

PY23 Workforce Connection of Central New Mexico (WCCNM) Annual Report

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In accordance with §677.205 of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) regulation and WIOA Law Sections 101 and 116, the Workforce Connection of Central New Mexico (WCCNM) submits the Program Year 2023 (PY23) Annual Report to the State of New Mexico, Department of Workforce Solutions, State Administrative Entity (SAE) on October 11, 2024. The report will be incorporated into an expanded annual report for the region that will be available on the WCCNM website at www.wccnm.org in December 2024.

The Workforce Connection of Central New Mexico (WCCNM) and the New Mexico Workforce Connection (NMWC) centers continue to move forward with strategic approaches to meet the needs of priority industries and assist businesses to become competitive and profitable. Our region's business-driven system allows us to be a qualified and valued resource for businesses and job seekers in the four-county area.

During the past year the WCCNM has continued to enhance job seeker and business community services to address ongoing economic and workforce readiness challenges. The WCCNM AE/FA support staff, Service Providers, and NMWC centers in Central New Mexico have developed Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) strategies to improve existing resources and implement new services offered through the NMWC centers.

PY23 was the second program year that all WCCNM service providers met and exceeded negotiated WIOA Performance Indicators and Measures outcome goals. This major accomplishment demonstrates the successful integration of Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) initiatives by all WCCNM service providers and NMWC operations.

During PY23 the WCCNM's CQI (see Section 6.2 Continuous Quality Improvements) initiatives centered on maximizing grant funding for participants to successfully complete training and secure sustainable employment leading to self-sufficiency. WIOA grant funding often restricts how funds may be used and often overlooks funding necessary to provide participants with resources needed for the successful completion of their career pathway objectives, including needed financial assistance with housing, utilities, and food.

1 SUMMARY OF THE WIOA TITLE I.B ADULT & DISLOCATED WORKER PROGRAM

1.1 MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Performance Achievement -

The WCCNM-WIOA Adult and Dislocated Worker Program Team has exceeded all negotiated performance measures for Program Year 2023. This achievement is a result of countless hours of intensive case management, accurate career matching in both classroom training and work-based learning programs along with accurate data collection supported with documentary evidence. The WCCNM-WIOA Team has done an outstanding job in assuring that hundreds of its community members are successfully matched and placed into career pathways that lead to long-term employment and self-sufficiency.

Work and Learn: Adult OJT/Apprenticeships/Internships and Classroom Training -

The WCCNM provides a combination of services that enables a “work and learn” environment. It can be as structured as a registered, apprenticeship requiring closely monitored work and training, an internship with a structured training plan or a work experience that enable students to learn, hands on, from someone in their prospective demand industry.

Work based learning opportunities provide essential firsthand engagement with the workplace for those who want to increase their earning capacity but need to earn a living while doing so. More importantly, a strong training and development program can have numerous short- and long-term benefits, including increasing employee engagement and retention rates, encouraging innovative thinking, mitigating risks, and giving the organization a competitive edge.

Our Business and Job Seeker Teams are fully aware of the benefits of participation in work-based learning opportunities and make every attempt to provide a combination of service that meets the needs of the employers AND the job seeker/employed worker.

In Program Year 2023, the Central Region Service Provider enrolled 478 new Adult and Dislocated Worker Job Seekers into classroom training, and 275 into work-based learning opportunities that include on-the-job training, internships, and apprenticeships. All training services are provided only for in-demand occupations following the policy of the Central Region Board that requires an 11.3% projected job growth rate or 50 or more projected average annual job openings. Currently, a high percentage of our classroom training dollars are expended on occupations within healthcare and transportation. All participants have experienced a high success rate regardless of the mode of training they have participated in, as demonstrated in performance outcomes.

We have had the greatest success in recruiting students for internship training by posting the positions available on the student employment websites at both CNM and UNM to reach as many students as possible. We also use various marketing techniques including social media to promote our paid internship program to employers.

We have supported apprentices for required related classroom training for 16 unique employers thus far this year, for a total of 53 apprentices that received this support. Our local ABC training provider has provided related instruction via customized training to help fund the classroom portion while these employees' work hands on.

Ten apprentices received supported work-based learning through the on-the-job training program. These apprentices are in registered apprenticeships and non-traditional apprenticeships.

These positions include: 5 sheet metal, 3- electrical, 1 waste water tech apprenticeship, 3-automotive technicians.

We aspire to increase enrollment in transitional jobs by aligning efforts with the Chances grant to guide more enrollees into a work-based learning experience where they can begin to earn while they earn early on to steer them sooner toward stability.

1.2 MAJOR CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

Dislocated Worker Recruitment and Service Provision -

Recruitment of the Dislocated Worker population continues to be an arduous task. Many of our dislocated workers don't begin to think of training or employment until their unemployment insurance is about to run out. This makes it difficult for them to even consider a classroom training program and if going into an OJT, or being referred for employment vacancies, their salary expectations are often not realistic. Their skills may be outdated, or the participant is going into a new industry or occupation all-together. If they chose to stay in the same industry or occupation, they don't usually qualify for the program.

It is imperative that we reach this population in time to increase their skill levels via classroom training or match them with an employer for on-the-job training prior to their unemployment insurance (UI) ending, we must reach them earlier. We see this as an opportunity to work at improving the outreach efforts of our Team by working with our Department of Workforce Solutions (DWS) partners in the Unemployment Insurance section.

It would be most helpful to remind dislocated workers about potential training opportunities at the onset of the unemployment insurance process. We suggest a short flyer that would go out with their award letter or a crawl at the bottom of the screen if the dislocated worker applies for UI on-line. This methodology might be most effective while they are newly laid off and considering their options. We hope to work with our Department of Workforce Solutions partner to discuss potential solutions to this longstanding challenge.

2 SUMMARY OF THE WIOA TITLE I.B YOUTH PROGRAM

2.1 MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The WCCNM Youth Program had a productive PY23, carrying over 628 youth from the previous year and enrolling 234 new participants. During the program year, 112 youth were placed in work experience activities and 40 youth received funding for an Individual Training Account (ITA).

Additionally, 79 youth received supportive services to assist with transportation, background checks, uniforms and work attire, eyeglasses, and license and testing fees., and 184 youth earned incentives for educational and employment achievements related to performance outcomes. By the end of PY23, 369 youth had completed the program through 4th quarter follow-up, and 555 participants were carried over into PY24.

The high demand for occupational training and requests for ITAs continued from PY22 resulting in the program expending all funds for training within the first quarter. To support this need, co-enrollments with the Adult WIOA program were initiated, as well as partnerships with other programs and providers. Additional funding was received later in the program year enabling additional youth to receive ITAs through WIOA Youth funding.

The program continued its focus on developing sector partnerships and researching apprenticeship programs, resulting in a new or strengthened partnerships in construction, healthcare and automotive industries.

- Presentations and meetings with the New Mexico's Chapter of the American Sprinkler Association were held. The association has an apprentice training program providing classroom instruction accompanied with paid on-the-job training leading to a credential as a licensed Fire Sprinkler Fitter. The training consists of a 15-module course usually completed within 10 months and are eligible for licensure.
- Partnership with MedNet to develop a sector partnership for Caregivers and Health Aids with plans to incorporate the training provider's program in conjunction with paid work experience leading to long-term employment with Beehive Homes. Beehive Homes has been a strong partner and employer with the Youth Program and is committed to creating short-time opportunities for youth and young adults to enter the Healthcare field.
- The Youth Program also focused on outreach to IntelliTec strengthening the partnership and discussing a sector partnership and career pathways for youth in the automotive field.

Remaining steadfast in implementing tailored and achievable Individual Development Plans with youth that identifies required supportive services and initiates SMART placements in education or training, the Youth Program maintained high performance exceeding five (5) of the six (6) Performance Measures in PY23.

