



GOVERNMENT OF PUERTO RICO  
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND COMMERCE

# Draft

Puerto Rico Unified Plan  
Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act  
Modification 2022-2024

March, 2022

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<u>ACS</u>	American Community Survey of the US Census Bureau
<u>BLS</u>	Bureau of Labor Statistics of the USDOL
<u>ETA</u>	Employment and Training Administration of the USDOL
<u>HHS</u>	US Department of Health and Human Services
<u>HUD</u>	US Department of Housing and Urban Development
<u>ODEP</u>	Office of Disability Employment Policy of the USDOL
<u>PRAFC</u>	Puerto Rico Administration for Families and Children
<u>PRASDF</u>	Puerto Rico Administration for the Socio-economic Development of Families
<u>PRDCR</u>	Puerto Rico Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation
<u>PRDEDC</u>	Puerto Rico Department of Economic Development and Commerce
<u>PRDH</u>	Puerto Rico Department of Health
<u>PRDE</u>	Puerto Rico Department of Education
<u>PRDOF</u>	Puerto Rico Department of Family
<u>PRDOH</u>	Puerto Rico Department of Housing
<u>PRDOLHR</u>	Puerto Rico Department of Labor and Human Resources
<u>PRDOS</u>	Puerto Rico Department of State
<u>PREC</u>	Puerto Rico Education Council
<u>PRIDCO</u>	Puerto Rico Industrial Development Company
<u>PRPB</u>	Puerto Rico Planning Board
<u>PRVRA</u>	Puerto Rico Vocational Rehabilitation Administration
<u>SCDD</u>	State Council on Developmental Disabilities
<u>SCIL</u>	State Council for Independent Living
<u>SRC</u>	State Rehabilitation Council
<u>UPR</u>	University of Puerto Rico
<u>USDOE</u>	US Department of Education
<u>USDOL</u>	US Department of Labor
<u>WDP</u>	Workforce Development Program of the PRDEDC

## I. UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN

Select whether the State is submitting a Unified or Combined State Plan. At a minimum, a State must submit a Unified State Plan that covers the six core programs.

Puerto Rico will be submitting a Unified State Plan. This plan includes the Adult Program, Dislocated Worker Program, Youth Program, *Wagner-Peyser Act* Program, *Adult Education and Family Literacy Act* Program, and Vocational Rehabilitation Program.

## II. STRATEGIC ELEMENTS

### (A) ECONOMIC, WORKFORCE, AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES ANALYSIS

#### Economic and Workforce Analysis

##### *(a) Economic Analysis*

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include an analysis of the economic conditions and trends in the State, including sub-State regions and any specific economic areas identified by the State. This must include –

##### i. Puerto Rico Economic Overview

The Puerto Rico 2022 State Plan Modification is available for public comment. Be advised that this revised document is based on federal guidance (TEGL 04-21) issued by the U.S. Department of Labor and the U.S. Department of Education, necessary state board approvals, and other state legislation impacting workforce development programs and activities in Puerto Rico.

The modified plan will be available for review and public comment until March 11, 2022, at 5:00 p.m. Please send your comments to [juntaestatalwioa@ddec.pr.gov](mailto:juntaestatalwioa@ddec.pr.gov). All comments will be reviewed by one or more WIOA partner programs which include the Puerto Rico Department of Economic Development and Commerce, the Puerto Rico Department of Labor and Human Resources, Puerto Rico Department of Education, and Puerto Rico Vocational Rehabilitation Administration.

**PR Economic Analysis Report 2020-2021**  
**Department of Labor and Human Resource**  
**Bureau of Labor Statistic**

The **PR Economic Analysis Report 2020-2021**, prepared by PR Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistic, shows an examination of Puerto Rico's economy and workforce during FY 2020-2021. Statistical data is from official sources such as, Puerto Rico Planning Board, US Census Bureau and the Puerto Rico Department of Labor and Human Resources. The three main topics presented in this report are: economy, demography, and labor market. The first section presents the Economy section with an analysis of principal economic variables such as: gross national product (GNP), gross domestic product (GDP), personal income and personal consumption expenditures, among others. Finally, the broader topic is the one related to the labor market, with an analysis of the labor force; employment and unemployment; composition of employment by industry sector; Business Employment Dynamics (BED), occupational employment data; in-demand skills; long-term industry and occupational projections; and Weekly Claims for Unemployment Insurance Data & Characteristics of the Insured Unemployed. Modification of labor market information included in the unified plan was updates with data form this report.

**Principal Macroeconomics Variables**

The evolution of the Economy of Puerto Rico in the Past 50 Years shows that P.R. moved from an agrarian economy in the 1960's, with the production of sugar cane and tobacco, to an industrial economy targeting petrochemical, electronics, needle and textiles manufacturing, in the period from 1970's until 2000.

The 21 century and the globalization launched the economy transformation to advanced manufacturing, service, and knowledge economics, in industries like advance pharmaceuticals, medical devices, biotechnology, food, export services, etc. Beyond the 2000's the PR economy are moving to the aerospace industry.

In FY 2020 Puerto Rico's real gross national product (GNP) decreased by 3.2% (Figure 1), then a downward trend was registered from FY 2006 to FY 2018, interrupted in FY 2012 and FY 2019, when there was a slight increase of 0.5% and 1.8%, respectively. In terms of the aggregate demand, the components that showed a decrease were: government consumption expenditure (0.3%), and personal consumption expenditure (9.4%); and otherwise, where a decrease was observed in construction investment (37.3%); net sales to the rest of the world (15.7%); and gross domestic fixed investment (22.1%).

**Figure 1**  
Gross National Product - Constant Prices  
(millions of dollars - fiscal years)



Source: PR Economic Analysis 2020-2021, PRDOLHR/ Puerto Rico Planning Board

The gross domestic product (GDP), the output of goods and services produced by labor and property located in Puerto Rico, showed a decrease of 1.7% in current prices for FY 2020 (Figure 2). This variable has been recording falls in FY 2017 and FY 2018 fiscal years. The sectors of GDP that registered a decrease in FY 2020 when compared with FY 2019 were: Utilities (19.5%); Agriculture (11.4%); Government (9.3%); Management of Companies and Enterprises (8.8%); Transportation and Warehousing (7.5%); Construction (3.7%); Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services (3.6%); Retail Trade (3.6%); Other Services (3.1%); Mining (2.8%); Accommodation and Food Services (0.4%); Real Estate and Rental (0.3%); and Wholesale Trade (0.1%). The Sectors that showed an increase were: Finance and Insurance (18.3%); Art, Entertainment and Recreation (5.0%); Information (4.1%); Educational Services (2.8%); Manufacturing (0.4%); Health Care and Social Services (0.3%); and Administrative Services and Support (0.1%).

**Figure 2**  
Gross Domestic Product - Current Prices  
(millions of dollars - fiscal years)



Source: PR Economic Analysis 2020-2021, PRDOLHR/ Puerto Rico Planning Board

The main sectors of Puerto Rico’s economy, in terms of production and income, are manufacturing and services. Manufacturing is the main contributor to the GDP. It has undergone fundamental changes over

the years, because of increased emphasis on higher-wages, high-technology industries, such as, pharmaceuticals, biotechnology, professional and scientific instruments; and certain high technology machinery and equipment. Manufacturing in Puerto Rico basically concentrates in certain major industries: pharmaceuticals and medicine; and chemical manufacturing. In FY 2020 this sector generated \$49,756.9 million or 48.2% of the GDP.

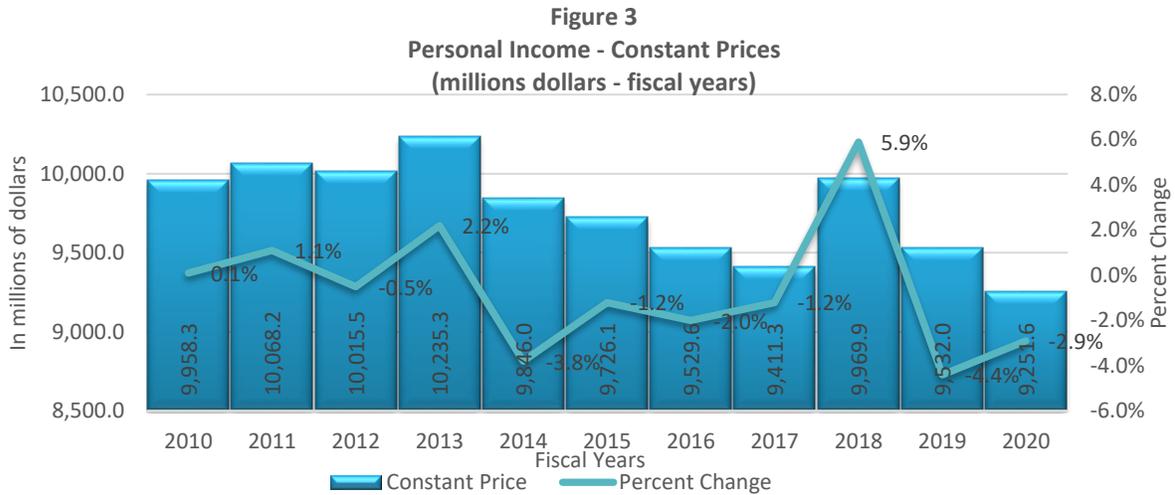
The service sector plays an important role in the economy, not only for its contribution to the GDP, but because of its leads in the private sector, in terms of employment. In FY 2020, this sector produced \$45,056.0 million and the share of the total GDP was 43.7% (Table 1).

**Table 1**  
**Gross Domestic Product by Major Industrial Sector - Current Prices**  
**(millions dollars - fiscal years)**

Major Industry	Fiscal Years				Difference	Percent Change
	2019r	Percent	2020p	Percent		
Gross Domestic Product	104,914.6	/	103,138.3	/	-1776.3	-1.7
Agriculture	719.6	0.7	637.4	0.6	-82.2	-11.4
Mining	43.0	0.0	41.8	0.0	-1.2	-2.8
Utilities	2,372.3	2.3	1,909.2	1.9	-463.1	-19.5
Construction	1,067.1	1.0	1,028.1	1.0	-39.0	-3.7
Manufacturing	49,581.1	47.3	49,756.9	48.2	175.8	0.4
Service (except Government)	44,721.7	42.6	45,056.0	43.7	334.3	0.7
Wholesalers Trade	2,771.4	2.6	2,769.1	2.7	-2.3	-0.1
Retail Trade	6,054.1	5.8	5,838.9	5.7	-215.2	-3.6
Transportation and Warehousing	1,371.4	1.3	1,269.0	1.2	-102.4	-7.5
Information	1,511.0	1.4	1,572.6	1.5	61.6	4.1
Finance and Insurance	4,022.5	3.8	4,758.6	4.6	736.1	18.3
Real Estate and Rental	17,154.4	16.4	17,100.0	16.6	-54.4	-0.3
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	2,503.2	2.4	2,412.7	2.3	-90.5	-3.6
Management of Companies and Enterprises	146.0	0.1	133.2	0.1	-12.8	-8.8
Administrative Services and Support	1,940.8	1.8	1,942.3	1.9	1.5	0.1
Educational Service	580.8	0.6	597.2	0.6	16.4	2.8
Health Care and Social Services	3,936.0	3.8	3,948.2	3.8	12.2	0.3
Art, Entertainment and Recreation	127.0	0.1	133.3	0.1	6.3	5.0
Accommodation and Food Services	2,157.7	2.1	2,149.3	2.1	-8.4	-0.4
Other Services	445.4	0.4	431.6	0.4	-13.8	-3.1
Government	5,861.1	5.6	5,318.4	5.2	-542.7	-9.3
Statistical discrepancy	548.9	0.5	-609.1	-0.6	-1158.0	-211.0

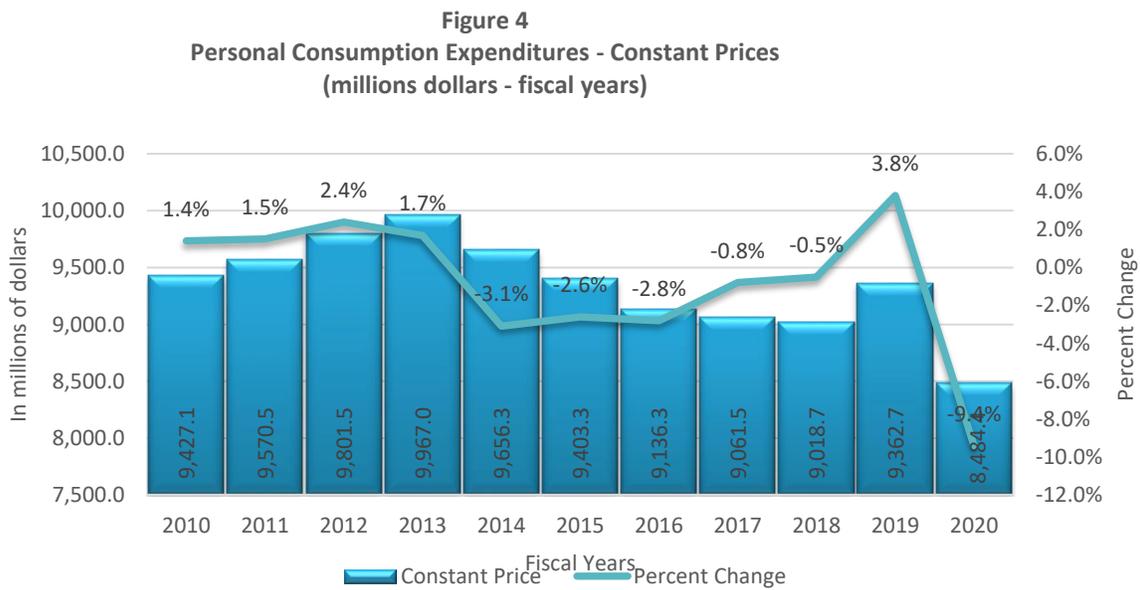
R-revised figures, P-preliminary figures, source: PR Economic Analysis 2020-2021, PRDOLHR/ Puerto Rico Planning Board

Personal income, in real terms, registered a decrease of 2.9% in FY 2020, reflecting a loss when compared to FY 2019. This variable is composed of employee compensation, proprietor income and transfer payments. The share of each one, as part of personal income in FY 2020 was 39.3%, 22.0% and 45.5%, respectively (Figure 3).



Source: Source: PR Economic Analysis 2020-2021, PRDOLHR, Puerto Rico Planning Board

In FY 2020, real personal consumption expenditures, a major component of the GNP, decreased by 9.4%, when compared to FY 2019. In net terms, this variable registered decrease of \$878.3 million. This variable is composed of, durable goods, nondurable goods, and services. The share of each one as part of personal consumption expenditures in FY 2020 was 19.0%, 37.5% and 43.5%, respectively (Figure 4).

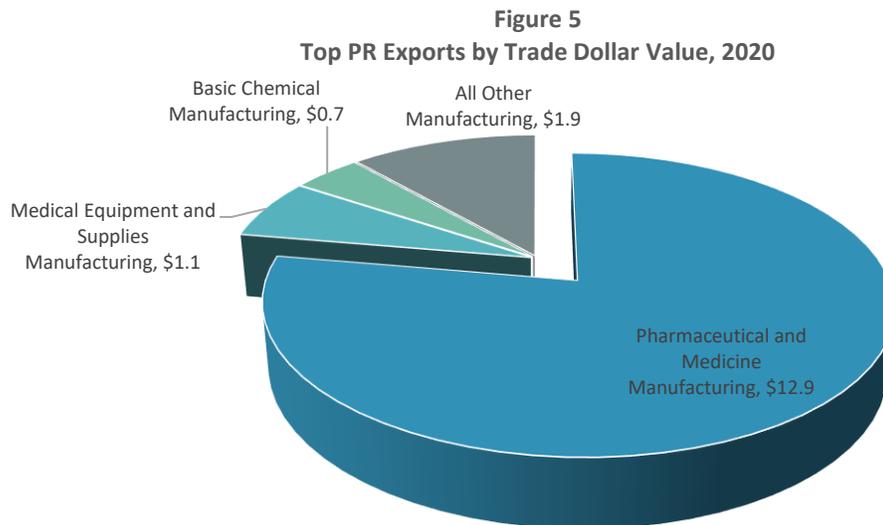


Source: PR Economic Analysis 2020-2021, PRDOLHR, Puerto Rico Planning Board

**Puerto Rico: Price Movements of Top Exports and Other Highlights, July 2020 \***

The export price indexes for the United States include Puerto Rico and other U.S. territories. Total exports for Puerto Rico amounted to \$16.6 billion in 2020. That was a 19.0-percent decline from 2019, when exports totaled \$20.5 billion. Export prices for pharmaceutical and medicine manufacturing recorded no change from March to June. The export price indexes for basic chemical manufacturing and medical

equipment and supplies manufacturing both increased over the same period (Figure 5).



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Foreign Trade Statistics.

\* Retrieved from: <https://www.bls.gov/mxp/publications/regional-publications/puerto-rico-exports.pdf>

### Top Puerto Rico Exports by Trade Dollar Value, 2020

- Puerto Rico led U.S. exports of pharmaceutical and medicine manufacturing in 2020, accounting for 19.3 percent of total U.S. exports.
- Medical equipment and supplies manufacturing was Puerto Rico’s second largest export in 2020, representing 6.9 percent of total exports for the island.
- Puerto Rico’s top 3 exports accounted for approximately 88.5 percent of the territory’s total exports in 2020.

In 2020, the United States exported roughly \$66.9 billion of pharmaceutical and medicine manufacturing products. Puerto Rico remained the top U.S. exporter of pharmaceutical and medicine products in 2020. The next 2 highest states, Indiana, and California, accounted for 12.4 percent and 11.3 percent of U.S. exports of pharmaceutical and medicine products by trade dollar value (Figure 6).

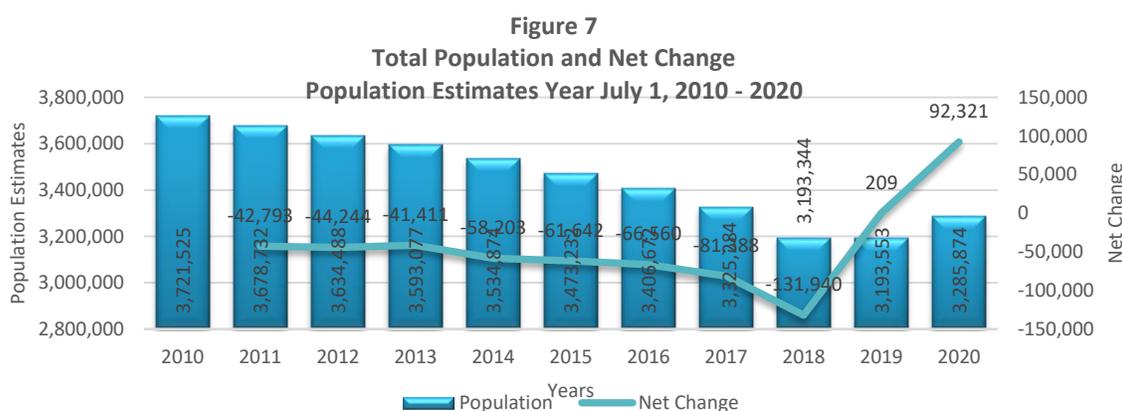


Source: BLS, July 2021, Puerto Rico: Price Movements of Top Exports and Other Highlights;

Subsource: U.S. Census Bureau, Foreign Trade Statistics.\

## Population

According to U.S. Census Bureau statistics, the population of Puerto Rico has continued a downward trend that began in 2005. The reduction of the estimated population from 2010 to 2020 was of 439,915 inhabitants or 11.8%. The high level of migration and the falling birth rate help to explain the decline. When analyzing the Island’s population in past years, we observe a considerable decrease after the hit of Hurricanes Irma and María in 2017. From 2016 to 2017, the decrease was 81,388 or 2.4%; from 2017 to 2018 the decrease was 131,940 or 4.0%; from 2018 to 2019 the increase was 209 or 0.0%. However, the arrival in early 2020 of the COVID-19 pandemics from 2019 to 2020 shows an increase of 92,321, explain ahead in Figure 7.



Source: PRDOL, PR Economic Analysis Report 2020-2021, U.S. Census Bureau, Population Division

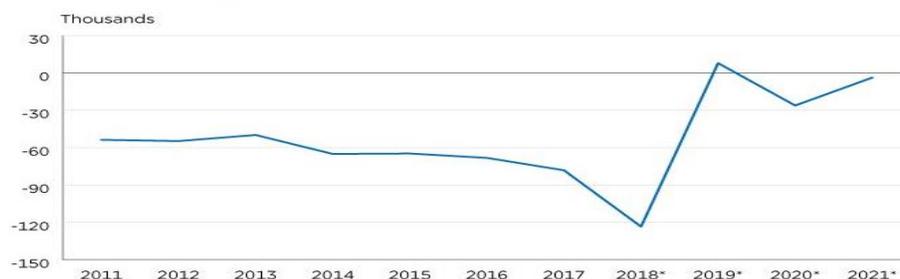
## Net Outmigration from Puerto Rico

The US Census released on December 21, 2021, the report **Net Outmigration from Puerto Rico slows during pandemic**, by Jason Schachter and Angela Menchaca, from the International Migration Branch in the U.S. Census Bureau’s Population Division. The report shows that net outmigration from Puerto Rico, which increased after Hurricane Maria in 2017 and a 6.4-magnitude earthquake in 2020, declined during the COVID-19 pandemic, according to U.S. Census Bureau population estimates (Figure 8). Net outmigration is the number of people who moved away from Puerto Rico minus the number who moved to its islands.

Throughout the decade, net outmigration from Puerto Rico remained at consistent levels until Hurricane Maria resulted in unprecedented high outmigration. However, this was followed by return migration the succeeding year. From July 1, 2019, to June 30, 2020, population estimates showed Puerto Rico returning to lower levels of net outmigration. This coincided with the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020, which slightly reduced net outmigration for the period. Slowdown in net outmigration continued into this year. Population estimates from July 1, 2020, to June 30, 2021 released today show net migration was only slightly negative.

**Figure 8**  
**Net Outmigration from Puerto Rico**  
**International Migration Branch**  
**U.S. Census Bureau's Population Division**

**Puerto Rico Net Migration: 2011-2021**



Note: Years represent July 1-June 30.

\*2018-2020 based on American Community Survey/Puerto Rico Community Survey data blended with Airline Passenger Traffic data; 2021 based exclusively on Airline Passenger Traffic data.

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey and Puerto Rico Community Survey; U.S. Bureau of Transportation Statistics, Air Carrier Statistics (T-100).

Overall, net outmigration from Puerto Rico declined, most likely because fewer people left the island during the pandemic. Other than return migration immediately after Hurricane Maria, Puerto Rico has not experienced such a dramatic drop in total net outmigration within the past decade. This making the impact of COVID-19 on migration particularly significant.

### Population in Local Board

The population on the Local Board reflects the same downward trend as the state level over the past decade. The local areas representative of the urban areas shows a greater reduction in the population, which include the local board of San Juan, Bayamón, Caguas, Guaynabo, as shown in Table 2. San Juan Local Board shows the largest population loss with 14 percent of the total reduction. The other 14 Local boards have a reduction below 10 percent. It is significant due the Local board of San Juan only includes the geographical delimitation of the municipality of San Juan. By including all the local boards that comprise the metropolitan area of San Juan, including local board of Bayamón, Guaynabo, Carolina and San Juan, the population loss reaches 35 percent during the decade.

**Table 2**  
**Population by Local Workforce Development Areas (ALDL)**  
**Population Estimates July 1, 2010 to 2020**

Local Area	2010	2015	2019	2020	Diference (2010-2020)	Diference (2019-2020)
Bayamón-Comerío	228,440	208,732	187,845	185,050	-43,390	-2,795
Caguas-Guayama	430,693	408,792	381,352	378,671	-52,022	-2,681
Carolina	176,425	161,861	146,983	144,958	-31,467	-2,025
Guaynabo-Toa Baja	289,632	272,875	253,086	250,974	-38,658	-2,112
La Montaña	164,745	156,598	145,898	144,814	-19,931	-1,084
Manatí-Dorado	270,690	257,946	240,739	239,050	-31,640	-1,689
Mayagüez-Las Marías	98,662	88,542	79,413	77,989	-20,673	-1,424
Northeast	240,437	227,566	211,127	209,482	-30,955	-1,645
Northwest	275,248	257,985	237,591	235,327	-39,921	-2,264
North Central Arcibo	299,020	279,758	257,529	254,879	-44,141	-2,650
Ponce	165,723	149,043	131,964	128,858	-36,865	-3,106

<b>San Juan</b>	394,235	355,496	318,622	312,975	-81,260	-5,647
<b>South Central</b>	171,647	163,372	152,697	151,889	-19,758	-808
<b>Southeast</b>	247,805	235,759	220,591	219,224	-28,581	-1,367
<b>Southwest</b>	268,123	248,907	228,116	225,203	-42,920	-2,913

Source: PRDOL, PR Economic Analysis Report 2020-2021, U.S. Census Bureau, Population Division.

### Outlook for the fiscal and economic crisis

- In the past decade more than 400,000 people have left Puerto Rico. The impact of Hurricanes Irma and María accelerated this trend.
- Student population has declined by over 40% since 2000 with an additional decline expected due to migration and decrease in births.
- About 43% of Puerto Rico residents live in poverty, which is the highest poverty rate of any U.S. state (Mississippi is the next highest at 19.7%).
- Puerto Rico is treated unequally under key federal programs such as Medicaid as compared to states. For example, the Census Bureau has reported that Oregon, a relatively prosperous state with a population similar in size to Puerto Rico, received over \$29bn from the Federal Government, whereas Puerto Rico received \$19bn for the same year (GAO Report United States March 2014: Information on How Statehood Would Potentially Affect Selected Federal Programs and Revenue Source).
- Periods of fiscal irresponsibility and lack of economic planning and transparency also contributed to Puerto Rico's financial crisis
- Overestimation of economic growth projections resulted in massive deficits that were covered with one-time measures and debt financing
- Frequent policy changes and lack of economic planning led to economic decline.
- The Economic Activity Index remained on the negative side. The recuperation is expected to begin with the investment of FEMA by the Hurricane María.
- Unchecked fiscal deficits between 2001 and 2008 led to a recurrent practice of deficit financing, resulting in a 131% growth in public debt during the period.
- An increase in expenditures and public debt led to a consistent decline in Puerto Rico's credit ratings (Puerto Rico Credit Rating FY00 –FY16: *S&P Rating on General Obligation Bonds*).
- Lenders enabled the island's debt binge - For years, bond holders extended credit to Puerto Rico, capitalizing on federal, state, and municipal tax advantages. But the lending continued well into the 2010s, when the island was careening toward economic chaos. Like a subprime borrowing that can't afford to pay for a huge mortgage, Puerto Rico was broke — but the credit was provided anyway. The additional debt compounded the island's crisis.

## World Ranking

Although the PR economy reflects a dramatic decline, the island maintains an adequate level of competitiveness globally. Some advantages still, like a privileged geographical location, easy access to U.S., Latin America, and Europe; Language's domain in Spanish & English; direct flights to major cities; access to the US market; Puerto Rico residents and businesses are subject to the legal protection of both the U.S. and the Puerto Rico Constitutions. The main disadvantage of the economic model is the high levels of energy production. The World Bank Group in their Economy Rankings of all countries in the world, established in its 2017 reports, shown in Table 3, that PR was in position 55 in Ease of Doing Business, while by 2020, it fell to position 65. As previously mentioned, access to energy is one of the main obstacles to increasing our competitive advantages. The ranking places PR in 92nd position with respect to this criterion. However, it is expected that with the approval of the recovery funds approved by FEMA for the reconstruction of the power system in the next years we will be able to improve access to more cost-effective energy.

**Table 3. Puerto Rico Economy World Rating**  
The World Bank Group  
Economy Rankings 2017, 2020

	Rating	
	2017	2020
Ease of Doing Business	55	65
Starting a Business	51	59
Dealing with Construction Permits	131	143
Getting Electricity	65	92
Getting Credit	7	4
Paying Taxes	135	163
Trading across Borders	62	70

Source: The World Bank Group, Economy Rankings 2017, 2020

## Socioeconomic Conditions

The median household income is the lowest in the US, equivalent to a half of the lowest in the nation, and three time lower than the US Median. In 2018, the U.S. Median Household Income (\$mm's) was \$57,652, meanwhile for PR was \$20,166, a difference of -65% (United States Census Bureau, 2020).

**Table 4. Socioeconomics Welfare Conditions**

Population	PR				USA			
	2010	2015	2017	2019	2010	2015	2017	2019
CHILDREN LIVING IN POVERTY	56.0%	58.0%	57.3%	57%	22.0%	21.0%	20.3%	17%
CHILDREN WITH PARENTS WITHOUT JOB SECURITY	54.0%	57.0%	56.0%	57%	33.0%	29.0%	27.0%	26%
CHILDREN LIVING IN HOUSES WITH HIGH COST OF HOUSING	32.0%	31.0%	29.0%	27%	41.0%	33.0%	31.0%	30%

ADOLESCENTS WHO DO NOT ATTEND SCHOOL OR WORK	18.0%	11.0%	13.0%	12%	9.0%	7.0%	7.0%	11%
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Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2020). American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates; Kids Count Data Center (2020). Data.

### Transformation and Innovation in The Wake of Devastation

After hurricanes Irma and María, thousands of people lost their jobs, schools were closed, government services and private enterprise could no longer operate effectively, landslides caused flooding hazards, and wastewater polluted marine environments. The Government of Puerto Rico views the recovery efforts as an opportunity to transform the Island by implementing solutions that are cost effective and forward looking, that harness innovative thinking and best practices, and revitalizes economic growth.

Recovery efforts are an opportunity to use recovery investments to help transform the Island by implementing solutions that are:

- cost-effective and forward-looking;
- harness innovative thinking and best practices from around the world; and
- contribute to greater economic development, revitalization, and growth as well as enhanced human capital.

Puerto Rico’s recovery plan sets out a path to help guide recovery investments toward this broader transformational vision by:

- defining what recovery means for Puerto Rico;
- establishing principles for how the Government of Puerto Rico, nongovernmental, private, and nonprofit agencies should work together towards recovery;
- describing the phases, the recovery will progress through;
- identifying the most pressing recovery issues and the priority actions, as well as potential partners and resources to address each issue; and
- committing to measuring and reporting on the progress of the recovery.

### The Central Recovery and Reconstruction Office of Puerto Rico

The Government of Puerto Rico— through the Central Recovery and Reconstruction Office (CRRO), established by executive order in 2017 and now also known as the Central Office of Recovery, Reconstruction, and Resilience (COR3), is in charge of developing this recovery plan in response to the “Further Additional Supplemental Appropriations for Disaster Relief Requirements Act, 2018” (Public Law No. 115-123). COR3 plans to use third-party assistance to manage recovery funds and optimize the long-term reconstruction process.

### Development of The Recovery Plan

The plan was developed over the course of three dynamic and overlapping phases:

1. Identifying damage, needs, and priorities for recovery
2. Identifying potential courses of actions (and their related costs)

3. Aligning the plan objectives and courses of action and identifying funding sources.

### **Fiscal transparency and strong Governance**

Transparency is a key guiding principle of Puerto Rico's entire recovery process.

The Central Recovery and Reconstruction Office of Puerto Rico, as a division of the P3 Authority, have the authority to centralize and oversight of the recovery and reconstruction of Puerto Rico. It will ensure that the Government of Puerto Rico can implement reconstruction efforts with efficiency, effectiveness, and transparency.

The COR3's responsibilities are to:

- **Monitor** contracting for compliance and effectiveness purposes.
- **Implement and enforce** checks and balances for procurement and approval of contracts and payments.
- **Deploy** a proven grant-management software and provide external visibility via frequent status updates to its public website.
- **Coordinate and channel** all efforts and activities of the Government related to recovery efforts.
- **Process, finance, and execute** works and infrastructure projects related to recovery efforts.

### **FEMA Funds Release**

Effective January 2022, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has obligated to the Government of Puerto Rico total more than 9,100 projects, nearly 80 percent are for permanent work. This represents over \$25.9 billion in federal funds for Puerto Rico's recovery. Hundreds of projects have already been completed while others are in the bidding and procurement stages.

The restoration of the electrical and aqueduct systems, as well as the reconstruction of roads, bridges, buildings, parks, schools, and ports, among others, will mark the beginning of the Island's socioeconomic development.

### **PROMESA Act**

Since July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2016, Puerto Rico is under federal legislation geared to the goal of restructuring Puerto Rico's public debt, and stabilizing government spending and long-term growth. The Puerto Rico Oversight, Management, and Economic Stability Act, Pub. Law 114-187 ("PROMESA" or the "Act"), was enacted into law on June 30, 2016. The Senate had passed PROMESA on June 29, 2016, and President Obama signed the Act into law on June 30, 2016. PROMESA is a federal legislative enactment. PROMESA includes a variety of provisions applicable to Puerto Rico, its instrumentalities and their liabilities and operations.

The Act established a seven-member Board, the members of which are designated by Congress and the President. The Oversight Board is provided with broad authority over Puerto Rico and instrumentalities of Puerto Rico, which the Oversight Board designates as "covered" instrumentalities. A key authority of the Board is that no budget can be submitted to the Legislature unless the Oversight Board has approved a

fiscal plan, and the budget is consistent with the fiscal plan. The Oversight Board can submit its own budget if the governor's budget is not acceptable.

A critical component of PROMESA is the requirement that Puerto Rico and covered instrumentalities must develop and maintain a fiscal plan. The first fiscal plan was approved by the board in January 2022.

### **PR Minimum Wage Act**

Puerto Rico has enacted the Minimum Wage Act, Act No. 47-2021, increasing the Island's minimum wage from \$7.25 to \$8.50 effective January 1, 2022. Additional increases will take effect on July 1, 2023, when the minimum wage will be raised to \$9.50, and potentially on July 1, 2024, when it will reach \$10.50, unless a mandatory decree alters that increase. Act 47-2021, enacted on September 21, 2021, establishes as public policy the periodic revision of the minimum wage to bring it in line with the cost of living and to ensure that people earn enough to meet their basic needs.

Act 47-2021 creates the Minimum Wage Evaluation Commission, which will prepare an annual report analyzing work conditions, benefits, cost of living and other factors that should be considered in establishing the minimum wage. Puerto Rico's minimum wage, including its regular increases, will prevail as long as it is higher than the US federal minimum wage, currently set to \$7.25. The minimum wage increase applies to non-exempt employees covered by the federal Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA). Puerto Rico's minimum wage will not apply to the following:

- agriculture workers
- administrators, executives, and professionals
- employees covered by a collective bargaining agreement establishing a higher wage
- governmental employees, including the government's executive agencies, legislative and judiciary branches, municipalities, and instrumentalities, but excluding employees of public corporations and other public entities that operate as private corporations.

### **Governor Administrative Statement 2021-023**

The Governor of PR, Pedro Pierluisi Urrutia, signed on February 18, 2022, the Administrative Statement 2021-023, which increased the minimum wage to \$10.95 per hour for construction workers of reconstruction projects financed with federal funds. In addition, it created the Multisectoral Advisory Council of Project Labor Agreements, to establish the guidelines and protocols to develop a Project Labor Agreement as a requirement to bid and contract with federal funds.

Construction workers will receive a wage increase on Puerto Rico reconstruction or recovery projects that are paid, in whole or in part, with federal funds. Specialized workers will be paid \$15.00 an hour, while the salary for laborers will be \$11.00 an hour. The increase will apply to government construction projects for the reconstruction and recovery of the archipelago after the hurricanes of 2017 and the earthquakes of 2020. The public policy is consistent with the U.S. President Joe Biden's administration, which mandated a minimum wage of \$15.00 an hour for employees of federal government contractors.

The implementation will begin with a pilot program for the Incorporation of Labor Agreements that will be implemented only in the construction projects of more than \$5 million and that are fully or partially paid for with federal funds allocated to the reconstruction from the Public Assistance program of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (**FEMA**) under Section 406 of the Stafford Act.

ii. Existing Demand Industry Sectors and Occupations.

Provide an analysis of the industries and occupations for which there is existing demand.

**Industry sectors in general**

As shown in Table 5, the principal industrial sectors with the highest share of GDP output in FY 2020 were Manufacturing (46.6%), Real Estate and Rental (14.32%), Government (8.19%), Finance and Insurance (5.59%) and Retail Trade (4.77%). These top five sectors comprised almost 80% of Puerto Rico's 2020 GDP output.

**Table 5. Series of Income and Product, Total, and Per Capita: FY 2005-2020**

	2005	2011	2014	2018	2020
<b>Total in current dollars (\$millions)</b>					
Gross national product	54,862	65,721	68,798	68,049	70,187
Per capita		17762	19,304	20,785	21,663
Gross domestic product	83,915	100,352	102,446	100,925	103,138
Per capita	21,943	27,122	28,745	30,968	31,833
<b>Per Industrial Sector (sector as % of GDP, subsector as % of sector)</b>					
Agriculture	0.6	0.79	0.85	0.78	0.79
Construction	2.5	1.3	1.1	0.85	1.3
Manufacturing	42.4	46.6	46.73	47.3	46.6
Wholesalers Trade	3.21	2.9	2.75	2.72	2.9
Retail Trade	5.57	4.77	4.91	5.2	4.77
Transportation and Warehousing	1.12	0.89	0.89	1.08	0.89
Information	2.32	2.6	2.58	2.73	2.6
Finance and Insurance	7.4	5.59	4.31	4.47	5.59
Real Estate and Rental	11.43	14.32	15.42	15.88	14.32
Professional, Scientific, Technical Services	2.08	1.54	1.79	2.25	1.54
Management	0.16	0.08	0.07	0.09	0.08
Administrative Services and Support	1.75	1.68	1.78	1.91	1.68
Educational Services	0.97	0.68	0.68	0.57	0.68
Health Care and Social Services	3.48	3.38	3.63	3.72	3.38
Art, Entertainment and Recreation	0.3	0.09	0.14	0.14	0.09
Accommodation and Food Services	2.03	1.77	1.97	2.03	1.77
Other Services	0.48	0.38	0.42	0.4	0.38
Government	9.71	8.19	7.64	6.37	8.19
Commonwealth	86.28	81.59	80.32	76.52	76.11
Municipalities	13.72	18.41	19.68	23.48	23.89

Gross national product	7,315	6,432	6,344	5,731	5,644
Per capita	1,913	1,738	1,780	1,758	1,742
Gross domestic product	11,379	10,589	10,434	9,489	9,254
Per capita	2,976	2,721	2,763	3,059	2,855
Salaries and wages (\$millions)	25,393	25,269	25,189	23,979	24,358
Employment, total (thousands)	1,213	1,043	987	968	986
Productivity (\$)	9,381	10,153	10,572	9,803	9,386

Source: PRPB, Statistical Appendix 2020.

From FY 2005 to FY 2020, the top nonfarm industrial sectors that were able to expand their share of GDP were Manufacturing, Real Estate and Rental, Information, and Health Care and Social Services. Moreover, the sectors that experienced a drop in their share of GDP were Government, Finance and Insurance, and Construction.

The Table 6 depicts the major industrial sectors with the highest estimated jobs for the first two quarters of 2021. Out of the 39 sectors and subsectors, 7 (37%) had an uptick in employment and 12 (63%) experienced a decrease between 2019-2021.

The largest employment sectors were Retail Trade (14.5%), Government (14.0%), Health Care and Social Services (10.6%), and Educational Services (9.1%). Together, they made up almost half (48.2%) of employment in 2021. The sectors that declined the most during this period were Information (-12.7%), Educational Services (-11.1%), Agriculture (-10.4), and Accommodation and Food Services (-9.0%).

**Table 6. Employment Estimates by Major Industry, 2019-2021**

Industrial Sector	2019	2021	As % of total	Change 2019-2021
Agriculture	9,889	8,958	1.1%	-10.4%
Mining	518	613	0.1%	15.5%
Utilities	8,104	8,306	1.0%	2.4%
Construction	26,155	27,752	3.3%	5.8%
Manufacturing	73,952	75,489	8.9%	2.0%
<i>Food</i>	11,623	11,404	15.1%	-1.9%
<i>Beverage and Tobacco Product</i>	2,279	2,404	3.2%	5.2%
<i>Apparel</i>	8,275	9,388	12.4%	11.9%
<i>Leather and Allied Product</i>	1,130	949	1.3%	-19.1%
<i>Wood Product</i>	399	387	0.5%	-3.1%
<i>Paper</i>	934	895	1.2%	-4.4%
<i>Printing and Related Support Activities</i>	1,539	1,383	1.8%	-11.3%
<i>Petroleum and Coal Products</i>	523	857	1.1%	39.0%
<i>Chemical</i>	16,429	15,863	21.0%	-3.6%
<i>Plastics and Rubber Products</i>	1,647	1,673	2.2%	1.6%
<i>Nonmetallic Mineral Product</i>	1,444	1,516	2.0%	4.7%
<i>Primary Metal</i>	326	495	0.7%	34.1%

Industrial Sector	2019	2021	As % of total	Change 2019-2021
<i>Fabricated Metal Product</i>	3,717	4,030	5.3%	7.8%
<i>Machinery</i>	2,138	2,015	2.7%	-6.1%
<i>Computer and Electronic Product</i>	5,555	5,990	7.9%	7.3%
<i>Electrical Equipment, Appliance, and Component</i>	3,975	3,714	4.9%	-7.0%
<i>Furniture and Related Product</i>	1,021	1,207	1.6%	15.4%
<i>Miscellaneous</i>	10,998	11,319	15.0%	2.8%
Wholesalers Trade	29,914	30,270	3.6%	1.2%
Retail Trade	126,587	122,641	14.5%	-3.2%
Transportation and Warehousing	21,157	20,254	2.4%	-4.5%
Information	16,615	14,745	1.7%	-12.7%
Finance and Insurance	30,081	29,774	3.5%	-1.0%
Real Estate and Rental	14,005	14,181	1.7%	1.2%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	32,877	35,173	4.1%	6.5%
Management of Companies and Enterprises	14,990	15,044	1.8%	0.4%
Administrative Services and Support and Waste Management and Remediation	75,136	73,541	8.7%	-2.2%
Educational Services	85,754	77,167	9.1%	-11.1%
Health Care and Social Services	90,572	90,231	10.6%	-0.4%
Art, Entertainment and Recreation	4,216	3,893	0.5%	-8.3%
Accommodation and Food Services	72,977	66,977	7.9%	-9.0%
Other Services	14,985	14,410	1.7%	-4.0%
Government	120,302	118,460	14.0%	-1.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>868,786</b>	<b>847,879</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>-2.5%</b>

Source: PRDOLHR, OES Estimates, 2019, 2021.

Table 7 shows the principal industries that are projected to have the largest expansions (in absolute terms) between 2018 and 2028, according to Puerto Rico's Department of Labor and Human Resources (PRDLHR) report on jobs by major group industry. The top five industries that are estimated to have the highest numeric change between 2018 and 2028 are Service-Providing Industries with a projection of 12830 jobs, meanwhile the Good-Producing Industries reflect a reduction in all the subsectors. Professional and Business Services and Trade, Transportation and Utilities are the subsectors with higher increase in jobs creation.

**Table 7**  
**PUERTO RICO - LONG TERM INDUSTRY PROJECTIONS**  
**JOBS BY MAJOR GROUP INDUSTRY**  
**2018 - 2028**

Industry Group	Projected		Change (2018 - 2028)	
	Employment	Employment	Employment	Percent
NAICS Title	2018	2028	Employment	Percent
<b>Total Employment, All Jobs</b>	986,783	993,679	6,896	0.70

	Good-Producing Industries	108,389	100,497	-7,892	-7.28
	Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	9,681	8,667	-1,014	-10.47
	Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	496	393	-103	-20.77
	Construction	26,262	26,008	-254	-0.97
	Manufacturing	71,950	65,429	-6,521	-9.06
	Service-Providing Industries	752,264	765,094	12,830	1.71
	Trade, Transportation and Utilities	168,300	178,000	9,700	5.76
	Information	16,643	17,122	479	2.88
	Financial Activities	41,856	44,906	3,050	7.29
	Professional and Business Services	124,282	140,120	15,838	12.74
	Education and Health Service	166,574	167,911	1,337	0.80
	Leisure and Hospitality	74,566	82,537	7,971	10.69
	Other Services (Except Government)	14,212	14,925	713	5.02
	Government	145,831	119,573	-26,258	-18.01
	Total Self-Employed Not-Incorporated	126,130	128,088	1,958	1.55

## Occupations

Table 8 shows the principal occupations that are projected to have the largest expansions (in absolute terms) between 2018 and 2028, according to Puerto Rico's Department of Labor and Human Resources (PRDLHR) report on occupations with the largest projected increase in employment. The top ten occupation that are estimated to have the highest numeric change between 2018 and 2028 are Security Guards; Combined Food Preparation and Serving Workers Including Fast Food; Registered Nurses; Personal Care Aides; Janitors and Cleaners, Except Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners; Retail Salespersons; Cooks, Restaurant; Stock Clerks and Order Fillers; Medical Secretaries; and Pharmacy Technicians.

**Table 8. Occupations with the largest projected increase in employment, 2018-2028**

	Occupation		2018 Employment	2028 Projected Employment	Change		Annual Openings			
	SOC Code	SOC Title			Net	Percent	Labor Force Exits	Occupational Transfer	Growth	Total
1	33-9032	Security Guards	26,806	29,546	2,740	10.22	1,437	2,189	274	3,900
2	35-3021	Combined Food Preparation and Serving Workers, Including Fast Food	14,824	17,544	2,720	18.35	1,290	1,592	272	3,154
3	29-1141	Registered Nurses	18,652	21,345	2,693	14.44	555	513	269	1,337
4	39-9021	Personal Care Aides	6,364	8,362	1,998	31.4	544	482	200	1,226
5	37-2011	Janitors and Cleaners, Except Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	29,939	31,925	1,986	6.63	1,892	2,182	199	4,273
6	41-2031	Retail Salespersons	37,252	38,992	1,740	4.67	2,191	3,378	174	5,743

	Occupation		2018 Employment	2028 Projected Employment	Change		Annual Openings			
	SOC Code	SOC Title			Net	Percent	Labor Force Exits	Occupational Transfer	Growth	Total
7	35-2014	Cooks, Restaurant	6,324	7,746	1,422	22.49	373	622	142	1,137
8	43-5081	Stock Clerks and Order Fillers	17,522	18,664	1,142	6.52	916	1,493	114	2,523
9	43-6013	Medical Secretaries	5,283	6,348	1,065	20.16	298	353	106	757
10	29-2052	Pharmacy Technicians	5,263	6,204	941	17.88	166	297	94	557
11	31-1011	Home Health Aides	2,224	3,058	834	37.5	142	154	83	379
12	35-3031	Waiters and Waitresses	11,530	12,318	788	6.83	828	1,461	79	2,368
13	53-3041	Taxi Drivers and Chauffeurs	3,142	3,890	748	23.81	189	192	75	456
14	53-3022	Bus Drivers, School or Special Client	1,315	1,968	653	49.66	127	80	65	272
15	11-1021	General and Operations Managers	6,065	6,680	615	10.14	134	420	62	616
16	Nov-31	Financial Managers	3,832	4,388	556	14.51	89	228	56	373
17	29-2010	Clinical Laboratory Technologists and Technicians	3,285	3,831	546	16.62	98	126	55	279
18	41-2011	Cashiers	31,468	32,012	544	1.73	2,833	3,155	54	6,042
19	43-3021	Billing and Posting Clerks	4,065	4,605	540	13.28	178	292	54	524
20	41-3021	Insurance Sales Agents	2,781	3,254	473	17.01	111	182	47	340
21	53-3033	Light Truck or Delivery Services Drivers	5,910	6,362	452	7.65	253	445	45	743
22	13-1111	Management Analysts	3,513	3,948	435	12.38	116	236	44	396
23	Nov-51	Food Service Managers	4,035	4,412	377	9.34	128	355	38	521
24	41-4012	Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing, Except Technical and Scientific Products	7,999	8,357	358	4.48	249	609	36	894
25	13-1161	Market Research Analysts and Marketing Specialists	1,760	2,107	347	19.72	46	152	35	233
26	47-2061	Construction Laborers	12,720	13,053	333	2.62	431	1,002	33	1,466
27	13-2011	Accountants and Auditors	9,583	9,903	320	3.34	275	633	32	940
28	31-1014	Nursing Assistants	780	1,088	308	39.49	50	54	31	135
29	31-9091	Dental Assistants	2,268	2,576	308	13.58	112	159	31	302
30	Nov-11	Medical and Health Services Managers	1,295	1,602	307	23.71	36	79	31	146

Source: PRDOLHR, Long Term Projections by Occupation 2018-2028. Note: Only includes occupations with 2,000 or more jobs in 2018. For confidentiality reasons some local area data was not disclosed.

On the other hand, the occupations that have had the largest net losses between 2014 and 2020 are Office and Administrative Support Occupations, Sales and Related, and Retail Salespersons with a combined total of 62,230 jobs. Furthermore, the occupations that have contracted the most during this period were Personal Care and Service Occupations (-52.75%), Food preparation workers (-33.81%), Laborers and

Freight, Stock, and Material Movers (30.71%), and Retail Salespersons (-29.1%). All occupations have a reduction over ten percent, with eight (8) of fourteen occupations, over the 20 percent of jobs reduction, as shown in Table 9.

**Table 9. Occupations with the largest decrease in employment, 2014 -2020**

Occupations	Est. 2014	Est 2018	Est 2020	Net loss 2014-20	% loss	Net loss 2018-20	% loss	MHW 2014 (\$)	MHW 2018 (\$)	MHW 2020 (\$)
Office and Administrative Support Occupations	166,720	153,920	135,890	-30,830	-18.49%	-18,030	-11.71%	\$11.33	\$12.04	\$12.56
Sales and Related Occupations	110,610	98,120	91,710	-18,900	-17.09%	-6,410	-6.53%	\$10.60	\$11.10	\$11.67
Retail Salespersons	42,840	32,090	30,340	-12,500	-29.18%	-1,750	-5.45%	\$9.01	\$9.33	\$10.23
Production Occupations	63,340	55,240	54,950	-8,390	-13.25%	-290	-0.52%	\$10.93	\$11.65	\$12.03
Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations	72,640	64,890	61,810	-10,830	-14.91%	-3,080	-4.75%	\$8.67	\$9.13	\$9.43
Secretaries and Administrative Assistants, Except Legal, Medical, and Executive	24,540	19,090	16,690	-7,850	-31.99%	-2,400	-12.57%	\$10.03	\$10.79	\$11.02
Transportation and Material Moving Occupations	48,200	42,780	58,170	9,970	20.68%	15,390	35.97%	\$10.43	\$10.99	\$11.33
Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance Occupations	43,580	39,520	35,880	-7,700	-17.67%	-3,640	-9.21%	\$8.93	\$9.76	\$9.95
Food Preparation Workers	11,890	7,850	7,870	-4,020	-33.81%	20	0.25%	\$8.83	\$8.83	\$9.22
Construction and Extraction Occupations	31,130	27,630	27,850	-3,280	-10.54%	220	0.80%	\$10.21	\$10.59	\$10.74
Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand-	12,470	9,300	8,640	-3,830	-30.71%	-660	-7.10%	\$10.55	\$12.02	\$12.15
Personal Care and Service Occupations	15,980	13,500	7,550	-8,430	-52.75%	-5,950	-44.07%	\$8.97	\$9.49	\$10.33
Police and Sheriff's Patrol Officers	16,320	13,860	13,020	-3,300	-20.22%	-840	-6.06%	\$8.76	\$15.23	\$18.00
First-Line Supervisors of Food Preparation and Serving Workers	7,750	5,510	6,160	-1,590	-20.52%	650	11.80%	\$10.62	\$10.64	\$11.02

Source: BLS (2020). OES.

According to the forecasts done by PRDLHR from 2018-2028, shows in Table 10, the occupations that are estimated to reduce substantially are Executive Secretaries and Executive Administrative Assistants; Police and Sheriff's Patrol Officers; Office Clerks, General; Secretaries and Administrative Assistants, Except Legal, Medical, and Executive; Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education; Word Processors and Typists; Secondary School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education; Legal Secretaries; Sewing Machine Operators and Teacher Assistants.

**Table 10. Occupations with the largest projected decrease in employment, 2018-2028**

SOC Code	Occupation	2018	2028 Projected	Change (2018-2028)	
	SOC Title	Employment	Employment	Numeric	Percent
43-6011	Executive Secretaries and Executive Administrative Assistants	8,509	5,997	-2,512	-29.52
33-3051	Police and Sheriff's Patrol Officers	13,285	10,831	-2,454	-18.47

SOC Code	Occupation	2018	2028 Projected	Change (2018-2028)	
	SOC Title	Employment	Employment	Numeric	Percent
43-9061	Office Clerks, General	21,842	19,644	-2,198	-10.06
43-6014	Secretaries and Administrative Assistants, Except Legal, Medical, and Executive	20,839	18,962	-1,877	-9.01
25-2021	Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education	10,907	9,228	-1,679	-15.39
43-9022	Word Processors and Typists	2,924	1,503	-1,421	-48.6
25-2031	Secondary School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education	7,739	6,571	-1,168	-15.09
43-6012	Legal Secretaries	3,696	2,680	-1,016	-27.49
51-6031	Sewing Machine Operators	5,415	4,488	-927	-17.12
25-9041	Teacher Assistants	7,230	6,321	-909	-12.57
51-9061	Inspectors, Testers, Sorters, Samplers, and Weighers	3,720	3,014	-706	-18.98
47-4051	Highway Maintenance Workers	4,853	4,162	-691	-14.24
43-9021	Data Entry Keyers	2,284	1,762	-522	-22.85
21-1093	Social and Human Service Assistants	4,496	3,980	-516	-11.48
33-1012	First-Line Supervisors of Police and Detectives	2,875	2,363	-512	-17.81
45-2092	Farmworkers and Laborers, Crop, Nursery, and Greenhouse	4,796	4,327	-469	-9.78
43-3031	Bookkeeping, Accounting, and Auditing Clerks	8,951	8,500	-451	-5.04
21-1021	Child, Family, and School Social Workers	3,360	2,917	-443	-13.18
25-1194	Vocational Education Teachers, Postsecondary	2,115	1,672	-443	-20.95
53-7064	Packers and Packagers, Hand	3,698	3,279	-419	-11.33

Source: PRDOLHR, Long Term Projections by Occupation 2016-2026.

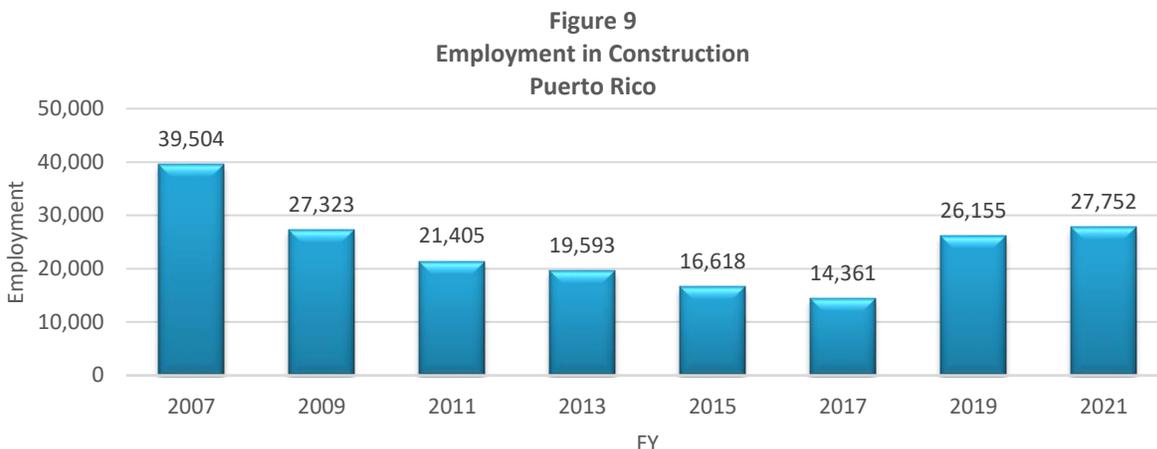
Note: Only includes occupations with 2,000 or more jobs in 2016. For confidentiality reasons some local area data was not disclosed.

## ii. Emerging Demand Industry Sectors and Occupations

Provide an analysis of the industries and occupations for which demand is emerging.

### Construction Sector Insights

Construction is one of the largest industry sectors in Puerto Rico. Although it has been decreasing due to the housing crisis of 2006, it is expected to grow in the following years. This is due to the reconstruction funds allocated by the federal government following the 2017 hurricanes. This growth will require training and retraining of members of the labor force to satisfy the demand of labor in this sector. The training required for these trades is not commonly offered in traditional post-secondary institutions.



Source: PR Department of Labor & Human Resources (2020). Household Survey.

As stated before, the construction sector in Puerto Rico will grow in the following years, requiring trained personnel to satisfy the increase in demand. In 2018, the construction sector exhibited its first growth in employment since 2012. During those years, the disbursement of federal funds for diverse reconstruction and recovery projects had a positive effect in the amount of employment in this sector. In the year 2012, when the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act had been in effect, the employment in the construction sector increased by 11.3%. Following a similar pattern as in 2012, employment increased in the years 2019 and 2021, the same time in which FEMA funds were assigned to the island. Since these disbursements are only 30% from the total allocated funds for recovery, it can be argued that employment in the construction sector will be steadily increasing until all funds have been disbursed.

**Table 11. Construction Employment**

Fiscal Year	Construction Employment	Change (Absolute)
2019	48,000	
2020	50,686	2,686
2021	51,567	881
2022	57,075	5,508
2023	61,676	4,602
2024	64,151	2,474

Source: Estimates by Estudios Técnicos, Inc.

Among other effects of the arrival of federal recovery funds are the increase in the construction sector employment. According to estimates from Estudios Técnicos, former DEDC consultant, the average increase in employment in the construction sector will be of 3,230 per year. In total, approximately 16,000 jobs in the construction sector are estimated to be created from 2020 to 2024. In addition to the total increase in employment, the turnover in the construction sector needs to be considered for training

purposes. The employment turnover consists in the percentage of job openings that are posted at the end of a period. This means another amount of potentially new workers in the field. As reported by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the rate of job openings in the construction sector for December 2019, was 3.1%. This rate was applied to the previously presented projections and the results are presented in the following Table.

**Table 12. Construction Training Demand**

Fiscal Year	Construction Employment	New Employees	Construction Industry Turnover (3.1%)	Total Training Demand
2019	48,000			
2020	50,686	2,686	1,571	<b>4,257</b>
2021	51,567	881	1,599	<b>2,480</b>
2022	57,075	5,508	1,769	<b>7,277</b>
2023	61,676	4,602	1,912	<b>6,514</b>
2024	64,151	2,474	1,989	<b>4,463</b>
	<b>Total</b>	<b>16,151</b>	<b>8,840</b>	<b>24,991</b>

Source: Estimates by Estudios Técnicos Inc

Note: The construction industry turnover is published by the Bureau of Labor Statistics:

<https://www.bls.gov/jlt/>

The total sum of the new employees per year and the industry turnover results in the total demand for training for that year. The total training demand is almost 25,000 persons. It is worth mentioning that not all these jobs belong to trades that are associated with formal instruction. Below follows an estimate of which instructional programs (CIP) -post-secondary educational programs, of any length- will be needed to satisfy this increase in job openings in the construction industry.

**Table 13. Educational Program to Satisfy the Job Opening in the Construction Industry**

Instructional Program Description	CIP CODE	Annual Graduates	Total Employment 2018	Job Openings	Demand by Instructional Program
Other Non-degree disciplines	99.9999	-	328,103	36,091	36,091
General Office Occupations and Clerical Services	52.0408	55	23,512	2,318	2,263
Truck and Bus Driver/Commercial Vehicle Operator and Instructor	49.0205	-	15,914	1,683	1,683
Receptionist	52.0406	-	10,540	1,344	1,344
Executive Assistant/Executive Secretary	52.0402	219	13,627	1,282	1,063
Floriculture/Floristry Operations and Management	01.0608	42	9,940	1,051	1,010
Customer Service Support/Call Center/Teleservice Operation	52.0411	-	7,526	954	954
Accounting Technology/Technician and Bookkeeping	52.0302	51	9,370	999	948

Instructional Program Description	CIP CODE	Annual Graduates	Total Employment 2018	Job Openings	Demand by Instructional Program
Home Health Aide/Home Attendant	51.2602	63	7,298	958	895
Building/Property Maintenance	46.0401	19	9,180	913	893
Office Management and Supervision	52.0204	233	11,246	1,064	831
Administrative Assistant and Secretarial Science, General	52.0401	573	14,846	1,397	823
Sales, Distribution, and Marketing Operations, General	52.1801	6	7,305	740	734
Teacher Assistant/Aide	13.1501	235	9,565	928	693
Banking and Financial Support Services	52.0803	163	7,850	763	600
Criminalistics and Criminal Science	43.0111	102	10,485	675	573
Selling Skills and Sales Operations	52.1804	-	4,823	546	546
Operations Management and Supervision	52.0205	33	6,223	490	458
Retailing and Retail Operations	52.1803	-	3,278	433	433
Quality Control Technology/Technician	15.0702	11	3,518	387	376
Medical Office Management/Administration	51.0705	9	3,980	376	368
General Merchandising, Sales, and Related Marketing Operations, Other	52.1899	1	3,647	364	362
Finance, General	52.0801	278	7,936	627	348
Teacher Education, Multiple Levels	13.1206	111	6,970	459	348
Industrial Mechanics and Maintenance Technology	47.0303	26	3,493	350	324
Construction/Heavy Equipment/Earthmoving Equipment Operation	49.0202	-	3,168	317	317
Insurance	52.1701	2	3,493	296	294
Other Academic Programs		56,218	297,638	25,688	- 30,530
<b>Total</b>		<b>58,450</b>	<b>844,474</b>	<b>83,491</b>	<b>25,042</b>

Source: IPEDS data, 2020. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020. Estimates by Estudios Técnicos.

A conversion from the occupation to instructional program was applied to determine the projected demand for instructional disciplines in the construction sector. Using a crosswalk from the Analyst Resource Center, the occupation by SOC code was converted to instructional programs by CIP codes. From the crosswalk and labor data, one can observe that the relationship between employment and instructional programs is not always one-to-one but may be one-to-many or not have a relationship with an instructional program at all. This information is reflected in the construction sector as it is found that there are multiple construction jobs, including construction laborers, that are non-degree requiring occupations and, therefore, are not represented by any CIP code. Table 14 presents the first 25 occupations with the highest employment and highest wages in 2020 the construction industry sector.

**Table 14**  
**Construction Industry Sector - 2020**

Top 25 Highest Employment Occupations			Top 25 Highest Paying Employment Occupations		
	Occupations	Employment 2020		Occupations	Mean Hourly Wage
1.	Construction Laborers	5,140	1.	Architectural and Engineering Managers	\$51.27
2.	First-Line Supervisors of Construction Trades and Extraction Workers	2,090	2.	Chief Executives	\$42.10
3.	Carpenters	1,430	3.	Computer and Information Systems Managers	\$36.07
4.	Helpers--Electricians	920	4.	Financial Managers	\$34.59
5.	Electricians	820	5.	General and Operations Managers	\$33.15
6.	Helpers--Carpenters	820	6.	Administrative Services and Facilities Managers	\$28.04
7.	Civil Engineers	760	7.	Construction Managers	\$27.88
8.	Secretaries and Administrative Assistants, Except Legal, Medical, and Executive	670	8.	Purchasing Managers	\$27.13
9.	Office Clerks, General	580	9.	Civil Engineers	\$26.60
10.	Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	550	10.	Electrical and Electronic Engineering Technologists and Technicians	\$22.14
11.	Roofers	540	11.	Human Resources Managers	\$22.03
12.	Cement Masons and Concrete Finishers	510	12.	Compliance Officers	\$21.28
13.	Operating Engineers and Other Construction Equipment Operators	490	13.	Mechanical Engineers	\$18.73
14.	Construction Managers	410	14.	Human Resources Specialists	\$18.04
15.	Plumbers, Pipefitters, and Steamfitters	410	15.	First-Line Supervisors of Office and Administrative Support Workers	\$17.58
16.	Welders, Cutters, Solderers, and Brazers	410	16.	Surveyors	\$17.28
17.	Janitors and Cleaners, Except Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	330	17.	Cost Estimators	\$16.94
18.	Painters, Construction and Maintenance	320	18.	Executive Secretaries and Executive Administrative Assistants	\$16.84
19.	First-Line Supervisors of Office and Administrative Support Workers	240	19.	First-Line Supervisors of Mechanics, Installers, and Repairers	\$16.78
20.	Maintenance and Repair Workers, General	240	20.	Electrical and Electronics Repairers, Commercial and Industrial Equipment	\$16.54
21.	Drywall and Ceiling Tile Installers	220	21.	Occupational Health and Safety Specialists	\$16.20
22.	General and Operations Managers	200	22.	Solar Photovoltaic Installers	\$16.01
23.	Structural Iron and Steel Workers	200	23.	Payroll and Timekeeping Clerks	\$15.76
24.	Bus and Truck Mechanics and Diesel	190	24.	Buyers and Purchasing Agents	\$15.30

Top 25 Highest Employment Occupations			Top 25 Highest Paying Employment Occupations		
Occupations	Employment 2020		Occupations	Mean Hourly Wage	
	Engine Specialists				
<b>25.</b>	Chief Executives	180	<b>25.</b>	Accountants and Auditors	\$15.26

Source: PR Department of Labor and Human Resources. Occupational Employment Statistics (OES)

### **Life sciences: pharmaceutical manufacturing**

Two segments of the pharmaceutical industry are currently experiencing excellent growth in the world's markets: (1) generic medications and (2) biologicals. Therefore, the panorama for growth in both fields represents an excellent opportunity for Puerto Rican labor. Some of the strategies involve:

- Protecting existing pharmaceutical operations through collaboration with companies in this sector
- Actively intervening in the sale of closed plants or plants in the process of closing, ensuring a connection to interested companies so that they may take over or adapt the operation of those plants, thereby minimizing downtime
- Fostering the establishment of a pharmaceutical industry specializing in the production of generics and biologicals, using local capital investment. Use the Puerto Rico Industrial Development Corporation (PRIDCO) as a partner for businesses
- Attracting retail packaging and distribution operations to complement already existing manufacturing operations
- Developing local abilities for pharmaceutical research and development to create intellectual property in Puerto Rico
- Developing joint training programs with universities and companies in the private sector to strengthen the future labor force and offer better job and growth opportunities

With five decades of pharmaceutical manufacturing, Puerto Rico has a highly experienced workforce knowledgeable in GMP, FDA and other global regulations. Although 60% of employees in the life sciences have at least a bachelor's degree, Puerto Rico offers the lowest labor costs of any region under U.S. jurisdiction – with hourly earnings in manufacturing averaging 65% to 80% of the U.S. average.

### **Life sciences: manufacturing of medical devices**

This sector is expected to experience a growth rate of 6% per year through 2020. Puerto Rico is in a unique position to take advantage of this trend, with an impressive history of \$4.5 billion in exports in the manufacturing of medical devices, along with thirteen of the world's twenty largest firms in this sector are in Puerto Rico. Some of the strategies involve:

- Attracting new lines of production to companies established in Puerto Rico
- Fostering research and development, and manufacturing of new products in Puerto Rico

- Focusing promotional efforts in high-growth sectors and corporations, especially including companies in the fields of orthopedics, trauma, invasive surgery, and visual devices
- Attracting companies within the medical devices supply chain, in order to consolidate the cluster and expand growth horizons
- Workforce advantages in this sector are comparable to that of the pharmaceutical manufacturing subsector.

### **Agricultural biotechnology**

According to Puerto Rico Industrial Development Company, Puerto Rico has emerged as an important center for agricultural biotechnology. There's ongoing research with corn, soy, sorghum, sunflower, cotton, among others since 1983. It is one of the fastest growing sectors and is supported by the following conditions: year around stable weather and environmental conditions, skilled and professional labor, soil quality, proximity to the U.S., rapid transportation system, agricultural academic research centers, and intellectual property protection. Pioneer Hi-Bred, BASF Agrochemical, Bayer-Crop science, Syngenta Seeds and Rice Tec are among many seed companies that have found the island to be fertile ground for research and development. The sector is made up of 18% of all agricultural employment (over 2,500 employees). Puerto Rico must become a center for the scientific production and improvement of seeds in Latin America, and it must become a leader in an industry that is slated to grow at 6% per year. Some of the strategies involve:

- Supporting the expansion of production by companies currently doing business in Puerto Rico by preparing personalized offers
- Attracting additional companies in this sector by promoting existing incentives, infrastructure, and talent in Puerto Rico
- Fostering additional research and development in this sector

A highly educated workforce is sustained by an array of current programs, including those offered at the Biotechnology Development and Training Center at the Mayagüez campus of the UPR, which is a public-private initiative that offers customized training programs for students and employees with degrees in science and engineering. In addition, pharmaceutical professionals who want to transition into the life sciences. There is a five-year bachelor's degree in industrial biotechnology from the UPR, Mayagüez campus, and Ph.D. programs in biomedical science from the UPR, Medical Sciences campus, and the Ponce School of Medicine/Pontifical Catholic University of Puerto Rico.

### **Outsourcing**

Puerto Rico is quickly emerging as a knowledge-services hub both for online monitoring as well as telecommunication-related operations like call centers. Income from outsourcing or expert services at the

global level is estimated to be some \$506 billion in the first half of 2018<sup>1</sup>. The industry is composed of four segments: (1) outsourcing of information technology, (2) outsourcing of business processes, (3) outsourcing of knowledge processes, and (4) outsourcing of engineering and R&D. Some of the strategies involve:

- Creating an outsourcing cluster linking universities, the private sector, and government
- Developing training programs in coordination with universities and companies in this sector, which includes offering students' internships in various companies within the sector
- Attracting large operations offering Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) and integrated outsourcing services through aggressive and personalized promotion
- Promoting the development of local software for eventual export, through promotion of current legislation
- Expanding the aerospace and defense sector, paying special attention to outsourcing in the area of research and development

### **Maintenance, repair, and operations (MRO) cluster**

The MRO market is projected to total \$76 billion by 2022, some 36% more than the current \$56 billion. The trend shows that airlines are increasingly interested in outsourcing their secondary activities. An MRO cluster could represent as much as \$600 million to the GDP with important effects on small and medium businesses and local economies. Aside from the principal services of assembly, cleaning, and coordination, most of the jobs are provided by businesses with fewer than 10 employees. Puerto Rico's MRO cluster would be in the aerospace triangle in the northwest part of the island, whose center is in Aguadilla. This region has proved itself to be one of the driving forces of the aviation industry in Puerto Rico, with emphasis on the aerospace industry. Some of the strategies involve:

- Beginning operations of Lufthansa Technik in 2015
- Creating an MRO school in Aguadilla and adapting its program to current university curricula in order to ensure quantity and quality of the labor force, helping to support the industry's development
- Identifying opportunities for set up businesses and creating links to the existing aerospace industry in Puerto Rico

A highly educated and skilled workforce supports this sector. Puerto Rico is home to two of the top 35 largest engineering programs in the nation at the Polytechnic University of Puerto Rico and the UPR, Mayagüez Campus. More than 20,000 degrees in science, engineering and technology are awarded each year by colleges on the Island.

