



1001 North 23<sup>rd</sup> Street  
Post Office Box 94094  
Baton Rouge, LA 70804-9094

(O) 225-342-3110  
(F) 225-342-2051  
[www.laworks.net](http://www.laworks.net)

John Bel Edwards, Governor  
J. Robert Wooley, Secretary

**Office of the Secretary**

December 1, 2023

Nicholas Lalpui  
United States Department of Labor  
Employment and Training Administration  
Dallas Regional Office  
525 South Griffin Street, Room 317  
Dallas, Texas 75202

**Re: Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Annual Report Program Year 2022**

Dear Mr. Lalpui:

I am pleased to present the Program Year 2022 Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Annual Statewide Performance Report for the state of Louisiana. The aforementioned report captures the work, achievements as well as challenges from July 1, 2022 through June 30, 2023.

The Annual Report is the vehicle that is used to show case how the state of Louisiana is implementing best practices as well as strategies outlined in the Combined State Plan helping to prepare Louisiana workers, educators and workforce partners for the improving employment trend that is projected through 2024.

The report will further highlight that the State of Louisiana has been diligent in its efforts to ensure workforce needs are met and exceeded across the state. We are so thankful for the opportunity to serve our fellow Louisianans utilizing funding opportunities within WIOA.

Our community partnerships have come to fruition in the form of additional apprenticeship programs, Industry Sector Partnerships, customized trainings and statewide collaborations that continue to fulfill our mission of "Putting People to Work" by providing statewide support and guidance in implementation.

If you have any questions or need any additional information, please feel free to contact Ms. Andrea Morrison, Assistant Secretary at (225) 342-3483 or via email at [amorrison@lwc.la.gov](mailto:amorrison@lwc.la.gov).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "J. Robert Wooley", with a long, sweeping underline.

J. Robert Wooley  
Secretary



The Department of Labor



2022

# WIOA PROGRAM ANNUAL REPORT

LOUISIANA WORKFORCE COMMISSION  
WORKFORCE INNOVATION AND OPPORTUNITY ACT

## **Executive Summary**

Louisiana Governor John Bel Edwards, in collaboration with Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC), under the leadership of Secretary J. Robert Wooley consistently works to support and remain committed to workforce progress as a priority for the state of Louisiana. The economy is steadily evolving and parallel to our evolution are the changing needs and demands of our state and nation, resulting in a shift in the business needs and skills demand to meet businesses' needs today and in the future. LWC continues the coordination and integration of service delivery, in aligning and strengthening employment, education, training and related services that support business & industry and job seekers. The agencies steadfast commitment is to ensure that working families are given the opportunity to earn a living wage that strengthens families and support our state's economic recovery.

### **Workforce Investment Council (State Workforce Development Board)**

The Workforce Investment Council (WIC) comprises of over 53 members representing an array of business, workforce (i.e. apprenticeship/training, organized labor and community-based organizations), state legislature and government.

The WIC serves to develop a strategic plan to coordinate and integrate a workforce development delivery system to assure efficiency and cooperation between public and private entities, by advising the governor on the needs of Louisiana's employers and its workforce as well as being responsible for occupational forecasting used to drive programs and funding for job training. The council supports development of an employer-led, demand-driven workforce development system based on occupational forecasts in which training, education and services for job seekers prepare Louisiana residents for high wage, high-demand career opportunities in Louisiana.

The WIC achieves its mission by the following listed below:

1. Recommending policy actions to both public and private institutions and creating coalitions to achieve their implementation.
2. Working with Workforce Development Systems partners to integrate workforce development into the decision making of business people, economic developers, educators, and human resource professionals.
3. Raising public awareness of the importance of workforce development for Louisiana's economic future.
4. Ensuring the public accountability by evaluating the effectiveness of the overall workforce development system.

### **Workforce Investment Council Strategic Vision**

The workforce landscape is constantly changing and the demands shift on a regular basis for a growing economy. Louisiana continues to experience growth in numerous in-demand industry sectors of the workforce, including manufacturing, information technology, healthcare and biotechnology, and to name just a few. With the increasing need for skilled workers, the creation of Industry Sector Partnerships aligns education and skills acquisition to meet the general requirements of workers and businesses. The WIC focuses on creating and sustaining good jobs while identifying strategies that support future-oriented education and training for Louisiana citizens as well as America's Workforce. This vision has continued

the mission with which Gov. Edwards charged the people of Louisiana. That shared mission is “Putting Louisiana First” and making it possible for all Louisiana citizens to be healthy and prosperous.

The Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC) and Governor John Bel Edwards work consistently to support and remain committed to workforce progress as a priority of Louisiana. Louisiana's economy is evolving. Parallel to our evolution are the changing needs and demands of our state and nation, resulting in a shift in the business needs and skills demand to meet businesses' needs today and in the future.

LWC has re-energized the Workforce Commission's commitment to increasing business engagement, employer utilization, reducing employer costs, and increasing value received from the workforce system to recruit and hire qualified Louisiana workers. We additionally have refocused our commitment to ensuring that working families earn a living wage that strengthens families, creates solutions to lift people out of poverty, and support our state's economic recovery. It is our goal to ignite more enthusiasm in creating solutions pertinent to Louisiana's Labor environment.

We, the people of Louisiana, envision a workforce system that will provide pathways for all Louisianans, including individuals who are receiving public assistance, the unemployed or underemployed, those who are deficient in basic skills, as well as persons with disabilities, including disabled veterans, and others who have significant barriers to employment. All will have access to education, training and supportive services needed to prepare for and secure high-demand occupations that pay family-sustaining wages.

### **Strategic Goals**

**Goal 1:** Continue to provide annual on-site technical assistance and guidance to all 15 Louisiana Workforce Development Boards.

1. To provide policy guidance and oversight of the network of comprehensive one-stop offices located in each region of the state.

**Goal 2:** Increase the participation and utilization of the workforce system by employers and job-seekers to foster the improvement and expansion of employer-driven regional sector partnerships to meet occupational demands as supported by regional labor market information.

1. Increase the use of labor market and educational data and technology, in coordination with local data, to inform and guide strategic workforce development decisions.
2. Develop focused, regional workforce initiatives that blend partner resources (co-investment) to educate and train workers for jobs within the workforce region.
3. Increase the alignment and efficacy of formula, discretionary and competitive workforce funding in efforts to support regional and local workforce initiatives.
4. Promote meaningful, portable industry credentials supported throughout the workforce delivery system.
5. Fortify a system of accountability for the workforce development system that supports and promotes the evaluation of the effectiveness of state and local workforce development boards in meeting the workforce demands of business and workforce.

**Goal 3:** To increase the number of adults dislocated workers, and youths entering the labor market and/or increase the number of youths receiving a degree or certification.

1. Effectively utilize WIOA Federal partners and other community resources as partners to deliver comprehensive plan for job seekers.
2. Development relationships with guidance counselors to assist in preparing students for academic and occupational goals leading to sustained employment.
3. Provide information regarding demand occupations and training to job seekers that are planning a career change or who wish to move up the career ladder.
4. Continue to work with training providers to ensure that available training will meet business needs.
5. Work with training providers to provide transitional assistance to students exiting training that are preparing to enter the workforce.

## **WIOA TITLE I - V PERFORMANCE AND ACTIVITIES**

### **WORKFORCE INNOVATION AND OPPORTUNITY ACT WAIVERS**

During Program Year 2022, the state of Louisiana had two WIOA waivers through U.S. Department of Labor. The Employment and Training Administration approved both waivers through June 30, 2024.

1. **Waiver of requirement that states and local areas expend 75 percent of all Governor’s reserve and local formula youth funds on out-of-school youth**  
The approval waives the requirement that the State expend 75 percent of Governor’s reserve youth funds on Out of School Youth. In addition, the state may lower the expenditure requirement of Governor’s reserve to 50 percent for Out-of-School Youth.
2. **Waiver of requirement that only permits WIOA Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) for Out-of-School (OSY) for Program Years (PY) 2022 and 2023**  
The approval waives the states requirement limiting Individual Training Accounts to only Out-of-School Youth, ages 16-24 years of age. Additionally, the approval outlines that the state may use Individual Training Accounts for In-School Youth ages 16-21 years of age. The approval of this waiver should not impede the State’s efforts to prioritize OSY, including outreach to the OSY population.

### **WIOA Title I**

#### **Performance**

Pursuant to WIOA, all states submitting a state plan must propose expected levels of performance for each of the prescribed indicators. Federal guidelines describe the primary indicators of performance as key factors in achieving the goals of WIOA.

