



Program Years 2025-2028

# LOCAL PLAN

## WORKFORCE INNOVATION AND OPPORTUNITY ACT

For questions, please contact:  
Heather Henry, President/Executive Director  
Workforce Development Board of Solano County  
707-863-3501 or [hhenry@solanowdb.org](mailto:hhenry@solanowdb.org)



**WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD**  
OF SOLANO COUNTY

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## Local Overview

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Solano’s vision for the future of workforce development over the next four program years (Program Year 2025 – 2028) is focused on supporting the community in adapting to today’s changing workforce landscape, while connecting to the vision and objectives outlined in the California Unified Strategic Workforce Plan and the North Bay Regional Workforce Plan. The Workforce Development Board (WDB) of Solano County seeks to proactively prepare job seekers, workers, businesses, and the workforce ecosystem for a changing training and economic landscape.

### A Changing Landscape

#### *Workforce Development Landscape*

Research conducted on the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) system showed that the intensive career counseling services for those seeking training provided substantial benefits in terms of labor market success to participants in the WIOA adult programs.<sup>1</sup> Additional research has shown the importance of providing WIOA participants “skills of value on the job” in addition to job search assistance programs for long-term labor market success. With today’s quickly evolving technology and landscape, the WDB and the local workforce ecosystem will need to continuously iterate and reevaluate the skills and supports needed to succeed in today’s economy.

Recent research on workforce development programs for low-income individuals shows that programs typically helped individuals into work, but did not significantly affect wage rates or long-term earnings; industry-based training (or sectoral training programs) were the exception.<sup>2</sup> These programs are based in employer relationships, seek to improve the economic mobility of participants, and provide wrap-around supports to aid in successful completion. This evidence-based workforce training practice leads to increased earnings for participants and maintained increases over time.

Through American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding invested in workforce development and training through the Solano County Board of Supervisors, the WDB and its partners have been piloting industry-based job training initiatives that cater to real-time industry needs and have provided short-term training leading to economic mobility of participants. These efforts align with the changing labor market and quickly evolving skill needs that are becoming less reliant on college degrees and more focused on skills attainment.

WDB business services and partners are seeing these trends in Solano’s business community. Employers are considering skills attained through routes other than college degrees, and businesses are increasingly needing candidates to have skills that the traditional educational systems do not teach.

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<sup>1</sup> “Government-Supported Job Training in the US: The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Moving Forward,” P. Mueser and K. Troske, [What’s Working? Perspectives on Key Issues in Workforce Development Programs and Practices](#), American Enterprise Institute, October 2024.

<sup>2</sup> “Scaling the Impact of Sector-Based Employment Strategies,” R. Hendra, et al., [What’s Working? Perspectives on Key Issues in Workforce Development Programs and Practices](#), American Enterprise Institute, October 2024.

Another evolution in workforce development trends is to uplift the local ecosystem of small and moderate-sized nonprofit partners. This helps to create a coordinated and aligned workforce ecosystem, ensuring all Solano residents have access to the training and employment opportunities within the region.

### *Evolving Training Landscape*

The region and nation are witnessing changing perspectives on post-secondary education. Post-secondary enrollments are down, leading to financial impacts on colleges and universities. The rising cost of universities and colleges is leading younger generations to question the return on investment of a college degree, and employers are also increasingly seeing practical skills gaps within recent college graduates. One local example is the concern biotech employers have expressed regarding the number of university graduates who have not been exposed to wet labs in college.

A recent study conducted by the National Skills Coalition found that adults predominantly engage in training through non-degree and credential programs, with the goal of building a better life for themselves and their families. However, adult students often believe that college is “not set up with their lives in mind,” which leads to a lack of training completion.<sup>3</sup> Data analysis of community college certificate students reveals that students are predominantly over 25 years of age, significantly more likely to be parents and living with low incomes, tend to have full-time jobs, and are predominantly first-generation college students. This data highlights the need for the workforce and community college systems to partner more effectively to holistically support the needs of adult learners.

Another evolution in Solano’s training landscape will come from the impacts of California’s upcoming [Master Plan for Career Education](#). This effort, led by the Governor’s Office, intends to modernize California’s master education plan and refocus the educational system to better prepare all learners for the workforce of tomorrow. The Plan is intended to guide the alignment of K-12, university and college, and workforce training systems. The Plan’s objectives include strengthening career pathways, prioritizing hands-on learning and real-life skills, and advancing access and affordability through streamlined collaboration among partners. The plan recognizes that degree attainment cannot be the only pathway to stable, well-paid work, and that other alternatives need to be developed for students across the systems.

### *Evolving Employment Perspectives*

The effects of COVID-19 and the economic downturn created long-term changes in worker perspectives on employment. Many workers engaged in low-wage work had to weigh complex choices around employment during the pandemic, and not all workers benefited equally from the resulting tight labor market post-pandemic.<sup>4</sup> In addition, many workers have faced heavy workloads and increased burnout in recent years. As such, workers have been shifting their expectations of jobs and taking steps to actively reinvent themselves for better future opportunities. All of these factors and the continued societal changes have led to increased mental stress as well. Three-quarters (75%) of workers experienced at least one mental health challenge in 2024, which elevates the importance of expanding mental health resources. Research suggests that workers in low-wage roles are increasingly seeing job quality attributes as a minimum expectation, whereas previously they were aspirational goals. Focus group participants, for

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<sup>3</sup> [“What Students Want: Students’ Experiences and the Implications of Enhanced Holistic Support for Non-Degree Pathways,”](#) L. Cruse and K. Michaels, National Skills Coalition, December 2024.

<sup>4</sup> [“Worker Voices: Shifting Perspectives and Expectations on Employment,”](#) FedCommunities, May 2023.



example, “highlighted how critical elements of feeling respected, having agency to determine work boundaries, or flexibility to achieve a greater work-life balance are all aspects of work that now have a higher premium to these workers than in the pre-pandemic labor market.”<sup>5</sup>

### Key Workforce Strategies

Through landscape review, stakeholder engagement sessions, individual partner and business discussions, and engagement with board members and staff, the WDB has identified five (5) strategies that should guide workforce development efforts over the next four years. These five strategies are embedded within Solano’s Local Workforce Development Plan.

#### 1. *Support the changing landscape of occupational training through partnerships and development of alternative skill-building routes.*

Given today’s changing training landscape, the WDB and partners aim to work with local providers over the next four program years to better align Solano’s workforce training options with the needs of businesses and students. By strengthening partnerships with education and training providers, the workforce system will be able to expand training opportunities for Solano residents and promote alternative skill-building routes. These alternative skill building routes could include apprenticeships, sector strategy cohorts, micro-credentials, certification programs, digital badges, bridge programs, and other alternative training models, particularly for underrepresented populations such as foreign-born individuals and non-traditional students.

*“Our community’s training providers provide the nutrients of the soil that will help the seeds of our community grow.”*

*- Board Member*

Stakeholders and literature review highlight the need to better align local occupational training options with real workforce needs of local and regional businesses, and expand connections between industry employers and training providers. These efforts will require changes to WIOA’s official local training list, as well as deepen partnerships with training providers to codesign new opportunities. As one board

member stated, the WDB and its training partners will need to ensure that they are providing the right nutrients in the soil to help the seeds of our community (youth and workers) to grow.

#### Strategies include:

- Expanding training course options on the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL)
- Considering the real-life needs of students, workers, and businesses in training logistics and wrap-around supports
- Ensuring WIOA-funded training opportunities are available that meet industry trends and labor market demands
- Promoting the building of skills through alternative routes
- Deepening partnerships with local training providers

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

*2. Evolve career services to meet the workforce resilience, technological adaptation, and mental wellness needs of job seekers and workers.*

Over the next four program years, the WDB seeks to enhance career services to help job seekers and workers build resilience, adapt to technology, and access mental wellness support. Key initiatives include removing employment barriers, integrating AI-driven and digital tools, and providing targeted career coaching.

