



January 24, 2023

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Policy Letter No. 16-03.1

To: Chief Elected Officials, Workforce Development Board
Chairperson, and Local Workforce Development Board Directors

From: Matt Damschroder, Director

Subject: Regional and Local Planning

I. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to identify regions as required by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and to outline the requirements for regional and local planning.

II. Effective Date

Immediately

III. Rescission

ODJFS, Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Policy Letter No. 16-03, Regional and Local Planning (October 21, 2016)

IV. Background

WIOA envisions a workforce development system that is customer-focused on both the job seeker and business and is able to anticipate and respond to the needs of regional economies. It requires local workforce development boards (WDB) and chief elected officials (CEO) to design and govern the system regionally, to align workforce policies and services with regional economies, and to support service delivery strategies tailored to these needs. To support this regional approach, WIOA requires States to identify regions.

Per section 106 (a)(2) of WIOA, the State shall identify:

- a. Which regions are comprised of one local workforce development area (local area) that is aligned with the region;
 - b. Which regions are comprised of two or more local areas that are collectively aligned with the region (referred to as planning regions);
- and

- c. Which, of the planning regions, are interstate areas contained within two or more states, and consist of labor market areas, economic development areas, or other appropriate contiguous sub-areas of those States.

As part of the identification of regions, the State will use the following criteria:

- a. A single labor market;
- b. A common economic development area;
- c. Possessing of the Federal and non-Federal resources to administer workforce development activities;
- d. Commuting patterns, which shows movement of workers from their residence to their workplace;
- e. Population centers;
- f. Similar economic bases, including percentage of employment in a particular industry;
- g. Labor force conditions, including labor force data and unemployment data; and
- h. Industrial composition, including industry employment patterns (jobs by industry and share of total employment by industry).

Purpose of Planning Regions

Planning regions are two or more local areas identified by the State which are collectively aligned with the region. The purpose of planning regions is to align workforce development activities and resources with larger regional economic development areas and available resources to provide coordinated and efficient services to both individuals and employers. The development of comprehensive regional partnerships facilitates this alignment and provides support for the execution and implementation of sector strategies and career pathways.

Identification of planning regions is important, because regional economic development areas do not necessarily correspond to State, county, or local workforce development areas, or municipal boundaries. Planning regions are established in order to ensure that training and employment services:

- a. Support economic growth and related employment opportunities;
- b. Meet the needs of individuals, including those with barriers to employment;
- c. Meet the skill competency requirements of the region; and
- d. Meet the specific needs of regional employers and the skills they require.

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Regional and Local Plans

Regional and local plans provide the framework for local areas to define how their workforce development systems will achieve the purposes of WIOA. They serve as a four-year action plan to develop, align, and integrate the region's or local area's job-driven workforce development systems, and provides the platform to achieve the planning region's or local area's vision and strategic and operational goals. The regional or local plan must support the strategy described in Ohio's Combined State Plan and represents a comprehensive, customer-focused, and actionable service delivery strategy.

Since the regional or local plan is only as effective as the partnerships that operationalize it, it must represent a collaborative process among local elected officials, local WDBs, and required and other partners (including economic development, education, and private sector partners).

V. Definitions

Chief elected official(s): The chief elected executive officer(s) “of a unit of general local government in a local area and, in the case of a local area” that “includes more than one unit of general local government,” the individual(s) designated under an inter-governmental agreement. - WIOA Section 3(9).

Consultation: a robust conversation in which all parties are given the opportunity to share their thoughts and opinions.

Core program: a program which is authorized under one of the following program provisions:

- (a) Chapters 2 and 3 of subtitle B of Title I, relating to youth workforce investment activities and adult and dislocated worker employment and training activities;
- (b) Title II, relating to adult education and literacy activities;
- (c) Sections 1 through 13 of the Wagner-Peyser Act (29 U.S.C. 49 et seq), relating to employment services; and
- (d) Title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. 720 et seq), relating to vocational rehabilitation services.

Planning region: a region comprised of two or more local areas that are collectively aligned with the region.

