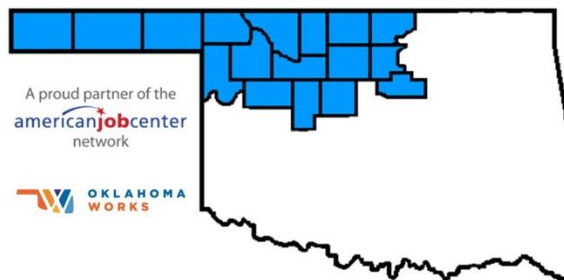


**NORTHWESTERN OKLAHOMA WORKFORCE  
DEVELOPMENT AREA  
COMPREHENSIVE FIVE-YEAR  
WIOA LOCAL PLAN**

**PERIOD: JULY 1, 2017 – JUNE 30, 2021**

**Prepared by**



**Northwestern Oklahoma Workforce Board (NOWB)**

1116 19<sup>th</sup> Street, Woodward, OK 73801  
580-256-8553

**Serving the Oklahoma Counties of Alfalfa, Beaver, Blaine, Cimarron, Dewey,  
Ellis, Garfield, Grant, Harper, Kay, Kingfisher, Major, Noble, Payne,  
Texas, Woods, and Woodward**

<b>Workforce Development Area</b>	Northwestern Oklahoma
<b>Workforce Board Chair</b>	Dennis Luckinbill
<b>Chief Local Elected Official</b>	C J Rose
<b>Workforce Board Director</b>	Jennifer Miller
<b>One Stop Operator</b>	Community Development Support Association, INC. (CDSA)

The following signatures attest that:

- They submit this local plan on behalf of the local Workforce Board and Local Elected Officials (LEOs) in the area;
- The planning was done with leaders within the community and represents the collective thinking of those local representatives;
- The information contained herein is true and accurate to the best of their knowledge;
- The local plan represents the Workforce Board’s and LEO’s efforts to maximize resources available under Title I of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and to coordinate these resources with other State and local programs in the Northwestern Oklahoma Workforce Development Area;
- They will operate the local system in accordance with the local plan, and applicable federal and state laws, regulations, policies and rules; and,
- All assurances within this template have been met.

**WDB Chair Typed/Printed Name:**

DENNIS LUCKINBILL

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Chief Local Elected Official Typed/Printed Name:**

C J ROSE

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

The local plan is a living document that should fluctuate as workforce needs are identified and, while relatively technical in nature, it is the primary governing document for the workforce development strategies and activities that are carried out in Northwestern Oklahoma. Initial development is based on guidance from the United States Department of Labor (DOL) and the Oklahoma Office of Workforce Development (OOWD). The development of the local plan was financed through the Federal Department of Labor and as codified in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2014. The local plan supports the State of Oklahoma’s vision and strategic goals as outlined in the State Plan.

The WIOA charges all local workforce development areas to create and publish a plan that defines key strategies, partnerships and resources that will promote local and regional economic health for industry and individuals through the growth of a strong and relevant workforce. The Northwestern Oklahoma Workforce Board (NOWB) collaborates with a wide variety of individuals, businesses, and organizations throughout Northwestern Oklahoma. Appointed by the Chief Local Elected Official (CLEO) in October 2012, the NOWB serves as a strategic convener to promote effective relationships between the workforce development system, economic development, education, and community partners in order to strategically address the talent needs of local employers.

After the successful merger of the North Central and Northwest Oklahoma Workforce Investment Areas in 2012 to form the 17 county Northwestern Oklahoma Workforce Development Area (Area), the OOWD communicated the Northwestern Oklahoma Workforce Board (NOWB) needed to wait on developing a strategic plan until guidance was established. The proposed NOWB mission is “To provide a collaborative talent development system within the region” and the proposed NOWB vision is “Innovative leadership advancing a quality talent development system”.

As the local plan was developed, we realized some suggested/potential steps were not fully executed. The Area is creating a plan of action to overcome those deficiencies in line with the Western Oklahoma Planning Region. Here are some of the steps the Area and Region plan to take and the timeline to complete them:

- Review the service matrices status and recommend local area action as needed – October 2017
- Core Partner meetings to motivate alignment of workforce activities – December 2017
- Regional Strategic Planning session – December 2017

This plan of action may include, but is not limited to: revisiting the process mapping of services to job seekers and businesses; reviewing economic conditions to better analyze industry needs; develop a more focused in-demand occupations list as a collaborative effort for the Western Oklahoma Planning Region; align resources to reduce overhead costs and form cooperative partnership agreements; provide a platform to readily and consistently review workforce intelligence; begin to ‘re-design’ service delivery (including beyond the WIOA Title I Service Provider) to meet the identified business and job seeker needs; and taking steps to support the consolidation of the Southwest Oklahoma Workforce Development Area with the Northwestern Oklahoma Workforce Development Area.

We will continue to strengthen the partnerships among the Area and each partner has committed to encourage appropriate contributions based on Federal and State guidance to further improve and streamline Job Seeker and Business Services.

#### Northwestern Oklahoma Workforce Development Area Overview (data obtained from Emsi)

Population (2016)	319,534
Jobs (2016)	134,919
Average Earnings (2016)	\$48,792
Unemployed (10/2016)	6,285

The questions provided as a template to assist in the development of the local plan are highlighted in grey.

Guidance statement provided by the Oklahoma Office of Workforce Development (OOWD):

*This template is to be completed by each of Oklahoma's local workforce development areas. As noted by an asterisk (\*) within the plan instructions, as appropriate, a local area in a multi-area region may use the Data Analysis section of the regional plan to meet the requirements of the first section of this plan [Local Workforce Development System Vision questions 1-7], and the Description of Regional Strategies section of the regional plan to meet the requirements of this plan's Local Workforce Development System Description questions 2b, 2e, 3, 6, 7, 10, and 15] while noting any unique aspects of the local area that are not captured within the regional plan. For those local areas within a multi-area region, this local plan will be submitted as an attachment to the regional plan.*

## **A. Local Workforce Development System Vision**

1. Provide an analysis of the local area's economic conditions, including:
  - a. Existing and emerging in-demand industry sectors and occupations

The Northwestern Oklahoma Workforce Development Board (NOWB) reviewed the Oklahoma Office of Workforce Development (OOWD) Area 'briefing' issued August 2015 as well as the Western Oklahoma Planning Region report issued April 2016 and compared it to reports from Emsi to better understand what are existing and emerging in-demand industry sectors and occupations. The briefing can be found at <http://oklahomaworks.gov/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Northwest-OK-Econ-Profile.pdf> and the Western Oklahoma Planning Region report at <http://oklahomaworks.gov/kenecon/>.

According to that briefing the industry most prominently represented in the Northwestern Oklahoma Workforce Area (Area) based on job numbers in 2015 is Government (including Defense). Other highly represented industries include Crop and Animal Production, Health Care and Social Assistance, and Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction. Several of the industries in the region have comparable earnings to the state averages. Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction has the highest gap of earnings in the Northwestern Oklahoma Region, earning \$20,450 less compared with state averages. Crop and Animal Production, and Construction industries in Northwestern Oklahoma have higher earnings than the state averages.

Health Care was viewed as an industry with existing and emerging in-demand occupations across the Area with moderate to high wages for workers and requiring education, training, and/or advanced degrees in order to obtain, retain, and/or advance within the industry. Other industries and occupations feed into and support the Health Care industry.

Industry	2015 Jobs	Current Regional Earnings	2015 State Total Earnings
Government	35,388	\$48,755	\$54,905
Health Care and Social Assistance	11,415	\$41,019	\$50,696
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	11,043	\$90,545	\$110,991
Crop and Animal Production	10,575	\$32,132	\$30,007
Manufacturing	9,849	\$58,904	\$65,998
Construction	9,597	\$51,410	\$47,930
Other Services (except Public Administration)	6,653	\$23,797	\$25,157
Administrative, Support and Waste Management	5,263	\$33,341	\$37,121
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	5,263	\$59,721	\$66,308
Wholesale Trade	4,829	\$64,378	\$64,790

Source: EMSI 2015.2 Class of Worker

The Oklahoma Department of Commerce identified five ecosystems in Oklahoma important to the economy to generate wealth, have employment growth potential, or where the state has a competitive advantage. These ecosystems are: Aerospace and Defense, Energy, Agriculture and Bioscience, Information and Financial Services, and Transportation and Distribution. In each ecosystem, there are critical occupations necessary for future growth and advancement. In addition to the five statewide ecosystems, there are ecosystems at the regional level important for regional economies such as Health Care.

### Health Care (Regional Complementary)

Based on 2015 job numbers, there are 33,840 jobs in the Health Care ecosystem in the Western Oklahoma Planning Region with average wages of \$45,270. As a projection of demand, by 2025 total employment in the Health Care ecosystem will grow to 40,510 jobs in Western Oklahoma, an increase of 6,670 jobs for the region.

The list below encompasses some of the critical occupations for the Health Care ecosystem in Western Oklahoma. However, these occupations are not solely intended to serve the Health Care ecosystem, they are driven by demand and individuals with these work backgrounds will have transferable skills to other ecosystems.

SOC	Industry	Median Hourly Earnings	Education Level
29-1051	Pharmacists	\$51.96	Doctoral or professional degree
11-9111	Medical and Health Services Managers	\$35.10	Bachelor's degree
29-1141	Registered Nurses	\$26.24	Associate's degree
29-2061	Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses	\$17.25	Postsecondary non-degree award
31-9091	Dental Assistants	\$16.59	Postsecondary non-degree award
29-2052	Pharmacy Technicians	\$13.22	Moderate-term on-the-job training
31-9092	Medical Assistants	\$11.77	Postsecondary non-degree award
31-1014	Nursing Assistants	\$10.21	Postsecondary non-degree award
31-1011	Home Health Aides	\$9.26	Short-term on-the-job training
39-9021	Personal Care Aides	\$8.66	Short-term on-the-job training

Source: EMSI 2016.1

*These occupations are necessary for the Health Care ecosystem to thrive. Just as important, they are necessary for other industries as well. Other industries that demand these occupations include general and medical hospitals, physician's offices, nursing care facilities, and home Health Care services, among others.*

It is understood that the identification of these in-demand industries and occupations allows for the focus on specific skills necessary for job seekers to obtain, retain, and advance on the job and will assist the Workforce Development System with targeted talent outreach and recruitment efforts.

Employment alone does not define "driver industries." For example, retail stores and restaurants are a significant source of jobs in Areas, but they normally provide lower wages, very few exports, and smaller multiplier effects. Driver industries must also rank high in industry concentration, competitiveness, exports, and wages.

The NOWB Demand Occupations Policy/List encompasses many industries and occupations on a broad level but strives to focus on jobs that meet or exceed the self-sufficiency wages in the Area. Since demand occupations must require training that results in a licensure, industry recognized credential, degree, or certificate, the data provided for existing jobs was ample evidence to move the NOWB to begin the process to streamline the Demand Occupations Policy/List for the Area in conjunction with the Southwest and South Central Areas as the Western Planning Region concentrates on similar industries and occupations.

Health Care has been an industry identified as one in which advancement is possible, higher earnings gains are available, and career pathways can be created as well as other support or connected occupations can feed into. The other industries represented provide for a large number of jobs within the Area but do not always require training and sometimes provide for only low wages.

Amongst the Emsi data for the period 2016-2026, two of the largest occupations included Nurse Assistants with a 3% increase in jobs and Registered Nurses with a 5% increase. Highest paying occupations included many Health Care occupations that required advanced degrees such as Dentist, Pharmacist, and Physician that are still in demand but not as attainable due to the education requirements. However, those jobs are supported and connected by other personnel such as Nurses, Aides, and assistants. Fastest growing occupations included Personal Care Aides with a 47% increase in jobs available and Home Health Aides with a 22% increase.

b. Employment needs of employers in existing and emerging in-demand industry sectors and occupations. \*

Across the Area as well as the Western Oklahoma Planning Region (Region), employers are continually seeking qualified talent for the existing jobs available but also to fortify plans for growth and expansion. Within the Health Care industry, for example, employers need applicants who have obtained the necessary skills and credentials to perform on the job such as a license provided by the State Board of Nursing. While every industry and in-demand or emerging occupation may not need formalized training or a lengthy training program for a credential in order to begin employment, resources are available to assist with needs like short-term pre-vocational services and on-the-job training. The Area is working on better coordination and coupling of in-demand occupation lists across the Planning Region so as to focus on Health Care and develop a sector strategy that can positively impact and influence the workforce development system.

The content and skill requirements of jobs are constantly changing, requiring employers to establish avenues for employees to continually upgrade their education and skills. In order for businesses to remain competitive in a global economy, they must find ways to develop new, more productive, higher value-added systems of production that employ highly skilled workers. The rapidly changing and more technologically advanced job skills require changes in the education and workforce training systems that are more flexible. All of this points to a growing demand for career pathways for ease of access into an industry and retraining of incumbent workers to address new processes. It is clear that workforce training must refocus its model to develop and implement avenues to lifelong learning for all workers.

Along with specific credentials and training of the applicants/potential new hires, employers across all industries have continued to report the need of soft skills, support from the community with affordable housing and transportation, and reduction in turn-over or churning .

The impact self-employment and small business have in the local economy cannot be understated. While not fully addressed in the data reviewed, entrepreneurs are a vital slice of the economy. The Area will strive to utilize labor market information provided through Emsi to better plan for the potential need of this cohort and support entrepreneurial efforts.

The Area supports an industry partnership structure that enables the workforce development system to be nimble and responsive to the ever-changing needs of the region's businesses. Collectively, the business needs in our Area are as diverse as the geography. With the collaboration and leadership of the Area's 'ecosystem industries', the Area will be actively engaging partners with the secondary and post-secondary institutions to ensure that industry specific curriculum and skills are being developed (if a gap is identified) along the spectrum of needs from entry to senior level positions.

As a goal to better understand employment needs, the Area intends to support a pilot project within the Region to create a user friendly and easy-to-take survey of workforce needs of employers. The results of the survey will become part of future local plans and would help support workforce planning activities.

2. Describe the knowledge and skills needed to meet the employment needs of the employers in the local area, including employment needs in in-demand industry sectors and occupations. \*

Businesses in the Area want qualified talent for their businesses – workers who have the knowledge, skills sets, and abilities that will meet and/or exceed their workforce needs and help the business maintain a competitive advantage and/or become globally competitive in the current and future markets. Soft skills and hard skills are both of major concern for businesses. Research has shown that businesses desire employees who exhibit the following: problem solving and critical thinking skills, positive work ethic, appropriate life management skills (balance between personal and work life), strong oral and written communication skills, interpersonal skills (team work), information gathering and organizational skills, occupational and job-related skills, self-direction and personal initiative, and customer service skills.

Some of the top industries in the region include manufacturing, energy, construction, Health Care, and accommodation and food services, and agriculture. The knowledge and skills needed to meet the demands of the existing and emerging industries in the Area range from less than a high school diploma to advanced degrees and certifications.

When concentrating on the Health Care industry, the occupations that provide for moderate to higher wages require training and industry recognized credentials. Reviewing the occupations in the chart from question A. 1. a., the highest paying jobs that require at least some postsecondary training up to an Associate’s Degree perform similar tasks and require similar knowledge, skills, and abilities (information in the chart below obtained from O\*NET [www.onetonline.org](http://www.onetonline.org)).