As one youth stakeholder stated, “Every kid I know has some level of anxiety.” To address this need, the WDB will explore ways to support mental health through stress management resources, connections to new partners, and other approaches, especially when serving young adults. Data-driven career guidance will continue to be a strategy to ensure job seekers receive relevant employment support and understand the career pathways available to them. By evolving career services, the WDB and workforce system will be able to foster a more adaptable, resilient, and future-ready workforce.

**Strategies include:**

- Addressing participants’ stacked barriers through supportive services and partnerships
- Exploring workshops and resources to help job seekers and workers adapt to industry changes and economic shifts
- Integrating technology into career services, where possible
- Incorporating mental health resources, stress management workshops, and access to counseling into career services
- Building participant and community awareness of local career pathways

*3. Collaborate with local school systems to expand career exploration and experiential learning opportunities for the emerging workforce.*

The WDB plans to collaborate with local schools to expand career exploration and experiential learning opportunities for the emerging workforce. Efforts will focus on increasing youth exposure to career options, strengthening industry-school partnerships, and leveraging technology, such as virtual reality and AI-driven career assessments.

The WDB also intends to provide more support for hands-on learning through internships, apprenticeships, job shadowing, career fairs, and field trips, ensuring students gain real-world experience. By fostering career awareness and practical learning across Solano’s young adults, the WDB can help build a strong talent pipeline for the future workforce.

**Strategies include:**

- Expanding youth exposure to regional career options
- Helping to strengthen industry-school partnerships
- Leveraging technology for career awareness
- Supporting development of experiential learning programs in the school systems
- Hosting youth work experience programs that expose youth to priority industries

*4. Build opportunities for local employers to increase work-based training and improve retention strategies.*

The WDB and partners will prioritize expanding employer-based training opportunities for businesses to coinvest in employee skill building, thereby improving retention and creating economic mobility pathways for workers. Key strategies will include increasing use of apprenticeship programs, supporting employee upskilling, and collaborating with businesses on employee retention strategies.

**Strategies include:**

- Increasing employer participation in registered apprenticeship programs across high-demand sectors
- Enhancing incumbent worker training
- Addressing business learning needs, such as legal and HR compliance
- Collaborating with businesses to create career pathway models
- Utilizing the job quality benchmarking index
- Piloting an Employer Resource Network to improve employee retention

*5. Strengthen partner awareness of labor market trends and available participant resources in the community.*

The WDB and the America's Job Center of California (AJCC) system aims to strengthen partner awareness of labor market trends and available community resources. To achieve this goal, key efforts will include increased sharing of industry and wage growth data, developing or supporting a centralized resource hub for workforce-related services, and improving referral networks among partners.

The AJCC system will also enhance outreach through targeted communication strategies, cross-training, and better promotion of partner services. Special focus will be placed on improving coordinated supports for seniors, individuals with disabilities, and Spanish-speaking populations. By fostering collaboration and data-driven decision-making across partners, the WDB ensures the entire workforce system can better serve job seekers and employers.

**Strategies include:**

- Disseminating industry and demographic data to partners
- Developing an approach to compiling community resources to be shared with partners
- Improving outreach and communication with partners
- Exploring creation of a workgroup for service providers who offer services in Spanish



## Connection to California Unified Strategic Workforce Development Plan

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Solano shares California's commitment to developing a workforce system that enables economic growth and shared prosperity for employers and employees by investing in industry strategies, job quality, and meaningful skills attainment. Solano's local workforce plan seeks to develop and advance the state's policy objectives as follows:

### Fostering Demand-Driven Skills Attainment

California's Unified State Workforce Plan envisions more closely aligning workforce and education programs with local in-demand occupations and priority sectors. In recent years, the WDB has been evaluating its local WIOA-eligible training options, and has identified gaps in training opportunities accessible to WIOA participants. Therefore, to increase access to career pathways that are aligned with regional workforce needs, significant effort needs to be made in expanding the training programs eligible for WIOA funding. In addition, the WDB plans to partner more closely with Solano's K-12 systems, community college, and adult schools to expand and align the area's career pathway opportunities.

As seen in the *Connection to North Bay Regional Workforce Plan* section, the WDB will focus partnership energies with economic development, training, and labor into strengthening training and workforce programs in priority sectors. Career service strategies to foster demand-driven skills attainment are outlined in the *Career Services* section of the plan.

### Enabling Upward Mobility for all Californians

#### *High-Road Workforce System*

California outlines its high-road workforce system vision as one focused on equitable jobs, a carbon-neutral environment, and meaningful engagement that places Californians in quality jobs with economic security. The Solano WDB has prioritized job quality initiatives, beginning with codeveloping North Bay's [Job Quality Framework](#) that outlines five elements of quality jobs for the North Bay workforce region. The WDB began a partnership in January 2025 with Jewish Vocational Services (JVS) Boston to offer a Job Quality Benchmarking Tool for Solano businesses. This tool will allow local businesses to measure their job quality against a Solano County occupational benchmark. Through the use of this tool, the WDB will be able to provide education and resources for businesses to enhance their job quality standards.

The WDB also envisions expanding the use of incumbent worker training to coinvest with businesses in upskilling their current employee base. The WDB also commits to expanding local apprenticeship options that lead to quality jobs with economic security. These investments will support the High Road workforce goals of upskilling, developing skill standards, building apprenticeships and career pathways, and supporting ongoing training and employee development.

#### *Climate and Environmental Sustainability*

The state plan outlines California's vision for protecting the environment, especially against climate change, and the understanding that low-income communities and communities of color can be disproportionately impacted by climate change. In addition, Solano supports the development of the North Bay's emerging industry focus on climate sustainability.

The WDB has partnered with the Solano County's Board of Supervisors to invest American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds into development of a summer youth climate-focused work experience program. After

being piloted for two years with ARPA funds, the WDB will be moving the program under WIOA Youth funding in the summer of 2025. Staff will continue to build an understanding of the climate change impacts Solano may face and how that will affect industry sectors and new skill demands locally.

### *Equity and Economic Justice*

California's Unified State Workforce Plan outlines the vision for the state's workforce system to ensure the provision of workforce and training services for historically unserved or underserved communities who experience systemic barriers in the labor force. The Solano Local Workforce Plan highlights planned efforts to invest in long-term approaches to serving individuals who experience systemic barriers, and in implementation of career pathways programs, to ensure access to good jobs for all Solano residents.

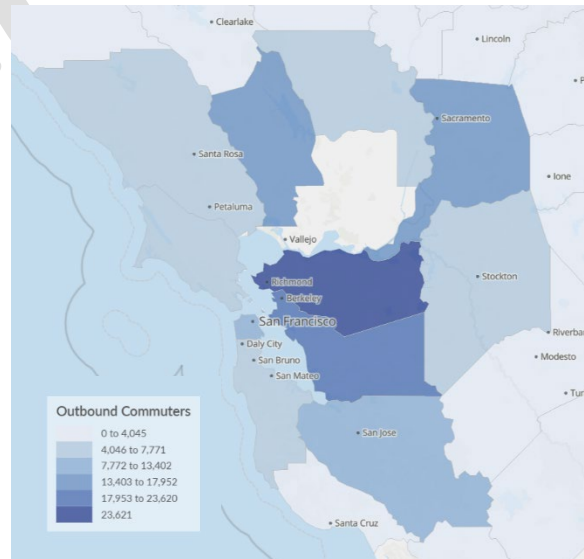
## Connection to North Bay Regional Workforce Plan

The North Bay Regional Planning Unit is comprised of the Sonoma Workforce Investment Board, the Workforce Alliance of the North Bay (comprising Lake, Marin, Mendocino, and Napa Counties), and the Workforce Development Board of Solano County.

