

LOCAL PLAN UPDATE

WORKFORCE INNOVATION AND OPPORTUNITY ACT

Local Area #11 – Northern Virginia

SUBMITTED BY

Virginia Career Works - Northern

2022-2024

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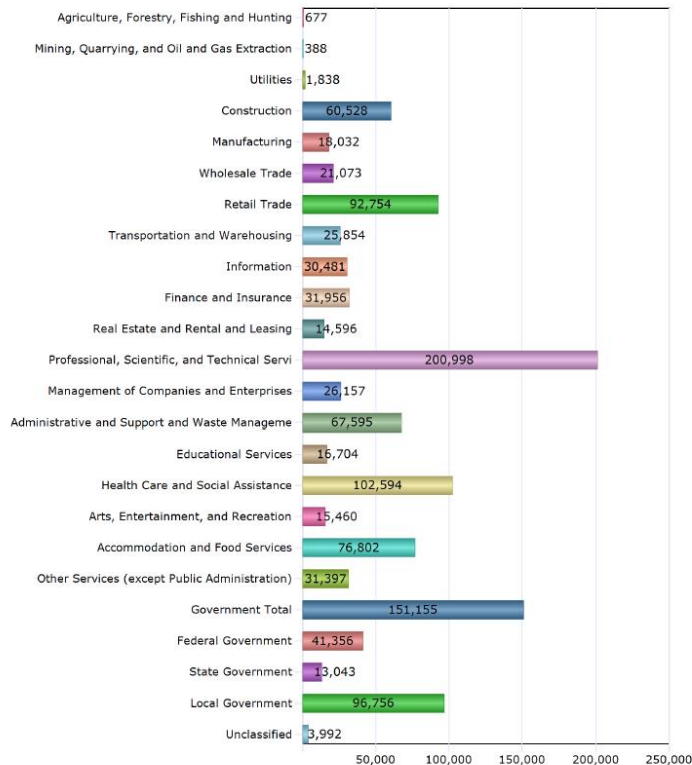
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Section 1: Workforce and Economic Analysis

1.1 A descriptive analysis of the regional economic conditions, including existing and emerging in-demand industry sectors and occupations; and the employment needs of employers in those industry sectors and occupations. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(1)(A)]

The Northern Virginia employment composition is primarily driven by five industry types, including Professional and Business Services (which includes Information Technology occupations), Health Care, Retail Trade, Food and Hospitality and Construction. According to Northern Virginia occupational data from June 2022 reflected in the chart below, from the Virginia Employment Commission (VEC) Local Community Profile for Area #11, the five targeted industry types include 533,676 jobs or 54% of the entire local workforce area employment profile. Significant employment levels in Federal, State and Local Government (151,155 jobs or 15%) are not counted as an employment focus of Virginia Career Works - Northern (VCWN).

Employment by Industry



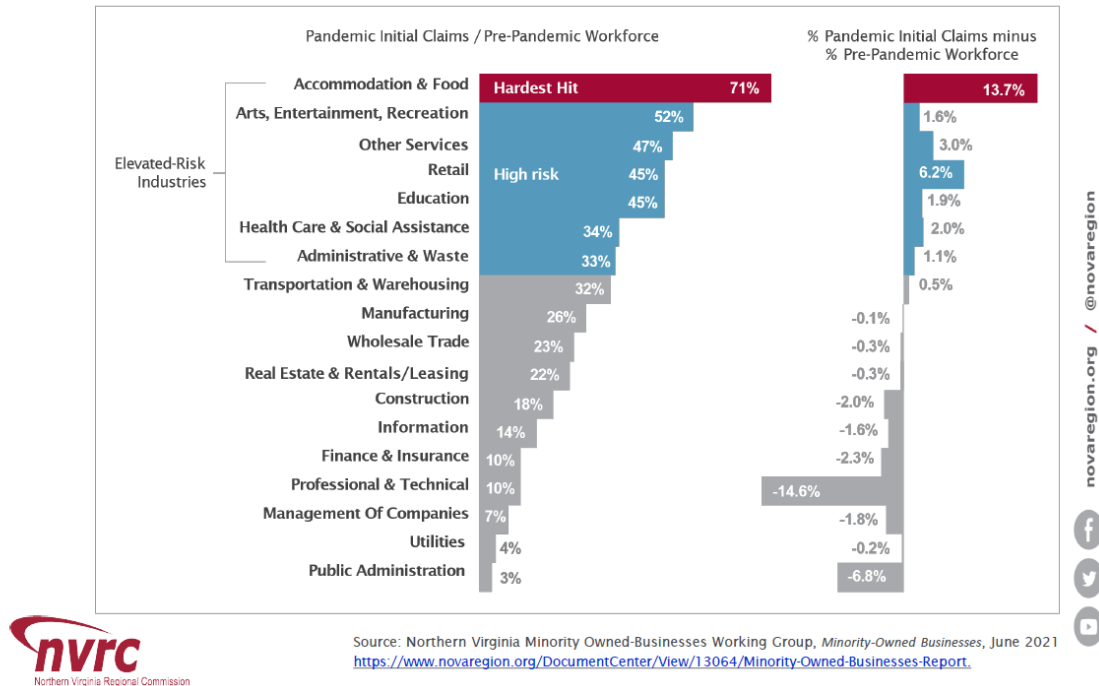
Total: 991,033

Note: Asterisk (*) indicates non-disclosable data.

Source: Virginia Employment Commission, Economic Information & Analytics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW), 2nd Quarter (April, May, June) 2022.

Unemployment in the region has fallen from a high of 10% in April 2020 to 2.6% in November 2022 (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics), meaning that the number of job opportunities that the Northern Virginia labor market offers for prepared jobseekers is rebounding from where it was earlier in the pandemic; however, according to a July 2022 Northern Virginia Regional Commission (NVRC) Report, [Economic Recovery and Transformation from Covid-19 Pandemic](#), the greatest obstacle to Northern Virginia's COVID-19 pandemic economic recovery is the labor shortage. The labor market was tight pre-pandemic and remains so, which is causing many local businesses to struggle to fill jobs. This is evidenced by the region's labor force being significantly down by 56,200 from February 2020, a high number of job postings, and a low unemployment rate that the region is currently experiencing. The chart below from the NVRC report highlights the industries in Northern Virginia that were impacted the most by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Hardest Hit Industries Due to COVID-19 in NOVA



Even with the COVID-19 pandemic, the Professional and Business Services sector continues to top the list of industries hiring in the region, with Software Developers being the most

in-demand occupation (Northern Virginia Community College). As the economy rebounds from the impact of the pandemic, the continued regional growth will depend on attracting and expanding qualified jobseekers for IT and other high-demand industries, where job and wage growth can offset less robust hiring in other sectors impacted by COVID-19. Since Amazon announced that a major part of its HQ2 operations would be located in Northern Virginia, the region's profile as a national technology and innovation hub continues to develop rapidly. Amazon's long-term goal is to invest \$2.5 billion dollars, occupy 4 million square feet of energy efficient office space, and create at least 25,000 new full-time jobs in the region. More IT employers are moving to the region, following Amazon's example, which is beginning to fuel new regional growth and demand for additional IT specialists. Northern Virginia employers' fast-growing and quickly-changing demand for skilled IT specialists continues to outpace the regional supply of trained IT specialists, forcing employers to either import IT talent from elsewhere or engage in costly bidding for experienced local IT talent. For employers, this increasing need for skilled IT talent combined with a comparatively low regional unemployment rate translates into shortages of skilled workers in many technology disciplines, with the most critical vulnerabilities in the fastest-growing IT occupations. The chart below compiled by Northern Virginia Community College details the numbers employed in IT positions by occupation and the projected regional annual growth.

TOP OCCUPATIONS (BY PROJ. GROWTH)

Occupation	Employment	LQ	Proj. Ann. Growth
Information Security Analysts	11,142	7.2	2.4%
Software Developers	44,394	3.4	2.1%
Software Quality Assurance Analysts and Testers	6,054	3.4	2.0%
Computer and Information Research Scientists	1,973	2.1	1.9%
Operations Research Analysts	1,096	3.5	1.9%
Web and Digital Interface Designers	3,472	3.7	1.8%
Web Developers	2,338	2.4	1.7%
Computer Occupations, All Other	8,060	2.1	1.2%
Computer User Support Specialists	11,178	1.7	1.1%
Computer and Information Systems Managers	7,884	1.7	0.9%
Database Architects	2,818	6.0	0.5%
Computer Systems Analysts	13,224	2.7	0.4%

Source: Lightcast Analyst (2022.4 release)

As noted in the NVRC report, an assessment of job postings by industry shows that those industries that have an increase in job postings from the pre-pandemic days are retail trade, educational services, accommodations and food services, and health care and social assistance (see table below). These industries are low-wage industries that were among the hardest hit by the pandemic. By the end of 2021, almost two years into the pandemic, these industries continued to have job postings well above pre-pandemic days is an indication that these industries are likely struggling with a shortage of workers due to many people transitioning to new, higher-wage careers in the pandemic and societal shifts transforming these industries during the pandemic.

Job Posting by Industry in NOVA

INDUSTRY	2019 Q4	2021 Q4	# CHANGE	% CHANGE
Retail Trade	7,168	9,101	1,933	27%
Educational Services	2,884	3,442	558	19%
Accommodation & Food Services	5,598	6,633	1,035	18%
Health Care and Social Assistance	10,118	10,784	666	7%
Finance & Insurance	7,430	6,363	-1,067	-14%
Information	3,750	3,028	-722	-19%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	27,226	20,299	-6,927	-25%
Manufacturing	8,567	5,695	-2,872	-34%
Public Administration	7,802	4,064	-3,738	-48%
Other Services	n/a	2,766	n/a	n/a
Administrative and Support and Waste Management	5,479	n/a	n/a	n/a

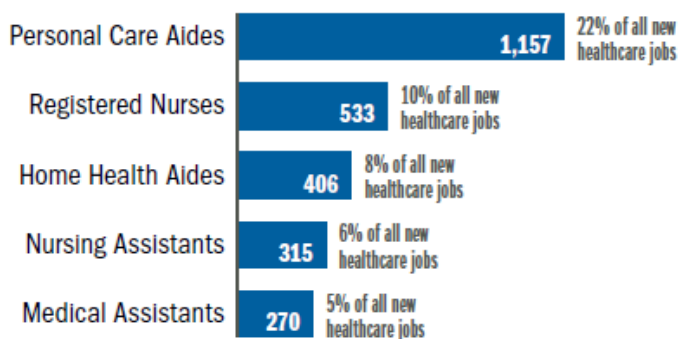


Source: Northern Virginia Community College, *State of the Workforce*, 2019 Q4 and 2021 Q4, as sourced from Burning Glass Technologies.

The Northern Virginia health care industry continues to grow as providers must meet the needs of an aging population, ongoing and changing health issues, and technology advancements. According to projections from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the health care and social assistance industry will generate the most jobs nationwide (5.7 million) over the next decade; however, the supply of graduates in many health disciplines is not keeping pace with demand for workers. Further, the population of Northern Virginia is growing at twice the rate of the nation, placing an increased demand for health care services on an already overtaxed system. This growing

demand for health care services, coupled with a static supply of graduates to replace those retiring, has resulted in a regional shortage of health care workers. The chart below from a [Northern Virginia's Healthcare Workforce 2020 Brief](#) compiled by Northern Virginia Community College identifies growth occupations within the health care sector within Northern Virginia over the next three years, with Personal Care Aides topping the list.

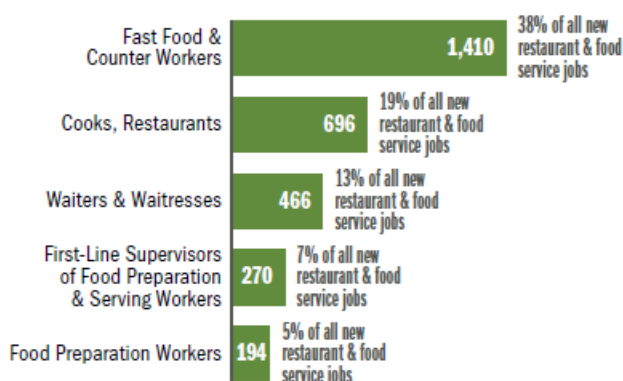
Figure 2. Healthcare Occupations Expected to Add the Most New Jobs over the Next 3 Years



Source: Chmura Economics & Analytics, JobsEQ.

While occupations in IT and Health Care call for higher-skilled and highly educated individuals, the Retail and Accommodation/Food Service industries are also one of the fastest growing sectors in the region. According to a [Northern Virginia's Hospitality & Entertainment Workforce 2020 Brief](#) compiled by Northern Virginia Community College, 38% of all new jobs expected to be added over the next three years in the Northern Virginia region will be for fast food and counter workers (which includes cafeteria workers). Other food preparation and serving workers and their immediate supervisors/managers are expected to make up an additional quarter of all new job growth over the same time period. *SkillSource* has established multiple relationships with local retail employers through other partnerships and offer National Retail Federation (NRF) certifications to individuals being placed into employment in the Retail and Accommodation/Food Service sectors.

**Figure 2. Restaurant & Food Service Occupations
Expected to Add the Most New Jobs over the Next 3 Years**



Source: Chmura Economics & Analytics, JobsEQ.

1.2 A descriptive analysis of the knowledge and skills required to meet the employment needs of the employers in the local area, including employment requirements for in-demand industry sectors and occupations. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(1)(B)]

As appropriate, a local area may use an existing analysis, which is a timely current description of the regional economy, to meet the requirements of this section. Local areas are encouraged to utilize regional economic development strategic plans in the identification and prioritization of industry sectors.

To meet the growing demand of Northern Virginia's top industries to fill the thousands of new jobs that are projected over the next five to ten years, Area #11 has identified the top skills that local employers are seeking. These skills apply to multiple industries and are representative of the skills that the Virginia Career Works - Northern Center staff must assess job seekers for to ensure they are meeting the demands of area businesses. The tables below show the top 15 advertised specialized and baseline skills requested in job openings advertised online in Northern Virginia as of December 2021 ([Northern Virginia State of the Workforce, 2021 4th Quarter](#)).

Top Specialized Skills Requested
by number of job postings

01. Customer Service.....	17,317
02. Scheduling	14,323
03. Project Management	10,545
04. Budgeting	9,977
05. Vaccination.....	9,551
06. Sales	9,455
07. Customer Contact.....	7,564
08. Software Development	7,058
09. Account Closing	6,710
10. Python	6,701
11. Java	6,316
12. SQL.....	6,176
13. Linux	5,234
14. Software Engineering	5,093
15. Staff Management	4,968

Top Baseline Skills Requested
by number of job postings

01. Communication Skills	39,612
02. Teamwork / Collaboration	23,037
03. Planning	17,338
04. Organizational Skills	16,498
05. Problem Solving	15,851
06. Writing.....	15,280
07. Detail-Oriented.....	14,294
08. Research.....	13,968
09. Microsoft Office	13,747
10. Microsoft Excel	13,641
11. Physical Abilities	10,878
12. Written Communication	10,233
13. Troubleshooting	8,728
14. Creativity	8,527
15. Multi-Tasking.....	8,079

Workforce Area #11 targets ongoing outreach and training efforts on high-growth and high demand occupations within the identified industries relevant to Northern Virginia, based on labor market information primarily from the Virginia Employment Commission and Northern Virginia Community College. By this review, Workforce Area #11 remains assured its workforce and training initiatives are matching workforce supply with business demand. Area #11 recognizes that effective career pathway programs lead job seekers to attain postsecondary credentials that are valued within the regional labor market. In Northern Virginia, these credentials are applicable in different industry clusters, including the top five industry sectors previously highlighted. For certain industry sectors, particularly IT, stackable credentials allow job seekers to build their qualifications over time and move up their career ladder to potentially upper level positions that pay higher wages. These credentials build upon one another, with each credential adding more value to the job seeker's resume and salary level.

The table below shows the top 15 detailed certification requirements found in job openings advertised online in Northern Virginia as of December 2021 ([Northern Virginia State of the Workforce, 2021 4th Quarter](#)).

Top Certifications by number of job postings

01. Security Clearance	12,471
02. Driver's License	8,807
03. Project Management Certification.....	2,481
04. Registered Nurse	2,392
05. CompTIA Security+	2,128
06. First AID/CPR/AED	1,758
07. Certified Information Systems Security Professional (CISSP)	1,656
08. IT Infrastructure Library (ITIL) Certification.....	1,569
09. Basic Life Saving (BLS)	1,280
10. Certified Public Accountant (CPA)	1,095
11. SANS/GIAC Certification	991
12. Cisco Certified Network Associate (CCNA).....	895
13. Certified Information Systems Auditor (CISA)	775
14. Advanced Cardiac Life Support (ACLS) Certification	729
15. Basic Cardiac Life Support Certification.....	694

1.3 An analysis of the local workforce, including current labor force employment (and unemployment) data, information on labor market trends, and the educational and skill levels of the workforce in the region, including individuals with barriers to employment. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(1)(C)]

The total population of the Northern Virginia Workforce Area #11 regional labor market exceeds 2.5 million and has a civilian labor force of 1,401,953 with a participation rate of 72.6% (Northern Virginia Regional Commission). This densely-populated suburban region of Northern Virginia is acknowledged as a distinct economic region that serves as the business center of the wider Northern Virginia area, giving way to more rural counties located south and west from Washington D.C. With the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of residents living below the poverty level in Northern Virginia is higher than it has been in the past, and the affluence of the region exerts especially daunting pressure on low-income adults that must contend not only with the barriers of poverty and lack of education, job skills and support systems, but also with an array of cultural and social challenges when seeking employment. The median household income in the NOVA is \$117,108 and the median house value is \$513,197. Unemployment in the region has fallen from a high of 10% in April 2020 to 2.6% in November 2022 (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics), meaning that the number of job opportunities that the Northern Virginia labor market offers for prepared jobseekers is rebounding from where it was earlier in the pandemic. Given this and the high median household income, the region also has population segments numbering in the tens of thousands with barriers to success preventing them from benefiting from the region's economic growth, and their education and career success is key to economic recovery and continued regional economic competitiveness.

With a low unemployment rate relative to the rest of the nation and a labor force participation rate of 71.5% in Fairfax County, and similar rates in other jurisdictions within Northern Virginia, the region is approaching a challenging dilemma of a regional economy where

a significant portion of the labor force is employed. When looking at the employment status for those below poverty, a significantly higher proportion are unemployed, not in the labor force, or are underemployed and working in part-time positions, and would benefit from the additional training and certification opportunities available through the public workforce system. It is estimated that possibly as many as nearly 70,000 individuals are currently not part of the Northern Virginia labor force, but want a job (Northern Virginia Regional Commission).

Information on labor market trends

As was noted earlier, while the Washington metropolitan region has experienced substantial growth, there are questions whether the region will be able to produce a steady supply of talented workers to fill in-demand occupations, particularly those that require advanced education levels. Employers in our region need more trained workers to fill high-demand occupations than our region is currently producing. An October 2016 report by the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOC), “Trends in Workforce Demand: Seven Key Economic Clusters,” identified 70 in-demand occupations in the region, and only 10 had lower education requirements (generally only a high school degree was required). Most of these positions are in Retail and Hospitality Services, and can be opportunities for jobseekers with lower educational attainment, or those with limited English proficiency that have multiple barriers to employment. These positions, however, do not provide a living wage for families. The average worker in the region earned an average weekly wage of \$1,943 as of 2021 Q4. Industry sectors, such as Accommodation and Food Services, Retail, and Health care, are all in the Very Low or Low Income Tier, as outlined in the table below (Northern Virginia Regional Commission).