Occupation	Tasks	Knowledge	Skills	Abilities
Registered Nurse	Administer medications to patients and monitor patients for reactions or side effects.	Customer and Personal Service — Knowledge of principles and processes for providing customer and personal services. This includes customer needs assessment, meeting quality standards for services, and evaluation of customer satisfaction.	Active Listening — Giving full attention to what other people are saying, taking time to understand the points being made, asking questions as appropriate, and not interrupting at inappropriate times.	Oral Comprehension — The ability to listen to and understand information and ideas presented through spoken words and sentences.
LPN	Administer prescribed medications or start intravenous fluids, noting times and amounts on patients' charts	Customer and Personal Service — Knowledge of principles and processes for providing customer and personal services. This includes customer needs assessment, meeting quality standards for services, and evaluation of customer satisfaction.	Active Listening — Giving full attention to what other people are saying, taking time to understand the points being made, asking questions as appropriate, and not interrupting at inappropriate times	Oral Comprehension — The ability to listen to and understand information and ideas presented through spoken words and sentences.
Medical Assistant	Record patients' medical history, vital statistics, or information such as test results in medical records	Customer and Personal Service — Knowledge of principles and processes for providing customer and personal services. This includes customer needs assessment, meeting quality standards for services, and evaluation of customer satisfaction.	Active Listening — Giving full attention to what other people are saying, taking time to understand the points being made, asking questions as appropriate, and not interrupting at inappropriate times.	Oral Comprehension — The ability to listen to and understand information and ideas presented through spoken words and sentences.

What this shows is an opportunity to create a career pathway (ladder/lattice) that can assist with the upward mobility of lower wage job seekers through the Health Care system into higher paying jobs. The training opportunities in the area are available to assist in obtaining the needed skills and credentials for the next level.

### **Northwestern Oklahoma Region Educational Assets**

Colleges, Universities, and Career Techs are vital in developing the workforce of Northwestern Oklahoma. The region is home to several educational institutions that help develop the region's workforce. These institutions help supply organizations and companies with the labor and skills necessary for today's economy. Colleges, Universities, and Career Techs can work with employers in Northwestern Oklahoma to find gaps in employee skills. With Health Care and Agriculture as two significant industries, the institutions should be able to provide adequate training for the workforce to succeed.

#### **Career Techs**

There are eight Career Techs in the Northwestern Oklahoma Region:

- Chisolm Trail Technology Center (Omega)
- Autry Technology Center (Enid)
- Meridian Technology Center (Stillwater)
- Pioneer Technology Center (Ponca City)
- Northwest Technology Center (Alva, Fairview)
- High Plains Technology Center (Woodward)

Source: Oklahoma Career Tech

#### **Colleges and Universities**

There are four colleges and universities with eight locations in the region:

- Northern Oklahoma College (Enid, Tonkawa, Stillwater)
- Northwestern Oklahoma State University (Alva, Enid, Woodward)
- Oklahoma Panhandle State University (Goodwell)
- Oklahoma State University (Stillwater)

Source: Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education

The skills needed by business are clearly as complex as advanced training can provide but also as straightforward as needing employees to show up to work on-time. The Area's ambition is that the available workforce is (1) endowed with the knowledge, skills, and abilities that will equip them to obtain, retain and advance in the jobs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century that will give them a good quality of life for their families, and (2) able to meet the needs of business for skilled works which will promote the businesses ability to remain locally, regionally, and globally competitive.

The opportunities available to individuals to access education and training through the local workforce system are plentiful. Short-term training options are growing, driven by the need to develop specific occupational skills identified by local employers. As the supply of available workers contracts, the opportunities provided by increased education and skill development cannot be understated. From entry level employees who are equipped with positive employability skills to occupations validated through licensing credentials, increasing education attainment will be key to continued growth.

3. Provide an analysis of the local workforce, including current labor force employment and unemployment data, information on labor market trends, and educational and skill levels of the workforce, including individuals with barriers to employment.\*

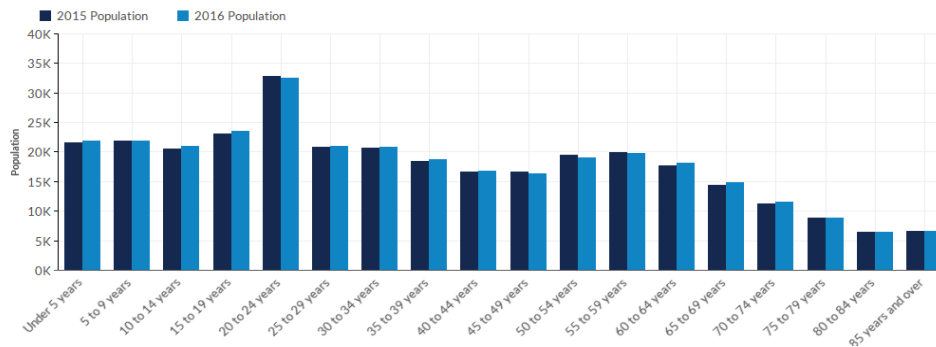
According to Emsi data, the Area's population for 2016 is 319,534 (about 8.1% of the State) and had a 3.3% growth over the past five years (State grown was 4.1%). The following charts and data are from Emsi reports.



Area	2015 Population	2016 Population	Change	% Change
17 Counties	317,879	319,534	1,655	1%
State	3,911,327	3,940,467	29,140	1%
Nation	321,418,820	323,772,974	2,354,154	1%
Total	325,648,026	328,032,975	2,384,949	1%

Source: QCEW Employees & Non-QCEW Employees - Emsi 2017.1 Class of Worker

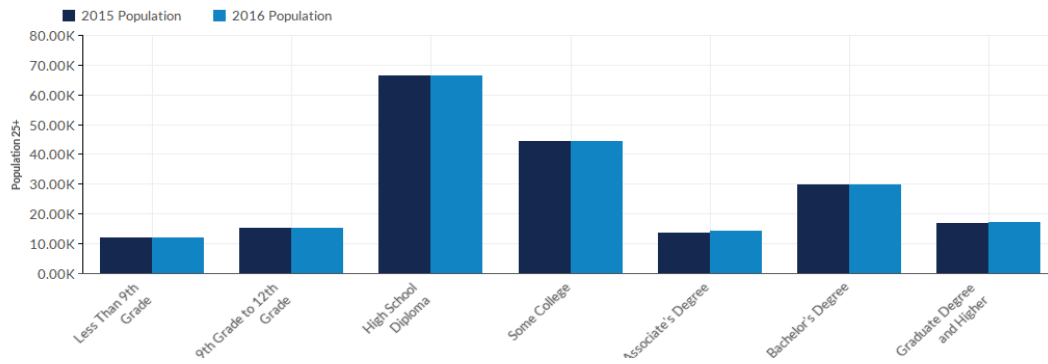
## Population by Age Cohort



Age Cohort	2015 Population	2016 Population	Change	% Change	2015 % of Cohort
Under 5 years	21,561	21,846	285	1%	6.78%
5 to 9 years	21,814	21,911	97	0%	6.86%
10 to 14 years	20,580	20,993	413	2%	6.47%
15 to 19 years	23,065	23,545	480	2%	7.26%
20 to 24 years	32,878	32,457	-421	-1%	10.34%
25 to 29 years	20,875	21,046	171	1%	6.57%
30 to 34 years	20,682	20,821	139	1%	6.51%
35 to 39 years	18,396	18,779	383	2%	5.79%
40 to 44 years	16,576	16,804	228	1%	5.21%
45 to 49 years	16,676	16,290	-386	-2%	5.25%
50 to 54 years	19,546	18,957	-589	-3%	6.15%
55 to 59 years	19,860	19,805	-55	0%	6.25%
60 to 64 years	17,735	18,098	363	2%	5.58%
65 to 69 years	14,397	14,790	393	3%	4.53%
70 to 74 years	11,285	11,520	235	2%	3.55%
75 to 79 years	8,847	8,899	52	1%	2.78%
80 to 84 years	6,446	6,435	-11	0%	2.03%
85 years and over	6,660	6,539	-121	-2%	2.10%
Total	317,879	319,534	1,655	1%	100.00%

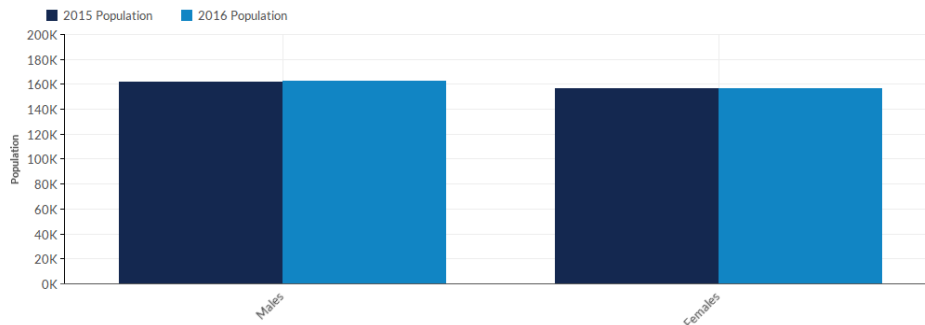
Source: QCEW Employees & Non-QCEW Employees - Emsi 2017.1 Class of Worker

## Educational Attainment by Level



Education Level	2015 Population	2016 Population	2015 % of Population	2015 State % Population	2015 National % Population
Less Than 9th Grade	11,989	11,971	6%	6%	7%
9th Grade to 12th Grade	15,069	15,139	8%	8%	7%
High School Diploma	66,473	66,419	34%	32%	28%
Some College	44,360	44,388	22%	23%	21%
Associate's Degree	13,639	14,104	7%	7%	8%
Bachelor's Degree	29,642	29,636	15%	16%	18%
Graduate Degree and Higher	16,809	17,126	8%	8%	11%
	197,982	198,783	100%	100%	100%

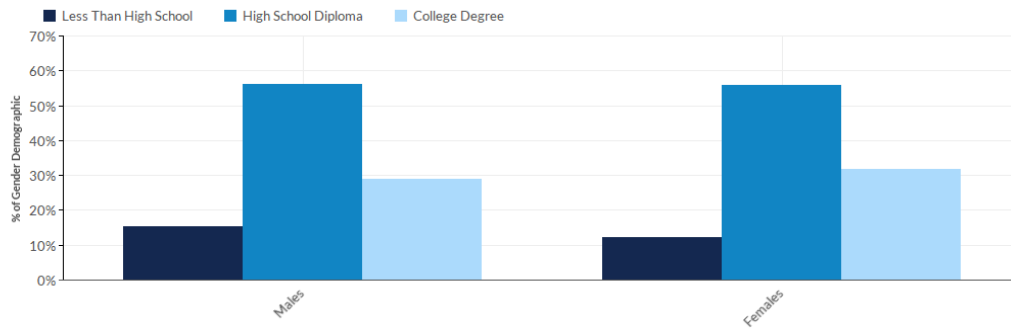
## Population by Gender



Gender	2015 Population	2016 Population	Change	% Change	2015 % of Cohort
Males	161,623	162,633	1,010	1%	50.84%
Females	156,256	156,901	645	0%	49.16%
Total	317,879	319,534	1,655	1%	100.00%

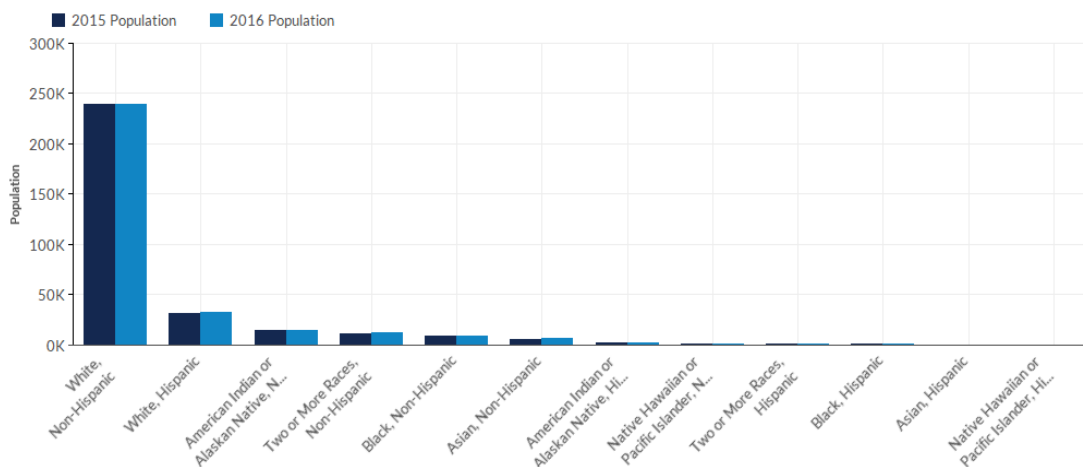
Source: QCEW Employees & Non-QCEW Employees - Emsi 2017.1 Class of Worker

## Educational Attainment by Gender



Gender	2015 Population	2016 Population	2015 Less Than High School	2015 High School Diploma	2015 College Degree
Males	99,171	99,716	15,038	55,546	28,587
Females	98,810	99,067	12,020	55,287	31,503
	197,982	198,783	27,058	110,833	60,091

## Population by Race/Ethnicity

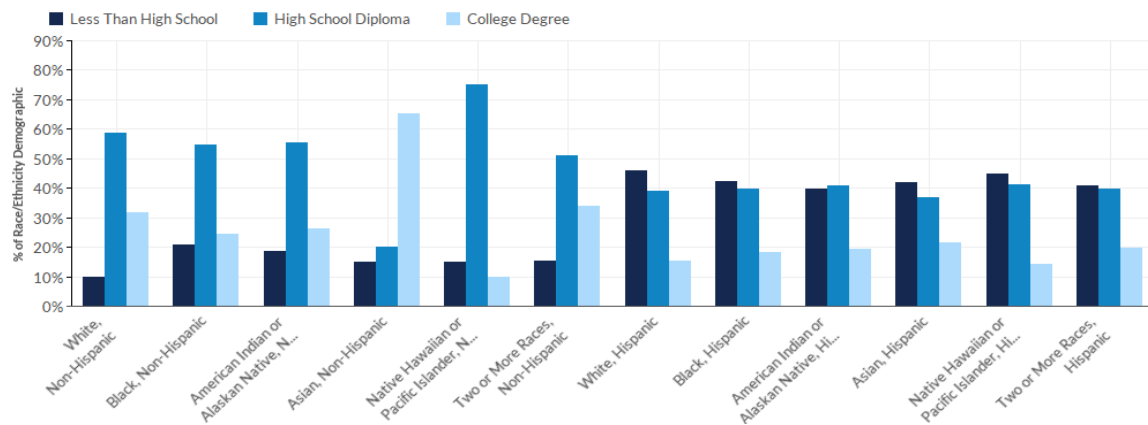


Race/Ethnicity	2015 Population	2016 Population	Change	% Change	2015 % of Cohort
White, Non-Hispanic	239,740	239,163	-577	0%	75.42%
White, Hispanic	31,180	32,097	917	3%	9.81%
American Indian or Alaskan Native, Non-Hispanic	14,046	14,253	207	1%	4.42%
Two or More Races, Non-Hispanic	11,630	11,941	311	3%	3.66%
Black, Non-Hispanic	8,570	8,771	201	2%	2.70%
Asian, Non-Hispanic	6,020	6,272	252	4%	1.89%
American Indian or Alaskan Native, Hispanic	2,348	2,477	129	5%	0.74%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, Non-Hispanic	1,593	1,671	78	5%	0.50%
Two or More Races, Hispanic	1,460	1,512	52	4%	0.46%

Race/Ethnicity	2015 Population	2016 Population	Change	% Change	2015 % of Cohort
Black, Hispanic	774	824	50	6%	0.24%
Asian, Hispanic	361	390	29	8%	0.11%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, Hispanic	158	165	7	4%	0.05%
Total	317,879	319,534	1,655	1%	100.00%