As identified in the North Bay Regional Workforce Plan, Solano County has a median income of \$100,027 and a poverty rate of 10.4%, the highest rate in the region except for Lake County. Solano County continues to have the highest unemployment rate in the North Bay region, with 10,700 individuals unemployed in November 2024. Solano's unemployment rate equaled California's at 5.3%, second only in the region to Lake County at 6.2%.

Solano County has the third highest proportion of individuals who identify as Hispanic or Latino at 28%, following Napa and Sonoma Counties. Compared to other North Bay counties, Solano has the lowest percentage of white individuals at 39% and also has the greatest population of Asian (16%) and Black/African American (14%) individuals.<sup>6</sup> These data points continue to highlight that Solano's community is one of the most diverse communities in the country.

Solano County's highest percentage of educational attainment is High School Graduation or Equivalent at 25.7%, followed by 24.4% with Some College, and 19.4% with a Bachelor's Degree. Solano County has the highest rate of individuals with an Associate's Degree in the North Bay region at 10.5%. Following Napa County, Solano County has the greatest proportion of individuals (11.8%) who speak English less than "very well" in the North Bay region. Solano County leads the North Bay area region with the highest proportion of individuals who speak languages other than Spanish or English. In 2023, there were 130,000 individuals



<sup>6</sup> North Bay Regional Workforce Plan

in Solano County who spoke languages other than English. These population characteristics help inform service delivery analysis.

Solano also continues to have the highest commuter rate in the North Bay region, with 31.4% of Solano residents commuting out of the county for work. This is less than pre-COVID rates, however. Contra Costa continues to be the largest work destination for Solano County residents, with 12.5% of Solano's commuters.

These data points outlined in the regional workforce plan show the unique considerations and attributes of Solano's community in the region. Solano has a more diverse and more vulnerable population of workers than most of the north bay area, and as such, targeted, industry-driven workforce and training programs are needed to help build economic and career pathways for Solano's residents.

### Priority Sectors

The North Bay workforce region identified its priority sectors as (1) Healthcare and Social Assistance, (2) Manufacturing, (3) Public Sector, and (4) Transportation and Logistics. These priority industries were identified based on volume of jobs, industry growth, and accessibility of pathways to living wage jobs.

The WDB will partner with the other workforce boards in the region through regional industry sector partnerships and career pathway initiatives. These projects, developed regionally and implemented locally, are prioritized for their potential to lead to quality jobs and career ladders that allow for progression to greater economic security.



Healthcare and  
Social Assistance



Manufacturing



Public Sector



Transportation and  
Logistics

#### *Healthcare and Social Assistance*

Healthcare and Social Assistance is Solano's largest industry, providing an estimated 29,250 jobs and average annual earnings of \$93,438. Solano County's healthcare sector has the highest growth rate expected of all industries in the county, which allows opportunities for quality jobs in the county. The largest number of healthcare jobs are in Fairfield, followed by Vallejo. Lightcast data shows that Solano County has two times the racial diversity of employees in healthcare as the national average, and slightly less gender diversity than the national average.

Many of the high-paying jobs can be found in Solano's robust hospital systems through Kaiser Permanente, NorthBay Healthcare, and Sutter Health. Solano's local non-profit and government healthcare clinics, however, have struggled to find and retain talent due to the competitive wages of the area's large healthcare providers. The top 5 skills sought in job postings as of January 2025 were (1) nursing, (2) clinical nursing, (3) obstetrics and gynecology, (4) medical equipment sterilization, and (5) medical ultrasonography.

There is a significant wage disparity between occupational groups in Solano's healthcare occupations. One-third of the industry's jobs are in Healthcare Support Occupations (36.4%), followed by Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations (29.2%), with the remaining third of jobs being in administrative or community service occupations. Over 10,000 workers are employed in Solano's healthcare support

occupations; the occupational group is seeing a 15% growth in jobs, but has median hourly earnings of \$16.72. Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations are also seeing growth, and have median hourly earnings of \$62.36. Therefore, there is a significant opportunity in Solano County to help build bridges into healthcare practitioner roles as career pathway opportunities for healthcare support workers.

The WDB and its partners have already begun to drive initiatives and investments in building economic mobility pathways in this industry. The WDB worked with Paradise Valley Estates on the Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) Upskilling Program to pilot microcredentials tied to wage increases within the CNA occupation. Other promising local healthcare initiatives include Touro University's Health Careers Opportunity Program (HCOP) to support local high school and college students from educationally and economically disadvantaged backgrounds to pursue graduate level healthcare careers, such as doctors and pharmacists. Vallejo High School's Health Careers Pathway brings together Career and Technical Education (CTE) high school courses, workforce preparation initiatives, and local partners to support students interested in healthcare careers. The WDB is also working with Solano Community College to build wrap-around certification and licensure assistance for nursing and Emergency and Medical Technician (EMT) students to support attainment of certification requirements for employment.

Stakeholders shared insights on the healthcare industry from multiple perspectives – employer, training provider, worker – that highlight the need for more targeted workforce development initiatives in the industry. The WDB will partner with local training providers and educational systems to help build career pathways and training opportunities in the healthcare sector, and will also explore incumbent worker training opportunities to aid economic mobility in the sector.

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*"Finding and funding opportunities for healthcare training shouldn't be this hard in an industry so important."*  
- Board member

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### *Manufacturing*

Manufacturing is an economic driver in Solano County. At \$3.7 billion Gross Regional Product (GRP), the highest private sector industry in the region, manufacturing provides growing opportunities for quality jobs with average earnings of \$105,309. Vacaville leads the county with the highest volume of manufacturing jobs at 3,229, followed by Fairfield and Benicia.

Two major manufacturing subsets exist in Solano: advanced manufacturing and food and beverage manufacturing. Biomanufacturing has been a growing industry in the City of Vacaville, with anchors such as incoming Lonza. The Food and Beverage Chain is unique to Solano due to the rural-urban mix of the county; the county can support the complete agricultural supply chain through manufacturing and distribution with key employers such as Anheuser-Busch and Jelly Belly Candy.

Over the past year, the WDB has been partnering with Solano Community College to further develop manufacturing career pathways in the county, and will explore manufacturing skills training and certifications, such as Programmable Logic Control (PLC) and Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP). In addition, the WDB will support local economic development efforts by Solano Economic Development Corporation (EDC), and city economic departments on their business growth plans for manufacturing.

### *Public Sector*

The public sector industry is a new priority industry for the North Bay region as government continues to provide stable employment and quality jobs, and is a sector with high recruitment needs. During the next

four years, the WDB will explore partnerships with local county and city governments to ascertain employment needs and opportunities for partnership. One possibility is building upon growing initiatives across the state to launch public sector apprenticeship programs, especially in areas of high vacancy rates like IT and accounting.

### *Transportation*

Transportation and Logistics continues to be a key industry in Solano County. Solano is perfectly positioned for goods movement with six (6) highway corridors, including I-80, and access to regional ports. Napa Valley and surrounding farmlands create a heavy demand for food and beverage transport. Vallejo and Benicia also have opportunities in the marine trade. Transportation and material moving occupations continue to dominate the industry, comprising 72.3% of the industry's jobs in the county. There are 108 transportation and logistics businesses in the county with 6,691 jobs at average earnings of \$74,889. Drivers with a Certified Driver's License A (CDL) are heavily sought after by local businesses with the highest postings in the industry, followed by forklift operators. The WDB has had success in training individuals for CDL licensure and placing individuals in training-related employment; the WDB will continue to invest training and employment resources in this local in-demand industry.

### *Emerging Industries*

The WDB is highly engaged in developing both of the region's priority emerging sectors: (1) Climate and Sustainability, and (2) Life Sciences and Biotechnology.

