



**TO:** Adult Career and Continuing Education Services (ACCES) Committee

**FROM:** Kevin G. Smith *KG Smith*

**SUBJECT:** Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) 2020 Combined State Plan

**DATE:** January 2, 2020

**AUTHORIZATION(S):** *Sharon L. Tate*

#### SUMMARY

#### **Issue for Discussion**

To provide the Board of Regents with information on the development of the New York State 2020 Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Combined State Plan. Under WIOA, states are required to develop a strategic plan every four years that focuses on strengthening and improving their respective workforces.

#### **Reason(s) for Consideration**

Required by Federal Statute.

#### **Proposed Handling**

This item will come before the ACCES Committee at the Board of Regents January 2020 meeting for discussion and its February 2020 meeting for approval.

#### **Procedural History**

In July, 2014 the WIOA was signed into law. The law supersedes the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 and amends the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, the Wagner-Peyser Act, and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. States are required to develop a four-year State Plan that implements the WIOA requirements. The first plan was submitted in July 2016 with a two-year modification submitted in April 2018.

## **Background Information**

WIOA is designed to help job seekers access employment, education, training, and support services to succeed in the labor market and to match employers with the skilled workers they need to compete in the global economy. The purpose of WIOA is to better align the workforce system with education and economic development in an effort to create a collective response to economic and labor market challenges on the national, state, and local levels. WIOA continues the trend in workforce legislation by further engaging the private sector to lead local workforce development board efforts and focuses on introducing increased flexibility and accountability of board members. WIOA encourages an improved response to labor market needs by connecting workforce development board performance to outcomes that require an understanding of the correlation between training investments and economic return.

The WIOA Combined State Plan must reflect a state's intent with regard to improved access for individuals with disabilities to high quality workforce services to prepare them for competitive integrated employment. One-stop centers must provide physical and programmatic accessibility to employment and training services for individuals with disabilities. WIOA calls for investments in serving disconnected youth and other vulnerable populations. In particular, students with disabilities must be provided with extensive pre-employment transition services so they can successfully obtain employment.

In addition, states must align the National Reporting System (NRS), accountability system for adult education, with the new WIOA requirements. WIOA requires that all core programs report on common performance measures and levels of performance. Measurement of skill gains is included in Title I performance. Participants who obtain a secondary or High School Equivalency diploma will only be included for reporting if they have obtained or retained employment or are in an education or training program leading to a recognized postsecondary credential within one year after exit from the program.

The core partners, in collaboration with the State Workforce Development Board, must identify a workforce vision for the State and must outline the goals and strategies for attainment of the vision. WIOA ensures that employment and training services provided by the core partners are coordinated and complementary so that job seekers acquire skills and credentials that meet employers' needs. WIOA brings together the following core programs of Federal investment in skill development and employment and training services:

- Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth formula programs – administered by the U.S. Department of Labor;
- Wagner-Peyser Act employment services – administered by the U.S. Department of Labor;
- Adult Education and Literacy Act programs – administered by the U.S. Department of Education; and,
- Rehabilitation Act Title I Vocational Rehabilitation programs – administered by the U.S. Department of Education.

At the state level, two of these WIOA core partners, Adult Education and Vocational Rehabilitation, are administered by the New York State Education Department (NYSED). Perkins V, Strengthening Career and Technical Education (CTE) for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, also administered by NYSED, coordinates with the core partners under WIOA.

WIOA requires each state to submit a unified or combined state plan that aligns their workforce system with education and economic development to create effective strategies to address economic and labor market challenges. If a state chooses to include educational or workforce development programs other than those identified as core partners, the state plan is referred to as combined rather than unified. New York State will submit another WIOA combined plan as the following programs, in addition to the Perkins V CTE program, are being included in the 2020 draft:

- Trade Adjustment Assistance Program, administered by the New York State Department of Labor (NYSDOL);
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, administered by the New York State Office for Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA);
- Senior Community Employment Program, administered by the New York State Office for the Aging (SOFA); and,
- Community Service Block Grant, administered by the New York State Department of State (DOS).

In 2015 as part of the effort to develop the initial WIOA Combined State Plan, interagency workgroups were created. These workgroups continued to meet and expand in both their membership and scope for the implementation of the 2016 WIOA Combined State Plan and subsequent development of the draft 2020 WIOA Combined State Plan. Accomplishments from the interagency workgroups in support of the 2016 WIOA Combined State Plan vision and goals included:

- Distribution of adaptive technology to One-Stop Career Centers throughout the State with training provided to front-line staff;
- Creation of a release of information form distributed to core partner agencies to use when sharing confidential information on common participants of services;
- Provision of joint webinars to core partners on the Summer Youth Employment Program and services for homeless and runaway youth; and,
- Utilization of the DOL One-Stop Operating System (OSOS) as a common system for partners (ACCES-VR and NYS Commission for the Blind) to track their business engagement activities.

As a result of the implementation of the 2016 WIOA Combined State Plan, ACCES-VR has been able to successfully build upon its vocational rehabilitation services and increase its cross-system work with core partners. Examples include:

- The implementation of pre-employment transition services (Pre-ETS) for ACCESS-VR eligible students in 2018 and for potentially eligible students in early 2020. Pre-ETS are mandated services under WIOA.