Source: QCEW Employees & Non-QCEW Employees - Emsi 2017.1 Class of Worker

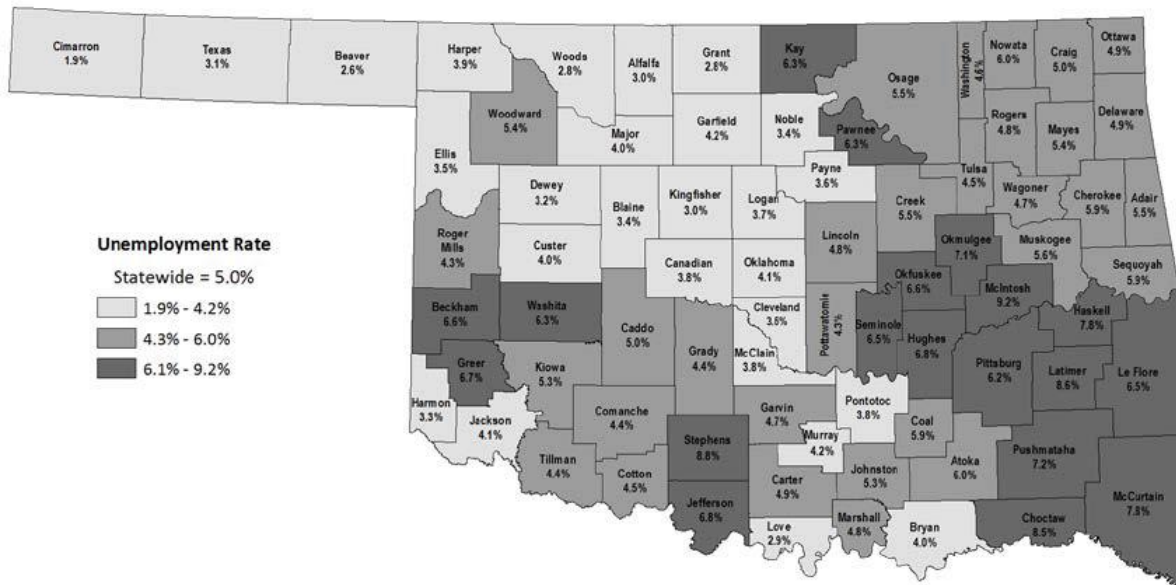
## Educational Attainment by Race/Ethnicity



Race/Ethnicity	2015 Population	2016 Population	2015 Less Than High School	2015 High School Diploma	2015 College Degree
White, Non-Hispanic	160,272	159,992	15,589	93,941	50,742
Black, Non-Hispanic	4,877	4,997	1,013	2,664	1,199
American Indian or Alaskan Native, Non-Hispanic	7,298	7,447	1,346	4,030	1,921
Asian, Non-Hispanic	2,942	3,072	437	590	1,915
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, Non-Hispanic	756	773	114	567	75
Two or More Races, Non-Hispanic	4,476	4,558	682	2,276	1,518
White, Hispanic	15,366	15,849	7,064	5,963	2,339
Black, Hispanic	321	340	135	127	58
American Indian or Alaskan Native, Hispanic	992	1,044	394	405	193
Asian, Hispanic	112	125	47	41	24
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, Hispanic	85	91	38	35	12
Two or More Races, Hispanic	485	495	197	193	95
	197,982	198,783	27,058	110,833	60,091

The Area has typically had and continues to have relatively low unemployment, staying below the national average and state average. The Areas average unemployment rate according to the Oklahoma Employment Report – December 2016 which was released February 1, 2017 from the Oklahoma Employment Security Commission is 3.5%.

UNEMPLOYMENT RATES by COUNTY – December 2016 (Not Seasonally Adjusted)



	December 2016			November 2016			Dec 2016	Nov 2016	Oct 2016	Dec 2015	County Rank
	Labor Force	Employment	Unemployment	Labor Force	Employment	Unemployment					
Northwestern WIA	151,028	145,013	6,015	151,856	145,824	6,032	4.0%	4.0%	4.1%	3.5%	
Alfalfa	2,911	2,824	87	2,927	2,837	90	3.0%	3.1%	3.1%	2.6%	6
Beaver	2,832	2,757	75	2,854	2,776	78	2.6%	2.7%	2.9%	2.5%	2
Blaine	4,231	4,089	142	4,223	4,081	142	3.4%	3.4%	3.4%	3.4%	11
Cimarron	1,456	1,428	28	1,471	1,440	31	1.9%	2.1%	2.6%	1.8%	1
Dewey	2,692	2,607	85	2,687	2,601	86	3.2%	3.2%	3.7%	3.6%	9
Ellis	2,284	2,204	80	2,291	2,212	79	3.5%	3.4%	3.5%	3.5%	13
Garfield	29,789	28,551	1,238	29,796	28,557	1,239	4.2%	4.2%	4.1%	3.6%	26
Grant	2,933	2,850	83	2,961	2,875	86	2.8%	2.9%	3.1%	2.8%	3
Harper	1,921	1,847	74	1,931	1,859	72	3.9%	3.7%	4.0%	2.6%	20
Kay	18,964	17,771	1,193	19,001	17,851	1,150	6.3%	6.1%	6.5%	5.7%	60
Kingfisher	8,397	8,145	252	8,445	8,175	270	3.0%	3.2%	3.2%	2.6%	6
Major	3,970	3,813	157	3,992	3,835	157	4.0%	3.9%	4.2%	3.0%	21
Noble	5,761	5,563	198	5,789	5,591	198	3.4%	3.4%	3.8%	2.9%	11
Payne	38,533	37,163	1,370	38,918	37,544	1,374	3.6%	3.5%	3.6%	2.9%	15
Texas	9,544	9,249	295	9,623	9,316	307	3.1%	3.2%	3.2%	2.8%	8
Woods	5,304	5,157	147	5,371	5,215	156	2.8%	2.9%	3.2%	2.5%	3
Woodward	9,506	8,995	511	9,576	9,059	517	5.4%	5.4%	6.0%	5.2%	48

In order to move closer to the Governor’s goal of increasing the number of credentialed workers in the state, the NOWB will need to create an outreach plan to help the Area’s residents become aware of training options that lead to industry recognized credentials as well as available jobs. The NOWB can also connect with Area public school systems to assist with the efforts for drop-out prevention in order to increase the number of high school graduates specifically targeting minority populations.

More data about the Region which includes the Northwestern Area can be found in the Western Oklahoma Regional Plan.

4. Provide an analysis of workforce development activities\*, including providing the SWOT analysis, that indicates how the local area's service delivery system is prepared to meet the community's workforce development needs.

a. Describe the strengths and weaknesses of workforce development activities.

The three Chief Local Elected Officials (CLEOs) and Workforce Board Chairs notably lead and participated in the combined, regional planning process as did a reasonable cross-section of Board membership and state and local agency representatives.

The self-assessment that was utilized in conjunction with the SWOT analysis assisted the Area to focus on a system that is meeting the customer's needs, accessible, current, innovative, and continuously improving.

The self-assessment tool was tabulated and for the three areas (governance, business services, and job seeker services) the Area's respondents voted these items as high priorities, in the initial phase (The team has discussed this indicator but has not started planning ), and the respondents were open to training:

- Governance - "The region has described to our local workforce development board(s)'s strategic vision to support regional economic growth and economic self-sufficiency. This must include goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce (including youth and individuals with barriers to employment), and goals relating to the performance accountability measures based on performance indicators."
- Business Services – "Business services outreach is an integrated, collaborative process that is developed and shared among all the partners within the system. Someone is designated to coordinate the business services outreach program among our regional partners."
- Job Seeker Services – "Our partners have developed and are implementing their plan to eliminate duplication of core services."

With the submission and approval of this local plan, the NOWB intends to bring the partners into a more collaborative arena to better understand what the local plan's focus is and to align the Area's activities with the local plans goals. The NOWB will call for the committee formerly known as 'system certification' to start meeting again to review the available data from the job seeker and business services matrices in order to focus on organizing integrated, collaborative processes for business outreach.

The SWOT information below is from the Western Oklahoma Regional Plan.

#### 1. STRENGTHS

- a. Top Findings: Small Town Commitments, Variety of Industries , Military Bases - Ft. Sill, Vance, Resourcefulness, Already have Relationships established, Strong Partnerships, Brick and Mortar already exists, Strong Leadership
- b. Supporting Findings: Career Technology Centers, Out of the Box Thinking, Diverse Populations, Regional Universities, Agriculture, Native American Tribes, Wind Energy and Other Natural Resources, Local Workforce Offices, Working already, Sharing = workforce enhancement, Customer Focused, Regional Mindset, Strong Economic Development agencies

#### 2. WEAKNESSES

- a. Top Findings: Limited Transportation, Loss of Population / "limited" population (Funding Formulas affected by this), Budget Cuts, Funding, Access to Health Care – Rural Health Care diminishing, Lack of Knowledge of other Services/Resources, Common Performance Measures – Who gets credit, Accessibility / ADA Compliance, Market Instability
- b. Supporting Findings: Lack of Manufacturing, Boom or Bust Economy, Brain Drain, Marketing, Territorialism, Lack of Broadband, Logistics, Client Transportation, Lack of Workforce Personnel, Lack of affordable housing, Marketability of workforce system (can't use funds), Closure of current resources, No Draw for young people – Not hip/cool

#### 3. OPPORTUNITIES

- a. Top Findings: Shared Data Systems, Dual Enrollment w/different funding streams & both meet performance, More opportunities to better serve community because we're working together, Eliminate Duplication, Working / Increased Collaboration with tribes, Political Landscaped Change, Better Trained Case Managers, Opportunities to "Fill in Gaps", Apprenticeships and OJT
- b. Supporting Findings: Creative Advertising/Marketing, Job Fairs / Cooperative Agencies, Common Registration/Intake Systems, Dual Enrollment, Educate on all services available / across agencies, Agencies could share performance measures, More resources for employment, More transportation resources, "Team" Case Management, Dual Customer Approach – Biz needs = Job seeker needs, Forced innovative approach mentality, More educated workforce – TAA, Forces us to work more closely

#### 4. THREATS

- a. Top Findings: Sanctions for Poor Performance, Funding Cuts, Territorialism, Transient Workers, Duplication of Services, Redundancy, Over dependence on Oil & Gas Industry, Aging Population, Not being able to serve everyone
- b. Supporting Findings: Lower Commodity Prices, Unemployment rate versus funding, Perception that consolidation threatens small communities, Not being able to provide services across large geographical areas, Staff burnout with larger unmanageable areas, State staffs increasing while field staffs decreasing, Field morale: Asked to do more, with less; while state staff grows and does less

b. Describe the workforce development system's capacity to provide the workforce development activities to address the education and skill needs of the workforce, including individuals with barriers to employment.

The public workforce system under the direction of the NOWB is responsible for serving a diverse population of business and job-seeking customers. The NOWB ensure that a full range of employment and training programs and services delivered through the Area's system are accessible to and will meet the needs of displaced homemakers, low-income individuals, women, minorities, individuals training for non-traditional employment, veterans, public assistance recipients and individuals with multiple barriers to employment (including older individuals, people with limited English-speaking proficiency, and people with disabilities) through the Oklahoma Works partnerships and programs.

All career and training services provided by the WIOA Title I Service Provider are available to all groups of people and accessible through the Oklahoma Works Offices. The NOWB is exploring new and more "customer friendly"/easier ways to access these services possibly via other outlets using technology or satellite offices. Without exception, there will be a large cost involved with new technology so the NOWB will clearly be seeking funding from the state or other resources. It is hoped that the state will invest in a system that is sufficient for all areas to utilize and can pay for it with set-aside funds.

There are no "special/exclusive" services set aside for specific groups of individuals; all job seekers are taken through the same process to determine needs and address barriers. At the time of this local plan's development, there are no specific nontraditional training and employment activities provided in the Area. The special needs of each of the above listed targeted groups are identified during the objective assessment/initial assessment process (service strategy design process) which is in place in each of the Area's Oklahoma Works Offices.

The related partners have a similar process mandated by their finding stream and/or state office. The process to receive services is simple—a job seeker walks into an Oklahoma Works office to speak to a staff member and the assessment process begins. The main goal is to help the job seeker obtain employment. After receiving basic career services and the One Stop Operator or staff has made a determination that the customer is unable to obtain employment or is unable to retain employment or get a better job without more intensive services, if the job seeker is eligible and desires more intensive services and the assessment process continues. The WIOA Title I staff then go through a procedure with the customer of determining, through assessment,

career planning, and counseling, what specific services the customer needs to obtain a job or get a better job. Because of the close connection with local partners, the services provided are considered 'wrap-around services' as they are intended to overcome the barriers to employment not just focus on one programs performance goals.

In the Northwestern Area, the recent move to have WIOA Title I staff serve in a comprehensive role and not just per specific program (adult, dislocated worker, youth) allows the staff to participate in 'joint staffing or 'team case management' efforts. The collective affect is the job seeker is surrounded by a team of workers, programs, and agency staff who can support the job seeker throughout the course of the journey to employment and career advancement.

c. Describe the employment needs of employers.

The knowledge and skills needed to meet the demands of the existing and emerging industries in the Northwestern Area are similar to that of the Western Oklahoma Region and range from less than a high school diploma to advanced degrees and certifications.

Businesses in the Area want qualified talent for their businesses – workers who have the knowledge, skills sets, and abilities that will meet and/or exceed their workforce needs and help the business maintain a competitive advantage and/or become globally competitive in the current and future markets. Soft skills and hard skills are both of major concern for businesses. Research has shown that businesses desire employees who exhibit the following: problem solving and critical thinking skills, positive work ethic, appropriate life management skills (balance between personal and work life), strong oral and written communication skills, interpersonal skills (team work), information gathering and organizational skills, occupational and job-related skills, self-direction and personal initiative, and customer service skills.

The skills needed by business are clearly as complex as advanced training can provide but also as straightforward as needing the employee to show up to work on-time. The Area's goal is that the available workforce is (1) endowed with the knowledge, skills, and abilities that will equip them to obtain, retain and advance in the jobs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century that will give them a good quality of life for their families, and (2) able to meet the needs of business for skilled works which will promote the businesses ability to remain locally, regionally, and globally competitive.

5. Based on the information above, describe the local area's key workforce development issues and possible solutions to be implemented within the local area.\*

The Area addresses the continual workforce demand changes by annually reviewing the Demand Occupations Policy/List and updating it to support a skilled and ready workforce for employers. There is still a gap of workers that do not possess the skills needed by employers for high wage jobs.

The Area supports the development of career pathways as a method through which workers can move up the career ladder by completing short-term certificate training programs that lead to credentials and upward mobility in their career of choice. This laddering effect, over time, produces a better-trained and qualified workforce for local employers, as well as higher wages for employees, which, in turn, creates a positive economic impact on local communities and the state as a whole. The lack of a defined or developed career pathway for any industry is stunting growth for the Area. It is hoped that with the development of a Regional Sector Strategy the progress toward career pathways will be established.

The NOWB, in coordination with the Western Oklahoma Planning Region, will begin its focus on Health Care Industry and use the sector strategy framework to begin to develop a Health Care sector strategy. We will expand to other industries after we complete the framework for Health Care. Our goal is to have the framework for Health Care completed by July 1, 2018.



6. Based on the analysis above, provide a description\* of the local board's strategic vision and goals to support economic growth and economic self-sufficiency, including:

a. Goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce, including individuals with barriers to employment; and,

After the successful merger of the North Central and Northwest Oklahoma Workforce Investment Areas in 2012 to form the 17 county Northwestern Oklahoma Workforce Development Area, the OOWD told the Northwestern Oklahoma Workforce Board (NOWB) to wait on developing a strategic plan until guidance was established by OOWD. The proposed NOWB mission is “To provide a collaborative talent development system within the region” and the proposed NOWB vision is “Innovative leadership advancing a quality talent development system”.