Through the Solano County's Board of Supervisors' ARPA investment, the WDB has been able to pilot several initiatives to prepare Solano residents for these emerging industries. The WDB has worked with Solano Land Trust, Solano County Office of Education, and other partners to develop a youth climate careers ready summer youth work experience program. In addition, the WDB has been strengthening its partnership with Solano Farm Bureau and is exploring agricultural-related career awareness and training opportunities.

The WDB collaborated with partners to pilot a new research associate training, develop adult school bridge programming, and pilot certification support for community college students in the bioeconomy sector. It has also increased partnerships with Solano Community College's Biomanufacturing Program and UC Davis to strengthen the workforce development infrastructure for this growing industry. These initiatives will continue and be expanded in the next four years.

In addition, as part of the Jobs for the Future Workforce Communities of Action cohort, the WDB developed the [\*Bioeconomy in Solano County\*](#) report with Solano Community College, Solano Economic Development Corporation, and the City of Vacaville that provides an action plan for strengthening the bioeconomy talent infrastructure. The WDB has used ARPA funding to raise awareness of bioeconomy careers, building on the strategic report. These activities include career mapping, development of a biotech careers website for Solano, holding a Bio Awareness event for young adults in Vallejo, providing a pilot Hackathon experience to introduce residents to biocareers, and more.



### Priority Occupational Groups

Below is a listing of top occupational groups across Solano County's industries by volume of jobs, change in jobs between 2019-2024, job postings in the past six months, and median hourly earnings.

| Occupation                           | 2024 Jobs | Change in Jobs | Job Postings (Aug 24-Jan 25) | Median Hourly Earnings |
|--------------------------------------|-----------|----------------|------------------------------|------------------------|
| Healthcare Support                   | 11,905    | 13%            | 898                          | \$16.72                |
| Healthcare Practitioners             | 10,964    | 5%             | 3,754                        | \$62.36                |
| Food Preparation and Serving Related | 14,545    | -2%            | 871                          | \$17.59                |
| Transportation and Material Moving   | 14,867    | 9%             | 1,066                        | \$20.73                |
| Office and Administrative Support    | 15,786    | -6%            | 1,433                        | \$24.66                |
| Sales and Related Occupations        | 13,909    | -16%           | 1,948                        | \$18.52                |
| Construction and Extraction          | 10,077    | -5%            | 275                          | \$32.33                |
| Management                           | 10,260    | 13%            | 1,548                        | \$53.20                |
| Business and Financial Operations    | 8,005     | 10%            | 816                          | \$40.35                |
| Production                           | 7,563     | -8%            | 597                          | \$22.73                |

Based on industry and occupational analysis, the WDB has identified Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations as a priority occupational group, as well as Transportation and Material Moving. Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations include Registered Nurses, Dental Hygienists, and Clinical Laboratory Technologists. The WDB will also focus on economic mobility strategies for individuals in occupational groups such as Healthcare Support. Healthcare Support Occupations include Home Health and Personal Care Aides (\$15.52 median wage an hour) and Nursing Assistants (\$21.71 median wage an hour).

## Partner Coordination

### AJCC System – WIOA Core and Required Partners

The ultimate vision of the America's Job Centers of California (AJCC) system in Solano is for WIOA-required and community partners to operate as a unified workforce ecosystem in Solano County with aligned service strategies.

The Solano AJCC system includes the following WIOA Core and Required partners, as outlined in federal law and regulations:

| Mandated Partner  | Local Partner Agency   |
|---|--|
| WIOA Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth Programs                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Workforce Development Board (WDB) of Solano County, Inc.</li> <li>- First Place for Youth</li> </ul>  |
| WIOA Title II Adult Education and Literacy  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Benicia Unified School District, Adult Education</li> <li>- Fairfield-Suisun Unified School District, Adult Education</li> <li>- Muzetta Thrower Adult Education Center</li> <li>- Vallejo Regional Education Center</li> </ul> |
| WIOA Title III Wagner-Peyser Programs   | State of California Employment Development Department (EDD) – Workforce Services Division  |
| WIOA Title IV Vocational Rehabilitation Programs                                  | State of California Department of Rehabilitation (DOR), Greater East Bay District  |
| Carl Perkins Career Technical Education (CTE)                                     | Solano County Carl Perkins CTE Consortium  |
| Title V Older Americans Act – Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) | ACC Senior Services Tri-County   |
| Job Corps   | Job Corps (Treasure Island, San Francisco, CA)   |
| Native American Programs (Section 166)  | California Indian Manpower Consortium (CIMC)   |
| Migrant Seasonal Farmworkers (Section 167)  | California Human Development (CHD)   |
| Veterans  | State of California Employment Development Department – Veterans Services  |
| Youth Build   | <i>No Youth Build operator in Solano County</i>  |
| Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) Act   | State of California Employment Development Department – TAA Services   |
| Community Services Block Grant  | CAPSolano JPA  |
| Housing & Urban Development (HUD)   | <i>No HUD-sponsored/funded workforce development program in Solano County</i>  |
| Unemployment Compensation   | State of California Employment Development Department – Unemployment Insurance Division  |
| Second Chance   | <i>No Second Chance program operators in Solano County</i>   |
| Temporary Assistance for Needy Families/CalWORKs                                  | Solano County, Department of Health and Social Services (H&SS)   |

All core and required WIOA partners are included in the AJCC system with services and infrastructure funding commitments identified in the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).

#### *AJCC Memorandum of Understanding*

The current AJCC Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is in effect from July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2025 and will be reviewed and renewed in July 2025 following state guidelines. The current MOU utilizes a two-tier approach, which includes:

An overarching Master MOU which makes the basic commitment of all agencies to support the AJCC and work together. The document is approved and signed off by the WDB's Board of Directors and the Solano County Board of Supervisors. WDB staff are authorized therein to negotiate individual Partner Agency MOUs.

A set of accompanying Partner Agency MOUs memorialize the individual commitment of each agency to the Master MOU concepts and commits to specific, negotiated cost-sharing arrangements.

Under the current MOU, the WDB, the Employment Development Department (EDD), and the Department of Rehabilitation (DOR) are collocated in the comprehensive AJCC located in Vallejo. A full range of services are provided in the AJCCs, as outlined in the MOU:

#### Service provided in AJCC Centers (Fairfield and Vallejo)

1. Basic Career Services
2. Individualized Career Services
3. Follow-up Services
4. Training Services
5. Business Services

#### *Co-Enrollment and Common Case Management*

The WDB has made considerable strides towards effective co-enrollment and common case management strategies over the past four years. The WDB utilizes co-enrollment strategies between WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth Programs as appropriate to leverage the strengths of the adult and youth systems. The WDB utilizes co-enrollment strategies between funding streams to maximize the services and resources of workforce programs for the benefit of the participant.

Plans are currently underway to improve co-enrollment strategies between the core WIOA programs during the next four years. The WDB and Title II Adult Education partners intend to strengthen co-enrollment and collaborate on workforce strategies, and the WDB and DOR are in early discussions to strengthen co-enrollment between Title I and Title IV programs as a recipient of the AJCC-DOR Collaboration grant awarded in 2025.

Community-based partners are an important part of Solano's workforce ecosystem, providing intensive coaching, supportive services, and work readiness skills to all segments of Solano's community. As such, the WDB continues to evolve collaborative case management strategies between WIOA and community workforce providers. The WDB is currently working with Center for Employment Opportunities (CEO) on Prison to Employment initiatives, and with four local workforce providers (Caminar, Center for Urban Excellence, Mission Samoa, and the Uncuffed Project) on the Helping Justice-Involved Reenter

Employment (HIRE) grant. The WDB will continue to seek opportunities to engage community-based and WIOA required partners in developing workforce solutions.

