



**Northern Rural Training and
Employment Consortium (NoRTEC)**

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**NoRTEC Regional Planning Unit
DRAFT LOCAL PLAN
MODIFICATION PY 2023-2024**

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Prepared for:

NoRTEC Workforce Development Board

February 2023



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Introduction

This Local Plan Modification is being submitted on behalf of the Northern Rural Training and Employment Consortium (NoRTEC) Workforce Development Board which serves the 11-county region of Butte, Del Norte, Lassen, Modoc, Nevada, Plumas, Sierra, Shasta, Siskiyou, Tehama, and Trinity Counties.

NoRTEC's mission is to develop strategic partnerships and solutions that meet the workforce needs of businesses and jobseekers, promoting the economic growth of the region. As part of that mission, one of NoRTEC's goals is to promote open communication among local and regional workforce partners to create a shared vision and regional strategy. Cultivating a network of partners and promoting aligned and collaborative efforts is critical for success, especially because of the large geographic area and diversity of the NoRTEC region.

The two-year local plan modification, as required under WIOA (29 US Code 3123), is organized in accordance with requirements outlined in the Employment Development Department's (EDD) Workforce Services Directive 22-05.

To fulfill the requirements of the directive, NoRTEC hosted multiple stakeholder discussion sessions as well as listening sessions. Invitees included organizations listed in the State's Directory of Planning Partners as well as additional local organizations across the eleven counties. In addition to personalized email outreach and invitations, session announcements were posted on the NoRTEC website and publicized through social media. Please see the appendix for a complete list of invitees, meeting dates and other documentation related to community engagement.

NoRTEC and its partners continue to promote collaborative efforts among our organizations and communities to ensure equality of opportunity, practices, systems, and policies. We look forward to continuing to innovate to meet the needs of businesses and jobseekers as well as promote the equitable economic growth of our region.



WIOA Local Plan

This Local Plan Modification is developed as a two-year update to the [2021-2024 NoRTEC Local Plan](#). It includes an update to how NoRTEC is operationalizing the roadmap set forth in the State Plan and Regional Plan as well as how individuals can access services through their local America's Job Center of California (AJCC) system. In addition, this Plan Modification describes how NoRTEC will coordinate with local partners to ensure person-centered delivery.

In September 2022, NoRTEC began gathering input and engagement from as many regional partners and stakeholders as possible through social media channels, calls, virtual meetings, and emails. NoRTEC conducts regular virtual meetings with partners across the region and took advantage of the opportunity to obtain input on the Local Plan update process. Some of these meetings included:

- Business and Industry Representatives
- Service Providers
- Industry Sector Partnerships and Members
- State Agencies
- Community Colleges and Universities
- County Offices of Education, K-12 Education, Career and Technical Education, and Adult Education
- Economic Development Agencies
- City and County Departments

WIOA Core and Required Partner Coordination

Service Coordination and Memorandums of Understanding

In April 2022, NoRTEC prepared and executed the [2022-2025 MOU](#) that includes an Infrastructure Financing Agreement (Exhibit A). The NoRTEC Partner MOU includes the following mission statement and goals to coordinate services and resources among AJCC partners: NoRTEC's mission is to bring together workforce development, educational, economic development and other employment services in a seamless customer-focused delivery network that enhances access to program services and improves long-term employment outcomes. The AJCC partners conduct regular check-ins and are committed to administering their independently funded programs as a set of integrated streamlined services to job seekers and employers, by:

- Helping businesses find skilled workers and access other support services, including education and training, for their current workforce;
- Providing an array of employment and business services and connecting customers to work-related training and education;
- Continuing to align investments in workforce, education, and economic development to regional in-demand jobs;
- Reinforcing partnerships and strategies to provide job seekers and workers with high quality career services, education and training, and supportive services needed to get good jobs and stay employed;
- Continuing to plan, coordinate, and provide services in an integrated manner to maximize the utilization of resources and ensure there will be no "wrong door" for customers seeking services from the system;



- Measuring customer satisfaction and continuously improving services based upon customer feedback; and
- Designing and continuously improving a system that reflects statewide/regional economic development strategies and is responsive to industry sectors in the region.

NoRTEC meets with new MOU signatories to provide background and explain work that is being done in the region. The meetings act as an onboarding process and further connect the partners to the workforce system through discussion of coordinated services and resources. Throughout the MOU period, NoRTEC sends out quarterly check-ins to gather information on activities and fulfillment of MOU responsibilities.

NoRTEC and its partners understand that strong partnerships are critical to offering the best services to customers. NoRTEC is working to strengthen and further establish existing working relationships with core and mandatory partners as required under WIOA law. The following programs are part of the AJCC system and are parties to the regional MOU:

NoRTEC, the WIOA Title I grant recipient and administrative entity, representing a Local Workforce Development Area comprised of a consortium of eleven counties: Butte, Del Norte, Lassen, Modoc, Nevada, Plumas, Shasta, Sierra, Siskiyou, Tehama, and Trinity. NoRTEC is a governmental entity, formed by a Joint Powers Agreement (JPA) between the afore-mentioned counties, and represented in the agreement by the Chair of the Governing Board (Chief Elected Official), and the Chair of the Workforce Development Board.

NoRTEC Memorandum of Understanding Partners	
WIOA Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth Programs	Alliance for Workforce Development SMART Business Resource Center Job Training Center of Tehama County
WIOA Title I Native American Programs (Section 166)	California Indian Manpower Consortium, Inc.
WIOA Title I Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker Programs (Section 167)	California Human Development Corporation
WIOA Title II Adult Education and Literacy Programs	Nevada Joint Union High School District Oroville Adult Education Center, Oroville Unified School District Sierra County Office of Education Tahoe/Truckee Unified School District
WIOA Title III Wagner-Peyser Programs	California Employment Development Department
WIOA Title IV Vocational Rehabilitation Programs	California Department of Rehabilitation
Title V Older Americans Act Programs	AARP Foundation, The Senior Community Service Employment Program
Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) Programs	California Employment Development Department
Veterans Programs	California Employment Development Department
Unemployment Insurance Program	California Employment Development Department
Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)/CalWORKs	Butte County Department of Employment & Social Services



	Lassen County Board of Supervisors (Health & Social Services Agency) Modoc County Board of Supervisors Nevada County Department of Social Services Plumas County Department of Social Services Sierra County Department of Social Services Del Norte County Department of Health & Human Services Shasta County Board of Supervisors Siskiyou County Board of Supervisors Tehama County Department of Social Services Trinity County Health and Human Services
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In addition to the partners providing the programs above, NoRTEC understands that there are many other community agencies and organizations in the 11-county area that provide valuable services related to workforce development or that support workforce customers. NoRTEC maintains close working relationships with other non-core partners to ensure a strong network of resources and referrals is available to all customers, providing the best access possible to employment, training, education, and supportive services. NoRTEC has regular meetings with many of these partners for the purposes of developing a comprehensive workforce system that enhances access to the program services with the goal of administering separately funded programs as a set of integrated streamlined services to customers.

To truly promote a comprehensive system approach, NoRTEC sees that each of these community organizations has a valuable role to play in the workforce system. NoRTEC maintains a Workforce Asset Service Directory to catalog the organizations that may be appropriate or beneficial for collaboration and alignment. Programs and organizations in the following categories were included:

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Adult Education | Literacy Programs |
| AJCCs | Other Business Services |
| Apprenticeship | Other Training |
| Career and Technical Education | Planning Intermediary |
| Career Pathways | SBDCs |
| Career Services | SCORE Chapters |
| College Entrepreneurship Programs | Sector Initiatives |
| College-based Business Services | Senior Services |
| Community Colleges | Service Providers |
| Disability Services | Veterans Services |
| Economic Development | WIOA Service Providers |
| Entrepreneurship | Work Experience Programs |
| Industry Associations | Work-Based Learning |
| Justice-Involved | Youth Services |

In addition to career and supportive services for job seekers, NoRTEC and its partners are continually working on ways to provide low cost, effective training platforms, such as customized training and OJTs, to meet the needs of employers and job seekers throughout the region. These training vehicles provide participants with an opportunity for hands-on, earn-while-you-learn training, and ensure employer buy-in to the training through the requirement of a 50% employer contribution to the cost of training.



These efforts help create a seamless AJCC delivery system by bringing together required partners in order to have a customer-focused service delivery network. An integrated system allows partners to improve services, maximize resources, avoid duplication, and enhance outcomes for all customers. The intended results are the development of meaningful MOUs and the integration of services and resources to the fullest extent possible. Additionally, NoRTEC and the AJCC MOU partners developed a consolidated system-wide budget for the network of comprehensive AJCCs.

Co-location

NoRTEC's 11 counties cover over 32,000 square miles and represent approximately 24% of the land area in California. There are AJCCs throughout the region as well as numerous partners. However due to the size and rural nature of the region, very few mandatory partners are physically co-located within the AJCC. The following are specific examples of co-location within in the region.