The strategic vision is driven by the intent of WIOA. WIOA states that the purpose of a local workforce development board is to set policy, oversee the workforce development system, coordinate resources, and convene partners and employers for the local portion of the statewide workforce development system.

Under WIOA, priority must be given to veterans, recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals, and individuals who are basic skills deficient in the provision of individualized career services and training services. Priority must be provided regardless of the level of funds received by the local Board.

Because WIOA programs are statutorily required to provide priority for public assistance, low-income and basic skills deficient individuals, priority at the local Oklahoma Works offices must be 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 basic skills deficient would receive first priority for services provided with WIOA adult formula funds.
- 2) Non-covered persons (that is, individuals who are not veterans or eligible spouses) who are included in the groups given priority because of being recipients of public assistance, low income or basic skills deficient.
- 3) Veterans and eligible spouses who are not included in the group of public assistance, low income or basic skills deficient.
- 4) Non-covered persons outside the groups given priority listed above.

WIOA provides federal funds to assist states and local workforce development systems to increase the employment, retention, earnings and occupational skill attainment of workers, particularly those individuals with barriers to employment. Oklahoma and the Area have programs and supports in place in serving individuals with barriers to employment through the Oklahoma Works initiative and partnerships and local collaborative efforts with economic development organizations, community based organizations, and faith based organizations.

b. Goals relating to the performance accountability measures based on performance indicators.

The negotiated rates for the federal WIOA Title I programs and the Wagner-Peyser Program can be found on question 10 of the “Local Workforce Development System Description” section.

The past several years have seen many businesses in the Area either closing and moving internationally or relocating to another part of the United States. This, plus the national economy still recovering from the recession and the ever flexing energy industry, has caused some unrest in the job market as workers who had been with a company for 15 plus years are now dislocated from those jobs. Because of this, the Area has

focused mainly on short-term prevocational services or Occupational Skills Training to get workers back into the job market as quick as possible capitalizing on transferable skills or through the obtainment of an industry recognized credential for a demand-occupation. On-the-Job Training contracts were successful in the past the NOWB is seeking new opportunities for more.

In the past, the Registered Apprenticeship programs were not pushed as a priority of service for our customers. NOWB will work with community colleges, technology centers, employers, and trade organizations to re-invigorate the “learn and earn” training opportunities. The NOWB has reached out the Federal and State Registered Apprenticeship offices to discuss how the workforce system can prepare individuals for apprenticeships. Further guidance from DOL on how WIOA training resources can be used in the Registered Apprenticeship model should clarify the funding strategies; however, until then, NOWB will apply its current policies to assist individuals interested in Registered Apprenticeships. The NOWB feels that by providing more opportunities to connect business with qualified talent with programs like Registered Apprenticeships, performance accountability measures can be easier to attain.

The NOWB will continue to work with the Area’s Key Economic Networks (KEN) and Champion as well as all the Western Oklahoma Planning Regions KEN Champions as they help drive the strategies and tasks needed to strengthen the talent delivery system. Given skill and talent supply concerns shared by local employers, the NOWB will be looking at the Health Care industry for opportunities to develop sector strategies and create opportunities to collaborate and leverage best practices. This will allow for the coordination and investment in partnership infrastructure where such may not have yet been developed.

7. Describe the strategy\* to work with entities that carry out the core programs and required partners to align resources available to the local area, to achieve the strategic vision and goals.

The NOWB is charged with the implementation of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 whose purpose is to “improve the quality of the workforce, reduce welfare dependency, and enhance the productivity and competitiveness of the Nation.” The NOWB has accepted the responsibility for convening the system partners to promote collaboration and reduce duplication.

The “Local Workforce Development System Description” (next section) elaborates on how the NOWB strategic policy is performed at the operational level.

Representatives from WIOA core programs serve as members of the NOWB. Local board representation allows for formal input on the direction of workforce activities and resource alignment. Although not yet fully formed and functional, a workforce system team is being developed to convene regularly to address Oklahoma Works (workforce development) activities, service integration, and the implementation of area wide workforce development initiatives.

## **B. Local Workforce Development System Description:**

1. Describe the workforce development system in the local area by addressing each of the following.  
a. List and describe the programs that are included in the system.

The Northwestern Oklahoma Workforce Development Area currently partners with the required WIOA partners in Sec 121 (b):

- WIOA Title I (Adult Dislocated Worker and Youth formula programs) administered by the U.S. Department of Labor
- Adult Education and Literacy Act programs administered by the U.S. Department of Education
- Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Services administered by the U.S. Department of Labor
- Rehabilitation Act Title I programs administered by the U.S. Department of Education

- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
- Public libraries
- Youth Build
- Oklahoma Career Technology
- Community Based Organizations
- Youth and family services organizations

b. List the location(s) of the comprehensive One Stop Center(s) (at least one) within your local area; and any affiliated or specialized centers (both physically and electronically linked, such as libraries) in the local workforce development area.

The Area currently has five Oklahoma Works Offices located in Enid, Guymon, Ponca City, Stillwater, and Woodward. The Enid Office serves Alfalfa, Garfield, Major, Blaine, Kingfisher, and Grant counties. The Guymon Office serves Texas, Beaver, and Cimarron counties. The Ponca City Office serves Kay and Noble Counties. The Stillwater Office serves Payne County. The Woodward Office serves Dewey, Ellis, Harper, Woods, and Woodward counties.

The Enid Office was chosen as the “comprehensive center” to comply with the requirements of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and the State but the NOWB is considering changing that location to another office that has more co-located partners and a more solid partnership structure. Oklahoma Job Match/Oklahoma Service Link is the current data management information system for the Centers and it is available on from any location with an internet connection. Access points, and potential satellite Offices, establishment are being discussed to better serve job seekers.

Once developed, Oklahoma Works partners will be executing the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) encapsulating the rules, playing field, and goals of the Oklahoma Works System and Offices in the Area. While expedited by NOWB, core programs and partners should provide input into its development to ensure positive understanding and pro-active execution.

The workforce system is often a confusing marriage of private and public agencies, programs, and services. To enlighten stakeholders and other community partners, NOWB is developing a system-wide in-service event(s) to hopefully take place before December 2017 that should assist partners in information sharing related to agency functions, programs, and services and, in turn, meet the needs of Oklahoma Works customers in the most comprehensive manner possible.

c. Identify your key strategies for aligning the core programs (WIOA Title I, II, III, and IV programs) as well as all required partner programs within the local the local one-stop system of comprehensive and affiliate offices by addressing each of the following items.

- Assess the types and availability of adult and dislocated worker employment and training activities in the local area.

The WIOA Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth Programs are available in all of our Oklahoma Works Offices. The contracted staff have transitioned into comprehensive case managers of all three programs (adult, dislocated worker, and youth). If services are not easily assessable to customers, the staff (partner staff are encouraged to act likewise) can make arrangements to meet job seekers offsite. The attached flyer is a representation of services available at the Oklahoma Works Offices. See appendix A.

To support the progress toward more availability of employment and training activities in the Area, the NOWB will reignite system partner meetings and explore the option of a regional partner meetings to:

- complete gap analysis and identify key services
- complete process mapping

- discuss infrastructure cost sharing
- utilize the Access for All Certification Process developed by OKDRS. See appendix B

- Provide an explanation of how the local board addresses local rapid response activities.

The responsibility of the Oklahoma Office of Workforce Development's (OOWD) Rapid Response Team is fully supported by the NOWB and the area's One Stop system partners. When mass layoffs or plant closures occur, the state Rapid Response Team notifies the local Rapid Response Team which takes immediate steps to augment the state team with its designated Rapid Response members to quickly respond. The swift response is in order to help workers find other appropriate jobs to return them to the workforce as quickly as possible. Quick coordination between state and local team members is believed by the NOWB to be vitally important because by rapidly responding to the situation, the pain and anguish of affected dislocated workers can be minimized. This state and local partnership is effective. Meetings with affected employers and workers are scheduled at the convenience of the employer and whenever possible, prior to the closure or layoff onsite at the company and on company.

At these meetings, and/or when they visit an area Oklahoma Works Office, information on services focus on ensuring that affected workers are aware of all the services that are available—Unemployment Insurance, childcare assistance, health insurance information, job search assistance, labor market information, financial and stress management assistance, and training services assistance. Workers attending the Rapid Response meetings are also informed of the NOWB's Demand Occupation List. If affected workers are unable to find employment, training services are offered. Training utilizing WIOA Title I funds will only be approved and funded if the training program leads to employment in one of the NOWB's Demand Occupations. The NOWB is committed to helping dislocated workers get back on their feet as quickly as possible, but would like to see them obtain new employment in occupations that are deemed most in demand in the area. In addition, to the services already mentioned, Job Fairs are scheduled frequently in the Area to specifically assist this targeted group or any other person who seeking employment.

- Describe how the local board will coordinate relevant secondary and post-secondary education programs and activities with workforce investment activities to coordinate strategies, enhance services, and avoid duplication of services.

The NOWB has membership from Post-Secondary education programs and representatives from the secondary education system attend NOWB meetings. The NOWB works closely with all partners including public schools, technology centers, and regional colleges and universities to support and assist in activities to coordinate strategies, enhance services, and avoid duplication of services. A project taking shape in the Area is an early exposure to career opportunities which is slated to take effect early summer 2017. The project began as a way to introduce high school students to the construction industry by the HIREs committee of the Northwest Oklahoma Alliance of which the NOWB is an active member. HIREs stands for Helping Individuals Reach Employment Success. Through this project, public school teachers will participate in tours of area career technology centers to learn more about the available training programs that lead to jobs and the skills necessary to graduate from those training programs. The afternoon will involve tours of the major employers in the community. The goal of the project is to support teachers by providing them with information about career options for their students who can then translate their coursework into potential job opportunities. The project is also forecasted to help students stay involved in school to graduate, connect to available resources, and make positive career choices.

- Describe how the local board, in coordination with the One Stop operator, maximizes coordination, improves service delivery, and avoids duplication of Wagner-Peyser Act services and other services provided through the delivery system.

The NOWB staff and the One Stop Operator meet regularly with partners to coordinate efforts. We discuss ways can effectively serve customers without duplications of Wagner-Peyser Act and other services and how

to maximize the potential of all available system staff. Each partner talks about the services their agency can provide, the eligibility requirements, and methods of delivery. The process has been arduous as the area is large and spread-out and partners are still working through 'territory' issues.

- Describe how the local board will coordinate WIOA Title I workforce investment activities with adult education and literacy activities under WIOA Title II, including how the local board will carry out the review of local applications submitted under Title II.

The NOWB and the Oklahoma Works Offices work closely with the Title II Adult Education and Literacy programs to provide access to our centers and to support efforts by Title II to help create a pipeline of available talent. Title II services, such as GED preparation classes, are offered off-site but efforts are being made to incorporate those classes into the service delivery model of the Oklahoma Works Offices. The WIOA Title I staff can co-enroll Title II customers, if eligible and needed, to further their education requirements similar to the coordination with Youth Build in the Enid Oklahoma Works Office. The One Stop Operator has met with local Title II staff in Woodward contact to discuss partnerships and programs. The local Woodward contact attends many of the NOWB meetings. Once notified of the need to review local applications submitted under Title II, the NOWB will form a committee for the review. The NOWB will require technical assistance and training from the appropriate entity so as to best serve the review process and provide adequate responses/recommendations.

- Describe and assess the type and availability of youth workforce investment activities in the local area, including activities for youth who are individuals with disabilities, and provide an identification of successful models.

The WIOA Title I Service Provider is responsible for providing the youth fourteen program elements and implementing a comprehensive program design from outreach through performance. The Title I staff refer eligible youth to other contractors, vendors, and community organizations that will deliver the youth program elements or service (if not provided 'in-house') and provide eligible youth the services that are already paid for through another resource to ensure WIOA Title I funds are spent last.

The Title I Staff in all five Oklahoma Works Offices are comprehensive case managers working the adult, dislocated worker, and youth programs. The move to comprehensive staff was a concerted effort to make sure the emphasis was on the assessment, individual needs, and services provided to the individual job seeker customer rather than focusing on eligibility first.

The NOWB's Title I Service Provider, by contract requirement, has developed structured and effective outreach process to ensure that there is an adequate flow of eligible youth applicants to meet program enrollment requirements. The program has linkages to groups or organizations in the community that support the referral and participation of eligible local area youth such as Youth Build, Department of Human Services, GED Training Classes, Native American Tribes, Oklahoma Works Office Partners, YMCA and YWCA, Women's Shelters, Youth and Family Services, Local High Schools, Career Technology Centers, Law Enforcement and Oklahoma Juvenile Affairs, and other community organizations. Opportunities with employers are addressed through activities such as but not limited to: job shadowing, paid and unpaid work experiences, job matching and employer engagement. The youth may also be exposed to post-secondary training opportunities with tours at universities and technology centers.

The NOWB, through its Service Provider, works with local agencies responsible for education, foster care, human services, juvenile justice, housing, and transportation. Members of the NOWB and the Youth committee represent education, human services, juvenile justice, and housing and provide input on Area youth activities including the Title I program. Youth are required to register in the Oklahoma Job Match/Oklahoma Service Link system prior to enrollment into a program. The Service Provider has made provisions for work experiences, internships and job shadowing and focused on spending a minimum of 20% on work-based learning.

A project started by Ponca City Development Authority (PCDA) called Careers & Cookies is currently being reviewed for replication in other portions of the Area. The goal of the project is to provide high school students with the opportunities to explore local career options and visit with local businesses about how education and training will improve chances for successful workforce attachment and increased wages.

The NOWB feels that it has established a strong and reliable network of organizations such as the local school districts, technical colleges, community action programs, social service agencies, other community agencies, and faith-based groups vital to reaching out and recruiting youth and collaborating in service delivery.

The Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitative Services (OKDRS) provided a document called “Oklahoma Works Workforce System Access for All Certification Process” to assist local areas and regions as they consider the physical space and accessible technology of the workforce development system. The document focuses on the environments that Job Seekers interact with when participating in services provided through the Oklahoma Works Workforce System Partners. In the end, Oklahoma Works Workforce System Partners and Workforce Areas will work through an ‘Access for All Accessibility Process’. See appendix B

**(Include a copy of any completed Process Maps and how they are used to align services and avoid duplication of services).**

**d. Describe the roles and resource contributions of each of the one-stop partners. Please include the completed Job Seeker and Business Services service matrices.**

The matrices for the Area were never “completed” as the system certification process that was originally required was an option. NOWB will reignite system partner meetings and explore the opportunity of a regional partner meetings to:

- complete process mapping and revise as needed
- complete gap analysis and identify key services
- discuss infrastructure cost sharing

Each of the Area’s One Stop Partners has been participating in the on-going changes of the workforce development system to better serve the public. Each has committed to encourage appropriate contributions based on Federal and State guidance to further improve and streamline services to businesses and job seekers.

**2. Describe how the local board will work with entities carrying out core programs to accomplish the following outcomes:**

**a. Expand access to employment, training, education, and supportive services for eligible individuals, particularly eligible individuals with barriers to employment.**

The NOWB will expand access to employment, training, education, and supportive services for eligible individuals, particularly eligible individuals with barriers to employment by remaining in connection with the Oklahoma WIOA State Plan, Section VI, Program-Specific for Core Programs as written and as amended by Federal and State guidelines. This guidance includes Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth Activities under Title I-B; Wagner-Peyser Program (Employment Services); Adult Education and Family Literacy Act Programs; and Vocational Rehabilitation. The Area will continue to refer participants and receive referrals from partner organizations. We are currently waiting on state guidance to help facilitate the inclusion of all core partners into the One Stop Centers/Oklahoma Works Offices.