Average Weekly Wage in NOVA

NOVA
Average
Weekly Wage
2021 4Q

\$1,943



INDUSTRY	INCOME TIER	2019 4Q	2020 4Q	2021 4Q	AVERAGE ANNUAL CHANGE
Accommodation and food services	Very Low	\$512	\$514	\$598	8%
Retail trade	Very Low	\$727	\$830	\$912	13%
Arts, entertainment, and recreation	Very Low	\$1,099	\$1,292	\$1,053	-2%
Educational services	Low	\$983	\$1,173	\$1,325	17%
Transportation and warehousing	Low	\$1,174	\$1,224	\$1,335	7%
Health care and social assistance	Low	\$1,175	\$1,390	\$1,401	10%
Administrative and waste services	Low	\$1,193	\$1,382	\$1,428	10%
Other services, except public administration	Low	\$1,248	\$1,391	\$1,435	8%
Construction	Middle	\$1,505	\$1,666	\$1,730	7%
Real estate and rental and leasing	Middle	\$1,539	\$1,745	\$1,849	10%
Manufacturing	Middle	\$1,681	\$2,107	\$1,874	6%
Public administration	High	\$2,178	\$2,314	\$2,366	4%
Utilities	High	\$2,379	\$2,674	\$2,772	8%
Wholesale trade	High	\$2,424	\$2,727	\$2,876	9%
Professional and technical services	Very High	\$2,543	\$2,755	\$2,886	7%
Finance and insurance	Very High	\$2,600	\$3,381	\$3,235	12%
Information	Very High	\$2,664	\$2,945	\$3,284	12%
Management of companies and enterprises	Very High	\$2,985	\$3,239	\$3,538	9%

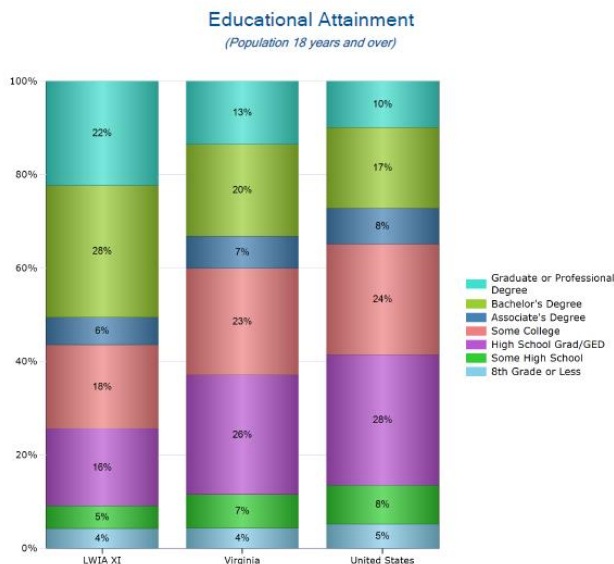
Source: Northern Virginia Regional Commission analysis of Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages*, retrieved June 30, 2022.

The MWCOG report states that all of the key economic clusters identified placed job postings for STEM-intensive occupations, particularly IT occupations. With the demand for qualified, educated workers outpacing supply, the need for additional education and training for those with barriers such as literacy and language skills are key in order to fill even middle-skill occupations. A Greater Washington Workforce Development Collaborative report notes that an estimated 30-46% of job openings in the region during the next five years will be “middle-skill,” or require more than a high school diploma but less than a four-year degree. The development of Bridge and career pathways programs that will help individuals who are unemployed and underemployed gain the necessary skills and education to meet this demand will be key to continued economic growth in the region.

Educational and skill levels of the workforce, including individuals with barriers to employment

Jobseekers within the Northern Virginia region are highly educated. Approximately 50%

of jobseekers in the region hold Bachelor's Degrees or higher, significantly higher than the 27% national average. The table below shows the educational attainment levels of jobseekers in the region, versus the Commonwealth and the nation (VEC Local Community Profile for Area #11).



Without having some type of education and necessary skills, it is very difficult to obtain employment with family-sustaining wages in the region, as the majority of employers are looking for a skilled workforce to fill their job openings. Particularly in a region such as Northern Virginia, which has 600,000 total immigrants (26% of population), having applicable certifications and skills are key. Almost 50% of adult immigrants have Bachelor's Degrees, although one-third work in jobs that pay \$12/hour or less (Source: L. Goren & M. Cassidy. The Facts about Immigrants and Their Contributions to the Northern Virginia Economy. The Commonwealth Institute, June 2016). While many immigrants work in major industries within Northern Virginia, they outnumber U.S. born workers in lower skilled sectors such as Food Service, Retail, and Construction.

The Northern Virginia region has experienced a significant increase in the refugee population over the past year. In 2021, the Biden administration evacuated and resettled more than 70,000 Afghan refugees, setting up processing centers across the country, the largest being the Operation Allies Welcome Safe Haven facility in Loudoun County, which has received more than

4,300 Afghans resettled in Northern Virginia between March 1 – August 11, 2022 (CBS News, [“Afghan families start U.S. resettlement process at repurposed conference center,”](#) August 11, 2022). Of the 12,387 refugees resettled in Virginia through 2021, 6,290 (or 50%) were resettled in Northern Virginia (Virginia Department of Social Services, Office of Newcomer Services). Fairfax County is the second largest County population of Afghan refugees in the country, and the Washington DC metropolitan area, including Northern Virginia, has the highest concentration nationally of immigrants from Afghanistan and other countries (Migration Policy Institute, [“Afghan Immigrants in the United States,”](#) September 9, 2021). Partner resettlement agencies report overwhelm and request volunteers for employment and resume support, transportation, and mentoring.

Often, refugees who have re-settled in the U.S. have acquired high levels of educational attainment in their home countries, in addition to valuable work experience; however, these foreign degrees, certifications, and work experiences are overlooked by U.S. educational institutions and employers. They often are forced to accept part-time employment in low-income positions with limited growth opportunities, rarely with any HR benefits. According to a [Brown University Watson Institute International and Public Affairs Report](#) from April 2021, though 45% of SIVs have an undergraduate degree from a foreign university, many that do find employment in the U.S. tend to work in menial jobs for which they are overqualified and that provide few benefits. The need to find immediate employment during the 90-day Resettlement and Placement period means that refugees are placed into survival jobs that result in little to no career advancement. This population, with access to training and certifications, could help to fill the workforce shortage in the region.

1.4 An analysis of the workforce development activities (including education and training) in the region to address the identified education and skill needs of the workforce and the employment needs of employers in the region [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(1)(D)]

In the Northern Virginia Workforce Area, having a credential or degree has become increasingly necessary in order to earn a meaningful living that will support a family. Recent job openings posted in the Northern Virginia Workforce Area show that nearly 55% require a Bachelor's Degree at minimum. Area #11 encourages job seekers to attain credentials and certifications in high-demand occupations within targeted industry sectors in order for them to obtain higher paying employment. Virginia Career Works - Northern Centers continue to provide basic skills and career assessments such as the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) and CareerScope for post-secondary education and training opportunities to Center customers. It must be noted, however, that these current Center assessments are not recognized by higher education institutions as a means of accessing college-level classes and training. For example, both Northern Virginia Community College and George Mason University use their own entrance testing to determine appropriate selection and entrance of students.

The Northern Virginia Workforce Area's Individual Training Account vouchers (ITAs) are the most commonly used methods for job seekers to access training and certifications. The Northern Virginia ITA Policy gives WIOA jobseekers the opportunity to choose among eligible training programs to achieve their skills training employment goals. Customer choice accompanied by effective career coaching is utilized to purchase WIOA training for job seekers. Training is available to jobseekers for skill upgrades or to gain access into a new occupation. Customers gain the skills and credentials needed by choosing from an updated and comprehensive list of Eligible Training Providers (ETPs) specific to their identified needs. The Northern Virginia Eligible Training Provider List has over 65 ETPs and hundreds of training programs that have been

approved by the VCWN Quality Assurance Committee. In Northern Virginia, the value of an Individual Training Account funded through WIOA Formula funding shall not exceed \$5,000. If a jobseeker obtains multiple certifications, the threshold can increase to \$6,500. A priority is placed on short-term certification, so nearly all training activities do not exceed eight to nine months in duration. If necessary, the VCWN policy allows case managers to refer higher cost vouchers to the VCWN Executive Director for approval.

In FY 2016, State policy that mandated all workforce development boards expend at least 40% of WIOA Adult and Dislocated Worker funds on training expenses went into effect, which had a significant impact on the amount spent on training in Area #11. The industry sectors associated with the highest ITA expenditures are IT, Transportation and Healthcare, which mirror labor market information for the in-demand industries in Northern Virginia. In FY 2022, Area #11 spent \$557,849 in ITA training and issued 213 ITAs.

The Governor of Virginia, the Governor's Workforce Advisor and the Virginia Secretary of Commerce and Trade have placed a strong emphasis on credential attainment, and the Northern Virginia public workforce system has made a high priority of meeting the State's goals to increase credential attainment. In FY 2022, the One-Stop Operator for the Northern Virginia Workforce Area #11, the Fairfax County Department of Family Services, aided jobseekers in attaining 179 credentials. Area #11 has worked with its One-Stop Operator to expedite career services at the Virginia Career Works – Northern Centers to assist clients with entering training at an accelerated rate. In FY22, most credentials were earned in Information Technology, Healthcare, and Transportation.

Area #11 has incorporated innovative uses of technology in order to meet the training needs of employed adults and nontraditional learners by offering more training online, particularly given

the COVID-19 Pandemic. Historically, only a handful of Northern Virginia Area #11's Eligible Training Providers (ETPs) had provided their training courses online; now, many of the ETPs, particularly those offering IT training, are offering online training options. Area #11 sees this as a necessary option for individuals that cannot attend in-person training during the pandemic, or may face other challenges such as childcare issues, transportation barriers, employment commitments, etc. Some job seekers also prefer to learn at their own pace or retain information better through asynchronous training opportunities.



The pandemic has accelerated the need for skilled workers, with micro credentials now being referenced as a cost-effective training method to address workforce shortages. Micro credentials are short courses that cultivate and verify a particular skill, knowledge or competency that employers want, and help learners bridge their preexisting skills and knowledge to meet rapidly changing labor market demands without removing them from the workforce. Micro-

credentials offer shorter and faster markers of critical skill acquisition, which helps students and learners better align their educational needs with dramatically changing labor markets, without diminishing the breadth, quality and rigor of a degree. Area #11 is able to connect jobseekers to micro credentials by offering free licenses for LinkedIn Learning to customers, an online learning platform that offers thousands of free video courses taught by industry experts in software, creative, and business skills.

1.5 An analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the workforce development activities identified in 1.4 and the capacity to provide these services [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(1)(D)]

The strengths of the Virginia Career Works Northern workforce development activities reflect our continued focus on fast-growing industries and occupations in the Northern Virginia

region. For over fifteen years, we have focused our WIOA case management staff on enhancing their familiarity with the region's labor market characteristics, its changes over the past decade and the employer's demands for a skilled and credentialed labor force. Our outcomes are highlighted in the substantial commitment of WIOA funding for jobseeker training, the large number of approved training providers that are engaged with the Virginia Career Works and the variety of occupations and industries that are supported through the public workforce system.

The identified weaknesses in our workforce activities are primarily driven due to the recent data that indicates that the Northern Virginia labor force significantly declined following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020 and to-date remains significantly below pre-pandemic levels. The Northern Virginia labor force was at its lowest in January 2021, representing a loss of 85,000 individuals compared to February 2020 (Northern Virginia Regional Commission). As COVID-19 restrictions have eased, and jobseekers are returning to the labor force, there still are currently not enough workers to meet the labor force demands across various industries in the region. Area #11 is creating new programs, such as one targeted to providing employment assistance to refugees, to help train and upskill workers to meet this demand, through certifications and work-based learning.

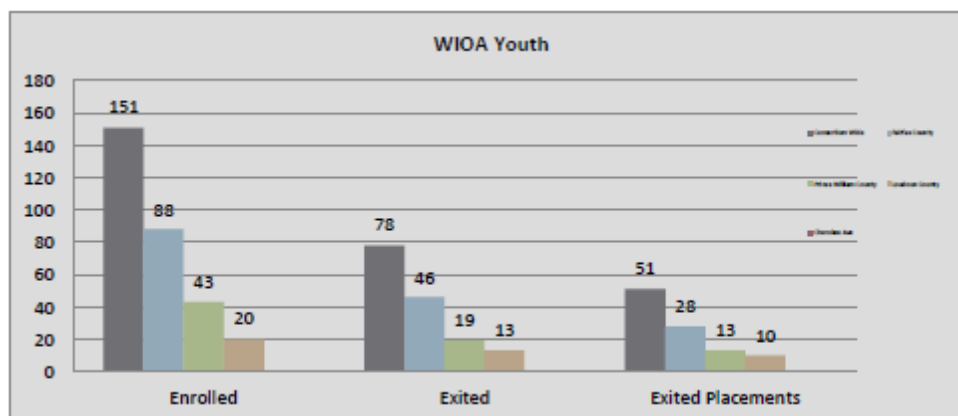
1.6 Describe and assess the type and availability of youth workforce investment activities in the local area including activities for youth with disabilities, which must include an identification of successful models of such activities. Please include:

- Local area's strategy for ensuring the availability of comprehensive services for all youth
- How the area will identify and select successful providers of youth activities and delivery of the fourteen youth program elements required under WIOA
- Strategies to ensure that all eligible WIOA youth receive access to the required program elements and activities during their enrollment in the WIOA youth program
- How the required program design elements will be addressed as part of the development of youth service strategies
- Strategies to identify, recruit, and retain out-of-school youth, and efforts to ensure the required percent of WIOA youth funds are expended

- Policy regarding serving youth who do not meeting income eligibility guidelines, including appropriate referrals
 - Efforts to coordinate with Job Corps, youth opportunity grants where applicable, registered apprenticeship programs, local offices on youth, and other youth services, including those administered through community colleges and other higher education institutions and local human services agencies
 - Efforts taken to ensure compliance with applicable child labor and safety regulations
- Pay-for-performance policy as applicable

Local area's strategy for ensuring the availability of comprehensive services for all youth

There is a broad variety of youth employment services and activities in the Northern Virginia region, with a number of both public and non-profit providers available to deliver services. An RFP was issued in 2020 to competitively bid for WIOA Youth services and Fairfax County Department of Family Services was awarded the contract, which can be renewed annually through 2025. The Area #11 WIOA Youth Program continues to be one of the largest in the Commonwealth, even though Area #11 is at 100% Out-of-School Youth enrollments, exceeding the mandatory requirement under WIOA that 75% of program spending must be for participants who are Out-of-School Youth. Through increased outreach efforts and improved partnerships with educational and community organizations, Area #11 has steadily increased the numbers of Out-of-School young adults enrolled in the program. The Northern Virginia WIOA Youth Program ended FY 2022 with 151 enrollments.



Staff have continued to serve WIOA eligible youth with individual case management services and increase program enrollments by building new partnerships and through projects customized to meet the needs of specific at-risk youth populations. With the increase in the age requirement from 21 years of age to 24 years of age, the WIOA Youth Program has worked significantly to target older young adults in outreach efforts. As a result, in FY 2020, 88% of WIOA Youth participants were between the ages of 19-24 years old. Young adults in the program have varying types of barriers, with 80% being Basic Skills Deficient and over 50% having a disability.

SkillSource and its One-Stop Operator also administer a local non-WIOA Summer Youth Program, the Educating Youth through Employment Program (EYE), which has helped nearly 1,500 young adults gain summer employment since program inception in 2006. The EYE Program provides teens and young adults, ages 17-24, with professional, paid employment opportunities at agencies, non-profit organizations and private sector companies throughout Northern Virginia. In a time when unemployment rates are at their highest amongst teens and young adults, it is programs like this that create jobs and professional opportunities that might not have otherwise existed. In addition to work experiences, young adults receive workforce development training focused on critical job readiness skills, including: workplace behavior, resume building, interviewing, networking, project management, and fiscal responsibility. In 2022, due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, SkillSource and Fairfax County DFS offered both paid work experiences for WIOA Youth, as well as a series of virtual workshops to over 40 young adults, referred by other county agencies, on employment and financial literacy topics.

How the area will identify and select successful providers of youth activities and delivery of the fourteen youth program elements required under WIOA

The VCWN and Youth Committee have used the public procurement process to identify and select the current WIOA Youth Program Provider, most recently in 2020. The Fairfax County Department of Family Services is currently delivering all fourteen (14) WIOA Youth Program elements. The VCWN and the Youth Committee are actively engaged in leveraging existing Federal, State, local and other resources to maximize resource effectiveness, particularly in youth services and programs. As new funding resources are identified, the VCWN, Youth Committee and SkillSource Group, Inc. will use competitive procurement requirements to identify and acquire additional youth service providers.

Strategies to ensure that all eligible WIOA youth receive access to the required program elements and activities during their enrollment in the WIOA youth program

WIOA Youth specialists provide participants with a comprehensive assessment, involve them in their own development, offer job readiness skills and career counseling, maintain ongoing contact, and hold youth accountable for results. The WIOA Youth Program is also able to provide tutoring services for those that need additional assistance. The WIOA Youth specialists provide soft skills training workshops to help prepare young adults for the workplace and other opportunities. Topics include: appropriate and professional behavior; job readiness skills and positive work habits; career exploration, including high demand industries; personal financial management; networking and resume building; and the benefits of higher education and certifications. The WIOA Youth Program also offers year-round paid and unpaid work experiences including internships and job shadowing, with an emphasis on the annual summer EYE program. Young adults are also assisted with GED completion, postsecondary education, and occupational skills training through the over 65 Northern Virginia Eligible Training Providers in a variety of fields. Area #11 WIOA Youth case managers also assist youth participants with their

training goals; in FY 2022, 32% of WIOA youth earned credentials in the Health Care industry and 43% earned credentials in Clerical/Administrative training.

How the required program design elements will be addressed as part of the development of youth service strategies

The VCWN has already developed new youth service strategies and initiatives in response to the required 14 program design elements required under WIOA. Financial literacy education is a required element, and while some financial literacy training had been conducted one-on-one and as part of the summer EYE workshop series, VCWN has seen a greater need to enhance financial literacy education for Northern Virginia youth participants. In 2019, *SkillSource* was selected by the United Way of the National Capital Area to launch a Financial Empowerment Center at the Virginia Career Works – Prince William Center, in partnership with Virginia Cooperative Extension – Prince William, to provide services to help individuals and families in Prince William County advance on a path toward financial stability. Services include financial coaching, small business coaching, financial workshops, and free tax preparation. *SkillSource* has utilized the PW FEC, particularly during the COVID-19 Pandemic, to integrate financial knowledge and skills-building services into the existing year-round WIOA Youth Program in Northern Virginia. This training will help WIOA Youth make financial decisions to reach their own life goals through appropriate financial capability education and access to resources to start saving for their future. WIOA Youth Program staff also utilize financial tools and curriculum through the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) to integrate into group-based learning opportunities, and in individualized services with the WIOA Youth case manager.

Leadership development is also one of the required elements in the WIOA Youth program. *SkillSource* launched the Northern Virginia Leadership Academy for participants in the WIOA

Youth Program to develop their leadership talents, as well as helping youth to recognize how their voices and actions can benefit their local communities. In 2022, *SkillSource* and its WIOA Youth Program Operator, Fairfax County DFS, held a virtual Leadership Academy for over 40 participants. The program consisted of four webinars—Resume Writing; How to Interview and Communicate; How to Maintain a Professional Social Media; and Financial Literacy—and one Career Panel. Each webinar had a follow-up assignment, including writing a resume, completing a mock interview, creating a LinkedIn account, and creating a budget sheet.

Strategies to identify, recruit and retain out-of-school youth, and efforts to ensure the required percent of WIOA youth funds are expended

Outreach efforts for older out-of-school youth includes continued collaboration with partner government agencies, faith and community based organizations, community centers, juvenile justice agencies, and programs that support school drop-outs and juvenile delinquency. Examples of these include the Choices for Success Foster Care Program, GRANTS GED Program, New Hope Housing, and Support on Suspension. The WIOA Youth Program has also collaborated with Year Up of the National Capital Area, which provides a one-year, intensive training program that provides low-income young adults, ages 18-24, with a combination of hands-on skills development, college credits, and corporate internships in the region. In the past, the Northern Virginia WIOA Youth Program has collaborated with Loudoun County Public Schools and Fairfax County Public Schools on mailings to transition students to inform them of services available through the WIOA Youth Program. Additionally, the Youth Program is introduced and available to older youth who come into the Virginia Career Works - Northern Centers located throughout the workforce area.

Policy regarding serving youth who do not meet income eligibility guidelines, including appropriate referrals

Up to 5% of WIOA youth participants served by the Northern Virginia Workforce Area #11 may be individuals who do not meet the income criteria for eligible youth, provided that they meet other WIOA criteria, such as basic skills deficient, school dropout, homeless, runaway, offender, pregnant or parenting, or face other serious barriers to employment. This is approved and closely monitored by the VCWN WIOA Supervisors.

Efforts to coordinate with Job Corps, youth opportunity grants where applicable, registered apprenticeship programs, local offices on youth, and other youth services, including those administered through community colleges and other higher education institutions and local human services agencies

Job Corps and other youth programs are resources for our program and partner with the VCWN to deliver ongoing workforce services to eligible youth in the Northern Virginia region. Job Corps used to be a *SkillSource* partner agency at the Virginia Career Works - Prince William Center and served on the Youth Committee. *SkillSource* also collaborates with the Virginia Department of Labor and Industry (DOLI), who will share information on approved registered apprenticeship opportunities that can be shared with WIOA Youth participants. A DOLI representative serves on the Northern Virginia Employer Solutions Team.

