

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT POLICY COMMITTEE**  
**Thursday, November 18, 2021**  
**9:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.**

**Virtual/Microsoft Teams Meeting**

**Call-in number: 1-323-776-6996 Access Code: 831 836 193#**

**AGENDA**

1. Introductions
2. Economic and Workforce Development Department update (Implementation Team) 15 minutes
3. Small Business Rent Relief update (LACDA) 5 minutes
4. Evaluation of the Los Angeles County America's Job Centers of California Report (continue discussion from 10/28) (Social Policy Research Associates/WDACS) 40 minutes
5. Public Comment

**NOTE:**

Please send comments to [EconomicDevelopment@ceo.lacounty.gov](mailto:EconomicDevelopment@ceo.lacounty.gov) by Wednesday November 17th at noon. They will be shared with the Committee prior to the meeting.



# County of Los Angeles CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICE

Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration  
500 West Temple Street, Room 713, Los Angeles, California 90012  
(213) 974-1101  
<http://ceo.lacounty.gov>

FESIA A. DAVENPORT  
Chief Executive Officer

November 9, 2021

To: Supervisor Hilda L. Solis, Chair  
Supervisor Holly J. Mitchell  
Supervisor Sheila Kuehl  
Supervisor Janice Hahn  
Supervisor Kathryn Barger

From: Fesia A. Davenport  
Chief Executive Officer

Board of Supervisors  
HILDA L. SOLIS  
First District

HOLLY J. MITCHELL  
Second District

SHEILA KUEHL  
Third District

JANICE HAHN  
Fourth District

KATHRYN BARGER  
Fifth District

## **LEVERAGING THE COUNTY'S WORKFORCE SYSTEM TO MEET THE POST COVID-19 LABOR MARKET NEEDS AND PREPARE FOR THE COUNTY'S WORKFORCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT (ITEM NO. 68-E, AGENDA OF SEPTEMBER 1, 2020)**

On September 1, 2020, the Board of Supervisors (Board) adopted a motion directing the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) to convene a Workforce and Economic Development Department Alignment Workgroup (Workgroup) consisting of representatives from the Departments of Workforce Development, Aging and Community Services (WDACS), Consumer and Business Affairs (DCBA), Public Social Services (DPSS), Los Angeles County Development Authority (LACDA), and other departments, as needed, to put forward a proposed organizational structure for the new economic and workforce development department (EWDD) on or before October 4, 2020, to align with the budgetary recommendations from the CEO.

In the second directive of the motion, the Board directed the Workgroup to engage a consultant, as needed, to review the July 2020 Workforce Optimization and Alignment Studies; analyze the current structure and efficacy of the County of Los Angeles' (County) America Job Centers of California (AJCC), including metrics of success; and within 90 days, return to the Board with recommendations for a more responsive structure for AJCC's and the County's workforce system, considering market pressures due to COVID-19, and the need to grow High Road Training Partnerships (HRTPs) and career pathways.

The CEO retained Social Policy Research Associates (SPRA) to perform the work related to the AJCC Assessment.

This memorandum is in response to the second directive of the motion which is the AJCC Assessment and presents an evaluation of findings and recommendations for the new EWDD, including:

- Opportunities to better integrate Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA), Title IB programs with other County workforce programs including Greater Avenues for Independence (GAIN), General Relief Opportunities for Work (GROW), and CalFresh Employment and Training (CFET);
- Options to enhance the delivery of workforce development services beyond what is required under the WIOA; and
- A framework for growing H RTP opportunities.

### **SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS**

#### **Evaluation of the County's AJCCs**

1. During the pandemic, AJCCs continue to meet and exceed their contractual metrics, which are negotiated between the State and the LA County Workforce Development Board (LACWDB).
2. AJCCs have continued to effectively serve employers and jobseekers during the pandemic, both virtually and through limited in-person services.
3. All LA County Comprehensive AJCCs, or "full-service" centers, provide access to partner programs through on-site co-location, including other County programs, as well as programs operated by community-based organizations.
4. AJCCs (and WDACS) are playing a role in H RTPs; however, these programs are limited in scope. AJCCs are not adequately resourced (time and funding) to engage in enhanced workforce services such as H RTPs. Additional resources would be required to engage in these types of specialized services.

#### **Enhancing AJCCs to Further Support the County's Workforce System: Challenges and Opportunities**

1. AJCCs are not properly resourced to match all jobseekers to high-quality jobs. Many jobseekers have high barriers to employment and do not have the required skills to be placed in high-wage jobs. In addition, there is not an abundance of "high-wage" jobs available in which to place them.

2. WIOA performance metrics are a barrier to integrating a larger number of GAIN/GROW participants into the AJCC system, as many of these individuals are not considered to be job-ready. However, participant referrals between these programs for training opportunities using non-WIOA funding is largely viewed as positive due to the more specific, participant-focused nature of these programs.
3. WIOA funding is limited; therefore, AJCCs are put in a position to prioritize enrollments and services. This is also true as it relates to the prioritization of participant enrollments to meet the required performance metrics. Therefore, identifying alternative sources of funding to support special populations to become job-ready is critical to workforce development in the County.
4. Based on the challenges that exist to co-enroll participants in WIOA-funded workforce development programs, more work is needed to connect GAIN/Grow customers to AJCC services. However, several AJCCs have contracts with the GAIN program to provide subsidized training using non-WIOA funding (e.g., GAIN funding).
5. Specialized training programs such as INVEST (partnership between WDACS and the Probation Department) have proven successful due to specialized training of AJCC staff to assist the targeted population, and the investment of additional funding and department staff resources to support the program.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE NEW EWDD**

1. Establish a clear vision for economic and workforce development in the County that includes strategies and priorities for all partners within the system.
2. Co-locate GAIN and GROW staff with AJCCs to increase the number of participants receiving services from AJCCs and provide training for AJCC staff to assist these populations.
3. Provide additional funding (non-WIOA) to AJCCs to provide intensive services to assist special/priority populations.
4. Engage community partners to provide bridge services for special/priority populations.
5. Consider making the development of HRTPs a focus for the new EWDD and create structured pathways between HRTPs and AJCCs.

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6. Provide adequate funding and realistic timelines and metrics for program development and implementation of new workforce and economic development initiatives.
7. Invest in data infrastructure for EWDD and workforce system partners.
8. Support AJCCs with adequate technical assistance, staff development, and funding to support living wages to support and retain employees.

Should you have questions concerning the AJCC Assessment, please contact me or Julia F. Orozco, Acting Senior Manager at (213) 974-1151 or [jorozco@ceo.lacounty.gov](mailto:jorozco@ceo.lacounty.gov).

FAD:JMN:JO  
AG:yy

#### Attachment

c: Executive Office, Board of Supervisors  
County Counsel  
Consumer and Business Affairs  
Public Social Services  
Los Angeles County Development Authority  
Workforce Development, Aging and Community Services

# Evaluation of the Los Angeles County America's Job Centers of California

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Prepared for the Los Angeles County Chief Executive Office  
September 2021

**Jessie Oettinger, Kris Palmer, Kate Dunham**  
SPRA | 1333 BROADWAY, STE. 310, OAKLAND, CA 94612

# Executive Summary

America’s Job Centers of California (AJCCs) are the frontline providers of public workforce services in California, leveraging federal, state, local, and philanthropic dollars to deliver a comprehensive range of employment and training services for employers and job seekers in brick-and-mortar, neighborhood-based locations as well as online. The Los Angeles County Workforce Development Board (LACWDB) oversees nineteen AJCCs in Los Angeles (LA) County. In May 2021, Social Policy Research Associates (SPR) was contracted to evaluate LACWDB’s network of AJCCs in the context COVID-19 response, High Road Training Partnerships (HRTTP) expansion, career pathways development, and workforce partnerships across Los Angeles (LA) County agencies. This report will expand on the following findings and recommendations.

Evaluation Findings	Recommendations
<p><b>The nineteen AJCCs overseen by the LACWDB are generally meeting and even exceeding their WIOA-related performance targets</b> and scoring well on state-required certification assessments.</p> <p><b>AJCCs have been key partners in the County’s COVID-19 initiatives to serve job seekers and employers</b>, continuing to offer job search support, and providing lay off aversion assistance, distributing PPE and offering other support to businesses.</p> <p><b>HRTTPs are underway in Los Angeles County</b>, showing promise to increase access to higher quality jobs. However, presently, the scale is small, the costs are high, and the time commitment for implementation is significant.</p> <p><b>AJCCs struggle with the expectation from system partners that they can be all things to all job seekers</b> and face a reality where they must balance structural economic barriers and funding hurdles with their WIOA-driven contractual obligations.</p>	<p><b>Clarify the vision and strategy for economic and workforce development at the highest levels.</b> Establish clear priorities that inform the County's entire economic and workforce development chain of programs and—based on those priorities—develop shared strategies.</p> <p><b>Focus on a population or service strategy in-line with the county's broader vision.</b> Build capacity to implement the county's vision by focusing on an aligned strategy. Support related activities and measurement practices to mobilize needed funding and policy changes.</p> <p><b>Set AJCCs up to be more successful.</b> Provide them with the resources, timelines, and metrics to align with the County’s vision for workforce and economic development.</p> <p><b>Continue to invest in data infrastructure to support data-driven decision making for the EWDD team and partners.</b> Ensure that WDACS’ data and IT infrastructure continues to be available to inform strategy, course correction, and accountability.</p>

## Introduction

SPR was contracted in late May 2021 to analyze how the current structure of America's Job Centers of California (AJCCs) overseen by the Los Angeles County Workforce Development Board (LACWDB) is responding to the needs of employers and jobseekers, specifically within the context of COVID-19 concerns, High Road Training Partnerships (HRTTP) expansion, and career pathways development. Specifically, the Los Angeles Board of Supervisors (BOS) Chief Executive Office (CEO) requested more information regarding:

- Opportunities to better integrate Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA) Title IB programs with other county workforce programs including Greater Avenues for Independence (GAIN), General Relief Opportunities for Work (GROW), and CalFresh Employment and Training (CFET).
- Options to enhance the delivery of workforce development services beyond what is required under WIOA.
- A framework for growing HRTTP opportunities.