- Alliance for Workforce Development (AFWD) in Oroville is located with Butte County Department of Employment and Social Service
- SMART Business Resource Center is located with CalWORKS and the California Department in Del Norte County
- AFWD in Alturas is located with TEACH, a community-based organization that provides emergency services (housing, transportation, food bank), childcare resource information, and senior services)

Referrals and Co-enrollment

All of the region's AJCCs have relationships with the local offices of the mandatory partners and track referrals to and from these entities. In order to facilitate stronger coordination, efforts are made to refer individuals to partner organizations. The AJCCs regularly receive referrals from the partners as the AJCCs are often the only agency with funding to serve job seekers. When checking in with regional partners during the MOU regularly scheduled updates, NoRTEC asks about the current referral process and if there are any needed changes due to the recent natural disasters. Workforce partners responded the current referral process is working well with electronic and online referrals. NoRTEC also asks partners if they foresaw any needed changes to the referral process with the AJCCs considering more offices are open now. Due to the large geographical footprint of NoRTEC, most partners appreciate having the electronic and virtual options of communicating, even when in-person meetings are possible.

Referrals are tracked and co-enrollment occurs when it makes sense based on the participant's needs. All service provider programs have WIOA applicants sign information sharing documents that allow staff to share information with other agencies as necessary and applicable. In order to facilitate co-enrollment and improve access to activities, NoRTEC and partners will continue to develop work processes with one point of contact for each partner to streamline customer service, referrals, and response so that everyone will know their "next steps" along their career paths, regardless of their program of entry to the system. One of the helpful improvements in the referral process is that NoRTEC constantly updates contact information on the MOU referral matrix.

Common Case Management

Within all of NoRTEC's AJCCs, case management is participant-centered and goal-oriented to assist WIOA-registered adult and dislocated workers with services that lead to self-sufficient employment, as well as follow up services after program exit. All WIOA adult and dislocated workers enrolled in career services and training services have met the eligibility requirements for such services and meet the requirements for the priority system. Case management activities support the customer's need based on



individual circumstances. Case management begins with career services for registered adult and dislocated workers. Case notes in individual participant files document case management activities.

Case management consists of monitoring the progress towards goal attainment as outlined in the Individual Employment Plan (IEP) and noting any barriers and potential barrier resolution. Case managers meet with participants on a regular basis to discuss their progress toward established goals and identification of additional needs and services. Case management activities for registered participants in WIOA career services and training services may require more staff involvement based on planned program activities and the close monitoring of services. AJCC partner agencies may participate in joint case management activities to facilitate participant success.

All case management and/or service coordination contact with participants is documented in the NoRTEC MIS system (CalJOBS) and in case notes that will be included in the participant files. NoRTEC's Service Provider case managers enter eligible client information into the CalJOBS system. CalJOBS can track multiple grant programs including WIOA Title 1, Wagner Peyser, TAA, and other programs or activities to indicate if they are co-enrolled.

Client-centered and strengths-based case management services include:

- Comprehensive assessments of skill levels, employment history, strengths, weaknesses, earning potential, employment goals, geographical area in which the client is willing and able to work, disabilities as it relates to employment, need for training, supportive services, barriers to employment and services needed. Assessment tools include, but are not limited to, DiSC (behavior assessment), Strengths Finder, On-Net, Holland's Theory of Career Choice, My Next Move, Myers Briggs, Elevations (skills, personality, and values), and Prove-It.
- Preparation of a competency-based IEP agreed upon by the client and career advisor to include employment goals, service plan, strategies to overcome identified barriers and action items with deadlines for both the client and career advisor. Ideally, assessment and IEP development are completed within the first month of service.

Upon completion of services, NoRTEC service provider staff conducts an exit interview with the participant to develop an action plan for follow up services for the 12 months after WIOA program exit. Follow-up services, including interpersonal communication skills, work site safety, and financial planning skills are also provided. Other planned follow-up services consist of additional career planning and counseling; contact with the participant's employer (if needed), including assistance with work-related problems that may arise; peer support groups; information about additional educational opportunities, and information about supportive services available. The goal of follow-up services is to ensure job retention, wage gains, and career progress for participants who have been referred to unsubsidized employment. Follow-up services are documented in the participant's case notes and in the NoRTEC MIS system (CalJOBS).

Remote and Rural Access

Technology

As noted, NoRTEC is a vast region with 11 counties covering over 32,000 square miles, approximately 24% of the land area in California. The region includes many remote and rural areas and NoRTEC is utilizing technology to coordinate activities across partners and reach remote areas including the employers and job seekers.

NoRTEC and its partners continue to invest in the use of technology to facilitate access to services in its remote areas. The pandemic and recent natural disasters accelerated efforts to increase access to



services through technology. NoRTEC and partners conduct business surveys and share the resulting information with all partners. Additionally, the partners make referrals to each other, attend regional meetings on State and Federal opportunities. The region also set up a SLACK page for the Business Services Group and Partners. The SLACK page allows individuals to share information, ask questions, and better coordinate activities. The page has increased communication sharing across the region as they share resources and develop common messaging and outreach materials.

It is important to note that technology access and connectivity is a barrier across the region. Broadband access and connectivity are significant issues in the region and NoRTEC actively participates in efforts to address these barriers, such as through the Broadband Consortia. Additionally, access to technology devices necessary for virtual services, and in some cases education and training, is a barrier for some individuals in the region.

Virtual Services

The services in the region are provided by the: Job Training Center in Tehama County; SMART Business Resource Center in Del Norte, Shasta, Siskiyou, and Trinity Counties; and Alliance for Workforce Development in Butte, Lassen, Modoc, Nevada, Plumas, and Sierra Counties. Even though the AJCC offices are now open, staff have continued to meet and increase communications with clients over email and phone, as well as through virtual appointments via Zoom and Facebook. The partners increased the virtual services and updated websites with online services including chat features. The AJCCs also moved workshops online utilizing Zoom, which allows presenters to still connect with job seekers in a personal way as attendees can ask questions and receive immediate feedback. Examples of the virtual workshops include: Secrets to a Successful Interview; DIY: Resume Workshop; Prepare for a Virtual Job Fair and Job Search Like a Pro.

Premier Virtual® Platform

In order to serve businesses and meet their number one need of recruitment assistance, NoRTEC invested in Virtual Premier® Platform to be utilized for virtual job fairs. The platform allows NoRTEC and its partners to reach businesses and pull together regional Business Services Representatives. Through the platform, virtual job fairs are occurring throughout the region. The easy-to-use platform allows job seekers to explore careers throughout the region and meet numerous employers without having to travel, which is especially important for job seekers with transportation barriers and in rural areas of the region. Job seekers are able to upload their resume so participating employers can view the resume and chat with candidates directly and even conduct on-the-spot virtual interviews. Employers also benefit by not having to travel to an in-person fair or staff a booth. They are able to post openings, log in to the fair, and meet with candidates. AJCC staff prepare job seekers for the virtual events through resume development and virtual job fair resume workshops.

Staff, partners, job seekers, and employers have reported several benefits of the virtual hiring system including:

- Ease of use;
- Ability to scale an event to any size;
- Unlimited access to the event;
- Alleviation of transportation barriers; and
- Robust reporting and tools to increase efficiency and effectiveness;
- Ability to host hybrid-events.

NoRTEC and its partners have experienced the benefits and successes of enhanced websites, live chat features, and increased virtual appointments, services, workshops, and job fairs. With the observed



benefits, NoRTEC and its partners will continue to embrace and support the use of technology to facilitate access to AJCC services for job seekers and employers across the region.

Industry Sector Partnerships

NoRTEC continues to support Next Generation Industry Sector Partnerships (Next Gen IPs), a sector strategy to coordinate and align workforce, education, economic development, and other public and community partners to support an industry. A Next Gen IP is a partnership of businesses from the same industry and in a shared labor market region who work with economic development, education, workforce development, and community organizations to address the overall competitiveness needs of the targeted industry. By addressing these business-driven priorities, Next Gen IPs not only support the overall competitiveness of an industry and regional economy and promote cross-sector collaboration, but they also benefit workers, students, and the broader community by connecting people to career pathways. In turn, NoRTEC supports this model for these benefits along with the training and credential attainment, increased wages, talent recruitment, and increased career and industry awareness supported by Next Gen IPs. NoRTEC promotes Next Gen IPs as the model for business engagement across regional partnerships.

The Next Gen IPs are another way that NoRTEC and its partners are reaching the more remote and rural areas of the region. As a result of COVID-19 recovery and the recent natural disasters, partnership meetings have had to occur virtually, and this has resulted in increased outreach and participation in remote areas. Most industry leaders in rural areas have indicated they prefer the hybrid option of in-person and virtual meetings. There are currently six Industry Sector Partnerships in the NoRTEC region and additional information can be found in the WIOA Regional Plan and at [NoRTEC's Next Generation Industry Sector Partnerships](#) page. Two of the partnerships focuses on rural healthcare.