The Area is in the process of exploring a mandatory ‘information to services workshop’ to be provided to all potential participants. It is hoped that this workshop will help Area citizens better understand what is available to assist them in their job search efforts but also to connect them with the most appropriate

resources to overcome barriers that have kept them from successful connection to the workforce or advancing on jobs. The NOWB will continue to work with partners to ensure WIOA funds are spent last.

b. Facilitate the development of career pathways\*.

From the Western Oklahoma Regional Plan - As of the date when this Regional Plan was prepared for publication (March, 2017), the Governor's Council for Workforce and Economic Development (GCWED) had not yet announced a policy on the requirements for Career Pathways.

Defining the Problem:

However, South-Central Oklahoma is seen as the leading region in the State of Oklahoma and Nationally (National Career Pathways Network) by those involved in Career Pathways development.

Based on these outcomes, SOIC refined its work plan to focus on only one issue—

*Improving, impacting and connecting Oklahoma's education systems by championing the support and alignment of education to promote business growth and job creation, giving Oklahoma a strategic, sustainable advantage.*

Defining Career Pathways:

One can research the term *Career Pathways* to better understand the meaning of the expression until exhaustion sets in. As mentioned, there is a great deal of information available on the Internet from sites such as Wikipedia, the United States Department of Education and the United States Department of Labor. Definitions on these sites will vary, but overall everyone seems to agree on the basic concept and definition.

Simply stated, a Career Pathway:

...is a framework for connecting a series of educational programs with integrated work experiences and supportive services thereby enabling *students and workers* to complete school and work and advance over time to better jobs and higher levels of education and training.

...is a systemic approach that ensures a pipeline of appropriately skilled and credentialed workers ready and available for Oklahoma businesses to hire.

...targets jobs in industries of importance to local economies.

...involves a great deal of career education. Some experts even suggest tying career education to subject matter as early as the five and six-year-old level.

Most importantly, a Career Pathway

...is NOT a program, but a systemic framework for a new way of doing business in our high schools, colleges and communities in support of the workforce needs of business and industry.

The U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, has produced a document\* that states that Career pathway programs feature the following characteristics:

- 1) Sector Strategy
- 2) Stackable Education/Training Options
- 3) Contextualized Learning
- 4) Integrated Education & Training
- 5) Industry-Recognized Credentials
- 6) Multiple Entry & Exit Points
- 7) Intensive Wrap-Around Services
- 8) Designed for Working Learners

The Governor's Council for Workforce and Economic Development has adopted the following definitions for the development of a statewide Career Pathways initiative:

### *Career Pathways Definition*

The term "career pathways programs" means a clear sequence of employer validated education coursework and/or training credentials and certifications that include the following components:

- Are aligned with the skill needs of industries important to local, regional, or state economies in which they are located, and reflect the active engagement of employers in targeted ecosystems regarding the skill requirements for employment or career progression in high demand occupations.
- Include the full range of secondary, adult education, and postsecondary education options, including registered apprenticeship, with a non- duplicative progression of courses clearly articulated from one level of instruction to the next, with opportunities to earn postsecondary credits and lead to industry-recognized [and/or] postsecondary credentials.
- Include curriculum and instruction strategies that make work a central context for learning (contextual learning) and help students attain work readiness skills.
- Include, as appropriate for the individual, integrated education and training that combine occupational skills training with adult education services, give credit for prior learning, and adopt other strategies that accelerate the educational and career advancement of the participant.
- Lead to the attainment of an industry-recognized degree or credential, which may include stackable credentials of value in the labor market and that articulate progressively to higher-level credentials or degrees.
- Help a worker enter or advance within a specific sector or occupational field, regardless of their skills at the point of entry.
- Include academic and career counseling, wrap-around support services particularly at points of transition, and support the development of an individual career plan.
- Are organized to meet the particular needs of adults, including childcare, accommodating work schedules with flexible and non-semester based scheduling, alternative class times and locations, accessible learning formats, and the innovative use of technology.
- Have the goal of increasing an individual's educational and skills attainment and employment outcomes.

Provide a list of the career pathways, and for each include:

- The phase of development (conceptual, in initial implementation, being sustained, or, expanding);

Career Pathways can be considered to be well beyond conceptual and implementation in the Region although not yet achieved in the Area.

Duncan, OK, in August of 2011, was the first city in Oklahoma to have successfully launched a Career Pathways program. Lawton, Oklahoma launched their Career Pathways program in 2016. Currently meetings are being held to implement career pathways in the Southwest area in a multi-community effort.

A project taking shape in the Northwestern Area is an early exposure to career opportunities which is slated to take effect summer 2017. The project began as a way to introduce high school students to the construction industry by the HIREs committee of the Northwest Oklahoma Alliance of which the NOWB is an active member. HIREs stands for Helping Individuals Reach Employment Success. Through this project, high school teachers will participate in tours of area career technology centers to learn more about the available training programs that lead to jobs and the skills necessary to graduate from those training programs. The afternoon will involve several tours of the major employers in the community. The goal of the project is to support teachers by providing them with information about career options for their students who can then translate



their coursework into potential job opportunities. The project is also forecasted to help students stay involved in school to graduate, connect to available resources, and make positive career choices.

Communities across the state have followed this lead and implementation occurs community by community. A pure definition would say that we are seeing expansion of the programmatic concept in the Western Oklahoma Region.

The NOWB plans to promote Career Pathways to all public schools in the Western Oklahoma Region by supporting job shadowing, encouraging schools to participate in the Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) events occurring in the region, coordinating with Southern Oklahoma Impact Coalition Pathway Team to promote the Career Pathways model used by Duncan Public Schools in other Schools in the region, and creating a resource book of companies that would be interested in job shadowing.

- Workforce Demand (need) – Describe the business workforce need being addressed by the strategy. Indicate the industry(s) and occupations being represented, how the need was determined, and the occupational skills to be addressed;

One business workforce need being addressed is to increase certification of Registered Nurses (RNs) in the Western Region. Based on regional ecosystem industries and workforce and economic development data, found in O\*Net and CareerOneStop, RNs are a specific occupation in demand in our Western Region.

The occupational skills addressed are to assess patient health problems and needs, develop and implement nursing care plans, and maintain medical records; administer nursing care to ill, injured, convalescent, or disabled patients. RNs may advise patients on health maintenance and disease prevention or provide case management. Registered nurses usually take one of three education paths: a bachelor's degree in nursing, an associate's degree in nursing, or a diploma from an approved nursing program. Registered nurses also must be licensed.

In 2009, the Southwest Oklahoma Impact Coalition (SOIC) concluded a multi-year major task of conducting in-depth personal interviews with nearly 600 businesses and industries in the southwest region of the state utilizing a tool that allowed all the collected data to be aggregated into one information profile. This data was then examined to determine and prioritize major barriers and obstacles to growth and expansion for the purpose of developing a work plan to address these growth-confining issues. Sectors interviewed included manufacturers, service industries, wholesale and retail trade, raw materials production, utilities, convention and tourism and construction. Virtually every type and size of business was interviewed.

The outcome of these surveys was that —across the board— business and industry owners identified the *lack of skilled and trained workers* as the number one barrier to growth in their particular sector. Due to the economic down- turn, in 2010 SOIC conducted focus groups with the manufacturing, Health Care and energy sectors to validate that the concern still existed and the results showed it did. By definition of a regional area (defined by OWDI #1-2017), the barriers should remain consistent across the entire Western Oklahoma Region.

- Relevance – Indicate the connection between the demand and the priority(ies) for the region;

In 2011, Governor Fallin's Task Force on Economic Development and Job Creation, found that while "Oklahoma has pockets of excellence, but no systemic effort that connects career exploration, career guidance and counseling, mentoring career pathways and related programs to the skills and credentials that are needed by business."

In April 2012, 61% of the Oklahoma executives responding to the FallinforBusiness.com survey indicated that the availability of skilled labor was "fair or poor." Certainly, this concern has not diminished and, in fact, according to the businesses surveyed, the need for skilled workers is on the rise.

Coordinated efforts between Title I and other system partners are expanding and supporting learning opportunities for workers at all stages of their education or career paths. Partners offer greater career and education guidance for adults through career and education planning workshops. Workshops are designed to help customers explore local and state labor markets, emerging and demand occupations and result in a training plan.

- Strategy – Identify the sector partners and the role of each;

Each Western Oklahoma community has its own Business & Industry, Education/Training, Economic Development, Government and Service Provider array, so a cookie cutter approach does not work. However, Business and Industry, through economic development and community organizations must engage the secondary and post-secondary education structure to solidify first a communications relationship and following that an approach to identifying specific workforce needs and finally creating workforce development solutions through education and training. Our goal will continue to be the sponsorship and collaboration effort through our local and regional economic development and community organizations to refine our strategy for career pathways development into the future.

- Funding – Describe available resources that will support the strategy;

The Oklahoma Office of Workforce Development has provided no funding for Career Pathways development as of the publication of this Local Plan. We currently have to charge staff time and travel from our existing WIOA grants to support career pathways development and activities.

Despite this challenge, the Western Region is thinking strategically about how to focus on creating a comprehensive system for career pathways. The primary strategy will be to increase and enhance sector partnerships to educate employers about the importance of developing career pathways, share the opportunities that Oklahoma Works Office has available to support this development, and create a systemic flow of information between businesses, Oklahoma Works, and higher education institutions.

Our regional area will continue to utilize Title I Youth, Adult and Dislocated Worker funds in partnership with other entities that provide workforce services, adult and basic education, and rehabilitation services. Together these partner entities expand the access to employment, training, education, and supportive services for eligible individuals, particularly eligible individuals with barriers to employment. This facilitates the development of career pathways and co-enrollment into core programs, and improves access to activities leading to recognized postsecondary credentials, including industry-recognized certificates and certificates that are portable and stackable.

- Unfunded Critical Elements – Identify any critical elements for the identified strategy that must be done for the success of the strategy that cannot be met with available resources. This may include: the expansion of an existing strategy, in any phase, from one LWDA to others in the region; the need to procure new training vendors; planning sessions involving multiple partners; training of One-Stop staff; and development of regional data collection systems.

The Oklahoma Office of Workforce Development has provided no funding for Career Pathways development as of the publication of this local plan. We currently support charging staff time and travel from our existing WIOA grants to support career pathways. All elements of Career Pathways are critical to support WIOA and the state plan.

One of the unfunded critical elements in the Western Region is funding of personnel in the Oklahoma Works Offices. The Case Managers within the Oklahoma Works Offices are to assist the client in attaining the necessary credentials and receive the supportive services available to achieve their career pathway. The Governor's Council for Workforce and Economic Development has set a state goal of 40% of WIOA local

funding spent on client training dollars only. This percentage does not include supportive services, personnel, and lease/rental of Oklahoma Works Offices. The 40% is not feasible at this time so work must be done as a region on cost sharing to meet the state goal.

The Western Region will continue to identify and leverage cross-agency, cross-program resources.

c. Facilitate co-enrollment, as appropriate, in core programs.

Since July 1, 2006, NOWB moved with the rest of the State to a 'service integrated' model in which any customer who reported to a Oklahoma Works Office or satellite offices and receives a staff assisted service would be considered as being "served", in whole or in part, by both WIOA (WIA at the time) and Labor Exchange (LE). Those accessing only self-service or informational activities count in performance for Labor Exchange. This model was intended to help eliminate duplication of services and streamline staff involvement with all customers so the customer wasn't shuffled from desk to desk for specific programs. This model has not been changed by the NOWB but there is lack of clarity as to how this model is supported by both WIOA and the Oklahoma Employment Security Commission (OESC) staff. The model clearly needs to be adjusted.

WIOA places a strong emphasis on planning across multiple partner programs to ensure alignment in service delivery. One key goal is to develop effective partnerships across programs and community-based providers to supply individuals the employment, education, and training services they need. Effective partnering is pivotal to maximize resources and to align services with career pathways and sector strategies. Career pathways allow for individuals to succeed in an environment that accounts for their current abilities and skill levels and provides them with an appropriate service structure to advance not just within an individual job but within an occupation or occupational cluster. In order to effectively promote and develop career pathways and sector strategies, it is vital that the WIOA core and One Stop partner programs work together to ensure a customer-centered approach to service delivery.

The Area will continue to work toward co-enrollment for all core programs, as appropriate, but is seeking clarification guidance from the state as to how co-enrollment is to work among the core programs.

d. Improve access to activities leading to a recognized post-secondary credential (including a credential that is an industry-recognized certificate or certification, portable, and stackable).

All staff in the system should be focused on leading job seekers into the demand occupations for the Area. The One Stop Operator is working on fostering those relationships so all staff are aware of the demand occupations and the contacts for the local educational facilities that provide such training. The staff in the Oklahoma Works Offices, specifically the Title I staff, assist customers in the direction of obtaining a recognized post-secondary credential, such as an industry-recognized certificate or certification, portable and stackable in the training procurement process. The Area is dedicated to providing attainable credential goals by partnering with the local technology centers and community colleges, and registered apprenticeship programs to ensure multiple avenues are available to the job seeker to obtain a post-secondary credential or industry recognized certificate.

e. Facilitate engagement of employers\* in workforce development programs, including small employers and employers in in-demand industry sectors and occupations to:

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

The NOWB engages local business members by being a business led and business driven Board of Directors. Board staff works closely with business members to understand their needs when developing policy and determining demand occupations. All system staff are encouraged to meet with businesses in their local area on a regular basis so they can nurture those relationships and establish positive referrals for the job orders. As

part of their contract, the Title I Service Provider must also conduct face-to-face meetings with business to provide information about the workforce development system and services, not just the Title I programs.

The NOWB will use the Region's newly developed sector strategy framework to help further meet business needs.

- Provide better coordination between workforce development programs and economic development;

The NOWB works closely with our local and regional economic development agencies. We are current members of the Northwest Oklahoma Alliance (NWOA), Woodward Chamber of Commerce, and Panhandle Regional Economic Development Coalition Incorporated (PREDCI). The Ponca City Development Authority (PCDA) and the City of Alva's Economic Developer are members of the NOWB. Since workforce development is a key building block for Economic Development, we lend our expertise and assistance as needed to economically grow and sustain our communities.

The Area has previously had memberships to area chambers of commerce and other economic development organizations but due to budget cuts has had to let those membership go. The NOWB members, staff and all system staff are strongly encouraged to participate in the local community events and meetings that are regularly held and are in connection with economic development to better understand where they can be supported.

- Support sector partnership strategies, including a list of active sector partnerships. For each, describe:
  - The phase of development (conceptual, in initial implementation, being sustained, or, expanding)

Sector strategies and career pathways are being developed to support and align with the five ecosystems (economic systems) of the state: Aerospace and Defense, Agriculture and Biosciences, Energy, Information and Financial Services and Transportation and Distribution, to ensure Oklahomans are exposed to those in-demand careers in wealth generating industries. In addition to the five state-dictated ecosystems, it is pertinent to include the complimentary ecosystem of Health Care which is projected to have the highest growth in Oklahoma at 11%. Registered Nurses and Nurse's Aides are two of the fastest growing occupations in the state and Area. These occupations, especially Registered Nurses, are high demand, high growth occupations that offer high wages. In all projected occupations by 2020, Health Care will be the industry with the highest growth.

The NOWB, in conjunction with the Western Oklahoma Planning Region, has selected Health Care as the primary sector strategy industry focus. The NOWB engages local business members by being a business led and business driven board. Board staff works closely with business members to listen to their needs when developing policy and determining demand occupations. We will use the Region's newly developed sector strategy framework to help further meet business needs. Sector Strategies are on-going and NOWB will expand its sector strategies as we receive changing guidance from the state. We will use current data to review high wage, high demand occupations and carefully select the industries sectors to begin our focus.