Efforts taken to ensure compliance with applicable child labor and safety regulations

All WIOA Youth case managers have a copy of the federal regulation on safety and child labor laws. Youth who enter employment, both subsidized and unsubsidized and participating employers receive a copy of child labor laws and regulations, and are informed of rights and responsibilities which cover child labor and safety laws.

Pay-for-performance policy

In 2017, *SkillSource* and VCWN launched the first WIOA Pay for Performance (P4P) initiative in Virginia, focused on increasing the numbers of foster care youth and youth offenders enrolled in the Northern Virginia WIOA Youth Program. The *SkillSource* Board had authorized 10% of Northern Virginia WIOA Youth allocations, or \$133,000, to be put towards P4P bonus payments to service providers, to allow for greater flexibility and a focus on longer-term outcomes. In 2019, due to guidance from the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL), the program was temporarily halted. *SkillSource* received approval from DOL to renew its P4P efforts in 2020, and is in process of re-launching its P4P initiative for the WIOA Youth Program in FY 2023.

1.7 Describe and assess the type and availability of adult and dislocated worker employment and training activities in the local area, including:

- Access to and delivery of career services (basic, individualized, and follow-up)
- The area's definition of self-sufficiency to be used when determining eligibility for intensive and training services for employed individuals
- The area's definition of hard-to-serve populations with additional barriers to employment

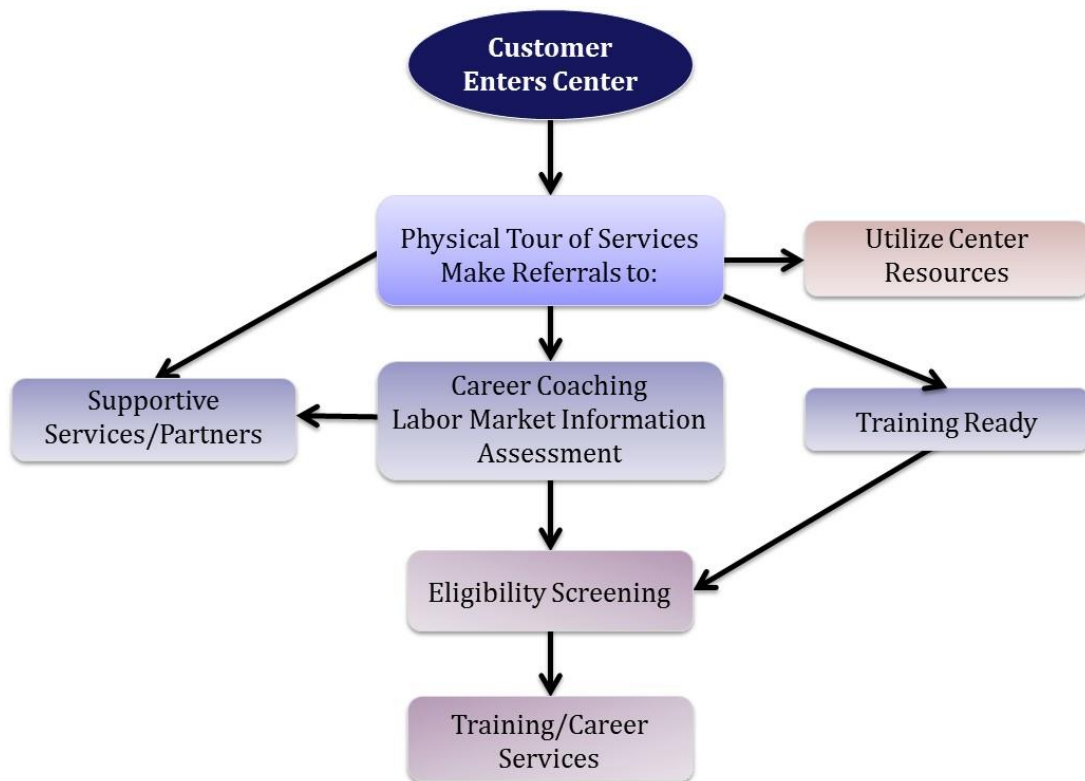
Access to and delivery of career services (basic, individualized, and follow-up)

The VCWN's One Stop Center Operator, the Fairfax County Department of Family Services, is the provider and facilitator of these services. The One Stop Operator is responsible for integrated service delivery at the six (6) Virginia Career Works - Northern Centers and supports all the VCWN policies related to oversight and implementation of the One-Stop Delivery System. Additionally, the One-Stop Operator is responsible for ensuring the service delivery system at the Center fully integrates the VCWN's protocols, policies and quality standards. Workforce services information is also available at the VCWN website at www.vcwnorthern.com.

To align with the service delivery process mandated through WIOA, the process for enrollment in the WIOA programs in Area #11 include: 1) eliminating the requirement for the sequence of services; 2) a jobseeker's access to training services is not conditionally based on

mandated activities; and 3) the One-Stop Centers provide up-front career coaching for all jobseekers. The Virginia Career Works - Northern Center Leadership Team developed a WIOA customer flow to follow the requirements that increased focus on Career Services (basic and individualized) throughout the service spectrum and increased focus on skills and development through access to training. The team also developed a new customer flow model that incorporated the key principles for change: high touch right at the front door; virtual and physical tour occurs continuously; access to a Career Coach is available to everyone; and collecting information about a customer first versus telling them what we do.

Since the WIOA roll-out of Career Service activities at the Virginia Career Works - Northern Centers, staff are now providing career coaching sessions that jobseekers are able to sign up for. Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, Area #11 has continued to deliver WIOA services through virtual methods, with enrollments being conducted securely online and meetings with case managers conducted through the use of Zoom, Skype, email, phone calls, etc. Jobseekers are still able to obtain faster access to training services with the waiting time reduced to a time period of 2-3 weeks. For jobseekers in need of GED, Commercial Driver's License (CDL), and other credentials that are in-demand by employers, jobseekers can be enrolled and start training within 1-2 weeks. Each of the five (5) Virginia Career Works - Northern Centers provides an access point for adult and dislocated worker services, and is implementing the Career Services model illustrated in the flow chart below.



The type and availability of adult and dislocated worker employment and training activities include basic, individualized, training and follow-up services.

Basic Career Services:

Access to computers, phones, and internet

Resume writing and interview preparation workshops

Career coaching

Basic employment assessments

Job lead assistance

Labor Market Information

Individualized Career Services:

Comprehensive Assessments

Individual employment planning and career counseling

Literacy activities

Training Services:

Occupational skills training

Skills upgrading

On-the-Job training

Entrepreneurial training

Follow-Up Services:

Job placement assistance

Career pathway development

Virginia Career Works - Northern Center staff do not stereotype individuals with disabilities when evaluating their skills, abilities, interests and needs, and takes into consideration the requirement to provide reasonable accommodations, reasonable modifications, and auxiliary aids and services. VCWN Center staff do not automatically refer job seekers with disabilities to State vocational rehabilitation programs, and makes referrals based on whether the individual would benefit from such services in addition to the other programs and services available in the One-Stop Centers. Case managers and job developers are trained about the range of approaches to workplace flexibility and job development, including creating employment positions for specific job seekers through negotiation with employers.

Included in the guided tour as part of the standard orientation to services is information on available modifications, assistance, and accommodations for customers who may have disabilities. All customers are routinely offered the option of meeting with staff in private offices. One-Stop staff ask all registrants (including individuals with disabilities) whether they need assistance during the registration process or if they will need some type of accommodations to take full advantage

of services and supports. Information on specific programs for customers with disabilities available at the One-Stop Center is provided to all customers so an individual customer does not have to disclose the fact that he or she has a disability in order to learn about these programs.

The area's definition of self-sufficiency to be used when determining eligibility for intensive and training services for employed individuals

Virginia Career Works – Northern defines self-sufficiency as the ability of an individual to adequately provide for the needs of oneself and family members from the earnings received from employment. To be self-sufficient, income must fall at least above the U.S. Health and Human Services Lower Living Standard Income Level (LLSIL) for the Northern Virginia region.

The area's definition of hard-to-serve populations with additional barriers to employment

Workforce Area #11 has not defined additional hard-to-serve populations with additional barriers to employment beyond the Area's Priority of Service Policy as found online on www.vcwnorthern.com

Section 2: Strategic Vision and Goals

2.1 Describe the local board's strategic vision and goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce (including youth and individuals with barriers to employment). The goals should relate to the performance accountability measures based on primary indicators of performance (found here: <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/eta/performance/performance-indicators>) to support regional economic growth and economic self-sufficiency [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(1)(E)]

SkillSource and the VCWN completed its 2021-2024, a four-year Strategic Plan for both organizations. The vision and goals identified in the Strategic Plan has aligned with the development of the Northern Virginia WIOA Local Plan. **Strategic Goal 2: Expand and improve the talent pipeline of youth and adults for businesses** in the 2021-2024 Strategic Plan specifically addresses the goal to prepare an educated and skilled workforce, including young adults and jobseekers with barriers to employment. Key Objectives are to:

- Work with training programs to ensure that placement is the focus at the end of every training program through partnerships with Virginia Career Works Centers in the region.
- Map career pathways in high demand occupations within the targeted industries to help jobseekers know the steps they need to take to become employed.
- Develop and provide navigation tools that will help jobseekers choose appropriate certificates and training.
- Strengthen workforce development strategies for adults that link education and career pathways to increased targeted sector employment opportunities, ensuring that workers have the skills needed to fill current and emerging high wage/high demand jobs.
- Strengthen workforce development strategies for youth that ensure access to education and training opportunities, particularly youth facing barriers to employment.
- Establish strong linkages with post-secondary institutions to align programming with career pathways and labor market demand.
- Promote registered apprenticeship programs.
- Build a highly efficient job placement infrastructure through alignment of local public and private services.
- Customize the service delivery processes to meet the needs of diverse populations, such as dislocated workers, older workers, veterans, low skilled adults, youth and adults with disabilities, offenders and other targeted job-seeker populations.

The Northern Virginia Workforce Area is measured annually by performance benchmarks that monitor local and statewide outcomes associated with WIOA programs and services. This includes measures for employment in the second and fourth quarters after a jobseeker has exited the WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth Programs, median earnings in the second quarter after exit,

as well as the credential attainment within four quarters after program exit and Measurable Skills Gains. Area #11 has regularly met or exceeded all WIOA performance benchmarks.

2.2 Describe how the local board's strategic vision and goals will support the strategies identified in the Virginia Combined State Plan (found here: <https://virginiacareerworks.com>).

There is close alignment between the Virginia Career Works Northern Board's strategic goals and the strategic goals of the Virginia Combined State Plan, as outlined in the table below.

Virginia Combined State Plan Goals	VCWN 2021-2024 Strategic Plan Goals
<p>1) Build Virginia's talent supply to align with current and anticipated business needs and to earn sustainable wages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Implement career pathways and credentialing priorities that align with the workforce needs of target industry sectors b) Identify and address the needs of job seekers as they recover from the COVID-19 pandemic c) Strengthen alignment of service delivery with other workforce and community programs, such as corrections, social services, public libraries, businesses, and veterans' services d) Increase the capacity of the workforce system by expanding the professional development of workforce professionals 	<p>1) Expand and improve the talent pipeline of adults and young adults for regional employers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Area #11 leads the Northern Virginia IT Employment Initiative (NVITE) Industry Sector Coalition (ISC), that brings together businesses, government, nonprofits, and educational institutions to meet employer needs by building a diverse talent pool of skilled entry-level IT workers. Area #11 and Northern Virginia Community College have also been partners together since 2005 on NoVaHealthForce, a coalition of health care providers in Northern Virginia b) Through a partnership with the Prince William County Department of Economic Development, <i>SkillSource</i> is assisting furloughed, unemployed, and underemployed residents impacted by the COVID-19 Pandemic with training, employment, and other supportive services, and helping employers to retain and hire qualified workers. c) Area #11 has two (2) employment centers in the Fairfax County Jail and the Prince William County – Manassas Adult Detention Center. Area #11 also has been awarded multiple TANF Employment Advancement grants that have been awarded through the Virginia Department of Social Services, and works closely with the local DSS agencies. d) Area #11 is committed to continuing to provide more professional development and staff training for workforce staff.

<p>2) Increase opportunities for Virginia’s businesses to fill jobs in high demand occupations that are strategic to Virginia’s economy and strengthen Virginia’s regions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Leverage state and local Business Solutions Teams to identify and address the service delivery needs of businesses b) Utilize sector strategies to engage businesses and other partners, such as economic development, education and training providers, chambers of commerce, and community organizations, to align public and private resources to address business needs c) Increase the understanding and accessibility of job-training programs, including worked-based learning, in Virginia’s high demand occupations d) Increase engagement and support to Virginia businesses that were particularly economically impacted during the COVID-19 pandemic e) Measure the placement rates, longevity, and wages of job-seeking customers to determine trends 	<p>2) Continue building sustainable partnerships with employers in the region’s targeted industries.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Area #11 has a strong Employer Solutions Team that meets monthly, comprised of representatives from multiple state and local agencies, and community partners, that collaborate to respond to employer and jobseeker needs in the region. b) Area #11 has sector strategy initiatives in IT and Healthcare, as well as partnerships with Economic Development, as referenced earlier. SkillSource is also a grant-funded partner of LEAD4IT, an employer-driven, Department of Labor-funded initiative offered by ICF International to address the shortage of skilled workers in the IT sector by assisting companies to design or expand work-based learning and training options to develop the candidates they need. c) Area #11 actively promotes WEX, OJT, and IWT to employers, and has several initiatives focusing on work-based learning. d) Area #11 has specific initiatives helping employers impacted by COVID-19, as referenced earlier. e) Area #11 actively examines job seeker outcome data through regular meetings with the WIOA One-Stop Operator team, to determine where the demand is and where any gaps exist.
<p>3) Increase outreach and recruitment efforts to make available services more well-known and accessible to stimulate job readiness and career awareness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Increase the effectiveness of work-based learning program outreach to businesses and potential participants b) Utilize data and technology, including the Workforce Data Trust and the referral portal, to make workforce services accessible to all customers c) Increase collaborations with workforce and community partners, including career and technical education (e.g., Perkins V), to promote career readiness through all training and education opportunities d) Strengthen engagement with state and local elected officials to cultivate 	<p>3) Be the regional workforce thought-leader and oversee delivery of high-quality workforce services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) As referenced earlier, Area #11 highly promotes work-based learning to businesses, and engages in a large summer youth employment program effort as well that serves WIOA Youth, in addition to youth referred by other partner agencies, in paid summer WEX. b) Area #11 has increased the use of web-based approaches to services, such as creating orientation videos for the WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth programs, monthly webinars, use of the Virginia Career Works Referral Portal, posting a fillable PDF WIOA intake packet online, and allowing jobseekers to

<p>relationships with more businesses to align their services and strategies to meet business needs</p>	<p>sign up for virtual and in-person services online.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> c) VCWN has been part of the Perkins Committee in Northern Virginia, and representatives from the public schools are part of the VCWN Board and Youth Committee. d) Area #11 actively works with its CLEOs to share information on new programs and services and to ensure alignment with local business needs. e) Area #11 has commissioned multiple workforce leadership editorials with the Washington Business Journal in 2022 and 2023, highlighting Virginia Career Works.
<p>4) Reduce workforce system barriers through collaboration and innovative solutions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Analyze labor market data to assess disparities in outcomes and develop solutions that increase opportunities for underserved populations b) Utilize the Accessibility Task Force to ensure universal service delivery across the Commonwealth c) Encourage Local Workforce Development Boards to engage non-traditional, non-mandatory programs as service delivery partners d) Leverage discretionary funds and support innovative initiatives to remove the largest barriers to employment (e.g., affordable childcare, transportation, housing, broadband access) 	<p>4) Ensure quality and diversity of funding sources to ensure a sustainable long-term impact</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Area #11 regularly has an LMI presentation at VCWN Board meetings to ensure the Board is apprised of workforce trends and disparities, and continually looks at WIOA demographic data to develop strategies to increase outreach and services to underserved populations. b) An Area #11 staff person sits on the State Accessibility Task Force. Area #11 continually looks at accessibility of Centers and programs through continuous monitoring. As SkillSource is a Ticket to Work Employment Network, serving Social Security disability beneficiaries, qualified staff are able to provide guidance on ensuring greater accessibility for customers. c) Area #11 has multiple cost-sharing partners at its Centers, including Melwood Horticultural Training Center, Educational Credit Management Corporation and the Virginia Cooperative Extension – Prince William. Multiple community partners also sit on the Employer Solutions Team. d) SkillSource is the non-profit fiscal agent for VCWN, and therefore Area #11 has been able to bring in multiple discretionary grants and funding efforts. For FY 2023, approximately 40% of the SkillSource budget is non-WIOA Formula funding.

The Virginia Career Works Northern Region targets access to our regional workforce services through our five (5) Virginia Career Works Centers and our newly developed capacity to deliver counseling and case management services virtually, through online service delivery. Through our broad network of physical centers and online services, our One Stop Operator staff can support our region's jobseekers, specifically focusing on employment at family-sustaining wages, with career progression opportunities. The Board's expertise and funding support of incumbent worker training initiatives has allowed the Virginia Career Works Northern region to be closely aligned with large, medium, and smaller employers in awarding training contracts to upgrade the skills of their current employees.

2.3 Describe how the local board's vision and goals align with and/or supports the vision of the Virginia Board of Workforce Development (VBWD) (found here: <https://virginiacareerworks.com>).

Similar to Item 2.2, there is close collaboration and alignment between the Virginia Career Works Northern Board's strategic vision and goals in supporting and implementing the vision and goals of the Virginia State Board of Workforce Development. As reflected in its 2020-2023 Strategic Plan, the State Board of Workforce Development seeks to: 1) Identify short and long-term workforce strategies for businesses and workers in response to changing economic conditions, 2) Expand equitable access to education and training programs, 3) Increase access to the technology needed for the education, training, and career pathway development for Virginia's workforce of the future and 4) Address systemic barriers to workforce success through Goal 4 innovative strategies, policy changes, and investments.

As outlined earlier, For the period 2021 – 2024, the Virginia Career Works Northern Region's four strategic goals include: 1) Be the regional workforce thought-leader and oversee delivery of high-quality workforce services, 2) Expand and improve the talent pipeline of adults

and young adults for regional employers, 2) Ensure quality and diversity of funding sources to ensure a sustainable long-term impact, and 4) Continue building sustainable partnerships with employers in the region's targeted industries.

The Virginia Career Works Northern Board, and its non-profit fiscal agent, The SkillSource Group, Inc., has sought to be a strong and reliable partner with the State Board of Workforce Development and the Virginia Community College System in following and implementing State workforce policy at the regional level. Moreover, the Virginia Career Works Northern Board consistently seeks to add new resources, reconsider existing programs while proposing new solutions to respond to the workforce priorities of the Governor of Virginia and the State Board of Workforce Development. Ideally, the Virginia Career Works Northern Region, as a representative of the largest and most populous local workforce area in the Commonwealth, is viewed as a leading innovative and responsive partner by State officials within the network of local workforce areas throughout the State. It is the intent of the Virginia Career Works Northern Board to continue as a leading partner to the State, in addition to offering occasional corrective suggestions, throughout the four years of this Local Plan.

2.4 Taking into account the analyses described in 1.1 through 2.3, describe a strategy to work with the entities that carry out the core programs and required partners to align resources available to the local areas to achieve the local board's strategic vision and goals. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(1)(F)]

VCWN has representatives of many of the core programs and required partners on its Board of Directors and part of its Committees, to ensure they are providing input on VCWN programs and services, and how the board's strategic vision and goals can be achieved. Many of these members are also invited to be on working groups, subcommittees, RFP review committees, and Center certification and monitoring teams, to ensure they are actively involved in VCWN activities.

While the VCWN, providers, and partners have a wide array of partnerships, there is a need to expand relationships with more organizations and employers in order to broaden outreach to ‘nontraditional’ organizations to reach segments of the jobseeker population not currently being reached. In order to form strategic partnerships as well as strategies to carry out workforce development activities, some strategies to increase partnerships include:

- Create more formal connections with faith-based and community organizations.
- Maximize the use of resource guides that provide a regional mapping of workforce and education partners, to share with jobseekers.
- Create pathways for individuals with a low skill level to get to ‘bridge’ programs that help them increase their skill levels to where the workforce system then continues to help them build skills to the level required to enter training and/or the workforce.
- Change the perception that the workforce system/centers only provides ‘low skilled’ workers to employers.
- Develop more robust partnerships with industry associations to better connect to employers.

