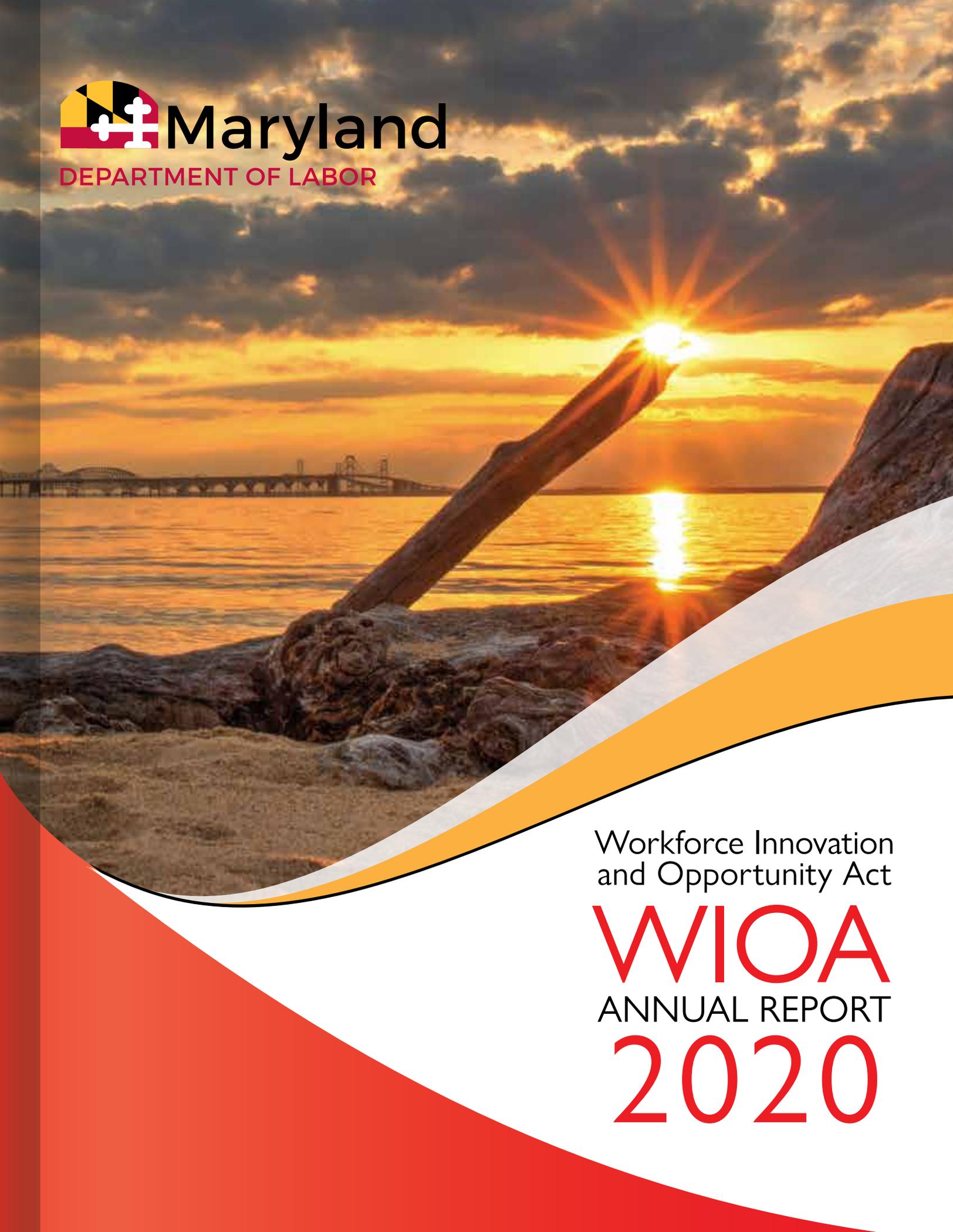




Maryland

DEPARTMENT OF LABOR



Workforce Innovation
and Opportunity Act

WIOA
ANNUAL REPORT
2020

MARYLAND ANNUAL REPORT
Workforce Innovation and
Opportunity Act Titles I and III
Program Year 2020

December 1, 2021



Larry Hogan
Governor



Boyd K. Rutherford
Lt. Governor

Tiffany P. Robinson

Secretary

MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

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Assistant Secretary

MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

DIVISION OF WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AND ADULT LEARNING

MISSION STATEMENT

The Division of Workforce Development and Adult Learning's mission is to ensure businesses have the skilled workforce they need to be competitive in today's environment as well as help people get jobs by working to better serve the unemployed, jobless veterans, newly dislocated workers, trade-impacted workers, New Americans, ex-offenders, low-wage workers, and the "hardest to serve."



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December 1, 2021

On behalf of Governor Larry Hogan, it is my pleasure to present Maryland's Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Program Year (PY) 2020 Annual Report Narrative - Titles I and III. This publication illustrates Maryland's successful job placement and training activities for the period of July 1, 2020, through June 30, 2021, as required by United States Department of Labor's Training and Employment Guidance Letter No. 5-18.

Governor Hogan's vision is to change Maryland for the better. That vision drives the collaborative efforts of the Maryland Department of Labor (MD Labor) as well as our state and local workforce partners. The 2020-2024 WIOA State Plan demonstrates the commitment of partners to learn together, discuss pressing issues, and come to lasting solutions for the business and jobseeker customers we collectively serve. This commitment has been especially vital during the challenges of mass unemployment and business impacts caused by the pandemic. I am proud to report that with every regulation promulgated pursuant to the federal Act, with every piece of guidance issued by the federal agencies charged with oversight of the programs included in this Plan, and with every technical assistance and training received, Maryland's workforce system is making Governor Hogan's vision a reality.

I am excited to share with you the many successes of the workforce system as contained in this report. Utilizing an employer-driven model, and through partnerships formed in the state's 32 American Job Centers (AJCs), 12 Local Workforce Development Areas, and WIOA partnerships, Maryland is providing services fundamental to Maryland's economic stability and growth.

During this year, Maryland has made key strategic investments in the work-and-learn model of Registered Apprenticeships, reaching a record number of over 11,517 apprentices. Thanks to Maryland's EARN Maryland (EARN) program, more than 4,500 unemployed or underemployed Marylanders have obtained employment. The flexible and innovative EARN program ensures that Maryland employers have the talent they need to compete and grow while providing targeted education and skills training to Maryland workers.

By communicating and collaborating with state and local partners implementing successful strategies to engage populations with significant barriers to employment, we are empowering citizens with the skills and expertise they need to secure and advance in family-sustaining employment on career pathways. In short, we are changing Maryland for the better.

Best regards,

Tiffany P. Robinson
Secretary
Maryland Department of Labor

Waivers

At this time, Maryland does not wish to submit a waiver. However, the State reserves its right to request a waiver from U.S. Department of Labor as it fully implements the requirements of WIOA.

Maryland's Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act PY 2020 Annual Report Narrative – Titles I and III

Based upon Training and Employment Guidance Letter (TEGL) No. 5-18

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) is landmark legislation designed to strengthen and improve our nation's public workforce system and help put Americans, especially those with significant barriers to employment, back to work. WIOA supports innovative strategies to keep pace with changing economic conditions and seeks to improve coordination between the core WIOA and other federal programs that support employment services, workforce development, adult education and literacy, and vocational rehabilitation activities. Moreover, WIOA promotes program coordination and alignment of key employment, education, and training programs at the federal, state, local, and regional levels. Furthermore, this legislation ensures that federal investments in employment and training programs are evidence-based and data-driven as well as accountable to participants and taxpayers. WIOA provides employment, job training, and education services to eligible adults, dislocated workers, and youth.

The prompts listed in TEGL 5-18 precede each response.

4.a Identify each waiver that the state has had in place for at least one program year and provide information regarding the state's progress toward achieving the goals and performance outcomes in ETA's letter of approval for the waiver (sec 189(i)(3)(C)(ii)) and outlined in the state's waiver request (when applicable). Discuss how activities carried out under each approved waiver have directly or indirectly affected state and local area performance outcomes. To the extent possible, provide quantitative information.

Maryland submitted requests for two waivers to the United States Department of Labor (USDOL) in the state's 2020 State Plan submission:

1. A request for a waiver from the requirements for the collection and reporting of performance-related data on all students participating in training programs listed on the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL).

Under this waiver, Maryland will continue to collect and report performance data for all WIOA-funded participants in accordance with the above regulations. MD Labor requested the waiver for the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) to allow for the expansion of programs on Maryland's ETPL. The intent was to allow new providers to take advantage of their presence on the list and prepare to collect data on all customers concurrently. Maryland received new requests to be added to the list, confirming that the waiver had a positive effect in increasing activity. Training and Employment Notice 7-12 notes the expiration of the waiver for all states and the requirement to collect data on all students effective July 1, 2021. Maryland's process is adjusted to ensure this requirement is in place as of July 1, 2021.

2. A request for a waiver from the requirements that "not less than 75 percent of funds allotted and available for statewide activities, and not less than 75 percent of funds available to local areas shall be used to provide youth workforce investment activities for Out-of-School Youth (OSY)."

Maryland requested that both the required state and local percentage for OSY youth expenditures be lowered to 50%. As indicated in the State Waiver request, the State required Local Areas to include a description in their plans on how they would implement the waiver. This information was submitted to the State as part of the 2021 Local Plan process. Out of the 13 Local Areas, five have indicated that they would implement strategies to increase program offerings to In-School-Youth (ISY). These strategies included partnerships with local school systems to implement year-round work experiences for ISY, dropout prevention services, and additional capacity to expand existing program partnerships with local Department of Rehabilitation Services. Current fiscal data indicate that, of the five, only two have expenditure levels below the 75% threshold. Pandemic-related closures and restrictions on access to school facilities have limited the ability of Local Areas to implement ISY strategies. The State continues to monitor the fiscal expenditures in these areas.

4.b Identify the two approaches the state has chosen for the Effectiveness in Serving Employers performance indicator pilot. If the state is piloting a state-established measure of Effectiveness in Serving Employers, or has any other metrics to assess employer engagement, describe the measure or metric as well.

States must select two of the three measures below to report on for PY 2020. Maryland has chosen to track and report on all three measures:

WIOA Effectiveness in Servicing Employers Measures

- **Employer Penetration Rate** - addresses the programs' efforts to provide quality engagement and services to all employers and sectors within a State and local economy. Percentage of employers using WIOA core program services out of all employers in the State.
- **Repeat Business Customers** - addresses the programs' efforts to provide quality engagement and services to employers and sectors and establish productive relationships with employers and sectors over extended periods of time; the percentage of employers who have used WIOA core program services more than once during the last three reporting periods.
- **Retention with Same Employer in the 2nd and 4th Quarters after Exit** - Addresses the programs' efforts to provide employers with skilled workers; percentage of participants with wage records who exit and were employed by the same employer in the second and fourth quarters after exit.

4.c *Include brief descriptions of: (a) current or planned evaluation and related research projects, including methodologies used; (b) efforts to coordinate the development of such projects with WIOA core programs, other state agencies and local boards; (c) a list of completed evaluation and related reports and links to where they were made accessible to the public electronically; (d) State efforts to provide data, survey responses, and timely site visits for Federal evaluations; and (e) any continuous improvement strategies utilizing results from studies and evidence-based practices evaluated.*

The Division of Unemployment Insurance (DUI) set aside funds from the Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) grant to evaluate Maryland's RESEA program. W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research is currently undergoing an in-depth analysis of the program. The Process Analysis Report is the first of three RESEA PY 2019 evaluation reports Upjohn is doing with the Jacob France Institute (JFI) at the University of Baltimore for the MD Labor. The three reports are:

- Process Analysis Report
- Formative Evaluation Report
- Plan for Annual Assessments with Incremental Improvements

(b) efforts to coordinate the development of such projects with WIOA core programs, other state agencies and local boards;

The Office of Workforce Development (OWD) and DUI work to improve coordination of current data systems between programs. This has been identified as a need for future successful management and evaluation of RESEA and other WIOA programs. The Maryland Workforce Exchange has recently been reprocurd with emphasis placed on coordination with DUI systems and services. In addition, DUI launched BEACON, a result of the UI modernization project, during the pandemic. BEACON ultimately will have greater coordination with the Maryland Workforce Exchange, and claimants will experience a seamless experience related to reemployment. Local boards and staff are knowledgeable of the RESEA programs as related to the evaluation team and use this knowledge and partnership with reemployment staff to refer eligible claimants to the Title I program.

(c) a list of completed evaluation and related reports and links to where they were made accessible to the public electronically.

See Process Analysis Report attached.

(d) State efforts to provide data, survey responses, and timely site visits for Federal evaluations;

The Process Analysis Report notes the disparities between RESEA data in the ETA 9128, the Participant Individual Record Layout (PIRL), and program administrative data. These sources should be harmonized, or the differences should be explained. Perhaps the federally required formatting and timing of reports explains the differences, but each of these three sources gives a dramatically different picture of RESEA program activity in Maryland. We plan to use the RESEA administrative data because it provides the most complete picture.

(e) any continuous improvement strategies utilizing results from studies and evidence-based practices evaluated.

The final report will set the plan for the RESEA PY 2020 evaluation. That will promise an incremental improvement over the PY 2019 evaluation. Process analysis report [1] suggests improvements in program management and data systems. Formative evaluation report [2] will identify if there are any differences in effectiveness between component services of RESEA and WPRS and whether any gaps in services needs are identified. Future evaluation results may suggest improvements that could be tried in a randomized controlled trial (RCT) context. These include such things as nudges for participation, making ineffective services optional, and testing new required services.