Data determining primary indicators of performance are collected from Louisiana’s Management Information Systems, Unemployment Wage Records, and from the State Wage Interchange System. These systems gather exit information on participants and provides real-time data elements for case management and performance reporting.

The following tables demonstrations Louisiana’s negotiated rate for each of the required indicators of performance along with the actual statewide outcomes achieved. Pursuant to federal policy, states achieving at least 90 percent of the negotiated goal are considered to have met the goal. Louisiana met all performance indicators; Employment Rate Second Quarter after Exit, Employment Rate Fourth Quarter after Exit, Median

Earnings, and Credential Attainment for WIOA Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs. WIOA Title III Wagner-Peyser participants met all performance indicators for Employment Rate Second Quarter after Exit, Employment Rate Fourth Quarter after Exit, and Median Earnings Second Quarter after Exit. We surpass the 90% threshold of our expected negotiated performance levels as indicated by U.S. Department of Labor for Program Year 2022.

### WIOA Title I and Title III PY 2022 Statewide Results

	Negotiated Performance Level PY22	Statewide Performance PY22
<b>Adult</b>		
Employment Rate 2nd Quarter After Exit	65.9%	75.8%
Employment Rate 4th Quarter After Exit	66.1%	72.8%
Median Earnings 2nd Quarter After Exit	\$6,400	\$7,384
Credential Attainment	73.5%	78.8%
<b>Dislocated Worker</b>		
Employment Rate 2nd Quarter After Exit	64.0%	74.4%
Employment Rate 4th Quarter After Exit	67.0%	73.4%
Median Earnings 2nd Quarter After Exit	\$7,500	\$8,489
Credential Attainment	79.8%	84.7%
<b>Youth</b>		
Employment Rate 2nd Quarter After Exit	70.7%	74.9%
Employment Rate 4th Quarter After Exit	72.0%	73.5%
Median Earnings 2nd Quarter After Exit	\$3,100	\$4,782
Credential Attainment	52.0%	55.0%
<b>Wagner-Peyser</b>		
Employment Rate 2nd Quarter After Exit	56.0%	66.0%
Employment Rate 4th Quarter After Exit	57.0%	62.8%
Median Earnings 2nd Quarter After Exit	\$5,000	\$7,075

## WIOA Title I and Title III PY 2022 Over the Year Progress

	Statewide Performance PY21	Statewide Performance PY22	Gain (Loss) PY22
<b>Adult</b>			
Participants Served - Career Services	3,993	3,477	-516
Participants Served - Training Services	2,554	2,468	-86
Exiters - Career Services	2,901	2,519	-382
Exiters - Training Services	1,635	1,626	-9
Employment Rate 2nd Quarter After Exit	73.2%	75.8%	2.6%
Employment Rate 4th Quarter After Exit	62.3%	72.8%	10.5%
Median Earnings 2nd Quarter After Exit	\$6,697	\$7,384	687
Credential Attainment	72.2%	78.8%	6.6%
<b>Dislocated Worker</b>			
Participants Served - Career Services	1,662	957	-705
Participants Served - Training Services	1,122	664	-458
Exiters - Career Services	1,337	832	-505
Exiters - Training Services	873	566	-307
Employment Rate 2nd Quarter After Exit	72.6%	74.3%	1.7%
Employment Rate 4th Quarter After Exit	61.5%	72.8%	11.3%
Median Earnings 2nd Quarter After Exit	\$8,459	\$8,473	14
Credential Attainment	84.0%	84.6%	0.6%

	Statewide Performance PY21	Statewide Performance PY22	Gain (Loss) PY22
<b><u>Youth</u></b>			
Participants Served - Career Services	2,365	2,219	-146
Participants Served - Training Services	910	898	-12
Exiters - Career Services	1,343	1,063	-280
Exiters - Training Services	513	549	36
Employment Rate 2nd Quarter After Exit	71.0%	74.9%	3.9%
Employment Rate 4th Quarter After Exit	72.4%	73.4%	1.0%
Credential Attainment	62.9%	54.9%	-8.0%
<b><u>Wagner-Peyser</u></b>			
Participants Served - Career Services	29,595	23,299	-6,296
Participants Served - Training Services			
Exiters - Career Services	26,199	19,465	-6,734
Exiters - Training Services			
Employment Rate 2nd Quarter After Exit	58.7%	56.0%	-2.7%
Employment Rate 4th Quarter After Exit	56.0%	57.0%	1.0%
Median Earnings 2nd Quarter After Exit	\$5,862	\$5,000	-862

## LOCAL PERFORMANCE

Upon completion of the state's negotiation with U.S. Department of Labor on state performance goals, performance target negotiations were conducted with each LWDB. As a result, expected levels of performance and goals were agreed upon for each local board. The following table summarizes outcomes based on local boards achieving 90% of their respective negotiated performance goals.



## **EFFECTIVENESS IN SERVICING EMPLOYERS**

Louisiana reported an Employer Penetration rate of 6.5% for Program Year 2022. This calculation was made by extracting the total number of employers with twenty or more employees receiving at least one of a set of core categories of services including job posting, employer based training, resume search, labor market information, incumbent worker training, seminars & workshops, and apprenticeships divided by the number of employers in Louisiana with twenty or more employees based on Labor Market Information data. We chose this threshold for total employees due to the enormity of the number of employers with fewer than twenty employees, especially self-employer sole proprietors and family businesses who are far less likely to hire a substantial number of new employees. Further, the rate of penetration would be likely be close to or statistically similar to zero, thus useless for analysis, had a denominator of all Louisiana employers been used. However, we have this data available if needed.

Louisiana reported a Repeat Business Customer Rate of 27.1% in Program Year 2022. The Repeat Business Customer Rate was calculated by counting number of businesses that utilized the foregoing core categories of services (for Employer Penetration Rate calculation) or any recorded employer service in our MIS system in the prior PY as the denominator. Of those in the denominator, the businesses that also received any of the mentioned core categories of services (for Employer Penetration Rate calculation) or any recorded employer service in our MIS system in Program Year 2022 were counted as the numerator.

## **COST OF WORKFORCE INNOVATION AND OPPORTUNITY ACTIVITIES**

During Program Year 2022, Louisiana expended \$29,707,532 on WIOA Title I Career Services and \$17,914,495 on WIOA Title I Training Services for a total of \$45,216,438 in WIOA Title I participant service expenditures. During Program Year 2022, Louisiana expended \$11,154,741 on WIOA Title III Career Services, bringing the total PY2022 expenditures for WIOA Title I and Title III participant services to \$56,371,179.

Many elements of WIOA enrollment require appropriate documentation be places in participant files. Documentation sources can be identified within the case management system HiRE - Helping Individuals Reach Employment.

## **TITLE II ADULT EDUCATION**

The Louisiana Technical and Community College system continues to support the integration of activities sponsored under the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) in multiple areas relative to adult education, career development, and employment and training activities.

In accordance with WIOA regulations, shared infrastructure costs of the One-Stop Delivery System was accomplished through equipment contribution at the local level. The WorkReady U-Adult Education comprehensive literacy center in each region provided an interactive kiosk at each certified One-Stop. The interactive kiosk provides direct telephone access and a chat feature for on-demand assistance to trained enrollment management specialists.

## **TITLE III WAGNER PEYSER**

The Louisiana Workforce Commission's Wagner-Peyser Program provides a full range of employment services throughout the State's fifteen (15) Local Workforce Development Areas. State Merit staff deliver

a multitude of services to individuals and employers in both Comprehensive One-Stop offices as well as numerous affiliate offices throughout the state. As the primary entry point for many individuals accessing the American Job Center system, Wagner-Peyser staff also provide critical referrals to an array of American Job Center partner programs and community resources. Through these efforts, in combination with a robust system of regional partners, many Louisiana residents are able to achieve a living wage.

The Wagner-Peyser program provides support for many statewide initiatives such as Drive Your Future 2.0, Infrastructure Investment & Jobs Act, Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment, Merit Initiative, Coursera, and Tech Ready Louisiana. Wagner-Peyser staff organize, promote, and assist with in-house Recruiting Events, Mobile Workforce Unit Recruiting Events, and a host of Regional Job Fairs sponsored and co-sponsored by LWC and partner agencies. Wagner-Peyser staff remain committed to achieving the Agency's mission of "Putting People to Work".