#### Sector Strategy Framework:

A sector strategy is a partnership of employers within a critical industry that brings together education, economic development, workforce systems, and community organizations to identify and collaboratively meet the workforce needs of that industry within a regional labor market.

Sector strategies represent a new way for workforce organizations to conduct business: moving from a "program administration" focus to a more strategic role building regional talent pipelines, addressing

skills gaps, and creating meaningful career pathways for a range of workers in important regional industries.

According to previous work and research, “great sector strategies”:

- Serve the dual purpose of aligning education, training, and support services to the needs of employers in an industry sector, while ensuring that those services are accessible to a range of workers
- Require a strong intermediary organization that sustains energy, coordinates dialogue, and brokers relationships among Service Providers and employers in carrying out the partnership’s agenda
- Are employer-driven, wherein employers recognize their self-interest in, need for, and the potential of the partnership
- Promote systemic change that benefits workers of all wage and skill levels, the industry, and the community at large
- Include the workforce system as a central player in any number of roles, such as the neutral intermediary body, the manager of operations and funding, and/or the source of labor market information

The framework described below is designed to help guide the Western Oklahoma Planning Region more effectively to operationalize sector strategies as they progress. It is understood that the growth and development of a sector strategy must be organic and not bound by one dominant program or partner within the system but rather as a benefit to industry and community.

#### Western Oklahoma Sector Strategy Basic Implementation Framework

1. Data informed decision making - use of rigorous data to make decisions about targeted industries and training investments
2. Industry engagement - broad and deep involvement of targeted industry sector employers in designing and delivering programs and services
3. Sector-based service delivery - how well are all partners facilitating the delivery of workforce solutions that are responsive to the needs of workers and targeted industry sectors?
4. Sustainability and continuous improvement - develop outcomes and how to measure success; financial sustainability of strategy
5. Organizational capacity and alignment - are there policy, personnel, vision, and resources in place to continually support sector strategy outcomes?

Although the region connects 3 different Oklahoma Workforce Areas, every effort will be made to collaborate, as appropriate, with a myriad of partners and business outside these arbitrary boundaries and across state lines. The Western Oklahoma Planning Region, by implementing sector strategies, intends to:

- ✓ Build on regional strengths;
- ✓ Align and link effective existing career pathway and sector strategies programs across the region;
- ✓ Focus on raising the skill level of all new entrants and existing workers rather than simple labor exchange;
- ✓ Communicating “a clear message that sector work can benefit all workers” is critical to engaging leadership beyond workforce development - Communicating that sector strategies are part of a broader competitiveness strategy will help to leverage diverse funding;
- ✓ Address the needs of employers by focusing intensively on the workforce needs of a specific industry sector over a sustained period, often concentrating on a specific occupation or set of occupations within that industry;
- ✓ Address the needs of workers by creating formal career paths to good jobs, reducing barriers to employment, and sustaining or increasing middle-class jobs;

- ✓ Bolster regional economic competitiveness by engaging economic development experts in workforce issues and aligning education, economic, and workforce development planning;
- ✓ Engage a broader array of key stakeholders through partnerships organized by workforce intermediaries;
- ✓ Promote systemic change that achieves ongoing benefits for the industry, workers, and community;
- ✓ Focus on “coalitions of the willing”;
- ✓ Comply with State and Federal guidelines to reduce costs for shared and administrative services to maximize funding to serve customers.

When completing our sector strategies, we will look at the skills of all occupations that meet our demand occupation requirements.

- Workforce Demand (need) – Describe the business workforce need being addressed by the strategy. Indicate the industry(s) being represented, how the need was determined, the occupational skills to be developed, the number of jobs being addressed, and the timeframe(s) associated with the need.

NOWB, in conjunction with the Western Oklahoma Planning Region, developed a sector strategy framework to begin working on regional sector strategies. We will use the framework along with the regional data to identify the industry sectors most in need. We will review the required skill sets and work closely with our training providers to make sure the training required is available. Sector Strategies will be a top priority and we will identify the top sectors in our area and develop the partnerships required to collaboratively meet the workforce needs of that industry within a regional labor market. NOWB plans to focus on the Health Care industry as the first sector strategy. We plan to have the Health Care sector strategy completed by July, 2018.

Based on 2015 job numbers there are 33,840 jobs in the Health Care ecosystem in the Western Oklahoma Planning Region with average wages of \$45,270. As a projection of demand, by 2025 total employment in the Health Care ecosystem will grow to 40,510 jobs in Western Oklahoma, an increase of 6,670 jobs for the region.

The list below encompasses some of the critical occupations for the Health Care ecosystem in Western Oklahoma.

SOC	Industry	Median Hourly Earnings	Education Level
29-1141	Registered Nurses	\$26.24	Associate's degree
31-1014	Nursing Assistants	\$10.21	Postsecondary non-degree award
39-9021	Personal Care Aides	\$8.66	Short-term on-the-job training
29-2061	Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses	\$17.25	Postsecondary non-degree award
31-1011	Home Health Aides	\$9.26	Short-term on-the-job training
31-9091	Dental Assistants	\$16.59	Postsecondary non-degree award
31-9092	Medical Assistants	\$11.77	Postsecondary non-degree award
29-2052	Pharmacy Technicians	\$13.22	Moderate-term on-the-job training
11-9111	Medical and Health Services Managers	\$35.10	Bachelor's degree
29-1051	Pharmacists	\$51.96	Doctoral or professional degree

Health Care was identified as one of our most critical industries and will be the focus of our first sector strategy. According to O\*Net ([www.onetonline.org](http://www.onetonline.org)) some of the key skills of some of the occupations required are similar and can be built on to further a career pathway such as:

Medical Assistant

- Speaking — Talking to others to convey information effectively.

- Active Listening — Giving full attention to what other people are saying, taking time to understand the points being made, asking questions as appropriate, and not interrupting at inappropriate times.
- Reading Comprehension — Understanding written sentences and paragraphs in work related documents.
- Social Perceptiveness — Being aware of others' reactions and understanding why they react as they do.
- Monitoring — Monitoring/Assessing performance of yourself, other individuals, or organizations to make improvements or take corrective action.

#### LPN

- Service Orientation — Actively looking for ways to help people.
- Active Listening — Giving full attention to what other people are saying, taking time to understand the points being made, asking questions as appropriate, and not interrupting at inappropriate times.
- Coordination — Adjusting actions in relation to others' actions.
- Monitoring — Monitoring/Assessing performance of yourself, other individuals, or organizations to make improvements or take corrective action.
- Reading Comprehension — Understanding written sentences and paragraphs in work related documents.

#### RN

- Active Listening — Giving full attention to what other people are saying, taking time to understand the points being made, asking questions as appropriate, and not interrupting at inappropriate times.
- Social Perceptiveness — Being aware of others' reactions and understanding why they react as they do.
- Service Orientation — Actively looking for ways to help people.
- Speaking — Talking to others to convey information effectively.
- Coordination — Adjusting actions in relation to others' actions.

- Relevance – Indicate the connection between the demand and the priority(ies) for the region.

Where Oklahoma Works Office staff have been hugely valuable is in getting program recipients ready for work. The Department of Rehabilitative Services and Oklahoma Works Offices have always worked closely in this region because their partnership allows staff to work together on career fairs and to help recruit job seekers jointly.

Sector Strategies are an on-going 'project' and the Area will develop sector strategies in line with the work of the Western Oklahoma Planning Region. The guidance from the state that has been received is revolving and changing but the Area will use current data to review high wage, high demand occupations and carefully select the sectors to begin our focus. The Area will not just look at demand because many of the occupations that have the highest number of job openings are low wage and do not require training. As stated in the Western Oklahoma Planning Region Plan, Health Care will be the initial industry reviewed for the development of a sector strategy.

- Strategy – Identify the sector partners and the role of each.

The business NOWB members will lead the sector partners in the development of Sector Strategies. Sector Strategy collaborators in Northwestern Oklahoma include: Business and Industry, Workforce Development Boards and Service Providers, Oklahoma Employment Security Commission, One Stop centers, students and parents/guardians, State Department of Education (K-12), Adult Education, Higher Education, Oklahoma

Department of Career and Technology Education, Department of Rehabilitation Services, Department of Human Services, After School Networks, Youth Build, Oklahoma Manufacturing Alliance, Veteran's Affairs, Private staffing agencies, Professional, trade and labor organizations, Community-based organizations, Faith-based organizations, Department of Corrections, Oklahoma Office of Juvenile Affairs, Economic Developers, Chambers of Commerce, Regional Economic Development Organizations, Minority organizations (tribes, Hispanic, traditionally black institutions), Elected officials - local and state, Oklahoma Department of Commerce, Department of Corrections, and Private foundations.

Roles for each of the sector partners will vary by input from NOWB members and staff with collected workforce data that guides our local areas employment and workforce skill set needs. Our Area hospitals and Health Care producing education and training institutions are on point to collaborate with producing a skilled workforce to fill Health Care positions in Northwestern Oklahoma.

- Funding – Describe available resources that will support the strategy.

As part of the Western Oklahoma Planning Region, The Area will continue to utilize Title I Youth, Adult and Dislocated Worker funds in partnership with other entities that provide workforce services, adult and basic education, and rehabilitation services. Together these partner entities expand the access to employment, training, education, and supportive services for eligible individuals, particularly eligible individuals with barriers to employment

The state can play several broad roles to sustain strategies, either by providing funding (state and/or federal) directly to regions, and/or by helping regions to develop the capacity at the regional level to fund their initiatives. However, the Oklahoma Office of Workforce Development has provided no additional funding for Sector Strategy development as of the publication of this Regional Plan.

- Unfunded Critical Elements – Identify any critical elements for the identified strategy that must be done for the success of the strategy that cannot be met with available resources. This may include: the expansion of an existing strategy, in any phase, from one LWDA to others in the region; the need to procure new training vendors; planning sessions involving multiple partners; training of One-Stop staff; and development of regional data collection systems.

The unfunded critical elements in the Western Region and the Northwestern Area is funding of personnel in the Oklahoma Works Offices. The Case Managers within the Oklahoma Works Offices are to assist the client in attaining the necessary credentials and receive the supportive services available to achieve their career pathway. The Governor's Council for Workforce and Economic Development has set a state goal of 40% of WIOA local funding spent on client training dollars only. This percentage does not include supportive services, personnel, and lease/rental of Oklahoma Works Offices. The 40% is not feasible at this time, so work must be done as a region on cost sharing to meet the state goal. The Western Region will continue to identify and leverage cross-agency, cross-program resources.

The Western Oklahoma Region's Sector Strategy initiative is still in its beginning stages. It would be critical to fund all phases, including the expansion of an existing strategy, in any phase, from one workforce area to the Region; the need to procure new training vendors; planning sessions involving multiple partners; training of One Stop staff; and development of regional data collection systems.

- Strengthen linkages between the One Stop delivery system and unemployment insurance programs; and,

Unemployment Insurance Program Letter No. 20-15, states:



*“UI programs play a vital role in the comprehensive, integrated workforce system by providing income support benefits to eligible individuals, who continue to be important customers of the workforce system.”*

The partners in Area’s workforce development system have a continuing interest in strengthening the linkages between our system and the unemployment insurance programs authorized under state and federal law.

Training and Employment Guidance Letter 16-16, Attachment II, goes on to identify some of the needs of UI claimants and how they are met by a properly-designed workforce development system:

- Provision of information and assistance regarding filing claims under UI programs, including meaningful assistance to individuals seeking assistance in filing a claim.
  - The Oklahoma Works has current labor market information and provides a wide array of re-employment services free of charge.
  - Employment Service staff can refer claimants to job openings in the local area, or in other parts of the State or country if the claimant is willing to relocate.
  - Referral to various training programs.
  - Assistance in establishing eligibility for programs of financial aid assistance for training and education programs not provided under WIOA.
  - If job openings in current field are limited, can offer testing and counseling to determine other appropriate jobs for the claimant.
  - Claimants who believe they have special needs or considerations, such as physical needs, which may prevent them from getting a job, can be referred to other agencies for help with those needs.
- Implement initiatives such as incumbent worker training programs, on-the-job training programs, customized training programs, industry and sector strategies, career pathways initiatives, utilization of effective business intermediaries, and other business services and strategies designed to meet the needs of regional employers.

The NOWB has successfully operated many on-the-job training contracts over the years as the North Central and Northwest Workforce Boards individually and as a combined Area. Industry and sector strategy initiatives have already been discussed in this local plan and will be worked on as an Area and in conjunction with the Western Oklahoma Planning Region. The business members of the NOWB provide an avenue for the Area to understand more about the needs of Area and Regional businesses and those members will be asked to spearhead a project to form focus groups and listening sessions for Area employers. The results of these sessions are projected to aid in the overall understanding of what the Area needs. Having such a large area geographically will cause the NOWB to break these sessions up into manageable pieces and possibly focus on a single set of communities or city as a pilot. The connection with the Key Economic Networks (KEN) Champion will be invaluable to see workforce development less from a programmatic view and more from a business perspective. Obviously the goal is to provide solutions to workforce needs at the speed in which employers need it solved. The NOWB will most likely need to focus on issues that can be chunked into quick turn-around projects in order to gain momentum with solutions all of which will feed into the larger overarching vision of the Area: “Innovative leadership advancing a quality talent development system”.

The Area is seeking ways to successfully implement initiatives such as incumbent worker training programs, customized training programs, and other business services and strategies designed to meet the needs of regional employers. It is hoped the partnership within the workforce development system will more readily share resources and staffing to support the NOWB in these

3. Describe how the local board will implement the goals and strategies of Oklahoma’s Unified State Plan.\*

The NOWB is implementing the goals and strategies of Oklahoma's Unified State Plan using the strategic guidance provided. Oklahoma Works is designed to increase the wealth of all Oklahomans through providing education and training for citizens to obtain quality employment, beyond the scope of WIOA (this cuts across all agencies regardless of funding streams). Our rationale is that coordinating strategic priorities and plans across education, training, and industry will increase the wealth of all Oklahomans by providing employment opportunities for workers and ready availability of highly skilled talent for business and industry. The statewide initiative is built upon a coalition of businesses, educational institutions, state agencies, and other partners, and is an overarching state strategy, but is fully aligned with the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.

Within Oklahoma, the Governor's Council for Workforce and Economic Development (GCWED), the newly revamped WIOA State Board, is composed of business leaders appointed to the GCWED who represent Oklahoma's diverse geography, who are from rural and urban areas and those who represent our state's major industry economic drivers. The GCWED, in alignment with the Oklahoma Works goal, has been tasked with using data to inform policy, track progress and measure success toward ensuring wealth generation, and governs, manages, and accounts for the way the state issues Department of Labor WIOA monies. State workforce partners, departments, and agencies impacting career readiness have developed metrics for targeted wealth generation across Oklahoma. The GCWED selected targets from these metrics, housed on the newly created OKStateStat.OK.gov, that form the foundation of the GCWED Dashboard. This dashboard facilitates the use of data to inform policy, track progress, and measure success consistently statewide.

As part of Oklahoma Works, state workforce partners will intentionally align and connect education and workforce resources to better provide support and remove workforce barriers for the citizens of Oklahoma. Workforce partners will also establish an annual review of funding sources and incentives provided by federal, state, and local sources and chart the effectiveness of federal and state funding used by the state's education, workforce, and economic development system.

4. Describe how the local board will coordinate local workforce development activities with regional economic development activities that are carried out in the local area and how the local board will promote entrepreneurial skills training and microenterprise services.