2.4 Describe the local board strategic plan designed to combine public and private resources to support sector strategies, career pathways, and career readiness skills development. Such initiatives shall include or address:

- Regional vision for workforce development
- Protocols for planning workforce strategies that anticipate industry needs
- Needs of incumbent and underemployed workers in the region
- Development of partners and guidelines for various forms of on-the-job training, such as registered apprenticeships
- Setting of standards and metrics for operational delivery
- Alignment of monetary and other resources, including private funds and in-kind contributions, to support the workforce development system
- Generation of new sources of funding to support workforce development in the region

Adherence to this guidance will satisfy the LWDB’s responsibility to prepare a demand plan for the initial year of this local plan, as required in the Code of Virginia Title 2.2 Chapter 24 Section 2.2-2472(E).

Regional vision for workforce development

As previously mentioned, the VCWN and *SkillSource* recently completed its 2021-2024 Strategic Plan, which outlines the vision for the Northern Virginia Workforce Area: “We envision a vibrant business and workforce region that is globally competitive.”

It should be noted that the strategic direction and planning of the VCWN and *SkillSource* are in close alignment with the vision and strategies of its Consortium jurisdictions. In particular, the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors has issued and updated its [Fairfax County Strategic Plan](#) in 2021. As Fairfax County is the WIOA Grant Recipient for Area #11, our respective vision and implementation plans are closely aligned.

Protocols for planning workforce strategies that anticipate industry needs

In order to be relevant and anticipate industry needs in Northern Virginia, the VCWN recognizes that we must create strategies that meet the needs of employers and puts the VCWN at the forefront of workforce development in the region. In the 2021-2024 Strategic Plan, Strategic Goal 1: Be the regional go-to organization on workforce development as both a ‘thought leader’ and in delivering high-quality workforce services highlights this goal. Key Objectives are:

- Identify key advertising channels to promote and advertise the workforce system as a bridge between business, people looking for jobs, training, and jobs.
- Develop a simplified message for the advertising for two key audiences, businesses, and jobseekers.
- Provide leadership on workforce issues within Northern Virginia and the broader Capital Region by designing and executing innovative pilots; developing a formal targeted industry

sector approach based on best practices in the field; and creating and executing a strategy to serve small businesses.

- Transition Business Solutions from an industry partnership model to viable sector strategies model to meet broad talent needs of key industries.
 - Continue to design, pilot and scale innovative workforce development solutions in collaboration with employers and SkillSource America Job Centers.
 - Develop strategies that support the creation, growth and sustainability of local small businesses.
 - Pursue opportunities to be recognized and to win awards within the profession and/or for customer excellence and quality.
 - Enhance the WDB's brand through expanded presence on social media and other methods.
- Continue to ensure a transparent, accessible workforce system.

The private sector leadership of the VCWN has a key role in establishing our strategy and partnership development in the region. The Board Chairman, Ed Trumbull, is a Vice President with ICF International, and Vice Chairman, Joseph Carter, is the CEO of R&K Cyber Solutions LLC, both private sector business representatives. Further, SkillSource was awarded a grant in 2019 to serve as the supporting administrative organization for the Northern Virginia GO Virginia Regional Council, ensuring that regional workforce services will retain a significant profile in future discussions and any Northern Virginia GO Virginia funding applications.

The needs of incumbent and underemployed workers in the region

The VCWN Board has made Incumbent Worker Training (IWT) a strategic priority and annually sets aside funds specifically towards these activities. IWT is a valuable tool when conducting outreach to employers, as employers recognize the value of IWT not only to their

company, but also to the retention of their employees. While many companies are having to cut funding for employee training, they recognize the value of this investment in their workforce, and what it will mean to ultimately help their bottom line. SkillSource and the VCWN have significantly invested in IWT, in recognition of how it will help incumbent workers and the underemployed to move along a career pathway that could result in a promotion and a raise. A priority is also placed on training that results in an industry-recognized credential, which the employee will have even if they leave their position with the company.

The Northern Virginia Workforce Area #11 recognizes that effective career pathway programs lead job seekers to attain postsecondary credentials that are valued within the regional labor market. In Northern Virginia, these credentials are applicable in different industry clusters, including IT, Healthcare, Retail, Construction, Professional and Technical Services and Hospitality. For certain industry sectors, particularly IT, stackable credentials allow job seekers to build their qualifications over time and move up their career ladder to potentially upper level positions that pay a higher wage. These credentials build upon one another, with each credential adding more value to the employee's resume and salary level.

The development of partners and guidelines for various forms of on-the-job training, such as registered apprenticeships

Registered apprenticeships are opportunities for all participants in the Northern Virginia WIOA programs to learn while on the job. A representative from the Virginia Department of Labor and Industry (DOLI) is a member of the Northern Virginia Employer Solutions Team, and has partnered with *SkillSource* on apprenticeship fairs to help apprenticeship sponsors in Northern Virginia find qualified apprentices. As more IT apprenticeships are being developed, *SkillSource* has been collaborating with DOLI more frequently to share information and promote these new

apprenticeship opportunities, including those in the Construction and Trades industries, to jobseekers.

The setting of standards and metrics for operational delivery

In the Strategic Plan, the VCWN notes that it will measure strategy progress and outcomes by the following metrics:

1. Customer satisfaction increases and is sustained (measured for both job seekers and employers.)
2. The number of employers using services for the first time through the VCWN Centers increases.
3. The number of repeat business customers increases.
4. Employer training-related placement rates increase.
5. Revenue from non-WIOA formula sources is sustained and increases.
6. Results of the Return on Investment study demonstrates to individuals using the services as well as to tax payers and community the positive economic impact of public workforce programs.
7. Employers report that they have the skilled workers they need to remain competitive.
8. Businesses report that the VCWN and its services are relevant.

Alignment of monetary and other resources, including private funds and in-kind contributions, to support the workforce development system

As the non-profit 501(c)(3) fiscal agent of the VCWN, *SkillSource* is able to pursue multiple funding opportunities in the private and public sector that are open to non-profit organizations. In the 2021-2024 Strategic Plan, Strategic Goal 3: Continue to focus on quality and diversify funding to ensure a sustainable impact over the long term highlights the Board's continued purposeful pursuit of non-WIOA resources in support of the VCWN's workforce programs. Key Objectives are to:

- Continue to diversify funding in support of a strong public and private workforce

development infrastructure.

- Explore the feasibility creating a social enterprise by investing in start-up businesses as a way to generate funding and as a job creation strategy.
- Maintain and increase capacity to attract non-WIOA formula funding resources.
- Continue commitment to quality standards and a certification process.
- Continue to produce a Return on Investment (ROI) study annually.

To accomplish these objectives, the Board will continue to aggressively pursue Federal, State, County, foundation and private grant funding opportunities. The Board has also set a priority to experiment with innovative partnership proposals, including WIOA Pay for Performance contracts and other alternative funding resources. *SkillSource* is in process of relaunching its innovative Pay for Performance (P4P) model, the only one in the State. In 2016, *SkillSource* partnered with local agencies in Fairfax, Loudoun and Prince William counties, and ICF International, Inc. to submit a P4P application to Third Sector Capital Partners, and was one of five local workforce board awardees nationwide selected to receive federally funded technical assistance to implement a P4P model. The goal of the Northern Virginia Team Independence (NVTI) project is to improve education and employment outcomes for WIOA young adults involved in foster care and the juvenile justice system in Northern Virginia. WIOA allows the use of non-federal resources and WIOA funds to incentivize the use of Pay for Performance through bonus payments to service providers, to allow for greater flexibility and a focus on longer-term outcomes. *SkillSource* launched its P4P in 2017, illustrating *SkillSource* as a leader in Virginia and the nation in Pay for Performance models. While the project was temporarily halted in 2019, it is in process of being relaunched in 2023.

The generation of new sources of funding to support workforce development in the region

In the 2021-2024 Strategic Plan, the VCWN also set an objective to explore the feasibility of creating a social enterprise by investing non-WIOA funds in start-up businesses and related employment initiatives as a job creation strategy. The VCWN determined that it must examine other social enterprise models established by non-profit organizations and workforce development boards.

In 2019, *SkillSource* was selected as the sub-grant recipient by the National Council on Aging to administer and implement the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) in Northern Virginia. This initiative provides workforce and training supports to mature jobseekers ages 55 year plus who wish to return to employment. The region represented by *SkillSource* extends from Northern Virginia to Central and Western Virginia and includes several jurisdictions within the Piedmont Region. The SCSEP Project has over 110 mature workers enrolled, and was recently renewed for the next five years and FY 2023 annual SCSEP funding awarded to *SkillSource* is nearly \$1.25 million.

Section 3: Local Area Partnerships and Investment Strategies

- 3.1 Provide a description of the workforce development system in the local area that identifies:
- The programs that are included in that system
 - How the local board will work with the entities carrying out core programs and other workforce development programs to support alignment to provide services, including programs of study authorized under the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006
 - How the local board coordinates and interacts with Chief Elected Officials (CEO)

[WIOA Sec. 108(b)(2)]

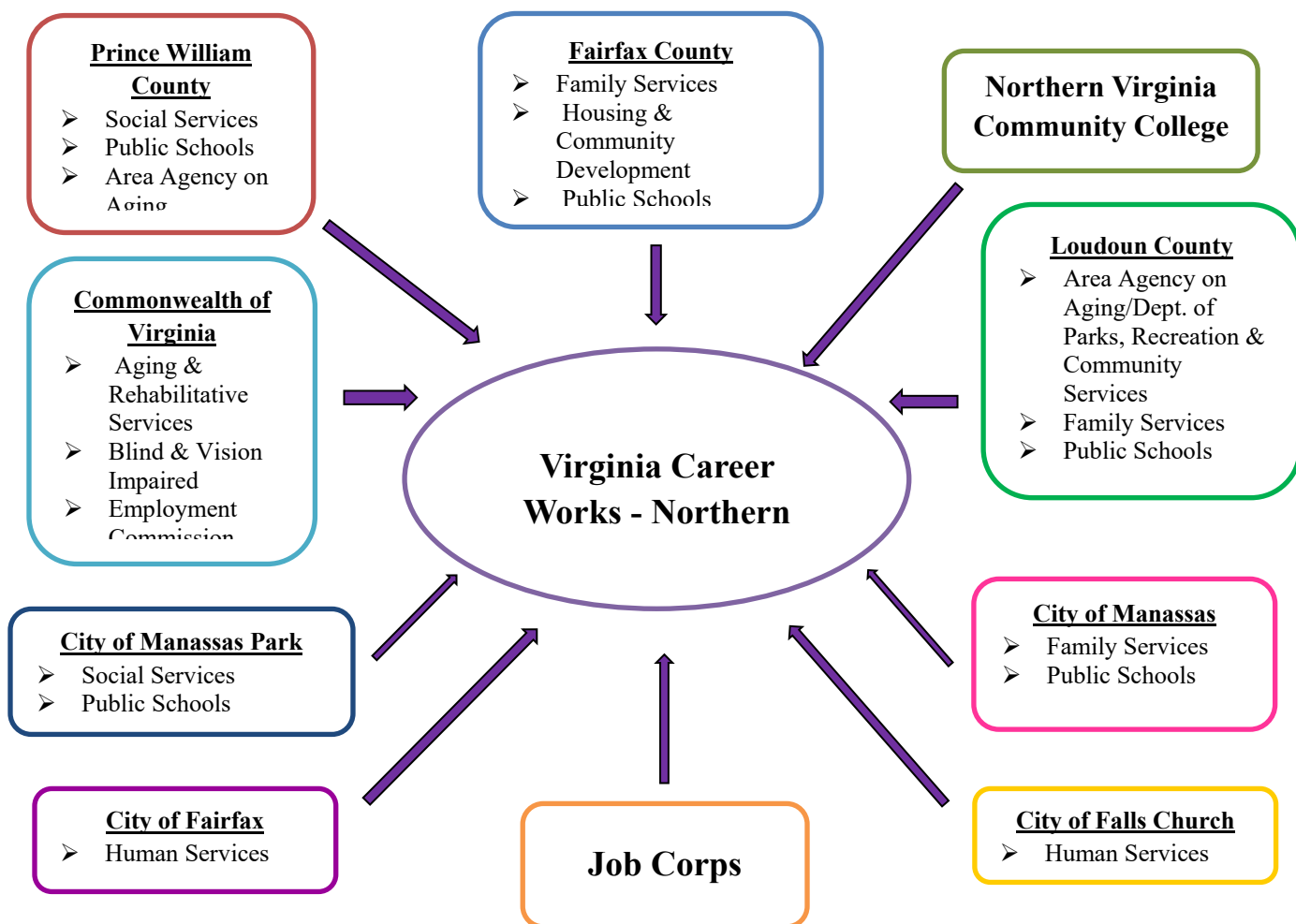
The programs that are included in the system

The partners in the Northern Virginia Workforce System, some of whom are WIOA non-mandatory partner organizations, bring critical expertise and resources to the One-Stop Centers and greatly supplement available Federal WIOA funding with related Federal, State and local

funding resources. In Northern Virginia, Partner organizations serve as members of local Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Teams, which support the One-Stop Center Manager in developing and implementing procedures and programs to support local Center customers. Partner representatives also participate on the Design and Leadership Teams, which support the VCWN Executive Director and the VCWN Board of Directors in assessing program options and in program implementation. The Partners to VCWN have agreed to provide the following programs and services, where feasible:

- Jointly promote integration of programs through collaborative planning;
- Align planning and budgeting processes to the vision and goals of the workforce system;
- Identify and support workforce skill standards and industry performance measures to drive common outcomes;
- Coordinate resources and programs to promote a more streamlined and efficient workforce system;
- Promote information sharing and coordination of activities to improve performance of local parties;
- Use common release of information processes subject to confidentiality provisions and to preserve records for the period required by law;
- Identify and address barriers to coordination;
- Promote development and implementation of a more unified system of measuring performance and accountability under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act;
- Promote development of common data systems to continuously improve services;
- Authorize WIOA training funds to support workforce development and employment

and training opportunities in occupations that are identified as a high-demand group.



In the Northern Virginia Workforce Area #11, all participating Partners sign a biannual umbrella services agreement that announces a shared regional vision for a customer-driven service delivery system

How the Local WDB will work with the entities carrying out core programs and other workforce development programs, including programs of study authorized under the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 (20 U.S.C. 2301 et seq.) to support service alignment

The VCWN and the adult basic education providers in Northern Virginia are signatories of the VCWN Umbrella MOU, which reinforces the need for a partnership to address academic achievement of career and technical education students, as well as strengthen the connections between secondary and postsecondary education. The VCWN has been part of the Perkins Committee in Northern Virginia that determines how Perkins funds is distributed to the career and technical education programs, and will continue to provide input from an industry and economic perspective to ensure programs are addressing the demands of the region. Further, VCWN will seek to align the WIOA programs with those career and technical education programs funded through Perkins.

How the Local WDB coordinates and interacts with Chief Local Elected Officials

The VCWN exists due to the long history of collaboration and coordination between the Chief Local Elected Officials (CLEOs) and the elected bodies of the three counties and four cities. The VCWN Chief Elected Official is the Honorable Jeffrey McKay, the Chairman of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors. VCWN will coordinate a meeting of the CLEOs from the Northern Virginia Workforce Area as necessary and also includes local elected officials in ad hoc updates and briefings as appropriate. Moreover, the VCWN Executive Director meets twice per year with the VCWN Policy Council, comprised of senior County and City representatives of each participating locality in Area 11, to assure adequate coordination and information sharing. The current CLEO Consortium Agreement and the CLEO-VCWN Agreement are executed and can be found at www.vcwnorthern.com.

3.2 Describe strategies and services that will be used in the local area to:

- Facilitate engagement of employers, including small employers and employers in in-demand sectors and occupations, in workforce development programs
- Support a local workforce development system that meets the needs of businesses in the local area

- Better coordinate workforce development programs and economic development
- Strengthen linkages between the one-stop delivery system and unemployment insurance programs

These strategies and services may include the implementation of initiatives such as incumbent worker training programs, on-the-job training programs, customized training programs, industry and sector strategies, career pathways initiatives, utilization of effective business intermediaries, and other business services and strategies, designed to meet the needs of employers in the corresponding region in support of the strategy described in 2.1.

The local board generally services as the “regional convener” and each regional convener shall develop, in collaboration with other workforce development entities in the region, a local plan for employer engagement. VBWD Policy No.13-01 Business Service Requirements for Local Workforce Investment Areas outlines the role and requirements of Local Workforce Areas and Virginia Workforce Centers in providing services to business customers, and presents required actions by the LWDA in regard to implementation of business services to enhance the business customer’s outcomes and satisfaction with the workforce system through Business Services Teams.

[WIOA Sec. 108(b)(4), Code of Virginia 2.2. Chapter 24 Section 2.2-2472.1]

Facilitate engagement of employers, including small employers and employers in in-demand sectors and occupations, in workforce development programs

- **Identify Trade Associations in targeted industries.** The VCWN has developed partnerships with trade associations in targeted industries, such as the Northern Virginia Technology Council (NVTC). NVTC is the membership and trade association for the technology community in Northern Virginia, and the largest technology council in the nation. A representative of the NVTC is on the VCWN Board, and *SkillSource* has collaborated with NVTC on grant proposals and regional initiatives. *SkillSource* was identified as a Supporting Organization to NVTC’s Veterans’ Employment Initiative to connect veterans to jobs within Virginia’s technology community, and was a member of the Veterans Advisory Committee for NVTC.

Currently, the VCWN has developed a partnership with Heavy Construction Contractors Association (HCCA), a Northern Virginia-based, regional, and independent construction trade association. Construction is one of the in-demand industries for the area. Through this alliance with the trade association, three areas are being addressed:

- Building customer awareness among the HCCA members of workforce development services available to them.
- Developing an understanding of their needs to ensure services are aligned to what the industry and specific employers need.
- Designing and delivering services that meet their workforce needs.

The VCWN plans to use these models to expand our work with other industry associations in the VCWN's high-growth industries, specifically hospitality, retail, and financial services.

- **Leverage employers on the VCWN.** The VCWN has a very engaged board. However, there needs to be a more deliberative and intentional approach to engage employers on the VCWN to provide feedback on areas identified in this plan, including competencies required, curriculum and connections to trade associations.
- **Formalize the referral process.** As noted above, each county has been successful in establishing a single point of contact for employers. However, how each county screens and refers jobseekers to employers is inconsistent. The Employer Solutions Team will work to formalize this process so it is consistent for employers, as many employers work across the workforce area.

Support a local workforce development system that meets the needs of businesses in the local area

VCWN maintains the philosophy that our primary external customers are business and industry, then jobseekers. Employers create job growth and as such must guide the workforce system. The VCWN will partner with employers in economic growth and talent development strategies. Through the Employer Solutions Team, Northern Virginia Workforce Area #11 has created a greater streamlined single point of contact process for businesses across all workforce system. The VCWN has created protocols for how to interact with the business customer to provide consistency, established a Salesforce customer relationship management system, and will seek to improve coordinated business development across partners and communication strategies around services offered through the entire system.

Better coordinate workforce development programs and economic development

The VCWN will engage in the following coordinating efforts with all area economic development initiatives in the upcoming year:

1. Provide information on who does what. A resource map would be useful to economic developers in their interactions with their business customers and that helps them identify ‘who does what’ in the region
2. Improve communication. VCWN staff will meet regularly with the local economic development contacts. These meetings will be designed to:
 - Stay in touch on needs that can be forecasted, e.g., what is coming up
 - Provide feedback on opportunities for improvement
 - Create a feedback loop between the Team and economic development.
3. Re-Brand. There is a perception among some agencies that the workforce system is really a social services system and thus can only provide applicants at a low level of skill. A systematic strategy at the VCWN level needs to be explored on how to change this.

4. Improve follow up. The Employer Solutions Team will be more proactive and create a process to ensure that within a specified number of days and weeks, we are reaching out to the employers who received services as well as their conduits, e.g., economic development, trade associations, chambers, etc. regularly, instead of waiting for them to reach out when they have another need, using both a push and a pull business marketing strategy.

Strengthen linkages between the one-stop delivery system and unemployment insurance programs

Pursuant to Virginia House Bill 1986ER and Senate Bill 1372, a regional convener designation is required for each workforce development region in the Commonwealth. As stated in the bill, the regional convener means “the local workforce development board having responsibility for coordinating business, economic development, labor, regional planning commissions, education at all levels, and human services organizations, to focus on community workforce issues and the development of solutions to current and prospective business needs for a skilled labor force at the regional level.” In September 2015, the VCWN voted unanimously to designate itself as the Regional Workforce Convener for Workforce Area #11.