### **Tourism**

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<sup>1</sup> FN: IDC (2018). Worldwide Services Revenue Led by Steady Growth in the Americas During the First Half of 2018. According to IDC (November 15, 2018). At: <https://www.idc.com/getdoc.jsp?containerId=prUS44448618>.

A Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) seeks to professionalize and give consistency to Puerto Rico's brand as a major tourist destination in the Caribbean and be recognized as a premier destination globally.

Tourism marketing strategies beyond the act will be based on the needs and trends of the national and global market. Through the DMO, Puerto Rico will display as a trademark the culture, natural sites, culinary experiences, and entertainment. Among its first initiatives should be the creation of a permanent brand for Puerto Rico. The brand will help leave behind the inconsistency of the brand and react quicker to market needs.

The Corporation for the Promotion of Puerto Rico as a Destination (DMO) officially began its work on August 2, 2017, with the appointment of its board members and the creation of internal committees.

### **Aerospace**

In recent years, Puerto Rico has become a magnet for some of the world's leading aviation and aerospace companies. With a long history of manufacturing expertise and a strong pipeline of engineering talent, the island has attracted multimillion-dollar investments by these and other major firms during recent years:

- Pratt & Whitney is performing engineering design and analysis for the jet turbine power plants of several aircraft from its Infotech Aerospace Service's division.
- Lockheed Martin has more than 60 employees conducting software support services from Puerto Rico for its global operations.
- Honeywell Aerospace employs more than 400 people in its shared services center that supports the company's global defense and space business.
- Hamilton Sundstrand manufactures aircraft climate control and electronic systems at its Puerto Rico plant, employing more than 900 workers.
- AXON Group and Pratt & Whitney established a world-class SAP services center that will create 300 jobs.
- Florida Turbine and ESSIG Research both have major operations on the island.

### **iii. Employers' Employment Needs**

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With regard to the industry sectors and occupations identified in (A)(ii) and (iii), provide an assessment of the employment needs of employers, including a description of the knowledge, skills, and abilities required, including credentials and licenses.

## **BUSINESS EMPLOYMENT DYNAMICS (BED) BY PRDOL/BLS**

### **Trends in Gross Job Gains and Job Losses**

Opening and expanding private sector business establishments in Puerto Rico gained 42,834 jobs in the fourth quarter 2020. This represents a decrease of 26,413 from the previous quarter. Over the quarter, expanding establishments added 34,324 jobs, while opening establishments added 8,510 (Table 15).

Gross job losses totaled 31,611 in the fourth quarter of 2020, a decrease of 810 from the third quarter of 2020. This was the second decrease in gross job losses since June of 2019. In the fourth quarter of 2020, contracting establishments lost 28,014 jobs, while closing establishments accounted for a loss of 3,597.

**Table 15**  
**Three-Month Private Sector Gross Job Gains and Losses, Seasonally Adjusted**  
**Fourth Quarter 2020**

Category	(3 months ended)				
	Dec	Mar	Jun	Sep	Dec
	2019	2020	2020	2020	2020
Gross job gains	36,994	34,391	26,094	69,247	42,834
At expanding establishments	30,317	30,193	20,433	54,932	34,324
At opening establishments	6,677	4,198	5,661	14,315	8,510
Gross job losses	33,546	35,428	109,540	32,421	31,611
At contracting establishments	28,060	29,473	86,413	27,115	28,014
At closing establishments	5,486	5,955	23,127	5,306	3,597
Net employment change <sup>1/</sup>	3,448	-1,037	83,446	36,826	11,223

1/ The net employment change is the difference between total gross job gains and total gross job losses.

Source: PR Department of Labor and Human Resources—Business Employment Dynamics (BED).

From October to December 2020 in Puerto Rico, gross job gains represented 6.6 percent of private sector employment, and gross job losses represented 4.9 percent of private sector employment, according to preliminary data released by the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the U.S. Department of Labor. This is less than the national rate of gross job gains (7.4 percent) and less for job losses (5.7 percent). The number of job gains from opening and expanding establishments was 42,834 and the number of job losses from closing and contracting establishments was 31,611. Expanding and contracting establishments accounted for most of the jobs gained and lost.

#### Rates of Gross Job Gains and Gross Job Losses

From October to December 2020, gross job gains represented 6.6 percent of private sector employment. Over the quarter, gross job gains at expanding establishments represented 5.3 percent. For the same period, gross job losses represented 4.9 percent of private sector employment. Gross job losses at contracting establishments represented 4.3 percent of private sector employment. The national rate at contracting establishments was 4.6 percent. The rate of gross job losses at closing establishments was 0.6 for Puerto Rico, and 1.1 percent for the United States (Table 16).

**Table 16**  
**Three-Month Private Sector Gross Job Gains and Losses as Percent of Employment,**  
**Seasonally Adjusted - Fourth Quarter 2020**

Category	(3 months ended)				
	Dec	Mar	Jun	Sep	Dec
	2019	2020	2020	2020	2020
<b>Total, Private for Puerto Rico</b>	<b>Rates (percent)</b>				
Gross job gains	5.4	5.0	4.0	11.0	6.6
At expanding establishments	4.4	4.4	3.1	8.7	5.3

At opening establishments	1.0	0.6	0.9	2.3	1.3
Gross job losses	4.9	5.2	16.9	5.1	4.9
At contracting establishments	4.1	4.3	13.3	4.3	4.3
At closing establishments	0.8	0.9	3.6	0.8	0.6
Net employment change <sup>1/</sup>	0.5	-0.2	-12.9	5.9	1.7
<b>Total Private for United States as a whole</b>	<b>Rates (percent)</b>				
Gross job gains	<b>6.2</b>	<b>5.5</b>	<b>4.8</b>	<b>9.4</b>	<b>7.4</b>
At expanding establishments	5.0	4.5	3.7	7.6	6.0
At opening establishments	1.2	1.0	1.1	1.8	1.4
Gross job losses	<b>5.5</b>	<b>6.1</b>	<b>17.0</b>	<b>6.0</b>	<b>5.7</b>
At contracting establishments	4.5	5.0	14.6	4.8	4.6
At closing establishments	1.0	1.1	2.4	1.2	1.1
Net employment change <sup>1/</sup>	0.7	-0.6	-12.2	3.4	1.7

1/ The net employment change is the difference between total gross job gains and total gross job losses.

Source: PR Department of Labor and Human Resources—Business Employment Dynamics (BED).

### Number of Establishments Gaining and Losing Employment

Another way to observe the dynamics of employment change is to count the number of establishments that opened, closed, expanded, or contracted during the quarter. Out of 45,156 active private sector establishments, a total of 11,013 gained jobs from October to December 2020. Of these, 8,673 were expanding establishments and 2,340 were opening establishments. During the fourth quarter of 2020, 8,563 establishments showed job losses. Of these, 7,675 were contracting establishments and 888 were closing establishments (Table 17).

### Establishment Births and Deaths

From October to December of 2020, a total of 1,037 new private sector, non-farm businesses created 3,443 jobs. This represented a decrease of 189 establishment births from the prior quarter, and a loss of 1,517 jobs. The job gains from these new establishments represented 0.5 percent of total employment births. The historical time series of birth data shows that the number of establishment births has remained around 900 every quarter, except that of the third quarter of 2017 and the first quarter of 2020 which were lower.

**Table 17**  
**Three-Month Private Sector Establishments by Direction of Employment Change**  
**Seasonally Adjusted - Fourth Quarter 2020**

Category	(3 months ended)				
	Dec. 2019	March 2020	June 2020	Sept. 2020	Dec. 2020
Establishments gaining jobs	9,012	8,788	7,068	14,464	11,013
Expanding establishments	7,639	7,781	5,679	10,666	8,673
Opening establishments	1,373	1,007	1,389	3,798	2,340
Establishments losing jobs	9,135	9,031	19,258	7,934	8,563
Contracting establishments	7,890	7,692	13,103	6,573	7,675
Closing establishments	1,245	1,339	6,155	1,361	888
Net employment change <sup>1/</sup>	128	-332	-4,766	2,437	1,452

1/ The net employment change is the difference between the number of opening establishments and the number of closing establishment.

Source: PR Department of Labor and Human Resources—Business Employment Dynamics (BED).

## OCCUPATIONAL EMPLOYMENT SURVEY (OES)

### Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates 2020

According to the Occupational Employment Survey, the estimated employment for 2020 was 819,750. The hourly mean wage was \$14.78, and the hourly median wage was \$10.62. In terms of employment and wages by a major occupational group, the Office and Administrative Support Occupations had the highest employment with 135,890. The hourly mean and median wage for this group was \$12.56 and \$10.61, respectively. Other occupational groups that stand out in terms of employment were, Sales and Related Occupations, 91,710 workers; Food Preparations and Serving Related Occupations, 61,810 workers; Educational Instruction and Library Occupations, 59,930 workers; Transportation and Material Moving Occupations, 58,170 workers; and Production Occupations, 54,950 workers (Table 18) (Figures 10 & 11).

**Table 18**  
**Employment and Wages by Major Occupational Group, 2020**

SOC Code	Occupational Group (SOC Title)	Employment	Location	Hourly Wage		Annual Wage	
		Total	Quotient	Mean	Median	Mean	Median
00-0000	<b>All Occupations</b>	<b>819,750</b>	<b>1.00</b>	<b>\$14.78</b>	<b>\$10.62</b>	<b>\$30,750</b>	<b>\$22,090</b>
11-0000	Management Occupations	38,700	0.83	\$36.97	\$30.16	\$76,890	\$62,740
13-0000	Business and Financial Operations Occupations	41,830	0.85	\$20.11	\$17.12	\$41,840	\$35,600
15-0000	Computer and Mathematical Occupations	12,250	0.45	\$21.42	\$18.79	\$44,550	\$39,080
17-0000	Architecture and Engineering Occupations	13,320	0.90	\$27.44	\$24.53	\$57,080	\$51,030
19-0000	Life, Physical, and Social Science Occupations	6,920	0.91	\$23.23	\$19.76	\$48,330	\$41,100
21-0000	Community and Social Service Occupations	14,980	1.14	\$14.40	\$13.29	\$29,940	\$27,640
23-0000	Legal Occupations	4,400	0.65	\$31.28	\$26.98	\$65,060	\$56,130
25-0000	Educational Instruction and Library Occupations	59,930	1.20	\$17.24	\$14.93	\$35,860	\$31,060
27-0000	Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media Occupations	5,700	0.52	\$17.84	\$14.99	\$37,110	\$31,180
29-0000	Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations	49,380	0.98	\$18.21	\$14.37	\$37,880	\$29,890
31-0000	Healthcare Support Occupations	15,110	0.40	\$9.66	\$8.93	\$20,100	\$18,560
33-0000	Protective Service Occupations	50,150	2.54	\$13.26	\$10.09	\$27,580	\$20,990
35-0000	Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations	61,810	0.93	\$9.43	\$8.94	\$19,610	\$18,590
37-0000	Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance Occupations	35,880	1.49	\$9.95	\$9.01	\$20,690	\$18,750
39-0000	Personal Care and Service Occupations	7,550	0.48	\$10.33	\$9.20	\$21,480	\$19,130

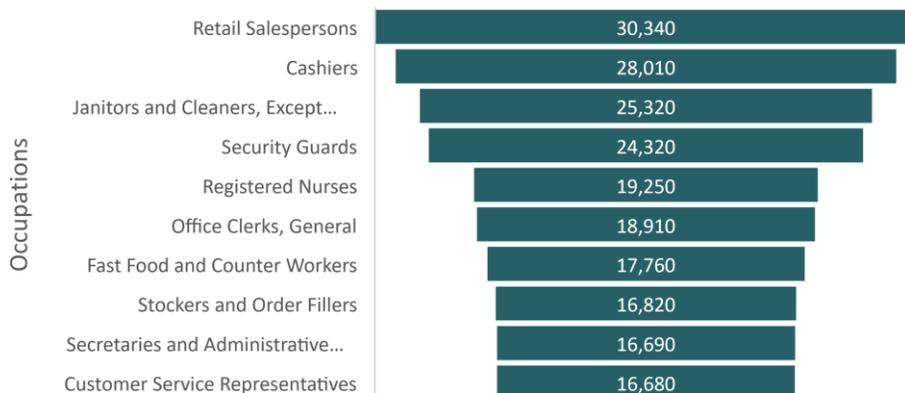
41-0000	Sales and Related Occupations	91,710	1.19	\$11.67	\$9.38	\$24,280	\$19,510
43-0000	Office and Administrative Support Occupations	135,890	1.24	\$12.56	\$10.61	\$26,130	\$22,070
45-0000	Farming, Fishing, and Forestry Occupations	2,240	0.79	\$10.58	\$8.74	\$22,000	\$18,190
47-0000	Construction and Extraction Occupations	27,850	0.80	\$10.74	\$9.25	\$22,340	\$19,240
49-0000	Installation, Maintenance, and Repair Occupations	31,020	0.96	\$13.73	\$11.37	\$28,550	\$23,650
51-0000	Production Occupations	54,950	1.09	\$12.03	\$9.57	\$25,010	\$19,900
53-0000	Transportation and Material Moving Occupations	58,170	0.81	\$11.33	\$9.32	\$23,570	\$19,390

**Figure 10**  
**Top 10 Highest Paying Occupations, 2020**



Source: PR Department of Labor and Human Resources. Occupational Employment Statistics (OES)

**Figure 11**  
**Top 10 Highest Employment Occupations, 2020**

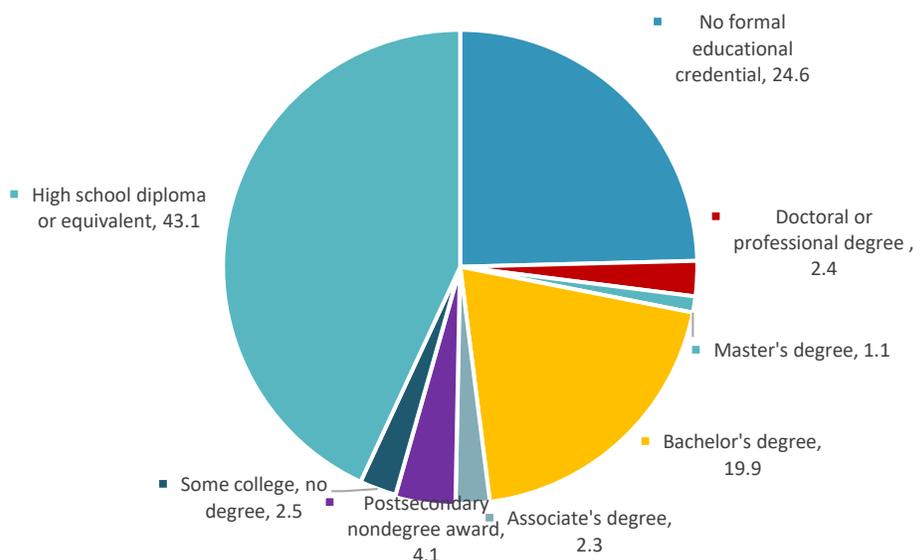


Source: PR Department of Labor and Human Resources. Occupational Employment Statistics (OES)

### Employment by Typical Education Level

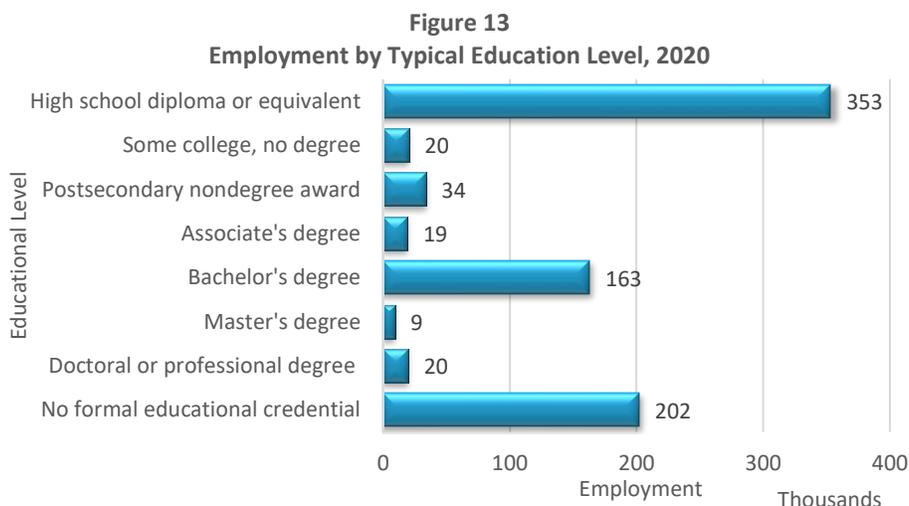
Occupations that typically require postsecondary education for entry level, made up 32.3% of employment. The largest postsecondary category, or occupations that typically requires a bachelor’s degree for entry, made up 19.9% of employment. This educational category includes registered nurses, kindergarten teachers on through the secondary levels, and many management, business and financial operations, computer, and engineering occupations, among others.

**Figure 12**  
Percent of Employment by Typical Education Level, 2020



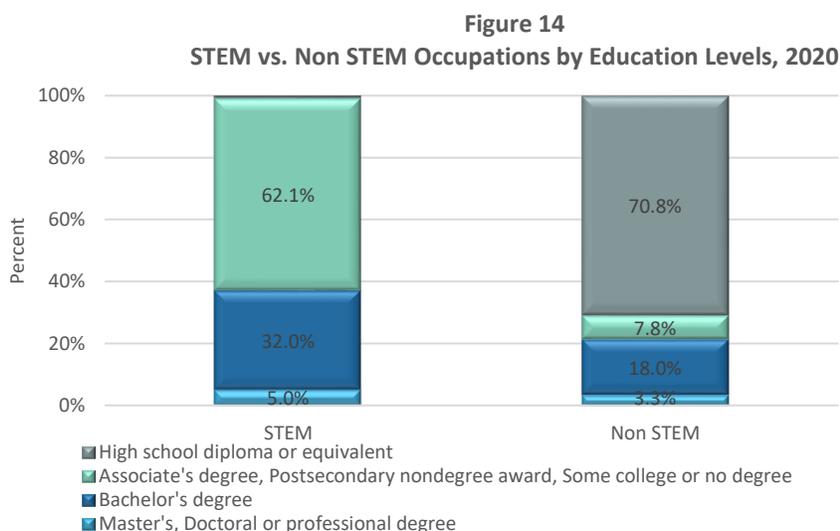
Source: PR Department of Labor and Human Resources. Occupational Employment Statistics (OES)

Occupations that typically require a high school diploma or the equivalent for entry level, made up 43.1% of employment, and occupations that require no formal educational credential for entry made up 24.6% of employment. These two educational categories include most production and construction occupations, as well as many occupations such as, retail salespersons, cashiers, and general office clerks. Occupations that typically require a postsecondary nondegree award, such as a certificate, for entry level made up 4.1% of employment (Figure 12 & 13).



Source: PR Department of Labor and Human Resources. Occupational Employment Statistics (OES)

Occupations or related field of study in the sciences, technology, engineering, and math are known by the English acronym STEM. Many STEM occupations require at least a bachelor’s degree. More technical and advanced jobs, including those in research, usually require a master’s or doctoral degree. But STEM isn’t only for people who have a bachelor’s or graduate degree. Many occupations typically require an associate degree, and a small number require either some college but no degree or a high school diploma or equivalent (Figure 14).

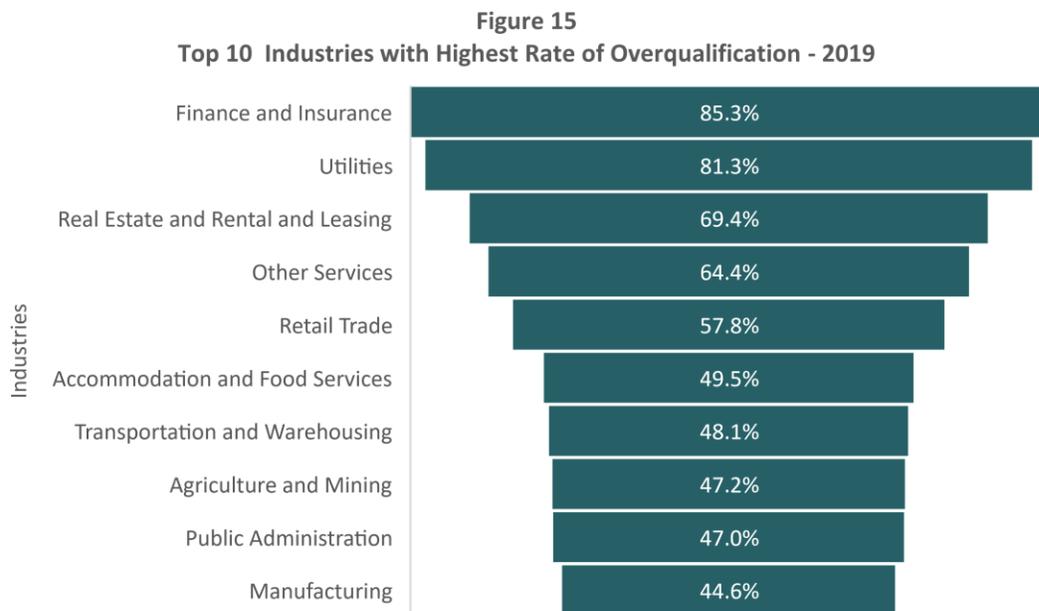


### Occupational Skills & Research

This section contains the results of the Occupational Skills and Research Survey of the Puerto Rico Bureau of Labor Statistics and presents skills on demand by employers in Puerto Rico. Of the entire group of employers surveyed, 42.0% informed that they had recruited at least one new employee between April of 2018 and March of 2019. Of the recruited employees, 30.3% were not required any specific level of education. However, 32.5% of those recruited had a high school diploma or its equivalent, while 22.4% had a Bachelor’s degree.

### Rate of Overqualification

The rate of overqualification, equivalent to the percent of the recruited employees who had a higher level of education than required for the vacancy, reached 39.1%. This rate reflected a decrease of 4.3 percentage points when compared with the previous year (43.4%). The industries with the highest rate of overqualification was the Finance and Insurance industry, where 57.4% of the recruited employees had more education than the one required for the job vacancy, followed by Utilities with 56.1% (Figure 15).

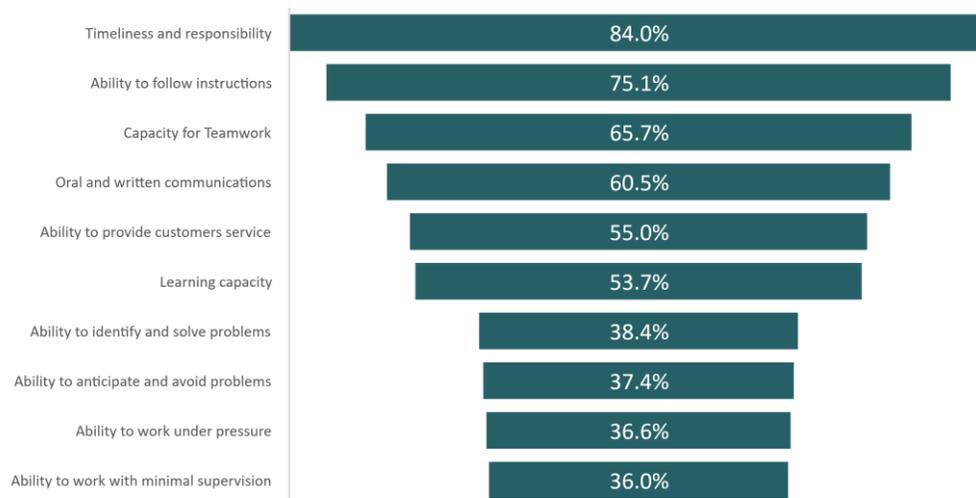


Source: Puerto Rico Department of Labor, Occupational Skills & Research Division

### Job skills most in-demand

Timeliness and responsibility, followed by ability to follow instructions were the skills most in-demand and most required by employers. The same were selected for the year 2019 by 84.0% and 75.1%, respectively (Figure 16).

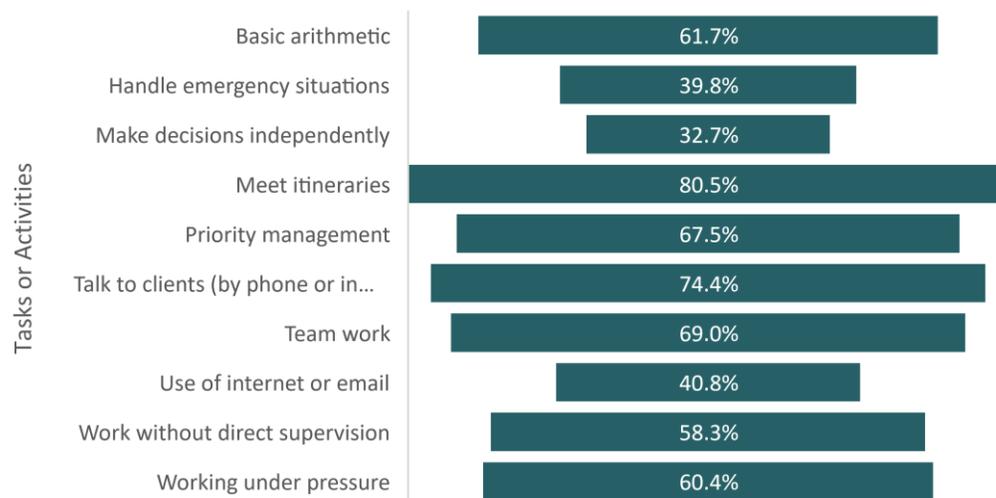
**Figure 16**  
**Top 10 Higher Demand Skill, 2019**



Source: Puerto Rico Department of Labor: Occupational Skills & Research Division

The ten (10) most required tasks or activities of the last recruited employees, and the percent of employers that required them for 2019 are presented in Figure 17.

**Figure 17**  
**Top 10 Tasks or Activities Mostly Required of a New Recruit - 2019**



Source: Puerto Rico Department of Labor: Occupational Skills & Research Division.

## Employment and Wages by Industry Sector

Occupations and wages by major industrial group in descending order of highest employment are presented below.

**Table 18**  
**Puerto Rico - Employment and Wages by Major Industry Sector**

Puerto Rico										
NAICS Code	NAICS-Title	Employment 2020	Mean hourly wage	Annual mean wage	Hour entry wage	Annual entry wage	Experience hourly wage	Annual experience wage	Median hourly wage	Median annual wage
By Major Industry Sector										
0	All industries	819,750	\$14.78	\$30,750	\$8.45	\$17,570	\$17.95	\$37,340	\$10.62	\$22,080
92	Public Administration	136,970	\$16.43	\$34,170	\$8.76	\$18,210	\$20.26	\$42,150	\$13.25	\$27,560
44-45	Retail Trade	114,510	\$11.34	\$23,580	\$8.47	\$17,610	\$12.77	\$26,570	\$9.24	\$19,210
61	Educational Services	81,710	\$17.32	\$36,020	\$9.56	\$19,890	\$21.20	\$44,090	\$15.09	\$31,390
62	Health Care and Social Assistance	81,380	\$13.56	\$28,200	\$8.43	\$17,530	\$16.13	\$33,540	\$10.78	\$22,420
31-33	Manufacturing	73,570	\$17.16	\$35,700	\$8.44	\$17,560	\$21.52	\$44,770	\$11.59	\$24,110
56	Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	69,170	\$10.91	\$22,690	\$8.42	\$17,510	\$12.16	\$25,290	\$8.88	\$18,480
72	Accommodation and Food Services	63,210	\$9.72	\$20,210	\$8.44	\$17,560	\$10.36	\$21,540	\$8.82	\$18,360
54	Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	33,630	\$20.22	\$42,060	\$9.20	\$19,130	\$25.73	\$53,520	\$15.13	\$31,460
52	Finance and Insurance	30,210	\$19.55	\$40,660	\$9.59	\$19,960	\$24.52	\$51,010	\$14.10	\$29,330
42	Wholesale Trade	29,240	\$16.79	\$34,930	\$8.45	\$17,570	\$20.97	\$43,610	\$11.13	\$23,150
23	Construction	24,760	\$12.62	\$26,250	\$8.44	\$17,550	\$14.71	\$30,600	\$9.70	\$20,170
48-49	Transportation and Warehousing	19,220	\$17.50	\$36,410	\$8.51	\$17,710	\$22.00	\$45,750	\$12.71	\$26,440
51	Information	16,700	\$18.47	\$38,420	\$8.68	\$18,060	\$23.36	\$48,600	\$14.75	\$30,680
55	Management of Companies and Enterprises	14,820	\$21.05	\$43,790	\$9.67	\$20,120	\$26.74	\$55,620	\$15.59	\$32,430
53	Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	13,710	\$12.51	\$26,020	\$8.44	\$17,550	\$14.55	\$30,260	\$9.69	\$20,160
81	Other Services (except Public Administration)	12,450	\$12.88	\$26,800	\$8.46	\$17,610	\$15.09	\$31,400	\$9.71	\$20,200
71	Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	3,530	\$12.11	\$25,190	\$8.47	\$17,610	\$13.93	\$28,980	\$9.43	\$19,610
21	Mining	530	\$11.34	\$23,580	\$8.44	\$17,560	\$12.78	\$26,590	\$9.37	\$19,490
22	Utilities	400	\$20.87	\$43,410	\$8.39	\$17,440	\$27.11	\$56,400	\$14.38	\$29,910
11	Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	50	\$9.93	\$20,650	\$8.42	\$17,520	\$10.68	\$22,220	\$8.90	\$18,520

(b) Workforce Analysis

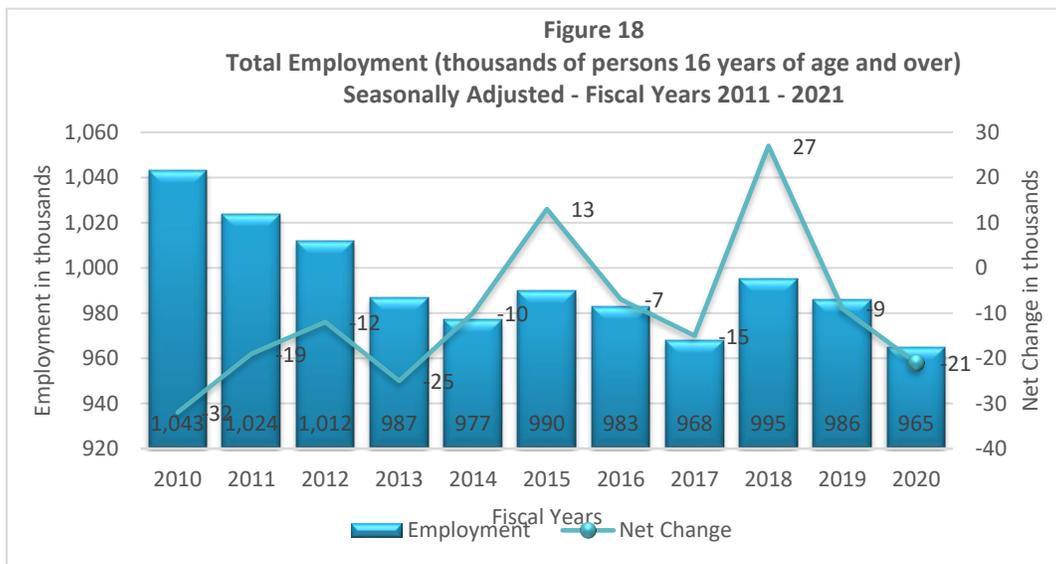
The Unified or Combined State Plan must include an analysis of the current workforce, including individuals with barriers to employment, as defined in section 3 of WIOA. This population must include individuals with disabilities among other groups<sup>5</sup> in the State and across regions identified by the State. This includes –

i. Employment and Unemployment

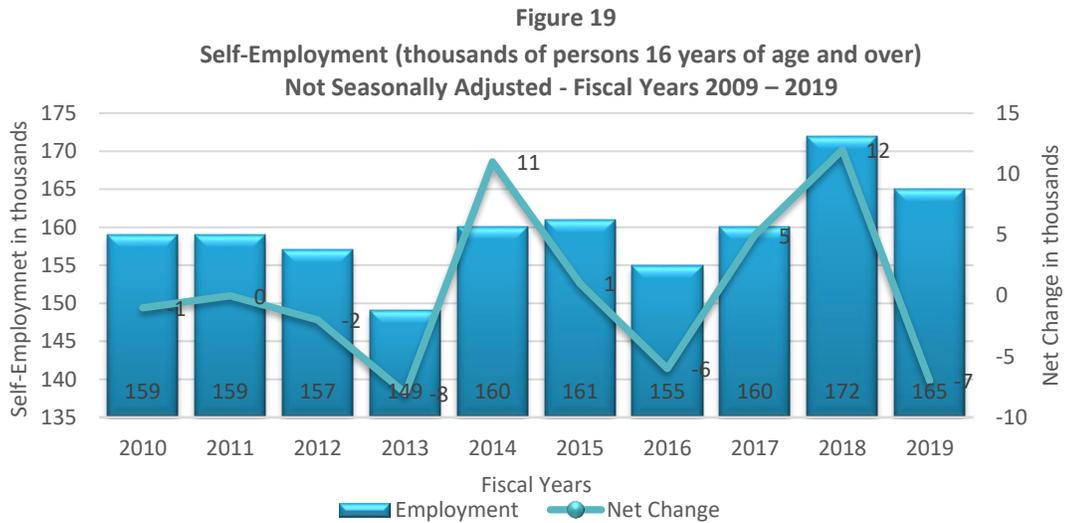
Provide an analysis of current employment and unemployment data, including labor force participation rates, and trends in the State.

**Employment**

The seasonally adjusted number of employed persons (which includes self-employed individuals and agricultural employment) reached a total of 965,000 in FY 2021. This represented a decrease of 21,000 employees or 2.1% in the local economy, when compared to FY 2020 (986,000). From FY 2011 to FY 2021, the Employment fell by 78,000 persons (Figure 18).

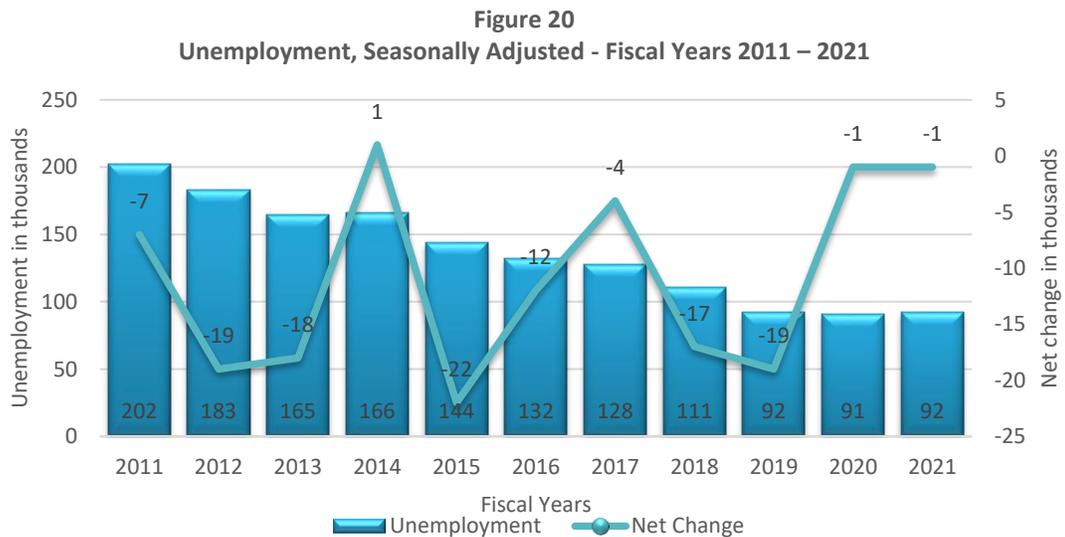


Self-employment not seasonally adjusted, in FY 2021 was 173,000 and reflected an increase of 8,000 persons or 4.8% of those totally employed, when compared to FY 2020 (165,000). From FY 2011 to FY 2021, the self-employment increased by 14,000 persons (Figure 19). It should be noted that in this fiscal year self-employment reached the highest figure in the entire historical series of 173,000, which only occurred during fiscal years 2006, 2007 and 2008, which reached the figure of 181,000, 192,000 and 177,000, respectively.

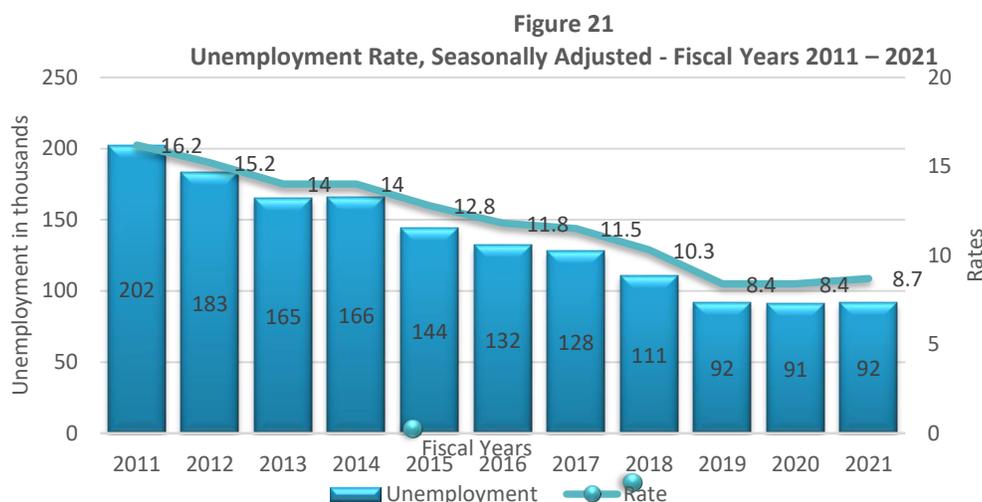


**Unemployment**

In FY 2021, unemployed people (seasonally adjusted) totaled 92,000 and represented 1,000 unemployed more than in FY 2020 (91,000). From FY 2011 to FY 2021, the unemployment decreased by 110,000 persons (Figure 20). The unemployment rate (seasonally adjusted) for FY 2021 was 8.7%, 0.3 percentage points more than in 2020 (8.4%). From FY 2011 to FY 2021, the unemployment rate decreased by 7.5% (Figure 21).



Source: PR Department of Labor and Human Resources - Labor Force Survey



Source: PR Department of Labor and Human Resources - Labor Force Survey.

### Labor Force by Local Workforce Development Areas (ALDL)

This section presents a labor force profile of each of the designated Local Workforce Development Areas (ALDL, for its acronym in Spanish) under the WIOA Program. The Program divides Puerto Rico into 15 local areas, with a total of 78 municipalities (Table 18).

**Table 18**  
**Labor Force, Employment, Unemployment and Unemployment Rate**  
**by Local Workforce Development Areas (ALDL)**  
**Fiscal Years 2020 and 2021**

Local Workforce Development Area	Labor Force			Employment			Unemployment			Unemployment Rate		
	FY 2020	FY 2021	Net Change	FY 2020	FY 2021	Net Change	FY 2020	FY 2021	Net Change	FY 2020	FY 2021	Net Change
Bayamón-Comerio	68,884	68,646	-239	63,898	62,779	-1,119	4,986	5,867	881	7.2	8.5	1.3
Caguas-Guayama	135,887	133,563	-2,324	125,868	124,037	-1,831	10,019	9,526	-493	7.4	7.1	-0.2
Carolina	60,402	60,309	-93	56,398	55,342	-1,056	4,004	4,967	963	6.6	8.2	1.6
Guaynabo-Toa Baja	100,373	99,571	-802	94,534	92,911	-1,623	5,839	6,660	821	5.8	6.7	0.9
La Montaña	43,261	42,232	-1,029	39,454	38,344	-1,110	3,807	3,888	81	8.8	9.2	0.4
Manatí-Dorado	67,829	66,666	-1,163	61,626	60,319	-1,307	6,203	6,347	144	9.1	9.5	0.4
Mayagüez-Las Marías	23,892	23,619	-273	21,387	21,519	132	2,505	2,100	-405	10.5	8.9	-1.6
Northeast	72,730	71,840	-889	66,659	65,236	-1,423	6,070	6,605	534	8.3	9.2	0.8
Northwest	71,949	70,242	-1,707	64,483	63,860	-623	7,466	6,382	-1,085	10.4	9.1	-1.3
North-Central Arecibo	74,284	72,594	-1,690	66,025	65,953	-72	8,259	6,642	-1,618	11.1	9.1	-2
Ponce	44,247	43,481	-766	40,018	39,696	-322	4,229	3,785	-444	9.6	8.7	-0.9
San Juan	131,426	131,632	207	123,211	121,653	-1,559	8,214	9,980	1,765	6.3	7.6	1.3
South Central	47,514	46,182	-1,333	41,995	41,989	-5	5,520	4,193	-1,327	11.6	9.1	-2.5
Southeast	67,423	65,476	-1,947	60,683	59,749	-934	6,741	5,728	-1,013	10	8.7	-1.2
Southwest	65,490	64,306	-1,183	57,727	57,914	187	7,763	6,393	-1,370	11.9	9.9	-1.9

Following bullets summarize the labor force, employment, and unemployment rate by local areas:

- Bayamón-Comerío - In FY 2021 the labor force in this area registered a decrease of 239 persons. In terms of employment, the area decreased 1,119 employees between FY 2020 and FY 2021. The unemployment rate in the area presented a rise of 1.3 percentage points in the comparative period.
- Caguas-Guayama - For FY 2021 the labor force in this area was estimated in 133,563 and represented a decrease of 2,324 persons. The unemployment rate fell from 7.4% to 7.1% from FY 2020 to 2021.
- Carolina - The labor force decreased from 60,402 to 60,309 representing a reduction of 93 persons between FY 2020 and FY 2021. Employment fell from 56,398 to 55,342 resulting in a reduction of 1,056 employed persons. Unemployment rate increased by 1.6 percentage points, from 6.6% in FY 2020 to 8.2% in FY 2021.
- Guaynabo Toa – Baja - The labor force reflected a reduction, from FY 2020 (100,373) to 99,571 in FY 2021, a decrease of 802 persons. The unemployment rate increased by 0.9 percentage points.
- La Montaña - Its labor force for FY 2020 was 43,261 and 42,232 for FY 2021 representing a loss of 1,029 persons. Employment in the area decreased by 1,110. The unemployment rate registered an increase of 0.4 percentage points between both years.
- Manatí – Dorado - This area presented a reduction in the labor force of 1,163 persons. In terms of the unemployment rate, it registered an increase of 0.4 percentage points.
- Mayaguez-Las Marías - Its labor force reflected a decrease of 273 persons. The employment sector showed an increase of 132 persons from FY 2020 to FY 2021. Unemployed persons and the unemployment rate registered a reduction of 405 persons, 1.6 percentage points, respectively.
- Northeast- The labor force fell from 72,730 in FY 2020 to 71,840 in FY 2021 which meant 889 less persons in the labor force. A decrease of 1,423 persons was registered in employment, from 66,659 in FY 2020 to 65,236 in FY 2021. The unemployed persons increase for the period in FY 2020, when there were 6,070 unemployed and 6,605 in FY 2021. This represented an increase of 0.8 percentage points in the unemployment rate for that period.
- Northwest - The labor force for the area was estimated at 71,949 for FY 2020 and in 70,242 in FY 2021. The unemployment rate of the area fell from 10.4% in FY 2020 to 9.1% in FY 2021.
- North Central Arecibo - Its labor force recorded a decrease of 1,690 persons from FY 2020 (74,284) to FY 2021 (72,594). The unemployment rate of the area diminished from 11.1% in 2020 to 9.1% in 2021.
- Ponce - Employment for the municipality fell by 322 persons. The unemployment rate for the area decreased from 9.6% to 8.7%, a reduction of 0.9 percent point.
- San Juan - In FY 2021 the labor force was estimated at 131,426 while in FY 2020 the number was 131,632, representing growth of 207 from one year to the other. Employment was estimated at

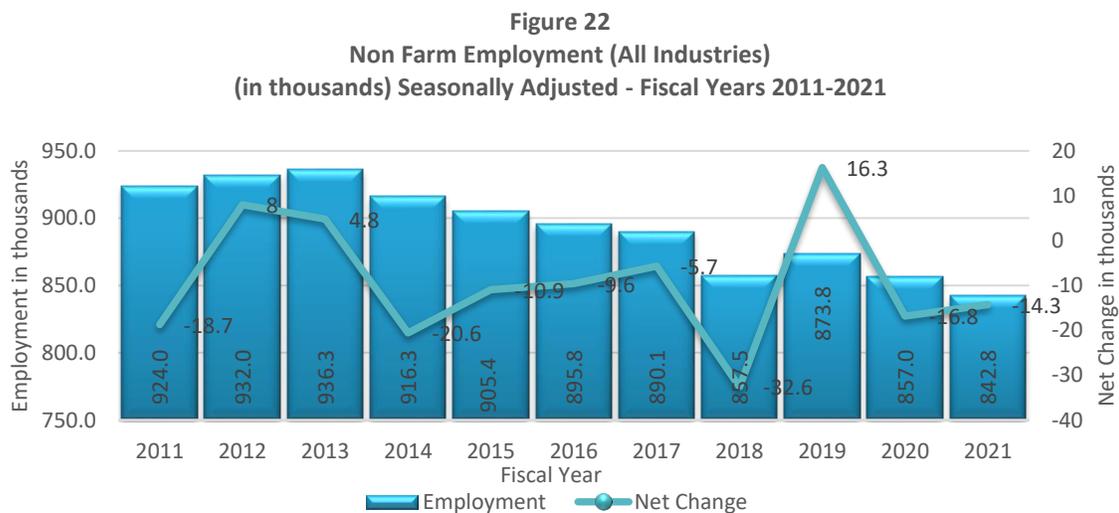
121,653 for FY 2021, representing an increase of 1,559 employees. The unemployment rate increased by 1.3 percentage points.

- South Central - The labor force for the area was estimated at 47,514 for FY 2020, while for FY 2021 at 46,182. Number of employed people in the area was 41,989 in FY 2021. Unemployment rate of the area fell from 11.6% in FY 2020 to 9.1% in FY 2021, a difference of 2.5 percentage points.
- Southeast - Its labor force showed a reduction of 1,947 persons from FY 2020 (67,423) to 2021 (65,476). Unemployment rate for the area diminished from 10.0% to 8.7% or 1.2 percentage points.
- Southwest - The labor force for FY 2020 was estimated at 65,490 and 64,306 in FY 2021 for a decrease of 1,183 persons. Unemployment rate fell by 1.9 percentage points.

### Employment by Industry

#### Current Employment Statistics Survey (CES)

In FY 2021, total nonfarm employment decreased by 14,300, mainly due to a significant loss in the following sectors: Education & Health Services (6,500); Leisure & Hospitality (3,900); Government (3,200); Information (2,600); Professional & Business Services (2,200); Other Services (900); and Financial Activities (900). Only three industry sectors reflected job earnings during FY 2021: Mining, Logging & Construction (2,300); Manufacturing (2,300); and Trade, Transportation & Utilities (1,400) (Figures 22 & 23).



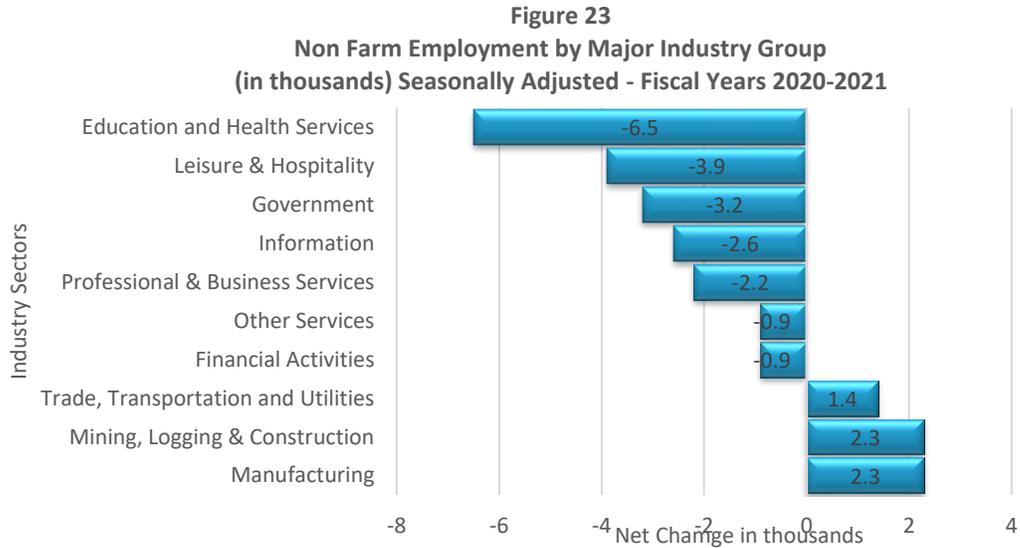
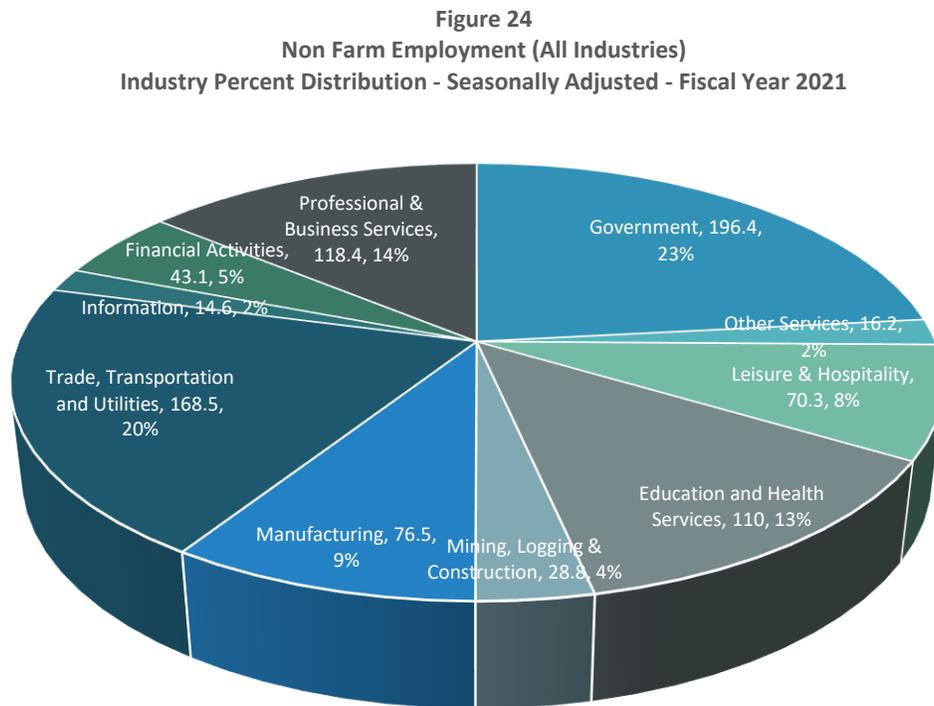


Figure 24 shows the composition of employment by industry in Puerto Rico for FY 2021. The Government industrial sector continues to be the largest employer with 196,400 jobs, followed by Trade, Transportation, and Utilities with 168,500; and Professional & Business Services with 118,400 jobs.



Source: PR Department of Labor and Human Resource - Current Employment Statistic (CES)

Of all industries, the Government super-sector was the only one that showed a constant decrease since FY 2010. In FY 2021 this sector decreased by 3,200 jobs. Of these, the subsectors of State Government and Local Government lost 3,100 jobs and 700 jobs, respectively. However, the Federal Government subsector gained 600 jobs in FY 2021. The significant decline in state government is due, in part, to the loss of 2,400 jobs in the state government Educational Services industry. Following bullets summarize the employment in the main industry sectors:

- Employment in Mining, Logging & Construction rose by 2,300 in FY 2021. The number of 28,800 employees in this industry in FY 2021 was the highest since FY 2013 with 33,700 employees. Construction employment increased by 2,200 jobs, with a job gain of 1,500 jobs, in the principal sub-sector of Construction of Buildings.
- From FY 1997 to FY 2018, employment in Manufacturing has been declining. During FY 2019 this sector increased by 2,900 jobs, FY 2020 added 600 jobs and FY 2021 added 2,300 jobs. The number of 76,500 employees in the manufacturing industry in FY 2021 was the highest since FY 2013 with 78,700 employees.
- Employment in Trade, Transportation, and Utilities increased in FY 2021 by 1,400 jobs. Retail Trade had the most significant rise with 2,600 jobs mainly gains in Building Material and Garden Equipment and Supplies Dealers with 1,300 jobs.
- Employment in the Information sector decreased by 2,600 jobs in FY 2021.
- Employment in Financial Activities decreased by 900 jobs in FY 2021, due to a loss in the subsectors of Finance and Insurance by 400 jobs, and Real Estate & Rental and Leasing with 500 jobs.
- Employment in the Professional and Business Services registered a total of 118,400 jobs in FY 2021 representing losses of 2,200 jobs.
- Employment in Education & Health Services showed a decreased of 6,500 jobs in FY 2021, mainly due to the losses in the subsectors of Educational Service by 4,100 jobs, and Health Care and Social Assistance with 2,400 jobs.
- Employment in Leisure and Hospitality decreased by 3,900 in FY 2021. Of these, jobs losses were in the subsector of Accommodation and Food Services by 3,700 jobs, mainly in the industry of Accommodation with a decrease of 3,200 jobs. Food Services and Drinking Places decreased by 400 jobs.
- Employment in Other Services decreased by 900 jobs in FY 2021.
- Employment in the Private Sector decreased by 11,100 jobs during FY 2021.

### **Employment by Local Workforce Development Areas (ALDL)**

Table 19 breaks down the ten occupations with highest employment by local area for 2020, with the different categories of wages. Local areas show the same trend in employment as the state level with jobs in retail, sales, and services with the highest production of jobs. Retail salespersons, cashier and security guard occupations predominate in the 15 local boards.

Table 19

## Top 10 Highest Employment Occupations, 2020 - By Local Workforce Development Areas (ALDL)

SOC- Code	SOC-Title	Employment	Mean hourly wage	Annual mean wage	Hour entry wage	Annual entry wage	Experience hourly wage	Annual experience wage	Median hourly wage	Median annual wage
<b>Bayamón-Comerio</b>										
41-2031	Retail Salespersons	3,370	\$9.40	\$19,540	\$8.61	\$17,910	\$9.79	\$20,360	\$9.09	\$18,910
41-2011	Cashiers	2,630	\$10.06	\$20,930	\$8.53	\$17,750	\$10.83	\$22,520	\$9.24	\$19,230
53-7065	Stockers and Order Fillers	1,790	\$10.42	\$21,680	\$8.53	\$17,740	\$11.37	\$23,650	\$9.39	\$19,520
33-9032	Security Guards	1,600	\$8.79	\$18,280	\$8.57	\$17,840	\$8.89	\$18,500	\$8.82	\$18,350
35-3023	Fast Food and Counter Workers	1,580	\$9.03	\$18,790	\$8.50	\$17,690	\$9.30	\$19,340	\$8.77	\$18,240
41-4012	Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing, Except Technical and Scientific Products	1,460	\$13.53	\$28,150	\$8.63	\$17,950	\$15.98	\$33,240	\$9.54	\$19,850
37-2011	Janitors and Cleaners, Except Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	1,250	\$9.78	\$20,340	\$8.53	\$17,750	\$10.40	\$21,640	\$9.04	\$18,800
41-1011	First-Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers	1,250	\$13.34	\$27,750	\$8.61	\$17,920	\$15.71	\$32,670	\$12.39	\$25,770
29-1141	Registered Nurses	1,150	\$17.25	\$35,880	\$13.12	\$27,280	\$19.32	\$40,180	\$17.09	\$35,560
13-1020	Buyers and Purchasing Agents	1,000	\$10.32	\$21,470	\$8.46	\$17,600	\$11.26	\$23,410	\$8.93	\$18,580
<b>Caguas-Guayama</b>										
41-2031	Retail Salespersons	3,300	\$11.15	\$23,180	\$8.59	\$17,870	\$12.42	\$25,840	\$9.26	\$19,250
31-1120	Home Health and Personal Care Aides	3,060	\$8.73	\$18,160	\$8.30	\$17,270	\$8.95	\$18,610	\$8.56	\$17,800
41-2011	Cashiers	2,910	\$9.15	\$19,030	\$8.53	\$17,740	\$9.46	\$19,670	\$8.83	\$18,360
33-9032	Security Guards	2,750	\$9.05	\$18,820	\$8.43	\$17,530	\$9.36	\$19,470	\$8.63	\$17,950
37-2011	Janitors and Cleaners, Except Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	2,420	\$9.66	\$20,090	\$8.50	\$17,690	\$10.23	\$21,290	\$9.00	\$18,720
35-3023	Fast Food and Counter Workers	2,410	\$8.58	\$17,850	\$8.47	\$17,610	\$8.64	\$17,970	\$8.69	\$18,070
29-1141	Registered Nurses	2,350	\$16.61	\$34,540	\$13.21	\$27,480	\$18.31	\$38,080	\$16.65	\$34,640
51-2090	Miscellaneous Assemblers and Fabricators	1,760	\$9.39	\$19,540	\$8.33	\$17,330	\$9.93	\$20,650	\$8.96	\$18,630
53-7065	Stockers and Order Fillers	1,720	\$10.76	\$22,380	\$8.73	\$18,160	\$11.77	\$24,490	\$9.64	\$20,050
43-6014	Secretaries and Administrative Assistants, Except Legal, Medical, and Executive	1,440	\$10.66	\$22,170	\$8.53	\$17,740	\$11.73	\$24,390	\$9.44	\$19,630
<b>Carolina</b>										
41-2031	Retail Salespersons	2,520	\$10.27	\$21,360	\$8.64	\$17,970	\$11.09	\$23,060	\$9.22	\$19,180
35-3023	Fast Food and Counter Workers	1,570	\$8.57	\$17,820	\$8.45	\$17,570	\$8.63	\$17,940	\$8.70	\$18,100
41-2011	Cashiers	1,450	\$8.90	\$18,500	\$8.54	\$17,770	\$9.07	\$18,870	\$8.83	\$18,370
35-3031	Waiters and Waitresses	1,160	\$8.90	\$18,510	\$8.54	\$17,760	\$9.08	\$18,890	\$8.80	\$18,300
43-4051	Customer Service Representatives	940	\$11.94	\$24,840	\$8.47	\$17,610	\$13.68	\$28,460	\$10.03	\$20,870
37-2011	Janitors and Cleaners, Except Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	910	\$9.24	\$19,210	\$8.55	\$17,790	\$9.58	\$19,920	\$8.92	\$18,550
53-7065	Stockers and Order Fillers	870	\$10.30	\$21,420	\$8.68	\$18,060	\$11.10	\$23,090	\$9.37	\$19,490
41-1011	First-Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers	860	\$14.13	\$29,390	\$9.11	\$18,950	\$16.64	\$34,610	\$13.05	\$27,140
53-3032	Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	860	\$12.08	\$25,130	\$8.52	\$17,720	\$13.86	\$28,830	\$10.15	\$21,110
43-1011	First-Line Supervisors of Office and Administrative Support Workers	700	\$16.69	\$34,720	\$10.43	\$21,690	\$19.82	\$41,230	\$15.81	\$32,890
<b>Guaynabo - Toa Baja</b>										
43-4051	Customer Service Representatives	3,850	\$11.23	\$23,350	\$8.44	\$17,550	\$12.62	\$26,250	\$9.33	\$19,400
37-2011	Janitors and Cleaners, Except Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	2,790	\$8.88	\$18,470	\$8.41	\$17,490	\$9.11	\$18,950	\$8.63	\$17,940
53-7065	Stockers and Order Fillers	2,590	\$9.74	\$20,260	\$8.71	\$18,120	\$10.26	\$21,330	\$9.22	\$19,190
41-2031	Retail Salespersons	2,370	\$9.87	\$20,530	\$8.62	\$17,940	\$10.49	\$21,820	\$9.19	\$19,120
41-2011	Cashiers	2,090	\$9.16	\$19,050	\$8.65	\$18,000	\$9.41	\$19,580	\$9.08	\$18,880
35-3023	Fast Food and Counter Workers	1,790	\$8.59	\$17,880	\$8.49	\$17,660	\$8.65	\$17,980	\$8.67	\$18,030
53-3032	Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	1,710	\$10.21	\$21,230	\$8.54	\$17,760	\$11.04	\$22,960	\$9.31	\$19,360
41-4012	Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing, Except Technical and Scientific Products	1,580	\$15.51	\$32,260	\$8.58	\$17,850	\$18.98	\$39,470	\$11.77	\$24,480
43-9061	Office Clerks, General	1,580	\$10.93	\$22,730	\$8.43	\$17,540	\$12.17	\$25,320	\$9.52	\$19,810
43-1011	First-Line Supervisors of Office and Administrative Support Workers	1,460	\$18.58	\$38,640	\$11.77	\$24,480	\$21.98	\$45,720	\$17.19	\$35,750

SOC- Code	SOC-Title	Employment	Mean hourly wage	Annual mean wage	Hour entry wage	Annual entry wage	Experience hourly wage	Annual experience wage	Median hourly wage	Median annual wage
<b>La Montaña</b>										
41-2011	Cashiers	790	\$8.53	\$17,730	\$8.48	\$17,650	\$8.55	\$17,780	\$8.64	\$17,980
25-9045	Teaching Assistants, Except Postsecondary	590	NA	\$19,720	NA	\$17,740	NA	\$20,720	NA	\$18,560
47-2061	Construction Laborers	410	\$9.57	\$19,910	\$8.40	\$17,470	\$10.16	\$21,120	\$9.17	\$19,070
29-1141	Registered Nurses	360	\$14.77	\$30,720	\$12.81	\$26,640	\$15.75	\$32,750	\$14.24	\$29,610
53-7065	Stockers and Order Fillers	330	\$8.75	\$18,210	\$8.47	\$17,610	\$8.90	\$18,510	\$8.67	\$18,040
43-6014	Secretaries and Administrative Assistants, Except Legal, Medical, and Executive	300	\$9.62	\$20,010	\$8.44	\$17,560	\$10.21	\$21,230	\$9.21	\$19,150
37-2011	Janitors and Cleaners, Except Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	290	\$11.11	\$23,100	\$8.51	\$17,710	\$12.40	\$25,800	\$10.36	\$21,550
43-1011	First-Line Supervisors of Office and Administrative Support Workers	290	\$16.19	\$33,670	\$11.60	\$24,130	\$18.48	\$38,440	\$15.46	\$32,160
35-2012	Cooks, Institution and Cafeteria	270	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
43-9061	Office Clerks, General	260	\$10.40	\$21,640	\$8.45	\$17,580	\$11.38	\$23,670	\$9.08	\$18,890
<b>Manatí - Dorado</b>										
41-2011	Cashiers	2,290	\$9.75	\$20,270	\$8.58	\$17,860	\$10.33	\$21,480	\$9.19	\$19,120
29-1141	Registered Nurses	1,430	\$14.42	\$29,990	\$11.92	\$24,790	\$15.67	\$32,600	\$14.11	\$29,340
51-2090	Miscellaneous Assemblers and Fabricators	1,350	\$12.17	\$25,310	\$8.46	\$17,600	\$14.02	\$29,160	\$10.45	\$21,740
41-2031	Retail Salespersons	1,200	\$11.20	\$23,300	\$8.72	\$18,150	\$12.44	\$25,880	\$9.30	\$19,340
35-2021	Food Preparation Workers	1,150	\$8.78	\$18,260	\$8.60	\$17,890	\$8.87	\$18,440	\$8.86	\$18,430
53-7065	Stockers and Order Fillers	1,080	\$10.23	\$21,270	\$8.55	\$17,780	\$11.07	\$23,020	\$9.08	\$18,880
43-9061	Office Clerks, General	950	\$9.79	\$20,350	\$8.44	\$17,560	\$10.46	\$21,750	\$8.91	\$18,540
43-6014	Secretaries and Administrative Assistants, Except Legal, Medical, and Executive	890	\$10.51	\$21,870	\$8.48	\$17,640	\$11.53	\$23,980	\$9.16	\$19,060
37-2011	Janitors and Cleaners, Except Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	850	\$9.95	\$20,690	\$8.52	\$17,730	\$10.66	\$22,170	\$9.17	\$19,080
25-2021	Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education	840	NA	\$38,670	NA	\$30,920	NA	\$42,540	NA	\$38,630
<b>Mayagüez - Las Marías</b>										
41-2031	Retail Salespersons	1,340	\$10.56	\$21,980	\$8.59	\$17,880	\$11.55	\$24,020	\$9.23	\$19,200
41-2011	Cashiers	1,180	\$9.29	\$19,320	\$8.60	\$17,900	\$9.63	\$20,040	\$9.12	\$18,970
29-1141	Registered Nurses	1,060	\$16.24	\$33,780	\$11.84	\$24,640	\$18.44	\$38,350	\$14.91	\$31,010
37-2011	Janitors and Cleaners, Except Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	920	\$9.95	\$20,690	\$8.50	\$17,680	\$10.67	\$22,200	\$8.99	\$18,690
43-6014	Secretaries and Administrative Assistants, Except Legal, Medical, and Executive	740	\$10.08	\$20,970	\$8.45	\$17,570	\$10.90	\$22,670	\$9.06	\$18,850
51-6031	Sewing Machine Operators	630	\$8.53	\$17,750	\$8.47	\$17,610	\$8.56	\$17,810	\$8.61	\$17,910
53-7065	Stockers and Order Fillers	590	\$9.90	\$20,600	\$8.76	\$18,230	\$10.47	\$21,780	\$9.39	\$19,540
43-9061	Office Clerks, General	580	\$10.33	\$21,490	\$8.42	\$17,510	\$11.29	\$23,480	\$9.00	\$18,720
35-3023	Fast Food and Counter Workers	550	\$8.75	\$18,190	\$8.62	\$17,940	\$8.81	\$18,320	\$8.88	\$18,470
43-1011	First-Line Supervisors of Office and Administrative Support Workers	410	\$15.20	\$31,630	\$9.58	\$19,930	\$18.02	\$37,480	\$14.32	\$29,780
<b>Noreste</b>										
41-2011	Cashiers	1,500	\$9.01	\$18,740	\$8.61	\$17,910	\$9.21	\$19,160	\$8.93	\$18,560
41-2031	Retail Salespersons	1,400	\$9.90	\$20,600	\$8.50	\$17,680	\$10.61	\$22,060	\$9.22	\$19,170
37-2011	Janitors and Cleaners, Except Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	670	\$10.07	\$20,950	\$8.60	\$17,900	\$10.81	\$22,480	\$9.28	\$19,300
53-7065	Stockers and Order Fillers	630	\$9.87	\$20,520	\$8.62	\$17,930	\$10.49	\$21,820	\$9.30	\$19,350
41-1011	First-Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers	580	\$14.19	\$29,520	\$8.78	\$18,260	\$16.90	\$35,150	\$12.87	\$26,770
43-9061	Office Clerks, General	580	\$9.79	\$20,360	\$8.46	\$17,590	\$10.45	\$21,750	\$8.90	\$18,510
49-9071	Maintenance and Repair Workers, General	500	\$9.64	\$20,060	\$8.49	\$17,660	\$10.22	\$21,250	\$9.00	\$18,710
35-3031	Waiters and Waitresses	400	\$8.78	\$18,270	\$8.41	\$17,500	\$8.97	\$18,650	\$8.64	\$17,970
43-4051	Customer Service Representatives	400	\$9.85	\$20,480	\$8.41	\$17,500	\$10.56	\$21,970	\$9.13	\$18,990
29-1141	Registered Nurses	390	\$16.31	\$33,920	\$13.10	\$27,260	\$17.91	\$37,240	\$15.67	\$32,590

SOC- Code	SOC-Title	Employment	Mean hourly wage	Annual mean wage	Hour entry wage	Annual entry wage	Experience hourly wage	Annual experience wage	Median hourly wage	Median annual wage
<b>Noroste</b>										
41-2031	Retail Salespersons	1,900	\$9.13	\$19,000	\$8.59	\$17,860	\$9.41	\$19,560	\$8.95	\$18,620
51-2090	Miscellaneous Assemblers and Fabricators	1,480	\$11.18	\$23,250	\$8.47	\$17,610	\$12.54	\$26,080	\$9.83	\$20,440
41-2011	Cashiers	1,250	\$8.93	\$18,570	\$8.51	\$17,700	\$9.14	\$19,000	\$8.80	\$18,300
35-3023	Fast Food and Counter Workers	1,200	\$8.72	\$18,130	\$8.64	\$17,970	\$8.75	\$18,200	\$8.84	\$18,390
37-2011	Janitors and Cleaners, Except Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	920	\$9.85	\$20,490	\$8.50	\$17,680	\$10.52	\$21,890	\$9.05	\$18,830
43-4051	Customer Service Representatives	880	\$9.09	\$18,910	\$8.33	\$17,320	\$9.47	\$19,710	\$8.71	\$18,120
43-6014	Secretaries and Administrative Assistants, Except Legal, Medical, and Executive	780	\$9.63	\$20,030	\$8.46	\$17,590	\$10.22	\$21,260	\$9.01	\$18,750
53-7065	Stockers and Order Fillers	650	\$9.69	\$20,150	\$8.58	\$17,850	\$10.24	\$21,300	\$9.15	\$19,030
43-9061	Office Clerks, General	640	\$9.62	\$20,000	\$8.47	\$17,620	\$10.19	\$21,190	\$8.89	\$18,500
25-2021	Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education	610	NA	\$33,270	NA	\$19,950	NA	\$39,930	NA	\$34,860
<b>Norte Central - Arecibo</b>										
41-2031	Retail Salespersons	2,130	\$9.25	\$19,250	\$8.59	\$17,870	\$9.59	\$19,940	\$8.98	\$18,680
41-2011	Cashiers	1,730	\$9.19	\$19,110	\$8.56	\$17,810	\$9.50	\$19,770	\$8.98	\$18,690
35-3023	Fast Food and Counter Workers	1,240	\$8.69	\$18,070	\$8.52	\$17,720	\$8.77	\$18,240	\$8.78	\$18,250
29-1141	Registered Nurses	1,080	\$15.49	\$32,230	\$12.17	\$25,310	\$17.16	\$35,690	\$15.28	\$31,770
37-2011	Janitors and Cleaners, Except Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	1,080	\$10.24	\$21,290	\$8.52	\$17,730	\$11.09	\$23,070	\$9.24	\$19,230
43-9061	Office Clerks, General	930	\$9.43	\$19,610	\$8.42	\$17,520	\$9.93	\$20,650	\$8.79	\$18,290
25-2021	Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education	880	NA	\$38,000	NA	\$28,740	NA	\$42,630	NA	\$38,410
43-6014	Secretaries and Administrative Assistants, Except Legal, Medical, and Executive	830	\$9.41	\$19,580	\$8.42	\$17,520	\$9.91	\$20,610	\$8.88	\$18,460
53-7065	Stockers and Order Fillers	700	\$10.02	\$20,830	\$8.57	\$17,830	\$10.74	\$22,340	\$9.26	\$19,270
25-9045	Teaching Assistants, Except Postsecondary	640	NA	\$19,750	NA	\$17,610	NA	\$20,820	NA	\$18,510
<b>Ponce</b>										
37-2011	Janitors and Cleaners, Except Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	2,410	\$8.97	\$18,650	\$8.58	\$17,840	\$9.16	\$19,050	\$8.85	\$18,410
41-2031	Retail Salespersons	2,350	\$10.02	\$20,850	\$8.56	\$17,800	\$10.76	\$22,370	\$9.06	\$18,850
41-2011	Cashiers	1,510	\$9.00	\$18,720	\$8.61	\$17,910	\$9.19	\$19,120	\$8.97	\$18,650
29-1141	Registered Nurses	1,360	\$15.88	\$33,040	\$12.35	\$25,690	\$17.65	\$36,710	\$15.53	\$32,310
35-3023	Fast Food and Counter Workers	1,070	\$8.64	\$17,970	\$8.41	\$17,490	\$8.76	\$18,210	\$8.58	\$17,850
43-6014	Secretaries and Administrative Assistants, Except Legal, Medical, and Executive	980	\$9.93	\$20,650	\$8.41	\$17,480	\$10.69	\$22,230	\$9.18	\$19,100
51-2090	Miscellaneous Assemblers and Fabricators	930	\$9.61	\$19,980	\$8.43	\$17,530	\$10.20	\$21,210	\$9.00	\$18,730
43-9061	Office Clerks, General	900	\$9.82	\$20,430	\$8.35	\$17,370	\$10.56	\$21,960	\$8.82	\$18,340
43-1011	First-Line Supervisors of Office and Administrative Support Workers	740	\$15.25	\$31,710	\$9.79	\$20,360	\$17.98	\$37,390	\$13.88	\$28,880
53-7065	Stockers and Order Fillers	730	\$10.73	\$22,310	\$8.57	\$17,820	\$11.81	\$24,560	\$9.51	\$19,780
<b>San Juan</b>										
33-9032	Security Guards	11,030	\$8.87	\$18,440	\$8.56	\$17,800	\$9.02	\$18,770	\$8.86	\$18,420
33-3051	Police and Sheriff's Patrol Officers	10,800	\$19.24	\$40,020	\$16.03	\$33,350	\$20.85	\$43,360	\$20.32	\$42,270
37-2011	Janitors and Cleaners, Except Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	8,670	\$9.66	\$20,080	\$8.44	\$17,560	\$10.26	\$21,350	\$8.94	\$18,600
43-9061	Office Clerks, General	7,920	\$11.43	\$23,770	\$8.37	\$17,400	\$12.96	\$26,950	\$10.56	\$21,960
29-1141	Registered Nurses	7,140	\$19.29	\$40,120	\$13.16	\$27,360	\$22.36	\$46,500	\$17.01	\$35,380
43-4051	Customer Service Representatives	6,370	\$12.16	\$25,300	\$8.68	\$18,060	\$13.90	\$28,920	\$10.90	\$22,660
43-6014	Secretaries and Administrative Assistants, Except Legal, Medical, and Executive	6,150	\$12.19	\$25,360	\$8.61	\$17,910	\$13.98	\$29,080	\$11.31	\$23,520
43-1011	First-Line Supervisors of Office and Administrative Support Workers	6,110	\$18.55	\$38,580	\$12.28	\$25,550	\$21.68	\$45,090	\$17.39	\$36,180
41-2031	Retail Salespersons	5,700	\$11.23	\$23,360	\$8.54	\$17,770	\$12.58	\$26,160	\$9.56	\$19,890
43-6011	Executive Secretaries and Executive Administrative Assistants	4,550	\$17.02	\$35,400	\$11.08	\$23,050	\$19.99	\$41,580	\$15.57	\$32,380

SOC- Code	SOC-Title	Employment	Mean hourly wage	Annual mean wage	Hour entry wage	Annual entry wage	Experience hourly wage	Annual experience wage	Median hourly wage	Median annual wage
<b>Sur Central</b>										
35-3023	Fast Food and Counter Workers	840	\$9.20	\$19,140	\$8.54	\$17,760	\$9.54	\$19,840	\$9.04	\$18,790
41-2011	Cashiers	840	\$9.12	\$18,970	\$8.50	\$17,690	\$9.43	\$19,610	\$8.95	\$18,610
25-2021	Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education	550	NA	\$37,600	NA	\$29,450	NA	\$41,670	NA	\$37,680
37-2011	Janitors and Cleaners, Except Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	470	\$10.45	\$21,740	\$8.43	\$17,540	\$11.46	\$23,830	\$9.31	\$19,370
53-7065	Stockers and Order Fillers	470	\$9.97	\$20,740	\$8.55	\$17,780	\$10.68	\$22,210	\$9.22	\$19,170
41-2031	Retail Salespersons	430	\$10.15	\$21,120	\$8.63	\$17,940	\$10.92	\$22,710	\$9.35	\$19,440
43-9061	Office Clerks, General	330	\$9.26	\$19,270	\$8.45	\$17,580	\$9.67	\$20,120	\$8.74	\$18,190
41-1011	First-Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers	310	\$12.22	\$25,430	\$8.58	\$17,850	\$14.05	\$29,220	\$11.19	\$23,280
43-4051	Customer Service Representatives	300	\$10.08	\$20,970	\$8.41	\$17,490	\$10.92	\$22,710	\$9.08	\$18,880
35-2012	Cooks, Institution and Cafeteria	290	\$13.35	\$27,770	\$9.75	\$20,280	\$15.15	\$31,510	\$13.49	\$28,070
<b>Sureste</b>										
51-2090	Miscellaneous Assemblers and Fabricators	2,330	\$8.69	\$18,080	\$8.43	\$17,540	\$8.82	\$18,350	\$8.71	\$18,120
41-2011	Cashiers	1,190	\$8.66	\$18,020	\$8.54	\$17,770	\$8.72	\$18,140	\$8.74	\$18,180
41-2031	Retail Salespersons	990	\$9.70	\$20,170	\$8.54	\$17,770	\$10.27	\$21,370	\$9.05	\$18,820
25-2021	Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education	830	NA	\$33,070	NA	\$21,660	NA	\$38,770	NA	\$32,630
29-1141	Registered Nurses	790	\$14.92	\$31,040	\$11.38	\$23,670	\$16.69	\$34,720	\$15.15	\$31,510
53-7065	Stockers and Order Fillers	790	\$9.25	\$19,240	\$8.65	\$18,000	\$9.55	\$19,860	\$9.00	\$18,730
37-2011	Janitors and Cleaners, Except Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	750	\$9.97	\$20,750	\$8.62	\$17,940	\$10.65	\$22,150	\$9.22	\$19,170
51-9111	Packaging and Filling Machine Operators and Tenders	750	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
43-9061	Office Clerks, General	700	\$9.90	\$20,600	\$8.52	\$17,720	\$10.59	\$22,040	\$9.08	\$18,890
17-2112	Industrial Engineers	600	\$38.49	\$80,070	\$24.39	\$50,720	\$45.55	\$94,740	\$38.04	\$79,130
<b>Suroeste</b>										
41-2011	Cashiers	2,340	\$9.43	\$19,610	\$8.58	\$17,840	\$9.85	\$20,490	\$9.15	\$19,040
51-6031	Sewing Machine Operators	2,030	\$8.52	\$17,720	\$8.47	\$17,630	\$8.54	\$17,760	\$8.68	\$18,050
41-2031	Retail Salespersons	1,170	\$9.15	\$19,040	\$8.51	\$17,700	\$9.47	\$19,710	\$8.81	\$18,330
51-2090	Miscellaneous Assemblers and Fabricators	870	\$9.90	\$20,590	\$8.29	\$17,240	\$10.70	\$22,260	\$8.67	\$18,030
37-2011	Janitors and Cleaners, Except Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	860	\$10.00	\$20,800	\$8.53	\$17,740	\$10.74	\$22,340	\$9.15	\$19,020
43-9061	Office Clerks, General	860	\$9.41	\$19,570	\$8.47	\$17,610	\$9.88	\$20,550	\$8.85	\$18,420
29-1141	Registered Nurses	760	\$15.43	\$32,100	\$12.27	\$25,530	\$17.01	\$35,380	\$15.70	\$32,650
35-3023	Fast Food and Counter Workers	750	\$8.48	\$17,640	\$8.42	\$17,520	\$8.51	\$17,700	\$8.56	\$17,810
43-6014	Secretaries and Administrative Assistants, Except Legal, Medical, and Executive	730	\$9.74	\$20,260	\$8.48	\$17,630	\$10.37	\$21,570	\$8.98	\$18,680
49-9071	Maintenance and Repair Workers, General	620	\$9.13	\$18,980	\$8.40	\$17,480	\$9.49	\$19,740	\$8.66	\$18,010

## Hiring and Separation Rate

The Hiring Rate for March of 2019 was 2.4%, and the Separation Rate was 2.1%. While for March of 2018, the rates were, 1.8% and 2.0%, respectively. In March of 2019, 20.0% of the employees were part-time workers (less than 28 hours per week). For the same month of 2018, it was 16.8%. The employers surveyed indicated that they offered their employees the followings marginal benefits, a health plan, 21.9%; productivity bonus, 11.5%; retirement plan, 11.5%; life insurance, 10.8%; and more than 15 days of vacation, 10.7%.