In the preliminary phase of the evaluation, SPR met with key stakeholders including Workforce Development Aging and Community Services (WDACS) leadership and Los Angeles (LA) County BOS staff (BOS Staff) from each of the five districts. Meetings, interviews, and an extensive document review provided a basis for refining the objectives of the evaluation and developing research questions. The evaluation also comprised of qualitative and quantitative data collection including conducting interviews with key representatives from WDACS, the AJCCs, LACWDB members, HRTTP employer partners, Department of Public Social Services (DPSS), and Probation. SPR also conducted a targeted review of state and national best practices from other workforce areas in California and other states that could inform the recommendations for LA County.

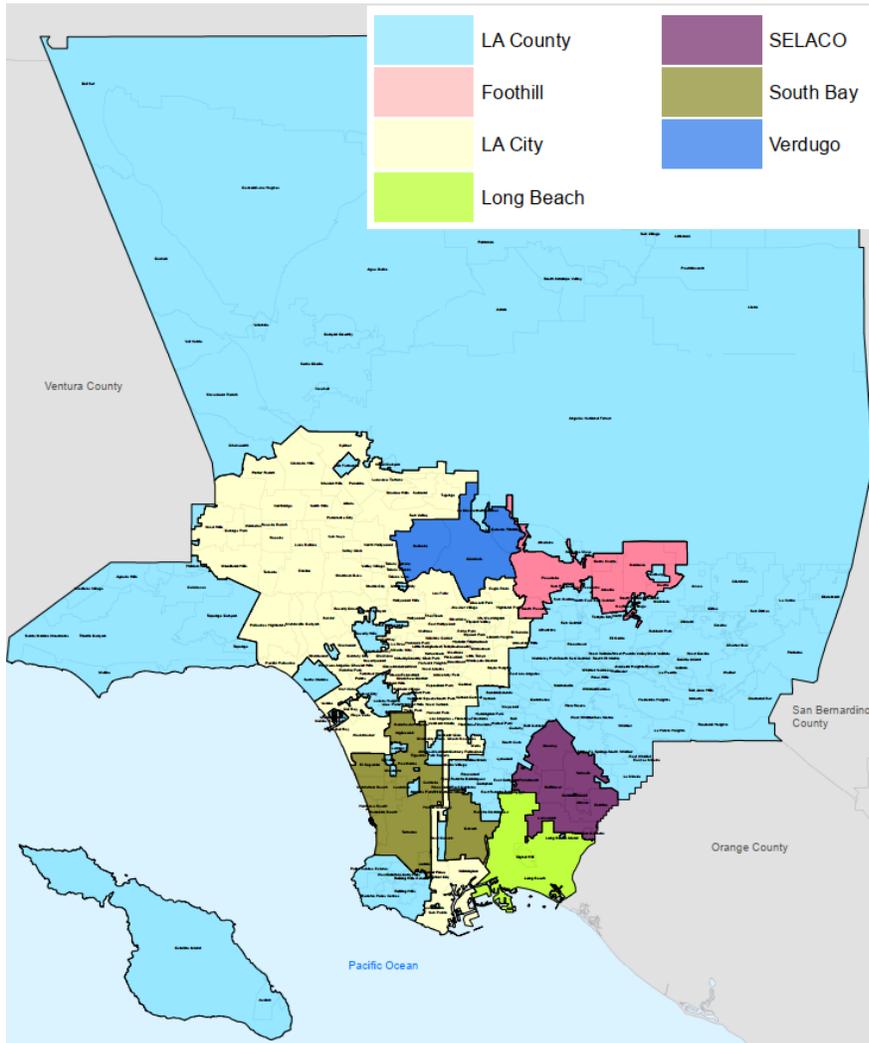
This report provides an overview of the LA County AJCC structure and summarizes key findings from our research activities. It also provides recommendations based on these findings.

## Overview of Los Angeles County AJCCs

The LACWDB is a 21-member body that is staffed by WDACS and appointed by the BOS, but is governed largely by federal WIOA legislation. For example, it is charged with carrying out state and federal WIOA policies, mandates and directives; setting its own local policies for WIOA service provision; procuring and overseeing contractors to provide WIOA-funded workforce services for eligible adults and youth in the local workforce development area (LWDA); and ultimately for tracking, reporting and meeting the performance accountability measures associated with WIOA and other workforce development funding.

As is illustrated in Figure 1, LACWDB is one of seven local workforce development boards (WDBs) in LA County<sup>1</sup> and oversees the fourth largest LWDA in the U.S., which serves approximately 4 million of LA County's more than 10 million residents, 57 of the county's 88 cities, and all of LA County's approximately 150 unincorporated communities.

**Figure 1. Los Angeles County Local Workforce Development Areas**

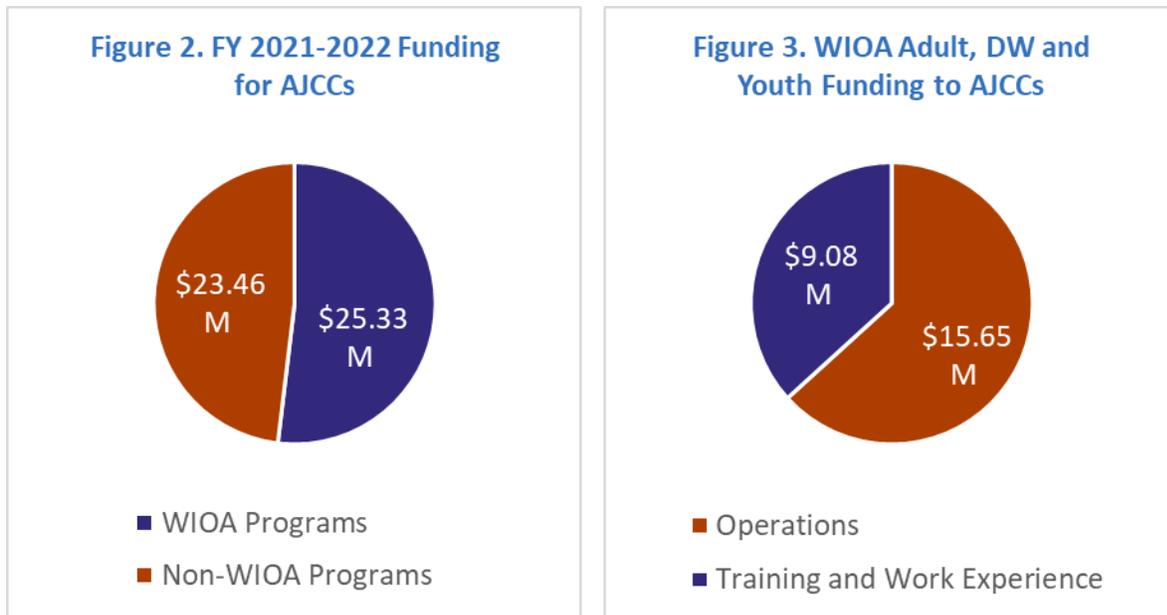


LACWDB uses its WIOA funding to support seven comprehensive AJCCs within the LWDA, as well as an additional twelve affiliate and specialized AJCCs. Comprehensive AJCCs are defined by WIOA as centers where job seekers and employers can access the full suite of programs, services, and activities offered by the WIOA core and required partners (a list of WIOA core and required partners is in Appendix A: WIOA Partners.) Affiliate AJCCs are also job centers where jobseekers and employers can access WIOA program services, but they are not required to provide

<sup>1</sup> The six other local workforce development boards in LA County are Foothill, LA City, Long Beach, SELACO, South Bay, and Verdugo. For a map of workforce board jurisdiction and LACWDB AJCCs, see: [https://workforce.lacounty.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/LACounty\\_AJCC\\_ServiceRegions\\_07312020.pdf](https://workforce.lacounty.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/LACounty_AJCC_ServiceRegions_07312020.pdf)

access to all partner programs. In LA County, specialized AJCCs are associated with comprehensive or affiliate sites and serve a specific population or industry sector.<sup>2</sup>

As is illustrated in Figures 2 and 3, for the 2021-2022 Fiscal Year, funding for these 19 AJCCs is approximately \$48.8 million, with just over half of that funding coming from WIOA programs. Of the approximately \$25 million dollars of WIOA funding that goes to AJCCs, roughly two-thirds is allocated for program operations and one-third to funding training (for adults) and paid work experience (for youth).



Data Source: WDACS

In addition to providing WIOA Title I program services, LA County's AJCCs are also hubs for other LACWDB-funded programs such as Innovative Employment Solutions (INVEST), the Los Angeles Regional Initiative for Social Enterprise (LA: RISE), and Prison to Employment (P2E). In fact, in program year 2020-2021, of the approximately 28,000 individuals who accessed programs operated by the LACWDB and administered through AJCCs, less than half were served under one of the three WIOA Title I programs and less than a third were enrolled in the more intensive types of WIOA Title I program services—individualized career services or training. This would suggest that the WIOA Title I program funding used to support AJCCs is an important point of leverage for the community in offering a brick-and-mortar presence in LA County neighborhoods for workforce services.

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<sup>2</sup> California Employment Development Department. (2019, April 30). *WIOA memorandums of understanding* (Directive No. WSD18-12). [https://edd.ca.gov/Jobs\\_and\\_Training/pubs/wsd18-12.pdf](https://edd.ca.gov/Jobs_and_Training/pubs/wsd18-12.pdf)

**WIOA mandates that AJCC operators be procured competitively, and the state of California further requires that WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth program service providers are also competitively procured.** This sets up a contractual relationship between LACWDB and its AJCC operators and WIOA Title I program service providers<sup>3</sup> to meet contractual performance targets related to the WDB’s WIOA performance targets that LACWDB negotiates with the State.