As the Northern Virginia Regional Workforce Convener, *SkillSource* and the VCWN launched a series of monthly Northern Virginia Workforce Conversations in 2016. The purpose of the Workforce Conversations series was to convene employers, jobseekers, educators, community leaders, and other stakeholders to discuss a variety of local workforce issues and interests. Each Workforce Conversation was dedicated to a specific workforce theme pertinent to employers, jobseekers, and workforce partners. Topics of discussion included employment opportunities and challenges for young adults, veterans, and people with disabilities, as well as labor market demand for industries such as construction and trades, healthcare, and retail. Panelists for the workforce

conversations included State officials, employer and non-profit representatives, training providers and adult education providers, as well as successful jobseekers that have utilized the services of the public workforce system. Each Conversation inspired meaningful discourse on its targeted subject and has attracted much interest from the community, with over hundreds of attendees. ***SkillSource*** was not able to continue these Regional Workforce Conversations due to funding and capacity limitations, but will strategize on how to continue to have future Workforce Conversations, possibly less frequently and virtually, to reduce costs.

In order to meet local employers' demand to re-train their existing workforce, ***SkillSource*** has offered Incumbent Worker Training (IWT) grants through WIOA. These funds can assist employers to support their employees in gaining new skills and in making their businesses more competitive and profitable. IWT reimburses employers for the cost of training their workers, and covers training costs such as instructional costs for training courses, classes for certification exams, online training, textbooks and manuals. Participating businesses must provide a minimum matching contribution, in amounts based upon company size. ***SkillSource*** has issued IWT contracts with Northern Virginia employers that vary in size from 25 employees to over 10,000 employees, training hundreds of incumbent workers in different high-growth industries such as IT, Healthcare, and Construction.

Area #11 has had significant success using On-The-Job training (OJT) job placement, as a means to introduce contextual learning, which imparts thinking, reasoning and work readiness attributes valued by employers. In an OJT, the focus is on direct learning as the worker is also earning a paycheck that leads to full-time employment. OJTs have been a critically successful tool to engage both local employers and job seekers alike. Through an OJT, 50% or more of a worker's wages (dependent on the size of the participating business) will be reimbursed to the employer for

up to six (6) months, allowing the worker to earn while they learn on the job. The Area #11 OJT policy can be found online at www.vcwnorthern.com.

In 2013, **SkillSource** received VDSS funding to provide subsidized and unsubsidized employment opportunities for Prince William TANF participants enrolled in the Virginia Initiative for Employment not Welfare (VIEW) program and increase their self-sufficiency through employment. In June 2016, based on the success of this initiative, SkillSource was awarded additional funding by the VDSS to expand services to include TANF/VIEW participants in Fairfax and Loudoun Counties, thus incorporating best practices developed over the previous three years in Prince William County throughout Northern Virginia. This program ended on September 30, 2019. As the end of the grant period, the project had placed 182 participants into permanent employment at an average hourly rate of \$15.85 (or \$32,968 annually) and was a leading project in the State of Virginia for over six (6) years. In 2017, VDSS awarded **SkillSource** another grant to include job seekers that are in TANF or at or below 200% of the Federal poverty level with minor children in Fairfax and Prince William counties. In 2019, VDSS awarded **SkillSource** funding for an initiative that serves low-income job seekers with incomes at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty level, who are referred from the Northern Virginia offices of the Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS), along with job seekers recently released from the Fairfax County Adult Detention Center and the Prince William – Manassas Adult Detention Center. In 2021, VDSS awarded SkillSource its first Pay-for-Performance contract to serve low-income jobseekers or those enrolled in TANF programs. SkillSource is paid primarily when certain outputs and outcomes are achieved under this grant project. In its first year, SkillSource exceeded all projected outcomes. These projects have offered subsidized work experiences, job development, placement and retention services. By offering subsidized work

experiences and education/training opportunities, coupled with soft skills training, to low-income job seekers, these initiatives seek to reduce utilization of public assistance by promoting job preparation and employment. These programs have offered a robust subsidized work experience program that allows job seekers to attain U.S. work experience and an employer reference, both of which are crucial to landing meaningful employment. Job seekers who have been out of work for an extended period, have recently immigrated to the area, or have recently obtained a certification, are able to gain experience needed to make them more employable.

3.3 Describe how the local board will coordinate workforce investment activities carried out in the local area with economic development activities carried out in the region in which the local area is located (or planning region), and promote entrepreneurial skills training and microenterprise services. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(5)]

Since 2002, the administrative offices of the VCWN and *SkillSource* have been deliberately co-located within the business offices of the Fairfax County Economic Development Authority. The VCWN focused on this office co-location to reflect the Board's policy focus on workforce development as an economic development priority area. Moreover, the co- location and alignment of the VCWN and its administrative staff has been instrumental in providing ongoing information and resources to the County's Economic Development Authority (and other jurisdiction's economic development offices) in its operational efforts to recruit new businesses and to strengthen existing businesses. The VCWN staff also work closely with other economic development departments and agencies in the surrounding jurisdictions and representatives from the economic development agencies in Fairfax County, Prince William County, and City of Manassas are represented on the VCWN/*SkillSource* Board of Directors.

As part of our administrative office co-location with the Fairfax County Economic Development Authority, both Workforce Board and One-Stop staff are occasionally engaged with local officials in economic development recruitment efforts or other outreach strategies with the

Virginia Economic Development Partnership. These engagements also include providing information and resources on the potential use of WIOA funds for incumbent worker training by existing local businesses.

In two of the three counties that make up the workforce area, the one stop system partners and economic development have an established process to collaborate. When businesses contact the economic development entities in Fairfax and Prince William counties with workforce needs, the economic developers put them in touch with the appropriate ‘single point of contact’ as noted above. In some parts of the region, the linkage between economic development and workforce development needs to be strengthened.

SkillSource and VCWN were able to strengthen its partnerships with the economic development agencies in Prince William County and the Cities of Manassas and Manassas Park due to the localities awarding *SkillSource* over \$1.1 million collectively in Federal CARES Act funding in August 2020 to assist furloughed, unemployed, and underemployed residents impacted by the COVID-19 Pandemic with training, employment, and other supportive services, and helping



employers to retain and hire qualified workers. The ELEVATE initiative served 245 jobseekers, placed 185 jobseekers into training, and served over 120

employers. At least 500 incumbent workers gained additional skills and certifications through this initiative. *SkillSource* worked closely on this initiative with Northern Virginia Community College, and other training providers. Due to the success of this initiative, Prince William County Department of Economic Development awarded Area #11 a \$1.4 million contract in 2022 to continue the ELEVATE initiative for Prince William County jobseekers, through March 2024.

The workforce system in Northern Virginia has been largely focused on entrepreneurship for the past nine years and implementing innovative strategies to support entrepreneurship. In June 2012, SkillSource was awarded \$8.3 million for the Virginia Employment Through Entrepreneurship Consortium (VETEC), through the Workforce Innovation Fund, launching entrepreneurship programs in Northern Virginia, Richmond, and Hampton Roads. At the completion of program services in June 2016, VETEC succeeded in integrating entrepreneurship services into the public workforce system, serving 694 jobseekers, and helping to launch 376 new businesses throughout the 3 local participating workforce areas, exceeding projected outcomes by almost 40%. During this Project, Virginia Career Works Northern staff worked closely with VCCS officials to develop specific WIOA outcome measures associated with entrepreneurship development, including business plan development, the duration of business existence and annual business earnings.

Since VETEC, Area #11 has continued to work with local partners who deliver entrepreneurship support, including the local economic development agencies, particularly Fairfax County Economic Development Authority (FCEDA), through its Entrepreneurship 101: Starting a Business workshops. Area #11 refers interested participants to these free workshops for individuals interested in starting a business in Fairfax County. Area #11 is currently examining ways to work with Eligible Training Providers to integrate entrepreneurship certifications as an option for interested jobseekers; however, this will require greater flexibility in the state WIOA performance benchmarks to include Entrepreneurship certifications earned as industry-recognized certifications under WIOA, and in counting those who launch businesses within the current performance measures. Currently, there are no State WIOA performance benchmarks that are applicable to small business startups and entrepreneurship development.

In April 2021, Area #11 was provided 5,000 LinkedIn Learning licenses, through a partnership with LinkedIn and the Virginia Community College System. LinkedIn Learning offers training in a variety of different topics, including numerous courses on Entrepreneurship, such as Entrepreneurship Foundations, Creating a Business Plan, Foundations of Raising Capital, and Managing Your Small Business. This free learning resource for interested entrepreneurs can provide a strong foundational basis for those interested in starting a business, that will help to outline the steps to successfully creating their new company. Due to the success and interest from staff and jobseekers, Virginia Career Works – Northern decided to continue with LinkedIn Learning through its own Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Formula Funds. Since inception, nearly 1,200 LinkedIn Learning licenses have been issued in total.

3.4 Describe how the local board coordinates education and workforce investment activities with relevant secondary and postsecondary education programs and activities to coordinate strategies, enhance services, and avoid duplication of services. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(10)]
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The VCWN Board and its Committees meet quarterly, and discusses coordination and partnership opportunities with partners, including secondary and post-secondary education. There are multiple representatives of post-secondary education on the VCWN Board. In addition, the WIOA Program staff identify other opportunities for service coordination with secondary and postsecondary education programs in the region that will enhance services to youth entering key industries within Northern Virginia.

The Board has also discussed the need to work together to design and execute a ‘bridge programs’ as part of a career pathways approach to promote post-secondary and career readiness. Bridge programs were identified as one of the first steps in a career pathway for low-skill adults. They support the transition from adult education to the next step in an occupational pathway. By connecting adult education programs (including ABE, ESL, and adult secondary education) to

occupational programs, bridge programs seek to increase the rates at which low-skill adults move into post-secondary occupational programs, persist in these programs, and obtain postsecondary credentials in industries offering family-sustaining wages and career advancement. The key elements of these programs are that they provide a combination of academic and occupational instruction, career guidance, and support services. Adult Education, and literacy organizations such as the Literacy Council of Northern Virginia, which are represented on the VCWN Board, are key to the development of career pathways and Bridge models that will be developed, in order to create programs that will help those with the greatest barriers obtain meaningful employment, including methods to fast-track highly-skilled immigrants into jobs with intensive English language instruction.

3.5 Describe how the local board will collaborate on local workforce investment activities with the community colleges in their area in the planning and delivery of workforce and training services.

SkillSource and the VCWN have a strong partnership with the Northern Virginia Community College as they are workforce system partners, and a highly utilized Eligible Training Provider. A representative from NOVA's Workforce Development Division has sat on the Board of Directors of the VCWN for multiple years, and NOVA is a member and co-chair of the Northern Virginia Employer Solutions Team. A **SkillSource** representative also sits on NOVA's Perkins Committee.

SkillSource and NOVA have collaborated on multiple programs and grant proposals, including the ELEVATE initiative. **SkillSource** had partnered with Northern Virginia Community College on their successful \$12 million grant proposal to the U.S. Department of Labor's Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training Grants Program, which resulted in the development of a Virginia Career Works - Northern Center at the NOVA campus in

Manassas (western Prince William County). Unfortunately, due to space limitations, VCWN had to close that location in 2020.

SkillSource and NOVA have also been long-time partners together on NoVaHealthForce, a coalition of health care providers in Northern Virginia. Since 2005, NoVaHealthForce has focused on health care career pathways and opportunities to increase regional health care employment in the Northern Virginia Workforce Area.

NOVA also offers robust LMI analytics, which has resulted in multiple opportunities for collaboration with the college, as a partner within the workforce system, to provide value to the entire workforce system. As a member of the EST, the college is a partner in delivering services to business based on the protocols established by the team. The addition of real time LMI from the college has enhanced how the VCWN Board and the Employer Solutions Team will identify gaps in the types of training needed to supply employers with the appropriately trained talent.

3.6 Describe how the local board will coordinate workforce investment activities in the local area with the provision of transportation, including public transportation, and other appropriate supportive services in the local area. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(11)]

The Northern Virginia Workforce Area provides supportive services as needed, including referrals to child care, health care, drug and alcohol services, etc. Transportation assistance may be provided to WIOA participants who are engaged in WIOA activities, in the form of gas cards, bus tokens, or metro cards. Additional supportive services may include, assistance in obtaining a driver's license, uniforms and supplies for work, and training support and credential fees. VCWN follows its Supportive Services Policy found online at www.vcwnorthern.com.

3.7 Describe the plans and strategies for, and assurances concerning, maximizing coordination of services provided by the State employment service under the Wagner-Peyser Act and services provided in the local area through the one-stop delivery system, to improve service delivery and avoid duplication of services. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(12)]
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The Virginia Employment Commission (VEC) administers the Wagner-Peyser system in Virginia, which assists job seekers to find employment; to assist employers in filling jobs; and to facilitate the match between job seekers and employers. Self-services are available to all jobseekers and employers, or jobseekers can receive information in-person at the One-Stop Employment Centers. ***SkillSource*** and the VCWN staff work side-by-side with Wagner-Peyser VEC staff, and do not duplicate any Wagner-Peyser staff efforts. ***SkillSource*** and the VCWN have a strong partnership with the Virginia Employment Commission, as they are workforce system partners, and are co-located at the Virginia Career Works – Prince William Center in Woodbridge, Virginia and the Virginia Career Works – Cherokee Avenue Center in Alexandria, Virginia. A representative from the VEC has sat on the Board of Directors of the VCWN for multiple years, and VEC is a member of the Northern Virginia Employer Solutions Team.

In July 2020, Area #11 was awarded the contract to deliver Wagner-Peyser Job Search services through a contract award with the VEC to deliver employment services for individuals with barriers to employment, to improve employment opportunities for Unemployment Insurance (UI) recipients and other job seekers, and deliver better services for employers. Area #11 designated existing staff and trained new temporary staff to deliver Wagner-Peyser services at the Virginia Career Works – Prince William Center.

3.8 Describe how the local board will coordinate workforce investment activities in the local area with the provision of adult education and literacy activities, including a description of how the local board will carry out the review of local applications. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(13)]
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Northern Virginia Workforce Area #11 has had a strong relationship with adult education providers; representatives from all three (3) County public school systems sit on the Board of Directors for the VCWN, as well as the Executive Director of the Literacy Council of Northern Virginia.

The Adult Education programs in Fairfax, Prince William and Loudoun counties provides the English language skills, adult basic education, and GED preparation that adults and young adults need to further their education at the post-secondary level, obtain employment, and become involved community members. Representatives for Fairfax County Public Schools and Loudoun County Public Schools also sit on the VCWN Youth Committee. All of the public school systems have supported outreach efforts for VCWN programs and services, and in referring their students to WIOA for services. The Northern Virginia WIOA Youth Program had collaborated with Loudoun County Public Schools and Fairfax County Public Schools on mailings to transition students to inform them of services available through the WIOA Youth Program.

Prince William County Public Schools is co-located at the Virginia Career Works – Prince William Center in Woodbridge, Virginia, and has collaborated with the partners at that location on multiple different programs and services for individuals with limited English proficiency (LEP). The LEP services offered include English classes, GED courses, citizenship preparation classes and LEP job readiness classes. The LEP workshop is a creative approach to serving customers with limited English. Job seekers can take several different workshops, and receive a Job Readiness Certificate. The workshops focus on job readiness and soft skills while providing basic English classes.

In 2021, the City of Manassas contracted with Area #11 to launch a new program, called GRADUATE, that offers City residents free GED preparation services, as well as pays for the costs of textbooks and exam fees. Area #11 works with Prince William County Schools Adult Education Program to deliver the GED training to residents, and has helped nearly 150 residents enroll in GED training.

In 2020, the VCWN reviewed the local Adult Education Plan, which included post-secondary qualification/credential goals and specific career pathways within adult education that will be aligned with WIOA. The review committee was comprised of VCWN staff and Board members, who met and each reviewed a portion of the applications received for Area #11. The scoring rubrics were submitted directly to officials with the Virginia Department of Education.

3.9 Describe how the local plan shall:

- Specify the policies and protocols to be followed by all the region's workforce development entities when engaging the region's employers
- Address how the region's workforce entities will involve employers in the formation of new workforce development activities
- Identify what activities will be undertaken to address employers' specific workforce needs

Specify the policies and protocols to be followed by all of the region's workforce development entities when engaging the region's employers

The Northern Virginia partnership has established a robust set of procedures and services that are codified in the VCWN Business Services Policy, found online at www.vcwnorthern.com. VCWN also created an Employer Services Plan that codifies key procedures, starting with a shared vision for employer services that is agreed to by all the partners in the Partner MOU. The shared vision is that the partners envision consistent, high quality services to business and industry customers. This vision drives the procedures that are organized and executed through the Northern Virginia Employer Solutions Team. The key elements to this approach are:

- An Employer Solutions Team that drive a set of practices, protocols, and accountability mechanisms for how any organization will interface with a business customer, thus providing businesses with a single way in which they receive products and services that is not variable depending on the agency that is their first point of contact.
 - All of the partners have a representative on the team and the team meets regularly.

- Each county has established a single point of contact for employers and economic development to whom all staff connect employers to when requests are received.
 - The VCWN has a single point of contact for incumbent worker training across the local workforce area.
- A common technology system that records business contacts so that all partners can ‘look up’ if a business has already been served, what services they have received, and who has served them. Thus the business does not need to ‘tell their story over and over again’.
 - The VCWN purchased Salesforce as the CRM tool. Partners are also able to record their information in it. Some partners do not yet have licenses while others do not want to enter the data in their own system and then again into the common system.
- A set of services that are commonly defined across all agencies to ensure that the business customer does not have to respond to differing requirements for services that have the same label across different organizations. These commonly defined services provide the basis for a collective marketing and communication strategy.
 - Recruiting and Screening Services
 - Advertise Your Job Openings: To provide an employer the opportunity to post employment opportunities throughout the one-stop system.
 - Screen Applicants: Based on employer skill requirements.
 - Conduct Recruitments: Provide Employers an in-person opportunity to inform job seekers (screened and/or unscreened) about available job openings within their organization.
 - Conduct Forums. Industry-specific forums in which business

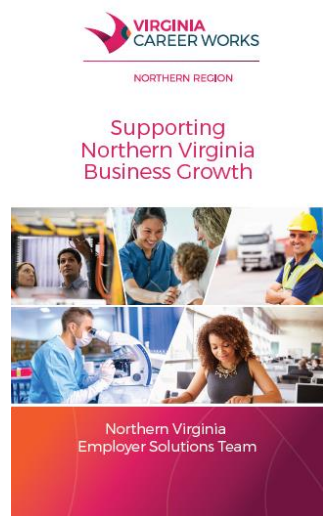
representatives provide inside information on successfully navigating through the hiring process.

- Conduct Job Fairs: Offer multiple employers the opportunity to meet enrolled and non-enrolled job seekers.
- Employee Development/Retention Services
 - Provide Training: Provide employers with training for current employees to build required skills.
 - Provide Financial Literacy Workshops: Provide employees with informational workshops on how to manage their finances.
 - Provide workshops: On starting your own business.
- Business Information (Consultative and Planning) Services
 - Provide LMI Research: To provide businesses and employers with requested information on localized labor market information.
 - Outplacement Assistance: To assist businesses that are downsizing due to economic factors or other circumstances.
 - Consultative Services: To provide entrepreneurs and businesses information and resources to enhance business performance (i.e. Business plans, tax credits, etc.)
 - Continuous improvement strategies based on common customer satisfaction data collection and analysis that includes mystery shoppers, focus groups, and electronic surveys.

Address how the region's workforce entities will involve employers in the formation of new workforce development initiatives

The VCWN and *SkillSource* will engage employers in the development of Federal and State grant proposals that propose new workforce development initiatives. Through strong employer connections and Board involvement, *SkillSource* has engaged regional employers in the development of its regional initiatives through grant activities. Utilizing the Employer Solutions Team approach, consistent and frequent employer outreach and services will be provided. The EST will engage regional employers in order to promote strategic growth through career pathways and strong talent development.

Identify what activities will be undertaken to address employers' specific workforce needs



The Northern Virginia EST will be tasked with further developing a strategic communication strategy that will outline how to promote the EST to Northern Virginia employers, and creating an action plan on how to engage employers to assess specific workforce needs. This plan will include strategies for outreach to employers, and how to engage them in services. It will be implemented for use with Chambers, Associations, and economic development agencies. Workforce Area #11 has created a Northern Virginia Business Services Brochure that is

used within our ongoing business outreach efforts; this Guide summarizes all of the various services that an existing or new business can access through the VCWN. The VCWN will enhance this Guide based on the EST's communication plan to ensure it addresses employers' specific workforce needs. This Guide is provided completely online for employers to access anytime. The VCWN will also examine other methods of disseminating information about EST services, through promotion and outreach efforts.

