runs North to South in Antrim County, and the North and South arms of Lake

Leelanau split part of Leelanau County in two. These bodies of water present significant challenges both for commuters and for companies transporting goods to and from the area.



In-demand Skills

Networks Northwest has developed and refined a demand-driven, employer needs-based strategy for design and implementation of all workforce programs. This strategy is based on the premise that meeting employer needs is the most effective way to serve job seekers while still meeting the needs of employers.

Determining employer needs and in-demand occupations in the region is a complex and fluid process. Networks Northwest administrative staff are responsible for ensuring federal and state workforce funding is invested in the most efficient and effective manner.

The Workforce Development Board has aligned local priority industry clusters with those identified by the State of Michigan, which include:

- Agriculture

- Construction
- Energy
- Healthcare
- Information Technology
- Manufacturing

Hospitality, Education/Public Service, Childcare, Public Safety, and Outdoor Recreation have been identified as additional priority industries for the region. The in-demand occupations within each cluster are created using state labor market information, occupational projections, trends in job postings, and demand from employers identified through local-level relationships. The list of in-demand occupations, organized by cluster, is available through our [Hot Jobs Report](#) (Appendix A). This serves to increase awareness of in-demand jobs and career options, career pathway exploration, and as a basis for the approved list of occupations for training.

Employer Led Collaboratives (ELCs) are a key component of outreach and education about industry clusters. The Business Services and Apprenticeship teams are tasked with bringing these industries together. Both teams organize and convene meetings to educate employers on the value of workforce development opportunities. Currently, groups and associations in the region meet for this purpose, most notably the manufacturing industry. Our teams are beginning to shift their focus to industries that have little or no collaborative meetings including Child Care, Energy, Healthcare, Outdoor Recreation, and Public Safety.

Skills for In-demand industries and occupations

Employability skills, computer literacy skills, basic academic skills, and occupational skills are all fundamental for the workforce. For workers to move into jobs that are accessible, fulfilling, and pay a wage that can sustain a family, the worker must possess the right combination of skills. Thus, many individuals struggle to find jobs for which they're qualified.

Employers face challenges filling open positions. They report that many job seekers in Northwest Lower Michigan lack the full set of skills needed to obtain in-demand jobs. In some cases, employers receive applications from job seekers who do not have the skills necessary for

the job. In other cases, they receive no applications at all. This dynamic reflects what is often termed a “skills gap.” A “skills gap” is the discrepancy between the specific skills that employers need to fill open positions and the skills that are currently held by the workforce.

The severity of a skills gap can vary based on industry or occupation, by region, and by employer needs and expectations. While it is virtually impossible to completely eliminate a skills gap in any region, workforce planning attempts to minimize its impact by attracting and training talent to meet the needs of the region’s employers.

Employability skills

Employability skills are those that are applicable to every job in every community. They include skills like:

- Communication
- Teamwork
- Reliability
- Problem-solving
- Organizing & Planning
- Timeliness
- Initiative
- Self-management
- Virtual meeting/interview etiquette and tips

While employability skills are often referred to as “soft skills,” they should not be seen as insignificant. These abilities are often first on the list when employers are asked what they look for in hiring new employees. Lack of employability skills is one of the most common reasons for termination and can contribute to employee retention issues. While the general perception is that lack of employability skills is a problem of younger workers, employers report the need across most working-age demographics. Of interest is the perception that older workers, veterans, and many in the disability community struggle less with employability skills than other populations.

To combat this lack of employability skills we have implemented a program called “Workplace Excellence.” The Workplace Excellence Series is designed to help people understand and adopt the essential workplace skills that companies demand today. We offer this training to job seekers and employers for their incumbent staff. The program is customizable so that we can focus on individuals or company-wide or cultural issues. This two-fold approach allows us to meet the needs of individuals and organizations.

Digital Literacy

In today’s economy, almost every job requires use of computers and technology. The ability to perform basic computer operations is even necessary before beginning employment. More employers are using online systems for job postings, job applications, and candidate screening. Individuals with low levels of digital literacy are at disadvantage when applying for and performing on a job. An individual’s digital literacy may be dependent upon access to technology-related equipment—whether a personal computer, smart phone, or other device. Regular use of technology is necessary to learn its various applications, and to prepare a job seeker for using it on the job.

When access to technology is limited (often due to poverty), a “digital divide” occurs. Those living in poverty are less likely to succeed in today’s job market, due in part to limited technological skills and abilities. School systems across the region are attempting to bridge this divide by integrating computers and tablets into the classroom. They provide students with iPads or laptops/netbooks. Google Classroom helps prepare many students for the world of work. However, school systems in affluent communities are better positioned to provide additional technology resources and experience to students than those in poverty-prone areas.

Digital Literacy assessment and training is available to customers of Northwest Michigan Works! through the Northstar Digital Literacy program. Northstar Digital Literacy defines basic skills needed to perform tasks on computers and online. Northstar Digital Literacy includes basic computer digital literacy standards and modules in three main areas:

- Essential Computer Skills - Basic Computer Skills, Internet Basics, Using Email, Windows OS, Mac OS
- Essential Software Skills – Microsoft Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Google Docs
- Using Technology in Daily Life - Social Media, Information Literacy, Career Search Skills, Accessing Telehealth Appointments, Supporting K-12 Distance Learning, Your Digital Footprint.

Northstar was developed to address the needs of job seekers who may lack the digital literacy skills required for seeking, obtaining, and retaining employment, and performing daily life tasks. Northstar Digital Literacy Certificates are available to individuals upon passing the assessments. This certificate serves as a valuable credential for employment, given that even entry-level positions increasingly demand basic computer skills. The certificate verifies the user's capability to perform essential computer tasks for higher education. It demonstrates proficiency in using social media and navigating online information responsibly. For those who do not pass, remediation is available in the Northwest Michigan Works! Learning Labs.

Another factor influencing digital literacy is the availability, or lack thereof, of broadband infrastructure. High speed internet is essential to using technology and learning its applications in the workplace. This infrastructure is available in many areas of the region, but is most common in densely populated areas. Broadband is available in all of the region's growth and investment areas. However, fiber, which provides ultra-high Internet speeds, is only available in a handful of communities. Many parts of the region, particularly rural areas, still depend on dial-up or costly satellite-based access to the Internet, which is not always reliable.

All individuals in a region should have access to all types of technology, including hardware, software, and reliable internet access. Whether employees, citizens, or students, individuals without these technological resources quickly find themselves at a disadvantage. Progress made in this arena will have positive impacts on individuals and communities lacking this critical infrastructure. Northwest Michigan Works! provides Jetpacks for internet access, making them available when necessary and appropriate to ensure workforce program participants have the connectivity required for their educational and employment needs.

Basic Academic Skills

Jobs of all types require more occupational training, higher levels of math skill, and stronger language and communication skills. Many workers are laid off from jobs that are obsolete, and the workers lack the math skills necessary to compete in today's job market. Their use of math on previous jobs was minimal or non-existent. Yet, these workers need to re-learn math from a very basic level to retrain for in-demand positions. Workers may learn through university programs, Northwest Michigan Works! Adult Education, or non-credit courses at postsecondary institutions.

For those working toward a degree, postsecondary institutions report increasing enrollments in remedial math classes. While these high school-level, non-credit classes rarely count toward a degree program, they still require the student to pay tuition and fees, and can quickly use up the limited time, financial resources and assistance available. However, these skills are absolutely necessary for students who are not prepared for college-level academics.

For adult workers who need remediation in basic academic skills, the Adult Education program offered in the Northwest Michigan Works! Learning Labs provide free access to basic academic learning, in preparation for a High School Equivalency Certificate or High School Diploma and transition to postsecondary training. However, Adult Education has historically seen significant decreases in public funding.

Despite recent increases in funding, access to adult education services in the remote areas of Northwest Michigan remains insufficient. There are significant gaps in the region where students must travel long distances, sometimes up to an hour one-way, to attend the program. While we have established Hyflex distance learning models to mitigate this issue, many students face challenges like a lack of access to a home computer, limited high-speed internet, or discomfort and difficulties with distance learning methods.

To address these barriers, the Adult Education program has invested in Chromebooks and internet access jet packs, which can be checked out at each lab. These resources enable students to participate in learning from home. Students are required to check in with their

teacher weekly to ensure they receive positive instructional services and to support their academic progress

Occupational Skills

Occupational Skills are those that are required to perform satisfactorily in a given occupation. For instance, a Certified Nurse Aide must be able to take vital signs; welders need a certain competency level in using a welding torch; and software developers must master various coding languages. A skills gap can occur for these occupational skills when training is not available. A skills gap also occurs when training is available but students do not participate in the programs, or when students do not possess the basic academic skills to succeed in the programs. A gap may occur when the community is unaware of the demand for the occupation.

Local employers have expressed a need for skills and certificates in their respective industries. The list below is a small sample of needs described by employers:

Advanced Manufacturing: Process improvement/Lean, safety, 3D Printing, machine setup and operation, blueprint reading, welding, robotics, AutoCAD, Calypso Basic, SQL Programming, hydraulics, design, and several IT functions including Comp TIA Network+.

Agriculture: Knowledge of seasonal crops for the region, food safety, Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) and Good Handling Practices (GHP), harvesting, processing, packaging, logistics, and unmanned aerial vehicles. There is also a push for distillery operation training to include spirits, cider, and wine. Certifications can include WSET or Vesta VIN.

Automotive, Construction and Transportation: Site safety including OSHA-10 and Wilderness First Aid, measuring, cutting, framework, carpentry, HVAC, electrical, energy efficiency, and high voltage training, CDL, and CDL endorsements including Hazmat. Logistics and service dispatch training are a new focus as companies grow.

Healthcare: Certified Nurse Aide (CNA), first aid, vital signs, medical terminology, medical billing and coding, Registered Nurse (RN), RN specializations (including pediatric and cardiac care, surgical technology, dementia care, and home health)

Hospitality: Customer service, ServSafe, TIPS, phone etiquette, food prep, restaurant management, culinary chef, landscaping, gaming dealers, and hotel management

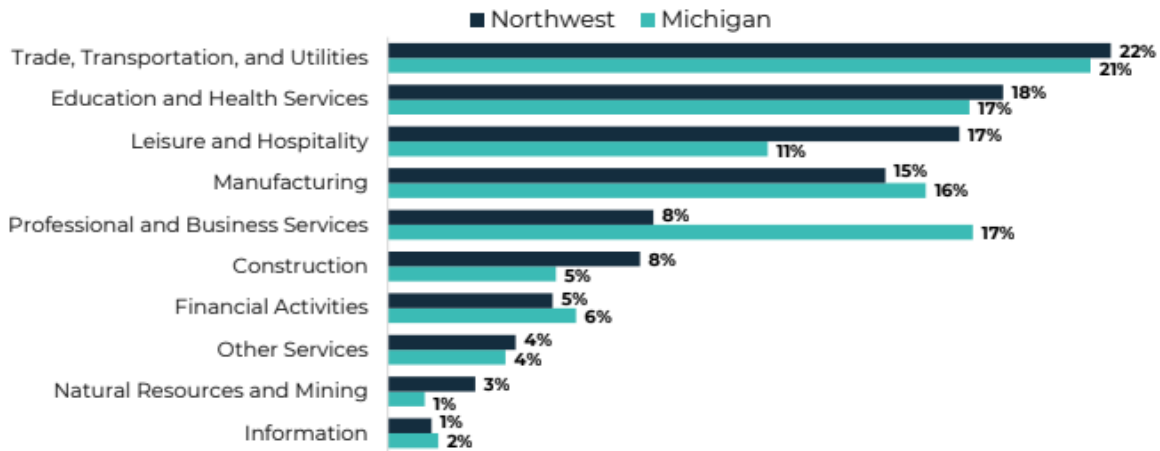
Information and Business Services: Sales, supervisor/management, software development (including Linux, Computer Architecture), computer programming (including network administration, Cisco), marketing, database-backed web applications (including Ruby on Rails, and insurance)

Education and Public Service: security training, early childhood education, secondary and postsecondary education, counseling, communication, technology and administration; special needs training, and CPR certificates

Some skills are required for multiple occupations, including sales, customer service, project management, and leadership. When these needs arise our teams will respond as they do with other industry training.

Over the past several years, the Northwest Michigan region has enjoyed solid increases in jobs across the Trade, Transportation, and Utilities industries. Education and Health Services, and Leisure and Hospitality industries comprised almost 57% of the region's growth. Manufacturing and Professional/Business Services also saw modest growth rates. Construction in our region continued to outpace the rest of the state. ¹

Distribution of Industry Jobs, Second Quarter 2023



Source: Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, Michigan Center for Data and Analytics (Table 10)

The demand-driven system in Northwest Michigan is not unlike other prosperity regions, with a continuing shortage of talent persisting. There are several reasons for this, which include:

- Lack of individuals willing and available to fill low-wage, entry-level, low-skilled positions.
- Job seekers looking for work have their choice of a multitude of job openings in and out of the region, leaving mid- to high-skilled jobs unfilled.
- The rate of business growth is higher than the rate than the system’s ability to train unskilled workers or identify workers willing to transition from one industry to another
- Some occupations, especially those in advanced manufacturing, are attempting to overcome a stigma that work environments in those industries are unsanitary, low-skilled, and have very little opportunity for advancement.
- Workers who have previously held jobs in the construction and manufacturing industries who lost those jobs during the pandemic’s economic downturn are unwilling to return to that industry or location. Construction is starting to come back to northern Michigan since we saw an exodus of this talent years ago, but there is still a gap in the talent we

need and the talent we have in our area. This is unfortunate because the region's manufacturing and construction industries have bounced back from the downturn. Employers are often willing to pay high wages to fill much-needed positions.

- Workers willing to transition from one industry to another, or return to an industry for an occupation for which they are at least partially skilled, find that their current skill levels are inadequate. Many industries have quickly embraced rapidly advancing technology, requiring even semi-skilled workers to receive some training in order to meet employer needs.
- Lack of overall population of working age to support the number of vacancies across the region.

Northwest Michigan Works! continues to address these barriers to employment by working with Networks Northwest, Economic Development Organizations, employers, community organizations, and stakeholders to explore these issues and collaborate on solutions. Potential strategies include:

- Outreach to the community and other stakeholders to market in-demand jobs and short-term training opportunities.
- Collaborations for career pathway development, outreach, and education in the region.
- Resolve the region's affordable housing and child care issues.
- Develop pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship opportunities throughout the region, especially to fill the traditional professional trades occupations.
- Identify non-traditional occupations for which Registered Apprenticeship opportunities may assist with meeting training needs for unique occupations,
- Work to develop and convene Employer Led Collaborative's centered around in-demand industries where gaps exist.

Workforce Development Activities - Strengths and Weaknesses

Workforce Development includes a variety of activities designed and implemented with the purpose to contribute to economic development and overall community viability and strength through a focus on employment and education. The Northwest region believes we are stronger

together, and relies on partners to bring their unique strengths and perspectives to solve problems and advance the region. With relatively scarce resources overall, partners in the region have found a natural collaborative rhythm as we work together to meet the needs of the region.

The Northwest region is strong in the following areas:

Strength	Evidence
Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Active Career & Educational Advisory Council (CEAC) ● Multiple collaborative initiatives and activities, Career Events, the Adult Career Training (ACT) program, and the Skills Up North (SUN) program ● Regional Prosperity Board ● Sub-regional Retention Visits to include but not limited to MEDC and other local economic development agencies (NLEA, AES, and others) ● Going Pro Training Fund grants in collaboration with multiple companies, New Jobs Training Program, Michigan Economic Development Corporation, and local economic development organizations ● Collaborative development of the Regional Prosperity Plan ● Development and maintenance of Business Resource Networks ● Development of the annual MiCareerQuest Northwest and partnership and support for MiCareerQuest events in neighboring MWA regions ● Strong partnerships with secondary and post-secondary educational providers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Talent Tours for 11th graders in collaboration with local businesses ○ Participation on several business class committees to inform students about the workforce scene

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Participating in and recruiting employers for Mock Interview events ● Job Fairs across MWA region ● Strong partnerships and collaboration with the Northwest Lower Michigan MiSTEM Region, including board seats ● Shared Career Advisor and collaborative agreement with Northwestern Michigan College ● Participation on regional EDO Talent Development Committee ● Participation in the Steering Team for the Community Health Innovation Region ● Apprenticeship Intermediary working with employers, training institutions, and the Department of Labor on a regular basis ● Housing multiple programs under one umbrella like Adult Education, Offender Success, and Apprenticeship Services, integrates services that are typically provided by different entities. This holistic approach streamlines access for participants and enhances the coordination and efficiency of program delivery.
Employer Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Employer Forums ● Just-in-Time Trainings ● Retention Visits ● Development of Employer Led Collaboratives ● Multiple successful hiring events, including virtual events ● Business Services Team assigned to employer relationship management (all are Certified Business Solutions Professionals) ● Sector initiatives ● Work closely with Regional Economic Development Organizations ● Strong partner in industry-led collaboratives like the Grand Traverse Manufacturing Council and the Home Builders Association ● Active and successful Business Resource Networks ● Active as the region’s US DOL Registered Apprenticeship Sponsor

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● International Trade resources through the Global Trade Alliance, in partnership with the MEDC ● Industry 4.0 employer engagement through the Industry 4.0 Technology Implementation grant ● Employer of the Day ● Employer participation in Career Connection workshops ● Document employer contact and outreach
Performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Consistently met or exceeded WIOA performance measures, ● Actively monitors expected and actual regional WIOA performance requirements and attainments ● Reviews local practices to improve performance outcomes and customer service
Career and Technical Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Approximately 40% of students in the Wexford-Missaukee ISD are first-time enrollments with the ISD ● Waiting lists for numerous programs ● Responsive to employer needs due to program advisory committees ● Convenes the Career & Educational Advisory Council (CEAC) ● Promotion of US DOL Registered Apprenticeships throughout the region ● Promotion and support of Educational Development Plans for the region's 3 Intermediate School Districts ● Shared Youth Career Advisor positions in the ISDs ● Shared Career Advisor position at Northwestern Michigan College ● Jobs for Michigan's Graduates In School and Out of School programs ● Young Professionals Program ● Integrated Education and Training

Training for Business and Industry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All post-secondary institutions offer customized training services for business customers • Michigan New Jobs Training Program is administered by a local community college with strong relationship with local economic development • Highly successful Going Pro Training Fund activities • Successful development of US DOL Registered Apprenticeships • Business Resource Networks • Retention Workshops
Use of Data and Labor Market Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Networks Northwest is known as the regional resource for data about in-demand industries and occupations • Produce Northwest Michigan Hot Jobs Report and Framework for Talent • Implementation and ongoing development of innovative Benchmarks Northwest website • Fully trained Business Services Specialists assist businesses requesting labor market information to make decisions based on data and information

The weaknesses of the region’s response to employer needs are opportunities for improvement and growth. All stakeholders providing workforce-related services are needed to assist in meeting these challenges. Many of the weaknesses identified here are addressed in the Regional Strategies and the Workforce Development Board’s Strategic Vision.

- Lack of community awareness about in-demand occupations and the skills needed to obtain them.
- Lack of people going into the workforce, influenced by our area being a destination for retirees.
- Talent recruitment from beyond our region is just beginning..

- Dwindling resources to support employment and training.
- Lack of resources to run successful worked-based training programs such as apprenticeships and pre-apprenticeships.
- Continued misperceptions about the public workforce system that include Michigan Works! is the Unemployment Insurance Agency;
- Misperception that Michigan Works! only works with low-skilled individuals, and that job postings are only for entry-level positions).
- Training for soft skills is still limited and employers have less time to provide soft skills training because they are busy fulfilling customer obligations with their limited resources.
- Lack of awareness of the “hidden” talent pool of individuals with disabilities and other marginalized populations.

The region’s capacity to provide the workforce development activities to address the education and skill needs of the workforce, including individuals with barriers to employment, is limited by financial resources. All other necessary elements are in place, offering a system of services that support completion of programs, placement into positions, and job retention. Current financial resources of the workforce development system are insufficient to meet employers’ current hiring needs, in terms of recruitment assistance and training. However, financial assistance for training programs may be leveraged with other programs, such as the New Jobs Training Program, Going Pro Training Fund, Michigan Reconnect, federal financial aid, local scholarship programs, and more. Additional grant funding is pursued from a variety of sources to support training needs.

Regional Service Strategies

See the Local Plan’s [Workforce Development System](#) section for a description of local workforce development activities in the region, including available education and training opportunities.

In-demand Industry Sector Initiatives

Sector-based initiatives include fully formed councils with governance structures, staff support, and strategic plans, to as-needed pop-up activities. The Northwest region's utilization of sector initiatives varies and continues to evolve, leaning toward a less-structured, demand-driven response to employer needs. Program development, planning, and delivery of workforce development services are organized around the framework of industry clusters.

Networks Northwest was an early adopter of the sector approach. We created and maintained several Regional Skills Alliances, including Healthcare, Agriculture, Entrepreneurship, Hospitality, and Advanced Manufacturing. These alliances provide a network of employers in each specific industry, working with educational partners to develop new training programs designed to meet employers needs. These alliances also offered training funds to create a skilled workforce. Noting the profound success of these alliances, we incorporated this approach into general workforce programming; we align all efforts around the region's in-demand industry sectors. Below are examples:

- All training, including employer-based (OJTs, Incumbent Worker, Customized, Integrated Education and Training), must fall into one of the in-demand industry sectors.
- Classroom training funds are linked directly to in-demand industry sectors.
- Our [Hot Jobs Report](#) identifies in-demand occupations within the in-demand industry sectors. It is updated regularly with input from available labor market information, job postings, and employer input.
- Every in-demand sector in the region is represented on the Networks Northwest Regional Prosperity Board.
- Employer Forums are convened to gather input from employers and support their workforce-related needs.
- Employer Led Collaborative bodies are formed to pursue all avenues of support for a particular industry. Currently there are 5 new ELCs in the beginning stages.

Historically, we have seen industry-based groups form or revitalize with employers taking the lead. Employers recognize working collaboratively benefits residents, business, and community organizations. Northwest Michigan Works! staff take active roles with these industry associations and will continue to collaborate to ensure alignment with the needs of each sector.

Strategies for continuing and building upon our use of the sector approach use many of the Michigan Industry Cluster Alliance tenets. We plan to implement the following strategies:

- Assist employers with access to Labor Market Information, including education about the data and uses for the information.
- Assess each industry cluster, identifying sectors and subsectors that lack a formal network of employers.
- Facilitate the development of a collaborative body/bodies of employers to ensure employers are well-represented throughout the region and have an opportunity to voice opportunities for improvement and share best practices..
- Facilitate closer connections between employers and educators to update curriculum.
- Provide a mechanism for regional career awareness campaigns by industry.
- Increase training for the most in-demand occupations for specific industry sectors.
- Improve the understanding of industry and talent needs.

Use of these strategies will vary by industry. They will also depend on factors related to projected growth of occupations within a sector, earnings potential for job seekers, and long-term employment options.

Training is available through Michigan Works via Individual Training Accounts. These are based on customer choice. However, training will be targeted towards the industry sectors with the highest earning potential with efficient and advanced credentialing options in the following industries:

- Manufacturing
- Energy, Construction and Transportation

- Healthcare
- Information and Business Services

Outdoor Recreation, Childcare, and Public Safety have been identified as emerging industries. These will be supported with the above strategies and an ELC model.

Support for occupations affected by seasonality and are lower in wage will include marketing those jobs on a regional basis.

See the [Employer Engagement through Sector Initiatives](#) section of the Local Plan for specific activities occurring in the Northwest region.

Below are descriptions of the factors that influence the economic vitality of in-demand industry sectors. These include projected jobs, anecdotal information from local businesses, and regionally-specific influences.

Manufacturing

In recent years, a combination of factors has contributed to the emergence of a nationwide manufacturing-specific skills gap that continues to impact Northwest Michigan. Fifteen to twenty-five years ago, many manufacturing companies went out of business when contracts for automotive manufacturing were transferred to foreign competitors. Dislocated workers and their families experienced traumatic times as they lost financial security and domestic stability. Entire communities were impacted. Due to the loss of these base jobs, non-manufacturing businesses were forced to close, including restaurants and retail stores.

Manufacturing is making a comeback and is more technologically complex and sophisticated. The companies that diversified, invested in new technology, and pursued global customers are thriving. However, the perception that manufacturing jobs are unstable and the memory of the trauma to our communities still lingers. Thus, many students and job seekers are not interested in pursuing training in manufacturing fields. Career tech and post-secondary programs have responded by offering early and middle college programs and dual enrollment options to increase training and foster increased interest in these occupations. Meanwhile, many workers

who were dislocated due to economic downturns and shifts within the industry do not have the advanced skills required to move into new high tech manufacturing positions. These skills include knowledge of and competence in processes, machinery, materials, tools, and programming.

With manufacturing jobs on the rise, many opportunities are available to job seekers looking for non-seasonal, full-time positions with a sustainable wage. Manufacturing jobs often pay more than jobs in other industries.

While the manufacturing industry has seen rapid growth over the past decade, industry growth now appears to be leveling off. The manufacturing industry currently employs almost 15,000 individuals at more than 500 businesses in Northwest Michigan. The vast majority of manufacturing jobs in the region are located in Grand Traverse, Wexford, Emmet, and Charlevoix counties. These counties are also the population centers in the region.

Industry	2020 Jobs	2030 Jobs	Numeric Change	% Change
31-33 Manufacturing ⁴	14,770	15,660	890	6.0%

Northwest Michigan manufacturing businesses serve numerous industries. There is a large supplier relationship to the automotive industry, but manufacturers also produce components and goods for the food service, medical, and energy sectors.

Northwest Michigan is known for its diverse economy, with several key manufacturing sectors contributing significantly to the region's economic landscape. The top manufacturing sectors in Northwest Michigan include:

- Automotive and Transportation Equipment Manufacturing-This sector is significant due to Michigan's historical association with the automotive industry. Manufacturers in this sector produce components and systems for vehicles, including parts suppliers and assembly operations.

- Food and Beverage Manufacturing-The region is home to many food processors, wineries, and breweries. This includes the processing of agricultural products such as cherries, apples, and other fruits that are abundant in the area.
- Plastics and Rubber Products Manufacturing-Companies in this sector produce a wide range of plastic products, from automotive parts to packaging materials.
- Machinery Manufacturing-This includes the production of machinery for various industries, including agriculture, construction, and manufacturing itself. Companies in this sector design and manufacture equipment used in a wide range of applications.
- Wood Products Manufacturing-Given the region's extensive forested areas, wood products manufacturing is significant. This includes furniture, cabinetry, and other wood-based products.
- Metalworking and Fabrication-Metalworking, including the production of fabricated metal products, is a crucial sector. This encompasses everything from small metal parts to large-scale structural components.
- Medical Devices and Equipment Manufacturing-The production of medical devices and equipment is growing, driven by advancements in healthcare technology and the demand for high-quality medical products.
- Aerospace and Defense Manufacturing-Although smaller compared to other regions, there are companies in Northwest Michigan involved in producing components for the aerospace and defense industries.

These sectors will benefit greatly from the region's efforts to build a skilled workforce and supportive business environment. The growing diversity in manufacturing will help stabilize the local economy and provide a wide range of employment opportunities.

Growth in the manufacturing industry continues to turn around due to adoption of new technologies, more globally minded investments, and the arrival of more highly trained employees. Entry-level operator/production jobs are expected to see more growth as well as higher skilled positions. The training available for these new positions must match the demand.

We will capitalize on this momentum. Efforts to close the skills gap and attract new talent to manufacturing are crucial for maintaining the industry's growth and ensuring that Northwest Michigan remains competitive in the modern manufacturing landscape.

Agriculture

The agriculture industry in Northwest Michigan is a vital component of the region's economy, characterized by its diversity and the high quality of its produce. This industry benefits from the region's unique climate, fertile soils, and proximity to the Great Lakes, which create ideal conditions for a variety of crops.

The key products of the agriculture industry in Northwest Michigan include:

- Fruit Production
 - Cherries: Northwest Michigan is renowned for its tart cherry production, contributing significantly to the state's status as a leading cherry producer in the United States. The region's climate, moderated by the Great Lakes, provides ideal conditions for cherry orchards.
 - Apples: Apple orchards are abundant, producing a wide variety of apple types that cater to local markets and broader distribution.
 - Wine Grapes: The region's growing wine industry is supported by vineyards producing high-quality grapes. Wineries in the Leelanau Peninsula and Old Mission Peninsula have gained national recognition for their wines.
- Vegetable Farming-The region supports the cultivation of a variety of vegetables, including asparagus, potatoes, and beans. These crops are often sold in local markets, contributing to the farm-to-table movement.
- Specialty Crops:
 - Hops: The craft beer industry has fueled the growth of hops farming in the region, supplying local breweries with essential ingredients.
 - Herbs and Flowers: Specialty farms produce herbs and flowers, catering to niche markets and adding diversity to the agricultural landscape.
- Livestock and Dairy

- Dairy Farming: Dairy farms produce milk, cheese, and other dairy products, contributing to the local food industry and providing raw materials for cheese production.
- Livestock: Beef and poultry farming are also present, supplying meat to local markets and beyond.
- Agritourism
 - Farm Tours and U-Pick Operations: Agritourism is a growing segment, with farms offering tours, U-pick fruit operations, and educational experiences for visitors. This not only provides additional revenue streams for farmers but also fosters a connection between consumers and the agricultural community.
 - Wineries, Breweries, and Distilleries: The presence of numerous wineries, breweries, and distilleries has made the region a popular destination for wine, beer, and spirit enthusiasts, contributing to the local economy through tourism.