LACWDB has procured seven AJCC operator/WIOA Title I program contractors, each of which manages one comprehensive AJCC, as well as one (or more) connected affiliate or specialized AJCCs. These seven contractors, the comprehensive AJCCs they operate, and their affiliate or specialized sites are as follows:

<b>Comprehensive AJCC</b>	<b>Contracted Operator and WIOA Title I Provider</b>	<b>Other AJCCs operated by comprehensive AJCC contractor</b>
Antelope Valley Comprehensive AJCC	Jewish Vocational Services (JVS) So-Cal	Palmdale Affiliate AJCC, Veterans AJCC, West LA AJCC
Southeast L.A. Comprehensive AJCC	Hub Cities Consortium	Slawson Affiliate AJCC
Rio Hondo Comprehensive AJCC	Southeast Area Social Services Funding Authority	Whittier Affiliate AJCC
Rancho Dominguez Comprehensive AJCC	Community Career Development	Willowbrook Affiliate AJCC
East San Gabriel Valley Comprehensive AJCC	Goodwill Southern California	Baldwin Park Affiliate AJCC, Santa Clarita AJCC
Pomona Valley Comprehensive AJCC	Managed Career Solutions	West Covina Affiliate AJCC
East L.A./West San Gabriel Valley Comprehensive AJCC	Archdiocesan Youth Employment (AYE) of Catholic Charities of Los Angeles, Inc.	Alhambra Affiliate AJCC, South LA AJCC

For more information on AJCC contractors, see Appendix B: Los Angeles County AJCC Contractors.

## **Evaluation Findings**

The following findings are based on interviews with a variety of respondents connected with the LACWDB workforce system, including representatives from WDACS, AJCCs, HRTPs, the LA County Probation Department (Probation) and the Department of Public Social Services (DPSS,)

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<sup>3</sup> Note that the AJCC operator and Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth services providers are combined roles procured via the same competitive process.

as well as an extensive review of WIOA performance measure results, both for the LWDA as a whole and for individual AJCCs.

### ***I. AJCCs are mostly meeting or even exceeding their WIOA-related contractual metrics***

WIOA provides two primary ways in which states (and by extension local WDBs) can track and assess the performance of local AJCCs and WIOA Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs: the formal capturing of data on WIOA performance metrics for those programs and the certification of local AJCCs.

### ***AJCC performance on WIOA employment-related metrics has enabled the LACWDB to meet its own State-set WIOA Performance Goals***

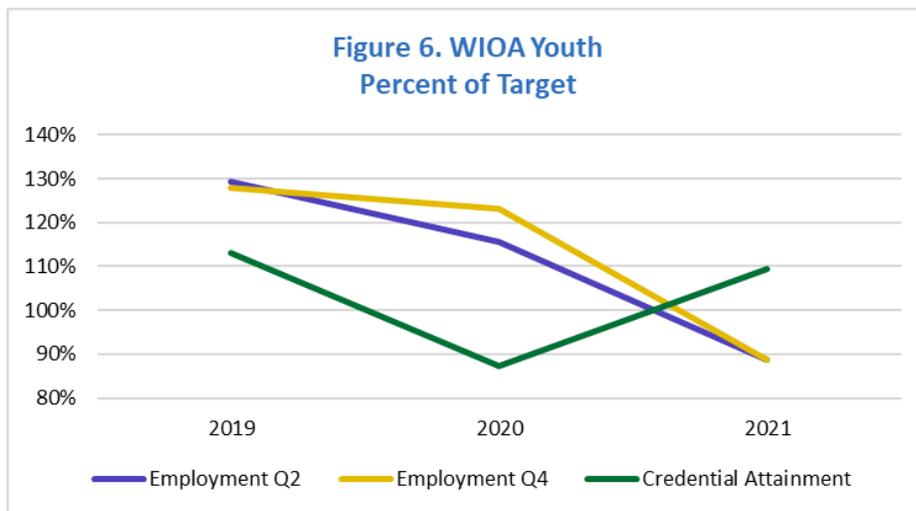
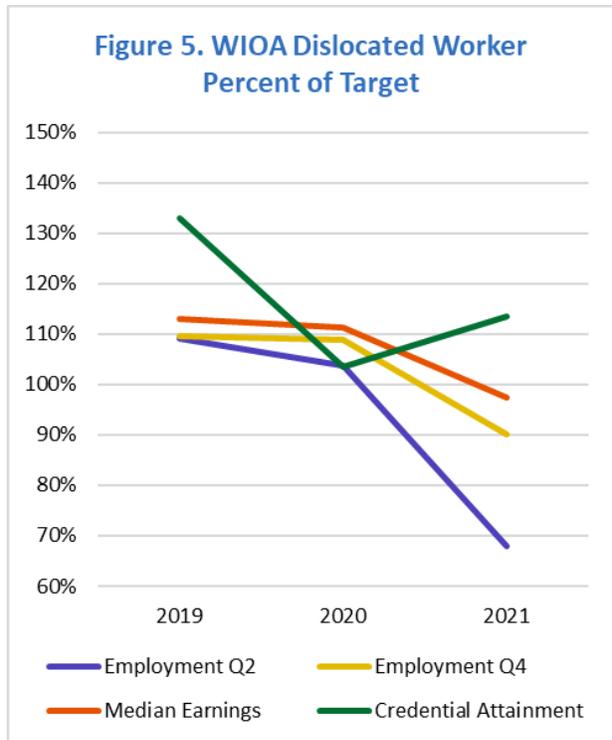
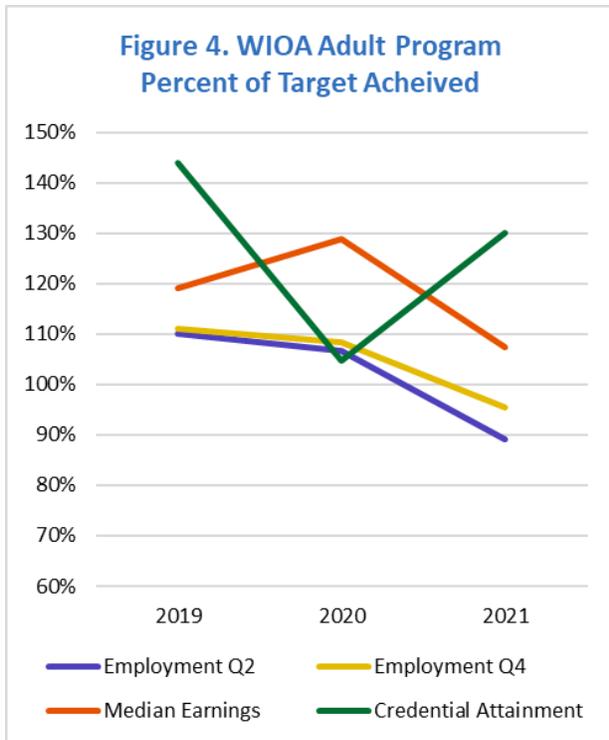
Technically, the states negotiate WIOA Title I program performance targets for each of WIOA's required metrics with local WDBs for the Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs as a condition of receipt of their WIOA grants for those programs. WDBs then pass these targets down—often slightly revised—to their contracted service providers for those programs. WIOA's six federally required performance indicators are:

- Employment rate - 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter after program exit (individual participants)
- Employment rate - 4th quarter after program exit (individual participants)
- Median earnings - 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter after program exit (individual participants)
- Credential attainment (individual participants who participated in education or training service)
- Measurable skill gains (individual participants who participated in education or training service)
- Effectiveness in Serving Employers (individual employers)

For program years 2018-2019 and 2019-20, based on the performance results of its contracted providers, the LACWDB met or exceeded its State-set WIOA performance targets for the three WIOA Title I programs (See Figs. 3-5 below). Even in the pandemic year of 2020-2021, although results for the employment indicators did miss their targets – but only slightly – results for the credential attainment and median earnings indicators still met or exceeded targets.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Per EDD and CWDB guidance on calculating local area performance and non-performance, LACDWD was close enough to its initial negotiated targets that it may ultimately technically meet its final adjusted targets in 2020-2021. [https://www.edd.ca.gov/Jobs\\_and\\_Training/pubs/wsd20-02.pdf](https://www.edd.ca.gov/Jobs_and_Training/pubs/wsd20-02.pdf)



Data Source: WDACS

Note: Because the measurable skill gains and effectiveness in serving employers indicators are newly established, no baseline targets for them were set in 2019 and 2020, so those indicators were excluded from this analysis. Similarly, because the Youth program formerly was not subject to the median earnings indicator and no baseline targets for it were set in 2019 or 2020, results for the Youth program for this indicator were also excluded.

### ***AJCCs are scoring well on State-required certification assessments***

In addition to meeting performance accountability indicator targets, WIOA requires certification of AJCCs every three years. Certification requirements and processes in California are co-developed and -overseen by the California Employment Development Department (EDD) and the California Workforce Development Board (CWDB). Certification requires an assessment of how well the AJCCs are performing against the AJCC Certification Indicators (formerly called the Hallmarks of Excellence) and the development of a continuous improvement plan.<sup>5</sup>

In 2018, six of the seven Comprehensive AJCCs within the LACWDB LWDA successfully achieved certification based on their scores on the Hallmarks of Excellence indicators. The certification process included a comprehensive site visit; interviews with AJCC leadership, staff and stakeholders; and a review of relevant AJCC documents. The one AJCC that fell short on achieving a “passing” mark in three of the eight Hallmarks criteria was provided technical assistance from WDACS and was able to achieve certification a year later.

According to the results of this certification process, the seven AJCCs scored highest on “effective partnerships” and “business results through data-driven continuous improvement.” These results further described successful, collaborative partnerships between AJCCs and EDD, Probation, GAIN, and the LA County Office of Education, among others. They also provided insight into how the AJCCs leverage the services and resources of their partners (both onsite and off) to fund additional training opportunities and supportive services for their job seekers.

In 2019, LACWDB's affiliate and specialized AJCCs were also assessed using the Hallmarks of Excellence Criteria. All of these AJCCs were also successful in achieving certification, generally receiving high marks across all criteria, particularly related to "effective partnerships." The certification results also described how specialized AJCCs were partnering with other organizations that serve their target populations. For example, the certification results detailed how the Veterans Specialized AJCC was working closely with the County Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, U.S. Vets, the County Department of Mental Health, and EDD.

### ***II. AJCCs played a key role in serving both job seekers and employers during the COVID-19 pandemic***

As addressed in the WDACS [\*Pathways for Economic Resiliency report\*](#), the impact of COVID-19 on the regional economy and its businesses, workers, job seekers, and communities has been far reaching and devastating.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> AJCC Comprehensive and Affiliate/Specialized Certification guidance: [https://www.edd.ca.gov/Jobs\\_and\\_Training/pubs/wsd20-08.pdf](https://www.edd.ca.gov/Jobs_and_Training/pubs/wsd20-08.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Sedgwick et al. (2020).