## Weekly Claims for Unemployment Insurance Data & Characteristics of the Insured Unemployed

### Weekly Claims for Unemployment Insurance Data

The Unemployment Insurance weekly claims data is used for the current economic analysis of unemployment trends in the nation, and states. Initial claims measure emerging unemployment and continued weeks claim measure the number of persons claiming unemployment benefits.

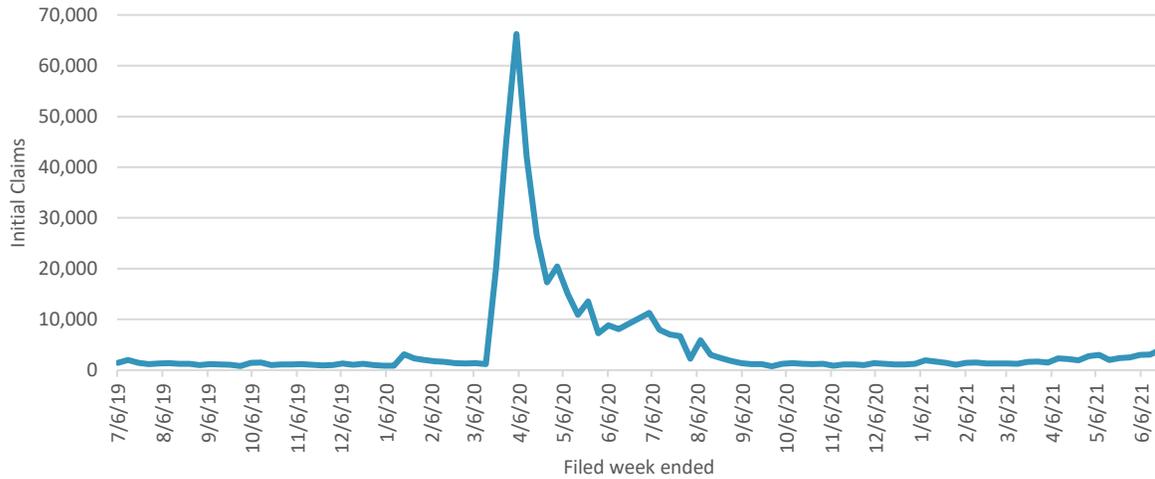
**Initial Claims** - An initial claim is a claim filed by an unemployed individual after separation from an employer. The claimant requests a determination of basic eligibility for the UI program. When an initial claim is filed with a state, certain programmatic activities take place resulting in activity counts including the count of initial claims.

**Continued Weeks Claimed** - A person who has already filed an initial claim and experienced a week of unemployment files a continued claim, to claim benefits for that week of unemployment. Continued claims are also referred to as insured unemployment.

In mid-March, the government of Puerto Rico issued Executive Order number OE-2020-023. It contemplated the closure of both the government and private companies. They then issued other executive orders that were gradually opening and changing the measures with which to address the situation of the COVID -19 pandemic. We will present data of the unemployment claims filed per week that include the months that comprise the fiscal year 2020 and 2021. For analysis purposes we will compare with the 2019 (before the COVID-19) and 2017 (Hurricane María) claimant data.

Comparing the week ending 3/23/2019 with the week ending 3/21/2020, when the lockdown started due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the results were the following: Initial claims were 1,002 to 20,148, a rise in 19,146 more claims; continued claims were 15,503 to 16,539, a rise in 1,036 more claims; and the insured unemployment rate was 1.84% to 1.94%, rise in 0.10%. Comparing the week ending 3/21/2020 with the week ending 3/20/2021, the results were the following: Initial claims were 20,148 to 1,592, a decreased in 18,556 less claims; continued claims were 16,539 to 50,083, a rise in 33,544 more claims; and the insured unemployment rate was 1.94% to 5.98%, rise in 4.04% (Figure19).

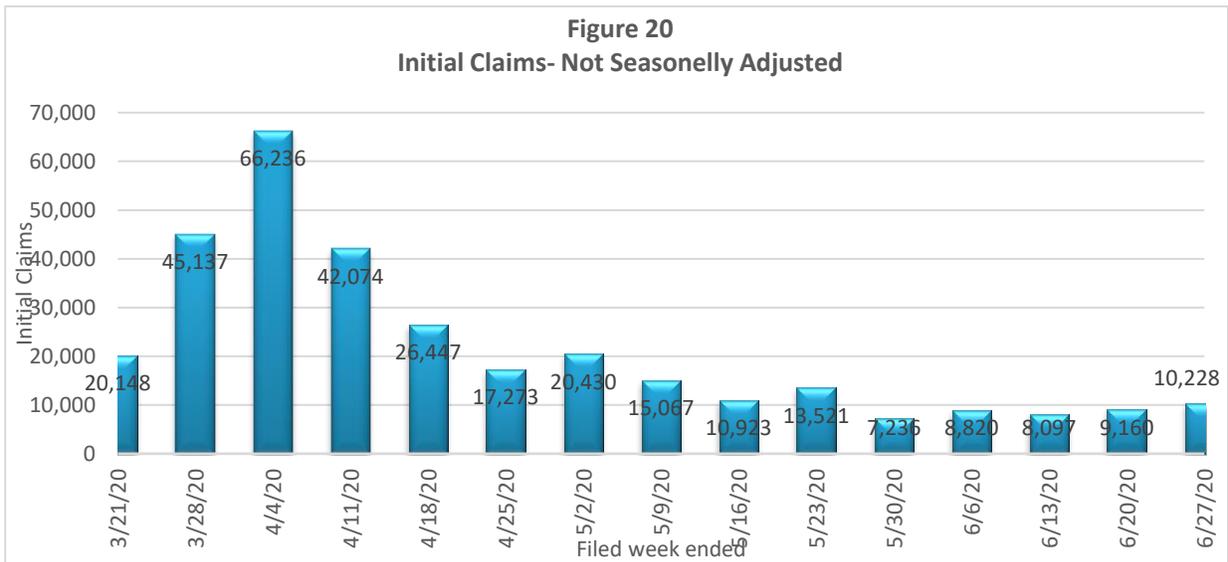
**Figure 19**  
Initial Claims-Not Seasonally Adjusted  
Filed Week Ended for the fiscal Year 2020-2021



Source: US Department of Labor.

The week ending 4/4/20 was the week when more initial claims were reported in Puerto Rico with 66,236 claims, in comparison with the week when Hurricane Maria claims were reported the week ending 4/11/2017 with 8,281 claims (Figure 20).

**Figure 20**  
Initial Claims- Not Seasonally Adjusted



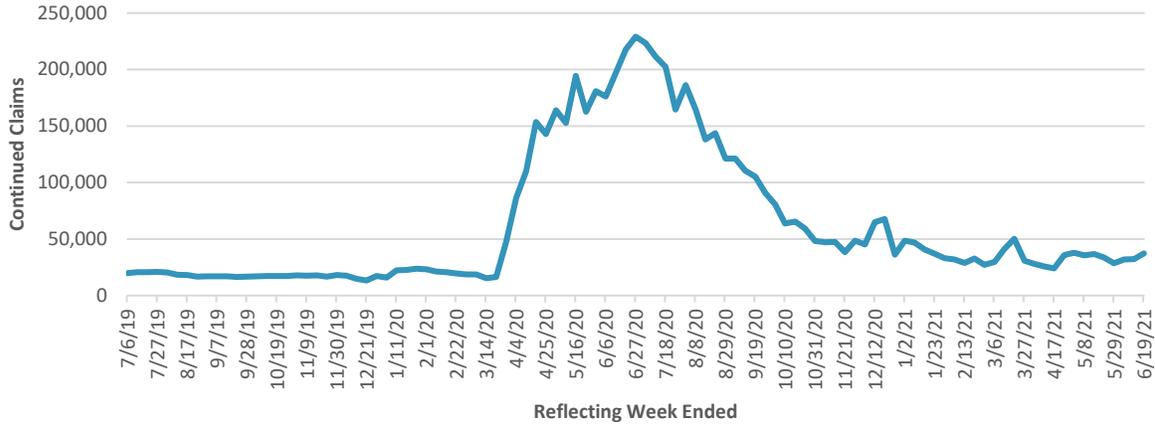
Source: US Department of Labor

Comparing the week ending 4/6/2019 with the week ending 4/4/2020 when the lockdown started due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the results were the following: Initial claims were 1,163 to 66,236, a rise in 65,073 more claims; continued claims were 14,997 to 86,474, a rise in 71,477 more claims; and the insured unemployment rate was 1.79% to 10.10%, a rise in 8.31%. Comparing the week ending 4/4/2020 with the week ending 4/3/2021, the results were the following: initial claims were 66,236 to 1,471, a decrease in 64,765 less claims; continued claims were 86,474 to 27,899, a decrease in 58,575 less claims; and the insured unemployment rate was 10.1% to 3.39%, a decrease of 6.71%

In the last week of FY 2020, ending 6/27/2020, continued claims reached the highest level of 229,039.

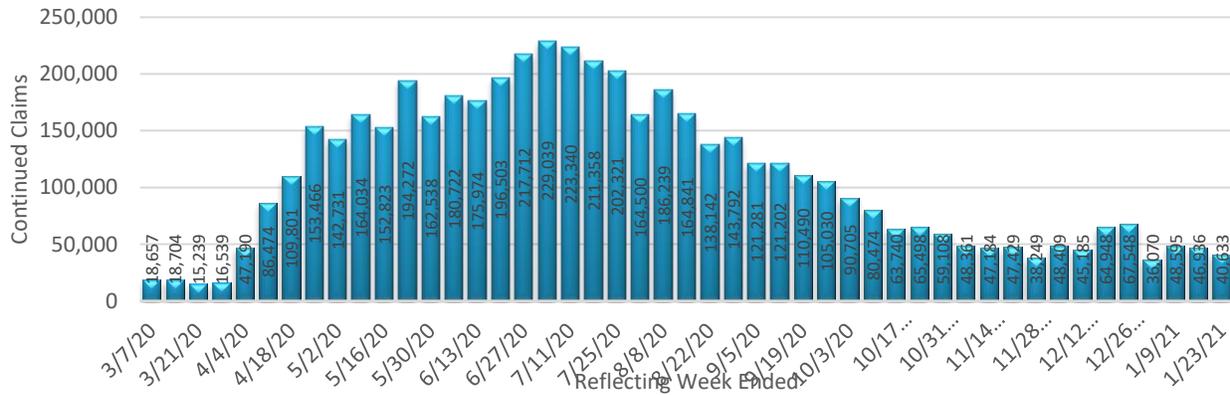
When comparing that same week with the last week of FY 2019, ending 6/29/2019 with 18,337 claims, it reflected an increase of 210,702 claims. When comparing that same week with the last week of FY 2021, ending 6/26/2021 with 39,700 claims, it reflected un decrease of 189,339 claims (Figures 21 & 22).

**Figure 21**  
Continued Claims - Not Seasonally Adjusted



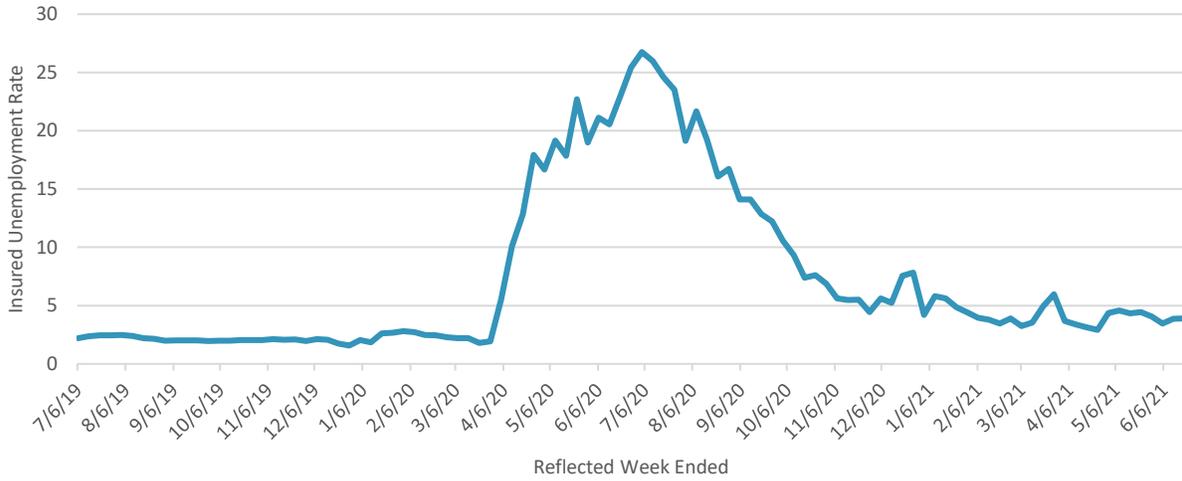
Source: US Department of Labor

**Figure 22**  
Continued Claims - Not Seasonally Adjusted



Source: US Department of Labor

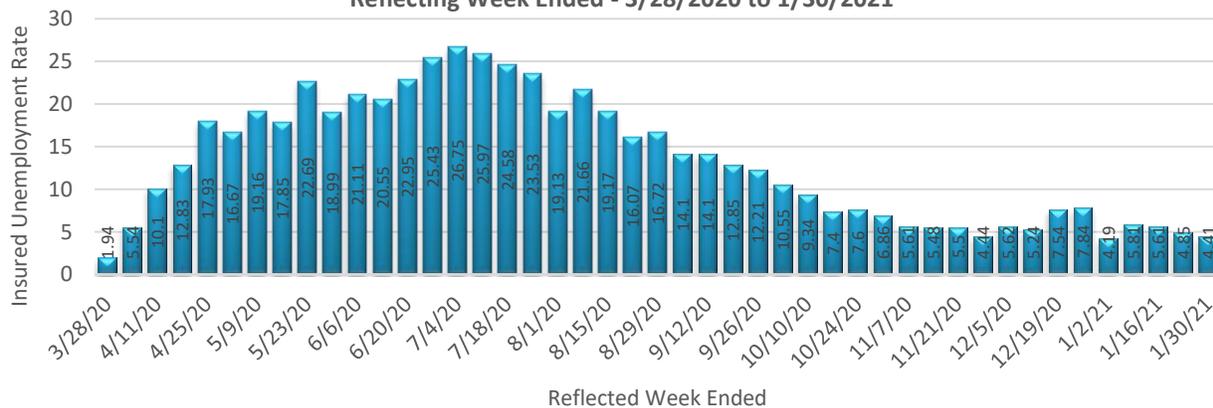
Figure 23  
Insured Unemployment Rate - Not Seasonally Adjusted  
Filed Week Ended for the Fiscal Year 2020 - 2021



Source: US Department of Labor.

During the last week of 6/27/2020 included in fiscal year 2020, the insured unemployment rate reached the highest level at 26.75%. When comparing that same week with the last week of fiscal year 2019, ending 6/29/2019, it recorded 2.19%, an increase of 24.56%. When comparing that same week with the last week of FY 2021, ending 6/26/2021 with level at 4.82%, it reflected un decrease of 21.93% (Figures 23 & 24).

Figure 24  
Insured Unemployment Rate - Not Seasonally Adjusted  
Reflecting Week Ended - 3/28/2020 to 1/30/2021



Source: US Department of Labor.

The highest insured unemployment rate in the week ending June 27, 2020, was in Puerto Rico (26.8), Nevada (20.9), Hawaii (19.9), New York (17.0), Louisiana (16.6), California (15.9), Massachusetts (15.6), Connecticut (15.2), Georgia (14.1), and Rhode Island (14.0).

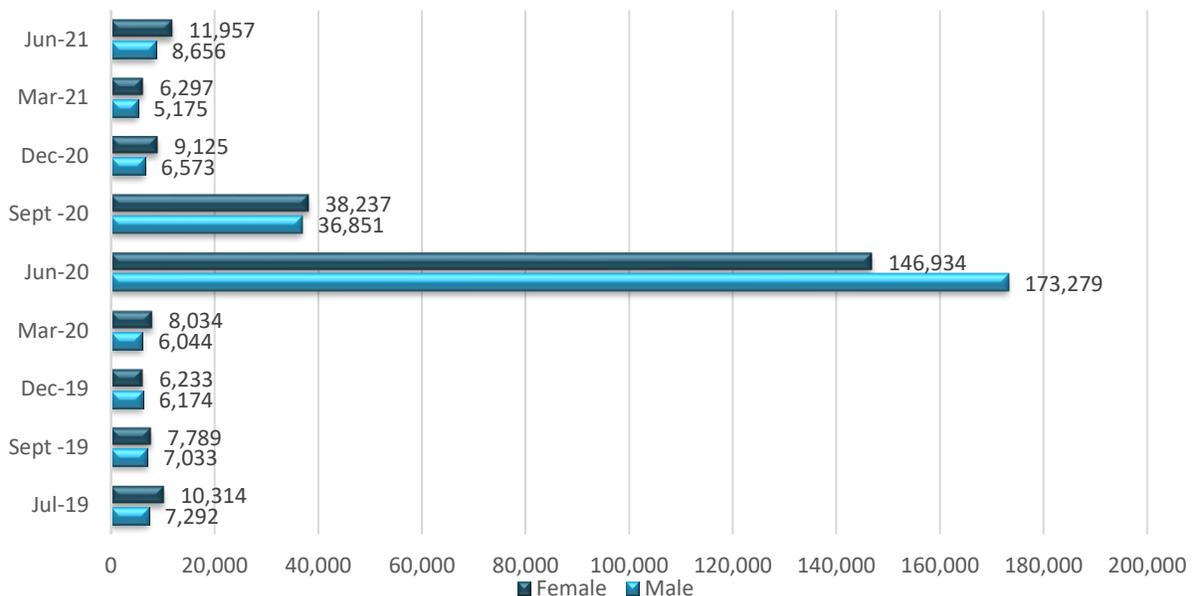
### Weekly Claims for Unemployment Insurance Data

**Unemployment Insurance weekly claims** data is used in current economic analysis of unemployment trends. Initial claims measure emerging unemployment. Continued weeks claimed measure the number of persons claiming unemployment benefits. This monthly report is due in the National Office by the 20th of the month, following the month the data relates. The survey week is to coincide with the survey week for the Bureau of Labor Statistics' Current Population Survey (CPS) week. This usually represents weeks claimed, filed during the week containing the 19th of the month. The week containing the 19th of the month is assumed to reflect unemployment experienced during the prior week containing the 12th of the month, the CPS survey week. When the CPS survey week is altered due to holidays, etc., the week used for the ETA 203 Report should be altered accordingly.

**Insured Unemployed** for this report, the number of insured unemployed, is the amount of regular state UI continued weeks claimed, both intrastate and interstate. The total count for insured unemployed is not reported on the ETA 203 but rather, the counts for demographic subcategories are reported. The sum of any given category, such as age groups, should generally be identical to the total for insured unemployed as reported on the ETA 539 report for state UI adjusted continued weeks claimed (CW) for the same week. Continued weeks claimed, under the Extended Benefit (EB) program, State Additional Benefits Program (AB), or any other extended compensation program should not be included on the ETA 203.

**Industry coding** will follow the most recent edition of the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS). Whenever possible, the industry assigned should be that of the employer for whom the claimant last worked. If it is not feasible to obtain the industry code of the most recent employer, the major base period employer may be substituted. Interstate claimants should be classified according to the best information available in the agent state.

**Figure 25**  
**Characteristics of the Insured Unemployed - Claims by Gender**  
**Months of Fiscal Years 2020 to 2021**



Source: US Department of Labor

**Occupation codes** will follow the most recent revision of the Standard Occupational Classification (SOC).

According to the COVID-19 pandemic, in Puerto Rico there was a total lockdown in mid-March, but some industries continued to open little by little. Figure 25 present the characteristics of the unemployed for the months that comprise fiscal year 2020 and 2021. The months of April to September of fiscal year 2020 reflected the largest number of claimants, due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

### ***Youth Workforce Participation***

The Youth Development Institute (YDI) of Puerto Rico, a nonprofit organization working to advance public policies- at both the federal and commonwealth level- that improve the lives of children and youth in Puerto Rico, presented a recommendation focuses on targeting the youth workforce development outcomes by providing specific youth workforce participation data for Puerto Rico.

Moreover, comparing employment and educational attainment data between years 1990, 2000 and 2016, the YDI can observe an important increase for youth ages 16 to 25 in Puerto Rico. However, these improvements have not translated to decreases in poverty levels among the same population; Puerto Rico's youth workforce remains poor. These statistics pre-date Hurricane Maria but taken together they present a sobering picture of the state of youth employment prior to the hurricane and will likely be exacerbated by current conditions in Puerto Rico.

Other recent natural disasters, including the Southeast earthquakes at the end of 2019 and first months of 2020 could impact the labor market indicators, especially in the impacted region.

### **Individuals with barriers to employment**

In 2020, Puerto Rico had a population of 3.2 million with 1 million people in the labor force. Many economic, political, and social factors contributed to having a proportionally large population with barriers to employment. A consequence of this situation is the low participation rate and the high unemployment mentioned before. Among the top groups with barriers to employment are individuals below poverty levels, SNAP recipients, individuals with disabilities, and older individuals, as shown Table 20.

**Table 20. Population with Barrier to Employment in Puerto Rico**

<b>Populations</b>	<b>Persons</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Source</b>
<b>Total population (2020)</b>	<b>3,263,584</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>US Census Bureau</b>
Persons below poverty level	1,419,659	43.5%	ACS 2020 - 5 yrs estimate
SNAP recipients	1,249,953	38.3%	ACS 2020 - 5 yrs estimate
Individuals with disabilities	750,624	23.0%	ACS 2020 - 5 yrs estimate
Older Individuals (65+)	695,143	21.3%	US Census Bureau
English language learners	672,298	20.6%	ACS 2020 - 5 yrs estimate
Single parents	378,576	11.6%	ACS 2020 - 5 yrs estimate
Individuals with low levels of literacy	261,087	8.0%	PR Literacy Survey - 2010
Veterans	76,216	2.3%	ACS 2020 - 5 yrs estimate
Disconnected youth*	22,845	0.7%	National Kids Count Data
American Indians and other races	9,791	0.3%	ACS 2020 - 5 yrs estimate
Ex-offenders	6,527	0.2%	PRDCR

Homeless	3,264	0.1%	HUD
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Source: American Community Survey 2013-2020, five-year estimates unless otherwise specified. Note: One individual can be counted in several groups. Numbers cannot be added. \* National Kids Count Data (Teens 16-19 not in school and not working).

### Displaced homemakers

Data are currently unavailable to accurately characterize this group as defined in section 3(16) of WIOA. ACS data estimated unpaid family workers in the population 16 years and older in the labor force to be 2,810 individuals in 2017.

### Low-income individuals

In Puerto Rico, 43.5% of the population lived below the poverty level in 2020, according with the Census 2020. This share could have increased after hurricanes Irma and Maria in 2017 and the earthquakes in the Southeast of the Island between December 2019 and the start of 2020. Setting these events aside, the number of persons in poverty fell by 309,487 persons from 2010 to 2020 (mainly because of migration). Nonetheless, the share of individuals living below the poverty level remained almost unchanged. In Puerto Rico, it is more than twice the share in the US.

**Table 21. Population living below the poverty level**

	Puerto Rico		Change 2010-2020
	2010	2020	
Population	3,634,488	3,263,584	-370,904
% Below Poverty level	45.10%	43.50%	-2%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2020). American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

**Table 22. Households by income level**

	Puerto Rico		Change 2010- 2020	US 2020	Difference PR/US
	2010	2020			
Number of Households	1,227,039	1,170,982	-56,057	122,802,852	
Less than \$10,000	29.80%	28.50%	-1.30%	6.70%	21.80%
\$10,000 to \$14,999	12.60%	11.80%	-0.80%	4.90%	6.90%
\$15,000 to \$24,999	17.70%	18.20%	0.50%	9.80%	8.40%
\$25,000 to \$34,999	12.30%	12.10%	-0.20%	9.50%	2.60%
\$35,000 to \$49,999	11.50%	11.50%	0.00%	13.00%	-1.50%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	9.10%	9.70%	0.60%	17.70%	-8.00%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	3.30%	3.90%	0.60%	12.30%	-8.40%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	2.40%	2.70%	0.30%	14.10%	-11.40%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	0.60%	0.80%	0.20%	5.80%	-5.00%
\$200,000 or more	0.70%	0.80%	0.10%	6.30%	-5.50%
Median income	\$18,791	\$19,775	984	\$57,652	(\$37,877)

Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2020). American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

The Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) of the Government of Puerto Rico provides a monthly benefit for nutritional assistance to low-income households. According to the American Community Survey 2018, 41.8% of households in Puerto Rico received food stamps, compared with 11.3% in the US. Among the Local Workforce Development Areas, the areas of La Montaña, North Central Arecibo, and Ponce had the largest percent of households on food stamps with 49.8%, 47.1%, and 45.9%, respectively.

**Table 23. Receipt of food stamps in the past 12 months by local area, 2019**

	Area	Households	Received food stamps in the past 12 months (#)	Received food stamps in the past 12 months (%)
	<b>United States</b>	<b>122,802,852</b>	<b>13,876,722</b>	<b>11.3%</b>
	<b>Puerto Rico</b>	<b>1,170,982</b>	<b>467,827</b>	<b>41.8%</b>
<b>#</b>	<b>Local Workforce Development Area</b>			
<b>1</b>	Bayamón-Comerío	75,393	23,070	30.6%
<b>2</b>	Caguas-Guayama	143,708	49,292	34.3%
<b>3</b>	Carolina	64,056	17,103	26.7%
<b>4</b>	Guaynabo-Toa Baja	91,988	25,205	27.4%
<b>5</b>	La Montaña	37,600	18,725	49.8%
<b>6</b>	Manatí-Dorado	97,501	40,950	42.0%
<b>7</b>	Mayagüez-Las Marías	32,802	13,974	42.6%
<b>8</b>	Northeast	74,485	31,507	42.3%
<b>9</b>	Northwest	90,963	41,388	45.5%
<b>10</b>	North Central Arecibo	97,575	45,958	47.1%
<b>11</b>	Ponce	53,341	24,484	45.9%
<b>12</b>	San Juan	145,321	40,545	27.9%
<b>13</b>	South Central	55,985	25,361	45.3%
<b>14</b>	Southeast	79,675	34,420	43.2%
<b>15</b>	Southwest	82,213	35,845	43.6%

Source: US Census Bureau. ACS 2019, 5 year estimate.

In Puerto Rico, the 56.7% of single female headed households were on food stamps, compared with 48% of single male headed households and 27.2% of married couples. All these percentages were higher than their US counterparts.

**Table 24. Households on food stamps by type and local area, 2018**

#	Area	Households on Food Stamps	Type of Household (% of total by type)		
			Married couple	Single male headed household	Single female headed household
	United States	15,029,498	6.8%	21.2%	35.4%
	Puerto Rico	467,827	27.2%	48.0%	56.7%
	<b>Local Workforce Development Area</b>				
<b>1</b>	Bayamón-Comerío	23,076	18.4%	33.3%	48.3%
<b>2</b>	Caguas-Guayama	49,297	23.0%	46.3%	50.2%

3	Carolina	17,082	15.7%	36.2%	47.3%
4	Guaynabo-Toa Baja	25,169	16.7%	36.1%	45.6%
5	La Montaña	18,721	39.6%	59.9%	66.0%
6	Manatí-Dorado	40,937	32.0%	52.2%	61.6%
7	Mayagüez-Las Marías	13,981	26.5%	54.6%	66.2%
8	Northeast	31,541	33.4%	47.6%	57.4%
9	Northwest	41,425	34.0%	58.5%	65.2%
10	North Central Arecibo	45,913	36.2%	61.7%	62.6%
11	Ponce	24,485	30.1%	59.1%	68.1%
12	San Juan	40,594	13.9%	32.0%	51.7%
13	South Central	25,340	31.9%	56.6%	61.9%
14	Southeast	34,400	32.0%	51.0%	60.8%
15	Southwest	35,866	33.7%	56.3%	62.4%

Source: US Census Bureau. ACS 2019, 5 year estimate.

In Puerto Rico in 2017 there were 734,789 persons with disability, which represents 23% of total population, compared with 12.6% in the US. The prevalence of disability is especially significant among 35 years and more age groups.

**Table 25. Percentage of population with disability, 2012, 2018**

	PR 2012	PR 2017	% Change	US 2017	Difference PR / US
Total population	<b>20.8%</b>	<b>21.3%</b>	<b>0.5%</b>	<b>12.6%</b>	<b>8.7%</b>
Gender					
<b>Male</b>	20.3%	21.2%	0.9%	12.5%	8.7%
<b>Female</b>	21.2%	21.5%	0.3%	12.7%	8.8%
Age Groups					
<b>Under 5 years</b>	1.3%	1.0%	-0.3%	0.8%	0.3%
<b>5 to 17 years</b>	9.9%	10.3%	0.5%	5.4%	4.9%
<b>18 to 34 years</b>	8.5%	8.6%	0.1%	6.1%	2.5%
<b>35 to 64 years</b>	24.2%	23.0%	-1.2%	12.9%	10.2%
<b>65 to 74 years</b>	42.2%	38.6%	-3.7%	25.4%	13.2%
<b>75 years and over</b>	68.2%	63.3%	-4.9%	49.7%	13.5%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2020). ACS 5-Year Estimates.

In 2018, the most common disability among employed persons were ambulatory (39.5%) and vision (35.8%). The most widespread disabilities among unemployed persons were cognitive and ambulatory with 40.7% and 31.4%, respectively. Among the population not in the labor force, the most common disabilities were ambulatory difficulty and cognitive difficulty with 15.5% and 13.9%, respectively.

**Table 26. Vocational rehabilitation service customers by type of disability, PY 2015**

Type of disability	Category total	As % of all customers
Cognitive	26,541	45%
Psychosocial	11,966	20%
Physical/ambulatory	7,156	12%
Other physical/ambulatory	3,886	7%
Other mental	3,084	5%
Vision	2,342	4%
Hearing	1,467	2%
Unidentified	1,312	2%
Respiratory	1,051	2%
Speech	362	1%
Hearing and vision	3	0.01%
<b>Total</b>	<b>59,170</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: PRVRA, Service statistics, PY2015.

According to statistics of the Puerto Rico Vocational Rehabilitation Administration (PRVRA), the top 3 occupations where the people seeking their services worked were Sales and Related, Office and Administrative Support, and Food Preparation and Serving Related occupations.

**Table 27. Employment outcomes of vocational rehabilitation services by major occupational group, PY 2015**

SOC Code	Occupational major group	Total employment	As % of all customers
41	Sales and related	315	10.7%
43	Office and administrative support	308	10.5%
35	Food preparation and serving related	297	10.1%
29	Healthcare practitioners and technical	255	8.7%
51	Production	252	8.6%
37	Building and grounds cleaning and maintenance	198	6.7%
39	Personal care and service	186	6.3%
25	Education, training and library	152	5.2%
49	Installation, maintenance and repair	125	4.2%
17	Architecture and engineering	111	3.8%
31	Healthcare support	107	3.6%
53	Transportation and material moving	101	3.4%
27	Art, design, entertainment, sports and media	85	2.9%
11	Management	83	2.8%
33	Protective services	71	2.4%
47	Construction and extraction	53	1.8%
21	Community and social services	47	1.6%

SOC Code	Occupational major group	Total employment	As % of all customers
13	Business and financial operations	46	1.6%
19	Life, physical and social sciences	45	1.5%
59	Homemaker	40	1.4%
15	Computer and mathematical	23	0.8%
45	Farming, fishing and forestry	17	0.6%
23	Legal	13	0.4%
55	Military specific	13	0.4%
Total		<b>2,943</b>	100%

Source: PRVRA, Service statistics, PY2015. Might not add to 100% due to rounding.

According to ACS estimates from 2017, the share of employed population with a disability in Puerto Rico was 8.5%, which grew significantly from 7.8% in 2016.

The PRVRA service statistics confirm ACS estimates for population 16 and over for the jobseeker population in terms of distribution by type of disability.

**Table 28. Employment status by disability of population 16 and over, 2012-2017**

Status and Disability Type	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Employed population with a disability	<b>8.6%</b>	<b>8.5%</b>	<b>8.6%</b>	<b>7.8%</b>	<b>7.8%</b>	<b>8.5%</b>
Hearing difficulty	17.0%	18.1%	17.8%	20.1%	16.7%	17.6%
Vision difficulty	30.8%	31.4%	33.2%	33.9%	36.7%	35.8%
Cognitive difficulty	31.2%	30.9%	29.3%	30.1%	27.1%	28.3%
Ambulatory difficulty	43.4%	39.8%	41.8%	44.5%	38.0%	39.5%
Self-care difficulty	7.6%	6.2%	8.9%	10.4%	8.2%	11.9%
Independent living difficulty	12.8%	13.9%	16.2%	12.7%	11.4%	13.7%
Unemployed population with a disability	<b>11.4%</b>	<b>11.4%</b>	<b>11.1%</b>	<b>12.2%</b>	<b>12.8%</b>	<b>10.4%</b>
Hearing difficulty	14.2%	13.0%	13.8%	14.1%	10.6%	22.0%
Vision difficulty	28.6%	31.5%	32.6%	36.5%	30.2%	29.0%
Cognitive difficulty	46.0%	46.2%	43.0%	46.6%	43.3%	40.7%
Ambulatory difficulty	32.3%	37.3%	34.0%	29.7%	34.5%	31.4%
Self-care difficulty	6.4%	8.6%	9.5%	8.9%	9.3%	7.1%
Independent living difficulty	20.2%	16.6%	21.4%	21.0%	20.1%	13.7%
Population not in labor force with a disability	<b>30.3%</b>	<b>30.1%</b>	<b>30.4%</b>	<b>30.4%</b>	<b>29.7%</b>	<b>28.2%</b>
Hearing difficulty	4.2%	3.9%	4.1%	4.0%	3.7%	4.0%
Vision difficulty	7.8%	6.9%	7.7%	7.3%	7.5%	7.7%
Cognitive difficulty	16.3%	16.1%	16.0%	15.6%	14.5%	13.9%
Ambulatory difficulty	16.9%	16.5%	17.2%	17.0%	16.4%	15.5%
Self-care difficulty	6.6%	6.6%	7.0%	7.4%	6.8%	7.2%
Independent living difficulty	15.1%	15.2%	15.3%	15.1%	14.1%	13.5%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2012-2017 American Community Survey.

### Older Individuals

According to ACS estimates, the labor force participation in Puerto Rico for persons 55 and older has stayed at approximately the same level during the past years; about half of that in the United States.

Population 55 to 64 dropped slightly (-2.3%) between 2016 and 2018, while the population 65 and over rose by more than 2.8%. Population aging poses significant challenges in all respects, including workforce development and regarding efforts aimed at jumpstarting the participation in labor force of the population.

### Ex-Offenders

According to the 2019's Inmate Population Profile completed by the PR Department of Correction and Rehabilitation (PDCR), as of September 2019, there were 7,663 inmates in the correctional facilities in Puerto Rico. Of this population, 7,400 or 97% were male and 263 or 3% were female.

Regarding the age distribution, the largest age group of the male inmate population was the 25 to 29 years age group with 1,412 inmates or 19% of total males. In the female inmate population case, the largest group was the 35 to 39 years age group with 67 inmates or 25% of total females.

As per their education and skills to participate in the labor market, 43% of male and 34% of female inmate population had less than high school diploma. About 3% of male and 0.8% of female inmate population could not read. On the other hand, most of them (57% of males and 66% of females), had high school diploma or more education. As a matter of fact, 70% of male and 53% of female inmates had a job before entering the correctional system. The principal sectors in which male inmates worked before incarceration were Construction, Cleaning and Maintenance, and Commerce with 32%, 14% and 12%, respectively. In the case of female inmates, the principal sectors were commerce, cleaning and maintenance and food related with 22%, 14%, and 12%, respectively.

**Table 29. Sociodemographic characteristics of the inmate population**

Characteristics	Male	(% of total count)	Female	(% of total count)
Total	7,400	97%	263	3%
Age				
18-24	599	8%	14	5%
25-29	1,412	19%	57	22%
30-34	1,395	19%	58	22%
35-39	1,315	18%	67	25%
40-44	1,021	14%	24	9%
45-49	704	10%	18	7%
50-59	676	9%	18	7%
60 and beyond	275	4%	7	3%
Could not read	238	3%	2	0.8%
Could not write	283	4%	5	1.9%
Educational Attainment				
K-6th grade	623	8%	10	4%
7th-11th grade	2,538	34%	80	30%

Characteristics	Male	(% of total count)	Female	(% of total count)
High-school diploma or GDE	3,256	44%	97	37%
Technical studies	361	5%	26	10%
Some college or Associate degree	462	6%	40	15%
Bachelor's degree	108	1%	8	3%
Master's degree or higher	27	0%	2	1%
Employment status prior to reclusion				
Employed	5,199	70%	140	53%
Did not participate in the labor force*	2,169	29%	121	46%
Field of previous work experience				
Construction	1,836	32%	2	2%
Cleaning and maintenance	821	14%	16	14%
Commerce	666	12%	25	22%
Auto repair and maintenance	560	10%	3	3%
Barber and hairdresser	344	6%	8	7%
Food related	293	5%	13	12%
Agriculture	197	3%	4	4%
Security services	43	1%	5	4%
Technical services	178	3%	2	2%
Art and entertainment	34	1%	0	0%
Health related	42	1%	8	7%
Professional	17	0%	3	3%
Communications and public relations	11	0%	0	0%
Education related	16	0%	0	0%
Sports related	23	0%	2	2%
Secretarial and administrative support	54	1%	8	7%
Caretaker	2	0%	6	5%
Related to warehouses	81	1%	1	1%
Other	499	9%	6	5%

Source: Department of Correction and Rehabilitation. Perfil de población confinada 2019.

### Homeless individuals, or homeless children and youths

In 2020 there were 2,451 homeless persons in Puerto Rico. "Chronically Homeless" individuals were the largest group with 1,085 persons or almost one third of total homeless.

**Table 30. Homeless persons by category, 2011-2020**

FY	Total	With Families	Veterans	Chronically Homeless
2011	2,900	554	137	3,564
2013	4,128	658	82	2,130

2015	4,518	589	164	1,756
2017	3,501	1,047	140	1,085
2020	2,451	200	88	668

Source: HUD, Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress, 2007-2020.

### Individuals within 2 years of exhausting lifetime eligibility under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program

In 2020, a total of 4,252 families received assistance through TANF, of which 98.1% received medical assistance, 99.2% nutritional assistance with a monthly pay of \$337.

**Table 31. TANF families by public assistance program 2015-2020**

	Total Families	Medical Assistance	SNAP (%)	SNAP Monthly Avg (\$)
<b>FY 2015</b>	10,838	99.9%	99.4%	271
<b>FY 2018</b>	6,048	98.8%	99.2%	355
<b>FY 2020</b>	4,252	98.1	95.9	337

Source: Office of Family Assistance. Characteristics and Financial Circumstances of TANF Recipients.

In FY 2020, 3,973 adults received assistance through TANF, of which 11.5% had less than 10<sup>th</sup> grade of education, 8.8% reached 10 – 11<sup>th</sup> grade, 56.5% completed 12<sup>th</sup> grade and 13.4% had more than high school education.

**Table 32. TANF adult recipients by educational attainment 2015-2020**

	Adult Recipients	Less than 10th grade	10 - 11th grade	12th grade	More than high school
<b>FY 2015</b>	10,149	16.9%	12.6%	57.8%	12.7%
<b>FY 2018</b>	5,569	14.3%	10.1%	56.5%	19.1%
<b>FY 2020</b>	3,973	11.5%	8.8%	56.5%	13.4%

Source: Office of Family Assistance. Characteristics and Financial Circumstances of TANF Recipients.

As highlighted before, 40.9% of all families live below poverty level. From these, 59.1% are female-headed families, and 45% of those have children under 18 years old. This factor causes it to be more difficult to connect TANF families to the job market.

**Table 33. TANF Adult Recipients by Employment Status 2015-2020**

FY	Total Adult Recipients	Employed (%)	Male Recipients	Employed (%)	Female Recipients	Employed (%)
<b>2015</b>	10,149	2.5%	716	1.3%	9,433	2.6%
<b>2018</b>	5,569	1.4%	236	0.0%	5,333	1.5%

<b>2020</b>	3,973	1.1%	231	1.5%	3,742	1.1%
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Source: Office of Family Assistance. Characteristics and Financial Circumstances of TANF Recipients.

As shown below, the most common reasons of TANF closures in 2020 were voluntary closure with 30.0%, employment with 11.5%, and reaching the federal time limit with 8.5% of all cases.

**Table 34. TANF Closed-Case Families by Reason for Closure 2015-2020**

FY	Total Families	Employment	Federal Time Limit	Other Sanction	Excess Income or Resources	Voluntary Closure	Other
<b>2015</b>	5,382	24.8%	2.9%	10.3%	7.5%	34.9%	19.6%
<b>2018</b>	3,011	12.7%	8.6%	8.7%	7.7%	37.9%	24.4%
<b>2020</b>	2,295	19.8%	8.5%	11.1%	9.1%	30.0%	11.5%

Source: Office of Family Assistance. Characteristics and Financial Circumstances of TANF Recipients.

### Single parents (including single pregnant women)

According to 2017 ACS data, there were 371,328 single parent families or 44% of total families. This figure included 80,278 single-male headed families and 291,050 single-female families.

The percentage of persons unemployed for 15 weeks or more reached a peak of 4.9% in 2011, after the full impact of the Great Recession. Since that year, this percentage has been decreasing to 1.6% in 2019.

**Table 35. Alternative measure of labor underutilization U-1, persons unemployed 15 weeks or longer, as a percent of the civilian labor force, 2007-2019**

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
As % of labor force	1.7	2.4	3.9	4.5	4.9	4.0	3.8	3.7	3.3	2.7	2.4	1.9	1.6

Note: The Figure was calculated by taking the average of each trimester.

Source: Puerto Rico Department of Labor and Human Resources.

### Other groups: Veterans

In 2018, there were 76,352 veterans in Puerto Rico. Most were in the 75 years and over age group with 36% of total. The second most import age group of veterans was 65 to 74 years. There were 30,074 veterans of working age (18 to 64 years), representing 40% of total veterans.

**Table 36. Veteran population by age, September 2018**

Total	18 to 34 years	35 to 54 years	55 to 64 years	65 to 74 years	75 years and over
<b>76,352</b>	4,548	12,495	13,074	18,654	27,582
<b>100%</b>	6%	16%	17%	24%	36%

Source: U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics, Living Veterans by state, age, group, gender, 2018

## ii. Labor Market Trends.

Provide an analysis of key labor market trends, including across existing industries and occupations.

The labor market in Puerto Rico has the following trends:

- Reduction in the participation rate.
- High and protracted unemployment.
- An ageing of the labor force.
- Transitioning from manufacturing to services industries.
- Government downsizing.
- High outmigration of people in working age.
- A highly educated labor force.

### Labor Force

In FY 2021, the labor force was estimated in 965,000 persons, and represented a decrease of 21,000 employees or 2.1% in the local economy, when compared to FY 2020 (986,000). From FY 2011 to FY 2021, the Employment fell by 78,000 persons (Figure 18). Self-employment not seasonally adjusted, in FY 2021 was 173,000 and reflected an increase of 8,000 persons or 4.8% of those totally employed, when compared to FY 2020 (165,000). From FY 2011 to FY 2021, the self-employment increased by 14,000 persons (Figure 19). It should be noted that in this fiscal year self-employment reached the highest figure in the entire historical series of 173,000, which only occurred during fiscal years 2006, 2007 and 2008, which reached the figure of 181,000, 192,000 and 177,000, respectively.

### Demographics

The demographic pressures on the labor force, including aging, population decrease, and a historic low natural growth rate are challenged by the increased outflow of migrants to the states, which spiked from 28,253 net out-migrants in 2010 to 72,469 in 2019. Outmigration was bolstered by the impact of hurricanes Irma and Maria in September 2017.

**Table 37. Net outmigration to States, 2010-2019**

Year	Out	In	Net
2010	-59,985.0	31,732.0	-28,253.0
2011	-76,218.0	22,649.0	-53,569.0
2012	-74,500.0	20,044.0	-54,456.0
2013	-73,846.0	24,652.0	-49,194.0
2014	-83,844.0	19,771.0	-64,073.0
2015	-89,000.0	24,762.0	-64,238.0
2016	-88,676.0	21,196.0	-67,480.0

Year	Out	In	Net
2017	-97,488.0	20,167.0	-77,321.0
2018	-133,451.0	20,900.0	-112,551.0
<b>2019</b>	-96,027	23,558	-72,469

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010-2018, American Community Survey

As shown in Table below, the percentage of outmigrants with post-secondary education grew from 40% in 2010 to 48% in 2013, and 56% in 2017. The median age of out-migrants increased from 28.1 in 2010 to 30.1 years in 2017. The numbers showed a relative shifting from blue-collar emigrants to more white-collar emigrants in recent years.

**Table 38. Profile of out-migrant to other States, 2010, 2013, 2017**

Year	With high school or less	With post-secondary education	Median age	Under 35 years old
2010	60%	40%	28.1	-62%
2013	52%	48%	28.5	-62%
2017	44%	56%	30.1	-60%

Source: PP Institute of Statistics. Migrant profile report (2010,2015,2017).

### Government Downsizing

From 2009 to 2019, the public sector decreased by 29.9% with an average drop of 3.5% per year. As a result, the share of government in total employment has gone from 30% to 23.2% in the last decade. The effects of government downsizing policies from 2009 to 2015 ensued a loss of 56,000 jobs with more than 20,000 of those being lost in 2010 alone.

State employment holds the largest portion within the public sector with an average share of 70% during this period. Nonetheless, it has decreased 35.9% (2009-2019) or -4.3% on average per year. Likewise, local government employment has decreased 20.1% during this period; however, federal jobs have increased by 11.4%.

**Table 39. Government employment, 2009-2019**

	Total Employment (000s)	Govt. (000s)	Govt. (as % of total)	Fed. (000s)	Fed. (as % of total)	State (000s)	State (as % of total)	Local (000s)	Local (as % of total)
2009	965.3	289.3	30.0%	15.0	1.6%	209.8	21.7%	64.5	6.7%
2010	931.6	267.6	28.7%	17.0	1.8%	190.0	20.4%	60.6	6.5%
2011	924.2	258.8	28.0%	14.6	1.6%	184.7	20.0%	59.5	6.4%
2012	940.1	259.2	27.6%	14.3	1.5%	183.5	19.5%	61.4	6.5%

2013	926.0	244.7	26.4%	14.0	1.5%	173.7	18.8%	57.0	6.2%
2014	909.8	234.7	25.8%	13.9	1.5%	166.0	18.2%	54.9	6.0%
2015	901.3	231.3	25.7%	14.2	1.6%	162.0	18.0%	55.1	6.1%
2016	894.0	227.5	25.4%	14.4	1.6%	157.3	17.6%	55.8	6.2%
2017	870.9	217.3	24.9%	14.8	1.7%	149.6	17.2%	52.9	6.1%
2018	860.9	207.3	24.1%	16.4	1.9%	141.2	16.4%	49.7	5.8%
2019	873.6	202.6	23.2%	16.7	1.9%	134.5	15.4%	51.5	5.9%

## Occupations

In terms of occupations, the largest number of jobs added between 2018 and 2028 were Professional and Business Services with 15,838 jobs (see Table 7). Moreover, the occupation with the largest expansion, among those that added the most jobs, was Middle School teachers with a percentage gain of 393% during this period. On the other hand, the three occupations with the greatest losses in employment were Office and Administrative Support Occupations, Sales and Related Occupations, and Retail Salespersons.

The Table below shows that the total number of individuals claiming unemployment insurance has fallen by 8,197 (32.7%). This, in part, may be due to the increased changes in migration patterns. Moreover, there has been a decreasing trend in males that has shifted to females, which now make up more than half of unemployed insurance claimants. From 2014 to 2020, the bulk of unemployment claimants has remained in the 25-54 age groups, comprising 63.4% of total cohorts in January of 2020.

When assessing occupation groups, Accommodation and Food Services saw an increase of 1,401 individuals claiming unemployment insurance from 2014 to 2018 followed by Health and Social Assistance and Retail Trade. From 2018 to 2020, many occupations saw a substantial decrease in claims; however, Educational Services (115%), Administration and Support/Waste Management and Remedial Services (38%), Transportation Warehousing (101%), and Manufacturing (15%) were among those that saw an uptick in claims.

**Table 40. Characteristics of Unemployment Insurance Claimants, 2020, 2021**

	21-Dec	Percent	20-Dec	Percent	Annual Change	Annual Pct Change
Total	<b>7,865</b>		<b>15,698</b>			
Male	3,508	44.6	6,573	41.90%	-3,065	-46.6%
Female	4,357	55.4	9,125	58.10%	-4,768	-52.3%
Years of Age	7,865		15,698			
Younger than 22	275	3.5%	569	3.60%	-294	-51.7%
22-24	526	6.7%	1,133	7.20%	-607	-53.6%
25-34	2,182	27.7%	4,414	28.10%	-2,232	-50.6%
35-44	1,993	25.3%	4,057	25.80%	-2,064	-50.9%
45-54	1,579	20.1%	3,066	19.50%	-1,487	-48.5%
55-59	631	8.0%	1,152	7.30%	-521	-45.2%
60-64	381	4.8%	746	4.80%	-365	-48.9%
65 and older	298	3.8%	538	3.40%	-240	-44.6%

Information Not Available	0	0.0%	23	0.10%	-23	-100.0%
Industry	7,865		15,698		-7,833	-49.9%
Agriculture/Forestry/Fishing and Hunting	223	2.8%	324	2.00%	-101	-31.2%
Mining	4	0.1%	5	0.00%	-1	-20.0%
Utilities	10	0.1%	7	0.00%	3	42.9%
Construction	496	6.3%	605	3.80%	-109	-18.0%
Manufacturing	1,049	13.3%	1,272	7.90%	-223	-17.5%
Wholesale Trade	203	2.6%	339	2.10%	-136	-40.1%
Retail Trade	800	10.2%	1,659	10.40%	-859	-51.8%
Transportation and Warehousing	133	1.7%	403	2.50%	-270	-67.0%
Information	90	1.1%	226	1.40%	-136	-60.2%
Finance and Insurance	209	2.7%	392	2.40%	-183	-46.7%
Real Estate, Rental and Leasing	128	1.6%	211	1.30%	-83	-39.3%
Professional/Scientific/Technical Services	343	4.4%	701	4.40%	-358	-51.1%
Management of Companies and Enterprises	21	0.3%	30	0.20%	-9	-30.0%
Administration and Support/Waste Management and Remedial Services	976	12.4%	1,785	11.10%	-809	-45.3%
Educational Services	521	6.6%	1,527	9.50%	-1,006	-65.9%
Healthcare and Social Assistance	649	8.3%	1,259	7.90%	-610	-48.5%
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	40	0.5%	108	0.70%	-68	-63.0%
Accommodation and Food Services	409	5.2%	1,267	7.90%	-858	-67.7%
Other Services (except Public Administration)	168	2.1%	281	1.80%	-113	-40.2%
Public Administration	676	8.6%	579	3.60%	97	16.8%
Information Not Available	717	9.1%	2,718	17.00%	-2,001	-73.6%

Source: ETA, Characteristics of the Unemployment Insurance Claimants, Dec-20, Dec-21

### iii. Education and Skill Levels of the Workforce

Provide an analysis of the educational and skill levels of the workforce.

According to estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau, there are around 2.39 million individuals over the age of 25 in Puerto Rico, of which 46.1% are males and 53.8% are females. From these, 52.9% have a high school degree or less while the remaining 47.1% have some college/associate degree, bachelor's degree or higher. Approximately a third of the male population has achieved 12<sup>th</sup> grade (no diploma) or less. However, almost 30% of women have completed a bachelor's degree or more compared to around 20% of men.

**Table 41. Percentage of population 25 years and over by sex and educational attainment, 2017**

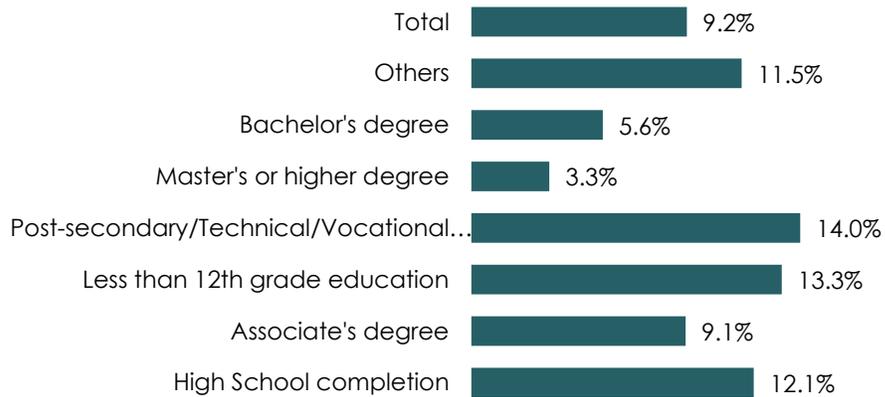
Sex	Population 25 years and over	Less than HS graduate (%)	HS graduate or GDE (%)	Some college or associate's degree (%)	Bachelor's degree or higher (%)
Male	1,102,958	27.7%	30.4%	21.7%	20.4%
Female	1,287,833	23.3%	25.2%	22.7%	28.9%

Total	<b>2,390,791</b>	<b>25.3%</b>	<b>27.6%</b>	<b>22.2%</b>	<b>24.9%</b>
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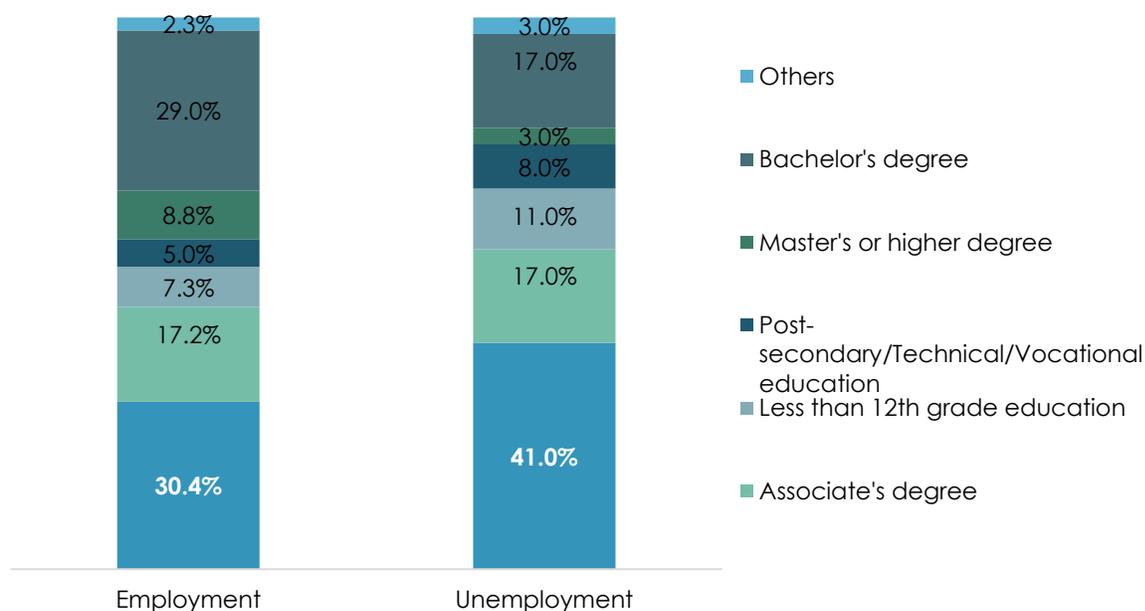
Source: ACS 5-year estimates, 2017.

By educational level, unemployment is concentrated among those with a post-secondary/technical/vocational preparation, while those with a bachelor’s degree and higher have lower unemployment. On the other hand, among those employed have a higher level of education. In other words, the higher the level of education, the lower the probabilities of being unemployed.

**Figure 26. Unemployment Rates by Educational Attainment, 2018**



Source: DLHR (2019). Empleo y Desempleo en Puerto Rico Promedio Año Natural (Anual).

**Figure 27. Distribution of Employment and Unemployment by Educational Attainment, 2018**

Source: DLHR (2019). Empleo y Desempleo en Puerto Rico Promedio Año Natural (Anual).

Slightly below a third of the population over 25 lives in the following regions: Caguas-Guayama (11.7%), San Juan (10.5%), and Manatí-Dorado (8.3%). The Northwest region has the highest percentage of individuals over 25 who have less than a high school diploma with 32.3% while South Central has the highest population of high school graduates in all the regions with 34.9%. In addition, Carolina, with 26.7%, has the largest percentage of individuals who have some college or an associate degree and 35.5% of San Juan's population has a bachelor's degree or greater, the highest one in all regions.

**Table 42. Percentage of population 25 years and over by local area and educational attainment, 2017**

Local Area	Population 25 years and over	Less than HS graduate (%)	HS graduate or GDE (%)	Some college or associate's degree (%)	Bachelor's degree or higher (%)
Bayamón-Comerío	146,279	21.8%	24.9%	26.4%	26.9%
Caguas-Guayama	280,564	22.3%	28.6%	21.9%	27.1%
Carolina	113,117	16.7%	25.6%	26.7%	31.0%
Guaynabo-Toa Baja	188,637	19.5%	23.5%	24.0%	33.1%
La Montaña	81,236	29.0%	30.8%	21.4%	18.8%
Manatí-Dorado	197,903	30.0%	26.6%	23.2%	20.3%
Mayagüez-Las Marías	58,490	30.4%	29.5%	17.2%	22.8%

Northeast	154,155	25.7%	33.2%	21.4%	19.7%
Northwest	179,789	32.3%	27.5%	20.1%	20.2%
Norte Central	193,624	29.5%	27.5%	22.4%	20.6%
Ponce	101,170	23.8%	30.3%	19.8%	26.1%
San Juan	251,574	20.4%	21.5%	22.6%	35.5%
South Central	108,638	25.3%	34.9%	18.8%	21.0%
Southeast	162,313	27.3%	28.6%	24.2%	19.9%
Southwest	173,302	30.4%	29.9%	18.5%	21.2%
<b>Puerto Rico</b>	<b>2,390,791</b>	<b>25.3%</b>	<b>27.6%</b>	<b>22.2%</b>	<b>24.9%</b>

Source: ACS 5-year estimates, 2017.

The relationship between the progression in educational attainment and poverty status is telling in terms of gender. A significant improvement in poverty status is achieved by males from non-high school level to high school and successively when progressing onto postsecondary and higher education levels. For females, the leap comes only after higher education attainment when the drop-in poverty status magnifies in relation to just attaining post-secondary education below a bachelor's degree. Nevertheless, still at this level males fare better.

**Table 43. Poverty rate of population 25 years and over for whom poverty status is determined by sex and educational attainment, 2019**

Sex	Population 25 years and over	Less than HS graduate (%)	HS graduate or GDE (%)	Some college or associate's degree (%)	Bachelor's degree or higher (%)
<b>Male</b>	1,102,958	61.4%	41.0%	26.0%	11.9%
<b>Female</b>	1,287,833	63.8%	54.7%	41.6%	16.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,301,735</b>	<b>62.6%</b>	<b>47.8%</b>	<b>34.6%</b>	<b>14.8%</b>

Source: ACS, 5-year estimates, 2019.

However, when assessing the estimates for median earnings by sex and education, one notes that men earn more than women in all categories by education. This is particularly true for higher education levels where women outnumber men. The salary difference between both genders for “graduate or professional degrees” is \$14,306 and \$7,057 for “bachelor’s degree”. Furthermore, the earnings gap narrows as the education level decreases and vice versa.

**Table 44. Median earnings (\$) of population 25 years and over by sex and educational attainment, 2019**

Sex	Population 25 and over	Less than HS graduate	HS graduate or GDE	Some college or associate's degree	Bachelor's degree	Graduate degree
Female	18,521	11,756	15,866	18,764	29,078	43,842
Male	18,651	9,167	12,521	16,098	22,596	31,040
<b>Total</b>	<b>18,587</b>	<b>11,259</b>	<b>15,055</b>	<b>17,187</b>	<b>24,668</b>	<b>34,649</b>

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2019 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates.

#### iv. Skill Gaps

##### Describe apparent “skill gaps”.

It is undeniable that the Puerto Rico labor market faces many difficulties caused by internal and external factors. Low participation rate and high unemployment prove that labor supply and demand do not match adequately. The government of Puerto Rico has important strategic initiatives, including an aerospace cluster, science and technology clusters, international insurance center, international financial center, Ponce’s Port of the Americas, and Act 20 for service exports, among others. Such initiatives will demand jobs in certain industries and occupations in the next years. These new jobs will require different education requirement and skills.

According to the PR Department of Labor projections. By year 2028, the occupations expected to growth will demand 15,420 new jobs. Almost 33% of these new jobs will require high school diploma or equivalent, 36% will require no formal education, and 22% will require a bachelor’s degree.