In the past decade, the agriculture sector in Northwest Michigan has continued to see strong growth, able to support almost 3,500 jobs in the region. The majority of the increase comes from jobs in animal production (almost 300). Individuals in the region, both locals and visitors, continue to express demand for locally- produced food and food products, which may contribute to an increase in jobs to support the industry. A surge in interest in locally grown, produced, and environmentally friendly products supports continued growth in the local agriculture industry. Farmers markets are popular in many communities. This is another demonstration of the ties between industries, in this case between tourism and agriculture.

Industry	2020 Jobs	2030 Jobs	Numeric Change	% Change
11 Crop and Animal Production ⁴	1220	1260	40	4.4%

The industry is experiencing shifts in its workforce. As significant numbers of farmers prepare to retire without passing farms on to heirs, new farmers face high start-up costs that create

barriers to establishing them in agriculture. Without new farmers to replace those retiring, significant acreages of farmland and valuable skill sets are endangered.

Many farms in Northwest Michigan depend on a skilled migrant workforce. However, immigration-related issues are impacting farms and workers. Farmers report difficulties finding workers with the appropriate skills, which threatens their ability to grow labor-intensive crops. A significant increase in H-2A intrastate recruitment applications being filed and accepted support recruitment efforts.

Most farms in Northwest Michigan are operated as small family farms. These operations face economic pressure as the size and scale of farming operations continue to increase. Many small farms are diversifying to remain competitive in the face of financial pressures created by statewide, national, and global food policy. These farms are looking for new markets or are adding value to their products through on-site processing. Although Northwest Michigan is still the “Cherry Capital,” there is a growth of startup agriculture businesses in winemaking, distilleries, hops, lavender, raw juices, cheese, jams, and more. However, the skill sets needed for managing business growth are lacking among the farm owners and managers. Additionally, farm and value-added processing equipment is increasingly high tech, requiring specialized skills to operate.

Growth in the agriculture industry supports job growth over all occupation clusters. Within the Agricultural occupation cluster Crop Production is expected to see the most significant growth (almost 7%).⁴

Energy, Construction and Transportation

This sector is a blend of traditionally clustered industries, as Energy, Construction and Transportation have connections and impacts on each other. Many jobs in these industries provide excellent wages for workers with a high school diploma/GED, short-term training or an apprenticeship. Many of the occupations in these industries require similar skill sets, so there are career mobility opportunities between the sectors. The region’s construction industry was

hit hard by the 2008 recession. Many companies went out of business and the skilled workforce left the area.

As the economy continues to recover, we are seeing a significant increase in commercial and residential construction projects, especially in the region’s population center of Traverse City.

Industry	2020 Jobs	2030 Jobs	Numeric Change	% Change
23 Construction ⁴	7,080	7,450	370	5.2%

However, construction companies are among the most desperate for skilled workers, because of the high level of skills needed and the extremely fast growth of their projects. With modest growth estimated at 5.2%, local employers are limited by the region’s availability of skilled workers. Growth is expected to begin at the entry level, mostly as Construction Laborers, but also as skilled Carpenters.⁴ In addition, Contractors with specialized skills, like roofers, masons, construction equipment operators, electricians, plumbers, and HVAC technicians, anticipate robust growth.⁴ As more workers enter the construction industry and move through its various career pathways, the rate of growth is expected to increase.

Industry	2020 Jobs	2030 Jobs	Numeric Change	% Change
48-49 Transportation and Warehousing ⁴	1,940	2,460	520	26.8%

Transportation of goods and materials continues to grow as the economy improves. In the 2nd quarter of 2023, trade, transportation, and utilities was the region’s largest private industry, employing just over one in five workers. This was similar to the statewide share.¹ This industry is especially important to Northern Michigan because of our geographic location. Products made here that will be sold elsewhere. The region’s current infrastructure is primarily supported by trucks, causing a substantial demand for Heavy and Tractor-trailer Truck Drivers and Light Truck or Delivery Services Drivers⁴. With competitive wages offered, an increasing number of

job seekers are seeking training and employment opportunities related to truck driving. Some rail infrastructure exists and some industries take advantage of air transport.

Growth in the region’s energy industry, encompassing natural gas, electric and alternative power generation, has stalled. Demand in the energy industry supports 680 jobs region-wide. Employers in the industry are experiencing a lack of talent, but the energy industry is poised to become one of the region’s leading fastest growing sectors. This is especially significant considering the strong link between the energy industry and the expected high-growth construction industry.

Industry	2020 Jobs	2030 Jobs	Numeric Change	% Change
Energy ⁵	680	640	-40	5.9%

With the region’s talent moving toward high-wage, well-marketed, in-demand occupations like Electrical Power-line installers and Repairers or Broadband technicians and related jobs and the state’s commitment to infrastructure we predict a reverse in job growth for this sector. Other occupations within the industry have seen slow-downs, especially those related to the oil industry’s raw material extraction/generation. The energy industry tends to move forward cautiously, reacting to fluctuating federal and state regulatory requirements.

Healthcare

The healthcare industry in Northwest Michigan is a crucial component of the region’s economy and community well-being, providing essential medical services, contributing to job creation, and driving economic growth. The sector is characterized by a diverse range of healthcare providers, including hospitals, clinics, long-term care facilities, and specialized medical services. The Healthcare sector continues to grow and offers a wide variety of jobs, from entry level to highly specialized. Career pathways in this sector are promising, as skill sets transfer from one occupation to another, with multiple stepping stones available.

Long-term projections anticipate continued and significant growth in the healthcare industry, a demand likely driven in part by the characteristics of an older population.

Industry ⁴	2020 Jobs	2030 Jobs	Numeric Change	% Change
621 Ambulatory Health Care Services	6,260	7,410	1,150	18.4%
622 Hospitals	7,570	8,210	640	8.5%
623 Nursing and Residential Care Facilities	1,960	2,120	160	8.2%

Healthcare providers include:

- Hospitals and Health Systems
 - Munson Healthcare: Munson Healthcare is the largest healthcare system in Northwest Michigan. It operates multiple hospitals, including Munson Medical Center in Traverse City, which serves as the regional referral center. Other hospitals in the system include Paul Oliver Memorial Hospital in Frankfort, and Kalkaska Memorial Health Center.
 - McLaren Northern Michigan: Located in Petoskey, McLaren Northern Michigan is a major healthcare provider offering comprehensive medical services, including specialized care in cardiology, orthopedics, and oncology.
- Outpatient and Specialty Clinics
 - Primary Care and Family Medicine: Numerous outpatient clinics provide primary care, preventive services, and family medicine, ensuring accessibility to routine healthcare for residents.

- Specialty Clinics: Specialty services such as cardiology, oncology, orthopedics, and mental health are available through hospital-affiliated and independent clinics.
- Long-Term Care and Assisted Living
 - Nursing Homes and Assisted Living Facilities: The region has a range of long-term care facilities, providing services for the elderly and individuals with chronic illnesses or disabilities.
 - Home Health Care: Home health agencies offer in-home medical care and support services, allowing patients to receive care in the comfort of their homes.
- Public Health and Community Services
 - County Health Departments: Local health departments play a vital role in promoting public health, providing immunizations, health education, and disease prevention programs.
 - Community Health Centers: Federally qualified health centers and other community clinics offer healthcare services to underserved populations, ensuring that all residents have access to medical care.

Together Munson Healthcare and McLaren Northern Michigan Hospital form the hub for healthcare-related occupations in the region, supporting a multitude of other occupations, both healthcare and non-healthcare, throughout the 10-counties. The Munson Healthcare system, based in Traverse City and is comprised of eight hospitals throughout Northern Michigan. Between its hospitals and partners, the healthcare entity employs 8,000+ employees, including over 1,000 physicians. In addition to Munson Healthcare, McLaren Northern Michigan Hospital operates out of Petoskey (Emmet County) and employs over 230 physicians and additional staff.

Home Health is a subset of the industry that faces complications in recruiting for open positions. Home Health Aides are entry-level workers, and there is no standard training or credential for the occupation. However, these workers are expected to perform at a higher level than their classification would indicate because their duties are performed in an unsupervised setting in

the home of patients. This situation calls for the ability for workers to think “on their feet,” make judgment calls on the spot, maintain appropriate boundaries and high levels of professionalism. In our geographically vast region, workers often must travel great distances to get to their worksites, requiring travel reimbursement costs. Because home health services are often funded by Medicare and a regulatory cap on reimbursements, companies are limited in the pay scale they can offer. All of these factors present barriers and higher levels of complexity for home health agencies’ attempting to recruit qualified workers.

Northwest Michigan Works! works alongside several home health aides and center-based organizations to develop apprenticeships for these entry level positions and beyond. The hope is that with standard training and a clear pathway recruiting into this industry becomes easier.

Certified Nurse Aide is another difficult position to fill, though it offers a standard training and industry-recognized credentials. The location of the work is typically fixed, such as at a hospital or nursing home. This provides some stability for the workers. Local employers have seen Home Health and Certified Nurse Aide as potential entry points on the healthcare career pathway.

The current need for registered nurses continues to grow and is projected to increase by 9.4% in the next 10 years. The job postings in our region often include specializations, such as operating room, neonatal, and cardiac nursing. T is a need for more graduates of Registered Nursing programs and training in specialized skill sets.

Occupation ⁴	2020 Jobs	2030 Jobs	Numeric Change	% Change
Registered Nurses 29-1141	2,970	3,250	280	9.4%
Medical Assistants 31-9092	1,040	1,230	190	18.3%

Home Health & Personal Care Aides 31-1120	1,730	2,110	380	22.0%
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Hospitality

The Northwest region is well-known for its hospitality and tourism economy. The hospitality industry in Northwest Michigan is a vital and dynamic sector, driven by the region's natural beauty, recreational opportunities, and vibrant local culture. This industry encompasses a wide range of services including lodging, dining, entertainment, and tourism-related activities.

Cities such as Petoskey, Traverse City, and Manistee attract hundreds of thousands of visitors per year, especially in the summer. Smaller towns and villages offer year-round recreational options like boating, kayaking, hunting, fishing, snowmobiling, and scenic trails. In addition to these activities, other key aspects of the region's industry include:

- **Lodging**
 - **Hotels and Resorts:** The region boasts numerous hotels and resorts, ranging from luxury accommodations to budget-friendly options. Notable resorts such as Grand Traverse Resort and Spa and Crystal Mountain Resort attract visitors year-round.
 - **Bed and Breakfasts:** Quaint bed and breakfast establishments offer personalized experiences and are popular among travelers seeking a more intimate stay.
 - **Vacation Rentals:** Platforms like Airbnb and VRBO have made it easier for visitors to find vacation homes and cabins, especially in scenic areas like Traverse City, Petoskey, and Charlevoix.
- **Dining and Culinary Experiences**
 - **Farm-to-Table Restaurants:** The farm-to-table movement is strong in Northwest Michigan, with many restaurants sourcing ingredients locally. This trend supports local farmers and provides fresh, high-quality meals to diners.

- Wineries and Breweries: The region is home to numerous wineries and breweries. Wine tasting tours and brewery visits are popular activities, especially in areas like the Leelanau Peninsula and Old Mission Peninsula.
- Local Cuisine: Visitors can enjoy local specialties such as cherry products, fresh fish from the Great Lakes, and artisanal cheeses.
- Recreational Activities and Attractions
 - Outdoor Recreation: The region offers a plethora of outdoor activities, including hiking, biking, fishing, boating, and skiing. National and state parks, such as Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore, attract nature enthusiasts.
 - Water Activities: The Great Lakes and numerous inland lakes provide opportunities for sailing, kayaking, and beach-going.
 - Golf Courses: Northwest Michigan features several renowned golf courses that attract golf enthusiasts from around the country.
- Cultural and Heritage Tourism
 - Festivals and Events: Annual events such as the National Cherry Festival in Traverse City and the Harbor Springs Festival of the Book draw large crowds.
 - Historical Sites and Museums: Historical attractions, including lighthouses, museums, and heritage sites, offer educational experiences for visitors.
 - Arts and Entertainment: The region supports a thriving arts scene with galleries, theaters, and live music venues contributing to its cultural richness.

Leisure and hospitality employed 17% of workers in Northwest Michigan in the 2nd quarter of 2023, reflecting the heavy influence of tourism in the region. It is worth noting that this number is on the rise after a significant drop in the 2nd quarter of 2021 due to the pandemic. The retail industry is expected to grow at a rate of almost 5.2%. Linked by the region’s ability to draw on tourism, Leisure and Hospitality, and Retail, have a high impact on the region’s economy.

Industry ⁴	2020 Jobs	2030 Jobs	Numeric Change	% Change
44 RetailTrade	15,270	16,060	790	5.2%

72 Accommodation and Food Services	12,640	16,460	3,820	30.2%
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Hospitality employs nearly 28,000 individuals in the region through retail, food service, accommodations, and recreation jobs. Most of the jobs are in accommodation, food service and retail. These jobs are expected to continue to grow, adding 4,610 new jobs across the 10-county region through 2030.

Occupation ⁴	2020 Jobs	2030 Jobs	Numeric Change	% Change
Food preparation and serving workers 35-0000	11,010	13,740	2,730	24.8%
Cashiers 41-2011	3,960	3,960	0	0%
Retails Salespersons 41-2031	4,440	4,780	340	7.7%

The shortage of workers willing to fill occupations in the hospitality industry has deepened over the last few years. Hospitality employers are desperate for workers. Although hospitality jobs are numerous, they are typically seasonal and wages can be low compared to the cost of living. We are beginning to see employers in this industry increase starting wages in order to attract workers, with some offering signing bonuses as an added incentive.

Information and Business Services

This industry cluster includes businesses that provide services to other businesses and to individuals. It includes accounting, legal, information systems, communications, waste management and insurance. The sector employs almost 12,000 individuals.⁴ This industry is linked to growth in all other industries. As the industries in this sector continue to grow,

numerous job opportunities will be available, ranging from entry level jobs that require minimal training to job requiring a Bachelor’s Degree or higher. The majority of jobs in this sector belong to professional office workers.

Industry ⁴	2020 Jobs	2030 Jobs	Numeric Change	% Change
52 Finance and Insurance	3,680	4,000	320	8.7%
54 Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	3,260	3,680	420	12.9%
56 Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	4,530	5,100	570	12.6%

Employers in the Information Technology industry are especially concerned about the lack of trained software developers and computer programmers. The “brain drain” appears to be a significant contributing factor because traditional college students leave the area and do not return after completing their education. In addition, completions at post-secondary institutions in the region are low, partly because the need is so high that students are recruited by employers before finishing their degree. This trend to hire workers prior to completing their degree is starting to be noticeable across multiple industries and occupations.

Occupation ⁴	2020 Jobs	2030 Jobs	Numeric Change	% Change
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Insurance Sales Agents 41-3021	350	410	60	17.1%
Customer Service Representatives 43- 4051	1,820	1,890	70	3.8%
Accountants and Auditors 13-2011	1,070	1,150	80	7.5%

Education and Public Safety

Education and Public Safety is a newly identified in-demand sector. It includes occupations that provide necessary services to the community like education, social services, security and emergency services. Teachers, social workers, law enforcement, corrections officers, and firefighters are included in this sector. The community has always needed these occupations, but the labor shortage has impacted the ability to meet the demand for these types of jobs. By recognizing this level of demand, the Networks Northwest Regional Prosperity Board can directly address training and employment placement into these types of occupations.

Regional Strategies

The local board adopted the following regional strategies in collaboration with various stakeholders, employers, and other organizations throughout Region 2.

Serving the Hardest to Serve

The “Hardest to Serve” have significant barriers to employment, like a lack of affordable housing, lack of reliable transportation, lack of marketable skills, low educational attainment, disabilities, lack of employability/soft skills, and more. WIOA law states that among eligible and interested individuals, priority must be given to the hardest to serve. Employers in the

region continue to identify lack of employability skills as one of the most significant barriers to employment for job seekers who are considered the hardest to serve.

Northwest Michigan Works! provides the Workplace Excellence curriculum to job seekers and incumbent workers. Trained Workplace Excellence facilitators provide ongoing workshops and one-on-one sessions intended to improve employability skills across the region. Workplace Excellence targets skills like teamwork, responsibility, communication, conflict resolution, problem solving, and more. Workplace Excellence was selected with employer input. Delivery of the training sessions involves employers to the greatest extent possible. A portable credential may be established through proper demonstration of skills, so that the certificate has value to employers. In addition, Networks Northwest continues to expand its work-based learning programs to incorporate soft skills training when possible.

Networks Northwest continues to deliberately identify and engage with underserved and unserved populations across the region. We partner with community organizations and participate in community discussions to support the ongoing work around housing, transportation, and childcare. Although these are complex issues, a variety of community organizations are committed to working together to identify and implement solutions.

Employer Engagement

The need for an employer-focused demand-driven workforce development model is as important now as it has ever been. Networks Northwest continues to be a regional leader in employer engagement to assist employers across all industries and employee skill levels.

Employer needs should be identified and workforce programs should be developed to meet those needs. In today's workforce climate, it would be difficult for any one entity or organization to identify and address all employer needs. Networks Northwest will continue to act as a regional convener as we bring employer-focused services together while increasing employer accessibility to those services.

Our strategy for ensuring a friendly environment for employer engagement throughout the local area includes maintaining and fostering collaborative relationships with a wide spectrum of industry-focused service providers. These include: Apex Accelerators, the Small Business Development Center, the Michigan Economic Development Corporation, post-secondary education and training institutions, local economic development organizations, and community based organizations. Additionally, specific collaborative activities may include the following:

- Expanded outreach to employers through the use of joint business retention visits. Networks Northwest partners with local and state level economic development agencies to schedule and conduct business retention visits. Based on employers' needs and desires, the Networks Northwest Business Services team works to bring appropriate partners to the table who are best able to address employer needs. These partners include but are not limited to the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC), local chambers or other economic development agencies, and Michigan Department of Agriculture & Rural Development (MDARD).
- The Networks Northwest's Business Services Department continues its active role in employer advisory groups throughout the region. Involvement includes participation in industry collaborations, intermediate school districts, industry advisory councils, and local chambers of commerce. Working in partnership with these organizations greatly increases the reach of Networks Northwest's employer engagement.
- Networks Northwest's Business Services and Apprenticeships teams convene Employer Led Collaboratives with members across the 10-county region.

Networks Northwest is partnering with one of the region's largest economic development organizations, Traverse Connect, to continue our work in talent attraction and engage with more employers. Through this partnership we are able to solicit and disperse resumes of job seekers, local and from outside our region, directly to employers. The [Northern Navigators](#) program and the [Creative Coast job board](#) are programs employers and job seekers alike can take advantage of. The Northern Navigators program is designed so volunteers from the region are acting as

'regional ambassadors.' Northern Navigators have chosen to live in the area, and who can help newcomers feel welcomed and connected. These Navigators offer knowledge of the regional lifestyle, recreation, schools, healthcare, real estate, industry, and career opportunities. The Creative Coast job board is a curated list of key employers and fairly compensated professional job opportunities in the Grand Traverse Region. Objectives for the Traverse Connect partnership include the referrals to both programs by Northwest Michigan Works staff. Our Business Services team recommends the job board when appropriate and encourages the use of the Northern Navigators to all job seekers looking to move to the area.

Career Pathways

Career Pathways are a critical component to the identification of sustainable living-wage jobs and careers. These Career Pathways must provide job seekers and employees with a clear understanding of the opportunities that exist along the pathway. Workforce development programming that uses a well-developed Career Pathway provides participants with a defined, easy-to-follow guide to entering and progressing through an industry. While Career Pathways can take many different forms, Networks Northwest will partner with employers, training providers, and educational institutions to develop comprehensive, regionally available Career Pathway programs. Career Pathway material and information will be offered in digital and printed formats.

Networks Northwest will continue its work in this area by focusing on careers that are most in need by employers. Our specific strategy will include partnering with employers during the early developmental stages for each industry. Employer input regarding required skills, education, and training will be critical to ensure an accurate pathway is presented to participants. Additionally, Networks Northwest will work with training and educational providers to identify resources available throughout all stages of the Career Pathway. Understanding training and educational requirements is an important aspect to ensuring job seekers and employees understand the full aspect of opportunities available and enter the industry at an appropriate level with a defined path during career advancement.

Emphasis will be placed on providing training and education opportunities that result in industry-recognized portable credentials. Earning these credentials will benefit employers by filling their need for skilled talent along the pathway as well as provide participants with increased career opportunities and potential income. The career pathways systems developed will give program staff, educators, employers, parents, and participants a tool to use in mapping out career pathways on an individual basis.

Northwest Michigan Works! provides the Kuder Journey Career Planning System. This is available to all customers. Kuder Journey is a comprehensive online platform that assists customers in navigating the initial steps of their career journey and supports adults seeking a career change. This powerful tool offers features to help customers identify suitable career paths and academic majors. It also provides information about professional associations, internships, and employment opportunities. It empowers users to align their career pursuits with their personal interests, skills, and values, ultimately leading to long-term career satisfaction

Increasing Awareness of In-demand Occupations

Throughout the development of the Regional Prosperity Plan and through ongoing engagement with employers, partners, board members, and communities, Networks Northwest has received a consistent and clear message: the people of our region need to be more aware of the available career opportunities. The Regional Prosperity Board's Strategic Agenda and the Regional Prosperity Plan prioritize increasing awareness of in-demand occupations as a key strategy.

To address this issue effectively, Networks Northwest's approach is multifaceted. It involves comprehensive and targeted marketing campaigns. These campaigns will highlight specific occupations and the general availability of quality jobs in our region.

Strategies include:

- Targeted marketing campaigns that allow us to focus on promoting particular in-demand occupations, providing detailed information about job roles, required skills, career paths, and benefits. This is already happening with Broadband occupations, electric vehicle related jobs, and even in healthcare, think MiREACH, in our region.
- General awareness campaigns will aim to raise overall awareness about the variety of good job opportunities available in the region, emphasizing the benefits of living and working locally.
- Partnerships and collaborations with employers will identify key occupations and develop campaigns that accurately reflect the opportunities and benefits of these jobs and/or careers. By partnering with schools, colleges, and training centers, we can ensure that students and job seekers are informed about the training and education required for these in-demand jobs.
- Community outreach through workshops or information sessions continues to be a preferred method of engagement. Hosting events and sessions in various communities to provide direct information and answer questions about career opportunities.
- Digital and social media presence will increase and play a major role in employer engagement. Utilizing social media platforms and online advertising to reach a broader audience will help create and spread awareness of in-demand occupations. We highlight local successes and employer testimonials. Featuring testimonials from local employers about the positive impact Northwest Michigan Works! and Networks Northwest programs have had on them and their workforce will help showcase the occupations in the region.

By implementing these multifaceted strategies, Networks Northwest can significantly increase awareness of in-demand occupations and ensure that residents are well-informed about the excellent career opportunities available in our region. This approach supports workforce development and strengthens the local economy and community.

Increasing Awareness of demand for specific occupations

Increasing the awareness of regionally available occupations continues to be a Networks Northwest priority. The foundation of our work is a thorough understanding of the needs of the employers we serve. Employers across all industries desire a locally educated and trained workforce. Networks Northwest will assist employers in meeting their workforce needs by ensuring the regional talent pool is aware of the living wage family sustaining careers available throughout the region.

Youth Advisors continue their involvement with the K-12 Educational Development Plan (EDP) process. By working directly with and in the education system we are able to ensure students are aware of the many career opportunities available to them in Northwest Lower Michigan. Employer involvement is a key component of the EDP process as they are often involved in career days as classroom guest speakers, and offer company tours and mentorship opportunities.

Our [Hot Jobs Report](#) for the region continues to be a popular tool utilized by participants, stakeholders, employers, and educators. Organized by industry sectors, this at-a-glance report provides updates about in demand occupations by industry, hiring trend information, credential requirements, and expected wage ranges.

Our Youth Services team, including the WIOA Youth program and Jobs for Michigan Graduates staff, stay informed and aware of the region's in demand careers. The Youth Services team collaborates with the Business Services department to do this. Youth staff regularly participate in student-focused programming to increase the students' career awareness and education. Examples of career-focused programming include job fairs, career fairs, talent tours, and industry awareness events.

Increasing Awareness of Career Opportunities in the Region

The annual MiCareerQuest Northwest event typically takes place in May each year. This event is lauded as a region wide success with over 2,000 students participating and anywhere from 40-55 employers present representing between 70 and 80 occupations.. The MiCareerQuest

event has increased the awareness of youth, educators, volunteers and parents about viable career opportunities in the region.

Additional career awareness events, focusing on the areas most in-demand occupations will include Networks Northwest's participation in National Manufacturing Day, Touch a Truck, Building Tomorrow, and several regional Career events hosted by school districts. Networks Northwest continues its relationship with the Northwest Lower Michigan MiSTEM region to bring additional awareness to in demand STEM related careers. Networks Northwest is always looking for innovative opportunities to collaborate to increase STEM-occupation awareness in the region.

Veterans Services

Veterans receive priority of service across all employment and training programs. They also have access to co-located Veterans Career Advisors (VCA) if they meet eligibility criteria. We go above and beyond to assist America's Veterans with accessing services. One challenge to providing services to veterans is that few of them self-identify their veteran status when they visit the service center. We continue to look for ways to provide excellent customer service and appropriate referrals to community partners.

Networks Northwest partners with veteran service organizations to offer workforce focused orientations. These are specifically developed to assist veterans in overcoming barriers and increasing access to training and employment.

Capitalizing on our ability to collaborate,, Networks Northwest will continue to partner with community-based veteran-focused organizations to host veteran job fairs, veteran ID days, and veteran employment bootcamps.

Apprenticeship

As a US DOL registered apprenticeship intermediary, Networks Northwest offers employers across the 10 county region on-site apprenticeship development, implementation and management services. Registered apprenticeship is an in-demand program for employers and

job seekers. It launches a business' talent pipeline while providing an earn and learn opportunity for the job seeker.

The Networks Northwest Apprenticeship Services Team operates in the most remote areas of the region to offer tangible apprenticeship resources for businesses large and small. The Apprenticeship Services Team focuses on barrier removal for the employer and the apprentice. This allows businesses to succeed with registered apprenticeship programming without the additional stress of working alone to coordinate this comprehensive workforce development tool.

Administrative Costs

Although willing to consider partnerships related to pooling financial contributions to support the region's administrative costs, Networks Northwest does not have any administrative costs arrangements at this time among regional partners.

Supportive Services

Supportive Services are essential to the success of the workforce development system's customers. Ensuring that these services are available and readily accessible is critical to implementation of regional strategies.

A variety of supportive services are available to participants across workforce development programs operating in the region, including the WIOA. Services include but are not limited to:

- Private vehicle registration, insurance, and repair for a vehicle to be used for work or training
- Transportation assistance (private vehicle mileage reimbursement, public transportation passes)
- Eye exams and glasses
- Clothing for interviews
- Clothing and tools/materials needed for employment (i.e. work boots, tools, scrubs)
- Medical exams required to enter a training program or for employment

- Licensing and certification fees
- Identification (driver's license, state identification card, birth certificate)
- Technology needs
- Reasonable accommodations for individuals with disabilities related to employment and education

In addition to those listed above, supportive services not listed on the Supportive Services Local Policy can be requested. See Appendix B for the Local Policy on Supportive Services.

Networks

Among the many possible supportive services, the three most in need are Transportation, Housing, and Child Care. These are especially important for the hardest to serve populations.

Networks Northwest is home to the local Regional Planning Organization (RPO). This department specializes in taking regional approaches, and working with local governments and communities to develop efficient, connected plans and services. The RPO is the designated entity for regional transportation solutions. It acts as a liaison to the Michigan Department of Transportation and local transit providers. Networks Northwest also acts as a regional data and policy resource about housing issues. It convenes networks on transportation and housing, which focus on regional collaboration and solutions.

Both networks consist of provider agencies, transit and housing, and other stakeholders. These networks offer opportunities for enhanced communication, visioning sessions, and joint activities. They host summits, promote public comment sessions, coordinate training on policy implications, and facilitate public awareness about transportation and housing challenges and potential solutions.