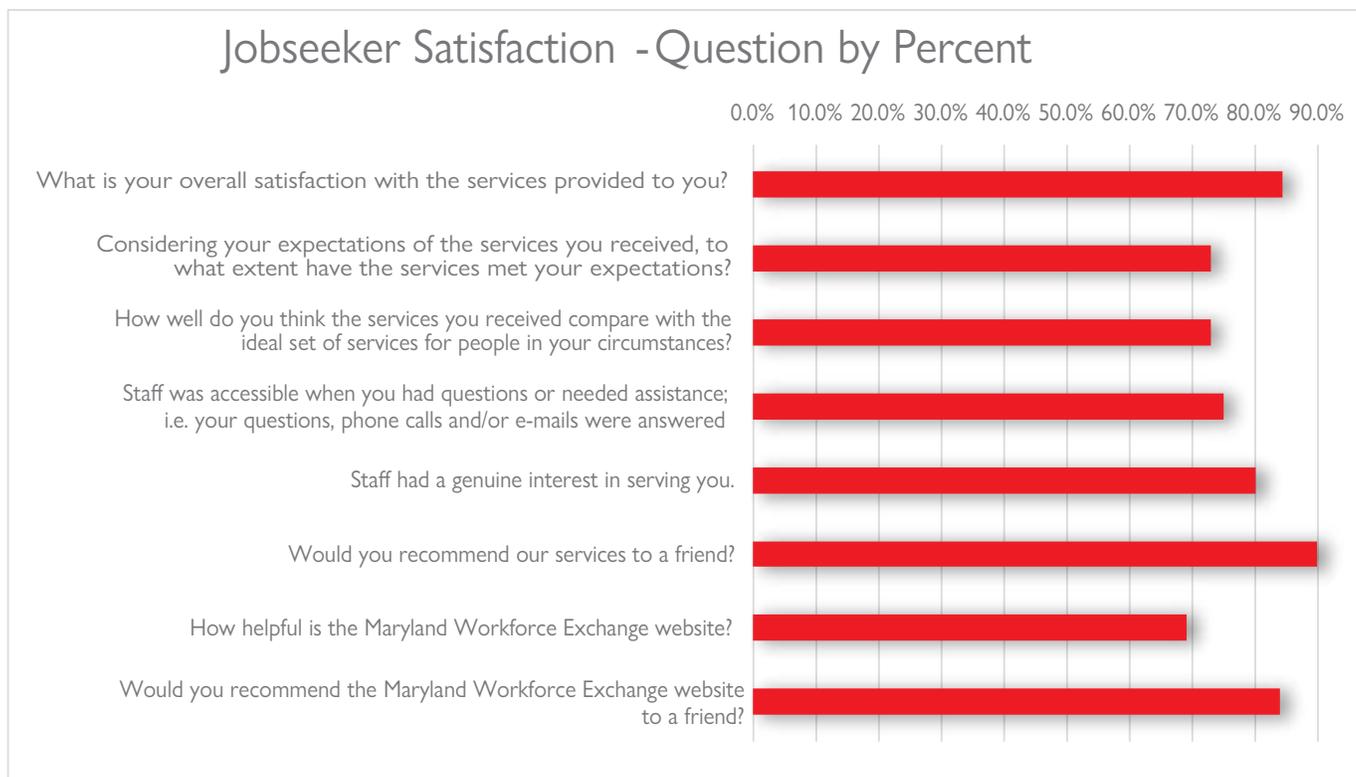
4.d Describe the state’s approach to customer satisfaction, which may include such information used for one-stop center certification, in accordance with 20 CFR 678.800. This description should include: 1) the state’s methodologies; 2) the number of individuals/employers who were provided customer satisfaction outreach, the response rate, and efforts made to improve the response rate; 3) the results and whether the results are generalizable to the entire population of customers; and 4) a description of any continuous improvement processes for incorporating the customer satisfaction feedback.

Jobseeker Satisfaction

A Jobseeker Satisfaction survey comprised of 10 questions was administered via an email solicitation with a link to an online survey delivered through Survey Monkey. A total of 2,729 surveys were sent, and 153 responses were received, a 5.6% response rate.

Among jobseeker respondents, 77.8% were somewhat or very satisfied with services. Over 67% of customers felt the services they received met or exceeded their expectations. A little over 67% felt the services they received were ideal for individuals in their circumstances. 69.3% felt the staff was accessible and reachable, and 73.9% of customers trusted staff had a real interest in serving them. 82.9% would recommend our services. Of those who visited the MWE, 63.8% found the site helpful or very helpful, and 77.6% would recommend it to a friend. Overall, a majority of customers who utilized our services found them useful and helpful in supporting their needs.

Survey questions and responses by percent are shown in the following table:

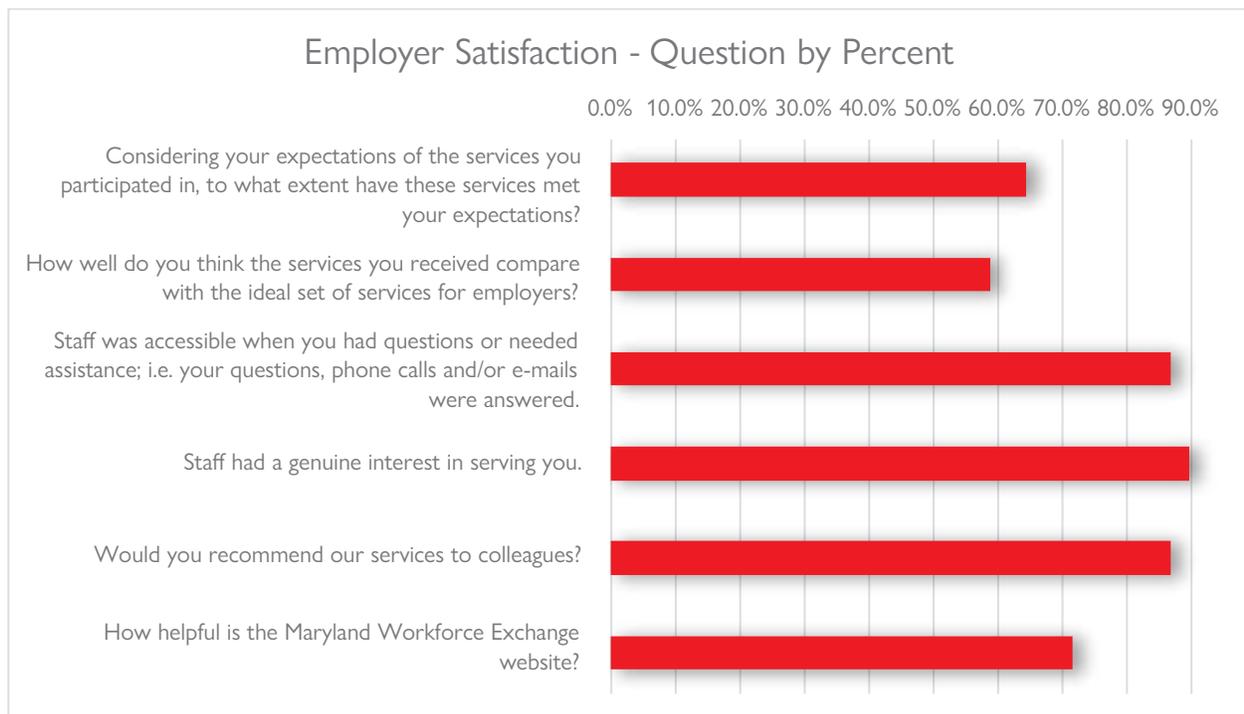


Employer Satisfaction

A 10-question Employer Satisfaction Survey was conducted using the same methodology applied for the Jobseeker Satisfaction survey. A total of 698 employers who received staff-assisted services were emailed links to an online survey. Of those sent emails, 40 responded, a 5.7% response rate.

Among employers, 57.5% felt the services they received met and exceeded their expectations. About 52% felt the services they received were ideal for employers in their circumstances. A majority of employers surveyed, 45%, were introduced to American Job Centers (AJCs) through the Maryland Workforce Exchange. Over 77% of respondents felt the staff was accessible and reachable, and 80% of employers trusted that staff had a real interest in serving them. Nearly 78% employers would recommend our services to colleagues. Of employers who used the Maryland Workforce Exchange, 63.9% found the site helpful or very helpful.

The following table includes the questions included in the survey and the response results:



Summary

These surveys allow us to see whether any issues exist. Survey results show that areas exist which may require some growth and improvement. Once all areas are thoroughly examined and issues are identified, a resolution can be implemented. Customers commented on the invaluable services Maryland is providing through the state's AJC network and the Maryland Workforce Exchange. What stands out in these survey results is that our staff, our system, and the services provided were a beneficial and valuable asset to our jobseeker and employer customers alike.

4.e Progress made in achieving the state's strategic vision and goals, as described in the state's Unified or Combined State Plan, for developing its workforce and meeting employer needs in order to support economic growth and economic self-sufficiency.

The State's workforce system is committed to implementing the *Benchmarks of Success for Maryland's Workforce System* (*Benchmarks of Success*), a strategic initiative that focuses on a shared vision of excellence.

As described in Maryland's 2020 - 2024 State Workforce Plan, the *Benchmarks of Success* defines five strategic goals to increase the earning capacity of Marylanders by maximizing:

1. Access to employment;
2. Skills and credentialing;
3. Life management skills;

And by:

4. Eliminating barriers to employment; and
5. Strengthening and enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of Maryland's workforce system.

Each of the strategic goals has a series of benchmarks that the State will ultimately track to gauge progress to better understand the system's success in working towards this shared vision and five shared goals. Maryland's workforce system uses the *Benchmarks of Success* as a framework, guiding the shared goals and activities of the WIOA system. The *Benchmarks of Success* allows partners to think systematically about how workforce services are delivered, whether services are reaching priority populations, and where to eliminate gaps to build a more prepared, responsive workforce for Maryland's businesses.

In order to implement the *Benchmarks of Success* and the vision articulated in the State Workforce Plan, Maryland partner agencies created a system of committees, including:

- **Executive Steering Committee** – including the executive leadership from the core WIOA partner agencies, responsible for providing strategic oversight

and direction to the *Benchmarks of Success* initiative, and governing the WIOA Alignment Group;

- **WIOA Alignment Group** – responsible for ensuring the strategic vision of the Executive Steering Committee is realized by providing operational guidance to the other *Benchmarks of Success* committees;
- **Data and Dashboard Committee** – responsible for developing a consistent, sustainable system all workforce partners can use to measure, analyze, display, and apply the *Benchmarks of Success* data to continuously improve the quality and effectiveness of services;
- **Communications Committee** – responsible for fostering the integration of Maryland's workforce system by broadly promoting the activities of the *Benchmarks of Success* committees and the services and resources of partner agencies and programs;
- **Policy Committee** – responsible for identifying opportunities to support the implementation of the *Benchmarks of Success* via policy change; and
- **Professional Development and Technical Assistance Committee** – responsible for producing, disseminating, and facilitating professional development and technical assistance programming that supports Maryland's WIOA partners in what the *Benchmarks of Success* are and how they can be used to drive continuous improvement; additionally, this committee is responsible for conducting a stakeholder analysis.

These committees feed back into each other for continuous collaboration and improvement of services, data, and vision.

The WIOA partners collaborated to create a Chief Learning Officer (CLO) position to oversee professional development across the Maryland workforce system, and an individual came onboard in 2019. The main purpose of this position is to create and maintain a comprehensive, statewide professional development and technical assistance portfolio that supports the strategic goals set forth in the WIOA State Workforce Plan and reflects the vision of the *Benchmarks of Success*. As defined in the State Workforce Plan, the position supports DWDAL and Maryland's workforce partners in delivering high quality, integrated services to customers, partners, and staff. The CLO chairs the Professional Development and Technical Assistance Committee.

In the first four implementation years of the *Benchmarks of Success*, the committees brought local and state stakeholders together and developed the following deliverables:

- A communications plan for sharing the *Benchmarks of Success* vision and updates (videos, newsletters,

collateral materials, presentations to Local Workforce Development Boards and other stakeholders, etc.);

- Collection and analysis of *Benchmarks of Success* data from the partner agencies, programs, and systems, including a baseline across the multi-agency system;
- Regional and Local Planning Guidance for WIOA Regions and Local Areas to correspond to the State Workforce Plan in 2018, 2020, and for 2022;
- A series of policy recommendations concerning: (1) jobseeker advisory groups: including customer voice in decision-making, (2) workforce solutions to the opioid epidemic, (3) youth apprenticeship, (4) transportation, (5) abating the benefits cliff, (6) measurable skill gain, and (7) engaging employers around priority populations;
- Creation of a CLO position to oversee professional development for the workforce system as a whole as well as a professional development framework for the system; and
- Research and recommendations regarding the continuation of virtual services for Maryland's workforce system (via a pending report from the Policy Committee).

4.f Progress made in implementing sector strategies and career pathways. The discussion may include business engagement strategies, work-based learning (including apprenticeship), work experiences for youth and adults, transitional jobs, and incumbent worker training strategies and policies in the state.

Maryland Apprenticeship and Training Program (MATP)

MATP has made significant progress in implementing sector strategies and career pathways. Registered apprenticeship was transferred to DWDAL in October 2016. Since that time, Maryland has focused on making the MATP a key component of its workforce strategy.

Initially, MATP came to DWDAL with a total of three staff, 400 registered apprenticeship sponsors, and 8,500 apprentices listed. After a thorough evaluation, MATP was overhauled to bring the program into compliance and to help facilitate growth. This process has included reinitiating compliance and quality reviews of existing registered apprenticeship sponsors and provisional reviews of newly approved registered apprenticeship sponsors. As a result of these reviews, numerous overdue apprentices, cancelled apprentices, and apprentices who should have completed were found to still be on the apprenticeship roster. MATP staff worked with United States Department of Labor (USDOL) and the number of registered apprentices was adjusted to a new baseline number of 7,340.

The process of conducting these reviews has continued, and as a result, over 300 reviews have been conducted from January 2017 through August 2021. This process is more than just ensuring that the apprenticeship program data is accurate or that apprenticeship continues to be the highest quality workforce training system. This process is also designed to provide sponsors and signatory/participating employers with the highest level of customer service. During the review process, sponsors/employers are provided information about items such as grants, tax credits, local workforce areas, and Maryland business services. Direct interaction with the sponsors/employers has assisted them with expanding their existing apprenticeship program, enhanced recruitment, and increased diversity.

MATP staff continue to provide an enhanced customer service approach that includes regular engagements with each registered apprenticeship sponsor (business) along with continued outreach to prospective new businesses. From November 2016 through August 2021, over 2,600 businesses have been actively engaged on behalf of registered apprenticeship. These engagements include site visits, round tables, industry conferences, and other events wherein staff and businesses have been able to exchange information.