***AJCCs were able to pivot to continue serving participants, both virtually and in-person, during the pandemic***

On March 19, 2020, Governor Gavin Newsom issued the first in a series of California stay-at-home orders, effectively shuttering most brick-and-mortar services at LA County AJCCs. In order to meet continued and new demands for services following this unprecedented action by the Governor, AJCCs pivoted quickly to offer virtual orientations, job fairs, workshops, and training on virtual enrollment strategies. Additionally, in-person, one-on-one meetings were and continue to be available by appointment for those unable to access virtual services. When enrollments waned later in the pandemic, AJCCs got creative about how to recruit people to resume their job searches. For instance, one AJCC, with the help of WDACS, ran a weeklong social media campaign that returned a significant number of interested participants.

***Virtual services highlighted the digital divide for jobseekers (and AJCC staff!)***

Pivoting to virtual services during the pandemic, however, brought issues related to the fact that many job seekers lack of internet access, technology, and digital literacy to the forefront and this digital divide posed a major challenge to AJCCs. Even when participants were provided with or had access to the appropriate technology, low levels of digital literacy in various communities presented an added challenge. For example, one AJCC reported that their participants lacked not only computers and Internet access, but also the skills necessary to navigate technology, such that staff had to instruct participants on how to open a Word document.

AJCC staff also struggled with the level of digital literacy they needed in order to fully provide virtual services, especially at the outset of the pandemic. Not only did AJCC staff members have to work in an online space, but they also had to navigate the varying levels of participants' computer literacy, which many staff members found challenging.

***To overcome the digital divide, AJCCs provided equipment and hotspots, and continued to provide limited in-person services***

To deal with the digital divide challenges described above, many AJCCs got creative about how to meet with clients in person. One AJCC, for example, worked with partners (in many cases WDACS) to access safe physical spaces, such as churches and community centers, to meet with job seekers. Their sentiments were echoed by many: "Virtual services sometimes work and sometimes do not. Staff need to spend time with people. A good percentage of funding needs to be designated specifically for staff to meet people in person."

Representatives from one AJCC related that, with some populations, building trust is critical, especially for "Latinos, justice-involved individuals, and youth," according to staff, and "that can be more challenging virtually." AJCC staff also reported that youth were digitally fatigued after

a year of virtual schooling. So, even though they were digitally literate, they were craving human-to-human interaction.

***WDACS and the AJCCs distributed equipment, provided layoff aversion assistance, and continued to provide support to small businesses during the COVID-19 pandemic***

As stated in the [LA County WDB 2021–2024 WIOA Local Area Plan](#), WDACS was instrumental in distributing support to businesses during COVID-19:

"With a focus on supporting local businesses, WDACS launched the first-of-its-kind Employer Assistance Grant Fund (EAGF) to provide direct financial relief to the most affected businesses with an emphasis on layoff aversion. The program successfully granted 1,489 grants for a total of \$46.7 million in distributed funds, with 35% awarded to businesses or non-profit organizations led by people of color. This one-of-a-kind program included multifaceted criteria to ensure equitable fund distributions to businesses most impacted by COVID-19 and businesses in vulnerable communities. The program's outcomes provide future opportunities to proactively support the local economy by providing direct financial support to community businesses. In total, EAGF award recipients reported averting more than 6,000 layoffs and retaining/earning about \$116M revenue as a direct result of the awarded funds."<sup>7</sup>

The same report also notes that WDACS distributed no-cost personal protection equipment (PPE) to small businesses, nonprofits, and social enterprises to increase safety for employers, employees, and customers. It "funded the distribution and partial procurement of 16.2 million units of critical PPE supplies for businesses with 100 employees or fewer."<sup>8</sup> Through its public-private partnership, the PPE Unite program not only contributed to public health and safety; it also saved the average PPE Unite business recipient at least \$182 in costs. This likely made a critical difference for many businesses that were seriously struggling to stay afloat during the pandemic.

As part of the LACWDB's Layoff Aversion Program, AJCC staff members also delivered increased layoff aversion services to small businesses. For example, AJCC staff members provided monthly, sometimes biweekly, information sessions and town hall meetings for businesses where they provided instructions on accessing COVID-19 financial assistance programs. Other services developed by WDACS and distributed or publicized by AJCCs included an employer press kit, a WDACS-run business disaster/crisis hotline, and access to legal experts.

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<sup>7</sup> Los Angeles County Workforce Development Board. (2021). *Los Angeles County Workforce Development Board 2021–2024 Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) local area plan*. [https://workforce.lacounty.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/LACountyWDB\\_LOCAL-PLAN-PY21-24\\_DRAFT\\_7\\_03.24.21.pdf](https://workforce.lacounty.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/LACountyWDB_LOCAL-PLAN-PY21-24_DRAFT_7_03.24.21.pdf), pp. 15–16.

<sup>8</sup> Los Angeles County Workforce Development Board (2021), p. 16.

### ***III. High Road Training Partnerships are underway in LA County and WDACS and LACWDB AJCCs are playing a role***

In 2017, CWDB launched its H RTP Initiative with \$10 million in grants provided to local partnerships to support workforce training models that addressed income inequality, economic competitiveness, and climate change through regional skills strategies. Echoing WIOA's themes, the initiative—which was recently re-funded at a higher level—takes a sector-based approach to employer engagement and focuses on training partnerships that build skills for both individuals and “high road” employers and generate family-supporting jobs where workers have “agency and voice.”<sup>9</sup>

#### ***LA County Sector-Focused Training Projects show promise, but they are currently limited in scope***

Formal, State-funded H RTPs are meant to be models of excellence, funded via relatively small state investments and aimed at serving, at least at first, relatively small numbers of individuals. LA County is home to four of the first eight state-funded H RTP partnerships.<sup>10</sup> The term “H RTP” is interchangeably used by many BOS Staff, WDACS, and AJCC staff members to describe other sector-focused training initiatives in LA County that offer job seekers access to well-paid, medium-skilled jobs (whether or not they are associated with CWDB-funded pilot projects), these sector-focused training projects have not been formally recognized as H RTPs by CWDB .

In addition to the “official” State-funded H RTPs, WDACS and LACWDB AJCCs currently collaborate with and support 12 sector-focused training projects, with WDACS playing a particularly important brokering role related to facilitating this collaboration. One WDACS representative referred to the AJCCs “as the arms and legs of employer-training partnerships.” For instance, for the HireLAX project, WDACS works with industry and training partners to connect participants to their closest AJCCs where they can enroll in a WIOA Title I program and thereby access support services to purchase needed training supplies, such as work boots. WDACS has also worked with LACWDB AJCCs to provide other services for sector-focused training projects. For example, AJCCs recruit and screen applicants and host employment events for these projects and associated employers. (Please see Appendix C: LA County High Road Training Partnerships and Sector-Focused Training Projects that Collaborate with WDACS and LACWDB AJCCs for a complete list of these H RTPs).

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<sup>9</sup> *High Road Training Partnerships*. California Workforce Development Board. (n.d.). Retrieved September 23, 2021, from <https://cwdb.ca.gov/initiatives/high-road-training-partnerships/>

<sup>10</sup> California Workforce Development Board. (2018). *High Road overview*. [https://cwdb.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/43/2019/09/High-Road-ECJ-Brief\\_UPDATED-BRANDING.pdf](https://cwdb.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/43/2019/09/High-Road-ECJ-Brief_UPDATED-BRANDING.pdf)

**Though HRTPs and sector-focused training projects show great promise as a strategy to work together with businesses and training providers to increase job seeker access to higher quality jobs, the scale is presently small, the costs are high, and the time commitment for implementation is significant.** Successful HRTPs often require the involvement of employers, workers, and training institutions (including colleges and adult schools), as well as the support of organizations that can recruit, screen, and support participants on the training pathway. Consequently, increasing the number of HRTPs in LA County will require a significant investment of both time and funding.

WDACS has been creative in leveraging WIOA training funds. One AJCC shared that it was able to find ways to fund certain types of training that allows them to pay for services upfront (as was required by the training partner). The AJCC specifically credited WDACS in supporting their efforts to navigate the compliance criteria embedded in the WIOA regulations.

***IV. AJCCs, as well as partner agencies and other interview subjects, reported that there is often a misperception that AJCCs are resourced to match all jobseekers to high-quality, high-wage jobs.***

There are several issues with this assumption.

#### ***LA County has a relatively low density of high-wage jobs***

Many local WDBs and workforce development programs are currently pursuing "quality jobs" strategies. Although definitions of quality jobs differ,<sup>11</sup> most programs—at a minimum—define such jobs as paying a living wage and offering benefits and opportunities for advancement. A recent report by the California Future of Work Commission defines quality jobs as providing “a living wage, stable and predictable pay, control over scheduling, access to benefits, a safe and dignified work environment, and opportunities for training and career advancement.”<sup>12</sup>

**However, for LA County to be able to readily connect its job seekers with such quality jobs, the 'elephant in the room' is the county's economic structure, and particularly the very high percentage of LA County jobs that do not pay living wages.** According to the [Public Policy Institute of California](#), and as illustrated in the figure 7 below, LA County has a relatively high