Transportation

Networks Northwest works with the Michigan Department of Transportation on various programs within the region. These include a Rural Task Force, a Small Urban Task Force, and the Traverse Transportation Coordinating Initiative (TTCI). These groups plan for, incorporate, and implement the region's transportation goals, taking into account multiple perspectives. The

Community Development Department also works with local transit agencies, organizations, and communities to broaden options and expand transportation choices in the region.

As a result of Census 2020 data, the TPCI became formally recognized as a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) in 2023. An MPO is an agency created by federal law to provide local elected officials with input for the planning and implementation of federal transportation funds to metropolitan areas with populations of greater than 50,000. As an MPO for the greater Traverse City area, the TPCI coordinates planning and consensus-building for transportation projects and expenditures, within a regional context.

Housing

High costs of housing in our rural, tourism-oriented area have undermined employers' attempts to recruit professionals from other areas. Housing that provides handicap-accessible entry and living areas is a barrier to employment for people with disabilities. The explosion of short-term rentals has served to compound the lack of long-term rental options. The lack of available, affordable rentals and steep residential home prices are forcing workers with lower incomes to live farther away, compounding the issue of transportation.

Networks Northwest was a key founding partner of [Housing North](#), an entity solely focused on housing issues and strategies for addressing affordable housing needs. The region's work around addressing the housing crisis culminates with the annual Northwest Michigan Housing Summit, presented by Housing North and partners such as Networks Northwest. The summit has evolved into a hallmark event, drawing stakeholders from throughout the region to discuss and strategize about housing issues while providing a forum to learn more about the challenges of accessing affordable housing. Networks Northwest most recent [Target Market Analysis](#) quantifies the number and types of housing needed in through 2025 at the county level and for each of the more populated regions within each county. This study is relied upon by communities, organizations, and developers alike as a guide to the actual demand and types of housing needed.

Child Care

The regional child care delivery system, like those in most of Michigan, is not enough to meet the needs of families with young children. Further, child care comprises critical economic infrastructure. When child care is strengthened in a community, it provides talent for economic development, now and in the future. Each child care worker allows six to eight other people to work, prioritizing child care solutions directly helps address Michigan's need for talent.

Building off the [Making Childcare a Regional Priority report](#), Networks Northwest convened the Northwest Regional Child Care Planning Coalition, charged with increasing access to quality, affordable child care. Recognizing that the child care crisis is an economic and workforce development crisis as much as a family concern, the Coalition included a broad spectrum of stakeholders ranging from government officials, economic developers, employers, parents, child care providers and other community partners. The work of the Coalition resulted in the Regional Child Care Action Plan, comprised of impactful solutions tailored to policy makers, local officials, employers, local funders, and community members. Continued support for work in this space will be ongoing as a key element for not only meeting the needs of working families, but also in support of licensed child care providers workforce needs throughout the region. Coordination with Economic Development

Economic prosperity can be found at the confluence of community, business, and talent development. Networks Northwest embraces this philosophy and remains committed to its recognized role as an economic development leader serving the 10 counties of Northwest Lower Michigan. Our leadership position requires us to take on many roles that can be defined as the convenor, supporter, coordinator, and provider of services.

Collaborative Development Council

Networks Northwest remains the lead entity for the Northwest Michigan Collaborative Development Council (CDC). We are uniquely positioned to convene the region's economic and workforce development leaders. With the environments of economic and workforce development continuing to evolve and rapidly becoming synonymous, this leadership group focuses on identifying and transforming local priorities into economic development projects.

These projects have positive, change evoking, regional significance. Networks Northwest and the CDC leadership team have the ability to be responsive and agile to the economic development needs of Northwest Lower Michigan.

Business Retention Visits

The Northwest Michigan Works! Business Services Team is active at the tactical level of economic development through its participation in business retention visits. Often taking the lead role, Northwest Michigan Works! Business Services Representatives team up with local economic developers, the MEDC, and a variety of key local, regional and state partners to meet with area companies. These visits ensure our employers' workforce and economic development needs are identified and communicated to the appropriate partners and service providers. Employers leave these visits with a new understanding of, and direct access to, the region's talent and economic development tools.

Regional Prosperity Board

The Regional Prosperity Board remains one of the strongest in the State. The board is composed of the workforce development board, local elected officials, and representation from multiple sectors that make up Northwest Lower Michigan. This eclectic membership supports the board's commitment to function as a leading talent, business and community agency. With multiple business and public sector representatives from across the 10-county region, the board is best able to identify, address, and act on a variety of economic and workforce development opportunities and improvements.

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy

Networks Northwest maintains and convenes regional economic development partners in order to ensure progress on and updates to the region's 2021 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). Supported by the Michigan Economic Development Corporation and the Northwest Michigan Collaborative Development Council, the CEDS defines and provides a roadmap for improving regional economic conditions. Planning has begun in preparation for updating the current CEDS plan for 2025. The Networks Northwest's Workforce Plan Ad Hoc committee will play a key role in informing the CEDS by reviewing data, exploring

strategies, identifying missing information and ensuring a coordinated effort for gathering additional input.

Performance

The Northwest region successfully negotiated with the State of Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity regarding WIOA Program Years 2024 and 2025 current levels of performance for the four primary indicators. These include:

- Employment Rate, 2nd quarter after exit;
- Employment Rate, 4th quarter after exit;
- Median Earnings, 2nd quarter after exit;
- Credential Attainment, within 4 quarters after exit.
- Measurable Skills Gains

The mutually agreed-upon performance indicator levels are as follows:

Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act

Adult	PY 2024	PY 2025
Employment Rate 2 nd Quarter after Exit	89.1%	89.1%
Employment Rate 4 th Quarter after Exit	89.1%	89.1%
Median Earnings 2 nd Quarter after Exit	\$8,500	\$8,500
Credential Attainment within 4 Quarters after Exit	83.5%	83.5%
Measurable Skills Gains	66.0%	66.0%
Dislocated Worker	PY 2024	PY 2025

Employment Rate 2 nd Quarter after Exit	90.0%	90.0%
Employment Rate 4 th Quarter after Exit	90.0%	90.0%
Median Earnings 2 nd Quarter after Exit	\$9,160	\$9,160
Credential Attainment within 4 Quarters after Exit	83.0%	83.0%
Measurable Skills Gains	64.0%	64.0%
Youth	PY 2024	PY 2025
Employment or Placement Rate 2 nd Quarter after Exit	79.0%	79.0%
Employment or Placement Rate 4 th Quarter after Exit	79.0%	79.0%
Median Earnings 2 nd Quarter after Exit	\$5,060	\$5,060
Credential Attainment within 4 Quarters after Exit	66.5%	66.5%
Measurable Skills Gains	48.7%	48.7%

Wagner-Peyser Act

	PY 2024	PY 2025
Employment Rate 2 nd Quarter after Exit	77.0%	77.0%
Employment Rate 4 th Quarter after Exit	71.2%	71.2%
Median Earnings 2 nd Quarter after Exit	\$8,000	\$8,000

The Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity (LEO) and Networks Northwest have agreed to the performance targets outlined above for Program Years 2024 and 2025. *2026 and 2027 performance targets will be submitted once received.

An additional WIOA Performance Measure has been defined by the USDOL: 'Effectiveness in Serving Employers.' Baseline data is being collected on this measure, which is expected to be included in future local performance targets.

Local Plan

Northwest Region

Program Years 2024-2027

Regional Analysis

Labor Market Data and Economic Conditions

All information presented in the [Regional Analysis](#) section of the Regional Plan is incorporated into the Local Plan.

Strategic Vision

In September 2023 the local board approved and adopted a revised "Strategic Agenda for Talent: 2023-2026". Throughout the revision process stakeholders including job seekers, employers, Networks Northwest staff, workforce, economic and education partners actively participated in providing meaningful input and feedback. The Strategic Agenda for Talent established direction, affirmed its foundation, and articulated a clear definition of success. Thus, the Networks Northwest vision entails:

- Direction: Serve as the primary resource for both job seekers and employers to address their workforce needs

- Foundation: Create and maintain authentic relationships with job seekers, employers, and partners that builds trust with customers and across a connected network
- Success: All customers, job seekers and employers, are empowered to improve their circumstances and have the resources to do so, thereby increasing the vibrancy and resiliency of our economy.

Strategic Priorities

The following Strategic Priorities will be the focus of programs and services. They address the most pressing issues faced by our customers. The corresponding strategies identify the role that Networks Northwest will play by “providing” the services directly or “coordinating” with partners to collaboratively deliver the services. Each of the following Strategic Priorities requires in-depth knowledge of employer needs, tools and resources for job seekers, and strong connections with a variety of partners.

Strategic Priority #1: Reduce barriers to success for job seekers and employers

The key strategies within this priority are to:

- Access existing community and business resources by *coordinating* with partners.
- Leverage workforce funding to *provide* supportive services.

Strategic Priority #2: Improve the foundational skills of the workforce

The key strategies within this priority are to:

- *Provide* foundational skills training and experiences across workforce development programs, including Adult Education, one-on-one coaching, workshops, and work experience.
- Equip employers to improve the foundational skills of their workforce by *providing* retention services and *coordinating* with training programs.

Strategic Priority #3: Increase earn-and-learn opportunities that provide upward mobility and lead to credential attainment

The key strategies within this priority are to:

- *Provide* work-based training programs, such as apprenticeships, that offer a variety of career pathways and that benefit both job seekers and employers.
- *Provide* and coordinate work-based experiences that connect the youth of our region with local employers.

Strategic Positions

Our three Strategic Positions are built on our ability and willingness to assert our role as the primary workforce development resource for employers, job seekers, and our communities.

We will be the primary resource for employers on the following:

- Improving soft skills of new and current workers
- Accessing talent for recruitment and hiring
- Retaining talent
- Supporting training new and current workers
- Connecting with other business resources

We will be the primary resource for job seekers on the following:

- Accessing available jobs
- Conducting effective job search
- Building foundational skills
- Connecting to resources
- Creating a career pathway

We will be the primary resource for the community on the following:

- The current skills of the labor force
- Occupation and industry data: wages, current employment, projections
- Information on employer needs

Alignment of Local Resources and across Core Programs

Three of the four core WIOA programs are already well-aligned in the region. Networks Northwest is the umbrella agency for Titles I, II, and III. Title II is delivered in partnership with Northwest Education Services, the Intermediate School District serving the greater Grand Traverse region.

Title IV of WIOA is delivered by Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS), a State of Michigan agency, under the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). The regional office is located in Traverse City, which is also the location of the Networks Northwest administrative office and the region's largest American Job Center (AJC). Although MRS is not 100% co-located in the AJC, they once were, and relationships among frontline staff have been nurtured and maintained. MRS staff use the AJC on a regular basis, with MRS counselors accessible to job seekers in the resource room who discuss services with walk-ins and referrals. MRS staff are co-located in the Cadillac AJC. MRS staff regularly access the Manistee and Petoskey AJCs.

Development and use of Career Pathways is one strategy that the board will lead to better align all core programs and local resources, including educational partners and employers. Career Pathways provide customers with a plan for long-term success, with milestones and increased earning potential along the way. Apprenticeships are one approach for implementing Career Pathways, beginning with pre-apprenticeships that can include remedial training in the Adult Education program, and continue to leverage the benefits of the combination of classroom and work-based learning.

Networks Northwest administration continues to facilitate greater and stronger connections across all programs. This strategy begins with purposeful inclusion, making sure that all programs are included in planning, program management, and service activities. This can be as simple as bringing representation from each of the four core programs together for planning a career fair, and as intricate as creating committees to address more complex and/or significant concerns in the availability and delivery of services.

Workforce Development System

Workforce Development activities in Northwest Lower Michigan are strong, varied, and collaborative. Multiple partners work together to deliver employment and training services to employers and individuals from all walks of life. Unless otherwise indicated, the term “program staff” refers to frontline services providers for all four core WIOA titles.

The public workforce development system consists of services provided through Networks Northwest, Northwest Michigan Works!, the State of Michigan’s Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity (LEO) and other community partners and stakeholders. Priority of service is given to veterans who are customers of all employment and training services. In addition, individuals with disabilities are provided with reasonable accommodations to fully participate in services. The region focuses on providing services to customers who are the ‘hardest to serve’. Program design and service delivery emphasize secondary and post-secondary credential attainment to support the Governor's 60x30 plan. The region is in the process of formally adopting a regional 60x30 goal.

Programs

Programs offered via the workforce development system include the four core programs, and several more.

- Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth (WIOA Title I)
 - National Dislocated Worker Grants
 - Rapid Response
 - Young Professionals
- Adult Education (WIOA Title II and State of Michigan Adult Education)
- Wagner-Peyser Employment Services (WIOA Title III)
 - Employment and Reemployment Services
 - Veterans Employment and Training
 - Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker
 - Labor Exchange through Pure Michigan Talent Connect

- o Reemployment Services & Eligibility Assessment (RESEA)
- Vocational Rehabilitation (WIOA Title IV)
- Trade Adjustment Act (all Laws)
- Partnership. Accountability. Training. Hope. (PATH)
- Jobs for Michigan’s Graduates
- OS Reentry
- Business Resource Network
- Going Pro Training Fund
- Senior Community Service Employment Program, operated by the AARP Foundation

The services provided via these programs are listed below.

Self-Directed Services

Customers, including individuals with disabilities and other barriers, may access a variety of resources using the Resource Room in any of four American Job Centers (AJC) in the region. Reasonable accommodations are provided as needed to individuals with disabilities.

Safe and reliable access to the internet helps self-directed jobseekers reach the resources and tools they need to connect with employment. Computers are available for the general public to use for job search purposes. The Resource Room computers provide visitors access to websites to aid in career pathway exploration, job search (including Pure Michigan Talent Connect), resume and cover letter assistance, and more. In the American Job Centers, staff members help customers with general job search services. These staff-assisted services are recorded in the One-Stop Management Information System (OSMIS) as Wagner-Peyser services. Services may include helping customers with job applications, resume writing, skill assessment, and identifying job opportunities that are a good match for the customer’s skillset. Kuder Journey is an online platform that can be used by customers to explore and develop their career pathway.

The Northwest Michigan Works! website, nwmiworks.org, offers customers virtual access to our staff who can provide services virtually, via the phone or web-based platform, or physically

in the AJC. This allows the AJC staff to meet the customer using their preferred method of interaction for the service(s) needed. While we have seen an increase in foot traffic in the AJCs since the pandemic has abated, virtual and phone services are useful as we serve constituents over a 10 county region that is expansive, rural, and has a lack of public transportation.

Career Services

Career Services are intended to support a job seeker at a more intensive level than those provided through Employment Services. These services are available in two categories, based on the level of staff assistance.

Basic Career Services require minimal intervention by the staff member and usually do not necessitate an appointment. These can include the following:

- Initial assessment
- Labor market information
- Job postings and information about vacancies
- Information on in-demand occupations and industries
- Community resources directories
- Walk-in assistance in job search and completion of job applications
- Information on unemployment insurance and public assistance
- Use of the resource room

Staff-assisted Career Services are provided in groups and/or one-on-one by trained Career Advisors, and can include:

- Career exploration, including career pathways
- Assistance with all aspects of job search, such as resume and cover letter writing, interviewing, and networking;
- Career assessments and job search preparation;
- Case management for eligible individuals, to assist in removing barriers and accessing community resources;

- Development of an Individual Employment Plan for Adults, Individual Service Strategy for Youth;
- Job readiness services;
- Group career counseling as well as one-on-one; i.e., Career Connection event.
- Specialized assistance for dislocated workers, through Rapid Response for companies who are downsizing or closing;
- Work experience opportunities for a variety of eligible individuals who need a transitional phase to long-term, self-sufficient employment.
- Soft Skills training

Veterans Services

The career services listed above are available to veterans at any time, and are provided via priority of service. However, additional and specialized assistance for veterans with significant barriers to employment is available. Barriers may include disabilities, homelessness, lacking GED, low-income, lacking housing, and more. This assistance involves intensive case management and employment preparation, referrals to community resources, and connections to veterans assistance programs that will help the veteran to become job ready. Services are delivered by veterans employed by the State of Michigan’s Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity.

In the Northwest Region, two Veterans Career Advisors serve the region, and have dedicated office space in our Traverse City AJC. In addition, a Veterans Employment Representative is housed in the Traverse City AJC, providing another linkage to employers for job seekers who are veterans. It is a privilege to be able to host staff with access to additional resources to benefit the region’s veterans.

Customers are screened as they enter the AJCs, and those who self-identify as veterans or spouses of veterans, receive an opportunity to receive services from the Veterans Career Advisor. All veterans are referred to Career Advisors to potentially receive one-on-one services,

which may also include enrollment in the WIOA.

Vocational Rehabilitation Counseling

Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) offers employment counseling to assist individuals with disabilities. Trained counselors come from different backgrounds, and have education and training in career counseling, vocational evaluation, job placement, community resources, and many other areas related to employment.

Vocational rehabilitation is a process. MRS counselors work in partnership with the customer to take steps toward long-term employment. A central value of MRS is “informed choice.” This means that the customer actively participates through the entire rehabilitation process. Together, the counselor and customer gather the information necessary to make the best choices. The information gathered can include evaluation of the customer’s strengths, resources, priorities, abilities, interests, and rehabilitation needs.

To begin the process, the individual completes an application, with accommodations provided if necessary. Based on the application, an MRS counselor determines eligibility.

Services may be provided based on priority groups, depending upon resource availability.

Upon determination of eligibility and priority group, a vocational evaluation is conducted. This allows the counselor and customer to explore job options, the local job market, different working conditions, and the impact of the disability on potential employment. The result of the evaluation is to set a career goal and jointly develop an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE).

All services deemed necessary will be included in the IPE. These may include:

- Vocational guidance and counseling
- Job search, placement assistance and job-keeping services
- Referral to other agencies for needed services

- Accommodation services such as interpreter, note taker, captioned telephone, frequency modulation system, etc.
- Job licenses, tools, equipment and initial supplies
- Rehabilitation and/or assistive technology services
- Training, either on-the-job or in school
- Hearing aids, artificial limbs, braces and other health services
- Specific post-employment services needed to maintain and/or regain employment

When the customer is ready to seek employment, services may include cover letter and resume writing assistance, interviewing skills, handling tough questions about his/her disability, job coaching, and more.

Customers are referred to receive services from MRS as appropriate, and referred customers continue to receive services from Michigan Works! throughout MRS's eligibility determination period, which can take up to 6 months. Collaborative case management is pursued if MRS staff and Michigan Works! staff determine such a relationship would benefit the customer.

Training Services

Training Services are available to individuals who need skill upgrading or development in order to obtain gainful employment. These services include:

- Work-based training, such as On-the-Job Training, United States Department of Labor Registered Apprenticeships, Customized Training developed by employers, and Incumbent Worker Training;
- Classroom training for eligible individuals in short-term, occupational training programs, available through an Individual Training Account voucher-based system (see Appendix C).
- Integrated Education and Training combines occupational skills training with adult education services to increase the educational and career advancement of participants.

Northwest Michigan Works! also partners with Northwest Education Services to deliver Adult Education services, including:

- Preparation classes for the GED;
- High school classes in order to obtain a diploma;
- English Language Learner (formerly known as English as a Second Language) classes;
- Adult Basic Education for improving basic math, reading, and writing skills;
- Digital literacy classes;
- Postsecondary Preparation

Adult Education services are open entry and open exit, allowing individuals to join the program at any time without waiting for a specific class schedule. Instruction is highly individualized and begins with a comprehensive intake process, which includes a diagnostic assessment to identify educational skills gaps. This tailored approach enables students to concentrate on the specific content they need to learn, rather than spending time on material they have already mastered. Consequently, students can progress through the program more efficiently, allowing them to quickly transition to postsecondary training or employment.

Post-secondary training is available through four primary educational institutions in the region: North Central Michigan College, Northwestern Michigan College, Baker College of Cadillac, and West Shore Community College. Among these institutions, training programs that support each of the in-demand industry sectors are available. Additional occupational training may be offered through private vendors or out of region educational institutions. Most training providers offer online access to materials. Some examples include Pinnacle Truck Driving School, Road Warrior Truck Driving School, Agape Healthcare (C.N.A.), Northwest Regional Fire Training Center, Ferris State University and more. Other Eligible Training Providers are identified as they become known to Northwest Michigan Works! staff, which usually occurs through the normal course of doing business with partners and agencies across the region.

Youth Services

Youth Services are offered by Northwest Michigan Works! through multiple programs. Regardless of the program, goals and outcomes are aligned with the WIOA's goals, including secondary and post-secondary credential attainment and employment.

WIOA In School and Out of School Youth

Partnerships are leveraged and established as we work to identify individuals who are potentially eligible for the WIOA Youth Program and in need of employment or reemployment services, whether those services will be provided as In-School Youth (ISY) or Out-of-School Youth (OSY). Referral sources are wide-ranging and can include:

- JMG participants
- Homeless shelters
- Youth Centers and Programs
- Secondary schools, including alternative high schools
- Adult Education Learning Lab students who are nearing completion of their High School Diploma or GED
- Age-appropriate youth who interact with Resource Room Staff
- Probation officers and law enforcement agencies who may interact with age-appropriate individuals
- Disability Network
- Domestic violence shelters
- Child and Family Services
- Refugee Assistance Agencies

Most ISY are referred by counselors, while OSY enter the workforce development system through referral streams like those listed above. Co-enrollment in other WIOA and alternate programs is explored as needed and appropriate. But, individuals eligible for WIOA Youth are enrolled to receive services under that program initially. Intake for referrals typically involves informal discussions between the potential participant and Career Advisor, where education and employment goals are explored and the Career Advisor gets a sense of services that may

be needed. The Career Advisor determines if the referral is eligible and suitable for the WIOA program.

Eligible and suitable referrals are enrolled in the WIOA Youth program and the Individual Service Strategy is developed. All WIOA Youth program participants receive an objective assessment to determine basic skills deficiency. Locally, the TABE is used as the primary objective assessment tool, and TABE results may support eligibility related to basic skills deficiency. Additional assessments are provided as appropriate. These gather information about the participant and inform the Individual Service Strategy (ISS). The ISS is developed collaboratively by the participant and the Career Advisor. The ISS is considered to be a living and breathing document that can be revised as barriers are identified and goals change. The ISS is the basis for all services provided to a participant. Staff tailor the ISS to each participant and ensure the plan is feasible to achieve.

As the Career Advisor begins to deliver WIOA services to the participant, activities and case notes are entered in the OSMIS. The ISS is reviewed regularly to ensure services provided and planned are in alignment with the ISS. Services provided under the WIOA Youth Program are called 14 Youth Elements. All Elements are at the disposal of the Career Advisor to provide to a participant. Participants who are in need of services or funding from other workforce programs, like WIOA Adult or Dislocated Worker, may be co-enrolled in those programs as well in an attempt to assist the participant to achieve their goals and successful program outcomes. Participants who have barriers that need to be addressed by an agency other than Northwest Michigan Works! are referred to other community agencies who can provide the assistance needed.

If the ISS includes employment as one of the desired outcomes, the Career Advisor collaborates with Business Services Representatives who will help make connections with local employers in the target industry/industries with the goal of ultimately placing the participant in unsubsidized employment. Additional services may be provided to assist in that placement, such as Work Experience, Job Shadowing, and On-the-Job Training.

When the Career Advisor determines the participant is ready to move to the exit phase of services, the enrollment is exited in the OSMIS, and service provision is limited to those services available as follow-up services. Follow-up services are offered to all WIOA Youth participants at exit, and are to be considered when developing the ISS.

Jobs for Michigan's Graduates

In addition to WIOA Youth services, we also provide youth services under the Jobs for Michigan's Graduates model for in-school youth, including the following:

- Employability skills training, work experience, training options, and access to a network of service providers that offer mentoring, financial literacy, study skills, entrepreneurship, leadership development, substance abuse prevention, high school drop-out prevention, credit recovery, and more
- Talent Tours
- Strong partnerships with local school districts, career tech centers, alternative schools, postsecondary institutions, and employers

In our region we will continue JMG services with our staff embedded in the ISD's Career and Technical Centers and other classroom locations. This allows our staff to create and maintain relationships with students, teachers, and administrators to foster the connection between educational institutions and private businesses. The JMG Specialist delivers the JMG curriculum, meets students at their level, encourages and mentors them about goal setting . The JMG Specialist stands alongside the student as they make the transition from high school to college, military career, or the workforce.

The JMG curriculum is delivered through classroom activities, leadership activities and conferences. It combines formal and informal interactions with students. Students take the lead on what and how they learn the curriculum through project-based learning. The JMG specialist is there to guide them through the process. The core values of a productive citizen continue with student exposure to the community through employer visits, talent tours, and community service opportunities.

The JMG Specialist can connect students with future employers. The talent pipeline is a primary focus of many of the partner employers in the region. Specialists can access dollars to create work experiences for JMG students, offering them the opportunity to gain experience and more exposure to their chosen career pathway.

Talent Tours

Talent tours are designed to give students first hand exposure to different career paths. This allows them to explore what jobs in their target career field entails. These tours offer an in-depth look at the daily operations of specific roles, providing students with a comprehensive understanding of company culture and work environments.

During a talent tour, students interact with employees, ask questions about daily routines, and learn what workers enjoy about their jobs. They engage with leadership and team members, gaining insights into management and staff perspectives. This interaction helps students understand the dynamics of the workplace and the collaboration between different roles.

Students also discover the credentials and education required for various positions within the company. This knowledge helps them make more informed decisions about their educational and career paths.

Educational partners often participate in talent tours, offering additional support and guidance to students. These tours provide a well-rounded overview of potential career paths, equipping students with the information they need to make informed decisions about their futures.

In our region, a talent tour might consist of a few students that want to learn more about a particular career. A talent tour might consist of 200 11th graders visiting a dozen job sites that they identified some interest in over a four day period. Every talent tour gives students an opportunity to interact with people that are doing the job they have interest in.

Business Services

Business Services is the key to our employer focused demand driven system. Fully integrated into the areas they serve, our Business Services Representatives understand what the Northwest Lower Michigan business community's needs and desires are about workforce development programming and services. These services include:

- Assisting businesses with creative and customized approaches to recruitment and training through job boards including the PMTC, in person and virtual job fairs, career awareness campaigns, career pathways and sector based initiatives
- Lead employers through the Going Pro Talent Fund Award application to help facilitate training for new hires and incumbent workers
- Active participation with intermediate school district industry advisory boards, industry associations, and community-based business-focused organizations
- Advocating for the region's hardest to serve job seekers by working with the Offender Success, Partnership. Accountability. Training. Hope. (PATH), Adult Education and Jobs for Michigan's Graduates programs
- A team dedicated to identifying apprenticeship opportunities, developing US DOL registered Apprenticeship programs and maintaining the program
- Serving employers and their at-risk employees through Business Resource Networks
- Core partners of the Networks Northwest Business Services Department, collaborating with Apex Accelerators, MEDC and the Global Trade Alliance
- The region's lead entity for business retention visits that ensures collaboration with local economic development organizations plus regional and state partners;
- Key contributors to the job seeker focused Career Connection workshops that ensure job seekers are aware of current employment trends and employer expectations
- Ensure job seekers have convenient access to employers with immediate hiring needs by coordinating the Employer of Day events hosted at American Job Centers and employer lead job fairs
- Connection between Networks Northwest job seeker customers and employers that helps ensure job-ready customers are matched to employer hiring needs

- Incentivizing employers to hire Northwest Michigan Works! customers with OJT funding, a wage reimbursement program designed to help an employer with “onboarding costs” and alleviate the risk of hiring a job seeker with barriers to employment.

Local Coordination

The programs above are provided in an integrated, holistic manner. This offers a seamless customer experience. To truly integrate at an efficient level, the Regional Prosperity Board has decided to deliver Title I and Title III programs through its workforce development arm, Northwest Michigan Works!, Inc. This in-house program delivery provides for less administrative overhead, allowing more funds to be directed toward programs. The direct delivery of programs provides for higher quality assurance and tighter alignment. This prevents the dilution of services due to potential competing visions and strategies at contracted organizations.

For programs that are delivered outside the realm of the workforce system’s administrative agency, partnerships and relationships are critical to alignment and effective program delivery. Partnerships with Title II and IV providers are strong. These will be maintained and strengthened by aligning WIOA services and performance measures. Relationships with required WIOA partners are well established and will be strengthened by further communication regarding WIOA programming, priorities, and activities. To facilitate the strengthening of those relationships, the board has adopted two primary strategies.

1. Use the Career & Educational Advisory Council (CEAC) to ensure that the workforce system is engaged and aligned with the education system. The CEAC, including membership, goals/metrics, and responsibilities are governed by the department of Labor and Economic Opportunity as outlined in State of Michigan Policy Issuance 23-29. It is designed to bring workforce, education and business together to effectively develop and implement training strategies and build talent pipeline structures designed to resolve talent issues experienced by the region’s employers. These regular meetings ensure ongoing conversations, planning, and strategic activities that respond to the

needs of employers. The close collaboration of the local Intermediate School Districts, Community Colleges, MiSTEM, private industry, and other stakeholders is key in creating talent pipelines to meet immediate and future needs of local employers.