As a result of this engagement, Maryland has experienced the largest growth of new registered apprenticeship sponsors in the program's history. There have been 107 new registered apprenticeship sponsors added since November of 2016, with an additional 30 reactivated for a net gain of 137 before adjusting for cancelled apprenticeship programs. (For comparison, the previous combined activity for the years 2012 through November 2016 in Maryland showed 23 new sponsors and 6 reactivated, for a net gain of 30 before adjusting for cancelled programs.) Additionally, Maryland has increased the number of apprentices working for businesses to over 11,200. Maryland first crossed the 11,000-apprentice threshold in 2020 and achieved 11,000 again in 2021. Maryland has now maintained over 10,000 registered apprentices, working and learning, for over 27 consecutive months.

The diversity of Maryland's program has also improved. In PY20, there were 2,889 new apprentices registered, up 21.3 % from Calendar Year (CY) 14. Of the 11,076 apprentices registered at year-end, there were 4,534 total minority apprentices, up 54.9 % from CY14; 589 total women apprentices, up 93.8 % from CY14; and 656 total veteran apprentices, up 19.1 % from CY14. Overall for the year, there were a total of 3,713 participating employers, up 10.0 % from CY14.

To strengthen career pathways, the higher education community in Maryland has also been a focus for registered apprenticeship. Recognizing the strong ties between related instruction for apprenticeship and the college system, five of Maryland's community colleges and the UMBC Training Centers have now become registered apprenticeship sponsors for the first time in Maryland's history. These colleges are now able to work directly with businesses on related instruction as well as providing a pathway for their students, or incumbent workers of their employer partners, to earn and learn rather than only participate in the educational process with which the colleges are normally associated. This also allows the colleges to enhance their relationship with the employers by maintaining the paperwork and registration components for the businesses.

Maryland has also made great strides in making the case for youth apprenticeship opportunities. MD Labor has been proud to partner with the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) and the Department of Commerce (Commerce) in developing a youth apprenticeship program available for participating local Maryland school systems (currently, Baltimore City as well as Allegany, Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Calvert, Caroline, Carroll, Charles, Dorchester, Frederick, Harford, Howard, Kent, Montgomery, Prince George's, Queen Anne's, St. Mary's, Talbot, Washington, and Wicomico counties).

Originally in 2015, House Bill 942 established an apprenticeship pilot program, Apprenticeship Maryland, to prepare students to enter the workforce by providing on-site employment training and related classroom instruction needed to obtain a license or certification for a skilled occupation. The program began in the summer of 2016 and lasted for two years. In June 2018, MSDE and MD Labor were pleased to announce the implementation of the Apprenticeship Maryland Program (AMP) as a new Career and Technology Education Program of Study.

Members of the MD Labor's MATP and MSDE's Career and College Readiness team continue to meet with officials at Maryland K-12 public school systems who express interest in the youth apprenticeship model. For the current 2020-2021 school year, a total of 90 students were registered as youth apprentices, representing growth of 91.5 % since the end of the prior school year, and over 572 % growth since the program's inception. A total of 63 students completed the program at the end of the school year.

EARN Maryland (EARN)

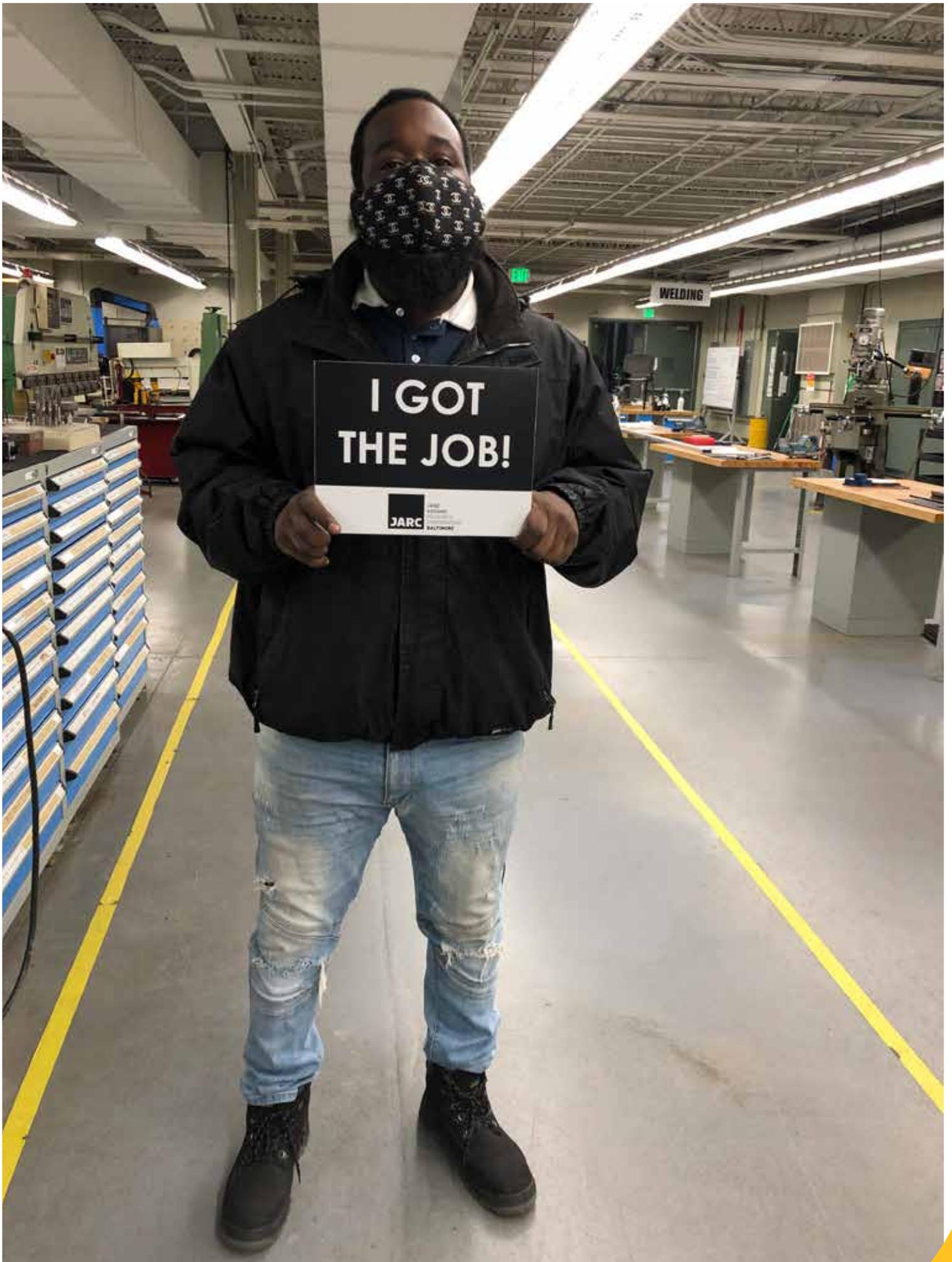
EARN is a state-funded, competitive workforce development grant program that is industry-led, regional in focus, and a proven strategy for helping businesses cultivate the skilled workforce they need to compete.

EARN has been recognized as a national best practice for its innovation in sector strategies and is a model that many states seek to emulate. Currently, there are more than 60 Strategic Industry Partnerships in operation, targeting a wide array of industries. More than 6,000 unemployed and underemployed Marylanders have obtained employment as a result of EARN training, and over 8,600 incumbent workers have received training. In addition to targeted investments in Cyber/Information Technology and Green and Clean Jobs training, EARN received additional funding in FY 2020 and FY 2021 to serve residents and employers in and around Opportunity Zones.

EARN Maryland continues to be a sound investment of state resources. A recent study on the economic impact of the program shows that for every dollar the State invests, an additional \$18.43 in economic activity is created.

Maryland Business Works (MBW)

MBW is an incumbent worker training program administered by DWDAL in consultation with Commerce. The program was established to support employer strategies for retention, growth expansion, and layoff aversion through upgrading the skills of currently employed workers of Maryland's businesses. The program's training funds are available to businesses serious about increasing employee productivity, upgrading the skills of current employees, and creating opportunities for expanding the existing workforce. Projects funded through MBW are focused on in-demand occupations and skillsets, as defined by businesses, and are intended to lead to potential career growth and increased wages for participating workers. Participating companies are required to match the funds provided by the MBW program for the actual training costs on a dollar-to-dollar



basis. Companies pay for 100% of total training costs and then receive a 50% reimbursement by MD Labor upon successful completion of the trainee. To date, Maryland has invested a total of \$2.0 M of Governor set-aside funds in MBW.

During PY 2021, 263 incumbent workers received training and industry recognized credentials with the support of the MBW program. \$259,644.48 was spent for training—for an average cost per participant of \$987. Businesses increased wages for 249, and 248 new positions were planned. In addition, registered apprenticeships utilized funding to train 239 registered apprentices in Maryland. Industries utilizing the grant included construction trades, manufacturing, IT/Cyber, and professional services.

Career Pathways

Maryland has invested \$1.5 million of its WIOA Governor's set-aside funding in local workforce entities since 2018 to support career pathway initiatives developed in partnership with Title II Adult Education providers.

In keeping within the focus of WIOA regulations on career pathway models, MD Labor developed this initiative with the following goals in mind:

- Increase WIOA Title II adult learners' access to WIOA Title I training and career opportunities;
- Focus on meeting lower-level adult learners where they are regarding education levels, and support them in meeting career goals;
- Increase adult learners' co-enrollment in WIOA Titles I and II;
- Address the needs of businesses;
- Expand career pathways through piloting one or more proven interventions;
- Support the creation of a Maryland WIOA Co-Enrollment and Career Pathways Guide to facilitate the distribution of information related to best practices, successes, challenges, and more; and
- Achieve sustainability once grant funds are exhausted or the project has ended through connecting to the Maryland Eligible Training Provider List or by other means.

Local workforce entities had the opportunity to apply for up to \$250,000 in funding to develop innovative demonstration projects with a consortium of local partners, including adult education providers and business partners. Eligible applicants were provided a menu of interventions that were selected by the department after careful consideration and review of national best practices. These interventions include:

- English language acquisition,
- Distance learning,
- Registered apprenticeship or pre-apprenticeship,
- Integrated education and training,
- Integrated English literacy and civics education, and
- Transition support specialists between local workforce and adult education entities.

Most of Maryland's local boards applied for this funding, and ultimately the state selected seven career pathway projects over three rounds of funding to offer adult learners innovative career pathways. Through strategic investments such as these, the department is changing the way the state approaches workforce development. The projects created with this funding began on April 1, 2018. All but one have been completed. Areas of emphasis include:

- A focus on English Language Learners interested in allied healthcare careers and training for two certifications: Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) and Patient Care Technician (PCT);
- Specialized workforce services to English Language Learners (ELLs) and low basic skills individuals to create and align career pathways into the construction trades by using the Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST) service delivery model; this will integrate English as a Second Language (ESL) course instruction with pre-apprenticeship and occupational skills training;

- Career pathways as a method through which Adult Education students funded under Title II can gain skills, credentials, and upward mobility in the healthcare sector as Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs);
- Innovative programming and services to qualified candidates interested in a career pathway in the healthcare or transportation and skilled trades industries; instruction in both career areas will be contextualized utilizing the I-BEST model with distance learning components; and
- A focus on trades, manufacturing, construction, transportation, healthcare, and leisure and hospitality industries allowing for support of entry level credentialing and providing candidates opportunities to move through stackable credentials or apprenticeship opportunities.

Mid-Maryland

Mid-Maryland’s “Zap the Gap” project focuses on ELL participants interested in allied healthcare careers, and trains for CNA and PCT certifications. Orientation, career exploration/essential skills, and bridge classes have been held at the AJC where the Transition Coordinator also maintains office hours. As of June 2021, Mid-Maryland has trained 22 participants. Of these, 21 successfully completed training, and 18 of these are either employed or are seeking employment.

Prince George County

Employ Prince George’s provided specialized workforce services to ELL participants and low basic skills individuals to create and align career pathways into the construction trades by using the I-BEST service delivery model.

As of June 2021, 29 participants enrolled in the National Certification Apartment Maintenance Technician (CAMT) Career Path. This program offers an accelerated program to obtain job readiness-related soft skills combined with occupational trade-related technical skills training which is required to obtain the CAMT credential. The training consists of courses in interior and exterior maintenance and repair, electrical maintenance and repair, plumbing maintenance and repair, heating, ventilation, and air conditioning maintenance and repair, and appliance maintenance and repair. The Heritage Care CNA/GNA training program began the training cohort on August 19, 2019. For both projects, 20 have completed training and are either employed or are seeking employment.

Baltimore City

The Baltimore Accelerating Connections to Employment’s Emergency Medical Technician (BACE-EMT) Project supports career pathways as a method through which Adult Education students funded under Title II can gain skills, credentials, and upward mobility in the healthcare sector. The BACE-EMT project uses the Integrated Education and Training model of service delivery.

As of June 2021, 24 students completed the EMT course. Nine students are certified EMTs; with five employed as full-time EMTs. The remaining certified EMTs are searching for full-time positions. In addition, one non-certified EMT is employed as a Transporter – the job classification will be upgraded to EMT as soon as the student becomes certified.

Anne Arundel County

Anne Arundel County’s project offers innovative programming and services to qualified candidates interested in a career pathway in the healthcare or transportation and skilled trades industries. Healthcare instruction focuses on providing candidates with the skills needed to obtain a dialysis technician license while learning advanced skills that will lead to training and employment as a dialysis technician and other occupations with a regional dialysis center. Instruction in the transportation and skilled trades industry will focus on providing the basic occupational skills that are essential for any skilled position in the field. Instruction in both career areas will be contextualized utilizing the I-BEST model with distance learning components.

In December 2019, a third round of career pathway grants were made to the Anne Arundel Workforce Development Corporation (AAWDC) and Howard Community College (HCC). These targeted funds support localities in developing career pathways that increase opportunities for adult learners while expanding the talent pipeline for the business community. AAWDC, in partnership with the Anne Arundel Community College and regional employers, offer innovative



programming and services to qualified candidates interested in a career pathway in the Dental Assisting and Auto Mechanics occupations. HCC's grant award supports the development of the Vision for Success program, which supports intermediate or high-level ELLs in becoming Ophthalmic Technician Assistants.

As of June 2021, a pathway in healthcare was created – from CNA/GNA to PCT and other credentials (phlebotomy, etc.). Stackable credentials are a value-added to the existing career path. Nineteen people were enrolled and have now successfully finished CNA training. Four participants are employed full-time and one is employed part-time. Recruiting for new candidates will continue, and recruiting is ongoing for the second career track training related to the skilled trades.