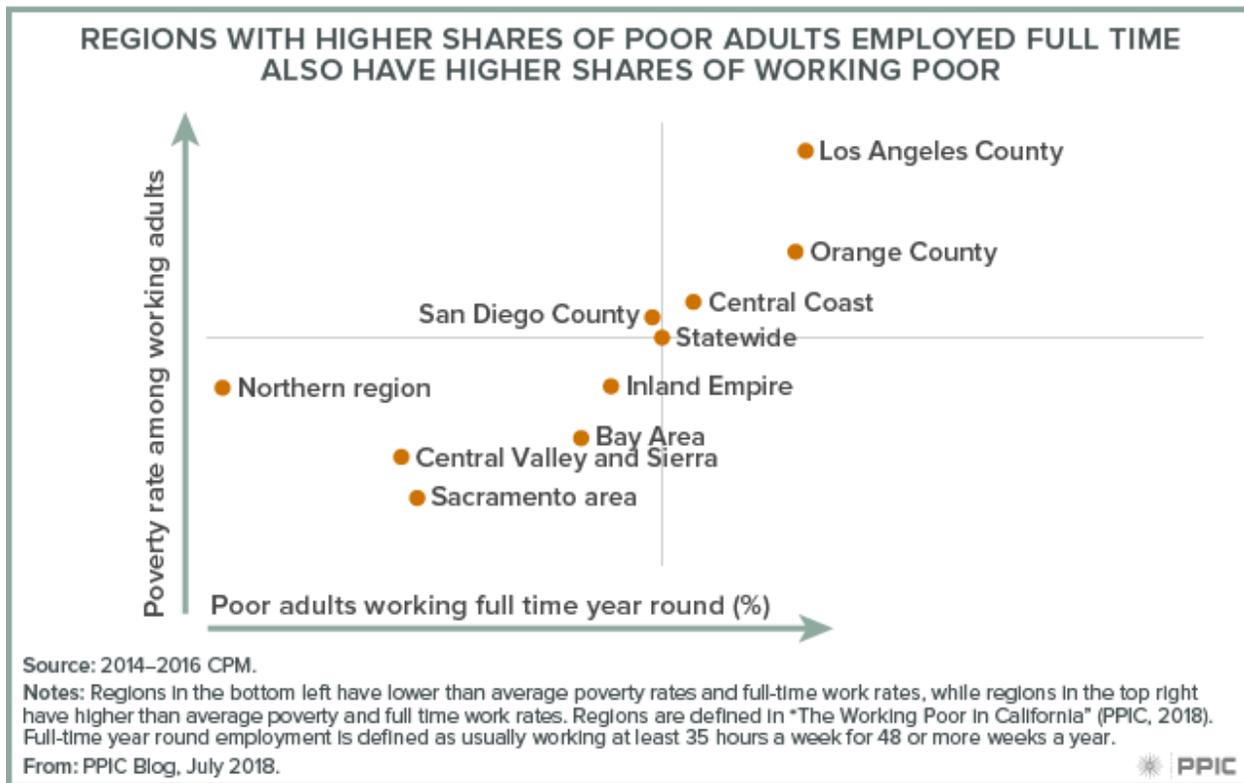
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<sup>11</sup> See, for example, a recent report on this topic from the Urban Institute, entitled "How Do We Define "Good Jobs," and How Do They Affect Worker Well-Being?" Available at: <https://www.workrisenetwork.org/working-knowledge/how-do-we-define-good-jobs-and-how-do-they-affect-worker-well-being>.

<sup>12</sup> California Future of Work Commission. A New Social Compact For Work And Workers (2021) Institute for the Future. <https://www.labor.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/338/2021/02/ca-future-of-work-report.pdf>

share of full-time workers who do not earn a living wage.<sup>13</sup> Further, in 2019, according to the LAEDC's *Pathways for Economic Resiliency report*, 15 percent of all jobs in LA County were not living-wage jobs—a statistic that may have worsened as a result of the pandemic.<sup>14</sup>

**Figure 7. Share of Working Poor Earning Poverty Wages in California Regions**

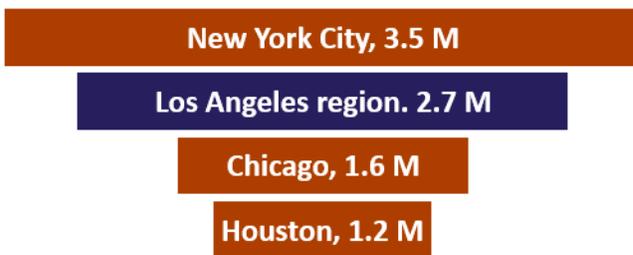


<sup>13</sup> Danielson, C., & Bohn, S. (2018, July 25). *Nearly half of the working poor are working full time and year round* [Blog post]. Public Policy Institute of California. <https://www.ppic.org/blog/nearly-half-of-the-working-poor-are-working-full-time-and-year-round/>

<sup>14</sup> Sedgwick, S. M., Girard, A., Ramsey, J., Larson, J., Sanchez, L., & Laferriere, T. (2020). *Pathways for economic resiliency: Los Angeles County, 2021–2026*. Los Angeles County Economic Development Corporation. <https://wdacs.lacounty.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Pathways-for-Economic-Resiliency-Condensed-Report-FINAL.pdf>

Los Angeles is not alone in grappling with this issue. While different studies of job quality and wages use different metrics, datasets, definitions, and calculations for low wage jobs or low-quality jobs, several recent studies provide additional findings related to this issue in California, Los Angeles, and the United States. For instance, the same Future of Work Commission report

**Figure 8. Cities with the Highest Total Number of Low Wage Workers**



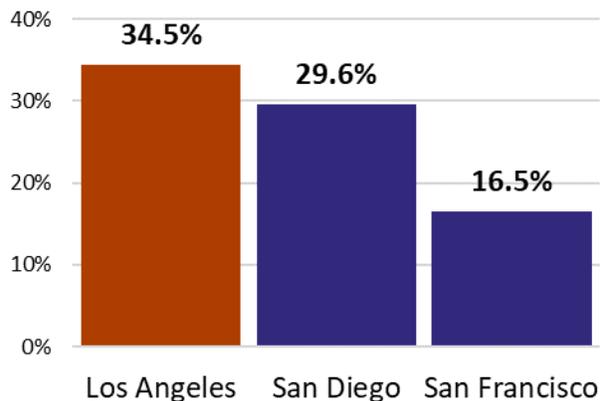
*Data Source: Brookings analysis of 2012-2016 American Community Survey 5-year Public Use*

While other large cities struggle with a high percentage of low wage workers, within California, LA County has a particularly high share of workers earning lower wages, especially when compared to other coastal metro areas in the state. As illustrated in Figure 9, an analysis by the UC Berkeley Labor Center of 2017 data found that Los Angeles had more than twice as many low wage workers (as a percentage of all workers) as San Francisco.<sup>17</sup>

quoted above also stated that “fewer than half of California workers report being in a quality job.”<sup>15</sup>

A 2019 study by the Brookings Institute (see Figure 8) found that large metropolitan areas have the highest numbers of low-wage workers, with the Los Angeles region having a particularly high number of low wage workers.<sup>16</sup>

**Figure 9. Share of Workers Earning Low Wages by County of Workplace, 2017**



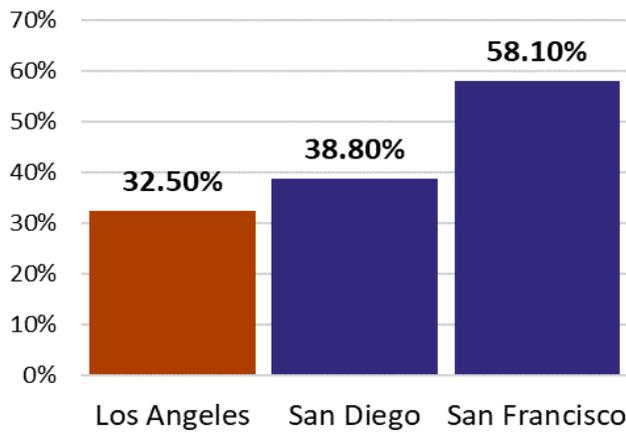
*Data Source: UC Berkeley Labor Center analysis of IPUMS American Community Survey 2017.*

<sup>15</sup> California Future of Work Commission. A New Social Compact For Work And Workers (2021) Institute for the Future. <https://www.labor.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/338/2021/02/ca-future-of-work-report.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> Ross, M. & Bateman, N. Meet the Low Wage Workforce (2019). Metropolitan Policy Program at Brookings. [https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/201911\\_Brookings-Metro\\_low-wage-workforce\\_Ross-Bateman.pdf](https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/201911_Brookings-Metro_low-wage-workforce_Ross-Bateman.pdf)

<sup>17</sup> Low-wage work in California. UC Berkeley Labor Center. (n.d.). Retrieved October 13, 2021, from <https://laborcenter.berkeley.edu/low-wage-work-in-california/#geography>.

**Figure 10. Adults 25+ with Bachelors or Higher**



Data Source: US Census Quick Facts

**Figure 11. Project Change in Employment by Occupation, Los Angeles County, 2020-2024**



Source: CA EDD

From: Pathways for Economic Resiliency

Structural factors contributing to the prevalence of workers earning low wages in the Los Angeles include issues on both the supply and demand side. For instance, as shown in Figure 10, LA County has a much lower percentage of adults with a college degree than other coastal metros. On the demand side, LA County also has a high prevalence of industry sectors that tend to employ lower wage workers. In their 2019 report, *Meet the Low Wage Workforce*, the Brookings Institute reported that the top 10 occupational clusters for low wage workers are primarily frontline service jobs, including

retail sales workers, food and beverage serving and preparation workers, home health aides and personal care workers, material moving scheduling, and dispatching workers, and office and administrative support.<sup>18</sup> Figure 11 is taken from the December 2020 *Pathways for Economic Resiliency* which reported that Los Angeles County lost many of these low

<sup>18</sup> Ross, M. & Bateman, N. *Meet the Low Wage Workforce* (2019). Metropolitan Policy Program at Brookings. [https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/201911\\_Brookings-Metro\\_low-wage-workforce\\_Ross-Bateman.pdf](https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/201911_Brookings-Metro_low-wage-workforce_Ross-Bateman.pdf)

wage positions early in the pandemic, but by 2024 many of these occupations are expected to recover and grow – with Personal Care and Services making the strongest gains.<sup>19</sup>

Basically, despite WDACS and the AJCCs’ attempts to help job seekers access high quality, living wage jobs, there are simply not enough “good jobs” currently available in LA County's labor market for all job seekers.

***Many WIOA participants cannot easily obtain the skills to qualify for available high-quality jobs that pay living wages***

According to multiple employer representatives interviewed for this study, AJCC clients do not typically have the skills needed to be eligible for their HRTPs and cannot readily develop them via a WIOA Title I program funds due to funding limitations.<sup>20</sup> One respondent clarified: “We need to be cognizant of what is realistic under WIOA. Sometimes there is no way to get high-road jobs filled through the AJCCs. The time and cost to build these skillsets are not available under WIOA.” Indeed, the sector-focused training initiatives employers interviewed for this evaluation reported that few referrals for their programs came from the AJCCs.