The Youth program maintained a 98% staff retention rate, the highest in several years, that resulted in consistent and continuous services to youth resulting in quality services and high performance. This retention can be attributed to the ability to provide higher wages aligning positions to job descriptions and better onboarding and continuous staff training and professional development. Staff training has been a priority for the Youth Program, with annual and quarterly trainings, Wednesday Wellness sessions, and professional development trainings throughout the year, including virtual webinars through the USDOL workforce GPS platform offering several best practices and evidenced based strategies for working effectively with youth.

The program also continued to offer Development Assets Framework presentations and training to youth, reflecting a strong commitment to supporting their educational and employment goals. With continuous quality improvement at the forefront, the Youth Program has implemented a more thorough and timely monthly internal monitoring. This process focuses on reviewing and correcting data entry errors in participant electronic files located in WCOS and file storage in PDS.

2.2 MAJOR CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

During Program Year 2023 (PY23), the WCCNM Youth Program encountered some challenges but remained steadfast in its mission to serve the youth of New Mexico's Central Region. The PY's decrease in funding for training coupled with the high demand resulted in the program expending all funds within the first quarter. This challenge created the need to refer participants to other programs or providers and a strengthened partnership with the Adult WIOA program for co-enrollments to secure additional funding for occupational skills training. The Youth program continued to provide supportive services to ensure these participants were successful in these collaborations and co-enrollments.

The Youth program continues to contend with several other youth programs placing youth into paid work experiences or pre-apprenticeships at higher wages or more hours. Several businesses are also hiring more youth for entry-level positions at higher wages due to the high need for employees. These challenges resulted in the program experiencing a slightly lower placement in work experience activities during the PY.

The Youth program also experienced decreased interest and activity in Torrance County in PY23, a first for this area. Several factors including the closing of the East Mountain Chamber contributed to this challenge. The program continued to focus on youth tailored outreach strategies, increased partnership development and business engagement to increase activity in the new program year. Recruitment and hiring for the programs only vacancy in the PY, the Business Practitioner, was a challenge. This required the Youth Development Practitioners to engage more frequently in business development and representing the program at employment events, jobs fairs, and chamber of commerce meetings.

3 BUSINESS SERVICES

3.1 MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The WCCNM Business teams, including staff from Adult & Dislocated Worker, Youth, and Career Services, collaborate to streamline communication and avoid duplicating efforts with the same businesses or associations through the launch of the Business Connector dashboard. This centralized application allows businesses to quickly submit workforce needs to the appropriate business team representatives. With a defined process, workflow, and a tracking database on the backend, the dashboard ensures that all inquiries are managed efficiently. Business teams can refer, communicate, and collaborate by adding case notes and transferring requests to other partners within the system. The WCCNM ensures timely follow-up by setting parameters after services are requested, and the tool's user-friendly design allows employers to easily submit their hiring and training needs. The

inquiry is then directed to the appropriate programs and staff who can assist. Staff can interact with the inquiry collaboratively, receiving real-time updates on contributions from other team members and employers, ensuring efficient coordination and eliminating duplicate contacts.

The WCCNM Business Team has built numerous collaborations and partnerships with community-based organizations, chambers of commerce, industry associations, and local trade unions. These partnerships are essential for developing the talent pipeline within the Central Region. By working together, the team not only connects qualified candidates with employers but also addresses workforce gaps through targeted training, education, and skill development strategies. These efforts ensure that both businesses and job seekers are supported in meeting the demands of the evolving labor market, strengthening the region's overall economic growth and workforce competitiveness.

The WCCNM Business Team's monthly outreach efforts showcase their dedication to engaging new businesses and recruiting dislocated workers through a range of strategic methods. They actively connect with a wide variety of businesses across key sectors such as technology, healthcare, construction, and manufacturing, ensuring that industries vital to the Central Region's economy are well-supported. Their outreach includes personalized communication with employers, industry-specific meetings, and partnerships with regional chambers of commerce and economic development agencies. Additionally, the Operations has established a bi-weekly Events Sub-Committee to coordinate and plan regional events, ensuring smooth execution and participation in both hosted and partner-led initiatives. Sector Strategy planning meetings further focus on organizing industry-specific events in areas like healthcare, IT, advanced manufacturing, and broadband. These targeted efforts not only facilitate job placement and workforce development but also address critical workforce gaps. Through comprehensive outreach, community engagement, and promotion of training programs, the WCCNM Business Team plays a key role in driving economic growth and workforce development in the Central Region.

In addition to direct business engagement, the team actively participates in career fairs, hiring events, and small business resource fairs, which serve as crucial platforms to connect job seekers with employers and promote WIOA services. These events provide opportunities to showcase the wide range of workforce solutions available, from skills development to job placement assistance. Part of the Business Team's efforts focuses on supporting individuals affected by layoffs. They collaborate closely with trade unions and employers to provide displaced workers with training opportunities and guidance on career transitions. By facilitating partnerships with apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs, the team enables participants to gain hands-on experience and develop in-demand skills that lead to sustainable employment.

3.2 SECTOR STRATEGIES

The WCCNM sector strategies have progressed with the IT/tech and healthcare industries. To include the USDOL's \$2 million, five-year H1-B Pathways to Infrastructure Jobs grant awarded in September 2023 with the targeted sectors; broadband, transportation and renewable energy. WCCNM will continue to leverage employer and industry relationships established through the sector initiatives

with the IT/tech field to support that component in certain occupations for these three sectors that require those capabilities.

WCCNM is targeting populations in smaller and/or rural communities, as well as historically marginalized, underrepresented, and underserved populations. Within these targeted populations, WCCNM is dedicated to creating a robust and skilled workforce by utilizing sector strategies and sector partnerships through the following steps: 1.) Creating partnerships with employers, educators and key industries within the infrastructure sector. These partnerships are the cornerstone of a worker-driven system that will provide information and intelligence to the workforce system regarding human resource needs, skills gaps, and education needs. 2.) Identifying high-priority occupations within the targeted industry cluster of infrastructure. The staff of WCCNM is regularly working with partners, employers and education groups to review what those occupations will be and researching the labor market. 3.) Developing an inventory of education and training programs that are currently available to upskill the current labor force, fill skill gaps occupation shortages. Utilizing this inventory, WCCNM is meeting with education partners and employers on what training and education programs still need to be created and developed. 4.) Creating clear career pathways by utilizing the data from the previous steps.

WCCNM has begun the process putting together a sector advisory council for the H1-B Pathways To Infrastructure Jobs Grant that consists of and engages key representatives to better serve and understand employer and worker needs. In efforts to further advance these initiatives we have also been developing an employer survey to assess their workforce needs.

3.3 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SUBCOMMITTEE

In January 2024 the WCCNM Board voted to disband the Economic Development Standing Committee and implement an Economic Development Ad Hoc Committee as needed to review and make recommendations to the Executive Committee on Regional economic developments and trends related to workforce development. Upon request, a Business Engagement Ad Hoc Committee has been formed to advise on the development of county-level economic and workforce strategic plans. Furthermore, members of the WCCNM and staff are now participating within the State Workforce Board Business Engagement Committee to further these efforts and provide input for the Central Region.

The WCCNM Board members continue to drive economic development strategies and plans within their respective geographical areas. They are in contact with business owners that are interested in relocating to or expanding existing operations within New Mexico's Central Region. This "Business and Employer Engagement" and resulting strategic plan development, including critical knowledge of employer labor and workforce needs, positions the WCCNM, training institutions, and other workforce development organizations to develop and fund trainings that specifically meet the emerging staffing demands of New Mexico's existing and new employers.

3.4 WORK-BASED LEARNING

During PY23, the Apprenticeship Team at Workforce Connection of New Mexico (WCCNM) achieved several significant milestones that contributed to the growth and awareness of the Apprenticeship program.