Western Maryland

The goal of Western Maryland's project is to provide opportunities that offer living wages that improve overall quality of life and promote employment sustainability. The grant achieves these goals by strengthening partner collaborations, utilizing resources effectively to address the employment barriers of identified candidates, and establishing robust career pathways that allow Title II adult education students to co-enroll in Title I adult, dislocated worker, and youth programs. Western Maryland's project focuses on trades, manufacturing, construction, transportation, healthcare, and leisure and hospitality industries, in alignment with the demand sectors identified in the local workforce plan. Target occupations allow for support of entry level credentialing and providing candidates with the opportunity to move through stackable credentials or apprenticeship opportunities.

As of June 2021, in Washington County, registration for new and continuing students was underway until classes were scheduled to begin. The Transition Specialist completed the intake process at the participant's preferred location. One participant earned a GED® and started a Commercial Driver's License - A course. Another participant finished the core trade pre-apprenticeship course and started the cybersecurity certificate program. One participant obtained employment as a welder while enrolled in the welding certification program.

Allegany College initiated tours of the Culinary School for participants to spark interest in the field of hospitality. Potential students complete a career exploration and interest survey prior to receiving a handout showing the steps necessary to complete their pathway to success.

In Garrett County, regular meetings between Title I and Title II staff were proving helpful in identifying potential candidates. Two new participants were added. The majority of the participants have their high school credential and are in reading and/or math remediation to improve their skills while engaged in workforce training program. To date, 75 individuals have been served with 29 completing training and receiving WIOA approver credentials, and 37 entered employment.

Youth Work Experience

MD Labor continues its efforts to ensure that the local workforce development boards, youth managers, and vendors meet the fiscal requirements outlined to provide 20% of their budget to provide work experience for Title I Youth participants. MD Labor is working diligently to address all technical assistance and training requests to improve adherence to the required elements of WIOA youth services and funds. MD Labor's statewide disability and youth services coordinator works closely with MD Labor's fiscal staff to monitor local boards' fiscal adherence to the WIOA requirements on appropriate allowable work experiences, the usage of the reporting tool developed to track work experiences, as well as appropriate documentation on the quarterly financial status reports.

At the request of the Local Area Directors, MD Labor included a waiver request to USDOL with the 2020 State Plan to reduce the out-of-school expenditure requirement to 50%. MD Labor believes that the availability of the waiver would provide programmatic flexibility to the Local Areas that would foster the creation of innovative programming and improve outcomes for Title I Youth Participants. The waiver has been approved by USDOL for PY 20 and 21. As a result of the approved request, Local Areas will be required to articulate in their local plans how they will implement the waiver. MD Labor will closely monitor Local Areas that chose to implement the waiver to ensure that performance in those areas improve as a result of the implementation.

Given the onset of COVID-19, Local Areas have been limited in their ability to provide work experiences. Although many have chosen to alter how work experiences are provided, offering variations of virtual and onsite opportunities, many have reduced the number of participants in their programs. Local Areas continue to provide feedback to the state on their efforts to meet the 20% work experience mandate. During these challenging times, Local Areas, partners, and contracted service providers have continued to address the 14 service elements, eligibility requirements, partnerships, and support major industries based upon labor market information. The use of virtual case management, mentoring, and job readiness training have allowed programs to remain connected with their enrolled participants.

Within this past year, Local Areas have consistently met or exceeded the required 20% work experience funding allocation for PY 2020. Labor will continue working with Local Areas to provide training and technical assistance to address any deficiencies in fiscal or programmatic performance.

4.g If the state has received a small state minimum allotment exception to decrease the minimum out-of-school youth expenditure requirement, describe how the exception has impacted services provided to both in-school youth and out-of-school youth, including specific strategies for serving each population, as well as how the state and/or local area is ensuring serving out-of-school youth remains a priority.

MD Labor does not have an exception.

4.h The state's performance accountability system, including

- Any specific state performance measures or goals and progress towards meeting them.*
- Any performance deficiencies on the primary indicators of performance, which may include descriptions of any factors impacting performance.*
- The state's common exit policy, including which ETA-funded partner programs are included in the state's common exit policy. Negotiated performance levels for local areas for titles I and III core programs for program years 2016-2017.*
- The state's approach to data validation and ensuring data integrity, including a description of the methodology of any validation activities that occurred.*

Maryland's WIOA Performance PY 2020

WIOA is landmark legislation designed to strengthen and improve our nation's public workforce system and help put Americans, especially youth and those with significant barriers to employment, back to work. WIOA supports innovative strategies to keep pace with changing economic conditions and seeks to improve coordination between the core WIOA and other Federal programs that support employment services, workforce development, adult education and literacy, and vocational rehabilitation activities. Moreover, WIOA promotes program coordination and alignment of key employment, education, and training programs at the Federal, State, Local, and Regional levels. Furthermore, this legislation ensures that Federal investments in employment and training programs are evidence-based and data-driven, and accountable to participants and taxpayers. WIOA provides employment, job training, and education services to eligible adults, dislocated workers, and youth.

Performance Indicators

In accordance with §677.155(a)(1)(i-vi), and TEGL 10-16, Change 1, the primary indicators for performance are:

WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Wagner Peyser Performance Measures

- Employment Rate QTR2 – Percentage of participants in unsubsidized employment in the second quarter after exit (Q2 post-exit).
- Employment Rate QTR4 – Percentage of participants in unsubsidized employment in the fourth quarter after exit (Q4 post-exit).
- Median Earnings – Median earnings of participants in the second quarter after exit (Median earnings Q2 after exit).
- Credential Rate – Percentage of participants with post-secondary credential attainment or high school diploma or GED during participation in the program or within one (1) year after exit. (Wagner Peyser is excluded from this measure)
- Measurable Skills Gain – Percentage of participants who, during the PY, are in education or training programs that lead to recognized post-secondary credential or employment, and who achieve measurable skills gain (documented academic, technical, occupational or other forms of progress, toward the credential or employment). (Wagner Peyser is excluded from this measure)

In accordance with §677.155(d)(1-6), the primary indicators for the youth program under title I of WIOA are:

WIOA Youth Performance Measures

- Placement in Employment or Education QTR2 – Percentage of participants who are in education and training, or in unsubsidized employment, during the second quarter after exit (Q2 post-exit).
- Placement in Employment or Education QTR4 – Percentage of participants who are in education and training, or in unsubsidized employment, during the fourth quarter after exit (Q4 post-exit).
- Median Earnings - Median earnings of participants in the second quarter after exit (Median earnings Q2 after exit).
- Credential Rate - Percentage of participants with post-secondary credential attainment or high school diploma or GED during participation in the program or within one (1) year after exit.
- Measurable Skills Gain - Percentage of participants who, during the PY, are in education or training programs that lead to recognized postsecondary credential or employment, and who achieve measurable skill gain (documented academic, technical, occupational or other forms of progress, toward the credential or employment).

In accordance with §677.155(a)(1)(vi), there is a primary indicator for the effectiveness in serving employers under WIOA, which is:

WIOA Effectiveness in Servicing Employers Measures

- Employer Penetration Rate- addresses the programs' efforts to provide quality engagement and services to all employers and sectors within a State and local economy. Percentage of employers using WIOA core program services out of all employers in the State.
- Repeat Business Customers- addresses the programs' efforts to provide quality engagement and services to employers and sectors and establish productive relationships with employers and sectors over extended periods; the percentage of employers who have used WIOA core program services more than once during the last three reporting periods.
- Retention with Same Employer in the 2nd and 4th Quarters after Exit. Addresses the programs' efforts to provide employers with skilled workers; Percentage of participants with wage records who exit and were employed by the same employer in the second and fourth quarters after exit.

States must select two of the three measures above to report on for PY2020 and PY2021 program year. Maryland has chosen to report on all three measures for these program years.

WIOA Negotiated Performance Targets and Results

The implementation of WIOA common performance accountability requirements has varied across Titles of the core WIOA programs, including Trade, and JVSG due to variations in federal agency oversight, policy guidance, and related requirements. For example, whereas Maryland Department of Labor negotiated Title I and Title III goals with the USDOL for indicators, MSDE-DORS only negotiated Measurable Skills Gains with the U.S. Department of Education, since the other measures are new for that Title and "baseline" data will be collected.

Baseline indicators are indicators for which the State did not need to propose an expected level of performance in the State Plan for PY 2020 and, therefore, did not need to come to an agreement with the federal Departments on negotiated levels of performance. Baseline indicators will not be used at the end of year performance calculations and will not be used to determine failure to achieve adjusted levels of performance.

When negotiating performance goals with the State, USDOL:

1. Took into account how the levels involved compare with the negotiated levels of performance established for other states. The Departments will provide the most recent performance data for all states, including previous actual, negotiated, and adjusted levels of performance, and will use this information throughout the negotiations process.
2. Used the statistical adjustment model;
3. Used continuous improvement; and
4. Used Government Performance and Results Act goals.

WIOA Assurance Statement

The State of Maryland assures USDOL that all required elements of the PY 2020 WIOA Annual Report have been reported accurately and uniformly to permit state-by-state comparisons across WIOA programs. The State assures USDOL that the WIOA Annual Report complies with the Act and federal regulations.

Maryland Common Exit Policy

Per Maryland Policy Issuance No. 01-2014: any participant who receives services funded in whole or in part from the WIOA, Wagner Peyser (WP), Veteran's Employment and Training Service (VETS) and Trade Act Adjustment /Trade and Globalization Adjustment Assistance (TAA/TGAA) programs, sequentially or simultaneously, will be counted as a participant in each program, and will share a common "date of participation" and a common "date of exit" for federal reporting.

Maryland Performance

Title I and Title III Performance - Maryland PY 2020

		Standard	MD Performance	% Standard Achieved
Employment Rate QTR2	Adults	76%	77.3%	101.7%
	Dislocated Workers	80%	83.0%	103.8%
	Labor Exchange	59%	60.0%	101.7%
Employment Rate QTR2	Adults	72%	76.6%	106.4%
	Dislocated Workers	76%	82.2%	108.2%
	Labor Exchange	68%	61.8%	106.5%
Median Earnings	Adults	\$6,200	\$7,614	122.8%
	Dislocated Workers	\$8,000	\$9,982	124.8%
	Labor Exchange	\$5,500	\$6,876	123.9%
	Youth	\$3,410	\$3,737	109.6%
Youth Education and Employment Rate QTR2		69%	70.6%	102.3%
Youth Education and Employment Rate QTR4		63%	72.3%	114.7%
Credential Attainment	Adults	60%	65.5%	109.1%
	Dislocated Workers	56%	59.9%	106.9%
	Youth	62%	65.0%	104.9%
Measurable Skills Gains	Adults	52%	70.5%	135.7%
	Dislocated Workers	52%	75.8%	145.7%
	Youth	48%	65.7%	136.9%
Employer Effectiveness Measures				
Retention With Same Employer			63.0%	Baseline
Penetration Rate			9.8%	Baseline
Repeat Business			28.6%	Baseline

Maryland exceeded 18 measures based on the negotiated goals for PY2020.

Local Workforce Development Area Performance and Their Negotiated Goals for PY 2020

WIOA and Labor Exchange Title I Performance - Maryland and Local Workforce Development Areas - PY 2020