***Overall funding for the Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs is limited, so AJCCs must prioritize enrollments and services***

When it comes to WIOA Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth program funding, AJCCs have limited resources and must prioritize enrollments and services to those most likely to result in attainment of the performance targets described above. For example, the State-set performance target for employment approximately six months after program completion (2nd quarter after exit) for individuals who are enrolled in WIOA individualized career services or training hovers at around 70 percent—meaning that AJCCs are incentivized by WIOA and the State to ensure that 70 percent of the individuals they enroll in such services will be successful in finding employment post-program. **And these performance targets for WIOA programs are**

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<sup>19</sup> Sedgwick, S. M., Girard, A., Ramsey, J., Larson, J., Sanchez, L., & Laferriere, T. (2020). *Pathways for economic resiliency: Los Angeles County, 2021–2026*. Los Angeles County Economic Development Corporation. <https://wdacs.lacounty.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Pathways-for-Economic-Resiliency-Condensed-Report-FINAL.pdf>

<sup>20</sup> Funding for the Title I programs has been declining since the early 2000s. See, for example: [https://wdr.doleta.gov/research/FullText\\_Documents/ETAOP-2016-05\\_Managing%20Funding%20Challenges%20in%20the%20Workforce%20Investment%20Act%20Adult%20and%20Dislocated%20Worker%20Programs%20-%20Mitigating%20Strategies%20and%20Effects%20on%20Services.pdf](https://wdr.doleta.gov/research/FullText_Documents/ETAOP-2016-05_Managing%20Funding%20Challenges%20in%20the%20Workforce%20Investment%20Act%20Adult%20and%20Dislocated%20Worker%20Programs%20-%20Mitigating%20Strategies%20and%20Effects%20on%20Services.pdf)

**relatively 'hard,' meaning that if AJCC contractors (and the LACWDB) do not meet them, they can face heavy consequences such as state funding-related sanctions.<sup>21</sup>**

Further, because there are many circumstances that can affect whether WIOA program participants are able to find and maintain employment—several which are completely outside of any control by program staff members—WIOA programs need to ensure they are serving a relatively large number of participants who are able to complete program services within each calendar quarter (and go on to find and maintain employment) or they also face performance risks. Consequently, although job training can be funded using WIOA Title I dollars, as it is the most expensive service, it is also provided to only a limited number of participants and funding amounts tend to be low per participant.

In addition to being limited by the dollar amount, WIOA training dollars can only be used for certain kinds of training provided by pre-approved training vendors. However, due to what several respondents described as a cumbersome and restrictive process (required by WIOA) for becoming a pre-approved training provider, many training vendors – including community colleges –have opted out of the pre-approval process for many of their training programs and so WIOA participants cannot use program funding to participate in those programs. According to one AJCC, “Community Colleges don’t have a lot of love for us because it’s very cumbersome for them to get their programs approved [and paid for] under WIOA [regulations].”

***AJCCs are not adequately resourced to serve populations with high barriers to employment***

AJCC staff members reported that they do not receive sufficient WIOA funding to adequately serve job seekers who need extensive or specialized support to overcome their high barriers to employment, such as those who are homeless or have recently been released from prison. While AJCCs have adopted a “no wrong door” philosophy for job seekers and strive to serve anyone who enters, often via referrals to specialized community-based organizations, they asserted that WIOA resources alone cannot support the kind of intensive case management needed to effectively support job seekers who face such high barriers to employment.

A key strategy used by the LACWDB AJCCs to increase their job seekers' access to needed resources is to collaborate with other LA County agencies and WIOA partners. Their effectiveness in partnering is evidenced by the findings of the 2018-2019 AJCC Certification process (described above) that ranked AJCCs highly for their effective partnerships. As further evidence of their partnering success, staff members from EDD (the agency that administers the Wagner-Peyser Employment Service program—one of WIOA's 6 core programs—in California) are co-located at all the County's Comprehensive AJCCs, which is not the case in several other

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<sup>21</sup> Wu, P. (2015, July 1). *Operating guidance for the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act* (Training and Employment Guidance Letter No. 3-15). U.S. Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration. [https://wdr.doleta.gov/directives/attach/TEGL/TEGL\\_03-15\\_Acc.pdf](https://wdr.doleta.gov/directives/attach/TEGL/TEGL_03-15_Acc.pdf)

LWDAs in California—despite WIOA's heavy emphasis on having Employment Service staff members co-located at job centers. Further, all the LACWDB Comprehensive AJCCs also have additional partner programs co-located on-site, including other LA County programs as well as programs operated by community-based organizations.

The 2018-2019 AJCC Certification process described in the first finding (*AJCCs are mostly meeting or even exceeding their WIOA-related contractual metrics*) ranked AJCCs highly for their effective partnerships with both co-located and non-co-located partners. As stated above, WIOA emphasizes the alignment and “direct access” to partner services, but many LWDAs and their AJCCs have struggled with the realities of co-location and access given a myriad of logistical issue such as data sharing, program eligibility requirements, real estate/lease issues, and the implications for WIOA required cost-sharing agreements.<sup>22</sup> Especially given this broader WIOA implementation context, the high degree of co-location (especially by EDD staff members) at LA County AJCCs is notable.

One AJCC-related partnership that many interview subjects spoke about favorably was the INVEST program, a partnership between Probation, the County Office of Diversion and Re-Entry, WDACS, and in the 2 most recent years of the program, LA City and South Bay WIB. INVEST provides training and employment services for adult probationers in LA County. Broadly, the program directs probationers to one of nine participating AJCCs (seven of which are overseen of which are overseen by LACWDB) where there are staff attuned to the specific needs of those reentering the workforce from the criminal justice system and trained on the resources available to INVEST participants.

Some aspects of what has made INVEST successful, both from an outcomes and implementation standpoint, include the following:

- 1) Probation is a fully (physically) present partner. While INVEST participants receive services at AJCCs and work with AJCC staff members, Probation staff members are also onsite (at scheduled times) and can serve as a resource for both AJCC staff members and INVEST participants.
- 2) AJCC staff members received specialized training on working with adults exiting the criminal justice system.<sup>23</sup> Several staff members noted that they enjoyed this training because it made them feel more empowered and confident in serving justice-involved individuals. They also appreciated that they received very clear and targeted

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<sup>22</sup> [https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/OASP/evaluation/pdf/ETA\\_WIOAStudy\\_AJCCsystems.pdf](https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/OASP/evaluation/pdf/ETA_WIOAStudy_AJCCsystems.pdf)

<sup>23</sup> This training, the Offender Workforce Development Specialist (OWDS), is now locally branded as Inclusive Workforce Development Specialist (IWDS), which leads to national certification recognized by the National Institute of Corrections (NIC).

information on what services and resources are available for them to offer INVEST participants.

- 3) There is additional funding available to support the provision of enhanced services to INVEST participants, making it financially viable for AJCCs to effectively serve these individuals with significant barriers to employment.
- 4) The tracking of participants and their outcomes is facilitated by an Automated Referral Service (ARS), that allows program partners to track the progress of referrals. Respondents, including AJCCs and INVEST partners, noted the ARS eliminated many common logistical barriers to effective coordination of programs that are spread out across multiple locations.

***More work is needed to connect General Relief and CFET customers to AJCC services***

As described above, one of the stated goals of this evaluation was to find ways to better connect customers from DPSS safety net programs such as GAIN and GROW, to the AJCC system so that those customers can have access to additional job search support and placement services. As part of its efforts to monitor the numbers of individuals served by those programs who access AJCC services, WDACS regularly reviews the numbers of customers enrolled in the DPSS's general relief (GR) and CalFresh Employment & Training (CFET) populations who are also served by WIOA Title I programs across the whole county, including those served by the other six LA County workforce boards. Based on WDACS' most recent review for 2020-2021 program year, the magnitude of such co-enrollment is small; only about three thousand GR customer and ten thousand CFET customer records matched records for WIOA enrollees for all LA County.<sup>24</sup>

One reason for such limited co-enrollment may be due to the challenges AJCCs face in serving job seekers who face significant barriers to employment, such as customers in DPSS programs. Further, another disconnect is likely due to different definitions of what is required for job seekers to have the skills required to be likely to meet the WIOA performance metrics described above. For example, CFET/GROW staff members reported that they refer clients to AJCCs for services when those individuals are determined to be "job ready," which by their definition means they have paperwork showing that they have the right to work in the U.S., a valid government ID, are not disabled, and (if male), are registered with the selective service. In contrast, AJCC staff members typically do not consider job seekers to be "job ready" unless they also have the requisite training, experience, and stability to get and keep a job. At no time did any AJCC staff member tell us in an interview—or imply—that they are unwilling to serve GR or

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<sup>24</sup> WDACS Los Angeles County WDA DPSS/WIOA Participants and General Relief Employable Match Scorecards FY 2020-21 (July 2020 - June 2021). Includes WIOA data from all seven workforce boards.

CFET recipients, but it should be noted that the WIOA employment targets discussed above do strongly incentivize WIOA programs to enroll only individuals who have the skills to become and stay employed after receipt of only relatively short-term services. In fact--given the limited WIOA resources for more intensive services--some might argue that in enrolling job seekers who face significant barriers to employment, WIOA programs would be setting such individuals up for failure.

While GR and CFET programs may not be a large percentage of WIOA enrollments, such participants are being served by AJCCs, albeit with non-WIOA Title I program funding. For example, several LA County AJCCs have contracts with the GAIN program to provide subsidized training using GAIN funds. Additionally, several AJCC staff members mentioned positive referrals relationships between AJCCs and DPSS programs (and in some cases co-location) in their interviews. These relationships were also documented in the Hallmarks of Excellence certification assessments described above.

## **Recommendations for the New Economic and Workforce Development Department (EWDD)**

As a new merger between LA County's Economic and Workforce agencies commences, we imagine there will be a comprehensive and strategic planning process. The planning process and vision that emerges will provide an opportunity to raise the profile of a renewed economic and workforce vision for the County. From interviews with County stakeholders, we heard pieces of a vision including high quality jobs, increased worker and job seeker skills, and high-quality business services. With those components in mind, the following recommendations apply the findings presented above along with evidence from a literature scan to inform the likely merger-related strategic planning process.

### ***1. Clarify the vision and strategy for economic and workforce development at the highest levels: Establish clear priorities that inform the entire economic and workforce development chain of programs and providers***

BOS staff shared high aspirations for more HRTPs, increased services for people with high barriers to employment, and more highly responsive services for employers. This desire was broadly shared by all respondents (from WDACS, AJCCs, employers, LACWDB members); all agreed that job seekers need more access to quality jobs and that employers are demanding new and higher skills, and many are currently experiencing worker shortages.

