November 16, 2021 draft

**Requirements and Considerations for WIOA Unified and Combined State Plans Modifications: Overview**

Slide 1: (Overview) **Heather**

Welcome to our presentation today on the Requirements and Considerations for the Workforce WIOA Unified and Combined State Plan two-year modification.

Slide 2: (Your Presenters) **Heather, Karla, and Shannon**

Hi, I’m Heather Fleck and I am the Unit Chief with the WIOA Governance team at the Employment and Training Administration, US Department of Labor. I am representing the Title I and Title III programs of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. And I am happy to be joined today by my colleagues from the Department of Education.

I am Karla Ver Bryck Block. I serve as the Branch Chief for the Monitoring and Administration Branch for the Title II programs in the Division of Adult Education and Literacy which is located in the Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education at the US Department of Education.

Hi, my name is Shannon Moler. I am a Vocational Rehabilitation Program Specialist with the Rehabilitation Services Administration, and I’m representing Title IV programs.

Slide 3: (Today’s Objectives) **Karla**

Today’s webcast has four main objectives. First, because each State and outlying area is required to submit a two-year modification addressing and updating the activities described in the current four-year plan under each of the WIOA titles, we want to provide you with the information you need to fully understand the process that you will be using for the preparation and submission of the modification. Second, we will review the information regarding the legal requirements for this modification. These requirements are contained in both the WIOA statute and regulations.

Third, we will discuss the current Administration’s priorities for workforce development and other considerations to take into account.

And fourth, we will provide you with resources for developing your modification to the plan for the next two years.

We know that there are experienced state planners for whom many of these principles are well-known; we also know that there are listeners who will be engaged in the strategic planning process during this modification process for the first-time. We hope that the content proves valuable for both groups.

Slide 4: About this Technical Assistance series – Federal staff have coordinated a series of pre-recorded Webcasts for state plan modification process. **Karla**

Federal staff from the six core WIOA programs as well as several of the combined partner programs have prepared webcasts to offer their perspectives on the modification process. The webcasts are modular – you may choose which presentation file or files are of interest to your State. As modification developers, coordinators, and authors, we hope that you will bookmark these helpful webcasts and revisit them as needed during the modification preparation period.

Slide 5: **Karla**

We encourage you to think about the Strategic Plan as both a compliance document as well as a living document. States must have an approved Plan in order to receive funds for the six core WIOA programs. The modification of the plan will be used for monitoring how the State is carrying out the program activities as well as the use of funds that the State addressed in its plan. That’s the compliance part. As in the past, you are likely to receive an onsite monitoring visit, or a virtual visit, or be part of desktop monitoring during the final two years of the plan as Federal staff carry out our fiduciary duties.

As for the “living” part, we encourage you to think of the modification process as an opportunity to redraw your roadmap for delivering services under WIOA to jobseekers and employers after considering both opportunities and challenges for the next several years.

Slide 6: **Karla**

Hopefully this slide looks quite familiar to many of you. This is essentially the Table of Contents for your State plan modification. These 7 sections follow the sections in the Information Collection Request (which is the plan template). These are the same 7 sections of the ICR used for all previous Plans and modifications. They have not changed.

Slide 7: **Shannon**

To continue encouragement of implementation of reforms and integration of workforce development services, WIOA requires States to develop a two-year modification for its four-year Unified or Combined State Plan that covers, at a minimum, the six core programs of the workforce development system.  In order to satisfy the submission requirements of WIOA for these State Plans, each State’s Governor is required to submit the modification to its Unified or Combined State Plan **by March 15, 2022.**

The information collection request (ICR) contains both strategic and operational elements that support integration and alignment of the workforce system. The Strategic and Operational Planning Elements constitute the “common elements” of the Plan— elements that universally apply to all programs that states include in their plan. As updated through the modification process, the Strategic Elements must include an analysis of the state’s current economic environment and identification of the state’s overall vision, as appropriately updated, for its workforce development system, including an analysis of the economy and workforce development activities. The Operational Elements within the submitted modification must identify the state’s planned actions to implement the state’s strategic vision and goals identified in the Strategic Elements. This section requires description of the policy, infrastructure, and program integration and alignment activities the state will undertake, as well as planning elements specific to each of the core programs and any required one-stop partner programs.

As part of the process, States must submit the modification through the WIOA State Plan portal (<https://wioaplans.ed.gov/>). When the plans are made available to States for editing in January 2022, state editors will see their 2020 plan submissions in “draft” status. State editors may choose to delete entire sections of the 2020 version or make updates to the existing language as needed. Training on how to use the State plan portal will be offered to State users separately from this webcast series. Some upgrades have been introduced since the PY 2020 submissions.

Slide 8: **Shannon**

As in past cycles, the State Plan modification must be developed with the assistance of the State Workforce Development Board, or State Board, as required by WIOA, and in coordination with administrators that have policymaking authority for the core programs and required one-stop partner programs. All levels of governance have a stake in ensuring the modification reflects the economic landscape in the State, and how the WIOA funding in each Title will impact services to workers and employers.

Stakeholder collaboration, review, and public comment remain key requirements of the planning process to produce the new two-year modification document.

Slide 9 **Shannon**

Federal review and approval of the State plan modification will occur within 90 days of submission and the Departments will issue notifications to States within the 90 day timeframe. Note that State plans will be made available to the public in PDF format. The State Plan Portal presents interface where stakeholders and the public can search across plans for key words or phrases, or service and strategy descriptions (e.g. sector strategies, career pathways, equity, etc.)