ROLLING 4 QUARTERS

	Standard	State Perform.	AA	BA	BM	FR	LS	MG	MM	PG	SM	SQ	US	WM	State Standard	
Performance Measure			Perf.	Perf.	Perf.	Perf.	Perf.	Perf.	Perf.	Perf.	Perf.	Perf.	Perf.	Perf.		
Employment Rate QTR2	Local Adjusted Employment Rate QTR2 Adult		76%	76%	76%	76%	76%	76%	76%	76%	76%	76%	76%	76%		
	Adults	76%	77.3%	69.5%	79.0%	71.0%	76.4%	81.8%	70.4%	78.9%	80.8%	73.8%	84.6%	79.2%	85.5%	76%
	Local Adjusted Employment Rate QTR2 DW		80%	80%	80%	80%	80%	80%	80%	80%	80%	80%	80%	80%	80%	
	Dislocated Workers	80%	83.0%	75.0%	82.8%	90.0%	73.7%	100.0%	78.2%	87.0%	81.8%	65.0%	85.3%	80.0%	92.0%	80%
	Local Adjusted Employment Rate QTR2 LX		59%	59%	59%	59%	59%	59%	59%	59%	59%	59%	59%	59%	59%	
Labor Exchange	59%	60.0%	59.1%	57.5%	61.6%	60.2%	70.1%	55.4%	61.8%	56.1%	62.3%	60.4%	64.6%	59.8%	59%	
Employment Rate QTR4	Local Adjusted Employment Rate QTR4 Adult		72%	72%	72%	72%	72%	72%	72%	72%	71%	72%	71%	72%	72%	
	Adults	72%	76.6%	69.4%	74.7%	73.4%	78.7%	81.8%	70.2%	80.9%	70.7%	73.6%	80.8%	88.1%	77.3%	72%
	Local Adjusted Employment Rate QTR4 DW		76%	76%	76%	76%	76%	76%	76%	76%	76%	76%	76%	76%	76%	
	Dislocated Workers	76%	82.2%	78.8%	77.1%	94.3%	75.5%	100.0%	71.7%	85.8%	76.8%	86.0%	85.1%	81.5%	86.8%	76%
	Local Adjusted Employment Rate QTR4 LX		58%	58%	58%	58%	58%	58%	58%	58%	58%	58%	58%	58%	58%	
Labor Exchange	58%	61.8%	60.8%	62.7%	64.2%	68.1%	67.7%	58.0%	64.0%	58.3%	60.9%	62.7%	63.8%	56.6%	58%	
Median Earnings	Local Adjusted Earnings Standard Adult		\$6,500	\$6,500	\$5,000	\$6,800	\$5,500	\$6,000	\$5,900	\$6,900	\$5,100	\$7,500	\$6,000	\$6,500		
	Adults	\$6,200	\$7,614	\$8,350	\$7,879	\$6,197	\$7,854	\$8,185	\$10,618	\$6,218	\$7,940	\$7,321	\$8,911	\$6,260	\$7,468	\$6,200
	Local Adjusted Earnings Standard DW		\$8,500	\$8,700	\$7,000	\$8,700	\$6,500	\$9,200	\$9,000	\$11,000	\$6,900	\$8,500	\$7,000	\$7,500		
	Dislocated Workers	\$8,000	\$9,982	\$11,910	\$10,847	\$10,503	\$7,669	\$3,488	\$15,176	\$11,557	\$13,392	\$12,229	\$9,344	\$7,971	\$7,299	\$8,000
	Local Adjusted Earnings Standard LX		\$6,500	\$6,100	\$5,000	\$6,500	\$5,000	\$7,000	\$6,500	\$6,000	\$5,500	\$6,000	\$5,500	\$5,000		
	Labor Exchange	\$5,550	\$6,876	\$8,964	\$7,232	\$6,262	\$8,501	\$5,510	\$9,796	\$8,078	\$6,960	\$6,412	\$6,818	\$6,006	\$6,110	\$5,550
	Local Adjusted Earnings Standard Youth		\$3,800	\$3,500	\$3,300	\$3,800	\$3,410	\$3,500	\$3,410	\$3,450	\$2,500	\$3,500	\$3,500	\$3,500		
Youth	\$3,410	\$3,737	\$3,024	\$4,673	\$3,534	\$4,807	\$3,694	\$3,172	\$4,507	\$3,514	\$4,680	\$3,954	\$4,296	\$2,755	\$3,410	
Local Adjusted Employment Rate QTR2 Youth		70%	72%	69%	70%	71%	69%	69%	70%	71%	68%	69%	70%			
Youth Education and Employment Rate QTR2	69%	70.6%	75.5%	82.6%	76.0%	82.6%	75.9%	51.1%	75.6%	68.5%	100.0%	65.7%	93.8%	65.7%	69%	
Local Adjusted Employment Rate QTR4 Youth		65%	65%	65%	65%	63%	63%	63%	65%	65%	64%	63%	63%	65%		
Youth Education and Employment Rate QTR4	63%	72.3%	76.7%	89.0%	71.1%	81.3%	77.8%	62.7%	72.2%	65.6%	87.5%	63.1%	85.2%	71.8%	63%	
Credential Attainment	Local Adjusted Credential Attainment Adult		58%	60%	60%	59%	62%	60%	59%	60%	60%	56%	60%	62%		
	Adults	60%	65.5%	59.3%	58.9%	72.0%	55.4%	80.5%	55.3%	61.4%	61.1%	62.7%	69.9%	75.0%	60.7%	60%
	Local Adjusted Credential Attainment DW		56%	56%	56%	56%	56%	56%	56%	56%	56%	58%	51%	56%	56%	
	Dislocated Workers	56%	59.9%	48.1%	42.1%	75.0%	57.9%	100.0%	70.6%	56.2%	50.8%	48.3%	52.9%	77.8%	85.7%	56%
	Local Adjusted Credential Attainment Youth		65%	65%	65%	62%	62%	62%	62%	63%	60%	60%	50%	64%	62%	
Youth	62%	65.0%	72.0%	70.8%	85.9%	59.1%	0.0%	61.2%	66.7%	36.8%	33.3%	52.1%	77.8%	41.7%	62%	
Measurable Skills Gains	Local Adjusted MSG Adult		52.0%	52.0%	52.0%	55.0%	55.0%	52.0%	52.0%	52.0%	50.0%	52.0%	52.0%	55.0%		
	Adults	52%	70.5%	69.3%	68.0%	62.5%	81.0%	87.9%	84.1%	64.4%	74.2%	62.5%	68.8%	69.4%	67.0%	52%
	Local Adjusted MSG DW		52.0%	52.0%	55.0%	55.0%	55.0%	52.0%	55.0%	52.0%	55.0%	52.0%	52.0%	55.0%		
	Dislocated Workers	52%	75.8%	73.3%	63.3%	77.8%	66.7%	100.0%	82.6%	75.4%	67.9%	59.1%	63.6%	81.1%	77.3%	52%
	Local Adjusted MSG Youth		48.0%	48.0%	49.0%	47.0%	48.0%	48.0%	48.0%	48.0%	45.0%	47.0%	48.0%	47.0%		
Youth	48%	65.7%	71.9%	63.5%	55.3%	43.5%	47.4%	94.6%	61.9%	73.3%	100.0%	80.0%	85.1%	62.5%	48%	
Local Adjusted Employers																
Retention With Same Employer		63.0%														
Local Adjusted Employers																
Penetration Rate		9.8%														
Local Adjusted Employers																
Repeat Business		28.6%														

Performance
 = Exceeded Standard
 = Meeting Standard (at least 90% of standard)
 = Failing Standard (Performed below 90% of standard)
 = No Participants in Measure

Local Workforce Development Areas:

Codes for LWDA	LWDA
Anne Arundel	AA
Baltimore County	BA
Baltimore City	BM
Frederick	FR
Lower Shore	LS
Montgomery	MG
Mid Maryland	MM
Prince George's	PG
Southern Maryland	SM
Susquehanna	SQ
Upper Shore	US
Western Maryland	WM

Data Validation Process

The State established processes for data validation that meet all federal guidelines issued by USDOL. Data validation is a series of internal controls or quality assurance techniques established to verify the accuracy, validity, and reliability of data. Maryland requires that the Local Areas use the Virtual One Stop (VOS) to upload documents upon receipt from the participants for data validation purposes. This digital medium streamlines the process by eliminating the need to maintain paper documents while allowing the validation process to be conducted remotely, accurately and more frequently than in prior program years. Maryland has a process in place to ensure that all documentation related to eligibility and performance outcomes are in VOS by the end of the applicable program year. During COVID-related closures, Maryland moved to virtual/remote operations.

The Office of Workforce Information and Performance (OWIP) pulls a random sample of files quarterly and annually. Samples contain files from all Local Areas for all Title I and Title III programs, as well as the Trade Adjustment Assistance program, the Jobs for Veterans State Grant program and National Dislocated Worker Grants.

Quarterly – The information from the extract file is checked against our state Management Information System (MIS) system to ensure the information contained in all federal extract files are accurate. Data is reviewed for errors, inconsistencies, missing data, out of range values and any anomalies. Local Areas are contacted to make corrections prior to submission in the federal Workforce Integrated Performance System (WIPS). This proactive approach of reviewing records in our case management system compared to the data extract are conducted on a quarterly basis to ensure the local areas are aware of any issues and can receive technical assistance during the year. The Monitoring and Compliance unit then verifies the participant's eligibility against the source documentation to make sure all requirements have been met by reviewing a sample of the participant's records. Local Areas are required to address all findings and/or concerns identified in a timely manner. Monitoring staff verifies the corrections made to a finding or concern within the Maryland Workforce Exchange before the finding or concern is closed.

In addition, on a quarterly basis USDOL will provide grant recipients with feedback regarding their performance reports to aid in data integrity efforts and support data accuracy. Their analysis will include, but is not limited to, a review of the data submitted, anomalies and outliers, and other potential data quality issues, which may indicate reporting inaccuracies. OWIP will use this data on a quarterly basis to

identify and correct errors to improve performance reporting and ensure data properly reflects the program participants, services, and outcomes.

OWIP also uses the WIPS logical value and data specification checks to identify issues and concerns. Local Areas are contacted to make necessary data changes. In accordance with USDOL, Maryland conducts a regular data integrity review of program data quarterly for errors, missing data, out-of-range variances in values reported, and other anomalies. The WIPS system along with the USDOL Quarterly Performance and Results system assist in this process. In order to process a clean data file, the Maryland Workforce Exchange changes must be in place for any missing and erroneous data identified during the review process and ensure these were corrected in the system before the extract is submitted.

Annual – The annual data validation is used primarily for ensuring data used in performance calculations was accurate, reliable and comparable. A sample of participants contained in the WIOA measures will be pulled. The 24 elements listed in TEGL 7-18 will be monitored and assessed based on required source documentation and state procedures. All elements indicated in TEGL 23-19 are validated. This time of year is also for training Local Area staff and showing best practices amongst the areas. Staff will be trained on what, why, and how data validation works. Once a year, Local Areas are asked to perform data file reviews on other local area files. This shows staff what they are required to have within their own records and allows the sharing of best practices which they may use within their own Local Area. MD Labor Central Office program management staff is available for any questions or issues that arise during this training.

Each year, Maryland plans to assess the data validation process to ensure the process is working as intended and make revisions as needed.

4.i.1 Activities provided with the funds reserved by the governor, which can be up to 15 percent of the state's allotment. In this section of the narrative, states may describe activities undertaken in whole or in part with their Governor's Reserve and how those activities have directly or indirectly impacted performance.

Baltimore's Promise Update

Baltimore's Promise is a collective established to coordinate strategy, identify quality programs, support alignment activities, establish shared measures for meaningful results, build public will, and advance policy on behalf of Baltimore City's youth. Most providers working through the

Baltimore’s Promise collective have continued utilizing hybrid service models to provide services to participants. The training providers have utilized in-person instruction for the hands-on lab components of the training while other instruction remains virtual. Funding for this project has ended. Providers are still working with program participants to access training upon reopening from COVID-19 closures, obtain employment, and wraparound supports. These supports include food resources, eviction support, and mental health services.

Below is the current list of providers and the training they provide:

Provider	Trainings
Baltimore City Community College (BCCC)	IT Helpdesk, CNA/GNA
Bon Secours Community Works (BSCW)	CNA/GNA
BioTechnical Institute of Maryland (BTI)	Biotechnology (BioSTART and Lab Associates)
Code in the Schools	IT
Civic Work(CW)s (Youthbuild)	Construction
Community College of Baltimore County (CCBC)	Geriatric Nursing Assistant, PCT, CAN, Medical Front Office with Phlebotomy, Pharmacy Technician
Maryland New Directions (MND)	Maritime, Transportation, Distribution and Logistics, Hospitality
NPower	IT
Urban Alliance (UA)	Land surveying program in collaboration with the Maryland Society of Surveyors
Job Opportunities Task Force (JOTF)	Construction
Year Up	Cyber Security, Helpdesk/Desktop Support training programs

Chart 1 – Performance Numbers – Cumulative To Date	
Measure	Outcome
Total # Participants Enrolled	501
Total # Participants Receiving Industry Recognized Training	501
Total # Participants Completing an Industry Recognized Training	359
Total # Participants Receiving an Industry Recognized Credential	286
Total # Participants Placed into Unsubsidized Employment	221
Average Wage at Initial Placement	\$13.84
Total # Participants Retaining Unsubsidized Employment for 60 Days After Placement	158

Performance Numbers – Segmented by Vendor

Vendor's Name		Enrollment		Completion		Certifications		Placement		Average Wage	
		Month	Total	Month	Total	Month	Total	Month	Total	Month	Total
1	BCCC	0	44	0	24	0	5	1	15	16.00	\$13.43
2	BSCW	0	93	1	70	1	70	4	50	13.33	\$12.88
3	BTI	0	24	0	14	0	0	0	9	-	\$16.12
4	CCBC	0	137	2	84	1	87	5	61	15.30	\$14.26
5	CW	0	38	9	36	0	24	0	13	-	\$14.50
6	Code in the Schools	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	-	-
7	JOTF	0	23	2	21	2	21	0	12	-	\$13.95
8	MND	0	69	1	60	8	45	3	38	14.38	\$12.80
9	NPower	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	-	-
10	UA	0	49	10	42	11	34	8	22	14.59	\$13.90
11	Year Up	0	19	0	8	0	0	0	3	-	\$24.29
Total		0	501	25	359	23	286	21	223	14.62	\$13.82

Note: The total placement number and the wage at placement average in this table includes two Cycle 1 participants placed into subsidized employment. This is why average wage in the two tables above varies slightly.

The performance metrics included in the tables above include program participants from both Cycle 1 (training that started in 2018), Cycle 2 (training that started in 2019), and Cycle 3 (training that started in 2020) under Grads2Careers (G2C). The narrative updates that follow are for Cycle 3 activity, except as noted.

Reentry Navigators

Maryland used \$500,000 of WIOA Governor set-aside funding to hire five Reentry Navigators. The Reentry Navigators serve the following Local Areas: Anne Arundel County, Baltimore City, the Lower Shore, Prince George's County, and Western Maryland. They interface with inmates in correctional education programs (both academic and occupational) and serve as the critical point of contact to the local AJCs. In addition, Reentry Navigators interact with businesses who hire ex-offenders.

These contractual positions report directly to the Labor Exchange Administrators in each Local Area. The goal of this intervention is to create a connection between the correctional education program and the workforce system as well as to inform the State regarding best practices for engaging this population. During the report period, Reentry Navigators provided intensive services previously not provided prior to release to 946 returning citizens behind the fence. A total of 324 of the returning citizens who worked with Reentry Navigators were placed in employment opportunities. The success of the program has created a desire to expand to other local areas. Labor is currently recruiting to expand navigators in the remaining eight Local Areas that previously did not have access to these services.

Registered Apprenticeships for Returning Citizens

MD Labor awarded \$149,995 to the Metropolitan Washington Chapter of the Associated Builders and Contractors, Inc. to support a re-entry pilot program. The pilot program encouraged Maryland's workforce system and registered apprenticeship sponsors to rethink the reentry population as a viable talent pipeline. The proposal provided an opportunity to consider innovative approaches in workforce development. The goal was to eliminate barriers to employment for re-entry participants by providing pre-apprenticeship training, supportive services, and comprehensive on-the-job training, combined with related instruction as registered apprentices. Participants entered into skilled trades occupations as registered apprentices with the outcome of being journeypersons in their respective occupations.

Thirteen total participants entered into pre-apprenticeship training. Two of the individuals were unable to complete the training, but 11 participants were successful. The 11 who completed the training have either directly entered into apprenticeship, are pending registration, or have entered into employment in the skilled trades but elected not to become apprentices. The breakdown is as follows:

- Three participants registered as apprentices,
- Six participants pending registration as apprentices, and
- Two participants employed but who have elected not to begin an apprenticeship.
- School-to-Apprenticeship Pathway - International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW)

MD Labor funded the Baltimore Electrician Joint Apprenticeship Training Committee (JATC) to continue expansion of its apprenticeship program by working with participating local public school systems to offer a School-to-Apprenticeship pathway. IBEW received \$57,000 to accomplish the following:

- Work with local public school systems to recruit student candidates who: will be entering their senior year, are on pace to graduate, are able to pass a drug test, have taken and passed a minimum of Algebra I, and will have a valid driver's license and vehicle by the end of the School to Apprenticeship year.
- Have the opportunity to take the first year of the JATC's related instruction in an online format (up to 50 students).
- Be provided classroom time and space to work with instructors as needed on both the curriculum and hands on labs.

