

the evening, including many in which Workforce Connection participants may enroll.

7. The AJCC delivers both AJCC-based and virtual services.

All Workforce Connection centers provide basic and individualized career services in person. To supplement in-person services, an array of online services is also available. These include orientations; application processes; CalJOBS registration; some workshops; access to labor market and training information; individual employment/career planning sessions with center staff; and one-on-one meetings with staff, among other services.

8. The AJCC ensures that individuals with disabilities are able to access virtual services.

Virtual services are reviewed for compliance with accessibility standards. As technology evolves, software and videoconferencing products continue to increase their accessibility capacity. For example, the closed captioning features of videoconferencing technology, such as Zoom, are now state-of-the-art. FRWDB secures assistance from colleagues at DOR in reviewing the accessibility of services.

Improvement could be realized in the following areas:

1. Review and Update Limited English Proficiency Plan

FRWDB's existing Limited English Proficiency Plan meets the general requirements established by EDD for such information. However, as the plan has not been updated in more than a decade, it could benefit from review and revision to reflect issues presently encountered by English Language Learners and resources currently available to such individuals in Fresno County.

AJCC Certification Indicator #2: The AJCC actively supports the One-Stop system through effective partnerships.

U.S. Department of Labor Characteristics of a High Quality AJCC

Reflect on the establishment of robust partnerships among partners. The AJCC operator facilitates an integrated, co-located partnership that seamlessly incorporates the services of all the AJCC partners.

California State Plan Vision and Strategies

Aligning, coordinating, and integrating programs and services to economize limited resources while also providing the right services to clients based on each client's particular and potentially unique needs to facilitate skills attainment.

AJCC Certification Workgroup's Vision

- A system is in place to assess the satisfaction of both co-located and non-co-located partners with the AJCC and its services.
- Both co-located and non-co-located partners believe that the AJCC adds value to their program and customers.
- The required AJCC partners meet on a regular basis to discuss the One-Stop system and the AJCC's contribution to the system and make recommendations for continuous improvement.
- The AJCC actively outreaches and provides access to non-co-located partner customers to participate in AJCC-based services, such as workshops and recruitment events.
- An inventory and overview of all partner programs and services are available to all AJCC staff, and all AJCC staff has received an orientation to all partner programs and services.
- One-Stop system marketing materials that overview all partner programs and services for distribution to customers at the AJCC and at all non-co-located partner locations have been developed.
- The AJCC's partner referral process (as outlined in the Memorandum of Understanding) is being implemented with a focus on quality referrals that are likely to convert to service.
- Referrals are recorded, and a system is in place for partners to follow through and report progress on referrals made.
- The AJCC connects to the community through multiple community partnerships and community access points.
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AJCC Certification Indicator #2: The AJCC actively supports the One-Stop system through effective partnerships.

Assessment of the AJCC's Strengths and Continuous Improvement Opportunities:

The Fresno area's effective workforce system partnerships are the result of many years of cooperation and collaboration not only related to operation and support for the centers, but, more broadly, by stakeholders working together to address critical workforce needs through a wide range of strategies and approaches. The local workforce partnership includes active participation by the WIOA-required partners, along with many other system allies, including economic development, local government agencies, organized labor, business associations, and a host of community-based and non-profit ventures, among others.

The following responses highlight the AJCC system's efforts and capacity to develop, maintain, and leverage effective relationships with WIOA core partners, other AJCC MOU partners, State Plan-mandated partner programs (e.g. Child Support Services, CalFresh Employment and Training), and myriad local stakeholders, including community- and faith-based agencies.

Areas of substantive strength include:

1. A system is in place to assess the satisfaction of partners with the AJCCs and their services.

A formal system to determine partner satisfaction with the AJCCs and their services has been developed. The survey assesses features and characteristics on the Workforce Connection centers and the workforce system, including: space, appearance, accessibility, and safety; staff to customer ratios; presence and activities of partners in the centers; use of customer-centered design principles; quality of the customer experience; continuous improvement processes; and more.

2. Partners believe that the AJCCs add value to their programs and customers.

Surveys indicate and partners report that regular meetings and access to center management make collaboration easy and that AJCC staff members are always willing to lend their support. Partners have also expressed appreciation for the training that FRWDB and the AJCCs make available to their staff. Participation of partner staff and customers at FRWDB and Workforce Connection events also suggests that partners believe that the centers provide value to them and their customers.

3. The required AJCC partners meet on a regular basis.

The AJCC Operator leads monthly Program Operations Meetings. These sessions provide a forum for the exchange of information among the partners; cross-training and partner presentations on programs and services; discussions about opportunities for partner collaboration on programs and services; and review of customer satisfaction survey results and related feedback, along with discussions on opportunities for system, service, process, and performance improvements.

Recently, the AJCC Operator has organized and led "Community Partnership Alliance" meetings, which include not only Workforce Connection and WIOA-mandated partner representatives, but managers and staff from dozens of public agencies and community-based organizations. These sessions provide a unique opportunity to share information with a broad audience and for participants to learn about a wide array of programs and services available to Fresno area residents and individuals from WIOA priority populations (e.g., English language learners, justice-involved individuals, immigrants, disconnected youth, seniors).

4. The AJCCs actively outreach and provide access to non-co-located partner customers to participate in AJCC-based services.

Workforce Connection leadership and staff cite various ways in which the centers communicate with partners and activities that partners' participants are encouraged to attend. Messaging to partners about center-based activities and community-based activities that are led by Workforce Connections takes place in monthly Program Operations meetings, through email blasts that go out to an array of partners and system stakeholders, and by direct communication by phone or email with non-co-located partners' management and staff. Among the AJCC-based and center-sponsored activities about which partners are notified are:

- Workshops and special presentations that are open to the public;
- Guest speakers, including employers;
- Job fairs featuring multiple businesses with job opportunities; and
- Specialized recruitment events for new or expanding businesses.

Events calendars published and distributed by Workforce Connection center staff are an effective resource for increasing partner awareness of center-sponsored events and activities.

5. An inventory and overview of all partner services is available to Workforce Connection staff.

Following the execution of the AJCC partner MOU, the partners began to provide their counterparts with a structured orientation and training to their programs. While these sessions were paused for a time during the pandemic, they have resumed.

As indicated in response to Indicator 6, FRWDB recently secured a grant through the James Irvine Foundation which will enable the local workforce system to record and catalog partner and stakeholder information. This will result in the development of a new and more detailed inventory of partner programs and those of other local service agencies.

Portions of this information are repeated in response to criteria addressed in Indicators 3 and 6.

6. One-Stop system marketing materials have been developed that provide an overview all partner services.

The Workforce Connection centers and FRWDB actively promote partners' programs and services by making print materials about their programs available at the centers, through hyperlinks on the Workforce Connection website, and broadcasting information via social media. Many of the partners reciprocate by promoting services of the AJCCs and of other partners. However, existing marketing messages and materials could do a better job of describing the overall workforce development system, indicating the organizations, programs, and services that comprise the system.

7. A partner referral process has been implemented.

The partner MOU provides a basic outline of a referral process and a statement that the partners agree to provide referrals to the AJCC and other partners and to receive such referrals. However, difficulty with communication and follow-up on referrals has been a persisted problem. As FRWDB sought a solution, agency leadership became familiar with Unite Us, a platform that enables participating organizations to share information, including referrals, about customers, while protecting data confidentiality. FRWDB is working to secure commitments from the partners to utilize the system. As Unite Us is fully implemented, the referral process described in the MOU will be updated.

8. Referrals are recorded, and a system is being implemented for partners to follow through and report progress on referrals made.

As described above, the web-based Unite Us platform will enable partners to share follow-up information on referrals that are made and received.

9. The AJCC connects to the community through multiple community partnerships and community access points.

In an effort to manage service delivery across an expansive service area, the network of FRWDB-funded AJCCs have effectively utilized community on-ramps for more than a decade. With funding for brick-and-mortar operations continuously decreasing, FRWDB and its service providers began to work with system partners, public agencies, and community organizations across the county to encourage their cooperation in serving as access points or on-ramps to the workforce system. Typically, this simply involves:

- Promoting the Workforce Connection centers through posters, brochures, and/or including information about the AJCCs within new customer orientations.
- Including a link on the on-ramp agency's website to the Workforce Connection website.
- Making an internet-connected computer available to customers.
- Having staff assist new customers in accessing Workforce Connection's online services.
- Providing warm hand-offs by connecting a potential customer to a Workforce Connection staff person by phone.

Some system partner representatives who are familiar with the centers and their services may provide more information and assistance than what is described above.

It should also be noted that the development of the Community Partnership Alliance, which holds quarterly meetings, has increased the number of organizations that function as community on-ramps for the Workforce Connection centers.

Improvement could be realized in the following areas:

1. Develop Promotional Materials Highlighting the Local Workforce System

On behalf of its AJCCs, FRWDB has developed various effective and informative printed materials and web-based messages highlighting the features and benefits of the Workforce Connection centers. By developing similar materials that promote the entire one-stop system, FRWDB could effectively communicate to potential customers the value that the full range of system partners can provide local job seekers and businesses.

2. Update the Referral Process Described in the Existing Partner MOU

The official referral process among the workforce system partners that is outlined in the MOU does not reflect the current referral system that has been implemented using the Unite Us platform. As the MOU is updated, the description of referral processes and protocols should be revised.

AJCC Certification Indicator #3: The AJCC provides integrated, customer-centered services.

U.S. Department of Labor Characteristics of a High Quality AJCC

- A. Organize and integrate services by function, rather than by program; when permitted by a program's authorizing statute and as appropriate, and by coordinating staff communication, capacity building, and training efforts. Functional alignment includes having AJCC staff who perform similar tasks serve on relevant functional teams, (e.g., skills development team). Service integration focuses on serving all customers seamlessly, including targeted populations, by providing a full range of services staffed by cross-functional teams, consistent with each program's purpose, scope, and requirements.
- B. Use an integrated and expert intake process for all customers entering the AJCCs. Frontline staff are highly familiar with the functions and basic eligibility requirements of each program. They can appropriately assist customers and make knowledgeable referrals to partner programs, as needed and as appropriate, given the authorized scope of the program.
- C. Develop and maintain integrated case management systems that inform customer service throughout the customer's interaction with the integrated system and allow information collected from customers at intake to be captured. Customer information is properly secured in accordance with personally identifiable information guidelines and facilitated as appropriate, with the necessary MOU or other forms of confidentiality and data sharing agreements. Data, however, would be shared with other programs within the One-Stop system only after the informed written consent of the individual has been obtained, where required.

California State Plan Vision and Strategies

- A. Integrated Service Delivery: braiding resources and coordinating services at the local level to meet client needs.
- B. Customer-Centered Service Design: use of customer-centered design to involve frontline staff and customers in the development, prototyping, and evaluation of AJCC services, resources, tools, and systems.

AJCC Certification Workgroup's Vision

- AJCC staff identifies with the AJCC system (and not just their specific program), believes that all AJCC customers are shared customers, and contributes to providing a positive AJCC experience for every AJCC customer.
- AJCC staff have received customer service and customer-centered design training.

- AJCC staff is cross trained in program partner eligibility and services, so they have the capacity to functionally serve customers well.
- The AJCC has clearly identified the roles, responsibilities, and authorities of both functional leaders and the supervisors of program partners, and the AJCC has an integrated functional organizational chart.
- The AJCC has a system in place to promptly greet all AJCC customers, identify the reason for their visit and their needs, and connect them to appropriate services as quickly as possible.
- The AJCC has developed integrated customer flow procedures that respond to customer need and moves customers seamlessly between AJCC entry and service delivery with as few hand-offs as possible.
- All AJCC co-located partners have identified the Career Services that apply to their program, and the AJCC has developed methods to align/integrate the delivery of those services.
- The AJCC has established protocols to co-enroll customers in more than one partner program when there is value to customers and has a strategy for effectively sharing case management when customers are co-enrolled.