Slide 10: **Shannon**

WIOA expects states to at a minimum review the economy and labor market conditions in their state since the last Plan was prepared and determine if strategies should be adjusted based on that information. In addition, new performance targets for the next two program year must also be established. Other major changes that impact how a state intends to implement its workforce development system must also be reflected in a state’s plan modification, such as organizations changes, major policy shifts, changes to local areas in the state, as examples.

The modification process allows all parties and principals to thoughtfully review implementation progress against the goals and reforms outlined by the Congress in the WIOA legislation.

The COVID-19 pandemic has unquestionably compelled changes in the economy of states as well as the delivery of workforce and education services. This modification process should reflect the approaches and strategies the States will use as our economy and way of doing business evolve, including through its physical American Job Centers and its “virtual services” in the next two years.

Slide 11: **Shannon**

The current Administration encourages states to use intentional planning and actions to facilitate an equitable economic recovery. As states reassess their education and workforce needs and strategic approaches to addressing the shifting economic and workforce landscape, strategic planning and cross-partner conversations are more important than ever. Such planning can drive implementation that more fully realizes the opportunities, innovations, and equitable prosperity that WIOA envisions for America’s workers and learners. With this in mind, there are four priorities to consider in your state planning efforts.

When states last submitted their State Plans in March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic and its disruptions to the global and local economies had only just begun. In developing and submitting the State Plan modification for program years 2022 and 2023, it is critical for states to reassess economic and labor market information (LMI) and adjust strategies for what may now be a different set of growing and declining industries, occupations, and skills.

Work closely with the LMI Director within your state. States must analyze data to assess disparities in labor market outcomes among various populationsand should focus planning efforts on not just how to tackle workforce challenges generally, but also how best to adapt and adjust workforce goals and strategic focus for those communities with disproportionately higher unemployment rates and lower earnings. Economic disadvantages may be particularly concentrated among underserved population groups, or individuals facing barriers to employment such as low-income individuals, English language learners, individuals without housing, individuals with disabilities.

Slide 12: **Heather**

Another top workforce development priority of this Administration includes facilitating the reemployment of unemployed individuals and the improved employment of underemployed individuals. All workforce system partners have a shared responsibility to assist in this goal. We encourage states to examine how well their systems and operations across the WIOA one-stop partner programs, including Unemployment Insurance (UI), can work more seamlessly together to positively affect the shared goal of reemployment, particularly for individuals with barriers to employment, including individuals with disabilities. Each one-stop partner program contributes services to individuals who meet program eligibility requirements and offers opportunities for individuals to co-enroll in more than one program.

Slide 13: **Heather**

President Biden’s first executive order was Executive Order 13985 on Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government, which was issued on January 20, 2021. Addressing equity issues is the highest priority for the Administration. This state plan modification process provides states with the opportunity to review, revise, and enhance their plans in the areas of addressing equity in service delivery and educational programming.

States are strongly encouraged to examine which groups of people experience inequities in access to and participation in public workforce programs that lead to quality jobs so that states can continue to develop or improve strategies to better address and promote equity in recruitment, service design, implementation, and support services.

Also during this modification opportunity, states are encouraged to consider ways they can continue to leverage both public and private sector pandemic-related investment to build and improve capacity of educational programming. This includes supporting educators to leverage technology for innovative and personalized instruction, and increasing access to internet and devices for students and families.

Slide 14: **Heather** Services that assist individuals to begin to return to work not only include education, training, and employment services, but also include services that support individuals’ personal and family needs to address barriers to work.

Supportive services are essential to ensure that youth and adults can stay engaged in program offerings and reach their educational and employment goals, and are critical for those with justice and child welfare system involvement, individuals with disabilities, individuals without housing, or those with limited English proficiency.

States should consider providing assistance with supported services, such as access to transportation, child and dependent care, referrals to physical and mental health assistance, housing assistance, and other needs that may affect barriers to employment, and enter into partnerships with community-based organizations to improve outreach and supports for an equitable recovery.

Slide 15: **Heather**

There are a number of considerations a state might want to take into account when developing its two-year modification, which may include decisions made by Governors through Executive Orders and laws passed by state legislatures with an impact on workforce development.

There are new Governors who bring their vision and state legislatures who have introduced bills that have shifted resources devoted to training and other services. These should be incorporated when drafting of the modification.

As economic recovery proceeds, sector strategies and career pathways described in the four-year plan may necessarily be adjusted in both scope and focus through the modification.

And we know that many states unfortunately continue to be affected by recent natural disasters, which might have caused increased unemployment in some sectors or some areas of the state. Taking those factors into account should also be an opportunity for you to refine your strategy or adjust where necessary to differently serve those populations or areas that have been affected.

States have gained significant experience and reached new judgements on “what works best” and technical assistance has been provided at the federal level as well as by multiple stakeholders in our system. You might have realized opportunities during the last two years to introduce new partners into your service delivery strategy, and you might want to consider how the continued integration of those new partners and their specific contributions are reflected in the modification.

Many of you are using continuous improvement assessments and constantly evaluating the success of your initiatives and adjusting your approaches in that regard. We encourage you to include such information in your state plan. Some states have participated in ETA evaluation forums/cohorts; the application of this knowledge can be also described in the modification.

Slide 16: **Heather**

This slide provides some resources you might want to check out as you are preparing your State plan modification.

It provides resources that have been issued by the Departments of Education and Labor. The link to the information collection request and other technical assistance resources should prove useful as you think about the modification process.

Slide 17: **Karla**

Thank you for participating in this webcast. If you have any questions, contact your Federal program office representative.