Wagner-Peyser Employment Services provides universal access to an integrated array of labor exchange services so that workers, job seekers, and employers can find the services they need. Employment and intensive services are provided to customers and co-enrolled customers with varying degrees of service requirements. This integrated approach enables Wagner-Peyser to seamlessly provide services to customers with significant barriers to employment such as homeless veterans, out of school youth, at risk adults, unemployed claimants, Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWD) participants, Strategies To Empower People (STEP) participants, and migrant seasonal farm-workers, justice-involved individuals etc. Programs that intersect and co-enroll with Wagner-Peyser services are listed and described below.

## **JOBS FOR VETERANS STATE GRANT (JVSG)**

The Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC) is committed to serving veterans, transitioning service members, and their families by providing resources to assist and prepare them to obtain meaningful careers and maximize their employment opportunities. This commitment is an important part of fulfilling our obligation to the men and women who have honorably served our country.

The State drives priority of service in referring veterans and other eligible persons to employment opportunities through a standardized review process. Every veteran that qualifies for services are seen by a Disabled Veteran Outreach Representative (DVOP) and given Individualized Career Services under the framework of case management. This process is comprised of a comprehensive assessment and individual employment plan based on the need of each individual veteran. Field leadership receives results of this process quarterly for action when necessary. In addition, Local Veteran Employment Representatives (LVER) are conducting training to the field on veterans' priority of service to the non-veteran staff in the local offices.. LVERs conduct Regional Priority of Service training for all American Job Centers (AJC) state staff members on an annual basis for every AJC in the state by the end of each fiscal year. LVERs are pursuing employers to enroll in the Hire Veterans Medallion Program, which incentivizes companies to hire veterans and provide them with a reward from the Department of Defense.

The State continues to provide Individualized Career Services under the framework of case management for Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) referrals in accordance with directives.

The State embraced the JVSG refocusing through the efforts of the JVSG staff members and their AJC partners, the state achieved a 100% Intensive Services Rate compared to a goal of 94%. The driving factor behind this success were AJC staff members conducted initial assessments on incoming Veteran job seekers

and only referrals of those identified to have a Significant Barrier to Employment (SBE) to a DVOP.

Below is a comparison of the key JVSG metrics between PY22 and PY23.

**Jobs for Veterans State Grant (JVSG)**

Measure	Negotiated Goal	Statewide Performance PY21	Statewide Performance PY22	Gain (Loss) PY22
Covered Entrants		615	663	48
Employment Rate 2nd Quarter After Exit	43.8%	50.7%	56.1%	5.4%
Employment Rate 4th Quarter After Exit	44.6%	49.7%	50.8%	1.1%
Median Earnings 2nd Quarter After Exit	\$5,200	\$6,698	\$7,395	\$697

Source: ETA 9173

The JVSG program has collaborated with the Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program (HVRP) Grant Awardee, the Elle Foundation of Shreveport, to ensure individualized career services are provided to all those enrolled in the program.

The State JVSG program has a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the local Army Military Installation on Fort Johnson; to provide office space for a DVOP twice a week to provide assistance with transitioning service members to ensure they have access to services.

**REEMPLOYMENT SERVICES AND ELIGIBILITY ASSESSMENT**

Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) program participants who are identified as transitioning veterans receiving UI benefits for Ex-Service members (UCX) and UI claimants who are most likely to exhaust all unemployment benefits are required to participate in four (4) appointments over the course of ten weeks to get them back to work.

The RESEA program uses statistical modeling to rank unemployment benefits claimants based on their likelihood to exhaust all unemployment benefits. This process includes a statistical evaluation of numerous work and related factors, including but not limited to length of workforce attachment, occupational field, industry, wages, and location. Claimants are assigned a score, with a higher score indicating a greater risk of exhausting unemployment benefits.

Unemployment Insurance (UI) recipients must register with our state propriety system HiRE. Additionally, UI recipients must be able and available to work and actively looking for work. UI recipients are required to complete three documented work search contacts each week and file for unemployment benefits each week by phone, online through HiRE, or with a live agent. As time permits, UI staff reviews work search-documented contacts to ensure program compliance. The UI recipient must continue filing weekly for as long as they are unemployed and are eligible for benefits.

The RESEA participant works one on one with their RESEA Case Manager who also reviews the documented work searches and complete eligibility assessments as well as provide a variety of resources that supports reemployment. To identify potential eligibility issues and refer claimants to UI for possible adjudication as applicable, Wagner-Peyser, WIOA, and RESEA program staff goes through consistent and extensive training throughout the year.

RESEA program participants have the flexibility to complete the required appointments virtually, in-person, or over-the-phone and all participants undergo an orientation to for an in depth overview of the program as well as introduced to COURSERA, a platform utilized to maximize preparation to enhance their skillset for prospective employers.

RESEA funded staff and WP funded staff both provide employment services to UI claimants enrolled in these programs.

Services include:

- Skills and interest assessments
- Career exploration and counseling
- Developing an Individual Employment Plan (IEP)
- Job notifications and referrals for employment
- Referrals for training and Registered Apprenticeship opportunities
- Resume and cover letter development
- Workshops, including interviewing skills, dress for success, and networking
- Local labor market information
- Information on hiring events, job, and career fairs
- WIOA Training (Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth Programs)
- JVSG Referrals (Veteran Programs)
- Job development with employers on behalf of individuals
- Vocational Rehabilitation referrals
- State propriety system navigation
- Referrals to American Job Center network of partners
- Referrals to external service providers to aid the participant in overcoming barriers to employment
- Rapid Response events

There were **46,655** individuals profiled for RESEA services in Program Year (PY) 2022-2023. During PY 2022-2023, the RESEA Department assisted **16,608 participants** of scheduled services that were successfully completed, which is a **58%** increase from the previous year.

The RESEA procured The Policy & Research Group (PRG), an experienced independent evaluator, to conduct its evaluation of the RESEA program in January 2022. The Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC) is taking steps to ensure that RESEA service delivery strategies are viable in assisting with "Putting People to Work."

PRG will continue to work with LWC to decide which RESEA program component(s) to evaluate and conduct an Evaluability Assessment of the RESEA program component(s), develop research questions that explore the RESEA program's influence on a particular population's outcomes of interest (e.g., employment, benefit duration, earnings), develop a Logic Model of the RESEA component(s) to be evaluated and assess existing data and data systems.

## **REINTEGRATION OF JUSTICE - INVOLVED PERSONNEL**

Wagner-Peyser funds provide full time dedicated staff working directly in or coordination with Day Reporting Centers (DRC). In order to accomplish a more aligned reintegration of justice-involved

personnel, Louisiana Governor John Bel Edwards decreed the reduction of recidivism as a top priority in the state. Employment is widely seen as a crucial element for successful reintegration for justice involved personnel.

LWC currently supports seven-day reporting centers in the following parishes: St Tammany, Caddo, East Baton Rouge, Ouachita, Calcasieu, Rapides and combined Orleans/Jefferson.

The staff provide individualized career services to formerly justice-involved persons that contribute to their successful transition to society. Staff also conduct outreach and advocacy on behalf of the participants to coordinate with local service agencies to provide various needs such as housing, clothing, transportation, legal assistance, etc. coordination with the local shelters - housing, other partners.

A comprehensive assessment and employment plan including follow-up every 30 days to ensure gainful employment. Substantial employment can assist individuals in succeeding after release from incarceration. This process allows the individuals to refocus their time and efforts on improving positive outcomes and can provide meaningful careers into workforce.

## **LOUISIANA REHABILITATION SERVICES**

The mission of Louisiana Rehabilitation Services (LRS) is to assist persons with disabilities in their desire to obtain, maintain, or advance in competitive integrated employment and achieve independence in their communities by providing rehabilitation services and working cooperatively with business and other community resources.

Louisiana Rehabilitation Services (LRS) continues to strive for excellence in its endeavors to assist persons with disabilities in becoming competitively employed in integrated environments and reaching their maximum level of independence. LRS values providing flexible and timely services consistent with "informed choice" of the individual and in recognizing individual needs and cultural differences.

### **Title IV Vocational Rehabilitation Program (VR)**

Vocational Rehabilitation provides a planned sequence of individualized services to assist persons with disabilities reach employment. It is a partnership between a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor and the individual with a disability. They work together to develop an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) that is specific to the unique strengths, resources, concerns, abilities, interests, and informed choice of the individual. The plan identifies the VR services the individual needs in order to achieve their employment goals.