Rural Healthcare Collaborative: There are two partnership efforts supporting the healthcare sector needs in the rural communities. Service providers AFWD and SMART are working together to support these partnerships. AFWD is expanding their partnership which has been in operation since 2016, and SMART is just starting a partnership. AFWD is aligning the Modoc partnership with the SMART and the HWY 299 Healthcare Collaborative. This partnership will promote and increase employer engagement throughout NoRTEC's most rural counties. Working together, the partners continue to provide needed support to the HWY 299 Healthcare Collaborative which primarily serves as a recruitment tool for partner facilities. The collaboratives serve Modoc, Lassen, Plumas, Shasta, and Siskiyou Counties.

Healthcare organizations serve rural communities with limited resources and funding, and struggle with recruiting, training and retaining talent. The collaboratives formed to support the unique needs of rural healthcare. A more robust collaborative will leverage resources and workforce supports across the region. This will promote and increase employer engagement throughout NoRTEC's most rural counties. These projects work to align education, workforce, and industry to provide real-time industry needs to ensure there is an adequate labor pool to meet current and future demands. Efforts focus on reducing employer recruitment and turnover costs, increase employee retention, increase job placements, and provide career pathway opportunities for currently employed workers.

The recent natural disasters post-COVID 19 continue to challenge healthcare professionals work in new ways. This collaborative helps with information sharing and resources to support healthcare professionals in the rural counties to effectively support community members. Even prior to the COVID-19 effects on the economy, the rural areas were experiencing difficulty both attracting and retaining high quality employees. Rural hospitals and clinics were already stretched thin from



a staffing standpoint. Now these facilities are under tremendous financial strain. With the challenges presented by natural disasters and recovery efforts of the COVID-19 pandemic, workforce development services will be vital to the sustainability of rural healthcare facilities.

The collaborative set out to use real-time, employer-validated data to identify specific needs. The partnership regularly identifies and shares critical and hard to fill positions highlighting job titles, companies reporting the position, skills needed for the position, ideal candidate qualifications, and number of open positions.

NoRTEC was also involved in the development of the [Next Gen Sector Partnership Rural Field Guide](#). The document was developed to be a companion to the Next Gen Sector Partnership Training Manual that offers insights and practical strategies to be utilized in rural regions implementing Next Gen Sector Partnerships.

The guide addresses the unique challenges rural communities face in building sector partnerships and sustaining them over time and emphasizes the importance of investing in relationships, and the need to work across silos to maximize scarce resources. The guide was developed in the spring of 2020 which was a uniquely opportune time to reflect on the importance of place, relationships, and using scarce resources wisely.

As the COVID-19 pandemic hit and the region was suffering from various natural disasters, NoRTEC utilized rural Partnerships in order to rapidly pivot, reassess priorities, and refocus industry partnership work. The pandemic and ongoing disasters both underscored the importance of working collaboratively across public and private sectors while simultaneously making it much more challenging to do so.

Service Delivery

Supportive Services

Supportive services are critical for many of NoRTEC's customers to ensure that they can overcome obstacles to completing training or staying in a job. Staff at the AJCCs are well-trained on the services that are available through the AJCC or other means in the county and surrounding areas to offer to those who are in need. Supportive services provided by NoRTEC and its Services Providers to individuals with barriers to employment may include, but are not limited to, linkages to community services, assistance with transportation, childcare, dependent care, housing, educational testing, reasonable accommodations for individuals with disabilities, legal aid services, referrals to healthcare, work attire, and work-related tools. Additional supportive services available include assistance with books, fees, school supplies, and other necessary items for students enrolled in postsecondary education classes as well as payments and fees for employment and training-related applications, tests, and certifications. NoRTEC and its Service Providers' networks of relationships with other community partners are especially important for referring individuals to support services when they are not available through the AJCC. NoRTEC will continue to build upon current relationships to create an even stronger network of partners, targeting areas of the region and service types where gaps are found to exist.

NoRTEC's Supportive Service Policy allows for the provision of supportive services at the discretion of the service provider. For WIOA-only customers, NoRTEC fosters the coordination and leveraging of other personal and/or community resources to fill these needs so that NoRTEC training investments can be used to their highest capacity. Training and best practice sharing for frontline staff is routinely provided to ensure effective coordination of resources.

Additionally, NoRTEC developed a regional Asset Inventory that identifies partners in the region who provide services related to, or supportive of, workforce development activities. The inventory is not



exhaustive and does not include all supportive services throughout the region, but it can be used as a starting point to identify partners who may be able to provide WIOA customers with additional resources and support. The inventory is available on line and can be filtered by county and category. The inventory is continuously updated as additional resources are identified to ensure that frontline staff in the region have a good understanding of the resources that are available, and customers have access to the most comprehensive list of opportunities possible.

Physical and Programmatic Accessibility

In the delivery of its programs, NoRTEC's Equal Opportunity and Nondiscrimination Policy states no one shall be excluded from participation, denied benefits, subjected to discrimination, or denied gainful employment because of race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy, childbirth, and related medical conditions, transgender status, and gender identity), national origin (including limited English proficiency), age, disability, or political affiliation or belief, or against beneficiaries on the basis of either citizenship status or participation in any WIOA Title I-financially assisted program or activity. NoRTEC and all Service Providers provide services to the broadest populations possible utilizing the universal access approach outlined in WIOA.

NoRTEC and subrecipient offices and AJCC sites are designed to accommodate the needs of physically and mentally disabled individuals, as appropriate:

- AJCCs providing intake, assessment, and referral shall be accessible.
- WIOA participants and staff may request medically necessary accommodations by putting their request in writing and submitting it to their point of contact in the NoRTEC AJCC system. All requests shall be reviewed and responded to by the EO Officer and/or Executive Staff of NoRTEC or its subrecipients, as appropriate.
- Programs and activities shall be conducted in the most integrated setting appropriate for qualified disabled individuals.
- Programs and services, when viewed in their entirety, shall be accessible.

AJCC Certification

In 2021, the NoRTEC AJCCs completed Baseline Certification to ensure that every AJCC is in compliance with key WIOA statutory and regulatory requirements. In addition, all Job Centers developed Continual Improvement Plans. The Baseline Certification and Continual Improvement Plans for all NoRTEC AJCCs are reviewed annually.

WIOA regulations outline three key requirements for AJCC certification: 1) effectiveness of the AJCC, 2) physical and programmatic accessibility for individuals with disabilities, and 3) continuous improvement. As noted, the certification includes requirements around physical and programmatic accessibility for individuals with disabilities as well as a focus on continuous improvement. Of the certifications, some of the items highlighted in the region included:

- Locations convenient for customers with adequate parking and accessible by public transportation.
- Staff honor and accommodate diversity and are comfortable and adept in working with all types of individuals, including those with disabilities, cultural differences, and all individuals with barriers to employment.
- The AJCC uses the principles of universal and customer-centered design to ensure inclusive space and materials are available to individuals regardless of their range of abilities, mobility, age, language, learning style, intelligence, or educational level.



- The AJCC ensures that individuals with disabilities are able to access virtual services in a manner that is comparable to the access available to others.
- Staff work with local organizations that serve individuals with disabilities to continually assess how to improve the accessibility and layout of the AJCC to ensure it meets the needs of the customers it serves.
- Staff are trained on how to best assist those with disabilities and share best practices with each other, including how to use assistive technology and accessibility features on the computers in resource rooms for improving access for people with disabilities.

Equal Opportunity Officer

NoRTEC has a designated Equal Opportunity (EO) Officer that is responsible for addressing equal opportunity issues that arise as a result of questions that people may have in regard to the proper implementation of Section 188 and applicable provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act. The EO Officer provides EO training to Service Providers and staff throughout the region. The EO training consists of a review of the laws and provisions as well as opportunities for staff to view and evaluate scenarios where EO violations may be occurring.

The EO Officer also completes a review of EO compliance by WIOA Service Providers in the course of monitoring reviews each year. The Compliance Monitoring Checklist issued by NoRTEC must be completed annually. Providers must have proper EO signage in place, and their facilities must be accessible to individuals with disabilities following ADA guidelines. They must also demonstrate how they are able to provide services to people with disabilities or those who need translation or interpretation assistance. The NoRTEC EO Officer also reviews the availability of assistive technology at all AJCC sites.

NoRTEC will continue to work to:

- Expand awareness to assist individuals with disabilities and other barriers to employment via:
 - a. Communication and confidentiality,
 - b. Disclosure and permissions,
 - c. Accommodation requests, equipment, tools, auxiliary aids, and
 - d. Inclusive/integrated service delivery that encourages full access and participation in WIOA and One-Stop activities.
- Review partner activities and policies related to access and provision of services by individuals with barriers to employment to establish best practices and cross agency standards.