3.10 Describe how the direction given by the Governor and the local board to the one-stop operator to ensure priority for adult career and training services will be given to recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals, and individuals who are basic skills deficient.

SkillSource and VCWN staff must give priority to recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals, and individuals who are basic skills deficient in the provision of individualized career services and training services. Under WIOA, priority must be provided regardless of the level of funds. WIOA also expanded the priority to include individuals who are basic skills deficient. WIOA provides a focus on serving individuals with barriers to employment, and the intent of this priority in the law is to ensure access to these populations on a priority basis. Priority of Service does not apply to the dislocated worker or youth programs. VCWN follows its Priority of Service Policy, found online at www.vcwnorthern.com.

When programs are statutorily required to provide priority to a particular group of individuals, as described above, priority must be provided in the following order:

1. First, to veterans and eligible spouses who are also included in the WIOA Priority groups given statutory priority for WIOA Adult formula funds. This means that veterans and eligible spouses who are public assistance recipients, other low-income individuals, or individuals who are basic skills deficient would receive first priority for services provided with WIOA Adult formula funds for individualized career services and training services.
2. Second, to non-covered persons (that is, individuals who are not veterans or eligible spouses) who are included in the WIOA Priority groups given statutory priority for WIOA Adult formula funds.
3. Third, to veterans and eligible spouses who are not included in WIOA's priority groups.
4. Fourth, to priority populations established by the Governor and/or the Virginia Career Works – Northern Region. As of the date of this policy, Veterans are a priority population

established by the Governor. Virginia Career Works – Northern Region has identified Individuals with Barriers to Employment as priority populations:

- (1) Displaced homemakers
- (2) Low-income individuals
- (3) Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians
- (4) Individuals with disabilities including youth who are individuals with disabilities
- (5) Older individuals (55 and older)
- (6) Ex-offenders
- (7) Homeless individuals (as defined in the Violence Against Women Act), or homeless children and youths (as defined in the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act)
- (8) Youth who are in, or have aged out of, the foster care system.
- (9) Individuals who are English language learners, individuals who have low levels of literacy, and individuals facing substantial cultural barriers
- {10}Eligible migrant and seasonal farmworkers
- (11) Individuals within two years of exhausting lifetime eligibility under part A of title IV of the Social Security Act (TANF)
- (12) Single parents (including single pregnant women)
- (13) Long-term unemployed individuals
- (14) Such other groups as the Governor involved determines to have barriers to employment [WIOA Sec. 3(24))

5. Last, to non-covered persons outside the WIOA Priority groups given priority under WIOA.

To monitor implementation of Priority of Service locally, VCWN and the One-Stop Operator management staff will run reports from the Virginia Workforce Connection (VaWC) regularly and review the results to ensure there are no discrepancies in implementation of Priority of Service. If any are found, they will be addressed for remediation, as needed.

Section 4: Program Design and Evaluation

4.1 Describe how the local board, working with the entities carrying out core programs, will expand access to employment, training, education, and supportive services for eligible individuals, particularly eligible individuals with barriers to employment. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(3)]

The VCWN and workforce partners are committed to expanding access to WIOA services, particularly those with barriers to employment. The VCWN has worked with its One-Stop Operator to ensure quality customer service through strong case management services, training in high-growth and in-demand industries, with an emphasis on career pathways and stackable credentials, as well as career navigation and job placement. The VCWN will ensure strong engagement with employers and businesses in high demand, high wage opportunities and coordinate training with industry-led business partnerships.

The VCWN will also align current training programs against career pathways, and will work with training providers to create new programs and curriculum based on data and employer feedback, and recruiting training organizations that may not be on the approved training provider list, such as apprenticeship programs. VCWN recognizes the importance of mapping resources within the region that provide workforce development services, and will lead efforts to expand access to services by engaging in resource mapping of workforce programs and services, and connecting the services across organizations to expand opportunities for eligible individuals.

4.2 Describe how the local board will facilitate the development of career pathways, consistent with the Career Pathways Definitions. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(3)]

As WIOA recognizes career pathways as an approach to aligning services offered by different programs, the VCWN will work with the partners within the Northern Virginia Workforce System, and local employers, to facilitate the development of regional career pathways. Local partnerships of adult education, workforce development, community colleges, community-based organizations, employers, and unions are essential to successful career pathways and bridge programs. Pathway development will focus on accelerated and integrated program models that result in a meaningful credential, and are employer-verified pathways and curriculum that focus on preparation for college and career success. VCWN and its case managers rely on labor market studies to anticipate industry needs and facilitate the development of career pathways that have been created by education providers such as Northern Virginia Community College (NOVA), to share with jobseekers that are interested in pursuing career paths in high-growth industries in the region such as IT and Healthcare. NOVA has created various [industry career ladders](#) for specific occupations, at every level of education, that highlights wages and the number of opportunities available in the region.

Other strategies that will facilitate the development of career pathways within the region include:

- Expand the options for providers to deliver skills training based on needs identified. The VCWN has been proactive in reaching out to entities to help them register for the Eligible Training Provider list. This offers jobseekers a wider range of options for training providers.
- In the role of regional convener, the VCWN has identified and convened employers in the IT sector, a high demand industry in the region, through an Industry Sector Coalition. The Northern Virginia IT Employment Initiative (NVITE) Industry Sector

Coalition (ISC) brings together businesses, government, nonprofits, and educational institutions to meet employer needs by building a diverse talent pool of skilled entry-level IT workers. The ISC enables members to discuss their shared human-resources issues, exchange information about industry practices, and take joint action to address workforce challenges. *SkillSource* facilitates the ISC, with funding and support of the Greater Washington Community Foundation. The ISC identified a significant challenge: even at the entry level, IT companies based their hiring almost exclusively on degrees, rather than competencies or skills. The ISC began to consider how competency-based hiring practices might have potential to source non-degreed candidates, diversifying the talent pipeline. *SkillSource* convenes this sector group on a regular basis, and will seek opportunities to lead other sector strategy groups.

- Survey employers by industry sectors on an annual basis. Sectors mentioned included IT, healthcare, business management, construction, retail and hospitality.
- VCWN board members within the specific industry sectors identified should be identified as industry champions to provide contacts with other employers within the industry.

4.3 Describe how the local board will utilize co-enrollment, as appropriate, in core programs to maximize efficiencies and use of resources. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(3)]
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SkillSource seeks to co-enroll jobseekers in WIOA core programs when possible, in order to assist job seekers in finding jobs and employers in recruiting the region's talent. Core partners including representatives from the WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs, the Virginia Employment Commission (VEC), Virginia Department of Aging & Rehabilitative Services (DARS), Prince William County Public Schools, and Prince William County Department of Social Services, are all co-located at the Virginia Career Works – Prince William Center in

Woodbridge, Virginia. This makes co-enrollments between partners easier and the customer is able to easily navigate services in one location.



Virginia Career Works – Northern is also part of the new [Virginia Career Works Referral Portal](#), which quickly and easily connects individuals across the Commonwealth of Virginia to critical training, career, and support resources during the COVID-19 pandemic

and beyond. The use of this portal also makes co-enrollment and referrals between partner agencies easier; participating agencies include the local workforce development boards, VEC, DARS, Virginia Department of Blind and Vision Impaired, and local Departments of Social Services agencies.

SkillSource recently completed a three-year project as a partner in the Northern Virginia Disability Employment Initiative Project/DEI Round 8, in partnership with the Virginia Community College System (VCCS), DARS, and the Virginia Department of Education to support enhancing existing career pathways for adults (and young adults) with disabilities age 18-64 leading to sustainable employment. SkillSource collaborated closely with DARS to serve individuals with disabilities, and seeking to increase co-enrollments between programs. DEI assisted 128 customers with disabilities, and registered 74 into WIOA Title III – Wagner Peyser services, and 23 into WIOA Title I – Adult or Dislocated Worker services.

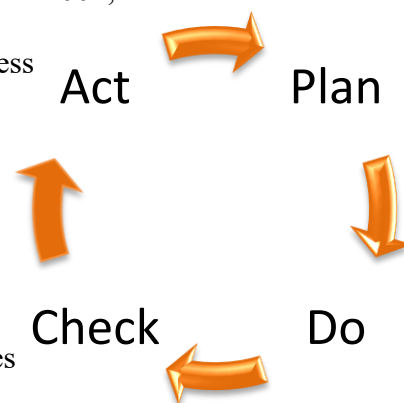
4.4 Describe one-stop delivery system in the local area, including:

- A. The local board's efforts to ensure the continuous improvement of eligible providers of services through the system and ensure that such providers meet the employment needs of local employers, and workers and jobseekers. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(6)(A)]

The VCWN currently monitors the One-Stop Operator of the Virginia Career Works – Northern Centers twice annually, cases under management, program exits, and WIOA

performance outcomes. Further, the VCWN Eligible Training Provider Coordinator reviews practices and procedures of the regional training providers who have been certified to receive WIOA customers with training vouchers. Since 2002, the VCWN has implemented customer surveys, both online and paper copy, for both job seekers and business customers of VCWN, to assess and monitor overall customer satisfaction with services provided through the Virginia Career Works - Northern Centers and the VCWN.

VCWN had its own local Center Certification process in place since 2001, that followed the Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) process methodology, requiring One-Stop Center managers to become proficient and practice ongoing data collection, monitoring and implementing towards results. Now that the State oversees the Center Certification process, VCWN follows the policies and guidelines established by State staff. Staff continue to follow the VCWN Operating Principles identify core processes that are utilized to work toward several quality service goals, including:



- Continuous Quality Process Improvement strategies are used to ensure our strategies meet changing expectations of our customer and the marketplace.
- The CQI principle of data-driven decision making is used in the operational end of all systems and processes.
- We seek to collaborate and to build partnerships around all the goals, strategies and tasks in which we are engaged.

The Virginia Career Works Northern currently has sixty-eight (68) WIOA Eligible Training Providers listed, representing over two hundred separate training programs, and has devoted a

fulltime staff member to administer this process and to ensure the continuous quality improvement process for Northern Virginia Eligible Training Providers during the annual renewal process. At the end of each program year, the Area #11 Program Coordinator collects Performance Data Reports (PDRs), an Equal Opportunity Annual Monitoring Tool, and updated oversight documentation for each training program approved through Area #11. Following State guidelines, Area #11 monitors the outcomes for all training providers who are certified as a WIOA Training Provider through their submitted Performance Data Reports (PDRs) that reflect annual performance data in the following areas for each approved program, even if it did not serve any WIOA customers during that year:

- 1) Completion Rate - must meet or exceed 50%.
- 2) Credential Attainment Rate - must meet or exceed 65%.
- 3) Employment Rate; and
- 4) Post Training Earnings.

Area #11 is also able to pull outcome data on Completion and Credential Attainment rates through reports from the Virginia Workforce Connection. This data is reported to the VCWN Quality Assurance (QA) Committee; training provider programs that do not meet the required Completion and Credential Attainment rates are identified to the QA Committee, and Area #11 staff will work with that ETP to develop a corrective action strategy. The decision to remove a program is made by the Board's QA Committee.

During the renewal period, ETPs must identify any changes to address, contact person, program content, program cost, etc., by submitting a Re-certification Form; all changes are reviewed by the QA Committee. Lastly, the ETP EO Annual Monitoring Tool must also be

completed, to ensure Equal Opportunity (EO) and access compliance for all individuals attending training through each ETP.

B. How the local board will facilitate access to services provided through the one-stop delivery system, including in remote areas, through the use of technology and through other means. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(6)(B)]

Even prior to the COVID-19 Pandemic, the Area #11 One-Stop Operator had increased the accessibility of services to customers by using web-based approaches to services, such as creating orientation videos for the WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth programs, posting the WIOA intake packet online and allowing jobseekers to sign up for WIOA eligibility screenings online. The One-Stop Operator also conducts monthly webinars that are accessible to anyone with computer and Internet access on topics such as How to Write an Effective Resume, The Art of Interviewing, Job Loss Survival Guide and A Jobseeker's Guide to Managing a Career.

Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, to comply with social distancing, the Virginia Career Works – Northern Centers closed their doors to the public in mid-March 2020, but access to services never stopped. The VCWN centers continued to provide assistance from a distance that was convenient and accessible to job seekers while still practicing physical and safety distancing for all people. Technology-driven services included seamless case management through the conversion of all program forms to fillable PDFs, use of DocuSign to securely submit documents, scheduled appointments via phone, Skype, FaceTime, Microsoft Teams, and Zoom, virtual hiring events using Zoom and other virtual job fair platforms, virtual career coaching, training webinars via Zoom, employment toolkits, and the new VCW Referral Portal. Staff also worked with local area Eligible Training Providers to assist WIOA clients in accessing virtual training. The Northern Virginia WIOA Youth program even supported two virtual Work Experiences and successfully held a virtual Youth Leadership Academy during the summer, in place of the summer youth employment program.

OUR DOORS MAY HAVE CLOSED BUT SERVICES NEVER STOPPED

	8 MONTHS PRE-COVID	STAY-AT-HOME ORDER/SAFER-AT-HOME	% CHANGE	
MONTHLY AVERAGE	JULY 2019 TO FEBRUARY 2020	MARCH 2020 TO JUNE 2020		
FAIRFAX VCW CUSTOMERS SERVED	2,049	2,546	19.5% INCREASE	
LOUDOUN VCW CUSTOMERS SERVED	441	925	47.6% INCREASE	
PRINCE WILLIAM VCW CUSTOMERS SERVED	1,319	*	*	
* Staff redeployed after closure. Limited data available.				
	PRE-COVID	STAY-AT-HOME ORDER	PHASE 1 & 2	PHASE 3
AVAILABLE SERVICES				
SEAMLESS CASE MANAGEMENT	✓	✓	✓	✓
JOB FAIRS	✓	✓	✓	✓
CAREER COACHING	✓	✓	✓	✓
TRAINING WEBINARS	✓	✓	✓	✓
EMPLOYMENT TOOLKIT	✓	✓	✓	✓
SCHEDULED APPOINTMENTS	✓	✓	✓	✓
UI APPLICATION ASSISTANCE	✓	✓	✓	✓
ACCESS TO JOB CENTER RESOURCE	✓	✓	—	✓

While many of the VCWN centers actually saw a remarkable increase in customers served per month during the months the centers closed, the closure of VCWN may have placed undue burden on our most vulnerable residents and job seekers. Starting with the VCW – Prince William Center location, in-person

services resumed on July 6, 2020, followed by the VCW – Fairfax Annandale location on August 3, 2020 and VCW – Loudoun Center on August 17, 2020, by appointment only using online scheduling systems. This strategic approach allows the center to maintain the staff level necessary to deliver online, virtual and e-learning employment services, yet still serve those in need of in-person services. All Centers that re-opened to the public have plexiglass barriers installed and other measures in place to ensure adequate social distancing. Many customers have liked the ability to access Center and WIOA services virtually. Due to the positive feedback, VCWN anticipates that the use of virtual services, in combination with in-person services, will likely continue even after the social distancing requirements are lifted, to provide services to a greater number of jobseekers across the region.

C. How entities within the one-stop delivery system, including one-stop operators and the one-stop partners, will comply with WIOA section 188, if applicable, and applicable

provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 regarding the physical and programmatic accessibility of facilities, programs and services, technology, and materials for individuals with disabilities, including providing staff training and support for addressing the needs of individuals with disabilities. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(6)(C)]

In October 2010, **SkillSource** contracted with the Social Security Administration to provide services under the Ticket to Work Program as a Workforce Employment Network (EN). The Ticket to Work Program is a Federal-local initiative that supports career development for Social Security disability beneficiaries aged 18 through 64 who want to work. The Ticket program is free and voluntary and helps people with disabilities replace Social Security cash benefits with earnings. By offering Ticket as one of multiple programs available to Northern Virginia job seekers, SkillSource has increased opportunities and choices for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) beneficiaries to obtain training, employment, vocational rehabilitation, and other support services from public and non-profit partners, including WIOA, within the Northern Virginia Workforce System. The **SkillSource** Ticket to Work staff regularly attend WIOA Title-I monthly case manager meetings to streamline co-enrollment activities.

As of December 2022, the SkillSource Ticket to Work Program has helped 369 Social Security beneficiaries with their employment goals, and has placed 225 into jobs at an average wage of \$16.20/hour (\$33,696 annually). As a result of these efforts, SkillSource has achieved a significant milestone of earning nearly \$2 million in Ticket revenues since becoming a Workforce EN for the Social Security Administration in October 2010.

In April 2020, **SkillSource** was selected to participate in the EN Marketing Program. The program's goal is to increase beneficiary program outreach and participation in the Ticket to Work program. **SkillSource** received its first data file of 5,000 Ticket holders at the end of September 2020 and began its text marketing campaign in December 2020. **SkillSource** paused its

involvement in the Marketing Program in July 2021 due to internal staffing changes. As of December 2022, **SkillSource** restarted participation in the Marketing Program. The goal is to increase the number of SSDI, and SSI beneficiaries served in 2023 by at least 25 Ticket assignments.

SkillSource has three (3) certified work incentives counselors on staff to assist Ticket to Work participants in understanding the impact of work on Social Security disability benefits and health care (Medicare and Medicaid) benefits. Additionally, **SkillSource** funded the certification of two (2) WIOA case managers and one (1) Center Operations representative in SSA work incentives. These case managers will act as an internal resource on SSA work incentives and can provide technical assistance to other One-Stop Center staff with customers who receive Social Security disability benefits. They also routinely present on SSA work incentives and promote other trainings to One-Stop Center staff such as the Virginia Commonwealth University's free virtual course, *Introduction to SSA Disability Benefits*. Additionally, Ticket Program staff collaborate with representatives from the Social Security Administration and Disability Determination Services to provide periodic seminars (virtual and in-person) on the disability application process and work incentives available to current disability beneficiaries.

In 2015, the VCWN created a Disability Services Subcommittee, a standing committee to provide information and to assist with operational and other issues relating to the provision of services to individuals with disabilities, as well as appropriate training for staff on providing supports for or accommodations to, and finding employment opportunities for, individuals with disabilities.

Area 11 has also been part of the VCCS and DARS Disability Employment Initiative (DEI), which has provided a number of resources and training for staff. Additions to the

SkillSource website were made to the Center contact page so that customers can see what assistive technology is available at each Center before visiting. The idea to add the information to the website was a product of the initial DEI Customer-Centered Design Team that included Center managers, **SkillSource** and Vocational Rehabilitation staff.

The **SkillSource** Disability Resource Coordinator created an Assistive Technology (AT) questionnaire for Center managers. The questionnaire was created to identify gaps in AT equipment, resources, and knowledge. DEI funds were used to purchase AT equipment for the One-Stop Centers. An AT training presentation by the DEI team and Virginia Assistive Technology System (VATS) Coordinator, Emily McKeough was conducted and open to all workforce staff and partners across LWDA 11. The training introduced staff to the AT loaner kits available to them to use with clients, the newly purchased AT equipment, and new Center pop-up information on the **SkillSource** website about available AT.

SkillSource staff funded by the Disability Employment Initiative (DEI) grant created an accommodations flyer/poster to be used at the Virginia Career Works Northern Centers and interested Adult Ed partners. The material is to be used by staff to initiate conversations with customers about possible accommodations. The word disability was intentionally left off the material to make it more universal in design. Adult Ed and staff across other agencies and programs were consulted for feedback on the material. The posters are to be displayed in Centers to create awareness among customers and staff about accommodations. The PDF versions were made

compliant with PDF/UA, 508, and WCAG Standards to ensure accessibility and were also translated into Spanish.