AJCC Certification Indicator #3: The AJCC provides integrated, customer-centered services.

Assessment of the AJCC's Strengths and Continuous Improvement Opportunities:

The network of Workforce Connection centers has continued to evolve over the more than two decades since they were first established. Sites have relocated to promote more cost-effective and accessible service delivery. In addition, centers are now more integrated and offer a wider range of services and supports than ever before. They are also more customer-focused and staff have become more adept at working well with all customers, including individuals with significant and/or multiple barriers to employment. FRWDB is committed to supporting a highly customer-focused system by providing or securing ongoing training and technical assistance for AJCC staff.

Areas of substantive strength include:

1. Staff from multiple partner organizations identify with Workforce Connection brand.

WIOA Title I-funded service provider staff members have been working alongside staff from EDD, DOR, and other system partners for many years inside the Workforce Connection centers. On a regular basis, staff work together to serve customers, participate in committees together, collaborate on events, and ensure that overall operations are effective. A team culture has developed over time and the service providers who manage these centers, along with the AJCC Operator, strive to foster and strengthen this culture among all staff, regardless of the organization that they work for. Participation in cross training and in team building activities further strengthens this collaboration.

2. AJCC staff have received customer service and customer-centered design training.

The AJCCs are focused on meeting the individual needs of all customers. Given this priority, FRWDB and Workforce Connection service providers make investments in customer-focused staff training a priority. Over the last decade, AJCC staff has participated in both customer service training and specialized training and activities pertaining to the use of customer-centered design. Prior to the pandemic, this training was provided on several occasions. As described in response to Indicator 6, a comprehensive professional development plan is being developed by FRWDB, which will be supplemented by training organized by the AJCC Operator. Across these activities, additional training on customer service and customer-centered design will be implemented. Also, AJCC service providers (the CLC Partnership and Equus) both report that additional internal training on customer service-related topics has been provided to their staff.

3. AJCC staff is cross trained in program partner eligibility and services.

As described in responses provided for Indicators 2 and 6, the workforce system partners have provided cross training on many occasions regarding their programs and services, along with information about the eligibility requirements. Over the last couple of years, the number of organizations providing such training has increased as local community-based organizations, various public agencies, and other stakeholders have joined the Workforce Connection Community Partnership Alliance, a network of agencies providing workforce development and related services.

4. The centers have clearly defined staff roles and responsibilities.

The delivery of workforce development services through the AJCC is principally governed by operational directives published by FRWDB. The content of publications is based on WIOA, its implementing regulations, state policy and guidance, and local policies and procedures adopted by the local board. The two Workforce Connection service providers have developed compatible procedures and work effectively in the operation of the centers, trading off management responsibilities where they are co-located.

5. The AJCC has a system in place to promptly greet all AJCC customers, identify the reason for their visit and their needs, and connect them to appropriate services as quickly as possible

FRWDB and the AJCC service providers have put customer-centered design strategies to their best use in developing procedures for reception/greeting services, particularly for first-time customers. Customers can go to the Workforce Connection website, prior to traveling to a center, to view an orientation video; register in CalJOBS, and complete an application. For clients preferring to complete these processes in-person, services are also available within the center. When clients who have completed registration arrive, they are issued a center passport and given an orientation to the resource room, where they can begin to

access resources. The full content of the reception process is outlined in an Operations Manual developed by FRWDB.

6. The AJCC has developed procedures to address customer priorities and move customers to the services they need

Customer flow procedures are in place. However, these procedures are not intended to prescribe a specific course or sequence of services. Rather, they illustrate the options available to customers.

7. Co-located partners have identified the career services that are applicable to their program.

All partners that are signatory parties to the AJCC MOU have formally assessed and identified the WIOA-defined career services that they provide. These are summarized within a chart, which comprises Attachment C to the MOU. The AJCC Operator has been tasked with periodically updating and revising the career services matrix.

8. FRWDB has established protocols to co-enroll customers in more than one partner program when there is value in doing so.

FRWDB has an operational directive on co-enrollment in place. However, the directive will be revised to correspond more closely to current state guidance, as expressed in the EDD/California Workforce Development Board (CWDB) directive on "Strategic Co-Enrollment." Co-enrollment of eligible individuals into two or more programs is common. Individual assessment and service planning activities help to identify needs that may best be addressed by more than one program.

Co-case management is facilitated by entering notes and updates into CalJOBS for those partners that use the system. For others, direct and frequent communications by phone and email are used. These processes, while somewhat cumbersome, are effective based on the good relationships that exist across the local workforce partnership. The Unite Us system will provide additional support for information sharing.

Improvement could be realized in the following areas:

1. Implement Customer-Centered Design Training for New Workforce System Staff

While some Workforce Connection managers and staff have participated in customer-centered design training, many individuals employed at the AJCCs and at remote partner locations have not received training on this critical topic. Given FRWDB's commitment to customer-focused service delivery, training on this topic should be renewed and provided to all center and workforce system partner staff.

2. Update Procedures for Co-Enrollment of Participants in Workforce System Partner Programs

FRWDB's existing procedures on co-enrollment of participants into partner programs and services were implemented more than a decade ago. Policies and procedures governing co-enrollment of WIOA participants into other programs should be updated and should correspond with State Directive WDS19-09 "Strategic Co-Enrollment – Unified Plan Partners," which describes protocols for co-enrollment and common case management of participants.

AJCC Certification Indicator #4: The AJCC is an on-ramp for skill development and attaining industry-recognized credentials that meet the needs of targeted regional sectors and pathways.

U.S. Department of Labor Characteristics of a High Quality AJCC

- A. Improve the skills of job seekers and worker customers. AJCCs offer access to education and training leading to industry-recognized credentials through the use of career pathways, apprenticeships, and other strategies that enable customers to compete successfully in today's global economy.
- B. Value skill development by assessing and improving each individual's basic, occupational, and employability skills.
- C. Balance traditional labor exchange services with strategic talent development within a regional economy.
- D. Create opportunities for individuals at all skill levels and levels of experience by providing customers as much timely, labor market, job-driven information, and choice as possible related to education and training, careers, and service delivery options while offering customers the opportunity to receive both skill-development and job placement services.

California State Plan Vision and Strategies

- A. Career Pathways: enabling progressive skills development through education and training programs, using multiple entry and exit level of skills development corresponds with a labor market payoff for those being trained or educated and results in industry-recognized credentials.
- B. Earn and Learn: a subsidized program that allows individuals to gain work experience while getting paid. Individuals receive training and education that combine applied learning opportunities while participating in the labor market.
- C. Supportive Services: providing supportive services like childcare, transportation, and counseling to facilitate program completion by those enrolled in training and education courses.
- D. AJCCs as an access point for programs providing "demand-driven skills attainment." From this perspective, AJCCs operate as an "on-ramp" or "gateway" to the "Regional Sector Pathways" programs either built out or identified through the regional planning process described above.
- E. AJCCs will continue to provide the full array of Career Services and function as labor exchanges. Still, there will be much greater emphasis on treating AJCCs as an access point for education and training services for those who want and need them.

AJCC Certification Workgroup's Vision

- All AJCC staff (i.e., the staff of all co-located partners regardless of staff position or program) value both skill development and employment outcomes and know how they can promote and contribute to both.
- All AJCC staff knows the regional target sectors, can identify regional sector career pathways, and can understand what those mean in terms of providing services to customers.
- The AJCC has skill development and training opportunities for customers at all skill and experience levels.
- The AJCC staff assist customers in accessing and enrolling in robust training services, including career pathways, integrated education and training, workforce preparation, work-based learning, and apprenticeship.
- AJCC staff are committed to and competent in helping customers navigate career pathways that result in industry-recognized credentials.
- The AJCC does not implement a "sequence of service requirement" for training and does not have cumbersome entry steps that prohibit easy access to education and training that leads to industry-recognized credentials.
- The AJCC ensures that supportive services are available to customers, as appropriate, to facilitate participation in training services.
- The AJCC strives to increase the number of all AJCC customers receiving skill development and training services, resulting in industry-recognized credentials.

AJCC Certification Indicator #4: The AJCC is an on-ramp for skill development and the attainment of industry-recognized credentials that meet the needs of targeted regional sectors and pathways.

Assessment of the AJCC's Strengths and Continuous Improvement Opportunities:

The Workforce Connection centers are widely recognized in Fresno County as resources not only for job search assistance, but for career exploration and planning, and connecting to training programs of all types that prepare people for careers.

Areas of substantive strength include:

1. Workforce Connection staff understand the value of both skill development and employment outcomes and know how they can promote and contribute to both.

Staff understands that many job seekers using Workforce Connection services will need training before they are prepared to look for work, while others will arrive with marketable skills, but will seek assistance with services such as resume development, interview preparation and job leads. Center staff understands that customers are unique. Therefore, each job seeker is assessed to determine his/her skill levels, interests, circumstances, and priorities. Staff values customer choice and recognizes that some customers will complete training and earn credentials before going to work, while others will simply become employed through individualized career services. Many customers are referred by training agencies that understand that Workforce Connection staff are skilled at matching recently

trained individuals with jobs in which they can use their new skills. Both credential and employment outcomes are highly valued by Workforce Connection managers and staff.

2. Staff are familiar with the regional target sectors and can identify regional sector career pathways.

Regional target sectors were first adopted as part of the Central Valley's PY 2017-20 Regional Plan. There has been significant time for staff to become familiar with these industries. As new staff are hired, they are oriented to the target sectors on which the workforce system is focused in Fresno County. AJCC staff could benefit from additional training on how to use information about jobs and careers in high growth and promising sectors to conduct effective individual employment and career planning with customers.

3. The local workforce system offers skill development and training opportunities for customers at all skill and experience levels.

FRWDB and AJCC representatives agree that training opportunities continue to expand for Fresno County residents served by the Workforce Connection centers. No matter what level of skills and experience a customer has when seeking services, training programs are available to bridge skill gaps. Opportunities range from basic skills training programs to courses that help healthcare workers become Registered Nurses. Many customers come to the AJCCs with skill sets that are partially transferrable to other jobs. These individuals simply need focused, short-term training to bridge a gap. Training in software and technology skills is becoming increasingly popular, as opportunities for remote work in high tech field are growing in the Central Valley. In addition to ensuring that new training programs are approved and added to the eligible list, the local workforce system and the AJCCs make effective use of work-based learning strategies to prepare job seekers for work.

4. The local workforce system offers a variety of training services and staff assists customers in accessing and enrolling in these services.

As indicated above, training programs suited to individuals with all levels of skills and experience are available to Workforce Connection customers. Community colleges, adult education programs, private trade and technical schools, community-based training programs, labor-led apprenticeships, and distance learning programs are all on FRWDB's eligible training provider list. Making the local training system even more robust is the use of work-based models such as transitional jobs and on-the-job training, along with unique programs that have been developed by FRWDB and training partners to address urgent labor market needs. These include Valley Build, a construction pre-apprenticeship program operated in collaboration with the Build Trades Council, and a Forestry Academy program, that includes both didactic and work-based learning activities preparing workers for jobs in forest management.

5. Workforce Connection staff assist customers in navigating career pathways tied to jobs in key industry sectors

Center staff, generally, has working knowledge of regional target sectors and courses/career pathway programs that are available. They could, however, benefit from additional training on how to use information about jobs and careers in high growth/promising sectors to conduct effective individual employment and career planning with customers.

6. FRWDB's AJCCs does not implement a "sequence of service requirement" for training.

As stated in response to Indicator 3, there is no prescribed customer flow, and Workforce Connection centers do not implement a sequence of service requirement for customers to access training. For customers needing to develop skills and earn credentials to qualify for employment, center staff attempts to facilitate their enrollment into training as quickly and efficiently as possible.