**Table 45. Education requirement in growing occupations, 2018-2028**

Education required for entry	Projected employment increase (2018-2028)	%
High school diploma or equivalent	5,095	33%
No formal educational credential	5,498	36%
Bachelor's degree	3,453	22%
Postsecondary non-degree award	571	4%
Doctoral or professional degree	130	1%
Associate degree	570	4%
Master's degree	103	1%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>15,420</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: PRDOLHR, Long-Term Projections, 2018-2028

**Table 46. Top 30 occupations by projected increase and postsecondary skills, 2018-2028**

#	Soc Code	Occupation		Projected employment increase
		SOC Title	Typical education needed	
1	33-9032	Security Guards	High school diploma or equivalent	3,900
2	35-3021	Combined Food Preparation and Serving Workers, Including Fast Food	No formal educational credential	3,154
3	29-1141	Registered Nurses	Bachelor's degree	1,337
4	39-9021	Personal Care Aides	High school diploma or equivalent	1,226
5	37-2011	Janitors and Cleaners, Except Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	No formal educational credential	4,273
6	41-2031	Retail Salespersons	No formal educational credential	5,743
7	35-2014	Cooks, Restaurant	No formal educational credential	1,137
8	43-5081	Stock Clerks and Order Fillers	High school diploma or equivalent	2,523
9	43-6013	Medical Secretaries	High school diploma or equivalent	757
10	29-2052	Pharmacy Technicians	High school diploma or equivalent	557
11	31-1011	Home Health Aides	High school diploma or equivalent	379
12	35-3031	Waiters and Waitresses	No formal educational credential	2,368
13	53-3041	Taxi Drivers and Chauffeurs	No formal educational credential	456
14	53-3022	Bus Drivers, School or Special Client	High school diploma or equivalent	272
15	11-1021	General and Operations Managers	Bachelor's degree	616
16	11-3031	Financial Managers	Bachelor's degree	373
17	29-2010	Clinical Laboratory Technologists and Technicians	Bachelor's degree	279
18	41-2011	Cashiers	No formal educational credential	6,042

		Occupation		
#	Soc Code	SOC Title	Typical education needed	Projected employment increase
19	43-3021	Billing and Posting Clerks	High school diploma or equivalent	524
20	41-3021	Insurance Sales Agents	High school diploma or equivalent	340
21	53-3033	Light Truck or Delivery Services Drivers	High school diploma or equivalent	743
22	13-1111	Management Analysts	Bachelor's degree	396
23	11-9051	Food Service Managers	High school diploma or equivalent	521
24	41-4012	Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing, Except Technical and Scientific Products	High school diploma or equivalent	894
25	13-1161	Market Research Analysts and Marketing Specialists	Bachelor's degree	233
26	47-2061	Construction Laborers	No formal educational credential	1,466
27	13-2011	Accountants and Auditors	Bachelor's degree	940
28	31-1014	Nursing Assistants	Postsecondary non-degree award	135
29	31-9091	Dental Assistants	Postsecondary non-degree award	302
30	11-9111	Medical and Health Services Managers	Bachelor's degree	146

Source: PRDOLHR, Long-Term Projections, 2018-2028

## (2) Workforce Development, Education and Training Activities Analysis.

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include an analysis of the workforce development activities, including education and training in the State, to address the education and skill needs of the workforce and the employment needs of employers. This must include an analysis of -

### (A) *The State's Workforce Development Activities*

Provide an analysis of the State's workforce development activities, including education and training activities of the core programs, Combined State Plan partner programs included in this plan, and required and optional one-stop delivery system partners.

It is in the best interest of WIOA to offer training in areas that will have the greatest need of employees. Recognizing these areas will help guide WIOA's efforts in training their participants in profitable trades.

According to our analysis of the labor and education, programs where demand surpasses the supply are presented in the following Table. The programs with the highest demand include General office occupations, Truck and Bus Driver, Receptionist, Customer Service Support, and Non-degree disciplines.

**Table 47. Comparison of Graduations versus Job Openings in Most Demanded Instructional Programs**

Instructional Program Description	CIP CODE	Annual Graduates	Total Employment 2018	Job Openings	Demand by Instructional Program
Other Non-degree disciplines	99.9999	-	328,103	36,091	36,091
General Office Occupations and Clerical Services	52.0408	55	23,512	2,318	2,263
Truck and Bus Driver/Commercial Vehicle Operator and Instructor	49.0205	-	15,914	1,683	1,683
Receptionist	52.0406	-	10,540	1,344	1,344
Executive Assistant/Executive Secretary	52.0402	219	13,627	1,282	1,063
Customer Service Support/Call Center/Teleservice Operation	52.0411	-	7,526	954	954
Accounting Technology/Technician and Bookkeeping	52.0302	51	9,370	999	948
Home Health Aide/Home Attendant	51.2602	63	7,298	958	895
Building/Property Maintenance	46.0401	19	9,180	913	893
Office Management and Supervision	52.0204	233	11,246	1,064	831
Administrative Assistant and Secretarial Science, General	52.0401	573	14,846	1,397	823
Sales, Distribution, and Marketing Operations, General	52.1801	6	7,305	740	734
Teacher Assistant/Aide	13.1501	235	9,565	928	693
Banking and Financial Support Services	52.0803	163	7,850	763	600
Criminalistics and Criminal Science	43.0111	102	10,485	675	573
Selling Skills and Sales Operations	52.1804	-	4,823	546	546
Operations Management and Supervision	52.0205	33	6,223	490	458
Retailing and Retail Operations	52.1803	-	3,278	433	433
Quality Control Technology/Technician	15.0702	11	3,518	387	376
Medical Office Management/Administration	51.0705	9	3,980	376	368
General Merchandising, Sales, and Related Marketing Operations, Other	52.1899	1	3,647	364	362
Finance, General	52.0801	278	7,936	627	348
Teacher Education, Multiple Levels	13.1206	111	6,970	459	348
Industrial Mechanics and Maintenance Technology	47.0303	26	3,493	350	324
Construction/Heavy Equipment/Earthmoving Equipment Operation	49.0202	-	3,168	317	317
Insurance	52.1701	2	3,493	296	294
Other Academic Programs		56,218	297,638	25,688	(30,530)
<b>Total</b>		<b>58,450</b>	<b>844,474</b>	<b>83,491</b>	<b>25,042</b>

Source: Estudios Técnicos, Inc.

The Non-degree disciplines are presented as the group with the highest demand mainly because they do not correspond with any instructional program. This group includes occupations that generally do not require a degree, such as retail salesperson, janitor, cashiers, and security guards.

Instructional programs related to administrative assistance and office aid predominate among the highest demanded. These programs are complementary between each other and respond to high turnovers in a large sector. In addition to being part of these results, Office and Administrative Support occupations were projected to have the largest demand in the latest PR Long Term Occupational Employment projections.

Additional important programs with high demand are Home Health Aid and Customer Service Support. Both programs are in have been in demand in recent years. Given the aging population in Puerto Rico, home health aides are becoming an alternative for persons with preexisting conditions. They provide a service that is essential for patients that may have mobility issues and want to remain living on their own. On the other hand, customer service support offices, or call centers, have been steadily growing in the island. These call centers mainly require a bilingual training in their candidates and provide services to companies ranging from telecommunications providers and banks to fine jewelry.

### **Methodology**

The Career demand in Puerto Rico was calculated with the combination of annual graduates, total employment, and job openings in each Instructional Program (CIPCODE). The separation rates were calculated by adding the projected growth with the labor force exits and occupational transfers and dividing by the total employment of that occupation. Using the separation rate obtained from the estimates we calculated the Job Openings by multiplying the separation rate with the Employment in that Instructional Program. Then the career demand by instructional program was calculated by subtracting the job openings with the annual graduates.

The estimates presented were prepared using data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), and Puerto Rico's Department of Labor and Human Resources (PRDLHR). The specific data sets used from each source were: BLS with the Occupational Employment Statistics (OES) survey, from the NCES we used Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) data set, and from PRDLHR we use the Occupational Employment Projections 2016-2016.

The specific data used from the OES Survey were the Employment per Occupation in Puerto Rico. The Annual Average Graduates were obtained from the IPEDS data set from years 2011 to 2018. The Crosswalk used for converting from Occupations to Careers was made by BLS and NCES using the 2010 CIPCODES and 2010 SOC CODES. Finally, from the PRDLHR the annual job openings were used to calculate the attrition rates from each occupation.

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*(B) The Strengths and Weaknesses of Workforce Development Activities*

Provide an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the workforce development activities.

**Strengths**

- While it posed immediate organizational challenges, the reorganization mandated by Act 171-2014, which transferred the Workforce Development Program from the PRDOLHR to the PRDEDC, has facilitated the integration of workforce and economic development activities required under WIOA. Significant opportunities arise by sharing the PRDEDC's resources available through the following units: Federal Contracting Center, One-Stop entrepreneur support network managed by the Commerce and Exports Corporation, Office of Industrial Tax Incentives, Youth Development Program, EB-5 Government's Regional Center, among other.
- As discussed in the previous section, although there are still voids in the system, the extent and number of programs provide many accessible opportunities for jobseekers and employers alike to find services, subsidies, and support.
- Important strides have been made regarding long-standing problems that affected the public secondary education system, especially in measuring dropout rates and increased compliance with IDEA indicators. Also, the fact that the public education system is managed as an integrated statewide LEA works towards facilitating policy and program implementation, data integration and the measurement of outcomes.
- The size of the population served and the impact of transfer payments on the economic conditions of those enrolled on sizable federal assistance programs (NAP, HUD, among other) that include a workforce component, represent an opportunity to increase education, training, and work experience for a high number of individuals.
- Core programs are supported by the availability of many training and service providers and qualified personnel, especially to provide services to target populations, including persons with disabilities.

**Weaknesses**

- The Government has overtly relied on non-competitive formula funds, thus missing on opportunities to strengthen the workforce system.
- Due to the fact that PR has not been able to submit performance reports for the past few years, many decisions about system reorganization have not yet been made.
- A silo-approach in managing government programs might have led to a diminish ability for leveraging program opportunities. More lateral redirecting among programs must be enabled through the appropriate structuring and maintenance of MOU's to strengthen coordination between core and required programs, local boards and operators in order to maximize resources and exchange referrals.

- The silo-approach might have also led to piecemeal communication and marketing of the services being offered throughout the workforce system to potential businesses customers and jobseekers alike, particularly when it comes to serving individuals facing barriers to employment.
- Efforts to braid and mutually leverage funding streams must be strengthened, which involves enhancing the advisory function and the provision of accurate, prompt, and complete data to policy and lawmakers alike.
- Information products are needed to assess specific aspects of the workforce system including disaggregated data to ascertain services to individuals facing barriers to employment; real-time supply and demand dynamics in the labor market; or information to characterize underemployment, self-employment, and the impact of the informal sector on the labor market. A data integration roadmap for the entire system is critical.
- Policies must be devised to tackle gender-skewed outcomes in post-secondary education and the labor market.
- The fiscal impairment of the public sector as a major employer and provider of funding for workforce activities poses a significant challenge to the effectiveness and performance of the entire system.

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*(C) State Workforce Development Capacity*

Provide an analysis of the capacity of State entities to provide the workforce development activities.

Puerto Rico has the capacity to provide the services required for workforce development, as is required by WIOA. Puerto Rico has one of the highest university densities in the world. The island’s gross enrollment ratio in post-secondary institution (84%) is on top of 97% of the countries in the world, according to the World Bank.

However, since 2014 the post-secondary enrollment, in absolute numbers, has been a decreasing, due to young population decline. This reduction has left institutions with underutilized facilities that are still furnished to provide traditional educational services. Specifically, these institutions, given the appropriate resources, have the physical equipment and campus area to provide training for at least 32,000 students. This amount results from the difference between the total enrollment in post-secondary institutions from 2014 and 2018 which are the year with the highest recent enrollment and the most recent year, respectively.

**Table 48. Post-secondary Institution Enrollment**

Year	Post-secondary Institution Enrollment
2014	260,492
2018	228,030

Year	Post-secondary Institution Enrollment
Vacant spaces	32,462

Source: IPEDS Data (2020)

In addition to the unused area in post-secondary institutions, the Public Building Authority (AEP) has vacant space available under its management. According to the latest available information, the AEP oversees more than 600 buildings with an approximate rentable area of 31.3 million square feet. Out of these 600 buildings, more than 200 are vacant grade school campuses. These schools can also be used to provide training in local communities. Using these vacant schools can increase WIOA's impact in harder to reach communities. Most of the programs' clientele have low mobility and can benefit from receiving training at more locally accessible facilities.

#### (A) STATE STRATEGIC VISION AND GOALS

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include the State's strategic vision and goals for developing its workforce and meeting employer needs in order to support economic growth and economic self-sufficiency. This must include -

##### (1) Vision

Describe the State's strategic vision for its workforce development system.

Puerto Rico's workforce development system and its network of American Job Centers, succeed at being the service of choice to meet the needs of industries, businesses, employers, and job seekers, and at expanding access to education, training and employment opportunities for adults, youth, dislocated workers, people with disabilities and individuals facing barriers to employment, thus contributing to further our economic development.

##### (2) Goals

Describe the goals for achieving this vision based on the analysis in (a) above of the State's economic conditions, workforce, and workforce development activities.

Puerto Rico's workforce development system has developed **six goals to** achieve the state's vision for workforce system as part of its strategic plan, each of which will employ several strategies. These goals are defined at the workforce system level and address both (a) preparation and education needed to develop an educated and skilled workforce, including preparing youth and individuals with barriers to employment and other population and (b) the goal for meeting the skilled workforce needs of employers.

1. Develop and efficient partnership with employers, the educational system, workforce development partners, and community-based organizations to deliver a platform that will prepare a skilled workforce for existing and new employers.

2. Increase awareness, participation, and utilization of the workforce development system by employers and job seekers
3. Facilitating a framework for planning, developing, and governing a job-driven system by employers and job seekers.
4. Maintain the American Job Center system physically and programmatically accessible throughout, for both job seekers and employers to enhance service delivery and meet their occupational education and employment needs.
5. Enhance performance through improved data integration, enhanced outcome metrics, system access, alignment, integration, and modernization, across the workforce development system, including required and non-required partners.
6. Prepare workers in Puerto Rico to succeed in a highly competitive labor market by increasing their skills and educational attainment.
7. X
8. X
9. X
10. X
11. x

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### (3) Performance Goals

Under section 116(b)(2)(A) of WIOA, there are six primary performance indicators for its core programs. Performance measures are calculated using the following methodology:

Employment Rate – 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter After Exit: The percentage of participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the fourth quarter after exit from the program. For Youth, the indicator is the percentage of participants in education or training activities, or unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit.

Employment Rate – 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter After Exit: The percentage of participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the fourth quarter after exit from the program. For Youth, the indicator is the percentage of participants in education or training activities, or unsubsidized employment during the fourth quarter after exit.

Median Earnings – 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter After Exit: The median earnings of participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the program.

Credential Attainment: The percentage of participants who obtained a recognized post-secondary credential or a secondary school diploma, or its recognized equivalent, during participation in or within one year of exit from the program.

Measurable Skill Gains: The percentage of participants who, during a program year, are in an education or training program that leads to a recognized post-secondary credential or employment and who are

achieving measurable skill gains, which are defined as documented academic, technical, occupational, or other forms of progress toward such a credential or employment.

Effectiveness in Serving Employers: Measures the Puerto Rico workforce systems effectiveness in serving employers by assessing the employee retention, employer penetration and repeat business customer rates.

As show, in the Tables below provide the anticipated levels of performance for Title I, Title II, Title III and Title IV programs. At this time, program year goals for PY 2020 and PY 2021 have not yet been negotiated.

**Table 49. Performance Goals for the Title I – Adult Program**

	Title I - Adult Program			
	Program Year 2023		Program Year 2024	
	Expected Level	Negotiated Level	Expected Level	Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter after Exit)	TBN	TBN	TBN	TBN
Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit)	TBN	TBN	TBN	TBN
Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit)	TBN	TBN	TBN	TBN
Credential Attainment Rate	TBN	TBN	TBN	TBN
Measurable Skills Gains	TBN	TBN	TBN	TBN

**Table 50. Performance Goals for the Title I – Dislocated Worker Program**

	Title I - Dislocated Worker Program			
	Program Year 2023		Program Year 202	
	Expected Level	Negotiated Level	Expected Level	Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter after Exit)	TBN	TBN	TBN	TBN
Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit)	TBN	TBN	TBN	TBN
Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit)	TBN	TBN	TBN	TBN
Credential Attainment Rate	TBN	TBN	TBN	TBN

Measurable Skills Gains	TBN	TBN	TBN	TBN
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**Table 51. Performance Goals for the Title I – Youth Program**

	Title I - Youth Program			
	Program Year 2023		Program Year 202	
	Expected Level	Negotiated Level	Expected Level	Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter after Exit)	TBN	TBN	TBN	TBN
Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit)	TBN	TBN	TBN	TBN
Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit)	TBN	TBN	TBN	TBN
Credential Attainment Rate	TBN	TBN	TBN	TBN
Measurable Skills Gains	TBN	TBN	TBN	TBN

**Table 52. Performance Goals for the Title II – Adult Education Program**

	Title II - Adult Education Program			
	Program Year 2023		Program Year 202	
	Expected Level	Negotiated Level	Expected Level	Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter after Exit)	TBN	TBN	TBN	TBN
Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit)	TBN	TBN	TBN	TBN
Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit)	TBN	TBN	TBN	TBN
Credential Attainment Rate	TBN	TBN	TBN	TBN
Measurable Skills Gains	TBN	TBN	TBN	TBN

**Table 53. Performance Goals for the Title III – Wagner-Peyser Program**

	Title III - Wagner-Peyser Program			
	Program Year 2023		Program Year 2024	
	Expected Level	Negotiated Level	Expected Level	Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter after Exit)	TBN	TBN	TBN	TBN
Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit)	TBN	TBN	TBN	TBN
Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit)	TBN	TBN	TBN	TBN

According to TEGL 10-19, the states are not required to submit an expected level of performance for the Effectiveness in Serving Employers indicator for PY 2023 and PY 2024. The indicator for this performance goal is in discussion between core partners to develop a common performance measure.

**Table 54. Performance Goals for Effectiveness in Serving Employers**

	Effectiveness in Serving Employers			
	Program Year 2023		Program Year 2024	
	Expected Level	Negotiated Level	Expected Level	Negotiated Level
Retention with Same Employer	TBN	TBN	TBN	TBN
Repeat Business Customer Rate	TBN	TBN	TBN	TBN
Employer Penetration Rate	TBN	TBN	TBN	TBN

#### (4) Assessment

The PRDEDC is responsible for evaluating the effectiveness of the state’s workforce development system. The State’s performance report is in accordance with the Sec. 116(d)(2) of WIOA. Performance reporting will comply with the requirements set forth in 20 CFR Sec. 677.160 of the proposed rule including, as might be applicable to each core program:

- A state performance report on program levels achieved with respect to number of participants served;
- Total number of participants who exited each of the core programs, including disaggregated counts of those who participated in and exited a core program by individuals with barriers to

- employment;
- Demographics;
- Total number of participants and program exiters who received career and training services for the most recent program year and the three preceding program years;
- Levels achieved for the primary indicators for career and training services for the most recent program year and the 3 preceding program years;
- Percentage of participants in a program who obtained unsubsidized employment related to the training received through Title I–B programs;
- Amount of funds spent on each type of career and training service for the most recent program year and the 3 preceding program years;
- Average cost per participant for those participants who received career and training services, respectively, during the most recent program year and the 3 preceding program years;
- Percentage of a State’s annual allotment spent on administrative costs; and
- Any other information that facilitates comparisons of programs with programs in other States.

The State Board and core programs will enforce the incorporation of assessment protocols leading to improvement through the selection and certification processes of local boards, operators, and providers. Measurement mechanisms will be devised to account for outcomes resulting from the implementation of sector strategies and career pathways.

(C) STATE STRATEGY

The Unified State Plan must include the State's strategies to achieve its strategic vision and goals. These strategies must take into account the State's economic, workforce, and workforce development, education and training activities and analysis provided in Section (a) above. Include discussion of specific strategies to address the needs of populations provided in Section (a).

As shown in Table 55, the strategic plan of the Puerto Rico workforce system establishes the strategies necessary for achieving each of the five goals proposed in the strategic plan. The strategies are focused on the following areas: economic development, skills and educational attainment, innovation and governance, service integration and system alignment.

**Table 55. Alignment of goals with the strategic plan of P.R. workforce system**

P.R. Workforce Development Program	State's Strategies:			
<b>Goal 1: Partnership with Workforce System</b>	a. Expand employer partnerships through the support of industry engagement.	b. Identify and promote best practices (private and public) for developing and sustaining partnerships.	c. Improve communication/participation between education entities, local and state boards, government agencies, community-based organizations, and employers.	d. Increase the utilization of Registered Apprenticeship programs as viable talent development opportunities.
	e. Increase connections with employers and Vocational Rehabilitation	f. Partner with K-12 education, higher education, career and technical education, and	g. Expand small business participation.	h. Develop strategic partnerships with key support agencies (e.g., Perkins Programs /Adult Ed, Office of Socioeconomic

P.R. Workforce Development Program	State's Strategies:			
	agencies to provide support and employment for youth and adults with disabilities.	adult education to provide consistent rules and eliminate barriers to implementing training programs around the State.		Community Development, Department of Family Affairs, Department of Housing, Department of Corrections etc).
	i. Enhance state and local partnerships to expand the workforce system's capacity to mitigate barriers to employment.			
<b>Goal 2: Increase participation of the Workforce System</b>	a. Change employer and jobseeker perceptions of the workforce development system.	b. Develop an image-building outreach campaign that educates citizens about the services and the career development opportunities available in the State.	c. Utilize technology, including social media and search engine optimization, to better connect jobseekers and employers with the talent development system in Puerto Rico.	d. Cross train, the AJCs staff including partners. Train staff who serve employers in sales, service, and skills needed to improve service to business.
	a. Conduct regular research on trends and changes in the	b. Provide training and capacity building to stakeholders focusing on the sector strategies implementation	c. Develop metrics and required evaluation tools, reports and dissemination mechanisms to track outcomes for	d. Convene a working group integrated by representatives of key existing and emerging

P.R. Workforce Development Program	State’s Strategies:			
<p><b>Goal 3: Framework for a job-driven system</b></p>	<p>employment industry.</p>	<p>framework, effective industry analysis, employer engagement, partnership building, and design of career pathways and industry-relevant training programs, among other topics.</p>	<p>regional sector strategies and career pathways.</p>	<p>industries, leadership from public systems such as workforce, higher education, economic development and employment support services, and policymakers to assist the State Board in developing support for sector strategies and career pathways.</p>
<p><b>Goal 3: Framework for a job-driven system</b></p>	<p>e. Directly engage industry associations and individual companies with a large presence in Puerto Rico that might have an interest in investing in sector strategies to work directly with regional and local partnerships, including devising</p>	<p>f. Identify opportunities to further academic research on conditions, approaches and prospects of the workforce development system.</p>	<p>g. Adopt a common framework to advance the adoption of regional plans by the local boards, program leaders, and elected officials that optimizes program integration and supports the implementation of sector strategies and career pathways.</p>	

P.R. Workforce Development Program	State’s Strategies:			
	relevant data and labor market information products.			
<p><b>Goal 4: American Job Centers</b></p>	<p>a. Develop an integrated data system that will enable the sharing of information between partner agencies to service both employers and jobseekers more efficiently.</p>	<p>b. Promote training that leads to industry recognized credentials and certification.</p>	<p>c. Support career pathways development and sector strategy initiatives as a way to meet business and industry needs.</p>	<p>d. Increase the availability and delivery of virtual workforce services (Expand service delivery access points by the use of virtual services, skill development, partner’s services, etc.</p>
	<p>e. Develop a common business outreach strategy with a common message that will be utilized by all workforce system partners.</p>	<p>f. Direct the State entities to acknowledge the American Job Center network as the main option to access comprehensive workforce development services.</p>	<p>g. Develop a uniform website for all local areas in Puerto Rico.</p>	<p>h. o Create a common workforce system identity, branding and messaging that lend support in marketing the system to those customers that ordinarily use the system, as well as to atypical customers like the highly-skilled job seeker, thus</p>

P.R. Workforce Development Program	State's Strategies:			
<p><b>Goal 4: American Job Centers</b></p>	<p>i. Establish a dedicated business service to tend the specific needs of SMBs/SMEs and promote the use of One Stop facilities and/or staff to employers who might need it for prescreening, interviewing or other allowable activities.</p>	<p>j. Coordinate marketing strategies so that the community can know about the program's services.</p>	<p>k. Identify other providers for areas where services are not available.</p>	<p>reinforcing the system's ability to attract a wider array of employers.</p>
	<p>a. Assess the efficiency of the workforce development system.</p>	<p>b. Share labor market data across workforce partners to ensure the same data informs multiple partners on training decisions and encourage further dissemination of this information to uncover</p>	<p>c. Align performance and financial reporting systems locally and statewide to better allocate funding, improve accountability, and address systemic issues</p>	<p>d. Enhance customer service by creating common standards and systems across all workforce entities and reducing regulatory barriers.</p>

P.R. Workforce Development Program	State’s Strategies:			
<b>Goal 5: Enhance performance through improved data integration, system access, alignment and modernization</b>		other areas where it might be useful.		
	e. Develop effective mechanisms to communicate and share performance information to System stakeholders to be used for continuous improvement.	f. Create interagency agreements with required and non-required partners to promote co-enrollment, align workforce development activities and improve data sharing.	g. Measure and report on the effectiveness of the workforce development system including the usage and quality of services.	h. Ensure all elements of the System have built-in feedback mechanisms, such as surveys and roundtables.
	i. Monitor progress in, and partner with, other states to share resources in creating the most impactful programs			
	a. Prioritize services and coordination across core and partner programs to expand education, work experience and employment outcomes for out-of-school youth.	b. Actively promote pre-employment transition services to youth with disabilities.	c. Expand early exposure of in-school youth to the range of career and higher education opportunities available through the workforce system.	d. Continue providing the College Board exam free of charge to all students enrolled in the public system taking it in 11th and 12th grades.
	e. Access to career information that will help to the participant to	f. 6. Coordinate with the PRDE’s State Board for Career and Technical	g. Address the need for employability skills training, especially in	h. Improve the reach of the English language literacy activities throughout the

P.R. Workforce Development Program	State’s Strategies:			
<p><b>Goal 6: Increasing Skills and Education Attainment</b></p>	<p>identify occupation and jobs that are growing in their area and the list of available trainings that can prepare the participant for those jobs.</p>	<p>Education, the PRDOLHR and the industry, the effective delivery of occupational education for high-demand, highly skilled and/or technologically advanced occupations</p>	<p>relation to preparing a good resume, searching for a job and understanding work expectations, as well as life skills.</p>	<p>population of jobseekers in need of English language skills.</p>
	<p>i. Improve coordination with programs that combine education, job training and preparation, counseling, and supportive services to benefit out-school youth.</p>	<p>j. Increase access to education for those that have barriers.</p>	<p>k. Integration of agricultural workforce development programs.</p>	<p>l. The AEP will initiate a pilot project with the (I-BEST) strategy, a model that boosts students’ literacy and work and college readiness skills, so students earn credentials, get living wage jobs, and put their talents to work.</p>
	<p>m. The PRDE's AEP will work collaboratively with other core programs and partner agencies to expand access to education, training and employment</p>	<p>n. Integration of career pathways into the adult education program curriculum-framework.</p>	<p>o. The DE-AEP will also focus on the update of the system to assist in the transition from adult education to postsecondary education, including linkages with</p>	<p>p. Design of contextualized Instruction, including the STREAM approach.</p>

P.R. Workforce Development Program	State’s Strategies:			
<p><b>Goal 6: Increasing Skills and Education Attainment</b></p>	<p>opportunities for adult learners.</p>		<p>postsecondary educational institutions or institutions of higher education.</p>	
	<p>q. The DEPR-AEP will foster the development and implementation of technology applications, translation technology, distance education, including professional development to support the use of instructional technology.</p>	<p>r. Integration of career counseling and planning into adult education.</p>	<p>s. Integration of employability skills into the classroom.</p>	<p>t. The DEPR-AEP will make efforts to incorporate Internet technology into adult education classrooms.</p>
<p><b>Goal 6: Increasing Skills</b></p>	<p>u. The AEP will invest funds in developing interactive classrooms with Smart boards, internet access, learning platforms, online resources and learning materials libraries with the purpose on enhancing learning.</p>	<p>v. The AEP will equip with portable computers notebooks the adult education classrooms.</p>	<p>w. The AEP will implement a distance education program to provide the necessary space to let teachers boost the learning and skills gains on adult learners.</p>	<p>x. Design, develop and implement of a technical assistance mentoring program among service providers to pair expert providers with providers that are emerging in their development of career pathways and integrated education and training.</p>

<p><b>P.R. Workforce Development Program</b></p>	<p><b>State’s Strategies:</b></p>		
<p><b>and Education Attainment</b></p>	<p>y. Provide ancillary services like transportation, childcare, counseling, and other to facilitate program completion by those enrolled in training and education courses.</p>	<p>z. The DEPR-AEP is committed to develop high quality professional development activities, and support services which will help teachers/instructors better understand the career pathways systems and expand their professional knowledge.</p>	<p>aa. Enroll and ensure the continued support and participation of central government agencies in sector partnerships, especially to leverage discretionary sources to fund education, training, employment and supportive activities.</p>
<p><b>Goal 7: Enhance Supportive Services</b></p>	<p>a. Develop a shared public policy for the allocation of support service in AJCs for priority populations under WIOA among partners.</p>	<p>b. Establish an evaluation process to calculate the allocation of supportive services for core programs and required AJC partners.</p>	<p>c. Evaluate the regulation of all core and required programs to create an inventory of support services, identify overlapping, regulatory limitations for the allocation of benefits.</p>
	<p>d. The State Workforce Development Board will develop a common</p>		

P.R. Workforce Development Program	State’s Strategies:		
	policy among the core partners on the support services to be offered in the AJCs for priority populations.		
<b>Goal 8- Co-enrollment</b>	a. Develop public policy to guide and promote co-enrollment of individuals seeking services at the AJC.	b. WIOA Regional and Local Plans must indicate a commitment to implement local service integration action plans.	c. Develop procedures for case management, skills assessment, application of diagnostic tests, and the development of goals and objectives plans for AJC participants in a uniform manner for all core and required programs.
	d. Align core and required partner databases with PRIS system for common registration, case management, referral to support services and tracking of activity, services and outcomes of shared customers.		
<b>Goal 9 – Improve</b>	a. Promote Continuous Improvement and Ongoing Professional Development	b. Train in the identification of best practices,	c. Require by public policy training hours on WIOA regulations for all staff from core and required partners.

P.R. Workforce Development Program	State’s Strategies:		
<p><b>Technical Assistance</b></p>	<p>for all state agency partner and local boards to promote continuous improvement in career and training services and case management services through state and regional initiatives that promote leading business practices as well as regulations and ongoing public policies</p>	<p>demonstrative and innovative projects implemented in other jurisdictions to be adopted in the AJC to improve service delivery.</p>	
	<p>d. Promote the creation of an interagency team to lead an effort to create a Workforce Academy. The team consists of WIOA partners at the state and local levels.</p>	<p>e. Ensure that all partner agencies and front-line staff are adequately prepared to understand and develop an effective plan to address the customer’s needs.</p>	<p>f. Afford opportunities for front-line staff to participate in ongoing professional development through topic-specific policy academies.</p>
	<p>g. Use technological solutions to maximize access and cost effectiveness providing training and information to workforce development system.</p>	<p>h. Utilize technology to produce webinars that provide a platform for all program partners to discuss WIOA topics and build a “library” of information that outlines the required and</p>	<p>i. Expand continuous improvement and professional development via regional roundtables and statewide summits that provide opportunities for peer-to-peer information exchange on best practices and lessons learned, establishing and strengthening cross-program relationships, and front-line feedback to state program leaders.</p>

P.R. Workforce Development Program	State's Strategies:		
		additional programs.	partner's
	j. Identify best practices that can be replicated across the State, as well as topics and areas of need as identified by evaluations and other assessments.		
<b>Goal 11: Improve Outreach and Dissemination at State Level</b>	a. Develop an orientation and outreach campaign for the eligible population to identify AJCs and the range of services available to them.	b. Implement a common branding strategy in all LWDA's and AJCs and State Level, to promote services in a uniform way.	c. The marketing strategies should provide emphasis on out-of-school youth clientele, dislocated workers, veterans, and other priority populations.
<b>Goal 12: State Board outcomes Policy</b>	a. The State Board will evaluate and establish state outcomes measures to assess the implementation of the WIOA regulation in PR.	b. Establish parameters to measure the level of use of formula funds periodically (semi-annually, quarterly or annually).	c. Establish benchmarks for the number of participants served per quarter for youth, adult and dislocated worker programs,

### III. OPERATIONAL PLANNING ELEMENTS

The Plan must include an Operational Planning Elements section that supports the State’s strategy and system-wide vision described in Section II(c).

#### (A) STATE STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include -

##### (1) State Board Functions

Describe how the State board will implement its functions under section 101(d) of WIOA (i.e. provide a description of Board operational structures and decision-making processes to ensure such functions are carried out).

##### **State Board Operational Structures and Processes**

The State Board was locally enabled under Act 171-2014 and OE-2014-064 to promote comprehensive planning and coordination of employment and training programs in the State. The PRDEDC has been directed to provide support to the board through its Workforce Development Program, which also administers Title I of WIOA and the TAA. The Board has planning, and coordination responsibilities related to the federal support received through WIOA and other programs with workforce development efforts.

The development of the plan is a task that the State Board accomplishes with the collaboration of the interagency committee integrated by WIOA core programs in a year-round working agenda. The role and responsibilities of the State Board are defined by WIOA, local statute and its internal regulations. The latter establishes subcommittees and working groups in connection with technical and issues. Among these: Strategic Planning and Budget Committee; Private Sector Liaising Committee; Evaluation, Monitoring and Auditing Committee; Entrepreneurship Committee; Continued Improvement Committee; and the Executive Committee.

##### **Functions**

The State Board is also responsible for assisting the Governor with additional functions designated by WIOA. These include:

- Developing and implementing the State Unified Plan and performance measures;
- Developing/expanding strategies for partnership in in-demand sector and occupations;
- Developing and aligning policies;
- Developing and continuously improving the one stop delivery system; and
- Developing policies and guidance on one stop partner role and resource contribution.

##### (2) Implementation of State Strategy

Describe how the lead State agency with responsibility for the administration of each core program or a Combined State Plan partner program included in this plan will implement the State’s Strategies identified in Section II(c). above. This must include a description of –

*(A) Core Program Activities to Implement the State’s Strategy*

Describe the activities the entities carrying out the respective core programs will fund to implement the State’s strategies. Also, describe how such activities will be aligned across the core programs and Combined State Plan partner programs included in this plan and among the entities administering the programs, including using co-enrollment and other strategies, as appropriate.

Integration of resources is accomplished through the regular sharing of information among the network of Core Partners and other providers. At the local level, State staff have been sponsoring meetings with local area Core Partners, educational institutions, and TANF staff to discuss their resources, target groups, and services.

Local areas are intended to continue the discussions and build upon the relationships initiated. At the LWDBs and their AJCs, the AJC certification policy requires that core and mandatory partners regularly provide cross-training on partner programs, implement cross-functional teams, are familiar with eligibility requirements for all programs, establish co-enrollment practices, and establish procedures for referrals.

**Table 56. Core Program Activities to Implement the State’s Strategy**

Core Program	Program Activities to Implement the State’s Strategy
<b>WIOA Title I</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. All MOUs will be reviewed.</li> <li>2. An analysis will be conducted to define the new regions of Workforce Development System in Puerto Rico.</li> <li>3. Expand the Registered Apprenticeship program in Puerto Rico.</li> <li>4. Puerto Rico Workforce System Brand Analysis.</li> <li>5. Develop and implement state policies to improve operational processes under WIOA.</li> </ol>
<b>WIOA Title II</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Partnership with the Career and Technical Education area.</li> <li>2. Partnership with public and not for profit private institutions to foster new initiatives in integrated education and training.</li> <li>3. Implementation of online professional development for teachers.</li> <li>4. A pilot Project with (I-BEST) strategy for credentials.</li> <li>5. Collaboration with other core programs and partner’s agencies.</li> <li>6. The DEPR-AEP will update and expand the implementation of the Career Pathways system.</li> <li>7. Update the Implementation effort of the College and Career Readiness Standards (CCR Standards).</li> </ol>

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>8. The DEPR-AEP will foster the development and implementation of technology applications, translation technology, distance education, including professional development to support the use of instructional technology.</li> <li>9. Incorporation of Internet service technology into adult education classrooms.</li> <li>10. Preparing and setting interactive classrooms in the instruction centers</li> <li>11. Provision of portable notebooks in classrooms.</li> <li>12. Incorporating online public domain and subscription-based search platform in the interactive classrooms.</li> <li>13. Development of a distance education program Technical assistance mentoring program for service providers.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Wagner-Peyser Act</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Provide technical assistance to WP staff to strengthen strategies to respond to the new challenges and demands of the labor market in the AJCs.</li> <li>2. Provide the competencies and skills necessary to the WP staff to understand the important role that technology plays in provision of career services to job seekers today.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Rehabilitation Act</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Offering technical assistance to employers, as required, to promote extended support options through orientation activities to employees / coworkers interested in collaborating with the process and identifying resources available in the workplace and community.</li> <li>2. Continue the dissemination of the services in radio and television programs to increase the number of participants in the AJCs.</li> <li>3. Collaboration with the community rehabilitation programs (PRC), if required, in efforts to prepare and submit proposals for the provision of extended services to other sources of available funds.</li> <li>4. Identification and communication of needs concerning the recruitment, reclassification, training, or any other requirement related to human resources.</li> <li>5. Coordination of staff training activities with universities and other institutions preparing professionals related to the rehabilitation field.</li> <li>6. Offering of advice and support on issues concerning the best use of human resources, particularly those assigned to the provision of direct services to meet the needs of the consumers.</li> <li>7. Planning and provision of human resources (involves the analysis; design; establishment and elimination of positions; selection and recruitment; and the implementation of a system of personnel evaluation);</li> <li>8. Forecasting of human resources needs (within a period of 1 to 5 years), by number and type of employee, emphasizing on the personnel that offers direct services to people with disabilities.</li> <li>9. Provision of training and promotion of staff development.</li> <li>10. Establishment of objectives and training activities to be offered to staff in order to comply with programmatic/administrative commitments of the agency.</li> </ol>

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>11. Coordinate the participation of ARV staff in the American Job Centers (AJC), to properly channel the needs of those with disabilities who request information and/or services in such centers.</li> <li>12. Identify possible referrals to the services of the ARV.</li> <li>13. Provide the AJC staff with guidance on various topics of interest that are requested related to people with disabilities.</li> <li>14. Actively participate in job fairs coordinated by the AJC.</li> <li>15. Exchange of employment networks / employers.</li> <li>16. Expansion of the provision of services to people with disabilities due to traffic accidents, through a collaboration agreement with the Automobile Accident Compensation Administration.</li> <li>17. Expansion of the availability of information resources or training for new recruitment staff through the agency's internal page (intranet).</li> <li>18. Continued with the use of remote interpretation video technology for deaf people.</li> <li>19. Continued funding from CERPR and CEVI to assist and support their operations, as well as jointly develop with the ARV, better employment and independent living opportunities for our applicants / consumers.</li> <li>20. Continuation with the financing of the SRC and the SILC to assist and support their operations as well as to develop, together with the PRVRA, better employment opportunities and independent living for our applicants/consumers.</li> <li>21. Continuation with the use of the video remote interpretation technology for the deaf persons.</li> <li>22. Expansion of the availability of the training resources to the newly recruited staff (e.g. modules), through access to the internal Web page of the agency (Intranet).</li> <li>23. Expansion of the provision of the services to the blind persons, with intellectual deficit and other disabilities, through training and employment to the Puerto Rico Industries for the Blind Company.</li> </ol>
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*(B) Alignment with Activities outside the Plan.*

Describe how the activities identified in (A) will be aligned with programs and activities provided by required one-stop partners and other optional one-stop partners and activities provided under employment, training (including Registered Apprenticeships), education (including career and technical education), human services and other programs not covered by the plan, as appropriate, assuring coordination of, and avoiding duplication among these activities.

The American Job Centers in Puerto Rico have been strategically located in their respective local areas to ensure accessibility to programs and services. According to the "Guía del Programa para Adultos, Trabajadores Desplazados y Jóvenes", the staff will be trained to provide information to customers about the programs, services, and activities available through partner programs. The activities listed in Section A were planned with the entire workforce development component of Puerto Rico. The strategic plan provides the framework for all workforce system, including but not limited to WIOA core programs.

### **Job Corps**

As with all required partners, the local boards are coordinating with Job Corps Program for delivery of its service through the development of a MOUs entered between the Local Workforce Development Boards, the Chief Elected Officials and Jobs Corps.

### **Youthbuild**

Pathstone is the local operator of Youthbuild and we are currently working in the process to complete the MOUs with each local board.

### **Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers Program**

The MOU between PRDOLHR and PathStone will facilitate the provision of educational services to MSFWs. PathStone provides education and information to agricultural workers on farms and camps and, in some locations. Through the Outreach Program, the PRDOLHR will leverage resources with PathStone to increase the number of MSFWs enrolled in educational services.

### **Activities authorized under title V of the Older Americans Act of 1965 (42 U.S.C. 3056 et seq.)**

The Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) is funded under Title V of the *Older Americans Act* Amendments of 2006, Public Law 109-365. The purposes of the SCSEP are to foster individual economic self-sufficiency and promote useful opportunities in community service activities, which include community service employment for unemployed low-income persons who are age 55 or older, particularly persons who have poor employment prospects, and to increase the number of persons who may enjoy the benefits of unsubsidized employment in both the public and private sectors. We are currently working to ensure that all Local Boards have their agreements with their corresponding SCSEP operator. In Puerto Rico, the PRDOLHR, AARP, and Pathstone, Inc. are the SCSEP grantees.

### **Career and technical education programs at the postsecondary level authorized under the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 (20 U.S.C. 2301 et seq.)**

The Puerto Rico State Board of Career and Technical Education is the entity responsible for the implementation of the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act. The Puerto Rico Department of Education is the state agency responsible for administering the program and oversees CTE in the public-school system at both secondary and postsecondary levels. Consistent with the conditions set forth in an MOU, information regarding postsecondary course offerings and activities are available to individuals at all One-Stop career centers and the Department collaborates with local boards throughout Puerto Rico to help ensure a comprehensive workforce preparation system. A PRDE representative from the regional level sits on every local board and acts as the PRDE one-stop coordinator.

Under WIOA, the program seeks to support the system through partnerships with industry, updating of curriculum, development of career pathways to address workforce needs, articulation agreements with post-secondary education programs (as Puerto Rico Technological Institute (ITPR) and the University of Puerto Rico (UPR)), recruitment and training of qualified CTE teachers, teacher externships, and ongoing

professional development opportunities. WIOA emphasizes greater coordination between workforce development and CTE through aligned definitions, the requirement that postsecondary CTE be a local infrastructure partner, the option to do a combined state plan that meets the planning requirements for WIOA's core programs and at least one other federal program, and other provisions.

The PRDE will continue furthering cooperative agreements with the Technological Institute and other public and private postsecondary institutions, with the purpose of offering students the opportunity to complete college degrees by means of a sequential curriculum and avert any duplicity of courses. Also, the PRDE will continue offering the dual credit program in the secondary level through which the participating students complete an associate degree in the ITPR and the UPR through a sequential curriculum, in addition to completing the high school diploma requirements.

#### **Activities authorized under chapter 2 of title II of the Trade Act of 1974 (19 U.S.C. 2271 et seq.)**

The main goal of the Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) program is to assist workers who have lost or may lose their jobs because of foreign trade. The TAA program offers a variety of benefits and services to eligible workers, including job training, income support, job search and relocation allowances, and a wage subsidy to workers 50 years of age and older. This program seeks to provide skills, credentials, resources and support to displaced workers, to encourage them to an early return to the labor force. The State Dislocated Worker Unit and the TAA services will be effectively integrated to the AJCs and use the network as the main point of participant intake and delivery of TAA program benefits and services. The PRDEDC has developed *State Policy Number 2020-001* to ensure that the correct process is implemented in the assistance to TAA clients.

#### **Activities authorized under chapter 41 of title 38, United States Code**

Puerto Rico Department of Labor, through the Jobs for Veterans State Grant (JVSG), is committed to serving transitioning service members, veterans, and their families by providing resources to assist and prepare them to obtain meaningful careers and maximize their employment opportunities. JVSG commitment is an important part of fulfilling our national obligation to the men and women who have served our country.

While continuing to serve existing veterans and other non-veteran job seekers, we recognized that changes in workforce programs' service delivery strategies to veterans were needed to respond to the forecasted increase in veterans, including men and women transitioning from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, to the civilian labor force. Additionally, we are working with workforce partners to ensure changes are affected so workforce programs are aligned with the roles and functions established in their authorizing legislation.

#### **Disable Veterans' Outreach Program Specialist (DVOP)**

The JVSG staff was refocused on their statutory duties to ensure that eligible veterans and eligible spouses receive the best combination of services, according to their needs. To accomplish this refocusing, Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) specialists serve only those veterans and eligible spouses most in need of Individualized career services. As a result, DVOP specialists will serve a narrower group of veterans and eligible spouses, enabling the specialists to provide Individualized career services to a vast majority of the

people they serve. This, in turn, will impact the core programs, including WP and Title I.

Under 38 U.S.C. 4103A(a), a DVOP specialist provides Individualized career services and facilitates placements to meet the employment needs of veterans, prioritizing service to special disabled veterans, other disabled veterans, and other categories of veterans in accordance with priorities determined by the USDOL. Policies and procedure are in place to specifically prohibit DVOP specialists from performing non-veteran related duties that detract from their ability to perform their statutorily defined duties related to meeting the employment needs of eligible veterans. Additionally, regular audits are performed by the DVET to ensure compliance with the limitations on the duties of DVOP specialists.

DVOP specialists also place maximum emphasis on assisting veterans who are economically or educationally disadvantaged. To ensure that DVOP specialists can fulfill their statutory responsibilities to provide intensive services to these categories of veterans, they are required to follow guidance developed by USDOL to identify the veterans prioritized and emphasized by the DVOP statute. An eligible veteran or eligible spouse who is identified as having a significant barrier to employment is immediately referred to a DVOP specialist or, in instances where a DVOP specialist is not available, another provider of intensive services.

#### **Local Veterans' Employment Representative (LVER)**

LVERs perform only the duties outlined in 38 U.S.C. 4104(b), which are related to outreach to the employer community and facilitation within the state's employment service delivery system. LVERs have assigned duties to promote to employers, employer associations, and business groups the advantages of hiring veterans. LVERs, where implemented, are part of the One-Stop Career Centers "business services team" or like entity, and as such serves as an active member of that team. Also, LVERs advocate for all veterans served by the network with business, industry, and other community-based organizations by participating in appropriate activities such as:

- Planning and engaging in job and career fairs;
- Conducting employer outreach;
- In conjunction with employers, conducting job searches and workshops, and establishing job search groups;
- Coordinating with labor unions, apprenticeship programs and businesses or business organizations to promote and secure employment and training programs for veterans;
- Informing Federal contractors of the process to recruit qualified veterans;
- Promoting credentialing and licensing opportunities for veterans; and
- Coordinating and participating with other business outreach efforts.

#### **Gold Card Initiative**

The Gold Card provides unemployed post-9/11 era veterans with the intensive and follow-up services they need to succeed in today's job market. The Gold Card initiative is a joint effort of the DOLETA and the Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS). ETA and VETS have developed a series of enhanced intensive services, including follow-up services, to identify those barriers to employment faced by veterans

of post 9/11 era. The services, when provided under the Priority of Services to Veterans, are designed to overcome those barriers and to reinsert our 9/11 era veterans the labor workforce.

The enhanced in-person services available for Gold Card holders at local American Job Center may include:

- Job readiness assessment, including interviews and testing;
- Development of an Individual Development Plan (IDP);
- Career guidance through group or individual counseling that helps veterans in making training and career decisions;
- Provision of labor market, occupational, and skills transferability information that inform educational, training, and occupational decisions;
- Referral to job banks, job portals, and job openings;
- Referral to employers and registered apprenticeship sponsors;
- Referral to training by WIOA-funded or third-party service providers; and
- Monthly follow-up by an assigned case manager for up to six months.

**Programs authorized under State unemployment compensation laws (in accordance with applicable Federal law)**

The PRDOLHR's UI programs include the following: regular UI, UCX, UCFE, TRA and PAB.

The main purpose of the Unemployment Insurance is to pay benefits to claimants and help them to return to the labor market before they exhaust their UI benefits. The Bureau of Employment Security, UI Division, will support WIOA through the RESEA personnel and by assigning one UI merit staff member to address any unemployment claimant's issue.

The PRDOLHR is committed to improve reemployment service delivery strategies. These strategies are contained in the new RESEA program and the core program activities to be implemented in the State Unified Plan. RESEA staff will be ascribed to the program as a team for the provision of reemployment services to UI claimants selected to participate in the RESEA program. A UI merit staff member are available to work on program management. The role of this UI staff member is to serve as a point of contact for technical assistance regarding UI issues, policies, and procedures.

The approach will ensure claimants served through the RESEA program at the One-Stop Centers to meet the eligibility provisions of State laws and receive an appropriate level of service suited to each individual claimant and be exposed to reemployment services (RES) including guidance, evaluation, Individual Reemployment Plan, labor market Information focused on claimants needs, referrals to job search self-directed, additional services (job search workshops, assistance in finding employment, occupational counseling and referrals to other services) and eligibility review to continue receiving unemployment benefits (UI).

RESEA staff will provide the traditional RESEA activities such as the UI eligibility review and referrals to adjudication. Responsibilities include registering UI claimants in Wagner-Peyser as required by State law,

referral of UI claimants to career counselors as deemed necessary, case management, one on one personal interview with the UI claimant, job search workshops, orientation of services available through the One-Stop Centers, referral to job offers, UI eligibility review and providing UI claimants with labor market information. These services will be managed by the Reemployment Service staff and as appropriate, by a licensed career counselor, where available (not all offices have a career counselor on-site).

As part of this commitment, the PRDOLHR will monitor closely these strategies to assure its successful implementation to help UI claimants in RESEA to return to the labor market before they exhaust their UI benefits. Through the RESEA initiative, ES will make efforts to implement strategies to achieve improved UI connectivity with the public workforce system and improved reemployment service delivery strategies. PRDOLHR is committed in continuing making progress connecting UI claimants to job opportunities and/or services that will speed their return to employment.

**Programs authorized under part A of title IV of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 601 et seq.), subject to subparagraph (C).**

Coordination with TANF will be strengthening to identify and pursue braided funding opportunities to support common services and to transition to procedures that facilitate serving customers under both TANF and the core programs. In the short-term, cross-program knowledge and understanding of the TANF and core programs will be delivered to staff members and a formalized referral process will be implemented to deliver career counseling and training coordination services and to provide access to job development and placement services for TANF customers. We are currently working to ensure that all Local Boards have their agreements.

**Employment and training programs administered by the Social Security Administration, including the Ticket to Work and Self-Sufficiency Program established under section 1148 of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1320b-19)**

Through the issuance of local planning and certification guidance, the State Board will encourage local boards and operators to become engaged in the Ticket to Work program as qualified Employment Networks. Currently two LWDBs are qualified as an Employment Network (Caguas-Guayama and Manatí-Dorado) and Southeast LWDB is going through the qualification process.

The PRVRA continues receiving referrals from the Ticket to Work Program for the purpose of providing vocational rehabilitation services. In addition, the PRVRA established an agreement with the Caribbean Center of Work Incentives Planning Assistance (CWIPA) to provide benefits planning service to the consumers of the PRVRA who beneficiaries of the Social Security Disability Insurance are. This service is expected to help these beneficiaries in decision-making regarding the benefits of reintegrating into the labor market.

As required under WIOA, PRVRA will coordinate its services with the Employment Networks for common customers, including individuals receiving assistance from an Employment Network under the Ticket to Work program, detailing how the responsibility for service delivery will be divided between the network and the

agency.

### **Employment and training programs carried out by the Small Business Administration (SBA)**

Coordination with the local district office of the SBA will be enhanced to fully tap into the opportunities available under the program for entrepreneurial capacity building and development. As previously discussed, although self-employment in Puerto Rico accounts for roughly twice the national average, entrepreneurship development still lags significantly when compared to other jurisdictions, thus representing a key opportunity for private employment creation.

Through planning guidance, local boards will be encouraged to engage the SBA and its network of Small Business Technology and Development Centers (SBTDCs) with locations in 6 local areas, and its specialized centers for international trade, technology and innovation, and the program initiatives servicing students, women, veterans and national guard reserve personnel, young and emerging entrepreneurs, older persons, and homemakers. The local boards shall also be encouraged to leverage the small business regional clustering organization initiative serving the entire Island led by the SBA.

Under the lead of the PRDEDC, the Federal Contracting Center will approach the SBA program to devise ways to effectively market the HUBZone's opportunity to "Under the Flag" industries, helping to expand employer's availability in 76 of 78 Municipalities identified and Labor Surplus Areas.

### **Programs authorized under section 6(d)(4) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2015(d)(4)) and work programs authorized under section 6(o) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2015(o))**

The USDA's FNS oversees a U.S. block grant to Puerto Rico that funds the Nutrition Assistance Program (NAP), which is a separate food assistance program implemented since 1982 in lieu of SNAP. Section 4142 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 mandated the completion of a study to provide information to aid the Congress in understanding the potential impact of reestablishing the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) in Puerto Rico in lieu of block grant funding. The block grant remains.

Under NAP (and TANF), coordination has been established to require unemployed able-bodied adults to register for work at the employment Registry of the Employment Service and seek employment. Individuals are required to participate in employment and training activities or employment interviews and accept or continue in employment if it is adequate. An MOE funded Puerto Rico Food Benefit Program provides for a six-month additional TANF benefit for food to be paid to NAP recipients who work at least 30 hours weekly, are not TANF recipients, and are single parents or relatives living with a related minor under 18. Certain unemployed able-bodied adults are exempt from the work requirement.

### **Programs carried out under section 112 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. 732)**

The Client Assistance program remains under the Office of the Advocate of the Persons with Disabilities. The system's components that provide services to persons with disabilities will be made aware of the obligations arising under sec. 20 of the Rehabilitation Act, including providing information on means of seeking assistance under the Client Assistance program. The PRVRA, as state-designated agency for administering

the core program under the Rehabilitation Act will also continue enforcing compliance section 102, providing individuals a description of services available from the client assistance program and information on how to contact the program as part of the eligibility determination process.

### **Registered Apprenticeship**

Since July 1, 2018, the Apprenticeship Program is under the PRDEDC. The WDP oversees the implementation of the program in the workforce system. As part of the strategy for an effective implementation, the WDP is receiving technical assistance by the National Apprenticeship Office and Region I in Boston. Work-based learning opportunities offered by the AJC are marketed by both Case Manager's and Business Services Representative staff. This staff pursues opportunities with employers and make appropriate referrals for work-ready participants. The PRWDB coordinates work-based learning opportunities across partner agencies to ensure maximization of employer contact and avoid business-contact fatigue. The PRWDB research opportunities and develops relationships with local businesses and partners, including those with registered apprenticeship programs and training providers to make these training models available to participants. In accordance with standards described under Career Services feedback mechanisms between Training Services and placement functions are in place to ensure that the training being provided is meeting the needs of business.

Registered Apprenticeship data is entered into a USDOL database called RAPIDS. In addition, we have an electronic Apprenticeship module that communicates with USDOL's WIPS system to report on program performance. We are working with ETA Regional Office to achieve the interface between the two systems. At the end of the year 2021, Puerto Rico has 20 registered Apprenticeship program, of which eight has been receiving funds from the ASE grant and WIOA Title I. The total number of active apprentices rise to 591.

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#### *(C) Coordination, Alignment and Provision of Services to Individuals.*

Describe how the entities carrying out the respective core programs, Combined State Plan partner programs included in this plan, and required and optional one-stop partner programs will coordinate activities and resources to provide comprehensive, high-quality, customer-centered services, including supportive services (e.g. transportation), to individuals, including those populations identified in section II(a)(1)(B), and individuals in remote areas The activities described shall conform to the statutory requirements of each program.

DEDCs the lead agency for the administration of three core WIOA programs. DEDC is also responsible for TAA grant. The PRDOLHR is responsible for Wagner-Peyser, Veteran Services through the Jobs for Veterans State Grant, and UI. The Vocational Rehabilitation Administration, under the PRDOLHR is present at the AJCs. Additionally, the SCSEP, is also within PRDOLHR but partially but partly since AARP and Pathstone, Inc. are also operators of the program. The AJCs are primary access points for much of the services provided by DEDC and PRDOLHR programs.

DEDC is collaborating with partners, to develop memorandums of understanding, cross-training, procedures, and best practices to facilitate the integration of services to ensure job seekers' needs are being met and referrals to other resources are successful.

The Department of Economic Development and the Department of Labor and Human Resources of Puerto Rico, Title I-B programs, grantees of UI, Wagner - Peyser Employment Services (ES), were allocated a grant of RSI-DWGs fund to integrate our Title I-B, UI, Wagner - Peyser Employment Services (ES) to the workforce information technology (IT) systems. The Puerto Rico database system is the Participant Record Information System (PRIS) and entered on function on March 9, 2020. The technology solutions include a common registration and case management across Title I and Title III programs. The software solution for WIOA workflows, is in compliance with the Training and Employment Guidance Letter (TEGL) 05-16, and the WIOA Participant Individual Record Layout (PIRL).

The implementation of the new software for data collection and information management expected results are:

- Improved Service Delivery and Employment Outcomes for Dislocated Workers;
- More Effective Connections to All Available Services through Integrated Case Management;
- Prevention of Long-Term-Unemployment;
- Increased Early Intervention and Layoff Aversion;
- Increased Accessibility to Services through Automation and Self-Service; and
- Enhanced Identification of Service Delivery Needs.
- **AJC Partners Integration**
- One of the main goals of the workforce development system is the integration of all core and required partners in the AJC; for common intake, common case management, supportive services, and avoid duplication of services. The WDP hired an IT vendor to develop the integration of the databases of the core and required partners of the system. The main challenge is assessing each partner's IT architecture, some of which have their own database platforms and confidentiality requirements. This initiative seeks that the PRIS can be used by the required partners as their database platform and share relevant information from other partners, to avoid duplication of services and tracking the clients through their participation.

- The WDP and partners have already begun the process of outlining the process of integrating services including databases, which is in the stage of initiating the evaluation of the partners' IT infrastructure. This work will support the objectives of integrating and reporting the results of the entire workforce system.
- The WDP and the State Board began to bring together all required and non-required WIOA partners. The inclusion of partners into this platform will allow for more effective system. DEDC must establish data share agreements with each partner willing to be integrated in the system, either by sharing the data, or by achieving an interface to share customer participation information. This will improve both client services and reporting with respect to data analysis and client activity. The intent of this process is to gather comprehensive and consistent information so that appropriate workforce development services will be provided. Common intake and case management will help coordinate and align services that are provided through the workforce development system and will ensure those needing services through the workforce system are receiving appropriate services.

### **AJC Partners Integration**

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*(D) Coordination, Alignment and Provision of Services to Employers*

Describe how the entities carrying out the respective core programs, any Combined State Plan partner program included in this plan, required and optional one-stop partner programs will coordinate activities and resources to provide comprehensive, high-quality services to employers to meet their current and projected workforce needs and to achieve the goals of industry or sector partners in the state. The activities described shall conform to the statutory requirements of each program.

The Employer Engagement Committee of the State Board and the Workforce Development Program of the DEDC are leading the process to develop the Business Service Unit at State Level and lead in development of the Statewide Business Services Framework Plan to guide the LWDBs and the AJC to collaborate with businesses.

The Plan will provide a broad framework to guide the local areas to create skilled business services teams that will be able to build credible relationships and provide worthy services that will benefit business. Wagner Peyser staff is going to be an integral part of this effort.

Those strategies are aimed to the business services teams to develop relationships with employers in their local areas; use the networks of the private sector employers on their local boards to expand their contacts and to provide information on industry trends and to identify potential red flags; develop other sources of early information on potential issues within their local areas; and develop responses to address identified issues.

Every Local WDBs have their own Employer Engagement committees composed of business representatives. These Committees will help develop the teams, provide guidance and recommendations, ensure professional development, establish specific goals for the teams, and track progress.

DEDC also is going to contract a consultant to evaluate the AJC brand among employers. The consultant will conduct qualitative and quantitative assessments of the AJC local brand among employers. Interviews will be conducted with employers to discover employers' awareness, perception, and usage of the AJCs. The assessments will be followed by recommendations to improve services and increase awareness of available

services, increase brand awareness, maintain brand awareness, rollout of the new plan, and development of an outreach plan.

The goal of the Employer Engagement Committee and the DEDC is to increase employer participation rates, including repeat customers and to increase the retention rates of employees placed into employment by the AJCs. This rate would help raise the confidence of employers in the workforce system and lead to increased employer engagement.

Apart from the strategies mentioned to improve and increase the use of patrons of AJCs services, the AJC network can assist employers with recruitment, interview and hiring services.

Services to employers include:

- Interviews and screening of job candidates to select skilled and trained personnel who will fill their labor force needs;
- Labor market information;
- Membership in the State, local boards, working groups, sector partnerships, employers' committees, among other entities, to intervene in policymaking for education, training and employment in the local, regional and statewide levels;
- Use of the One Stop Center network and systems to disseminate job offers; and
- Incentives, subsidies, follow-up and supportive services to employees, including initial services to obtain with Health and Drug Testing, criminal records, and required certifications for prospective employees.

The Employment Service staff:

- Issue employer certifications, denials, or notices of invalidation for tax credit on a timely basis;
- Maintain a system and procedures to regularly monitor the activities initiate appropriate corrective actions;
- Manage agreements with TANF and NAP in Puerto Rico serving the majority of WOTC applications, which are from participants of the TANF or NAP programs and train staff from these programs;
- Maintain the current cooperative efforts with employment and training organizations already working with the private sector, such as Veterans organizations, Job Service Employer Committees and local boards, to inform employers about requirements for the use of the federal tax incentive known as Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC);
- Train, as appropriate, State, and participating agency staff and provide monitoring and technical assistance to these agencies; and
- Engage in outreach efforts to get more qualifying employers to use the tax credit program and increase our number of certifications.

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*(E) Partner Engagement with Educational Institutions.*

Describe how the State's Strategies will engage the State's community colleges and area career and technical education schools, as partners in the workforce development system to create a job-driven education and training system. WIOA section 102(b)(2)(B)(iv).

As previously discussed, the State Board will coordinate with the PRDE's State Board for Career and Technical Education, the PRDOLHR and the education services industry, the effective delivery of occupational education for high-demand, mid and high-skilled and/or technologically advanced occupations.

The State Board will assume its convening functions under WIOA to leverage the resources and concert the support of the Education Council, the PRDE, IHEs and CTE institutions to adopt a common framework to support the implementation of career pathways and to further the alignment of the educational and workforce systems. Educational institutions will also be engaged as providers of educational and training services and are critical to the successful implementation of the Registered Apprenticeship program. Including that the all system will develop and deploy a training program to educate staff in AJC about how to work with structured work-based learning programs. Also, the designing of that framework will contribute to collaborate on pre-apprenticeship program developed in response to industry demands.

Regarding services for students with disabilities, Act 51-1996, as amended, mandates coordination between the PRDE's Special Education Program and the PRVRA, among other agencies, with the purpose of ensuring a seamless transition of young people with disabilities to postsecondary education. The PRVRA intervenes in the process of transition before eligible students with disabilities graduate from or exit the school system and facilitates the insertion in training programs and post-secondary educational institutions. The PRVRA sponsors to consumers such training in various accredited educational institutions for acquiring knowledge and occupational skills necessary for the workplace.

In terms of serving individuals with barriers to employment, along with basic adult education, PRDE's CTE program is key to meet the workforce development needs of the correctional population. Please, refer to section III(A)(2)(B) for additional information regarding coordination with the Carl D. Perkins program.

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*(F) Partner Engagement with Other Education and Training Providers*

Describe how the State's Strategies will engage the State's other education and training providers, including providers on the state's eligible training provider list, as partners in the workforce development system to create a job-driven education and training system.

As required under WIOA, the State maintains a publicly accessible list of eligible training providers and their eligible training programs, including relevant performance and cost information. The State Board adopted procedures for initial determination of eligibility and subsequent certification of training providers.

In issuing a determination, local boards are required to:

- Analyze the impact of economic, geographic, and demographic factors, and the characteristics of the populations served by applicants, including their difficulties to access or provide services, if any.

- Determine the occupations for which they are requesting training services, which shall be those in demand in the geographic region covered by the local board.
- Keep the process of initial eligibility determination open throughout the year.
- Establish eligibility criteria, requirements for additional information and minimum performance levels for providers of training beyond what is required by the State Board, which might be applicable to the specific local area.
- Safeguard the confidentiality of personally identifiable information of any education records, including the circumstances related to prior consent, and comply with the provisions of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).
- Periodically invite public and private educational institutions and community-based organizations to submit applications for initial or subsequent eligibility determination as providers of training for occupations in demand.
- Regarding apprenticeship programs, promote the automatic inclusion of providers in the State List after a request is made by a registered provider under the provisions of the Registered Apprenticeship Act and enabling State provisions.

Exception made of Registered Apprenticeship, One-Stop Centers' operators are required to collect performance information and determine whether the providers meet the performance criteria. Providers that meet the criteria are considered eligible providers of training services.

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*(G) Leveraging Resources to Increase Educational Access.*

Describe how the State's strategies will enable the State to leverage other Federal, State, and local investments that have enhanced access to workforce development programs at the above institutions, described in section (E).

Maximizing available funding and the leveraging of non-traditional funding sources to support the improvement of the workforce system is a key goal of the State Unified Plan. PRDE's lead in developing career pathways will allow combining the efforts and resources available to both Title II and Carl D. Perkins programs to advance their implementation, thus expanding the flexibility of the postsecondary educational system.

Collaboration with the PRDOF will add to the workforce system, resources available through TANF vocational education services and the Chafee Education and Training Voucher program, representing additional opportunities to serve the workforce needs of low-income individuals and youth. Through continued coordination, State resources currently devoted to providing for bridge education, vocational education, subsidies and tax expenditures can also be leveraged to support the system. A case in point, the PRVRA intends to request funding from the State's Employment and Training Opportunities Development Fund, which accrues 1% of all taxable salaries paid by employers' beneficiaries under the Employment Security Act and the proceeds of interest paid on the Benefits for Non-Occupational Disabilities Law.

An enhanced coordination with the PREC will allow the harvesting of data being supplied by educational institutions under local and federal mandates to retrofit the educational and workforce systems. Additional opportunities could arise by devising ways in which the Council's State student financial assistance programs support the strategies of the system.

Local areas will be encouraged to leverage the resources of required partners to support the delivery of integrated services, through financial and non-financial agreements. Many of the arrangements for sharing other state resources must be worked out in detail at local level involving other agencies and the local One-Stop Centers' partners, through MOUs.

A key strategy in leveraging other Federal investments that have enhanced access to workforce development programs at educational institutions is to equip the State Board to manage the function of identifying and seeking additional or dormant competitive funding opportunities that can benefit any component of the workforce development system. DEI and REO, among others, represent additional opportunities. To that end, the State is committed to advance the designation of the local boards as 501(c)(3) tax-exempted non-for profits to leverage non-traditional sources of grant funding.

Regarding local governments, through guidance pertaining the local area and regional planning processes, there is also the opportunity to encourage Chief Elected Officials to sponsor municipal tax abatement measures and other benefits to reward businesses and employers sponsoring the implementation of career pathways.

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*(H) Improving Access to Postsecondary Credentials.*

Describe how the State's strategies will improve access to activities leading to recognized postsecondary credentials, including Registered Apprenticeship certificates. This includes credentials that are industry-recognized certificates, licenses or certifications, and that are portable and stackable.

As discussed, the offer of postsecondary education in Puerto Rico has grown significantly in the past decade, with mid-skilled level education being the segment with the largest expansion. Even within, institutions of higher education, the advance in mid-skilled careers, certificates and degrees has been noticeable.

Although the dynamics are varied, along with the growth in the number of institutions providing career and technical education, the increase in mid-skilled graduates evidence that access to a postsecondary degree and credentials has become somewhat more flexible in recent years and that there is a sizable infrastructure to support it. Please, refer to section II(A)(2)(A), for additional information on the education infrastructure and credentialing activities in the jurisdiction.

Under WIOA, alignment activities will be pursued to engage the providers of education and training to implement strategies that facilitate access to postsecondary credentials. As explained in section III(c)(2), above, the State will advance the implementation of career pathways to expand the accessibility industry recognized credentials. The strategy is key to provide participants with multiple entry points to

accommodate academic readiness and multiple exit points to permit on ramp and off ramp, when necessary, to lead to industry-recognized credentials, as recommended by the USDOL.

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*(I) Coordinating with Economic Development Strategies.*

Describe how the activities identified in (A) will be coordinated with economic development entities, strategies, and activities in the State.

The Department of Economic Development and Commerce (DEDC) serves as the umbrella entity for key economic development agencies in Puerto Rico. Created in 1994, the DEDC is at the leading edge of Governor's policy of taking the most out of Puerto Rico's fiscal autonomy as a tool for promoting local and foreign investment. This vision allows for the creation of thousands of jobs in manufacturing, aerospace, telecommunications and information technology, engineering services, scientific research, and others.

To achieve these strategic goals, the DEDC is working on initiatives that:

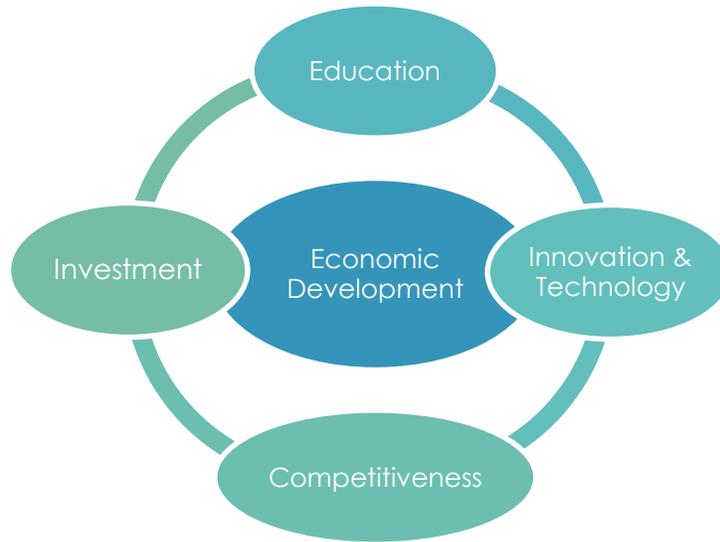
- Create new tax and economic incentives for high technology industries as well as start-ups and locally owned businesses;
- Improve Puerto Rico's regulatory and structural framework in order to enhance its competitiveness as a destination for investment and the production of high-value goods and services;
- Establish regional centers, or "poles," of economic activity throughout the island; and
- Grow critical sectors, including manufacturing, tourism, commerce and exportation, film and visual arts, banking and insurance.

### **Main Components of Economic Development**

Puerto Rico's education must be transformed to foster a maximum level of innovation & technology that enables us to be globally competitive and thus reach the desired level of local, national, and foreign investment that allows the export of goods and services. Education: System Transformation and Skills Promotion.

The education system is an essential component and is a key for economic development, so there is the need to continually calibrate and align curricula and teaching methodologies to ensure that they address the needs of local and international industries, and that we help professionals in the work force to reinvent themselves, as they need.