State Strategic Partner Coordination

County Health and Human Services Agencies and CalFresh Employment and Training Services

NoRTEC, CalFresh partners, and the local AJCC work together to provide clients with workforce services. Through this partnership, referral systems have been set up for a better customer experience for individuals who access CalFresh Employment and Training services. NoRTEC and its partners are aware of numerous barriers faced by the individuals, so efforts are being made to coordinate activities. On-going coordination meetings ensure partner agencies share who is doing what and coordinate activities that address barriers and service needs.

Partners agreed that substance abuse and mental health issues are among the biggest barriers facing their clients. Transportation is also a significant barrier to employment because the area is



geographically large and spread out. Throughout the region, is difficult for people to find full time jobs in their area while also taking care of children. Housing availability and affordability were also identified as issues by partners. Furthermore, rural counties lack sufficient resources to serve their client population; staff are few and are required to perform many different roles, which makes it difficult to provide clients with the support that they need.

CalFresh partners have expressed a desire for more subsidized employment opportunities for their clients, as well as more on-the-job training opportunities. Human Service Agencies (HSAs) in the region refer clients to the AJCCs for job search assistance, training, and supportive services. In addition to the AJCCs, CalFresh entities partner with colleges, Probation Departments (for employment and training services at their day reporting center), and the Child Abuse Prevention Council. For the subset of CalFresh recipients who also receive General Assistance/Relief, county HSAs also have dedicated staff to work with those individuals on their employment goals.

Local Child Support Agencies

Required partners including core WIOA partners and the Local Child Support Agencies (LCSA) for NoRTEC's eleven counties continue to meet regularly and work together to serve non-custodial parents. During the meetings, some of the items that are discussed include LCSA demographic data, partnership/relationship, barriers, and services. In some counties, the AJCC service provider shares a video about their available services at child support court.

Many LCSAs work closely with the AJCC staff in their areas or are in the process of establishing that relationship. For example, in Tehama County, child support clients are required to attend workshops at the AJCC in Red Bluff, and the instructor signs to verify their attendance. Some child support case managers have received or will receive training on AJCC resources and programs, and some LCSAs are working with their AJCCs to ensure that a good referral process is in place for clients who need workforce services.

Two of the major barriers to employment for child support clients, as identified by partners, are criminal records and a lack of transportation. The LCSAs do not have the resources to provide motivational tools or supportive services directly, but the degree to which child support clients are referred to other community services or resources for support varies from LCSA to LCSA. Efforts are being made to increase consistency across referrals and to share information about available resources through tools such as NoRTEC's Workforce Asset Service Directory.

Child support clients who utilize the AJCCs are able to access the full range of AJCC services, including career counseling, job search assistance, training, supportive services, and referrals to other community services.

There are partnership agreements in place describing on-going and future collaboration. Furthermore, in order to enhance future communication and information sharing, NoRTEC added the LCSAs to their newsletter distribution list and has made efforts to increase communications. During one of the most recent check-ins, suggestions were made for stronger connections with Del Norte County, which were addressed. All comments are included in the public engagement documentation, attached.

English Language Learners, Foreign Born, and/or Refugees

NoRTEC and its partners continue to coordinate with community-based organizations and local partners who serve individuals who are English Language Learners (ELL), foreign born, and/or refugees. Given the rural nature of NoRTEC's area as well as the small number of English Language Learners, available services are somewhat limited. However, NoRTEC and its providers are serving these populations. There



is a significant number of bilingual (Spanish/English) staff that are available at the AJCCs at all times and written documents are available in Spanish. NoRTEC and its service providers continue to actively engage in county-level outreach and coordinate with local organizations.

For example, Job Training Center (JTC) staff attended the annual Health & Wellness Care Hop hosted by Latino Outreach of Tehama County and Anthem Blue Cross. Staff provided information on jobs, training, and the 2020 Census. The JTC also received Workforce Accelerator funding to create Spanish video and outreach materials to engage the Latinx population about employment and career opportunities. The content utilizes prominent local Latinx professionals as a way of reaching more broadly to English Language Learners. Another example is Alliance for Workforce Development's (AFWD) work with the North State Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, which is one of the first Chambers of Commerce in the area to support underserved individuals. The group endeavors to bring minority business owners together to promote equity and knowledge wealth. AFWD translated both business and client services flyers to be distributed in an attempt to expand support in the community to Spanish-speaking employers and job seekers in the region. AFWD has several staff members who are bilingual in English and Spanish and also offers translation and interpretation services in additional languages through a professional agency.

As part of NoRTEC Equity and Access Working Group, line staff have been provided with opportunities to speak with and learn from guest speakers representing different partner agencies and community groups within the region. Presentations have included the Spanish speaking and Hmong populations. Discussion topics included how to serve individuals in a culturally appropriate manner, outreach strategies, particular challenges within a community, and ways to better work together to ensure that all customers are able to take advantage of available services. AJCCs have evolved to increase the number of bilingual staff, add bilingual training cohorts, have more targeted client outreach, and attend multicultural community events. In Fall 2022, line staff also took part in a cross training with staff from California Human Development, to ensure smooth cross referral and coordination of services.

The primary provider of services to Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers (MSFW) in the area is California Human Development (CHD). CHD offers employment and training services plus emergency assistance to low-income MSFWs, dependents of MSFWs and other individuals with barriers to employment, including victims of disaster within NoRTEC's counties. CHD creates paths and opportunities for people in need to rise above barriers in their pursuit of better lives, including assisting MSFWs who seek self-sufficiency, independence and dignity through education, training, citizenship, housing, and other services. Employment and training services include vocational training, on-the-job training, pre-apprenticeship, work experience, financial literacy, temporary employment and emergency assistance. Working together with County Social Services, WIOA, EDD, DOR and other onsite partners, CHD provides outreach, intake, recruitment, orientation and job readiness to employment services available at or through the AJCCs in each county.

As noted, some services for ELL, refugees, and foreign born are limited due to the vast geographic size of the region resulting in additional challenges and barriers. According to partners, some classes for ELL students are available via adult education and community colleges, but there are a limited number of certified ESL instructors in the area. Adult education schools struggle with providing classes in ways that are supportive of ELL individuals as well as all students with jobs and families. In Siskiyou County, once the adult education school started providing childcare, enrollment increased. In Modoc County, the Adult Education program works closely with the AJCC and serves mutual clients in ESL and citizenship test preparation. Another challenge is that given the vast geographical spread of some of the counties, transportation is a major challenge for students to be able to access services which can be even more challenging for ELL students.



Partner organizations are making sure to connect all students, including ELL students, with career pathways and living wage jobs by referring them to the AJCCs which are located in every county. California Human Development (CHD) is focusing its efforts on connecting students with apprenticeships because of the higher wages and benefits. Currently they are mainly helping students access the laborers apprenticeship, since it does not require a high school diploma.

With regards to gaps in services and outreach efforts, some partners report that it is currently difficult to gauge the true demand because of the political climate at the federal level. Potential ELL, foreign-born, or refugee students are reluctant to seek services or to connect with organizations which may inquire about personal information. Partners report from past experience that flyers or other written outreach materials are not as effective with these students; word-of-mouth appears to be one of the primary ways that ELL individuals find out about services.

Competitive Integrated Employment Blueprint

The NoRTEC region falls under two Department of Rehabilitation (DOR) districts: The Redwood Empire District and the Northern Sierra District. A Local Partnership Agreement (LPA) is in place between DOR and NoRTEC. The Northern Sierra District Administrator is currently serving as the point of contact for NoRTEC with regards to DOR. NoRTEC meets with the Competitive Integrated Employment Blueprint partners on an ongoing basis. Efforts are continually made to coordinate activities to better serve individuals with developmental and intellectual disabilities.

Discussions take place during regular meetings on the status of local planning efforts and ways that NoRTEC and its AJCCs may be helpful in serving individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (ID/DD). Efforts are continually made to strengthen the referral process between AJCCs and regional centers and DOR and education partners, to ensure that consumers are provided excellent customer service and served in a timely manner. The partners work together to refine the referral process to maximize the number of consumers with ID/DD who are able to utilize the AJCCs. While education partners most often encounter the majority of these consumers and could potentially connect other partner services via the IEP process, parents need to agree to allow any other organizations to be part of the process.

NoRTEC provides support to the Competitive Integrated Employment effort through outreach to employers. As materials are developed to educate employers about the benefits of employing individuals with disabilities, business services staff are able to help reach employers and provide them with information and referrals, including to DOR student services such as paid work experience and job coaches.

DOR provides Windmills training to enhance awareness around disabilities and their impact. DOR also intends to make training available on all the core partners' services including the IEP process. NoRTEC and individual AJCC's will coordinate with DOR for needed staff development. DOR will continue to conduct "WIOA Training Topics" trainings "ADA Basics" and "Serving Customers with Disabilities," which staff will attend as appropriate.