7. The AJCC ensures that supportive services are available to customers, as appropriate, to facilitate participation in training services.

AJCC management and staff understand the importance of supportive services for clients as they train and search for work. Funds are budgeted annually from the WIOA Title I Adult and Dislocated Worker programs for this purpose. The centers also make every attempt to leverage resources from other programs to cover the costs of supportive services, which, for some customers, may be significant, depending on the services they need and the length of time they are participating in training and job search. For clients who are enrolled in other programs, staff attempt to secure funds for supportive services from those programs before accessing Title I budgets, which are limited. FRWDB has published an Operational Directive on this topic.

8. Workforce Connection staff provide access to training for all AJCC customers needing this service.

As indicated in response to item A (above), AJCC and FRWDB managers and staff understand the importance of skill development and the advantages that certain credentials bring to job seekers when they are applying for jobs. FRWDB is able to identify and track year-to-year changes in the number of individuals who receive training.

Improvement could be realized in the following areas:

1. FRWDB Leadership Should Identify Opportunities to Design and Implement a Structured Labor Market Information Training Program for All Staff

To establish a strong base of knowledge among the Workforce Connection centers' direct services staff, including those providing career planning and case management services, FRWDB leadership should procure or develop a training

program addressing basic economics; local labor market information and how to use it in service planning; the region's target industries; sector strategies in Fresno County and adjacent workforce areas; career pathways and industry-specific training programs; and quality jobs. This training would support staff's ability to effectively support job seekers in making decisions about training and preparation for jobs and careers.

2. Resume Monthly Sectors Orientations

To improve information on in-demand careers in the Central Valley's leading industries, FRWDB's business services team and the Workforce Connection staff should collaborate on strategies for resuming the delivery of monthly sector orientations.

AJCC Certification Indicators #5: The AJCC actively engages industry and labor and supports regional sector strategies through an integrated business service strategy that focuses on quality jobs.

U.S. Department of Labor Characteristics of a High Quality AJCC

- A. Design and implement practices that actively engage industry sectors and use economic and labor market information, sector strategies, career pathways, registered apprenticeships, and competency models to help drive skill-based initiatives.
- B. Develop, offer, and deliver quality business services that assist specific businesses and industry sectors in overcoming the challenges of recruiting, retaining, and developing talent for the regional economy.
- C. To support area employers and industry sectors most effectively, AJCC staff identify and clearly understand industry skill needs, identify appropriate strategies for assisting employers, and coordinate business services activities across AJCC partner programs, as appropriate.
- D. To incorporate an integrated and aligned business services strategy among AJCC partners to present a unified voice for the AJCC in its communications with employers.
- E. Additionally, AJCCs use the forthcoming performance measure(s) on effectiveness in serving employers to support continuous improvement of these services.

California State Plan Vision and Strategies

- A. Regional partnerships: building partnerships between industry leaders, workforce professionals, education and training providers, and economic development leaders to develop workforce and education policies that increase job quality and support regional economic growth.
- B. Sector strategies: aligning workforce and education programs with leading and emergent industry sectors' skills needs.
- C. Fostering demand-driven skills attainment: workforce and education programs must align program content with the state's industry sector needs to provide

California's high road employers and businesses with the skilled workforce it needs to compete in the global economy.

AJCC Certification Workgroup's Vision

- All AJCC staff have advanced knowledge of the regional economy, labor market conditions, business talent supply chains, and the needs of high-growth sectors and high road employers.
- The AJCC focuses on quality jobs by actively promoting targeted sector opportunities and high-demand occupations to all AJCC customers.
- The AJCC promotes systems and partnerships that connect workers to high-quality jobs or entry-level work with clear routes to advancement.
- The AJCC has a defined strategy in place to regularly seek and capture employer advice in the design and delivery of demand-driven services for job seekers.
- The AJCC is an integral partner in the implementation of the Local Board's integrated business services strategy and seeks to minimize redundant employer contacts while maximizing access to system-wide, integrated business services.
- The AJCC offers a wide range of AJCC-based services for employers, including referral of qualified candidates, on-site recruitment, pre-employment testing, skill verification, and hiring and training subsidies.
- The AJCC consistently seeks feedback and satisfaction data from businesses on the delivery of business services and applies it for continuous improvement.
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AJCC Certification Indicators #5: The AJCC actively engages industry and labor and supports regional sector strategies through an integrated business service strategy that focuses on quality jobs.

Assessment of the AJCC's Strengths and Continuous Improvement Opportunities:

FRWDB has adopted a bifurcated, but coordinated, structure for delivery of business services. A Business Services unit is housed within FRWDB. It is responsible for developing and maintaining relationships with businesses and in assisting them in accessing services that address a wide range of needs. Business Services staff works directly with their counterparts at the Workforce Connection centers, providing them information on businesses' hiring needs and job opportunities. In turn, AJCC staff match job ready candidates to available positions, and support business through specific services, such as work-based learning.

The following responses highlight the AJCC system's efforts and capacity to effectively engage with businesses in key sectors, while concurrently collaborating with core, AJCC, and other partners in efforts to coordinate and integrate outreach to and communications with businesses in and around Fresno County. It should be noted that FRWDB has recently redesigned and modernized the business services function, which was paused during the pandemic. The unit has been re-staffed and new plans for the delivery of business services are currently being designed and tested. Therefore, some of the processes described below are pending full implementation.

Areas of substantive strength include:

1. AJCC staff understands the regional economy, labor market conditions, and the needs of key industries.

FRWDB's Business Services team members are generally knowledgeable about the economy, the labor market, regional priority sectors, and characteristics signaling that businesses are "high road" employers. As described, in response to Indicators 4 and 6, more training on these topics may be beneficial for FRWDB and AJCC staff.

2. The AJCC focuses on quality jobs by actively promoting targeted sector opportunities and high-demand occupations to all AJCC customers.

The local workforce development system focuses on jobs within the regional priority sectors, which are thriving industries that have many good jobs offering stability and career advancement potential. The Business Services unit and the AJCCs focus on jobs that pay self-sustainability wages (or higher), are in-demand, have low turnover, offer benefits, and provide paths to wage increases and advancement. While federal and state workforce agencies have developed definitions of "quality jobs," FRWDB has not adopted or developed a definition at the local level.

3. Workforce Connection centers promote systems and partnerships that puts customers on paths to high-quality jobs.

There are several ways in which FRWDB and center staff leverage relationships to create opportunities for job seekers to connect to quality jobs. These include partnerships with employers, industry associations, sector partnerships, organized labor, and local education agencies. Examples of workforce system efforts to utilize these relationships to create more opportunities for job seekers, include:

- Working with the San Joaquin Valley Manufacturing Alliance, a business-led sector partnership, FRWDB and AJCC staff become aware of hiring and training opportunities that can benefit job seekers.
- FRWDB regularly collaborates with the Building Trades Council and member unions to recruit candidates for apprenticeships and for pre-apprenticeship training that position participants for union membership and quality jobs.
- Collaboration with the Associated California Loggers as part of the FRWDB's regional Forestry training programs, creates access to jobs with participating businesses.

The Business Services Team, AJCC representatives, and other system leaders and staff are effective in building and maintaining relationships with businesses and other organizations that lead to job seekers' gaining access to hiring and career opportunities.

4. The AJCC has a defined strategy in place to regularly seek and capture employer advice in the design and delivery of demand-driven services for job seekers.

FRWDB and its network of Workforce Connection centers provide many forms of information, assistance, and support to businesses in Fresno County. Over the course of delivering these services, companies may provide input or advice about services they need or how services could be designed to better align with the priorities of local businesses. In addition, there are organizations, groups, and events with which Business Services and AJCC staff are involved. This provides access to various forms of information that could be used to inform the design of business-responsive services for job seekers. Among these interactions and communications are:

- Business Services Team representatives meet directly with companies to obtain information used to update the local area's demand occupation list, which includes information on the qualifications for these jobs.
- Discussions with industry associations representatives provide information on skills needed by local businesses in specific sectors.
- Participation in employer roundtables when these discussions take place adds staff knowledge about industry needs.

5. The workforce system attempts to coordinate business outreach with partners and to minimize redundant employer contacts.

FRWDB has created a structure under which the free-standing Business Services unit has the primary workforce development system responsibility for business contacts. This information is shared with the AJCCs where candidates are matched to job opportunities that are identified. The Business Services team works with system partners to meet business needs. Through this collaboration, business outreach efforts are coordinated and multiple or redundant contacts to employers are minimized.

6. The AJCCs offers a wide range of center-based services for employers.

Between the efforts of the Business Services unit, its network of partners, and the Workforce Connection centers, an extensive array of services are available to business at the AJCCs, facilities of business services partners (e.g. the SBDC), businesses' own facilities, or at other community locations, such as the sites of job fairs and other hiring events. Services for businesses include, but are not limited to, recruitment, screening, pre-interviewing, skills, verification, testing, training or retraining, assistance with human resources issues, layoff aversion, assistance to workers in response to business downsizing or closure, financing assistance, business startup strategies, and support for targeted industries.

7. FRWDB and the AJCCs seek feedback from businesses on the delivery of business services.

FRWDB Business Services representatives and Workforce Connections staff that serve business customers rely, primarily, on informal processes to secure feedback from employers that have either been served directly by the AJCCs or by that have been assisted by the Business Service unit. As customer feedback

and satisfaction data are critical resources in determining where improvements can be made, a structured survey is needed.

Improvement could be realized in the following areas:

1. Develop a Local Definition of Quality Jobs

FRWDB leadership should examine how developing or adopting a definition of job quality may benefit the Workforce Connection centers and their customers by creating a common understanding of opportunities that are targeted by the local workforce system. With the increasing focus by federal and state workforce program administrators on job quality, adopting a local definition would enable FRWDB to establish performance targets for metrics identified in connection with the definition.

2. Reinstate the Use of Business Satisfaction Surveys

Surveys of business customer satisfaction are critical to determining the effectiveness of services provided by FRWDB and the Workforce Connection centers to local employers.

3. FRWDB Leadership Should Identify Opportunities to Design and Implement a Structured Labor Market Information Training Program for All Staff

To establish a strong base of knowledge among Workforce Connection direct services staff, including those providing career planning and case management services, FRWDB leadership should procure or develop a training program addressing basic economics; local labor market information and how to use it in service planning; the region's target industries; sector strategies in Fresno County and adjacent workforce areas; career pathways and industry-specific training programs; and quality jobs. This training would support staff's ability to effectively support job seekers in making decisions about training and preparation for jobs and careers.

This recommendation is repeated from Indicator 4.

AJCC Certification Indicator #6: The AJCC has high-quality, well-informed, and cross-trained staffing.

U.S. Department of Labor Characteristics of a High Quality AJCC

- A. Train and equip AJCC staff in an ongoing learning process with the knowledge, skills, and motivation to provide superior service to all job seekers, including those with disabilities and businesses, in an integrated, regionally focused framework of service delivery. AJCC staff are cross-trained, as appropriate, to increase staff capacity, expertise, and efficiency. Cross-training allows staff from differing programs to understand every program and to share their expertise about the needs of specific populations so that all staff can better serve all customers. AJCC staff are routinely trained and are keenly aware of how their

particular function supports and contributes to the overall vision of the local board.

- B. The AJCC center is staffed with highly trained career counselors, skilled in advising job seekers of their options, knowledgeable about local labor market dynamics, and aware of available services inside and outside the AJCC.

California State Plan Vision and Strategies

Certification criteria will include an assessment of professional development and staff capacity building.