These comprehensive services go far beyond those found in typical job training programs and include such services as:

1. Assessment, Career Guidance and Counseling;
2. Career Services, including Supported Employment, Job Readiness Training, and Job Placement Assistance;
3. Training Services, including post-secondary education and other vocational training;
4. Prosthetics and Orthotics;
5. Interpreters and Readers; and

## 6. Assistive Technology, including Mobility Equipment, Hearing Aids, and Vehicle Modifications.

As a result of the VR program, 1,235 individuals obtained employment in Program Year 2022. The average hourly earnings of these individuals was \$15.98, with average annual earnings of \$27,932. Of those obtaining successful employment, 56% obtained employment in Louisiana's top demand occupations. This can be attributed in part to training provided to the Rehabilitation Counselors to ensure that they are knowledgeable when providing vocational guidance to individuals so they may choose a career goal that is in demand.

### **Order of Selection**

When LRS does not have sufficient funding or staff to serve all eligible consumers, federal regulations mandate that individuals with the most significant disabilities be given priority for services. LRS determines who has the most significant disabilities by implementing an Order of Selection (OOS) which is derived from an individual's functional limitations and barriers to employment that are directly resultant from their disability. Using this information, the individual is placed in an appropriate OOS Category, which ranges from most to least severe. On March 28, 2022, LRS consolidated and reduced the five OOS categories to three categories, which are as follows: Category 1 – Most Significantly Disabled, Category 2 – Significantly Disabled, and Category 3 – Non-Significantly Disabled (which remained closed). On August 15, 2022, LRS opened Category 3, which eliminated a deferred waiting list and currently allows services to be offered to all eligible applicants.

### **Transition**

In Program Year 2022, LRS continued to provide services to students with disabilities as they transition from high school into adulthood to pursue training and employment. LRS is mandated to expend 15% of the VR federal allotment to make available five core Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS), including job exploration counseling, work-based learning experiences, counseling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive transition or post-secondary educational programs, workplace readiness training, and instruction in self-advocacy. During this time period, LRS provided services to 3,929 students with disabilities.

LRS makes these services available through VR counseling staff, fee for service agreements with Community Rehabilitation Programs, and Third Party Cooperative Arrangement contracts with school districts. LRS currently has 15 active Third Party Cooperative Arrangements with local education agencies to provide Pre-Employment Transition Services, and LRS is continuing to pursue additional contracts with local education agencies.

### **Customized Employment**

The effort to build vendor capacity to provide Customized Employment (CE) services across the state is progressing. As part of the plan to make affordable training in Customized Employment available to LRS vendors statewide, staff at the Louisiana State University Human Development Center (LSU-HDC) have become Customized Employment Certified trainers to provide CE services to LRS consumers.

In PY 2022, LSU-HDC offered the theory portion of the Customized Employment Overview and Discovery Course, and ten LRS vendors completed six CE theory webinars and five facilitated meetings, including quizzes and assignments.

## **State as a Model Employer (SAME)**

In March 2018, Louisiana set a goal to serve as a Model Employer for business by a commitment to improve hiring, recruitment, and retention of people with disabilities through Executive Order JB 18-08, State as Model Employer (SAME) Task Force, signed by Governor John Bel Edwards. SAME was codified into state law, effective 5/25/2022, by Act 103 of the 2022 Regular Session and applies to all executive branch state agencies. La. R.S. 46:2597 specifically requires each executive branch state agency to:

Implement and maintain a Voluntary Self-Identification of Disability Form for all agency employees for purposes of effective data collection and analysis as to the disability status of its workforce; and,

Prepare and submit a SAME Agency Plan by December 1 of each year that includes the strategies and goals for the upcoming year and the progress and outcomes for the current year related to employment of individuals with disabilities.

Louisiana Rehabilitation Services (LRS), the state unit that assists persons with disabilities in their desire to obtain, maintain or advance in competitive integrated employment, serves as the primary Point of Contact (POC) for the SAME initiative and facilitates the exchange of information between LRS and state agency designees relative to persons who are applicants or who have been determined eligible for LRS' Vocational Rehabilitation program.

In Program Year 2022, fifty-four (54) LRS consumers obtained or maintained employment with the State of Louisiana. These individuals are employed throughout state government, including universities, state police, hospitals, and correctional facilities. The Louisiana Department of Health and the Louisiana Workforce Commission were the top two state employers this past year.

## **Workforce Development**

Louisiana Rehabilitation Services is actively involved with the 15 local Workforce Development Areas. LRS is represented on each of the workforce boards, and VR staff members have a presence in the American Job Centers. In Program Year 22, LRS Rehabilitation Employment Development Specialists began participating with LWC's Business Service Representatives as well as the Industry Sector Coordinators in weekly virtual meetings. Building relationships with employers and with the business community continues to be a premise in the Employment Initiative as our connections with the Human Resource personnel and hiring managers ultimately connect our consumers with viable jobs. During Program year 22, our Rehabilitation Employment Development Specialists and the Statewide Employment Coordinator were also tasked with coordinating a Disability Job Fair to align with the National Disability Awareness Month. We were successful in recruiting 73 employers, and 96 job seekers had conversations with recruiters, to determine if they were a good fit for the jobs the recruiters/employers had available. Our Rehabilitation Employment Development Specialists and the LRS Statewide Employment Coordinator continue to foster connections with employers and HR personnel.

## **Ticket to Work**

LRS continues efforts to assist Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) beneficiaries in meeting employment goals. LRS continues to collaborate with Employment Networks to ensure Ticket-to-Work is successful in Louisiana. A number of LRS staff received additional training in Program Year 2022 related to Social Security (SS) beneficiaries and how employment impacts

cash benefits. LRS continues to be committed to referring our consumers who have Social Security (SS) benefits to our in-house CPWIC (Community Partner Work Incentives Counselor) and WIPA Services (Work Incentives Planning and Assistance) as the information obtained from these providers will enable our consumers to make informed decisions regarding employment and how employment will impact their cash benefits and medical insurance. LRS staff understands that WIPA provides our consumers with SS benefits with valuable information on the work incentives and services available to help them achieve their employment goals. Furthermore, LRS has a Cost Reimbursement Coordinator, and the Cost Reimbursement Coordinator continues to receive ongoing training along with the other CR Coordinators in the 50 other states. The Cost Reimbursement Program was authorized in 1981 and it is only available to State VR agencies. The two purposes of the CR program are:

- To make SVR services more readily available to SS beneficiaries with disabilities.
- To generate savings to the Social Security Trust Fund for SSDI beneficiaries and to the General Revenue Fund for Supplemental Security Income recipients.

In Program Year 2022, LRS received \$3,122,070.89 from the Social Security Administration's reimbursement program.

### **Rehabilitation Engineering/Assistive Technology**

LRS continues our collaboration with the Louisiana Assistive Technology Access Network (LATAN), the federal Assistive Technology Act program for Louisiana. LATAN is an approved provider to serve LRS consumers and provides Assistive Technology Evaluations and Assessments. LRS refers consumers to LATAN for additional assistance through their program.

LRS revised the process for approving new assistive technology providers and provides technical assistance to Regional LRS staff regarding the updated assistive technology (AT) vendor application and approval process. The goal is to improve efficiencies in screening potential new vocational rehabilitation providers and/or Community Rehabilitation Providers to serve LRS consumers. The new application procedures also improved the renewal process for AT providers and data collection for reporting. LRS served more consumers in PY-2022, and there was an increase of 12% in Rehabilitation Technology expenditures from PY 2021.

Buy America, Build America Act (BABAA) compliance documentation was created for home modification providers. LRS requires home modification contractors to sign the new BABAA Compliance Acknowledgement form prior to completing these AT services for consumers. Technical assistance to Regional LRS staff began so Rehabilitation Counselors understand the importance of BABAA compliance when working with home modification contractors.

### **Randolph-Sheppard Business Enterprise Program**

This program provides employment opportunities for the blind by establishing and maintaining Business Enterprise Facilities. The program currently operates 57 facilities throughout the state, providing entrepreneurial opportunities for 39 individuals who are blind.

The COVID-19 pandemic and the mitigation efforts established to prevent its spread have permanently changed the business landscape for many of our blind entrepreneurs in the Randolph-Sheppard Program. Many of the state, federal, and municipal agencies, which our vendors currently serve, have



adopted permanent hybrid attendance policies, which have allowed employees to partially or completely telecommute. This change has resulted in a marked decrease in the available customer base by as much as 50% in some state buildings and as much as 75% in many of our Federal locations. This has also forced nearly all of our blind vendors to modify their staffing levels and menu selections to accommodate for this new business environment.