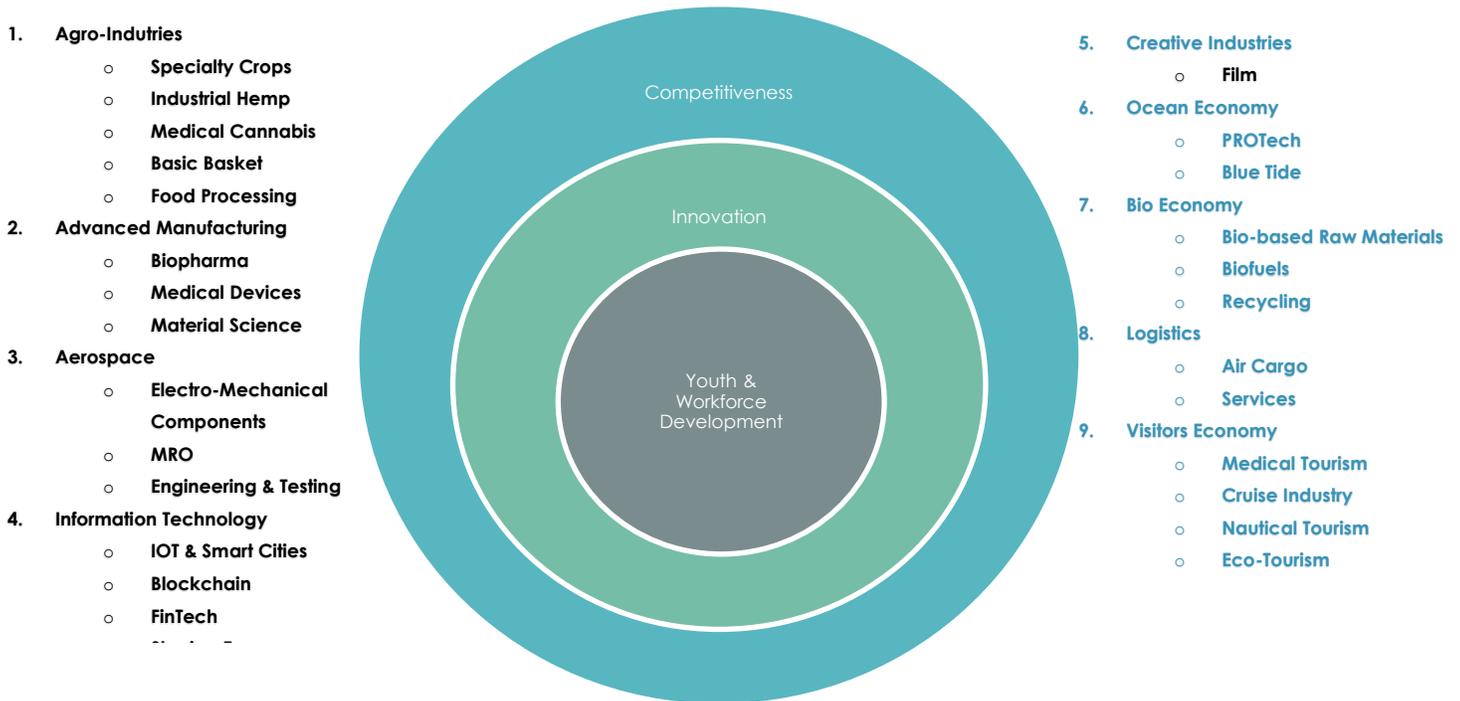
Figure 28. Main Component of Economic Development



**Innovation: Solid Ecosystem for Entrepreneurship**

To establish a healthy and sustainable ecosystem of innovation it is fundamental that the projects of entrepreneurship respond to the needs of the market. PRDEDC will provide Technical and Financial Assistance in areas like Market Needs; Applied Research; Incubators Startups; Accelerator Startups; Substitution of Imports of Goods and Services.

Figure 29. Strategic Areas for Economic Development



### **Competitiveness: Structural Reforms**

1. Structural Reforms: Labor Permits Tax Energy
2. Eliminate Requirement for Electronic Export Information (EEI) - Elimination of the federal requirement for export, achieving an equal treatment in order for transactions to and from the Island be more agile at a lower cost.
3. Incentives Code
  - a. Consolidates and rationalizes all economic incentives in a single code.
  - b. Establishes a uniform process for granting incentives.
  - c. Focus the resources on the incentives with Return of Investment

### **Investment: Tools and Opportunities**

- A. Federal Programs
  - a. New Market Tax Credits
  - b. EB-5 Program
  - c. Foreign Trade Zones
  - d. Insert PR in US treaties to avoid double taxation
- B. State Initiatives
  - a. Invest Puerto Rico
  - b. Destination Marketing Org. (DMO)
  - c. Incentives Code
  - d. Infrastructure Plan
- C. Investment Opportunities
  - a. Public Private Partnerships
  - b. Science City
  - c. Roosevelt Roads Redevelopment
  - d. Port of Las Americas

### **Efficient and effective use of incentives**

- a. Exports of goods for niche markets
- b. Exports of services
- c. Substitution of imports

- d. Supply chain associated with exports and substitution of imports
- e. Establishment of small businesses and start-ups

### **SMEs: Programmatic Commitments for Economic Development**

1. Innovative SMEs
  - a. Designation of 10% of the Special Fund for Economic Development (FEDE) to provide contributory incentives to SMEs that foster innovation in economic sectors.
2. Maletín Empresarial de la Mujer
  - a. Program focused on supporting those Puerto Rican women who wish to develop in the business world mainly in the areas of technology and innovation.
3. Additional Initiatives
  - a. Master Entrepreneurship
  - b. Business Intelligence and Entrepreneurship System
  - c. Entrepreneurship in Functional Diversity population
  - d. From School to Business
  - e. SME Food Sector

### **STRUCTURAL REFORM**

- Act 1-2017 – The Participative Public Private Partnerships Act. Strengthens the P3 legal framework to facilitate critical infrastructure investments and improve public services.
- Act 4-2017 – The Labor Transformation and Flexibility Act. Amends labor laws with the intention of improving labor market competitiveness, improving the labor participation rate, and halting the migration of citizens to external labor markets.
- Act 8-2017 – The Act for the Administration and Transformation of Human Resources in Government. Allows for the transfer of workers across the Government to save \$100 million through mobility and attrition.
- Act 13-2017 – Enterprise Puerto Rico Act. Creates a not-for-profit corporation to promote the economic development of Puerto Rico, attract foreign direct investment and incentivize investments in technology in collaboration with the private sector.
- Act 17-2017 – Act to Promote Puerto Rico as a Destination. Enables the creation of a destination marketing organization (DMO).
- Act 18-2018 – Reforms, simplifies and expedites the permitting process in order to improve quality and efficiency in processing requests for all permits, licenses, inspections, complaints, certifications,

consultations, or any other authorization that affects in any way the operation of a business in Puerto Rico, including those issued by municipalities.

- **Act No. 47-2021 - PR Minimum Wage Act** - Puerto Rico has enacted the Minimum Wage Act, Act No. 47-2021, increasing the Island’s minimum wage from \$7.25 to \$8.50 effective January 1, 2022. Additional increases will take effect on July 1, 2023, when the minimum wage will be raised to \$9.50, and potentially on July 1, 2024, when it will reach \$10.50, unless a mandatory decree alters that increase. Act 47-2021, enacted on September 21, 2021, establishes as public policy the periodic revision of the minimum wage to bring it in line with the cost of living and to ensure that people earn enough to meet their basic needs.

## (B) STATE OPERATING SYSTEMS AND POLICIES

The Unified State Plan must include a description of the State operating systems and policies that will support the implementation of the State strategy described in section II Strategic Elements. This includes –

### (1) State Operating Systems

The *State operating systems* that will support the implementation of the State’s strategies. This must include a description of –

- (A) State operating systems that support coordinated implementation of State strategies (e.g., labor market information systems, data systems, communication systems, case-management systems, job banks, etc.)

### **Workforce and labor market information systems**

The workforce and labor market information system (WLMI) established under section 49I-2 of the Wagner-Peyser Act is administered by the PRDOLHR. The Department also maintains a Bureau of Labor Statistics and a Research Division on Occupational Skills and administers the Occupational Employment and Wages Survey, the Nonfarm Employment Survey, and special surveys, studies, and research. The products are readily available at <http://www.mercadolaboral.pr.gov/>.

The PRDOLHR maintains a WLMI fully accessible for a range of customer groups, including job seekers, employers, and policymakers. State and local industry and occupational employment projections are maintained for long-term (10 years) and short-term (2 years), as well as for statewide and sub-state levels. The State uses the Local Employment and Wages Information System (LEWIS), to derive staffing patterns for sub-state projections.

As required by USDOL, the PRDOLHR also produces a statewide annual economic analysis report, an essential tool for strategic planning for WIOA and other workforce programs. The report provides information and analyses that can support workforce planning and the process of making policy decisions for workforce development, education, economic development and business engagement around sector strategies and career pathways initiatives.

The plan proposes to continue coordination with federal data producers to make sure Puerto Rico is included in reports, series, surveys and statistical products that are available for other state jurisdictions and are accessible through the USDOL websites. Among other, these include the following products:

- Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD). LEHD links employee and employer records from an array of data sources (administrative records, demographic surveys and censuses). LEHD's principal product is its Quarterly Workforce Indicators (QWI), which include employment, job creation, monthly earnings, and worker turnover data by locale as well as by detailed industry, gender, and age of workers. Although all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands have joined the LED Partnership, the LEHD program is not yet producing public-use statistics for Puerto Rico.
- Business Dynamics Statistics (BDS). Provides annual measures of business dynamics (such as job creation and destruction, establishment births and deaths, and firm startups and shutdowns) for the economy and aggregated by establishment and firm characteristics.
- County Employment and Wages (QCEW). BLS produces this series from the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW) program. Wages represent total compensation paid during the calendar quarter, regardless of when during that quarter the individual worked.
- USDOE's State Assessment of Adult Literacy and State and County Estimates of Low Literacy. The SAAL is conducted in conjunction with the National Assessment of Adult Literacy (NAAL). Puerto Rico is not included in this report.

The Department of Education uses the Statewide Longitudinal Data System (SLDS) for K-12 levels throughout the jurisdiction with a clear component of the WLMI system that provides increased visibility of data in the systems of primary and secondary education. The objective of the SLDS is to contribute to improve the education policy and the operational decisions with data related to the student's achievements over time. It also aims to establish the mechanisms of organization, policies, procedures, systems and human resources necessary to perpetuate their use by those interested in education at all levels. An immediate result was to help improve the ability to identify young people outside the school who need services from the workforce system.

The system integrates data from the Student Information System of the DE (SIE, for its acronym in Spanish), which collects information on all students enrolled in the public education system, the Financial Information System (SIFDE, for its acronym in Spanish), data from the Special Education Program, data on students who are Spanish learners, among other data.

The Adult Education Program is integrated into the Data Management Committee, which coordinates the integration of the data collected in the Adult Information System (AIS) in the access portal of the longitudinal system, which has facilitated access to the data of the program and to improve the capacities for the presentation and analysis of the data necessary to support the decisional process.

The Education Council collects, analyzes and disseminates detailed data on K-12 educational institutions, vocational and technical institutions, and IHEs. Data available at: <http://cepr.cespr.org/ceprd/index.asp>.

## **DATA, COMMUNICATION AND CASE MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS**

### **Participant Record Information System (PRIS)**

The Department of Economic Development and the Department of Labor and Human Resources of Puerto Rico, Title I-B programs, grantees of UI, Wagner - Peyser Employment Services (ES), were allocated a grant of RSI-DWGs fund to integrate our Title I-B, UI, Wagner - Peyser Employment Services (ES) to the workforce information technology (IT) systems. The Puerto Rico database system is the Participant Record Information System (PRIS) and entered on function on March 9, 2020. The technology solutions include a common registration and case management across Title I and Title III programs. The software solution for WIOA workflows, follows the Training and Employment Guidance Letter (TEGL) 05-16, and the WIOA Participant Individual Record Layout (PIRL).

In compliance with the Section 116(d)(1) of WIOA and related federal guidelines, the system consists in a multiuser web-based software based on the PIRL, including the validation rules established by DOLETA and the reports related with the PIRL database. Its main function is to comply with the three sets of validation rules (duplicate rules, valid values rules, and logical rules) reflected in the generation of a 100% error free, comma delimited text files (csv files) based on the PIRL schemas for all the programs. The software was developed according with the PIRL Schemas CSV files and will be used by the sixteen programs included in PIRL.

In the initial phase of the PRIS system, Title I-B programs and W-P were fully integrated. The Workforce Development Program is in the final stages of development to streamline the application process for integrate or interface the participant management systems of WIOA Titles I, II, III, and IV and other required partners.

The implementation of the new software for data collection and information management expected results are:

- Improved Service Delivery and Employment Outcomes for Dislocated Workers;
- More Effective Connections to All Available Services through Integrated Case Management;
- Prevention of Long-Term-Unemployment;
- Increased Early Intervention and Layoff Aversion;
- Increased Accessibility to Services through Automation and Self-Service; and
- Enhanced Identification of Service Delivery Needs.

The PRIS collects and reports on performance measures for Title I and Title III programs. Currently, ETA 9169, for PY 2019 y PY 2020 were submitted and certified by WIPS.

The main challenge for submitting ETA 9169 and 9173 reports was the migration from the former database to the new platform with the required elements of the PIRL. This migration produced thousands of data

errors that needed an analysis effort to identify the data to complete the required fields. Additional data elements that were added under WIOA, which were not collected in the developed software under WIA parameters, were the main source of PRIS errors. However, with the collaboration of the partners and the staff of the Local Board, it was possible to develop a work plan to enter the data, correct the errors reported by the WIPS, and finally, submit the ETA 9169 reports for the PY 2019 and PY 2020.

PR did not submit the performance reports required by WIOA regulations since the implementation of the act. Negotiation with Region I and ETA allowed PR to present with priority the reports of PY 2019 and PY 2020. Soon we will be presenting the execution reports for the AP 2017 and AP 2018, so that our jurisdiction would comply with the WIOA reporting.

The PRIS is in the process of upgrading, already the database and reporting phase was completed, the vendor is working to expand the capacity of the PRIS with the following additional modules:

- Case Management – The case management module is a supplemental tool to facilitate the collection of data from case managers in the AJC, currently in the process of implementation in PRIS. Its design was made through the input of a sample of case managers, WP and WDP staff. The module it's in the stage of performing QA tests and user tests to upload it to the platform.
- Eligible Training Providers Module – This module electronically integrates the entire process for eligible training service providers to: submit documentation to the Local Boards of trainings eligible for WIOA funds; allow the Local Board process for evaluate and approve recommended training in accordance with occupational demand; as well as the evaluation at state level and the creation of the ETPL. The module has the function of collecting the ETPL performance data element required in the ETA 9171.
- Registered Apprenticeship Module – This module is in the process of QA and user testing to proceed to be uploaded to the PRIS. In addition, of the required elements of the PIRL, it contains additional data fields to collect information relevant to case management and will be aligned with the RAPIDS database.
- Youth Module Module – The module collects information from services providers of the 14 elements of the youth program from the local areas and state level.
- Rapid Response Module – Collects information from dislocated workers receiving rapid response services.

### **AJC Partners Integration**

One of the main goals of the workforce development system is the integration of all core and required partners in the AJC; for common intake, common case management, supportive services, and avoid duplication of services. The WDP hired an IT vendor to develop the integration of the databases of the core and required partners of the system. The main challenge is assessing each partner's IT architecture, some of which have their own database platforms and confidentiality requirements. This initiative seeks that the

PRIS can be used by the required partners as their database platform and share relevant information from other partners, to avoid duplication of services and tracking the clients through their participation.

The WDP and partners have already begun the process of outlining the process of integrating services including databases, which is in the stage of initiating the evaluation of the partners' IT infrastructure. This work will support the objectives of integrating and reporting the results of the entire workforce system.

The WDP and the State Board began to bring together all required and non-required WIOA partners. The inclusion of partners into this platform will allow for more effective system. DEDC must establish data share agreements with each partner willing to be integrated in the system, either by sharing the data, or by achieving an interface to share customer participation information. This will improve both client services and reporting with respect to data analysis and client activity. The intent of this process is to gather comprehensive and consistent information so that appropriate workforce development services will be provided. Common intake and case management will help coordinate and align services that are provided through the workforce development system and will ensure those needing services through the workforce system are receiving appropriate services.

**State Wage Interchange System (SWIS).** Puerto Rico signed the SWIS Agreement with DOLETA, which incorporates all six WIOA core programs to exchange interstate quarterly wage records. Since January 1, 2020, all Queries for Wage Data for all applicable programs are processed through the SWIS Clearinghouse. The SWIS Agreement replaces the Wage Record Interchange System (WRIS and WRIS2) Data Sharing Agreements previously executed by most States. States signing the Agreement will be able to exchange interstate quarterly wage records with any other State signing the Agreement to satisfy performance reporting requirements in section 116 of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).

The PR Department of Labor & Human Resource is the SUIA agency. "SUIA" is the state agency that holds wage data, whether such agency also administers the state's unemployment insurance program. On the other hand, PACIA" is the Performance Accountability and Customer Information Agency designated by the governor to be responsible for coordinating the state's program for assessing state and local program performance and evaluating training provider performance. The PACIA are PR Department of Economic Development & Commerce – Access PACIA; PR Department of Education – Access PACIA; PR Department of the Family – Access PACIA; and the PR Vocational Rehabilitation Administration – Access.

**MIP.** The Accounting Information System (MIP) is used by the WDP to keep accounting data on WIOA federal funds allocated to local areas, as well as disbursements to participants and providers, and administrative and operational concepts of expenditure. All local board (fifteen) provide the data required by the system, regardless the use of internal financial information systems.

**Claimants' Services Web Portal.** The system allows filing an unemployment insurance claim online. Users can file an initial claim for unemployment benefits if they have worked in Puerto Rico for at least two quarters within the last 18 months and became unemployed due to reasons beyond their control. Any

application submitted after 5pm, from Monday to Friday, will be processed the next working day. Time to complete the application should not exceed 30 minutes. Also, claims are accepted by phone at (787) 945-7900, a service available during regular working hours.

**Adult Information System (AIS).** The Puerto Rico Adult Education data collection reporting system uses the Adult Information System (AIS) designed to help providers collecting, analyzing and using data to identify and implement strategies to achieve expected levels of performance. Current efforts are focused on the Adult Information System, which will strengthen compliance with NRS requirements. The Adult Information System is an application that manages the processing of information in the different functional areas; it complies with the regulations and requirements of the Adult Educational System and manages the required Federal reporting for the NRS System. The application allows for the simultaneous creation and administration of locations independent of each other. It is web-based with an integrated security protocol and conveniently designed in modules.

The application has the capability of generating transactions following a procedural flow with requirements and authorizations for admissions, assigning staff, programming of courseware, registration, creation of file documents, and academic matters. It also processes the electronic filing of documents by capturing a variety of documentation already in the system, minimizing in this way the filing of forms and conversion of documents to digital form within different functional areas. Users can generate follow-up files in a digitally centralized way for each functional area; reports are selected depending upon level of security access and the users' functional roles.

**Consumer Rehabilitation Information System (CRIS).** The PRVRA maintains the Consumer Rehabilitation Information System. It keeps data on services provided to applicants and consumers, and the data required for federal and state reporting. CRIS is not currently integrated with the PRDOLHR or the One-Stop systems. The case management capabilities of the system have been updated to collect data on Pre-Employment Transition Services delivered students with disabilities.

**Job Banks.** PR.JOBS is the PRDOLHR's official Job Bank. This resource, available to employers and job seekers in general, is provided free of cost by Direct Employers as part of an agreement to NASWA to provide such valuable tool to State Workforce Agencies. Direct Employers Job Central is a web clearinghouse operated by Direct Employers where employers can post available jobs and recruit eligible job candidates; job seekers may also search for job openings and apply for employment.

Job Central uses the O\*NET Autocoder to assign occupational codes. The Direct Employers uses a version that has been upgraded extensively since the original and will not recode jobs uploaded from a state workforce agency site unless they have a valid SOC/O\*NET code assigned.

Upon registration in PR.JOBS a job seeker will have access to a vast network of employers and can publish their resume online and get access to skills transferability tools like MyNextMove and MySkillsMyFuture. A registered employer will find a network of jobseekers in search of employment and can search their resumes

online matching their job opportunity and allowing them to extend an invitation for an interview totally transparent to the job seeker.

**RAPID.** Registered Apprenticeship data is entered into a USDOL database called Registered Apprenticeship Partners Information Data System (RAPIDS). In addition, we have an electronic Apprenticeship module that communicates with USDOL's WIPS system to report on program performance. We are working with ETA Regional Office to achieve the interface between the two systems.

(B) Data-collection and reporting processes used for all programs and activities, including those present in one-stop centers.

The implementation process of the new software for data collection and information management is in its last phase of review. The PRDEDC expects to release the PIRL compliance reports of the PRIS program on April 15, 2020. Currently there is no data on the programs, with the new report it is expected to present the statistical information for the last four years. The expected results are:

- Improved Service Delivery and Employment Outcomes for Dislocated Workers;
- More Effective Connections to All Available Services through Integrated Case Management;
- Prevention of Long-Term-Unemployment;
- Increased Early Intervention and Layoff Aversion;
- Increased Accessibility to Services through Automation and Self-Service; and
- Enhanced Identification of Service Delivery Needs.

**AIS.** The Adult Information System complies with the regulations and requirements of the Adult Educational System and manages the required Federal reporting for the NRS System.

**Vocational Rehabilitation Services.** The PRVRA system collects data for the RSA-911 and other federal and local reports. Whereas WIOA sets new performance indicators for the program, CRIS will be undergoing adjustments in programming, so data can be recorded as needed to measure compliance. Currently, the CRIS is not integrated into the system of other core programs or the One-Stop Centers network.

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(3) State Policies that will Support the Implementation of State's Strategies

The State policies that will support the implementation of the State's strategies (e.g., co-enrollment policies and universal intake processes where appropriate). In addition, provide the State's guidelines for State-administered one-stop partner programs' contributions to a one-stop delivery system.

The State Board will review its policies to comply with the requirements under WIOA. In order to bring all practices into compliance with WIOA and other federal regulations, the PRDEDC and the State Board will establish in the next months the following local policies or guidance:

**Table 57. In-Process State Policies and Procedures**

<b>Local Policy</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Local Policy Number</b>	<b>Expected Date</b>
1) Cash Management	Policies and procedures for cash management	TBD	April 2020
2) Cost Allocation	Policies and procedures for cost allocation	TBD	April 2020
3) Closeout Federal Grant	Policies and procedures for Closeout of federal grants	TBD	April 2020
4) Payroll base on budget	Policies and procedures for payroll base on budget	TBD	April 2020
5) Financial Reporting	Policies and procedures for financial reporting of federal grant	TBD	April 2020
6) Trade Adjustment Assistance	Requirements when approving Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) Training for petitions.	2020-001	March 2020
7) On the Job Training	This policy provides guidance regarding the limitations and eligibility of individuals to participate in On-the-Job Training (OJT) opportunities.	TBD	March 2020
8) Roles and responsibilities of directors, local boards and elected officials of the One-Stop Centers	Establish the roles and responsibilities of the actors involved in the fiscal and programmatic areas in the One-Stop Center.	TBD	April 2020
9) Case management	Provide guidance for carrying out case management interventions (eligibility, referrals, training activities, employment, etc).	TBD	April 2020
10) Local Board Certification	Policy for compliance with local board certifications.	TBD	April 2020
11) Local area designation	To provide guidance and process for the designation and subsequent designation of Workforce Development Areas.	TBD	May 2020
12) Youth Program Guidance	Guide to define concepts, eligibility, and other aspects related to the youth program.	TBD	May 2020
13) Expense requirements	Policy to determine requirements for the expenditure level of training activities.	TBD	May 2020

Local Policy	Description	Local Policy Number	Expected Date
14) Rapid Response	Políticas para intervenir en asuntos de respuesta rápida a nivel Estatal	TBD	May 2020
15) Customized training	This policy provides guidance to the Local Areas as they implement Customized Training for the Adult and Dislocated Worker programs.	TBD	May 2020
16) Conflict of interest	This policy is established to provide direction for sub-recipients, contractors, staff and board members of Puerto Rico Local Workforce Development Boards in order that business can be conducted within the guidelines that will prevent actual, potential, or questionable conflicts of interest.	TBD	April 2020
17) Policy on recapture and reallocation of funds	This policy describes the reallocation and recapture of local area Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) allocations for youth, adult, and dislocated worker activities.	TBD	May 2020
18) WIOA Operational Guidelines	Guidelines about basic services, training services, Individualized career services, case management, rapid response and other operational regulations of WIOA	No number required	May 2020
19) Local Areas Designation	WIOA policy requirements for establishing local areas.	TBD	May 2020
20) Composition of Local Boards	WIOA Standard Requirements for Boards	TBD	May 2020
21) One-Stop Center Certification	Policies and procedures for the certification of One-Stop Center	TBD	May 2020
22) State Apprenticeship Implementation Guide	Policies and procedures for establishing a State Apprenticeship Agency	TBD	June 2020
23) Local Board Cost Allocation Guidance	Guidelines about cost allocation procedures for all Local Board.	TBD	June 2020
24) Access to information	Policy to provide to the public (including individuals with disabilities) access to meetings of State Boards and local boards, and information regarding activities of State Boards	TBD	June 2020

Local Policy	Description	Local Policy Number	Expected Date
	and local boards, such as data on board membership and minutes.		
25) Accessibility to individuals with disabilities	Policy to ensure the physical and programmatic accessibility of all One-Stop Centers with the individuals with disabilities.	TBD	June 2020

***The narrative does not have policies or processes addressing one-stop partner programs contributions to a one-stop delivery system. Puerto Rico states that these guidelines will be added in the next few months. However, States must establish a policy to addresses the handling of One-stop partners' contributions including the application of the State Funding Mechanism and statutory caps. Such policy or process should also identify the time frames and deadlines for local areas to negotiate and incorporate infrastructure funding agreements (IFAs) into their local MOUs. (Compliance)***

***Puerto Rico did not describe their co enrollment and common intake processes for LWDA's and AJC's staff. Additionally, Puerto Rico did not include the MOU/IFA policy. Puerto Rico must include the co enrollment and common intake, and MOU/IFA policies and procedures.***

***(Compliance)***

The Workforce Development Program approved the following policy on 5 May 2017: "Carta circular WIOA-01-2017 Memorandum of Understanding MOU". This policy describes the vision, structure, and functions of the one-stop system in Puerto Rico. As the USDOL has issued guidance and information after the development of this policy, work is underway in Puerto Rico to modify this policy. Also, this policy will consider the Co-enrollment strategy. Through the implementation of this strategy, the State can increase the success of the program and the participants, maximize resources, be efficient in the service offered and align with regional sectoral strategy. The procedures are under review by the WDP and the State Board, and this policy has been included in Table 57 of the State Plan, particularly row number 26. Once the policy review has been completed and approved by the State Board, the WDP will be notified of the implementation of the new changes to the entire workforce system. Staff from all agencies will be able to review and ask questions during technical assistance calls with program specialists and appropriate division directors. DEDC will continue to invest time and resources to ensure that this policy and others meet with the specification of WIOA and the workforce system in Puerto Rico.

## **AJC Partners Integration**

One of the main goals of the workforce development system is the integration of all core and required partners in the AJC; for common intake, common case management, supportive services, and avoid duplication of services. The WDP hired an IT vendor to develop the integration of the databases of the core and

required partners of the system. The main challenge is assessing each partner's IT architecture, some of which have their own database platforms and confidentiality requirements. This initiative seeks that the PRIS can be used by the required partners as their database platform and share relevant information from other partners, to avoid duplication of services and tracking the clients through their participation.

The WDP and partners have already begun the process of outlining the process of integrating services including databases, which is in the stage of initiating the evaluation of the partners' IT infrastructure. This work will support the objectives of integrating and reporting the results of the entire workforce system.

The WDP and the State Board began to bring together all required and non-required WIOA partners. The inclusion of partners into this platform will allow for more effective system. DEDC must establish data share agreements with each partner willing to be integrated in the system, either by sharing the data, or by achieving an interface to share customer participation information. This will improve both client services and reporting with respect to data analysis and client activity. The intent of this process is to gather comprehensive and consistent information so that appropriate workforce development services will be provided. Common intake and case management will help coordinate and align services that are provided through the workforce development system and will ensure those needing services through the workforce system are receiving appropriate services.

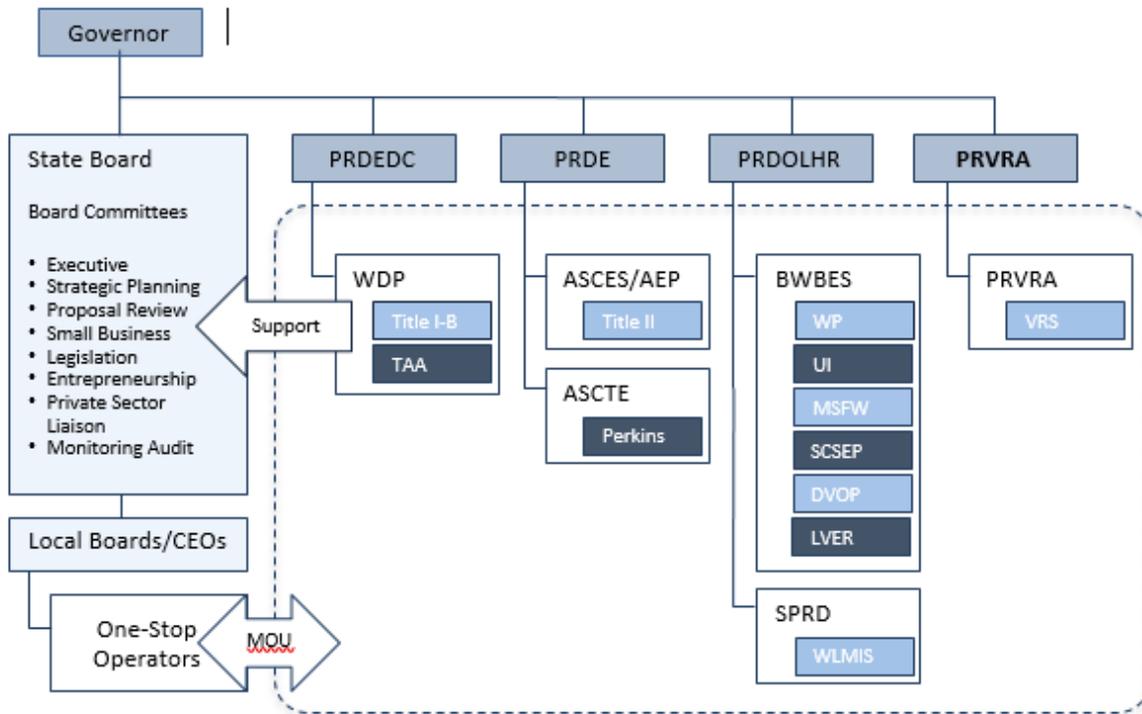
The PRIS is in the process of upgrading, already the database and reporting phase was completed, the vendor is working to expand the capacity of the PRIS with the following additional modules:

- Case Management
- Eligible Training Providers Module
- Registered Apprenticeship Module
- Youth Module Module
- Rapid Response Module

(A) State Agency Organization

Describe the organization and delivery systems at the State and local levels for the programs covered in the plan, including the organizational structure. Include an organizational chart.

Figure 30. Organizational chart of workforce system with core programs



(B) State Board

Provide a description of the State Board, including –

i. Membership Roster

Provide a membership roster for the State Board, including members’ organizational affiliations.

The Puerto Rico Workforce Board operates in accordance with the Federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act and local regulations. The Board's responsibility is to lead strategic efforts in Puerto Rico to strengthen and develop the workforce system. Representation on the Puerto Rico Workforce Board is mandated by federal and state law. The board includes representation from government agency leaders,

elected officials, private sector representatives, and other representatives of Puerto Rico's workforce. Most of the board member are private business representative.

**Table 58. WIOA Workforce Members**

<b>Member Name</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>	<b>Organization</b>
<b>Hon. Pedro R. Pierluisi Urrutia</b>	Government Representative	Governor, Puerto Rico
Vacant	Government Representative	Representatives Chamber
Vacant	Government Representative	Senator, Puerto Rico
<b>Manuel Cidre Miranda</b>	Government Representative	Secretary, Department of Economic Development and Commerce
<b>Eliezer Ramos Parés</b>	Government Representative	Designated Secretary, Puerto Rico Department of Education
<b>Gabriel Maldonado González</b>	Government Representative	Designated Secretary, Puerto Rico Department of Labor
<b>William Rodríguez Rodríguez</b>	Government Representative	Secretary, Puerto Rico Department of Housing
<b>Carmen Ana González Magaz</b>	Government Representative	Acting Secretary, Puerto Rico Department of the Family
<b>Dra. María M. Gómez García</b>	Government Representative	Vocational Rehabilitation Administrator
Vacant	Government Representative	Mayor, Municipality
Vacant	Government Representative	Mayor, Municipality
<b>Emilio Colón Zavala</b>	Business/Industry Representatives	ECZ Group
<b>Nelson Ramírez</b>	Business/Industry Representatives	Secure Tech Group
<b>Coral Cummings Pino</b>	Business/Industry Representatives	Walgreens Puerto Rico
	Business/Industry Representatives	Vacancy
<b>Jorge Capó Matos</b>	Business/Industry Representatives	American International Plaza
<b>Sonia Navarro González</b>	Business/Industry Representatives	Brodersen Enterprise of P.R.

<b>Member Name</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>	<b>Organization</b>
<b>Luz Disla Peña</b>	Business/Industry Representatives	Finanzas al Día, Inc.
<b>Lymarís Otero Cruz</b>	Business/Industry Representatives	Asociación de Comercio al Detal, Inc.
<b>Carl Leyva Ramos</b>	Business/Industry Representatives	Carl Leyva & Asociados, Corp.
<b>Michael Pabón Rivera</b>	Business/Industry Representatives	CIC Construction
<b>Umberto Donato Solís</b>	Business/Industry Representatives	DDD Group
<b>Christian González Ortiz</b>	Business/Industry Representatives	Wovenware, Inc.
<b>Peggy Abreu Albarrán</b>	Business/Industry Representatives	Honeywell
<b>Elizabeth Alonso Quiñones</b>	Business/Industry Representatives	Hidroponistas de Puerto Rico
<b>Luis Alvarado Cintrón</b>	Business/Industry Representatives	President, EIS Consulting Group
<b>Jesús E. Vázquez Rivera</b>	Business/Industry Representatives	President, Centro Unido de Detallistas
<b>Irba Batista Cruz</b>	Workforce Representatives	Secretary of the Central Federation of Workers
<b>Alexis Torres O’Farril</b>	Workforce Representatives	Construction Inspector, PRIDCO
	Workforce Representatives	Vacancy Education
<b>Osvaldo Ubiñas Nieves</b>	Workforce Representatives	Director, Ramey Job Corps
<b>Olga Ramos Carrasquillo</b>	Workforce Representatives	President, Boys & Girls Club Puerto Rico
<b>John Viguera Ortiz</b>	Apprenticeship Representative	President, LiUNA-Puerto Rico District Council

Note: Board vacancies are pending Governor’s appointments.

#### *ii. Board Activities*

Provide a description of the activities that will assist State Board members and staff in carrying out State Board functions effectively.

The development of the plan is a task that the State Board accomplishes with the collaboration of and interagency committee integrated by core and required partners and a year-round working agenda. The role and responsibilities of the State Board are defined by WIOA, local statute and its internal regulations. The

latter establishes subcommittees and working groups in connection with technical and particular issues. Among these: Strategic Planning and Budget Committee; Private Sector Liaising Committee; Evaluation, Monitoring and Auditing Committee; Entrepreneurship Committee; Continued Improvement Committee; and the Executive Committee.

The State Board is also responsible for assisting the Governor with additional functions designated by WIOA. These include:

- Developing and implementing the State Unified Plan and performance measures;
- Developing/expanding strategies for partnership in in-demand sector/occupations;
- Developing and aligning policies;
- Developing and continuously improving the one stop delivery system; and
- Developing policies and guidance on one stop partner role and resource contribution.

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#### (4) Assessment and Evaluation of Programs and One-Stop Program Partners

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##### *(A) Assessment of Core Programs*

Describe how the core programs will be assessed each year based on State performance accountability measures described in section 116(b) of WIOA. This State assessment must include the quality, effectiveness, and improvement of programs broken down by local area or provider. Such state assessments should take into account local and regional planning goals.

Please, refer to section II(b)(4), above.

#### **Title I-B**

The State will continue to assess the program based on the results of fiscal and programmatic monitoring, and customer satisfaction surveys, and the analysis performance and accountability measures.

#### **Adult Education**

Section 212 of WIOA requires a description of how the eligible agency will evaluate annually the effectiveness of the adult education and literacy activities based on the performance measures described in section 116. The evaluation will address the extent to which local providers have implemented each of the thirteen required activities specified in Section 231 and will focus in two key features: a formative evaluation is conducted to assure quality of program management by tracking the effectiveness of program development and implementation; followed by a summative evaluation that documents the educational impact on learners, and determines the extent to which populations specified in the State Plan are served.

The project staff, together with the evaluator, design and formalize the evaluation plan. The evaluation tasks are divided into the following tasks:

- Documenting the project's implementation process;
- Periodically aligning program elements with program goals;

- Monitoring outcomes and impact;
- Following-up on studies of former participants;
- Measuring the effectiveness of teacher training; and
- Assessing the extent to which adult education goals and objectives of individuals with barriers to employment and ensuring their access, and other special populations have been met.

The evaluation plan will yield both quantitative and qualitative data, needed to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of the program's functions and services. The program evaluator will utilize a combination of strategies, which include but are not limited to Pre and post inquiries; Surveys; Interviews; Standardized tests; Placement tests; Attendance records; Observations; and Questionnaires.

The product of the evaluation will include:

- Applicable information about the effectiveness of the Section 231 grant program
- Characteristics of the adult learners
- Improvements in literacy levels and educational gains of learners
- Analysis of learner goal attainment
- Outcomes of performance standards
- Services provided

The outcome reports will include the new requirements of the National Reporting System (NRS).

Pursuant to Section 116 of the Adult Education and Literacy Act, each local provider must report student progress measures obtained from all students who have attended at least twelve (12) hours of instruction in programs receiving Section 231 federal supplemental funds. The evaluation activities will require local providers to:

- Collect and analyze student performance and program improvement data;
- Determine performance levels on standard and core indicators;
- Identify needs and support services; and
- Implement continuous improvement initiatives to meet performance levels for standards and core indicators.

Documented progress of student performance measures must include at a minimum:

- Literacy skill level improvements in reading, writing, and speaking the English Language, English language acquisition, problem solving, numeric, and other literacy skills;
- Placement in, retention in, or completion of post-secondary education, training, or unsubsidized employment or career advancement;
- A secondary school diploma or its equivalent; and
- Attainment of student learning goals.

All participating local providers will be required to maintain individual student records for all students who have attended 12 hours of instruction. Each record must contain:

- Student identification and Intake information;
- Demographic data;
- Attendance data;
- Assessment data;
- Attainment data; and
- Other relevant information as specified by the data management system.

### **Monitoring of providers**

The Puerto Rico Department of Education Adult Education Services continues to promote its comprehensive accountability system to determine program effectiveness and measure the progress of local providers towards continuous improvement. The agency reviews program delivery strategies, processes, and evaluation data in order to support and improve the literacy services provided and to optimize the return of the investment of federal funds in adult education literacy activities.

Monitoring processes include risk monitoring to determine that the allocated funds are used efficiently; monitor files to validate that local programs meet the eligibility criteria of the participants; and programmatic and fiscal monitoring. Said monitoring activities will be carried out each school year, in order to demonstrate compliance with the applicable program regulations. The monitoring effort will continue throughout the Plan and will include:

- **Mid-year Reports** - The Puerto Rico Adult Education Program requires all local providers to submit quarterly reports that reflect participation levels for the first three months.
- **Annual Program Evaluation** - The Program conducts continuous comprehensive program evaluation. This evaluation includes all participating local providers and uses surveys of all local providers, on-site observations and interviews. It provides recommendations for state level planning and development activities for the following year. It will also identify the best practices and emerging needs in conjunction with the training and technical assistance needed for local providers to establish high quality, effective instructional programs to the targeted populations specified in the State Plan.
- **Student Follow-up** - The Adult Information System's report submitted to the USDOE will reflect the grantee's progress in achieving the objectives in the application of the program and the effect of the program on participants served.

### **Vocational Rehabilitation**

The agency will assess its performance accountability measures, described in section 116(b) of WIOA, through:

- Reports on WIOA indicators based on data gathered through the case management system;

- Satisfaction surveys to customers, employers and Community Rehabilitation Programs;
- Compliance with strategies established in the VR Portion of the Plan; and
- Internal programmatic monitoring.

In order to collect data for the WIOA performance indicators, PRVRA staff will follow-up on customers and also request data on employment and wages records from other agencies.

#### **Waiver Sections 129(b)(1)(A) and 134(a)(2)(vi)**

PRDEDC going to request a waiver for statewide required activities described in WIOA Sections 129(b)(1)(A) and 134(a)(2)(vi); to conducting evaluations under section 116(e) of activities authorized under this chapter and chapter 3 in coordination with evaluations carried out by the Secretary under section 169(a).

PR did not submit the performance reports required by WIOA regulations since the implementation of the act. Negotiation with Region I and ETA allowed PR to present with priority the reports of PY 2019 and PY 2020. Soon we will be presenting the execution reports for the AP 2017 and AP 2018, so that our jurisdiction would comply with the WIOA reporting. Since PR has not been able to submit performance reports for the past few years, many decisions about system reorganization have not yet been made. State Board assessment of the workforce development system must rely on objective and qualitative data of performance measure for PY 2017-2021, not yet available for the WIOA implementation.

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#### *(B) Assessment of One-Stop Program Partner Programs*

Describe how other one-stop delivery system partner program services and Combined State Plan partner programs included in the plan will be assessed each year. Such state assessments should take into account local and regional planning goals.

Since PR has not been able to submit performance reports for the past few years, many decisions about system reorganization have not yet been made. State Board assessment of the workforce development system must rely on objective and qualitative data of performance measure for PY 2017-2021, not yet available for the WIOA implementation.

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#### *(C) Previous Assessment Results*

Beginning with the state plan modification in 2018 and for subsequent state plans and state plan modifications, provide the results of assessments of the effectiveness of the core programs and other one-stop partner programs and Combined State Plan partner programs included in the Unified or Combined State plan during the preceding 2-year period (i.e. the 2-year period of the plan modification cycle). Describe how the State is adapting its strategies based on these assessments.

No data available at this moment.

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#### *(D) Evaluation*

Describe how the State will conduct evaluations and research projects on activities under WIOA core programs; how such projects will be coordinated with, and designed in conjunction with, State and local boards and with State agencies responsible for the administration of all respective core programs; and, further, how the projects will be coordinated with the evaluations provided for by the Secretary of Labor and the Secretary of Education under WIOA.

Puerto Rico will conduct evaluations and research on the implementation of WIOA core programs. The evaluation process is important to determine the effectiveness of the planning and implementation processes of the strategic plan. Plans for this in-depth evaluation process include:

- Establish regular meetings to evaluate the performance of the local areas. These meetings should assess if the activities carried out by the local area staff are consistent with the goals set out in the strategic plan;
- Conduct a formative evaluation of services, resources and activities at the local and state levels. This evaluation will provide the appropriate knowledge for decision making at the management level;
- Annual evaluation of the performance of local areas and the effectiveness and efficiency of the services offered through WIOA core programs.
- The evaluation measures are those set out under section 16(b)(2)(A) and include the six primary performance indicator; and
- Formative evaluation will help in the process of identifying areas for improvement. The collaboration of agencies, internal staff and external resources will be solicited to work on projects to improve the effectiveness of core programs.

Objective and qualitative data of performance measure for PY 2017-2021, submitted through PRIS will be used as a basis for future evaluations and will determine whether a modification of the strategic goals is necessary and consistent with the results of the evaluation.

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#### (5) Distribution of Funds for Core Programs

Describe the methods and factors the State will use in distributing funds under the core programs in accordance with the provisions authorizing such distributions.

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##### (A) For Title I Programs

Provide a description of the written policies that establish the State's methods and factors used to distribute funds to local areas for –

The Governor allocates WIOA formula funds allotted for services to youth, adults and dislocated workers in accordance with WIOA sections 128 and 133. Within-State allocations are made in accordance with the allocation formulas contained in WIOA sections 128(b) and 133(b).

Of WIOA formula funds allotted for services to youth, adults and dislocated workers, the Governor's Reserve funds from each of these sources for statewide workforce investment activities. In making these reservations,

the Governor reserves up to 15 percent from each of these sources. Funds reserved under this paragraph are combined and spent on statewide employment and training activities, for adults and dislocated workers, and statewide youth activities, without regard to the funding source of the reserved funds. The Governor reserves a portion of the dislocated worker funds for statewide rapid response activities, as described in WIOA. In making this reservation, the Governor reserves up to 25 percent of the dislocated worker funds.

i. Youth activities in accordance with WIOA section 128(b)(2) or (b)(3),

The Governor elects to distribute funds in accordance with the allocation formula in section 128(b), as follows:

- 33<sup>1/3</sup> percent on the basis of the relative number of unemployed individuals in areas of substantial unemployment in each workforce investment area, compared to the total number of unemployed individuals in all areas of substantial unemployment in the State;
- 33<sup>1/3</sup> percent on the basis of the relative excess number of unemployed individuals in each workforce investment area, compared to the total excess number of unemployed individuals in the State; and
- 33<sup>1/3</sup> percent on the basis of the relative number of disadvantaged youths in each workforce investment area, compared to the total number of disadvantaged youths in the State. (WIOA sec. 128(b)).

ii. Adult and training activities in accordance with WIOA section 133(b)(2) or (b)(3),

The Governor elects to distribute funds in accordance with the allocation formula in 133(b), as follows:

- 33<sup>1/3</sup> percent on the basis of the relative number of unemployed individuals in areas of substantial unemployment in each workforce investment area, compared to the total number of unemployed individuals in areas of substantial unemployment in the State;
- 33<sup>1/3</sup> percent on the basis of the relative excess number of unemployed individuals in each workforce investment area, compared to the total excess number of unemployed individuals in the State; and
- 33<sup>1/3</sup> percent on the basis of the relative number of disadvantaged adults in each workforce investment area, compared to the total number of disadvantaged adults in the State. (WIOA sec. 133(b))

iii. Dislocated worker employment and training activities

Dislocated worker employment and training activities in accordance with WIOA section 133(b)(2) and based on data and weights assigned.

The Governor elects to distribute funds in accordance with the allocation formula considering the following:

- Insured unemployment data;
- Unemployment concentrations;

- Plant closings and mass layoff data;
- Declining industries data;
- Farmer-rancher economic hardship data; and
- Long-term unemployment data.

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*(B) For Title II*

- i. Describe how the eligible agency will award multi-year grants or contracts on a competitive basis to eligible providers in the State, including how eligible agencies will establish that eligible providers are organizations of demonstrated effectiveness.

Please, refer to section VIII. (A) and (B), below.

- ii. Describe how the eligible agency will ensure direct and equitable access to all eligible providers to apply and compete for funds and how the eligible agency will ensure that it is using the same grant or contract announcement and application procedure for all eligible providers.

Please, refer to section VIII. (A) and (B), below.

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*(C) Vocational Rehabilitation Program*

In the case of a State that, under section 101(a)(2)(A)(i) of the Rehabilitation Act designates a State agency to administer the part of the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan under which VR services are provided for individuals who are blind, describe the process and the factors used by the State to determine the distribution of funds among the two VR agencies in the State.

Not applicable.

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(6) Program Data

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*(A) Data Alignment and Integration.*

Describe the plans of the lead State agencies with responsibility for the administration of the core programs, along with the State Board, to align and integrate available workforce and education data systems for the core programs, unemployment insurance programs, and education through postsecondary education, and to the extent possible, the Combined State Plan partner programs included in this plan. The description of the State's plan for integrating data systems should include the State's goals for achieving integration and any progress to date.

Planning Note: States should be aware that Section 116(i)(1) requires the core programs, local boards, and chief elected officials to establish and operate a fiscal and management accountability information system based on guidelines established by the Secretaries of Labor and Education. Separately, the Departments of

Labor and Education anticipate working with States to inform future guidance and possible information collection(s) on these accountability systems. States should begin laying the groundwork for these fiscal and management accountability requirements, recognizing that adjustments to meet the elements above may provide opportunity or have impact on such a fiscal and management accountability system.

The Government will comply with fiscal and management accountability information system specified by the USDOL.

- i. Describe the State's plans to make the management information systems for the core programs interoperable to maximize the efficient exchange of common data elements to support assessment and evaluation.

The Puerto Rico database system is the Participant Record Information System (PRIS) and entered on function on March 9, 2020. The technology solutions include a common registration and case management across Title I and Title III programs. In the initial phase of the PRIS system, Title I-B programs and W-P were fully integrated. The Workforce Development Program is in the final stages of development to streamline the application process for integrate or interface the participant management systems of WIOA Titles I, II, III, and IV and other required partners.

The PRIS is in the process of upgrading, already the database and reporting phase was completed, the vendor is working to expand the capacity of the PRIS with additional modules. The WDP hired an IT vendor to develop the integration of the databases of the core and required partners of the system. The WDP and the State Board began to bring together all required and non-required WIOA partners. The intent of this process is to gather comprehensive and consistent information so that appropriate workforce development services will be provided. Common intake and case management will help coordinate and align services that are provided through the workforce development system and will ensure those needing services through the workforce system are receiving appropriate services.

- ii. Describe the State's plans to integrate data systems to facilitate streamlined intake and service delivery to track participation across all programs included in this plan.

Please, see below.

- iii. Explain how the State board will assist the governor in aligning technology and data systems across required one-stop partner programs (including design and implementation of common intake, data collection, etc.) and how such alignment will improve service delivery to individuals, including unemployed individuals.

### **Participant Record Information System (PRIS)**

In the initial phase of the PRIS system, Title I-B programs and W-P were fully integrated. The Workforce Development Program is in the final stages of development to streamline the application process for integrate or interface the participant management systems of WIOA Titles I, II, III, and IV and other required partners. The PRIS collects and reports on performance measures for Title I and Title III programs. Currently, ETA 9169, for PY 2019 y PY 2020 were submitted and certified by WIPS.

One of the main goals of the workforce development system is the integration of all core and required partners in the AJC; for common intake, common case management, supportive services, and avoid duplication of services. The WDP hired an IT vendor to develop the integration of the databases of the core and required partners of the system. The main challenge is assessing each partner's IT architecture, some of which have their own database platforms and confidentiality requirements. This initiative seeks that the PRIS can be used by the required partners as their database platform and share relevant information from other partners, to avoid duplication of services and tracking the clients through their participation.

### **State Wage Interchange System (SWIS)**

Puerto Rico signed the SWIS Agreement with DOLETA, which incorporates all six WIOA core programs to exchange interstate quarterly wage records. Since January 1, 2020, all Queries for Wage Data for all applicable programs are processed through the SWIS Clearinghouse. The SWIS Agreement replaces the Wage Record Interchange System (WRIS and WRIS2) Data Sharing Agreements previously executed by most States. States signing the Agreement will be able to exchange interstate quarterly wage records with any other State signing the Agreement to satisfy performance reporting requirements in section 116 of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).

The PR Department of Labor & Human Resource is the SUIA agency. "SUIA" is the state agency that holds wage data, whether such agency also administers the state's unemployment insurance program. On the other hand, PACIA" is the Performance Accountability and Customer Information Agency designated by the governor to be responsible for coordinating the state's program for assessing state and local program performance and evaluating training provider performance. The PACIA are PR Department of Economic Development & Commerce – Access PACIA; PR Department of Education – Access PACIA; PR Department of the Family – Access PACIA; and the PR Vocational Rehabilitation Administration – Access.

- iv. Describe the State's plans to develop and produce the reports required under section 116, performance accountability system. (WIOA section 116(d)(2)).

The Puerto Rico database system is the Participant Record Information System (PRIS) and entered on function on March 9, 2020. The technology solutions include a common registration and case management across Title I and Title III programs. In compliance with the Section 116(d)(1) of WIOA and related federal guidelines, the system consists in a multiuser web-based software based on the PIRL, including the validation rules established by DOLETA and the reports related with the PIRL database. Its main function is to comply with the three sets of validation rules (duplicate rules, valid values rules, and logical rules) reflected in the generation of a 100% error free, comma delimited text files (csv files) based on the PIRL schemas for all the programs. The software was developed according with the PIRL Schemas CSV files and will be used by the sixteen programs included in PIRL.

In the initial phase of the PRIS system, Title I-B programs and W-P were fully integrated. The Workforce Development Program is in the final stages of development to streamline the application process for

integrate or interface the participant management systems of WIOA Titles I, II, III, and IV and other required partners.

The PRIS collects and reports on performance measures for Title I and Title III programs. Currently, ETA 9169, for PY 2019 y PY 2020 were submitted and certified by WIPS.

The main challenge for submitting ETA 9169 and 9173 reports was the migration from the former database to the new platform with the required elements of the PIRL. This migration produced thousands of data errors that needed an analysis effort to identify the data to complete the required fields. Additional data elements that were added under WIOA, which were not collected in the developed software under WIA parameters, were the main source of PRIS errors. However, with the collaboration of the partners and the staff of the Local Board, it was possible to develop a work plan to enter the data, correct the errors reported by the WIPS, and finally, submit the ETA 9169 reports for the PY 2019 and PY 2020.

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*(B) Assessment of Participants' Post-Program Success*

Describe how lead State agencies will use the workforce development system to assess the progress of participants who are exiting from core programs in entering, persisting in, and completing postsecondary education, or entering or remaining in employment. States may choose to set additional indicators of performance.

The DEDC is going to provide continuously technical assistance to the AJC related to PRIS and reporting process, planning, and providing services utilizing the new performance measure as a guide. The technical assistance includes on-site visit to the Local Areas, explaining in full detail the performance measures and related terminology.

***Puerto Rico must respond to section of the narrative (Compliance)***

It is essential that even though Puerto Rico has not reported on performance measures since 2017, a manual record procedure has been maintained for the participant's case management. This manual record even allowed that with the implementation of the new PRIS system, the information collected could be entered into the new system. The new system, although still in its testing process, will be able to track, predict, and report on core performance indicators, including rates of job placement, earnings, job retention, skill gains, and credentials obtained to ensure compliance with federal performance standards for WIOA Title I and Title III programs.

Once the 2018 program year performance report is issued, Puerto Rico will begin submitting the corresponding quarterly and annual reports. With these reports, state-level performance measures under WIOA will be carefully monitored. These quarterly and annual reports will be handled at the state level by the WDP and sent to the AJCs. These measures are critical to statelevel decision making. The State Plan stated that all local areas would be under evaluation, and consideration would be given to reorganize them to serve participants more effectively.

Performance measures are a required indicator by WIOA for maintaining AJCs. Therefore, Puerto Rico will conduct an assessment of all AJCs and finally determine how the reorganization of the system will look to ensure that a high-quality system is provided to all participants in Puerto Rico's workforce system.

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*(C) Use of Unemployment Insurance (UI) Wage Record Data*

Explain how the State will meet the requirements to utilize quarterly UI wage records for performance accountability, evaluations, and as a source for workforce and labor market information, consistent with Federal and State law. (This Operational Planning element applies to core programs.)

The wage record information is used to determine employment, retention, and average earnings. Puerto Rico's Unemployment Insurance (UI) wage records are the primary data source. Puerto Rico signed the SWIS Agreement with DOLETA, which incorporates all six WIOA core programs to exchange interstate quarterly wage records. Since January 1, 2020, all Queries for Wage Data for all applicable programs are processed through the SWIS Clearinghouse. The SWIS Agreement replaces the Wage Record Interchange System (WRIS and WRIS2) Data Sharing Agreements previously executed by most States. States signing the Agreement will be able to exchange interstate quarterly wage records with any other State signing the Agreement to satisfy performance reporting requirements in section 116 of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).

The PR Department of Labor & Human Resource is the SUIA agency. "SUIA" is the state agency that holds wage data, whether such agency also administers the state's unemployment insurance program. On the other hand, PACIA" is the Performance Accountability and Customer Information Agency designated by the governor to be responsible for coordinating the state's program for assessing state and local program performance and evaluating training provider performance. The PACIA are PR Department of Economic Development & Commerce – Access PACIA; PR Department of Education – Access PACIA; PR Department of the Family – Access PACIA; and the PR Vocational Rehabilitation Administration – Access.

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*(D) Privacy Safeguards*

Describe the privacy safeguards incorporated in the State's workforce development system, including safeguards required by section 444 of the General Education Provisions Act (20 U.S.C. 1232g) and other applicable Federal laws.

The State complies with section 444 of the General Education Provision Act, section 2(c)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, section 491-2(a)(2) of the Wagner Peyser Act, 2 CFR 200.303, OMB Uniform Guidance and any other applicable provision. It also complies with all relevant local provisions, including

those identified by the Puerto Rico Institute of Statistics pertaining the access, dissemination and confidentiality of government information.

The PRIS Management Information System is a role-based system with specific permissions granted, depending on an individual's role. Confidential information is protected within the system by restricting access to view, enter, or edit data to specific security roles or specific security privileges. Access to the systems is granted by users with specialized administrative rights and administrative users' accounts are monitored periodically to ensure that rights have been granted to only appropriate staff.

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#### (7) Priority of Service for Veterans

Describe how the State will implement and monitor the priority of service provisions for veterans in accordance with the requirements of the Jobs for Veterans Act, codified at section 4215 of 38 U.S.C., which applies to all employment and training programs funded in whole or in part by the Department of Labor. States should also describe the referral process for veterans determined to have a significant barrier to employment to receive services from the Jobs for Veterans State Grants (JVSG) program's Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) specialist.

Enacted on November 7, 2002, the Jobs for Veterans Act of 2002 (Public Law 107-288) has the main objective of "review and enhance employment, placement and training services offered to veterans." The Act requires that all workforce development programs, fully or partially funded by the USDOL, provide priority service to Veterans and, under certain circumstances, to spouses of veterans. Veterans and eligible spouses of veterans who otherwise meet the eligibility requirements for adult programs must receive the highest priority for services.

The PRDOLHR is committed to establish relationships with agencies that make up the One-Stop Workforce Development System, such as municipalities, consortiums, colleges and universities, public and private agencies, faith-based and community-based organizations, employer and labor union representatives to ensure and confirm priority of service. Priority of Service will be provided by Wagner-Peyser merit staff. The Veteran Program Coordinator (JVSGC) will be responsible to overview the compliance of Priority of Service by members of the Workforce Community.

A Strategic Plan will be implemented by Wagner-Peyser with an active participation of DVOPs/LVERs staff members who will meet with representatives of all of these organizations in order to achieve or review any agreements in place. The Strategic Plan will have the following goals in mind:

- Identify: veterans, veterans with disabilities, returning wounded or injured veterans, REALife-lines participants, transitioning service members and eligible persons;
- Promote employment of veterans;
- Promote training and education for veterans;
- Seek and coordinate support services for veterans; and
- Establish referral and service procedures.

Wagner-Peyser staff will continue to announce and provide priority of service to veterans according to Federal law and applicable regulations. Veterans entering to the the AJCs will be notified of their priority right of service under the Wagner-Peyser Act, as amended by WIOA. Once a customer is identified as a veteran, he/she will be provided special information designed for veterans only, and will be referred, when appropriate, to specially trained staff for intensive services. Local areas will continue to encourage the provision of additional priority services and information to veterans, including priority access to job orders and individual training accounts (ITAs).

As provided by law, the affected programs that must provide priority service includes, but are not limited to:

- Adults and Displaced Workers program under Title I of WIOA;
- All services offered under the Wagner-Peyser Act;
- All programs under the Trade Act;
- National Emergency Grants;
- Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP);
- National Farmworkers Jobs Program (NFJP);
- H-IB Technical Skills Training Grants;
- Job Corps;
- Demonstration Projects under WIOA;
- Youth Opportunity Program;
- Youth Program under WIOA;
- Labor Market Information Formula Grants;
- Research and Development;
- Electronic tools in AJCs; and
- Other self-directed Internet-based services that use technology to assist individuals in accessing workforce development resources.

Under 20 CFR 1001.120, priority of service is applied to all employment services including:

- Registration;
- Interview with a Veteran Representative;
- Tests;
- Occupational Counseling;
- Job Search Workshops; and
- OJT Referrals.

All career centers inform veterans and eligible spouses of priority of service at initial contact and provides detailed information about priority of service and the range of employment, placement and training services available to them. If a veteran meets the definition of a Veteran with Significant Barriers to Employment as

defined below, the veteran or eligible spouse is referred to a JVSG DVOP Specialist for the provision of services.

Also, as disposed by the USDOL Secretary, Veterans aged 18-24 are to be referred to a DVOP specialist for services. Veterans also receive reemployment services from career centers through a FY16 Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) program. RESEA provides focused case management services, including reemployment orientation, individualized career assessment, and job search assistance.

Wagner-Peyser staff will continue to announce and provide priority of service to veterans according to Federal law and applicable regulations. Veterans entering the ES offices will be notified of their priority right of service under the Wagner-Peyser Act, as amended by WIOA. Once a customer is identified as a veteran, he/she will be provided special information designed for veterans only, and will be referred, when appropriate, to specially trained DVOP Specialists to receive intensive services. In order to be referred to a DVOP, the veteran or eligible spouse shall meet one of the following criteria:

- A special disabled or disabled veteran, as those terms are defined in 38U.S.C § 4211(1) and (3);
- Special disabled and disabled veterans are those: who are entitled to compensation
- (or who but for the receipt of military retired pay would be entitled to compensation)
- under laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans' Affairs; or, were discharged or
- released from active;
- Homeless, as defined in Section 103(a) of the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance
- Act (42 U.S.C. 11302(a));
- A recently-separated service member, as defined in 38 U.S.C § 4211(6), who at any point
- in the previous 12 months has been unemployed for 27 or more consecutive weeks;
- An offender, as defined by WIA Section 101(27), who has been released from incarceration within the last 12 months;
- Lacking a high school diploma or equivalent certificate; or
- Low-income (as defined by WIOA at Section 101 (25)(B)).

For Priority of service purpose, the veteran definition is broad covering all persons that served at least one day in the active military, naval, or air service, and who was discharged or released under conditions other than dishonorable, as specified in 38 USC 101(2). Eligible Spouse as defined at section 2(a) of the JVA (38 USC 4215(a)) means the spouse of any of the following:

- Any veteran who died of a service-connected disability;
- Any member of the Armed Forces serving on active duty who, at the time of application for the priority, is listed for more of 90 days as missing in action, capture in line of duty by hostile force and forcibly detained or interned by foreign government or power; and
- Any veteran with a total disability from a service-connected disability evaluated by VA.

However, a spouse whose priority of service is derived from a living veteran or service member lost her priority of service if the veteran loses the status that is the basis for the priority or if she divorces from the

veteran. The workforce system network in Puerto Rico, including Wagner-Peyser, and the general public is aware of the Priority of Service entitlement to veterans, covered persons and eligible spouses through announcements posted in the bulletin boards and near the entry service delivery point. In addition, Wagner-Peyser and AJC Staff are fully trained to identify covered persons at the reception desk and once in a while they ask the public if there is any veteran or spouse among the clients at the AJC.

Verifying Priority of Service Status through the required paperwork is not mandatory unless the covered persons will undergo eligibility determination or if the applicable federal program rules require the verification in site. Once Priority of Service is determined, covered persons move ahead of the line to receive the appropriate employment, training and placement services over the non-covered persons as required by law and as stated by VPL 07-09. Some Unemployment Insurance Offices have adopted this priority of service model from the Employment Service or the AJC although not mandatory by law.

Local areas will continue to encourage the provision of additional priority services and information to veterans, including priority access to job orders and individual training accounts (ITAs). Other steps that will ensure priority of service to veterans include:

- Training staff members;
- Periodic reception and Labor Exchange Staff reinforcement;
- DVOP/LVER immediate access to job opportunities;
- Placement of signs in waiting areas stating Veterans preference in all offices;
- A brief orientation (in the morning and afternoons) to clients waiting to be served at the reception area related to the priority to Veterans is offered;
- Distribution of printed informative material; and
- Data and Report Validation.

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#### (8) Addressing the Accessibility of the One-Stop Delivery System for Individuals with Disabilities

Describe how the one-stop delivery system (including one-stop center operators and the one-stop delivery system partners), will comply with section 188 of WIOA (if applicable) and applicable provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12101 et seq.) with regard to the physical and programmatic accessibility of facilities, programs, services, technology, and materials for individuals with disabilities. This also must include a description of compliance through providing staff training and support for addressing the needs of individuals with disabilities. Describe the State's one-stop center certification policy, particularly the accessibility criteria.

As mentioned previously, Title I and the PRVRA will lead the efforts to adapt the USDOL Office of Disability Employment Policy's (ODEP) recommendations contained in its "Promising Practices in Achieving Universal Access and Equal Opportunity: a Section 188 Disability Reference Guide". The resulting guidance will be adopted by the State Board and mandated to all local areas as part of the local area certification and operator competitive selection processes.

(9) Addressing the Accessibility of the One-Stop Delivery System for Individuals who are English Language Learners

Describe how the one-stop delivery system (including one-stop center operators and the one-stop delivery system partners) will ensure that each one-stop center is able to meet the needs of English language learners, such as through established procedures, staff training, resources, and other materials.

The main language used in the provision of services throughout the system, in both printed and oral form, is the Spanish language.

#### IV. COORDINATION WITH STATE PLAN PROGRAMS

Describe the methods used for joint planning and coordination among the core programs, and with the required one-stop partner programs and other programs and activities included in the unified or combined plan.

At the State level, Puerto Rico Unified State Plan was developed in collaboration and coordination with representatives from all core programs.

A WIOA Unified State Plan team was formed with the purpose of development and submission for approval, an integrated, aligned and actionable WIOA Unified State Plan. The Department of Economic Development and Commerce, acts as the implementation team lead, pulling together representatives from all core programs including Adult Education, Wagner-Peyser, and Vocational Rehabilitation.

The Governor's Workforce Development State Board approval of the WIOA Unified State Plan is requested at their full board meeting, which was held electronically due to the COVID-19 crisis.

#### V. COMMON ASSURANCES

The State Plan must include assurances that:

1. **The Government of Puerto Rico** has established a policy identifying circumstances that may present a conflict of interest for a State Board or local board member, or the entity or class of officials that the member represents, and procedures to resolve such conflicts;
2. **The Government of Puerto Rico** has established a policy to provide to the public (including individuals with disabilities) access to meetings of State Boards and local boards, and information regarding activities of State Boards and local boards, such as data on board membership and minutes;
3. The **Department of Economic Development and Commerce**, the **Department of Labor and Human Resources** and the **Vocational Rehabilitation of Puerto Rico** reviewed and commented on the

appropriate operational planning elements of the Unified State Plan, and approved the elements as serving the needs of the populations served by such programs;

- a. **The Government of Puerto Rico** obtained input into the development of the Unified State Plan and provided an opportunity for comment on the plan by representatives of local boards and chief elected officials, businesses, labor organizations, institutions of higher education, the entities responsible for planning or administering the core programs, required one-stop partners, other primary stakeholders, including other organizations that provide services to individuals with barriers to employment, and the general public, and that the Unified State Plan is available and accessible to the general public;
  - b. **The Government of Puerto Rico** provided an opportunity for review and comment on the plan by the State Board, including State agency official(s) for the Unemployment Insurance Agency if such official(s) is a member of the State Board;
4. **The Government of Puerto Rico** has established, in accordance with WIOA section 116(i), fiscal control and fund accounting procedures that may be necessary to ensure the proper disbursement of, and accounting for, funds paid to the State through allotments made for the core programs to carry out workforce development activities;
  5. **The Government of Puerto Rico** has taken appropriate action to secure compliance with uniform administrative requirements in this Act, including that the State will annually monitor local areas to ensure compliance and otherwise take appropriate action to secure compliance with the uniform administrative requirements under WIOA section 184(a)(3);
  6. **The Government of Puerto Rico** has taken the appropriate action to be in compliance with WIOA section 188, Nondiscrimination, as applicable;
  7. The Federal funds received to carry out a core program will not be expended for any purpose other than for activities authorized with respect to such funds under that core program;
  8. **The Government of Puerto Rico** will pay an appropriate share (as defined by the State board) of the costs of carrying out section 116, from funds made available through each of the core programs;
  9. **The Government of Puerto Rico** has a one-stop certification policy that ensures the physical and programmatic accessibility of all One-Stop Centers with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA);
  10. Service providers have a referral process in place for directing Veterans with Significant Barriers to Employment (SBE) to DVOP services, when appropriate; and
  11. Priority of service for veterans and eligible spouses is provided in accordance with 38 USC 4215 in all workforce preparation, development or delivery of programs or services funded directly, in whole or in part, by the Department of Labor.

## VI. PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR CORE PROGRAMS

The State must address all program-specific requirements in this section for WIOA core programs.

### (A) ADULT, DISLOCATED WORKER, AND YOUTH ACTIVITIES UNDER TITLE I-B.

The Unified State Plan must include the following with respect to activities carried out under subtitle B

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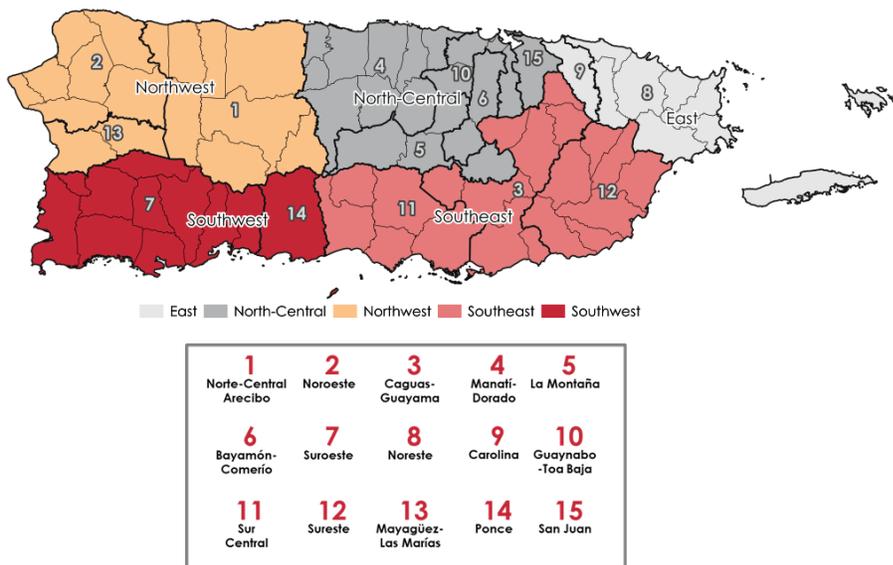
(a) General Requirements

(1) Regions and Local Workforce Development Area

(A) the regions and the local workforce development areas designated in the State.

In 2016, the governor identified five regions of economic development in the Island, according to the predominant economic activities at that time. However, although these five regions remain in place, the current government is evaluating the effectiveness of these regions under the new economic reality of Puerto Rico. A reorganization of the regions is being considered to adapt to the new trends of the labor market, the needs of the participants and to respond to an efficient system.