VCWN will continue to provide effective communication through accessible information and communication technology by making available technical assistance materials, guides and training to VCWN Center staff and partner organizations on topics such as:

- FAQs on physical, communication, and programmatic accessibility;
- Adaptive equipment available and processes for obtaining and using such equipment;
- How to make websites accessible; and
- Video Relay Services and Video Remote Interpreting



D. Describe the roles and resource contributions of the one-stop partners. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(6)(D)]

The Northern Virginia Workforce Area #11 One-Stop partners are all signatories of the VCWN Center System Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), which is signed every two years. This agreement outlines the roles, resources and services provided by each partner. The Prince William Workforce Center in Woodbridge, Virginia utilizes a Cost Allocation Plan that is renewed annually through an Addendum to the Center System MOU, to identify the resource contributions for each of the One-Stop partners located at the Virginia Career Works - Prince William and Cherokee Avenue Centers, and the in-kind resource sharing at the remaining Centers. These can be in-kind services that are being provided in support of the operations of the Centers, including costs for staffing, technology support, communications, operating costs, and facility costs. Each partner organization to this MOU must agree to contribute a fair share of the operating costs of the

comprehensive One-Stop Center proportionate to the use of the Center by the partner's program (benefit received). Signatories of this Agreement include the following partners:

- The ***SkillSource*** Group, Inc. on behalf of Virginia Career Works - Northern
- Fairfax County Government (through the Chairman of the Board of Supervisors as the Chief Elected Official for Northern Virginia Area #11)
- Fairfax County (through its Department of Family Services)
- Fairfax County (through its Department of Housing and Community Development)
- Fairfax County School Board, which operates Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS)
- Loudoun County (through its Department of Family Services)
- Loudoun County School Board, which operates as Loudoun County Public Schools (LCPS)
- Prince William County (through its Department of Social Services)
- Prince William County Public Schools (PWCS), Adult Education
- City of Manassas (through its Department of Family Services)
- City of Manassas Park (through its Department of Social Services)
- Commonwealth of Virginia (through its Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services)
- Commonwealth of Virginia (through its Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired)
- Commonwealth of Virginia (through the Virginia Employment Commission)
- Northern Virginia Community College
- Melwood Horticultural Training Center
- Educational Credit Management Corporation – The College Place

E. Describe how one-stop centers are implementing and transitioning to an integrated technology-enabled intake and case management information system for core programs and programs carried out by one-stop partners [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(21)]
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The Area #11 One-Stop Operator has increased the accessibility of services to customers by using web-based approaches to services, particularly due to the COVID-19 pandemic, as previously mentioned, such as creating orientation videos for the WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth programs, use of the Virginia Career Works Referral Portal, posting a fillable PDF WIOA intake packet online, and allowing jobseekers to sign up for virtual and in-person services online. The One-Stop Operator also conducts monthly webinars that are accessible to anyone with computer and Internet access on topics such as How to Write an Effective Resume, The Art of Interviewing, Job Loss Survival Guide and A Jobseeker's Guide to Managing a Career. The VCWN website is also Section 508 compliant.

The Northern Virginia workforce partners are also committed to expanding access to services through use of technology such as Skype, FaceTime, Microsoft Teams, and Zoom, which helps those customers in parts of the region that do not have adequate access to transportation, or the means to travel to the Virginia Career Works - Northern Center locations. The Virginia Career Works - Northern Centers are equipped with webcams and will be able to support the increased use of virtual methods to provide services to a greater number of jobseekers across the region. **SkillSource** has also held multiple and participated in virtual regional job fairs, that have been extremely successful and have engaged hundreds of jobseekers at each event. In 2022, **SkillSource** contracted with Brazen, an online job fair platform, to host multiple virtual job fairs. **SkillSource** anticipates maintaining its virtual services even beyond the pandemic, as it has increased the capacity of the Northern Virginia Workforce System to effectively deliver services to jobseekers that have transportation or other barriers to participating in in-person services.

Furthermore, in accordance with Virginia Workforce Letter No. 20-07 Change 1, VCWN has transitioned its WIOA case files to electronic case files, for all new participants enrolled in WIOA Title I (Youth, Adult, and Dislocated Worker) programs, and applicable discretionary grant programs, in the Virginia Workforce Connection (VaWC) to ensure compliance with federal and state statutes, regulations, and policies. Case management staff have undergone training to ensure the accurate uploading of documentation, case notes, and other activity and service codes are made in VaWC. This process is reviewed monthly by the Area #11 One-Stop Operator's WIOA Quality Assurance Supervisor and during file monitoring.

F. Describe the services provided by each partner mandated by federal and state law, and other optional partners.

All of the agencies that are signatories of the Center System MOU agree to collaborate to achieve a shared vision for a seamless customer-focused one-stop delivery system, that integrates service delivery across all programs and connects businesses and job seekers with the full range of services available in their communities, whether they are looking to find jobs, build basic educational or occupational skills, earn a postsecondary certificate or degree, or obtain guidance on how to make career choices, or are businesses and employers seeking skilled workers. The agencies will provide the following services:

- To jointly promote the further integration of programs through joint planning and aligned service delivery;
- To align planning and budgeting processes to the vision and goals of the workforce system;
- To jointly identify and support workforce skill standards and industry performance measures to drive common outcomes;
- To coordinate resources and programs and to promote a more streamlined and efficient workforce development system;

- To promote information sharing and the coordination of activities to improve performance of local parties;
- To use common release of information processes subject to confidentiality provisions and to preserve records for the period required by law;
- To identify and address barriers to coordination;
- To promote the development of common data systems to track progress and measure performance;
- To commit to customer service by using performance data, including the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act performance measures and other real-time program information to continuously improve services; and
- To authorize WIOA training funds to support workforce development and employment and training opportunities in occupations that are identified as a high-demand group.

G. Identify the Virginia Workforce Center Operator for each site in the local area.

The Fairfax County Department of Family Services is the lead One-Stop Operator and the WIOA Youth Program Operator for Workforce Area #11.

H. Identify the physical locations of each comprehensive Virginia Workforce Center in the local area, and the co-location strategy for each center (current and planned).

The Northern Virginia Workforce System has one (1) Comprehensive Virginia Career Works Center located in Woodbridge, Virginia, and four (4) Affiliate Virginia Career Works Centers (see map to the right). The System also includes two jail-based Employment Centers at the Fairfax County Alternative Incarceration Branch (AIB) and the Prince William Manassas Regional Adult Detention Center (PWMRAD). The jail-based employment centers were the first to be operated by a local workforce area in Virginia.



In 2016, the Virginia Employment Commission initiated planning efforts to meet WIOA service integration requirements; the VEC offices at 5520 Cherokee Avenue, in the Alexandria section of Fairfax County, had been identified for potential integration within Workforce Area #11. This site, located near the south-eastern border of Fairfax County, is in a high-density, heavily trafficked section of Fairfax County and offered an ideal Virginia Career Works Center location that is nearly halfway between the Annandale and South County Centers. That Center had represented 40% of the VEC's entire online job orders recorded annually for the entire Commonwealth. After multiple conversations between VEC and VCWN staff, and with approval of the VCWN and **SkillSource** Board of Directors, the Cherokee Avenue location re-opened in July 2018 as a Virginia Career Works Center, and has seen a steady volume of jobseekers. Partners at this Center include VCWN and WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth staff, the Virginia Employment Commission, the Educational Credit Management Corporation (ECMC), an organization which provides financial tools and services, nonprofit career education, and job placement services to help students succeed and achieve their academic and professional goals, as well as staff from other **SkillSource** and VCWN programs.

In July 2020, Area #11 had to close its Virginia Career Works – Northern Center located at the Manassas Campus of Northern Virginia Community College (NOVA), due to NOVA needing the space for other NOVA services and classes. VCWN views having a location in the western portion of Prince William County as an important goal for the Board, and is currently searching for a potential space in Manassas, Virginia for a new Center.

I. If applicable, identify the locations of Virginia Workforce Network affiliated sites, partner sites, or specialized centers.

1. Virginia Career Works – Fairfax Annandale Center, Heritage Center, 7611 Little River Turnpike (West Wing), Suite 300W, Annandale, VA 22003

2. Virginia Career Works – Fairfax Alexandria Center, 8350 Richmond Highway, Suite 327, Alexandria, VA 22309
3. Virginia Career Works – Cherokee Avenue Center, 5520 Cherokee Avenue, #100, Alexandria, VA 22312
4. Virginia Career Works – Loudoun Workforce Resource Center, 102 Heritage Way, N.E., Leesburg, VA 20176
5. PWMRADDC Employment Center, 9320 Lee Ave, Manassas, VA 20110
6. Fairfax County AIB Employment Center, 10520B Judicial Drive, Fairfax, VA 22030

4.5 Describe the policy, process, and criteria for issuing individual training accounts (ITAs) including any limitations on ITA amounts. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(19)]

As outlined in the VCWN ITA Policy (found online at www.vcwnorthern.com), the Northern Virginia WIOA One-Stop Operator is responsible for managing the ITA voucher system. As appropriate, the WIOA Case Manager will assist eligible individuals with the purchase of training programs that meet the individual's training needs as evidenced by supporting documentation in the participant's case file.

To be eligible for training services, the WIOA participant must participate in the following services:

- a. Completed a comprehensive assessment of skill levels and service needs that may include diagnostic testing.
- b. Participated in an in-depth interview to identify employment barriers and employment goals.
- c. Development of an individual employment plan that identifies the employment goals and appropriate combination of services for the participant to achieve the employment goals. Should occupational skills training be warranted as part of the participant's Individual Employment Plan (IEP) or Individual Service Strategy (ISS), the IEP/ISS must include evidence that a review of the

labor market information has been conducted to determine that the occupation selected is in demand and those employment opportunities exist.

d. Individual counseling sessions, which include career planning and case management services, along with short-term pre-vocational services of developing learning skills, communication skills, punctuality, personal maintenance skills, and professional conduct to prepare individuals for unsubsidized employment or training.

Once the participant's skill levels and assessment results have been reviewed, the WIOA case manager provides information regarding the availability of training. In consultation with the WIOA case manager, the participant reviews the Statewide or local list of eligible training providers (ETP) to determine training options. The training provider's requirements for enrollment, performance outcomes, and cost for the training course selected are discussed with the participant. It is the responsibility of the WIOA case manager AND participant to identify and select a training provider from the state or local list of ETPs approved by VCWN.

The participant fills out a Customer Request for Training form and the ETP completes the Financial Award Analysis (FAA) form. Based on a comprehensive assessment of career interest/aptitude, the skill levels and evaluation of participant's training needs coupled with labor market information on the participant's career interest, the WIOA case manager begins the process for initiating the Training Authorization Form (TAF). The TAF is the Area #11 ITA voucher system which provides information regarding the participant's type of training, duration of training, training costs and training provider. The TAF is submitted at least one (1) week prior to the participant's training start date, in order for a Letter of Authorization (LOA) to be issued and sent to the ETP.

The VCWN sets the training fund cap limit; currently, the maximum training fund limit for adults is \$6,000 and \$6,500 for dislocated workers. The training fund limit on an individual ITA for adults is \$4,500 and \$5,000 for dislocated workers. The additional funds allocated to each participant will be specifically tied to additional training certifications through stackable credentials. There is no training fund cap for out-of-school youth who access an ITA. Any requests to exceed the ITA limitations must be approved by the VCWN Executive Director.

4.6 If training contracts are used, describe processes utilized by the local board to ensure customer choice in the selection of training programs, regardless of how the training services are to be provided. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(19)]

The Northern Virginia ITA policy states that training services, whether under ITAs or under contract, must be provided in a manner that maximizes informed customer choices in selecting an eligible training provider. Case management staff are aware and monitored for this, and provide the full listing of the Northern Virginia Eligible Training Providers to customers. After the WIOA participant selects a training provider from Statewide/Local ETP list, it is up to the WIOA participant to contact the training provider and obtain information on training availability, training costs, curriculum, class schedules, etc. in order to make an informed decision of the best choice on where to go for training. The customer then informs the WIOA case manager of their training provider and program selection.

4.7 Describe process utilized by the local board to ensure that training provided is linked to in-demand industry sectors or occupations in the local area, or in another area to which a participant is willing to relocate. [WIOA Sec. 134(c)(3)(G)(iii)]

As part of the ETP review process by VCWN and the Quality Assurance Committee, program applications are reviewed to assess that the training provided is in-demand in the region, and will result in job placement. This is assessed through the use of Labor Market Information and O*Net to demonstrate that the training is related to high-growth occupations. Furthermore, when meeting with their WIOA case manager, Labor Market Information is reviewed during the

development of the participant's IEP or ISS, which must include evidence that this review was conducted and that the occupation is in-demand. If the participant's desired career interest is not a high growth occupation, the participant must demonstrate an intense need of training due to a prior experience of demand and existence of opportunities that would guarantee employment after completion of the training.

<p>4.8 Describe how rapid response activities are coordinated and carried out in the local area. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(8)]</p>
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The current Rapid Response Team is led through the Virginia Employment Commission. The local Rapid Response Coordinator is an active member of the Northern Virginia Employer Solutions Team and regularly attends VCWN Board meetings. Once a WARN notice is issued, the team organizes and collaborates well to get the needed partner services to the business' employees. When a need is identified that the team cannot provide locally, the lead Rapid Response Coordinator will work with the state to help meet the need. One challenge to the delivery of Rapid Response services is that employers are not forthcoming in providing information about their potential downsizing or closing down for a myriad of legitimate reasons. Through better use of real time data analytics and working even more closely with economic development, the Rapid Response Team is exploring ways to identify and then offer help to businesses before the layoff crisis occurs.

Due to the impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic, air travel in the United States has reduced by over 95% since March 2020. As a result, airline operators and affiliated employers that support Dulles International Airport and Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport had issued WARN notices for significant layoffs and terminations by October 1, 2020. Affiliated industries and employers dependent on air travel, such as car rental companies, airport restaurants, airport mall stores and adjacent hotels and lodging have already terminated or furloughed employees due to

enormous losses of customers. VCWN estimated that over 6,000 workers between the airlines and other companies supporting the airport could be impacted, depending upon decisions by the U.S. Congress and the private sector airlines. The Virginia Community College System awarded Areas #11 and #12 Rapid Response funding in October 2020 to help impacted employees. Though Congress did provide relief to the airlines, there are still hundreds, if not thousands, of potentially impacted workers that could be served through the initiative.

Section 5: Compliance

5.1 Describe how the local board meets its responsibilities for oversight, monitoring, and corrective action for WIOA Title I programs.

The Northern Virginia Workforce Area has implemented an active oversight and monitoring protocol. The VCWN Board of Directors Quality Assurance Committee is responsible for ongoing oversight of Virginia Career Works - Northern Centers and oversees ongoing performance management, Center operations, and State certification and any corrective actions determined necessary. VCWN staff, particularly the Executive Director and the Deputy Executive Director, lead the internal Center monitoring protocols. Center monitoring reviews are scheduled twice a year and separate file reviews with Comprehensive and Affiliate Centers are scheduled once a year. The monitoring reviews evaluate One-Stop Center operations with an approved checklist of programs and activities to be reviewed and include both Center staff and customer surveys conducted during the monitoring visit. The file review evaluates case file management and compliance with Virginia Community College System and U.S. Department of Labor guidelines.

Upon completion of the Center Monitoring Review and the Case Management File Review, the VCWN Executive Director forwards correspondence to the Center Director and the One- Stop

Operator highlighting any identified areas of weakness that may require corrective action. A response from the Center is required within thirty (30) days.

5.2 Describe how the local board conducts business in accordance with the Sunshine Provisions of WIOA staffing plans for the local board.

The VCWN is committed to conducting business in accordance with the Sunshine Provisions of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. All Committee and Board meetings are advertised at least one month (30 days) prior to the actual meeting date and the six month meeting schedule is advertised on the VCWN website at www.vcwnorthern.com. Public comment periods are also included in the VCWN Board of Directors meeting agenda. Major Board policy documents are advertised on the VCWN website and in local newspapers and business journals to solicit public review and comment. The *SkillSource* staff organizational chart is also posted on the website, as well as all of *SkillSource*'s audited A-133 and financial statements and IRS Form 990 information. *SkillSource* recently achieved the "Platinum" distinction in Candid, which is the highest level of recognition a non-profit can achieve to demonstrate their commitment to transparency and sharing data on outcomes and results.

5.3 Describe the methods and strategies used to ensure timely expenditure of WIOA funds.
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Annually, *SkillSource* prepares a budget, which is reviewed and adopted by the *SkillSource* and the VCWN Boards of Directors. The budget includes estimated carry-in funds from prior year funding, new authorized WIOA and other grant funding, and anticipated renewals of long-established funding streams. Each month, the *SkillSource* Finance Committee reviews financial management reports, which include budget to actual comparisons in a consolidated format and by funding stream. The management report identifies the expenditure and obligation rates of WIOA and other funding streams. On a quarterly basis, the *SkillSource* and VCWN boards review the expenditures, obligations and program performance reports. Furthermore, the *SkillSource* Director of Budgeting and Financial Accounting and the Vice President of Operations

meet with the program and fiscal staff for the One-Stop Operator on a monthly basis to review and monitor expenditures and obligations of WIOA and other contract awards, and also meet with the **SkillSource** President and CEO and WIOA program staff on a monthly basis to review WIOA obligations. This level of detail and review is one of the strategies used by **SkillSource** to ensure timely expenditure and reporting of WIOA and other funds.

5.4 Describe the process for neutral brokerage of adult, dislocated worker, and youth services. Identify the competitive process and criteria (such as targeted services, leverage of funds, etc.) used to award funds to sub-recipients/contractors of WIOA Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth services, state the names of contracted organizations, and the duration of each contract. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(16)]

Since inception, the VCWN and Youth Committee have used the public procurement process every five (5) years to identify and select the WIOA Youth Program Provider. Most recently conducted in 2020, the Fairfax County Department of Family Services is currently delivering all WIOA Youth program elements. The VCWN and the Youth Committee are actively engaged in leveraging existing Federal, State, local and other resources to maximize resource effectiveness, particularly in youth services and programs. As new funding resources are identified, the VCWN, Youth Committee and **SkillSource** will use competitive procurement requirements to identify and acquire additional youth service providers, or to deliver Pay for Performance contracts.

According to Section 121 (d)(2)(A) of the WIOA legislation, local workforce development boards are mandated to select the One-Stop Operator through a competitive process every four (4) years. Eligible entities included any public, private or non-profit organization, or a consortium of entities that at a minimum, includes 3 or more of the mandated One-Stop partners.

SkillSource last re-bid the RFP for the Northern Virginia WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker, and One-Stop Operator Contract in 2021. The RFP was posted on the **SkillSource** website, the website for the National Association of Workforce Boards (NAWB) and **SkillSource** ran an

advertisement for five weekends in the Classifieds section of the Washington Post. *SkillSource* also sent the RFP electronically to vendors that have expressed interest in being on *SkillSource*'s RFP distribution list, and held a Pre-Proposal Conference. The RFP responses were reviewed by a Review Committee comprised of *SkillSource* and VCWN Board Members, as well as *SkillSource* staff. The Committee recommended that the contract should be awarded to Fairfax County Department of Family Services, which was approved by the *SkillSource* and VCWN Board of Directors.

As the fiscal agent of the VCWN, *SkillSource* is a non-profit corporation in the Commonwealth of Virginia. *SkillSource* has made a corporate determination to follow the Virginia Public Procurement Act (VPPA) and the procurement policies set in the Uniform Guidance, where applicable. The *SkillSource* Board of Directors has also established various financial and procurement policies. *SkillSource* reserves the right to award contracts on a sole-source basis consistent with all applicable procurement laws and regulations.

5.5 Identify the entity responsible for the disbursement of grant funds. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(15)]

SkillSource is the fiscal agent of the Area #11 Virginia Career Works - Northern Board (VCWN), and is identified as such in the Northern Virginia Consortium Agreement that is signed by all of the Chief Local Elected Officials in Area #11. *SkillSource* is responsible for the financial, administrative and program activities of Area #11. Fairfax County Government, the WIOA Grant Recipient for Area #11, has two agreements in place that reflect that the *SkillSource* Group, Inc. will operate as a WIOA subgrant recipient to the Virginia Career Works - Northern Region: 1) WIOA Fiscal Agent Agreement and 2) Federal Subaward Agreement. The Agreements are drafted for a two-year period, to coincide with the two-year Virginia Career Works – Northern Consortium Agreement, which is currently in effect through June 2024.

5.6 Describe the strategy used by the local board to leverage WIOA funds with other federal, state, local, and philanthropic resources.

SkillSource is actively engaged in leveraging existing Federal, State, local and other resources to maximize resource effectiveness. Since 2003, **SkillSource** has been focused on multiple resource development initiatives and identifying and pursuing non-WIOA funding opportunities. The VCWN and the **SkillSource** Group, Inc. will continue pursuing a comprehensive Resource Development Strategy, focusing on grants development, social enterprise, and related resource strategies. WIOA Formula Funding only comprises 60% of **SkillSource**'s FY 2023 revenues of \$10 million; the other 40% reflects a combination of other Federal, State, County, and Foundation grants.

5.7 Indicate the negotiated local levels of performance for the federal measures. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(17)]

The VCWN has set the PY 2022 and PY 2023 goals outlined below for the performance accountability measures in Workforce Area #11, based on the WIOA performance indicators set by the Commonwealth.