Another notable challenge faced by our vendors is the continued wholesale price increases on core snack items that far outpace normal inflation. Chocolate candy bars, packaged pastries and potato chips have all nearly doubled in wholesale price over the last two to three years. While the vendor must raise their retail price to accommodate for these increased cost, consumer demand is weakened by the higher price point and is resulting in a lower overall profit for the blind vendor.

With decreased sales due to diminished employee staffing levels due to telecommuting, vendor supply-chain issues, increased wholesale prices, and a challenging labor market, it remains a distinct possibility that many of our locations will never fully recover from the effects of the pandemic. To assist blind vendors, we are considering merging locations and changing the scope of operations. An example of a change in scope could be from a cafeteria to a snack bar or from a snack bar to a vending machine only location.

Although the actual number of vending opportunities has remained fairly constant, we have experienced a net decrease of 13 blind vendors. As a consequence of this, several of our remaining vendors are working multiple locations, which has increased their income. LRS staff are promoting Randolph-Sheppard program opportunities to counselors who work with individuals who are blind, as well as directly to organizations whose membership is comprised of individuals who are blind, including the National Federation of the Blind of Louisiana and the Affiliated Blind of Louisiana.

On September 16, 2022, the chair of our Elected Committee of Blind Vendors and the Blind Services Executive Director held a training session with LRS counselors and other staff from around the state who work directly with LRS consumers who are blind to educate them about employment opportunities in the Randolph-Sheppard program. The Blind Services Executive Director and Randolph-Sheppard Program Manager have also spoken directly to many consumers of Vocational Rehabilitation Services about entrepreneurial opportunities in the program.

### **Independent Living Part B Program**

Independent living Centers located across the state provide core services: information and referral; Independent Living skills training; peer counseling; individual and systems advocacy; and services that facilitate the transition from nursing homes and other institutions to the community. During Program Year 2022, 4,130 individuals received independent living services at an average cost of 146.02 per consumer.

### **Independent Living Older Blind Program**

The four rehabilitation centers contracting for the provision of Independent Living Older Blind (ILOB) services provided services, such as orientation and mobility training; low vision evaluations and handheld and electronic magnifiers; training in performing activities of daily living, to a total of 987 individuals 55 years of age or older and having significant visual impairments during FFY 2022.

Our contractors continue to provide in-person services; however, some consumers remain reluctant to meet in groups due to increased risk caused by secondary health conditions. When this occurs, staff provide services one-on-one to the consumer.

## **STATEWIDE ACTIVITIES**

### **National Dislocated Worker Grant - COVID-19 Disaster Dislocated Worker Grant**

#### **COVID-19 Disaster Dislocated Worker Grant**

With the rapid spread of COVID-19 and the infectious variants that followed, the impact on Louisiana's economy was significant, which resulted in major temporary and permanent layoffs across multiple industries. Louisiana's unemployment insurance claims increased substantially beginning in March 2020 and continued increasing as more workers became unemployed through the 2020 and 2021 program years due to pandemic. Louisiana paid out more than \$8 billion in unemployment benefits to more than 800 claimants between March 2020 and April 2021. Louisiana's workforce and economy suffered long-term effects as more unemployed workers filed claims.

As the Louisiana Workforce Commission's Office of Workforce Development continued to provide disaster-relief services through our National Dislocated Worker Grant – COVID-19 Disaster Dislocated Worker Grant (DDWG) – the effects of the pandemic continued to increase workforce shortages, especially in front-line healthcare jobs, food services, and for small businesses. LWC's DDWG was awarded under the category of Emergency/Disaster on May 1, 2020 as a direct result of the COVID-19 public health emergency and an additional award amount of \$16,767,303 on September 30, 2021 for a total grant amount of \$22,767,303. Under this grant, the state planned to serve 3,100 eligible participants with temporary disaster-relief subsidized employment including clean up, recovery and humanitarian efforts. The initial period of performance was April 14, 2020 – March 31, 2022; however, as COVID-19 continued to affect Louisiana, disaster relief services were still required as spikes in COVID-related cases were reported throughout the state. The LWC was approved for a no-cost extension on February 14, 2022 to extend the grant through December 31, 2022. This allowed for an additional nine months of disaster-related services to help individuals recover and rebuild economic stability. The Office of Workforce Development managed the COVID-19 Disaster Dislocated Worker Grant within 11 LWDA's through sub-recipient awards and contracted service provider CSRS, Inc., a disaster recovery consultant serving as the statewide employer of record.

LWC, along with stakeholders and program partners, identified labor market needs, specifically in industries hardest hit due to COVID-19, which included Accommodations and Food Services, Retail Trade, and Health Care and Social Assistance. To respond to identified needs within Louisiana communities, LWC provided disaster-relief temporary employment opportunities to eligible DDWG participants. Subsidized employment included clean-up and recovery efforts such as cleaning and disinfecting facilities, quarantine or treatment areas after their use, and worksites including common areas and surfaces; decontamination services in the neutralization or removal of germs; and checking temperatures and tracking customers/visitors to facilities open to the public. Humanitarian assistance included assistance with the distribution of donated food items; medical and cleaning supplies, etc. for disaster victims at designated locations within declared areas; loading/unloading materials and/or equipment for delivery to disaster

victims; providing information on disaster related assistance through verbal, written, and electronic methods; administering vaccines and other disaster-related medical treatment; and organizing and coordinating recovery, quarantine, or other related humanitarian activities. Through employment and training services, eligible participants were provided postsecondary occupational opportunities focusing on in-demand occupations and credential attainment, on-the-job training, apprenticeships, entrepreneurial training, and customized training opportunities to recover from the unexpected job loss and quickly revitalize Louisiana's labor force. Supportive services were also provided to enable individuals to participate in disaster-relief employment and employment and training services, which included transportation and childcare assistance, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), and other related assistance. The Covid-19 grant Period of Performance ended on December 31, 2022. The state enrolled a final 759 eligible dislocated workers with 522 in temporary employment and 205 enrolled in occupational skills training.

### **Hurricane Ida Disaster Dislocated Worker Grant**

Louisiana experienced significant disaster events over the past 2 years, which include the COVID-19 pandemic, Hurricanes Laura, Delta and Zeta, and most recently Hurricane Ida making landfall as a category 4 hurricane on August 29, 2021 near Port Fourchon in Lafourche Parish. Winds of 150 mph, wind gusts of up to 130 mph, heavy rain, and storm surge left devastation in its aftermath. The storm severely impacted Louisiana's power grids, knocking out power to more than one million customers including the entire city of New Orleans. For many, power remained out for several weeks causing further damage with an increase of mold and mildew due to the sweltering heat. Hurricane Ida hit on the 16th anniversary of the historically devastating Hurricane Katrina and tied the state's most powerful storm ever with Hurricane Laura. High winds and significant flooding caused interstates, highways and roads to be closed, businesses to shut down, and thousands of Louisiana residence seeking refuge in shelters, other parishes and surrounding states. Louisiana suffered devastation once again, especially along coastal parishes, with significant damage to public property and structural damage to thousands of businesses and homes. Hurricane Ida also clogged streams, rivers and bayous with tree branches and other debris, which made waterways more dangerous.

The LWC was awarded a National Dislocated Worker Grant (NDWG) under the category of Disaster on September 16, 2021 as a direct result of Hurricane Ida with a period of performance from August 26, 2021 through August 25, 2023 for \$5,000,000. Under the Hurricane Ida DDWG, the state plans to serve 248 eligible participants with temporary disaster-relief subsidized employment including clean-up, recovery and humanitarian efforts. The state has enrolled 187 eligible dislocated workers through June 30, 2023, with 149 in temporary employment.

The Office of Workforce Development manages the Hurricane Ida Disaster Dislocated Worker Grant (DDWG) within seven LWDAs through sub-recipient awards. Twenty-five (25) parishes were designated for public assistance and sustained the most damage and in the geographic regions in greatest need. These parishes are Ascension, Assumption, East Baton Rouge, East Feliciana, Iberia, Jefferson, Lafourche, Livingston, Orleans, Plaquemines, Pointe Coupee, St. Bernard, St. Charles, St. Helena, St. James, St. John the Baptist, St. Martin, St. Mary, St. Tammany, Tangipahoa, Terrebonne, Washington, West Baton Rouge, and West Feliciana.