WIOA Title I Coordination

Digital Fluency and Distance Learning

NoRTEC and its service providers continue to invest in training and professional development. Recent activities have focused on ensuring staff gain and expand proficiency in digital fluency and distance learning which has become even more important due to the pandemic and recent natural disasters.



NoRTEC will continue to invest in training and professional development opportunities for frontline staff similar to the examples provided in the 2022-2024 Local Plan.

NoRTEC also subscribes to Premier Virtual®, a system designed for virtual job fairs. Prior to launching the system, NoRTEC hosted trial events for representatives from all 11 counties. The system is designed to be easy to navigate for both employers and job seekers; however, the demo event allowed staff to become familiar with the system and identify areas where job seekers and employers may need coaching ahead of actual events. The platform will allow staff to deliver virtual job fairs and connect local employers with job seekers.

Seeing the value and benefit of the training as well as the movement to more virtual services, NoRTEC will continue to invest in training and professional development for staff to expand proficiency in digital fluency and distance learning.

Cultural Competencies and Trauma-Exposed Populations

NoRTEC and its service providers continue to invest in staff completing training and professional development to ensure cultural competencies and an understanding of trauma-exposed populations. The COVID-19 pandemic and recent catastrophic fires, droughts and floods have had a significant impact on the region including staff. Residents throughout the region have experienced various natural disaster-related traumas. In addition to the trauma resulting from the disasters and pandemic, job seekers across the region have been exposed to a variety of other personal traumas such as job loss, homelessness, or abuse. In addition to trauma, job seekers experience inequities in employment, wages, etc., therefore NoRTEC has committed to supporting staff in training and professional development opportunities.

Training is frequently provided on topics that increase staff's effectiveness in serving key customers, including job seekers and businesses. Training of this type is especially important for frontline team members who work directly with customers.

Topics dealing with cultural competency and trauma-exposed populations that would likely be beneficial to frontline staff may include:

- Equity, Diversity and Inclusion
- Cultural Bias
- Understanding Trauma
- Homelessness
- Recognizing Post-Traumatic Stress and Depression
- Justice Informed Employment Retention
- Gender and Sexual Identity and Serving the LGBTQ Community (in planning process)
- Building Resiliency in Communities
- Mental Health Awareness
- Sexual Harassment
- Domestic Violence

Staff participate in yearly training on the Equal Opportunity Law, nondiscrimination and equal opportunity policy. Annual training includes disability awareness and etiquette, effective communication strategies, access to technology, access to employment, racial equity and dealing with individuals who are English language learners. These training sessions are vital for staff to effectively work with customers and connect them with the best services available.



Examples of recent staff training include:

- Butte College [Resiliency Zone Training](#)
- Justice Involved Populations [Ascend Training](#)
- DWI-Core Competency Training
- Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Training with CSU, Chico Office of Diversity
- FEMA Access and Functional Needs and Appeals Training
- California Center of Excellence for Trauma Informed Care – Hospitality House/GV Trauma and Homelessness Training
- Kirwan Institute – Ohio State University Implicit Bias Training
- California Mandated Reporter Training
- Department of Rehabilitation Best Practices for Serving Those w/Disabilities
- 4 Foundations to Help Trauma-Impacted Youth Not Just Survive, but Thrive!- Center for Adolescent Studies, Inc
- De-escalation and complaint/grievance handling
- Motivational interviewing training
- Juneteenth training and celebration
- Leading and Managing with Effective Communication training

NoRTEC sponsored many staff in the region to attend the 2022 CWA Meeting of the Minds Conference where diversity and equity were major topics at the conference. Sessions such as Meeting Your Diversity, Inclusion, Equity, and Access Hiring Needs, Human Centered Design and Courageous Practice - Equitable MC3 Training were attended by staff.

In addition to trainings, NoRTEC and its partners actively engage and align with regional efforts around access, equity, and inclusion. NoRTEC established an Equity and Access Working Group which has been meeting for over a year. In addition to working with various partners across the region, the group is focused on strategies to increase educational attainment and reduce equity gaps. The group has heard from guest speakers about the needs specific to various target populations, including the Hmong, Native American, Latino, and LGBTQIA+ communities.

NoRTEC will continue to invest in training and professional development for frontline staff to ensure cultural competencies and an understanding of trauma-exposed populations. The trainings will assist the region in continuing the conversation and focusing on improvements to service delivery for all populations.

Rapid Response and Layoff Aversion Activities

NoRTEC coordinates with statewide activities to provide early support and connection to employment and training services for participants who are affected by layoff events. NoRTEC and its service providers have a strong connection with county and regional economic development and maintain regular communication to support employers at risk for layoffs. Collaboration between workforce development, economic development, and statewide activities are available to assist companies and dislocated workers with the goal of assisting workers in returning to work as quickly as possible. A response can be coordinated quickly and tailored to the needs dictated by the situation.

While the region's focus for dislocated worker programs is minimizing periods of unemployment and rapid transition to new employment, it is also understood that businesses may experience a variety of stressors in day-to-day operations resulting in the consideration of layoffs or even business closure. Effective Layoff Aversion and Rapid Response requires Business Service Representatives (BSRs) to build relationships with the local business community, pay attention to early warning signs of economic stress



to businesses, and proactively reach out to those businesses to discuss issues and potential solutions. BSRs have various tools at their disposal to assist with proactive layoff aversion strategies such as tracking business financial health through Econovue and Dun & Bradstreet information, assistance obtaining loans, employee training, and other assistance to keep businesses competitive. Layoff aversion efforts are intended to provide consultation service, training options, feedback, and information to businesses that would potentially allow the business to avoid layoffs or closure.

Consultations may occur as an onsite, in-person meeting or other form of communication (e.g., conference call, online chat, Skype, etc.). Engagement includes a representative of the employer involved with decision making authority within the company. The content of the discussion includes the well-being of the business, training needs, labor market information, economic development corporation referrals, and other relevant information to determine how to best serve the business and its needs. There are several identifiers to consider while working through the assessment process with the business: health of the local economy and the business cycle; business's marketing and outreach activities; debt to income ratio; cash flow; business plan; and training of current employees.

When a business discusses its challenges with a Business Services Representative, the business is referred to appropriate consultation, training, financial, or other resources. If the services or referrals provided by Service Providers result in jobs saved, the BSR must obtain certification from the business relating to the layoff aversion activity and number of jobs saved and submit it to the Rapid Response Coordinator. A layoff is averted when: 1) a worker's job is saved with an existing employer that is at risk of downsizing or closing, or 2) a worker at risk of dislocation transitions to a different job with the same employer or a new job with a different employer and experiences short-term or no unemployment. To be considered as a job saved, the maximum period of unemployment shall not exceed one week.

Rapid Response Teams

When businesses must close their doors, NoRTEC's Rapid Response teams help employers plan effectively, comply with federal regulations, reduce stress, bolster employee morale, and help guide dislocated workers through practical re-employment. Led by a Community Coordinator at each AJCC, the teams are pro-active and business-focused, and they respond to a closure notice by the end of the business day. The Rapid Response Teams are comprised of representatives from workforce development, unemployment insurance services, community-based organizations, AJCC partners, community colleges, and any other service or agency that is focused on providing services to the displaced workers.

The Rapid Response teams take pre-emptive action to manage layoffs more effectively by quickly providing information to companies and workers about comprehensive outplacement services and unemployment insurance. These teams work with businesses to swiftly maximize public and private resources and minimize the disruptions on companies, affected workers, as well as communities affected with job loss. These services are available without any cost to the business or workers.

Team members also move easily from county to county to provide services related to lay-offs, plant closings, and other Rapid Response activities. Service provider staff provide on-site orientations and eligibility services to immediately begin working with the displaced workers. This approach helps minimize the frustration associated with job loss for the displaced workers.

NoRTEC service providers will continue to offer services and provide access through partnerships to adult education, job training, postsecondary education, registered apprenticeship, career advancement activities, and supportive services. All of these are aligned with economic and community development strategies to meet the skill needs of existing and emerging regional employers and high-growth occupations as well as the needs of under-skilled adults.



Adult and Dislocated Worker Activities

Each of NoRTEC's 11 counties has at least one physical AJCC offering adult and dislocated worker employment and training activities. Within the NoRTEC WDA, there are [12 AJCC facilities](#). The WIOA Adult and Dislocated Worker formula programs are critical pieces of the AJCC delivery system providing workforce development resources and activities in the region. The AJCC delivery system's intent is to be employer-driven, and to provide value-added, "just in time" career and training services for jobseekers and current workers. WIOA services can be provided in any order and allow the AJCC service delivery approach to be customized and customer-centric.