### *Access to Services*

As outlined in Solano's Key Workforce Strategies, Solano's community and training stakeholders are interested in gaining a better understanding of the labor market trends and available community resources. Partners shared how they have looked to the WDB for industry and occupational data to inform service delivery, and are interested in the demographic and worker analysis the WDB has conducted. As such, the WDB will make efforts to better disseminate industry and demographic data to partners in the community, thereby supporting partners' access to data to drive decision-making. The AJCC system as a whole will work together to enhance outreach through targeted communications strategies across partners.

In addition, the WDB will explore the feasibility of developing a centralized resource hub or Community Asset Map for workforce-related services in the community. The WDB envisions this could be a regularly updated resource guide, or an online map of community resources. The WDB will first identify current efforts in the community to map community assets and develop a vision for the initiative with AJCC partners.

AJCC partners are at varying stages of providing in person, hybrid, and virtual services to participants. In Solano's last planning period, the WDB piloted a number of new virtual service options that will be continued and expanded in the next four years if funding allows. These virtual services allow free access to basic workforce services to the community at large and expand resources across service providers:

- **Career Coach**, a powerful online tool powered by Lightcast, simplifies career exploration by aligning an individual's interests with specific professions, and by providing detailed insights (including local wage data, projected job growth, and required skills) on employment opportunities in Solano County. Additionally, Career Coach helps individuals craft a resume tailored to what employers in the industry are looking for.
- **NorthStar Digital Literacy** is an online tool that provides digital literacy assessments and self-guided learning options. The WDB provides free access to the tool through its website, and is exploring additional uses with Fairfield-Suisun Adult School, who also utilizes the tool.
- The WDB uses **Premier Virtual**, by career.io, as a virtual career fair platform and as a way to host online and hybrid recruitment events. This platform allows businesses and job seekers to connect virtually and share resumes and job descriptions prior to the hiring event to maximize onsite interactions at the event. Businesses may also use the platform for post-event interviews and review resumes. The WDB will explore further uses of this platform in the next four years to include use of their AI interview preparation tool.

Road to Employment is an initiative that seeks to increase the geographic accessibility of WIOA services across Solano County by bringing AJCC services into the community. At the beginning of 2025, the WDB provided Road to Employment services at the following locations:

**Vallejo**

- Springstowne Library
- John F. Kennedy Library
- Vallejo Regional Education Center

**Vacaville**

- Vacaville Town Square
- Muzetta Thrower Adult Education Center

**Fairfield**

- Fairfield-Suisun Adult School

The WDB and its partners will continue to explore ways over the next four years to increase access to AJCC services across the county.

*Supportive Services Delivery*

The AJCC partners will work together, along with community stakeholders, to mitigate barriers to employment and work collectively to address what one stakeholder called “stacked barriers.” Stakeholders identified a number of barriers that kept residents from accessing employment: transportation, computer access, right-to-work documentation, legal resources, impact of felonies, lack of work experience or spotty work history due to substance abuse, low levels of basic reading and math, and mental health and resiliency challenges. The WDB and partners will work to address these stacked barriers through the following interventions:

- **Criminal Records** – The AJCCs will continue to partner with Legal Services of Northern California to host Clean Slate events, as well as support the monthly PACT meetings for individuals on parole. Through grants such as Prison to Employment and Helping Justice-Involved Reenter Employment (HIRE), the WDB is partnering with local organizations serving justice-involved individuals and piloting pre-apprenticeship programs for individuals with criminal records.
- **Digital Access and Literacy** – AJCC partners and local employers have identified digital access and literacy as a barrier for individuals to enter and succeed in the workplace. Fairfield-Suisun and Vallejo Adult Schools will continue to provide basic digital skills training in each AJCC, and partners will provide digital literacy as a key supportive and pre-vocational training service. The WDB also recognizes that the use of AI in the workplace is likely to lead to redesigning job responsibilities in the short term. Therefore, the WDB and partners will continue learning and exploring use of AI in career services.
- **Disabilities** – The WDB and AJCC partners will continue to leverage and collaborate on services such as disability advocacy, benefits counseling, job coaching, and other supportive services provided in the area. A Disability Resource Specialist provides customized services for individuals with a range of different abilities to upskill and reenter the labor market. In addition, the WDB provides benefits counseling for individuals receiving Social Security Income (SSI) and Social Security Disability Income (SSDI). The WDB and DOR are in early partnership discussions to work together more effectively for the benefit of co-enrolled participants.



- **Mental Health** – Mental health and wellness has become a growing concern among partners, not only among youth but also among adult workers. Stakeholders identified a lack of referral entities in the county for mental health services for participants. The WDB and AJCC partners will explore providing services such as stress management workshops and including access to counseling as a WIOA supportive service, as well as seek new partnerships with local mental health resources.

#### *Accommodations and Accessibility Compliance*

The WDB and Solano AJCCs comply with WIOA Section 188 and applicable provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 regarding the physical and programmatic accessibility of facilities, programs and services, technology, and materials for individuals with disabilities. The WDB's *Accommodations and Accessibility Policy* outlines the requirements and guidance for accessibility and the WDB's Equal Opportunity (EO) Officer ensures compliance with WIOA Section 188 and ADA provisions in AJCC and WIOA Career Service delivery.

Solano County's two AJCCs are ADA compliant and equipped with auxiliary aids and accommodations, including a list of currently available assistive technology devices and services within the centers available for individuals with disabilities. Information on accommodations and rights of all individuals, including individuals with disabilities, is included in orientations of WIOA services, and additional services and accommodations for individuals with disabilities are provided as needed. The WDB also ensures that compliance with ADA requirements is included in occupational and work-based training contracts.

Proper signage of ADA compliance is posted in the AJCCs in visible locations. Signage includes "Equal Opportunity is the Law," as well as notice of the availability and right to receive reasonable accommodations. Both AJCC facilities include accessible counters, automatic and power-assisted doors, accessible restrooms, accessible workstations, and wheelchair-accessible paths. WDB staff also conduct monitoring of subrecipients and training providers to ensure all WIOA service locations are ADA compliant.

#### *State Strategic Partner Coordination*

##### *Health and Social Services and CalFresh*

Individuals receiving public assistance are a priority population under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). Of the 323 individuals served by the WDB through WIOA Title I programs (Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth) in FY2023-24, 101 individuals (or 31% of participants) received CalFresh assistance.

Although many CalFresh recipients are currently working, the economic landscape in Solano County creates barriers to attaining livable wage jobs for many in the county. Four of out the top five largest occupations in Solano County have wages below the self-sufficiency standard. This is indicative of the county's economy, which has a significant volume of low-wage / entry-level jobs or highly skilled opportunities that many CalFresh recipients do not typically have the technical skills to qualify for. Therefore, access to technical skills attainment is imperative for our Solano's CalFresh population, coupled with wrap-around support to help recipients address basic needs as they increase their earning potential.

The WDB and Solano County, Department of Health and Social Services (H&SS) have partnered over the past year to improve collaboration through the CalWORKS Outcomes and Accountability Review (CalOAR)

process. The two entities now have a data sharing MOU to share eligibility data about public assistance programs for individuals referred to the WDB from H&SS. The partners have also engaged in a number of cross-training events and partnership discussions to better serve co-enrolled individuals. H&SS CalFresh outreach staff also now provides information and application assistance on a monthly basis at the Vallejo AJCC to support AJCC customers with access to public assistance programs.

#### *Department of Child Support Services*

The Solano County Department of Child Support Services (DCSS) and the WDB have been partnering organically since the fall of 2017. The existing partnership has focused on providing AJCC comprehensive service delivery for noncustodial parents (hitherto referred to as “parents ordered to pay child support”) to facilitate successful labor market outcomes.

The WDB will build upon its current AJCC partnership and work closer with the Child Support/Family Courts to enhance the “seek work” order, where the courts require parents ordered to pay child support who are unemployed to visit the WDB. The partners will explore the creation of additional tools and incentives to better serve Solano’s parents ordered to pay child support.