Figure 31. WIOA Regions and Local Areas



The main characteristics of the regions are:

- Northwest. The region is characterized by an industrial clustering in computer and information devices, aerospace, and agriculture.
- Southwest. The region is characterized by the concentration of industries in the sectors of agriculture, eco-tourism, hospitality, and logistics technology.
- North Central. The region is characterized by an industrial clustering in pharmaceutical manufacturing, biotechnology, logistics technology, health services, research and development and medical tourism.
- Eastern. The region is characterized by the concentration of industries in tourism, and logistics technology.

- Southeast. The region is characterized by the concentration of industries in pharmaceutical manufacturing, agricultural biotechnology including crop research and development.

The Governor and the State Board shall establish public policy and guidelines to enable local areas develop regional plans. These will be presented to the State Board for evaluation and approval. The guidelines will consider the following topics, consistent with the objectives established in WIOA regulations:

- Technical assistance to local areas for carrying out the regional planning and service delivery efforts required under section 106(c);
- Alignment with regional economic development strategies adopted by the State;
- Integration of the economic development initiatives of local government consortia;
- Integration of industry cluster organizations, and the advancement of sector strategies and initiatives;
- Development of projects and activities for existing and emerging industries generating jobs opportunities;
- Collaboration with business and industry associations available in the region
- Agreement structure (MOUs) with consortia, clusters, business associations, academia, providers and other stakeholders in the workforce development systems;
- Conditions for strategic planning including evaluation of strength, weaknesses, and opportunities in the region, terms for the revision of the plan, among other parameters;
- Governance of the regional plan, in collaboration with the boards of mayors and participating local boards; and
- Integration of the local boards in the service-delivery model mandated by WIOA, including common intake, common outreach strategies and initiatives, universal service across the region, common performance measures (optional), identification of additional grants and fund opportunities, cost allocation plan, and MOU structure with required and optional partners, among other factors.

(B) Describe the process used for designating local areas, including procedures for determining whether the local area met the criteria for “performed successfully” and “sustained fiscal integrity” in accordance with 106(b)(2) and (3) of WIOA. Describe the process used for identifying regions and planning regions under section 106(a) of WIOA. This must include a description of how the State consulted with the local boards and chief elected officials in identifying the regions.

**The State Board's Administrative Letter WIOA-1-2015**, *Public Policy and Requirements for the Initial and Subsequent designation of local areas under WIOA*, establishes the process for considering the request of the initial designation of local areas for the administration of the funds allocated under WIOA. Additionally, the guidance establishes the directives that will govern the process of evaluation of an application for the subsequent designation as local area. Finally, it also establishes the circumstances and criteria under which

the State Board may consider an application for re-designation of local areas that belong to a region of economic development or that seek designation as a single local area.

Under WIOA, the State Board has the power to recommend the designation of an entity as a local area. The State Board advises the Governor in matters relating to the workforce investment system, including those related to section 106 of WIOA, as well as sections 20 CFR 679.200 to 679.290 of the proposed rule.

WIOA conceives a system centered on the customer, comprising both job seekers and employers, capable of anticipating and responding to the needs of regional economies. This requires that local boards and the Chief Elected Officials design and manage a regional system by aligning their services and policies with regional needs and devising support strategies for the provision of services adapted to the demands of the economy.

The Governor, in consultation with the State Board, the Chief Elected Officials and the Local Boards will designate local areas as a condition for receiving the funds allocated to the Government of Puerto Rico under Title I of WIOA. In accordance with OE-2014-64, the PRDEDC is WIOA's Title 1 designated grantee, as well as the designated unit to provide administrative and operational support to the State Board.

The state regulations are being issued in compliance with sections 3 and 106 of WIOA, Act 171-2014, which transferred the WDP to the PRDEDC, and the Governor's EO-2014-64 that designated the PRDEDC as grantee, administrator and monitor of WIOA funds allocated to the State and established the State Board.

The State Board Administrative Letter WIOA-1-2015, also enacts public policy to guide the local area re-designation process. In summary, the transition process from a local area designated previously, to be initially designated as a local area under WIOA can occur using one of two methods:

- **Automatic Designation.** Under section 106(b)(2) of WIOA, the Governor must approve an application from the previously designated area for the initial designation under WIOA, provided there has not been a change in the composition of the local area; and for the 2 program years prior to the adoption of the approval of WIOA, the local area "performed successfully" (during PY 2012 and PY 2013), and complied with the criteria pertaining "sustained fiscal integrity".
- **Discretionary Designation.** After recommendation of the State Board, in accordance with section 106(b)(4) of WIOA, the Governor might approve an application of any unit of general local government, including a combination of those units, for its designation as local area under WIOA, if the State Board recommends and determines that the unit or units share a common labor market; share a same area of economic development; and have federal and non-federal resources, including education and training institutions appropriated for delivery service for the labor force.

At any time, the Governor might review the performance and outcomes of a local area to assess if it meets the requirements for its subsequent designation.

#### Compliance issue

Request: Puerto Rico must describe the designation of local areas, region and planning efforts, including a description of the mechanism the state uses to consult with the local boards and CEOs for identifying regions. Puerto Rico must provide its procedure for subsequent local area designation and how it defines performed successfully and sustained fiscal integrity for that purpose. Puerto Rico must list each of the local and regional areas.

The government of Puerto Rico developed the policy "PRDDEC-WIOA-RR-06-20" called "Designación de Áreas Locales. Once approved by the State Board its will replace WIOA-1-2015 policy. the " The procedure is currently under review by the State Board. Due to the emergency related to COVID-19, the State Board has this policy and additional ones under its consideration. This policy describes the processes for designation and subsequent designation, as established under the WIOA regulations. The terms " sustained fiscal integrity" and "performed successfully" were included in policy PRDDEC-WIOA-RR-06-20. Puerto Rico currently has five regions and fifteen local labor development areas. However, the State office is in the process of designating redefined regional areas. The objective is to define regions that are consistent with labor markets as defined by work to home flows.

The Bureau of the Census uses, among other data, Place of Workflows to support delineation of Metropolitan and Micropolitan Statistical Areas for OMB. Metro and Micro areas, commonly used geographical areas used by the Bureau, are made up of a county with a large population nucleus and adjacent counties that have a high degree of integration with that nucleus.

Similarly, the Puerto Rico WIOA State Office has used Place of Workflows to propose to define geographical labor markets, by determining the integration of places of residence with the main areas of work in a region. Municipalities were grouped based on the municipal interrelationship between the place of work and place of residence of workers. Municipality-to-municipality home-to-work flows area based on 5- year ACS 2006-2010, which is the most current data available. The resulting regions may be considered labor market areas. Implicitly home-to-work flows consider the size and diversity of a center of economic activity, driving distances, and psychological and geographic barriers. The proposed regions conform quite well with traditional areas of economic activity consisting of a central place -sometimes more than one- of economic activity and smaller adjoining municipalities. As such, they provide a rational basis to conduct regional planning. All local areas are within a specific region. Adjustments were made to account for the supra-regional pull of the certain municipalities of the San Juan Metropolitan Area, mainly the municipalities of San Juan, Bayamon, Carolina, and Guaynabo avoid defining an excessively large labor market area. The current regions and the local areas are listed in the table below:

Table 1. Local and Regional Areas

Region	Municipality	Workforce Area
Este	Canóvanas	Noreste

Este	Carolina	Carolina
Este	Ceiba	Noreste
Este	Culebra	Noreste
Este	Fajardo	Noreste

<b>Region</b>	<b>Municipality</b>	<b>Workforce Area</b>
Este	Loíza	Noreste
Este	Luquillo	Noreste
Este	Naguabo	Noreste
Este	Río Grande	Noreste
Este	Vieques	Noreste
Noroeste	Adjuntas	Norte-Central Arcibo
Noroeste	Aguada	Noroeste
Noroeste	Aguadilla	Noroeste
Noroeste	Añasco	Noroeste
Noroeste	Arecibo	Norte-Central Arcibo
Noroeste	Camuy	Norte-Central Arcibo
Noroeste	Hatillo	Norte-Central Arcibo
Noroeste	Isabela	Noroeste
Noroeste	Jayuya	Norte-Central Arcibo
Noroeste	Lares	Norte-Central Arcibo
Noroeste	Las Marías	Mayagüez-Las Marías
Noroeste	Mayagüez	Mayagüez-Las Marías
Noroeste	Moca	Noroeste
Noroeste	Quebradillas	Norte-Central Arcibo
Noroeste	Rincón	Noroeste
Noroeste	San Sebastián	Noroeste

Noroeste	Utuaado	Norte-Central Arecibo
Norte-Central	Barceloneta	Manatí-Dorado
Norte-Central	Barranquitas	La Montaña
Norte-Central	Bayamón	Bayamón-Comerío
Norte-Central	Cataño	Guaynabo-Toa Baja
Norte-Central	Ciales	Manatí-Dorado
Norte-Central	Cidra	La Montaña
Norte-Central	Comerío	Bayamón-Comerío
Norte-Central	Corozal	Manatí-Dorado

<b>Region</b>	<b>Municipality</b>	<b>Workforce Area</b>
Norte-Central	Dorado	Manatí-Dorado
Norte-Central	Florida	Manatí-Dorado
Norte-Central	Guaynabo	Guaynabo-Toa Baja
Norte-Central	Manatí	Manatí-Dorado
Norte-Central	Morovis	Manatí-Dorado
Norte-Central	Naranjito	La Montaña
Norte-Central	Orocovis	La Montaña
Norte-Central	San Juan	San Juan
Norte-Central	Toa Alta	Guaynabo-Toa Baja
Norte-Central	Toa Baja	Guaynabo-Toa Baja
Norte-Central	Vega Alta	Manatí-Dorado
Norte-Central	Vega Baja	Manatí-Dorado
Sureste	Aguas Buenas	Caguas-Guayama
Sureste	Aibonito	Caguas-Guayama
Sureste	Arroyo	Caguas-Guayama
Sureste	Caguas	Caguas-Guayama

Sureste	Cayey	Caguas-Guayama
Sureste	Coamo	Sur Central
Sureste	Guayama	Caguas-Guayama
Sureste	Gurabo	Caguas-Guayama
Sureste	Humacao	Sureste
Sureste	Juana Díaz	Sur Central
Sureste	Juncos	Sureste
Sureste	Las Piedras	Sureste
Sureste	Maunabo	Sureste
Sureste	Patillas	Sureste
Sureste	Salinas	Sur Central
Sureste	San Lorenzo	Sureste
Sureste	Santa Isabel	Sur Central
Sureste	Trujillo Alto	Caguas-Guayama
<b>Region</b>	<b>Municipality</b>	<b>Workforce Area</b>
Sureste	Villalba	Sur Central
Sureste	Yabucoa	Sureste
Suroeste	Cabo Rojo	Suroeste
Suroeste	Guánica	Suroeste
Suroeste	Guayanilla	Suroeste
Suroeste	Hormigueros	Suroeste
Suroeste	Lajas	Suroeste
Suroeste	Maricao	Suroeste
Suroeste	Peñuelas	Suroeste
Suroeste	Ponce	Ponce
Suroeste	Sabana Grande	Suroeste

Suroeste	San Germán	Suroeste
Suroeste	Yauco	Suroeste

(C) Provide the appeals process referred to in section 106(b)(5) of WIOA relating to designation of local areas.

The Administrative Letter WIOA-1-2015, seeks to establish the process for considering the request of the initial designation of local areas for the administration of the funds delegated under WIOA, including the appeal procedures in case on an adverse determination regarding the application for a local area designation. Accordingly, a local area that understands that an adverse determination made with respect to its application of automatic or subsequent designation warrants revision, might submit to the state a reconsideration statement addressed to the State Board within a term of 15 calendar days after the date of receipt of the notification. The State Board shall issue a final determination within 15 calendar days after receipt of the review request. If a denial determination is issued, the PEE might file an appeal to the USDOL within 30 calendar days from the date of receipt of the notice of the determination of the State Board.

**Compliance issue**

**Request: Puerto Rico must describe the appeals process local boards and CEOs must use relating to the designation of local areas established by the State Board. (WIOA Sec 106(b)(5)). If a more detailed appeals procedure is available in the document they name, please include key information within the state plan. The appeal procedure must also apply to subsequent designation and any local area requests for new local area designations.**

The State Board is in the process of approving a policy regarding the local workforce development areas designation and re-designation. The State Policy will contain information regarding this full process. The content of this policy is as follows:

A unit of general local government or grant recipient that requests but is not granted designation of an area as a local area under either the initial or subsequent designation clause may submit an appeal to the Department of Economic Development and Commerce (DEDC).

1. An appeal must be in writing and filed with the DEDC within fourteen (14) days after the notification of the decision. The appeal is to be submitted to the Secretary of DEDC and the President of the State Workforce Development Board.
2. The appeal must contain a specific statement of the grounds upon which appeals is sought.
3. The State Board will have 60 days to review the appeal and make recommendation to the Governor. The review will take into account the information of the original request and

supplemental information provided in the appeal to determine if the criteria set forth in this policy have been met.

4. The final decision rests in the Governor.
5. If the appeal is connected to a request for initial designation under this policy and if the appeal does not result in designation, the entity may be request review by the Secretary of Labor to determine if procedure rights were granted of if the minimum criteria of WIOA Section 106(b)(2) of Section 106 (b)(3) were met. This second level of appeal must be sent within fourteen (14) days to:

Assistant Secretary of Employment and Training United  
States Department of Labor 200 Constitution Avenue,  
N.W.  
Washington, DC 20210

A copy of the appeal must be simultaneously provided to the:

ETA Regional Administrator  
United States Department of Labor  
John F. Kennedy Federal Building  
Room E-350  
Boston, Mass 02203

(D) Provide the appeals process referred to in section 121(h)(2)(E) of WIOA relating to determinations for infrastructure funding.

The State Board will develop public policy and adopt regulations regarding the appeal process applicable to determinations for infrastructure funding.

#### Compliance issue

Request: Puerto Rico must describe the appeals process established by the State Board as required by WIOA Sec 121(h)(2)(E), relating to the determination for infrastructure funding.

One-Stop partner may appeal the Governor's determination regarding their portion of funds to be provided for infrastructure costs. In addition, the State Board have a Grievance and Complaint Policy draft under

consideration. This policy will apply to all entities and individuals who would like to appeal a decision at the local or the state levels.

The appeals process relating to determinations for infrastructure funding are as follows:

1. The Governor, through the assistance of the SWDB, will make the final determination of each required partner's proportionate share of statewide infrastructure costs under the State funding mechanism.
2. Any required partner may appeal the Governor's determination on the basis of a claim that:
  - The Governor's determination is inconsistent with the proportionate share requirements of 20 CFR 678.735(a), or
  - The Governor's determination is inconsistent with the cost contribution caps described in 20 CFR 678.736 and 20 CFR 678.738.
1. The process will ensure resolution of the appeal in order to ensure the funds are distributed in a timely manner, consistent with the requirements of 20 CFR 683.630.
2. An appeal must be made within twenty-one (21) days of the Governor's determination and must be submitted formally, in writing, by registered mail no later than the fifteen (15) day from the date of receipt of the notice of denial or revocation

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## (2) Statewide Activities

- (E) Provide State policies or guidance for the statewide workforce development system and for use of State funds for workforce investment activities.

**The Planning Guidelines** is the official document that sets the public policy and requirements for allocating local area funding for the Youth, Adult and Dislocated Workers programs. In compliance with WIOA regulations, priorities and goals the State planning will meet the needs of services of specific populations and minorities, as well as those of job seekers and employers. The annual Planning Guidelines compile the State and Federal public policies pertaining the management of WIOA funds. This Guide is designed to ensure compliance with ETA policies and goals, as stated in Training and Employment Guidance Letters (TEGL), Training and Employment Notices (TEN), WIOA Final Rules, as well as the State Board policies. Following are some of the items considered in the Planning Guidelines in relation to service delivery under WIOA. Please, for more details about State Policies and Procedures, refer to the **Table 57: In-Process State Policies and Procedures.**

### Compliance issue

**Request: Puerto Rico must include MOUs/IFAs and co-enrollment policy, not listed on currently policy development list.**

The Workforce Development Program approved on 5 May 2017 the policy: "Carta Circular WIOA-01-2017 Memorando de Entendimiento MOU". However, the procedure is under review and is currently being listed in the ongoing policies of the DEDC. You may refer to Table 57 of the State Plan, particularly row number 26.

In accordance with WIOA, One-Stop partners may appeal the Governor’s determination on the portion of funds to be provided for One-Stop infrastructure cost and request a hearing. A written appeal and request for a hearing must be mailed to the State Board within 21 calendar days from the Governor’s infrastructure cost determination.

The appeal must be in writing and state the grounds for the appeal. The appellant must describe how the Governor’s infrastructure cost determination is inconsistent with proportionate share requirements, cost contribution limitations, and/or the cost contribution caps, in accordance with WIOA Notice of Proposed Rulemaking Section 678.750(b).

The appellant will be contacted within 10 calendar days of the receipt of the appeal and a hearing date will be scheduled. To ensure a prompt resolution of the appeal and distribution of funds in a timely manner, the appellant will receive a written decision no later than 15 calendar days after the hearing.

**In-Process State Policies and Procedures (see also in Table 57)**

Local Policy	Description	Local Policy Number	Expected Date
1. Cash Management	Policies and procedures for cash management	TBD	April 2020
1. Cost Allocation	Policies and procedures for cost allocation	TBD	April 2020
1. Closeout Federal Grant	Policies and procedures for Closeout of federal grants	TBD	April 2020
1. Payroll base on budget	Policies and procedures for payroll base on budget	TBD	April 2020
1. Financial Reporting	Policies and procedures for financial reporting of federal grant	TBD	April 2020
1. Trade Adjustment Assistance	Requirements when approving Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) Training for petitions.	2020-001	March 2020

1. On the Job Training	This policy provides guidance regarding the limitations and eligibility of individuals to participate in On-the-Job Training (OJT) opportunities.	TBD	March 2020
1. Roles and responsibilities of directors, local boards and elected officials of the One-Stop Centers	Establish the roles and responsibilities of the actors involved in the fiscal and programmatic areas in the One-Stop Center.	TBD	April 2020
1. Case management	Provide guidance for carrying out case management interventions (eligibility, referrals, training activities, employment, etc).	TBD	April 2020
1. Local Board Certification	Policy for compliance with local board certifications.	TBD	April 2020
1. Local area designation	To provide guidance and process for the designation and subsequent designation of Workforce Development Areas.	TBD	May 2020

Local Policy	Description	Local Policy Number	Expected Date
1. Youth Program Guidance	Guide to define concepts, eligibility, and other aspects related to the youth program.	TBD	May 2020
1. Expense requirements	Policy to determine requirements for the expenditure level of training activities.	TBD	May 2020
1. Rapid Response	Políticas para intervenir en asuntos de respuesta rápida a nivel Estatal	TBD	May 2020
1. Customized training	This policy provides guidance to the Local Areas as they implement Customized Training for the Adult and Dislocated Worker programs.	TBD	May 2020

1. Conflict of interest	This policy is established to provide direction for sub-recipients, contractors, staff and board members of Puerto Rico Local Workforce Development Boards in order that business can be conducted within the guidelines that will prevent actual, potential, or questionable conflicts of interest.	TBD	April 2020
1. Policy on recapture and reallocation of funds	This policy describes the reallocation and recapture of local area Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) allocations for youth, adult, and dislocated worker activities.	TBD	May 2020
1. WIOA Operational Guidelines	Guidelines about basic services, training services, Individualized career services, case management, rapid response and other operational regulations of WIOA	No number required	May 2020
1. Local Areas Designation	WIOA policy requirements for establishing local areas.	TBD	May 2020
1. Composition of Local Boards	WIOA Standard Requirements for Boards	TBD	May 2020
1. One-Stop Center Certification	Policies and procedures for the certification of One-Stop Center	TBD	May 2020
1. State Apprenticeship Implementation Guide	Policies and procedures for establishing a State Apprenticeship Agency	TBD	June 2020
1. Local Board Cost Allocation Guidance	Guidelines about cost allocation procedures for all Local Board.	TBD	June 2020
<b>Local Policy</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Local Policy Number</b>	<b>Expected Date</b>
1. Access to information	Policy to provide to the public (including individuals with disabilities) access to meetings of State Boards and local boards, and information regarding activities of State Boards and local boards, such as data on board membership and minutes.	TBD	June 2020

1. Accessibility individuals with disabilities	to	Policy to ensure the physical and programmatic accessibility of all One-Stop Centers with the individuals with disabilities.	TBD	June 2020
1. MOUs/IFAs and coenrollment policy	and	This policy provides the guidance and establishes the procedures regarding <i>Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act</i> (WIOA) Memorandums of Understanding (MOU)	TBD	August 2020
1. Priority Services		To provide policy guidance to Local Workforce Development Boards for the implementation of priority of service for WIOA Title I Adult program customers.	TBD	August 2020
1. Grievance and Complaint Policy.		This policy applies to all entities and individuals who would like to appeal a decision at the local or the state levels.	TBD	August

(F) Describe how the State intends to use Governor’s set aside funding. Describe how the State will utilize Rapid Response funds to respond to layoffs and plant closings and coordinate services to quickly aid companies and their affected workers. States also should describe any layoff aversion strategies they have implemented to address at risk companies and workers.

**Governor set-aside funds**

Statewide activities funds are being used and prioritized to carry out the following required activities:

- **Operating a fiscal management and accountability system:** The DEDC has established, in accordance with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Section 116(i), fiscal control and fund accounting procedures that are necessary to ensure the proper disbursement of, and accounting for, funds paid to the State through allotments made for adult, dislocated worker, and youth programs to carry out workforce investment activities.
- **Dissemination of the State’s list of Eligible Training Providers:** The WIOA Section 122(c) specifies that states must establish an application procedure for training providers and programs to maintain their eligibility and the eligibility of their programs. States in partnership with the local boards, the One-Stop system, and its partners play a leadership role in ensuring the success of the eligible training provider system. The module of the Eligible Training Providers List (ETPL), that is part of the PRIS, serves as an important tool for participants seeking training to identify appropriate providers

and relevant information such as cost and program outcomes. Using the PRIS, career planners can assist participants in identifying training providers offering programs in high-demand industries that result in positive outcomes and recognized credentials. This system will provide up-to-date information about in-demand occupations, training programs that address the skill needs of employers, and information about available jobs and occupations.

- **Technical Assistance to local areas:** The State will publish and disseminate performance outcomes on a quarterly basis for all local areas. These reports allow the State and local areas to monitor performance outcomes to establish trends and identify measures requiring corrective action. The WIOA program staff will monitor performance, identify issues, and provide technical assistance, as needed.

Programmatic reviews ensure that workforce development system achieves quality program outcomes that meet the requirements and objectives of the WIOA and federal and state regulations. Puerto Rico will continue to evaluate the effectiveness of local programs by conducting comprehensive programmatic reviews and oversight activities for the entire workforce development system. The WIOA programmatic reviews will provide guidance and direction to local programs to assist in providing quality workforce development services to our customers and provide a framework for continuous improvement efforts under the WIOA. Program reviews also offer the opportunity for disseminating information about effective program practices to the entire workforce development system. State staff will continue to conduct programmatic reviews to ensure effective grant monitoring and oversight utilizing a comprehensive set of monitoring and oversight activities, including on-site monitoring, quarterly desk reviews, and ongoing technical assistance and training.

Use of the DEDC Monitoring Guides by WIOA State Coordinators is required. In addition, Monitoring Guides are living documents that are updated regularly to reflect changes in law, regulation, and/or policy, as well as to include any improvements which will make the guides easier and more effective to use.

- **Evaluations:** The State will conduct evaluations and research projects on activities under the WIOA core programs to establish and promote methods for improving such activities to achieve high-level performance within, and high-level outcomes from, the statewide workforce system. Such projects will be coordinated with, and designed in conjunction with, state and local boards and with State agencies responsible for the administration of all respective core programs. Evaluations will include analysis of customer feedback, outcome, and process measures for the workforce investment system, as required.

In addition to funding the above-referenced WIOA activities, statewide activities funds are being used for those activities deemed most essential to the basic functions of the workforce investment

system, including oversight of the local workforce investment boards and the WIOA programs. Statewide funds are being used to carry out the following allowable activities:

- **State Level Administration** includes the following functions:
  - Staff costs for program oversight and monitoring.
  - Participant Record Information System (PRIS) and related staff costs: The state uses a single integrated data collection system, known as the Participant Record Information System. This ensures that all local providers collect, report, and maintain the same data elements. In the next months, DEDC is going to start a second phase aimed to achieve the integration and/or interface of some required partner’s data systems.
- **Special Projects Funding:** Funds have been set aside for yet-to-be-determined special projects generated by DEDC. Special projects could include, but are not limited to, workforce and economic information and data needs, support for statewide planning activities around the WIOA, support for regional and local activities, surveys, evaluations. Funds may also be utilized to provide additional support for local boards operations, commensurate with the level of any remaining set aside funds.
- **Capacity Building and Professional Development Funds to our workforce development system:** To most efficiently and effectively utilize these funds to benefit the entire Puerto Rico workforce development system, funds are going to be allocated to support activities in addressing the goals of local strategic plans and the needs of local employers for a skilled workforce. Funds may be utilized for, but not limited to, supporting state and local partnerships to build equitable pathways to high-wage careers, enhancing system capacity to provide opportunities for individuals with barriers to employment to enter in-demand industry sectors or occupations and nontraditional occupations, and developing and improving local program performance and goals through assisting ongoing system development and proficiency, including professional development and technical assistance.

### **State Unit for Dislocated Workers and Employers – Rapid Response Services**

The Department of Economic Development and Commerce facilitates the statewide Rapid Response services and serves as the recipient of plant closings/mass layoff notices required under the Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification Act.

Rapid Response is a key component to Puerto Rico’s strategy to create a unified local approach while working with and providing a comprehensive array of services to employers. As a business service, Rapid Response will promote a full range of services available to help companies in all stages of the economic cycle. Early intervention facilitates a relatively quick and unencumbered transition to employment or training, following either a permanent closure or mass layoff, or a natural (or other) disaster resulting in mass job dislocation.

The State Unit for Dislocated Workers and Employers of the Workforce Development Program of DEDC is in charge of carrying out Rapid Response services and coordinates the Trade Adjustment Assistance Program (TAA). The State Unit has Rapid Response and TAA coordinators who have the responsibility to coordinate services to dislocated workers affected by mass layoff and plant closings. The Rapid Response process

involves a unification of state agencies and local service providers, together with the private sector and organized labor. The goal of all concerned parties is to provide dislocated workers with an array of support, resources, and technical assistance to effectively assist in the transition to reemployment. The RR and TAA State Coordinators participate in cross training of crucial re-employment and assistance programs and services most relevant to each local area or region. Subsequently, the RR and TAA State Coordinators acts as the link between the Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs), Wagner Peyser and Unemployment Insurance of the PRDOLHR, and applicable federal, state, and private resources to ensure all re-employment and supportive service information is readily available to assist employers and workers experiencing a mass layoff or plant closing.

The state has been developing a comprehensive rapid response and TAA procedures, that will be continuously reviewed for improvement, to serve impacted employers and workers using the Rapid Response, and TAA Programs. To provide thorough and complete delivery, the procedures will provide a special emphasis to business engagement and layoff aversion services.

The Rapid Response team begins the process by interacting with companies that have, or plan to, lay off workers. Information regarding the WIOA Dislocated Worker and TAA Programs are provided to the company, and if applicable, union officials at this early stage. Worker meetings are planned at this point to discuss the available workforce programs in more detail.

In addition to acting as a facilitator and resource of re-employment resources, the TAA and RR State Coordinators thoroughly documents dislocation events, allowing for trend analysis and proactive strategy development, organizes necessary communications and aligns relevant services to support affected workers. The strategies are all part of a demand-driven system and a key component of a comprehensive layoff aversion strategy.

(G) In addition, describe the State policies and procedures to provide Rapid Responses in cases of natural disasters including coordination with FEMA and other entities.

The statewide RR coordinator and team respond to natural disasters in the same manner as other dislocations, while adapting to the unique characteristics of the event. The coordinator will organize and develop a coordinated response with the appropriate federal, state, and local agencies to ensure impacted individuals receive the services they need.

When the Governor declares an emergency and formally requests a federal emergency declaration, the Puerto Rico Department of Economic Development and Commerce (DEDC) will work with the local board(s) to determine if the disaster could result in a potentially large loss of employment and evaluate whether sufficient resources are available to adequately provide workforce services. If a funding shortfall is anticipated, the DEDC will seek Emergency Dislocated Worker Grant funding pending federal designation. If FEMA declares a natural disaster and establishes a designated disaster area, the DEDC will formally apply for assistance and work with the local area(s) on implementation.

PR recently has been affected by different types of disasters; hurricanes, earthquakes, and the latest COVID-19 pandemic. For this reason, the DEDC requested a waiver allowance of WIOA section 134(a)(2)(A), (2)(B) and (3) to add flexibility in the use of the funds reserved by the Governor for use to provide statewide rapid response activities (i.e. WIOA section 134(a)(2)(A)), for use to provide statewide employment and training activities (i.e. WIOA section 134(a)(2)(B) and (3)) to provide disaster relief to affected areas.

Under this waiver allowance, permitted WIOA statewide fund use includes, but is not limited to:

- Expeditious allocation of funds to a local workforce development board, or local board, so they may respond quickly to a disaster, emergency, or other qualifying event as described at 20 CFR 687.100(b). Only those events, and cascading events caused by a qualifying event, that have been declared as an emergency or disaster by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), by the chief official of a Federal Agency with jurisdiction over the Federal response to a disaster with potential significant loss of employment, or the Governor of Puerto Rico as a qualifying event, qualify for the use of WIOA statewide funds.
- To alleviate the effects that a qualifying event causes within affected local area(s), and/or planning regions, WIOA statewide funds will allow comprehensive disaster relief employment and employment and training activities, and the provision of needed humanitarian resources and services, including other services or resources deemed necessary as described at 20 CFR 687.180(b)(1).
- An individual's disaster relief employment is limited to 12 months or 2080 hours for work related to recovery from a single emergency or disaster. The Workforce Development Program (WDP) of the DEDC may extend an individual's disaster relief employment for up to an additional 12 months or 2080 hours if requested and sufficiently justified by the local board.
- Employment and training activities as described in WIOA section 134(c) and (d) are supported for WIOA eligible participants.
- Supportive services may be provided to enable individuals to participate in disaster relief employment, including such costs as transportation, childcare, and personal safety equipment and clothing consistent with local policies.
- Individuals shall be eligible to be offered disaster relief employment and employment and training services if such individual is a dislocated worker; is a long-term unemployed individual as defined by the State; is temporarily or permanently laid off as a consequence of the emergency or disaster; or in the case of an individual who is self-employed, becomes unemployed or significantly underemployed as a result of the emergency or disaster as well as appropriate adults and youth ages 18 and over.

The waiver request is under consideration of the USDOLETA.

(H) Describe how the State provides early intervention (e.g., Rapid Response) to worker groups on whose behalf a Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) petition has been filed. (Section

134(a)(2)(A). This description must include how the State disseminates benefit information to provide trade-affected workers in the groups identified in the TAA petitions with an accurate understanding of the provision of TAA benefits and services in such a way that they are transparent to the trade-affected dislocated worker applying for them (Trade Act Sec. 221(a)(2)(A) and Sec. 225; Governor-Secretary Agreement). Describe how the State will use funds that have been reserved for Rapid Response to provide services for every worker group that files a TAA petition.

The DEDC is in the process of developing a comprehensive procedure, expected to be approved by May 2020, to serve customers using the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Rapid Response (RR), the WIOA Dislocated Worker, and Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) programs. Both TAA and Rapid Response activities are shared by State Unit for Dislocated Workers and Employers within the Workforce Development Program of DDEC to ensure the provision of an all-inclusive approach. The Rapid Response section is comprised of Rapid Response (RR) and TAA State Coordinators who are assigned to serve layoffs/closings across the state.

The RR Coordinators begins the process by interacting with companies that have, or plan to, lay off workers. As soon as company closure or layoff information is known, this information is investigated by the assigned Coordinator. Investigation and fact-finding of potential trade impact is immediately conducted for consideration of a TAA Petition. If found that a TAA petition filing is warranted, the TAA State Coordinator discusses with the employer, and if applicable, the Union Officials, the next steps for petition filing as well as potential benefits if approved. If the impacted employer or Union prefers to file the TAA Petition with the U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL), the TAA State Coordinator is available for assistance.

Dependent upon the employer preference, a Rapid Response and/or Worker Orientation meeting is arranged to discuss the re-employment, state, federal, and local resources, as well information presented by the W-P and UI staff. If TAA certified, the TAA Worker Benefit Orientation (WBO) meetings are arranged in coordination with all applicable partners, including LWDBs.

The TAA WBO meetings expand upon the Rapid Response worker orientation and provide detailed information on all TAA benefits and services. The integration of the State's Rapid Response and TAA Program ensures workers will receive prompt and accurate information to make informed career and employment decisions.

The LWDBs are highly encouraged to co-enroll TAA participants into the WIOA Dislocated Worker programs as applicable. The TAA Comprehensive Manual states "In accordance with federal regulations, each LWDB shall provide a full range of reemployment services, including mandated services, to eligible workers. These services include case management, training, job search/relocation allowances and other dislocated worker programs administered by the LWDB to maximize program efficiency and prevent duplication of services".

Qualified participants for this program can receive the following services:

- Skills assessments, individual employment plans, career counseling, supportive services, and information on training labor markets;
- Classroom training, on-the-job training, customized training designed to meet the needs of a specific employer or group of employers, apprenticeship programs, and more;
- Income support available in the form of weekly cash payments to workers who are enrolled in a full-time training course and have exhausted their unemployment insurance;
- Reimbursement for costs of seeking employment outside of the worker's commuting area;
- Reimbursement for relocation costs for employment outside of the worker's commuting area; and
- A wage subsidy for up to two years that is available to re-employed older workers and covers a portion of the difference between a worker's new wage and their old wage (up to specified maximum amount).

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(b) Adult and Dislocated Worker Program Requirements

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(1) Work-Based Training Models

If the State is utilizing work-based training models (e.g. on-the-job training, incumbent worker training, transitional jobs, and customized training) as part of its training strategy and these strategies are not already discussed in other sections of the plan, describe the State's strategies for how these models ensure high quality training for both the participant and the employer.

Work-based training is employer-driven with the goal of unsubsidized employment after participation. Generally, work-based training involves a commitment by an employer or employers to fully employ successful participants after they have completed the program. Work-based training can be an effective training strategy that can provide additional opportunities for participants and employers in both finding high-quality work and in developing a high-quality workforce. Customized training, On-the-Job Training (OJT), incumbent worker training, and Registered Apprenticeships are all identified as work-based training services. Each of these work-based training models can be effectively used to target different job seeker and employer needs.

The WIOA State Workforce Development Board is in the process of approving a Work-based Training Policy at state level. Nevertheless, the LWDBs are required to have a local policy in place that includes a strategy for providing work-based training services. Local training policies and contracts are reviewed during the WIOA programmatic reviews.

**Customized Training:** Customized training is designed to provide local areas with the flexibility to ensure that training meets the unique needs of job seekers and employers or groups of employers. Customized training is to be used to meet the special requirements of an employer or group of employers and conducted with a commitment by the employer to employ all individuals upon successful completion of training.

Employers pay a significant portion of the training costs, as determined by the local board, considering the size of the employer and other factors that may include the number of employees participating in training; the wage and benefit levels of the employees (at present and anticipated upon completion of the training); the relation of the training to the competitiveness of the participant; and other employer-provided training and advancement opportunities.

The training must incorporate new technologies, processes, or procedures, skills upgrades, workplace literacy, or other appropriate purposes as identified by the local board.

The LWDBs are required to have a local customized training policy for the execution of customized training contracts. Since “significant portion of the training costs” is not identified under the WIOA, the LWDBs will be allowed to locally define “significant portion” as part of their local customized training policy.

**On-the-Job Training:** The OJT is primarily designed to first hire the participant and provide the participant with the knowledge and skills necessary for the full performance of the job. The OJT is a critical tool that can help job seekers enter successful employment. The term “on-the-job training” means training by an employer that is provided to a paid participant while engaged in productive work in a job that:

- Provides knowledge or skills essential to the full and adequate performance of the job.
- Provides reimbursement to the employer of up to a percentage of the wage rate of the participant for the extraordinary costs of providing the training and additional supervision related to the training.
- Is limited in duration as appropriate to the occupation for which the participant is being trained, considering the content of the training, the prior work experience of the participant, and the service strategy of the participant, as appropriate.

The LWDBs are required to have a local OJT policy for the execution of OJT contracts. Local OJT policies and contracts will continue to be reviewed during the WIOA Programmatic Reviews.

Prior to approving an OJT, the local area must assess the potential participant to ensure suitability for the training. The assessment, at a minimum, shall include the relevant occupation’s specific skill requirements, the participant’s academic and occupational skill level, prior work experience and the Individual Employment Plan (IEP) or Individual Service Strategy (ISS). The IEP must reference the lack of skills and the need for OJT. The results of the assessment will be used, in part, to determine the appropriateness of and suitability for the OJT, along with determining the duration of the training.

Prior to entering into an OJT agreement with an employer, the local LWDBs shall conduct a pre-screening to ensure that the employer meets the minimum standards and can provide both training and long-term employment to an OJT participant.

Local areas should target priority industries identified by Local Workforce Development Boards consistent with a demand-driven workforce system. Occupations targeted for OJT should be defined in the local OJT policy and should align and support State Workforce Development Board. Targeted outreach should then occur within those industries.

**Incumbent Worker Training (IWT) Programs:** The IWT is designed to ensure that employees of a company are able to acquire the skills necessary to retain employment and advance within the company or to provide the skills necessary to avert a layoff and must increase both the participant's and a company's competitiveness. An ideal IWT is one where a participant acquires new skills allowing the participant to move into a higher skilled and higher paid job within the company, thus allowing the company to hire a job seeker to backfill the incumbent worker's position. The training should, whenever possible, allow the participant to gain industry-recognized training experience and ultimately, should lead to an increase in wages.

The IWT is designed to meet the special requirements of an employer (including a group of employers in partnership with other entities) to retain a skilled workforce, or to avert the need to lay off employees by assisting the workers in obtaining the skills necessary to retain employment. The IWT is conducted with a commitment by the employer to retain or avert the layoffs of the incumbent workers being trained.

Local areas may use up to 20 percent of their local Adult and Dislocated Worker funds for IWT. The employer, or group of employers, must pay for a portion of the cost of providing the training to incumbent workers. The portion of the training cost is the non-federal share of the cost of providing the training.

The LWDBs utilizing IWT are required to have a local IWT policy in place. The local policy must include a description of local and/or regional layoff aversion strategy being utilized.

Employers are required to contribute their share (the non-federal share) of the training costs, using a sliding scale approved by the LWDB.

Local policies and contracts for IWT will be reviewed during the WIOA Programmatic Reviews.

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## (2) Registered Apprenticeship

### Describe how the State will incorporate Registered Apprenticeship into its strategy and services.

Registered Apprenticeship is a potential workforce solution that contributes to the development of industry-defined competencies and serves as a proven industry-driven workforce.

Since 2018, the Department of Economic Development and Commerce of Puerto Rico thru Workforce Development Program is working as an Apprenticeship Office under USDOL-OA Region I oversight. In this capacity, the department has direct contact with Registered Apprenticeship Sponsors/Employers and promotes the utilization of WIOA funding to employers in training WIOA qualified apprentice participants. There is a stipulation that the employer will retain the apprentice upon completion of the first year of the apprenticeship program. Incentives exist for employers which include direct financial assistance for the apprentices' related training instruction.

For eligible participants, local Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Adult and Dislocated Worker funds may be used for not only Registered Apprenticeships, but for pre-apprenticeship training, such

as remediation and/or basic job skills training, to prepare an individual for a Registered Apprenticeship program.

Registered Apprenticeships can be funded through several mechanisms. Given the unique nature of Registered Apprenticeships, there are several ways in which training services will be used in conjunction with these programs:

- Registered Apprenticeships generally involve both classroom and on-the-job instruction. An On-the-Job Training (OJT) contract may be developed with a Registered Apprenticeship program for training participants. The OJT contracts are made with the employer. The OJT contract may be made to support some or all of the OJT portion of the Registered Apprenticeship program,
- A combination of an Individual Training Account (ITA) to cover classroom instruction along with an OJT contract to cover some or all of the work-based training portion of the Registered Apprenticeship is allowed, and
- Incumbent worker training may be used for upskilling apprentices who already have an established working/training relationship with the Registered Apprenticeship program.

Local areas may also include support services, in coordination with career and/or training services to participants in a Registered Apprenticeship program. The supportive services must be consistent with the WIOA Section 134(d)(2) and state and local policies.

An Apprenticeship State Expansion Grant was awarded to DEDC to promote the expansion of apprenticeship programs across occupations and industries sectors and encourage diversity in the apprentice population. The performance period ends on June 30, 2022.

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### (3) Training Provider Eligibility Procedure

Provide the procedure for determining training provider initial and continued eligibility, including Registered Apprenticeship programs (WIOA Section 122).

The Procedure for Initial and Continuous Eligibility for Training Providers contains the State policy applicable to WIOA training providers. The policies guide the procedures, directives, and the threshold criteria for achieving a determination of eligibility of educational institutions interested in providing training and learning services for adults and dislocated workers, in compliance with section 122 of WIOA. The procedure applies to trainings and learning programs provided using the Individual Training Accounts ("ITAs").

The following institutions may request an eligibility determination, initial or continuing, to provide training services under WIOA:

- Higher education institutions that offer a program that leads to a post-secondary recognized credential;
- Institutions that offer training programs registered under the National Apprenticeship Act;

- Any other public or private institution with training programs, which may include joint labor-management apprenticeship organization and occupational technical training; and
- Eligible adult education and literacy service provider under Title II, if these activities are provided in combination with training in occupational skills.

Any educational institution must complete the application for eligibility and submit the required information electronically to be assessed by the Local Board, in accordance with section 122 of WIOA.

The Local Board submits to the state and to the State Board the training service providers that comply with the minimum requirement established by the Board. Thereafter, the State will include the recommended eligible programs in the State list of training services providers and disseminate them in all the One Stop Centers via the electronic system. The electronic system will automatically update the list any time a training or education program will be determined eligible. The State shall notify the Local Board through written communication the update of the training service providers' list.

**Extended Eligibility – Biennial Review:** All training providers' eligibility is going to be reviewed at least every two years as indicated in the State Training Provider Policy. The State will review the performance of providers to ensure they are meeting minimum levels of performance. The biennial review will also include verification of the registration status of registered apprenticeship programs.

All sponsor of the Registered Apprenticeship program in the USDOL will automatically include the apprenticeship programs in the State list, which will be disseminated to the One Stop Centers. The electronic system will automatically update the list each time a Registered Apprenticeship Program is included. The sponsors of Registered Apprenticeship programs shall not be subject to the same requirements of implementation for the determination of eligibility of other training providers.

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(4) Priority for public assistance recipients, other low-income individuals, or individuals who are basic skills deficient

Describe how the State will implement and monitor the priority for public assistance recipients, other low-income individuals, or individuals who are basic skills deficient in accordance with the requirements of WIOA Section 134(c)(3)(E), which applies to individualized career services and training services funded by the Adult Formula program

Local areas must establish the criteria and the process by which priority of service will be applied. Priority for individualized career and training services must be given to recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals, and/or individuals who are basic skills deficient. It is not necessary to determine that an adult is eligible in accordance with the priority of service until it is determined that the individual needs individualized career or training services. Veterans and eligible spouses continue to receive priority of service.

When programs are statutorily required to provide priority for a particular group of individuals, priority must be provided in the following order:

- First, to veterans and eligible spouses who are also funded in the groups given statutory priority for the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Adult formula funds. This means that veterans and eligible spouses who are also recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals, or individuals who are basic skills deficient would receive priority for services funded with the WIOA Adult formula funds for individualized career services and training services.
- Second, to non-covered persons (that is, individuals who are not veterans or eligible spouses) who are included in the WIOA's priority groups.
- Third, to veterans and eligible spouses who are not included in the WIOA's priority groups.
- Fourth, to priority populations established by the Governor and/or the local Workforce Development Board.
- Last, to non-covered persons outside the groups given priority under the WIOA.

The statutory requirement applies to adult program funds for individualized career and training services. Funds allocated for the Dislocated Worker program are not subject to this requirement. The State Board will be reviewing and approving a policy to provide the framework for the local boards in the next weeks.

Priority of Service is monitored as part of the state's WIOA programmatic reviews. The goal of programmatic reviews is to provide technical assistance, as appropriate, and ensure that established policies, procedures, and systems achieves quality program outcomes that meet the requirements and objectives of the WIOA and federal and state regulations.

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(5) Describe the State's criteria regarding local area transfer of funds between the adult and dislocated worker programs

The Planning Guidelines is also the official document that sets the public policy and requirements for local area funds allocation regarding the Youth, Adult and Dislocated Workers programs. Section VIII of the guidelines establishes the public policy for transfer of funds between the adult and dislocated worker programs in accordance with section 133(b)(4) of WIOA allows for the transfer of 100 percent of funds between adults and dislocated workers programs, subject to the approval of the Governor. The local areas transfer requests are evaluated according to the need of each local area. To request transfers between programs, local areas must present to the State a transfer application that include:

- Transfer application signed by the president of the Board of Mayors and the president of the Local Board
- Certification of the Local Board in quorum, with the presentation of the minutes of the meeting in which are discussed the scope of the transfer of funds, together with the vote held to authorize it
- Statistical data of the closures of business, industries, or employers, as well as the dislocated workers or adults with need, which justify and evidence the need for increase services in the program which funds will be transferred (applications received without this information will not be considered for evaluation)

- Measures to be implemented to avoid any adverse impacts on the services of the program from which funds were transferred or reduced
- Two Budget Information Summaries (BIS), one including the transferred amount to maintain the identity of the program where it is transferred, and another reflecting the reduction of the program from which the transfer takes place

Transfer of funds will be made only after completing a thorough analysis of the impacts on the service in the affected programs. The Local Board in charge of establishing the priorities and outcomes of the local areas will consider the impact in the service delivery at the One Stop Centers prior to completing a transfer of funds.

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(c) Youth Program Requirements

With respect to youth workforce investment activities authorized in section 129 of WIOA

- (1) Identify the State-developed criteria to be used by local boards in awarding grants for youth workforce investment activities and describe how the local boards will take into consideration the ability of the providers to meet performance accountability measures based on primary indicators of performance for the youth program as described in section 116(b)(2)(A)(ii) of WIOA in awarding such grants.

As provided in sec. 123 of WIOA, local boards must identify eligible providers of youth workforce development activities in the local area by awarding grants or contracts on a competitive basis based on the recommendation of the youth standing committee, whose establishment will be encouraged by the State Board.

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The Local Boards must include the State plan criteria used to identify youth providers, taking into consideration the ability of the provider to meet performance accountability measures based on the primary indicators of performance for the youth programs. Also, must conduct a full and open competition to secure that the selection of youth service providers is made in accordance with federal procurement guidelines in 2 CFR parts 200, in addition to applicable State and local procurement laws.

Where the Local Board determines there is an insufficient number of eligible providers of youth workforce development activities in the local area, such as might be the case in a rural area, the Local Board might opt to award grants or contracts on a sole source basis (WIOA sec. 123(b)).

Local youth programs must be designed to provide for an objective assessment of each youth participant that meets the requirements of WIOA Section 129(c)(1)(A) and include a review of the academic and occupational skill levels, as well as the service needs, of each youth for the purpose of identifying appropriate services and career pathways for participants and informing the individual service strategy. Also, to develop

and update, as needed, an individual service strategy for each youth participant and provide case management to youth participants, including follow-up services. Local areas must ensure that WIOA youth service providers meet the referral requirements established in sec. 129(c)(3)(A) of WIOA for all youth participants.

According to sec. 129(c)(2) of WIOA, local areas must make each of the required 14 youth elements available to youth participants. According to WIOA sec. 129(c)(3)(C), the local areas must ensure that parents, youth participants, and other members of the community with experience relating to youth programs are actively involved in both the design and implementation of its youth programs. A minimum of 75% of State and local youth funding is to be used by local areas for out-of-school youth (OSY). At least 20% of local Youth formula funds must be used for work experiences, such as summer and year-round employment, pre-apprenticeship, OJT, internships, or job shadowing.

Youth program providers must provide a detailed description of each program element with youth performance information (for WIOA youth providers). Performance information for each training program will include a detailed description of the provider partnerships with business partners, and a provider must not be found in fault in criminal, civil, or administrative proceeding related to its performance as a training or educational institution and must not be included in any Federal, State, or local debarment and suspension lists.

- (2) Describe the strategies the State will use to achieve improved outcomes for out-of-school youth as described in 129(a)(1)(B), including how it will leverage and align the core programs, required and optional one-stop partner programs, and any other resources available.

Out of school youth are one of the most difficult populations to serve because their primary interest lies in attaining self-sufficiency. Local Areas received youth with facing diverse economic and social barriers to achieve their academic or employment goals. Among these: below average academic and reading levels; risks of becoming dropouts, homeless, runaway, foster child, pregnant or parents, offenders; or in need of additional assistance to obtain and maintain employment. To improve the out of school youth outcomes the State will pursue the following strategies:

- Implementation of the Registered Apprenticeship. Registered Apprenticeship will be implemented as a useful strategy to increase youth attainment of industry-recognized credentials, as well as to improve youth outcomes.
- Puerto Rico Office of Apprenticeship will partner with the PRDE, community colleges, universities, and community partners to increase the opportunities for youth to transition from high schools into an apprenticeship or pre-apprenticeship program.
- Foster a structured approach for out of school youth emphasizing the importance of a youth program design that includes meaningful work experiences that integrate work-based learning and academic classroom learning, as a strategy to strengthen services to out of school youth. Local areas will be encouraged to design this activity by providing a greater number of hours in work experience

combined with alternative secondary school, support service and academic learning for the out of school youth.

- **Strengthening Employer Collaboration.** Increase partnerships with employers to foster economic development and high-growth opportunities for out of school youth. The WIOA system has the mission to prepare and train workers, and to help businesses find qualified workers to meet their present and future workforce needs. Local areas will be encouraged to integrate employers to help define and support new strategies designed to better educate, train, and prepare out of school youth and to provide critical leadership in the creation of these pipeline strategies.
- Also, employers can help the workforce system by identifying the skills and competencies needed in the industry, particularly for entry-level positions; developing industry certification; collaborating with training institutions in occupational-skills curriculum development; creating student internships and work experience opportunities; providing formal mentoring programs and partnerships that support youth in their interest to pursue careers in high-growth and high-demand industries; and acquiring employer and industry commitments to hire youth. Also, under WIOA, employers are the main partner in the implementation of Apprenticeship training opportunities and credentials.

When designing youth employment and training programming, State and local areas should consider the following design elements; promotion and increase of meaningful work experience opportunities as set forth in section 129(c)(2)(c) of WIOA, particularly for out of school youth; increase of service delivery for youth with disabilities; need to address the issues impacting service delivery for out of school youth; need to ensure quality case management through the monitoring process; and provision of effective follow-up services.

The state level will provide technical assistance to local areas for carrying out the necessary activities to improve the outcomes for out of school youth as described in section 129(a)(1)(B).

- (3) Describe how the state will ensure that all 14 program elements described in WIOA section 129(c)(2) are made available and effectively implemented.

WIOA eligible youth are individuals between the ages of 14 and 24 that are either Out of School Youth or In School Youth as defined by WIOA's section 129(a)(1). These must also meet one of the following additional conditions: being basic skills deficient; be an English language learner; an offender; homeless, runaway, in foster care or aged out of the foster care system; pregnant or parenting; an individual with a disability; or a person who requires additional assistance to enter or complete an educational program or to secure and hold employment.

Services are provided to eligible youth participants through a network of youth service providers, which are competitively procured. The Youth program is committed to providing, through local areas, the following required youth elements:

- Tutoring, study skills training, instruction and evidence-based drop-out prevention and recovery strategies;
- Alternative secondary school services or drop-out recovery services;
- Paid and unpaid work experiences;
- Occupational skills training;
- Education offered concurrently with and in the same context as workforce preparation;
- Leadership development;
- Supportive services;
- Adult mentoring;
- Comprehensive guidance and counseling;
- Financial literacy education;
- Entrepreneurial skills training;
- Labor market and employment information services;
- Activities that prepare for transition to post-secondary education and training; and
- Follow-up services.

In order to become an eligible Youth training provider, the entity must first contact the local area to apply. The area will conduct a competitive bidding process to award locally procured youth contracts. The statewide youth eligible provider list is comprehensive list of those locally procured youth contracts. Once the entity has successfully completed the application process dictated in the local area policy, the application is then referred to the State program to be included on the statewide youth provider list.

- (4) Provide the language contained in the State policy for “requiring additional assistance to enter or complete an educational program, or to secure and hold employment” criterion for out-of-school youth specified in WIOA section 129(a)(1)(B)(iii)(VIII) and for “requiring additional assistance to complete an education program, or to secure and hold employment” criterion for in-school youth specified in WIOA section 129(a)(1)(C)(iv)(VII).

State policy defers to local policy on the definition of “requires additional assistance to complete and educational program, or to secure and hold employment.”

- (5) Include the State definition, as defined in law, for not attending school and attending school as specified in WIOA Section 129(a)(1)(B)(i) and Section 129(a)(1)(C)(i). If State law does not define “not attending school” or “attending school,” indicate that is the case.

Puerto Rico compulsory education laws require children between the ages of 6 and 16 to attend school. However, for purposes of WIOA, the Workforce Development Program does not consider providers of Adult Education under title II of WIOA, YouthBuild programs, and Job Corps programs to be schools. Therefore, WIOA youth programs may consider a youth to be “not attending school” for purposes of WIOA youth program eligibility if he/she is attending Adult Education provided under title II of WIOA, YouthBuild, or Job Corps. It is the policy of the WDP that student attendance at a post-secondary institution qualifies as “attending school.”

State policy defines “alternative education” as options for students who are at risk of dropping out of high school to remain engaged in an alternative-learning environment that focuses on their particular skills, abilities, and learning styles.

- (6) If using the basic skills deficient definition contained in WIOA Section 3(5)(B), include the State definition which must further define how to determine if an individual is unable to compute or solve problems, or read, write, or speak English, at a level necessary to function on the job, in the individual’s family, or in society. If not using the portion of the definition contained in WIOA Section 3(5)(B), indicate that is the case.

Puerto Rico is using the basic skills deficient definition as contained in WIOA sec. 3(5). The term “basic skills deficient” means a youth that: has English reading, writing, or computing skills at or below the 8th grade level on a generally accepted standardized test; or is unable to compute or solve problems, read, write, or speak English at a level necessary to function on the job, in the individual’s family, or in society.

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(d) Single-area State Requirements

In States where there is only one local workforce investment area, the governor serves as both the State and local chief elected official. In such cases, the State must submit any information required in the local plan (WIOA section 106(d)(2)). States with a single workforce area must also include:

Not applicable.

- (1) Any comments from the public comment period that represent disagreement with the Plan (WIOA section 108(d)(3)).

Not applicable.

- (2) The entity responsible for the disbursement of grant funds, as determined by the governor, if different from that for the State (WIOA section 108(b)(15)).

Not applicable.

- (3) The type and availability of WIOA title I Youth activities, including an identification of successful providers of such activities (WIOA section 108(b)(9)).

Not applicable.

(e) Waiver Requests

(Optional) States wanting to request waivers as part of their title I-B Operational Plan must include a waiver plan that includes the following information for each waiver requested:

- (1) Identifies the statutory or regulatory requirements for which a waiver is requested and the goals that the State or local area, as appropriate, intends to achieve as a result of the waiver and how those goals relate to the Unified or Combined State Plan;
- (2) Describes the actions that the State or local area, as appropriate, has undertaken to remove State or local statutory or regulatory barriers;
- (3) Describes the goals of the waiver and the expected programmatic outcomes if the request is granted;
- (4) Describes how the waiver will align with the Department’s policy priorities, such as:
  - a. supporting employer engagement;
  - b. connecting education and training strategies;
  - c. supporting work-based learning;
  - d. improving job and career results, and
  - e. other guidance issued by the Department.
- (5) Describes the individuals affected by the waiver, including how the waiver will impact services for disadvantaged populations or individuals with multiple barriers to employment; and
- (6) Describes the processes used to:
  - a. Monitor the progress in implementing the waiver;
  - b. Provide notice to any local board affected by the waiver;
  - c. Provide any local board affected by the waiver an opportunity to comment on the request;
  - d. Ensure meaningful public comment, including comment by business and organized labor, on the waiver.
  - e. Collect and report information about waiver outcomes in the State’s WIOA Annual Report.
- (7) The Secretary may require that States provide the most recent data available about the outcomes of the existing waiver in cases where the State seeks renewal of a previously approved waiver.

On June 12, 2018, the U.S Department of Labor approved the waiver request of certain statutory and regulatory provisions of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). This action was taken under the Secretary's authority to waive certain requirements of WIOA Title I, Subtitles A, B, and E, and Sections 8 - 10 of the Wagner-Peyser Act in WIOA Section I 89(i). Puerto Rico workforce development system has seven (7) waivers approved until June 30, 2020. We are request an extension of the following waivers for the 2020-2023:

1. Waiver of WIOA Section 134(c)(3)(H)(i) and 20 CFR 680.720(b) to increase on the job training (OJT) employer reimbursement up to 90 percent. **(Refer to Appendix A)**
2. Waiver of WIOA Section 134(d)(5) to allow up to 50% percent of Adult and Dislocated Workers funds to be used for the provision of transitional jobs. **(Refer to Appendix B)**
3. Waiver of the requirement under WIOA 129(a)(4), and consistent with 20 CFR 681.410 that states and local areas must expend a minimum of 75 percent out of- school-formula funds on youth workforce activities for out-of-school youth (OSY). **(Refer to Appendix C)**
4. Waiver of statewide required activities described in WIOA Sections 129(b)(1)(A) and 134(a)(2)(vi) to conduct evaluations under section 116(b) of activities authorized under this chapter and chapter 3 in coordination with evaluations carried out by the Secretary under section 169(a). **(Refer to Appendix D)**
5. Waiver of Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, or WIOA. Section 134(a) Statewide Employment and Training Activities. **(Refer to Appendix E)**
6. Waiver of the limitation on the use of funds for capitalization of business under WIOA 181(e) to allow funds to be used to capitalize small business, up to \$5,000 per affected business. **(Refer to Appendix E)**

#### TITLE I-B ASSURANCES

- (1) **The Government of Puerto Rico** has implemented a policy to ensure Adult program funds provide a priority in the delivery of training services and individualized career services to individuals who are low income, public assistance recipients or basic skills deficient;
- (2) **The Government of Puerto Rico** has implemented a policy to ensure local areas have a process in place for referring veterans with significant barriers to employment to career services provided by the JVSG program’s Disabled Veterans’ Outreach Program (DVOP) specialist;
- (3) **The Government of Puerto Rico** has established a written policy and procedure that set forth criteria to be used by chief elected officials for the appointment of local workforce investment board members;
- (4) **The Government of Puerto Rico** established written policy and procedures to ensure local workforce investment boards are certified by the governor every two years in accordance with WIOA section 107(c)(2);
- (5) **The Government of Puerto Rico** has written policy and procedures to ensure the alternative entity meets the definition under WIOA section 101(e) and the legal requirements for membership;
- (6) **The Government of Puerto Rico** established a written policy and procedure for how the individuals and entities represented on the State Workforce Development Board help to determine the

methods and factors of distribution, and how the State consults with chief elected officials in local areas throughout the State in determining the distributions;

- (7) **The Government of Puerto Rico** will not use funds received under WIOA Title I to assist, promote, or deter union organizing in accordance with WIOA section 181(b)(7);
- (8) **The Government of Puerto Rico** distributes adult and youth funds received under WIOA equitably throughout the State, and no local area suffers significant shifts in funding from year-to-year during the period covered by this plan;
- (9) **The Administration of Vocational Rehabilitation** cooperates with **the Department of Labor and Human Resources**, and **the Department of Economic Development and Commerce**;
- (10) **The Government of Puerto Rico** agrees to report on the impact and outcomes of its approved waivers in its WIOA Annual Report.
- (11) **The Government of Puerto Rico** has taken appropriate action to secure compliance with the Uniform Guidance at 2 CFR 200 and 2 CFR 2900, including that the State will annually monitor local areas to ensure compliance and otherwise take appropriate action to secure compliance with the Uniform Guidance under section WIOA 184(a)(3).

## VII. WAGNER-PEYSER ACT PROGRAM (EMPLOYMENTS SERVICE)

### (A) EMPLOYMENT SERVICE STAFF

- (1) Describe how the State will staff the provision of labor exchange services under the Wagner-Peyser Act, such as through State employees, including but not limited to state merit staff employees, staff of a sub-recipient, or some combination thereof.

Provision for the labor exchange services under the Wagner-Peyser Act (WP) will be staff mainly through state merit staff employees. Nevertheless, under the new regulations providing flexibility on the use of such merit staff, Puerto Rico may evaluate other means to provide reemployment services such as pre-vocational services by contracting such services as deem required.

- (2) Describe how the State will utilize professional development activities for Employment Service staff to ensure staff is able to provide high quality services to both jobseekers and employers.

WP has been impacted by recent Puerto Rico economic crisis and worsened by the COVID-19 pandemic, and at the Federal level with the diminishing funding with each passing program year. This situation has not yet impacted the ability to recruit staff to provide the required services available under WIOA for career and employment of job seeking persons, and for fulfill the overall responsibilities of WP. However, if WP funding continues decreasing in the forthcoming years, WP may be in a position of not been able to recruit additional staff or fulfill other responsibilities as required by law.

It is necessary then, to continue training existing staff currently providing direct services to Federally designated high priority populations, such as veterans and eligible spouses, UI claimants more likely to exhaust their benefits, including UCX, and other special target populations identified as in need of career services such as agricultural workers (MSFWs), with the skills and tools necessary to provide such services.

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### *Paradigm Changes: The Workforce Professional*

Since the implementation of WIOA in 2014, ways of doing business have changed drastically. As a result, employment counseling in the ES began to evolve to accommodate this transformation and the implementation of the concept of service delivery through the American Job Centers.

The requirements to provide employment counseling services are no longer based primarily on the formal education of the WP professional staff. A determination regarding the staff ability to provide advice or counseling is considered and include past work experiences, current job requirements, current and past job duties and skills required to carry out their responsibilities.

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### *Employment Counseling*

Employment counseling is defined as the process by which a WP Workforce Professional and the job seeker work together as a group and/or in individual activities, so that the job seeker may obtain better knowledge and understanding about the labor market and a have a more realistic approach when selecting, changing, and adapting to a career, profession, or a job.

The WP staff has the responsibility of providing direct services to target populations as defined by the USDOL as high priority, such as veterans and eligible spouses, UI claimants more likely to exhaust their benefits, including designated UCX, and other populations in need of career services such as farm workers, with the skills and tools necessary to enable them to achieve their goal of obtaining suitable employment according to their needs, skills, and educational level.

For WP staff to comply with this responsibility as stated above, at a minimum, it is recommended staff attain the minimum competencies to provide, in an effective way, all the career services required under WIOA. The following skills and or competencies are adopted to be provided to the WP staff at the American Job Centers:

- **Individual Counseling (one to one).** Refers to a private session (face to face) between an employment specialist and a job seeker. The main objective is to help the job seeker to explore his current situation regarding the selection or changing job or occupation.
- **Group Counseling.** Refers to the process by which an employment specialist uses the principles and techniques of group dynamics and leadership roles in a continuous and meaningful way to help a job seeker who have trouble getting or keeping a job due to work-related attitudes, behaviors, or habits. Usually, these group interventions focus on the discussion of a common theme within the rest of the group.

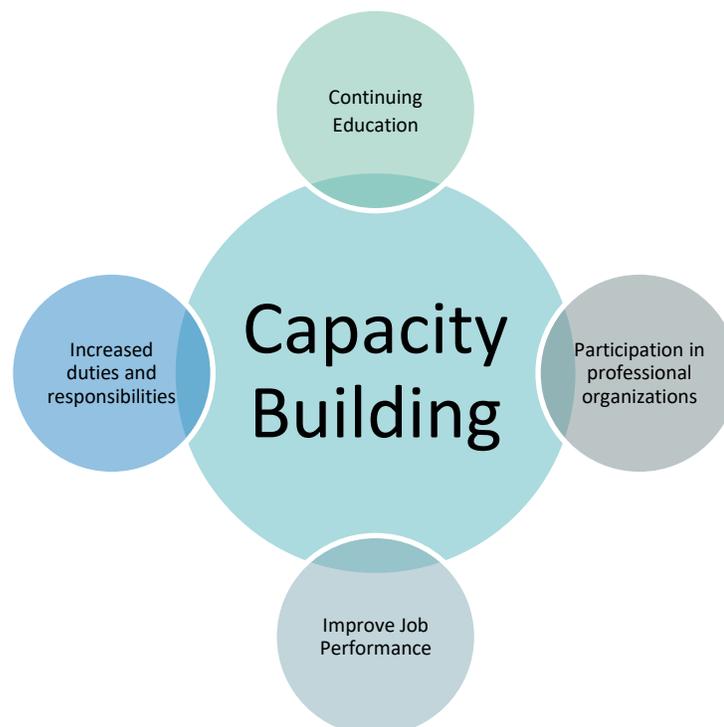
- **Counseling Skills.** Refers to the ability to establish a relationship of trust, open and useful to each client, accurately interpreting the feelings as well as verbal and nonverbal expressions, and convey that understanding to the client and any other relevant information and necessary assistance. The employment specialist must have the awareness and knowledge of career development theory and the ability to support the job seeker through transitions and facilitate decision-making and goal setting. Must have the ability to recognize the need to refer the job seeker to appropriate resources to eliminate barriers to employment and the ability to obtaining (intake) the necessary and effective information to ensure that the job seeker is fit and able to benefit from the programs available in within the One-Stop Centers.
- **Individual and Group Skills Assessment.** Refers to the ability to provide a continuous assessment using individual skills and group evaluation and use of formal and informal assessment methods that comply with the regulations of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC); the ability to provide continuous assessment, individual and group settings, involving the assessment and measurement of customer needs, characteristics, potential, individual differences and self-evaluation; and the ability to recognize the needs and special features of all kinds, for example, minorities, women seeking non-traditional and culturally different occupations, immigrants, the disabled, older workers and people with AIDS.
- **Development and Use of Labor Market Information.** Refers to the ability to access, understand and interpret the labor market information and job market trends; the ability to develop and use educational, occupational, and labor market information to help job seekers in their decision-making process and the formulation of employment and career objectives that lead to self-sufficiency; and the ability to develop and use skills standards.
- **Computer Skills.** Refers to the ability to apply the principles of employment counseling to the use of the Internet and other online services, including but not limited to testing, job banks (PR.JOBS), job search, preparing and distributing resumes, reports, case management, counseling and maintaining confidentiality of customer data.
- **Development and Implementation of an Individual Employment Plan and Case Management.** Refers to the ability to help job seekers to develop and implement an appropriate individual employability plan to help them move from their current situation through any necessary service to improve their employability, including training and supporting services into a suitable job. It involves the knowledge of educational resources and training, sources for financial support, community resources and requirements of the local labor market; and the ability to handle cases through placement and retention.
- **Placement Skills.** Refers to the ability to identify and communicate an understanding of employers staffing needs to develop effective job development contacts and help the job seeker to present his/her qualifications in relation to the employer's needs; the ability to teach job search skills and for job development; the ability to help the job seeker in making decisions related to the work environment in which he/she could be more successful; and the ability to advocate for employment and career development of special target groups.
- **Community Relations Skills.** Refers to the ability to help job seekers to get the services needed to address their employment barriers that may interfere with the successful employment and their career goals; the ability to make presentations to community groups and to participate in

the working teams of such community groups; the ability to develop information packages; and the ability to associate and establish staff resources with other agencies within the One-Stop Centers.

- **Workload Management and Inter-Personal Relationship Skills.** Refers to the ability to coordinate all aspects of the Employment Counseling Program as part of a team effort, resulting in a continuous and significant sequence of client services, agency staff, employers, and the community; and the ability to operate a comprehensive employment resource center.
- **Professional Development Skills.** Refers to the ability to develop skills on an individual basis and within the position or profession and demonstrate by example the performance and standards expected of a professional Employment Specialist.
- **Ethical and Legal Aspects.** Refers to the ability to meet ethical standards, knowledge of regulations and legislation affecting training and employment, employment services and social reform, such as the EEOC, the Americans with Disabilities Act, professional testing standards, Multicultural Affairs, Family Affairs and one Stop Centers.

Consistent and strategic investment in staff development reflects Puerto Rico’s commitment to integrated workforce services. Employment Service enable job seekers to receive seamless services geared to facilitate their return to employment. However, to successfully implement and provide those services, it is of the outmost importance and essential that the skills and competencies of the Wagner-Peyser staff be continuously reviewed and re-engineered. Wagner-Peyser (WP) staff is the most important asset in the delivery of high-quality services in a prompt manner.

WP staff at the American Job Centers is the key to the success of WIOA in the provision of career services to job seekers. WP staff, as a Workforce Professional, must understand they must work differently, they



must participate in reengineering and capacity building process and ultimately derive pride and satisfaction from successfully meeting job seekers needs and measurable program goals. For this to occur, a consistent and strategic investment in staff development needs to occur as a reflection of the Puerto Rico's commitment to integrate workforce services and to attain the above professional development.

We are committed to continue provide intensive capacity building to WP staff for them to understand the new challenges and demands that WIOA on the workforce delivery system, including but not limited to:

1. **Continuing Education:** Courses and workshops, pursuing certificates, accreditation, or other credentials through educational programs.
2. **Participation in professional organizations:** Attending local, regional, national, and international meetings, conferences and workshops sponsored by professional organizations; serving as an officer, board member, or committee member; coordinating events sponsored by the Employment Service and/or the American Job Center.
3. **Improve Job Performance:** keeping up with technology, systems, processes; learning about new developments in your field; improving existing skills.
4. **Increased duties and responsibilities:** taking on new challenges in current position, projects, long or short-term assignments.

An integral part to this approach is to provide the competencies and skills necessary to the WP staff and to understand the important role that technology plays in provision of career services to job seekers today. To obtain this, the following approached will be use, but not limited to:

1. **Skill Based Training:** By providing effective skill-based training staff will learn conceptual information or necessary behaviors, practice learning the new information or behaviors, and receive feedback on their performance.
2. **Job Assignments:** Learning by Doing; working on real problems and dilemmas, adding new responsibilities to an existing job, stretching staff, pushing them out of their comfort zones that requires them to think and act differently.
3. **Developing relationships:** Learning through interaction with others.

By investing in professional development, we will be motivating the WP staff to invest in the workforce system goals, be excited about overall successes, and feel motivated to improve provision of services to job seekers and to contribute to the American Job Centers workplace culture and be an active part of the workforce professional's community. This continuous professional development will help staff to not only be competent in their responsibilities as a workforce professional, but also excel in it. Actively pursuing professional development ensures that knowledge and skills stay relevant and up to date. It also allows WP staff to be more aware of changing trends and directions in the workforce system.