- The development and implementation of a statewide student referral system that streamlines the ACCES-VR application process to reduce barriers to postsecondary services.
- The expansion of extended supported employment services for youth to up to 48 months, providing additional time to support employment success for youth with disabilities.
- The execution of a data exchange agreement with the NYSDOL. This agreement allows ACCES-VR to receive wage information about its participants after exit from services to support WIOA reporting requirements.
- A partnership with NYSDOL that allows ACCES-VR to report services provided to business in the NYSDOL's One-Stop Operating System (OSOS). Tracking of business services in OSOS began in February 2019 and as of November 30, 2019, over 1000 unique businesses across the state have directly received services from ACCES-VR.

The 2016 WIOA Combined State Plan also resulted in the building of capacity in adult education programming for ACCES-Adult Education and Family Literacy as follows:

- Expansion to 56 Literacy Zones in high poverty communities.
- Increased Adult Education partnership with the 33 Local Workforce Development Boards across the state.
- Enrollment of all adult education students in Job Zone, a web-based career resource utilized by the One-Stop Career Centers.
- Creation of "Fast Track" instruction strategies that create resources for students who have not passed The High School Equivalency (TASC) exam.
- Improved case management for Adult Education programs supporting collaboration with WIOA partners

The draft 2020 WIOA Combined State Plan builds on the previous plan's efforts to improve and strengthen New York State's workforce development system. New York's workforce development vision, goals and implementation strategy are as follows:

Vision: New York State envisions a unified workforce development system that is regionally coordinated and programmatically seamless, delivering workforce training, business services, and statewide job linkages to all New Yorkers.

Goals: The vision is supported by three goals:

- *Governance* - WIOA programs will be governed in a seamless system, coordinated with regional sector-based workforce strategies that align with the New York State Regional Economic Development Council (REDC) strategic plan to build partnerships between government, education, and business.
- *Service Delivery* - Services, including job development, job posting, job match and referral, basic skills training, occupational skills training, and high school equivalency preparation will meet the needs of businesses and participants through public-private sector partnerships, with priority given to individuals with barriers to employment.
- *Accountability* - Meaningful performance metrics will be reported to support evidence-based and data-driven workforce investments, and accountable and

transparent programs. This includes the alignment of technology, metrics and data systems across programs.

Implementation Strategy: To implement New York's vision and goals the partners have and will continue to seek several strategies for the One-Stop Career Center System. These ensure all partners work together to align and coordinate services, providing job seekers and businesses seamless service delivery. Strategies include:

- Aligning workforce and economic development functions to create systems that align to meet the needs of businesses with job seeking participants, including individuals with disabilities;
- Incentivizing robust business partnerships to best inform workforce decision-making at all levels;
- Recognizing the essential role of education and literacy as the foundation for a strong, versatile workforce and providing priority to serving New Yorkers who have deficits in basic skills and have barriers to employment;
- Sharing labor market data across workforce partners to inform policy and service decisions;
- Developing training for front-line program delivery staff to provide efficient and seamless services with other mandated programs and partners; and
- Continue to integrate information technology to improve service delivery.

The draft 2020 WIOA Combined State Plan continues to emphasize the implementation of cross-systems strategies that will benefit all participants of New York State's workforce development programs. ACCES-VR and Adult Education will continue to build capacity to:

- Expand upon data sharing opportunities to support improvement in services and WIOA reporting requirements.
- Build on efforts to provide services to businesses that hire workers with disabilities.
- Develop integrated education and training models.
- Provide instruction with co-teaching or dual enrollment in basic skills and occupational/Career and Technical Education (CTE) training.

While WIOA provides opportunities, there are also challenges associated with implementation, including:

- Implementation of the new Test of Adult Basic Literacy (TABE) that increases the rigor in all literacy instruction.
- Implementation of strategies to allocate 15% of ACCES-VR funding to Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS).
- Execution of the required local memorandums of understanding for service delivery and cost sharing among the core partners and each of the local workforce development boards.
- Increased requirements related to the collection and reporting of WIOA data.

With the implementation of the first WIOA Combined State Plan in 2016, systemic improvements have been made between the state partners responsible for education, training and employment to remove barriers for people seeking employment, including youth and people with disabilities, and businesses in need of qualified employees. In the draft 2020 WIOA Combined State Plan, the partners will continue to work together to implement strategies to further build upon successes and the vision of a unified workforce development system inclusive of education, training and businesses.

### **Related Regent's Items**

1. [February 2018](http://www.regents.nysed.gov/common/regents/files/218accesd1.pdf)  
<http://www.regents.nysed.gov/common/regents/files/218accesd1.pdf>
2. [October 2015](http://www.regents.nysed.gov/common/regents/files/meetings/Oct%202015/1015accesd1.pdf)  
<http://www.regents.nysed.gov/common/regents/files/meetings/Oct%202015/1015accesd1.pdf>

### **Recommendation**

ACCES will continue to work with the NYS DOL and the NYS Commission for the Blind to finalize a draft Combined State Plan for review and approval at the February 2020 Board of Regents meeting.

### **Timetable for Implementation**

The approved 2020 WIOA Combined State Plan will be submitted on March 2, 2020 and will become effective July 1, 2020.