AJCC Certification Workgroup's Vision

- The AJCC has regular staff meetings with all AJCC staff (i.e., the staff of all co-located partners regardless of program) to build relationships, provide updates on center activities, and discuss strategies for AJCC improvement.
- Partners have agreed to provide training to all AJCC staff on a regular basis.
- There is a capacity building and/or professional development plan for staff and partners.
- All AJCC staff has received training on the services of One-Stop partners, eligibility for those services, and the process for referring customers to partners.
- All AJCC staff has received training on how to use labor market information to help customers identify career pathways, develop in-demand skills and credentials, and find jobs.
- All AJCC staff has received training to effectively assist customers in registering with CalJOBS and match customers to available jobs.
- All AJCC staff has received training on serving individuals with barriers to employment, including customers with disabilities.
- All AJCC staff has received training on providing excellent customer service and customer-centered design.
- All AJCC staff has received training on sector strategies, career pathways, job quality, and high road training partnerships.

AJCC Certification Indicator #6: The AJCC has high-quality, well-informed, and cross-trained staffing.

Assessment of the AJCC's Strengths and Continuous Improvement Opportunities:

Overall, the individuals that staff FRWDB's comprehensive and affiliate Workforce Connection centers are knowledgeable, skilled, and experienced workforce development professionals. However, with regular changes in staffing at the AJCC level and at FRWDB, some past training should be reimplemented at the same time as new training is developed for all staff and partners. The addition of a Training Manager to the FRWDB team will help to ensure that the full range of skills needed by workforce system staff are addressed through a comprehensive, formalized program of training.

The local workforce system partners, including WIOA Title I representatives, have provided a significant amount of cross-training. This process is on-going and, under the leadership of the AJCC Operator, now also includes training from a broader array of community stakeholders.

Areas of substantive strength include:

1. The AJCC has regular staff meetings.

As stated in response to Indicator 3, the AJCC Operator leads monthly Program Operations meetings. These sessions provide a forum for the exchange of information among partners; cross-training and partner presentations on programs and services; discussions about opportunities for partner collaboration on programs and services; and review of customer satisfaction survey results and related feedback, along with discussion on opportunities for system, service, process, and performance improvements.

2. Partners have agreed to provide training to all AJCC staff on a regular basis.

As indicated in response to item D (below), the MOU among the partners describes their agreement to provide cross training to their colleagues. As stated above, the delivery of cross training by both mandated workforce system partners and other local stakeholders is active. FRWDB was recently awarded a grant by the James Irvine Foundation to expand information sharing and training among the partners, record the sessions, and create a video library to enable ongoing learning among FRWDB, Workforce Connections, partner, and stakeholder representatives.

3. There is a capacity building and/or professional development plan for staff and partners.

Two tracks of training will comprise an overarching professional development plan for the Workforce Connections staff and partners. The first will be developed by the FRWDB's training manager and will address core workforce content. The second will be led by the AJCC Operator and will focus on both operations and system coordination,

4. All AJCC staff has received training on the services of One-Stop partners, eligibility for those services, and the process for referring customers to partners.

Following the execution of the partner MOU, the partner representative began to provide their workforce system counterparts with a structured orientation to and training about their programs. Such training provides information about organizations, programs, services, outcomes schedules, eligibility criteria, referrals, and more.

5. AJCC staff has received training on how to use labor market information to help customers identify career pathways and develop in-demand skills and credentials and find jobs.

Some AJCC staff has received training on how to use labor market information to assist customers in choosing career pathways. Additional training on this and related topics will be embedded into the overarching professional development plans being developed by FRWDB's Training Manager and the AJCC Operator,

6. AJCC staff has received training in how to effectively assist customers in registering with CalJOBS.

The ability to register clients into CalJOBS, utilize its job matching functions, and take advantage of its full range of features is central to the AJCCs' ability to effectively serve job seekers and operate programs. All staff has received training in CalJOBS. As training is needed for new staff, it is scheduled in accordance with sessions sponsored by EDD. Experienced staff, including managers from either FRWDB or Workforce Connection service providers may also provide CalJOBS instruction to staff.

7. Workforce Connection staff has received training on serving individuals with barriers to employment, including customers with disabilities.

AJCC staff has participated in various training sessions that address ways to work effectively with vulnerable populations and individuals with barriers to employment. Examples include training focused on serving individuals with disabilities and best practices in effectively working with formerly incarcerated and justice-involved individuals. FRWDB plans to secure a commitment from local DOR representatives to provide additional training for AJCC staff.

8. AJCC staff has received training on providing excellent customer service and customer-centered design.

Workforce Connection centers are focused on meeting the individual needs of all customers. Given this priority, FRWDB and AJCC service providers make investments in customer-focused staff training a priority. AJCC staff has participated in both customer service training and specialized training and activities pertaining to the use of customer-centered design. As identified in response to Indicator 3, training in both topics will again be implemented as part of the FRWDB/Workforce Connection comprehensive professional development plan to ensure that all current and future staff have critical customer services skills, which are fundamental in the delivery of workforce services to job seekers and businesses.

9. AJCC staff has received training on sector strategies, career pathways, job quality and high road training partnerships.

As described in response to Indicator 5 and other sections of this assessment narrative, the FRWDB Business Services unit's staff have primary responsibility for business outreach and the development and maintenance of relationships with businesses, particularly those within the region's targeted industries. As such, Business Services representatives have a working knowledge of sector strategies and career pathways and have broad, general knowledge of concepts pertaining

to job quality and “high road” employers. However, while some AJCC staff have received training related to sector-focused workforce development, training for all AJCC staff (including those providing career planning and case management services) is needed, as it would enable them to provide more effective services to job seekers who are considering options related to careers in several high-growth/promising sectors.

Improvement could be realized in the following areas:

1. Implement Customer-Centered Design Training for New Workforce System Staff

While some Workforce Connection managers and staff have participated in customer-centered design training, many individuals employed at the AJCCs and at remote partner locations have not received training on this critical topic. Given FRWDB’s commitment to customer-focused service delivery, training on this topic should be renewed and provided to all center and workforce system partner staff.

This recommendation is repeated from Indicator 3.

2. FRWDB Leadership Should Identify Opportunities to Design and Implement a Structured Labor Market Information Training Program for All Staff

To establish a strong base of knowledge among Workforce Connection direct services staff, including those providing career planning and case management services, FRWDB leadership should procure or develop a training program addressing basic economics; local labor market information and how to use it in service planning; the region’s target industries; sector strategies in Fresno County and adjacent workforce areas; career pathways and industry-specific training programs; and quality jobs. This training would support staff’s ability to effectively support job seekers in making decisions about training and preparation for jobs and careers.

This recommendation is repeated from Indicators 4 and 5.

AJCC Certification Indicator #7: The AJCC achieves business results through data-driven continuous improvement.

U.S. Department of Labor Characteristics of a High Quality AJCC

- A. Use common performance indicators to ensure that federal investments in employment and training programs are evidence-based, labor market-driven, and accountable to participants and taxpayers. Center performance is transparent and accountable to the communities and regions served; data entry staff are trained and understand the importance of data validation, data collection processes, and the importance of accurate reporting.
- B. Develop and implement operational policies that reflect an integrated performance, communication, and case management system, and use technology to achieve integration and expanded service offerings.

California State Plan Vision and Strategies

Certification criteria will include an assessment of the way the AJCC will use data for continuous improvement.

AJCC Certification Workgroup's Vision

- The AJCC contributes to the achievement of WIOA performance indicators for all core program partners.
- The AJCC reports to the Local Board on an ongoing basis the number of customers served, the types of services provided, and the outcomes of those services.
- The AJCC operates in a cost-efficient manner, and the results justify the resources invested.
- The AJCC has a system in place to collect satisfaction data from individuals and employers using the AJCC's services.
- The AJCC has a system in place to capture and respond to specific customer feedback, complaints, and compliments.
- The AJCC regularly reviews and analyzes performance, customer satisfaction, and service data and develops specific plans for AJCC service improvements.
- The AJCC regularly identifies areas of needed technical assistance to improve business results and taps available resources to obtain needed assistance.

AJCC Certification Indicator #7: The AJCC achieves business results through data-driven continuous improvement.

Assessment of the AJCC's Strengths and Continuous Improvement Opportunities:

The use of data to record and track results is critical to the operation of successful workforce development programs and to determining how well programs and services meet the needs of both job seekers and business customers. Data informs every aspect of FRWDB's programs from design to delivery and evaluation. Data used for these purposes may be either quantitative or qualitative in nature. Data sources are many and, while a wide variety of data sets are used frequently, FRWDB regularly tests and utilizes new data reference points as they are identified.

Labor market information (LMI) and analysis from public sources, such as the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics and California EDD's Labor Market Information Division, as well as proprietary data bases, are commonly used to identify industry and occupational targets for participant training and job placement. Regional and local LMI supplements such data. Information from business leaders, economic development professionals, industry associations, and others with an intimate knowledge of the local labor market serves to provide both real-time insights and forecasts on business needs, which are essential to FRWDB's the Workforce Connection centers' developing and implementing program and process improvements.

WIOA's performance indicators provide a means of measuring program effectiveness with respect to job placement, wages, job retention, credential attainment and more. FRWDB and AJCC managers and staff regularly review program performance on these indicators, which provides a clear picture of how well services are translating into results.

Data obtained directly from customers is also key to ensuring that programs and services address customers' priorities, needs, and preferences. Needs assessments and satisfaction surveys are among the most common methods utilized by FRWDB and the AJCCs to determine what customers want and their opinions on the value and effectiveness of the services that they have received. Customer feedback is reviewed regularly and often serves as the basis for improvements to content and delivery of services.

Areas of substantive strength include:

1. The AJCCs contribute to the achievement of WIOA performance indicators for all core program partners.

The central focus of the four Workforce Connection centers is to provide services funded by the WIOA Title I Adult and Dislocated Worker programs. Therefore, the AJCCs clearly contribute directly to the achievement of the WIOA performance measures for Title I program. However, FRWDB and AJCC center leadership acknowledge that, in many ways, the Workforce Connection centers are hubs for collaboration among the workforce system partners and that the work of centers and FRWDB's Business Services unit is critical to supporting job seekers and businesses throughout Fresno county. Given this work, the AJCCs are potentially significant contributors to achievement of some or all of the performance measures by the WIOA Title II, III and IV programs. Specific ways in which the AJCCs support performance of the WIOA core partner programs include:

- Directly, through their marketing efforts, and indirectly, through their reputation with businesses and with individuals in the community, the AJCCs promote the entire workforce system throughout the county.
- Business outreach efforts produce job leads for which customers of partners programs may compete.
- FRWDB and the Workforce Connection centers host job fairs and sponsor recruitment events to which core partner programs may refer their participants.
- The centers actively promote co-enrollment of customers into multiple programs, thereby creating opportunities for the partners to meet performance goals.
- FRWDB and the Workforce Connection centers bring a wide range of training to the workforce system partners, thereby increasing partner staff's knowledge and enabling them to operate more effectively.

The AJCCs may be able to further contribute to core program partners' achievement of the WIOA performance measures by working with each of the partners to develop a specific performance improvement strategy.

2. FRWDB leadership reports to the Local Board on an ongoing basis the number of customers served, the types of services provided, and the outcomes of those services.

Data on AJCC traffic, services, and performance is collected by FRWDB staff on a regular basis. This information is first reported on a quarterly basis to the Adult Committee, which oversees programs serving adults and dislocated workers. The information is subsequently reported to the full workforce development board during its quarterly meetings.

3. The AJCC operates in a cost-efficient manner and the resources invested are justified by the results.

FRWDB has spent many years working toward the development of structures, strategies, and processes that will enable the AJCCs it administers to operate with extreme efficiency and in a cost-effective manner. AJCC service providers and FRWDB carefully negotiate budgets to ensure that planned expenditures are reasonable. Attention is given to details such as the ratio of management to staff and funding available for support services, training, and other essential elements of strong and effective workforce programming. The AJCCs regularly achieve a reasonable cost per participant and, through an infrastructure funding agreement negotiated with the MOU partners, secure contributions to operating the centers. The Workforce Connection service providers also keep costs to the WIOA Title I program down by leveraging partner programs, and co-enrolling eligible participants into two or more programs through which they can receive services supporting the objectives outlined in their individual training plans.