The NOWB coordinates local workforce development activities with regional economic development projects that are carried out in the local area and promotes this through Board members and staff, education, training, and membership in local, regional, state, national and international economic development organizations. The integration of workforce development into the larger category of economic development requires a specific effort to support the total building block picture of the six components of economic development, as recognized by the International Economic Development Council. Those components are Workforce Development, Leadership Development, Community Capacity Development, Business Retention and Expansion, Entrepreneurial Development and Business and Industry Recruitment. NOWB members and staff represent each of the six components of economic development and the NOWB participates directly in the three regional organizations. Two NOWB members are from Economic Development organizations in the Area and many of the staff are graduates of the University of Oklahoma Economic Development Institute and provide major input on NOWB initiatives, projects, and general operations to ensure workforce development integration into the larger economic development picture. NOWB works with local community, regional, and state economic development partners to provide microenterprise and entrepreneurial training and support.

There are several key partners in the region which provide assistance:

- Oklahoma Economic Development Authority (OEDA)
- Ponca City Development Authority (PCDA)
- Woods County Economic Development
- Panhandle Regional Economic Development Coalition Inc. (PREDCI)
- Northwest Oklahoma Alliance (NwOA)

- Northern Oklahoma Development Authority (NODA)
- Woodward Industrial Foundation
- REI - Regional Enterprises Inc.
- Oklahoma Small Business Development Center
- Oklahoma Department of Commerce

5. Describe how:

- a. The local board will ensure the continuous improvement of eligible providers of services through the system in order to meet the employment needs of local employers, workers, and jobseekers; and,

The NOWB viewed this question to include not only the Eligible Training Providers (ETPs) who's programs of training are approved by each workforce board in Oklahoma as "approved for WIOA Title I funding" but also for any provider of services through the workforce development system.

The NOWB will explore conversations with the community of nonprofit training providers about a shared vision for Area and the desire for continuous improvement across the public and nonprofit workforce arenas. Multiple efforts in recent years have supported continuous improvement plans within the public workforce system and communities that never came to fruition or sanctioned because there wasn't a set standard with which to measure success. Discussions are expected during the program year about how to bring such efforts together.

To meet this requirement, the NOWB will encourage the administration of self-assessments. It has been suggested that the tool should use the Malcolm Baldrige Quality Criteria but because this hasn't been conducted before on such a scale as to review the entire system, it may be simpler to use a straightforward tool similar to that used for the SWOT analysis and the service mapping. The self-assessment process should involve all partner programs staff involved in workforce development. Measurements of the results should take into account the federal performance measures and, of course, the goals of the State Plan. A critical part of quality improvement is customer focus. The system including the Oklahoma Works offices should measure customer satisfaction - during the time of service and at the time of exit from service for both job seekers and business customers. This information should be used to improve the day-to-day operations of the system.

The NOWB has established measures for the contracted WIOA Title I Service Provider and One Stop Operator. Under the changing dynamic of the Oklahoma Works vision and State Plan, the NOWB may be required to revisit and revise these contract extension requirements to ensure that they are in line to help attain not only federal measures but also act positively to achieve the goals outlined in the State Plan.

The workforce development system emphasizes informed customer choice, system performance, and continuous improvement. The ETPs process is part of the strategy for achieving these goals. Training providers must be determined eligible to receive Workforce Innovation and opportunity Act (WIOA) Title I funds to train adults and dislocated workers. Eligible job seekers who need training use a list of eligible providers to make an informed choice.

The NOWB staff diligently work with all ETPs to ensure that the data in the online management information system (Oklahoma Job Match/Oklahoma Service Link) is accurate and up-to-date and that the Area is in compliance with all issued guidance and policy. The ETPs system in Oklahoma Job Match/Oklahoma Service Link has been broken for at least 4 years now but the NOWB staff continues to work with all ETPs and the online system to get the data entered correctly. All staff working in the system who need information about the ETPs can still review that data online using Oklahoma Job Match/Oklahoma Service Link and are requested to contact NOWB staff to validate correct performance, cost, and testing information. Until the OOWD provides an opportunity for the system to be fixed, this is the only avenue for the NOWB to ensure the

information is correct. In the end, the NOWB will manage the quality of service among its own training providers by pruning and/or adding to the eligible training provider list.

The NOWB will continue to monitor and provide technical assistance to all eligible providers of services to ensure continuous improvement. Through our partnerships with the eligible providers of services, information pertaining to employment needs will be communicated as necessary.

b. Entities within the One Stop delivery system, including system/center operators and partners, will comply with section 188 of WIOA, if applicable, and applicable provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 regarding the physical and programmatic accessibility of facilities, programs and services, technology, and materials for individuals with disabilities, including providing staff training and support for addressing the needs of individuals with disabilities.

The Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation Services (OKDRS) and the Oklahoma ABLE Tech have provided excellent training for staff in the system via webinars, trainings in Oklahoma City, and weekly emails regarding the physical and programmatic accessibility of facilities, programs, services, technology, and materials for individuals with disabilities. The Workforce Board Staff share other resources that are provided by the federal civil rights administration and the US Department of Labor. The OKDRS reviewed all Workforce Oklahoma Offices for compliance and provided each area a written report but action hasn't been taken yet on the reports.

As described in the Federal Regulations at 29 CFR Part 38, Section 188 applies to any recipient of funding under Title I of WIOA. It is also applicable to:

- Programs and activities that are part of the One Stop delivery system and that are operated by One Stop partners, to the extent that the programs and activities are being conducted as part of the One Stop delivery system; and
- The employment practices of a recipient and/or One Stop partner, to the extent that the employment is in connection with programs and activities that are being conducted as a part of WIOA Title I or the One Stop delivery system.

The Federal Regulations go on to describe how the implementation of certain requirements of Section 188 will be the responsibility of *"The Governor or the LWDA grant recipient, as provided in the State's Nondiscrimination Plan...."*

As an example, § 38.73 states:

*38.73 Responsibility for developing and publishing complaint processing procedures for Service Providers. The Governor or the LWDA grant recipient, as provided in the State's Nondiscrimination Plan, must develop and publish, on behalf of its Service Providers, the complaint processing procedures required in § 38.72. The Service Providers must then follow those procedures.*

Similar statements appear in §38.33, §38.37, and elsewhere.

As of the time when this local plan was prepared, the State's Nondiscrimination Plan had not yet been developed. So, the exact duties and responsibilities of the Local Workforce Development Area grant recipient are not known at this time. Even so, the NOWB is ready and willing to carry out any and all duties assigned to it under Section 188 and the Federal Regulations as the NOWB functions as the convener of One Stop partners in the Area.

All applicable NOWB policies will be updated to reflect the requirements of the State's Nondiscrimination Plan after July 1, 2017. All One Stop partners will be required to comply with Section 188 and the implementing regulations.

The entities of the local workforce system in the Area – including our One Stop Operator and each of our One Stop partners – are focused on accessibility for all job seekers and businesses. This includes access to facilities,

programs and services, technology, and materials. Working with the Governor’s Council for Workforce and Economic Development (GCWED) and other partners as described in the State’s Unified Plan, NOWB will bring sharper focus on developing and employing more Oklahomans with disabilities.

As described in Oklahoma’s Unified Plan, the Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) is leading Oklahoma’s Workforce System towards enhanced accessibility. The objective is to provide equitable services to individuals with disabilities and to ensure that all Workforce System partners comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Our local workforce development system is committed to following the leadership of our DRS partner. For example, we will work to fully implement the “Access for All” initiative in the Area. Access for All is a partnership between the Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation Services (Oklahoma’s Vocational Rehabilitation Program) and Oklahoma ABLE Tech (Oklahoma’s Assistive Technology Act Program). The Access for All initiative places a focus on recruitment, hiring, and promotion of individuals with disabilities in the state of Oklahoma’s workforce system. Access for All focuses on Oklahoma Works partners as well as employers in the state. This initiative provides training, consulting, and resources to ensure that individuals with disabilities are intentionally included in efforts to achieve greater household wealth for Oklahomans.

We are confident that the Access for All initiative will equip our One Stop partners with the knowledge and resources to make our entire system more accessible to individuals with disabilities. We want all of our One Stop programs to be accessible in person, on the phone, and, to the extent possible, other technology means such as applications like Skype, through the web.

The state’s Unified Plan describes how a One Stop center certification policy will be developed to meet the requirement of WIOA Sec. 102(d)(6)(A). Upon publication of the certification criteria, the local workforce development system in Northwestern Oklahoma will be prepared to implement processes to meet and exceed the state criteria. Our processes will include appropriate training for managers and staff in the Oklahoma Works Offices. We will also establish effective self-monitoring mechanisms to make sure that accessibility standards are maintained throughout our system. Annual training will be conducted with all entities and a continual review of all Americans with Disabilities Act programs is ongoing.

The Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitative Services (OKDRS) provided a document called “Oklahoma Works Workforce System Access for All Certification Process” to assist local areas and regions as they consider the physical space and accessible technology of the workforce development system. The document focuses on the environments that Job Seekers interact with when participating in services provided through the Oklahoma Works Workforce System Partners. In the end, Oklahoma Works Workforce System Partners and Workforce Areas will work through an ‘Access for All Accessibility Process’. See appendix B

**6. Describe how the local board will coordinate WIOA Title I workforce development activities with the provision of transportation, child care, and other appropriate supportive services in the local area. Include a copy of a completed Job Seeker Wrap Around Services service matrix.\***

The job seeker service matrix is attached (see appendix C). As stated already in this local plan, the NOWB has not ‘completed’ the service matrix for business and job seeker services but will be reigniting the team that did work on it previously under what was deemed “system certification” to complete the process.

The WIOA Title I Service Provider and One Stop Operator are charged with coordination of resources for participants who receive WIOA Title I funds. Policies have been put into place to assist with the minimum requirements of services like supportive services. The combination of policies the Board has developed is supposed to help guide the front line staff and the One Stop Operator from the program design, assessment, and individual employment plan/individual service strategy develop through service provision, exit and performance. Everything developed (contract, policies, monitoring, etc.) are conceived to “force” the staff to coordinate with other resources to provide wrap-around services.

NOWB has strongly encouraged the WIOA Title I Staff and One Stop Operator to use information from [www.211oklahoma.org](http://www.211oklahoma.org) to determine if needed supportive services are available from any source other than WIOA Title I funds. The Title I Service Provider has created resource lists that front line staff must access and exhaust prior to requesting Title I funds for services.

7. Provide the executed cooperative agreements\* which define how Service Providers will carry out the requirements for integration of, and access to, the entire set of services available in the local One Stop system. This includes cooperative agreements between the local WDB and other local entities with respect to efforts that will enhance the provision of services to individuals with disabilities and to other individuals, such as cross training of staff, technical assistance, use and sharing of information, cooperative efforts with employers, and other efforts at cooperation, collaboration, and coordination.

The NOWB has not entered into cooperative agreements as of the development of this local plan. The NOWB will explore these agreements, as needed, as we work toward the integration of our One Stop Centers.

8. Identify the local:

- a. Fiscal agent – Oklahoma Economic Development Authority (OEDA)
- b. One Stop Operator(s) – Community Development Support Association (CDSA)
- c. Service Provider(s) for Adult and Dislocated Worker WIOA Title I Basic and Individualized Career Services – Community Development Support Association (CDSA)
- d. Service Provider(s) for Youth WIOA Title I Services - Community Development Support Association (CDSA)

9. Describe the competitive process used to award the subgrants and contracts for WIOA Title I activities.

The process to award subgrants and contracts for WIOA Title I Services begins with an ad hoc committee of the NOWB which creates a request for proposal (RFP) for the competitive procurement. The committee, via the NOWB Staff as appropriate, sends the RFP to the Fiscal Agent to release (advertise) on behalf of the NOWB. After at least a 30 day period, the committee reviews and grades all applicable and eligible bids. The committee then develops a recommendation to the NOWB for approval at the next NOWB meeting. The NOWB takes action on the recommendation and terms of the contract are negotiated with the subgrantee.

10. Describe the local levels of performance negotiated with the State.\*

PY 2016 Northwestern Oklahoma Workforce Board Local Performance		
Outcome	Program	PY 2016 Performance Goal
Employment Rate 2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter After Exit	Adults/Wagner-Peyser	64%
	Dislocated Worker	76%
	Youth	63%
Employment Rate 4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter After Exit	Adults/Wagner-Peyser	64%
	Dislocated Worker	71%
	Youth	69%
Median Earnings 2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter After Exit	Adults/Wagner-Peyser	\$5,366.00
	Dislocated Worker	\$6,084.00
	Youth	
Credential Attainment within 4 Quarters After Exit	Adults	88%
	Dislocated Worker	86%
	Youth	60%

The measures listed above were agreed upon by the NOWB and the OOWD. The Performance Goal numbers were the result of a process to review previous years data and potential for future years performance. The NOWB staff was given a very brief time to review the data that was provided by the USDOL through OOWD staff and perform the calculations necessary to get the goal numbers. The OOWD then worked with the NOWB staff to 'negotiate' the actual goal numbers that would become the final seen above. Some of the negotiation was based on the desire of OOWD to see the NOWB Area go above what the data calculations revealed.

The ultimate measure of progress of a workforce development system relates to the value found in the workforce and the workplace. The difficulty in the calculation of value is that reported impact is often subjective and anecdotal. To promote objectivity while still addressing specific local workforce issues, the NOWB is hoping to utilize WIOA accountability measures of performance, business and industry feedback, actual program outcomes, and completion and employment data provided through workforce development entities and labor market information in order to best determine the 'performance' of the Area.

11. Describe the actions the local board will take toward becoming or remaining a high performing board.

As of the date when this local plan was prepared, the Governor's Council for Workforce and Economic Development (GCWED) had not yet announced a policy on the requirements for a high-performing board. Even so, a broad hint of the GCWED's philosophy is found on Page 127 of the State's Unified Plan. On the topic of board certification, the Unified Plan includes this statement:

*"The Council is responsible for certifying Local Workforce Boards. The certification process is the key strategy to ensure Local Workforce Development Boards have the proper membership and structure to be highly effective in creating and continuously improving an aligned workforce development system, overseeing funds effectively and achieving established performance measures."*

Therefore, the key to ensuring that a local board is highly effective can be found in the criteria defined for certifying the local board. As determined by the GCWED, the certification criteria include:

- Appropriate LWDB membership;
- Proper LWDB area organizational structure;
- Separation of LWDB, One Stop Operator, and WIOA Title I provider staff; and
- Collaboration with Economic Development Partners.

NOWB's certification as the local workforce development board for the Northwestern Oklahoma Workforce Development Area was confirmed on January 29, 2016.

Workforce development in the Area is partnership focused. It draws resources and momentum from multiple sources to provide a collaborative talent development system that engages employers and job seekers at the local level. Keeping the NOWB, its membership, staff, and system closer connected not just to share or leverage resources is vital for a successful, high performing, and forward moving Board.

In the future, the members and staff of the NOWB will take additional steps toward remaining a high-performance board. Planned actions may include, but are not limited to:

- Participation in regular board member development activities such as those offered by the Oklahoma Association of Workforce Development Boards (OAWDB) if NOWB remains a member;
- Leadership attendance at the Annual Forum of the National Association of Workforce Boards (NAWB) as funds allow;
- Enforcement of the NOWB's conflict of interest standards as published in the board's bylaws;
- Enforcement of bylaws with respect to attendance in board and committee meetings;

- Establish goals such as:
  - Build a talent development delivery system through systematic change, integration of resources, and continuous improvement.
  - Build relationships that promote success: engage business, industry, and community to ensure universal contribution and commitment to workforce initiatives and strategies that support regional economies.
  - Educate and inform often: disseminate organization, workforce, and career pathway information regularly and opportunistically to foster interest and collaboration.
  - Advance financial viability: reinforce the fiscal foundation of the organization to sustain legacy operations and increase diversification.
  - Focus and advance universal access to workforce services in all counties with a focus on populations with barriers.
  - Connect youth to the workforce system.