All participants have access to a series of opportunities including education on relevant employment trends, job referral, job placement, and other services prior to receiving WIOA training services. Career services through the AJCCs include a menu of job seeker services for customers to access that are either self-directed or staff-assisted and a variety of training opportunities for those who will benefit. The goal is to make education, job training, and employment services universally available and easily accessible to residents in each service area.

Individuals receiving more intensive career services are required to be enrolled in the adult and dislocated worker programs. Registration is not required when the career service is self-service or informational in nature. Also, individuals who are unable to obtain or retain employment through receiving career services and have been determined to be in need of additional training in order to obtain employment will be transitioned to training services. The same is true for employed individuals, except that these individuals must be earning less than a self-sufficient wage.

Programs incorporate comprehensive and specialized assessments of the skill levels and service needs of adults and dislocated workers. Staff utilize testing, assessment tools, and in-depth interviewing and evaluation to identify employment barriers and appropriate employment goals. Career services include an initial assessment that leads to the development of the Individual Employment Plan (IEP). The evaluation of the need of training services builds upon the IEP and includes occupational standards needed for employment goals in the format of competency-based job specific skills. Assessment is considered to be an on-going process throughout case management activities. Adult and dislocated worker program participation and goal attainment is evaluated based upon the IEP.

Staff may also collaborate with other partners to assemble and review other assessments that are available, such as customer's interest, aptitude, and basic skills levels to ensure an appropriate determination is made regarding the service and/or training needs of customers. An appropriate determination of any supportive service needs and identified training needs of the customer will be assessed to ensure that a career plan has been designed to meet all needs of the customer.

Case management is participant-centered and goal-oriented to assist WIOA registered adult and dislocated workers with services that lead to self-sufficient employment, as well as follow up services after program exit. NoRTEC AJCC staff provide face-to-face contact with participants on a regular basis to discuss their progress toward established goals and identification of additional needs and services. All case management and/or service coordination contact with participants is documented in the NoRTEC MIS system (CalJOBS) and in case notes that will be included in the participant files. AJCC partner agencies may participate in joint case management activities to facilitate participant success.

Priority of Service

Individuals enrolled in the WIOA Adult and Dislocated Worker programs must meet eligibility criteria outlined in NoRTEC's Policy Statement for WIOA Adult and Dislocated Worker Programs. The policy describes the region's priority of services for (A) Veterans and Eligible Spouses, and (B) Public Assistance



Recipients, Low Income, and Basic Skills Deficient Adults. All WIOA programs (Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth) are required to provide priority of service to veterans and eligible spouses of veterans. The Adult program is additionally required to provide priority of service to: public assistance recipients, other low-income individuals, and individuals that are basic skills deficient. NoRTEC applies priority of service in the following order (for the Adult program):

1. Veterans and eligible spouses (also known as “covered persons”) who meet the mandatory priorities (public assistance recipient, other low-income individuals, and individuals who are basic skills deficient) must receive the highest level of priority for WIOA programs and services.
2. Non-covered persons who are part the Adult program’s priority of service groups (public assistance recipients, other low-income individuals, and individuals who are basic skills deficient) receive the second level of priority for WIOA programs and services.
3. Veterans and eligible spouses (“covered persons”) who are not public assistance recipients, low income, or basic skills deficient, receive the third level of priority for WIOA programs and services.
4. Non-covered persons who are not part of the Adult program’s priority of service groups (public assistance recipients, other low-income individuals, and individuals who are basic skills deficient) receive the fourth level of priority for WIOA programs and services.

Career Services

Basic Career Services are considered “universal services” and do not require eligibility determination or enrollment into the WIOA program. These career services are delivered by AJCC staff either through workshops or one-on-one engagement. Some of the services can also be accessed on the CalJOBS website. The services carry no additional costs that must be paid to outside vendors on behalf of the participants. Basic career services include, but are not limited to:

- Determination of whether an individual is eligible to receive assistance under the WIOA Adult, Dislocated worker, or Youth programs;
- Outreach, intake, and orientation to the information and other services available through the one-stop delivery system;
- Initial assessment of skill levels (including literacy, numeracy, and English language proficiency), aptitudes, abilities (including skills gaps), and supportive service needs.
- Labor exchange services, including job search and placement assistance, career counseling (if needed) which includes provision of information on in-demand industry sectors and occupations, and provision of information on nontraditional employment; and appropriate recruitment and other business services on behalf of employers including small employers in the local area.
- Provision of referrals to and coordination of activities with other programs and services, including programs within the AJCC delivery system, and when appropriate, other workforce development programs;
- Provision of workforce and labor market employment statistics information, including the provision of accurate information relating to local, regional, and national labor market areas, including: Job vacancy listings in relevant labor market areas; Information on job skills necessary to obtain the vacant jobs; and Information relating to local occupations in demand, the earnings, skill requirements, and opportunities for advancement for such occupations.
- Provision of performance information and program cost information on training services by program type and provider (e.g., California’s ETPL (eligible training provider list), providers of adult education services under Title II of WIOA, providers of vocational rehabilitation services under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973).



- Provision of information on how NoRTEC is performing on performance accountability measures, as well as any other performance information relevant to the one-stop delivery system.
- Provision of information, and referral to such services, related to the availability of supportive services or assistance, including child care, child support, medical or child health assistance available through the State's Medicaid program and Children's Health Insurance Program, benefits under SNAP, assistance through the earned income tax credit, housing counseling and assistance services sponsored through the US Department of Housing and Urban Development, and assistance under a State TANF program (and other supportive services and transportation through that program).
- Provision of information and assistance regarding filing claims for unemployment compensation, including meaningful assistance to individuals seeking assistance in filing a claim.
- Assistance in establishing eligibility for programs of financial aid assistance for training and education programs not funded under WIOA.

Individualized Career Services are not considered universal services, and individuals who receive them must be eligible under WIOA and enrolled in the WIOA program as a participant. These services are accessed through one of NoRTEC's 12 AJCC's. These services are subject to Priority of Service provisions. Individualized Career Services are those that are appropriate in order for an individual to obtain or retain employment, and include the following:

- Comprehensive and specialized assessments of the skill levels and service needs of adult and dislocated workers, including diagnostic testing and use of other assessment tools, and in-depth interviewing and evaluation to identify employment barriers and appropriate employment goals.
- Development of an individual employment plan to identify the employment goals, appropriate achievement objectives, and appropriate combination of services for the participant to achieve his or her employment goals, including the provision of information on eligible providers of training services and career pathways to attain career objectives.
- Group and individual counseling.
- Career planning.
- Short-term prevocational services, including development of learning skills, communication skills, interviewing skills, punctuality, personal maintenance skills, and professional conduct to prepare individuals for unsubsidized employment or training.
- Internships and work experiences that are linked to careers.
- Workforce preparation activities that help an individual acquire a combination of basic academic skills, critical thinking skills, digital literacy skills, and self-management skills, including competencies in utilizing resources, using information, working with others, understanding systems, and obtaining skills necessary for successful transition into and completion of postsecondary education, training, or employment.
- Financial literacy services.
- Out-of-area job search assistance and relocation assistance.
- English language acquisition and integrated education and training programs.
- Follow-up services, including counseling regarding the workplace, for participants placed in unsubsidized employment for up to 12 months after the first day of employment, as appropriate.

Training Services are not considered universal services, and individuals who receive them must be eligible under WIOA and enrolled in the WIOA program as a participant. These services are accessed in-



person at any one of NoRTEC's 12 AJCCs. These services are subject to Priority of Service provisions outlined above and in the NoRTEC policy under the WIOA Adult program. Training services may be made available to employed and unemployed adults and dislocated workers who:

- A one-stop center or one-stop partner determines, after an interview, evaluation, or assessment, and career planning, are:
 - Unlikely or unable to obtain or retain employment that leads to economic self-sufficiency or wages comparable to or higher than wages from previous employment through career services;
 - In need of training services to obtain or retain employment leading to economic self-sufficiency or wages comparable to or higher than wages from previous employment; and
 - Have the skills and qualifications to participate successfully in training services.
- Select a program of training services that is directly linked to the employment opportunities in the local area or in another area to which the individual is willing to commute or relocate.
- Are unable to obtain grant assistance from other sources to pay costs of such training, including such sources as State-funded training funds, Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA), and Federal Pell Grants, or require WIOA assistance in addition to other sources of grant assistance.

Training services include, but are not limited to:

- Occupational skills training (provided through an Individual Training Account), including training for nontraditional employment, and apprenticeships.
- On-the-Job training (OJT).
- Incumbent worker training.
- Programs that combine workplace training with related instruction, which may include cooperative education programs.
- Training programs operated by the private sector.
- Skill upgrading and retraining.
- Entrepreneurial training.
- Transitional jobs.
- Job readiness training provided in combination with services described in training services listed above.
- Adult education and literacy activities, including activities of English language acquisition and integrated education and training programs, provided concurrently or in combination with services described in items training services listed above.
- Customized training conducted with a commitment by an employer or group of employers to employ an individual upon successful completion of the training.