Professional development will also include the training of WP staff in the provisions of the American with Disabilities Act of 1990, regarding the physical and programmatic accessibility of facilities, programs,

services, technology, and materials, for individuals with disabilities to support the needs of individuals with disabilities.

The ES is currently exploring with professionals in the field of Employment Counseling, ways to develop workshops and training courses that will provide the skills and competencies described above to WP professional staff who serves as Workforce Professionals so that they are familiar with the expectations of a workforce professional to provide a quality experience for job seekers visiting the American Job Center.

Our goal is to have a complete structured training curriculum aligned with these competencies mentioned above to equip them with the necessary tools to provide high-quality services to both jobseekers and business such as:

- Intensive interviewing techniques
- Administering career assessments
- Accessing and interpreting labor market information
- Customized service strategies for employers and jobseekers
- Identifying the potential need for soft skills and skills gap training
- Developing workforce partnerships
- Identifying available supportive services
- Résumé writing expertise
- Counseling to address barriers to employment and to assist with career selection
- Strategies for business recruitment events
- Methodologies to connect qualified jobseekers with employers
- Providing workforce statistics and prevailing industry wages
- Guidance on employment laws as it relates to the workplace
- UI the WOTC, and other workforce services
- Access to customer service training to enhance services to jobseekers and businesses

In addition to the competencies mentioned above, other staff development activities may include:

- Comprehensive online resources on the Employment Service Intranet using MS SharePoint technology:
- Comprehensive training on external online resources such as [mynextstep.org](http://mynextstep.org) and [myskillsmyfuture.org](http://myskillsmyfuture.org)
- Job shadowing for new staff at State and local offices
- Ongoing assessment of PRDOLHR and partner staff training needs by local Employment Service Managers

- Participation on Local Boards to keep abreast of information on local, State, and national issues.
- (3) Describe strategies developed to support training and awareness across core programs and the Unemployment Insurance (UI) program and the training provided for Employment Service and WIOA staff on identification of UI eligibility issues and referral to UI staff for adjudication.

### Cross Training

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Aware of the need to offer better services, the ES/UI will provide cross training, technical assistance and support to all core partners staff who serve local job seekers and employers to ensure that program partners are highly engaged in local and State workforce partnerships that allow for the constant exchange of information on core programs, UI legislation, and available programs and to integrate these programs into the customer flow within the One-Stop Centers. ES will continue providing cross training on services provided by WP to veterans, UI claimants, MSFWs and job seekers in general. Also, cross training is provided in areas such as the WP Complaint System, the Agricultural Recruitment System (ARS), refocusing of the Jobs for Veterans State Grants (JVSG) and the impact it has on the provision of services by WIOA partners, Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment Program (RESEA, UI policies, rules, procedures, detection addressing and resolution of UI issues affecting UI eligibility.

### Identification of Unemployment Insurance (UI) Eligibility Issues

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Under the grant requirements for the Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment Program (RESEA), a complete review of UI eligibility is performed under the Eligibility Review Program (ERP). Section 303(a)(1) of the *Social Security Act* (SSA) requires "management methods ...as it is determined by the US Secretary of Labor as reasonable to ensure full payment of unemployment compensation at the due date." This means the implementation of procedures and policies for UI eligibility information by ES and/or WIOA staff to quickly identify UI eligibility issues and the correspondent referral to UI staff for proper adjudication under state UI law. To ensure that ES meets the needs of UI, policies and procedures are in place to define and timely provide the required information relating to the requirements regarding participation or availability of a claimant.

UI claimants referred to RESEA will be subjected to this eligibility review as part of their participation in RESEA. However, all UI claimants not referred to RESEA and receiving of employment services will be subjected to the same eligibility review by WP staff as part of the initial assessment. These services will be provided by WP state's merit staff. WP/RESEA staff will review WP/RESEA participants who have completed appraisal interviews and will refer them to UI for adjudication as appropriate.

### (B) ASSISTANCE TO INDIVIDUALS FILING A CLAIM FOR UI THROUGH AJC

Explain how the State will provide information and meaningful assistance to individuals requesting assistance in filing a claim for unemployment compensation through AJCs, as required by WIOA as a career service.

Consistent with the Employment Service policies and procedures which require an integrated approach to its reemployment strategy to strategically coordinate resources and activities serving the unemployed community, on October 5, 2018, a Technical Operational Guidance was issued to address the provision of services to UI claimants regarding assistance to individuals filing a claim for UI through the American Job Centers.

This operational guide established the guidelines, policies and procedures to be followed by the ES and UI staff (responsible for the administration of the Federal Unemployment Insurance Program (UI)), in the implementation of the provisions of the Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act of 2014 (WIOA) with relation to UI Programs, and to: 1) recommend the Division of Unemployment Insurance to continue working with other partners in the Workforce System, in the development and implementation of strategies that support WIOA's vision, as described in the Training and Employment Guidance Letter (TEGL) 19-14 ; 2) urge the Division of Unemployment Insurance and the Division of Employment Service to coordinate with State Boards and Local Boards on how best to most efficiently use UI programs including the Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA), as they develop integrated strategies for service delivery through American Job Centers under WIOA.

#### Career Services under WIOA Include the Provision of "Information and Assistance" in Connection with the Filing of a UI Claim.

The integrated workforce system established by WIOA is intended to provide participants with a unique and comprehensive experience that includes a professional level of service provided in a timely manner. WIOA requires, as part of its career services, the provision of information and assistance to individuals in connection with the filing of a UI claim (WIOA Section 134(c)(2)(A)(x)), WIOA 20 CFR 678.430(a)(10)).

To provide this access and the meaningful assistance to individuals requesting assistance in filing a claim for unemployment compensation through the One-Stop Centers, assistance will be available through:

- UI orientation provided to every new claimant explaining the full range of workforce services available to help them return to work by Wagner-Peyser merit staff and/or duly trained WIOA staff.
- Online access via <https://desempleo.trabajo.pr.gov/reclamantes/> where customers can file electronically from career centers, home, libraries, or any other Internet portal.
- Fully staffed resource centers at all career centers, including Internet access, copies, phones, fax, and resource libraries as permitted due to COVID-19 pandemic.
- Access points at One-Stop Centers and career centers across the State.
- An opportunity for each claimant to access in-person reemployment services as they come to career centers and One-Stop Centers to complete the UI filing process.
- Access to professional and experienced staff for the preparation of resumes, registration in ES as a requirement for claimants and job matching services.

- The availability of staff, technology, and written materials in a variety of languages to meet the needs of all customers.
- Fully accessible services, online and in person, to serve any customer with a disability.
- Joint participation of UI staff with other workforce partners in large layoff events.
- Daily referrals of customers from workforce partners to UI specialists to ensure that customers have access to all benefits to which they are entitled.

People who directly seek career services from the One-Stop Career System should receive services beyond what they could get on their own using self-service tools, such as public Internet portals and telephone services. The goal is for individuals to be able to receive more robust or "meaningful" staff-assisted services, as needed.

As set forth in 20 CFR 678.305(d), access to each partner's programs and services means:

- Have a representative of this program physically present in the American Job Centers.
- Have a representative of a different partner program, physically present at the American Job Center properly trained to provide information to clients about the programs, services, and activities available through all partner programs; or
- Have a direct link available, using technology, to a representative of a partner program who can provide meaningful information or services.

The methods or means of providing access to the different partner programs are contained in the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). These has been coordinated with the Local Boards and the Operators of the One-Stop Career System.

In the context of providing assistance to UI's claimants, "significant assistance" means **having staff in the American Job Centers properly trained in the filing of a UI claim, and in the rights and responsibilities of the claimants**. Employment Service staff is responsible for providing the necessary assistance in filing UI's claims, if requested, or if the individual is identified as needing the service due to barriers such as limited Spanish proficiency, disabilities, or other barriers. The staff who provide this assistance may come from UI, Wagner-Peyser, or other AJC staff who have been duly trained to provide assistance and service in the taking of claims thus facilitating the daily acceptance of information. Costs associated with providing this information and assistance to individuals filing UI claims may be met with administrative funds from UI's grant under Title III of the Social Security Act or through a combination of funds from other programs that are consistent with the language authorizing such programs and Federal cost principles.

The provision of meaningful information or services is carried out using technology or direct liaison to an appropriate representative of a partner program. As described in 20 CFR 678.305(d)(3)(i), a "direct link" means providing a direct connection at an American Job Center within a reasonable time, by telephone, or through real-time Internet communication, with a representative of a partner program who may provide program information or services to the customer.

The level and timeliness of the remote service is comparable to the assistance the person would receive if staff were assisting such an individual in person at the AJC. This means that, if an individual in an AJC is directed to a telephone for assistance regarding a UI claim, there must be a dedicated telephone line to serve the customer in a timely manner (20 CFR 20 CFR 678.305(d)(3)(i)). Individuals should not simply be directed to a general information line or dial-up line with UI Call Center, where the individual is placed on hold along with all other claimants who have called for service. Providing only a telephone number, link to a web page, information, pamphlets, or other resources and materials does not constitute a "direct link" (20 CFR 20 CFR 678.305(d)(3)(i)). ES must ensure that, if assistance is provided remotely using technology, it should be one that allows trained staff to provide assistance in a timely manner.

It is important to emphasize that UI eligibility determinations must be made by UI merit staff who is responsible for carrying out this activity. As set out in UIPL 12-01, *Outsourcing of Unemployment Compensation Administrative Functions*, and explained in more detail in UIPL 12-01, Change 1, *Outsourcing Unemployment Compensation Administrative Functions – Claim Taking*, only merit staff (state employee) will ask, either in person at the AJC, or remotely, answer questions, provide advice or make decisions that may affect UI eligibility of claimants. For example, for assistance in completing a UI claim, only UI merit staff may provide specific advice to the individual, including an indication of the possible effects on UI eligibility based on the individual's specific circumstances or actions. And, in relation to services to claimants, only UI merit staff can adjudicate UI issues that may arise and that may include the search for data by all parties (partners).

Some of the areas of opportunity that have been implemented to improve the integration of UI into the Single Management System include, but are not limited to:

- Access by UI claimants to the full range of services available at the AJCs.
- Referral of UI claimants to reemployment services through the Worker Profiling and Reemployment Services (WPRS) and/or the Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment Programa (RESEA).
- Ensure that claimants meet eligibility requirements (such as, job search, register with the Employment Service as provided by state law, participate in reemployment services as required under the RESEA and WPRS programs), and ensure that there is a feedback loop to provide UI Program staff with information about any potential eligibility issues.
- Ensure that claimants are fully notified of the deadlines and eligibility requirements associated with TRA, the Alternative Trade Adjustment Assistance (ATAA) Program, and the Reemployment Trade Adjustment Assistance (RTAA) Programs, and that communication with the case managers of TAA participants is an enabler.
- Coordination with the Rapid Response teams to provide services to employers and workers in situations of mass dismissal and carry out activities to file a UI claim to receive UI compensation benefits.

**(C) REEMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE TO UI CLAIMANTS AND OTHER UNEMPLOYED INDIVIDUALS**

Describe the State’s strategy for providing reemployment assistance to UI claimants and other unemployed individuals.

Puerto Rico is positioned, along other partner’s staff, to provide comprehensive employment and placement services to jobseekers who are most in need and face multiple barriers to reemployment. All employment, training and placement services are available to all job seekers coming to an AJC on a customer–centric approach for the deliverance of services, aligned with WIOA, for providing reemployment assistance to UI claimants and other unemployed individuals (job seekers) as long they are eligible to work in the United States including, but not limited to:

- Directing UI claimants, who are required to seek work, to register in the state work search system PRNLX ([www.puertorico.usnlx.com](http://www.puertorico.usnlx.com)).
- Providing the job seeker, not only job search assistance, but information on the AJC services.
- Encouraging job seekers to attend an AJC orientation and refer them to subsequent services, as appropriate.
- Detailed labor market information related to growth occupations and industries, and wage surveys to assist with decision making in the selection of a better career opportunity or looking for a new job.
- An orientation about the services available through the AJC with emphasis on access to information available on the labor market and careers, delivery of labor market information unique to the experience, skills, and desired occupation of the claimant.
- Assistance in the use of basic services available and self-help offered within the AJC through the use resources room or virtually (Internet).
- An initial assessment of skills relative to available jobs preferably with an Employment Counselor to identify strengths, weaknesses and barriers after the claimant receives the initial orientation by the ES/RESEA staff.
- Referrals to appropriate services offered by other partners within the AJC such as self-assessment, information on education and training, interviewing techniques, networking, occupational exploration, and online resources, among other services.
- Development of and Individual Reemployment Plan which should include job search activities, appropriate topics such as preparing resumes and strategies workshops, job search and/or authorized training.
- Workshops on effective job search.
- Interviewing techniques and resume development.
- An overview of multiple self-service employment resources.
- Direct referrals to job training, educational and supportive service opportunities in the community.

The provision of reemployment services for UI claimants has a high relevance during recessions and high unemployment periods. As a result, ES will focus its attention and resources to continue better integration and UI service connection with the services provided through the AJCs under WIOA. The goal is to ensure that UI seekers have access to the full range of employment services and training through the AJCs while ensuring that claimants meet the requirements for active participation in the job search as a condition to continue receiving benefits.

All Wagner-Peyser services are staff assisted services although any job seeker has access to other services provided by the AJC such as self-assisted services, group presentation and customized one-on-one assistance. Jobseekers who need more specialized services according to their needs (e.g., veterans, migrant and seasonal farmworkers, UI claimants) received more in-depth career services to further their career goals.

Reemployment Services (RES) arises as an amendment to the Social Security Act (SSA), PL 103-152, Unemployment Compensation Act Amendments of November 24, 1993, and after. This law added Sections 303(a) (10) and 303(j) to SSA. Profiling is designed to assist UI claimants who may be unlikely to find employment before their benefits are exhausted. All claimants identified by the profiling model system are mandated to participate in required WPRS/RESEA services and shall complete a comprehensive objective assessment and a reemployment plan.

RESEA is of high priority for the USDOL. With the new RESEA program enacted into law, new challenges are before us to better serve UI claimants so they can return to the labor market before exhausting their UI benefits. This requires the establishment of service strategies which are based on evidence. Several studies have found that when attention is placed on the job search efforts of UI claimants and their reemployment needs, these translate into fewer erroneous payments and shorter claim periods. WPRS/RESEA initiatives seek to address both priorities.

#### (D) USE OF W-P FUNDS TO SUPPORT UI CLAIMANTS

Describe how the State will use W-P funds to support UI claimants, and the communication between W-P and UI, as appropriate including the following:

(1) Coordination of and provision of labor exchange services for UI claimants as required by the Wagner-Peyser Act;

The PRDOLHR administers the WP Labor Exchange System. Currently, all UI claimants (job seekers) are required to register into the state's labor exchange system, PRNLX, and create a resume. Once registered, job seekers have access to all the online features, such as: searching for jobs, identifying employment trends and occupational information, using the virtual recruiter to automatically receive alerts of new jobs that match the job skills in their resume, and having their resume viewable by employers registered in the system.

All AJCs have a resource center where job seekers can conduct self-service activities by using resources such as computers and phones to conduct job searches and create a resume through PRNLX, respond to employment opportunities, manage their UI claim through the PRDOLHR website, etc. In addition to self-service options, claimants can also receive staff-assisted services, such as job search workshops,

assistance with access and navigating the PRNLX system, individualized labor market information, referral to veteran services, and referral to education, training, and supportive services, including Federal electronic tools such as MyNextMove and MySkillsMyFuture and use of fax and copier machines, telephone, resume writing and development, career exploration, among other services. These services are available to all ES job seekers including UI claimants. Both UI and WP program representatives are party to the MOU with other local area partners to identify the service delivery. The PRDOLHR programs, including UI, are committed to their roles as partners within the AJCs and consistently collaborate internally and with the local areas to further support the spirit of WIOA. These two partners are also coordinating internally within the PRDOLHR as this agency administers both programs.

In summary, PRDOLHR will use WP funding to support the reemployment and related services to UI claimants. ES continue providing labor exchange services as required by 20 CFR 652.3.

(2) Registration of UI claimants with the State’s employment service if required by State law.

UI claimants are required by state law to register with the employment service (ES) as a requirement to be eligible to receive UI compensation. Once UI claimants filed their claim, either in person, by phone, or by the Internet, they are required to visit the nearest career center and register with ES. The claimant has the burden of registering with ES. Once registered, Form 506, Registration of Visits to Employment Service / Unemployment Insurance) is given to the individual as prove his/her registration for UI purposes. The card must have a unique Individual Identifier assigned by PRIS to be valid. Every time the claimant needs UI services, he/she needs to present the card to the UI representative as evidence of his/her registration in ES since UI representatives do not have access to the PRIS system.

(3) Administration of the work test for the State unemployment compensation system, including making eligibility assessments (for referral to UI adjudication, if needed), and providing job finding and placement services for UI claimants; and

UI claimants in Puerto Rico receiving UI benefits must be able and available to work as required by law and be actively seeking full-time work. Amendments to the UI law in Puerto Rico in 2012, established that if an individual earned most wages in the base period used to establish the claim from part-time work, the individual would be allowed to restrict their work search part-time and can reject a full-time job offer. The only exceptions to the work search requirements in Puerto Rico are for the following:

- Individuals with a job attachment, which would include individuals for whom their employer has filed a “partial” unemployment claim for them or those individuals with a definite recall to work (the law does not establish a predetermined period to return to work).
- Union members in good standing.
- Individuals who are approved and enrolled in an approved training program by the Director of the Bureau of Employment Security.

The primary work test is done through the UI benefit certification Form 566, which includes a question about whether the individuals can be available and actively seeking employment. A negative response places an issue on the certification, which cannot be removed until a statement is obtained regarding

availability. If an issue is determined, a benefits eligibility review is performed by the UI benefits interview specialist or claims examiner and a determination released, if in order. During the initial claims filing application, individuals are asked questions regarding their availability. Negative responses require adjudication of the potential availability issue by a UI claim examiner or service specialist.

Administration of the work test is also performed through the RESEA program. During the in-person appointments, a UI eligibility review is performed and the RESEA interviewer question the individuals about availability for work and any barriers to work they may be facing during all contacts. During all eligibility reviews (i.e., UI, RESEA), staff review the individual's work search, discuss the individual's availability, and any barriers to work. ES Placement Officials staff have regular contact with employers and receive notice when individuals fail to report to an interview or refuse work – resulting in an issue on the individual's claim. This can include employers reporting individuals who do not report for interviews, individuals who are incarcerated, or are otherwise not able, available, and/or actively seeking work. In the event a potential issue is discovered from any source, an unemployment benefits interview is scheduled with a claim's examiner. If the individual is not able, available, and actively seeking work (and is not exempted from work search), an appropriate determination regarding UI benefits is released.

The secondary work test is done through ES at the one-stop-centers. If a UI claimant walk-in into an AJC for employment and/or placement services, ES staff will perform the work test and is directed to contact the UI adjudication unit when they become aware of UI claimant's refusal of suitable employment or failure to attend scheduled interviews.

#### (4) Provision of referrals to and application assistance for training and education programs and resources.

The integration of WP within the American Job Centers in Puerto Rico allows for the orderly provision of services to job seekers and the provision of referral to and application assistance for training and educational programs and resources. It is of utmost importance to WP to coordinate the integration of these services which is a primary goal under WIOA. This brings together the core programs to provide the whole range of services seamlessly and coordinated to individuals seeking services at the career centers providing information to job seekers on community resources, labor market information, GED, occupational training, OJT, and support services that make training possible to enhance an individual's ability to return to work. The network works as the "front door" to the workforce system. WP staff from roles are inserted in the workflow with the responsibility of identifying job seekers' needs, assist them with UI, employment and reemployment assistance, trade services, automated resources, workshops, and referrals to more intensive services such as training, which are provided by WIOA through local boards, and other partners.

RESEA participants are referred to the Dislocated Workers program for eligibility and leverage of resources for other services not provided by WP. This will serve as an access point to inform UI customers about other WIOA Title I and other partner programs and services. This collaborative partnership

facilitates a streamlined referral process for UI customers to WIOA programs and services within the AJC system.

#### (E) AGRICULTURAL OUTREACH PLAN (AOP).

(e) Agricultural Outreach Plan (AOP). Each State agency must develop an AOP every four years as part of the Unified State Plan required under sections 102 or 103 of WIOA. This AOP must include an assessment of needs.

Under WP, as amended by WIOA, the PRDOLHR has the responsibility to provide services to Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers (MSFW) on a basis that is qualitatively equivalent and quantitatively proportionate to services provided to non-MSFWs. It has long been acknowledged that MSFWs encountered significant barriers to complete basic educational objectives and to find sustainable employment that meets their economic needs and aid them in raising their families. These barriers include transportation problems, language barrier (English proficiency) and exposure to workplace hazards. The PRDOLHR will continue its commitment in assisting MSFWs to overcome these problems. WP services such as job search assistance, counseling, testing and referral services, including the wide range of training services available under WIOA and the National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP) are available to all MSFWs.

As required in WP regulations at 20 CFR 653.107, an Agricultural Annual Outreach Plan (AOP) is required to be submitted on an annual basis. Therefore, we are including the AOP for PY 2016 as part of the Unified State Plan required under WIOA. The plan describes strategies on how MSFWs who are not being reached by normal intake activities conducted by employment service local offices are to be contacted. The WP Act, as amended by WIOA, also requires that the activities planned to provide the full range of employment and training services to the agricultural community, both MSFWs and agricultural employers, must be provided within the One-Stop Centers network. This requires specific actions to provide MSFWs with the wide range of services available to non-MSFW in an equitable manner according to the Charles R. Richey Order of 1973 regarding violations of civil rights to MSFWs.

Historically, Puerto Rico had been designated a significant MSFW State. MSFW-significant States are those with the highest number of MSFW, based on the total number of MSFW participants in the WP program as reported in the Wagner-Peyser (WP) Annual Performance Report, ETA-9173 4QTR report.

(1) Assessment of Need. Provide an assessment of the unique needs of farmworkers in the area based on past and projected agricultural and farmworker activity in the State. Such needs may include but are not limited to employment, training, and housing.

The Agricultural Outreach Plan (AOP) requires the state to provide an assessment of the unique needs of farmworkers in the area based on past and projected agricultural and farmworker activity in the State. This AOP intends to provide and assessment of the unique needs of farmworkers for the remaining of the WIOA State Unified Plan for 2020-2023, including activities planned for providing a full range of employment and training services to the farmworkers community and the provision of outreach activities to reach Migrant

and Seasonal Farmworkers (MSFW) who are not being reached by normal intake activities conducted by Employment Service local offices.

Under WP, as amended by WIOA, PRDOLHR is responsible for the development of specific strategies to ensure the proper provision of services to MSFWs through the American Job Centers (AJC), in a manner that is quantitatively proportional and qualitatively equivalent to those provided to non-MSFWs. WP is also committed to ensuring that H-2A foreign guest workers and domestic farmworkers are aware and fully understand their rights and become familiarized with labor laws established to protect them.

Puerto Rico continues to be a designated significant MSFW State due to special circumstances such as an estimated large number of MSFWs in the service area. Also, due to irregular One-Stop Career Center MSFW data in PY2020, Significant MSFW One-Stop Career Centers designations for PY2021 remain as such. Puerto Rico remains active as a supplier state for various in the Eastern Region of the United States. However, many MSFWs from Puerto Rico continue to face substantial barriers in their efforts to secure agricultural jobs in the United States due to discriminatory practices of some H-2A employers, who tend to require experience tailored to the specific crops rather than seeking the skill set required for the tasks described on the job order.

Puerto Rico MSFWs unique needs are not so different from the counter parts in the main United States having similar needs than immigrant and low wage worker populations. The following are some of the most common needs identified in the MSW population:

- Lack of flexibility in their working hours which precludes them from accessing basic services, as agricultural work hours do not coincide with typical business hours.
- Poor access and/or assistance with transportation not only to their workplace but also to basic services such as health, legal counseling, and education.
- Lack of coordination of assistance to access educational development opportunities, as many appear to lack basic skills.
- Lack of young farmers as that 65% of the island's agriculture workforce is over 55 years of age. The decrease in new farmers will have significant negative effects on the island's agriculture in the coming decades.
- Lack of knowledge and proper training to protect themselves of workplace hazards.
- Discriminatory practices in the hiring process reducing their chances of obtaining employment.
- Low educational level, some totally illiterate.
- Lack of basic communication skills in English which precludes them from seeking employment offered by U.S. employers, and
- Limited or poor conditioned housing facilities near their place of employment.

PRDOLHR will continue its commitment in assisting MSFWs to overcome these barriers by ensuring that WP services such as job search assistance, counseling, testing and referral services, including the wide range of training services available under WIOA and the National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP) are made easily available to them.

Although Puerto Rico has been designated as an agricultural supply State, many workers will continue to face substantial challenges in obtaining agricultural jobs in the United States to meet employer’s needs due to discrimination and barriers placed by H-2A employers, specifically requiring increase in job experience for most of the crops. This situation makes it difficult for local workers to apply for these jobs and opens the door for employers to hire alien or non-US-citizen workers. However, the State Monitor Advocate is continuously advocating and acting on behalf of these MSFWs by coordinating efforts with different enforcing Federal agencies to identify unscrupulous H-2A employers who continuously violate H-2A, Wagner-Peyser and labor related laws.

(2) Provide an assessment of the agricultural activity in the State: 1) identifying the top five labor-intensive crops, the months of heavy activity, and the geographic area of prime activity; 2) Summarize the agricultural employers’ needs in the State (i.e. are they predominantly hiring local or foreign workers, are they expressing that there is a scarcity in the agricultural workforce); and 3) Identifying any economic, natural, or other factors that are affecting agriculture in the State or any projected factors that will affect agriculture in the State.

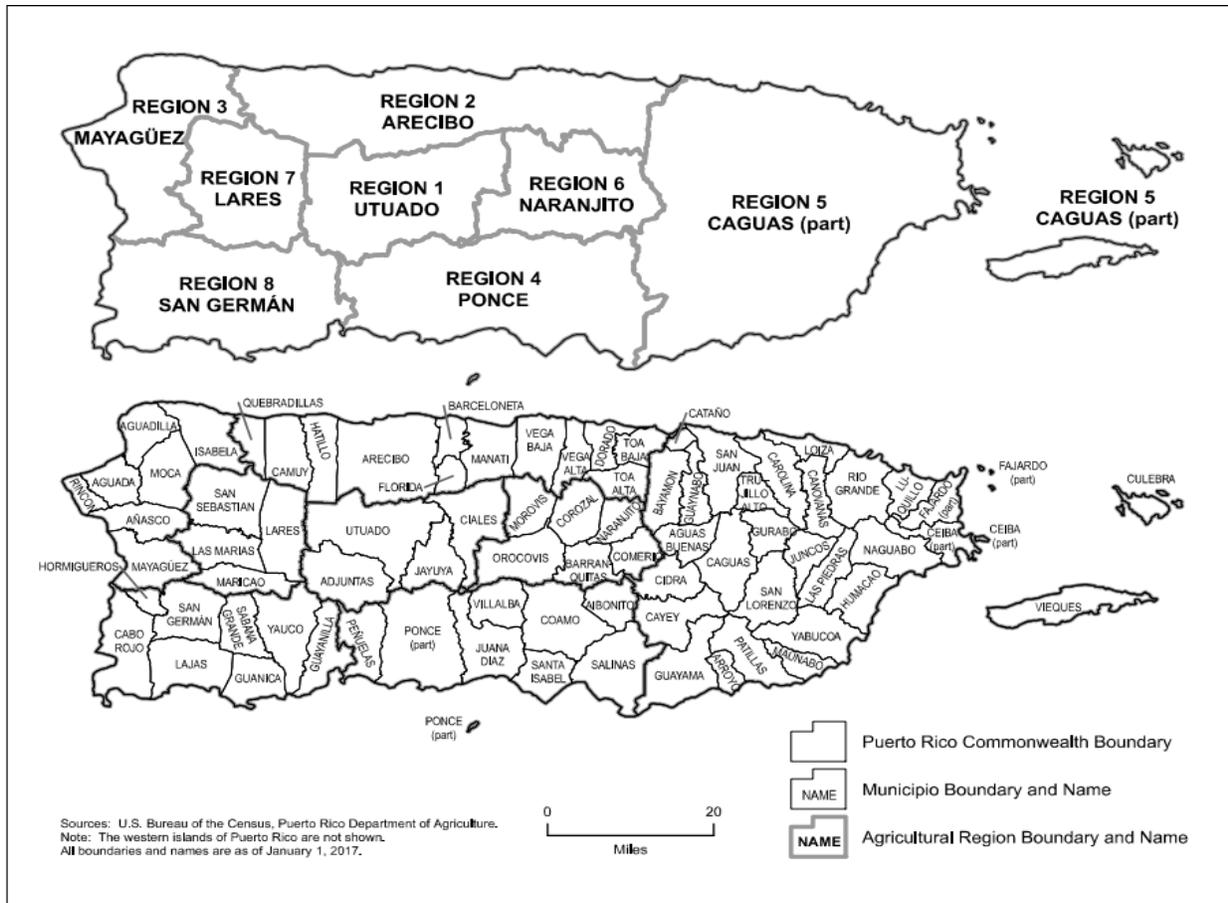
Puerto Rico has 487,775 acres of cropland, with a total value of agriculture sales of \$485,053,483. Agriculture is Puerto Rico’s oldest industry and will continue to be a significant economic driver for the next four years in most of the Island's regions. According to the 2017 USDA Agricultural Census for Puerto Rico, the agriculture industry in Puerto Rico is responsible for approximately 21,029 jobs on a permanent or temporary basis when compared to 2012 (30,122), a reduction.

As of December 2021, the total number of workers (not seasonal adjusted) was of 14,000, according to PRDOLHR's statistics for this worker group, experiencing a reduction in total workers with respect to November 2021 (18,000) of 4,000 workers. We conclude that this reduction in the workforce is closely related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Workers in general did not return to their former jobs. Others migrated to the mainland U.S.A. in search of better opportunities. Also, Puerto Rico has reported 4,000 deceased during the pandemic in general. Non-agricultural employers increase the base salary over the federal minimum wage of \$7.25 to \$8.50 to the \$9.00 range. In addition, the government enacted a law which increase the Puerto Rico minimum wage to \$8.50. However, this increase in the minimum wage does not apply to the agricultural industry.

According to the USDA Agricultural Census for 2017, we can pinpoint the top five labor intensive crops as follows based on the quantity harvested:

Crop	Quantity Harvested
<b>Coffee grown in the shade</b>	21,490 quintals
<b>Bananas</b>	226,981 (thousands)
<b>Plantains</b>	169,073 (thousands)
<b>Pineapple</b>	4,725 tons
<b>Vegetables</b>	68,042,624 pounds

The coffee industry remains among the top five most labor-intensive crop. Growing coffee represents one of the major contributions to the Puerto Rico's economy, one of its main businesses and way of life for much of the population of the central area of the island. According to the USDA Census of 2017, there are about 1,251 coffee farms, of whom the vast majority are small and medium producers. Coffee farms are mainly located in the central and western region of Puerto Rico although other small farms could be found in the Caguas region per the 2017 Agricultural Census. The major coffee harvesting was in the regions of Utuado, Lares and San Germán comprising of 15 municipalities in the central and western region. The months of heavy activity for this crop is during the months of September, October, and November.



The Ponce region is the major producer of vegetables during 2018 accountable for 46,302,725 pounds of harvested vegetables with 104 farms and 2,201 acres harvested.

Plantains and bananas are one of the most economically important crops in Puerto Rico. In 2018 it contributed \$53.2 million combined to the Gross Agricultural Income (2018 Agricultural Census). These industries are a source of income and jobs in the central area and in the coastal plains. Mayaguez, Ponce, Caguas, Naranjito and Lares regions are the major producers of plantains in Puerto Rico for 2018, accountable for 2,035 farms with an aggregate harvested of 10,624 acres which produces a total aggregate of 169,073 (thousands) plantains.

Plantains and bananas are usually ready for harvest anywhere from 14 to 20 months depending on the climate and other factors. Flowering usually happens within 10-15 months, while an additional 4-8 months is needed for fruit it develops and ripen.

**Table 46. Plantains Harvested for Sale: 2018**

[Harvested and planted cuerdas were assumed to be the same. For meaning of abbreviations and symbols, see introductory text.]

Geographic area	Plantains					Quantity harvested (thousands)
	Farms	Cuerdas	Trees			
			Total	Nonbearing age	Bearing age	
Puerto Rico .....	2,035	10,624	10,352,963	4,079,341	6,273,622	169,073
Region 1 - Utuado .....	489	1,191	979,106	482,588	496,518	7,543
Region 2 - Arecibo .....	90	286	297,440	143,280	154,160	3,465
Region 3 - Mayagüez .....	196	1,617	1,570,790	714,700	856,090	17,728
Region 4 - Ponce .....	137	1,257	1,228,878	469,128	759,750	19,161
Region 5 - Caguas .....	284	1,971	2,094,120	770,195	1,323,925	29,263
Region 6 - Naranjito .....	279	1,934	1,953,720	680,231	1,273,489	58,918
Region 7 - Lares .....	438	1,828	1,773,539	718,292	1,055,247	26,824
Region 8 - San Germán .....	122	542	455,370	100,927	354,443	6,171

**Table 47. Bananas Harvested for Sale: 2018**

[Harvested and planted cuerdas were assumed to be the same. For meaning of abbreviations and symbols, see introductory text.]

Geographic area	Bananas					Quantity harvested (thousands)
	Farms	Cuerdas	Trees			
			Total	Nonbearing age	Bearing age	
Puerto Rico .....	1,157	5,207	4,300,538	1,229,234	3,071,304	226,981
Region 1 - Utuado .....	350	1,362	1,294,764	515,964	778,800	33,576
Region 2 - Arecibo .....	48	90	56,264	12,060	44,204	3,283
Region 3 - Mayagüez .....	52	110	65,632	10,466	55,166	1,057
Region 4 - Ponce .....	57	933	755,688	72,768	682,920	109,442
Region 5 - Caguas .....	74	187	150,531	35,151	115,380	6,002
Region 6 - Naranjito .....	101	355	305,616	56,400	249,216	12,173
Region 7 - Lares .....	341	1,234	962,723	235,922	726,801	22,565
Region 8 - San Germán .....	134	936	709,320	290,503	418,817	38,883

In Puerto Rico, we can see crops Pineapple crops in the municipalities of Lajas, Manatí, Santa Isabel, Guayanilla and Guánica. According to one grower, the varieties that are usually produced on the island are, cabezona, Pan de Azúcar and MD-2. The latter turns out to be the most cultivated for commercial purposes since it can produce more than once per season. The good thing about this variety is that you can have several cycles in a single season. Through a good fertilization plan a grower can have several harvests a year. Naturally, the main harvest lasts about six months.

In 2018 Pineapple crops contributed \$3 million to the Gross Agricultural Income. This industry, along with the ones described above are a source of income and jobs in the valleys and coastal plains. Ponce, Lares and San Germán regions are the major producers of Pineapple in Puerto Rico. They account for 90 farms for a total of 497 acres harvested.

**Table 45. Pineapples Harvested for Sale: 2018**

[Harvested and planted cuerdas were assumed to be the same. For meaning of abbreviations and symbols, see introductory text.]

Geographic area	Pineapples					Quantity harvested (tons)
	Farms	Cuerdas	Plants			
			Total	Nonbearing age	Bearing age	
Puerto Rico .....	131	652	8,517,292	3,847,466	4,669,826	4,725
Region 1 - Utuado .....	6	(D)	10,202	(D)	(D)	(D)
Region 2 - Arecibo .....	7	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)
Region 3 - Mayagüez .....	16	50	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)
Region 4 - Ponce .....	7	199	2,018,500	1,273,900	744,600	563
Region 5 - Caguas .....	6	3	4,700	3,740	960	8
Region 6 - Naranjito .....	6	11	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)
Region 7 - Lares .....	62	118	2,292,362	1,077,956	1,214,406	1,923
Region 8 - San Germán .....	21	180	2,004,782	1,192,376	812,406	581

Agricultural employers face situations that affect the agricultural industry. For example, they face lack of workers. Reasons for this, according to one agricultural employer is the number of social aids provided by the federal government to low-income persons such as food stamps. Agricultural employers pinpoint this as the main reason why people refuse to work not only in agriculture but in non-agricultural jobs. Other reasons can be attributable to the low wages paid in the agriculture when compared with other non-

agricultural industries who increase their minimum wage up to \$9.00/hour. The COVID-19 pandemic aggravated the situation at a higher scale.

The population of agricultural workers began to decrease after Hurricane Maria and was aggravated by the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic and the economic aid of the different social assistance programs. As a result of the backdrop described above, agricultural employers began to turn their view to the H-2A Program for the first time in Puerto Rico.

The already difficult situation of a severe lack of workers turned into a real crisis forcing many agricultural employers, including coffee, banana, and tomato growers, to go to social media to implore people for help to save their crops. To overcome this situation, some agricultural workers had resorted to the H-2A program. According to the Puerto Rico Employment Service Foreign Labor Certification Unit a total of 31 agricultural employers have submitted a total of 46 Agricultural Job Orders (ETA-790) associated to an H-2A Visa application requesting 364 H-2A visas to bring foreign worker to work in the different crops in Puerto Rico. From this CNPC has approved 28 Job Orders. As of the time of this annual plan, 145 foreign workers were hired by agricultural employers in Puerto Rico since 2019 to present.

	2019	2020	2021	Totals
<b>Employer</b>	2	17	12	31
<b>Job Orders Received</b>	2	19	25	46
<b>Job orders approved by CNPC</b>	2	18	8	28
<b>H2-A Visa Requested</b>	14	185	165	364
<b>Foreign Workers in PR</b>	14	96	35	145

Another element to consider in the present volatile employment environment of the MSFWs in Puerto Rico is Public Law #87, approved on June 22, 1962 (Public Law #87). It allows employers to conduct active recruitment in Puerto Rico to perform work in the U.S. mainland. These job offers are typically not for agricultural employment although every so often there are farming jobs and offer for landscaping, processing plants and food packagers. The job offers promoted under this law could be temporary or permanent in nature. The increase in this type of employment offers have significantly impacted the MSFWs in Puerto Rico because they are gravitating towards these jobs with better chance of permanency, much better salaries, and the possibility of permanent relocation rather than pursuing the regular Interstate Job offers that are posted from other states under the ARS

There is a need for educational opportunities and incentives for these new farmers, farmers looking to shift to new crops or alternative farming methods, and MSFWs interested in becoming entrepreneurs. Directing more efforts and resources to these needs will promote the development of new agricultural employers and increase the employability of the MSFWs of Puerto Rico. In addition to these challenges, the agricultural community does not have up to date agricultural data. The lack of agriculture statistics is forcing farmers, private entities, and government agencies to plan without adequate information on the current status of the agricultural industry. The PRDOLHR, with the assistance of the SMA, will explore the possibilities of joining efforts with partners and organizations such as PathStone, the Puerto Rico Department of Education (PRDOE), the University of Puerto Rico Agricultural Extension, Puerto Rico Farm Bureau, the PRDOA and others, to create a series of orientation sessions to be offered in every region to promote existing and upcoming educational opportunities and incentives aimed to alleviate the above listed issues.

(3) An assessment of the unique needs of farmworkers means summarizing MSFW characteristics (including if they are predominantly from certain countries, what language(s) they speak, the approximate number of MSFWs in the State during peak season and during low season, and whether they tend to be migrant, seasonal, or year-round farmworkers). This information must consider data supplied by WIOA Section 167 National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP) grantees, other MSFW organizations, employer organizations, and State and/or Federal agency data sources such as the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) Employment and Training Administration.

As mentioned before, the population of agricultural workers began to decrease after Hurricane Maria and was aggravated by the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic and the economic aid of the different social assistance programs. As a result of the backdrop described above, agricultural employers began to turn their view to the H-2A Program for the first time in Puerto Rico.

Since 2019 the farmworker population in Puerto Rico has changed with the advent of the recruitment of foreign workers due to the lack of agricultural workers. Still, farmworkers in Puerto Rico are the predominant agricultural workforce of 22,000 as of December 31, 2021. As a result, agricultural employers have resorted to foreign workers in the absence of an agricultural workforce. Foreign workers came from several countries such as Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Colombia, Honduras, Guatemala and Mexico.

A small number of migrant workers are referred through the ARS to agricultural job opportunities in the United States. This number is in decline due to the job opportunities available through the Promotion of Employment Opportunities Abroad Program (P.L. 87 of June 22, 1962, as amended), jobs which tend to be longer lasting with higher pay. Therefore, MSFWs are now gravitating towards other types of employment in the U.S. mainland. The low educational level and lack of understanding of the English language is one of the most evident barriers for MSFWs in Puerto Rico, because they are perceived as not ready to be inserted in the non-farm labor market resulting in fewer services being offered to them in addition to their low educational level.

A small number of migrant workers are referred through the Agricultural Recruitment System to agricultural job opportunities in the United States. Most of these workers are aware of job opportunities and pursue them during the high season peak. Farm workers in Puerto Rico are mostly economically and educationally disadvantaged with low level skills and not ready to be inserted in the nonfarm labor market.

(4) Outreach Activities. The local offices outreach activities must be designed to meet the needs of MSFWs in the State and to locate and contact MSFWs who are not being reached through normal intake activities. Describe the State agency's proposed strategies for:

As part of a corrective action plan, the PRDOLHR hired four Outreach Workers to comply with 20 CFR 653. This is a hard to fill position that requires staff persons designated as Outreach Workers to be in the field visiting employers and performing outreach to MSFWs to overview their rights not been violated such as wages, housing, working conditions, etc. The PRDOLHR is committed to comply with 20 CFR 653 to conduct Outreach activities as required by law and regulations. The following sections contains the Outreach activities to be carried out during the remaining life cycle of the WIOA Unified Annual State Plan for 2020-2023.

(1) Contacting farmworkers who are not being reached by the normal intake activities conducted by the employment service offices

Puerto Rico has been designated as a significant MSFW supplier. As such, Puerto Rico's One-Stop Centers will operate an Outreach program to locate and contact MSFWs not being reached by regular intake procedures. The lack of Outreach Workers put Puerto Rico in a non-compliance status risk the compliance with the equity ratio indicators. During us. As a result, a corrective action plan (CAP) was established by the USDOL/ETA to ensure Outreach Workers were hired for each of the significant MSFWs offices. As part of the CAP five Outreach Workers were hired during PY2020. Unfortunately, two Outreach Workers resigned during PY2021. PRDOLHR is in the process of hiring two new Outreach Workers for the significant MSFWs offices of Guayama, Humacao and Mayaguez.

Due to the tropical weather of Puerto Rico, Outreach workers made contacts with MSFWs all year-round and during peak agricultural activity periods, which vary dependent on the crop. Contacts are made at locations where MSFWs live and congregate. Written and oral presentations are provided to MSFWs on services such as, but not limited to:

- Information regarding the full array of services offered in the career centers.
- Referral to agricultural, H-2A orders, and non-agricultural employment.
- Referral to training.
- Referral to supportive services.
- Career counseling.
- Job development.
- Information on the Wagner-Peyser complaint system.
- Summaries of farm worker rights (terms and conditions of employment)

When making contacts, Outreach workers obtain permission from the agricultural employers to conduct outreach activities within the limits of the employer's property. During the contact, Outreach workers provide valuable information about services available to them in the career centers and encourage MSFWs to visit the nearest career center for the full range of employment, placement, and training services available to them.

In the event MSFWs cannot or do not wish to visit a physical one-stop system location, Outreach staff help the worker to complete an application for ES (ES-511), provide referrals to employment opportunities for which the workers are qualified, assist them in preparing complaints, or make appointments for needed services. As appropriate, Outreach staff will carry out follow-up contacts with MSFW customers.

The State Monitor Advocate also performs a variety of advocacy activities, including, but not limited to:

- Overseeing the operation and performance of the MSFW complaint system.
- Contributing to the State AOP and reviewing the daily reports of outreach workers.
- Participating in public meetings throughout the state.

- Meeting with farm worker groups and employers to promote the use of the career center services

The State Monitor Advocate also meets and works with other workforce agencies to coordinate services to MSFWs and raised issues, as appropriate, to ensure that the development of new systems and strategies for service delivery will address the needs of MSFW customers.

The State Monitor Advocate conducts onsite reviews at One-Stop Centers, ensuring local workforce systems follow the designated equity indicators and minimum service levels for MSFWs. The State Monitor Advocate also provides training and technical assistance, as needed, to staff of partner agencies regarding outreach and services to MSFWs, and the ES complaint system. For the remaining part of the WIOA Unified State Plan we project to provide outreach services to approximately 11,530 MSFWs. Outreach must perform at contacting as many as 40 workers per week.

**Staffing and minimum contact levels, PY 2022-23**

Area/service location	Outreach workers	Contacts per year	Designated outreach worker status
North Central Region	1	1,920	Hired
Southeast Region	1	1,920	To be hired before 6/30/2022
AMSI Guayama Region	1	1,920	To be hired before 6/30/2022
South Central Region	1	1,920	Hired
South West Region	1	1,920	Hired
Mayaguez/Las Marías Region	1	1,920	To be hired before 6/30/2022
Total	6	11,520	

(2) Providing technical assistance to outreach workers. Technical assistance must include trainings, conferences, additional resources, and increased collaboration with other organizations on topics such as one-stop center services (i.e. availability of referrals to training, supportive services, and career services, as well as specific employment opportunities), the employment service complaint system, information on the other organizations serving MSFWs in the area, and a basic summary of farmworker rights, including their rights with respect to the terms and conditions of employment.

For outreach workers to make an efficient job that could be beneficial to farmworkers and agricultural employers, they must be trained in all required areas and competencies to comply with 20 CFR 657.103 and be able to:

- Develop strategies and techniques to locate and contact MSFWs to provide information for services available at the local One-Stop Centers.
- Use the information of the Labor Market Information to inform MSFWs of specific job openings (agricultural and non-agricultural) available to them. Also, to assist agricultural employers on securing workers and acquiring information on labor market trends.
- Provide the necessary competencies on labor related laws affecting MSFWs such as the Fair Labor Standard Act (FLSA), the Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers Protection Act (MSPA), Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, H-2A Regulation, Housing, and other State regulations governing MSFWs.
- Assist MSFWs in filling job applications, preparing worker complaints, making appointments, and

arranging for transportation.

- Provide information about services available through electronic means and teaching them how to access this information.
- Identify qualified MSFWs seeking employment, using 20 CFR Part 653. Initial and follow-up outreach efforts will be made to provide needed services and assist MSFWs in landing a job or improving employability.
- Contact agricultural and non-agricultural employers, program operators, community or faith-based organization, and education-and-training providers on behalf of MSFWs.
- Solicit jobs, training opportunities and employment related services for MSFWs.
- Provide agricultural and non-agricultural employers with information, services and assistance requests related to labor issues and needs.
- Accept job postings while performing field outreach activities.
- Refer qualified MSFWs from the MSFWs Outreach log and from previous contacts through follow-up activities if there are job openings for referral.
- Select qualified MSFWs from the MSFWs Outreach log to perform job development activities to enhance MSFW applications by including their additional occupational skills, transferable occupations, and matching positions with non-agricultural jobs, when no suitable, agricultural job openings are available for referral.

The hired Outreach Workers were trained and participated in workshops provided by PathStone, Legal Services Farmworker Division, PROSHA and the Wage & Hour Division to properly train the Outreach workers of WP and PathStone in all required areas and competencies established on 20 CFR 653.103. Some of the areas and topics covered were:

- Develop strategies and techniques to locate and contact MSFWs in order to provide information for services available at the local AJCs.
- Use the Labor Market Information to inform MSFWs of specific job openings (agricultural and non-agricultural) available to them.
- Assist agricultural employers on securing workers and acquiring information on labor market trends.
- Provide the necessary competencies on labor related laws affecting MSFWs such as the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), the Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers Protection Act (MSPA), Equal Employment Opportunity laws, H-2A Regulations, Housing and other State regulations governing MSFWs.
- Assist MSFWs in filling job applications, preparing worker complaints, making appointments, and making transportation arrangements.
- Provide information about services available through electronic means and teaching them how to access this information.
- Identify qualified MSFWs seeking employment and plan follow-up visits to provide needed services

to improving their employability.

- Contact agricultural and non-agricultural employers, program operators, community or faith-based organizations, and education-and-training providers on behalf of MSFWs.
- Solicit jobs, training opportunities and employment related services for MSFWs.
- Provide agricultural and non-agricultural employers with information, services and assistance requests related to labor issues and needs.
- Accept job orders while performing field outreach activities.
- Refer qualified MSFWs to job openings of their interest.

In addition to providing information about the AJC services, the Outreach workers frequently inquire about the working conditions, wages, and overall wellbeing of the MSFWs and encourage them to visit the nearest career center for the full range of employment, placement, and training services.

A network of American Job Center will allow the referral of workers to both agricultural and non-agricultural jobs. Coordinated efforts will continue between the ES, the Wage and Hour Division, OSHA, and the State Legal Services Farmworker Division, to provide training to outreach workers and the local WP staff. These efforts will result in highly trained Outreach workers in areas such as agricultural workplace safety information to assist and inform MSFWs how to undertake work safety measures.

Currently the SMA position is vacant. PRDOLHR is committed to designate a SMA as soon as possible to comply with 20 CFR 653. Once designated, the SMA will be responsible for meeting with other workforce agencies to ensure that services provided to MSFWs are rendered in a manner that is quantitatively proportional and qualitatively equivalent to those provided to non-MSFWs. To accomplish this task, the SMA will work in the development of monitoring tools that will simplify the timely and accurate identification of issues and a series of strategies and protocols for service delivery that will ensure continuity and increase success rate when addressing the needs of MSFW customers.

During the onsite reviews of the AJCs, the SMA will analyze all available data regarding the provision of services of the local workforce systems to determine their compliance with the designated equity indicators and minimum service levels for MSFWs. The SMA will also provide training and technical assistance to staff and partner agencies as needed.

(3) Increasing outreach worker training and awareness across core programs including the Unemployment Insurance (UI) program and the training on identification of UI eligibility issues.

To comply with federal regulations, all WP staff is trained in the Agricultural Recruitment System (ARS). The training provided important information to staff in the use of the ARS system, to fill the need for workers during harvest season and for other available agricultural jobs. To better serve the needs of agricultural employers, WP merit staff must focus on employer issues. Employer services are planned and implemented based on each career center service delivery plan. To make sure that agricultural employer needs are met, career centers must provide key activities in the agricultural referral process, such as integrating services for agricultural employers and workers; identifying job- ready workers once they arrive at the work site; and providing employers with labor market information related to their specific industry, such as farmworker rights and support service information, among other services.

The efforts to be provided by Outreach staff will cover those described in 20 CFR 653.107(i-p). These efforts are the minimum required, but staff will be more thorough in their presentation, providing a comprehensive outline of services available in their area. The PRDOLHR entered a Memorandum of Understanding with PathStone to provide a comprehensive outreach approach to MSFWs. The purpose of the MSFW outreach program is to take available services directly to where MSFWs live and work if they are unable to come to the One-Stop Centers. The MSFW program provides the necessary framework for the One-Stop Centers staff to locate, contact, and enhance employability of MSFWs in Puerto Rico. Outreach interviewers provide services at the point of contact or at the One-Stop Centers office. If needed, services which are not available at the local One-Stop Centers, will be provided by the Outreach worker by means of referrals to other WIOA partners, agencies and organizations that provide the needed assistance. All Outreach activities will be funded with Wagner-Peyser funds for those activities managed by the Employment Service. All outreach activities managed by PathStone will be funded through WIOA- 167 funds.

Outreach workers staff contact growers during the harvesting seasons to plan for upcoming labor needs. Coordination is made with the growers and with other career centers to match the labor needs of employers with workers qualified to fill the jobs. In line with PRDOLHR's focus on services to business, State merit staff provide Outreach personnel with comprehensive listings of area growers to aid in scheduling visits throughout the agricultural community. PRDOLHR also collaborates with the Puerto Rico Department of Agriculture to ensure all resources for growers and agricultural workers are coordinated in a seamless fashion. Additionally, Outreach workers has a strong relationship with the UPR's Agricultural Extension Service/Department of Agriculture regional field staff to collaborate and improve services to agricultural employers and MSFWs.

PRDOLHR's focus is on services to business, while the state merit staff provides Outreach staff to aid in scheduling visits throughout the agricultural community. The SMA will reach out to the Puerto Rico Department of Agriculture to design strategies that could ensure all resources available to the agricultural community are coordinated in a seamless fashion. Capitalizing on the long-standing relationship between the Outreach workers with the University of Puerto Rico's Agricultural Extension Service/PRDOA regional field staff, joint meetings will be coordinated to collaborate and improve services to agricultural employers and MSFWs. The SMA will make recommendations to the AJCs to ensure that key staff will be granted access to the local UI system to allow them to view basic information of MSFWs, which could be used to assist them with issues related to application for benefits, employment records, interstate claims and eligibility issues. Training on basic unemployment data system will be arranged for the selected staff.

(4) Providing State merit staff outreach workers professional development activities to ensure they can provide high quality services to both jobseekers and employers.

20 CFR 653.107(i-p) requires PRDOLHR to operate an Outreach Program to reach farmworkers that for different reasons normally did not reach ES local offices. The PRDOLHR provides outreach through six career centers in agriculturally significant areas and continue to reinforce the Outreach program to comply with regulations as required by 20 CFR 653.107. These centers will be part of the State's WIOA One-Stop Centers system, serving as either a comprehensive One-Stop Center or an affiliated One-Stop site. The employment-related needs of MSFWs are of primary importance to the PRDOLHR. These needs will be a priority for the following six significant career centers:

Career Service Servicing Areas serving MSFW

Career Center Locations	Municipalities served
North Central Region	Quebradillas, Camuy, Hatillo, Arecibo, Lares, Utuado, Jayuya, Adjuntas
Southeast Region	Humacao, San Lorenzo, Juncos, Las Piedras, Maunabo, Patillas, Yabucoa
AMSI Guayama Region	Guayama, Arroyo
South Central Region	Coamo, Villalba, Juana Díaz, Santa Isabel, Salinas, Naranjito
Southwest Region	San Germán, Cabo Rojo, Hormigueros, Lajas, Sabana Grande, Maricao, Yauco, Guayanilla, Peñuelas, Guánica
Mayaguez/Las Marías Region	Mayagüez, Las Marías

Source: PRDOLHR.

The MSFW Outreach Specialists and the American Job Centers staff are included in cross-training from the standpoint of sharing information on the ES and Career Centers programs as well as learning the basics of the array of programs offered through the Centers and outside the Centers. Program cross-training is a continuous process to be able to offer a more integrated plan of service. Training will include information on Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), Outreach Program, MSFW classification, Agricultural Job Orders, Welfare Transition (WT)/Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Job Corps, business services, resource rooms, workshops, Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA), Veterans, and Wagner-Peyser programs. For the purposes of referring participants to other support services, training will also include information on vocational rehabilitation, GED programs, childcare, and transportation.

In addition to the above, Outreach workers will be provided with workshops on issues related to MSFWs such as child labor, human trafficking and sex harassment, use of pesticides, OSHA Sanitation Standards, Housing, etc., to provide Outreach staff with the professional development and tools required to serve the MSFW population.

(5) Coordinating outreach efforts with NFJP grantees as well as with public and private community service agencies and MSFW groups.

An MOU has been entered with PathStone. As the ETA designated grantee for Puerto Rico, PathStone operates the National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP) and provides career and training services and related assistance for MSFWs. The cooperative agreement will serve to assist in establishing and demonstrating effective outreach coordination, enhance service delivery to MSFWs and increase registration activities between PathStone and significant career centers staff. The partnership provides for the sharing of labor market information, training, supportive services, and job-related resources available to MSFWs. The cooperative agreement will improve mutual capacities and the likelihood of effective customer service, by sharing the responsibilities for this population and displaying an efficient use of available resources.

The primary benefits of the cooperative agreement with PathStone are:

- The information exchange process is streamlined, something that will improve the occurrence and accuracy of shared information.
- Each organization will be better prepared to coordinate actions, including those that may require immediate intervention when serving MSFWs.

- Staff awareness of emerging issues regarding the MSFW community has increased.
- The establishment of a vehicle of communication with the career centers and PathStone to periodically review and assess quality services to MSFWs.
- Reports are shared on the staff hours spent performing MSFW outreach activity.

PathStone also have cooperative agreements with several career centers and community partners focusing on integrated service strategies and resource sharing. Collaborative approaches reduce duplication of effort and ensure that resources are used effectively for the benefit of customers.

PathStone Corporation is also the NFJP housing grantee for Puerto Rico and provides housing support services to MSFWs through rental and utility assistance. The State Monitor Advocate and the PRDOLHR Outreach workers will continue to coordinate with PathStone staff in their efforts to assist growers in providing safe and affordable housing for farmworkers, hence expanding the range of services available to this population.

(5) Services provided to farmworkers and agricultural employers through the one-stop delivery system. Describe the State agency's proposed strategies for-

(A) Providing the full range of employment and training services to the agricultural community, both farmworkers and agricultural employers, through the one-stop delivery system.

(i) How career and training services required under WIOA Title I will be provided to MSFWs through the One-Stop Centers

Each outreach staff establishes a list of available resources and develops partnerships with local organizations serving MSFWs. Resources include, but are not limited to: Department of Health, Farmworker Health Program, State Workers Compensation, Migrant Legal Services, PathStone Corporation, PRDE's Adult Education program, and ESL and GED services to MSFWs. Career centers will collaborate with Local Boards to ensure MSFWs have training opportunities for jobs in demand in the area. We believe there are enough resources for Outreach but will continue to seek for additional resources to meet the needs of MSFWs as they are identified.

Although Outreach services are provided to MSFWs who cannot or do not wish to visit a physical career center location, other MSFWs visit the career centers in search of employment, placement, or training services. At the career center, MSFWs receive an orientation which is a requirement prior to receive any services they might apply for. Through this orientation, workers will become aware of the range of services available to them on the center and how to apply for such services.

Once the workers are informed of all the services available to them, depending on their personal employment needs, might opt to use the self-service resource area where they can access the Internet to perform job searches, preparation of resumes, browsing of job offers, among other services. If in need of employment and placement services, the worker is referred to a Wagner-Peyser Employment Specialist. Here, the worker is registered in Wagner-Peyser and assessed to determine his/her job readiness. Depending on the assessment, the MSFW might be referred to an available job offer/job development, or to an Occupational Counselor for additional career services. If deemed not job ready, the MSFW is referred

to one of the several partners located in or out of the center to provide the necessary assistance in attaining the skills necessary to get a suitable job.

Once registered, a farmworker might receive the following career services:

- Assistance for program compliance
- Preparation of job applications
- Job information per type of referral to specific employment opportunities (agricultural and non-agricultural), training, counseling, and other services
- Support service referrals for individuals or family members
- Information and referrals to PathStone or other appropriate program services
- Information about farm worker rights (Federal and State employment related protections laws such as MSPA and FLSA)
- How to contact other organizations servicing MSFWs, such as the Migrant Legal Services, Migrant Health, and others
- When applicable, Outreach Staff will make appropriate referrals to PathStone, Inc. as stipulated under the Job Service Cooperative Agreement or Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

The ARS System is operated and coordinated within the One-Stop Centers by WP and other partners. As a result, the Foreign Labor Certification Unit can share Agricultural Job Orders, both local, intrastate, and interstate, with the AJCs staff and PathStone and receive referrals from the different AJCs. The FLC Unit receives job orders from the different State Order Holding Officers asking for qualified workers for open agricultural jobs. These job orders are mainly associated with an H-2A application. The job orders are distributed to the local Employment Service Offices via SharePoint lists where they be unconsciously placed for job seekers apply to these agricultural jobs.

Outreach workers and WP staff at the career centers will identify workers and screen them against employer requirements; coordinate referrals with the Puerto Rico FLC Unit and assist with scheduling interviews with employers and make travel arrangements.

One-Stop Centers will continue making efforts to strengthen the working relationships with MSFWs and employers. AJC staff assists Outreach workers in providing MSFW with the full range of services available through the One-Stop Centers.

Federal requirements call for services be provided to MSFWs in a “qualitatively equivalent and quantitatively proportionate” to the services provided to other non-MSFWs. This means that MSFWs are to receive all workforce development services, benefits and protections on an equitable and non-discriminatory basis (i.e., career guidance, testing, job development, training, and job referral). It is necessary, therefore, to continue strengthening the capability of the WP staff to serve the needs for farm working jobs, by helping them find employment through the Labor Exchange System. Also, ES provides a Job Bank where MSFWs can search for jobs they may qualified.

Career centers staff assists employers by referring qualified workers to the different job orders posted. However, the process still poses challenges for career center staff to provide farmworkers with available jobs since jobs available in the Puerto Rico Job Bank are mostly in professional jobs which require college preparation, advance skills, and job experience. Information on services, including how to register for services is provided online ensuring that farmworkers have the full range of services available whether services are received in the field or a career center. Bilingual staff are also made available to assist non-Spanish speaking customers.

The career centers receive Job Orders through the Interstate Clearance System. Concerted efforts are made with Order Holding States to refer qualified MSFWs to these job openings. To make sure that employer labor needs are met, WP merit staff works with job matching results to ensure that qualified MSFWs are referred to the corresponding job opening. Outreach efforts are used to recruit workers outside the local job site recruiting area. Outreach staff is committed to provide information on the services provided at the career centers and will help employers posting agricultural job orders and referring workers to these very same opportunities.

(ii) [How the State serves agricultural employers and how it intends to improve such services.](#)

PRDOLHR plans to continue implementing strategies and the use of best practices to address the needs of agricultural employers including the following topics:

- Limited knowledge of State/Federal employment laws and regulations. Career centers will continue to host Forums/Workshops to educate employers and agricultural crew leaders regarding State/Federal laws and regulations.
- Lack of efficient use of local human resources. Career centers staff must encourage/facilitate communication between growers, regarding farm-workers' specific needs. One possible resource is Puerto Rico's Agricultural Extension Program.
- Lack of facilities/staff to screen and interview potential farmworkers. Career centers might provide temporary office space that agricultural employers might use as a job-interviewing facility. Workforce Center staff might also provide intake and referral activities at the growers' locations.
- Encourage farm labor contractors to register. Career centers staff might provide forms and instructions for completing crew leader registrations and ensure that farm labor contractors' registration cards are kept current.
- Housing. The ARS requires employers to provide housing at no cost to workers who cannot reasonably return to their place of residence after each working day. This is one of the unique challenges Puerto Rico agricultural employers faces when using ARS; especially when providing housing for coffee pickers. Also, the PRDOLHR is planning to coordinate efforts and grant activities with PathStone, Inc., the Housing Grant coordinator for the NFJP grantee under the

WIOA 167 housing grant for Puerto Rico, to address the housing needs of farm workers and their families.

Agricultural employers and MSFWs are critical to the State's workforce, especially in the geographic areas where agriculture is the key economic industry. Serving the needs of the agricultural industry requires coordination among the following stakeholders:

- State Monitor Advocate
- WIOA Section 167, PathStone, Inc.
- Groups that represent MSFWs
- Agricultural employer organizations
- Wage and Hour Division (Caribbean District)
- Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC)
- Federal agencies with regulatory responsibilities for enforcing laws related to agricultural labor
- Other organizations such as OSHA

Each of the above organizations has been instrumental in the ongoing efforts of providing support for the benefit of agricultural employers and their workers. They were provided with the opportunity to comment on and participate in the development of this plan.

(B) Marketing the employment service complaint system to farmworkers and other farmworker advocacy groups.

In fulfilling its responsibilities under Federal regulations, the PRDOLHR has established a Uniform Complaint System under WP pursuant to 20 CFR 658.400. With this complaint system in place, career centers have the capacity to resolve MSWF complaints and any others job seeker impacted by WP activities. The state and local managers have the responsibility to resolve complaints filed pursuant to 20 CFR 658.400.

The State Monitor Advocate is responsible for the oversight, operation, and performance of the complaint system. The Monitor is also responsible for the marketing and promotion of the complaint system to other MSFW advocacy groups and partners such as MSFWs served by PathStone. The State Monitor Advocate also oversees that Outreach workers inform MSFWs about their rights and the way to contact to the complaint system, and that provide them help to file a claim, as appropriate.

During the required career center orientation, job seekers are briefed on the Wagner-Peyser complaint system. During registration, a WP Employment Specialist explains the complaint system to the worker and how to properly file a complaint. A complaint form is handled out to the worker at that moment. He is also informed of his rights as a MSFW.

C) Marketing the Agricultural Recruitment System to agricultural employers and how it intends to improve such publicity.

ES is committed to market the use of the ARS among employers in the local service areas by reinforcing Outreach Workers skills and knowledge to promote the ARS within agricultural employers, including ES staff assigned to placement tasks. Regarding the H-2A program, agricultural employers fear to use the system due to the high costs it represents for them to provide the additional guarantees to MSFWs such as housing, and transportation, reimbursement, as required by applicable regulations. State laws have been forwarded to stimulate and regulate the employment of foreign workers with no avail since this is a Federal occupied field.

Agricultural industry in Puerto Rico is far different from the agricultural industry in the United States and local agricultural employers cannot afford the costs of implementing the required guarantees they need to provide to MSFWs, local or foreign guest workers.

(6) Other Requirements.

(A) Collaboration. Describe any collaborative agreements the SWA has with other MSFW service providers including NFJP grantees and other service providers. Describe how the SWA intends to build upon/increase collaboration with existing partners and in establishing new partners over the next four years (including any approximate timelines for establishing agreements or building upon existing agreements).

#### COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT WITH PATHSTONE

The cooperative agreement with PathStone will be review to and evaluated to provide a better comprehensive outreach approach to MSFWs in Puerto Rico. The plan is to renew the agreement in the coming months and to enforce the responsibilities of each partner in the agreement. Wagner-Peyser management at the One-Stop Career Centers will have the task to administer the agreement at the local level by ensuring that quarterly meetings are held to discuss what issues need attention within the agreement and to ensure services reach to the MSFWs community served by the significant career centers.

#### LEGAL SERVICES OF PUERTO RICO

The PRDOLHR has linkages with the Legal Services Program and establishes collaboration to provide orientation and valuable information to MSFW who migrate to the United States to work in farm work through the Federal Agricultural Job Order Clearing System. Before departing to work in the USA, workers are briefed on the rights available to them as MSFWs. Coordination is made with Legal Services if any worker needs legal services due to the violation of his/her rights by the agricultural employer while working in the USA.

(B) Review and Public Comment. In developing the AOP, the SWA must solicit information and suggestions from NFJP grantees, other appropriate MSFW groups, public agencies, agricultural employer organizations, and other interested organizations. In addition, at least 45 calendar days before submitting its final AOP, the SWA must provide a proposed plan to NFJP grantees, public agencies, agricultural employer organizations, and other organizations expressing an interest and allow at least 30 days for review and comment. The SWA must: 1) Consider any comments received in formulating its final proposed AOP; 2) Inform all commenting parties in writing whether their comments have been incorporated and, if not, the

reasons; therefore, and 3) Transmit the comments and recommendations received and its responses with the submission of the AOP.

(i). Include the list of organizations from which information and suggestions were solicited, any comments received, and responses to those comments. The AOP must include a statement confirming NFJP grantees, other appropriate MSFW groups, public agencies, agricultural employer organizations and other interested employer organizations have been given an opportunity to comment on the AOP.

The PRDOLHR provided the opportunity for all interested parties to review and comment on the draft AOP. The organizations listed below were sent the draft AOP and invited to comment; however, no comments were received. As the program year progresses and the needs of the agribusiness community evolves, the PDOLHR will continue to work with partners of the agricultural community to explore new approaches to meeting the demands of Puerto Rico's expanding agricultural industry.

The following organizations received the draft AOP:

- Puerto Rico Department of Education (PRDE) / Migrant Education Program
- Puerto Rico Farmworker Health Program
- Puerto Rico Legal Services Farmworker Division
- Puerto Rico Department of Agriculture
- Department of Export and Commerce (PRDEDC) / WDP
- PathStone Corporation
- USDOL Wage and Hours Division

(C) Data Assessment. Review the previous four years Wagner-Peyser data reports on performance. Note whether the State has been meeting its goals to provide MSFWs quantitatively proportionate services as compared to non-MSFWs. If it has not met these goals, explain why the State believes such goals were not met and how the State intends to improve its provision of services to meet such goals.

Puerto Rico began implementing a new MIS system (PRIS) in February 2020. In doing so, the previous system (SIAC) was phased-out in February 2020. In March 2020 Puerto Rico declares a COVID-19 emergency, the government declares a closure of operations and establishes a lock-down. It wasn't until June 2020 that government operations began to return gradually to normal but providing services virtually. The new system officially went into operation in June 2020.

Although the system entered operations and was developing since the end of 2018, as of the date of this AOP, PRIS has not generated the performance reports corresponding to the years 2017, 2018, 2019. The 2020 reports are available, but we still understand that the migration of data from SIAC to PRIS faced problems and it is very possible that records were lost in the migration as well as the possibility that data elements have not been migrated correctly or have been lost in the migration.

Another situation found has to do with the proper classification of MSFWs in the PRIS system by ES staff at local level. This situation required the publication of new policies and procedures for the ES staff to properly recorded MSFWs in the PRIS System. The Technical Guide to Policies and Procedures GTTP 2-21, *Guide to Completing PIRL Elements 413 and 808 in the PRIS System*, was published on November 29, 2021.

Under these circumstances, ES does not have the necessary performance data to determine if goals have been met to provide MSFWs quantitatively proportionate services as compared to non-MSFWs using performance data. Nevertheless, ES collect monthly data of WP activities at the local level in the absence of a robust MIS that could provide all the information required to oversee services provided to MSFWs. Based on this data, see table below, and the ETA-5148 reports for program years 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020, we assert that for these years, only the first three quarters of PY2018 shows that services were provided as expected. For 2017 ES was not in compliance, including PY2020.

Quarter	2017		2018		2019		2020	
	WP	MSFW	WP	MSFW	WP	MSFW	WP	MSFW
<b>1QTR</b>	13,029	620	12,547	419	15,248	311	1,992	29
<b>2QTR</b>	16,275	237	15,217	269	15,256	204	3,817	51
<b>3QTR</b>	15,112	315	9,529	226	9,915	162	3,714	31
<b>4QTR</b>	12,747	548	13,379	321	2	-	9,298	105
<b>Total</b>	57,163	1,720	50,672	1,235	40,421	677	18,821	216

Given the above scenario, corrective actions will be taken to:

- Ensure MSFWs are registered in Wagner-Peyser and classified appropriately.
- Ensure services to MSFWs are entered appropriately into the PRIS System.
- Ensure Outreach Workers are not only reaching out to MSFWs but providing the services they are entitled to.

Total MSFWs reported as registered by Local Offices

Source: ES Internal Data Collection

(D) Assessment of progress. The plan must include an explanation of what was achieved based on the previous AOP, what was not achieved and an explanation as to why the State believes the goals were not achieved, and how the State intends to remedy the gaps of achievement in the coming year.

#### **MSFWs contacted by outreach activities**

During PY 2020, a little more than 2,200 workers were contacted. Outreach Workers positions were vacant for several years and in PY2020 PRDOLHR made major efforts to fill these positions during the 2QTR and 3QTR of PY2020. Three Outreach workers were recruited who joined the two who were already in house. During the first half of PY2021, two Outreach workers resigned. The Human Resources office has been asked to publish a new notice to recruit the three vacant positions as Puerto Rico has six local areas designated as significant. This situation had an adverse impact on MSFW services in the camp. As of this AOP Human Resources is in the process to initiate the hiring process.