2. Position Networks Northwest as a lead agency in the region for talent development activities and knowledge of workforce issues. Networks Northwest continues to develop resources for services, data, and local intelligence on job seeker and employer needs. This ensures we are at the table for ongoing conversations regarding talent. Deliberate and strategic outreach and partnership development activities significantly contributes to desired outcomes.

Access, Career Pathways, and Credentials

Access to Services

Access to employment, training, education, and supportive services is a challenge in rural areas, especially for individuals with disabilities and other barriers. While AJCs are located in 4 of the 10 counties (Grand Traverse, Emmet, Wexford, and Manistee), 6 counties lack convenient access to a job center. We are always searching for strategies to increase access to individuals residing in the 6 outlying counties. Access to all core programs is available through all four centers. The affiliate centers (located in Petoskey and Manistee) are open Monday through Friday from 8:00am - 5:00pm..

The board has identified strategies to expand access to services, including offering virtual workshops, enhancing technology use for interaction and service delivery, and establishing more partnerships in the region to hold ‘office hours’ in locations closer to areas of the region that are potentially under-served. Service strategies offered through Northwest Michigan Works! include:

- Career Connection Workshops provided virtually and in-center, and at locations outside of the regular job center locations. These unique workshops offer a learning opportunity for customers to improve their job search outcomes and networking time with Career Services staff, Business Services Representatives, and other job seekers. Career Connection workshops are held at a variety of locations with the support of community partners. Promotion of the workshops is supported by the system and by the hosting partner (for locations outside of the AJC). Employers may be invited to attend the Career Connection workshops to offer a first-hand employer perspective, while also informally meeting potential candidates to fill their company's open positions. The goal is to increase the number of Career Connection workshops throughout the region and provide them in more locations.
- Hiring and Career Events are held throughout the region in partnership with educational institutions, chambers, and community based organizations. The goal is for Northwest Michigan Works! and Networks Northwest to serve as the primary coordinator and hub for all hiring events throughout the region. These events allow employers and job seekers to connect for hiring opportunities and for career exploration. Career Services staff are typically on hand to provide services to job seekers in attendance, and make relevant connections. Hiring events are promoted on our website and social media accounts. We offer to partner with any organizations seeking to coordinate an event aimed at job seekers. While the region has historically offered several larger hiring events throughout a given year, we aim to offer more frequent smaller hiring events. These small events provide employers with a venue to fill open positions that are available when they need it.
- Technology platforms that allow for seamless interaction and service delivery have been adopted by Northwest Michigan Works! We will continue to explore platforms that assist in our service strategies. Current platforms include electronic signatures for document completion/submission, Zoom, Google Meet, and more. Northwest Michigan Works! expects to continue to offer an appropriate blend of services virtually and in-person to meet the needs of each customer. Our social media presence has significant following and we use it to promote hot jobs, hiring events, job search tips, and more.

- The adult education program's distance learning options for individuals in need of remediation services, high school completion, or GED services. They also lend chromebooks and data jetpacks for student use. Online classrooms allow students to gain access to software and other learning resources. Most recently, educational assessments were allowed to be administered remotely. Distance Learning instruction is built on a HyFlex learning model. Hybrid-Flexible (HyFlex) course design offers a flexible participation policy that allows students to choose how they attend class sessions. Students have the option to participate in face-to-face synchronous sessions in person, typically held in a traditional classroom setting. They may also complete course learning activities online without the need to physically attend class. This model provides greater flexibility and accessibility, accommodating diverse learning preferences and schedules. Teacher contact and instruction is instrumental in helping students make gains and achieve their goals. Thus, cell phones were provided to each of the teachers while they worked from home so that students would be able to reach their teachers with questions and for support. Google Meet and Zoom are utilized to promote student and teacher face-to-face interaction.
- MRS Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors utilize public access points to meet with customers within reasonable travel distance from their residence. Public access points include the American Job Centers, public libraries, and schools. Through this strategy, MRS has a presence in every county of the region.

Career Pathways

Long-term career planning is based on individual circumstances for all workforce customers. Specifically, Networks Northwest approaches career pathways in terms of empowering customers in any WIOA programs to envision educational and/or career advancement, instead of simply focusing on short-term attainment. This may be accomplished by assisting a customer with obtaining training and/or credentials necessary to achieve their identified goals. For example, the Adult Education program works with each student to identify career goals at the

beginning of their participation to map out educational goals that build on their GED and transition them to post-secondary training.

Networks Northwest supports the State of Michigan's career pathways tool called Pathfinder. Job seekers and students can access Pathfinder from the Northwest Michigan Works! website. Pathfinder uses current labor market, wage and institutional data and metrics to help users create individualized career roadmaps. This free tool provides information to students, their parents, and guidance staff so they can make informed choices about educational and career options. The Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity's Office of Employment and Training (LEO-E&T) created this online career planning tool to help connect Michigan residents with high-quality, in-demand degrees and credentials. Pathfinder allows users to easily access information about the steps necessary to become credentialed in an in-demand career field

Northwest Michigan Works! continues our partnership with the MiSTEM Network to maintain and produce [Career Profile cards](#). The project consists of 100+ cards of local professionals discussing how much they enjoy their career, how their education impacts their everyday work, career advice for students interested in pursuing a career, and if so, where they might get educated locally.

Partnerships with local employers and educational institutions are paramount in ensuring a career pathways system functions for all. They improve access to activities leading to a recognized postsecondary credential

Co-enrollment

Facilitating career pathways for customers is purposeful and strategic, encompassing coordination with program partners. This may include, but is not limited to, co-enrollment in core and non-core workforce programs. Adult career services, youth, MRS, the Northwest Michigan Works! Apprenticeship team, and Adult Education staff currently co-enroll participants for whom it makes sense, based on their identified needs and goals. Trade Adjustment Assistance participants are screened for Dislocated Worker Eligibility and co-

enrolled if they are eligible for the WIOA Dislocated Worker program. Co-enrollment may result in collaborative case management .

Recognized Credentialing

The Regional Prosperity Board joins Governor Whitmer in her efforts to challenge Michigan’s citizens to earn a post-secondary credential as part of the 60 by 30 initiative, with the goal of arming at least 60% of Michiganders with a post-secondary credential by 2030. [According to the Lumina Foundation](#), Michigan still lags behind the nation, with only 49% with a credential, less than the nation’s credential rate of 51%. Data provided by the Lumina Foundation shows 100% of the Northwest Lower Michigan region counties fall below the national rate, many significantly. Activities leading to a recognized post-secondary credential inherently involve engaging partners such as employers and educational institutions. An example of such a partnership is the Strategic Agenda for Talent and the coordinated efforts of the CEAC to establish a regional educational attainment goal.

Other deliberate activities aimed at improving access to postsecondary credentials leading to portable and stackable industry-recognized certifications include expanding access to the following:

- Barrier Removal- Addressing barriers to achieving postsecondary credentials has a direct impact on the level of workforce participation. Support for overcoming such barriers as housing, transportation and child care while earning a recognized credential are key to increasing credential attainment for underrepresented groups in particular.
- Going Pro Training Fund (GPTF)-The GPTF provides support to employers who wish to upskill their existing workforce while providing incentives to grow their business, ideally resulting in new hires and higher wages for all workers as they gain valuable skills.
- Apprenticeships and Pre-Apprenticeships-Northwest Michigan Works! can sponsor apprenticeships for any employer in any occupation, and manage the tracking and documentation requirements with the U.S. Department of Labor. Northwest Michigan Works! works collaboratively with secondary and postsecondary educational partners and the region’s employers to develop pre-apprenticeship training models. Pre-Apprenticeship examples include the Skills Up North and the Adult Career Training programs and the Young Professionals

programs, implemented in collaboration with ISDs throughout the region..2 different ISDs in the region. Additional pre-apprenticeship programs related to construction have also been implemented. related to occupations in construction.

- Work-based Learning Scholarships- Occupational training funds are committed to scholarships for low-skilled, eligible participants to attend short-term training programs that incorporate a work-based learning component. These are available via Individual Training Accounts.
- On-the-Job Training (OJT)- Employers are offered OJT contracts as incentives to hire and train individuals who lack necessary skills and corresponding credentials for the job. Employers are encouraged to promote post-secondary credentialing as part of career pathway development for their new hires.
- *Short-term Classroom training*- These intensive, short-term training programs teach students the foundational skills for an in-demand occupation. It prepares them for additional training and corresponding credentials based on the company's needs. Examples include Industrial Sewing, CNC, and Construction Laborer.
- Michigan Advanced Technician Training (MAT2)- MAT2 is a partnership between Baker College of Cadillac, MEDC, Wexford-Missaukee ISD, Northwest Michigan Works!, and local employers. The program trains and credentials individuals in Mechatronics, a cross-functional and broad-based specialty. Employers sponsor and hire participants, while graduates commit to working with that employer for a minimum time period.
- Integrated Education and Training (IET) - Integrated Education and Training (IET) is an instructional approach that combines adult education and literacy activities with workforce preparation and training to equip individuals with the skills needed for employment and career advancement.

To further awareness of existing post-secondary credentials available within the region, the board intends to develop a campaign to increase the number of post-secondary credentials offered by existing and new education institutions listed on Michigan Training Connect (MiTC). Listing more options for training programs offered in the region will draw individuals to the Pure Michigan Talent Connect site. It will also help inform citizens of the many opportunities available to them for credential attainment. As part of this campaign, we will need to connect the value received by the training providers as a result of listing their training programs on the MiTC. On its most basic level, the MiTC can function as a portal to Career Pathways, providing

the link for individuals to see the potential benefits of earning a post-secondary credential, including increased wages and more options for them as they move through their career. At the same time, concurrent activities can be planned to bring together employers and training providers/educational institutions to offer a space for collaboration. Then communication can be shared between all parties, with the expressed goal of increasing the value of existing credentials and potentially developing credentials where gaps are identified.

Employer Engagement using Sector Initiatives

Networks Northwest facilitates engagement of employers, including small employers and employers in in-demand industry sectors, in the development and continuous improvement of workforce development programs. This engagement ensures that employers are guiding the system and that the system is delivering programs and services that ultimately meet their needs. The three core programs administered by Networks Northwest participate in these engagement activities and benefit from the guidance provided by employers. Employers benefit by learning more about the programs. Facilitation of employer engagement is primarily done through a sector-based approach. Activities conducted include Employer Forums, surveys, participation in industry associations and councils, employer panels, membership in collaborative networks, attendance at local networking events, and more. The overall strategy is to align local resources, required partners, and entities that carry out core programs with the intent of serving employers.

Sector initiatives are led by the workforce system, but involve participation and support from multiple agencies and employers. Activities are conducted in response to needs expressed by employers. Current and ongoing activities are listed below.

Manufacturing

Four manufacturing councils exist throughout the region. The Northwest Michigan Works! Business Services Team has relationships with all of them. These include the Northern Industrial Association, Grand Traverse Area Manufacturing Council, Cadillac Area Manufacturing Association, and Manistee Manufacturers Council.

All of these councils are heavily focused on talent issues at this time. Therefore, most have centered their efforts on assisting their members with recruitment. The Grand Traverse Area Manufacturing Council, now aligned with Traverse Connect, has expressed interest in partnering to coordinate Manufacturing Day for the area. For hands-on activities we have a large number of manufacturers participate in the MiCareerQuest Northwest event. Wexford Missaukee ISD continues to partner with local K-12 school districts, employers and Northwest Michigan Works! to offer area students talent tours on National Manufacturing Day. The Charlevoix/Emmet ISD has partnered with Northwest Michigan Works and several local employers to run talent tours during a week-long Manufacturing event. Our connections to local middle schools have assisted in this initiative, and we provide staff members as chaperones, event logistic coordination, and remain the bridge between education and business. The Charlevoix/Emmet ISD also hosts a MiCareerQuest event in which manufacturing is a large presence. Multiple other career awareness and recruitment activities occur throughout the year in relation to manufacturing companies and specifically, in partnership with these associations. Employer partners in these efforts include LEAR, Grand Traverse Plastics, Century Inc., Britten, Inc., AAR, Thompson Surgical, Clark Manufacturing, Skilled Manufacturing Inc., Kalkaska Screw Products, EJ, TranTek, ACAT Global, Avon Automotive, Petoskey Plastics, Springfield, Inc., Cone Drive, RJG, Team Elmer's, Cadillac Rubber, FIAMM, Rexair, EJ Plastics, TentCraft, Frankfort Manufacturing, and many more.

The workforce system supports training in Manufacturing in multiple ways. In addition to training individual customers who are interested in manufacturing, we are prepared to coordinate Just-in-Time Trainings in a variety of manufacturing occupations. We promote manufacturing training programs such as apprenticeships. Our in-house Apprenticeship team partners with local employers to create a training program or apprenticeship program.

Education providers continue to redevelop programs for manufacturing careers in response to the changing word of manufacturing. They have experienced such low enrollments in the past that many had closed or suspended these programs. It takes significant resources to develop a college program. Networks Northwest continues to respond to this challenge by assisting local colleges with surveys to employers, employer forums, and potential student surveys to

ascertain future priorities such as justifying creation of new, modular, and robust manufacturing programs. In response, we have seen our community colleges develop programs like NCMC's [Fast Track Program](#). Each Fast Track program results in valuable, industry-specific certification designed to meet local employers' requirements. Our business services team, along with our job seeker team, are aware and refer appropriately to these regional programs.

The Northwest Michigan Works! Business Services team works extensively with local manufacturers. Their needs are significant, the jobs can be challenging for recruitment, and skill needs are varied. In many cases, companies are willing to train on the job, especially for entry level positions, if a willing and motivated candidate can be found. The Adult Education Learning Labs and our partnership with local CTE programs such as ACT are extremely beneficial when a candidate has the aptitude for manufacturing but needs to upgrade his/her math skills to be successful. Some local manufacturers have embraced the opportunity to hire individuals with disabilities, and our partnership with MRS has been helpful.

Multiple work-based training opportunities are available to our Manufacturing employer customers, including Customized, Incumbent, and On-the-Job Training services, as needed and appropriate. The Going Pro Talent Fund has been instrumental in training new hires and incumbents for our manufacturing base in northern Michigan. In our latest award cycle we have 443 individuals being trained, 35 of which are apprentices, in a manufacturing-related program. The training will take place with 20 manufacturing employers and the GPTF award will reimburse these companies for the training in the amount of \$658,801.68. This demonstrates the collaboration and partnerships in the region and also the need to upskill our workforce for the manufacturing jobs of the future.

Agriculture

The farmers of northwest lower Michigan have embraced growth opportunities provided by local food movements, including farmers markets, farm-to-table restaurants, and farm-to-school programs. However, growth necessitates management of the business of farming and takes the farmer from the field to the office. There are numerous small businesses that take a

local farm product and add value through processing. These businesses include winemakers, jams, hummus, hops, and many more. Many of these farms and value-added food companies need help with business planning, access to capital, identifying target markets, creating a viable pricing structure, and marketing. Assistance with these struggles is primarily delivered by the Northwest region of the Michigan Small Business Development Center. Additional partners provide funding support to these local businesses. Our relationships with them are critical to our continued support and involvement with the agriculture industry. These partners include the local economic development organizations, revolving loan funds (VentureNorth in the Northwest region), Northern Initiatives, Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, and more.

Multiple work-based training opportunities are available to Agriculture employer customers, including USDOL Registered Apprenticeships, Customized, Incumbent, and On-the-Job Training services, as needed and as appropriate. Apprenticeships offer a viable succession plan for farmers who are looking ahead to retirement.

Networks Northwest also served as the grant recipient when the local Food Innovation Hub received an MDARD Regional Food System grant. This food hub is now operational, managed by a new nonprofit, and housing multiple small agriculturally-related food businesses. We maintain connections to the regional food system, and the growers, producers, and processors who comprise it. Employer partners in the Agriculture industry include Shoreline Fruit, Iron Fish Distillery, 9 Bean Rows, Cultured Ferments, Left Foot Charley, , St Ambrose Cellars, Sleeping Bear Apiaries, Stormcloud Brewing, Northern Organics, Food for Thought, Graceland Fruit, and many more.

Additionally, the system's partnership with the Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker Program of the Labor and Economic Opportunity department assists in leveraging resources to support the agriculture industry. The Agricultural Employment Liaison covering the region is located within our Traverse City American Jobs Service Center. Thus, we are able to coordinate with that department daily if necessary.

Energy, Transportation and Construction

This varied but connected cluster of industries is in need of skilled workers. Employers' outcry for workforce system support has been significant. We continue to focus on training and recruitment services to provide assistance.

Sector-based efforts are coordinated with the local colleges and training providers. Northwestern Michigan College (NMC) is a key partner in the five counties including and surrounding Grand Traverse County. Northwest Michigan Works! collaborates with NMC on their Building Tomorrow events. Building Tomorrow is a hands-on construction trades awareness and readiness event for area high school students. Northwest Michigan Works! is a strong supporter of the Home Builders Association's training and scholarship programs.

The Transportation industry is experiencing significant labor shortages. The impact of this industry on other sectors makes it a lynchpin in the region's economic vitality. To address the need, Networks Northwest will dedicate funds for Individual Training Accounts to support multiple truck-driver trainings. The number per year will be based on funding availability. We will also pursue Just-in-Time training as appropriate. Educational partners in this industry include Pinnacle Truck Driving and Road Warrior Trucking.

The construction industry's needs are significantly high, too. The recent rebound in development has pressured the industry to quickly ramp up. The lack of well-trained and capable workers has impeded potential growth of the companies and the region. Networks Northwest partners with NMC who coordinates the Building Tomorrow career fair and expo event to help spread awareness of construction as a viable career. Regionally, we are collaborating with employers and schools to bring hands-on career events to our k-12 students. This talent pipeline creation strategy has received support from partners and employers. Employer partners include the local Home Builders Association, Manthei Construction, Kendall Electric, Windemuller, D&W Mechanical, Wolfline Construction, Springfield Inc., UA Local 85, Phillips Lifestyles, Paul Davis Restoration & Remodeling of Northwest Michigan, Grand Traverse Construction, Builders Exchange, Burdco, Team Elmer's, Hallmark Construction, and significant representation from small independent contractors.

Northwest Michigan Works! has successfully developed, launched and is managing USDOL Registered Apprenticeship programs in the construction trade industries. These include carpentry with stackable credentials, plumbing, HVAC, electricians, fiber optic line workers, broadband technicians, and more. Program lengths range from 12 months to 4 years. Approximately 10 employers and 50 apprentices are sponsored through Northwest Michigan Works!.

Energy sector jobs are going unfilled. Employers report a lack of skill sets in applicants for their open positions. The Northwest Michigan Works! Business Services and Apprenticeships teams are starting to create an Employer Led Collaborative to address these growing needs. Utilities operating in the region need skilled talent to fill critical positions that support the region's infrastructure. Jobs like electrical power-line installers and repairers, power plant operators, broadband installers, and others remain unfilled while utility companies search for skilled workers. While current levels of job openings fall slightly below the State and National levels, the industry itself has seen growth over the last few years. We expect to see that rate of growth increase over the next decade. Charlevoix-Emmet ISD has produced cohorts of line-workers with additional cohorts are expected.

Healthcare

Healthcare is a priority industry in the region due to high demand for workers, variety of career options, and extreme lack of skilled workers. These factors make this industry complex and in need of support.

Sector-based activities focus on recruitment activities and training programs. Networks Northwest dedicates funds for Individual Training Accounts to support multiple CNA and M.A. training, due to a high need for these occupations.

Previous Employer Forums have indicated a large need for Home Health Aides, CNAs, and MAs among other entry level healthcare positions. A constant partner in this undertaking has been the region's Area Agency on Aging. AAoA partnered with Networks Northwest to study regional needs for healthcare workers through the Career Awareness Campaign for the Home

Health Aide occupation. This campaign identified target audiences including stay-at-home parents, college students, and recent retirees. The messaging focused on the rewarding and fulfilling aspect of the career. The campaign included a dedicated website with a feed of home health positions posted on Pure Michigan Talent Connect. A committee of home health agencies advised and provided input on the campaign. Employer partners included Monarch Home Health, In-Home Health, Harbor Care Associates, Comfort Keepers, and more. While the results of the campaign were mixed, we intend to convene similar networks of industry specific employers to continue brainstorming effective methods to promote healthcare occupations throughout the region.

We currently help convene a Healthcare Employer Led Collaborative and look to formalize this group moving forward. We will identify a lead employer and recruit more employers to the table. This will allow us and the partners to identify target gaps to focus on and bring appropriate resources to help combat the lack of skills, talent, and training programs. Employers that we currently partner with include Kalkaska Memorial Health Center, and Cadillac Family Physicians,

Multiple work-based training opportunities are available to Healthcare employer customers, including Apprenticeships, Customized, Incumbent, and On-the-Job Training services, as needed and appropriate. Non-traditional apprenticeships in home health aide, CNA, M.A., and other healthcare occupations offer an alternative training option for these companies.

Hospitality

Because many hospitality-based positions are seasonal and lower in pay, our services to hospitality employers are focused on assisting with job postings, promoting job openings, and sending customers to job fairs. Additional services are available for those positions that offer full-time, year-round employment. These services may include On-the-Job Training or enhanced support for recruitment, as needed and appropriate.

Northwest Michigan Works! has developed a unique culinary apprenticeship program with Birchwood Golf and Resort in Harbor Springs. This apprenticeship experience includes 6000 hours

of on the job learning with a mentor and 432 hours of online coursework instruction with Rouxbe Culinary School. The apprentices will achieve multiple credentials including SERVSafe, an American Culinary Federation Certification and the US Department of Labor National Credential. After graduation, apprentices will grow the business' talent pipeline by becoming mentors for the new apprentices, thus creating a solid and sustainable succession plan.

Boyer Resorts participates in our Business Resource Network, a program that assists with employee retention issues. We have seen the benefit of having a third party available to company workforces that have traditional challenges such as turnover and working with individuals with barriers.

Information and Business Services

Many occupations in this sector require college degrees, primarily at the Bachelor's level. The local region's training support is limited to short-term programs, and therefore our sector-based work is focused on Information Technology. These occupations require various industry certifications, stepping stones, and short-term training options. Employer partners represent multiple industries, including IT and software, because companies from all sectors require IT infrastructure.

An ongoing activity is the Northwestern Michigan College and Northwest Michigan Works Regional Job Fair. This combined effort brings together the Information Technology Career Fair, the NMC Job Fair, and the Jobs for Vets Hiring Event. Job fair fatigue and the recognition that many employers were participating in all three events brought the partners together to better serve the community. The employers involved in the IT Career Fair have always expressed interest in pre-screening attendees and this continued into the combined event. Employers were able to preview guaranteed attendees and let our teams know they wanted to speak with certain individuals. As a result, employers saw fewer applicants, but those applicants are typically a good fit for open positions. Students from NMC's Computer Information Technology programs attend, so they can ask questions about the careers available from local companies. Other educational providers attend, including New Horizons, 20fathoms, and Ferris State

University. Employer partners include SafetyNet, Hagerty Insurance, Pesto Group, Munson Medical Center, Wyant Computers, and more.

Another sector-based activity was the development of a Software Developer US DOL Registered Apprenticeship program for a small business in the northern part of the region. This 12-month innovative program provides customized proprietary training directly taught by the business. Apprentices work 100% remotely while completing their coursework and achieving their on the job learning tasks. The company offers similar training to other software development businesses across the state and nation.

Multiple work-based training opportunities are available to our Information and Business Services employer customers, including Apprenticeships, Customized, Incumbent, and On-the-Job Training services, as needed and appropriate.

Coordination

Coordination with Unemployment Insurance Programs

Workforce development frontline staff are knowledgeable about unemployment insurance programs, but are not subject matter experts on how the unemployment insurance system works. AJC staff have access to information related to unemployment, which can be passed along to unemployment insurance claimants in need of claim assistance. Some resources include direct phone lines that connect customers directly to a representative from the Unemployment Insurance Agency, materials available on the unemployment insurance website, and fact sheets. AJC staff do not answer questions specific to a customer's UIA claim, yet they know where to find UIA resources and are trained to help the customer navigate UIA. This is critical to provide the highest levels of customer service possible to unemployment claimants who are often reacting to a recent job loss and are receptive to any assistance we can provide.

Our region is fortunate to have a local Unemployment Insurance office located in the Traverse City American Job Center. This has made it much more convenient for customers who have questions about their claim and are experiencing problems to access the assistance needed. In addition, we have at least one dedicated phone line available in all AJCs that automatically prioritizes customers calling UIA via a dedicated phone line in the customer service queue, providing meaningful assistance to claimants. Each Job Center has a room or a portion of the public resource room with dedicated computers to use in filing a claim. Written step-by-step instructions are available to customers needing assistance.

Our AJCs have partnered with UIA through its Community Connect Program. All AJCs have hosted “pop-up” events where a UIA representative was in the AJC and offered assistance to customers on a walk-in basis. While these events are no longer being held in the AJCs, they are being scheduled in the local community. UIA provides us with dates and locations for the pop-up events, which we can share with customers.

The Employers assisted by our Business Services Team often have questions about the unemployment system, and our Business Services Representatives are asked for help. They are well-prepared with web sites, resources, and information to provide to companies. UIA may be invited to provide regular information sessions to employers. Northwest Michigan Works! staff are also present at these sessions.

In order to ensure that staff across all programs, including Adult Education, Michigan Rehabilitation Services, and other partners, are knowledgeable about the resources from UIA, Networks Northwest may coordinate with UIA representatives to implement annual training sessions. These sessions will identify and share UIA resources, the latest fact sheets, website navigation tips and tricks, and other additional information of value to attendees.

Coordination with Economic Development Services

More than ever before, the talent shortage leads most conversations focused on Economic Development. Communities interested in economic growth and prosperity are working hard to collaboratively address the talent gaps within the workforce. For this reason, Networks

Northwest continues to connect with local economic development agencies and state departments to ensure a positive economic trajectory for the region.

Economic Development Organizations

Networks Northwest and Northwest Michigan Works! partner closely with 5 of the region's economic development organizations. These include the Alliance for Economic Success, the Manistee Area Chamber of Commerce, the Cadillac Area Chamber of Commerce, the Northern Lakes Economic Alliance, and Traverse Connect. Collaboration takes place at the leadership and staff levels. It includes joint participation in regional job fairs, support of business retention and growth projects, talent attraction initiatives, internship and apprenticeship opportunities, and administering various grant opportunities.

Collaborative Development Council

As the lead entity for the Northwest Lower Michigan Collaborative Development Council (CDC), Networks Northwest convenes the region's economic development organizations and state partners. These convenings bring together like-minded organizations to improve the overall economic prosperity of the region. Through these meetings CDC leadership is able to identify and prioritize the region's economic opportunities and priorities. Working collaboratively, the leadership team operationalizes coordinated strategies within their respective subregions while maintaining and supporting a unified region-wide approach to economic development

Joint Retention Visits

The joint retention visit is an invaluable component of the region's economic development services and programs. Northwest Michigan Works! Business Services Representatives take a lead role in business retention visits. Partnering closely with the Michigan Economic Development Corporation and the local economic development entity, the Michigan Works! Business Services Representative ensures employers' business related concerns and needs are discovered and explored on a regular basis. These regularly scheduled meetings allow company leadership the opportunity to learn more about the services available at the local and

state levels. Information gathered during these visits can be valuable in shaping future economic and talent development strategies.

Entrepreneurial skills

Northwest Lower Michigan has a strong history of, and bright future for, entrepreneurship. Support for entrepreneurs is provided by the Northwest Michigan Small Business Development Center (SBDC), local chapters of SCORE, and Junior Achievement. The SBDC offers training and counseling for entrepreneurs and early growth stage companies. Working closely with the Northwest Michigan Works! Business Services Team, SBDC staff ensure customers have access to the most complete set of business services available. Northwest Michigan Works! Business Services Representatives serve their customers by identifying opportunities to refer and connect employers and entrepreneurs to the SBDC. Northwest Michigan Works! and SBDC leadership meet on a regular basis to discuss joint programming opportunities and collaborative projects.

One-Stop Delivery System

Continuous Improvement

Networks Northwest provides WIOA Titles I and III via in-house service delivery through its workforce development arm, Northwest Michigan Works!, Inc. Networks Northwest provides administration and coordination for Title II, in partnership with Northwest Education Services, who delivers the educational services. These services are continuously improved through internal and external feedback, ongoing program development, tracking performance measures, and continuous collaboration with local partners. Title IV is delivered by Michigan Rehabilitation Services, and is available through partnerships and referrals from the other programs.