4. The AJCC has a system in place to collect satisfaction data from individuals and employers using the AJCC's services.

All Workforce Connection centers use a series of customer satisfaction surveys to secure feedback from job seekers at key points in the participation. These include surveys on the use of basic career services, participation in individualized career services, and the outcomes of training programs. This information is collected, reviewed, and analyzed by center leadership and staff and, as described below, becomes the basis for potential system improvements. Summaries are provided to the workforce development board on a quarterly basis.

5. The AJCC has a system in place to capture and respond to specific customer feedback, complaints, and compliments.

FRWDB has published a formal customer complaints procedure which is distributed to customers by Workforce Connection staff. In addition, there are many informal processes through which customers communicate their opinions to Workforce Connection management and staff and many methods by which center representatives respond to these comments. Comments of a positive nature, whether verbal or in writing, may be maintained at the discretion of center management. Concerns expressed by customers are directed to AJCC managers, who may respond to them directly or refer them to managers or supervisors who

are better positioned to respond. FRWDB representatives are responsible for communicating directly in writing to commenters who express concerns via social media.

6. The AJCC regularly reviews and analyzes performance, customer satisfaction, and service data and develops specific plans for AJCC service improvements.

As described above, customer feedback is used to identify where systems, services, processes, and performance can be improved. Program operations meetings provide a forum for AJCC service providers, partners, and FRWDB representatives to review ratings and comments. Over the years, dozens of improvements of all kinds and sizes have been made as the result of customer feedback. Many of the issues that were ultimately addressed through customer-centered design projects were identified from input by one or more job seekers that has participated in AJCC services.

7. The AJCC regularly identifies areas of technical assistance needed to improve operations and outcomes .

It is common for Workforce Connection managers and staff to identify the need for technical assistance in any number of areas. The primary resource for such assistance is FRWDB, which may provide training, instruction, or guidance through its own staff resources or may arrange for technical assistance by securing outside expertise. Often technical assistance needs can be addressed through training. Depending on the topic and the availability of funds, FRWDB may request training through the San Joaquin Valley and Associated Counties RPU Regional Organizer, who coordinates training funds designated for staff development.

Improvement could be realized in the following areas:

1. Reinstate the Use of Business Satisfaction Surveys

Surveys of business customer satisfaction are critical to determining the effectiveness of services provided by FRWDB and the Workforce Connection centers to local employers.

This recommendation is repeated form Indicator 5.

By signing below, the Local Board Chair agrees with the **AJCC's Certification Indicator Assessment** and attests to develop a continuous improvement plan with target dates.

Signature

Name

Title

Date

AJCC Certification Indicator Assessment

The America's Job Center of CaliforniaSM (AJCC) Certification Indicator Assessment is intended to encourage continuous improvement by identifying areas where an AJCC is exceeding quality expectations, as well as areas where improvement is needed. The Certification Indicators were developed in alignment with the Training and Employment Guidance Letter 04-15, California's Unified Strategic Workforce Development Plan (State Plan), and the AJCC Certification Workgroup's vision for California's One-Stop delivery system.

The matrix below describes each Certification Indicator using both characteristics of a high-quality AJCC and the overall vision and strategies of the State Plan. Additionally, the Certification Indicators are provided as guidance for the evaluator to use to note the assessment of the AJCC's strengths and continuous improvement opportunities. The Local Board may establish additional criteria or set higher standards for continuous improvement than those suggested by the state criteria below.

Local Workforce Development Boards (Local Board) must submit a completed AJCC Certification Indicator Assessment to their Regional Advisor for each comprehensive and/or affiliate/specialized AJCC by **November 1, 2024**.

Name of Local Board: Fresno Regional Workforce Development Board

Name of AJCC: Workforce Connection – Parlier

AJCC Type: Affiliate

Both the Baseline and Indicator Assessment portions of the AJCC certification process were completed by an independent evaluator, who applied a two-part approach to the review, including:

- 1) A focused review of each of Fresno Regional Workforce Development Board's (FRWDB) four America's Job Centers of California (AJCCs), which operate under the "Workforce Connection" brand name; and
- 2) Review of all centers from a system perspective.

This approach enabled the evaluator to complete a site-specific assessment of baseline compliance, while recognizing that most of the Indicator Assessment criteria can and should be addressed from a system perspective, based on the fact that, differences in size and on-site partner presence notwithstanding, all centers operate under the same policy structure and deliver the same services. The other notable difference among FRWDB's four Workforce Connections centers is that they are operated by two distinct, competitively procured service providers: Equus Workforce Services and the CLC Partnership, a joint venture of organized labor, a local non-profit organization, and a small business.

Equus Workforce Services delivers WIOA Title I Adult Program Services at the Workforce Connection – Fresno site, which is a comprehensive AJCC. Equus Title I Adult Program staff are also located at the following AJCC affiliate sites: Workforce Connection – Mendota and Workforce Connection – Parlier.

The CLC Partnership delivers WIOA Title I Dislocated Worker Program Services at the Workforce Connection – East location, which is a comprehensive AJCC. CLC Partnership Title I Dislocated Worker Program staff are also located at the following AJCC affiliate sites: Workforce Connection – Mendota and Workforce Connection – Parlier.

This Indicator Assessment narrative is for the comprehensive Workforce Connection – Parlier center. However, except where specifically noted, descriptions apply equally to all AJCCs in the FRWDB network.

AJCC Certification Indicator #1: The AJCC ensures universal access, with an emphasis on individuals with barriers to employment.

U.S. Department of Labor Characteristics of a High Quality AJCC

- A. Reflect a welcoming environment to all customer groups who are served by the AJCC. All AJCC staff are courteous, polite, responsive, and helpful to job seekers, businesses, and others who visit the AJCC location, or by telephone or e-mail. AJCC staff are sensitive to the unique needs of individuals with disabilities and are prepared to provide necessary accommodations.
- B. Ensure meaningful access to all customers. AJCCs must be physically and programmatically accessible to all customers, including individuals with disabilities. In doing so, AJCCs use principles of universal and human-centered

design, such as flexibility in space usage, the use of pictorial, written, verbal, and tactile modes to communicate with customers with disabilities or Limited English Proficiency; providing clear lines of sight to information for seated or standing users; providing necessary accommodations; and providing adequate space for the use of assistive devices or personal assistants. AJCCs use assistive technology and flexible business hours to meet the range of customer needs.

- C. Include both virtual and center-based service delivery for job seekers, workers, and employers. Both methods of delivery support the talent needs of the regional economy, although each may better serve different customers with different levels of service needs at any given time. The system can expand its reach by delivering robust virtual services; and increasing the accessibility of those services through community partners, such as libraries, community and faith-based organizations, and other partners.

California State Plan Vision and Strategies

Enabling upward mobility for all Californians, including populations with barriers to employment. Workforce and education programs need to be accessible for all Californians and ensure that everyone has access to a marketable set of skills and is able to access the level of education necessary to ensure economic self-sufficiency and security.

AJCC Certification Workgroup's Vision

- All AJCC staff honor and accommodate diversity and are comfortable and adept in providing services to diverse customers, including individuals with disabilities, cultural differences, and all individuals with barriers to employment.
- The local Equal Opportunity Officer (EOO) periodically reviews the AJCC's policies, procedures, and the facility for accessibility and equal opportunity. The EOO then provides recommendations and staff training, where needed.
- The AJCC has a Limited English Proficiency Plan to provide meaningful access for individuals who do not speak English as their primary language and who have limited ability to read, speak, write, or understand English.
- The AJCC uses the principles of universal and human-centered design to ensure inclusive space and materials are available to individuals regardless of their range of abilities, mobility, age, language, learning style, or educational level.
- The AJCC implements the veteran's preference and priority of service requirements.
- The AJCC provides services outside of regular business hours where there is a workforce need as defined by the Local Board.
- The AJCC delivers both AJCC-based and virtual services.
- The AJCC ensures that people with disabilities can access virtual services in a manner that is comparable to those without a disability.

AJCC Certification Indicator #1: The AJCC ensures universal access, with an emphasis on individuals with barriers to employment.

Assessment of the AJCC's Strengths and Continuous Improvement Opportunities:

All four Workforce Connection centers funded by FRWDB ensure universal access for customers and AJCC staff is skilled and experienced at working with job seekers from diverse backgrounds, including individuals with barriers to employment.

Areas of substantive strength include:

1. AJCC staff value diversity and are comfortable and adept in working with all types of individuals.

Workforce Connection staff and partner representatives assigned to the centers communicate in various languages (e.g., Spanish, Punjabi, Hmong, ASL) and represent diverse cultures. Several staff members, including former participants that have been hired by contractors, have lived experience similar to that of some customers. As such, these individuals both understand and appreciate diversity and work well with diverse customers. FRWDB and center leadership recognize that staff members benefit from training to increase their understanding of individuals with various barriers to employment. Center managers and staff have participated in training on diversity, equity, and inclusion and on cultural competency. Training that has been made available to staff deals with individuals with barriers to employment, including individuals with disabilities and formerly incarcerated/justice involved individuals. Additional training on these topics will be incorporated into a comprehensive professional development plan being developed by FRWDB and the AJCC Operator.

2. The local Equal Opportunity Officer periodically reviews the AJCC's policies, procedures, and facility for accessibility and equal opportunity.

A key function for FRWDB's Equal Opportunity Officer (EOO) is to regularly review guidance from the state and other sources to identify changes that will affect local policies and procedures and AJCC operations. The EOO attends state-sponsored and other training to remain aware of such issues. FRWDB is responsible for ensuring compliance with all aspects of equal opportunity, including accessibility for individuals with disabilities. Policies and procedures serve as the basis for staff training.

3. The AJCC has a Limited English Proficiency Plan.

As required by California WIOA policy, FRWDB has developed a Limited English Proficiency Plan that applies to all Workforce Connection centers. The plan acknowledges and builds upon the bilingual capabilities of many center staff and describes the various strategies and resources (including forms being available in Spanish) by the centers to assist individuals who are not fluent in English. Local adult education agencies are key partners in serving customers who are English language learners, and they provide a wide range of educational programs for this

priority population, including English-as-a-Second Language (ESL) courses. The plan could be updated to reflect current issues faced by English Language learners and resources for this population.

4. The AJCC uses the principles of universal and customer-centered design to ensure inclusive space and materials are available to all customers.

FRWDB and AJCC staff participated in training on customer-centered design that was led by former U.S. DOL Regional Administrator Virginia Hamilton, who is an expert in the topic. Part of this training included using customer input to identify services and/or processes that could be improved through a customer perspective. As a result of the training, several improvements were made to AJCC processes. In addition, FRWDB and AJCC representatives utilized these design techniques and human-centered design principles to lay-out and configure space at the two comprehensive Workforce Connection centers, and at the new affiliate site in Parlier. Space, furnishings, work areas, color schemes, and other features of these facilities reflect FRWDB's intensive focus on customers. These same techniques and principles will be utilized for a new Mendota Workforce Connection facility, once space is identified.

5. AJCCs implement the veteran's preference and priority of service requirements.

FRWDB has developed a policy on veterans' preference and priority of service to mirror state policy and comply with all federal regulations. The policy has been implemented by all Workforce Connection centers. Resources room "passports" issued by the centers identify customers who are veterans.

6. Workforce Connection centers provide services during traditional business hours and outside these hours based of needs.