- 1. Apprenticeship Awareness:** Through active participation in job fairs, presentations during RESEA Orientation, organizing Youth Apprenticeship Week, and engaging with multiple schools, the team significantly increased awareness of the Apprenticeship program. The number of job seekers interested in the program grew from virtually none (0-1) per month to approximately 30-40 per month. This rise in interest also expanded the awareness of opportunities available through the program.
- 2. Creation of Guides for Staff and Job Seekers:** To better serve the community and businesses, the team developed various resources, including videos for social media, flashcards for job seekers, and digital documents detailing the application process for each occupation. These resources have been instrumental in guiding job seekers through the application process and promoting the program to the wider community.
- 3. Streamlined Booking Process:** A new booking system was introduced, allowing customers interested in the Apprenticeship program to schedule appointments with the Apprenticeship Team based on availability and preference for virtual or in-person meetings. This system not only offers greater flexibility to customers but also enables the team to prepare more effectively for client meetings. Our first customer successfully used this system to book a virtual meeting to discuss apprenticeship opportunities and we plan to continue offering virtual appointments.
- 4. Development of the Apprenticeship Form:** An innovative form was created in Formsite, designed as a decision tree. This form guides job seekers based on their profile, presenting them with relevant occupation options and offering the opportunity to schedule an appointment after completing the form.
- 5. Implementation of Paperless Files:** The team transitioned to paperless operations by digitizing all flyers, brochures, contact information, and pamphlets from each sponsor. This allows for efficient sharing of information with interested parties via email, reducing the environmental impact and improving accessibility.
- 6. Expanded Outreach:** The Apprenticeship Team has been working to expand outreach efforts to potential Registered Apprenticeship Sponsors and Employers by collaborating with the WIOA business team and the H1B program. These efforts have already resulted in one employer registering an apprenticeship program. Additionally, the team is developing a strategic plan to focus on businesses with in-demand occupations by reviewing job postings and descriptions to align with apprenticeship opportunities.

Our team has been providing support and employment opportunities to marginalized or disadvantaged groups interested in apprenticeships by leveraging resources and building partnerships with organizations and agencies that offer critical services to individuals facing social, economic, or personal barriers, and we plan to expand these efforts in the future.

3.5 MAJOR CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

The WCCNM aims to enhance outreach efforts for underserved populations in the Central Region by strengthening communication with partners and community programs. To better promote the wide range of services and programs offered, targeted outreach initiatives will be developed to effectively engage these populations. Improving partner engagement will involve creating streamlined communication channels for outreach, training opportunities, and event planning. This will ensure better coordination, avoid duplication of efforts, and guarantee appropriate staffing across all co-located partners during events.

While WCCNM benefits from a variety of service providers, funding streams, grant awards, and programs, each comes with unique eligibility requirements and outcome measures. This can sometimes create confusion for customers, including the business community. To address these challenges, WCCNM will continue to promote an operational approach within the NMWC Centers that creates collaboration, strengthens programs, and encourages innovation. Operations will continue to provide partner communication to all staff on programs in our region. This approach will ensure that services are delivered effectively to both individuals and employers, helping to streamline access and maximize impact across the Central Region.

4 PERFORMANCE INDICATORS AND MEASURES

PY23 performance results for the Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth, Title III (Wagner-Peyser) are detailed in the following tables and include Employment Q2, Median Wages in Q2, Employment Q4, Credential Attainment Rate, and Measurable Skill Gains Rate. All performance indicator percentages for each WCCNM program show that performance was exceeded in all categories, with the exception of the Dislocated Worker Participation Threshold. The Participant Threshold outcome measure was first added to the regional performance outcome indicators beginning in PY22 and will serve as precedence moving forward with NMDWS during annual Central Region performance outcome negotiations.

PY2023 –Annual Report ETA Federal Report 9169

Table 1: Adult Program Performance Indicators – PY23

Indicator	Numerator/Denominator	Actual	Negotiated	% Met	Status
Employed in Q2 Rate	593/704	84.23%	75.50%	112%	Exceeds
Employed in Q4 Rate	394/491	79.65%	75.50%	106%	Exceeds
Median Wages	—	\$11,779.44	\$8,000.00	147.20%	Exceeds
Credential Attainment Rate	316/424	74.53%	64.00%	117%	Exceeds
Measurable Skills Gains Rate	606/727	83.36%	63.25%	132%	Exceeds
Adult Participation Threshold	773/850	773	850	91%	Meets

Source: WCOS Annual Federal Report: 9169 on 08/07/2024.

Table 2: Dislocated Worker Program Performance Indicators – PY23

Indicator	Numerator/Denominator	Actual	Negotiated	% Met	Status
Employed in Q2 Rate	138/172	80.23%	68.00%	118%	Exceeds
Employed in Q4 Rate	159/214	74.30%	68.5%	109%	Exceeds
Median Wages	—	\$13,700.78	\$7,850.00	175%	Exceeds
Credential Attainment Rate	126/171	73.68%	70.00%	105.20%	Exceeds
Measurable Skills Gains Rate	138/172	80.23%	68.00%	118%	Exceeds
DW Participation Threshold	159/214	74.30%	68.5	109%	Exceeds

Source: WCOS Annual Federal Report: 9169 on 08/07/2024.

Table 3: Youth Program Performance Indicators – PY23

Indicator	Numerator/Denominator	Actual	Negotiated	% Met	Status
Employed in Q2 Rate	593/705	84.11%	67.00%	126%	Exceeds
Employed in Q4 Rate	544/683	79.65%	66.00%	121%	Exceeds
Median Wages	—	\$11,779.44	\$3,700.00	318.30%	Exceeds
Credential Attainment Rate	316/424	74.53%	52.00%	141.40%	Exceeds

Measurable Skills Gains Rate	605/727	83.22%	51.00%	163.20%	Exceeds
Youth Participation Threshold	455/525	455	525	87%	Fail

Source: WCOS Annual Federal Report: 9169 on 08/13/2024.

Table 4: Title III – Wagner-Peyser Performance Indicators – [PY Year]

Indicator	Numerator/Denominator	Actual	Negotiated	% Met	Status
Employed in Q2 Rate	3949/6011	65.70%	58.00%	113.30%	Exceeds
Employed in Q4 Rate	3313/5070	65.35%	58.00%	113%	Exceeds
Median Wages	—	\$9,759.90	\$5,574.00	175.10%	Exceeds

Source: WCOS Annual Federal Report: 9169 on 08/13/2024.

4.1 MAJOR CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

In PY23 the WCCNM service providers demonstrated significant improvements in all aspects of service delivery as reflected in the above WIOA Performance Indicators and Measures outcome. However, challenges remain in ensuring best practices continue to evolve to meet changing employer and workforce needs.

PY23 marks the second year the first year that Youth Measurable Skills Gains (MSG) and Dislocated Worker performance measures have met and exceeded negotiated outcomes. During PY23 WCCNM service providers maintained a strong focus on and continued to develop new practices to address these two historically challenging performance outcome measures, which remain an ongoing challenge. During PY24 and beyond WCCNM Service Providers will continue to utilize participant data to drill down into possible data input errors or omissions and closely monitor participant data to ensure every opportunity is made in capturing participant data needed to meet performance goals.

