

# WORKFORCE INNOVATION AND OPPORTUNITY ACT (WIOA)

# UTAH'S PLAN

## 2024-2028



**WORKFORCE  
SERVICES**  
REHABILITATION



Utah State Office  
of Education



STATE WORKFORCE  
DEVELOPMENT BOARD



DEPARTMENT OF  
**WORKFORCE  
SERVICES**

# WORKFORCE INNOVATION AND OPPORTUNITY ACT (WIOA)

## PLAN FOR THE STATE OF UTAH

### OVERVIEW

**UNDER THE WORKFORCE INNOVATION and Opportunity Act (WIOA)**, the governor must submit a Unified or Combined State Plan to the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Labor that outlines a four-year strategy for the state's workforce development system. The publicly funded workforce development system is a national network of federal, state, regional and local agencies and organizations that provide a range of employment, education, training and related services and supports to help all job seekers secure good jobs while providing businesses with the skilled workers they need to compete in the global economy. States must have approved Unified or Combined State Plans in place to receive funding for core programs. WIOA planning requirements foster better alignment of federal investments in job training while integrating service delivery across

programs, improving efficiency in service delivery and ensuring that the workforce system is job-driven and matches employers with skilled individuals. WIOA requires states to plan across core programs through their Unified or Combined State Plans. This process promotes a shared understanding of the workforce needs within each state and fosters development of comprehensive and integrated approaches, such as career pathways and sector strategies for addressing the needs of businesses and workers. Successful implementation of many of these approaches called for within WIOA requires robust relationships across programs. WIOA requires states and local areas to enhance coordination and partnerships with local entities and supportive service agencies for strengthened service delivery, including through Unified or Combined State Plans.

### ELEMENTS OF THE WIOA COMBINED STATE PLAN



- Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth Program
- Wagner-Peyser Act and Agricultural Outreach Plan
- Adult Education and Family Literacy Program
- Vocational Rehabilitation Program

\*Jobs for Veterans State Grants



## ALIGNING WITH THE UTAH HOME PLAN

The WIOA Combined State Plan aligns with the goals presented in the governor's [Utah Home Plan](#) to expand opportunities to all Utahns with increased access to high quality jobs and careers.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



## UTAH'S VISION

**A STRONG ECONOMY**, now and in the future, depends on a world-class workforce. Utah will enhance and expand collaborative efforts with businesses and organizations, educational institutions, community partners and government agencies through business development and partnerships related to key industry sectors and occupations. Utah will increase access to and opportunities for employment, education, training and support services that individuals—particularly those with barriers to employment—need to succeed in the workforce.

## GOALS

**UTAH'S GOALS FOCUS** on preparing an educated and skilled workforce, including preparing youth and individuals with barriers to employment and other populations. Utah's goals support meeting the skilled workforce needs of employers. The goals align with the Utah governor's priorities to build a sustainable future for current and future generations of Utahns, giving equal opportunities for all.

Utah will partner across the WIOA core and required partners, education, economic opportunity, businesses, organizations and other programs to coordinate, align strategies, leverage resources and work together to develop Utah's workforce and create opportunities for sustainable employment.

Utah will involve employers directly in the workforce development system by utilizing and leveraging existing partnerships and expanding opportunities for them to participate in developing new partnerships and aligning programs.

Education and training partners will establish programs that meet both the current and emerging needs of businesses and organizations, including an emphasis on real-life applicability of skills development. Partnerships will facilitate clear connections for students to join Utah's workforce.



## OUR VISION

is to increase access to and opportunities for employment, education, training and support services that individuals — particularly those with barriers to employment — need to succeed in the workforce.

Utah will provide education and training options that provide the skills and competencies required to meet employer and job seeker needs. Strong partnerships will enable job seekers to find sustainable employment and employers to recruit and retain quality employees.

Government and community partners will leverage and align resources to reduce or eliminate barriers to employment so that at-risk populations have greater opportunities in the workforce.

## PARTNERS

**THE ROLE OF THE CORE PARTNERS** is to ensure services are coordinated, aligned and complementary to assist job seekers in acquiring the skills and credentials that meet employer needs:

- Adult and Dislocated Worker program
- Youth program
- Wagner-Peyser Act programs



## THE PARTNERSHIPS

built through WIOA continue to expand and adapt to meet current needs while improving services and having a positive impact on Utah's workforce system.

- Adult Education and Family Literacy Act programs
- Vocational Rehabilitation programs

Utah's WIOA partners are responsible for workforce and economic development through the collaboration of programs, initiatives and services that create a seamless, customer-focused one-stop delivery system. Utah's required partners collaborate and align their services to enhance access for job seekers and businesses.

