

Illinois Unified State Plan for 2020-2024

Executive Summary

In January 2019, two days after his inauguration, Governor Pritzker issued Executive Order #3 (EO 3) and directed the State to prioritize revitalizing economic growth and creating economic opportunity in communities across the state using a data-informed, demand-driven framework for improving the quality of the State's workforce. Building upon that direction, the Illinois Workforce Innovation Board (IWIB) guided the development of the WIOA State Unified Plan that follows. This plan outlines the vision, principles and goals for the integration of workforce, education and economic development programs for the State of Illinois. It provides guidance to Illinois' workforce development partners as they seek to implement the Governor's vision to improve our State's economy and the lives of its workers.

In the spring of 2019 IWIB members and State agency leaders representing core and required partners came together to review and update the vision, principles and goals for the State of Illinois. The National Governor's Association facilitated this process by leading exercises, such as identifying strengths and weaknesses prior to drafting updated language. This leadership process resulted in an updated strategic vision and principles that were ultimately approved by the Illinois Workforce Innovation Board. The vision and principles provide a foundation for the Unified State Plan, Regional Plans and Local Plans.

Illinois' Vision Statement: Foster a statewide workforce development system that supports the needs of individuals and businesses to ensure Illinois has a skilled workforce to effectively compete in the global economy.

Our Guiding Principles:

- Demand-Driven Orientation - Through a sector strategy framework, the state will support the system assessment of business needs for talent across local, regional and state levels.
- Strong Partnerships with Business at All Levels - Strong partnerships with business will assist employers to define in-demand skills and articulate those needs to education and training providers.
- Pathways to Careers of Today and Tomorrow - The development of career pathways that meet employers' skill needs today, while offering individuals clear opportunities to build and upgrade their skills, earn industry-recognized credentials, and advance their career over time.
- Cross-agency Collaboration and Connections - There will be a focus on improving the strategic connections across all components and levels of the education and workforce systems.
- Integrated Service Delivery - Illinois will more effectively serve business and individual customers by implementing service integration strategies.
- Equitable Access and Opportunity for All Populations - Connecting individuals with relevant supports, such as transportation, child care and transition services will help targeted populations prepare for and advance along a career pathway.
- Clear Metrics for Progress and Success - Illinois will develop or adopt metrics that will monitor for progress and success informing continuous improvement and innovation efforts.
- Focus on Continuous Improvement and Innovation - Illinois will advance systemic and sustainable change that drives us to be prompt, agile and responsive to changing economic conditions.

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State Goals: As was detailed in the report responding to the Governor’s EO 3, charting a new course for Illinois’ economic future requires that we learn from the past. We must scale up practices that have proven effective, re-engineer those that have not delivered on promised success, and abandon those with little to no return. Six lessons learned will help guide our path forward and form the basis for the statewide goals that follow:

- Workforce development efforts must support the industries and occupations targeted at the state and regional levels while responding to the needs of local employers.
- The skills gap is arguably Illinois’ most serious barrier to economic prosperity. Building a pool of job seekers and workers with the right skills at the right time is essential.
- Our job creation efforts must be statewide and extend to employers of all sizes. Effective economic development strategies are needed in urban and rural areas alike. Also, two-thirds of the nation’s private sector workforce is employed by small business. Strategies to stabilize, retain, and grow this bedrock of our economy are urgently needed throughout Illinois.
- All our investments must generate an acceptable return on investment. These returns must be measured in terms of outcomes most meaningful to Illinois residents – such as jobs, earnings, and long-term career prospects.
- Programs to prepare individuals for the workplace too often ignore the harsh economic realities of low-income populations. Education and training models that offer an “earn as you learn” component enable economically at-risk populations to acquire new skills while supporting themselves and their families. For others, support for child care and transportation can mean the difference between advancing on a career pathway or remaining in poverty.
- The system-level change we envision will require that all State agencies with a stake in education, job creation, or workforce development support each other.

Goals for Achieving the State’s Strategic Vision

1. *Unite workforce development partners around regional cluster strategies:* Regional cluster strategies will focus resources on the industries with the highest potential to add jobs and increase prosperity in regions across Illinois. These strategies bring together the public and private sectors in each region to build on their unique strengths.
2. *Prepare Illinois’ workers for a career, not just their next job:* Regardless of background, life circumstances, or education level, Illinois workers can be prepared for high-demand careers by developing core academic, technical, and essential employability skills throughout their lifetimes.
3. *Connect job seekers with employers:* Assist Illinois businesses to find the productive workers they need, through more efficient training and better services for job seekers and employers.

State Strategies to Achieve These Goals: Six essential state strategies underpin Illinois’ commitment to engage and support all parts of our education, workforce, and economic development systems.

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Strategy 1: Coordinate Demand-Driven Strategic Planning at the State and Regional Levels

The IWIB has a demand-driven strategic planning process grounded in strong partnerships across education (secondary and postsecondary), workforce and economic development at the State, regional and local levels.

Strategy 2: Support Employer-Driven Regional Sector Initiatives

The IWIB continues to guide this important work to ensure investment in resources and promotion of skills and careers in targeted industry and high demand occupations.

Strategy 3: Provide Economic Advancement for All Populations through Career Pathways

State and regional sector initiatives will provide the foundation for sector-based career pathway initiatives that expand career and educational opportunities for students and workers, including those facing multiple barriers to employment to achieve economic advancement.

Strategy 4: Expand Service Integration

Defined as “a combination of strategies to align and simplify access to one-stop center services and supports for employers, job seekers, and workforce professionals within the system,” the goal of service integration in Illinois is to provide the best experience possible for all WIOA customers.

Strategy 5: Promote Improved Data-Driven Decision Making

Partner agencies will design, develop and use the statewide public-private data infrastructure (see Strategy 6, below) to provide both employers and job seekers with information and tools to promote and access job openings, review changing labor market trends and opportunities, identify funding opportunities and fund education, training and support services.

Strategy 6: Advance Public-Private Data Infrastructure

Focusing on the IWIB Vision, the board will ensure measures are implemented that will guide Illinois through sustainable, systemic change. It will expand and improve the Illinois public-private data infrastructure to support the five strategies described above. This requires the integration of labor market information with State education and workforce longitudinal data systems, as well as program and case management systems.

To assure that the IWIB can lead the efforts of Illinois in these six strategic areas, it has identified a need to strengthen the effectiveness and impact of its members and the membership of local workforce boards. Strategies will be developed to identify appropriate methods of outreach between the IWIB and local boards, as well as the technical assistance and resource needs that will allow board members to better understand their functions and responsibilities and ensure accountability in effectively conducting their business.

Stakeholder Collaboration and Comment: The IWIB is responsible for overseeing the development, implementation and modification of the Unified State Plan and for convening all relevant programs, required partners and stakeholders. The State agencies responsible for the administration of the core and required programs have reviewed and commented on appropriate operational planning portion of the Unified State Plan. Illinois' Unified State Plan was released for public comment on January __, 2020 to allow interested stakeholders to participate in the development of the plan. The comments to the Unified State Plan can be viewed in Attachment A.

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The current draft of the full Unified State Plan may be accessed and read at the following link, which will activate on December 5, 2019:

illinoisworknet.com/UnifiedStatePlan2019

This draft of the Unified State Plan will be revised to incorporate feedback received by the IWIB and feedback received during the public comment period in January 2020.

Draft