Follow-up Services must be provided as appropriate for participants who are placed in unsubsidized employment, for up to 12 months after the first day of employment.

Youth Workforce Investment Activities

The goals of NoRTEC's youth programs are to improve long-term employability; enhance educational, occupational, and citizenship skills; encourage education completion; increase employment and earnings; and reduce future dependency on social service programs for youth participants.

Services are provided to those who have been determined to be in need of and are able to benefit from, such services. The majority of youth enrolled in the program will be economically disadvantaged (up to 5% may be not economically disadvantaged, but must have one or more barriers to employment), and



all will have one or more barriers to employment including: basic skills deficient, high school dropout, subject to juvenile or adult justice system, homeless, pregnant or parent, runaway, in or aged out of foster care, disability, or requiring additional assistance to enter or complete an educational program or to secure or to hold employment.

The Youth program consists of the following elements:

1. Tutoring, study skills training, instruction, and evidence-based dropout prevention and recovery strategies that lead to completion of the requirements for a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent (including a recognized certificate of attendance or similar document for individuals with disabilities) or for a recognized postsecondary credential;
2. Alternative secondary school services, or dropout recovery services, as appropriate;
3. Paid and unpaid work experiences that have as a component academic and occupational education, which may include: a. Summer employment opportunities and other employment opportunities available throughout the year; b. Pre-apprenticeship programs; c. Internships and job shadowing; and d. OJT (on-the-job) training opportunities.
4. Occupational skills training, which includes priority consideration for training programs that lead to recognized postsecondary credentials that align with in-demand industry sectors or occupations within NoRTEC's service area;
5. Education offered concurrently with and in the same context as workforce preparation activities and training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster;
6. Leadership development opportunities, including community service and peer-centered activities encouraging responsibility and other positive social and civic behaviors;
7. Supportive Services;
8. Adult mentoring (for not less than 12 months);
9. Follow-up services (for not less than 12 months, as appropriate);
10. Comprehensive guidance and counseling, which may include drug and alcohol abuse counseling and referral, as appropriate;
11. Financial literacy education;
12. Entrepreneurial skills training;
13. Services that provide labor market information and employment information about in demand industry sectors or occupations available in the local area, such as career awareness, career counseling, and career exploration services; and
14. Activities that help youth prepare for and transition to postsecondary education and training.

Success in meeting the unique needs of hard-to-serve youth has been demonstrated through NoRTEC's programs that enhance the basic educational skills of youth, encourage secondary school completion or enrollment in supplementary or alternative school programs, and that provide youth with work-based learning opportunities. The programs that are in place are designed to develop and reinforce a positive orientation to work for economically disadvantaged youth. NoRTEC's service providers have strong working relationships with agencies such as Department of Rehabilitation to serve youth with disabilities. The providers also have relationships with local high school districts and community colleges, Foster Youth & Independent Living Programs, Juvenile Probation, Social Services/Teen Parent Programs, and other local community-based organizations. Youth referred from these partner agencies have the benefit of completing their educational and employment goals with additional support and wraparound resources.

A key component of NoRTEC's youth programs is the strong linkage to local employers. Through collaboration with Business Services teams and Industry Sector Partnerships, jobsites are developed on an ongoing basis for enrolled youth to participate in paid work experience, OJTs, and job shadowing.



Youth programs are regarded as a resource to employers, and business owners have had input in all areas of job readiness training.

Referrals are received through all local partner agencies who serve youth. Outreach and recruitment efforts are ongoing and provided through presentations to partner staff as well as directly to youth through high school and community presentations.

All youth that are referred for the program meet with a staff member, and if they are eligible for services, that team member generally becomes their case manager for their duration of their participation in the program, including follow-up. The development of this relationship is crucial to the success of the youth and the program. Following eligibility sign off, the assessment process begins, reviewing the path for each youth. Youth case managers use an assessment interview to address background information including social, behavioral, and substance abuse issues, financial circumstances, academic history, work history, basic skills, work readiness skills, and occupational skills. The youth client also completes interest, aptitude, and personality assessments to help them determine which career industry/pathway is a good choice for them to pursue. Current and relevant labor market information is always explained to the youth and is used as an important component in the guidance and development of an occupational training plan.

The information gathered during the initial assessment period is used to produce the Individual Service Strategy (ISS). The ISS is used to ensure that the youth has contributed to the development of their plan and has had the opportunity to learn self-advocacy skills, ensuring a higher level of buy-in and accountability. Upon completion of each incentivized and planned activity, the youth may also be eligible for a cash incentive.

Basic skills deficiencies are often addressed prior to placing the youth in a work site learning opportunity when appropriate, and educational goals take priority over work-based activities if so indicated in the youth's service strategy. NoRTEC youth programs have seen challenges in asking youth to focus solely on educational goals before the opportunity to participate in a work placement, so in many cases, a plan is developed to work concurrently on educational attainment and work-based learning goals. In some instances, an incentive may be available when educational goals are completed.

Youth services are embedded within the local AJCCs and the program focuses on out-of-school youth (OSY). This structure leverages many services offered to adult customers and prevents unnecessary duplication. When a young person enters the AJCC, they are greeted, and basic information is gathered verbally to determine if they would be best served with youth or adult services. If they are under 18, they are given a youth application and invited to attend a Youth Orientation Session. If they are between 18 and 24, have few barriers, a work history, and/or are already established in college or have a college degree or training credential, they will most likely be served in the adult program, as youth funds are reserved for those with more barriers to employment and greater need for the more intensive case management services provided in the youth program.

NoRTEC subcontracts with a diverse group of service providers with deep community connections and capacity to meet the region's diverse geographic and demographic needs. These providers assist NoRTEC in developing and implementing integrated education and training models that provide accelerated learning opportunities for youth lacking a high school credential and/or who are basic skills deficient.

According to updated Labor Market Information and Demographic studies and to the insights gathered from partners, a focus on youth in the region is critical to address the shrinking pool of talent. NoRTEC works to develop alternative career pathways and innovative strategies that meet the needs of at-risk youth, with an emphasis on targeting dropouts and reengaging them into education and employment.



Youth Programming

NoRTEC youth service providers have also implemented innovative, individualized training related to entrepreneurship and small business development for interested youth to foster the entrepreneurial spirit, teach the necessary skills, and provide opportunities and incentives to pursue business ideas. These may include business development, market research, income statements, producing a commercial, outreach, project management and investment strategies. Enrolled youth receive instruction and demonstrate skills in analytical thinking, public speaking, dressing for success, communication, time management and social responsibility. For example, SMART youth services collaborate with the Young Entrepreneur Program at Shasta College where youth participate in a mock business startup using “Know Opportunity,” a board game that focuses on addressing the gap between contextualized learning and real-world application of skills and college options.

In Del Norte County, SMART offers the E3 (Experience, Education, Employment) program. E3 is available during summer months and is for incoming high school juniors, seniors, and recent graduates. The program provides youth with a paid internship and the opportunity to earn up to 10 high school elective credits for participating in the program. Youth also earn wages during the work experience. The wages are a key component of supporting the youth, which have many barriers to education and employment. The program provides valuable work experiences that develop critical employability skills, helping prepare the youth for future full-time employment.

Job Training Center of Tehama County is partnering on a new apprenticeship program with the Red Bluff Fire Department (RBFDF). Starting last year, youth were able to earn a paycheck while learning about how to become a Firefighter I. JTC is able to sponsor youth participants and the RBFDF is providing training and preparation to take the exam. The training encompasses approximately 700 hours. The training requires participants to work full time at the department while following a set curriculum. At the completion, the participant can take the Firefighter I exam through the Office of the State Fire Marshal. This training supports young adults where they live while also meeting the county’s need to fill essential positions in public safety.

Alliance for Workforce Development staff in Alturas are working with TEACH staff from Adult Education and Advancing Modoc Youth to develop youth programs that will be paid for with grant funding recently awarded to the North State Together collaborative. The focus of the grant is to promote K-16 education collaboratives that create streamlined pathways from high school to postsecondary education into the workforce.

Over the last few years, AFWD youth staff have strengthened their partnership with the Department of Rehabilitation (DOR). Working together as a team, clients and their counselors develop a plan to determine the steps necessary for the clients to reach their goals. DOR helps individuals with a disability who require services to prepare for, enter, engage in, or retain gainful employment, or to live more independently and also offers student services to help students prepare for workplace success by exploring options, getting ready to work, and creating careers. By meeting more often, DOR and AFWD youth staff have the opportunity to provide streamlined services to their clients.