COVID-19 has hampered the first year of activity. The DWDAL MATP Director and the Sponsor and Baltimore County Public Schools have met multiple times to facilitate entry for high school students. Favorably, as recovery continued from the pandemic, 13 individuals have participated thus far with two entering apprenticeship.

Baltimore Alliance for Careers in Healthcare (BACH)

BACH is a nonprofit dedicated to eliminating the critical shortage of qualified healthcare workers in the Baltimore area by working with local agencies, healthcare institutions, and other entities to create opportunities for residents to pursue careers in health professions. Through its work with seven major healthcare employers in the Baltimore region, BACH has a frontline understanding of workforce needs and experience convening employers to ensure efforts are industry-led. Due to the organization's history of delivering outstanding outcomes, along with their work as an intermediary, BACH leads this effort.

Since November 2016, BACH has been creating its own registered apprenticeship program by utilizing ApprenticeshipUSA Expansion Grant funding. To date, BACH has created the occupations of Environmental Care Supervisor, Surgical Technologist, Licensed Practical Nurse, Central Sterile Processing Technician, and Medical Assistant. Since inception, 84 apprentices have been registered in this program, with 36 completing, and 28 presently active as apprentices.

BACH was awarded additional funding in the amount of \$668,575 over a period of two years beginning on September 1, 2019 and ending on January 31, 2022 to support the continuation and expansion of its Healthcare Apprenticeship Program.

To date, 152 total participants have been served through the grant. Forty-seven of these participants have entered into registered apprenticeship occupations against the grant goal of 95 to be served. The sponsor has increased the number of employers participating in their program, registering Sinai Hospital, Franklin Woods Center, and Johns Hopkins Bayview Medical Center as new employers into their program during the grant period. This will assist the sponsor in additional scaling efforts of their program.

Independent Electrical Contractors (IEC) – Charles County Public Schools (CCPS), Apprenticeship \$73,748.95

The IEC-CCPS pre-apprenticeship grant is designed to serve a total of 13 CCPS seniors during the 2020-2021 school year. All 13 participants received OSHA-10 and Red Cross CPR Certifications along with their high school diplomas. Eight of the participants completed the entire pre-apprenticeship Electrical Pathway Program. Two of the 10 immediately entered employment and were registered or are in the process of being registered as apprentices with an average starting wage of \$12.80 per hour.

The remaining eight are all in the process of receiving their driver's licenses and meet weekly with IEC staff to provide updates on their progress. Upon receipt of their licenses, they will begin employment and be registered as apprentices.

Independent Electrical Contractors (IEC) – Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS), Apprenticeship \$74,392.93

The IEC-MCPS pre-apprenticeship grant is designed to serve a total of 10 MCPS seniors during the 2020-2021 school year. All 10 participants received OSHA-10 and Red Cross CPR Certifications along with their high school diplomas. Eight of the participants completed the entire pre-apprenticeship Electrical Pathway Program. Five of the eight immediately entered employment and were registered or are in the process of being registered as apprentices with an average starting wage of \$12.80 per hour.

The remaining three are all in the process of receiving their driver's licenses and meet weekly with IEC staff to provide updates on their progress. Upon receipt of their licenses, they will begin employment and be registered as apprentices.

TranZed Apprenticeship Services \$87,320.64

TranZed Apprenticeship Services received a grant designed to expand registered apprenticeship programs in the information technology industry by recruiting 100 new apprentices to at least 25 employer-partners. It is using its established partnerships across the State to accelerate the launch and effectiveness of the program, focusing on those counties experiencing high rates of un- and under-employment and employer need. TranZed will build as wide a recruit strategy for our apprentices as possible, supporting candidates from several underrepresented populations in the IT sector - including women, people of color, and candidates from low-income or single-income households.

Tranzed was awarded funding in the amount of \$87,320.64 on August 5, 2020 over a period of about two years ending on April 30, 2022. To date, a total of 59 new business have been engaged and 15 new apprentices have been registered.

Maryland Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MD MEP) \$250,000

The MD MEP received a grant designed to expand registered apprenticeship programs in the manufacturing industry by creating new registered apprenticeship programs, reactivating inactive registered apprenticeship programs, registering new manufacturing occupations, and bringing new employers into their Group Non-Joint Program.

To date, grant efforts have resulted in the reactivation of two sponsors, the registration of one new occupation for one sponsor and three new occupations for another sponsor. Six new apprentices have registered with more anticipated in the near future. Several new employers are scheduled for registration in the MD MEP Apprenticeship.

4.i.2 Rapid response activities and layoff aversion

Rapid Response

Rapid Response is an early intervention strategy designed to provide individuals who are unemployment with support during the transition between positions. The goal of Rapid Response services is to shorten or eliminate the time between employment opportunities, reducing or eliminating the time an individual would receive Unemployment Insurance. Services are provided to businesses faced with reducing their workforce regardless of the reason(s) for the reductions.

Rapid Response teams (consisting of a state representative and a local WIOA representative as well as other partners) confidentially meet with companies to assess potential layoffs and closings and work collaboratively to plan a response that meets workers' needs. Depending upon the needs of the impacted workers, coordination with other partners may be necessary, such as DUI, Veteran Services Unit, Division of Rehabilitative Services, and approved State of Maryland Contract Interpretation Services.

During Rapid Response events, participants receive information concerning the employment services and resources available through AJCs. Impacted workers are encouraged to visit their nearest AJC as soon as possible.

Case managers are encouraged to refer and co-enroll Trade Adjustment Assistance (Trade) Program participants in appropriate programs to ensure optimal service delivery

leveraging resources from Trade, discretionary grants, and WIOA Title I programs concurrently. Partner programs may be able to assist with participant assessments, childcare, travel costs, case management, and on-the-job training not covered under Trade.

Maryland's Layoff Aversion services include strategies and activities to prevent or minimize the duration of unemployment resulting from layoffs. Since the onset of COVID-19, all related activities have been re-structured to allow the delivery of required information virtually or via conference call, including Town Hall meetings. Though we have reinstated "in-person" sessions, all virtual components remain an option if the employer and/or impacted worker prefers that option.

Services include:

- Immediate and on-site contact to determine assessment of layoff plans, reemployment prospects for workers, available resources, and possibility of Trade impact;
- Short-time compensation;
- Work Sharing/Layoff Aversion and Reopening Unemployment Insurance program;
- Employee skill upgrading and customized training;
- Provision of information and access to unemployment compensation benefits and programs;
- Information sessions on the Trade Program;
- Information on Pell Grants and the GI Bill;
- Interviewing skills workshops;
- Résumé workshops;
- Job fairs and targeted hiring events,
- Providing on the job training assistance;
- Connecting businesses with workers;
- Working with Economic Development to learn of potential businesses coming to the area with hiring needs; and
- Working with employers on proactive measures such as succession planning or opportunities of potential economic and work transition or expanding of business.

During PY 2020, Rapid Response activities in Maryland included:

- 144 employers served;
- 201 Rapid Response events; and
- Workforce Recruitment/Layoff Aversion services including 4,531 events servicing 1,937 employers.
- 2,699 Recruitment Postings/Flyers;
- 133 Virtual Job Fairs;

- Layoff Aversion/Direct Connect One Employer to Another = 27 events
- 555 Job Blasts to Partners/Staff;
- 152,768 Job Orders
- 550 Assisting Employers with MWE for Posting;
- 198 Total number of dislocations received (including Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notifications [WARNs], and Notice of Dislocation Event Reporting form) impacting 10,131 workers);
 - 171 were WARNs impacting 8,896 workers
 - 27 were Notices of Dislocation Event impacting 1,235 workers

The Dislocation Services Unit (DSU) works jointly with the Business Solutions Team to stay abreast of employment needs throughout the state and learn of any new industries potentially moving to Maryland.

When WARNs or Notices of Dislocation events are received, the DSU looks to match of the industry sectors of the impacted workers to the potential placement of existing vacancies. Regular Business Engagement meetings are also held that provide an opportunity for business staff around the state to come together and make connections for our customers.

Layoff Aversion

On March 5, 2020, Governor Larry Hogan declared a state of emergency in Maryland as a result of the public health threat associated with COVID-19. Over subsequent days, the Governor issued a series of Executive Orders to encourage social distancing to protect citizens from further spread of the disease.

To support small businesses facing financial impacts from the pandemic-related shutdowns, MD Labor established the COVID-19 Layoff Aversion Fund with \$7 million of state and federal Rapid Response resources. The COVID-19 Layoff Aversion Fund directed grants to small businesses experiencing economic stresses to mitigate potential layoffs or facility closures due to COVID-19 and promote social distancing. Eligible businesses applied for funding up to \$50,000.

MD Labor accepted applications to the COVID-19 Layoff Aversion Fund starting March 23, 2020. By March 25, 2020, the majority of the funds had been obligated. An additional \$2 million of state funds were provided for a total of \$9 million.

Under Governor Hogan's leadership through the MD Labor COVID-19 Layoff Aversion Fund, 21,555 jobs were saved, and 1,267 small businesses were supported through two rounds of funding totaling over \$31 million. One of several relief programs originally introduced by the governor in March 2020 and expanded through additional funding in October 2020, the COVID-19 Layoff Aversion Fund enabled Maryland to quickly provide crucial financial assistance to help Maryland small businesses avoid layoffs and closures.

- The first round of funding announced in March 2020 awarded over \$10 million in grants to 445 small businesses and saved 8,819 jobs.
- The second round of funding announced in October 2020 awarded over \$21 million in grants to support 822 small businesses and save 12,736 jobs.

Grantees used the average award size of \$25,725 for needs such as purchasing remote access equipment and software to promote teleworking, assisting with employee training and education, purchasing cleaning supplies and services to maintain an onsite workforce, and taking advantage of Labor's Work Sharing Unemployment Insurance Program by supplementing employee income.

4.i.3 Activities provided under the Wagner Peyser (WP) Act Employment Service section 7(b) (e.g., services to groups with special needs or extra costs of exemplary models for delivering services).

Under Title III of WIOA, the WP Act, a greater emphasis is placed on providing services to unemployment insurance (UI) claimants with referrals to additional AJC services, to ensure claimants remain eligible for UI benefits and to provide them with meaningful assistance towards their efforts to regain employment. WP staff provide reemployment services to UI claimants to facilitate a faster return to work to reduce the average week's duration of UI benefits. During this period, the

average week duration decreased from 20 weeks to 14.8 weeks. MD Labor exchange services, which are the primary services provided under Wagner Peyser, fall under the basic career services identified in WIOA. Wagner Peyser staff must use funds authorized by WIOA to provide basic career services.

Maryland has increased staffing in the Tax Credit unit to increase productivity in the unit for the purpose of certifying applications more efficiently. Work Opportunity Tax Credit benefits are designed to incentivize businesses to hire individuals with barriers to employment or special needs. The addition of staff has allowed the unit to process applications faster and reduced the unit backlog. The current backlog is under six months based on the added staff.

Funds have also been utilized to provide outreach to Migrant Seasonal Farmworkers in order to distribute information regarding services available to eligible customers in the AJCs.

Maryland has allocated WP funds to support the Senior Community Service Employment Program under the Older Worker program. WP funds have been leveraged to support costs for increased staff support for AJCs to staff Employment Specialists. Employment Specialists recruit host agencies and eligible older workers to be placed in training slots for host agencies. They assist older workers in securing unsubsidized employment in conjunction with activities in Maryland's AJCs. Maryland exceeded the entered employment goal for the first time since transitioning to workforce due to leveraging these funds in this manner.

4.j Any National Dislocated Worker Grants (DWGs) awarded to or within the state and how those funds are coordinated with state rapid response activities and dislocated worker programs, as well as how the DWGs fit in with state co-enrollment policies and disaster/emergency management activities, as applicable.

Maryland is pleased to have been awarded funding under the National Health Emergency (NHE) Dislocated Worker grant program. DWDAL applied for these funds to support the operations of Workforce Development's response to the opioid epidemic in Maryland, given the prevalence of opioid-related deaths. Part of the grant award was allocated to eight Local Areas. Through this funding, over 300 individuals were served and more than 100 obtained employment. The grant opportunity allowed Local Areas to partner more closely with Local Health Departments and generally become more aware of best practices in serving individuals impacted by the opioid crisis.

This funding also allowed for the creation of the Opioid Workforce Innovation Fund (OWIF). The goal of the OWIF is to seed new and innovative service delivery models that blend workforce and behavioral health services. Sixteen organizations, including non-profits, recovery centers, and Local Areas received funding. As of June 30, 2020, nearly 600 individuals were trained, including unemployed and underemployed individuals and incumbent workers. Over 350 individuals earned a new certification or credential, and nearly 200 became employed.

While the OWIF was successful in meeting its identified goals, perhaps the biggest success is the lasting relationships forged as a result of the project's collaborative approach. For example, the Western Maryland Consortium has formed strong partnerships with Recovery and Wellness Centers, non-profit and community-based organizations, workforce partners, and institutions of higher education. Together, these partners have come to understand best practices, both from a workforce development and behavioral health perspective, related to serving individuals who have been impacted by the opioid crisis.

While the grant ended on June 30, 2020, this funding served as the catalyst for Maryland to expand its workforce portfolio specific to combating the opioid crisis. The Department's relationship with the Maryland Department of Health's Behavioral Health Administration (BHA) has strengthened as a result of the OWIF. An individual from BHA sits on the OWIF Review Panel, lending subject-matter-expertise during the application review process. Given the close collaboration on the project, BHA witnessed first-hand the success of the OWIF. As such, MD Labor has received nearly \$1.3 million from BHA to continue OWIF projects. As of August 31, all deliverables were exceeded on this project, and MD Labor was invited to request additional funds from BHA to continue OWIF projects. The first grant award, which was \$200,000, resulted in the funding of three organizations and led to more than 50 individuals obtaining employment and 72 earning an industry- recognized certification. BHA awarded MD Labor a little over \$1 million in 2020. To date, more than 60 individuals have obtained employment.

Finally, as a result of the partnership with BHA and the Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services (DPSCS), MD Labor led efforts on a grant proposal to the Opioid Operational Command Center that received

funding in August 2019. The pilot developed a new offering through MD Labor’s Correctional Education program to train Certified Peer Recovery Specialists (CPRS). In 2021, MD Labor applied for funding to continue the program at the Maryland Correctional Institution for Women, and expand to Dorsey Run Correctional Facility. This funding will lead to 24 individuals becoming certified as a peer recovery specialist.