Internal monitoring is conducted on all workforce programs over the course of a program year. Title I and National Dislocated Worker Grants include a file review for 100% of the enrollments

at the time of registration, verifying each enrollee is eligible. Verifying documentation to support eligibility and data validation is required for all enrollments. As Title I participants are exited, employment and performance outcomes are also monitored. Title II conducts a 100% file review quarterly. Identified errors are immediately corrected during reviews. Monitoring of Title III is typically conducted through observation, including individual RESEA appointments), ensuring all required posters are posted and up to date, and observing customer and staff interactions in the Resource Room. Internal monitoring occurs for PATH, OS Reentry, and Trade Act programs. Providing internal monitoring continuously provides the opportunity to identify and resolve problems before they significantly impact quality and performance for each individual program, while at the same time striving for quality service delivery. The consistency of regular monitoring and reviewing all programs provides the ability to identify trends and patterns over time and across programs. Issues that are discovered through this process inform staff professional development, program changes, and new goals and objectives. Monitoring procedures and focus areas are reviewed and updated annually as appropriate.

In addition, the LEO monitoring unit conducts reviews of workforce programs according to their own schedule, with comprehensive reviews for each program typically conducted once every two years. As required by law, Networks Northwest has a single audit conducted by an independent firm.

Access to American Job Centers

Within the 10-county region, Northwest Michigan Works! has 4 American Job Centers (AJCs). At each AJC, job seekers are provided an opportunity to prepare for, obtain, and advance in meaningful employment. Additionally, employers may access services to easily identify skilled workers and capitalize on other available supports to retain their current workforce.

Comprehensive service centers are located in Traverse City and Cadillac. Both provide a full-range of high-quality services to employers and job-seekers.

Traverse City Michigan Works! Service Center	Cadillac Michigan Works! Service Center
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1209 S. Garfield, Suite C Traverse City, MI 49686 (231) 922-3700 Hours of Operation: M - F, 8:00- 5:00	423 N. Mitchell Street Cadillac, MI 49601 (231) 775-3408 Hours of Operation: M - F, 8:00 - 5:00
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Affiliate service centers are located in Manistee and Petoskey, providing high-quality services to the public.

Manistee Michigan Works! Service Center 400 River Street Manistee, MI 49660 (231) 398-3150 Hours of Operation: M - F, 8:00- 5:00	Petoskey Michigan Works! Service Center 2240 Mitchell Park Drive Petoskey, MI 49770 (231) 347-5150 Hours of Operation: M - F, 8:00- 5:00
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Each AJC is co-located with Adult Education programs and services, including Learning Labs. One-stop partners are also co-located wherever possible. These include Michigan Rehabilitation Services, Migrant and Seasonal Farm Worker staff, Veterans Services, OS Reentry, and Department of Health and Human Services.

The use of technology is critical to reach those in the most rural counties of Northwest Michigan. The world wide web provides access to multiple job search resources like the Pure Michigan Talent Connect; O*Net OnLine; Michigan eLibrary; Pathfinder, career resource tools, veteran information and resources, local community services, and how-to videos for job search, resume development, cover letters, and information videos on various occupations.

Northwest Michigan Works! delivers most services in-person and virtually. Individuals interested in contacting us or receiving services virtually choose from a plethora of technology

options, including a web-based contact form, telephone, and texting as a means to contact a Career Advisor. Services like intake, registration, workshops, and others can be delivered through a variety of platforms, including Google Meet, Zoom, FaceTime, or other technology that works best for the customer and staff.

Additionally, the Networks Northwest website hosts an orientation video for Northwest Michigan Works! allowing customers to virtually experience the services available at each of the centers. All of these technological tools allow for customers to access one-stop services in a variety of ways, regardless of geographic location in the region.

In addition to technology, career services are available through partner relationships. For example, Career Advisors are regularly available at Benzie Area Christian Neighbors. Several local libraries provide space for Career Advisors and Learning Lab teachers to meet with customers, offering a location closer to their home than an existing AJC. Career Advisors are free to meet with and provide services to customers in public locations that meet the customer's situation and needs.

Non-discrimination

Networks Northwest and Northwest Michigan Works!, Inc. are committed to non-discrimination in the delivery of and access to workforce programs and services. This commitment is demonstrated in a myriad of ways, complying with the nondiscrimination provisions of the WIOA and Americans with Disabilities Act.

All registered one-stop center customers access the "Equal Opportunity is the Law" poster and the agency's "Complaint Policy and Procedure" handout. This handout outlines the necessary steps in the case a customer suspects discrimination. The "Equal Opportunity is the Law" poster is provided in English, Spanish, and other languages that are common to the area. It is prominently displayed in all the AJCs and at Networks Northwest, near public entrances and in common areas. Further, an approved Equal Opportunity tagline is present on all one-stop publications and websites. The tagline and the poster are available on the Networks Northwest website.

Customers are offered appropriate auxiliary aids and services, including assistive technology devices and services, when necessary to afford individuals with disabilities an equal opportunity to participate in, and enjoy the benefits of, the available programs or activities. Reasonable accommodations are made for customers requesting such accommodations to ensure equal access to services. Interpretive services, including American Sign Language, are provided to customers as needed through Certified Languages International. While all customer workstations are fully accessible, Northwest Michigan Works! is interested in establishing at least one station in each AJC with enhanced accessibility to include specialty software like JAWS, hardware and other accommodations.

Training opportunities about equal opportunity and non-discrimination, the American with Disabilities Act, and serving those individuals with disabilities are attended by agency staff regularly so as to stay abreast of best practices and procedures.

Internal monitoring of programs includes provisions for assessing non-discrimination and equal opportunity within each AJC. Additionally, LEO conducts regular reviews of the Networks Northwest’s Equal Opportunity policy and procedures, further ensuring access and opportunity for all individuals. The board continues to identify areas that can be improved to allow for greater access to services for persons with all abilities.

WIOA Required Partners

Partner Name	Program
Northwest Michigan Works!	Title I: Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth
Northwest Michigan Works!/Northwest Education Services	Title II: Adult Education and Literacy
Networks Northwest	Title III, Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Services Trade Adjustment Assistance

Michigan Rehabilitation Services Bureau of Services for Blind Persons	Title IV: Vocational Rehabilitation
North Central Michigan College Northwestern Michigan College	Postsecondary Career and Technical Education programs, Carl D. Perkins
Michigan State Housing Development Authority	Family Self Sufficiency Program
AARP Foundation	Title V of the Older Americans Act, Senior Community Service Employment Program
State of Michigan, Department of Health & Human Services	SNAP & TANF
Native American Programming	Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians Little River Band of Ottawa Indians Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians
State of Michigan, Department of Labor & Economic Opportunity	Veterans Employment & Training Services Migrant Seasonal Farmworker Programming Unemployment Insurance National Job Farmworker Program

Resource contributions include programs and services provided by each agency, depending upon eligibility, for shared customers through referral. Resource contributions, described and formalized through signed Infrastructure Funding Agreements, for costs associated with AJC infrastructure, are negotiated each Program Year with each partner. Each WIOA Required Partner's share of IFA costs, if any, are calculated and applied through the use of a methodology developed in partnership with LEO, the Michigan Works! Association, the Michigan Works!

agencies, and other Partners. Expected infrastructure costs are reconciled against actual costs at least quarterly.

Adult and Dislocated Worker Employment & Training Activities

Career Services, Basic and Individualized

WIOA Career Services are provided to individuals who have been determined to be eligible, suitable and willing to participate in the WIOA program as a Dislocated Worker or Adult. Career Advisors and Resource Room staff work together to provide WIOA services. As an entry point into the Northwest Michigan Works! system for workers who have been dislocated from their jobs and are now filing for unemployment insurance benefits, Resource Room staff act as one of the primary sources of referrals for individuals to the WIOA program. Resource Room staff engage in conversation with individuals they come into contact with, whether physically within the Resource Room or through an alternate form of technology, including telephone conversations. During these conversations, staff attempt to determine which individuals may be in need of WIOA services to achieve their employment goals.

When a Career Advisor receives a referral to the WIOA program, additional assessments are conducted. These include written assessments and informal conversations, with the expressed purpose of determining program eligibility, suitability, and willingness to engage in program activities. This is the start of a relationship between the Career Advisor and the customer. Once the Career Advisor and customer agree to move forward with enrollment, eligibility paperwork is completed, and design of the Individual Employment Plan (IEP) begins. The IEP is a plan of services that guides service provision throughout the WIOA enrollment. The focus of the IEP is around identification of barriers leading to sustainable employment and how to best provide services and referrals to remove or mitigate identified barriers. The region very often sees participants with barriers like transportation, limited/no access to childcare, computer literacy limitations, lack of job search skills, and/or lack of hard skills needed to compete for in-demand occupations. All services provided to a WIOA participant are represented in the IEP, which can

and should be modified and updated over the course of the participant's time in the WIOA program.

Some participants will receive an objective assessment as part of their IEP. The Northwest region uses the TABE as the standard objective assessment for WIOA Adults and Dislocated Workers. While the TABE is not required for all WIOA Adults and Dislocated Worker participants, it is encouraged for those entering training programs with rigorous academic components. Additional assessments are available to inform career exploration, career pathways, and other characteristics to be considered for a participant's unique plan of services. WorkKeys (in addition to the TABE) may be appropriate for customers who intend to enter an occupation without first receiving training services. Kuder Journey is an online assessment tool that helps customers identify occupations that match their interests and work values, skills, and natural aptitudes. Customers in need of obtaining their high school diploma or equivalent, in need of remedial education services, or who have been determined to be basic skills deficient as defined by WIOA, are referred to the Adult Education Learning Labs. The Labs are co-located in each AJC. Services received in the Learning Labs may be provided concurrently with WIOA services, as appropriate.

Participants work with Career Advisors to identify career targets that match their interests and that are in-demand within the region. As targets are identified, participants are exposed to labor market information regarding the occupations and industries in which they are interested. Customers learn about wages, credential requirements, and local demand for each occupation. They learn about what a typical day on the job might look like for occupations of interest. Participants may conduct this research through a variety of methods and tools, including internet-based research, videos, informational interviews, and more. Knowledge is power, and the more information a participant has about possible career fields, the more likely they are to succeed when they become employed.

In addition to services described above, WIOA Adults and Dislocated Workers may receive any or all of the services available to participants through the program, including but not limited to:

- Job search assistance

- Assistance applying for jobs
- Assistance creating a resume, cover letter, references, and/or portfolio
- Assistance with interviewing, which may include mock interviews and online interviewing
- Assistance with how to negotiate and accept a job offer and how to move through the onboarding process
- Development of employability skills
- Training, including classroom training, on-the-job training, or becoming part of a United States Department of Labor Registered Apprenticeship
- Supportive Services
- Networking techniques, which may include practicing their 'elevator pitch'

Services may be provided in a workshop format or one-on-one. Many times a combination of both formats are needed for effective delivery. One-on-one career counseling is needed in many situations, especially to discuss certain types of employability skills or other topics particular to a specific participant. Other times, participants benefit from hearing one another's stories and picking up tips and tricks that have worked for other participants.

Services may be provided in-person or virtually - whichever method works best for the services needed and in a manner that best meets the needs of the participant. Virtual service delivery may include telephone, Zoom, Skype, Google Meet, Facebook Live, Live Chat, and more.

Veterans receive Priority of Service to all services and have access to specialized services because of their status as a veteran, eligible spouse of a veteran, or transitioning service member. Veterans typically are in need of assistance as they work to translate skills developed in a military environment to those in civilian jobs.

Training Services

The focus of training programs is to improve job seeker customer's skill sets to meet employer demand. Because a vast range of skills is needed among employers, and a variety of skill sets exists within the local labor pool, we utilize a variety of training models.

- Adult Education- Open-entry, open-exit learning labs assist students to achieve their High School Equivalency Degree or High School Diploma, improve their basic academic skills, or learn English as a second language. Students may receive remedial education. Digital literacy education is a required component of instruction. Each student's education plan is individualized based on thorough, diagnostic assessments. Career planning is integrated into orientation and programming, to ensure students continue on to postsecondary training and/or on-the-job learning.
- Classroom Training- Eligible participants can attend training programs that prepare them for an in-demand occupation. Examples include completing a degree, or pursuing a short-term training program such as Certified Nurse Aide, project management, or accounting. This training service is available primarily through the use of Individual Training Accounts (ITA). All classroom training programs funded with WIOA dollars are included on the eligible training provider list, or Michigan Training Connect.
- Work-based Learning Scholarships- Eligible participants can attend an existing training program that is short-term, occupationally-specific, and incorporates hands-on training. Examples include Certified Nurse Aide and Truck Driving. This training service is available through the use of ITAs.
- Just-in-Time Training- Employers work with a training provider of their choice to develop an accelerated vocational training program. Northwest Michigan Works! recruits, screens, and enrolls a full class. Examples include Basic Machining, Welding, and Food Service. This training service is available through the use of ITAs.
- Customized Training- Employers work with a training provider of their choice to develop a customized training program. Employers and Northwest Michigan Works! collaborate to recruit, screen, and interview job seekers. Employers commit to hire successful trainees and contribute to the cost of the training.
- On-the-Job Training- Employers hire an eligible participant and provide training on the job. The employer is reimbursed a percentage of the worker's wage for the training period.

- Incumbent Worker Training- Northwest Michigan Works! can subsidize the cost of training for existing workers. Funds are limited, but application is easy and eligibility of training participants is simpler than other training programs.
- US DOL Registered Apprenticeships- Endorsed by the United States Department of Labor, Apprenticeships combine work-based learning with related technical instruction, after the trainee has been hired.
- Integrated Education and Training (IET) - Integrated Education and Training (IET) is an instructional approach that combines adult education and literacy activities with workforce preparation and training to equip individuals with the skills needed for employment and career advancement.

Most training types result in an industry-recognized credential.

WIOA Adults and Dislocated Workers are not required to access basic career services prior to enrolling in the program. However, many individuals seek additional assistance, often provided under the WIOA Program, if they are unable to secure employment with self-directed and/or staff facilitated services in the resource rooms. Many individualized career services are also available prior to enrollment in a program. However, customers who require long-term one-on-one career advising, and/or who enter a WIOA-funded training program, must enroll in the WIOA Adult or Dislocated Worker (or Youth) programs.

Youth Services

Youth and young adults in the region are impacted by many factors. Among others, these include housing, nutrition, health care, parental support, transportation, drug use, and criminal behavior. Partners of the workforce investment system and other service providers are available to address many of these issues. These providers include school homelessness services, free and reduced breakfast and lunch programs, county health departments, public transportation, substance abuse treatment providers, and juvenile justice.

In a perfect scenario, all of the above issues would be resolved and/or not applicable. Supportive and healthy environments would make fertile ground for teaching employability skills, and drop-out prevention would not be necessary. While the above providers are doing their part to address these issues, the workforce system must do its part to support youth in their efforts to prepare for sustainable, family-supporting employment. Together with partners like secondary and post-secondary education institutions, WIOA Required Partners, the Disability Network, and other community and faith-based organizations (for example Northwest Michigan Community Action Agency and Child and Family Services), Northwest Michigan Works! continues to develop a framework of services to assist local youth and young adults as they move toward self-sufficiency.

In order to effectively meet the needs of youth in the region, the following services are available to individuals ages 14 to 24 under the WIOA Youth program:

- Tutoring, study skills training, and instruction leading to secondary school completion, including dropout prevention strategies;
- Alternative secondary school offerings or dropout recovery services;
- Paid and unpaid work experiences with an academic and occupational education component;
- Occupational skill training, with a focus on recognized postsecondary credentials and in-demand occupations;
- Leadership development activities (e.g., community service, peer-centered activities);
- Supportive services;
- Adult mentoring;
- Follow-up services for at least 12 months after program completion;
- Comprehensive guidance and counseling;
- Integrated education and training for a specific occupation or cluster;
- Financial literacy education;
- Entrepreneurial skills training;

- Services that provide labor market and employment information about in-demand industry sectors or occupations available in the local area, such as career awareness, career counseling, and career exploration services;
- Postsecondary preparation and transition activities;
- Soft skills training.

These required program elements are delivered in a seamless fashion, with individualized strategies to fit the needs of each youth participant.

The services listed above are delivered directly by Northwest Michigan Works! staff. Partnerships have been established and are in development whereas other appropriate community partners may also provide services, as applicable and appropriate, under the WIOA Youth program. See Appendix D-1 for an outline of WIOA Service delivery by agency, including an identification of possible community partners and agencies with which Northwest Michigan Works! anticipates the pursuit of a formalized agreement to provide services.

Services provided by a partner agency and are funded by the WIOA Youth program will be awarded as the result of a competitive bidding process. If services are provided free of charge by the partner agency, then the provider will enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with Networks Northwest.

Basic Skills Deficiency

See Appendix D-2 for the local area's definition of Part B of Basic Skills Deficiency.

Youth Activities

Youth activities in the Northwest region are as follows:

- WIOA Youth Program administered by Career Advisors
- Jobs for Michigan's Graduates Program administered by JMG Specialists
- Northwestern Michigan College shared position, Employment Specialist

The WIOA Youth program focuses on Out-Of-School Youth (OSY), and we encourage In-School Youth (ISY) opportunities. When Career Advisors begin working with a customer who is deemed eligible for WIOA Youth, a review of our services is provided, eligibility and suitability are determined, and the general expectations and anticipated experience of the program are explained to the customer. Once enrolled, the Career Advisor and participant begin designing the plan of services in the participant's Individual Service Strategy (ISS). The ISS is provided to the participant in order to achieve the customer's and program's goals. The planning of the ISS may take multiple sessions. These are structured as coaching sessions where discussions, assessments and other career exploration take place. Barrier identification also occurs at these meetings. Once ready, the Career Advisor works with the participant to identify possible employers of choice and/or training that is needed to obtain desired employment objectives. With the help and tutelage of the Career Advisor, the participant takes the next steps in their plan with the ultimate goal of unsubsidized employment or potentially enrollment in post-secondary education.

As barriers are removed and others are identified during the service plan, they are addressed. This could be through a partner or community resource, or with program-specific funding dollars. For example, if not for a transportation issue the participant could be gainfully employed, the purchase of bus tokens or gas cards may effectively eliminate this barrier to employment.

Out-of-School Youth

There is a need in the Northwest region to provide intensive, specialized services for young adults who are not in school and struggling with multiple barriers. Residents aged 16-19 and 20-24 typically experience unemployment at much higher levels than the rest of the population. This group is in need of help and will be served when they meet eligibility criteria outlined by the WIOA.

The Northwest region's strategy for serving out-of-school youth ages 16 to 24 is to develop a comprehensive mix of services, utilizing an intensive case management model. This model embraces a "whole-life" approach, encompassing the participant's education, work, soft skills,

life skills, employability skills, leadership, and more. The goal is for the participant to actively participate in the program, with 12 or more months of follow-up services provided post-exit.

Case managers are deployed throughout the region to serve out of school youth. The Career Advisors work with program participants to create an ISS for each youth. This plan will identify barriers, and select any and all of the 14 program elements that are appropriate to that individual youth. The ISS is a dynamic document, and will change throughout participation to reflect goals obtained and changes to the participant's situation.

Out-of-school Youth with disabilities are assisted with the mix of services appropriate to their needs, and are connected to Michigan Rehabilitation Services for vocational rehabilitation counseling as needed.

In-School Youth

Services for youth who are currently in school will be coordinated in a classroom setting whenever possible, and with individual appointments. This population requires at least some coordination with parents and/or guardians.

Eligibility for in-school youth is as follows:

- A. Age 14 to 21 and attending school; and
- B. Low-income individual; and
- C. Fall within one or more of the following categories:
 - 1. Individual with a disability
 - 2. Basic skills deficient
 - 3. English language learner
 - 4. Offender
 - 5. Homeless, runaway, or foster child
 - 6. Pregnant or parenting
 - 7. An individual who requires additional assistance to complete an educational program or to secure or hold employment

The local policy defining Youth who Need Additional Assistance is attached to this plan as Appendix D-3.

Most of the region's in-school youth are provided services under the Jobs for Michigan's Graduates (JMG) program. This model recognizes that adult intervention helps youth make the right choices, but it is often missing from the lives of disadvantaged youth. It is also essential that youth learn "soft skills," the types of skills that are applicable to any job. These include communication, teamwork, problem-solving, respect for authority, and personal accountability. These are the skills in highest demand from employers around the region, regardless of industry or occupation.

The Jobs for Michigan's Graduates (JMG) program incorporates all of the above and more. Positive relationships with adult instructors are a foundation of the program. The curriculum consists of teaching youth competencies that prepare them to be strong citizens and effective workers.

To ensure youth have experience-based opportunities, the program incorporates a part-time, competitive wage Work Experience program for each student, as appropriate. These experiences can be in the public or private sector. This provides youth with an effective form of soft skills training, while supporting them with intensive case management and job coaching.

In-school Youth with disabilities will be assisted with the mix of services appropriate to their needs, and will be connected to Michigan Rehabilitation Services for Pre-Employment Transition Counseling.

When JMG participants are identified as individuals who are in need of services that can be provided under the WIOA In-School-Youth (ISY) program, the appropriate referral is made to a Career Advisor. Then the enrollment process begins. Other sources of WIOA ISY referrals can come from secondary schools, parents, or by self-referral. Most ISY participants are in need of intensive case management services, experiencing a multitude of barriers. All services available under the WIOA Youth Program are available to an ISY participant.

Jobs for Michigan's Graduates

The Jobs for Michigan's Graduates program is a mix of in-school and out-of-school programs. Currently we have 17 programs: 9 within Charlevoix-Emmet ISD, Northwest Education Services, 2 within Wexford/Missaukee ISD, 3 within Cadillac Area Public Schools, Northwestern Michigan College, and CASMAN Academy. Each of our 11 JMG Specialists carry a caseload of 50 or more new students in addition to those in follow up.

JMG's mission of equipping young people with the skills necessary to overcome barriers and achieve success in education, employment, and in life is aligned with our organizational values and fits with our mission. JMG Specialists carry this mission out in many ways including classroom curriculum, informal conversations, leadership conferences, talent tours, referrals to external partners when appropriate, work experience opportunities and more.

To ensure that youth have experience-based opportunities, the program incorporates a part-time, competitive wage Work Experience program for each student, as appropriate, in the public or private sector. This provides youth with an effective form of soft skills training, while supporting them with intensive case management and job coaching.

JMG Specialists support the goal to serve at least 730 total students between the JMG In-School and Out-of-School programs, with enrollments in WIOA for students who are eligible and in need of WIOA services.

Networks Northwest is committed to bridging JMG with WIOA Youth, in terms of funding and programming when appropriate. We have contracted for the past 9 years and will continue to do so with Youth Solutions Inc., the JMG administrative entity. We will continue to partner with the local Career Tech Centers, alternative schools and local school districts to deliver the program and meet performance requirements of both programs.

The ultimate goal of all activities, regardless of the program, is full-time employment and long-term retention. Each youth's ISS or Individual Development Plan (IDP) will facilitate the goals, objectives, and milestones to achieve success.

Northwestern Michigan College (NMC) Collaboration

A recent expanded partnership with Northwestern Michigan College highlights our efforts to search for and serve those individuals in need of Northwest Michigan Works! services. JMG services are now provided to eligible students. We have an embedded staff person on the college campus able to deliver Career and Employment services to walk-in traffic and in the classroom when needed. Our shared position is a 50-50 split between Northwest Michigan Works! and the college. The staff person is able to provide Michigan Works! services and make appropriate referrals to the AJC for those in need of more one-on-one services and/or enrollment into an appropriate program. Services being delivered on campus are as follows:

- Resume help
- Mock interviews
- Career assessment
- Career pathway planning

These services can be delivered individually and in a classroom setting. Our Employment Specialist is flexible and adapts to campus needs. Working with the NMC Advising Department allows for considerable access to the students and a shared mission to connect our customers/students with employment has only enhanced a valuable and established partnership.

Waivers

Northwest Michigan Works! takes advantage of appropriate waivers to ongoing workforce development activities in the region. Waivers provide increased flexibility that allows the Agency to more effectively respond to the needs of employers and job seekers. Waivers in use in the Northwest Michigan region include

- A waiver of the requirement to expend 75 percent of WIOA Title I Youth State formula funding on the OSY population. The Northwest region reserves the option to lower this amount to 50 percent.

No locally-requested waivers are in use at this time.

Coordination with Education

The CEAC advises the Workforce Development Board on issues related to education and careers. The CEAC is the local entity that formally guides collaborative partnerships with local school districts, employers, postsecondary institutions, advocates, and training providers. Members include the following:

- At least 1 Workforce Development Board member
- Employers (at least 2) who represent documented in-demand industries that provide high-wage and high-growth careers
- Representation from labor unions
- Local school district offering CTE or Adult Education Programs
- Intermediate School District offering CTE or Adult Education Programs
- Post-secondary institution
- Career and technical education administrators (non-instructional)
- Public school parent
- Academic educator
- Lead Business Service Representative from the Michigan Works! Agency
- Business Development Manager from the MEDC
- Economic Analyst from the Department of Technology, Management and Budget Labor Market Information and Strategic Initiatives
- Talent Development Liaison (LEO-WD)

- Secondary and Post-secondary Perkins staff
- Regional MiSTEM representatives

The collaborative group identifies significant talent needs and collectively develops and implements training strategies to effectively meet employer talent needs. The Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity (LEO) requires each CEAC complete an initial certification process, with subsequent re-certifications occurring bi-annually. Certifications provide guidance related to the Council's membership requirements, the establishment of metrics to achieve high performing outcomes, and more. The CEAC is encouraged by Federal legislation to provide recommendations to the local Board in the development of workforce development strategies, especially related to secondary and postsecondary educational institutions. As an advisory group, the CEAC coordinates with other educational entities in guiding career development programs and career pathways. These efforts may also include other programs like prisoner reentry programs and veterans programs.

The CEAC ensures that the workforce system is engaged with the education system. The CEAC, including membership, goals/metrics, and responsibilities as governed by LEO (Policy Issuance 23-29 and subsequent changes), is designed to bring education and business together to effectively develop and implement training strategies designed to resolve talent issues experienced by the region's employers. These regular meetings ensure ongoing conversations, planning, and strategic activities that respond directly to the needs of employers.

The CEAC operating in the Northwest Michigan region has established the following priorities for program year 2024:

- Engage apprenticeship success coordinators to establish and grow pre-apprenticeship and registered apprenticeship opportunities for adults and youth.
- Engage local education and economic partners to encourage establishment of and participation in career pathway and exploration events (e.g., Talent Tours,

MiCareerQuest®, Manufacturing Week, Energy Week, and National Registered Apprenticeship Week).

- By partnering to support initiatives such as Futures for Frontliners and Michigan Reconnect, promote and positively impact the Governor’s postsecondary credential attainment goal of 60 percent by 2030.
- Sub-committee has been formed to develop an Educational Attainment Goal for our region

In addition to the CEAC, the workforce system develops and maintains relationships with public and private training providers. Another area where relationships with training vendors is critical is in employer services. All postsecondary institutions in the region offer training programs for employers, already developed or customized based on need. Educators are often invited to attend the Employer Forums (see Business Services and Engaging Employers using Sector Initiatives sections) so they can hear first-hand from employers about skill shortages and workforce needs.

Our plan is to have each Business Services Representative on our Business Services Team serve on at least one advisory board for programs at the local career tech center and/or college. This is already happening to some degree but we are in the process of re engagement with more advisory committees. Business Services Representatives often call on community college partners when employers are interested in access to the New Jobs Training Fund program, and to connect companies with training services for Apprenticeships, Customized Training, Incumbent Work Training, and Going Pro Talent Fund. Communication is regular and ongoing throughout the year. The Business Enhancement Team Meeting offers an opportunity for formal sharing of new programs, focus areas, and needs with education partners. This is a quarterly meeting facilitated by Northwest Michigan Works! that all business-facing organizations are invited to participate. Current member organizations range from local EDOs to state level workforce or economic development partners.

Supportive Services

Northwest Michigan Works! provides supportive services to eligible participants in all workforce programs for which supportive services is an allowable cost, including:

- WIOA Adult
- WIOA Dislocated Worker
- WIOA Youth
- PATH
- Jobs for Michigan's Graduates
- OS Reentry

MRS and the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) have the ability to provide supportive services through their programming. Participants who are mutual customers of multiple programs may receive supportive services funded by more than one program concurrently. Northwest Michigan Works!, MRS, DHHS and other partners who may provide support do attempt to coordinate services as much as possible.

One of the most daunting barriers to employment in our large rural region is transportation. With limited public transit available and long distances to travel to jobs and training, the provision of supportive services related to transportation has been extremely important to supporting participants as they work toward successful outcomes. Clothing for training or for the first few weeks of employment may be provided to participants who are pursuing the acquisition of skills or starting a new job that requires specific types of clothing. Examples may include steel-toed boots, scrubs, and safety glasses. Participants in training may receive assistance with fees and other costs associated with testing to receive industry-recognized credentials. Supportive services may also be provided as assistive devices for those with disabilities.