#### *Individuals with Disabilities and Competitive Integrated Employment*

In FY2023-24, 801 individuals (or 6.39% of individuals) with disabilities accessed the AJCC system in Solano County, an increase over the previous four (4) program years. Of the 264 adults newly enrolled in WIOA Title I services, 42 individuals had a disability (or 13% of enrolled individuals). The WDB employs a Disability Resource Specialist, who provides accessible services and customized job placement and training support for individuals with disabilities. The Specialist is also certified as a Benefits Counselor.

Workforce partners in Solano County have come together to serve individuals with disabilities and infuse Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE) goals for individuals with disabilities, including with Intellectual Disabilities/Developmental Disabilities. Together, WDB and its disability partners will continue to develop strategies around employer engagement, earn and learn strategies, educational transition services, disability benefits counseling, and improved service coordination.

#### *English Language Learners and Foreign Born*

Solano County has less than 15% of the population considered as Limited English Proficient (LEP), and therefore, is not required to have a Local Plan provision on English Language Learners (ELL), the Foreign Born, and Refugees. However, the WDB recognizes a growing LEP population in the county and considers it important to address the needs of its English Language Learners and Foreign Born.

A foundational step to improving services for the ELL population in Solano County has been to better serve the ELL population coming into the AJCCs. Although the WDB has had no formal ELL-specific services, over 1,000 individuals who had a preferred language other than English utilized the AJCC in Solano County in FY2023-24. This is, in part, due to the presence of a bilingual staff person in the Fairfield AJCC. However, in FY2023-24, only 9 out of 264 individuals (3.4%) who self-identified as ELL were enrolled into Adult or Dislocated Worker programs. More ELL supports have been needed in WIOA enrolled services to ensure individuals who speak English “less than very well” are able to receive services.

The WDB has been building its Spanish-speaking staff capability and now have staff in the AJCC and WIOA enrolled services that can speak Spanish and better support Solano’s Spanish-speaking community. Already, the WDB’s Spanish-speaking Workforce Development Specialist has participated in events at the

Adult Schools to better help bridge the gap between Title I and Title II services for Spanish-speaking individuals. The WDB will also explore integrated education and training programs with the Solano County Adult Education Consortium that will afford participants the benefits of enhanced support services and inter-agency referral systems. The WDB intends to enhance this partnership over the next four (4) years.

In the stakeholder engagement sessions, there was considerable interest in developing county-wide Spanish-speaking collaboratives to coordinate services across systems for individuals who predominantly speak Spanish. Development of this collaborative will be a goal for the next four (4) years, as well.

### *Veterans*

The WDB has built loose relationships to serve veterans in Solano County, but much more could be done. Solano County is home to Travis Air Force Base, and potential opportunities exist to better serve veterans and military spouses with workforce services. During the next four years, the WDB will seek to connect more effectively with Solano County's Veteran Services Office, as well as Travis-based collaboratives. The WDB is currently a member of TRAFC, the military-civilian partnership committee of the Vacaville Chamber of Commerce, and will build upon this relationship in coming years.

### *Environmental Sustainability*

Over the past planning period, the WDB has been participating in local environmental sustainability conversations with a variety of partners. The WDB sits on the Climate Committee, organized by the Solano Land Trust, that seeks to have a common language around climate sustainability and to build awareness within the community of climate impacts and climate-related initiatives. The WDB will continue to participate in this group and ensure workforce considerations are included in the growing conversation.

For the past two years, the WDB has partnered with the Solano Land Trust and Solano County Office of Education in a Climate Careers Group looking at understanding the jobs data, enhancing environmental literacy in the K-12 system, and launching a local implementation project. The group utilized ARPA funds invested by Solano County's Board of Supervisors to pilot a summer youth work experience program that introduces high school juniors and seniors to climate considerations and climate careers. In this five-week paid work experience program, youth learn about water implications, land preservation, sustainable agriculture, and local ecosystems. A number of partners make this opportunity possible, including Solano Land Trust, Solano County Office of Education (SCOE), Fairfield-Suisun Sewer District, Solano Resource Conservation District, Student Conservation Association, Sustainable Solano, and Solano County Farm Bureau. The WDB is currently procuring a Climate Curriculum that can be embedded in workforce development programming in partnership with ReWork the Bay; the partners hope to have a curriculum that can be scaled regionally and beyond. During the next four years, the WDB will utilize WIOA Youth funds to develop a year-round program for high school juniors and seniors to expand upon the Climate Career Ready youth program and continue the collaborative work on environmental sustainability.

## Career Services Coordination – WIOA Title I

The Workforce Development Board (WDB) of Solano County serves as the Adult and Dislocated Worker Title I service provider in Solano County. The WDB procures a subrecipient to deliver Youth services, as well as provides industry-specific programming for Youth in-house.

### Professional Development

The WDB is committed to professional development of staff and cross-training of partners to ensure that front-line staff maintain skills relevant to the current labor market and can provide culturally competent services. In recent years, the WDB has included community partners, where feasible, in professional development opportunities. Through a capacity building grant from the James Irvine Foundation, the WDB has been able to invest in WDB and partner staff to upskill, obtain certifications, and gain exposure to promising practices through conferences and learning trips. This investment has been instrumental in propelling career service efforts and quality in the community forward.

Part of the WDB's commitment to professional development has included building professional certification attainment among WDB staff. The business services team has completed training as Certified Business Service Consultants and the job seeker services team is currently completing their Certified Workforce Development Professional certifications. Additional certifications are anticipated in specialized areas, such as youth development and reentry services.

The WDB has also completed a six-month digital fluency initiative with staff to build fluency on Microsoft Office products. The WDB and AJCC partners will continue to identify trainings to support staff in enhancing their digital literacy skills. Additional trainings will be identified and held to ensure staff and partners provide the best culturally competent services to all Solano County demographics and that staff have an understanding of the experiences of trauma-exposed populations.

Potential staff and partner trainings are outlined in the AJCC's Continuous Improvement Plan. These trainings included training on customer-centered design and universal access principles, cross-training of AJCC partner services, customer service skills, emerging industry and business needs, and available business talent incentives.

### Rapid Response and Layoff Aversion

Rapid Response activities and services are provided to employers and workers who have been affected by lay-offs, plant closures, and down-sizing, and are carried out in conjunction with Employment Development Department (EDD) and other stakeholders.

WDB's Rapid Response Coordinator, who is the Director of Business Solutions and Brand Management, ensures affected employers are contacted in a timely manner upon notification. They also coordinate with EDD Workforce Services staff to schedule planning meetings, orientations, and any other services requested by the affected employer and employees at times and dates convenient to them. Collectively, the WDB and EDD provide information and access to unemployment compensation benefits and programs, comprehensive one-stop delivery system services, available career and training activities, as well as information on the Trade Adjustment Act (TAA) program, the GI Bill and other resources.

Rapid response activities are reported quarterly to EDD and included in the EDD Rapid Response 121 Report. Layoff aversion activities are reported to EDD quarterly and included in the Layoff Aversion 122

Report. Rapid Response and Layoff Aversion activities are outlined in detail and guided by the WDB's *Rapid Response Policy*.

The WDB Business Services Team, in partnership with the Solano-Napa Small Business Development Center (SBDC), will continue to monitor small business health in the community and identify additional layoff aversion and small business investment opportunities.

### *Business Services*

The WDB provides talent services and solutions to Solano County's business community. These services allow the WDB to effectively respond to rapid response and layoff aversion needs, help support placement of participants with local businesses, and provide recruitment activities, such as career fairs to aid the local labor market. In addition, the business services team provides innovative solutions to meet the changing needs of today's economy and to help the business community adapt to today's labor market.