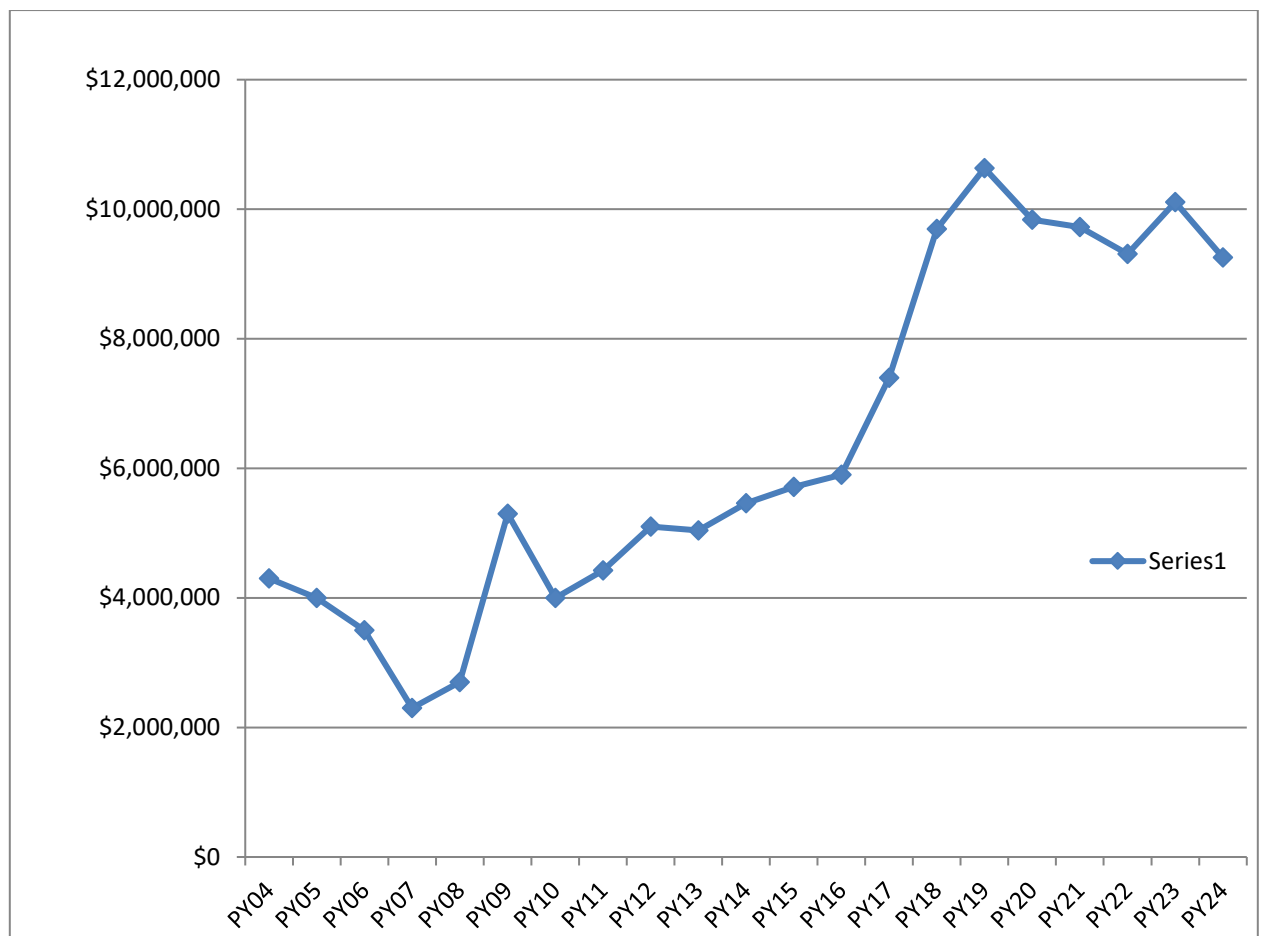
In addition, the WCCNM has developed a new data validation protocol to be implemented during PY23 that will focus on monitoring participant post-exit activity to ensure wage, employment, credential obtainment and MSG data are properly indicated in WCOS and facilitate accurate Quarterly and Annual reporting. In addition, data validation helps identify any data collection issues or patterns and allows for corrective actions to be taken early.

4.2 FUNDING

The WCCNM has assumed responsibility for many past workforce-related special projects and grant opportunities from the USDOL and the State of NM. These include past successful completions of ARRA American Recovery Reinvestment Act, SESP State Energy Sector Partnership Act, NEG National Emergency Grant(s), NM's TechHire H1B Grant, as well as new Apprenticeship, USDOL REO Grant, USDOL H1B Infrastructure Grant, and other funding opportunities to be identified through the upcoming establishment of the WCCNM Board's status as a separate entity authorized to compete for additional funding opportunities, and

other workforce related initiatives. There have been no forfeitures of granted WIOA or other appropriations and the Central Region has managed to remain in good standing with clean third-party independent audits for over 18 years.

The following graph demonstrates the WCCNM WIOA Title I Formula funding allocation for recent years. The Program Year PY23 (7-1-23 through 06-30-24) the WCCNM was awarded at \$10,108,941, representing \$798,025 Increase overall from the PY22's \$9,310,916 formula funding, resulting in a 8.57% increase. FYI PY24's Funding (7-1-24 to 6-30-25) is known at this time to be \$9,253,434 which is back down \$855,507 or 8.50% decrease over PY23.



WCCNM's success is very much related to the structure of Central Region's Board members & Board Officers with active involvement. Additionally, the region's current and past business leaders, community development partnerships, and competent training institutions are also an important consideration in measuring WCCNM's success.

One success for the Central Region is budget management. The board members do not direct their interests to contractors or sub recipients and avoid any appearance or potential for

conflict of interest. County board representatives work together recognizing the four-county region as one area, serving customers based upon individual needs via the New Mexico Workforce Connection centers without a focus on budget allocations or expenditures to each county. Therefore, the region's partner activities and direction may be adjusted quickly to address new demands and WIOA initiatives, while maintaining what is best for business leaders as a region versus a siloed approach.

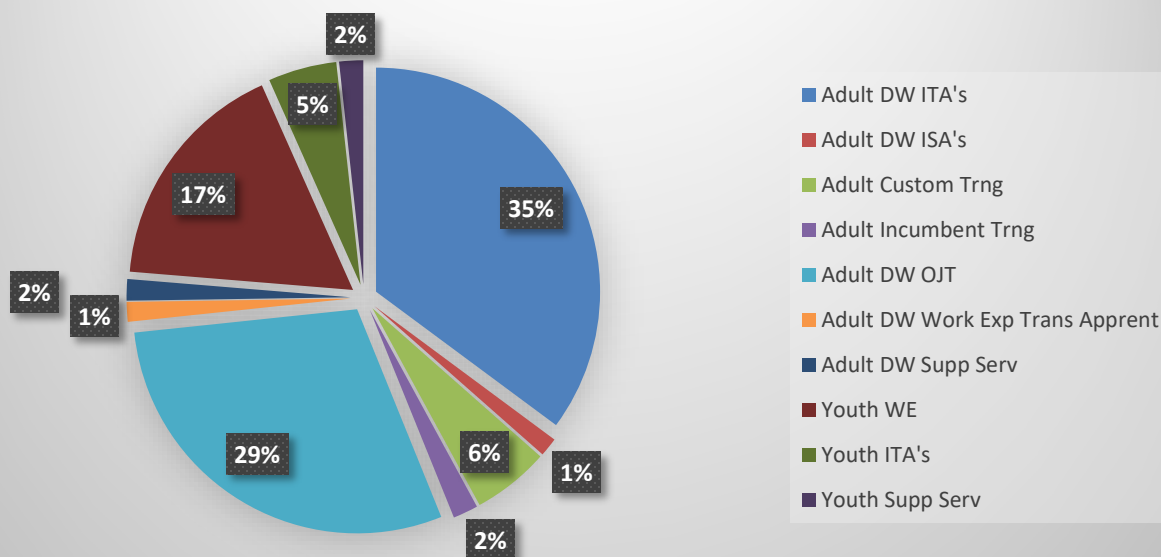
Furthermore, the WCCNM has managed to perform USDOL directives and maintain costs at a reasonable level by sharing of resources and leveraging costs amongst WIOA mandated partners. The WCCNM provides the One-Stop Operator authority to navigate complexities of bureaucracies with a focus on customer service and flexibility in all the Central Region centers, including the operation of New Mexico's premier comprehensive jobs center in Albuquerque. In support, the WCCNM provides significant investments for development of a comprehensive communications and internet-based infrastructure that allows for a combination of in-person and virtual services which promotes robust service strategies and an enhanced customer experience.

WCCNM operates under a grant requirement to expend 40% of WIOA monies on client or participant services, with 60% available for infrastructure and administrative costs such as facilities, staff, and other board related expenses. The WCCNM manages to exceed this threshold and has been at least 55% expenditure rate year after year historically for training services. WCCNM attempts to reach 60% and can get there when redistributions by the State NMDWS occur. This is because our infrastructure costs and staff remain the same and this additional funding goes straight to participant services.