Hurricane Ida disaster-relief temporary employment includes clean-up and recovery efforts including demolition, repair, renovation and reconstruction of damaged and destroyed structures, facilities and lands located in the disaster area; as well as the delivery of appropriate humanitarian assistance to individuals affected by the hurricane, including those displaced with actions designed to save lives, alleviate suffering, and maintain human dignity in the immediate aftermath of disasters. This assistance includes activities such as the provision of food, clothing, and shelter. Jobs may include, but not limited to general laborer, heavy equipment operator/truck driver, community outreach worker/humanitarian worker, and team leader/supervisor.

Hurricane Ida caused damage to Louisiana's fishery infrastructure, leaving fishermen out of work due to the storms impact to the natural habitat of the fishing industry and for many, the loss of supplies and equipment. Through this DDWG, the state is assisting eligible self-employed small business owners struggling to recovery due to the impacts of Ida, especially in the coastal parishes of Terrebonne, Lafourche, Jefferson, St. Bernard and Plaquemines through small business capitalization. Businesses will be required to submit an application to apply for assistance, show proof of their business, and the impact sustained as a direct result of the hurricane.

### **TRADE ADJUSTMENT ASSISTANCE (TAA)**

Trade Adjustment Assistance, or TAA, aids in reducing the negative impacts of foreign imports on the U. S. workforce. The Program offers adversely affected workers (AAWs) assistance in finding suitable employment through paid allowances, training, and case management services. Eligible AAWs may experience reduced work hours, job loss due to a decline in production/sales, or be otherwise negatively impacted by the outsourcing of jobs to foreign countries. TAA offers a variety of benefits and services to eligible workers including training, income support, job search allowances, relocation allowances, and a tax credit to help pay the costs of health insurance. An added TAA benefit is the A/RTAA wage subsidy, which is available to eligible AAWs 50 years of age and older that later obtain qualifying re-employment.

TAA is an essential partner of the WIOA Dislocated Worker and Adult programs. As such, co-enrollment of TAA-certified workers in these programs is a top priority. Co-enrollment grants Trade affected participants' access to all appropriate services offered through their local American Job Centers, including but not limited to, labor market information, testing and training referrals, career planning, and follow-up services, such as childcare, to facilitate their re-entry to the workforce.

TAA entered "sunset" (termination phase) on July 1, 2022, precluding any new worker groups from being certified as TAA eligible. RTAA participants who received at least one payment before July 1, 2022 continue receiving paid subsidies. Potential worker groups/employers that may have become TAA eligible after July 1, 2022 are referred to U.S. Department of Labor for archival and future investigation after reauthorization. Existing TAA participants deemed eligible before July 1, 2022 continue to receive benefits and services.

In PY 2023, TAA-Louisiana filed one (1) new petition, this new petition filed could be certified, as it was submitted pending reauthorization. TAA continues providing outreach, benefits and services to existing participants, but was forced to halt enrollment of new RTAA participants as Trade transitioned to its sunset phase. On July 1, 2022, the termination provision under Section 285(a) of the Trade Act of 1974, as amended, took effect. Unfortunately, the Department of Labor was unable to start new petition investigations. Prior to this, Louisiana had three (3) active petitions affecting 750 workers and provided TAA services to workers under two (2) out-of-state certified petitions. Between July 1, 2022 and June 30, 2023, the TAA training program

served approximately 100 eligible AAWs. Seventeen (17) participants completed TAA training and received their credentials in the industries of Transportation, Healthcare, Contracting, Technology Services, Business, Media, Construction and Manufacturing.

<b>Trade Activity - PY2022</b> <i>(July 1, 2022 - June 30, 2023)</i>	
New Petitions Filed	1
Petitions Certified	0
Estimated Workers Affected	750
Pending Petitions	1
Number of Active Petitions	3
Total Workers Affected	850
Out of State Petitions Recognized	2
TAA Training Fund Expended	\$117,608.73
Total TAA Participants Served	1000 <sup>2</sup>
Total RTAA Participants Affected	4
Total Co-enrollments as of 6/30/2022	57
Total TAA Training Completions	17

- 1 As a result of impending reauthorization, states are unable to submit new petitions.
- 2 TAA participants served includes those that were eligible for TAA and Case Management services.

### **RAPID RESPONSE (RR)**

During PY2022, our Rapid Response team acted on 57 layoff events across the state, 15 of which came from Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification (WARN) Act notices. Approximately 44% of these events came from the retail sector. Other events included health care services, administrative support services, food services and manufacturing sectors. There were 1,030 layoffs associated with these events. In addition, Rapid Response conducted 32 worker transition assistance orientation meetings, 5 workshops and 2 job fairs for 19 companies attended by 375 impacted workers.

Our team utilized a hybrid approach where services were offered both in-person and virtually. Regardless of the approach, our Rapid Response team invites support staff from Unemployment Insurance, local American Job Center, Veterans and Trade Adjustment Assistance programs to participate in the services provided. When appropriate, other service providers may also be invited to participate.

Other notable activities:

**Targeted Outreach** - To better facilitate our outreach efforts, each of our regional Rapid Response coordinators are required to make a minimum of 10 business contacts weekly. Our coordinators work with our Industry Sector coordinators and Business Services representatives to better select targeted companies, highlighting services available and building a contact network of prospering businesses that could be leveraged for the quick placement of workers impacted by recent layoff events. Our team also coordinates with state and local economic development organizations on layoff events. These coordination efforts have enabled our team to better facilitate interaction between hiring employers and available workers.

HALOW - Rapid Response continues to encourage the hiring of recently laid off workers through the HALOW (Hire a Laid-Off Worker) initiative. Employers can visit our website and click on our HALOW link to review recently laid off worker profiles. We have received positive feedback from employers that have used HALOW to find qualified candidates to fill their internal vacancies. During PY2022, there were 148 workers from 4 layoff events highlighted on our HALOW page.

Layoff Aversion - We continue to plan and develop our LATTE (Layoff Aversion Training & Technical Expertise) and SEWN (Strategic Early Warning Network) initiatives. We have followed up our PY2021 training with Steel Valley Authority with follow-up meetings with core team members from Louisiana Economic Development and the Manufacturing Extension Partnership of Louisiana to develop a strategy for buy-in and implementation. We are actively seeking a Turnaround Management Consultant to join our core team. This initiative aims to identify companies "at risk" and offer them specialized consultation services to help them succeed. To assist in identifying these "at risk" companies, we are exploring a subscription to Dun and Bradstreet EconoVue system to use as a predictive analytical tool.

Mobile Workforce Centers - We maintain two mobile workforce centers to use in times of disasters to provide needed Rapid Response services across the state. We were very fortunate not to have any declared disasters in our state during FY2022. However, our Mobile Workforce Centers did not sit idle. We leveraged them to participate in a plethora of job fairs, hiring events, expungement events and community activities across the state. Our Mobile Workforce Center staff have assisted individuals with registering for work, developing resumes, completing job applications and referrals for services. During PY2022, we attended 132 events and provided services to 2,151 visitors to our Mobile Workforce Centers.

Louisiana Rapid Response - Eight-Year Data Review

RR Program Year July 1 - June 30	RR Total Laid Off	RR Total Activities	RR Total Attendees
2015 - 2016	4,113	132	1,912
2016 - 2017	3,231	98	2,468
2017 - 2018	1,624	53	1,011
2018 - 2019	3,261	101	2,011
2019 - 2020	2,409	89	1,361
2020 - 2021	2,337	53	933
2021 -2022	874	21	384
2022 - 2023	1,030	39	375

**JOBS FOR AMERICA’s GRADUATES LOUISIANA (JAG LA)**

JAG-LA works with Louisiana students as early as grade 7 through grade 12 and provides services to out-of-school youth who did not thrive in the regular education setting. The core program is dedicated to providing opportunities for students challenged with life and learning hurdles, including academic, social, behavioral and economic. JAG-LA’s mission is to identify students who face barriers and guide them on to a successful path toward continued education, a meaningful career and productive adulthood.

Jobs for America’s Graduates-Louisiana (JAG-LA) Program is an affiliate of the National Jobs for America’s Graduates (JAG) Program, the nation’s largest dropout prevention program and career readiness program serving youth 12-21 years of age.

## JAG-LA 2022-2023

JAG Model	Number of Programs	Estimated Students Served
Multi-Year Program	112	7,326
Middle School Program	46	2,760
Out-of-School Program	14	490
TOTAL	172	10,

### BUSINESS SERVICES

#### REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIP

The LWC Apprenticeship Division expanded to 95 apprenticeship programs that provided employment and training to approximately 5,002 registered apprentices across Louisiana in the year. Historically, Louisiana’s apprenticeship programs have been centered around occupations with the Construction sector. Louisiana Workforce Commission continues to cultivate prospects in expanding programs to other industry sectors. As result of our efforts, the following programs were added to the state’s Registered Apprenticeship list.