Area #11 WIOA Performance Measures	PY 2022 and PY 2023 Goals
WIOA Adult	
Employment (Second Quarter after Exit)	79.0%
Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit)	80.0%
Median Earnings	\$ 9,037
Credential Attainment Rate	75.0%
Measurable Skill Gains	80.9%
WIOA Dislocated Worker	
Employment (Second Quarter after Exit)	87.5%
Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit)	83.5%
Median Earnings	\$ 10,893
Credential Attainment Rate	72.5%
Measurable Skill Gains	82.1%
WIOA Youth	
Employment (Second Quarter after Exit)	73.5%
Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit)	72.0%
Median Earnings	\$ 3,500
Credential Attainment Rate	70.0%
Measurable Skill Gains	77.8%

5.8 Describe indicators used by the local board to measure performance and effectiveness of the local fiscal agent (where appropriate), contracted service providers and the one-stop delivery system, in the local area.

[WIOA Sec. 108(b)(17)]

The VCWN and its Quality Assurance Committee will be responsible for reviewing and evaluating the performance of the Virginia Career Works - Northern Centers and the One-Stop Operator. The Board reviews reporting for WIOA performance on a quarterly basis and will use this data to inform decisions that will be made about programs. This information is accessible to the public through the VCWN website.

SkillSource and the VCWN programs have a history of strong performance. **SkillSource** annually commissions an independent consultant study that assesses the regional economic and fiscal impact of all the services provided by the Northern Virginia Workforce System. The FY 2021 ROI Study compares public workforce costs with the economic benefits from employment outcomes attained. The Study indicates that adults entering the Northern Virginia workforce after participating in SkillSource training programs reflect an estimated ROI 2.3 times greater than public workforce costs. When job placements through Core services are considered, the benefit/cost ratio increases to approximately 2.9, which indicates benefits are nearly 3 times greater than the public costs required to generate them.

5.9 Provide a description of any replicated cooperative agreements with respect to efforts that will enhance the provision of services to individuals with disabilities and to other individuals, such as cross training of staff, technical assistance, use and sharing of information, cooperative efforts with employers, and other efforts at cooperation, collaboration, and coordination.

[WIOA Sec. 108(b)(14)]

In December 2019, **SkillSource** coordinated and hosted a professional development training on Motivational Interviewing (MI) for workforce staff. The Motivational Interviewing Network of Trainers (MINT) defines MI as “a form of collaborative conversation for strengthening a person’s motivation and commitment to change.” MI techniques are useful for anyone who regularly interacts with clients, including case managers and frontline staff. It is a goal-oriented

and customer-centered counseling approach in which staff learned how to tap into their clients' internal motivations to reach their employment goal(s). The training was led by Dr. Trevor Manthey, a certified MINT trainer. Staff representing multiple agencies across the region participated including VEC, VIEW, SNAPET, DARS and other community partners. A cost-sharing agreement was coordinated with LWDA 12 for staff from the City of Alexandria and Arlington County to attend.

SkillSource offered two virtual CompTIA® IT Fundamentals (ITF+) Training Cohorts through Northern Virginia Community College that was marketed across programs and partner agencies including DARS/DBVI and Ticket to Work. At least 20% of the participants had a documented disability, all of which passed their ITF+ exam upon course completion.

SkillSource DEI staff assisted the DEI State Coordinator in setting up the initial WIOA Section 188 Trainings, WIOA Section 188: Achieving Equal Access and Opportunity: Requirements and Promising Practices, and outreach efforts. Several locations and times were made available to accommodate workforce staff across the region. The training was made available to partner agencies including SNAPET and VIEW. The trainings were presented by a National Disability Institute subject matter expert on WIOA Section 188 and focused on learning about strategies for AJC customer flow and services and to meet compliance that results in better outcomes. Workforce staff across agencies were in attendance including the Virginia Employment Commission, **SkillSource**, WIOA Title-I and VCW Center operations.

Other cross-training activities included networking and information sharing with DARS and DBVI. **SkillSource** initiated a brown-bag lunch event at the DARS Fairfax Office with WIOA Title-I case managers and DARS counselors. Staff were put into small groups and given case studies to work through to simulate Integrated Resource Teams (IRTs). **SkillSource** presented

information on Ticket to Work at the local DARS office. WIOA Title-I was represented at the IT Career Fair – an annual event coordinated by DBVI and DARS through the Career Pathways for Individuals with Disabilities (CPID) grant. *SkillSource* provided staff resources to the Career Pathways for Individuals with Disabilities (CPID) initiative for three years resulting in increased collaboration and coordination with Virginia Vocational Rehabilitation agencies.

Employer Solutions Team

The *SkillSource* Career Pathways Coordinator co-leads the Northern Virginia Employer Solutions Team and coordinated business outreach efforts with LWDA 12 to ensure DARS/DBVI representation across workforce areas. A *Menu of Employer Services from Northern Virginia Workforce Partners* was created to encompass the varying employer services available across WIOA Title-I and Title-IV agencies. It is used by the *SkillSource* Employer Solutions Team and is housed on the VCWN employer services [webpage](#).

Section 503 Inquiries

SkillSource is listed on the Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs' (OFCCP) Employment Resource Referral Directory (Directory) found at <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ofccp/compliance-assistance/outreach/errd>. The Directory provides contact information to non-profit organizations that can assist federal contractors in hiring qualified applicants with disabilities and meet their hiring goals under Section 503. *SkillSource* Ticket to Work staff are the dedicated point of contact for Section 503 inquiries from employers and track inquiries through Salesforce. TTW staff have presented information to the Employer Solutions Team on Section 503 including the new OFCCP site and resources.

DARS Work Incentives Specialist Advocate (WISA) Services

Since 2011, **SkillSource** has been a vendor of DARS to provide work incentives counseling to their consumers through its Work Incentives Specialist Advocate (WISA) program. In 2015, SkillSource was invited by DARS to participate in the SSA Benefits Planning Query (BPQY) Proof of Concept (POC). Access to the POC is available to **SkillSource** through its partnership with DARS. The BPQY POC has been instrumental in gaining timely access to pertinent benefits information for Ticket to Work clients.

5.10 Describe the actions the local board will take towards becoming or remaining a high-performing board, consistent with the factors developed by the State Board (available here:)
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The Virginia Career Works Northern Region Board consistently strives to become and remain a high performing local workforce development board. To do so, the Board of Directors expects its professional staff and the One Stop Operator to 1) focus on strategy (State and Local Plans), 2) to evaluate and analyze outcomes that highlight quality and results that positively serve the public, to develop and maintain a Dashboard / Scorecard of ongoing service delivery and performance outcomes to share both internally and externally with the public, 4) to manage and utilize up to date performance tools and processes and finally, 5) to manage and enhance workforce system funding to allow for continues growth and improvement.

There are several strategies that the Virginia Career Works Northern Board has undertaken and will continue to implement in its ongoing efforts to become and remain a high-performing local workforce development board. Those strategies are ingrained in the new 2021 – 2024 Strategic Plan and include:

- **Embrace and communicate the State of Virginia and the local Virginia Career Works vision for workforce development.** The Virginia Career Works Northern Vision is that ‘We envision a vibrant business and workforce region that is globally competitive’.

- **Support and lead employer-led high-quality sector partnerships.** Over the past decade, the Virginia Career Works Northern Region has started, nurtured, and continued to development partnerships with the region’s health care industry, the information technology industry, transportation, and logistics employers, along with targeted efforts for specific employers.

- **Prioritize solutions for racial and economic disparities in education and employment.** The Virginia Career Works Northern works closely with Fairfax County Government, which has adopted its ‘One Fairfax’ initiative, to reduce and eliminate racial and economic barriers within the jurisdiction. The workforce board’s efforts are highlighted through our focus on at-risk populations, including at-risk young adults not participating in school or education, our employment focus on adult with disabilities, and our two employment centers located in large County jails (Fairfax and Prince William County).

- **Achieve outcomes and results through alignment with system partners and leveraging of federal, state, and philanthropic resources.** With the relative insufficient amounts of WIOA funding that is allocated to the Virginia Career Works Northern region, as compared to the local workforce area population size and employer base, the Board has emphasized the importance of expanding resources and partner relationships. Virginia Career Works Northern is consistently seeking to bring new funding resources to support enhanced service delivery opportunities – in FY 2023, total WIOA formula funding represented just 60% of the budget, showing the success of broadening and diversifying workforce funding streams at the local level. In FY 2021, the expansion of available workforce funding has included over \$1.1 million in Federal CARES Act grant funding, at least \$1.1 million in Older Worker Senior Community Service Employment Program funding, \$150,000 in philanthropic funding from Truist Bank to support financial empowerment training for low-income adults, among other examples. Another key funding

leveraging example is the success of the SkillSource Group Ticket to Work Employment Network, which services adults with disabilities receiving Social Security Disability Income (SSDI) payments. Since inception in 2010, the SkillSource Ticket Employment Network has earned nearly \$2 million in outcome payments from the Social Security Administration and those funds have been reinvested into the local workforce system to support other Board priorities.

5.11 Describe the process for getting input into the development of the local plan and providing public comment opportunity prior to submission. Be sure to address how members of the public, including representatives of business, labor organizations, and education were given an opportunity to provide comments on the local plans. If any comments received that represent disagreement with the plan were received, please include those comments here.
[WIOA Sec. 108(d)]

The VCWN posted the 2022-2024 Northern Virginia WIOA Local Plan Update on the VCWN website for public comment on January 5, 2023. The plan will be posted until January 19, 2023. The VCWN also posted an advertisement in the Washington Post to notify the community regarding the posting of the plan and inviting comments. The advertisement ran in the Washington Post during the weekend of January 14 and 15, 2023. No public comments were received. This plan was also disseminated to Area #11 workforce partners, as well as Board Members of the VCWN and *SkillSource*, which is comprised of representatives from State and local partners, including business, education, and labor organizations.

5.12 Describe professional staff development strategies, including:

- Process used to ensure staff receive continuous training in workforce development practices
- Methods to ensure effective use of the Virginia Workforce Connection system of record and to adhere to timely data entry requirements for WIOA services
- Process to measure staff performance and delivery of high-quality customer service
- Process to meet and maintain staff certification and Virginia Workforce Center certification as required by Virginia Workforce Council Policy 300-06

Process used to ensure staff receive continuous training in workforce development practices

The Northern Virginia Workforce Area and its One-Stop Operator ensure that the One-Stop Center staff is given the opportunity to be certified as Workforce Development Professionals.

Area #11 pays for all training expenses in order for staff to keep up to date with workforce development policies and practices. This has currently been done through the National Workforce Professional Certification through the Dynamic Works Institute – an asynchronous online tiered certification program on WIOA, Customer Service, Career Development, Job Preparation, Job Search, Project Management, etc.

The One-Stop Centers provide training to all of its line and supervisory staff to ensure universal access to services and activities and nondiscrimination/equal opportunity, including training on topics such as confidentiality, privacy, and disclosure of disability. One-Stop Center staff performance evaluations include requirements that staff have participated in disability-related training that emphasizes the need to effectively serve individuals with disabilities. Cross training between staff of the VCWN and community organizations is provided to facilitate the exchange of up-to-date information on available services, supports, resources, and critical disability-related employment topics. One-Stop Center staff are trained on which funds may be used for conducting a comprehensive assessment, such as Vocational Rehabilitation, education, TANF, and/or Medicaid funds. Staff are provided training on how to access these funds and coordinate the process of referral for assessment. Program staff from the *SkillSource* Ticket to Work Program also deliver disability training for One-Stop Center staff and provide information and consultation services to employers on disability hiring topics.

Each of the Partners commits to staff certification, cross-training of staff (within the Comprehensive Centers) and other professional learning opportunities for staff that promote continuous quality improvement. Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS) counselors are professionally trained (generally with a master's degree, certified

rehabilitation counselor or certified vocational evaluator). DARS is committed to participating in the Virginia Workforce Development System and other cross trainings as needed.

Other modules developed by the Disability Employment Initiative are included in the Virginia Workforce Development Systems modules. The optional modules are Welcoming All Customers/Universal Strategies, Asset Development (Financial literacy for example: banking, savings and budgeting), and Integrated Resource Teams with a Person Centered Planning approach (collaborative case management) and Mystery Shopper (Continuous Quality Improvement).

Methods to ensure effective use of the Virginia Workforce Connection system of record and to adhere to timely data entry requirements for WIOA services

Performance management starts with the evaluation of individual WIOA cases and their outcomes at the case manager level which then are translated through to their collective impact against the negotiated standards of the Northern Virginia Workforce Area. The Fairfax County Department of Family Services, Area #11 operator of WIOA programs, dedicates a Quality Assurance Supervisor, in addition to Supervisors for the WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth Programs, to track and manage the outcomes of cases and how those outcomes translate into performance indicators on a monthly, quarterly, and annual basis. The One Stop Operator also streamlines case management practices across the workforce area by dedicating a single manager to review, evaluate, and monitor the WIOA caseload from enrollments through to exit and follow-up.

Process to measure staff performance and delivery of high-quality customer service

The *SkillSource* employee performance management system is centered on supporting competencies, professional development, and reinforcement through recognition. The *SkillSource* staff, and a collaboration of partners operating under various personnel systems, use different tools

to measure performance excellence, but all use performance as a basis for retention and pay increases. All systems use a combination of behavior elements, job specific performance elements, and personal development elements as measures for performance evaluation. Annual performance reviews include a self-evaluation; a supervisor evaluation; goals for the upcoming year; and a development plan.

The VCWN Center management teams meet regularly with staff to discuss issues, employer and job seeker feedback results, individual development plans, organizational expectations, and progress towards the Center goals. As part of the performance evaluation process, employees assist in the establishment of their own goals and professional development plans under the leadership of their supervisors. Professional development plans are designed to assist the employee in meeting their professional goals and to enhance their work. Even though development plans and goals are created annually, they can be amended and adjusted to accommodate changes as needed. Staff participation in decision making, strategic planning and problem-solving teams is reflected in their performance evaluations.

The importance of *SkillSource*'s ethics, values, and principles are reinforced by discussing customer feedback with employees at weekly meetings, annual performance reviews, and as needed on an ongoing basis. VCWN Center leadership demonstrates their commitment to quality customer service by rewarding employees with Customer Service Awards. Center employees and partners are also bound by their respective agencies to basic service ethics like non-discrimination, conflict of interest and confidentiality of customer information. The VCWN Centers and Partner Agencies have high standards of honesty and integrity.

SkillSource employs a number of methods to gain information on all of our customers' expectations and needs. To broaden the ability to collect customer feedback, *SkillSource* utilizes

both internal and external data collection methods. The primary customer feedback tools *SkillSource* uses to learn about key requirements are:

- **Online Survey:** In order to gather information from a larger portion of our customer base, *SkillSource* developed an online survey to further identify customer needs and expectations. With the data received, through the Design Team and CQI process, *SkillSource* reviews and analyzes trends and identifies areas for improvement.
- **Customer Comment Card:** This tool allows customers to anonymously provide information on their level of satisfaction against several key indicators of service delivery and operations. These include ratings on customer service, technology, accessibility, service delivery, and resources. Comments are reviewed on a monthly basis by the VCWN Center Operations management team and used by the CQI teams on a quarterly basis for continuous quality improvement.
- **Workshop Evaluations:** This tool allows *SkillSource* to get immediate response from primary customers on the quality of workshops, presenters and access to services to determine the overall level of satisfaction. Attendees are also asked for suggestions for improvement.
- **Employer Surveys:** Employers are surveyed at job recruitment and signature events.

The data collected by these tools is reviewed by the VCWN Center Leadership and CQI teams. Through the use of these tools, *SkillSource* is able to learn about customer requirements and make decisions on improvements to better serve customers. Areas for improvement are prioritized based on frequency of need and availability of resources.

On November 10, 2020, the Area #11 contracted WIOA workforce consultant, Strumpf Associates, moderated a focus group consisting of jobseekers participating in programs funded

through the Northern Virginia Workforce System. The focus groups were conducted as part of a comprehensive strategic planning process that VCWN began in October 2020. Data for the environmental analysis included feedback from customers on their experience with the organization. Staff were asked to identify customers to invite to the focus group based on criteria provided by Strumpf Associates. Each contact was called and sent a letter of invitation to participate in the focus group. Invitees were offered a 100-dollar gift certificate to Walmart as a token of appreciation for their participation. Fifteen (15) individuals participated, representing a variety of workforce programs. Participants were from the WIOA programs, as well as other *SkillSource* programs, including the *SkillSource* TANF Employment Advancement initiatives, ELEVATE, and the Disability Employment Initiative and Ticket to Work Program. Participants were encouraged to be honest and forthright, as their responses would remain anonymous. The focus group was conducted virtually and lasted for one and one-half hours.

The facilitator led participants through a formal and sequenced set of questions. The purpose of the focus group was to identify what customers thought about their overall experience with the programs and the organization. A summary of the key focus questions and responses are below.

- **What worked with the way you received services?**
 - Many of the participants noted that their case managers are very encouraging and helpful.
 - I like my counselor.
 - Laura (case manager) changed my life.
 - Time spent to help ‘polish my resume’ and providing a professional review of resumes was noted as helpful by some of the participants.
 - Most of the participants noted how their case managers were ‘always sending job

leads.’

- Talking to someone 1 on 1.
- Getting information and resources I might not get/find on my own.
- Whenever I email my case manager or call, they respond right away. Several of the participants agreed with this statement.

The facilitator asked about how it was going to meet with their case managers virtually. All participants stated that it was working fine and agreed with one of the participants who stated, ‘it is what it is.’

- **What did not work for you in the way you received services and what could be improved?**
 - There needs to be more resources for ex-felons. The program needs to recruit employers that have said they will hire ex-felons. And the program could provide some type of bond or insurance to companies to help them take what they see as the risk of hiring an ex-felon.
 - A lot of conversation ensued around how they were not getting jobs that aligned to their experience and career goals. All of the participants expressed appreciation of their case managers and their efforts to continuously send job orders. However, several on the call already had BA and Masters Degrees and/or a substantial work history. Many stated that the job fairs and job leads they were getting were more ‘entry level’ or not in their field of interest, such as financial services, some IT, or not at ‘a high level’. There was a high level of agreement that the job fairs did not have enough ‘professional level’ job opportunities and neither did the job leads they received.

- One person stated that ‘I sign on to virtual job fairs but cannot talk to a recruiter’. They are always not available’. As the discussion went on it was stated that there is ‘no method to get into a que or sign up to talk with someone’. One person said ‘I go on for 2 hours and click and click and can never get in to see the recruiter. So, I just go to the company website directly, but doesn’t that defeat the purpose of the job fair for being able to network?’
- I tried to get to a class under the CARES Act, but the school never answered my calls/emails. Then my CM tried and tried and did not get a response either.
- Several participants had gotten certificates through the training programs. One participant stated that ‘there needs to be a much better connection between the training program, obtaining a certificate and getting a job for which the certificate is relevant. There is not a clear pathway from the end of training/certification to a job’. Many of the focus group participants agreed with this statement.
- There should be a method and help to receive credit for degrees and/or experience from other countries.
- An example was provided from one of the participants of someone they knew, a family member, who was also in the program. As recounted by the focus group participant, this person wanted to get their AWS certificate. The focus group participant state that the case manager ‘gave [my family member] a really hard time because they said that they were too qualified’. The family member was in an internship with Amazon and expressed that they thought it would provide ‘a leg up’ if Amazon began to hire some of the interns. The family member was ‘so frustrated that they ended up quitting the program.’ The focus group participant stated that

one improvement is for case managers to focus on the credentials people need to become employed, as making the judgement of being ‘too qualified’ was not helping this family member get a job.

During the focus group, participants shared employment related resources among themselves. At the end of the focus group, several participants asked if there would be future focus groups. One person stated, ‘this has been so helpful, sharing resources and just getting to talk. I would do it without the gift certificate’. Several people agreed that doing this type of session would be useful on a more regular basis. VCWN will seek to hold more focus groups on a regular basis.

Process to meet and maintain staff certification and Virginia Workforce Center certification as required by Virginia Workforce Council Policy 300-06

The Virginia Workforce Council requires that a minimum of 60 percent of front-line staff in Virginia will achieve a professional workforce development certification. In 2020, 41 out of 50 (82%) of front-line staff had received a workforce development certification and 9 are in the process of receiving a certification.

In accordance with Virginia Workforce Council Policy 300-06 One-Stop Service Delivery System regarding initial certification of Virginia Comprehensive One-Stop centers, the Northern Virginia Workforce Area selected the Virginia Career Works – Prince William Center in Woodbridge as the designated Comprehensive One-Stop Center, to comply with the uniform State Certification standards. Four (4) of the Virginia Career Works – Northern Centers in LWIA #11 qualified for Affiliate status. All Centers were approved under the State Certification renewal process in 2020.

All approved Area #11 policies can be found online here under VCWN Program Policies: <https://vcwnorthern.com/public-documents/>.