Required partners include:

- Veterans job counseling, training and placement services
- Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP)
- Career and Technical Education (CTE)
- Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA)
- Community Services Block Grant employment and training activities
- Unemployment Compensation programs
- Programs authorized under the Social Security Act Title IV, Part A (TANF)
- Job Corps
- National Farmworkers Jobs program
- YouthBuild
- Indian Training program

## STATEWIDE INPUT

**UTAH'S STATE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD** (SWDB), through the work of its committees, led the development of Utah's Combined Plan. The board members directly participated in the development of Utah's vision and goals, providing the foundation for the strategies, activities and services outlined in the plan. Input on the plan was solicited from government agencies, nonprofit organizations, local government, employers and elected officials. Utah's plan was presented at one virtual statewide town hall meeting and was available online for public comment. Utah's State Workforce Development Board and agency partners have worked closely





together to implement the goals of the 2020 plan. The relationships and connections that have been built since Utah implemented its first plan in 2016 have influenced the development of the 2024 plan. All partners have established a clear understanding of their roles and collaborative strategies to continually improve services and have a positive impact on Utah's workforce system.

## A COMBINED PLAN

The Veteran Employment Services joined the WIOA core partners to develop Utah's 2024 Combined plan. Veterans Employment Services leverages its resources and aligns its programs with partners to support WIOA plan goals. It encompasses a range of services that support veteran job seekers through the Jobs for Veterans State Grants (JVSG) program in securing and sustaining employment, including partnering directly with businesses.

### VETERAN JOB SEEKERS

have a wide range of services to help them secure and sustain employment.



## STRATEGIC PLAN

Utah's plan includes strategies to achieve its vision and goals. Utah's plan utilizes data, partnerships and resources to implement strategies that support local areas in providing services to individuals and employers. Utah is committed to adjusting its strategies as needed to meet the state's workforce needs. Utah's workforce partners receive annual updates about Utah's economic condition.

Workforce development activities include:

- Identifying targeted industry sectors and occupations; aligning programs and services to support them; and ensuring involvement from business and education partners
- Setting collaborative performance goals, sharing information and data and working together to resolve problems and address gaps
- Collaborating and coordinating training, marketing and feedback
- Utilizing existing committees, workgroups and programs while working to align and share resources when it is appropriate
- Holding regular SWDB and committee meetings as required by Utah's plan

# ECONOMIC SUMMARY

**THE 2023 UTAH ECONOMY** operated as a full-employment economy, having recovered from the severe interruptions of the COVID pandemic. Finding available labor in substantial numbers can be a challenge for employers. The unemployment rate was at 2.4% and employment growth averaged around 3%, which equals Utah's long-term annual growth average. Above average wage gains have emerged within the past two years, indicating a tight labor market. These wage gains are an expected outcome within a full-employment economy.

The available labor supply is limited as 2.4% unemployment would suggest. Yet the economy has found enough new labor to maintain above average employment growth for several years. Labor in-migration plays a primary role in keeping job growth above what a 2.4% unemployment rate might otherwise constrain. Yet the labor market is tight, causing employers to be aggressive, and sometimes frustrated, in seeking labor. This situation creates job opportunities. As a result, this is an excellent environment for people with barriers to employment to find a job.

To provide perspective on Utah's economic achievements, Utah has out-performed all other states since the onset of the COVID pandemic in early 2020. When looking at each state's percentage employment gain compared to February 2020, Utah is second in the nation in percentage growth. Utah's employment level is 9.6% higher than it was before COVID hit. Only Idaho has had greater job gains, at 9.9%.

Internal population growth is Utah's foundation for employment expansion and success. Utah has the youngest median-age in the nation giving it the nation's youngest labor force. Utah's large average family size makes for a continuous flow of new workers aging into the labor force. There are more young workers in the state than old. Therefore, the economy is always expanding to accommodate this continuous maturing of the population into the labor force.

Additionally, Utah lies in the middle of America's strongest in-migration region, the underpopulated Rocky Mountains. For most of America's development, the mountain states were under-utilized as mountains were a barrier to an industrial economy's development. Flat land, rivers, lakes and oceans transported the era's industrial physical products. Mountains presented a challenge for this type of activity. But with the advent of the technological economy, barriers are removed and the economic door is wide open for the mountain states to experience their long-delayed permeation and economic potential.

By mid-2023, the labor force participation rate in Utah returned to its pre-pandemic level as workers idled by the pandemic reentered the workforce. Abundant job openings and low unemployment rates contributed to wage growth and a seller's market for labor, where employees had significant bargaining power with employers.

The high inflation of 2022 and early 2023 began to abate, pushed down by Federal Reserve interest rate hikes. The high interest rates also drove the level of job openings downward, helping to bring labor demand and supply closer to equilibrium. However, the ratio of openings to unemployed workers in Utah remains elevated by historical standards at 2.3 jobs per unemployed worker in the state.

**BY MID-2023** the labor force participation rate in Utah returned to its pre-pandemic level as workers idled by the pandemic reentered the workforce.



# WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PARTNERING OPPORTUNITIES

**UTAH'S GOVERNOR**, State Workforce Development Board and WIOA partners utilized the 2024 planning process to ensure partners are leveraging and aligning efforts and resources as Utah awards and implements grants received from the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), the Creating Helpful Incentives to Produce Semiconductors (CHIPS) and Science Act, and the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA). Utah's workforce development partners understand these grants can

help improve job quality in clean energy industries and incentivize the expansion of workforce training pathways into jobs with a strong employment outlook. Utah will assess how the investments may expand the manufacturing and clean energy industry sectors in the state and consider plans for sector-based strategies that incorporate career pathways into related jobs for the current workforce and youth entering the workforce.



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