- Southern University A & M College (Teacher Apprenticeship)
- Operation Spark (Application Developer)
- Pillar Homecare (Certified Nursing Assistant Apprenticeship)
- The 1881 Institute (Mechanical Engineering Technician Apprenticeship)
- Storer Institute (HVAC Technician Apprenticeship)
- Baker Gulf Coast Industrial (Pile Driver Apprenticeship)
- NOLA Electrical Training Institute (Electrician Apprenticeship)
- Career Magnet School (Welder Apprenticeship)
- Certification Point Inc. (IT Generalist & IT Specialist)
- Chris Rinehart Plumbing, LLC. (Plumber)
- Bottom Line Equipment (Operating Engineer Apprenticeship)
- BASF North America Geismar Louisiana (Process Operator Technician Apprenticeship)
- Ready Power (Gas Main Fitter Apprenticeship)
- North American Shipbuilding (Welder, Pipefitter, Electrical & Shipfitter Apprenticeship)
- LASHIP (Welder, Pipefitter, Electrical & Shipfitter Apprenticeship)

The Apprenticeship Division currently has one U.S. Department of Labor grants to expand Registered Apprenticeship including On-The-Job Learning contracts, Related Technical Instruction Contract and participant Supportive Services. Grant initiatives involve creating consortia programs, increasing the number of programs and apprentices, improving apprentice retention, and improving the quality of programs.

Approximately 350 individuals were provided supported services and/or stipends in Program Year 2022. These supportive services included, but were not limited to tools/supplies, gas reimbursement, and child care services.

### **INCUMBENT WORKER TRAINING PROGRAM (IWTP)**

Louisiana’s Incumbent Worker Training Program (IWTP) creates training partnerships among the LWC, business and industry, and training providers. The IWTP benefits business and industry by assisting in the skill development of existing employees, thereby increasing employee productivity and company growth. Program funding is through a portion of Unemployment Insurance tax contributions dedicated solely for customized training.

#### **IWTP/SBET FISCAL YEAR PERFORMANCE SUMMARY**

Fiscal Year	Total Contracts & Awards	#of Participants Trained	# Employers Represented	# of Jobs Retained	# of Jobs Created	Average Wage Increase
2022-2023	\$18,146,736.00	45,366	580	25,139	1,230	14.8%
2021-2022	\$14,921,426.00	38,973	492	20,376	1,032	16.5%

FY 22-23=IWTP-128 contracts for \$16,394,742.00; SBET 693 awards for \$1,751,995  
 FY 21-22=IWTP-117 contracts for \$13,640,629.00; SBET 498 awards for \$ 1,280,797

#### **Success Stories:**

##### **Small Business Employee Training (SBET)**

The Small Business Employee Training (SBET) program continued its recovery from COVID-19 levels, with a 28 percent increase in completed training from awards and greater funding to small businesses. With the success of the SBET plumbing apprenticeship funding, a relationship began with the LWC Registered Apprenticeship program. Both programs now are exploring opportunities for training to meet the demand forecast with the federal Infrastructure Investment & Job Training act funding for the state. An SBET program employer, Rob Wise of IT Inspired, featured representing the Information Technology field in one of the public service announcements filmed and distributed about the IWTP, described IWTP as “an amazing resource for our employees . . . they feel more empowered with this type of training.”

##### **Incumbent Worker Training Program (IWTP) - Customized**

Employers taking part in IWTP Customized Employee Training spoke about their experience with the program in four public service announcements produced with the LWC Public Information unit. The experience of Brian Champagne, an employee of LeBeouf Towing, who used the program to train for promotions from deckhand eventually to port captain was one of the Customized stories highlighted in the videos. One of the consortium projects for IWTP Customized training, which allow groups of employers with similar training needs to combine, is the subject of a video on the Electrical Training Alliance, which partners with the electrician’s union and training providers in a multi-party grant. “IWTP has enhanced our program . . . the on-the-job training combined with the classroom training - it’s really



unbeatable and it's really changed the entire dynamic of our program," was the endorsement given by Matt Green, the director of the alliance.

## THE WORK OPPORTUNITY TAX CREDIT (WOTC)

The Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) Program makes a federal tax credit available to employers who hire individuals from eligible target groups. Louisiana Work is responsible for facilitating this process in Louisiana. WOTC operates under federal law and directives from both the U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL) and the Internal Revenue Service. LWC, employers, employer's legal representatives, and newly hired employees are all stakeholders in the success of this program.

In order for employers to benefit from this program, their newly hired employees must be identified as part of at least one of the current active target groups specifically defined by USDOL and certified by LWC.

List the top three goals that the program addresses and LWC leveraging opportunities:

1. Goal 1: Provide a federal tax credit to participating employers (reducing their income tax liability) for hiring individuals from certain target groups who have consistently faced significant barriers to employment.
2. Goal 2: Incentivize workplace diversity and facilitate access to good jobs for American workers.
3. Goal 3: Assist targeted workers in moving from economic dependency into self-sufficiency as they earn a steady income and become contributing taxpayers.

Based on program history of an ever-evolving list of target groups including various modifications for veterans, SNAP and TANF recipients, designated community residents, at-risk youth, and the long-term unemployed, the WOTC program shows a high degree of flexibility as a policy tool.

As for the future of WOTC beyond 2021, due diligence with research, applications and deadlines will be paramount. Typically, WOTC is reauthorized annually. For the first time Congress reauthorized WOTC for 5 years through December 2025, indicating that there may be growing support for WOTC on a congressional level and support for the push to make WOTC permanent. Staying abreast of these opportunities can significantly impact Louisiana for years to come.

### WOTC Unit Operations

1. Partners - Any business or industry who employs individuals from target groups.
2. Financials - LWC WOTC operations are funded by a Calendar Year Grant from USDOLETA, currently January 1, 2020 through December 31, 2022, for a total of \$303,000.
3. Locations - The program is housed in Baton Rouge at LWC Administrative Offices; WOTC staff routinely travel to make presentations to business, industry, and other interested groups statewide.

## II. WOTC Program Metrics

### WOTC Certifications Workload

Applications Denied					54223	
Applications Certified					46136	

WOTC Target Group	# of Certified Individuals Employed	Total Tax Credit
IV-A TANF Recipient	140	\$336,000.00
Veteran Receiving SNAP Benefits	53	\$127,200.00
Disabled Veteran	5	\$24,000.00
Disabled Veteran Unemployed for 6 months	6	\$57,600.00
Veteran Unemployed for 4 weeks	173	\$415,200.00
Veteran Unemployed for 6 months	617	\$3,455,200.00
Veteran with Vocational Rehab Referral	1	\$2,400.00
Veteran not in subgroup	0	
Ex-Felon	1286	\$3,086,400.00
Designated Community (Poverty) Resident	1593	\$3,823,200.00
Vocational Rehab Referral	449	\$1,077,600.00
Snap Recipient	37987	\$91,168,800.00
SSI Recipient	397	\$952,800.00
Long term TANF	34	\$306,000.00
Unemployed Veteran	0	
Disconnected Youth	0	
Lon-term Unemployed	3395	\$8,148,000.00
<b>Total Calendar Year 2022</b>	<b>46136</b>	<b>\$ 112,980,400.00</b>

### III. Outcomes

Each certified application represents an individual from a targeted group (significant employment barriers) that has attained employment.

### IMPLEMENTING SECTOR STRATEGIES

Louisiana is actively supporting industries facing significant challenges by implementing three new sector strategies while also maintaining focus on two critical sectors. The primary objectives are to establish Regional Sector Partnerships to identify workforce development challenges and create tailored solutions for these challenges. The identified Industry Sectors are Transportation & Logistics, Coastal Restoration, Broadband, Healthcare, and Hospitality.

The hospitality, transportation, and healthcare sectors have faced substantial disruptions due to the pandemic. To bolster these industries, create well-defined career paths, and increase participation, Louisiana has introduced three new Industry Sector partnerships. While these partnerships have a statewide reach, they were initially launched and concentrated in areas with specific needs. Industry

Sector Coordinators are diligently working on establishing Regional Sector Partnerships to identify and address workforce development challenges with sector-specific solutions.