As outlined in the Key Workforce Strategies, the WDB will focus efforts over the next four years on building capacity and opportunities for employer-based training and retention strategies. These efforts will include promoting employer participation in registered apprenticeship programs across high-demand sectors, expanding use of incumbent worker training to support the growth of local businesses, and partnering with employers to invest in alternative skill-building initiatives.

Business stakeholders shared a cross-industry high demand for training on topics such as customer service, management skills, workplace etiquette, computer skills, digital literacy, legal and HR requirements, and more. As such, business services will explore and analyze the feasibility of offering business resources, training, and upskilling assistance on these talent-related topics.

Innovative business solutions over the next four years include the launch of an Employer Resource Network (ERN®) and a Job Quality Benchmarking Index. Through an initial ARPA investment from the Solano County's Board of Supervisors, the WDB is partnering with local businesses to launch an ERN® in Solano County. ERN® is a national public-private partnership model that provides on-the-job career coaching and retention support for employees at local businesses. This model not only improves employee retention for local businesses, but also connects frontline workers with wrap-around services to improve their economic stability. Solano's ERN® would be the first in California.

With initial funding from the James Irvine Foundation, the WDB launched a Job Quality Benchmarking Tool for businesses in January 2025. This tool, developed by Jewish Vocational Services (JVS) Boston evaluates job quality across various occupations by creating a local benchmarking index. Businesses can input data on five key job quality factors for a specific occupation and compare their results to local benchmarks. Solano is the first in the state to utilize this innovative tool to improve job quality in the community.



## Adult and Dislocated Worker Programs

WIOA Adult and Dislocated Worker Services are based out of the two AJCCs in Solano, located in Fairfield and Vallejo. Adult and Dislocated Worker services to individuals include the following:

| Basic Career Services   |   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eligibility for AJCC Partner Services</li> <li>• Outreach</li> <li>• Intake</li> <li>• Orientation</li> <li>• Initial Assessment</li> <li>• Labor Market Information</li> <li>• Resume Preparation</li> <li>• Job Search Workshops</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CalJOBS Registration</li> <li>• Resource Center for Self-Services</li> <li>• Supportive Service Information</li> <li>• Unemployment Insurance (UI) Information</li> <li>• Financial Aid Information</li> <li>• Referrals to Programs</li> </ul>  |
| Individual Career Services  |   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comprehensive Assessments</li> <li>• Objective Assessments</li> <li>• Individual Employment Plan Development</li> <li>• Career Exploration</li> <li>• Career Planning and Counseling</li> <li>• Case Management</li> <li>• Barrier Mitigation</li> <li>• Supportive Service Funding</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Workforce Preparation</li> <li>• One-on-One Resume and Interview Assistance</li> <li>• Work Experience</li> <li>• Referral to Basic Skills Development</li> <li>• Pre-Vocational Training</li> <li>• Financial Literacy</li> <li>• Job Development and Matching</li> <li>• Follow-Up Services</li> </ul> |
| Training Services   |   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Occupational Skills Training</li> <li>• Career Pathway Training</li> <li>• On-the-Job Training</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transitional Jobs</li> <li>• Entrepreneurial Training</li> <li>• Incumbent Worker Training</li> </ul>  |
| Business Services   |   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Career Fairs</li> <li>• Recruitment Events</li> <li>• Pre-Screening of Candidates</li> <li>• Talent Pipeline Strategy</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Talent Retention Strategies</li> <li>• Business Seminars and Workshops</li> <li>• Labor Market Information</li> <li>• Technical Assistance and Consultation</li> </ul>   |

Over the next four years, the WDB intends to make continuous improvements to its WIOA Adult and Dislocated Worker programs. As outlined in Solano's Key Workforce Strategies, the WDB plans to enhance occupational training opportunities for Solano's residents, evolve career services to better meet the needs of job seekers and workers, and build employer-based training and retention opportunities.

The WDB has been building the labor market knowledge of its team and partners to ensure participants across the AJCC system are receiving timely and relevant career support. Over the next four years, the WDB will continue to integrate data-driven career guidance into its service delivery and encourage partners to do the same. This will allow more participants to gain awareness of locally relevant career opportunities and have a clearer understanding of pathways to reach those opportunities.

Stakeholders identified that many participants across the workforce partners are facing stacked barriers that keep them from attaining and retaining quality employment. Today's changing workforce and

economic landscape requires a new level of workforce resilience for job seekers and workers to be successful. As such, the WDB will work over the next four years to develop workshops and/or resources to help job seekers and workers adapt to industry changes and economic shifts. These efforts could include the use of AI in the workplace, awareness of rights on the job and self-advocacy, and enhancement of digital literacy.

Stakeholders resoundingly expressed concerns about mental health and anxiety during planning sessions, and partners are struggling to be able to access mental health resources for clients. The WDB will, therefore, explore integrating mental wellness needs into career services delivery, and build partnerships with mental health providers in the county.

The WDB also understands the importance of training and skill building in each individual's career pathway. However, access to occupational training in Solano County can be limited, and the programs WIOA can currently fund do not meet the changing industry needs of today. Therefore, the WDB intends to focus over the next four years on developing new training models and expanding training partnerships in the region.

A key initiative will be to expand the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) of training courses, and to streamline the local ETPL application and renewal process. The WDB will engage with local public and private training providers to make improvements to the application and renewal process, as well as add trainings that align with current labor market needs. In addition, the WDB will participate in North Bay regional efforts to establish a regional ETPL. These efforts will allow expanded options for WIOA participants to engage in relevant and local training opportunities that lead to careers.

The WDB will also coordinate with training partners over the next four years to expand the development of alternative skill-building routes, building off past successes. The WDB successfully used microcredentials for upskilling Certified Nursing Assistants (CNA) that led to economic mobility for participants. The WDB has also been piloting short-term certification programs through ARPA investment from Solano County's Board of Supervisors, such as Food Manager Certification and Forklift Certification. These certifications have provided participants with the skills needed to promote on the job or gain new employment. The WDB has also piloted industry-specific cohort programs with ARPA investments, including Childcare Entrepreneurship Bootcamps, Research Associate lab training, bridge programming for biotech careers, as well as supported sector partnership programs like the Working Waterfront Coalition. These new industry-based training initiatives, founded on the principles of sector strategies, will be continued and built upon over the next four years, where feasible.

The WDB is also launching a PearsonVue Testing Center in 2025 to increase access to industry-recognized credential attainment. Over the next four years, the WDB will evaluate this service and potential connections with training activities under WIOA.

#### *WIOA Adult Priority of Service*

Per WIOA regulations, the WDB provides priority of service to recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals, and individuals who are basic skills deficient when providing individualized career services and training services funded with WIOA Adult funds. Veterans and eligible spouses also receive priority of service; however, the WDB ensures that they meet WIOA adult program eligibility and other WIOA criteria. Priority of service criteria is outlined in the WDB's *Adult and Dislocated Worker Eligibility and Enrollment Policy* updated in September of 2024.

WIOA Adult priority of service is provided in the following order:

1. Veterans and eligible spouses who are also recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals, or individuals who are considered basic skills deficient.
2. Individuals who are not veterans or eligible spouses, but who are recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals, or individuals who are considered basic skills deficient.
3. Veterans and eligible spouses who are not included in the federal WIOA priority groups.
4. Individuals who are neither veterans nor eligible spouses nor meet the criteria to be considered part of the federal WIOA priority groups, but are a member of a local priority group.
5. All other individuals who do not meet the above priority groups.

The California and Solano workforce boards have identified the populations below as local priority groups based on analysis of economic and State or county conditions. These identified priority populations are not to be interpreted as additional eligibility criteria.