The answer to these problems does not lie solely on the shoulders of the AJCCs or any other single entity, such as WDACS. Complex, systemic and structural economic problems are facing regions globally and need urgent attention and leadership at the highest levels as employment protections decline, income inequality grows, middle-wage jobs shrink, and the labor market

becomes more volatile. Federal WIOA resources and the AJCCs' roles will need to be leveraged inside a larger, robust set of interventions to increase economic growth and mobility in the region. Leaders from industry, WDACS, AJCCs, the LACWDB, DPSS, and Probation—namely, everyone we were asked to interview for this report—need to be involved. These leaders indicated their eagerness to work together to find solutions to close gaps between job seeker and employer needs.

To make progress on solving these hard problems, the new EWDD and LA County's AJCCs will need clarity, prioritization, and incentives to optimize their contribution in a larger context. The BOS is best situated to provide such guidance and support to all these entities, as well as to other system partners, to enable them to align with the BOS' economic and workforce development priorities, and, by extension, push those priorities down to service providers at the AJCCs as well as those contracted by other County agencies. As evidence of the appropriateness of the BOS playing this role, several respondents mentioned that they felt that a BOS motion would have the power to put talked-about plans, such as service alignment, into action and suggested that clear direction from the Supervisors is instrumental in getting new ideas implemented.

#### ***Develop shared strategies for LA County economic and workforce development activities***

As suggested above, a key activity for the new LA County EWDD will be to develop a shared strategy for economic development and workforce activities under its purview in pursuit of the vision established by the BOS.<sup>25</sup> As early planning activities begin, one key task toward this end will be to review relevant planning documents such as the newly developed LACWDB 2021-2024 WIOA Local Area Plan, which includes a sectoral approach, and look for additional synergies between those documents that can help to strengthen the implementation of additional sector strategies and HRTPs within the County. The new EWDD could increase its sectoral focus by using those sectors to prioritize the kinds of employers it serves (as the Vancouver WDB in Washington State does) and the kinds of training it approves for use with WIOA training funds, as does the San Francisco WDB.

Additionally, as outlined in the August 4, 2020 Board motion, the Board directed the CEO, in consultation with the Los Angeles County Economic Development Corporation (LAEDC), to set forth a process for the preparation of a Strategic Plan for Economic Development for the County that reflects broad public and stakeholder participation from throughout the County with a specific focus on assessing the impacts on disadvantaged communities and communities of color that will result from the anticipated restructuring of the regional economy due to

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<sup>25</sup> Note: the county administered LWDA is one of seven areas within the entire county. Similarly, while EWDD will bring together many of the county's economic development offices and agencies, there are also many other city-level economic development organizations that will still operate independently of LA County EWDD.

COVID-19, and on identifying specific strategies the County should deploy to mitigate these impacts and ensure that all share future economic prosperity.

Another possible strategy that the new EWDD could consider would be to adopt a Quality Jobs approach, such as the San Diego WDB has done (see Figure 12 which presents the San Diego WDB's Quality Job Indicators). Given the challenges to connecting current AJCC customers to quality living wage jobs that were described above, adopting such a strategy could serve as an important signpost for the LA County public workforce system's vision for the future.



Other communities have used strategies like industry sectors to help prioritize activities and services. For instance, the Workforce Southwest Washington LWDB uses a sectors framework to help them prioritize the kinds of employers they are serving, the kinds of training they approve for WIOA training funds, and the kinds of strategic outreach they do with partners. San Francisco's Office of Economic and Workforce Development also utilizes a sector-based approach to investing in the kinds of training academies the Department supports using a mix of WIOA and San Francisco General Fund dollars.

No matter what strategies the new EWDD chooses to adopt, it should prioritize for early adoption strategies that are aligned with LA County's vision for economic and workforce development, but that can also be accomplished quickly, setting the new department and its partners up for some early wins.

***II. Focus on a population or service strategy in-line with LA County's broader vision***

Based on the BOS motions, department reporting, previous evaluation reports, and County-wide discussions that led to this evaluation, as well as our interviews with system stakeholders, there are many smaller, more targeted steps EWDD could take to enhance operations and services of the workforce and economic development system. As EWDD and its partners make

choices about how to prioritize and fund early activities, four ideas for specific initiatives include:

**1. Increase the number of GR and CFET participants who receive workforce services at AJCCs.**

DPSS' GAIN and GROW managers meet regularly with WDACS and there is interest among all parties in finding better ways to connect program resources. Specifically, the GROW program manager indicated that she is interested in making more structural changes to the way they provide services to customers, such that those services take a "career-pathway structure." If increasing the connection between the GR and CFET populations and AJCCs is a goal, some of the successful aspects of the INVEST program should be considered as ways of doing so. These include:

- ✓ **Train AJCC staff on how to work specifically with GR and CFET populations.** Having expertise in the kinds of barriers specific groups of clients experience (in the case of INVEST, this was individuals exiting the justice system) and how to work with and potentially remediate them, will empower AJCC employees and help to make successful interactions between AJCC staff members and GR and CFET clients more likely.
- ✓ **Co-locate GAIN and GROW staff on site at AJCCs and have them participate in client case management.** As noted above, a key approach for INVEST is to have Probation officers rotate spending time at each of the AJCCs that are part of the program to provide support to participants and AJCC staff. Consequently, to increase connections between AJCCs and GAIN and GROW, it would make sense to have staff from those programs regularly spend time at AJCCs.
- ✓ **Provide AJCCs with additional dedicated (non-WIOA) resources to provide more intensive services to GR and CFET participants.** With these additional resources (such as what Probation provides AJCCs as part of INVEST), AJCCs would be able to provide GR and CFET clients with the more intensive and long-term services they need to succeed in the labor market. Also, as with INVEST participants, given that they would have non-WIOA funds available to serve these participants, AJCCs would not need to enroll GR and CFET participants in a WIOA Title I program until they were confident that those individuals were ready to achieve the WIOA performance metric targets.
- ✓ **Make use of WDACS' data and IT infrastructure.** This would include adding GAIN and GROW to the ARS and adding relevant data on co-enrollment to data dashboards to enable the programs to make real-time, data-driven decision making and how to improve the partnership.

- ✓ **Consider developing a network of community partners that specialize in bridging the gap between what the GR and CFET programs and the AJCCs consider "job ready."** One option to help with job readiness disconnect between the GR and CFET programs and AJCCs would be to use community partners who are experienced in serving the GR and CFET population to provide additional job readiness services to GR and CFET clients before they are referred to an AJCC for enrollment in a WIOA Title I program. This was the approach used by New York City when it required its Adult and Dislocated program contractors to refer to community partners all customers with significant barriers to employment for remediation before those customers could be enrolled in a WIOA Title I program. The City and County of San Francisco also piloted this approach to serving individuals in their broader network of workforce system Access Points to ensure that those customers taking advantage of their broad range of training academies and other workforce services, were ready to benefit.

**2. Create structured pathways between AJCCs and existing HRTPs.** Another focused strategy that EWDD could pursue is finding ways to better connect AJCC customers to H RTP programs. While several staff and H RTP partners said that AJCC customers generally were not a good fit for current H RTP opportunities, it is worth considering whether a customized short-term training program or other type of programming could be created to develop a structured bridge for AJCC customers into H RTPs. An analogous solution to this is the pre-apprenticeship model which helps connect individuals with higher barriers to employment or nontraditional populations to apprenticeship opportunities. Apprenticeships are a good comparison to H RTPs because they are a common strategy used by successful H RTPs. The pre-apprenticeship-to-apprenticeship pathway recognizes that even programs that target "entry level workers" might still be out of reach for those with high barriers to employment. As such, pre-apprenticeship programs provide programming aimed at:

- Recruiting and screening underrepresented populations as identified by their partner apprenticeship programs;
- Providing remedial education and support to bring individuals up to the minimum skill and stability levels required to start and persist on in an apprenticeship program.
- Delivering technical skills and training that orient participants to the kinds of work and expectations that will be required of them during an apprenticeship; and

- Connecting participants to opportunities by getting them in front of apprentice and employer partners who provide job site tours, lectures, and often offer hands-on training.<sup>26</sup>

AJCCs and EWDD can work closely with HRTPs to understand the kinds of participants they are looking for; the application and selection process and timeline; the pre-requisite education or skills needed to start the program; and what additional on-going support participants might need to be successful in the H RTP to build a supported pathway into these opportunities for a broader spectrum of workers.

**3. Focus on developing HRTPs.** WDACS, industry partners, and every AJCC we interviewed talked excitedly about the need for a greater scale and emphasis on HRTPs. Engaging the business and education community in building HRTPs could be an early priority for the new EWDD team. At the same time, investment in H RTP development would have to be undertaken with clear expectations. We heard from WDACS staff and H RTP partners that program development is time intensive for agency staff, employers, and training partners. For example, WDACS staff shared that the Northrup Grumman H RTP, now in its sixth year, took several years “to get to the scale and smooth operation that it is now.” It should also be noted that HRTPs are generally not set up to serve a high volume of individuals. Some of the larger HRTPs serve a magnitude of several hundred participants a year while smaller programs serve less than 50 (see a comprehensive H RTP table in the Appendix).