VI. State Requirements

A. Consultation

The State is required to identify regions in consultation with local CEOs and local WDBs. In Ohio, consultation will entail one or more of the following activities:

1. E-mail notification of proposed planning regions to the CEOs and local WDB directors with the opportunity to provide comment;
2. Dialogue with one or more of the following associations which provide support and guidance to the CEOs and local WDBs:
 - a. County Commissioners Association of Ohio; and
 - b. Ohio Workforce Association;
3. In-person meetings and/or teleconferences with individual CEOs and local WDB directors;
4. Collaboration with the Governor's Executive Workforce Board and the Office of Workforce Transformation;
5. Presentations at training events and/or at local WDB meetings; and
6. The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) legal public comment process for workforce policies.

B. Identification of Regions

In addition to WIOA and the State's criteria for the identification of regions, the following guidelines must be followed when identifying planning regions:

1. A single local area may not be split across two planning regions;
2. Local areas must be contiguous in order to be a planning region; and
3. A local area may only be part of one planning region.

While it is the desire of the State to have all local areas assigned to planning regions and engaged in regional planning, the geographic configuration of Ohio's local areas, as currently designated, does not allow for this in a manner which meets the established criteria and guidelines. Therefore, Ohio will be identifying both single local area regions and planning regions.

Using the State criteria and associated guidelines, Ohio has identified the following regions (Attachment A).

1. **Northeast Region**, consisting of Areas 2, 3, 4, 5, and 19;
2. **East Region**, consisting of Areas 6, 17 and 18;
3. **Southeast Region**, consisting of Areas 14, 15, and 16;
4. **Southcentral Region**, consisting of Areas 11, and 20;
5. **South Region**, consisting of Area 1;
6. **Southwest Region**, consisting of Areas 12 and 13;
7. **West Region**, consisting of Area 8;
8. **Northwest Region**, consisting of Area 9;
9. **Northcentral Region**, consisting of Area 10; and
10. **Central Region**, consisting of Area 7.

Ohio is not identifying interstate planning regions at this time. This does not prohibit planning regions or local areas in Ohio from regionally planning with other states' local areas for the purposes of that state's regional planning requirements.

Local areas identified as single area regions will work and coordinate with other local areas or planning regions who share a common labor market as identified in Attachment B. Activities will include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Identification of sector strategies;
2. Development of strategies to serve common employers; and
3. Coordination of rapid response and/or layoff aversion activities.

The State will review and/or modify the identification of single local area regions and planning regions when local area designation is reviewed and/or modified, including local area subsequent designation, ongoing review of local area subsequent designation, and local area re-designation.

C. Provision of Data

The State will assist the planning regions and single area regions in obtaining the necessary labor market data, operational data elements, and any other data that will support the process of regional or local planning. The State will also provide ongoing support to meet the purpose of the regional and local planning.

D. Approval of Regional and Local Plans

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The State must review completed regional and local plans. Such plans will be considered approved 90 days after receipt of the local or regional plan unless the State determines in writing that:

1. The plan(s) does not comply with applicable provisions of WIOA and the WIOA regulations, including the required consultations and public comment provisions, and the nondiscrimination requirements; or
2. The plan(s) does not align with the Combined State Plan, including the alignment of the core programs and the support of the Combined State Plan's goals and reform principles.

VII. Local Workforce Development Area Requirements

A. Development of Local and Regional Plans

Per section 108 of WIOA, the local WDB, in partnership with the CEO, shall develop and submit a local plan to the State. If the local area is assigned to a planning region, the local WDB will submit its local plan as part of the regional plan, as required in section 106 of WIOA, and will not submit a separate local plan.

Local Plan

For single local area regions, the local WDB, in partnership with the CEO, shall prepare, submit, and obtain approval of a local plan that includes a description of the policies, procedures, and local activities that are carried out in the local area and that contains all the requirements outlined in §679.560 of Title 20 the Federal Regulations.

The required contents of the local plan are contained in Attachment C of this policy.

The local area shall collaborate with the WIOA core programs and other programs included in Ohio's Combined State Plan in the development of the local plan. The local area must also coordinate with other partners, including OhioMeansJobs center partners, and economic development, education, and private sector partners, to create a shared understanding of the local area's workforce development needs, a shared vision of how the local area can be designed to meet those needs, and agreement on the key strategies to realize this vision.

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The local plan must support the strategic framework for the workforce development activities, goals and the reform principles outlined in Ohio's Combined State Plan. The goals and reform principles in Ohio's Combined State Plan are found on the [Ohio WIOA Combined State Plan](#) page.