WCCNM has three subrecipients (One-Stop Operator, Adult/Dislocated Worker and Youth service providers) receiving monies for their staff's payroll costs and indirect business expenses. The MRCOG serving as the WCCNM's Fiscal Agent is responsible for all fund-draw downs and management of capital improvement, administrative and operational monies, and the majority of participant fund distributions for payments. The MRCOG's comprehensive internal controls and procedures limits any financial risks and increases the capacity for the WCCNM to function and perform at a high-level.

Please see the charts below depicting a breakdown of costs by program year periods to include Program Year 2002 through 6-30-24 or end of PY23.

WCCNM PY04 to PY23 (6-30-24) Client Services by % Total



Program Type	Amount
Adult DW ITAs	\$27,030,638
Adult DW ISAs	\$1,040,444
Adult Custom Training	\$4,273,466
Adult Incumbent Training	\$1,391,889
Adult DW OJT	\$22,659,511
Adult DW Work Experience Transitional Apprenticeship	\$1,093,023
Adult DW Supportive Services	\$1,187,769
Youth WE	\$13,090,324
Youth ITAs	\$3,802,208
Youth Support Services	\$1,329,976
Total	\$76,899,248

5 SUCCESS STORIES

5.1 ADULT

Noah- had struggled his entire life with a learning disability that impaired his reading abilities. This adversely affected his ability to get an education, but he continued to fight to move ahead. He has had to work harder than most to obtain the knowledge and skills to better himself; he just needed to find that one opportunity that would allow him to obtain employment with a company that he would be able to grow with.

Noah previously completed a work experience with the WIOA Youth program as a maintenance worker; he knew that this was not the work that would bring him to self-sufficiency. But then, he started working in the construction field. While working in construction he observed the many truck drivers and operators on the worksite and began to realize that he was very interested in becoming a truck driver himself. Noah came to the WCCNM office and worked with the WIOA Team to see how this program could help him to get the training he needed to obtain his CDL.

Noah quickly brought in all required documents to determine his eligibility and found a school that would help him in working through his disability. He had some struggles obtaining his permit for a few months until he found an MVD office that was willing to provide accommodation for his disability by reading the test aloud to him so he could record the answers. This additional assistance enabled him to obtain his learner's permit. He expressed his excitement at being able to learn while in training behind the wheel of a semi-truck and was excited to take his driving test. Noah had the stamina and enthusiasm to work through a system that isn't always accommodating to people with disabilities.

Noah completed the CDL training program on 06/27/2023 and after passing the rigorous written and pre-trip safety exams was able to obtain his license on 07/10/2023. Noah successfully obtained employment with Swift Trucking on 07/28/2023 earning \$19.00 per hour for his first three months with an expected increase soon after. Noah is grateful for the opportunity and support that he received through the WIOA program.

5.2 DISLOCATED WORKER SUCCESS STORY:

Sergio - enrolled into WIOA in September of 2022 as a dislocated worker and was interested in going back to school for Web Development. He was receiving unemployment benefits at the time and was looking at making a career change. He had worked as a food server at various restaurants over in prior years. Sergio started getting passionate about IT when he worked for Apple as a Technical specialist & product zone specialist focusing on sales. He knew he needed to obtain more technical training to be successful in the IT field. Sergio decided to enroll into the Deep Dive Full stack boot camp where he learned the fundamentals of modern web development, building great websites, and how, in-demand software can assist browsers to run perfectly.

Through a lot of hard work and dedication, Sergio completed the Deep Dive Full Stack Program at CNM Ingenuity. He was eager to enter the workforce but had some challenges to overcome, mainly due to his lack of prior experience. He was having a difficult time getting interviews and started to feel defeated. His career development specialist referred him to the WIOA business team to see if they could help.

After about 3 months, Sergio was beginning to get worried that he wouldn't be able to find work in his field. One of the Business Consultants (BC's) contacted him to ask how he would feel about participating in an internship with a company that was searching for Software Engineers. Sergio thought it would be a great opportunity but felt nervous that he didn't have the appropriate skills to be successful in the position. The BC sent his resume to the company, and they were extremely interested in providing the work experience that could help expand his knowledge. Sergio begun his internship at Tau Technologies and focused on proving troubleshooting, software design and

documentation in full stack development, and implementing software libraries as well as writing software manuals. Through his internship, Sergio grew more confident and realized this was something he could see himself doing long-term. Through the next 4 months, Sergio advanced his skills and continued to grow in C++ documentation and website design, as well as converting python code into C++ for performance gains.

As the internship ended the BC inquired with the employer as to Sergio's "fit" with their company. They agreed that Sergio was a great fit for the team and were eager to keep working with him. Sergio was able to move into an OJT contract paying 50% of the hourly wage to help offset the training costs required to fill the skills gaps associated with his new full-time position. After he completed his hours, Sergio was offered an unsubsidized full-time position earning \$25.00 an hour as a software engineer.

All within the year, Sergio went from being unemployed and collecting unemployment benefits, to going back to school, obtaining an internship, and receiving a full-time job offer. Sergio stated that the support he received from WIOA was what led him to his success, and he is so thankful to all the WIOA staff that supported him along his journey. He is looking forward to his new career and is eager to showcase his talents.

5.3 YOUTH SUCCESS STORY



David -who is 19 was referred by his case manager at New Mexico's Children Youth and Families' Department (CYFD). At a young age, David has faced more challenges than many encounter in a lifetime. With only a high school diploma, David was put into a position of immense responsibility when his father became incarcerated, and his mother no longer in the picture. Without hesitation, David took on the role of primary caregiver for his 15-year-old sister, demonstrating remarkable resilience and dedication. With this responsibility David needed support from community resources including employment and other needs.

Despite the sudden upheaval, David navigated the complexities of working with the CYFD and attending numerous court hearings. His unwavering commitment to his sister's well-being led him to the WIOA Youth program in Sandoval County, where he found additional support and resources. Time was of the essence, and David quickly gained a work placement JCE Inc. Early on David realized that this was not the right placement for him. At that point his Youth Development Practitioner worked quickly with David so that he could change his worksite. David was then placed for work experience at American Tire and Service. As an Intern Tire/Lube Technician, David was able to gain hands-on knowledge and experience. Mechanics had always been a passion of his, a skill he honed while working on cars with his father. This opportunity was particularly motivating for David, as he had minimal work experience in retail and needed a clear career path.

The WIOA program came through just in time for David, providing essential support such as food pantries, gas cards, supportive services including uniform reimbursement and transportation,

certification, and employment opportunities. In collaboration with the Youth and Adult program, David was given On-the-Job Training (OJT) to expand his work experience and training. This not only assures longevity in employment but also broadens his training in the mechanical trade.

David's hard work has truly paid off. He is now working in a trade he is passionate about and has also earned his OSHA 10 safety certificate. Since joining the WIOA program, David's resume has grown, not only with work experience but also with valuable certifications. He has built stability for himself and his sister, who plans on graduating next year from Rio Rancho High School.

David's positivity and strong will have pushed him through the difficulties he and his family have faced. His ambition is clear: to build a stable and sustainable life for himself and his sister in Rio Rancho, New Mexico. Through sheer determination and hard work, he is laying the foundation for a brighter future, proving that even in the face of adversity, success is possible. David continues to be successful in his OJT activity at American Tire and Service.

6 LABOR MARKET SUMMARY

6.1 PY23 LABOR MARKET INFORMATION

The Central Region and Albuquerque MSA, comprising Bernalillo, Sandoval, Torrance, and Valencia counties, surrounds the Sandia Mountains and includes the cities of Albuquerque and Rio Rancho. Most of the state's major technological industries and businesses are located in this region, which is the state's most populous but geographically smallest region. In 2023 Q1 the Albuquerque MSA represents 46.5% for Q1 223 of the employees in the state per current QCEW data.