Included as part of the initial assessment for participants is identification of barriers related to training and employment. Emerging barriers may be identified during case management. As barriers are identified, the case manager determines options for mitigating or removing the

barriers. Considerations may include a survey of community resources available to the participant, reviewing personal resources that may be available to the participant, and services that may be provided by Northwest Michigan Works!. The process for providing supportive services includes an assessment by the case manager to determine the barrier and which supportive service will be most helpful. Supportive services deemed necessary to be provided by Northwest Michigan Works! are processed through a procedure whereby the case manager requests the support, a supervisor reviews and approves or denies the request, and the case manager makes the appropriate entries and notations in the OSMIS. If not already represented there, the barrier and supportive service are included in the participant's ISS/IEP in the One-Stop Management Information System or in the IPE by the vocational rehabilitation counselor.

The local supportive services policy is attached to this plan as Appendix B.

Northwest Michigan Works! does not offer needs related payments as part of its standard WIOA programming at this time.

Coordination with Supportive Services

In every county in the region, a human services collaborative body convenes multiple human services organizations on a monthly basis. This group represents an array of supportive services and other applicable community resources. Northwest Michigan Works! participates with every group and regularly attends meetings, representing WIOA Titles I, II, and III. MRS also participates, representing WIOA Title IV. Through this connection and others, the entire workforce system is made aware of numerous resources and initiatives. Examples of programs and supports that have been shared at meetings and through an email listserv are:

- Application fair for Section 8 housing
- Substance abuse prevention and treatment programs
- Support network for adoptive families
- Community Health Needs Assessment
- Affordable Care Act navigator available at the local health clinic
- Applications for the Double Up Food Bucks program

The above are a few examples of the wealth of information that is shared through these groups. Information includes new staff and programs at partner agencies, changes in bus routes, new times for food pantries, and more.

In addition to the strategic coordination provided by Networks Northwest (described in the regional plan), frontline staff in the AJCs and at MRS are well-versed in transportation resources, and make an effort to inform transportation partners about ours. The staff also have access to directories and schedules for local transit authorities, where those are available. Customers have access to transportation information in the AJCs through handouts and using computers in the resource rooms. Workshop calendars may be shared with transit authorities for placement on the buses and in waiting rooms, and are promoted on the Northwest Michigan Works! website, social media pages, and with local partners. Partners, including those from transportation, are periodically invited to present at staff meetings so that our knowledge of their programs and services are up to date. This provides the opportunity to share information about workforce development services.

Because the frontline staff are so knowledgeable about the challenges of the workforce, especially those with barriers to employment, they have become a source of data and anecdotal information for transportation planning. Staff attend transportation planning events and summits, providing insight on behalf of those who are most in need of the services.

Per Participant Funding Cap

Networks Northwest does not adhere to an established per participant funding cap. However, per participant costs are monitored and analyzed for efficiency throughout all workforce program planning. Ensuring per participant costs are appropriate and not exorbitant are considered in planning and program delivery activities.

Coordination with Employment Services

Northwest Michigan Works! operates Titles I, II, and III, an arrangement that is conducive to an environment that maximizes coordination of the provision of workforce development services from the various titles with little to no duplication of services. Customers in need of or who are receiving less intensive services are typically enrolled in and provided services under Wagner-Peyser/Employment Services. While Employment Services customers receive staff-assisted services, those customers are not generally case managed. Customers who request or who are identified as in need of more intensive one-on-one services are referred to the WIOA program. Other workforce programs like Trade Adjustment Assistance and PATH may identify and refer customers to Employment Services or one of the WIOA programs for co-enrollment, taking advantage of services and funding offered as a result of braiding multiple funding sources.

Delivery of Employment Services

Employment Services are delivered through a variety of funding streams, including Wagner-Peyser, Trade Adjustment Assistance, PATH, and the three titles of the WIOA. Employment Services delivered under Title IV are delivered directly by Michigan Rehabilitation Services. With the exception of Title IV, workforce development programs are delivered directly by Networks Northwest and Northwest Michigan Works! staff, which allows for a seamless service delivery model all within a single AJC.

Employment Services are typically provided in the Resource Room of each AJC, and can be provided one-on-one. Frontline staff have been trained to assist customers in need of varying levels of assistance.

Point of Contact

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Direct Delivery of Services

Wagner-Peyser employment services are delivered by a combination of merit-based staff and non merit-based staff. Merit-based staff are employed by Northwest Michigan Council of Governments, DBA Networks Northwest, is a Special Purpose Unit of Government, while non merit-based staff are employed by Northwest Michigan Works!. employees of this organization are merit-based staff. Northwest Michigan Works!. The board has chosen to take advantage of the recent changes in merit-based staffing requirements for the delivery of Wagner-Peyser services.

Employment Services are delivered directly by staff under the agencies described above. This arrangement allows for direct control over staffing, and increased effectiveness and efficiency through monitoring and continuous improvement.

Services

Wagner-Peyser services are provided at no charge to job seekers and employers.

Northwest Michigan Works! staff greet customers as they enter the AJC Resource Room. Customers check in with staff to access the services they need. They receive a Customer Intake Form that can be used to enter demographic information about the customer into the various systems that support workforce development activities, including Pure Michigan Talent Connect, G*STARS, and OSMIS. In addition to customer information, staff make notations on the Customer Intake Form to be used after the customer's visit to make entries into the appropriate systems, as applicable. Customers are asked if they have served in the military, so as to receive priority of service and to ensure compliance with ES policy and the Jobs for Veterans Act. Opportunities are made available for customers to disclose any disabilities and request reasonable accommodations. All One-Stop AJC customers receive equal access to Employment Services. Automated door openers, wheelchair accessible pathways, bathrooms, and workstations ensure universal access to services.

As the staff begin to interact with the customer, they listen and ask questions so they can tailor support to each customer's needs. When staff identify customers who may benefit from more

intensive services they refer the customers to a WIOA Career Advisor. The Career advisor determines WIOA eligibility, suitability, and the willingness of the applicant to participate in the WIOA.

Customers who need minimal or no staff assistance as they begin their job search or career transition will work relatively independently in the Resource Room. The following Employment Services are among those available:

- Access to the Pure Michigan Talent Connect website
- Labor Exchange Services
- Access to job search resources via the Internet
- Local components of the ES complaint system
- The Unemployment Insurance Work Test
- Accommodations and information to Unemployment Insurance claimants
- Services to Veterans
- Services to Migrant and Seasonal Farm Workers
- Participation in a system for clearing labor between states
- Fidelity Bonding program
- Any other additional services as necessary to ensure access to Employment Services for all who seek them

Self-service

Self-services are available for job seekers and employers in all of the Northwest Michigan Works! Service Centers. Each center includes a Resource Room located at the front of the center. It is structured for self-service use. In the Resource Rooms, customers have access to computers, a job search information library, copier, fax machine, résumé paper, and more. On these computers, customers have access to the web-based Pure Michigan Talent Connect, in addition to other job search tools and business-related resources.

Each computer is equipped to maximize the customer's experience. They are configured to make it as easy as possible for the individual to use the available resources. For example, the Internet

homepage is set to the Pure Michigan Talent Connect (PMTTC) website. There are also shortcuts to the site and the Internet browser favorites displays PMTC, as well as other useful Internet resources.

Some employers provide us with physical employment applications, which are available in the resource rooms for customers to complete. Staff are available to assist with applications. Completed applications are forwarded to employers periodically while the position(s) remain open. Employer customers may also use the fax and copy machines, as part of the self-services available in the service centers. A physical job board is maintained in each resource room that consists of printed lists of job postings from PMTC. Job postings are grouped by county to allow job seekers to jobs near their desired geographical location.

In addition, employer customers have access to interview rooms and can connect with Business Services staff who can provide a wide variety of employment services. Employers have access to local labor market information on Benchmarks Northwest, a local website of data that helps inform data-based decision making. Examples of data include wage information , numbers of jobs, and credentialing information.

Facilitated Services

Many customers receive a combination of Self-service and Facilitated services that are provided by Career Services Specialists who are stationed throughout the resource room. Facilitated services may include:

- Assistance with career exploration and assessment resources
- Searching for job openings on the internet or assistance in reviewing the job board
- Completing physical and online employment applications
- Writing and printing résumés and cover letters
- Using the phone, FAX, and copy machines;
- Provision of forms or information needed for partner services
- Creating and updating Pure Michigan Talent Connect profiles

- Referrals to the WIOA program and other workforce programs
- Providing linkages to community and partner agencies, including information about services available through those organizations

Staff-Assisted Services

Most customers receive a combination of Self-services, Facilitated services, and Staff-assisted services. Services may be provided by Career Services Specialists or Career Advisors. Customers who struggle to find work solely through self-service and facilitated services, or who request types of services requiring more intensive assistance may receive Staff-assisted services.

- Assistance with financial aid
- Provision of assessments regarding skills, interests, and the need for supportive services
- Provision of information and meaningful assistance with filing for unemployment insurance
- Job search assistance
- Career guidance
- Referrals to specific job openings

Various instructional workshops are offered to the public by staff in each AJC. Workshops are now also offered virtually. Workshops are made available based on identified customer needs and frequency of workshops are limited by staffing levels. Examples of workshops regularly offered include:

- Career Connection
- Veterans Employment Services Orientation

Content of workshops is varied in to offer a single job seeker options to learn more about each topic. For example, one week Job Search Strategies might focus on using LinkedIn as a job search tool, while the next week the same workshop may focus on Pure Michigan Talent Connect profiles. Keeping content current and varied offers customers content that meets their

needs. Workshops help customers become more familiar with services provided by AJC staff when they view a video describing services provided by Northwest Michigan Works!. The video is also available online.

Business Services staff, referred to as Business Services Representatives, provide a multitude of staff-assisted services to employers, both in the field and at the service center. Employers who seek assistance at the service center are directed to staff who can help answer questions and describe the various services available to employers. Employers also have access to space at the service center to conduct interviews. Staff-assisted services to employers include:

- PMTC training
- Assistance with talent recruitment, candidate pre-screening and referrals
- Workforce assessments
- Developing customized training solutions, including Going Pro Talent Fund applications
- Offering interviewing guidelines and best practices
- Provision of Labor Market Information

In addition, Business Services Representatives work to develop collaborative relationships between local workforce and economic development partners, some of which include:

- Michigan Small Business Development Center
- Procurement Technical Assistance Center
- Global Trade Alliance of Northern Michigan
- Michigan Economic Development Corporation
- Chambers of Commerce
- Traverse Area Human Resource Association
- Local Non-Profit Agencies

Business Services Representatives work collaboratively with Career Advisors and other Partners to host multiple hiring events throughout the region. Partners may include any of the WIOA Required Partners as well as local community colleges, Career Technical Centers, and

others. Restrictions due to the coronavirus pandemic was the impetus for our recent virtual hiring event, of which we intend to hold more. We also intend to regularly hold hiring events that may focus on an in-demand industry or occupation cluster, or involve multiple in-demand industries. Frequently held hiring events will allow employers increased access to job seekers when they have positions to fill, which results in an overall increased responsiveness of the agency.

Staffing Levels

Employment Service staff are available to assist job seekers with facilitated and/or staff-assisted services. Staffing levels for provision of Employment Services at each AJC are as follows:

<u>Service Center</u>	<u># of FTEs</u>
Traverse City Service Center	5
Petoskey Service Center	3
Cadillac Service Center	4
Manistee Service Center	4

Unemployment Insurance (UI) Work Test

To register for work, UI claimants enter their profile in the PMTC at a One-Stop Service Center or another location with Internet access. Northwest Michigan Works! Career Services Specialists help the claimants meet the requirements of the work test. To complete the work test, MWA staff verifies a claimant's profile is entered in the Pure Michigan Talent Connect and then enters proof of registration into the online system prior to 6:30 p.m. every day, so that the UI determination process can proceed. During the course of providing services to a claimant, a MWA staff member may become aware of an incident of possible non-compliance or potential eligibility issue (Able, Available, and Seeking Work), such as refusing an offer of suitable work. Non-compliance is reported immediately in the OSMIS, no later than 48 hours after the incident of non-compliance. Refusal of work may be reported by employers through the PMTC.

Reemployment Service Eligibility Assessment (RESEA)

The RESEA Program is intended to provide customized services to UI claimants who have been identified as most likely to exhaust their Unemployment Insurance benefits. The intention of this early intervention is to return the unemployed claimant back to work sooner than if they had not received RESEA services.

Activities provided under the RESEA Program are administered in accordance with policy set forth by the State of Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity. RESEA services are only provided to eligible participants. To be eligible to participate in the RESEA Program, customers must be referred by UIA.

Claimants listed on the OSMIS Weekly Claimants List may be contacted via email or letter, encouraging them to schedule and attend their RESEA appointment with Northwest Michigan Works!. When a claimant calls to schedule their RESEA appointment with Northwest Michigan Works!, the MWA staff will make every reasonable effort to accommodate the customer's schedule. Appointments will be held with the claimant within 14 days of the "Letter Sent Date". Should the claimant be unable to keep their RESEA appointment date, they may reschedule their RESEA appointment once within the 14 days of the "Letter Sent Date". The MWA does not excuse claimants from their obligation to schedule a RESEA appointment or meet RESEA activity requirements.

When the RESEA service is provided, the following activities are delivered:

- Orientation Northwest Michigan Works! services
- Confirmation of an active profile on Pure Michigan Talent Connect (PMTTC)
- Assessment of UI Eligibility*
- Discussion of Work Search Activities
- Development of an Individual Service Strategy (ISS)*
- Discussion of Labor Market Information (LMI)
- Referral to Reemployment Services

*Performed and provided in a one-on-one confidential setting

All RESEA activities are provided to ensure each RESEA participant receives services appropriate for their unique needs. The Orientation is provided by video or as a verbal summary. The MWA staff providing RESEA services locate and review the customer's PMTC profile, providing feedback to the customer as appropriate. The Assessment of UI Eligibility is conducted by asking the participant prescribed questions. Potential eligibility issues are reported through the OSMIS. The Individual Service Strategy is developed in a one-on-one setting with the participant and is designed to meet the unique situation of the participant. The review of Labor Market Information is typically provided via a conversation with the participant, although participants may receive an in-demand occupations brochure. Or the staff may teach the customer how to find relevant LMI information on the internet. All RESEA participants who attend their appointment discuss different options to fulfill the requirement to complete reemployment services, which could include any one or combination of the following:

- Workshops
- One-on-one career counseling
- Assessments
- Online career exploration

Documentation for RESEA services is recorded in the OSMIS as case notes. Data entry may occur as early as the date the service was provided, but no later than 48 hours after the date of service. Career & Reemployment Service Outcomes are recorded in OSMIS within 48 hours of completion.

UI may mandate a subsequent second RESEA appointment for claimants who attend an initial RESEA appointment and are still receiving UI benefits 5 weeks after the initial RESEA appointment. The following services are provided at a mandatory subsequent RESEA appointment: UI eligibility assessment, discussion of work search activities, and review of the ISS.

There is also an option for a voluntary subsequent RESEA if the customer and Case Manager agree that a second RESEA appointment may be scheduled for participants who successfully complete the first RESEA appointment. The following services are provided at a voluntary subsequent RESEA appointment: UI eligibility assessment, discussion of work search activities, and review of the ISS.

Veterans

Employment Services staff provide the same quality of services to all customers, including veterans. Northwest Michigan Works! ensures that provision of Employment Services complies with the Jobs for Veterans Act of 2002, which requires that all U.S. veterans and eligible persons receive priority in vocational guidance, training, and job placement services.

The Northwest MWA has an established local policy for veteran's priority of service. The local policy guides staff in implementing priority of service for this population, beginning with identifying veterans. Strategies to identify veterans include asking every customer who enters the service centers "Have you served in the military?" and providing an opportunity for veterans, or the spouse of a veteran, to self-identify on the Northwest Michigan Works! Customer Intake Form. Identified veterans will receive facilitated services, at minimum, if desired.

To ensure veterans' priority, the Northwest MWA does the following:

- Provide priority service for facilitated and staff-assisted employment services to veterans
- When taking applications in the service center for employment opportunities, applications completed by veterans are identified as such and provided to the employer first
- If there is a line for using computers, staff ensure veterans go to the front of the line
- When referring to WIOA-funded services, Wagner-Peyser staff make certain that veterans are identified so that priority of service can be provided for Career and Training Services

In addition, Career Services Specialists are aware of the 24-hour hold for job orders in order to give priority to veterans and regularly promote it to veteran job seekers and employers.

Veterans who are eligible, suitable and willing to engage in the WIOA program are enrolled and provided individualized case management services.

Employment Services staff provide a Military Service Questionnaire (MSQ) to all veterans and eligible persons who identify themselves as such. If the veteran or eligible person qualifies for a referral based on their MSQ responses, they will be referred immediately to a Veterans Career Assistant (VCA), a process that is completed electronically to increase efficiency. The VCA will further evaluate the referral. Referrals who, upon evaluation by the VCA will not receive services from the VCA are re-referred to a Career Advisor who prioritizes the referral for WIOA enrollment and services.

Upon referring to the Veterans Career Advisor, the Employment Services staff will:

- Ensure that the customer has an active Wagner-Peyser registration in the OSMIS; if necessary, the staff will create the registration and record the service(s) provided
- Complete the appropriate sections of the “For Staff Use Only” section of the MSQ
- Enter the activity in OSMIS recording the official referral
- Follow Up with the receiving VCA to ensure the MSQ was received and relay any additional information that may be relevant to the VCA

The region has access to a Veterans Employment Representative (VER), who liaises with local employers to advocate for veteran job seekers. The VER has access to all services, including funds related to work-based training services, to which other Business Services Representatives have access. The VER may participate in Business Services Team meetings. The VCAs and VERs are invited to participate in weekly case reviews to advocate for job seekers and connect job seekers with employment opportunities.

The VER and VCAs have designated office space at all AJC locations. The VCAs are an integral part of the Workforce Development team, providing individualized services and case

management in conjunction with Michigan Works! staff. Business Services Representatives regularly communicate with the VCAs and share job postings and employer-specific information. Shared locations and open communication allow for seamless referrals for Wagner-Peyser customers.

Migrant and Seasonal Workers

Migrant and Seasonal Workers (MSWs) receive equitable access and opportunity to leverage the full range of employment services that are provided to non-MSW customers. Standard/self services such as fact sheets, information handouts, and other forms, such as the Customer Intake Form are made available in Spanish, the primary language of MSFWs in the Northwest region. Additionally, front line staff are empowered to use Language Line, a translation service and Google Translate, an app that has proven to be effective in communicating with non-English speakers.

MSW Outreach workers are available for facilitated and staff-assisted services, on-site at the service center locations. Staff diligently work to identify MSWs in the resource room and connect them with the Outreach Worker via direct referrals. MSW Outreach workers are located near the Resource Room, enabling for a warm handoff when making direct referrals. Northwest Michigan Works! ensures all front line staff are up to date on identifying MSWs and providing comprehensive employment services for this specialized population. The MSW Outreach workers have access to the Business Services Representatives to help connect MSWs to employment opportunities, as needed. In addition, MSWs interested in learning the English language are referred to the Adult Education Learning Lab for English language services.

At this time, there is no plan to provide additional services or activities for which Wagner-Peyser Funds may be used.

Navigators & Barriers to Employment

The Barriers to Employment Success Inventory (BESI) is administered to customers to identify the supports needed to address their specific employment barriers.

The board has designated and trained staff to provide specialized services to targeted groups of individuals within the region. These 'Navigators' become experts as they interact and assist individuals with barriers related to employment.

Business Resource Network Navigator

Our Business Resource Network (BRN) Business Success Coach provides services to BRN participating employers and their at-risk employees. The Business Resource Network (BRN) provides retention services through a professional, on-location Success Coach offering unique resources to help employees reach success in their work and home lives; increasing productivity, reducing absenteeism and turnover costs while encouraging workforce development and growth. The services provided are targeted at removing barriers and ensuring participants have the skills necessary to retain their current employment while also preparing the employee for career advancement within the organization. Services may be provided to BRN participants individually or in group sessions. When appropriate, the Business Success Coach may call upon local partners to provide subject matter expertise. Examples of services offered through the Business Success Coach include, but are not limited to:

- Personalized budgeting and financial management
- Soft skills training
- Referrals to workforce development programming for training and education
- Physical and mental health referrals
- Assistance accessing childcare
- Overcoming transportation barriers
- Ensuring food security
- Securing temporary and permanent housing
- Assistance accessing community resources

The Business Success Coach develops partnerships with community organizations in an effort to develop new resources for families and individuals, especially for those areas where gaps in resource availability exist. The Business Success Coach works closely with participating employers to coordinate times and activities to best serve the participants. In addition, employers of the BRN provide the Business Success Coach with onsite office space. Working onsite greatly enhances employee participation and acceptance of the services being offered.

The Business Success Coach refers BRN participants to workforce development programs as appropriate.

Coordination with Adult Education

In 2002, funding for Adult Education in Michigan was reduced from \$80 million to \$20 million. At this time, several adult education programs in the region were unable to continue providing services. Those local school districts who were closing programs approached Networks Northwest and Traverse Bay Area Intermediate School District, now known as Northwest Education Services, and asked that a partnership be formed to ensure that services would remain available despite the drastic reduction in resources. The two entities formed a relationship that remains intact to this day.

The roles and responsibilities of each entity are outlined in the Memorandum of Agreement, attached as Appendix E. In short, Northwest Education Services is the recipient of state funds, employs and evaluates teachers, and awards high school credit. The workforce system coordinates the program through the Regional Director of Adult Education, an employee of the NW MI Works!. It is the grantee for the WIOA Title II (AEFLA) funding and supplements support for the programming from its facilities budget. Lab Aids are employed by the workforce system to complete data entry into the MAERS system. Learning Lab Specialists address participant barriers and facilitate Career Planning for transition to postsecondary education or training. Adult Education services are provided through the Northwest Michigan Works! Learning Labs that are housed within Northwest Michigan American Job Centers with access points located at local libraries.

State Adult Education Funding in Michigan is distributed on a regional basis. Northwest Education Services is the regional fiscal agent for Region 2 and collaborates with the CEAC of the WDB to design a regional strategy that aligns adult education programs into an efficient delivery system that provides instruction that is contextual and based on career planning. As the fiscal agent, Northwest Education Services is responsible for awarding contracts to local providers of adult education services.

To coordinate with the workforce development board, as required in WIOA Sections 107(d)(11)(A) and (B)(i) and WIOA Section 232, Northwest Education Services works through the CEAC to review applications and makes recommendations to the WDB, which then advises Northwest Education Services on awards. The process takes into account the availability of services throughout the region, and ensures that programming is available across the region. In addition, the local Workforce development board reviews the local WIOA Title II (AEFLA) applications to ensure consistency with the local workforce plan. of services with the WIOA Title I plan.

The following Adult Education services are available throughout the region through the Northwest Michigan Works! Learning Labs:

- Adult Basic Education
- Adult Secondary Education
- High School Completion
- High School Equivalency
- English Language Learning (formerly English as a Second Language)
- Workplace Literacy

A Michigan certified teacher provides individualized instruction through on-line computer software and board approved textbooks. Tutoring is also an option for the lower functioning student. HyFlex earning options are available through the use of the online software programs. Students are able to check out Chromebooks and data ports to facilitate learning at home. Any

student using this option must meet with a teacher at least once a month. Contact is maintained through phone calls, Google Meets, texts or email.

The Northwest Michigan Works! Learning Labs are housed inside the AJC. Satellite services are provided in local libraries to increase access. There is full integration with all programs in the delivery of activities. All customers are shared based on the customer's needs. An unlimited license to Kuder Journey, a flexible and scalable online career planning system has been purchased for the Northwest Michigan Works! program. This tool will be employed by all programs to facilitate the conversation and build resources on career planning and pathways. Workforce programming provides participants with the opportunity to improve their skills through various stepping stones of education and work experience utilizing all the resources of all the programs.

Some of the challenges related to career pathways include:

- no consistent, generally accepted definition of the term "Career Pathways"
- following an individual through multiple stepping stones will necessitate a much longer time period of participation in our programs
- every industry and occupation is different.

Components of Adult Education services may include the following:

- Thorough assessments
- Basic academic education
- Occupational training
- Work-based learning

Progression through each of the above results in industry-recognized credentials and an increase in job prospects and potential income. The career pathways systems developed will give program staff, educators, employers, and participants a tool to use in mapping out career pathways on an individual basis.

Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) and Infrastructure Funding Agreements (IFAs)

Memorandums of Understanding are in place with Required WIOA Partners in the region, including:

- Northwest Michigan Works!
- Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians
- Little River Band of Ottawa Indians (*signed agreement not yet received*)
- Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians
- State of Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity
 - Michigan Rehabilitation Services
 - Bureau of Services for Blind Persons
 - Veterans Services
 - Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers
 - Unemployment Insurance
- North Central Michigan College
- Northwestern Michigan College
- Department of Health and Human Services
- American Association of Retired Persons Foundation
- Michigan State Housing Development Authority
- Telamon

Executed MOUs are in place for three years and have been submitted to the State of Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity. They are reviewed and updated during the 3-year time period as needed.

Infrastructure Funding Agreements (IFAs) with the applicable WIOA Required Partners in the region have been negotiated and are in place. Executed IFAs and the IFA spreadsheet delineating FTEs and Cost Allocations based on FTEs have been submitted to the State of

Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity. Subsequent IFAs are evaluated and executed on an annual basis.

Grant Recipient

The Northwest Michigan Council of Governments is responsible for disbursement of grant funds. This entity, now doing business as Networks Northwest, has had numerous federal contracts over many years. The agency has been a State of Michigan subrecipient to deliver federally-funded programs under the Workforce Investment Act, The Wagner-Peyser Employment Service, the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families welfare-to-work program, Trade Act, and several other workforce development programs for 50 years. In addition to workforce development programs, Networks Northwest administers business and community development programs for the ten-county region. These include the APEX Accelerator program, Global Trade Alliance, several sector alliances, and the State of Michigan's OS Reentry program. The agency is also the local Regional Planning Organization, which provides numerous services to local governments and their communities throughout the region.

The grant recipient direct delivers WIOA Career services, through the One-Stop delivery system, including eligibility determination, outreach and intake, assessments, labor exchange services, provision of labor market information and local in-demand occupations, use of the eligible training provider list, provision of and referral to barrier removal services, and all other Career services described in WIOA Section 134. A competitive process to award sub-grants and contracts for this spectrum of services is therefore not required. Training services are provided through Individual Training Accounts (see the Individual Training Accounts section, below). No contracts for training services are in use at this time.

Sub-grantee Selection for Title I

In the event a competitive process is needed to award sub-grants resulting in contracts for WIOA Title I activities, the following process is expected:

1. Develop and publish the Request for Proposal (RFP), describing the activities to be performed and including proposal requirements.
2. Score proposals submitted against a previously established scoring mechanism based on elements described in the RFP.
3. Award the sub-grant and enter into an agreement with the winning bidder.

Records related to the RFP process are retained for review purposes.

Local Levels of Performance

Local levels of performance are described in the [Performance](#) section of the Regional Plan.

Negotiations between the State of Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity for Program Years 2024 and 2025 are expected to take place during Fall 2024.

High-Performing BoardThe Networks Northwest Regional Prosperity Board serves as the governing body for Networks Northwest. The board developed a clear mission and vision for the organization, attached as Appendix F, and organizational hallmarks and values.

The Board's primary purposes are:

- To provide strategic resources (data, leadership, education, publications, models, staff time, funds, etc.) for the region's economic and community vitality
- To provide for an annual Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for use by community officials, businesses and organizations
- To discuss and create macro-level recommendations for impact around the core elements of the CEDS
- To connect and support regional networks around topics related to economic and community vitality
- To provide oversight for financial and operational effectiveness. This is done in part through committee: Executive/Governance; Finance/Audit; Career & Educational Advisory Council

Networks Northwest prides itself on being well-connected to employers in the region. This is evidenced by robust board membership, with representation from local chambers of commerce, economic development, every in-demand industry sector, small family-owned companies, and the largest employers in the area.

In March 2023, a new strategic plan was adopted by the Networks Northwest board after a significant and robust amount of involvement from the board and staff. The following priorities, with corresponding strategies and action items, were identified:

- Communications - Update and expand approaches to convey internally and externally what Networks Northwest and Northwest Michigan Works! do and can accomplish for our communities.
- Board Engagement - Actively engage board members to address and solve challenges facing Northwest Lower Michigan, leveraging their skills, experience and connections.
- Thought Leadership - Ignite regional action through use of speakers, summits and other information-sharing that can be connected to the ongoing work of the agency and community stakeholders.
- Programming and Impact - Working with partner organizations, address critical regional needs in housing, child care, and workforce talent attraction.