Key Observations: Job orders in Healthcare, Transportation, Accommodation, and Food Service saw significant increases in Q2 of 2022 and sustained high levels throughout the year. These sectors were prioritized due to their industry sector assignments.

Quarter	Employers Contacted	Services Provided	Job Orders Entered	Job Openings
2022 - Q1	1054	2057	759	2000
2022 - Q2	989	1711	651	1788
2022 - Q3	585	1704	370	841
2022 - Q4	357	749	234	810
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3320</b>	<b>6880</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>5439</b>

### Region 1 - Hospitality

The hospitality industry plays a pivotal role in Louisiana's economy, particularly in Region 1. To address the workforce development needs of this sector, a Sector Partnership was initiated. Notable hotels in New Orleans, including The Hyatt, The Royal Sonesta, HRI Properties, The Marriott, W Hotels, The Four Seasons, Omni Hotels, The Hilton, The Aimbridge, The Sheraton, and Westin New Orleans, actively participated. Representatives from the Louisiana Lodging Association, alongside support partners from the City of New Orleans, the Louisiana Workforce Commission, and Job 1 (Orleans American Job Center), were also present.

The primary workforce challenges identified revolved around staff recruitment and retention, leading to the identification of three specific issues:

1. Retention
  - a. Transportation difficulties
  - b. Scheduling
  - c. The Generation Z workforce
2. Crime as a deterrent to potential workers in the area.
3. Hospitality unions making promises of salaries those companies consider unattainable.

Retention emerged as the most pressing concern, prompting the group to initiate collaborative efforts to find solutions. The Hospitality Industry Sector Coordinator has reached out to experts in Gen Z Workforce and Flexible Scheduling to work with Sector Partners in crafting solutions.

### Region 2 - Coastal Restoration

The Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC) is dedicated to serving all Louisianans, including those interested in the Coastal Restoration Sector. In partnership with the Coastal Protection and Restoration Agency (CPRA), LWC is committed to identifying the needs of businesses awarded contracts for coastal projects across the state. LWC conducts various employer recruitment and engagement activities, such as job fairs and on-the-job training (OJT) to secure employees whose occupation is to combat coastal land loss, mitigate flood risks, and maximize land restoration efforts.

LWC collaborates with the Coastal Restoration Protection Authority, addressing coastal and workforce issues. The LWC/CPRA Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) underscores the implementation of the LA First (1st) Hiring Act and the collaboration to connect job opportunities arising from coastal projects to Louisiana workers through LWC. The LWC Resiliency Coordinator and other statewide partners work collaboratively on projects supporting coastal resiliency, aligning with the Coastal Master Plan. An essential component of the MOU involves quarterly meetings to discuss upcoming projects, contract awards, and connecting contractors with local workforce development boards.

The Louisiana Workforce Commission and the Coastal Protection Restoration Authority work in tandem to fulfill the roles and responsibilities outlined in the MOU, leading to various activities, including Coastal Day and Coastal Stakeholder Convening that connected over 100-interested stakeholder's activities to coastal work opportunities and LWC services.

### **Statewide - Transportation**

The transportation sector retains its critical importance across the state. To address the workforce development needs of this sector, a Sector Partnership was initiated. Representatives from the transportation sector, including entities like Razorback Rentals LLC, Lafayette Utility System, Lafayette Consolidated Government, PMI/PTL, Barriere Construction, TDs Trucking, Training & Technology LLC, Bengal Transportation, Freedom Trucks, R Group II, and the Louisiana Motor Transportation Association, actively participated. Support partnerships included SLCC, Coastal Truck Driving School, the Louisiana Workforce Commission, the Louisiana Community Technical College System, South Louisiana Community College, Coastal Trucking School, and Baton Rouge Community College.

The significant shortage of CDL drivers in Louisiana prompted the identification of several workforce development challenges:

- Limited insurance providers for trucks in the state.
- Infrastructure issues related to truck travel in specific areas.
- Delays in testing for examiners, necessitating re-testing of existing examiners.
- Inequitable distribution of WIOA (Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act) funds, with some local areas lacking support for CDL training.
- Limitations on permit testing at training facilities, allowing testing only at the end of CDL training.
- The prevalence of manual transmissions in older trucks, while new trucks use automatic transmissions.
- Challenges associated with transporting oversized loads within Louisiana.
- Shortage of individuals pursuing training for Diesel Tech positions.

Efforts are ongoing to increase the number of drivers, leading to the launch of "Drive Your Future 2.0" in late 2022.

### **Drive Your Future 2.0**

This initiative aimed to alleviate the truck driver shortage across the state by offering training grants to qualified applicants. These grants covered tuition for accredited truck driving schools, with a particular emphasis on enrolling veterans and underemployed individuals. With a total budget of \$563,545,000,

Louisiana partnered with the Louisiana Technical Community College System, Diesel Driving Academy, and Coastal Truck Driving School to establish 100 training slots statewide.

As of October 27, 2023, 97 eligible participants have completed CDL training, and 53 of these graduates are currently employed in the transportation industry.

### **Region 7 - Healthcare**

A Healthcare Sector Partnership was launched in Northwest Louisiana, with participation from representatives of the healthcare industry and support partners. Healthcare providers present included CHRISTUS Shreveport-Bossier Health, DeSoto Regional Health System, Natchitoches Regional Medical Center, Claiborne Memorial Medical Center, Brentwood Hospital, Minden Medical Center, Natchitoches Reg. Medical Center, Pathology Resource Network, Willis Knighton Health System, Ochsner LSU Health, LSU Health Shreveport, Barksdale Air Force Base, CHRISTUS Bossier Emergency Services, and Angie White, COO of North Louisiana Economic Partnership (NLEP). Support agencies, including the City of Shreveport (LWDA 71), CDC (LWDA 70), and the Louisiana Workforce Commission, were also in attendance.

The discussions centered on various workforce development issues:

- Requirements for nursing instructors to have a Master's Degree (MSN) to teach in Louisiana, hindering nurses with a Bachelor's Degree (BSN) from teaching, as allowed in other states.
- Age restrictions, necessitating individuals to be 18 years of age to work in healthcare in Louisiana.
- The need for training in Sexual Pediatric Assault (SANE – Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner), addressing high burnout rates in this field.
- Shortages of technicians (e.g., EKG, Radiation, Patient Care Technician) and nursing staff.
- Insufficient basic customer service skills across various levels.
- Difficulties in recruiting healthcare professionals outside of NW Louisiana due to negative public perceptions.
- Issues related to agency nurses, including loyalty concerns, lack of specific training, poor attitudes, and unrealistic pay requirements, straining hospital budgets.

Identified issues have been prioritized, leading to the formation of committees currently working on addressing recruitment and retention, education and training, and policy and regulations.

### **Grow with Google**

This initiative is a direct response to the growth of the Information Technology Sector, which continued to expand during the pandemic, prompting increased interest in pursuing employment in this field.

The Grow with Google scholarships, funded through a partnership between the National Association of State Workforce Agencies (NASWA) and Google, aim to make 30,000 program scholarships available nationwide. Google offers career certificates in high-growth fields such as project management, user experience (UX) design, data analytics, IT support, digital marketing, and e-commerce.

The program features self-paced classes offered through Coursera, requiring under 10 hours of flexible study per week and taking an average of three to six months to complete. It includes hands-on projects and employer connections, with graduates gaining free access to career resources such as coaching

sessions, mock interviews, resume-building tools, and access to the Google Career Certificates employer consortium.

The Louisiana Workforce Commission has 500 scholarships for job seekers, which cover Google certifications in various fields, including IT support, project management, data analytics, UX design, digital marketing, and IT automation with Python. The program has witnessed significant engagement, with numerous individuals completing courses and earning certifications.

<u>Google Specialization Certifications Offered</u>	<u>Google Certifications Earned</u>
Google IT Support	7
Google Project Management	4
Google Data Analytics	10
Google UX Design	1
Google Digital Marketing & E-Commerce	3
Google IT Automation with Python	1

<u>Google General Program Information</u>	<u>Google Completion Numbers</u>
Google Certifications Offered	6
Google Certifications Earned	26
Google Single Courses Offered	39
Google Single Courses Completed	320
Google Program License Invitations Issued	434
Google Program License Invitations Used	320
Individuals Achieving 1 Course Completion	97
Individuals Achieving 50% or more Course Completion	18

## **SUMMARY**

Louisiana is constantly expanding as engaging traditional and non-traditional partnerships to ensure the integration of activities and continuous evaluation and quality improvements in WIOA policy implementation across the state for success.