The demand for a qualified workforce in the Central Region and the alignment of WCCNM sector strategies and priority industries is reflected in labor market information and economic data. The top ten industry sectors in the region are represented in the table below (Source: Jobs EQ 2023 Q1). The largest employers in the region are the Sandia National Laboratories; The University of New Mexico; Presbyterian Healthcare Services; Kirtland Air Force Base; Intel Corporation; The City of Albuquerque; Lovelace Health System; PNM; Honeywell Aerospace; and Albuquerque Public Schools.

Table 5: Top Ten Industry Sectors in the Albuquerque Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) – 2023

Rank	Industry Sector	Establishments	Employees
1	Health Care and Social Assistance	5,016	72,996
2	Retail Trade	2,356	43,963
3	Accommodation and Food Services	1,805	41,157
4	Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	3,898	37,906
5	Educational Services	716	31,600
6	Construction	2,276	29,555

Rank	Industry Sector	Establishments	Employees
7	Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	1,632	27,551
8	Public Administration	353	24,264
9	Manufacturing	832	17,660
10	Transportation and Warehousing	591	17,326

Source: Jobs EQ 2023 Q1

At the beginning of PY 23, the unemployment rate in the Albuquerque MSA was 4.1 percent, 0.4 percent higher than the state's whole of 3.7 percent. New Mexico grew by 16,600 jobs in total nonfarm employment, representing a gain of 2.0 percent over-the-year change.

Table 6: Average Wage Information – 2024 Q1

Area	Employees	Average Hourly Wage	Average Weekly Wage	Average Annual Wage
Albuquerque MSA	391,290	\$28.63	\$1,145	\$59,540
New Mexico	841,555	\$27.63	\$1,105	\$57,460

Note: Assumes a 40-hour work week year-round.

Source: NMDWS, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages program

Over the year, the Albuquerque MSA grew by 9,500 jobs in total nonfarm employment, representing a gain of 2.4 percent. The following private sector industries added jobs: private education and health services, up 3,200 jobs, or 4.8 percent; leisure and hospitality, up 2,300 jobs, or 5.3 percent; mining and construction, up 1,200 jobs, or 4.6 percent; manufacturing, up 800 jobs, or 4.7 percent; financial activities, up 600 jobs, or 3.0 percent; professional and business services up 500 jobs, or 0.8 percent; and miscellaneous other services up 300 jobs, or 2.5 percent. Trade, transportation, and utilities employment was down 1,200 jobs, or 1.8 percent. Information was down 100 jobs, or 1.7 percent. In the public sector, state government was up 800 jobs, or 3.1 percent, and local government was up 600 jobs, or 1.6 percent. Employment in federal government was up 500 jobs, or 3.5 percent. Source: NMDWS, Labor Market Review August 2023, Volume 52 No. 8 Published September 26, 2023.

6.2 CONTINUOUS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

In Program Year 2023, the Workforce Connection of Central New Mexico (WCCNM) made substantial progress in its Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) efforts, focusing on innovation, collaboration, service enhancement, and committed to data-driven decision-making. One of the most significant achievements was the full launch of the Business Engagement Tool, which has gained more than 100 active business accounts since its official launch on April 1st, reflecting its successful adoption within the business community. This tool has transformed how businesses interact with WCCNM, providing a transparent and efficient platform for submitting inquiries, tracking service requests, and fostering

real-time collaboration. Additionally, an Events Sub-Committee was created to review and improve event planning and sector strategy across the region. The sub-committee, composed of representatives from business teams across partners and programs, reports its findings and recommendations to the Operations Standing Committee.

WCCNM also focused on improving internal processes in PY23, with particular attention to enhancing the customer experience at the Welcome Desk. This initiative involved documenting key processes, creating detailed flowcharts, and developing activity matrices to standardize operations. By doing so, WCCNM was able to streamline customer interactions, reduce bottlenecks, and ensure a more consistent service delivery. These efforts not only improved operational efficiency but also identified new opportunities for continuous improvement, ensuring that every client received timely, high-quality assistance. Enhancements to participant registration through digital tools like QR codes led to more accurate and efficient data collection, while updates to the onboarding process ensured that staff were better prepared to deliver uniform, high-quality services. The WCCNM also focuses on improving its intranet, MyHub, to better serve staff and partner needs. This includes updating the training section, streamlining request processes, and adding new modules with information about partner organizations and their programs.

Looking ahead to PY24, WCCNM aims to elevate its CQI initiatives by focusing on improving customer satisfaction, enhancing internal communications, increasing automation, and incorporating AI into operations. A standalone CQI plan has been developed to guide these efforts, ensuring the organization remains responsive to the evolving needs of job seekers, businesses, and community stakeholders. WCCNM is committed to maintaining its leadership in workforce development through continuous improvement and innovation. By embedding CQI practices into the core operational framework, we ensure that quality improvements are not just isolated initiatives but an integral part of our service delivery model.

6.2.1 Survey Outcomes

Each year, Workforce Connection of Central New Mexico (WCCNM) collects feedback from participants of its Title I WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs as well as Title III Employment and Career Services programs to assess the effectiveness and quality of services provided. In Program Year 2024, a total of 6,516 surveys were distributed, and 55 participants responded, yielding a 1% response rate for both Title I and Title III programs. While the response rate remained consistent with prior years, valuable insights were gathered regarding participant satisfaction, employment outcomes, and the quality of services offered.

For the **WIOA Title I program**, 819 surveys were sent, and of those surveyed, 11 individuals responded (1%). Despite the low response rate, participant feedback indicated a strong sense of satisfaction with the services received:

- **91%** of participants expressed **satisfaction or high satisfaction** with the program's services.
- **81.8%** reported successfully **finding employment** through program assistance.
- **91%** felt that the services provided met their **needs extremely well or very well**.
- **82%** were **highly satisfied** with the professionalism and accessibility of staff.
- **91%** indicated that the program either **met or exceeded their expectations**.

These results mirror the ongoing efforts of Workforce Connection to provide tailored support and guidance for job seekers, offering both job placement services and career pathway assistance, particularly for individuals facing workforce challenges.

For the **Title III Employment and Career Services program**, 5,697 were sent, with 44 responses received (1%). The results for Title III programs reflect similar patterns of satisfaction and service quality:

- **53%** of participants expressed **satisfaction** with the services provided.
- **55%** felt that the services they received effectively **met their needs**.
- **70%** were **satisfied or very satisfied** with the professionalism of staff.
- **72%** felt that the program either **met or exceeded their expectations**.

Although the satisfaction rate for Title III is lower compared to Title I, these outcomes offer insight into potential areas for improvement, particularly around ensuring that services align with participant needs more consistently.

Despite the challenges of low response rates, Workforce Connection of Central New Mexico (WCCNM) continues to show high levels of participant satisfaction across both Title I and Title III programs. The employment outcomes and positive feedback about staff professionalism demonstrate the organization's commitment to serving Central New Mexico's workforce needs. Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) initiatives remain a key focus for future program enhancements to further align services with participant expectations, as employing more engaging and accessible survey methods to improve response rates and strengthening staff training programs to further enhance professionalism and accessibility in service delivery.

6.3 CHANGES TO SYSTEM AND PROGRAM DELIVERY

The WCCNM continuously uses customer survey results to assess and improve service delivery across New Mexico Workforce Connection Centers. Based on customer feedback, adjustments will be made, as needed, to resource room activities, customer flow, focusing on frequently requested services. The survey insights are also key in finalizing the structure and content of the new WCCNM and NMWC Central Region website. To enhance the survey process, particularly for the Youth Program, surveys will now be sent via text instead of email to encourage higher response rates.