To date, WDACS has played an important role in brokering services and funding between employers, training partners and the AJCCs. An H RTP development focus could set the agenda with priorities to:

- ✓ Establish EWDD as a backbone organization, or an entity that guides vision and strategy, supports aligned activities, establishes shared measurement practices, builds public will, advances policy, and mobilizes funding.<sup>27</sup>
- ✓ Deliver economic development or training services for businesses or sector partnerships that are interested in developing HRTPs.
- ✓ Scale up connections with California Community Colleges (CCC) partners to find strategic H RTP alignment. In 2021, there were 21 community colleges in LA County serving

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<sup>26</sup> Oettinger, J., & Hebbard, L. (2019, February) Access to Opportunity: Using Pre-apprenticeship Programs to Connect to Registered Apprenticeship. California Apprenticeship Initiative Hub, Foundation for California Community Colleges. <https://caihub.foundationccc.org/Portals/0/Documents/CAICaseStudies/cai-pre-apprenticeship-programs.pdf>

<sup>27</sup> Turner, S., Merchant, K., Kania, J., & Martin, E. (2012, July 17). Understanding the value of backbone organizations in collective impact: Part 2. *Stanford Social Innovation Review*. [https://ssir.org/articles/entry/understanding\\_the\\_value\\_of\\_backbone\\_organizations\\_in\\_collective\\_impact\\_2](https://ssir.org/articles/entry/understanding_the_value_of_backbone_organizations_in_collective_impact_2)

401,063 students.<sup>28</sup> As CCC enrollments have been declining, even more so during COVID-19, forward-thinking colleges are becoming more open to and flexible about offering training solutions. The CCC budget is over \$11 billion, and this offers many opportunities for education and training leverage. [Strong Workforce Program funding](#) (\$248 million annually), for example, is particularly geared towards support of career and technical education and programs

- 4. Support coordinated efforts by WDACS, AJCC Business Service Representatives (BSRs), and EWDD** Consider the contributions and local knowledge of AJCC BSRs as the new EWDD sets its priorities and targets for economic and business services. AJCCs and their BSRs are excited about the merger of the economic and workforce development entities in the County and envision that the new EWDD will result in more opportunities for them to engage with small, local employers, and entrepreneurs and help them with accessing additional talent sourced via the AJCCs. Adding the capacity of WDACS and AJCC BSRs to the County's economic development teams as those teams' talent/workforce development specialist will only strengthen the County's ability to assist local businesses with achieving their goals, hopefully leading those businesses to need to hire additional job seekers from AJCCs. As one WDACS respondent put it, hopefully the new EWDD will be an opportunity for "more of a one-stop shop for businesses... [where we can also] market workforce services to them. Hopefully we see that with the new department. We want to...better integrate the work."

### ***III. Set AJCCs and their partners up for greater success***

System change is expensive, resource intensive, iterative, and takes a long time. Being realistic about timelines, impact, and cost both within EWDD and with external contractors is critical to being able to persevere, find the energy and will to iterate, and keep working toward the new department's vision and goals.

#### ***Set realistic metrics, timelines, and funding***

Several AJCCs reported experiences of working with WDACS and other County agencies on special employment-related initiatives outside of their baseline WIOA-based contracts. Generally, the AJCCs were excited to be included in special projects and eager to contribute, but said they often struggled with timelines, expectations, and funding. If EWDD plans to engage AJCCs as partners in specific workforce initiatives, setting them up for success includes:

- **Providing adequate time for planning, startup, and implementation.** For example, we heard about several instances where a lead agency was awarded a two-year grant,

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<sup>28</sup> <http://www.laalmanac.com/education/ed38.php>

which it then took several months to organize and distribute to subcontractors, and by the time AJCC was under contract and had set up processes and trained and hired staff, they only had one year left to meet two-years of outcomes. AJCC respondents said that when it comes to new initiatives, they need time to develop processes and resources; to train and hire staff, and to test out service strategies before they can jump into full implementation.

- **Being clear about goals and outcomes and ensuring that reporting requirements match stated goals.** You get what you measure. Therefore, EWDD and partners should carefully review available reporting requirements against the initiative’s broader goals.
- **Setting funding commensurate to goals.** Serving populations that face high barriers to employment is resource intensive. Providing training is resource intensive. Given the resources available, EWDD and other funding partners may have to choose between intervention intensity and volume of participants served.

#### *Help the AJCCs to provide their own staffs with living wage, high quality jobs*

The AJCCs themselves are employers who play a role in the ecosystem of “first jobs to better jobs,” often employing their own former customers. However, we also heard that many AJCCs are barely paying family sustaining wages and that employee turnover is a common cause of quality issues at AJCCs. To remedy these issues, EWDD has a role to play in incentivizing and providing sufficient resources to AJCC contractors to allow them offer jobs that pay competitive and family sustaining wages. The procurement process, for instance, could offer target salaries for AJCC/Title I program staff members and reward respondents that meet such pay targets. The BOS can work with the other LA County WDBs to adopt similar standards to raise wages for employees at all AJCCs throughout the County.

#### *IV. Continue to invest in data infrastructure to support data-driven decision making for the EWDD team and partners*

Continue to invest in what we see as one of WDACS’ greatest strengths and assets, which is its data infrastructure and the associated expertise that goes with it. We found WDACS data to be advanced and impressive, providing value to WDACS staff, to partner agencies, and to the AJCCs.

As resources are established to support the new EWDD, maintaining this critical infrastructure to track, share, and analyze program performance is of utmost importance to supporting all of the other recommendations in this report.

## Appendix A: WIOA Partners

There are six WIOA Core Partners:

- WIOA Title IB: Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth Programs. Funding for these programs is passed down from the federal government to the State and then allocated to local workforce development boards which generally contract out service provision to job seekers and employers.
- WIOA Title II Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) Program. In California, the federal AEFLA funding goes to the state Department of Education which make subawards to local education partners.
- WIOA Title III: Wagner-Peyser Employment Service Program. This program is administered by California’s Employment Development Department (EDD), Workforce Services Division, which has regional offices where job seekers and employers can receive services.
- WIOA Title IV Vocational Rehabilitation Program. In California, Vocation Rehabilitation is administered by California’s Department of Rehabilitation (DOR) which has regional offices throughout the state to serve job seekers and employers.

In addition to the six core partners, WIOA directs AJCCs to provide access to the services of any required partner programs in the area. Required partners include:

Carl Perkins Career Technical Education (Perkins V)	Veterans Employment and Training Services
Title V Older Americans Act	YouthBuild
Job Corps	Trade Adjustment Assistance Act
Native American Programs	Community Services Block Grant
Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers Program	Housing & Urban Development workforce development programs
Unemployment Compensation	Second Chance Act Programs
Temporary Assistance for Needy Families/CalWORKs	National Farmworkers Jobs Program

## Appendix B: LA County High Road Training Partnerships and Sector-Focused Training Projects in LA County with WDACS, AJCC Involvement

HRTP Name	CWDB Funded (Y/N)	WDACS Involved (Y/N)	AJCCs Involved	AJCC(s)	AJCC Services Provided	# Trained and Placed
Aircraft Fabrication and Assembly		Y	Y	Antelope Valley Santa Clarita	Case management Support services and job placement Paid training Follow-up services	Since inception in 2016: 1397 trained 1253 placed
<a href="#">Apprenticeship Readiness Fund</a>	Y	Y	Y	Various AJCCs	Case management Support services and job placement Paid training Stipends	
Careers 4 A Cause		Y	Y	Co-enrollments with various AJCCs	Case management Support services and job placement Paid training Stipends	Since inception in spring 2020: 88 trained 33 placed (cohort of 30 currently seated)
CHIRP Solar Program		Y	Y	Pomona Valley East San Gabriel Valley	Support services and job placement Training	Since inception in spring 2019: 35 trained 23 placed
Electric Bus Manufacturing Technology		Y	Y	Pomona Valley	Case management Support services and job placement Paid training Follow-up services	In first cohort: 15 trained 13 placed  In second cohort (in progress): 15 in training

## Appendix B: LA County High Road Training Partnerships and Sector-Focused Training Projects in LA County with WDACS, AJCC Involvement

H RTP Name	CWDB Funded (Y/N)	WDACS Involved (Y/N)	AJCCs Involved	AJCC(s)	AJCC Services Provided	# Trained and Placed
High Road to Electric Bus Manufacturing in Los Angeles County: BYD-SMART	Y	Y	Y	Antelope Valley Santa Clarita, NE San Fernando Valley	Case management Support services and job placement Paid training	Scheduled to start in fall 2021 (COVID-19 stopped earlier launch)
HireUP	N	Y	Y	South LA, ESGV, West LA, NESFV	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Case management</li> <li>Support services and job placement</li> </ul>	198 trained 126 placed
<a href="#">Hospitality Training Academy</a>	Y	Y	Y	Several AJCC partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Case management</li> <li>Job placement</li> <li>Training</li> <li>Stipends</li> </ul>	Hire Up training partner and new partnership with CRDF initiative
Medical Careers Academy		Y	Y	East LA/San Gabriel Valley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Case management</li> <li>Support services and job placement</li> </ul>	In first cohort, completed spring 2021: 15 trained 12 placed (will train 40–50 per year)

## Appendix B: LA County High Road Training Partnerships and Sector-Focused Training Projects in LA County with WDACS, AJCC Involvement

H RTP Name	CWDB Funded (Y/N)	WDACS Involved (Y/N)	AJCCs Involved	AJCC(s)	AJCC Services Provided	# Trained and Placed
Microsoft Training Program – Vets		Y	Y	Veterans AJCC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Case management</li> <li>• Paid training</li> <li>• Support services and job placement</li> <li>• Paid training</li> </ul>	Started summer 2021: 20 students seated currently (will train 50–60 per year)
Military Training Academy – Aerospace		Y	Y	Veterans AJCC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Case management</li> <li>• Support services and job placement</li> <li>• Paid training</li> </ul>	Since inception in fall 2020: 35 trained 26 placed (will train 100 per year)
Northrop Grumman – NDT Training Academy		Y	Y	Santa Clarita, NE San Fernando Valley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Case management</li> <li>• Support services and job placement</li> <li>• Paid training</li> </ul>	Started summer 2021: 15 students seated currently (first cohort)
<a href="#">UAA – CNC Training</a>		Y	Y	Santa Clarita, San Fernando Valley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Case management</li> <li>• Support services and job placement</li> <li>• Paid training</li> </ul>	Since inception in 2018: 132 trained 118 placed

## Appendix B: LA County High Road Training Partnerships and Sector-Focused Training Projects in LA County with WDACS, AJCC Involvement

HRTP Name	CWDB Funded (Y/N)	WDACS Involved (Y/N)	AJCCs Involved	AJCC(s)	AJCC Services Provided	# Trained and Placed
<a href="#">Women in Non-Traditional Employment</a>	Y	Y	Y	Various AJCCs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Case management</li> <li>• Support services and job placement</li> <li>• Paid training</li> <li>• Stipends</li> </ul>	In partnership with various programs
<a href="#">Worker Education and Resource Center</a>	Y	Y	Y	Several AJCC co-enrollments as a part of the Hire Up program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Case management</li> <li>• Support services and job placement</li> </ul>	15 trained 8 placed