Digital Literacy and Fluency

As with all populations served by NoRTEC and its service providers, digital literacy and fluency is an important service component for youth. Youth experience the same barriers as the general population regarding access to technology devices and a lack of broadband in rural and remote areas. During and after the pandemic and during natural disaster events, the need for technology devices and broadband is even more essential as youth required technology for their education. Service providers also realize they cannot assume that youth have access to devices and are fluent in digital literacy. Young people



may know how to navigate websites, but not have typing skills, or know how to use software like Microsoft, or understand email etiquette. Service providers make efforts to improve digital literacy and fluency for young adults. Additionally, many of the virtual services available to adults are also available to the youth. The youth are able to access videos, online tools, online workshops, and virtual job and career fairs. Youth staff continue to provide access to the virtual services and coaching to support youth in digital literacy and fluency.

Analysis of Youth Programs

The road to recovery post COVID-19 has been incredibly hard on the youth in our region and particularly hard for youth of color and youth in rural areas. Even during a strong economy, young people struggle to attach to the workforce. Disadvantaged youth face multiple barriers to employment including lack of housing, transportation, childcare and access to health care and internet and technology. All of these issues are increased by the devastation of natural disasters and while trying to recover after COVID-19.

The following includes key lessons learned from NoRTEC's youth programs, including some successes or strengths that can be leveraged, as well as challenges that will be addressed and/or acknowledged moving forward.

- It is challenging for most disadvantaged youth to identify realistic career goals. Often, they identify a career that sounds interesting or pays a high wage, but do not have a real understanding of the work itself, the training required, or how it meshes with their personal interest, aptitudes, and values. More in-depth career exploration and planning is needed than what they have experienced, as well as work experience that provides needed exposure to their career choice.
- Many disadvantaged youth do not come from a family, culture, or social circle that values, supports, or encourages higher education or credential attainment. Mentoring and other formalized financial and moral support systems must be positioned for them.
- Youth are more likely to stay engaged in planned activities when tied to paid work experience.
- Youth engage more and have greater success with basic skills improvement when instruction is tied to specific job tasks (real world experience) and financial incentives are offered.
- Some youth become dependent on a long-term work experience (6 months) and are fearful or reluctant to seek unsubsidized employment on their own.
- Youth generally need more supportive services than adult clients. Assistance with child care is often needed as often the youth must depend on unpaid family members. This leads to unreliable care and may cause the youth to drop out of the program. Transportation is another major barrier and limits availability for many jobs.
- Many disadvantaged youth are "couch surfing" and have no stable home. This causes some to leave the program prior to completion because they have been required to leave and must find another friend to stay with for a short time. This creates instability in their lives and affects their ability to participate in the program.

Procurement and Disbursal of Grant Funds

In 2018, NoRTEC created Guiding Principles for AJCC Procurement Process. The guiding principles were developed for staff to use in the development of the Request for Proposal document for WIOA services beginning July 1, 2019. The overriding consideration in developing the guiding principles was to achieve the best and most cost-effective service for the greatest number of residents in the region. The Guiding Principles are: 1) Greater access to the workforce system, 2) Greater number of clients enrolled, 3) Lower overhead expenditures, and 4) Emphasis on employer engagement and service.



NoRTEC has been designated and is responsible for the disbursement of WIOA funds under WIOA Section 107(d)(12)(B)(i)(III).

A Request for Proposal (RFP) was released for WIOA AJCC Employment Center, Job Seeker, Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs for all 11 NoRTEC counties on September, 2019. The RFP process involved a set of rules to safeguard fair and objective decision-making when awarding grant funds to a winning bidder. The rules comply with applicable federal, state and local requirements, i.e., Title 2 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 200.

Notice of the RFP was legally published in local newspapers within all 11 counties and all RFP material was posted on NoRTEC's website. The RFP contained the following sections: RFP Purpose and Schedule, Background, Proposal Format and Rating Criteria, Disclaimers and General Provisions. Following its release, a bidder's conference was held providing prospective bidders an opportunity to request clarification regarding the RFP's programmatic specifications from NoRTEC's staff. All questions and answers from the conference were posted on NoRTEC's website.

After proposals were submitted, proposal components (i.e., technical narrative, performance, budget, cost allocation/indirect cost proposal, organizational capabilities) were rated by a Selection Committee. Interviews with the top respondents were scheduled with the NoRTEC Executive Committee. Entities not recommended by the WDB for a contract to deliver the solicited services received a letter from the Director of Program Administration, notifying that entity of its appeal rights under NoRTEC's appeal process.

NoRTEC last procured Service Providers in 2019, with contracts beginning on July 1, 2020 for a four-year term. The next procurement will take place in Spring 2023. NoRTEC last procured a One Stop Operator in 2020 and annually renewed the contract through 2023.

AJCC Operator and Career Services Providers

NoRTEC is the WIOA Title I grant recipient and administrative entity representing the Local Workforce Development Area comprised of a consortium of eleven counties: Butte, Del Norte, Lassen, Modoc, Nevada, Plumas, Shasta, Sierra, Siskiyou, Tehama, and Trinity. NoRTEC procures AJCC Operators and Career Services providers in a competitive process. The current AJCC Operators and Career Services Providers for the region are:

- Job Training Center in Tehama County;
- SMART Workforce Development Center in Del Norte, Shasta, Siskiyou, and Trinity Counties;
- and Alliance for Workforce Development in Butte, Lassen, Modoc, Nevada, Plumas, and Sierra Counties.

The One Stop Operator is Racy Ming Associates, contracted on July 1, 2020 until June 30, 2023 after a competitive procurement process. The One Stop Operator is responsible for coordinating the service delivery of the required one-stop partners and service providers in accordance with the AJCC System MOU and ensure the implementation of partner responsibilities and contributions agreed upon in NoRTEC MOU. Roles and responsibilities of the One Stop Operator include coordinating the implementation and updates of the NoRTEC Partner MOU, address grievances, and identify any changes that may be needed to the working agreements. On a quarterly basis, the One Stop Operator connects with NoRTEC staff and partners on the status of partner contributions outlined in the MOUs, including reconciling partner contributions and infrastructure costs. The One Stop Operator also convenes partner meetings as necessary to coordinate service delivery in accordance with the MOU.



Appendices

A. Stakeholder and Community Engagement Summary

Partners were personally invited to input sessions through regularly scheduled partner meetings, social media, eBlasts, email and phone calls. Invitees included those required by EDD Directive as well as additional community partners with interests in workforce development. In addition to individual outreach; notices of the public meetings were posted on the NoRTEC website.

Date	Mode of Outreach	Target of Outreach	Summary of Participation and Comments
November 8, 2022 <i>and</i> November 9, 2022	Virtual, Teleconference and In Person Public Notice <i>and</i> Public Presentation	Public Input Listening Session for Regional Community Stakeholders in the 11-county region	Public Notice posted on NoRTEC website and publicized via social media and eBlasts. In addition, an email notification was widely disseminated to local area stakeholders, including NoRTEC MOU partners, community-based organizations, NoRTEC service providers, Industry Sector Partnerships and education. Special care was taken to ensure that organizations representing historically disadvantaged populations. The input sessions included a presentation on the regional economic landscape, an overview of the workforce development system, current state and regional goals and priorities, and offered questions designed to solicit input from the attendees on how to improve services to job seeker and business communities. Opportunities for public comment throughout the process were also explained.
October 26, 2022	Teleconference and Emails	Cal FRESH Partners	Del Norte, Siskiyou and Butte County CalFRESH partners confirmed there were no changes to the partnership description in the 2021-2024 Local Plan.
October 26, 2022	Teleconference and Emails	Child Support Partners	Del Norte and Nevada County Child Support Partners confirmed there were no changes to the previous descriptions of the NoRTEC partnership described in the 2021-2024 Local Plan. Due to staff changes, Del Norte Child Support Services requested a closer coordination and referral process with the local Service Provider, which has been established.



Date	Mode of Outreach	Target of Outreach	Summary of Participation and Comments
November 2 and 8, 2022	Teleconference, in person meetings and emails.	Partners providing services for ELL; Foreign-Born and Refugees	Mary Potts, Division Director of California Human Development (CHD) provided updated information on their services, which were incorporated into the Draft Local Plan.
October 26, 2024	Teleconference and emails	Competitive Integrated Employment Partners	Vivian Hernandez Obaldia, Regional Director of the Northern Sierra District (DOR) submitted updated information on services, which were incorporated into the Draft Plan.
	<i>NoRTEC Website</i>		<i>Ongoing information on the Regional and Local Plan update process and draft documents.</i>



B. Public Comments Received that Disagree with the Local Plan



C. Signature Page

The Northern Rural Training and Employment Consortium (NoRTEC) Board approves this Regional WIOA Plan Modification for the period of July 1, 2023 through June 30, 2024 in accordance with the provisions of the WIOA.

Willy Hagge, NoRTEC Workforce Development Board Chair **Date**

Paul Roen, NoRTEC Governing Board Chair **Date**

Michael Cross, NoRTEC Executive Director **Date**