Coinciding with the strategic plan, the board recognized an opportunity in the post-COVID pandemic era for new levels of flexibility and adjustment. The overall operational effectiveness was enhanced by reducing the number of voting members and change in meeting cadence, while maintaining both state and federal statutes set forth for both the Northwest Michigan Council of Governments and the Northwest Michigan Workforce Development boards that make up the Networks Northwest Regional Prosperity Board. A board Advisory Committee was also created, to allow for non-voting members to continue engaged participation and for leveraging specific and expert level experience, advocacy and advice at the board level. The revised board composition has proven to be more agile and responsive, while maintaining strong representation from both the public and private sectors. Board participation as well as

new leadership engagement has increased. Looking forward, continuing efforts to enhance board engagement are being prioritized and new, creative ways for doing so are being explored.

Effectiveness and Continuous Improvement

To ensure forward progress on the Networks Northwest Strategic Plan, the Networks Northwest Regional Prosperity board evaluates each of the four identified Strategic Priorities at every board meeting. Doing so keeps these priorities, strategies and action items squarely focused. This intentional examination ties directly into the success of the region's workforce programs for which the board oversees, and demonstrates the board's commitment to ongoing continuous improvement and effectiveness.

To ensure that each board member as well as the board as a whole is serving with the utmost quality, the following standards have been established locally

- Each new board member attends a comprehensive board orientation session
- Every board member is assigned to a committee
- Meeting agendas are designed for strategic discussion on topics that have significant impact on program design, service delivery, and community vitality
- Board meetings and committees emphasize assessment of the agency's fiscal and programmatic performance
- The board is data-driven, utilizing the following quantitative information to guide program direction and strategic decision-making: performance outcomes, audits and monitoring reviews, labor market information, and numerous prosperity and economic indicators
- Recruitment of new membership targets those who express interest in being active and engaged
- Annual planning includes purposeful engagement of the board with legislators and other significant groups of influence
- Board members review and share best practices with agency staff
- Professional development for board members is available through attendance at conferences and economic/education summits

- The agency ensures participation of board members in presenting the annual report to groups and communities they represent

Standards of effectiveness and continuous improvement criteria for assessing the American Job Centers will be developed.

Allocating Infrastructure Funds

Infrastructure Funding Agreements (IFA) guide the process for funds received from partners related to infrastructure. Funds received from partners as part of this process are collected based on actual costs, which are calculated at least quarterly over a program year. As such, IFA funds received are not allocated; rather they are reimbursements for actual infrastructure costs already incurred.

One-Stop Partner Contributions

One-Stop Partners contribute funds related to infrastructure as outlined above. Other contributions from partners include arrangements for which Northwest Michigan Works! and the Partner share costs associated with a single staff person. In cases like this, Northwest Michigan Works! is the employer of record, incurring those costs associated with the employment and work completed by the shared position. According to formal agreement between the two agencies, the partner agency contributes a designated portion of costs associated with the position. Employees working under these arrangements represent the highest levels of collaboration and partnership found throughout our region by ensuring local workforce development needs and innovations in talent development are evolving to meet the ever changing needs of our communities.

Partners frequently take opportunities to contribute funds, food, or other resources to support local events led by Northwest Michigan Works!, for example MiCareerQuest and local hiring events.

Individual Training Accounts

Training services are available to eligible participants in need of additional skills to achieve long-term, sustainable employment via Individual Training Accounts (ITAs). Career Advisors work with customers to assess skill sets, identify training needs, and plan for appropriate training services. The customer is tasked with conducting research to ensure commitment and suitability. In addition, the career advisor counsels the participant on training choices, and facilitates access to the Michigan Training Connect (MiTC) list of approved training vendors and programs. The customer is able to freely select from approved training programs, ensuring fully informed customer choice. Training providers with programs that have been identified by the customer, but are not on the eligible training provider list are encouraged to become an approved training program.

Upon selection of a training program, the participant meets with a Career Advisor, who helps ensure the participant is connected with the training institution, enrolls in the training program, and is ready to complete planned training services. The participant signs an Occupational Training Agreement (OTA), which identifies the training provider, program, training start and end dates, approximate cost by class or program, and support services necessary to participate. This agreement then generates vouchers to fund the planned training, either in part or in whole.

All training services are provided via ITAs. No contracts for training services are utilized at this time.

ITAs are limited to training programs and providers that have demonstrated effective outcomes, including their ability to offer training programs that can result in an industry-recognized credential and employment in in-demand occupations and industries. The Northwest Michigan Works! Agency approves or denies approval for training providers and programs according to a standardized and objective process in order for training providers/programs to be deemed an Eligible Training Provider (ETP), resulting in their training program to be posted publicly on the MiTC. Only training providers/programs deemed eligible may receive the WIOA Title I training funds to train participants. The local policy (see Appendix G) outlines the approval and denial

of approval criteria and the corresponding methodologies and procedures used to approve or deny approval of training provider applications to the MiTC.

Public Comment

This plan has been published for public comment and review on the agency's website. Members of the local board and members of the public, including representatives of business and labor organizations, may review the plan by downloading it from www.networksnorthwest.org/localplans or by verbal request by contacting the Networks Northwest office at 231-929-5000. Comments may be submitted to Networks Northwest via the comment form on the website, or through the phone number above.

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the plan will be made available in alternate formats, such as large print or audiotape, in response to special requests. All Networks Northwest board meetings are open to the public, comply with the physical requirements of the ADA, and welcome public comment.

Outreach for the purpose of reviewing the plan may be conducted in the following ways:

- Direct email to partner organizations, informing them of the opportunity to comment and encouraging their review and feedback
- Legal notices in local newspapers
- Notice in the Networks Northwest email newsletter
- Request for feedback via social media

Comments received will be responded to individually. Modifications may be made to the plan if comments are determined to be significant enough to warrant plan adjustments. Comments and responses will be attached to the plan in the final version and submitted to the State of Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity.

Technology Integration

Several of the WIOA programs, as well as partner programs, are integrated via the One-Stop Management Information System (OSMIS). This is one tool which staff use to record and track fundamental case management tasks and service delivery across programs such as WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth; Employment Services; Welfare Reform; Food Assistance Employment and Training; and Trade Act.

The Northwest Michigan Works! system uses a career assessment tool called Kuder Journey. This tool is available to all programs in the system, including all core programs and potentially partner programs. Kuder Journey, a web-based application, directs customers to take a series of three brief assessments that assess an individual's career interests, aptitudes, and work values. Responses for all three assessments are combined and analyzed by the Kuder Journey system, and provides customers with suggestions regarding careers and career pathways that appear to be a good fit to their unique person. Results are stored in the customer's online profile, which remains available to the customer as long as they wish to access it. The Case Manager works with the customer to review the results and facilitates exploration in the various occupations and fields of interest. The tool also provides integrated labor market information and information regarding credentialing, training providers, and other information for the various occupations. The Kuder Journey suggests additional steps to be completed to obtain employment in each occupation of interest. The Career Advisor uses Kuder Journey results to assist in the development of the ISS/IEP. Multiple case managers have access to Kuder Journey results for common customers, increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of the Kuder Journey as an assessment tool.

Northwest Michigan Works! uses Salesforce as a case management tool for Business Services teams, and is the location where each individual Business Services Representative records services provided to employer customers. Capturing services provided to customers in Salesforce allows us to share information with local economic development organizations and the Michigan Economic Development Corporation. We track multiple aspects of our services,

including recruitment, job postings, job fills, and hiring events; training services; retention visits; and referrals made to partner organizations.

We look forward to the technology changes planned for the OSMIS by the State of Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity in collaboration with local Michigan Works! agencies.

Priority of Service

Occasionally funds to provide training services to WIOA Adult participants reach levels that are limited. In such circumstances, funding requests for participants in training are subject to Priority of Service criteria outlined in the Local Policy for Priority of Service.

Priority of service is applied when the funding needs for eligible participants who are seeking training exceeds the availability of funding for training.

Veterans and eligible spouses are given the highest priority, providing they meet eligibility criteria and are deemed suitable for training, as is consistent with the Job for Veterans Act of 2002.

The Local Policy for Priority of Service is attached to this plan as Appendix H.

Coordination of Rapid Response Activities

Coordination of local Rapid Response Services follows, at minimum, guidelines outlined by the State of Michigan's Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity, and includes multiple partners throughout the region. a Local Policy and education of all parties involved. Career Advisors and the Business Services team have received training and have access to guidelines outlined in the Local Rapid Response Local Policy, Appendix I; They, in addition to community partners who may also have a role to play in the implementation of Rapid Response activities, are prepared to mobilize, collaborate, and communicate with all parties involved to ensure the affected employees are provided the appropriate services. Northwest Michigan Works!

coordinates with all applicable local partners to provide wrap around services for the affected employer and employees.

Rapid Response

Rapid Response activities are fulfilled through the Business Services team of Northwest Michigan Works! Business Services Representatives are assigned to specific county territories to provide employer customers easy access to the full range of services available through the Northwest Michigan Works! system. Serving as the MWA representative on the Rapid Response Team, the Business Services Representative works closely with the State of Michigan's Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity's Rapid Response section, to provide the assistance necessary to ensure that workers transition to new employment as quickly as possible.

The Business Services Representative's maintain ongoing contact with the Rapid Response Section Workforce Consultant. Often being the first to hear of a pending closure or layoff, they have made it a practice to notify the Workforce Consultant immediately upon learning of any forthcoming worker dislocation in their assigned territory, whether or not a Worker Adjustment Retraining Notification (WARN) notice is required.

The close relationships already established between Michigan Works! Business Services Representatives and local employers often pave the way to successful initial Rapid Response meetings and subsequent worker orientation meetings. When a local employer is facing layoffs or closure, trust is a critical factor because of the often confidential information that is revealed at the initial meeting. Business Services Representatives, along with the RRS Workforce Consultant, inform the employer and union representative(s) of the array of services available to dislocated workers including Layoff Aversion IWT, State Adjustment Grants (SAGs), and National Dislocated Worker Grants (NDWGs). State Adjustment Committees will be established when appropriate.

The individual responsible for Joint Adjustment Committees (JACs), State Adjustment Grants (SAGs), and National Dislocated Worker Grants (NDWGs) is:

Lisa Schut, Regional Director of Policy & Resource Management
PO Box 506
Traverse City, MI 49685-0506
lisa.schut@networksnorthwest.org
(231) 357-1302

In the past we have used funds from various National Dislocated Worker Grants (NDWG) for training options for the Long-term Unemployed and for affected workers of mass layoffs. These programs have been successful in our region, providing incentives to employers, additional training options, support services, and connection to permanent jobs to those who are eligible for services. National Dislocated Worker Grants will be pursued as appropriate and available.

The local Rapid Response policy is attached as Appendix I.

Alignment with Statewide Workforce Plan

The Northwest Region's Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act Regional and Local Plans have many initiatives that directly support Michigan's Statewide Workforce Plan. This includes alignment with the Statewide Workforce Plans' three pillars and with the state's priority sectors.

Local Workforce Board Involvement

The Networks Northwest board formed the Workforce Plan Ad Hoc Committee to work on aligning the WIOA Regional and Local plans with the Michigan Statewide Workforce plan. The committee was charged with prioritizing strategies to support our region and to eliminate duplicate efforts to reach regional goals. Committee members come from different areas of the Northwest Region and represent different industry sectors.

Priority Sector Alignment

The Northwest Region has six in-demand industry sector initiatives that are listed below. Sectors in bold align with the state's priority sectors.

- Agriculture
- Energy, construction and transportation
- Healthcare
- Hospitality
- Information & Business Services
- Education and Public Service

While Business Services, Education and Public Services are not state priority sectors, they illustrate the flexibility of region and localities to tailor initiatives specific for their local workforce needs.

Pillar Alignment

Pillar 1: Help more Michiganders earn a skills certificate or degree

Northwest Michigan Works! Has several initiatives that contribute to this pillar.

Career pathways, apprenticeship opportunities, adult education, and the Career and Educational Advisor Council (CEAC) increase the number of Michiganders with degrees and certificates. Career pathways, adult education, and employer engagement also lead to expanded pathways for lifelong learning and career success. Additionally, career pathways, apprenticeships, and employer engagement can reskill Michigan citizens for industry transitions.

Pillar 2: Increase access to opportunities that grow the middle class

Several Northwest Michigan Works! initiatives expand career exposure, exploration, experience and navigation. These include career pathways, the CEAC, youth programs, MiCareerQuest, and increasing awareness for in-demand occupations through advising and our Hot Jobs report. To address barriers to employment for underrepresented groups, Northwest Michigan Works! has youth programs, follows a Priority of Service Local Policy, offers supportive services, employment services, and actively engages with WIOA required partners like Michigan Rehabilitative Services.

Northwest Michigan Works! assists eligible customers with transportation barriers through supportive services and through our community resource network. Our networks also enable us to expand access to affordable, reliable child and elder care.

Pillar 3: Support business & entrepreneurial growth through Talent Solutions

Northwest Michigan Works! supports making Michigan the “Go-To State” for business growth through dynamic and responsive business solutions. Additionally, the agency supports Michigan’s small business and entrepreneurial ecosystem. Northwest Michigan Works! Accomplishes this as our Business Services Team actively engages with employers in our region. Initiatives that support economic development include the Collaborative Development Council, business retention visits by our business services team, the Regional Prosperity Board, and the development of a comprehensive Economic Development Strategy.

Reference Appendix J for a graphic representation of alignment between the Northwest Region's Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act Regional and Local Plans and Michigan's Statewide Workforce Plan.

Endnotes

1 Michigan Center for Data and Analytics), 2024 Annual Planning Information and Workforce Analysis Reports

2 Department of Technology, Management and Budget (DTMB), US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2018

3 The Employment Situation, June 2020, US Bureau of Labor Statistics,
<https://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/empsit.pdf>

4 Department of Technology, Management and Budget (DTMB), US Bureau of Labor Statistics, Michigan Regional Long-Term Employment Projections 2020-2030

5 The Energy Industry combines a variety of industry NAICS codes, including Oil and Gas Extraction (21-1000), Utilities (22-1000) and Electrical Equipment and Appliances (33-5000).

[Appendix A: Hot Jobs Report](#)

HOT JOBS REPORT



MANUFACTURING

Education Level	Occupation	Entry Level Wage	Reported Wage
High School Diploma	Inventory	\$17,877	\$17,877
	Heavy Machine Operator/Industrial Electrician	\$18,823	\$23,454
	CO2 Machine Operator/Industrial Electrician	\$18,823	\$23,457
	Plating/Plating Machine Operator	\$17,820	\$19,253
	Welding/Welding Skills Representative	\$17,820	\$21,253
Technical Certificate or Associate Degree	Injection Molding Operator	\$18,214	\$19,253
	Medical Equipment Technicians/Industrial Electrician	\$18,214	\$19,253
	Welder (Including Specialist)	\$18,217	\$23,457
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	Engineering (Mechanical, Civil), Process Design, Manufacturing, Mechanical Electrical, Instrumentation Specialist	\$23,263	\$24,453



AGRICULTURE

Education Level	Occupation	Entry Level Wage	Reported Wage
High School Diploma	Farm Laborer, Heavy/Overhead Machine	\$16,317	\$17,253
	Agricultural Equipment Operator	\$17,314	\$19,253
	Cash/Heavy Machine	\$17,314	\$19,253
	Food/Storage/Operations	\$18,310	\$21,253
Technical Certificate or Associate Degree	Tractor, Tractor/Tractor Operator	\$18,310	\$21,253
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	Construction Business/Finance	\$23,300	\$27,253



BASIC TRANSPORTATION & CONSTRUCTION

Education Level	Occupation	Entry Level Wage	Reported Wage
High School Diploma	Light Truck Delivery Service Driver	\$16,323	\$19,253
	Body Repair Technicians	\$17,323	\$19,253
	Heavy Equipment Operator	\$17,323	\$19,253
	Truck/Tractor Operator	\$17,323	\$19,253
	Construction Laborer	\$16,323	\$19,253
	Public Safety Bus Driver	\$16,323	\$19,253
	Operator	\$16,323	\$19,253
	Construction/Maintenance Worker	\$17,323	\$19,253
	Painter, Plumber, Electrician	\$16,323	\$19,253
	Heavy Equipment/Tractor Operator	\$16,323	\$19,253
	General Maintenance/Repair Worker	\$17,323	\$19,253
	Industrial Process/Line Control Operator	\$16,323	\$19,253
	Heavy/Tractor/Tractor Driver (Including some operators)	\$16,323	\$19,253
	Automotive Service Technicians	\$16,323	\$19,253
	HR/IT Technicians/Analyst	\$16,323	\$19,253
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	Driver and Regional Planning Managers	\$23,320	\$24,253



HEALTH CARE

Education Level	Occupation	Entry Level Wage	Reported Wage
High School Diploma	Home Health Personal Care Aide	\$16,314	\$19,253
	Medical Receptionist/Receptionist	\$16,314	\$19,253
	Pharmacy Technician	\$17,323	\$23,253
Technical Certificate or Associate Degree	Emergency Medical Technicians (EMT) & Paramedics	\$18,320	\$23,253
	Dental Hygienist	\$23,314	\$24,253
	Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA)	\$16,314	\$19,253
	Medical/Clinical Assistant	\$16,314	\$21,253
	Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) & Licensed Vocational Nurse	\$21,323	\$22,253
	Physical Therapist Assistant	\$21,323	\$23,253
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	Podiatry Technicians/Technologists	\$24,320	\$25,253
	Registered Nurse (RN)	\$24,314	\$24,253
	Medical Assistant/Service Manager	\$23,323	\$24,253
	Physical Therapist	\$23,314	\$24,253
	Health Practitioner & Physiotherapist	\$24,320	\$25,253
	Clinical Laboratory Technicians/Technologists	\$24,320	\$25,253
	Advanced Care/Medical/Mental Health Counselor	\$23,323	\$24,253
Physician & Surgeon	\$23,320	\$35,253	



HOSPITALITY

Education Level	Occupation	Entry Level Wage	Reported Wage
High School Diploma	Fast Food & Counter Service Worker	\$14,314	\$14,253
	Server, Bartender, Host, Waitress	\$14,320	\$14,253
	Cashier/Point of Sale	\$14,320	\$14,253
	Baker	\$14,314	\$14,253
	Butcher & Meat Cutter	\$14,314	\$14,253
	Hotel/Reservations	\$14,314	\$14,253
	Hotel/Reservations Desk Clerk	\$14,317	\$14,253
	Baker & Cake Decorator	\$14,317	\$14,253
	Housekeeping/Cleaning Worker	\$14,317	\$14,253
	Landscaping/Construction Worker	\$15,320	\$15,253
	Barista/Cafe, Starbucks, Service Worker	\$14,314	\$14,253
	Restaurant Worker	\$14,314	\$14,253
Technical Certificate or Associate Degree	Supervisor of Food Prep/Plating Staff	\$15,320	\$15,253
	Cooking/Prep, Bakery, Restaurant	\$15,320	\$15,253
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	Hotel/Reservations Manager	\$24,320	\$24,253
	Chef/Cook, Restaurant, Release Service	\$14,320	\$19,253



INFORMATION & BUSINESS

Education Level	Occupation	Entry Level Wage	Reported Wage
High School Diploma	Administrative Services, Receptionist, Clerk (Cash, Receipt, General)	\$15,320	\$15,253
	Customer Service Representative	\$15,320	\$15,253
	Sales Representative	\$15,327	\$15,253
	Bookkeeper, Accounting Clerk, Billing & Pricing Clerk	\$14,320	\$15,253
Technical Certificate or Associate Degree	Supervisor of Distribution, Release/Operator	\$24,320	\$24,253
	Computer User Support Specialist	\$14,320	\$15,253
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	Marketing/Sales Representative	\$24,320	\$24,253
	Accountant/Bookkeeper	\$23,323	\$23,253
	Human Resource Specialist	\$23,323	\$24,253
	Software Developer & Programmer	\$24,320	\$24,253
	Web Developer/Digital Content Designer	\$24,320	\$24,253
	Operations/Quality Manager	\$24,320	\$24,253
	Market Research Analyst & Marketing Specialist	\$23,323	\$24,253
	Financial Analyst/Advisor	\$23,320	\$24,253
Information Technology/Information Worker	\$23,327	\$23,253	



EDUCATION & PUBLIC SERVICE

Education Level	Occupation	Entry Level Wage	Reported Wage
High School Diploma	Childcare Provider/Assistant	\$14,327	\$17,253
	Social Services/Service Specialist	\$14,327	\$17,253
	Security Guard/Inspector	\$14,327	\$17,253
	Public Safety Telecommunicator	\$14,327	\$17,253
	Correctional Officer/Officer	\$14,327	\$17,253
Technical Certificate or Associate Degree	Teacher Assistant	\$14,327	\$17,253
	Paralegal	\$23,320	\$24,253
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	Social Worker, Including Healthcare	\$23,320	\$24,253
	Teaching Assistant (Elementary, Secondary, Postsecondary), Including Special Services	\$21,320	\$24,253
	School Counselor	\$21,327	\$24,253
	Teacher	\$24,327	\$24,253

1. See MW2021 for more data with the latest number of respondents.

Appendix B: Local Policy - Supportive Services



LOCAL POLICY

Supportive Services

Effective Date: 2/21/2025

Expiration Date: Ongoing

Summary

This policy provides guidance on the provision of supportive services for eligible program participants. Supportive services may be made available to participants in need of additional assistance to secure and/or retain employment, participate in a training program, and/or overcome barriers to full participation in allowable activities.

Policy

General

Supportive services are not entitlement payments. They are provided at the discretion of Staff. Staff must use the policy provisions herein and applicable local, state, and federal regulations.

Supportive services are provided based on individual circumstances. A payment made on behalf of one customer may not necessarily be made on behalf of another.

The Northwest Michigan Works! Director has discretion to alter the availability of supportive services. This can occur any time during the program year based on funding levels and other priorities.

In addition to this Policy's requirements, Staff must follow all rules and guidelines established by the funding source used to pay for a supportive service.

Staff must seek the lowest cost option available when submitting supportive service requests.

Eligibility

Customers who receive a supportive service must be eligible for the program that funds the supportive service. Only programs that allow for supportive services can be used when funding supportive services.

Only customers who have a verified need for a supportive service may receive a supportive service. Staff are responsible for verifying the customer's need for supportive services. Determination of need should be based on whether the supportive service will assist in removing barriers to employment and/or training, or fully participating in the program.

Allowable Supportive Services

Northwest Michigan Works! does not maintain a comprehensive list of allowable supportive services. This is because customer needs and barriers vary widely, making it impossible to capture every possible solution. Supportive services and funding sources frequently change, and a static list quickly becomes outdated or inaccurate. Instead, Staff assess each customer's situation and connect them with the most relevant and up-to-date resources available. This flexible, case-by-case approach ensures customers receive the best possible support tailored to their unique circumstances.

Allowable supportive services must support an customer's ability to:

1. Fully participate in a workforce development program; or
2. Enter or complete a training program for an in-demand occupation; or
3. Obtain or retain a job.

Each Northwest Michigan Works! Service Center maintains a secure supply of cash equivalents. Examples of cash equivalents include bus passes, gas cards, or gift cards. Staff will follow established procedures for accessing, distributing, and documenting the provision of cash equivalents to a customer.

If a supportive service cannot be provided through cash equivalents, Staff may request supportive services through the agency's established process.

Supportive services may only be provided for while a customer is eligible to receive them.

Transportation assistance may be provided to Young Professionals Program participants through a per diem of \$50/week.

Vendors

The Purchasing and Records Clerk (PRC) will establish vendor relationships in each community throughout the region. Vendors are selected based on their ability to provide the goods or services most commonly needed by program participants.

In establishing vendor relationships, efforts will be made to distribute expenditures of supportive services funds throughout a community. The PRC will assure that costs are reasonable in relation to the goods or services being provided. Vendors will be treated courteously and paid promptly.

The Purchasing and Records Clerk conducts all procurement activities related to supportive services.

Process

Staff will follow established and standardized procedures when requesting supportive services for an eligible customer.

Staff will follow program-specific guidelines for providing and documenting the provision of supportive services to customers.

Programs that use OSMIS as the case management system to document and record services must enter supportive services into the appropriate fields in the participant's OSMIS record and in the case notes. Case notes should be as specific as possible. They must include:

- Type of supportive service provided
- Date provided

- Amount of supportive service provided
- Gas card or bus pass number (if applicable)
- Reason the supportive service was provided
- Other appropriate and relevant details

Prohibited

Fines, fees, and late fees are not allowable supportive services.

Tuition and related fees are not considered to be supportive services.

It is not allowable to use supportive service dollars, including the use of cash equivalents, to neither purchase marijuana in any form on behalf of a customer nor assist a customer in the acquisition or consumption of marijuana in any form. Nor is it allowable to assist with certification, credentialing, or any other supportive service that supports, directly or indirectly, training, employment, job search, job placement, or any other activity related to employment or re-employment for training or career goals that support occupations or fields of study specific to the marijuana industry, including occupations that support, directly or indirectly, research, production/processing, sales, transport, purchase of goods and services tied to marijuana, or any other marijuana-related activity as a component of the training program. There are no exceptions to this prohibition.

Exceptions

Exceptions to this Local Policy may be made at the discretion of the Regional Director of Policy and Resource Management or the Northwest Michigan Works! Director. All exceptions will be documented appropriately in the participant file.

References

None

Revision History

Original Publish Date: 2/21/2025

[Appendix C: Local Policy - Individual Training Accounts](#)

Appendix D-1: 14 Youth Elements

[Appendix D-2: Local Policy - Basic Skills Deficient](#)



LOCAL POLICY #6010

Basic Skills Deficient

Effective Date: 3/18/2026

Expiration Date: Ongoing

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to define Basic Skills Deficient (BSD) for participants served through Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) programs and to establish the criteria used by Northwest Michigan Works! to determine and document BSD.

Identification of Basic Skills Deficiency supports the following:

- eligibility determination for WIOA Youth participants,
- identification of barriers to employment for WIOA Adult and Dislocated Worker participants,
- determination of priority populations for WIOA Adult services, and
- development of appropriate service strategies for participants.

Background

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) identifies Basic Skills Deficiency as a barrier to employment.

For WIOA Youth, Basic Skills Deficiency may be used as one of the barriers to employment required to determine program eligibility.

For WIOA Adult and Dislocated Worker participants, Basic Skills Deficiency may be identified as a barrier to employment and may support service planning and priority of service determinations.

Under WIOA, Basic Skills Deficient is defined as:

- An individual who has English reading, writing, or computing skills at or below the 8th grade level, or
- An individual who is unable to compute or solve problems, or read, write, or speak English at a level necessary to function effectively on the job, in the individual's family, or in society.

Local Workforce Development Boards are required to establish criteria for determining when an individual meets the second definition above.

This policy establishes the Northwest Michigan Works! [criteria](#) for identifying Basic Skills Deficient participants.

Policy

Programs Affected

This policy applies to participants served under the following programs:

- WIOA Adult
- WIOA Dislocated Worker
- WIOA In-School Youth
- WIOA Out-of-School Youth

Basic Skills Deficiency may be used in the following ways:

Program	Use of BSD
WIOA Youth	Barrier to employment that may be used to determine eligibility
WIOA Adult	Barrier to employment and Priority of Service category
WIOA Dislocated Worker	Barrier to employment

Identification of BSD may inform service strategies including referrals to Adult Education, basic skills instruction, digital literacy training, or other skill development services.

Determining Basic Skills Deficient [Through Assessment](#)

A participant is considered Basic Skills Deficient through assessment when standardized academic assessment results indicate:

- Reading, writing, or math skills at or below the 8th grade level (8.9), or
- Educational Functioning Level NRS Level 1–4.

Academic assessments used to determine Basic Skills Deficiency must align with the Northwest Michigan Works! [Assessment Local Policy and Procedure](#).

Functional Basic Skills Deficiency

Functional Basic Skills Deficiency should be assessed as part of the assessment process for all WIOA Adult participants.

A participant may be determined to be functionally Basic Skills Deficient when they demonstrate difficulty functioning effectively in employment, education, or daily activities due to limited academic or language skills.

Indicators may include, but are not limited to:

- Learning English as a Second Language (ESL)
- Enrollment in remedial or developmental coursework
- Lack of a high school diploma or recognized equivalent
- Participation in secondary education with a grade point average below 2.0
- Graduation with a certificate of completion rather than a high school diploma
- Participation in special education services or possession of an Individualized Education Plan (IEP)
- Documented social, mental, or physical impairments that impact learning
- Limited computer or digital literacy skills needed to search for employment, complete applications, or perform basic workplace tasks
- Difficulty completing job applications, employment forms, or workplace instructions
- Difficulty reading workplace safety instructions, schedules, or training materials
- Lack of basic workplace readiness or pre-vocational skills

Functional BSD determinations must be supported through documented case manager observations, participant statements, or supporting documentation when available.