In September of 2020, MD Labor was awarded \$4,589,064 from USDOL to provide training and other services through the *Support to Communities: Fostering Opioid Recovery through Workforce Development* grant. MD Labor awarded funding to seven Local Areas representing 14 jurisdictions across the state that have experienced negative social and economic impacts due to the opioid crisis. More than 700 Marylanders are anticipated to participate in the new pilot program, which will provide participants with job training and recovery services, leading to employment in 14 high demand industries and occupations. Sub grantees spent most of the year planning, and activities are expected to ramp up in the final quarter of 2021.

Maryland was awarded \$2,780,440 in COVID-19 National Dislocated Worker Grant funds that has supported 10 Local Areas who have served over 355 participants. The grant will currently end December 31, 2021.

MD NDWG Grants to Local Areas	Total Funded Awards	Total Projected Participants	Participants to 30 September
Anne Arundel - Workforce Development Corporation	\$525,000	150	40-(27%)
Baltimore City - Mayor’s Office of Employment Development	\$300,000	69	46-(66%)
Baltimore County - Department of Economic and Workforce Development	\$81,500	25	13-(52%)
Mid-Maryland Workforce Development Board - Howard County	\$125,000	115	22-(19%)
Montgomery - WorkSource Montgomery	\$175,000	50	56-(112%)
Prince George’s - Employ Prince George’s	\$450,000	49	48-(98%)
Southern Maryland - Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland	\$315,060	77	37-(48%)
Susquehanna Workforce Network	\$125,000	15	15-(100%)
Upper Shore Workforce Investment Board	\$125,000	22	39-(177%)
Western Maryland Consortium	\$250,000	95	39-(41%)
TOTALS	\$2,471,560.00	667	355-(53%)

(As of the end of Q3 2021 – September 30, 2021 - the 9th of 12 months of reporting. As of June 30, 2021, MDOL had allocated \$2,471,560 of the \$2,780,440 budgeted for LWDA contracts, is leaving a current unencumbered balance of \$ 308,880.)

Successes

- **Accurate participant capacity/forecasting.** Local Areas that set relatively smaller, more conservative participant targets have already achieved their goals or are on track to do so.
- **Timing and alignment of funding streams.** Local Areas with a clear sense of grant timing and spending have been able to position/time the NDWG expenditures as other funding sources expire. They requested their NDWG amount accordingly.
- **Close working relationship with employers/participants/general community.** Local Areas with a thorough knowledge of their clients and opportunities have been able to quickly maximize the NDWG funds and co-enroll participants in programs

Challenges

- **The changing landscape of the COVID-19 pandemic ironically slowed and delayed the progress of a funding program hoping to quickly address its effects.** The closing of job centers, shift to virtual operation, and technological divide between some providers and participants has taken months to adjust to.

- **Enhanced and extended federal and state unemployment benefits may have slowed participant interest in committing to new training or a career change.** All Local Areas reported initial interest in virtual outreach events, but less follow-through in committing to scheduled appointments and training during uncertain times.
- **Overestimating capacity.** Without being able to predict the above effects, a few of the Local Areas overestimated their funding needs and participant capacity. Five of the ten funded Local Areas requested and received more funding for more participants in May/June, but the same five now lag the others in percentages of target participants served.
- **Initial reluctance to co-enroll and tendency to define qualified applicants too narrowly.** Despite steady communications, training, and technical assistance, a few Local Areas were hesitant or uncertain as to how to apply the grant in context with other funding streams. In time, all have come to understand the grant's flexibility.

Projections

- **Participation may increase.** All Local Areas expect an increase in participants as the school year has begun, extended unemployment benefits expired in early October, and live meetings restart.
- **Additional Technical Assistance.** MD Labor will concentrate efforts with Anne Arundel County and Howard County Local Areas to increase their participant service rates.

4.k Any technical assistance needs of the state workforce system.

Youth Services

As COVID-19 has become the face of all things in American life, the COVID-19 pandemic has posed unprecedented challenges for students ages 16 to 24 in pursuing education and employment goals. Local Areas that have adopted virtual programs to engage youth have learned strategies that will become relevant in the recovery period, as well as useful to the work of youth vendors in the future.

Some local communities offer online training, work experience with companies, and work and learn programs. The barriers of lack of technology, lack of digital skills and a not so encouraging learning environment at home will become staples in this constantly changing world for this group.

In order to eliminate or reduce the digital divide, MD Labor has to ensure a diverse, fair and effective service delivery system that supports Marylanders' learning and growth. This 21st-century skill is more important to youth now than ever before. Maryland must be the leader in developing the steward of the future workforce by providing the necessary tools to be effective and globally competitive. To make this happen, Maryland will need collaboration across networks and to lead by influence. Any guidance at the federal level that will assure the youth are ready for the workforce along with state leaders is helpful. To assist with developing minds for the future, MD Labor is looking for constructive dialogue and technical assistance in the areas below:

- Technical assistance to Local Boards that provide a clear understanding as to how to best integrate increased technology skills to underserved populations.
- Assist with developing strategies on how best to engage the youth generation on Equity, Inclusion and Diversity. This means that youth need the awareness, skills and knowledge to understand, navigate and flourish in this increasingly global economy.
- Annual training of staff members who see value in assisting each participant, understand participant's developmental needs, and work closely with families, to achieve the program goals.
- Training to state programs and monitoring staff as to how to provide beneficial technical assistance to the field – where lines align or where lines cross.

The lesson learned during the COVID pandemic is that we must digitize and virtualize administrative processes as much as possible to be efficient and effective while helping Local Areas to feel less strained in delivering direct services that can make an impact.



4.1 Promising practices, lessons learned, and success stories that focus on serving employers, communities, and individuals with barriers to employment, including information based on the state's evaluation and related research projects. This discussion should cover a broad range of at-risk and priority populations served, including out-of-school youth, low-income adults, dislocated workers, individuals who are basic skills deficient, individuals with limited language proficiency, individuals with disabilities, veterans, the long-term unemployed, and any other individuals with barriers to employment, or other populations the state may wish to discuss.

NATIONAL DISLOCATED WORKER GRANT (NDWG) | *Meet Ammara*

Ammara gets the training and supportive services she needs to become successfully employed.

Ammara was an Active Duty spouse with a Master of Science in Higher Education. She had worked primarily in the non-profit area and at a community college. She came to an American Job Center (AJC) operated by the Anne Arundel Workforce Development Corporation seeking assistance in finding a professional job that matched her background in policy and program management. A Career Consultant at the AJC thought Ammara would be a great candidate for the Military Corps Career Connect (C3), an initiative funded by a National Dislocated Worker Grant. After enrollment, she was referred to the Spouse Fellowship program with the Hiring our Heroes initiative, where program staff placed her in a fellowship with Solutions for Information Designs, LLC. She worked virtually as an Occupational Analyst.

She also had a goal of earning her Project Management Professional (PMP) certification and enrolled in a PMP cohort. She successfully completed her fellowship but due to family medical issues, she was not able to participate in the cohort. She then obtained full-time employment as a Program Administrator with JRH Consultants at an annual salary of \$35,000. Unfortunately, that job was not a good fit and she was again unemployed.

She came back to C3 for assistance and this time was placed in a fellowship with Kiernan Group Holdings. This six-week fellowship progressed into a 12 week on-the-job training (OJT) that started in April of 2019. Both the employer and Ammara were very happy. Unfortunately, the company experienced financial issues resulting in drastically reduced staffing hours that fell below the minimum Ammara needed.

She was still interested in pursuing her PMP certification and completed a five-day course with Vets2Pm through C3. As she was preparing for her exam, she was offered and accepted a position as a Program Manager with the Washington Center, but then COVID-19 hit and the job was rescinded.

She used the newly found time to study and prepare for her PMP exam. Testing centers were temporarily closed, so her exam date was delayed, but she finally took, completed, and passed the exam on August 29, 2020. She subsequently obtained employment with the University of Maryland, Smith School of Business as the Program Manager of their evening part-time MBA program with an hourly rate of \$34.

NDWG | *Meet Ronda*

Ronda achieves her training and employment goals despite being affected by the opioid epidemic.

Ronda came to the Garrett County office of the Western Maryland Consortium (WMC) in late 2019 seeking a skills upgrade to increase her income and job opportunities. She was a dislocated worker struggling through inconsistent part-time jobs and had been affected by the opioid epidemic, relying on public assistance to get by in life.

After receiving career counseling and information on WIOA funding from the staff at WMC, Ronda decided to improve her job prospects by training for her Class A Commercial Driver's License (CDL-A) with funding from the National Health Emergency Dislocated Worker Grant. Her husband had been a truck driver before his health deteriorated, and she always enjoyed going out on the road with him. Ronda's career counselor helped her get enrolled in CDL-A training with the Mountaintop Truck Driving Institute through Garrett College.

Ronda subsequently earned her CDL-A. It did not take long for her to find a steady, good paying job as a truck driver, and for the first time she has a job with benefits and insurance! She signed on as a driver in training with U.S. Xpress and is

enjoying traveling the country while earning a great wage.

WIOA ADULT WORKER | [Meet Denise](#)

Denise earns professional credentials and returns to a rewarding career with support from her local American Job Center (AJC).

Denise was newly divorced and faced unemployment following the closure of her family-owned property management business when she sought assistance from her local AJC. She arrived at the AJC with an employment goal already in mind: to return to the human resources career she had left behind 20 years earlier to support the family business. Between Denise's long absence from the human resources field and her lack of current industry certifications, she was concerned she would not be a competitive candidate for the job she was hoping to achieve.

With guidance and support from her Career Consultant, Denise identified the Senior Professional in Human Resources (SPHR) certification as a valuable industry-recognized credential that would help her stand out with employers. Denise's Career Consultant assisted her in securing WIOA funds to cover the cost of a training program that would prepare her to pass the challenging SPHR certification exam. Denise worked hard to complete the training and pass the exam, successfully obtaining her SPHR credential. Her Career Consultant assisted Denise in developing an updated résumé that highlighted her new credential, as well as the computer and the human resource skills she had continued to use while working in the family business. Denise used the AJC's online interviewing program to brush up on her interviewing skills and worked with a Job Developer to locate promising job opportunities.

Denise was rewarded for her tenacity. She received an offer to work as a Human Resources Onboarding Specialist with the Children's Guild Alliance earning \$40,000 per year. Today she is excited about her new role and the new opportunity to re-establish her career as a human resources professional.

WIOA ADULT WORKER | [Meet Kevin](#)

Kevin gains valuable career guidance and training on his way to a great new job.

Kevin appeared to have it all. He held a Master's degree in Business Administration and a C-suite job as Vice President in charge of program management. When Kevin's employment ended, he joined the ranks of Unemployment Insurance claimants attending Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) workshops at their local American Job Center (AJC).

The guidance Kevin gained from his RESEA session and the customized services he received from AJC staff helped him develop a solid reemployment plan. He attended additional workshops offered through the AJC focused on small business and interviewing skills. He also activated his professional network and tapped recruiters for career guidance. Through these efforts, Kevin learned that Project Management Professional (PMP) certification would give him an edge with employers. Kevin maintained contact with the AJC staff, who helped him access WIOA-funded training to prepare for the PMP certification exam.

After successfully completing PMP training, Kevin was hired as a Program Manager earning \$125,000 a year. He still plans to take the PMP exam later this year, but because his new employer is willing to pay the costs involved, he no longer needs WIOA funding support. The horizon for Kevin's career is once again bright!

WIOA ADULT/DISLOCATED WORKER | [Meet Marian](#)

Marian finds support for training, credentials, and job search resources that build her résumé and advance her career.

Marian was an experienced Systems Analyst with a 25-year tenure at her company when she was laid off. Her professional background included supporting a variety of Information Technology (IT) contracts, not only as a Systems Analyst but also as a COBOL Programmer and Automation Engineer. Despite Marian's diverse skill sets and strong employment record, she knew that her lack of any current industry-recognized IT credentials would hold her back in finding a job that reflected her professional accomplishments and career goals.

Marian worked with a Career Consultant at a nearby American Job Center (AJC), who helped her determine how she could invest in her training and credentials to take the next step in her career. After considering a range of options, she

decided to leverage WIOA training and supportive services funds to pay for project management training and membership dues with the Project Management Institute. Marion excelled in the project management training program over the next few months, while simultaneously completing several workshops available through the AJC that helped her strengthen her interviewing skills, use LinkedIn effectively, sharpen her résumé, and build her small business savvy.

The COVID-19 pandemic may have slowed Marian's job search, but it did not stop her. Since completing the training, she has started in a new Systems Analyst position at the Maryland Department of Health earning \$55,000 per year. She plans to take the Project Management Professional (PMP) exam in the near future and looks forward to this next step in her career.

VETERAN SERVICES | [Meet Christopher](#)

Christopher receives "the opportunity of a lifetime" and improves his life.

A veteran of the United State Marine Corps, Christopher relocated to Frederick from North Carolina. He wished to start a new life, and he knew that he needed employment to make that happen. Over the first few months, he struggled to find employment—submitting over 152 résumés and applications.

Christopher sought out the help of the Frederick American Job Center (AJC), as he had learned that veterans could receive immediate assistance. He scheduled an appointment with Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program Specialist Kevin Madara. Together, they worked on updating and reformatting his résumé.

Christopher submitted the résumé online and within a week, employers started contacting him. He interviewed with two employers and decided to accept employment with Dairy Farmers of America in Frederick as a machine operator pasteurizing milk. The employer offered Christopher a competitive salary with a great opportunity for advancement in management.

Thanks to the Mr. Madara and the [Frederick AJC], they really helped me receive the opportunity of a lifetime and to better my life. Their suggestions and advisement paid off in the long run. I would like to say a very special to you Mr. Madara and the [AJC] for your services. – Christopher S.

WIOA ADULT/DISLOCATED WORKER/VETERAN SERVICES | [Meet Billy](#)

Billy gets back into the workforce with the help of the Liberty Career Center.

Billy is a 74-year-old dislocated veteran who worked as a Business/Disaster Recovery Consultant for over 21 years. He became unemployed when he lost his government contract, so he came to the Liberty Career Center seeking a training opportunity to re-enter the workforce.