The Dislocated Worker (DW) Program is committed to continuous quality improvement by identifying and enrolling participants not currently engaged in career pathways leading to economic self-sufficiency. Key efforts include:

- Ongoing collaboration with RESEA,
- Raising awareness about opportunities for dislocated workers, with clear explanations of who qualifies as a DW, and creating targeted outreach materials to promote DW program benefits on WCCNM's social media platforms,
- Promoting short-term training and credential programs for in-demand fields like IT boot camps, apprenticeships, and fast-track associate degrees,
- Offering needs-related payments to DW clients who have exhausted unemployment benefits to support training completion, and

- Conducting data-driven outreach projects to target areas with high numbers of dislocated workers.

7 PARTNERSHIP ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES

The WCCNM remains committed to exploring innovative approaches that yield lasting enhancements throughout the workforce system. Our commitment lies in delivering cost-effective results for job seekers and businesses, thereby contributing to the local economy. Fundamental to these initiatives are our strategies emphasizing engagement with partnerships and system-wide approaches. WCCNM is dedicated to pursuing innovative strategies that drive sustainable improvements across the workforce system. Our focus is on delivering impactful, cost-efficient solutions for both job seekers and businesses, ultimately supporting the growth of the local economy. Central to these efforts are our partnership engagement strategies and system-wide approaches, which form the backbone of our continuous improvement initiatives.

The WCCNM partner network in the Central Region continued to grow, including a wide range of co-located partners, external required partners, and community partners:

Partners Co-located in New Mexico Workforce Connection Centers

- WIOA Title I.B Adult & Dislocated Worker (WCCNM Contracted Provider – Mid-Region Council of Governments)
- WIOA Title I.B Youth (WCCNM Contracted Provider – YDI)
- WIOA Title III Career Services (NM Department of Workforce Solutions)
- Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) Program (NM Department of Workforce Solutions)
- Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessments (RESEA) Program (NM Department of Workforce Solutions)
- Veteran Services Program (NM Department of Workforce Solutions)
- National Farmworker Jobs Program-Employment and Training Grant (MET, Inc.)
- New Mexico Works-Wage Subsidy & CareerLink Programs (NM Department of Workforce Solutions)
- UNM Valencia Accelerated College & Career Education (ACCE)
- TANF Program - NM Works (NM Department of Workforce Solutions)
- Rapid Response (NM Department of Workforce Solutions)
- Unemployment Insurance (NM Department of Workforce Solutions)

Required External Partners

- WIOA Title II (Albuquerque Adult Learning Center)
- WIOA Title II (Catholic Charities-Adult Basic Education)
- WIOA Title II (CNM SAGE-Adult Basic Education)
- WIOA Title II (UNM Valencia- Adult Basic Education)
- WIOA Title II (Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute)
- WIOA Title II (Adult Education Santa Fe Community College)
- WIOA Title II (Adult Education UNM- Los Alamos)
- WIOA Title IV Vocational Rehabilitation (NM Division of Vocational Rehabilitation)
- CNM Carl D. Perkins Grant
- Five Sandoval Pueblos Inc. WIOA Program
- National Indian Youth Council WIOA Program
- SCSEP (Goodwill)

- SCSEP (NICOA)
- SCSEP (NM Aging and Long-Term Services Department)
- Help NM-Community Based Service Grant
- TANF Program (NM Human Services Department)
- Isleta Pueblo WIOA Program
- Job Corps
- Santo Domingo Pueblo WIOA Program
- San Felipe Pueblo

Our Community Partners

- HopeWorks LLC
- Gordon Bernell Charter School
- Rio Metro Regional Transit District, New Mexico Job Access Program (Rio Metro Regional Transit District)
- Ticket-to-Work (TTW) (Adelante of NM)
- Bernalillo County
- CNM Workforce & Community Success
- Albuquerque Housing Authority

7.1 REENTRY EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY GRANT- CHANCES

The WCCNM's Pathway Home 3, Reentry Employment Opportunity (CHANCES) grant was awarded to the WCCNM in July 2022. Through this grant, the WCCNM is serving incarcerated individuals who are within 20 to 270 days of release to ensure they receive pre-release job readiness and occupational training. Prior to participants being released, CHANCES case managers work with incarcerated participants to begin planning and arranging needed reentry supportive services, and leveraging additional post-release training with the goal of participants being placed in jobs very quickly after they are released. Through WCCNM's work on the CHANCES program, we have identified and coordinated a network of reentry service providers in Bernalillo County to facilitate the programs sustainability plan. WCCNM plans to continue providing WIOA-funded, and partner services, as well as leveraging critical reentry services provided through our recently developed reentry partner network after the CHANCES grant period of performance ends.

The WCCNM has recently requested a 12-month No Cost Period of Performance Extension to continue the grant through December 2026. If approved, this extension will allow the CHANCES Program service provider (YDI) to meet and exceed their Performance Outcome Measures by enrolling a minimum of 105 additional incarcerated individuals. To achieve this, CHANCES has implemented plans to co-enroll participants being served in the Eastern Workforce Board Area and is expanding this strategy to the Southwestern Area Board.

In addition, WCCNM plans to identify future reentry grant opportunities to continue building on the foundation and successes achieved through the CHANCES grant. Formerly incarcerated individuals seeking employment have difficulty finding jobs or steady employment. Many suffer from behavioral health and substance abuse issues, and they are high risk for recidivism. Through the CHANCES grant these individuals receive the reentry services they need including housing, food, clothing, healthcare,

behavioral and substance treatment and counseling, incentives, and training stipends to help ensure they successfully complete WIOA Adult funded training and job placement within the Central Region.

7.2 H1-B PATHWAYS TO INFRASTRUCTURE JOBS GRANT

In July 2023, WCCNM successfully submitted the Department of Labor's Building Pathways to Infrastructure Jobs Grant. The project titled *New Mexico's Mid-Region Infrastructure Partnership (NM-MIP): Training Central New Mexico for Quality Jobs in Infrastructure*, was awarded to WCCNM for \$1,999,976 in October 2023 and continues to build off a developed sector strategy in IT along with other career pathways. The partnership includes the Workforce Board as the grantee and training providers UNM Valencia Campus, CNM, and CNM Ingenuity. The infrastructure sectors that are highlighted are IT, Advanced Manufacturing, Professional, Scientific, and Technical services career pathways and will focus on these areas of job demand: Broadband, Renewable Energy, and Transportation.

In PY 23, WCCNM has co-enrolled 15 participants through WIOA Adult and Dislocated worker program. Given that PY 23 was heavily focused on planning and addressing future milestones, a collaborative partnership with employers and higher education, including UNM Valencia, CNM Ingenuity, AREA, and other industry experts. Staff have also engaged NMDVR and the NM Governor's Commission on Disability has been highlighted to ensure equitable access for workers with disabilities. Additionally, we've initiated contact with the New Mexico Native American Workforce Partners (NAWP) to better understand and support rural tribal communities. We are utilizing the engagement with our partners to make sure we are thoroughly deploying our own sector strategies and aligning with their current work and programs.

In PY 23 staff implemented an inventory of funding throughout the state and trainings that fall within each sector to help better understand what is happening in the region related to workforce development and how we can leverage these resources and not duplicate efforts. The goal is to develop a working inventory of major education and training assets so that during conversations with employers, we can find where the gaps may be and if necessary, discuss how to create a program or training that would fill those gaps. This step is critical in finding out if there are already programs in place that WCCNM can utilize to fulfill employers occupational and/or training needs.

For PY 24, staff's goal is to enroll 5-10 participants every month and continue to work with the Apprenticeship team to build employer relationships within the three sectors to strengthen the sector strategy plan for the region.

7.3 PARTNER ENGAGEMENT & SYSTEMS-WIDE APPROACHES

7.3.1 Intake and Referrals

In Program Year 2023, the Workforce Connection of Central New Mexico (WCCNM) continued to enhance and streamline its referral system through the intranet, building on the foundation set in previous years. Key updates were made to ensure a more efficient process for both internal and

external partners, fostering greater collaboration and improving service delivery across the entire network.