- Individuals over the age of 55 (locally-defined)
- Individuals with a disability (locally-defined)
- Justice-involved individuals, current or previous involvement (locally-defined)
- Long-term unemployed (locally-defined)
- Single parents (locally-defined)
- Transgender and gender non-conforming (state-defined)

Priority of service status is established at the time of eligibility determination and does not change during the period of participation. As such, the WDB implements priority of service through priority of intake and enrollment. Staff are also encouraged to identify additional barriers customers face in obtaining and retaining employment in order to inform service delivery and to effectively track individuals.

The WDB locally defines “basic skills deficiency” to include stated or assessed survival skills, such as digital literacy and financial literacy skills. Employers often consider a high school diploma as a basic academic literacy level; as such, the WDB includes lack of a high school diploma within the definition.

In Program Year 2023-24, of the 133 newly enrolled individuals in the WIOA Adult program, 66.9% (or 87) identified as one of the federal WIOA priority groups. The WDB created a local priority group list in 2024, and will track and analyze enrollment, activities, and outcomes for the County’s priority populations. The table below outlines individuals from priority groups served in Program Year 2023-24:

| Priority Population                   | Priority Group | Number Enrolled | Percentage of Enrolled |
|---------------------------------------|----------------|-----------------|------------------------|
| Basic skills deficiency               | Federal        | 3               | 2.3%                   |
| Individuals over the age of 55        | Local          | 24              | 18.0%                  |
| Individuals with a disability         | Local          | 23              | 17.3%                  |
| Justice-involved individuals          | Local          | 9               | 6.8%                   |
| Long-term unemployed                  | Local          | 36              | 27.1%                  |
| Low-income                            | Federal        | 86              | 64.7%                  |
| Public assistance recipients          | Federal        | 60              | 45.1%                  |
| Single parents                        | Local          | 21              | 15.8%                  |
| Transgender and gender non-conforming | State          | 0               | 0%                     |
| Veterans and military spouses         | Federal        | 6               | 4.5%                   |

It is important to note that actual numbers of priority populations may be higher, due to individuals not wanting to self-disclose as part of a population group, such as justice-involved individuals and transgender and gender non-conforming individuals. The WDB will continue to expand and improve access to, and delivery of, services for WIOA Adult's priority populations over the next four years.

### Youth Services

The WDB has prioritized serving opportunity and out-of-school youth with WIOA Youth investments, per federal regulations. Youth services are outlined in the *WIOA Youth Service Delivery Policy* and are designed to assist eligible youth in achieving academic and employment success. The WDB and its WIOA Youth Services provider also ensure that all WIOA 14 Youth Program Elements are available to youth participants.

The WDB currently contracts with First Place for Youth, with services in Fairfield for transitioning-age foster youth. Contracted youth services include:

- Outreach and Recruitment
- Eligibility Determination and Objective Assessment
- Assessment and Addressing of Barriers
- Individual Service Strategy (ISS) Development
- Career Coaching Services
- Work Experience and Work-Based Learning
- Job Placement Services

In the spring of 2025, the WDB will launch a Community Investment Achievers (CIA) young adult work experience program. This program will provide a paid, eight-week work experience for WIOA-eligible young adults ages 18-24. Four days a week of the program will be working in the field performing duties related to community improvement projects and Fridays will be focused on worksite wrap-ups, vocational exploration, and connection to community. The WDB will explore the potential of connecting this program to the regional public sector priority industry goals.

In the summer of 2025, the WDB will launch its new Climate Career Ready program with WIOA Youth funding for high school juniors and seniors. The cornerstone of the program will be a five-week climate work experience program in the summer that will expose youth to water considerations, land restoration, sustainable farming and more while engaging in paid work. The WDB will then work with Solano County Office of Education (SCOE) to provide climate-related activities throughout the following school year for participants.

As outlined in the Key Workforce Strategies, the WDB also commits to collaborating with local school systems to expand career exploration and experiential learning opportunities for the emerging workforce. The WDB currently licenses Lightcast's Career Coach, an online tool that provides Solano-centric career exploration and labor market information in an easy-to-use, no-cost format for job seekers. This tool will be leveraged for youth-serving providers and school systems. The WDB has also invested in Virtual Reality (VR) headsets that provide virtual reality introductions to over fifty occupations. The WDB will work with local youth-serving providers and school systems to ensure wide access to this career exploration tool.

Over the past years, the WDB and SCOE have been strengthening their partnership around career education and connections for Solano's school-age youth. The partners will focus over the next four years

on identifying and piloting projects that enhance Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs with industry connections, pre-apprenticeship opportunities, and job placement assistance post-graduation.

The WDB understands the importance of ensuring digital literacy is embedded within WIOA Youth programming and will continually seek opportunities to increase digital literacy skills of youth across programs. In addition, stakeholders identified the need for improving communication skills among young adults, and the importance of mental health resources; as such, the WDB will explore opportunities to include these elements into future youth programming.

## Grant Administration

### *Disbursement of Grant Funds*

Solano County is the legal recipient for all WIOA funds and is the entity responsible for all WIOA expenditures in the Solano County Service Area. The County disburses WIOA grant funds in the manner prescribed by the state and federal government and provides administrative and technical assistance to the WDB to assist in proper management of WIOA funds as needed. The WDB and Solano County have a standing Agreement that outlines each entity's roles and responsibilities relating to WIOA and the disbursement of grant funds.

### *Competitive Procurement Process*

Procurement transactions for WIOA sub-awards and contracts maximize open and free competition consistent with federal and state standards and regulations. The WDB's competitive process is outlined in the WDB's *Procurement Policy*. In procuring WIOA Title I services, the WDB works to assure that minority and women-owned businesses are used when possible, per federal guidelines, and makes effort to ensure local businesses and organizations are included in solicitation dissemination. The WDB also implements parameters to avoid conflict of interest.

The WDB uses Micro-Purchases, Small Purchases, Sealed Bids, Competitive Proposals, and Non-Competitive Negotiation to procure goods and services. The WDB also allows for cooperative procurement processes to avoid acquisition of unnecessary or duplicative items and promote cost-effective use of shared services where appropriate and as encouraged in 20 CFR Section 200.318(e). For each method of procurement, the WDB has procedures that ensure all solicitations or quotes incorporate a clear and accurate description of the technical requirements for the material, product or service to be procured, as well as all requirements which the potential vendors must fulfill to be considered. In addition, the WDB conducts a risk assessment for all sub-recipients prior to engaging in contract, and all contractors are required to assure the administrative capacity to meet Federal, State, and Service Area requirements.

An overview of the procurement method, current cost limits, and minimum bids/quotes needed can be found in the following table:

| Procurement Method       | Cost Limits        | Minimum Bids/Quotes Needed   |
|--------------------------|--------------------|--|
| Micro Purchases          | Less than \$10,000 | One quote at a reasonable cost   |
| Small Purchases          | \$10,000-\$250,000 | Two quotes; written, verbal or from a catalog  |
| Sealed Bids              | No limits          | Three written bids in response to an IFB   |
| Competitive Proposals    | No limits          | Three written competitive proposals in response to a Request For Proposals (RFP) or Request for Quotes (RFQ) |
| Noncompetitive Proposals | No limits          | All bids and quotes obtained   |



The Solano County Purchasing Department is considered a central government purchasing agency which meets the requirements of WIOA regulations for competitive purchasing.

*AJCC Operator and Career Service Providers*

The WDB was approved by the state and the Chief Locally Elected Official to be the Career Services Provider in Solano County. The WDB competitively procures the One Stop Operator and WIOA Out-of-School Youth services. The current One-Stop Operator is California Human Development for the period of July 1, 2024 to June 30, 2025, with the option for two additional years of funding. The current WIOA Youth service provider is First Place for Youth for the period of July 1, 2024 to June 30, 2025 with a contractual focus on work experience. At the writing of this plan, the WDB is currently in a procurement process for WIOA Youth services.