Documentation Requirements

Basic Skills Deficiency must be supported by documentation in the participant file.

Acceptable documentation may include:

- Academic assessment results
- Educational records or transcripts
- Documentation from education or training providers
- Case notes describing barriers related to reading, writing, mathematics, English language proficiency, or digital literacy
- Participant self-attestation, when supported by case manager observations

Documentation must be sufficient to support the BSD determination during monitoring, data validation, or program review.

Youth Assessment and Post-Testing

WIOA Youth participants must receive an objective assessment as part of eligibility determination and service planning.

Youth participants identified as Basic Skills Deficient and who remain enrolled in services must be reassessed at least once during each program year of participation in the WIOA Youth program to measure academic progress.

Assessment procedures and post-testing practices are outlined in the Northwest Michigan Works! [Assessment Local Policy and Procedure](#).

Exceptions

Exceptions to this policy may be granted by the Regional Director of Policy and Resource Management or the Northwest Michigan Works! [Director on a case-by-case basis](#).

Requests for exceptions must be submitted in writing and must include justification for the request. Approved exceptions must be documented in the participant file.

References

1. State of Michigan, Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity, Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Manual, dated March 11, 2021 and future publications
2. Local Policy #6009: Assessments
3. Local Procedure #9031: Assessment Data Entry in OSMIS

Revision History

Original Publish Date: 3/18/2026

Appendix D-3: Local Policy - Youth Requires Additional Assistance

Appendix E: Adult Education Memorandum of Understanding

**MICHIGAN WORKS! SYSTEM
MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING
BETWEEN**

Northwest Michigan Works!

AND

Networks Northwest

THE

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD

Part I

General Information

This Memorandum of Understanding (hereinafter referred to as the MOU) establishes the terms and conditions between Northwest Michigan Works! (hereinafter referred to as partner) and Networks Northwest, the local Workforce Development Board (hereinafter referred to as the WDB) for the Northwest Michigan Works! Agency. This MOU is entered into for the purpose of delineating the respective roles and responsibilities of Northwest Michigan Works! as a One-Stop partner, in compliance with the provisions of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity

Act (WIOA) of 2014, Section 121(c)(2). By signing this MOU, the parties agree to abide by the terms, conditions, goals, and principles set forth herein.

This MOU is designed to ensure the efficient and effective coordination and delivery of services in the Northwest Michigan Works! service delivery area in order to prevent duplication and maximize available resources. In addition, this MOU establishes joint processes and procedures that will enable all parties to more fully integrate the current service delivery system, resulting in a more seamless and comprehensive array of education, human service, job training, and other workforce services.

Part II

Service Provision and Coordination

Northwest Michigan Works! agrees to the following:

- Provide employment and training services to participants as allowed by its applicable laws and funding levels;
- Maintain communication and coordinate with AJC Partner Programs operating within the Northwest Michigan region for the purpose of serving mutual customers and keeping each other informed about programs and services available;
- Maintain a physical presence at each comprehensive American Job Center. The WIOA mandates all required partners, including The Partner named in this MOU, to maintain a physical presence at each comprehensive American Job Center in the Northwest Michigan Region. The Partner agrees to work with the WDB to identify which of the type(s) of physical presence is/are best suited to providing the types and high quality of services to meet the needs of mutual customers. These options include having a Partner program staff member physically present at the American Job Center, having a staff member from a different partner program physically present at the American Job Center and appropriately trained to provide information to customers about the programs, services, and activities available through Partner programs, or making available a direct linkage through technology to a Partner program staff member who can provide meaningful information or services. While not required, the Partner is encouraged to

coordinate with the WDB to establish and/or maintain a similar presence in the affiliate American Job Centers.

- Refer customers to AJC Partner Programs operating within the Northwest Michigan region as appropriate and according to Referral Strategies as outlined in Part IV of this MOU.
- Provide employment and training services to participants as allowed by its applicable laws, funding levels and as outlined in the Northwest Michigan Works! *Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act Regional and Local Plan*, which can be found on the Networks Northwest website (www.networksnorthwest.org). Services to be provided include but are not limited to:
 - Offer employment resources for job seekers, with the help of the Pure Michigan Talent Connect (the statewide Internet-based labor exchange system), as well as a wide variety of programs and services to help job seekers of all skill levels and backgrounds obtain employment and/or training;
 - Provide services to employers, including but not limited to customized recruitment, training solutions, and connections to other business service partners and incentive or employment support programs;
 - Determine eligibility for appropriate programs;
 - Conduct rapid response activities;
 - Ensure priority of service to veterans;
 - Provide specialized activities with career counseling available, as well as training and workshops that help a job seeker develop the skills necessary to reenter the workforce or enhance employee retention;
- Maintain communication and coordinate with AJC Partner Programs operating within the Northwest Michigan region for the purpose of serving mutual customers and keeping each other informed about programs and services available;
- Coordinate with AJC Partner Programs operating within the Northwest Michigan region regarding strategies for customers of AJC Partner Programs operating within the Northwest Michigan region to access to services provided at the Northwest Michigan Works! Agency;
- When possible, explore, develop and implement methods and strategies to coordinate and reduce duplication of effort related to intake, assessment and other service provisions and program requirements common to AJC Partner Programs operating within the Northwest Michigan region;
- Self-evaluate the types and methods of services provided by the Northwest Michigan Works! Agency in an effort to continuously improve customer service and the quality of service;
- As appropriate, develop and cross-train Northwest Michigan Works! Agency staff to act as a method of accessing services that are provided by AJC Partner Programs operating within the Northwest Michigan region;
- Commit to provide exceptional customer service to American Job Center Network customers.

The WDB agrees to the following:

- Monitor program(s) offered and services provided and offered in an effort to continuously improve customer service and the quality of service and increase internal process quality and efficiency;
- Provide administrative support for the Northwest Michigan Works! Agency employees, including but not limited to offering opportunities for professional development; providing and coordinating program-related direction and guidance; providing the administration of various human resource functions including but not limited to hiring employees, payroll, coordination of health insurance and other fringe benefits; evaluating employee performance; and acting as the liaison between the Northwest Michigan Works! Agency

and the entities that provide policy and guidance for programs administered by the Northwest Michigan Works! Agency.

Part III One-Stop Operating Budget

Infrastructure costs of a One-Stop are defined as non-personnel costs that are necessary for the general operation of the One-Stop center, including but not limited to facility costs, utilities and maintenance, equipment (including assessment related and assistive technology for individuals with disabilities); and, technology to facilitate access to the One-Stop center, including technology used for the center's planning and outreach activities (WIOA Section 121(h)(4)). Each required WIOA Partner that carries out a program or activities in a local One-Stop must use a portion of the funds available for the program and activities to maintain the One-Stop delivery system, including payment of the infrastructure costs of One-Stop centers (WIOA Section 121 and the WIOA Final Regulations at 678.500 through 678.510).

Required partners must contribute toward infrastructure costs based on their proportionate use of the One-Stop delivery centers and relative benefits received. At a minimum, Infrastructure Funding Agreements (IFAs) must be developed and entered into with required WIOA Partners that are either co-located within one of the Northwest Michigan Works! Agency Service Centers, or linked by technology. Failure of a required WIOA Partner to come to consensus regarding the terms of the IFA would trigger the State Funding Mechanism (SFM). Required WIOA Partners would be subject to the SFM if it is triggered.

The Partner is subject to the IFA and is therefore required to participate in the One-Stop Operating Budget, which will be negotiated separately from this MOU.

Part IV Referral Strategies

Northwest Michigan Works! agrees to the following:

- Accept referrals of appropriate customers from AJC Partner Programs operating within the Northwest Michigan region for eligibility determination and provision of services, as applicable;
- Refer customers to AJC Partner Programs operating within the Northwest Michigan region, as appropriate;
- Become familiar with the basic eligibility and participation requirements, as well as with the available services and benefits offered for the AJC Partner program(s) offered in the Northwest Michigan Works! Agency's region;
- Maintain positive and effective working relationships with the various AJC Partner management and staff who are operating within the Northwest Michigan region;
- Work collaboratively with American Job Center Partners to best serve mutual customers.

The WDB agrees to the following:

- Evaluate ways to improve the referral process, possibly through innovation, as appropriate;
- As appropriate, follow up on the results of referrals in an effort to assure that the resources for each party are leveraged at an optimal level.

Part V Inclusion Strategies

Both parties agree that accessibility to the services provided in the American Job Centers and by all Partner agencies is essential to meeting the requirements (according to Section 188 of the WIOA and the WIOA nondiscrimination and Equal Opportunity Regulations (29 CFT Part 38; Final Rule December 2, 2016 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)) and goals of the American Job Center Networks for the Northwest Michigan Works! Agency. Job seekers and businesses must be able to access all information relevant to them via visits to physical locations as well in virtual spaces, regardless of gender, age, race, religion, national origin, disability, veteran's status, or on the basis of any other classification protected under state or federal law.

Both parties agree that they will not discriminate in their employment practices or services on the basis of gender, gender identity and/or expression, age, race, religion, national origin, disability, veteran's status, or on the basis of any other classification protected under state or federal law. To that end, both parties will work toward and/or maintain policies and procedures addressing these issues, and that such policies and procedures have been or will be disseminated to their employees and otherwise posted as required by law.

Both parties agree to the following:

- Commit to training staff members to provide services to all, regardless of range of abilities, mobility, age, language, learning style, or comprehension or education level. An interpreter will be provided in real time or, if not available, within a reasonable timeframe to any customer with a language barrier;
- Provide, as required by applicable Federal, State and Local law and is allowable and reasonable, assistive devices such as screen-reading software programs; in addition, assistive listening devices will be provided to ensure physical and programmatic accessibility exists with the American Job Center.

Part VI Other Provisions

Both parties agree to the following principles and practices in an effort to develop and promote a positive relationship:

- *Collaboration.* Work collaboratively to promote, maintain and implement effective workforce development programs;
- *Coordination.* Coordinate efforts in the provision of services to minimize redundancy and duplication of services, and maximize efficient and effective delivery of services;
- *Innovation.* Explore, develop and implement innovation with the Northwest Michigan Works! Agency and other regional American Job Center Partners to enhance customer experience as it relates to coordinated service delivery for mutual customers;
- *Confidentiality.* Abide by all applicable Federal, State and Local laws and regulations regarding confidential information. In addition, in carrying out their respective responsibilities, each party shall disclose, respect and abide by confidentiality policies and legal requirements of the other party.
- *Indemnification.* The parties to this MOU recognize the partnership consists of various levels of government, not-for-profit, and for-profit entities. Each party to this agreement shall be responsible for injury to persons or damage to property resulting from negligence on the part of itself, its employees, its agents, or its officers. No party assumes any responsibility for the other party, State or non-State, for the consequences of any act or omission of any third party. The Partner acknowledges that Networks Northwest bears no responsibility and/or liability for any actions of the Partner's employees, agents, and/or assignees. Likewise, Networks Northwest acknowledges that the Partner has no responsibility and/or liability for any actions of Networks Northwest.

- *Severability*. If any part of this MOU is found to be null and void or is otherwise stricken, the rest of this MOU shall remain in force.

Part VII Duration of Agreement

In accordance with the provisions of the WIOA of 2014, this MOU is effective this 1st day of July, 2023 by and between Networks Northwest and Northwest Michigan Works!, as system partners. This MOU shall remain in effect until June 30, 2026 or unless otherwise terminated by mutual agreement of all signing parties, under the following condition:

Any party may withdraw from this MOU by giving written notice of intent to withdraw at least 30 calendar days in advance of the effective date of the withdrawal. Notice of withdrawal shall be given to all parties covered by this agreement. Should any partner withdraw, this MOU shall remain in effect in its entirety with respect to the remaining parties until the expiration date of this agreement, or a new MOU is executed, whichever occurs first.

All signing parties assure that this MOU will be reviewed and renewed at least once every three years, or when substantial changes occur.

Part VIII Procedure for Amendment or Assignment

This MOU may be modified at any time by written agreement of the parties. Such amendments will require the signature of all parties affected by such amendment. Assignment of responsibilities under this MOU by any of the parties shall be effective upon written notice to the other parties. Any assignee shall also commit in writing to the terms of this MOU.

**Part IX
Certification**

The undersigned hereby agree to abide by all terms and conditions outlined in this agreement, or in any amended version of this agreement, for the duration of this agreement.

Approval on behalf of Partner: Northwest Michigan Works!

Terry Vandercook, Director



Signature of Partner

April 17, 2023

Date

Approval on behalf of the WDB: Networks Northwest

Nicole Sulak



Signature of WDB Board Chair

April 24, 2023

Date

Approval on behalf of Chief Elected Official: Networks Northwest

Chris Christensen



Signature of Chief Elected Official

April 21, 2023

Date

**MICHIGAN WORKS! SYSTEM
MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING
BETWEEN
Northwest Michigan Works!
AND
Networks Northwest the Workforce Development Board**

Modification Number: 1

Summary of Memorandum of Understanding: This Memorandum of Understanding (hereinafter referred to as the MOU) establishes the terms and conditions between Northwest Michigan Works! (hereinafter referred to as partner) and Networks Northwest, the local Workforce Development Board (hereinafter referred to as the WDB) for the Northwest Michigan Works! Agency. This MOU is entered into for the purpose of delineating the respective roles and responsibilities of Northwest Michigan Works! as a One-Stop partner, in compliance with the provisions of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2014, Section 121(c)(2).

Effective Dates: July 1, 2023 through June 30, 2026

Description of modification(s):

1. Revise the name of the signatory for Northwest Michigan Works! from Terry Vandercook to Jessica Willis.

Except for the modification listed above, all other parameters and specifications included in the original agreement remain unchanged.

Certification

The undersigned hereby agree to abide by all terms and conditions outlined in this agreement, or in any amended version of this agreement, for the duration of this agreement.

Approval on behalf of Partner: Northwest Michigan Works!



Jessica Willis, Director of Northwest Michigan Works!

05/10/2024
Date

Approval on behalf of the WDB: Networks Northwest



Nicole Sulak, WDB Chair

05/10/2024
Date

Approval on behalf of Chief Elected Official: Networks Northwest



Chris Christensen, Chief Elected Official

05/10/2024
Date

Appendix F: Local Board Mission and Vision

[Appendix G: Local Policy - Michigan Training Connect](#)

Local Policy: Michigan Training Connect (MiTC)

Date: July 1, 2021

To: Northwest Michigan Works! staff

From: Terry Vandercook, Chief Program Officer

Subject: Approving or denying approval of training provider/programs to be an Eligible Training Provider (ETP) on the eligible training provider list on the Michigan Training Connect

Programs Affected: Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act Adult; Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act Dislocated Worker; Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act Youth

Applicable State and/or Federal Guidelines: WIOA Manual dated November 8, 2019; MiTC Policy Manual

Funding Source(s): Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act

Background

The Michigan Training Connect (MiTC) serves as an important tool for participants seeking training to identify appropriate providers and relevant information such as cost and program outcomes. Using the MiTC, Case Managers can assist participants in identifying training providers offering programs leading to job placement in in-demand industries and occupations that result in positive outcomes and recognized credentials.

The Northwest Michigan Works! Agency (NMWA) approves or denies approval for training providers/programs according to a standardized and objective process in order for training providers/programs to be deemed an Eligible Training Provider (ETP), resulting in their training program to be posted publicly on the MiTC. Only training providers/programs deemed eligible may receive the WIOA Title I-B training funds to train participants.

This policy outlines the approval and denial of approval criteria and the corresponding methodologies and procedures used by the NMWA to approve or deny approval of training provider applications to the MiTC.

Policy

Section	Policy Provision
Initial Eligibility Approval Criteria	<p>For training programs that have not previously been made eligible, training providers must submit required information, including performance, in order for their programs to be considered for initial eligibility. Programs that receive initial eligibility designation receive the designation for one year.</p> <p>The following information must be provided to the NMWA in order for the initial eligibility to be evaluated:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. description of training program services to be offered; 2. training program outcomes that meet the minimum standards (listed below); <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Unsubsidized employment during the 2nd quarter after exit b. Unsubsidized employment during the 4th quarter after exit c. Median earnings d. Credential attainment <p><i>Exception: New training programs are exempt from meeting the training program outcome criteria. New training programs are defined as programs for which the first class has not yet occurred and/or the program is a new offering for the institution.</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. proof of proprietary school licensure; 4. information concerning whether or not the training provider is in partnership with business, which could include information about the quality and quantity of employer partnerships; 5. information to determine high-quality training services, including whether or not the training program leads to a recognized post-secondary credential; 6. information that addresses the alignment of the training with in-demand industry sectors and occupations, to the extent possible; 7. the ability of training providers to provide training services that are physically and programmatically accessible for individuals who are employed and for individuals with disabilities. <p>Once the NMWA approves Initial Eligibility, the program is designated as eligible to have an Individual Training Account (ITA) on the MiTC and approved to serve ITA-eligible customers across the State.</p>

<p>Continuing Eligibility Approval Criteria</p>	<p>All ETPs are subject to continued ITA eligibility procedures and minimum performance standards each year thereafter. Continued ITA eligibility is determined on an annual basis. A program's eligibility period expires July 31 of each year. The program may be removed from the MiTC if they do not renew by July 31.</p> <p>The following information must be provided to NMWA in order to evaluate continuing eligibility criteria:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. training program outcomes that meet the minimum standards that are equal to the WIOA Dislocated Worker minimum standard percentages, which include: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Unsubsidized employment during the 2nd quarter after exit b. Unsubsidized employment during the 4th quarter after exit c. Median earnings d. Credential attainment; 2. information identifying the recognized post-secondary credentials received by all training participations; 3. program cost information, including tuition and fees for the WIOA participants in the program; 4. information on the program completion rate for the WIOA participants; 5. the degree to which training programs relate to in-demand industry sectors and occupations within the state; 6. the training provider's ability to offer industry-recognized certificates and/or credentials; 7. the quality of the training program; and 8. the ability of training providers to provide training services that are physically and programmatically accessible for individuals who are employed and for individuals with disabilities. <p>Training providers/programs that fail to meet the requirements may be denied approval. The NMWA has the discretion to grant an approval according to stipulations made in this Local Policy.</p> <p>Once the NMWA approves continuing eligibility, the program is designated as eligible to have an Individual Training Account (ITA) on the MiTC and approved to serve ITA-eligible customers across the State.</p>
<p>Local Standards</p>	<p>Performance Standards</p> <p>The NMWA will follow the minimum performance standards identified by the Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity – Workforce Development (LEO-WD).</p>

	<p>Requesting Additional Information The NMWA may, at its discretion, request information in addition to that required for the standard eligibility (initial and continuing) criteria. Supplemental information may be requested of the training provider in order to verify or clarify performance levels or other standard criteria required to be reported by the training provider. Supplemental information may also be requested in order to pursue an exception that may avert a denial of eligibility or to verify the quality of the training provider/program.</p> <p>Examples of supplemental information that may be requested include but are not limited to full performance data including completion, placement/employment, and wage information.</p>
	<p>Other Training Provider/Program Characteristics As appropriate, the NMWA may also consider the following characteristics of the training provider/program throughout the approval process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the ability of a training provider to partner with employers and to provide job placement services; • drop-out rate/completion rate of the training provider/program • training provider’s compliance, or lack thereof, with federal disability and accessibility laws; • quality of the credential offered; • level of demand for related occupations within the region; • other applicable characteristics; and • the provider’s student loan default rate.
<p>Restrictions</p>	<p>Training programs that support education and training in fields of study specific to the marijuana industry, including occupations that support, directly or indirectly, research, production/processing, sales, transport, purchase of goods and services tied to marijuana, or any other marijuana-related activity as a component of the training program. There are no exceptions to this prohibition.</p>
<p>Approval Documentation</p>	<p>The NMWA will maintain files, either electronic or physical, that reflect the approval process for each training provider/program.</p>

<p>Denying Eligibility</p>	<p>It is at the discretion of the NMWA to approve or deny approval of a training provider/program. The NMWA may:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • deny approval of a training program; • approve a training program that does not meet standard eligibility requirements including failure to meet at least one performance measure; • deny a training program due to possible health and safety issues *The MWA must first notify WD in writing and request approval to remove a training provider from the MiTC; • deny training programs lacking performance documentation; and • deny training programs that provide low-quality or questionable performance data. <p>In any of the above circumstances, the final decision to approve or deny approval must be made by the Regional Director prior to the issuance of the approval or denial of approval. In addition, all circumstances will be documented and a file maintained.</p> <p>Should the NMWA deny approval of an application, the reason for the denial will be provided in writing to the training provider associated with the application.</p> <p>Training providers and programs that are denied approval for placement on the MiTC have the right to appeal the decision within 30 working days from the date of the denial by following the Grievance and Complaint Policy in effect at the time of denial of eligibility.</p> <p>Approvals will be reconsidered annually.</p>
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	<p>Failure to Meet Minimum Performance Standards A training provider/program that does not meet eligibility requirements for Initial or Continuing eligibility (whichever is applicable) may be denied approval for placement on the MiTC.</p> <p>The NMWA reserves the right to make an exception to this requirement if a training program fails to meet at least one of the minimum performance standards. In such a circumstance, the NMWA may take additional aspects of the training program into consideration, including but not limited to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. number of students who participated in the training program 2. local economic conditions 3. limited number of training providers in the region that provide training for program of study 4. students drop out due to outside influences 5. students transfer from one program to another 6. students take advantage of employment opportunities not directly related to area of study often resulting in lower wages 7. data is not available 8. limited number of students enrolled (20 or under) 9. outcomes not significantly below minimum standard performance metric 10. other circumstances presented by the training provider <p>Should the NMWA grant approval to a training provider/program failing to meet minimum performance standards, the Regional Director will be notified and supplied the rationale for such an approval.</p>
	<p>Health and Safety Issues The NMWA reserves the right to deny a Training Provider's initial or continuing Eligibility if the NMWA determines the health and safety of students and others may be at risk. This determination will be made based on sound rationale and supporting documentation, when applicable and available.</p>
	<p>Programs Lacking Performance Documentation A training program may be unable to document one or more performance measures. Examples include 1) a program with cohorts lasting more than one year and during which no one graduates and no one drops out and credential attainment cannot be calculated; or 2) all program graduates transfer to continuing education in a related field resulting in no graduates available for employment and wages are undefined.</p> <p>In such circumstances, the NMWA has the discretion to approve or deny approval of the training program and may request supplemental information in order to verify the quality of the training provider.</p>

	<p>Questionable or Low-Quality Data (Implementation of Data Collections Assistance) In the event a training provider presents data that is of questionable or low-quality, the NMWA has the discretion to approve or deny the approval of the training program. The NMWA may request supplemental information in order to make a determination.</p>
<p>Removing a Training Provider/Program from the MiTC</p>	<p>Applicable Circumstances</p> <p>The NMWA may request a training provider/program be removed from the MiTC under the following circumstances:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inaccurate information - The NMWA discovers information regarding the training provider/program was provided in an inaccurate manner; a termination of eligibility will occur for a period of not less than two years; such a training provider will be liable to repay, from non-federal funds, all of the WIOA training funds received during the period of non-compliance; • Violated WIOA requirements - It is determined an eligible training provider/program has substantially violated any requirements under the WIOA; the provider's eligibility to receive funds for the program(s) in question will be terminated for a period of not less than two years; • Eligibility expires - A training provider/program does not reapply under the continued eligibility procedures; such training providers/programs will be removed from the MiTC and are required to reapply under the continued eligibility provisions, and are subject to meeting minimum performance prior to having their program placed back on the MiTC; • Fails to meet performance - A training program fails to meet minimum performance requirements and is not granted an exception by the NMWA; the training provider's eligibility to receive funds may be suspended for a period of not less than two years, at which time the training provider may re-apply under the continuing eligibility requirements/procedures. Should the NMWA grant approval to a training provider/program failing to meet minimum performance standards, the Regional Director will be notified and supplied the rationale for such an approval. • Non-compliance - A training provider substantially violates the terms outlined in a training agreement, and will be considered to be in non-compliance; an example of a substantial violation is ceasing to continue to provide training services to participants; • Health or safety risks - The NMWA discovers that the health and safety of students or others could be at risk.

	<p>Procedure</p> <p>The NMWA will first engage in an objective investigation of the circumstances surrounding the possible need to remove a training provider/program from the MiTC; the investigation will be thoroughly documented and presented to the Regional Director, who will make the final determination as to whether or not to pursue the removal. If it is determined that it is appropriate for a training provider to be removed from the MiTC, the Regional Director will follow the procedure below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NMWA will request approval from the LEO-WD by submitting the results of the investigation to the LEO-WD via email at MiTC@michigan.gov; • if the LEO-WD does not concur, the non-concurrence will be documented in the file; • if the LEO-WD concurs, the training provider will be removed from the MiTC; • NMWA will issue written notice within 10 business days to the training that the program has been removed from the MiTC. The notice must clearly identify the program and specific reason(s) for the removal. The notice will also advise the training provider of the right to appeal the MWA's decision within 30 working days from the date of the denial, following LEO-WD's Grievance and Complaint Policy in effect at the time of denial for placement on the MiTC. <p>The Program Specialist will maintain files on all cases to which this procedure applies.</p>
<p>Data Collection Assistance</p>	<p>If a provider can demonstrate the collection of program specific performance to be unduly burdensome or costly, the State or local MWA:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • must provide access to cost-effective methods for collection of information; • may provide additional resources to assist provider in the collection of information from stateside workforce investment activities under WIOA; • may take steps to assist training providers in collection of supplying required information such as offering technical assistance.
<p>Other ETP Requirements</p>	<p>All ETPs are subject to the equal opportunity and nondiscrimination requirements contained in Section 188 of the WIOA.</p>

Appendix H: Local Policy on Priority of Service



LOCAL POLICY #2004

Priority of Service

Effective Date: 6/1/2020

Expiration Date: Ongoing

Summary

This policy establishes Northwest Michigan Works! priority of service requirements for Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Adult funded training services.

WIOA requires priority for training services funded through the WIOA Adult program to be given to recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals, and individuals who are basic skills deficient. Northwest Michigan Works! has established additional local priority categories to support fair access to training opportunities.

This policy explains how priority of service will be applied when WIOA Adult training funds are limited.

Background

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) requires local workforce development areas to establish policies regarding priority of service for WIOA Adult funded training services.

Priority of service helps ensure that individuals with the greatest economic need and barriers to employment receive access to training opportunities when funding is limited.

In addition to federally required priority groups, Northwest Michigan Works! may establish additional local priority categories based on regional workforce needs and participant populations served.

Policy

Programs Affected

This policy applies to:

- WIOA Adult

Priority of Service Requirements

Priority for training services funded through the WIOA Adult program will be provided in accordance with federal law, state guidance, and this local policy.

Priority of service will be applied when training funds are determined to be limited by the Regional Director of Policy and Resource Management.

Priority of service does not guarantee approval for training services.

Priority Levels

Level 1

Individuals meeting one or more of the following criteria:

- Recipients of public assistance
- Low-income individuals
- Individuals who are basic skills deficient

Basic skills deficiency is determined in accordance with the Northwest Michigan Works! Local Policy: Basic Skills Deficient.

Level 2

Individuals meeting one or more of the following criteria:

- Unemployed individuals
- Returning citizens
- Individuals with disabilities

For purposes of this policy, disability has the same meaning as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Level 3

- Employed individuals whose family income is below the locally defined self-sufficiency level

Self-sufficiency determinations will be made in accordance with the Northwest Michigan Works! Local Policy: Self-Sufficiency.

Veterans Priority

Veterans and eligible spouses, including eligible caregivers when recognized under federal law, will receive priority within each applicable priority level in accordance with federal law and the Northwest Michigan Works! Veterans Priority of Service Local Policy.

Applying Priority Levels

When training funds are limited, Priority Level 1 will receive priority over Priority Levels 2 and 3. Priority Level 2 will receive priority over Priority Level 3.

Participants who are not approved for training services due to limited funding may be placed on a waiting list if additional funding becomes available.

Exceptions

Exceptions to this policy may be approved by the Regional Director of Policy and Resource Management on a case-by-case basis.

Exceptions and supporting rationale must be documented in the participant file.

References

1. Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)
2. WIOA Manual – Adult Priority of Service
3. 20 CFR 680.600
4. 20 CFR 1010.110
5. Local Policy: Basic Skills Deficient
6. Local Policy: Self-Sufficiency
7. Veterans Priority of Service Local Policy

Revision History

Original Publish Date: 6/1/2020

Revision Date: 5/1/2026

- Comprehensive revision of Priority of Service Local Policy
- Removed outdated priority structure and clarified veterans priority requirements
- Updated language to align with current WIOA guidance and local policy structure
- Updated document format to current

Appendix I: Local Policy - Rapid Response

Appendix J: Graphic - Local and Regional Workforce Plan Alignment with State Workforce Plan