One of the major improvements made was the consolidation of referral forms. Previously, there were different forms for each of the three partners that had requested referrals. In PY23, we introduced a single, comprehensive referral form with a dropdown menu listing all partners, including external, co-located, and community partners. This update simplified the referral process, enabling staff to make referrals more quickly and efficiently. Additionally, the referral system was expanded to allow co-located partners to refer clients to external partners, facilitating two-way communication and collaboration. This bidirectional referral capability further strengthened our ability to provide holistic support to clients across the WCCNM network.

Throughout the year, we worked diligently to educate and inform our partners about the enhanced referral system, resulting in more teams requesting access and using the platform. We also placed a strong emphasis on promoting referrals from RESEA to WIOA and Apprenticeship programs, ensuring that job seekers could access the most relevant services. Alongside these efforts, we shared more detailed information about different partners and programs through the intranet, helping staff gain a better understanding of the New Mexico Workforce Connection (NMWC) network and improving the overall referral process. Additionally, as highlighted in the CQI section, the Business Services Connector continued to play a crucial role in serving business clients, with inquiries steadily increasing throughout PY23.

7.3.2 Partner Meetings and Communication

Since returning to daily operations after the pandemic, the WCCNM has not held Quarterly Gatherings with partners. To reintroduce all partners and their programs, the Central Region has expanded the Team Coordination Meetings to include all Central Region partners, rather than just co-located partners. These meetings now focus on presenting and educating each other about their programs. Additionally, All Staff Meetings have been introduced, where partners educate the entire WCCNM staff, both in-person and via Zoom, fostering greater collaboration and understanding across our region.

7.3.3 System-wide Training Strategy

In Program Year 2023, the Workforce Connection of Central New Mexico (WCCNM) continued to prioritize system-wide staff training, ensuring all team members are equipped with the knowledge and skills needed to efficiently manage programs, tools, and services. The three-tiered training strategy, introduced in previous years, remained central to this effort, delivering comprehensive learning opportunities across the organization. The training program is structured into three levels: **LEVEL 1**, covering core WIOA programs and mandated training; **LEVEL 2**, focusing on partner programs and system training; and **LEVEL 3**, which emphasizes professional development and specialized program training.

A key focus this year was enhancing staff proficiency in form creation and data management, with dedicated training sessions on Ninja Forms and FormSite. These trainings empowered staff to streamline form creation processes, improving operational efficiency across various departments. Additionally, staff were trained in WCOS reporting, equipping them with the necessary skills to

generate and interpret essential data. Other sessions included CANVA training for creating engaging presentation decks, and hands-on training on updating key sections of the WCCNM website, such as the board and success stories.

All staff also received training on managing the Business Services Connector, which played a vital role in improving the referral process and streamlining business service inquiries. This training is offered on demand for new hires, ensuring that all staff members, current and incoming, are familiar with this important tool. Additionally, we updated the Partners and Programs section on the intranet, providing detailed information about each program to enhance staff understanding and improve referrals. Monthly staff meetings hosted by the One-Stop operator continued to provide an opportunity for partners to present their services, ensuring that the team stays informed on available resources.

To further support staff, virtual trainings were held to address common questions about Unemployment Benefits, a topic frequently asked about by clients. Finally, in light of workplace safety concerns, active shooter training was also conducted for co-located partners, reinforcing WCCNM's commitment to creating a safe and well-prepared work environment. These diverse training efforts in PY23 have ensured that WCCNM staff are well-prepared to meet the evolving needs of the workforce and business communities they serve.

7.3.4 Bi-weekly Team Coordination Meetings

In Program Year 2023, the Workforce Connection of Central New Mexico (WCCNM) continued to hold bi-weekly Team Coordination Meetings to maintain alignment and foster collaboration across the Central Region. As in PY22, these meetings convened managers and supervisors from all regional programs, alongside representatives from both comprehensive and affiliate centers. However, in PY23, the invitation was extended to include all partners, ensuring that everyone remained informed and engaged, promoting stronger collaboration and more cohesive service delivery across the board.

The meeting agendas typically focused on key areas such as the events calendar, including both internal events across various counties and partner-hosted events. Discussions also covered quality improvement initiatives, shared challenges, and infrastructure requirements to ensure smooth operations across all centers. To accommodate all participants, the meeting format shifted from in-person to a hybrid model, allowing individuals who could not attend in person to join remotely and actively contribute to the discussion. This change not only increased participation but also enhanced communication and collaboration across all teams.

The bi-weekly meetings remain a vital platform for staying up-to-date on the activities across the Central Region, fostering coordination, and addressing any challenges that arise. By bringing together staff and partners in a more inclusive, flexible format, WCCNM has reinforced its commitment to open communication, ensuring that all stakeholders are aligned in their efforts to support job seekers and businesses in the region.

8 COMMUNICATION AND MARKETING EFFORTS

8.1 MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Digital marketing strategies for PY23 were optimized by focusing on streamlining internal communication and marketing procedures, expanding social media content, and leveraging community partnerships to increase brand awareness. Key accomplishments include:

- **Social Media Channel Growth:** We saw a steady increase in followers across our social media channels (Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn, TikTok, X, and YouTube), surpassing a 5% quarterly growth benchmark on the Meta platform and TikTok. WCCNM's video educational content continues to increase reach and brand awareness. Our goal for PY24 is to maintain this growth while diversifying content to cover additional four-county programs, partners, and services.
- **Business Services Connector:** In July 2023 we completed the development phase of the Business Services Connector, a digital tool designed to transform how businesses interact with a variety of workforce services in Central New Mexico. Consulting with Real Time Solutions and Ardham Technology, this digital strategy has increased efficiency and accountability of the business services request process. A comprehensive social media marketing campaign was launched in April of 2024 to drive traffic to the Business Services Connector portal on our website. Metrics show a steady increase of requests and accountability from partners to offer services and connect our partners to employers.
- **Data Collection & Analysis:** We invested in the digital platform Formsite to collect detailed data using secure event registration forms. This enhances our ability to target outreach, improve customer service, and help job seekers connect with opportunities. Our goal is to spend more time analyzing this data to make more informed marketing decisions and to increase brand awareness as measured by the number of residents and businesses who use our services.
- **Website Enhancements:** Significant upgrades were made to improve navigation, SEO, accessibility, and ADA compliance. We also updated key content areas like the Community Calendar of Events, WIOA Success Stories, Employer Services, Youth, Veteran Services, and FAQ document creation available to print, all which ensure a more user-friendly experience.
- **Streamlined Digital Content Management:** Cross-training additional staff for website content production has improved consistency of posting, addressed ADA compliance issues, and kept our communications and content fresh and relevant.
- **Email Marketing Development:** We have begun to utilize data from our new investment in the secure digital tool Formsite to broaden email marketing efforts. Goals for PY24 include expanding email marketing with additional staff and partner support.
- **Improved Participant and Employer Communications:** We created new handouts and online resources to highlight "Hot Jobs," and current career opportunities on all social

channels, to distribute at the Welcome Desk, post on our website, and provide in person to job seekers so they know exactly which career opportunities will be at any given event. Consistently posting these job vacancies on social media, we aim to expand this practice across all Central Region events, especially at Sandoval County events, in PY24.

- **Increased Partner Collaboration and Outreach:** We utilized Team Coordination meetings, both in person and online, to expand our social media content, with the goal of encouraging partners and diverse community programs such as Job Corps, Adult Education, Apprenticeship, and local community partners to request our marketing services. The Social Media Marketing Request process was streamlined for faster communication facilitation between partners which is tied to more content diversity on our social media channels as well as on our website.

8.2 CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIC ADJUSTMENTS

- **Increased Competition:** With social media becoming more saturated, we will emphasize partnering with local Chambers of Commerce and other community partners to introduce services to new participants and employers. We aim to drive new traffic to the Business Services Connector portal on our website and increase attendance at our events through partner outreach in PY24.
- **The Demand for Video Content and Email Marketing:** Recognizing that social media is only part of a more comprehensive digital strategy, our goal is to add email marketing with additional staff and partner support and increase production of educational and trending video content (which is demonstrated to outperform other forms of social media content).