All Workforce Connection centers are open from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Outside normal business hours, FRWDB and center staff remain available to assist job seekers and business customers. Services provided after traditional work hours include:

- Employer recruitment events.
- Job fairs, including those held on virtual platforms, used to recruit on behalf of multiple employers.
- Community and civic events, occurring after hours or on weekends, which are used to promote the centers' programs, services, and activities and to recruit candidates.
- Rapid response activities to assist employees from all shifts who have received notice of layoff.
- Workshops that are provided in the evening, including those offered online.
- Web-based services of the Workforce Connection system, including orientations, are available every day and at any time.

Partners also point out the significant number of after-hours services they provide. Most schools in the local adult education consortium offer virtual courses during

the evening, including many in which Workforce Connection participants may enroll.

7. The AJCC delivers both AJCC-based and virtual services.

All Workforce Connection centers provide basic and individualized career services in person. To supplement in-person services, an array of online services is also available. These include orientations; application processes; CalJOBS registration; some workshops; access to labor market and training information; individual employment/career planning sessions with center staff; and one-on-one meetings with staff, among other services.

8. The AJCC ensures that individuals with disabilities are able to access virtual services.

Virtual services are reviewed for compliance with accessibility standards. As technology evolves, software and videoconferencing products continue to increase their accessibility capacity. For example, the closed captioning features of videoconferencing technology, such as Zoom, are now state-of-the-art. FRWDB secures assistance from colleagues at DOR in reviewing the accessibility of services.

Improvement could be realized in the following areas:

1. Review and Update Limited English Proficiency Plan

FRWDB's existing Limited English Proficiency Plan meets the general requirements established by EDD for such information. However, as the plan has not been updated in more than a decade, it could benefit from review and revision to reflect issues presently encountered by English Language Learners and resources currently available to such individuals in Fresno County.

AJCC Certification Indicator #2: The AJCC actively supports the One-Stop system through effective partnerships.

U.S. Department of Labor Characteristics of a High Quality AJCC

Reflect on the establishment of robust partnerships among partners. The AJCC operator facilitates an integrated, co-located partnership that seamlessly incorporates the services of all the AJCC partners.

California State Plan Vision and Strategies

Aligning, coordinating, and integrating programs and services to economize limited resources while also providing the right services to clients based on each client's particular and potentially unique needs to facilitate skills attainment.

AJCC Certification Workgroup's Vision

- A system is in place to assess the satisfaction of both co-located and non-co-located partners with the AJCC and its services.
- Both co-located and non-co-located partners believe that the AJCC adds value to their program and customers.
- The required AJCC partners meet on a regular basis to discuss the One-Stop system and the AJCC's contribution to the system and make recommendations for continuous improvement.
- The AJCC actively outreaches and provides access to non-co-located partner customers to participate in AJCC-based services, such as workshops and recruitment events.
- An inventory and overview of all partner programs and services are available to all AJCC staff, and all AJCC staff has received an orientation to all partner programs and services.
- One-Stop system marketing materials that overview all partner programs and services for distribution to customers at the AJCC and at all non-co-located partner locations have been developed.
- The AJCC's partner referral process (as outlined in the Memorandum of Understanding) is being implemented with a focus on quality referrals that are likely to convert to service.
- Referrals are recorded, and a system is in place for partners to follow through and report progress on referrals made.
- The AJCC connects to the community through multiple community partnerships and community access points.

AJCC Certification Indicator #2: The AJCC actively supports the One-Stop system through effective partnerships.

Assessment of the AJCC's Strengths and Continuous Improvement Opportunities:

The Fresno area's effective workforce system partnerships are the result of many years of cooperation and collaboration not only related to operation and support for the centers, but, more broadly, by stakeholders working together to address critical workforce needs through a wide range of strategies and approaches. The local workforce partnership includes active participation by the WIOA-required partners, along with many other system allies, including economic development, local government agencies, organized labor, business associations, and a host of community-based and non-profit ventures, among others.

The following responses highlight the AJCC system's efforts and capacity to develop, maintain, and leverage effective relationships with WIOA core partners, other AJCC MOU partners, State Plan-mandated partner programs (e.g. Child Support Services, CalFresh Employment and Training), and myriad local stakeholders, including community- and faith-based agencies.

Areas of substantive strength include:

1. A system is in place to assess the satisfaction of partners with the AJCCs and their services.

A formal system to determine partner satisfaction with the AJCCs and their services has been developed. The survey assesses features and characteristics on the Workforce Connection centers and the workforce system, including: space, appearance, accessibility, and safety; staff to customer ratios; presence and activities of partners in the centers; use of customer-centered design principles; quality of the customer experience; continuous improvement processes; and more.

2. Partners believe that the AJCCs add value to their programs and customers.

Surveys indicate and partners report that regular meetings and access to center management make collaboration easy and that AJCC staff members are always willing to lend their support. Partners have also expressed appreciation for the training that FRWDB and the AJCCs make available to their staff. Participation of partner staff and customers at FRWDB and Workforce Connection events also suggests that partners believe that the centers provide value to them and their customers.

3. The required AJCC partners meet on a regular basis.

The AJCC Operator leads monthly Program Operations Meetings. These sessions provide a forum for the exchange of information among the partners; cross-training and partner presentations on programs and services; discussions about opportunities for partner collaboration on programs and services; and review of customer satisfaction survey results and related feedback, along with discussions on opportunities for system, service, process, and performance improvements.

Recently, the AJCC Operator has organized and led "Community Partnership Alliance" meetings, which include not only Workforce Connection and WIOA-mandated partner representatives, but managers and staff from dozens of public agencies and community-based organizations. These sessions provide a unique opportunity to share information with a broad audience and for participants to learn about a wide array of programs and services available to Fresno area residents and individuals from WIOA priority populations (e.g., English language learners, justice-involved individuals, immigrants, disconnected youth, seniors).

4. The AJCCs actively outreach and provide access to non-co-located partner customers to participate in AJCC-based services.

Workforce Connection leadership and staff cite various ways in which the centers communicate with partners and activities that partners' participants are encouraged to attend. Messaging to partners about center-based activities and community-based activities that are led by Workforce Connections takes place in monthly Program Operations meetings, through email blasts that go out to an array of partners and system stakeholders, and by direct communication by phone or email with non-co-located partners' management and staff. Among the AJCC-based and center-sponsored activities about which partners are notified are:

- Workshops and special presentations that are open to the public;
- Guest speakers, including employers;
- Job fairs featuring multiple businesses with job opportunities; and
- Specialized recruitment events for new or expanding businesses.

Events calendars published and distributed by Workforce Connection center staff are an effective resource for increasing partner awareness of center-sponsored events and activities.

5. An inventory and overview of all partner services is available to Workforce Connection staff.

Following the execution of the AJCC partner MOU, the partners began to provide their counterparts with a structured orientation and training to their programs. While these sessions were paused for a time during the pandemic, they have resumed.

As indicated in response to Indicator 6, FRWDB recently secured a grant through the James Irvine Foundation which will enable the local workforce system to record and catalog partner and stakeholder information. This will result in the development of a new and more detailed inventory of partner programs and those of other local service agencies.

Portions of this information are repeated in response to criteria addressed in Indicators 3 and 6.

6. One-Stop system marketing materials have been developed that provide an overview all partner services.

The Workforce Connection centers and FRWDB actively promote partners' programs and services by making print materials about their programs available at the centers, through hyperlinks on the Workforce Connection website, and broadcasting information via social media. Many of the partners reciprocate by promoting services of the AJCCs and of other partners. However, existing marketing messages and materials could do a better job of describing the overall workforce development system, indicating the organizations, programs, and services that comprise the system.

7. A partner referral process has been implemented.

The partner MOU provides a basic outline of a referral process and a statement that the partners agree to provide referrals to the AJCC and other partners and to receive such referrals. However, difficulty with communication and follow-up on referrals has been a persisted problem. As FRWDB sought a solution, agency leadership became familiar with Unite Us, a platform that enables participating organizations to share information, including referrals, about customers, while protecting data confidentiality. FRWDB is working to secure commitments from the partners to utilize the system. As Unite Us is fully implemented, the referral process described in the MOU will be updated.

8. Referrals are recorded, and a system is being implemented for partners to follow through and report progress on referrals made.

As described above, the web-based Unite Us platform will enable partners to share follow-up information on referrals that are made and received.

9. The AJCC connects to the community through multiple community partnerships and community access points.

In an effort to manage service delivery across an expansive service area, the network of FRWDB-funded AJCCs have effectively utilized community on-ramps for more than a decade. With funding for brick-and-mortar operations continuously decreasing, FRWDB and its service providers began to work with system partners, public agencies, and community organizations across the county to encourage their cooperation in serving as access points or on-ramps to the workforce system. Typically, this simply involves:

- Promoting the Workforce Connection centers through posters, brochures, and/or including information about the AJCCs within new customer orientations.
- Including a link on the on-ramp agency's website to the Workforce Connection website.
- Making an internet-connected computer available to customers.
- Having staff assist new customers in accessing Workforce Connection's online services.
- Providing warm hand-offs by connecting a potential customer to a Workforce Connection staff person by phone.

Some system partner representatives who are familiar with the centers and their services may provide more information and assistance than what is described above.

It should also be noted that the development of the Community Partnership Alliance, which holds quarterly meetings, has increased the number of organizations that function as community on-ramps for the Workforce Connection centers.

Improvement could be realized in the following areas:

1. Develop Promotional Materials Highlighting the Local Workforce System

On behalf of its AJCCs, FRWDB has developed various effective and informative printed materials and web-based messages highlighting the features and benefits of the Workforce Connection centers. By developing similar materials that promote the entire one-stop system, FRWDB could effectively communicate to potential customers the value that the full range of system partners can provide local job seekers and businesses.

2. Update the Referral Process Described in the Existing Partner MOU

The official referral process among the workforce system partners that is outlined in the MOU does not reflect the current referral system that has been implemented using the Unite Us platform. As the MOU is updated, the description of referral processes and protocols should be revised.

AJCC Certification Indicator #3: The AJCC provides integrated, customer-centered services.

U.S. Department of Labor Characteristics of a High Quality AJCC

- A. Organize and integrate services by function, rather than by program; when permitted by a program's authorizing statute and as appropriate, and by coordinating staff communication, capacity building, and training efforts. Functional alignment includes having AJCC staff who perform similar tasks serve on relevant functional teams, (e.g., skills development team). Service integration focuses on serving all customers seamlessly, including targeted populations, by providing a full range of services staffed by cross-functional teams, consistent with each program's purpose, scope, and requirements.
- B. Use an integrated and expert intake process for all customers entering the AJCCs. Frontline staff are highly familiar with the functions and basic eligibility requirements of each program. They can appropriately assist customers and make knowledgeable referrals to partner programs, as needed and as appropriate, given the authorized scope of the program.
- C. Develop and maintain integrated case management systems that inform customer service throughout the customer's interaction with the integrated system and allow information collected from customers at intake to be captured. Customer information is properly secured in accordance with personally identifiable information guidelines and facilitated as appropriate, with the necessary MOU or other forms of confidentiality and data sharing agreements. Data, however, would be shared with other programs within the One-Stop system only after the informed written consent of the individual has been obtained, where required.

California State Plan Vision and Strategies

- A. Integrated Service Delivery: braiding resources and coordinating services at the local level to meet client needs.
- B. Customer-Centered Service Design: use of customer-centered design to involve frontline staff and customers in the development, prototyping, and evaluation of AJCC services, resources, tools, and systems.

AJCC Certification Workgroup's Vision

- AJCC staff identifies with the AJCC system (and not just their specific program), believes that all AJCC customers are shared customers, and contributes to providing a positive AJCC experience for every AJCC customer.
- AJCC staff have received customer service and customer-centered design training.