Billy recognized that his age and lack of a Project Management certification could be barriers to securing employment in his field. However, he felt confident that his experience, skills, and abilities coupled with a Project Management Professional (PMP) credential would help him to obtain employment in a high demand market. Liberty Center Career Consultant Elizabeth Frederick-Carter was assigned to assist Billy with navigating the WIOA training experience. Midway through the process, the COVID pandemic caused a sudden delay. Both the agency and training provider were forced to briefly suspend training activities and shift their operations to a remote platform. During this time, Elizabeth stayed in contact with Billy, keeping him abreast of the agency's status, sharing job leads and community resources, and even offering guidance when he experienced unemployment issues. Billy maintained his job search and landed a couple of interviews. As he had feared, he was told that the he would have been hired immediately if he had a PMP certification.

Once the training resumed, Billy successfully completed the 12-week PMP course online with Towson University. Five weeks later, he gained full-time employment as a Cyber Resilience Analyst through an IT Staffing Agency, at the rate of \$65.00 per hour. He also plans to complete the final certification exam before the end of 2020.

WIOA ADULT WORKER | [Meet Donald](#)

Donald meets his short-term employment goal with the Health Department as a Contact Tracer.

Donald worked with Andrea Fuhrman at the Career Center Hunt Valley and was enrolled in the WIOA program for about a year. Donald had a background as an entrepreneur and was exploring several personal business projects as well as traditional employment. He was difficult to place because his background as a business owner with specialized technical skills did not always clearly map to traditional position descriptions. COVID-19 also complicated his job search, as he was responsible for children who were learning remotely from home.

Donald responded to a recruitment headed by Special Projects Manager Leah Dahlheimer and was selected to be a Contact Tracer. This position was a lifesaver for Donald, who is now earning \$22.26 for 35 hours of work from home, allowing him to balance his kids' schooling needs with the work. He continues to look for a permanent position in his field, but is so happy that this opportunity came along when it did.

WIOA ADULT WORKER | [Meet Andres](#)

Andres obtains short-term employment as he continues to work on his long-term career goals.

Andres recently moved to the U.S. from Columbia, South America with education and work experience as an Environmental Health Engineer. He came to the Career Center Hunt Valley for employment assistance and worked closely with two Career Consultants. They assisted him in applying for and earning his Professional Environmental Health Specialist registration with the State of Maryland, an important credential required to qualify for jobs in his field. Andres also worked with American Job Center (AJC) staff on his résumé, interviewing skills, and job search strategies.

Andres responded to the recruitment for the Baltimore County Department of Health Contact Tracer position and started in that role in August of 2020. Although the Contact Tracer position is temporary, it is allowing Andres to establish an employment record in the U.S. and will help him bring his wife through the complex U.S. immigration process to join him.

Recently Andres interviewed for an Environmental Health Specialist position with Baltimore County that would further stabilize his situation and launch him on his career track in the U.S. No matter the outcome of this interview, Andres worked very hard to prepare his résumé and strengthen his interviewing skills. His efforts will continue to increase his chances for success.

WIOA ADULT/DISLOCATED WORKER/REENTRY/REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIP | [Meet Andre](#)

A returning citizen, Andre gets employment through registered apprenticeship and the Howard County Office of Workforce Development.

Seeking help with finding self-sustaining employment, Andre was a returning citizen who came to the Howard County Office of Workforce Development shortly after his release. Andre had previous experience as a Warehouse Assistant but struggled to find an employer willing to hire him due to his criminal background.

While still incarcerated, Andre had attended a presentation on job seeker services that Howard County staff deliver on a monthly basis. He learned about registered apprenticeship opportunities during the presentation and decided this was a good career path for him. He was accepted into an HVAC apprenticeship with Office of Workforce Development's partner Howard Community College. WIOA funding paid for the apprenticeship's required Related Instruction.

Andre was two months into his classroom training when he was offered employment with Environmental Systems Associates. Andre is now in his second year of the HVAC apprenticeship and he is still employed.

WIOA ADULT/DISLOCATED WORKER/REENTRY | [Meet Walter](#)

Returning citizen Walter benefits from the efforts of many workforce partners.

Walter was among many American Job Center (AJC) customers who face multiple barriers to employment. In Walter's case, his successful reentry was complicated by the fact that he was a returning citizen who was also recovering from a drug addiction. He was referred to the Howard House residential recovery program just as the COVID-19 pandemic began. To facilitate Walter's recovery and help him remain compliant with his parole, Howard House staff referred him to the Howard County AJC for jobseeker services. The AJC began by working with Walter to understand his challenges, which included the



fact that he had been incarcerated for five years, had lost all of his personal identification, and was required to attend several meetings a day as part of his recovery process.

Walter was determined to get his life back on track despite these challenges. He worked with a team of workforce partners who collaborated to provide him with one-on-one and group life and job search skills training. He was also able to access WIOA funding to support Commercial Driver's License (CDL) driver training.

These supports have helped Walter find a position that allows him to be compliant with his parole and recovery requirements. The CDL training will help him find employment that pays the livable wage he needs to be independent and sustain a good life. Walter now has the same tools that any citizen needs to be successful.

BUSINESS SERVICES | *Meet Carrie*

Columbia Workforce Center helps Applied Physics Lab (APL) get the candidates it needs. APL Human Resource Specialist Carrie was looking for new ways to find qualified candidates to fill her organization's open positions during the pandemic. She was eager to participate when she learned that Howard County's Columbia Workforce Center would be hosting a virtual employment information session. Joining a variety of area businesses for the event, Carrie shared information on APL's current job openings. She even invited other APL staff to answer specific questions from jobseekers regarding benefits.

The virtual employment information session afforded APL the opportunity to connect with 86 jobseekers in a safe environment in the midst of the pandemic. The company was able to improve recruitment efficiency and add to its candidate pipeline.

WIOA ADULT/DISLOCATED WORKER | *Meet Robinette*

Robinette gets the training and supportive services she needs to be competitive in the job market.

In her late twenties, Robinette and her husband were among the many employment casualties of the COVID-19 crisis. She was laid off from a job working at Food Lion where she earned \$11.00 per hour with no benefits. Her husband worked as a dishwasher and was also unemployed due to the pandemic. Robinette enrolled in WIOA and was approved to receive funding assistance to train as a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA), only to discover a new challenge: all classes were now being offered virtually and her family did not own a personal computer.

The non-profit Bridges to Housing organization with whom Robinette was working to address her housing needs collaborated with Howard County's Office of Workforce Development and Howard Community College to help Robinette procure a PC and Internet service. She also received a cell phone and a new email address to function as a distance-learning student.

Robinette is now a licensed CNA and has additionally earned a certificate in Advanced Patient Care. Her newly acquired credentials will allow her to compete in the labor market. Her future goal is to become a Licensed Practical Nurse.

YOUTH SERVICES | *Meet Brandon*

Brandon faces many challenges but ultimately secures permanent, full-time employment.

Brandon was a participant in the Howard County 2019 Summer Youth Employment Program (HCSYEP). While he was participating in the program, his living situation became unstable. Once the HCSYEP ended, Brandon transitioned into the year round youth program, where he obtained work experience at Howard County's Office of Workforce Development and continued to develop his workforce skills. Unfortunately, Brandon found himself homeless during this time in the midst of the pandemic.

The Howard County Office of Workforce Development Youth staff, along with other community partners, stepped in to connect Brandon with shelter and temporary housing, but because the Office of Workforce Development moved to telework, his job ended. He used the money he had earned and saved during his work experience to sustain himself until he was able to secure new employment with a staffing company.

Brandon leveraged his accumulated savings, the skills he acquired through his work experience, and the support of community partners to secure permanent housing and find gainful employment that paid a livable wage.

BUSINESS SERVICES | *U.S. Census Bureau*

U.S. Census Bureau recruits needed workers despite pandemic.

Already the largest employer in Prince George's County, Maryland, the U.S. Census Bureau faced the unprecedented challenge of recruiting 200 candidates to fill 100 Field Representative positions for the 2020 Census – during a pandemic. The organization's internal recruiting efforts had not produced the an adequate candidate pool needed, so they approached Employ Prince George's (EPG), the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Title I service provider for Prince George's County.

EPG provided the Census Bureau with technical assistance to maximize the capabilities of a virtual platform and helped them conduct two successful virtual hiring events, which attracted over 150 interested jobseekers over a two-week period.

Census Bureau Representative Vonda James praised EPG's services, saying: *“EPG has done a tremendous job with marketing and advertising the Census Bureau Virtual Job Fair. Over 150 job seekers registered for the event and because of the turnout, Vonda insists that EPG (Business Services Department) help her market future virtual job fairs for the Census Bureau on our EPG platforms.”*

WIOA ADULT/DISLOCATED WORKER | *Meet Jasmine*

Jasmine finds a wide range of services at her local American Job Center.

Jasmine was a single parent and full-time student in the process of registering for classes at the Prince George's Community College (PGCC) when the program director with whom she was working mentioned that there might be a program available to assist with her tuition costs. The program director referred Jasmine to the Employ Prince George's (EPG) program. Excited at the prospect of new support, Jasmine entered an EPG American Job Center with hopes of finding some financial help for her education, but was surprised at the scope and breadth of the services she received: *“My experience with the EPG was nothing short of amazing! After submitting the paperwork, I was promptly contacted by EPG staff. I thought that I was just going to receive payment for my class and that was it, but I received so much more! EPG paid for my class, books, uniform and license payment. And not only did I receive financial assistance, I received employment support! I received assistance with my résumé which needed a total revamp, as I am changing my career field. I also received job leads! Last, but not least, I received support from my Career Specialist. I always knew that I had someone in my corner when I needed assistance with anything! I am forever grateful to the EPG staff for all of the help and guidance they gave me. I feel that I am more than prepared to enter my new career field!”*

WIOA ADULT/DISLOCATED WORKER | *Meet Precious*

Precious moves from poverty and homelessness to a good job and plans to buy a home.

After Precious lost her job due to organizational restructuring, she worked in a series of low-paying contractual positions and part-time jobs that did not pay enough to cover her rent. Precious found herself living in a transitional home in Bowie, working part-time as a Human Resources Manager, and barely making enough to pay for food and transportation. Precious was determined to improve her life, but she knew she needed help. She worked with Employ Prince George's (EPG) Career Consultant Camille Dixon to explore options and resources. Confident that enhancing her credentials with a certificate in Human Resources Management would increase her demand with hiring managers, Precious enrolled in related training. She continued to meet with Ms. Dixon, who offered her encouragement and guidance and helped her access the services and resources she needed to stabilize her life. EPG Workforce Development Instructor Jasmine Owens also worked closely with Precious to develop a professional résumé.

Renewed confidence, valuable occupational training, and a new résumé paved the way for Precious to start getting interviews. She was offered a Human Resources position at one of the top hospitals in the Baltimore region. Her improved economic situation has allowed her to move into better housing and she is even preparing for homeownership.

"My life was on complete edge and Ms. Camille went quickly to help stabilize my situation. She connected me with many resources and she also gave me positive feedback and many pep talks. Jasmine was so professional. She heard me out and provided me with positive feedback and resources, too. Both professionals helped to boost my confidence during this extremely stressful time in my life. They did not judge me, nor did they make me feel bad. They showed genuine support for my career and well-being. I'm so grateful for the role they both played in helping me save my confidence and my career." – Precious

BUSINESS SERVICES | [Meet Ebed Community Improvement Inc.](#)

Business Services staff help Ebed recruit qualified individuals despite pandemic-related restrictions.

By July of 2020, mandatory statewide shutdowns and social distancing requirements introduced to slow the spread of the coronavirus resulted in many Maryland companies reducing their staff levels, driving an upswing in Prince George's County's unemployment rate to 10.1%. But even as some companies were drawing down their workforce, other area employers were struggling to find effective recruitment strategies that observed social distance restrictions. Ebed Community Improvement Inc. was one of several local employers that reached out to Employ Prince George's (EPG's), the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Title I provider for Prince George's County, in search of help sourcing talent for immediate openings.

EPG's Business Services Department collaborated with Ebed staff to design a customized plan to meet Ebed's recruiting needs while also observing safety protocols. By understanding Ebed's hiring needs and staffing challenges, EPG was able to plan and execute a virtual recruitment process and hiring event.

The successful plan drew multiple résumés, which EPG screened based on Ebed's needs and qualifications, yielding 10 qualified candidates. Ebed was very pleased with the candidate pool and ultimately selected three for follow-up and second interviews.

"On behalf of Ebed and myself, I would like to thank Employ Prince George's and the American Job Center! They have been an amazing resource and support with our recruiting needs. Ebed has been in a partnership with [the EPG] American Job Center for about a year, and they continue to come up with creative ways to assist us with recruiting by using different types of job fairs and finding innovative ways to advertise, with no cost to our nonprofit company. Being in partnership with EPG is one of the best decisions we ever made, and we look forward to a continuing relationship. We appreciate all that you do." – Ebed Community Improvement Inc. staff member

4.m Any challenges the state workforce system faces, which may include policy, implementation, or other relevant challenge.

Maryland faces challenges in 2021 with the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Governor Larry Hogan acted early and aggressively to address coronavirus as it gained a footprint in Maryland, declaring a state of emergency on March 5, 2020. As the crisis evolved, the Governor issued a series of Executive Orders aimed at encouraging social distancing to further slow the spread of disease. An Executive Order issued March 23, 2020 closed all non-essential businesses in the State, and a "Stay-at-Home" directive followed on March 30, 2020. In 2021, the State worked efficiently to vaccinate eligible populations and

many workforce activities are now operating normally or in a hybrid model. As of October 15, 2021, 84.9% of Marylanders 18 and older have received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine.

The pandemic has had a substantial impact upon Maryland's economy, with over one million new UI claims since March 1, 2020. The significant impacts of COVID-19 and associated disruptions of service prompted MD Labor to issue a policy on *COVID-19 flexibility guidelines* for Maryland's workforce system, including extensions, exemptions, etc. to certain requirements of workforce development and adult education programming. The Department re-issued the policy in June 2021 to account for reopening and shifting federal guidance.

As operations continue to normalize, Maryland faces the challenge of trying to meet the employment needs of local businesses. Like many other states, there is a shortage of skilled workers due to recent retirements or resignations, health concerns, or lack of childcare. A local economist recently characterized the shortages to the Governor's Workforce Development Board by saying money may no longer be the most important thing to Marylanders. The Department will continue to work to connect jobseekers to employment opportunities and support businesses in recruiting and retaining the talent they require to remain competitive in the marketplace.

4.n Any strategies/policies relating to Pay-for-Performance contracting, which may include examples from local areas.

N/A