12. Describe how training services will be provided through the use of individual training accounts, including, if contracts for training services will be used, how the use of such contracts will be coordinated with the use of individual training accounts, and how the local WDB will ensure informed customer choice in the selection of training programs regardless of how the training services are to be provided.

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014, in §134(F) establishes the requirement that “training services...shall be provided in a manner that maximizes consumer choice in the selection of an eligible provider of such services,” and further establishes, in §134(G)(i) that “training services shall be provided through the use of individual training accounts...and shall be provided to eligible individuals through the One Stop delivery system.”

Training services must be linked to occupations that are in demand in the local area or in another area to which an adult or dislocated worker (DLW) receiving services is willing to relocate. Training services shall be limited to individuals who are unable to obtain other grant assistance, including Federal Pell grants or require assistance beyond the assistance made available under other grant assistance programs.

Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) are necessary to ensure fiscal responsibility and appropriate training in demand occupations. ITA’s have the capability to track fiscal contributions from partnering agencies to ensure WIOA is the last resort funding source. When using an ITA, the local area is able to obtain the needed information to track data and fiscal integrity and encourage continuous improvement.

ITAs are developed and awarded to eligible participants. The ITA will inform the participant of the amount of WIOA financial support that NOWB will make available on his/her behalf, inform NOWB and the Service Provider which eligible training provider and demand occupation the participant has selected for training, and inform NOWB and the Service Provider of the beginning and end dates of the training program. Additionally the ITA outlines the participant’s responsibilities to the WIOA program and NOWB. The development of an ITA is not necessary when the participants are TAA funded.

The objective of the Eligible Training Provider (ETP) system is to encourage a market like environment for job seekers who are in need of and desire training and to ensure customer choice. Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) are used to fund the Occupational Skills Training service with the goal that the training will produce the potential of higher earnings within the Area’s demand occupations/driver industries. The NOWB ITA Policy outlines the procedures for the ITA including the maximum amount and time limit for use.

Because the online data system for the Eligible Training Provider List in Oklahoma Job Match/Oklahoma Service Link is not working properly, all Area staff are requested to contact the Board Staff office for information regarding validity of the data.



13. Describe how One Stop centers are implementing and transitioning to an integrated, technology-enabled intake and case management information system for programs carried out under WIOA.

The NOWB supports the effort of the One Stop Partners state agencies to find a path through the variety of historical and legacy programs currently in use by all partners. Until all partners can fully utilize one system to conduct intake and case management, the workforce development system in Oklahoma can never be fully integrated. The WIOA Title III and Title I partners are utilizing Oklahoma Job Match/Oklahoma Service Link as their internet based system for a common tool for intake and case management. This system also provides the OOWD with needed information to report to the federal government. When this local plan was prepared, the NOWB was not aware of any definite plan or timeline for creating a fully integrated intake system or case management information system. While the GCWED develops their implementation strategies, the One Stop partners in the Area will continue to use the existing resources available for the collection of program-specific participant data. Although these resources are not integrated as is requested in this question, they do provide a baseline for the development of a future system for data sharing, etc.

The Oklahoma Job Match/Oklahoma Service Link system has several self-service features that are widely used by the customers (job-seekers and employers) in our local workforce development system. It is also designed for use by case managers in several of our One Stop partner programs. These are recognized as advantages of the online system. However, OKJobMatch does not presently meet the needs of all One Stop partners – so, it is not a fully integrated system in that regard.

The One Stop partners in the Area look forward to the eventual development and use of fully integrated intake and case management systems. In the meantime, we will use our existing resources to facilitate our intake and case management functions.

14. Describe the direction given to the One Stop center operator to ensure priority for adult career and training services will be given to recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals, and individuals who are basic skills deficient.

The One Stop Operator is required by contract to ensure all NOWB policies are complied with and to ensure all local staff abide by all federal and state laws, guidance, and policy which includes the WIOA of 2014 and Regulations which specifically outline the priority for adult career and training services. The WIOA Title I Service Provider and One Stop Operator staff are required, by contract, to be operationally familiar with all applicable laws, regulations, guidance, policy, and technical assistance from the federal, state, regional, and local levels.

The NOWB created an application for the WIOA Title I Service Provider and One Stop Operator to utilize as an assessment tool when conducting intake interviews which helps to identify priority populations. If a job seeker is found to not meet the priority population's requirements of WIOA, they are placed in the general population pool and provided services upon availability. The WIOA Title I Service Provider staff and One Stop Operator must document and track the results of who received services and who did not receive training services due to priority of service criteria. At the time of this local plan submission not all system programs are using the same application.

NOWB staff conduct regular technical assistance sessions with the WIOA Title I Service Provider staff and One Stop Operator regarding eligibility, policy, monitoring, partnerships, and other case management issues.

15. Describe the process used by the local board to provide a 30 day public comment period prior to submission of the plan\*, including an opportunity to have input into the development of the local plan, particularly for representatives of businesses, education, and labor organizations. The required public comment process is outlined in section 108(d) of WIOA.

The NOWB will utilize the Fiscal Agent website to post the local plan for public comment for at least 30 days. An email and postal mail address will be provided to submit comments. The local plan will also be emailed to all Board members and system partners. A legal notice will be placed in the Area's lead city newspapers.

The posting period is planned to commence on March 30, 2017 and terminate on April 28, 2017. The published local plan, attachments, comments, and NOWB response(s) to comments will be attached to the local plan and presented to the GCWED and OOWD in accordance with established timelines..

Public comments to this local plan can be made to Jennifer Miller, Workforce Board Director, by email at [jmiller@oeda.org](mailto:jmiller@oeda.org) or by postal mail to Workforce Board Director, 1116 19<sup>th</sup> Street, Woodward, OK 73801. All comments must be received by close of business April 28, 2017.

### **Assurances**

Provide a statement indicating the local workforce development board will agree to the following assurances:

- The Local Workforce Development Board assures it will establish fiscal control and fund accounting procedures to ensure the proper disbursement of, and accounting for all funds received through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.
- The Local Workforce Development Board assures it shall keep records that are sufficient to permit the preparation of reports required by the Act and shall maintain such records, including standardized records for all individual participants, and submit such reports as the State may require.
- The Local Workforce Development Board assures it will collect and maintain data necessary to show compliance with the nondiscrimination provisions of the Act.
- The Local Workforce Development Board assures funds will be spent in accordance with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, regulations, written Department of Labor Guidance, written Oklahoma guidance, and all other applicable Federal and State laws.
- The Local Workforce Development Board assures that veterans will be afforded employment and training activities authorized in the Jobs for Veterans Act and 20 C.F.R. Part 1010.
- The Local Workforce Development Board assures it will comply with any grant procedures prescribed by the Secretary which are necessary to enter into contracts for the use of funds under WIOA, but not limited to the following:
  - General Administrative Requirements – Uniform Guidance at 2 C.F.R. Part 200 and 2 C.F.R. Part 2900.
  - Assurances and Certifications – SF 424B – Assurances for Non-Construction Programs; 29 C.F.R. Part 31,32 – Nondiscrimination and Equal Opportunity Assurance (and Regulation); 29 C.F.R. Part 93 – Certification Regarding Lobbying (and Regulation); 29 C.F.R. Parts 94 and 95 – Drug Free Workplace and Debarment and Suspension; Certifications (and Regulation).

By virtue of their signatures at the beginning of the document, the Northwestern Oklahoma Chief Local Elected Official and the Workforce Board Chair agree to the above listed assurances.

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E-mail: [manager.enid@oesc.state.ok.us](mailto:manager.enid@oesc.state.ok.us)

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# Oklahoma Works Workforce System Access for All Certification Process

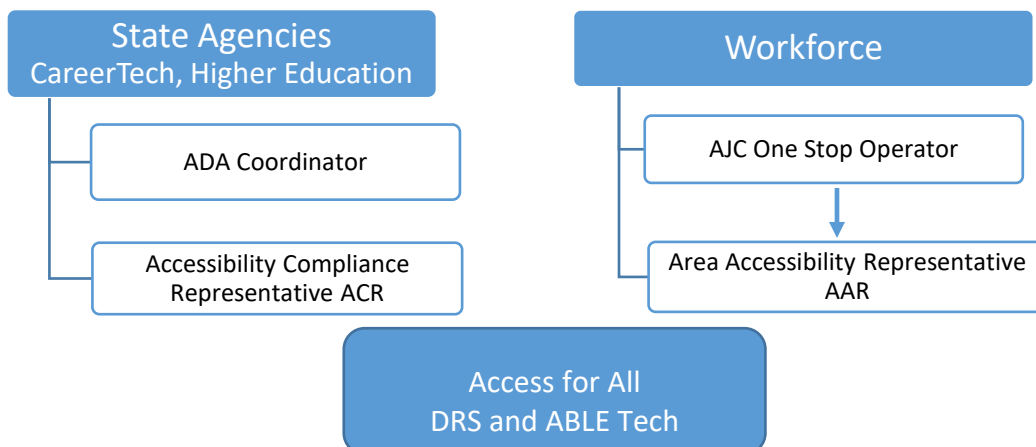
There are two parts to the Oklahoma Works Workforce System Access for All (referred to as “Access for All” from this point on) Certification in Oklahoma. One considers accessibility in the physical space and the other considers accessibility in technology. Both focus on the environments that Job Seekers interact with when participating in services provided through the Oklahoma Works Workforce System Partners. In the end, Oklahoma Works Workforce System Partners and Workforce Areas will work through an Access for All Accessibility Process.

The [Roadmap for Physical and Technology Accessibility Standards Certification](#) specifies steps required to attain certification under the Access for All initiative. The Roadmap provides an outline of the required steps and introduces some of the tools available to help Entities work toward certification.

As Entities move toward certification in either physical or ICT accessibility, Access for All anticipates that there will be times when a physical location or ICT resource cannot be made accessible quickly. The Access for All Equally Effective Alternative Access Plan will help Entities to detail the plans that they will implement when a Job Seeker with a disability tries to use those physical locations or ICT resources.

A key component of the Access for All certification is the presence of a local coordinator who is the point of contact between Workforce System Entities and Access for All. This role varies based on the type of Entity.

- State agencies should have an ADA Coordinator identified. The ADA Coordinator typically oversees an agency’s efforts to identify and remove barriers that keep job seekers with disabilities from accessing programs, services and activities or from practicing effective communication. The ADA Coordinator in the Access for All initiative will serve as point of contact and agency subject matter expert on physical and program access.
- State agencies should also have an Accessibility Compliance Representative, or ACR. The ACR focuses on an agency’s information and communication technology (ICT) accessibility efforts. The ACR in the Access for All initiative will serve as point of contact and agency subject matter expert on information and communication technology access.
- Entities such as American Job Centers shall designate an Area Accessibility Representative, or AAR. The AAR is unique to Entities that do not otherwise have an ADA Coordinator or ACR identified. The AAR in the Access for All initiative serves as a coordinator and point of contact between the Entity and Access for All in both physical and ICT access. The AAR may be asked to coordinate activities related to certification as well. American Job Centers maintain a one-stop operator; it is recommended that the one-stop operator also be appointed as the AAR.



Any questions about the Access for All certification process or the above roles are welcome. Entities may [submit questions about the Certification process online](http://bit.ly/AccessQuestion) (<http://bit.ly/AccessQuestion>).

## Physical Accessibility

Access for All will assist the Oklahoma Works Workforce System Partners in working toward certification of their physical locations in the following ways. Access for All will assess physical locations and review them for compliance with the ADA Standards for Accessible Design and make recommendations for ways in which any noted deficiencies may be corrected. Access for All will work with the Oklahoma Works Workforce System ADA Coordinators or their designees to design and implement a systematic process for ensuring that leased and purchased spaces are thoroughly reviewed for compliance with the ADA Standards prior to taking possession.

At the Workforce System Area level, each Area will designate an Area Accessibility Representative, or AAR. Access for All will work with each AAR to provide them the training they will need in order to identify the physical accessibility barriers most commonly encountered in most locations. Areas for which training shall be provided include:

- Parking Areas
- Accessible Routes
- Ramps
- Entrances and Doors
- Signage
- Interior Spaces
- Bathrooms

The AAR can contact Access for All to request information and guidance for situations outside their levels of expertise. Ensuring that knowledge of design requirements are distributed among the Workforce System will help in preventing and ameliorating barriers for physical access.

You can [submit questions about the Certification process online](http://bit.ly/AccessQuestion) (<http://bit.ly/AccessQuestion>).

## Information and Communication Technology Accessibility

Access for All looks at the processes and people involved in creating accessible technology environments for Job Seekers. In state agencies, the Career and Technical Education system and higher education institutions the Certification asks for each entity to report its designated Accessibility Compliance Representative, or ACR. The ACR serves as the point of contact between the entity and Access for All, as well as being the point of contact within the entity. The AAR's role is different than that of the ACR. An AAR will serve primarily as a coordinator of activity between the Workforce System Area and Access for All.

Access for All will assist the Oklahoma Works Workforce System Partners in working toward certification in technology accessibility by providing a framework. This framework consists of tools to help to identify and prioritize technology tools offered to Job Seekers. This will capture all of the technology that Job Seekers use, whether they come from within an entity or from outside of the entity. Then, each entity will answer a questionnaire that asks about policy and processes to help to make sure that accessibility is always part of the conversation about technology use. Based on the technology inventory and questionnaire (see "Resources" below), Access for All will work with each entity that seeks certification to detail the entity's efforts in the context of five areas, where applicable:

- Policy and Procedure

- Procurement and Acquisition
- Web sites and Software
- Non-web Content (Word, PowerPoint, PDF, for example)
- Multimedia

Access for All will help to define the full scope of the entity's certification steps and to set achievable goals within that scope. Ultimately, certification steps for entities that seek certification depend on the kind of technology that the entity serves up to Job Seekers.

You can [submit questions about the Certification process online](http://bit.ly/AccessQuestion) (<http://bit.ly/AccessQuestion>).

## Additional Access for All Certification Resources

- The ADA Physical Accessibility Checklist is available in two formats: [ADA Checklist in Word](#) and [ADA Checklist in PDF](#). This accessibility checklist has been provided to assist in identifying key aspects of accessibility for site locations. It conforms to the latest accessibility guidelines contained in the 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design. It has helpful notes and visual aids to guide the individuals utilizing it to be better able to accurately assess a given location for compliant with the Standards.
- [ICT Accessibility Checkpoints](#) look at process and policy that support an independent and sustained ICT accessibility effort.
- Tools are available to help to guide you through the certification process in more detail. Each tool fits into a different timeframe in the ICT accessibility certification process.
  - Information and Communication Technology Inventory
    - This asks that the Entity identify all of the technology that it uses to provide access to programs, services or activities or to communicate with all Job Seekers. The inventory asks to identify the tool, the Entity that owns or administers the tool, and the importance of the tool to the Job Seeker's work with the Entity.
  - Access for All ICT Accessibility Program Questionnaire
    - This guides the Entity through a set of questions that help to identify challenges and opportunities in beginning and sustaining activities around ICT accessibility. The questionnaire helps to more specifically measure where an Entity is with respect to ICT accessibility processes, training and administration. It will be used to track progress over time as well.

## Surveys to Employers, Employees and Job Seekers

Access for All will assist with a survey that asks employers, service provider employees and job seekers about their experience with the Workforce System. Access for All will assist by providing survey questions that ask these audiences specific questions about their readiness and satisfaction with employers and the Oklahoma Works Workforce Development System.

Surveys will begin to circulate to these audiences during the Fourth Quarter of Program Year 2018 (April-June, 2018).