- AJCC staff is cross trained in program partner eligibility and services, so they have the capacity to functionally serve customers well.
- The AJCC has clearly identified the roles, responsibilities, and authorities of both functional leaders and the supervisors of program partners, and the AJCC has an integrated functional organizational chart.
- The AJCC has a system in place to promptly greet all AJCC customers, identify the reason for their visit and their needs, and connect them to appropriate services as quickly as possible.
- The AJCC has developed integrated customer flow procedures that respond to customer need and moves customers seamlessly between AJCC entry and service delivery with as few hand-offs as possible.
- All AJCC co-located partners have identified the Career Services that apply to their program, and the AJCC has developed methods to align/integrate the delivery of those services.
- The AJCC has established protocols to co-enroll customers in more than one partner program when there is value to customers and has a strategy for effectively sharing case management when customers are co-enrolled.

AJCC Certification Indicator #3: The AJCC provides integrated, customer-centered services.

Assessment of the AJCC's Strengths and Continuous Improvement Opportunities:

The network of Workforce Connection centers has continued to evolve over the more than two decades since they were first established. Sites have relocated to promote more cost-effective and accessible service delivery. In addition, centers are now more integrated and offer a wider range of services and supports than ever before. They are also more customer-focused and staff have become more adept at working well with all customers, including individuals with significant and/or multiple barriers to employment. FRWDB is committed to supporting a highly customer-focused system by providing or securing ongoing training and technical assistance for AJCC staff.

Areas of substantive strength include:

1. Staff from multiple partner organizations identify with Workforce Connection brand.

WIOA Title I-funded service provider staff members have been working alongside staff from EDD, DOR, and other system partners for many years inside the Workforce Connection centers. On a regular basis, staff work together to serve customers, participate in committees together, collaborate on events, and ensure that overall operations are effective. A team culture has developed over time and the service providers who manage these centers, along with the AJCC Operator, strive to foster and strengthen this culture among all staff, regardless of the organization that they work for. Participation in cross training and in team building activities further strengthens this collaboration.

2. AJCC staff have received customer service and customer-centered design training.

The AJCCs are focused on meeting the individual needs of all customers. Given this priority, FRWDB and Workforce Connection service providers make investments in customer-focused staff training a priority. Over the last decade, AJCC staff has participated in both customer service training and specialized training and activities pertaining to the use of customer-centered design. Prior to the pandemic, this training was provided on several occasions. As described in response to Indicator 6, a comprehensive professional development plan is being developed by FRWDB, which will be supplemented by training organized by the AJCC Operator. Across these activities, additional training on customer service and customer-centered design will be implemented. Also, AJCC service providers (the CLC Partnership and Equus) both report that additional internal training on customer service-related topics has been provided to their staff.

3. AJCC staff is cross trained in program partner eligibility and services.

As described in responses provided for Indicators 2 and 6, the workforce system partners have provided cross training on many occasions regarding their programs and services, along with information about the eligibility requirements. Over the last couple of years, the number of organizations providing such training has increased as local community-based organizations, various public agencies, and other stakeholders have joined the Workforce Connection Community Partnership Alliance, a network of agencies providing workforce development and related services.

4. The centers have clearly defined staff roles and responsibilities.

The delivery of workforce development services through the AJCC is principally governed by operational directives published by FRWDB. The content of publications is based on WIOA, its implementing regulations, state policy and guidance, and local policies and procedures adopted by the local board. The two Workforce Connection service providers have developed compatible procedures and work effectively in the operation of the centers, trading off management responsibilities where they are co-located.

5. The AJCC has a system in place to promptly greet all AJCC customers, identify the reason for their visit and their needs, and connect them to appropriate services as quickly as possible

FRWDB and the AJCC service providers have put customer-centered design strategies to their best use in developing procedures for reception/greeting services, particularly for first-time customers. Customers can go to the Workforce Connection website, prior to traveling to a center, to view an orientation video; register in CalJOBS, and complete an application. For clients preferring to complete these processes in-person, services are also available within the center. When clients who have completed registration arrive, they are issued a center passport and given an orientation to the resource room, where they can begin to

access resources. The full content of the reception process is outlined in an Operations Manual developed by FRWDB.

6. The AJCC has developed procedures to address customer priorities and move customers to the services they need

Customer flow procedures are in place. However, these procedures are not intended to prescribe a specific course or sequence of services. Rather, they illustrate the options available to customers.

7. Co-located partners have identified the career services that are applicable to their program.

All partners that are signatory parties to the AJCC MOU have formally assessed and identified the WIOA-defined career services that they provide. These are summarized within a chart, which comprises Attachment C to the MOU. The AJCC Operator has been tasked with periodically updating and revising the career services matrix.

8. FRWDB has established protocols to co-enroll customers in more than one partner program when there is value in doing so.

FRWDB has an operational directive on co-enrollment in place. However, the directive will be revised to correspond more closely to current state guidance, as expressed in the EDD/California Workforce Development Board (CWDB) directive on "Strategic Co-Enrollment." Co-enrollment of eligible individuals into two or more programs is common. Individual assessment and service planning activities help to identify needs that may best be addressed by more than one program.

Co-case management is facilitated by entering notes and updates into CalJOBS for those partners that use the system. For others, direct and frequent communications by phone and email are used. These processes, while somewhat cumbersome, are effective based on the good relationships that exist across the local workforce partnership. The Unite Us system will provide additional support for information sharing.

Improvement could be realized in the following areas:

1. Implement Customer-Centered Design Training for New Workforce System Staff

While some Workforce Connection managers and staff have participated in customer-centered design training, many individuals employed at the AJCCs and at remote partner locations have not received training on this critical topic. Given FRWDB's commitment to customer-focused service delivery, training on this topic should be renewed and provided to all center and workforce system partner staff.

2. Update Procedures for Co-Enrollment of Participants in Workforce System Partner Programs

FRWDB's existing procedures on co-enrollment of participants into partner programs and services were implemented more than a decade ago. Policies and procedures governing co-enrollment of WIOA participants into other programs should be updated and should correspond with State Directive WDS19-09 "Strategic Co-Enrollment – Unified Plan Partners," which describes protocols for co-enrollment and common case management of participants.

AJCC Certification Indicator #4: The AJCC is an on-ramp for skill development and attaining industry-recognized credentials that meet the needs of targeted regional sectors and pathways.

U.S. Department of Labor Characteristics of a High Quality AJCC

- A. Improve the skills of job seekers and worker customers. AJCCs offer access to education and training leading to industry-recognized credentials through the use of career pathways, apprenticeships, and other strategies that enable customers to compete successfully in today's global economy.
- B. Value skill development by assessing and improving each individual's basic, occupational, and employability skills.
- C. Balance traditional labor exchange services with strategic talent development within a regional economy.
- D. Create opportunities for individuals at all skill levels and levels of experience by providing customers as much timely, labor market, job-driven information, and choice as possible related to education and training, careers, and service delivery options while offering customers the opportunity to receive both skill-development and job placement services.

California State Plan Vision and Strategies

- A. Career Pathways: enabling progressive skills development through education and training programs, using multiple entry and exit level of skills development corresponds with a labor market payoff for those being trained or educated and results in industry-recognized credentials.
- B. Earn and Learn: a subsidized program that allows individuals to gain work experience while getting paid. Individuals receive training and education that combine applied learning opportunities while participating in the labor market.
- C. Supportive Services: providing supportive services like childcare, transportation, and counseling to facilitate program completion by those enrolled in training and education courses.
- D. AJCCs as an access point for programs providing "demand-driven skills attainment." From this perspective, AJCCs operate as an "on-ramp" or "gateway" to the "Regional Sector Pathways" programs either built out or identified through the regional planning process described above.
- E. AJCCs will continue to provide the full array of Career Services and function as labor exchanges. Still, there will be much greater emphasis on treating AJCCs as an access point for education and training services for those who want and need them.

AJCC Certification Workgroup's Vision

- All AJCC staff (i.e., the staff of all co-located partners regardless of staff position or program) value both skill development and employment outcomes and know how they can promote and contribute to both.
- All AJCC staff knows the regional target sectors, can identify regional sector career pathways, and can understand what those mean in terms of providing services to customers.
- The AJCC has skill development and training opportunities for customers at all skill and experience levels.
- The AJCC staff assist customers in accessing and enrolling in robust training services, including career pathways, integrated education and training, workforce preparation, work-based learning, and apprenticeship.
- AJCC staff are committed to and competent in helping customers navigate career pathways that result in industry-recognized credentials.
- The AJCC does not implement a "sequence of service requirement" for training and does not have cumbersome entry steps that prohibit easy access to education and training that leads to industry-recognized credentials.
- The AJCC ensures that supportive services are available to customers, as appropriate, to facilitate participation in training services.
- The AJCC strives to increase the number of all AJCC customers receiving skill development and training services, resulting in industry-recognized credentials.

AJCC Certification Indicator #4: The AJCC is an on-ramp for skill development and the attainment of industry-recognized credentials that meet the needs of targeted regional sectors and pathways.

Assessment of the AJCC's Strengths and Continuous Improvement Opportunities:

The Workforce Connection centers are widely recognized in Fresno County as resources not only for job search assistance, but for career exploration and planning, and connecting to training programs of all types that prepare people for careers.

Areas of substantive strength include:

1. Workforce Connection staff understand the value of both skill development and employment outcomes and know how they can promote and contribute to both.

Staff understands that many job seekers using Workforce Connection services will need training before they are prepared to look for work, while others will arrive with marketable skills, but will seek assistance with services such as resume development, interview preparation and job leads. Center staff understands that customers are unique. Therefore, each job seeker is assessed to determine his/her skill levels, interests, circumstances, and priorities. Staff values customer choice and recognizes that some customers will complete training and earn credentials before going to work, while others will simply become employed through individualized career services. Many customers are referred by training agencies that understand that Workforce Connection staff are skilled at matching recently

trained individuals with jobs in which they can use their new skills. Both credential and employment outcomes are highly valued by Workforce Connection managers and staff.

2. Staff are familiar with the regional target sectors and can identify regional sector career pathways.

Regional target sectors were first adopted as part of the Central Valley's PY 2017-20 Regional Plan. There has been significant time for staff to become familiar with these industries. As new staff are hired, they are oriented to the target sectors on which the workforce system is focused in Fresno County. AJCC staff could benefit from additional training on how to use information about jobs and careers in high growth and promising sectors to conduct effective individual employment and career planning with customers.

3. The local workforce system offers skill development and training opportunities for customers at all skill and experience levels.

FRWDB and AJCC representatives agree that training opportunities continue to expand for Fresno County residents served by the Workforce Connection centers. No matter what level of skills and experience a customer has when seeking services, training programs are available to bridge skill gaps. Opportunities range from basic skills training programs to courses that help healthcare workers become Registered Nurses. Many customers come to the AJCCs with skill sets that are partially transferrable to other jobs. These individuals simply need focused, short-term training to bridge a gap. Training in software and technology skills is becoming increasingly popular, as opportunities for remote work in high tech field are growing in the Central Valley. In addition to ensuring that new training programs are approved and added to the eligible list, the local workforce system and the AJCCs make effective use of work-based learning strategies to prepare job seekers for work.

4. The local workforce system offers a variety of training services and staff assists customers in accessing and enrolling in these services.

As indicated above, training programs suited to individuals with all levels of skills and experience are available to Workforce Connection customers. Community colleges, adult education programs, private trade and technical schools, community-based training programs, labor-led apprenticeships, and distance learning programs are all on FRWDB's eligible training provider list. Making the local training system even more robust is the use of work-based models such as transitional jobs and on-the-job training, along with unique programs that have been developed by FRWDB and training partners to address urgent labor market needs. These include Valley Build, a construction pre-apprenticeship program operated in collaboration with the Build Trades Council, and a Forestry Academy program, that includes both didactic and work-based learning activities preparing workers for jobs in forest management.