Four-year local plans must be submitted by May 31, 2025 and every four years thereafter.

Regional Plan

Each planning region, including the individual local WDB and CEO of the local areas assigned to the planning region, shall prepare, submit, and obtain approval of a single regional plan that:

1. Includes a description of the activities described in 20 CFR 679.510 (a); and
2. Incorporates local plans for each of the local areas in the planning region as an addendum to the regional plan.

The required contents of the regional plan and local plan are contained in Attachment D of this policy.

Four-year regional plans must be submitted by May 31, 2025 and every four years thereafter.

The local workforce development areas within the planning region must coordinate available resources to decide how the regional planning process will occur and who will lead or be responsible for the writing of the plan. Some options available may include rotating these responsibilities amongst the local area's WDB directors or hiring a consultant.

The planning region shall collaborate with the WIOA core programs and other programs included in Ohio's Combined State Plan in the development of the regional plan. The planning region must also coordinate with other partners, including OhioMeansJobs center partners, and economic development, education, and private sector partners, to create a shared understanding of the planning region's workforce development needs, a shared vision of how the planning region can be designed to meet those needs, and agreement on the key strategies to realize this vision.

The regional plan must support the strategic framework for the workforce development activities, goals and the reform principles outlined in the Combined State Plan. The Combined State Plan's goals and reform principles are found on the [Ohio WIOA Combined State Plan](#) page.

B. Submission of Regional and Local Plans

The local WDBs and the CEOs within the planning region or single local area region must ensure that there has been an opportunity for public comment on the development of the regional and/or local plans. Additionally, copies of the proposed regional and local plans must be made available to the public through electronic and other means, such as public hearings and local news media. Members of the public must be given at least 30 days to provide their comments on these plans, before the plans are submitted to the State.

The local WDB or the entity responsible for the development of the regional plan shall submit the regional or local plan electronically to the Office of Workforce Development (OWD):
OWDPOLICY@jfs.ohio.gov.

C. Modification of Regional and Local Plans

Ensuring that regional and local plans remain up-to-date and relevant, and ensuring consistency between regional and local plan requirements, will improve the effectiveness of the public workforce system.

At the end of the first two-year period of the four-year regional and local plans, the local WDBs, in partnership with the appropriate CEOs and planning regions, as applicable, must review the regional and local plans and prepare and submit modifications to the regional and local plans to reflect any of the following changes:

1. Labor market and economic conditions; and
2. Other factors affecting the implementation of the regional or local plan, including but not limited to:
 - a. Significant changes in local and/or regional economic conditions;
 - b. Changes in the financing available to support WIOA Title I and partner-provided WIOA services;

- c. Changes to the local WDB structure of the local areas, including any local area's WDB structure within a planning region; and
- d. The need to revise strategies to meet performance goals.

The local WDBs and the CEOs within the planning region or single local area region must ensure that there has been an opportunity for public comment on the modification of the regional and/or local plans. Additionally, copies of the proposed regional and local plan modifications must be made available to the public through electronic and other means, such as public hearings and local news media. Members of the public must be given at least 30 days to provide their comments on these plan modifications, before the modifications are submitted to the State.

If the CEOs and the local WDBs decide, after the review of the regional and/or local plans, that a modification of neither plan is necessary, the local WDB or the entity responsible for the regional plan shall e-mail OWD at OWDPOLICY@jfs.ohio.gov, indicating that the reviews of the plans were completed and modifications to the regional or local plans were not necessary.

VIII. Technical Assistance

Ongoing support, guidance, training and technical assistance on development of local and regional planning is available to all local areas.

Requests for technical assistance may be sent to ODJFS, Office of Workforce Development: WIOAQNA@jfs.ohio.gov.

IX. References

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, §§ 106, 107, and 108 Public Law 113-128.

20 C.F.R. §§ 679.200 - 679.210.

20 C.F.R. §§ 679.500 - 679.580.

USDOL, [TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT GUIDANCE LETTER \(TEGL\) No. 04-21 Modification Requirements for Workforce Innovation and](#)

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[Opportunity Act \(WIOA\) State Plans for Program Years \(PYs\) 2022 and 2023](#)

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