5. Workforce Connection staff assist customers in navigating career pathways tied to jobs in key industry sectors

Center staff, generally, has working knowledge of regional target sectors and courses/career pathway programs that are available. They could, however, benefit from additional training on how to use information about jobs and careers in high growth/promising sectors to conduct effective individual employment and career planning with customers.

6. FRWDB's AJCCs does not implement a "sequence of service requirement" for training.

As stated in response to Indicator 3, there is no prescribed customer flow, and Workforce Connection centers do not implement a sequence of service requirement for customers to access training. For customers needing to develop skills and earn credentials to qualify for employment, center staff attempts to facilitate their enrollment into training as quickly and efficiently as possible.

7. The AJCC ensures that supportive services are available to customers, as appropriate, to facilitate participation in training services.

AJCC management and staff understand the importance of supportive services for clients as they train and search for work. Funds are budgeted annually from the WIOA Title I Adult and Dislocated Worker programs for this purpose. The centers also make every attempt to leverage resources from other programs to cover the costs of supportive services, which, for some customers, may be significant, depending on the services they need and the length of time they are participating in training and job search. For clients who are enrolled in other programs, staff attempt to secure funds for supportive services from those programs before accessing Title I budgets, which are limited. FRWDB has published an Operational Directive on this topic.

8. Workforce Connection staff provide access to training for all AJCC customers needing this service.

As indicated in response to item A (above), AJCC and FRWDB managers and staff understand the importance of skill development and the advantages that certain credentials bring to job seekers when they are applying for jobs. FRWDB is able to identify and track year-to-year changes in the number of individuals who receive training.

Improvement could be realized in the following areas:

1. FRWDB Leadership Should Identify Opportunities to Design and Implement a Structured Labor Market Information Training Program for All Staff

To establish a strong base of knowledge among the Workforce Connection centers' direct services staff, including those providing career planning and case management services, FRWDB leadership should procure or develop a training

program addressing basic economics; local labor market information and how to use it in service planning; the region's target industries; sector strategies in Fresno County and adjacent workforce areas; career pathways and industry-specific training programs; and quality jobs. This training would support staff's ability to effectively support job seekers in making decisions about training and preparation for jobs and careers.

2. Resume Monthly Sectors Orientations

To improve information on in-demand careers in the Central Valley's leading industries, FRWDB's business services team and the Workforce Connection staff should collaborate on strategies for resuming the delivery of monthly sector orientations.

AJCC Certification Indicators #5: The AJCC actively engages industry and labor and supports regional sector strategies through an integrated business service strategy that focuses on quality jobs.

U.S. Department of Labor Characteristics of a High Quality AJCC

- A. Design and implement practices that actively engage industry sectors and use economic and labor market information, sector strategies, career pathways, registered apprenticeships, and competency models to help drive skill-based initiatives.
- B. Develop, offer, and deliver quality business services that assist specific businesses and industry sectors in overcoming the challenges of recruiting, retaining, and developing talent for the regional economy.
- C. To support area employers and industry sectors most effectively, AJCC staff identify and clearly understand industry skill needs, identify appropriate strategies for assisting employers, and coordinate business services activities across AJCC partner programs, as appropriate.
- D. To incorporate an integrated and aligned business services strategy among AJCC partners to present a unified voice for the AJCC in its communications with employers.
- E. Additionally, AJCCs use the forthcoming performance measure(s) on effectiveness in serving employers to support continuous improvement of these services.

California State Plan Vision and Strategies

- A. Regional partnerships: building partnerships between industry leaders, workforce professionals, education and training providers, and economic development leaders to develop workforce and education policies that increase job quality and support regional economic growth.
- B. Sector strategies: aligning workforce and education programs with leading and emergent industry sectors' skills needs.
- C. Fostering demand-driven skills attainment: workforce and education programs must align program content with the state's industry sector needs to provide

California's high road employers and businesses with the skilled workforce it needs to compete in the global economy.

AJCC Certification Workgroup's Vision

- All AJCC staff have advanced knowledge of the regional economy, labor market conditions, business talent supply chains, and the needs of high-growth sectors and high road employers.
- The AJCC focuses on quality jobs by actively promoting targeted sector opportunities and high-demand occupations to all AJCC customers.
- The AJCC promotes systems and partnerships that connect workers to high-quality jobs or entry-level work with clear routes to advancement.
- The AJCC has a defined strategy in place to regularly seek and capture employer advice in the design and delivery of demand-driven services for job seekers.
- The AJCC is an integral partner in the implementation of the Local Board's integrated business services strategy and seeks to minimize redundant employer contacts while maximizing access to system-wide, integrated business services.
- The AJCC offers a wide range of AJCC-based services for employers, including referral of qualified candidates, on-site recruitment, pre-employment testing, skill verification, and hiring and training subsidies.
- The AJCC consistently seeks feedback and satisfaction data from businesses on the delivery of business services and applies it for continuous improvement.
-

AJCC Certification Indicators #5: The AJCC actively engages industry and labor and supports regional sector strategies through an integrated business service strategy that focuses on quality jobs.

Assessment of the AJCC's Strengths and Continuous Improvement Opportunities:

FRWDB has adopted a bifurcated, but coordinated, structure for delivery of business services. A Business Services unit is housed within FRWDB. It is responsible for developing and maintaining relationships with businesses and in assisting them in accessing services that address a wide range of needs. Business Services staff works directly with their counterparts at the Workforce Connection centers, providing them information on businesses' hiring needs and job opportunities. In turn, AJCC staff match job ready candidates to available positions, and support business through specific services, such as work-based learning.

The following responses highlight the AJCC system's efforts and capacity to effectively engage with businesses in key sectors, while concurrently collaborating with core, AJCC, and other partners in efforts to coordinate and integrate outreach to and communications with businesses in and around Fresno County. It should be noted that FRWDB has recently redesigned and modernized the business services function, which was paused during the pandemic. The unit has been re-staffed and new plans for the delivery of business services are currently being designed and tested. Therefore, some of the processes described below are pending full implementation.

Areas of substantive strength include:

1. AJCC staff understands the regional economy, labor market conditions, and the needs of key industries.

FRWDB's Business Services team members are generally knowledgeable about the economy, the labor market, regional priority sectors, and characteristics signaling that businesses are "high road" employers. As described, in response to Indicators 4 and 6, more training on these topics may be beneficial for FRWDB and AJCC staff.

2. The AJCC focuses on quality jobs by actively promoting targeted sector opportunities and high-demand occupations to all AJCC customers.

The local workforce development system focuses on jobs within the regional priority sectors, which are thriving industries that have many good jobs offering stability and career advancement potential. The Business Services unit and the AJCCs focus on jobs that pay self-sustainability wages (or higher), are in-demand, have low turnover, offer benefits, and provide paths to wage increases and advancement. While federal and state workforce agencies have developed definitions of "quality jobs," FRWDB has not adopted or developed a definition at the local level.

3. Workforce Connection centers promote systems and partnerships that puts customers on paths to high-quality jobs.

There are several ways in which FRWDB and center staff leverage relationships to create opportunities for job seekers to connect to quality jobs. These include partnerships with employers, industry associations, sector partnerships, organized labor, and local education agencies. Examples of workforce system efforts to utilize these relationships to create more opportunities for job seekers, include:

- Working with the San Joaquin Valley Manufacturing Alliance, a business-led sector partnership, FRWDB and AJCC staff become aware of hiring and training opportunities that can benefit job seekers.
- FRWDB regularly collaborates with the Building Trades Council and member unions to recruit candidates for apprenticeships and for pre-apprenticeship training that position participants for union membership and quality jobs.
- Collaboration with the Associated California Loggers as part of the FRWDB's regional Forestry training programs, creates access to jobs with participating businesses.

The Business Services Team, AJCC representatives, and other system leaders and staff are effective in building and maintaining relationships with businesses and other organizations that lead to job seekers' gaining access to hiring and career opportunities.

4. The AJCC has a defined strategy in place to regularly seek and capture employer advice in the design and delivery of demand-driven services for job seekers.

FRWDB and its network of Workforce Connection centers provide many forms of information, assistance, and support to businesses in Fresno County. Over the course of delivering these services, companies may provide input or advice about services they need or how services could be designed to better align with the priorities of local businesses. In addition, there are organizations, groups, and events with which Business Services and AJCC staff are involved. This provides access to various forms of information that could be used to inform the design of business-responsive services for job seekers. Among these interactions and communications are:

- Business Services Team representatives meet directly with companies to obtain information used to update the local area's demand occupation list, which includes information on the qualifications for these jobs.
- Discussions with industry associations representatives provide information on skills needed by local businesses in specific sectors.
- Participation in employer roundtables when these discussions take place adds staff knowledge about industry needs.

5. The workforce system attempts to coordinate business outreach with partners and to minimize redundant employer contacts.

FRWDB has created a structure under which the free-standing Business Services unit has the primary workforce development system responsibility for business contacts. This information is shared with the AJCCs where candidates are matched to job opportunities that are identified. The Business Services team works with system partners to meet business needs. Through this collaboration, business outreach efforts are coordinated and multiple or redundant contacts to employers are minimized.

6. The AJCCs offers a wide range of center-based services for employers.

Between the efforts of the Business Services unit, its network of partners, and the Workforce Connection centers, an extensive array of services are available to business at the AJCCs, facilities of business services partners (e.g. the SBDC), businesses' own facilities, or at other community locations, such as the sites of job fairs and other hiring events. Services for businesses include, but are not limited to, recruitment, screening, pre-interviewing, skills, verification, testing, training or retraining, assistance with human resources issues, layoff aversion, assistance to workers in response to business downsizing or closure, financing assistance, business startup strategies, and support for targeted industries.

7. FRWDB and the AJCCs seek feedback from businesses on the delivery of business services.

FRWDB Business Services representatives and Workforce Connections staff that serve business customers rely, primarily, on informal processes to secure feedback from employers that have either been served directly by the AJCCs or by that have been assisted by the Business Service unit. As customer feedback

and satisfaction data are critical resources in determining where improvements can be made, a structured survey is needed.

Improvement could be realized in the following areas:

1. Develop a Local Definition of Quality Jobs

FRWDB leadership should examine how developing or adopting a definition of job quality may benefit the Workforce Connection centers and their customers by creating a common understanding of opportunities that are targeted by the local workforce system. With the increasing focus by federal and state workforce program administrators on job quality, adopting a local definition would enable FRWDB to establish performance targets for metrics identified in connection with the definition.

2. Reinstate the Use of Business Satisfaction Surveys

Surveys of business customer satisfaction are critical to determining the effectiveness of services provided by FRWDB and the Workforce Connection centers to local employers.

3. FRWDB Leadership Should Identify Opportunities to Design and Implement a Structured Labor Market Information Training Program for All Staff

To establish a strong base of knowledge among Workforce Connection direct services staff, including those providing career planning and case management services, FRWDB leadership should procure or develop a training program addressing basic economics; local labor market information and how to use it in service planning; the region's target industries; sector strategies in Fresno County and adjacent workforce areas; career pathways and industry-specific training programs; and quality jobs. This training would support staff's ability to effectively support job seekers in making decisions about training and preparation for jobs and careers.

This recommendation is repeated from Indicator 4.

AJCC Certification Indicator #6: The AJCC has high-quality, well-informed, and cross-trained staffing.

U.S. Department of Labor Characteristics of a High Quality AJCC

- A. Train and equip AJCC staff in an ongoing learning process with the knowledge, skills, and motivation to provide superior service to all job seekers, including those with disabilities and businesses, in an integrated, regionally focused framework of service delivery. AJCC staff are cross-trained, as appropriate, to increase staff capacity, expertise, and efficiency. Cross-training allows staff from differing programs to understand every program and to share their expertise about the needs of specific populations so that all staff can better serve all customers. AJCC staff are routinely trained and are keenly aware of how their