There is a significant declined in MSFWs registered in Wagner-Peyser due to multiple factors mainly associated with the impact of Hurricane Maria, and now the COVID-19 pandemic. Road conditions in agricultural areas made access to MSFWs work and gathering areas. In addition, several agricultural employers ceased operations or reduced their labor force for several months while working on the recovery of their farms. As of December 31, 2021, 1,234 MSFWs have been contacted by outreach activities for PU2021.

We are committed to continue reinforcing the Outreach Program to comply with regulations as required by 20 CFR 653.107, which requires PRDOLHR to operate an Outreach Program to reach farmworkers that for different reasons normally did not reach ES local offices. Once the vacant positions are filled out, ES will be in position to provide the whole range of services to MSFWs dwelling in the significant agricultural areas and to increase the number of MSFWs served and provide outreach services to more than half the population of farm workers that at this time cannot be reached.

### **Equity Performance Indicators**

The lack of performance data from the PRIS System and the failure of local offices to appropriately classify MSFWs in the system are the main barriers to properly identify if Puerto Rico complies with the equity performance indicators. PRDOLHR is committed to work closely with and assess the conditions that unable ES to meet the performance goals for MSFWs. This assessment will be the basis for a corrective action plan that allows the ES to meet the performance standards for MSFWs and ensure they are receiving services quantitatively proportionate as compared to non-MSFWs.

### **Referral of MSFWs to interstate agricultural job orders**

The number of MSFWs interested in applying to agricultural jobs in the mainland has decreased in the past years. Several factors have contributed to this as explained in Section E(2), such as the Promotion of Jobs Abroad Program under P.L. 87 which provides better job conditions and the possibility of permanent relocation. The few MSFWs referred to interstate agricultural job orders are those we were recall by their previous employers.

(E) State Monitor Advocate. The plan must contain a statement confirming the State Monitor Advocate has reviewed and approved the AOP.

At the time of this report, the SMA position is vacant. The PRDOLHR is in the process of hiring a new SMA. Therefore, the AOP is not review, approve, or discuss with the SMA as required.

## **WAGNER-PEYSER ASSURANCES**

Wagner-Peyser Assurances. The State Plan must include assurances that:

- 1. The Wagner-Peyser Employment Service is co-located with One-Stop Centers, or a plan and timeline has been developed to comply with this requirement within a reasonable amount of time. (Sec 121(e)(3))**

As of the date of this State plan, all Wagner-Peyser Employment Service Local Offices are co-located with One-Stop Centers and is in full compliance with the requirement set forth in Sec. 121(e)(3).

- 2. The State agency is complying with the requirements under 20 CFR 653.111 (State agency staffing requirements) if the State has significant MSFW One-Stop Centers.**

The PRDLHR is committed to comply with 20 CFR 653.111. As of the date of this State Plan three Outreach Worker positions are vacant in significant MSFW One-Stop Centers (Southeast Local Area,

AMSI Guayama Local Area, and Mayaguez-Las Marías Local Area. Efforts to fill the vacant positions are underway. We expect to have these vacancies be filled on or before June 30, 2022.

- 3. If a State Workforce Development Board, department, or agency administers State laws for vocational rehabilitation of persons with disabilities, that board, department, or agency cooperates with the agency that administers Wagner-Peyser services, Adult and Dislocated Worker programs and Youth Programs under Title I; and**

State Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) agency is a workforce system partner and as such it has presence in the American Job Centers. The VR staff is cooperative with all workforce system partners at the American Job Centers providing services to individuals with disabilities referred by other core partners in the Center.

- 4. State agency merit-based public employees provide Wagner-Peyser Act-funded labor exchange activities in accordance with Department of Labor regulations.**

We ensure that WP staff provide labor exchange activities in accordance with the USDOL regulations as contained in 20 CFR 103.

## VIII. ADULT EDUCATION AND FAMILY LITERACY PROGRAM

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include a description of the following as it pertains to adult education and literacy programs and activities under title II of WIOA, the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA).

### (A) ALIGNING OF CONTENT STANDARDS

**Describe how the eligible agency has aligned its content standards for adult education with State-adopted challenging academic content standards, as adopted under section 1111(b)(1) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended (20 U.S.C. 6311(b)(1)).**

The Department of Education of Puerto Rico (DEPR) is the eligible agency for adult education and literacy programs and activities implementation under title II of WIOA, the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA). The Assistant Secretary for Alternative Education-Adult Education Program (AEP), State Director for Adult Education, is the implementation unit for these programs.

During the 2022-2023 period the DEPR will focus on the revision and re-aligning of the State education adopted standards and curriculum. The AEP has hired a national expert on adult education curriculum to re-design the adult education curriculum. A team of adult education teachers under contract with the AEP will serve as facilitators and curriculum co-designers the hired consultant. The curriculum design will include an update component on soft skills and preparation for the labor market to participants in harmony with the finding of the Puerto Rico Department of Labor new research on the Puerto Rico Economic Analysis prepared under a grant of the USDOL/ETA on the labor market.

The implementation of the curriculum in all Adult Education program centers requires continuous faculty development efforts to assure teachers are thoroughly familiar with the academic content standards requirements. Hired curriculum facilitators will provide technical assistance in the implementation of the curriculum in all Adult Education program centers and activities. The AEP Program centers directors and key staff will provide technical assistance to program teachers in curriculum implementation. Adult Education program teachers will receive specialized training on the standards, the indicators, and assessment activities of the curriculum. They will provide emphasis on syllabus content, provided academic guidelines, technology, computer literacy, workforce preparation and employability skills to facilitate learning on adult participants.

The AEP will emphasize the importance in the life of people who have not completed high school, need for English language learning and civic participation and the rights and responsibilities of citizens. It is the purpose of AEFLA to assist immigrants and other individuals who are English language learners to improve their reading, writing, and comprehension skills in English and mathematics, as well as understanding the American system of Government, individual freedom, and the responsibilities of citizenship. The commitment of the Adult Education Program is focused on providing a structured, innovative, flexible and

contextualized curriculum, in addition to being dynamic and adaptable to changes in the social system and the educational system in a contextualized environment.

The AEP will update the workforce preparation curriculum, and expand the career pathways model custom made to the necessities education service providers' centers in the Local Workforce Development areas under the WIOA Program, for career pathways implementation. The AEP will implement a phase 3 of the initial effort to include new education services providers in the development of a the career pathways plan emphasizing the geographical areas and careers most in demand that reflect the new circumstances post pandemic as shows the results of the employers survey performed by the PR Department of Labor and human Resources.

This activities on career pathways and soft skills new curriculum will provide the transferable skills needed by individuals to make them “employable” to an employer, including Problem-solving, oral communication, adaptability, collaboration, resource management, organizational skills, written communication and technology use, as the leading skills. Also, it includes activities that promote critical thinking, and build self-management skills, such as utilizing resources and information, understanding systems, and working with others.

In the implementation of the aligned curriculum standards the AEP will provide training to the teachers based on the following protocol:

The PEA has hired academic facilitators that are specialists in the subject that have been enriching and tempering the AEP educational plans. These staff resources will provide technical assistance to teachers in the program's curriculum, standards and indicators, and proposed changes to update teaching for adult or disabled participants. They will highlight the need to address and develop 21st century skills, digital literacy, and employability and workforce preparation skills to achieve a transition to postsecondary education level or to the workplace. Workplace skills, often called employability skills, are the basic skills a person must have to succeed in any workplace. They are the core knowledge skills and attitudes that allow workers to understand instructions, solve problems and get along with co-workers and customers. The academic facilitators will offer training workshops, coaching and mentoring by subject and individualized technical assistance in each of the centers.

The Service Providers of each center will receive technical assistance related to all the requirements of the AEP training activities to achieve a better academic performance and greater preparation so that the adult participants can compete in postsecondary levels and/or in the labor market, in the particular skills that each employer needs. They will also receive technical assistance for teachers in the areas of need required.

All teachers of the Adult Program will receive specialized professional training related to the standards and indicators of the Program, activities related to the development of 21st Century skills, important for

competitiveness in the global labor market, STEM, employability and workforce preparation skills and career pathways.

## **B. LOCAL ACTIVITIES**

Describe how the State will, using the considerations specified in section 231(e) of WIOA, fund each eligible provider to establish or operate programs that provide any of the following adult education and literacy activities identified in section 203 of WIOA, including programs that provide such activities concurrently. The Unified or Combined State Plan must include at a minimum the scope, content, and organization of these local activities.

### **Adult Education and Literacy Activities (Section 203 of WIOA)**

**Adult education;**

**Literacy;**

**Workplace adult education and literacy activities;**

**Family literacy activities;**

**English language acquisition activities;**

**Integrated English literacy and civics education;**

**Workforce preparation activities; or**

**Integrated education and training that—**

**Provides adult education and literacy activities, concurrently and contextually with both, workforce preparation activities, and workforce training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster, and**

**Is for the purpose of educational and career advancement.**

**Special Rule.** Each eligible agency awarding a grant or contract under this section shall not use any funds made available under this title for adult education and literacy activities for the purpose of supporting or providing programs, services, or activities for individuals who are under the age of 16 and are enrolled or required to be enrolled in secondary school under State law, except that such agency may use such funds for such purpose if such programs, services, or activities are related to family literacy activities. In providing family literacy activities under this title, an eligible provider shall attempt to coordinate with programs and services that are not assisted under this title prior to using funds for adult education and literacy activities under this title for activities other than activities for eligible individuals.

**Activities under adult education; literacy; workplace adult education and literacy activities and family literacy activities**

The AEP will, using the considerations specified in section 231(e) of WIOA, fund each eligible provider to establish or operate programs that provide any of the following adult education and literacy activities identified in section 203 of WIOA, including programs that provide such activities concurrently. The Plan will include the scope, content, and organization of these local activities: Adult education; Literacy; Workplace adult education and literacy activities; Family literacy activities; English language acquisition activities; Integrated English literacy and civics education; Workforce preparation activities; and Integrated education and training that provides adult education and literacy activities, concurrently and contextually with both, workforce preparation activities, and workforce training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster, and that are for the purpose of educational and career advancement.

The eligible individuals and providers

As administrative/fiscal agent, the program will ensure that service providers deliver services to eligible individuals who have attained at least 16 years of age; are not enrolled or required to be enrolled in a secondary school under the Puerto Rico law; lack basic skills; do not have a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent; or are English language learners. All activities funded under WIOA are authorized, approved and overseen by the Adult Education program.

The following organizations will be eligible to apply for funding provided they have demonstrated effectiveness and comply with the 13 considerations established by WIOA in providing adult education and literacy services:

a local education agency

a community-based organization or faith-based organization

a volunteer literacy organization

an institution of higher education

a public or private nonprofit agency

a library

a public housing authority

a nonprofit institution that is not described in any of items A through G and has the ability to provide adult education and literacy activities to eligible individuals

a consortium or coalition of the agencies, organizations, institutions, libraries, or authorities described in any of items A through H; and

a partnership between an employer and an entity described in any of items A through I.

An eligible provider must establish that it has demonstrated effectiveness through performance data on its record of improving the skills of eligible individuals, particularly those who have low levels of literacy in reading, writing, mathematics, English language acquisition, and other subject areas relevant to the services provided in the state's application for funds. An eligible provider must also provide information regarding its outcomes for participants related to employment, attainment of secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent, and transition to postsecondary education and training. (34 CFR §463.24)

There are two ways in which an eligible provider may meet the requirements:

An eligible provider that has been funded under Title II of the WIOA must provide NRS performance data required under Section 116 of the WIOA to demonstrate past effectiveness.

An eligible provider that has not been previously funded under Title II of WIOA must provide performance data to demonstrate its past effectiveness in serving basic skills deficient eligible individuals in all of the following areas: reading, writing, mathematics and English language acquisition

The following outcomes will be used in determining demonstrated effectiveness of eligible education service providers:

Number of eligible individuals served who are basic skills deficient in reading, writing, math and English language skills

Attainment of secondary diploma/equivalent

Transition to postsecondary education and training

The following will not be considered eligible applicants:

Applicants that are not in compliance with the Civil Rights Act of 1964 or those applicants that discriminate on the basis of nationality, origin, race, gender, religion, or handicap, sexual orientation or gender identity, political or religious ideology, disability or physical or mental disability, being a victim of domestic violence, sexual aggression or stalking.

As required by federal regulations, services providers will be prohibited from using federal funds to supplant state or local dollars. All federal funding will be used to enhance learner's services, as outlined in this Plan. The Adult Education program will conduct competitions under WIOA upon receiving guidance from the USDOE, Office of Career, Technical and Adult Education (OCTAE). Awards to eligible providers will be made available through a Request for Proposal (RFP) application process. To help ensure direct and equitable access to funds for adult literacy and basic skills activities, RFP's will be announced directly to providers and through regional media. In addition, all providers will be considered for grants based on

the same criteria. These criteria are aligned with the requirements in this Plan and the thirteen(13) considerations required by WIOA federal legislation.

### **Providers grants distribution criteria**

The PRDE's Adult Education program will use the following parameters to distribute funds to approved applicants:

Not less than 82.5 percent of the grant funds will be used to award grants and contracts under Section 231 and to carry out Section 225, of which not more than 20 percent of such amount shall be available to carry out Section 225.

Shall not use more than 12.5 percent of the grant to carry out State Leadership activities under Section 223.

Shall not use more than 5 percent of the grant funds, or \$85,000, whichever is greater, for administrative expenses of the eligible agency.

Every effort will be made to select at least one eligible provider for each local area of the workforce system in Puerto Rico.

Providers' grants will be distributed based on the ability to meet the following AEFLA's purposes outlined in WIOA:

Assist adults to become literate and obtain the knowledge and skills necessary for employment and economic self-sufficiency.

Assist adults who are parents or family members become a full partner in the in the academic development of their children.

Promote transition from adult education to post-secondary education and training through career pathways.

Assist adults in completing high school and hold a diploma o equivalent certificate.

Assist immigrants and English language learners improve reading, writing, math, and comprehending the English language and acquire understanding of American government, individual freedom, and responsibilities of citizenship.

### **How Applications will be reviewed for local plan alignment**

For the purpose of alignment with the plans of the Local Workforce Development Board, the applicants for funding will describe the alignment between their proposed services and the local WDB plan to demonstrate to what extent the eligible provider aligns the proposed activities and services with the

objectives of the local plan for the activities and services. As required by WIOA (34 CFR 463.21), the AEP will send proposals for funding to the corresponding local WDB. If the delivery area of services proposed by the applicant includes more than one local area of workforce development the AEP will send the proposals to each area for comments and feedback.

The Adult Education Program (AEP) will perform the following process for assuring that the eligible providers' applications are aligned the local plan priorities. The AEP program as eligible agency will submit all the grant applications to the appropriate Local Board for its review for consistency with the local plan. The AEP will provide all Local Boards an appropriate timeframe for comments. Also, the AEP will give the local board an opportunity to make recommendations to promote alignment with the local plan. The recommendations will be analyzed and incorporated whenever appropriate if demonstrate alignment with regional needs as identified in the local workforce development plan; and serve individuals in the community who were identified in such plan as most in need of adult education and literacy activities.

#### The use of multiyear competition

The AEP will use a multiyear competition process to award funding to eligible applicants. The multiyear competition will be issue for four years periods and implemented under continuation plans each one of the four years. If there is a natural disaster AEP will follow any guidance from the U.S. Department of Education regarding competition schedules.

The AEP will use a process that ensures that all eligible providers have direct and equitable access to apply and compete for AEFLA funds and that the same grant or contract announcement and application process are used for all eligible providers.

In addition to the AEFLA list of the specified organization types that may be eligible providers under § 463.23 the AEP will allow "other organization types" to apply +with the purpose of expanding the availability of eligible providers, as far as these "other" organizations meet the AEFLA eligibility requirements.

The AEP will conduct a new phase of the open competition performed during the 2021 program year to expand the geographical areas and offerings in adult education. Actually service providers are approved and the AEP dire to expand the number in order to make the education services more accessible. The grant application will address, the thirteen considerations and requirements established in Title II. The competition will be open to all eligible providers. All eligible providers will be required to submit evidence of demonstrated effectiveness. To demonstrate effectiveness, applicants that have received Title II AEFLA funds in the program years immediately preceding the competition will be evaluated based on their performance against the state's negotiated targets during those years. Applicants that did not receive funds through the AEP will be required to provide data that show their past ability to achieve success in comparable measures. For both groups, these measures include effectiveness in helping students develop their academic skills.

The application materials will clearly address applicant eligibility, incorporate a method for supplying required data on demonstrated effectiveness, and be transparent in how the AEP intends to evaluate the information to determine application eligibility.

The use of the thirteen considerations Of WIOA in funding eligible providers

The PRDE's - AEP, will fund each eligible provider using the considerations specified in section 231(e) of WIOA, in order to establish or operate programs that provide any of the adult education and literacy activities identified in section 203 of WIOA, including programs that provide such activities concurrently. We summarize here the 13 Considerations of WIOA for Funding to be enforced which are:

The degree to which the eligible provider would be responsive to:

- (1) Regional needs as identified in the local plan under WIOA, Section 108; and
- (2) serving individuals in the community who were identified in such plan as most in need of adult education and literacy activities, including individuals who:
  - (i) Have low levels of literacy skills; or
  - (ii) Are English language learners

The ability of the eligible provider to serve eligible individuals with disabilities, including eligible individuals with learning disabilities

Past effectiveness of the eligible provider in improving the literacy of eligible individuals, to meet State-adjusted levels of performance for the primary indicators of performance described in WIOA Section 116, especially with respect to eligible individuals who have low levels of literacy

The extent to which the eligible provider demonstrates alignment between proposed activities and services and the strategy and goals of the local plan under WIOA, Section 108, as well as the activities and services of the one- stop partners

Whether the eligible provider's program:

- (1) Is of enough intensity and quality, and based on the most rigorous research available so that participants achieve substantial learning gains; and
- (2) Uses instructional practices that include the essential components of reading instruction
  - Whether the eligible provider's activities, including reading, writing, speaking, mathematics, and English language acquisition instruction delivered are based on the best practices derived from

the most rigorous research available and appropriate, including scientifically valid research and effective educational practice

- Whether the eligible provider’s activities effectively use technology, services, and delivery systems, including distance education in a manner sufficient to increase the amount and quality of learning and how such technology, services, and systems lead to improved performance
- Whether the eligible provider’s activities provide learning in context, including through integrated education and training, so that an individual acquires the skills needed to transition to and complete postsecondary education and training programs, obtain and advance in employment leading to economic self-sufficiency, and to exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship
- Whether the eligible provider’s activities are delivered by well-trained instructors, counselors, and administrators who meet any minimum qualifications established by the State, where applicable, and who have access to high quality professional development, including through electronic means
- Whether the eligible provider’s activities coordinate with other available education, training, and social service resources in the community, such as by establishing strong links with elementary schools and secondary schools, postsecondary educational institutions, institutions of higher education, local workforce investment boards, one-stop centers, job training programs, and social service agencies, business, industry, labor organizations, community-based organizations, non-profit organizations, and intermediaries, for the development of career pathways
- Whether the eligible provider’s activities offer flexible schedules and coordination with Federal, State, and local support services (such as child care, transportation, mental health services, and career planning) that are necessary to enable individuals, including individuals with disabilities or other special needs, to attend and complete programs;
- Whether the eligible provider maintains a high-quality information management system that has the capacity to report measurable participant outcomes (consistent with Section 116) and to monitor program performance.
- Whether the local areas in which the eligible provider is located have a demonstrated need for additional English language acquisition programs and civics education programs (Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education)

### **Productivity principles in service delivery by approved applicant activities**

The PRDE's -AEP, will emphasize and encourage several principles in the service delivery to participants by the approved applicants. These principles include:

The delivery of adult education and literacy activities, concurrently and contextually with both, workforce preparation activities, and workforce training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster.

Delivery of programs that provide to participants the contextualization of English language acquisition with employability, workplace and financial literacy skills, as described in sec. 129(b) (2) (D) of WIOA, under the individual career services category.

Fostering the requirement of collaborative agreements and formal partnerships as part of the service provider grant application. If an eligible provider do not have the financial and staff resources to provide comprehensive instructional and support services on their own, they must document how they will partner with other adult education providers and partner agencies to fulfill the career pathways plan components and the Thirteen Considerations of WIOA.

The delivery of services to adults who are English language learners fully implementing Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IEL/CE) as described below: (1) integration of civics engagement skills into career pathways and workforce preparation activities, including professionals with degrees and credentials; (2) integration of educational technology and hybrid learning (blended learning) models into civics educational activities, including the use of technology and social media to increase learner opportunities for responsible civic engagement; and (3) training and technical assistance on research and evidence-based instructional strategies.

Eligible providers programs and activities should assist adults to become literate and obtain the knowledge and skills necessary for employment and economic self-sufficiency; assist adults who are parents or family members become a full partner in the education development of their children; promote transition from adult education to post-secondary education and training through career pathways; assist adults in completing high school and assist immigrants and English language learners improve reading, writing, math, speaking and comprehend the English language and acquire understanding of American government, individual freedom, and responsibilities of citizenship.

To address the findings of the new post pandemic evidence of hard to hire occupations, the AEP will expand the offering of activities under Integrated education and training that provides adult education and literacy activities, concurrently and contextually with both, workforce preparation activities, and workforce training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster, and is for the purpose of educational and career advancement. Service providers will be required to develop integrated education and training that provides adult education and literacy activities, concurrently and contextually with both workforce preparation activities and workforce training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster.

#### **Partnership with the Career and Technical Education area.**

The AEP will foster partnerships with the Career and Technical Education (CTE) Assistant Secretariat (Vocational Education Program) at the DEPR and the six technology institutes administered by the CTE under the PRDE to implement integrated education and training programs that provides adult education and literacy activities, concurrently and contextually with both workforce preparation activities and workforce training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster. The eligible approved providers

participating in the program activities and services will be encouraged to provide integrated education and training. The partnership with the CTE will be for the provision of services to individual in the Correction system. The partnership with the six technology institutes will be for the attainment of credentials to regular the AEP regular clientele.

### **Partnership with public and not for profit private institutions to foster new initiatives in integrated education and training**

The program will foster a partnership with other core partners, including the Assistant Secretariat for Training at the Puerto Rico Department of Labor and Human Resources and other not for profit private institutions with the purpose of fostering projects and activities to provide integrated education and training among qualified AEP participants.

### **Promote earning credentials**

To address the findings of the new post pandemic evidence of occupation on most demand the AEP will expand the offering of activities focused toward earning credentials to increase the number of students who earn their high school diploma and English learning or equivalent simultaneously with entry level industry recognized certification/credentials. The industrial, service sectors and conglomerates to be targeted will include manufacturing, health professions, technology and the hospitality industry. Also, the AEP will promote partnerships with accredited post-secondary and higher education institutions to design and implement programs aimed to credentials for the adult education clientele, providing concurrent basic education and occupational training. The AEP will enter partnerships with accredited post-secondary and higher education institutions to design and implement programs aimed to credentials for the adult education clientele.

### **A pilot Project with (I-BEST) strategy for credentials**

The AEP will initiate a pilot project with the (I-BEST) strategy, a model that boosts students' literacy and work and college readiness skills, so students earn credentials, get living wage jobs, and put their talents to work. This model challenges the traditional notion that students must complete basic education before starting to earn credits in a job-training or academic program. I-BEST pairs two instructors in the classroom — one to teach professional and technical or credit—bearing academic content and the other to teach basic skills in areas of reading, math, writing or English language. I-BEST programs develop skills in the contexts of specific jobs and college programs, enabling students to move through college, earn credentials and get jobs faster.

## **C. CORRECTIONS EDUCATION AND OTHER EDUCATION OF INSTITUTIONALIZED INDIVIDUALS**

**Describe how the State will establish and operate programs under section 225 of WIOA for corrections education and education of other institutionalized individuals, including how it will fund, in accordance with the requirements of title II subtitle C, any of the following academic programs for:**

- **Adult education and literacy activities;**
- **Special education, as determined by the eligible agency;**
- **Secondary school credit;**
- **Integrated education and training;**
- **Career pathways;**
- **Concurrent enrollment;**
- **Peer tutoring; and**
- **Transition to re-entry initiatives and other post release services with the goal of reducing recidivism.**

**Each eligible agency using funds provided under Programs for Corrections Education and Other Institutionalized Individuals to carry out a program for criminal offenders within a correctional institution must give priority to serving individuals who are likely to leave the correctional institution within 5 years of participation in the program.**

The PRDE's AEP will reserve no more than 20 percent of its Federal grant received under WIOA to provide programs for corrections' education and education for other institutionalized individuals as described in Section 225.

Additional areas targeted through this program are:

- Increased basic skills to obtain a high school diploma
- Readiness to transition successfully into the community and workforce
- Adults with disabilities literacy and adult secondary education skills
- Integration of digital literacy skills
- English literacy courses
- Education and development of workforce preparation skills through coordination with vocational education
- Use of the career pathway model for fostering a transition from correction facilities to employment
- Professional development for adult education teachers participating in correction programs through innovative strategies which include the development of 21st Century skills, STEM and employability skills in a contextualized environment.

Each eligible agency using funds provided under Programs for Corrections Education and Other Institutionalized Individuals, to carry out a program for criminal offenders within a correctional institution, must give priority to serving individuals who are likely to leave the correctional institution within 5 years of participation in the program. Section 225 (a) of WIOA states that from funds made available under Section 221(a)(1) for a fiscal year, each eligible agency shall carry out corrections education or education for other institutionalized individuals. The funds shall be used for the cost of education programs for criminal offenders in correctional institutions, other institutionalized individuals and for other individuals, including programs for:

- Adult education and literacy services
- Special education as determined by the eligible agency
- Secondary school credit
- Integrated education and training
- Career pathways
- Concurrent enrollment
- Peer tutoring
- Transition to re-entry initiatives and other post-release services with the goal of reducing recidivism.

Programs will be design and shared with the correctional institutions personnel and service providers to support the access of incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals to life-expanding career pathways opportunities that include approaches such as dual enrollment, peer tutoring, and transition to re-entry services designed to facilitate post-release success and reduce recidivism. Additional areas targeted through this program will be: increased basic skills to obtain a high school diploma; readiness to transition successfully into the community and workforce; adult literacy and adult secondary education skills; integration of digital literacy skills; English literacy courses; education and development of workforce preparation skills through coordination with vocational education; and the professional development of adult education teachers through innovative strategies.

#### D. INTEGRATED ENGLISH LITERACY AND CIVICS EDUCATION PROGRAM

**Describe how the State will establish and operate Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education programs under Section 243 of WIOA, for English language learners who are adults, including professionals with degrees and credentials in their native countries, including how the Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education program under section 243(a) of WIOA will be delivered in combination with integrated education and training activities.**

**Describe how the State will fund, in accordance with the requirements of title II, subtitle C, an Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education program and how the funds will be used for the program.**

**Describe how the Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education program under section 243(a) of WIOA will be designed to prepare adults who are English language learners for, and place such adults in, unsubsidized employment in in-demand industries and occupations that lead to economic self-sufficiency.**

**Describe how the Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education program under section 243(a) of WIOA will be designed to integrate with the local workforce development system and its functions to carry out the activities of the program.**

The State will fund, in accordance with the requirements of title II WIOA, an Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education program and the Integration of literacy and English language instruction with occupational skill training, including promoting linkages with employers. The AEP will prepare a Request for Proposals (RFP) requesting eligible service providers to present proposals for providing educational services under section 243 of WIOA for Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education. The issue of the RFP will be promoted y disseminated in local media, American Career Centers (One-Stop Centers) and DEPR Adult Education Centers among other dissemination methods.

The Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education program under section 243(a) of WIOA will be designed to prepare adults who are English language learners and to place such adults in unsubsidized employment in in-demand industries and occupations that lead to economic self-sufficiency. Section 243(a) establishes that the Secretary shall award grants to States, for English literacy and civics education, in combination with integrated education and training activities. The AEP at the DEPR, as mandated by WIOA, Title II, will be integrating English Literacy with Civics Education (IEL/Civics), basic education, workforce preparation skills and credentials into an integrated approach to benefit English learners. Such services will include instruction in literacy and English language acquisition and instruction on the rights and responsibilities of citizenship and civic participation, with emphasis to those participants engaged in the process of acquiring the American citizenship. IEL/Civics might include workforce training. The teaching will integrate a comprehensive civic participation component into English Literacy. IEL/Civics project will be focused on contextualized learning in which language and literacy are developed through practical, immediately relevant, thematic units around civics education that is integrated into the skill areas of English reading, writing and speaking.

The IEL/Civics project will include the following activities as required by WIOA section 243:

- Provide instruction in literacy and English language learning; civic participation and the rights and responsibilities of citizens; and training for the workforce. The activities must be provided in combination with integrated education and training activities.
- Prepare adults who are English Language Learners (ELLs) for non-subsidized employment in occupations or career pathways, which lead to economic self-sufficiency

- Assisting English language learners to achieve proficiency in reading, writing, speaking and comprehension.
- Direct the adult to a high school diploma or its equivalent (Equivalency Exam).
- Direct English language learners to enter postsecondary education or training.
- Offer education for adults in combination with integrated education and training (IET).

The Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education program under section 243(a) of WIOA will be designed to integrate the services with the local workforce development system, particularly the American Job Centers (AJC) - (One Stop Centers), to carry out the activities of the program. The AEP will establish a cross referrals strategy to recruit participants for the program.

The Department of Education will take all necessary steps to implement an RFP process to ensure priorities for the use of IEL/Civics funds aligned with the scope and federal requirements governing IEL/Civics programming.

How the Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education programs will prepare adults for unsubsidized employment

The AEP IELCE programs will include activities to prepare and foster the participants' placement into unsubsidized employment in in-demand industries and occupations that lead to economic self-sufficiency in the local or regional labor market. The IELCE programs will include the following:

Seeking employer engagement as an essential component through regional employer committees to provide feedback and advice to the regional AEP education services centers about regional needs.

A career pathways model focusing industry clusters in areas like health, tourism, hotels, restaurants, and services to businesses.

IELCE program components in combination with IET that must include:

Co-enrolling participants in integrated education and training

Workforce Preparation and Workforce Training for a specific jobs opportunities, in addition to literacy, English Language Acquisition, Civics Education and Adult Education & Literacy. Workforce preparation activities must include activities, to help the participant acquire a combination of critical thinking skills, digital literacy skills, and self-management skills, including competencies in utilizing resources, using information, working with others, understanding systems; skills necessary for successful transition into and completion of postsecondary education or training, or employment.

Emphasis in career industry credentials that lead to progress through career ladders into the selected industry clusters to facilitate participants' sense of career progress and self-sufficiency.

## E. STATE LEADERSHIP

### 1. Describe how the State will use the funds to carry out the required State Leadership activities under section 223 of WIOA

Section 223 of WIOA mandates funds be used for four required activities and several permissible activities and encourage collaboration to avoid duplication and maximize impact. The DEPR- AEP will perform the four required activities under section 223, including:

1. Alignment of adult education and literacy activities with other core programs and one-stop partners to implement strategies identified in the unified State plan, including development of career pathways to provide access to employment and training services for adult education participants.
2. Operate high quality professional development programs to improve adult education instruction including incorporating essential components of reading instruction, instruction related to specific needs of adult learners, instruction provided by volunteers or other personnel and dissemination of information about models and promising practices.
3. Provision of technical assistance to local providers receiving funds including the development and dissemination of instructional and programmatic practices based on best available research in reading, writing, speaking, mathematics, English language acquisition, distance education, and staff training. Promoting the role of local providers as one-stop partners and helping in use of technology including staff training and improving efficiencies.
4. Monitoring and evaluation of the quality of and improvement in adult education and dissemination of information about models and proven or promising practices within the State

The DEPR- AEP will perform several of the permissible activities under section 223, including: technology instruction investments, curriculum development, achieving performance objectives and transition to postsecondary education. The PRDE's-AEP will work collaboratively with other core programs and partner's agencies to expand access to education, training and employment opportunities for adults, people with disabilities and individuals facing barriers to employment, thus contributing to further our economic development. The AEP program will provide resources and services through One-Stop Centers that include orientation for Adult Education program opportunities, career pathways, transition resources, referral processes, and other joint mechanisms developed through agency partnerships. The PRDE Adult Education Program will develop the following activities under section 223 of WIOA:

**The Alignment of adult education and literacy activities with other core programs and one-stop partners to implement strategies identified in the unified State plan, including development of career pathways to provide access to employment and training services for adult education participants**

Collaboration with other core programs and partner's agencies

The PRDE's AEP will work collaboratively with other core programs and partner's agencies to expand access to education, training and employment opportunities for adult learners. The AEP will provide resources and services through American Job Centers (One-Stop Centers) including orientation about program opportunities, career pathways, transition resources, referral processes, and other joint mechanisms developed through agency partnerships. The Adult Education Program have signed a memorandum of understanding, (MOU) with the 16 American Job Centers (AJC) for collaboration and is, under the financial possibilities of the agency, contributing to the infrastructure costs for the operations of the AJC. The AEP maintain a regular employee staff member on each one of the 16 One-Stop Centers one day a week to evaluate adult education potential participants y make referrals to the adult education service providers approved by the AEP for services. These AEP employees make cross referrals between the One-Stop centers and the AEP service providers.

### **Development of career pathways**

The DEPR-AEP will update and expand the implementation of the Career Pathways system with the following goals:

(a) Making use of the Career Pathways Plan as a strategic planning tool - that align and bridge training, education, employment and supportive services at the local and state levels; partnering with employers; and enabling individuals to move beyond adult basic education and succeed in postsecondary education, earn industry recognized credentials, and advance along a career path;

(b) integrating adult basic education and occupational skills training to enable individuals to increase their educational learning gains and earn industry-recognized credentials while completing basic skills training; and connecting the systems and structures that serve individuals with lower skills through mechanisms such as effective contextualized programs that result in increased mastery of basic skills and the attainment of credentials that are relevant to employers.

The AEP is aware of the existing gap between the labor force skills and the needs of employers in many high-growth industries, including healthcare, technology, tourism and manufacturing. This gap creates structural unemployment while well-paying jobs go unfilled and, many low-skilled adults are trapped in low-wage jobs with little opportunity for career advancement. The career pathways model aims to address the economy's vital need for skilled workers while offering low-wage workers the opportunity to obtain education and training they need to succeed in the labor market. To achieve these goals, the career pathways approach offers low-skilled adults well-articulated training and employment ladders targeted to locally in-demand jobs combined with supportive services. This approach presupposes that post-secondary education and training should be organized as a series of manageable steps leading to successively better credentials and employment opportunities in growing occupations. Each step is designed to prepare participants for the next level of employment and education and provide a credential with labor market value.

The AEP career pathways model will include partnerships with providers, including community-based organizations, community and technical colleges, human services and workforce agencies, and employers. The model will be designed to allow entries, exits, and re-entries, depending on skill levels and prior training, employment prospects, and changing personal situations. The model will have the following main components:

- Basic and occupational skills instruction delivered concurrently to support accelerated entry into college-level occupational training programs and credentials for those participants with skill levels too low to meet entry requirements.
- Instructors overlap, integrated basic skills and occupational training instruction, allowing participants to build knowledge about the industry while increasing their basic skills.
- Participants will be exposed to work environments through a diversity of instructional tools including labs, internships and shadow jobs (job exploration tours).
- Academic and non-academic supportive services to help participants persist in their programs: guidance and assistance to apply for available financial resources; access to standard college support services such as tutoring; employment linkages to local industry and access to college career centers.

**Update the Implementation effort of the College and Career Readiness Standards (CCR Standards):**

The DE-AEP will also focus on the update of the system to assist in the transition from adult education to postsecondary education, including linkages with postsecondary educational institutions or institutions of higher education. In addition to the update of career pathways and partnerships, the DEPR-AEP will focus on update of the College and Career Readiness Standards (CCR Standards) to link basic education for adults, postsecondary education, and the world of work. At present time the DEPR-AEP has the curriculum aligned to the 2007 Standards. The standards require the implementation of the critical skills and knowledge expected by employers and required for success in workforce training, postsecondary education, and employment. The College and Career Readiness Standards (CCR) for Adult Education presents a set of college and career readiness standards that reflect the content most relevant to preparing adult students for success in colleges, technical training programs and the transition to work. The effort will promote, also, English language acquisition and civics education. The College and Career ready standards are designed to be relevant to the real world, allow students to master more critical-thinking and unique problem-solving skills, and to reflect the knowledge, skills and social foundations that our students need for success in both college and work.

**Operate high quality professional development programs to improve adult education instruction including incorporating essential components of reading instruction, instruction related to specific needs of adult learners, instruction provided by volunteers or other personnel and dissemination of information about models and promising practices.**

The DEPR-AEP is committed to develop high quality professional development activities, and support services which will help teachers/instructors better understand the career pathways systems and expand their professional knowledge.

### **1. Professional development for career pathways update**

Areas and themes related to the development and delivery of career pathways systems that would help low-skilled adults' transition into postsecondary education and employment or with disabilities, include the following:

- Design of Contextualized Instruction, including the STEM approach.
- Integration of employability skills into the classroom.
- Integration of career pathways into the adult education program curriculum-framework.
- Integration of career counseling and planning into adult education.
- Focusing participants on career pathways.

### **2. Provision of technical assistance to eligible providers of adult education and literacy activities**

The plan for providing technical assistance to service providers will include:

- Technical assistance in the curriculum thematic areas.
- Academic supervision to offer mentoring and coaching in both contents and Andragogy process.
- Training and technical assistance in the integration of digital literacy skills into all adult education and literacy activities.
- Training on the administration of pre and posttests standardized by the National Reporting System (NRS) and the descriptors of each level of functioning, used to measure educational gain and training on the monitoring of achievements of the core measures for the NRS.

### **Implementation of online professional development for teachers**

The AEP will develop an online professional development program for adult education teachers. There are several benefits for adult education in the efforts for professional development for teachers: students have better learning outcomes and teachers learn better ways to teach, develop better organization and planning skills and gain knowledge. Online professional development adds flexibility for teachers. In an online class, teachers can work at their own pace, as well as access classes any time of the day from any working technical location. Online professional development provides an open schedule, great flexibility and can substantially decrease stress for teachers and their students.

For teacher, physical classroom attendance requirements can cause scheduling conflicts and challenges. Requiring teachers to come to a physical location or stay at school late at night can cause significant challenges. When teachers are required to attend a physical location for professional development, the cost can be significant for both teachers and the AEP. Online courses are typically more affordable than

in-person classes. Technology reduces the cost of delivering professional development in various ways. Teachers can save money on gasoline, clothes and books. The Department of Education can save money on renting space, printed materials and furniture. Therefore, it is an excellent choice for both parties to consider online professional development courses.

Provision of technical assistance to local providers receiving funds including the development and dissemination of instructional and programmatic practices based on best available research in reading, writing, speaking, mathematics, English language acquisition, distance education, and staff training. Promoting the role of local providers as one-stop partners and helping in use of technology including staff training and improving efficiencies

The DEPR-AEP will foster the development and implementation of technology applications, translation technology, distance education, including professional development to support the use of instructional technology. This activity will be performed in compliance with the criteria number seven (7) of the 13 considerations of WIOA, that requires to consider “whether the eligible provider’s activities effectively use technology, services, and delivery systems, including distance education in a manner sufficient to increase the amount and quality of learning and how such technology, services, and systems lead to improved performance”.

The DEPR-AEP will also, promote the implementation by service providers of the essential components of reading instruction in the basic and secondary education activities, including phonemic awareness; phonics; vocabulary development; reading fluency, including oral reading skills; and reading comprehension strategies. Reading comprehension involves three levels of understanding: literal meaning, inferential meaning, and evaluative meaning. To achieve this objective the service providers will be required to implement several reading strategies, including activating background knowledge. Better comprehension occurs when students are engaged in activities that bridge their old knowledge with a new questioning and analyzing text structure.

In consideration to this commitment the DEPR-AEP will develop and implement the following activities:

#### **Incorporation of Internet service technology into adult education classrooms**

The DEPR-AEP will expand the efforts to incorporate Internet technology into adult education classrooms. The internet has become a powerful tool for communication. It has revolutionized communication, to the extent where we utilize the internet in everything we do. Internet in education classrooms breaks down communication barriers, as its portability enhances collaboration between students and teachers. Internet access is one of the important technologies in education, it allows the adult education clientele to connect to the internet technology without the wires. School Internet is about facilitating better education through reliable, secure and supported wireless connectivity, which provides students and staff with the ability to work and connect in all areas of the school campus, all the time. The Internet technology facilitates, also, the learning through distance education.

### **Preparing and setting interactive classrooms in the instruction centers.**

The AEP will invest funds in developing interactive classrooms with Smart boards, internet access, learning platforms, online resources and learning materials libraries with the purpose on enhancing learning. The interactive classroom fosters spontaneity and flexibility, allowing teachers to draw and comment on a wide variety of Web resources. It allows teachers to save time in the classroom, print if necessary, including any notes made during the lesson, reducing duplication of effort and facilitating review. It can be used to carry out videoconferences, attractive presentations, staff training, distance meetings, information sessions and group discussions. Therefore, it is also an excellent information technology and telecommunications (ICT) resource for the teacher professional development. Other benefits that teachers and students can find with the use of the interactive classroom is to have a tool that, in addition to the contents of the book, presents a technological combination in an reflective, contextualized and strategic way, which gives students the possibility of access to a critical and constructive education, in which each one is the manager of their own change and pedagogical progress.

### **Provision of portable notebooks in classrooms**

The AEP will equip with portable computers notebooks the adult education classrooms. Schools across the country have experimented with providing students with a notebook to facilitate learning. Providing students with notebooks for use in the classroom and at home, improve learning in several subjects, including science, math, and English. Students receive more feedback on their writing, edit and revise their work more often, draw on a wider range of resources to write, and publish or share their work with others.

The benefits of using computer notebooks in the adult education classroom include:

- Fostering online collaboration with other students
- Providing curriculum support and additional information to students
- Promoting better organization: Notebooks help students keep track of their assignments and utilize an online school calendar
- Allowing students to receive and view assignments online and submit their work via e-mail rather than being required to print them
- Improving the review process: Teachers may edit student papers and return them digitally to provide more detailed feedback
- Improving students' computer literacy skills
- Making learning more interesting for technology-savvy students

### **Incorporating online public domain and subscription-based search platform in the interactive classrooms**

Adult education teachers and students will benefit from online search resources on public domain. To help teachers make better use of their time and resources the AEP will research and acquire online public domain search platform for the interactive classrooms with educational content, most of which is created and shared by fellow teachers and educators. These resources will provide ready-made lesson plans and study guides, practice exercises and other tools, to enhance teaching/learning for the student and professional grow for the teacher. Also, the interactive boards acquired will include a full search and education material data base to help teachers and students in their learning process.

### **Development of a distance education program**

The AEP will expand the actual limited distance education program to provide the necessary space to let teachers boost the learning and skills gains on adult learners in geographical areas most impacted for the earthquakes and the pandemic. The distance education strategy will include two modalities, blended (hybrid) distance education and full distance education in a long-range stage with emphasis in this last one.

The distance education plan will let teachers develop supplemental activities and materials, fill gaps and address skills as they become more familiar with the curriculum over time. The AEP will promote the use of technology platforms for distance education. In an initial stage, a face to face approach combined with working remote on assignments, in a blended model approach, instructors will include both in-class and online instruction. The AEP will promote a full distance education approach using technology platforms.

The provision of assistance to eligible providers in developing and implementing programs that achieve the objectives and in measuring the progress of those programs in achieving such objectives, including meeting the State adjusted levels of performance described in section 116(b)(3), to comply with the requirements of NRS.

The DEPR-AEP will provide technical assistance to approved service providers on how to comply with measuring the progress of those programs in achieving such objectives, including meeting the State adjusted levels of performance described in section 116(b)(3), regarding the reporting requirements for NRS,. This reporting includes the total number of participants served, and the total number of participants who exited each of the core programs identified in sec. 116(b)(3) including disaggregated counts of those who participated in and exited a core program, by: 1) Individuals with barriers to employment, 2) co-enrollment in any of the programs in WIOA sec. 116(b)(3), 3) information on the performance levels achieved for the primary indicators of performance for all of the core programs identified including disaggregated levels for (i) Individuals with barriers to employment.

### **Technical assistance mentoring program for service providers**

Design, develop and implement of a technical assistance mentoring program among service providers to pair expert providers with providers that are emerging in their development of career pathways and

integrated education and training. Under these partnerships the service providers with less resources and experience will receive the benefits of the more in-depth knowledge of their partners. The service providers with more experience and effectiveness will help the AEP as mentors in technical assistance for the less experienced providers. This effort on collaborative networks will boost synergy on the servicing system for the AEP clientele.

Monitoring and evaluation of the quality and improvement in adult education and dissemination of information about models and promising practices within the State

The AEP will perform ongoing data collection to support the design, implementation, and evaluation of program activities, including: analysis of labor market data, which will help our program identify local workforce needs and improve the program offering and career pathways for the participants. The AEP will promote activities to improve adult education including leveraging existing funding sources, expanding staff skills and capacity, using and sharing administrative data, and leveraging and integrating of data.

WIOA legislation emphasize the importance of program monitoring. Monitoring ensure that proper systems are followed and meet legal requirements. Monitoring includes onsite and desktop monitoring systems, corrective-action procedures, follow-up procedures, and other items. The reason for emphasizing monitoring is to help reduce possible audit exceptions, sanctions, and unallowable costs that result in penalties and fund to be reimbursed to the Federal government.

We aim to improve the structure and delivery in the system to assist the unemployed adults in achieving a family-sustaining wage while providing our employers with the skilled workers they need to compete on the marketplace.

The AEP will lead efforts to identify and promote proven and promising strategies, practices and initiatives for meeting the needs of employers, workers and job seekers, and identify and disseminate information on proven and promising practices carried out in other local areas for meeting such needs.

The AEP will foster and implement promising strategies for meeting the employment and skill needs of workers and employers, such as the establishment of industry and sector partnerships, that provide the skilled workforce needed by employers and that expand employment and career advancement opportunities for workforce development system participants in in-demand industry sectors or occupations.

## **2. Describe how the State will use the funds to carry out permissible State Leadership Activities under section 223 of WIOA, if applicable**

Section 223 of WIOA mandates funds be used for four required activities and several permissible activities and encourage collaboration to avoid duplication and maximize impact. The DEPR- AEP will perform the four required activities under section 223, including:

Alignment of adult education and literacy activities with other core programs and one-stop partners to implement strategies identified in the unified State plan, including development of career pathways to provide access to employment and training services for adult education participants.

Operate high quality professional development programs to improve adult education instruction including incorporating essential components of reading instruction, instruction related to specific needs of adult learners, instruction provided by volunteers or other personnel and dissemination of information about models and promising practices.

Provision of technical assistance to local providers receiving funds including the development and dissemination of instructional and programmatic practices based on best available research in reading, writing, speaking, mathematics, English language acquisition, distance education, and staff training. Promoting the role of local providers as one-stop partners and helping in use of technology including staff training and improving efficiencies.

**Monitoring and evaluation of the quality of and improvement in adult education and dissemination of information about models and proven or promising practices within the State**

The DEPR- AEP will perform several of the permissible activities under section 223, including: technology instruction investments, curriculum development, achieving performance objectives and transition to postsecondary education. The PRDE's-AEP will work collaboratively with other core programs and partner's agencies to expand access to education, training and employment opportunities for adults, people with disabilities and individuals facing barriers to employment, thus contributing to further our economic development. The AEP program will provide resources and services through One-Stop Centers that include orientation for Adult Education program opportunities, career pathways, transition resources, referral processes, and other joint mechanisms developed through agency partnerships. The PRDE Adult Education Program will develop the following activities under section 223 of WIOA:

The Alignment of adult education and literacy activities with other core programs and one-stop partners to implement strategies identified in the unified State plan, including development of career pathways to provide access to employment and training services for adult education participants

**Collaboration with other core programs and partner's agencies**

The PRDE's AEP will work collaboratively with other core programs and partner's agencies to expand access to education, training and employment opportunities for adult learners. The AEP will provide resources and services through American Job Centers (One-Stop Centers) including orientation about program opportunities, career pathways, transition resources, referral processes, and other joint mechanisms developed through agency partnerships. The Adult Education Program have signed a memorandum of understanding, (MOU) with the 16 American Job Centers (AJC) for collaboration and is, under the financial possibilities of the agency, contributing to the infrastructure costs for the operations

of the AJC. The AEP maintain a regular employee staff member on each one of the 16 One-Stop Centers one day a week to evaluate adult education potential participants y make referrals to the adult education service providers approved by the AEP for services. These AEP employees make cross referrals between the One-Stop centers and the AEP service providers.

## **2. Development of career pathways**

The DEPR-AEP will update and expand the implementation of the Career Pathways system with the following goals:

(a) Making use of the Career Pathways Plan as a strategic planning tool - that align and bridge training, education, employment and supportive services at the local and state levels; partnering with employers; and enabling individuals to move beyond adult basic education and succeed in postsecondary education, earn industry recognized credentials, and advance along a career path;

(b) integrating adult basic education and occupational skills training to enable individuals to increase their educational learning gains and earn industry-recognized credentials while completing basic skills training; and connecting the systems and structures that serve individuals with lower skills through mechanisms such as effective contextualized programs that result in increased mastery of basic skills and the attainment of credentials that are relevant to employers.

The AEP is aware of the existing gap between the labor force skills and the needs of employers in many high-growth industries, including healthcare, technology, tourism and manufacturing. This gap creates structural unemployment while well-paying jobs go unfilled and, many low-skilled adults are trapped in low-wage jobs with little opportunity for career advancement. The career pathways model aims to address the economy's vital need for skilled workers while offering low-wage workers the opportunity to obtain education and training they need to succeed in the labor market. To achieve these goals, the career pathways approach offers low-skilled adults well-articulated training and employment ladders targeted to locally in-demand jobs combined with supportive services. This approach presupposes that post-secondary education and training should be organized as a series of manageable steps leading to successively better credentials and employment opportunities in growing occupations. Each step is designed to prepare participants for the next level of employment and education and provide a credential with labor market value.

The AEP career pathways model will include partnerships with providers, including community-based organizations, community and technical colleges, human services and workforce agencies, and employers. The model will be designed to allow entries, exits, and re-entries, depending on skill levels and prior training, employment prospects, and changing personal situations. The model will have the following main components:

Basic and occupational skills instruction delivered concurrently to support accelerated entry into college-level occupational training programs and credentials for those participants with skill levels too low to meet entry requirements.

Instructors overlap, integrated basic skills and occupational training instruction, allowing participants to build knowledge about the industry while increasing their basic skills.

Participants will be exposed to work environments through a diversity of instructional tools including labs, internships and shadow jobs (job exploration tours).

Academic and non-academic supportive services to help participants persist in their programs: guidance and assistance to apply for available financial resources; access to standard college support services such as tutoring; employment linkages to local industry and access to college career centers.

**Update the Implementation effort of the College and Career Readiness Standards (CCR Standards):**

The DE-AEP will also focus on the update of the system to assist in the transition from adult education to postsecondary education, including linkages with postsecondary educational institutions or institutions of higher education. In addition to the update of career pathways and partnerships, the DEPR-AEP will focus on update of the College and Career Readiness Standards (CCR Standards) to link basic education for adults, postsecondary education, and the world of work. At present time the DEPR-AEP has the curriculum aligned to the 2007 Standards. The standards require the implementation of the critical skills and knowledge expected by employers and required for success in workforce training, postsecondary education, and employment. The College and Career Readiness Standards (CCR) for Adult Education presents a set of college and career readiness standards that reflect the content most relevant to preparing adult students for success in colleges, technical training programs and the transition to work. The effort will promote, also, English language acquisition and civics education. The College and Career ready standards are designed to be relevant to the real world, allow students to master more critical-thinking and unique problem-solving skills, and to reflect the knowledge, skills and social foundations that our students need for success in both college and work.

Operate high quality professional development programs to improve adult education instruction including incorporating essential components of reading instruction, instruction related to specific needs of adult learners, instruction provided by volunteers or other personnel and dissemination of information about models and promising practices.

The DEPR-AEP is committed to develop high quality professional development activities, and support services which will help teachers/instructors better understand the career pathways systems and expand their professional knowledge.

Professional development for career pathways update

Areas and themes related to the development and delivery of career pathways systems that would help low-skilled adults' transition into postsecondary education and employment or with disabilities, include the following:

Design of Contextualized Instruction, including the STEM approach.

Integration of employability skills into the classroom.

Integration of career pathways into the adult education program curriculum-framework.

Integration of career counseling and planning into adult education.

Focusing participants on career pathways.

Provision of technical assistance to eligible providers of adult education and literacy activities

The plan for providing technical assistance to service providers will include:

Technical assistance in the curriculum thematic areas.

Academic supervision to offer mentoring and coaching in both contents and Andragogy process.

Training and technical assistance in the integration of digital literacy skills into all adult education and literacy activities.

Training on the administration of pre and posttests standardized by the National Reporting System (NRS) and the descriptors of each level of functioning, used to measure educational gain and training on the monitoring of achievements of the core measures for the NRS.

### **Implementation of online professional development for teachers**

The AEP will develop an online professional development program for adult education teachers. There are several benefits for adult education in the efforts for professional development for teachers: students have better learning outcomes and teachers learn better ways to teach, develop better organization and planning skills and gain knowledge. Online professional development ads flexibility for teachers. In an online class, teachers can work at their own pace, as well as access classes any time of the day from any working technical location. Online professional development provides an open schedule, great flexibility and can substantially decrease stress for teachers and their students.

For teacher, physical classroom attendance requirements can cause scheduling conflicts and challenges. Requiring teachers to come to a physical location or stay at school late at night can cause significant challenges. When teachers are required to attend a physical location for professional development, the cost can be significant for both teachers and the AEP. Online courses are typically more affordable than in-person classes. Technology reduces the cost of delivering professional development in various ways.

Teachers can save money on gasoline, clothes and books. The Department of Education can save money on renting space, printed materials and furniture. Therefore, it is an excellent choice for both parties to consider online professional development courses.

Provision of technical assistance to local providers receiving funds including the development and dissemination of instructional and programmatic practices based on best available research in reading, writing, speaking, mathematics, English language acquisition, distance education, and staff training. Promoting the role of local providers as one-stop partners and helping in use of technology including staff training and improving efficiencies.

The DEPR-AEP will foster the development and implementation of technology applications, translation technology, distance education, including professional development to support the use of instructional technology. This activity will be performed in compliance with the criteria number seven (7) of the 13 considerations of WIOA, that requires to consider “whether the eligible provider’s activities effectively use technology, services, and delivery systems, including distance education in a manner sufficient to increase the amount and quality of learning and how such technology, services, and systems lead to improved performance”.

The DEPR-AEP will also, promote the implementation by service providers of the essential components of reading instruction in the basic and secondary education activities, including phonemic awareness; phonics; vocabulary development; reading fluency, including oral reading skills; and reading comprehension strategies. Reading comprehension involves three levels of understanding: literal meaning, inferential meaning, and evaluative meaning. To achieve this objective the service providers will be required to implement several reading strategies, including activating background knowledge. Better comprehension occurs when students are engaged in activities that bridge their old knowledge with a new questioning and analyzing text structure.

In consideration to this commitment the DEPR-AEP will develop and implement the following activities:

Incorporation of Internet service technology into adult education classrooms

The DEPR-AEP will make efforts to incorporate Internet technology into adult education classrooms. The internet has become a powerful tool for communication. It has revolutionized communication, to the extent where we utilize the internet in everything we do. Internet in education classrooms breaks down communication barriers, as its portability enhances collaboration between students and teachers. Internet access is one of the important technologies in education, it allows the adult education clientele to connect to the internet technology without the wires. School Internet is about facilitating better education through reliable, secure and supported wireless connectivity, which provides students and staff with the ability to work and connect in all areas of the school campus, all the time. The Internet technology facilitates, also, the learning through distance education.

### **Preparing and setting interactive classrooms in the instruction centers.**

The AEP will invest funds in developing interactive classrooms with Smart boards, internet access, learning platforms, online resources and learning materials libraries with the purpose on enhancing learning. The interactive classroom fosters spontaneity and flexibility, allowing teachers to draw and comment on a wide variety of Web resources. It allows teachers to save time in the classroom, print if necessary, including any notes made during the lesson, reducing duplication of effort and facilitating review. It can be used to carry out videoconferences, attractive presentations, staff training, distance meetings, information sessions and group discussions. Therefore, it is also an excellent information technology and telecommunications (ICT) resource for the teacher professional development. Other benefits that teachers and students can find with the use of the interactive classroom is to have a tool that, in addition to the contents of the book, presents a technological combination in an reflective, contextualized and strategic way, which gives students the possibility of access to a critical and constructive education, in which each one is the manager of their own change and pedagogical progress.

### **Provision of portable notebooks in classrooms**

The AEP will equip with portable computers notebooks the adult education classrooms. Schools across the country have experimented with providing students with a notebook to facilitate learning. Providing students with notebooks for use in the classroom and at home, improve learning in several subjects, including science, math, and English. Students receive more feedback on their writing, edit and revise their work more often, draw on a wider range of resources to write, and publish or share their work with others.

The benefits of using computer notebooks in the adult education classroom include:

- Fostering online collaboration with other students
- Providing curriculum support and additional information to students
- Promoting better organization: Notebooks help students keep track of their assignments and utilize an online school calendar
- Allowing students to receive and view assignments online and submit their work via e-mail rather than being required to print them
- Improving the review process: Teachers may edit student papers and return them digitally to provide more detailed feedback
- Improving students' computer literacy skills
- Making learning more interesting for technology-savvy students
- Incorporating online public domain and subscription-based search platform in the interactive classrooms

Adult education teachers and students will benefit from online search resources on public domain. To help teachers make better use of their time and resources the AEP will research and acquire online public domain search platform for the interactive classrooms with educational content, most of which is created and shared by fellow teachers and educators. These resources will provide ready-made lesson plans and study guides, practice exercises and other tools, to enhance teaching/learning for the student and professional grow for the teacher. Also, the interactive boards acquired will include a full search and education material data base to help teachers and students in their learning process.

### **Development of a distance education program**

The AEP will implement a distance education program to provide the necessary space to let teachers boost the learning and skills gains on adult learners. The distance education strategy will include two modalities:

Blended (hybrid) distance education.

Full distance education in a long-range stage.

The distance education plan will let teachers develop supplemental activities and materials, fill gaps and address skills as they become more familiar with the curriculum over time. The AEP will promote the use of technology platforms for distance education. In an initial stage, a face to face approach combined with working remote on assignments, in a blended model approach, instructors will include both in-class and online instruction. In the long run, the AEP will promote a full distance education approach using technology platforms.

The provision of assistance to eligible providers in developing and implementing programs that achieve the objectives and in measuring the progress of those programs in achieving such objectives, including meeting the State adjusted levels of performance described in section 116(b)(3), to comply with the requirements of NRS.

The DEPR-AEP will provide technical assistance to approved service providers on how to comply with measuring the progress of those programs in achieving such objectives, including meeting the State adjusted levels of performance described in section 116(b)(3), regarding the reporting requirements for NRS,. This reporting includes the total number of participants served, and the total number of participants who exited each of the core programs identified in sec. 116(b)(3) including disaggregated counts of those who participated in and exited a core program, by: 1) Individuals with barriers to employment, 2) co-enrollment in any of the programs in WIOA sec. 116(b)(3), 3) information on the performance levels achieved for the primary indicators of performance for all of the core programs identified including disaggregated levels for (i) Individuals with barriers to employment.

### **Technical assistance mentoring program for service providers**

Design, develop and implement of a technical assistance mentoring program among service providers to pair expert providers with providers that are emerging in their development of career pathways and integrated education and training. Under these partnerships the service providers with less resources and experience will receive the benefits of the more in-depth knowledge of their partners. The service providers with more experience and effectiveness will help the AEP as mentors in technical assistance for the less experienced providers. This effort on collaborative networks will boost synergy on the servicing system for the AEP clientele.

Monitoring and evaluation of the quality and improvement in adult education and dissemination of information about models and promising practices within the State.

The AEP will perform ongoing data collection to support the design, implementation, and evaluation of program activities, including: analysis of labor market data, which will help our program identify local workforce needs and improve the program offering and career pathways for the participants. The AEP will promote activities to improve adult education including leveraging existing funding sources, expanding staff skills and capacity, using, and sharing administrative data, and leveraging and integrating of data.

WIOA legislation emphasize the importance of program monitoring. Monitoring ensure that proper systems are followed and meet legal requirements. Monitoring includes onsite and desktop monitoring systems, corrective-action procedures, follow-up procedures, and other items. The reason for emphasizing monitoring is to help reduce possible audit exceptions, sanctions, and unallowable costs that result in penalties and fund to be reimbursed to the Federal government.

We aim to improve the structure and delivery in the system to assist the unemployed adults in achieving a family-sustaining wage while providing our employers with the skilled workers they need to compete on the marketplace.

The AEP will lead efforts to identify and promote proven and promising strategies, practices and initiatives for meeting the needs of employers, workers and job seekers, and identify and disseminate information on proven and promising practices carried out in other local areas for meeting such needs.

The AEP will foster and implement promising strategies for meeting the employment and skill needs of workers and employers, such as the establishment of industry and sector partnerships, that provide the skilled workforce needed by employers and that expand employment and career advancement opportunities for workforce development system participants in in-demand industry sectors or occupations.

## F. ASSESSING QUALITY

**Describe how the eligible agency will assess the quality of providers of adult education and literacy activities under title II and take actions to improve such quality, including providing the activities described in section 223(a)(1)(B) of WIOA.**

### **Quality assessment**

The DEPR-AEP will enforce the criteria number 3 of the 13 considerations of WIOA, regarding the past effectiveness of the eligible provider in improving the literacy of eligible individuals, to meet State-adjusted levels of performance for the primary indicators of performance described in WIOA Section 116, especially with respect to eligible individuals who have low levels of literacy.

Also, all applications submitted for funding must comply with section 231 and the stipulations of this Plan regarding submission of applications. In addition to those included in the application, the applicants must also comply with the following requirements:

Submit clear and measurable goals and objectives that promote higher student achievement and performance. Their performance levels must meet those established at the state level.

Demonstrate through measurable outcomes and performance measures, their past effectiveness in helping participants attain higher literacy skills, especially at the lowest levels of literacy.

Student performance, retention and promotion must be reported to the State, as might be required, through its new student information system.

Must evidence that they are serving the most in need (low income and low literacy students) through needs assessments and community analysis.

Programs must be of enough intensity and duration; therefore, must meet the requirements established by the State for programs that assist participants in attaining a high school diploma, or assist in the transition to postsecondary education and training using career pathways. Enough intensity and duration must be evidenced by an operational design that is appropriate to meet the established performance measures. The integration of prioritized literacy-based workforce preparation skills and digital literacy skills in the instruction delivered under content domains, will be strongly encouraged for all programs.

Programs must be based on adult education practices that are supported by the most rigorous or scientifically valid research available and the use of strategies that have proven to be effective and documented through research, such as career pathways, standard-based education and PRDE's adult education academic content standards.

Service providers must hold programs in a non-threatening environment where real life and life-long learning skills are promoted. These strategies are critical for participants to prepare productive and contributing members of the community for the global economy.

Professional development for all adult education program personnel must meet high quality standards established by the PRDE in terms of credit hours and intensity of training. The PRDE supports adult educators in learning and applying practice that are based on the most rigorous or scientifically valid research available.

Local service providers must demonstrate how they will implement memorandum of understanding (MOU) with all appropriate agencies such as universities, training programs, schools, employers and other government agencies to effectively coordinate services for adults in their programs.

Local service providers must commit themselves to provide to the PRDE all required data and comply with the Student Information System. This element is essential in tracking students and assessing their performance. Local providers will be trained for data collection and submission procedures and will be required to submit all required data within the deadlines established by the Adult Education program.

Local service providers of English Literacy and Conversational English must substantiate the need for these programs in the community, describe how their program will effectively address participant's needs and document program outcomes.

The Adult Education program will encourage service providers to offer programs in a flexible schedule and with ample support services to enable adults to attend and complete these programs. Workplace literacy providers will be required to offer flexible schedules and locations that will accommodate the needs of working adults. The Adult Education program promotes support services such as childcare and transportation, among local service providers.

The local providers will be accountable for meeting and complying with standards of quality for administration and instruction of Adult Basic Education activities. The effectiveness of programs, services and activities of funding recipients will be assessed through the DEPR Monitoring Division. The Division employs the following methods to assess programs and evaluate program improvement: data reviews, monitoring visits, on-site program reviews and self-assessment of program functions and performance. Any time a service provider is asked for a corrective action plan to improve in a particular area, AEP personnel will provide technical assistance and support to improve the quality of the adult education activities of the service provider

**How the AEP program will assess the quality of State Leadership activities for professional development as described in section 223(a)(1)(B) of WIOA**

Section 223(a) (1) (B) of WIOA (B) requires... “the establishment or operation of high quality professional development programs to improve the instruction provided pursuant to local activities required under section 231(b), including instruction incorporating the essential components of reading instruction as such components relate to adults, instruction related to the specific needs of adult learners, instruction

provided by volunteers or by personnel of a State or outlying area, and dissemination of information about models and promising practices related to such programs”..

In designing professional development plan, the AEP will develop an assessment tool to assess the professional development activities implemented to determine the extent to which adult service professionals have core competencies and skills relevant to their competency field. The assessment tool will include a list of items to examine competencies relevant to core adult participants’ activities elements.

The assessment will identify areas of strength, areas for improvement, and next steps for planning. The assessment tool will inform the AEP about the quality of staff capacity and will also serve as the baseline to evaluate outcome of the professional development plan.

The staff will rank how relevant they believe each competency is to their job responsibilities; how knowledgeable or skilled they believe that they are on each competency; how much training they have in each competency and other competencies.

#### Performance accountability

The performance accountability assesses the effectiveness of grantees in achieving continuous improvement of adult education and literacy activities. The performance outcome measures consist of the following core indicators:

The percentage of program participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit of the program

The percentage of program participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the fourth quarter after exit of the program

The median earnings of program participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the program

The percentage of program participants who, during a program year, are in an education or training program that leads to a recognized post-secondary credential or employment and who are achieving measurable skills gains toward such a credential or employment

The indicators of effectiveness in serving employers established pursuant to WIOA

Measurement of effectiveness of service providers in previous service delivery.

Review and consideration of the Local Workforce Boards comments on the service providers’ proposal in terms of alignment with the regional plan of each concerned local area.

Each fiscal year, the Adult Education program negotiates proposed target percentages for each of the core indicators of performance with the USDOE, Office of Career, Technical and Adult Education (OCTAE). Each local program is responsible for meeting or exceeding the negotiated performance targets.

Adult Education and Family Literacy Act Program Certifications

States must provide written and signed certifications that:

The State Plan must include	Include
1. The plan is submitted by the State agency that is eligible to submit the plan;	Yes
2. The State agency has authority under State law to perform the functions of the State under the program;	Yes
3. The State legally may carry out each provision of the plan;	Yes
4. All provisions of the plan are consistent with State law;	Yes
5. A State officer, specified by title in the certification, has authority under State law to receive, hold, and disburse Federal funds made available under the plan;	Yes
6. The State officer who is submitting the plan, specified by the title in the certification, has authority to submit the plan;	Yes
7. The agency that is submitting the plan has adopted or otherwise formally approved the plan; and	Yes
8. The plan is the basis for State operation and administration of the program;	Yes

Adult Education and Family Literacy Act Program Assurances

The State Plan must include assurances that:

The State Plan must include	Include
1. The eligible agency will expend funds appropriated to carry out title II of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) only in a manner consistent with fiscal requirements under section 241(a) of WIOA (regarding the supplement-not-supplant requirement);	Yes

The State Plan must include	Include
2. The eligible agency will ensure that there is at least one eligible provider serving each local area, as defined in section 3(32) of WIOA;	Yes
3. The eligible agency will not use any funds made available under title II of WIOA for the purpose of supporting or providing programs, services, or activities for individuals who are not “eligible individuals” within the meaning of section 203(4) of WIOA, unless it is providing programs, services or activities related to family literacy activities, as defined in section 203(9) of WIOA;	Yes
4. Using funds made available under title II of WIOA to carry out a program for criminal offenders within a correctional institution, the eligible agency will give priority to serving individuals who are likely to leave the correctional institution within five years of participation in the program.	Yes
5. The eligible agency agrees that in expending funds made available under Title II of WIOA, the eligible agency will comply with sections 8301 through 8303 of the Buy American Act (41 U.S.C. 8301-8303).	Yes

Authorizing or Certifying Representative

CERTIFICATION REGARDING LOBBYING

Certification for Contracts, Grants, Loans, and Cooperative Agreements

The undersigned certifies, to the best of his or her knowledge and belief, that:

(1) No Federal appropriated funds have been paid or will be paid, by or on behalf of the undersigned, to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of an agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with the awarding of any Federal contract, the making of any Federal grant, the making of any Federal loan, the entering into of any cooperative agreement, and the extension, continuation, renewal, amendment, or modification of any Federal contract, grant, loan, or cooperative agreement.

(2) If any funds other than Federal appropriated funds have been paid or will be paid to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with this Federal

contract, grant, loan, or cooperative agreement, the undersigned shall complete and submit Standard Form-LLL, "Disclosure of Lobbying Activities," in accordance with its instructions.

(3) The undersigned shall require that the language of this certification be included in the award documents for all subawards at all tiers (including subcontracts, subgrants, and contracts under grants, loans, and cooperative agreements) and that all subrecipients shall certify and disclose accordingly. This certification is a material representation of fact upon which reliance was placed when this transaction was made or entered into. Submission of this certification is a prerequisite for making or entering into this transaction imposed by section 1352, title 31, U.S. Code. Any person who fails to file the required certification shall be subject to a civil penalty of not less than \$10,000 and not more than \$100,000 for each such failure.

Statement for Loan Guarantees and Loan Insurance

The undersigned states, to the best of his or her knowledge and belief, that:

If any funds have been paid or will be paid to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with this commitment providing for the United States to insure or guarantee a loan, the undersigned shall complete and submit Standard Form-LLL, "Disclosure of Lobbying Activities," in accordance with its instructions. Submission of this statement is a prerequisite for making or entering into this transaction imposed by section 1352, title 31, U.S. Code. Any person who fails to file the required statement shall be subject to a civil penalty of not less than \$10,000 and not more than \$100,000 for each such failure.

Please download and sign the forms below. Please scan and return the forms to [wioa@ed.gov](mailto:wioa@ed.gov) at the same time you submit your State Plan via the portal.

SF424B - Assurances – Non-Construction Programs

(<http://www2.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/appforms/appforms.html>)

Grants.gov - Certification Regarding Lobbying

(<http://www2.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/appforms/appforms.html>)

SF LLL Form – Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (required, only if applicable)

(<http://www2.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/appforms/appforms.html>)

APPLICANT’S ORGANIZATION	Enter information in this column
Applicant’s Organization	Puerto Rico Department of Education

APPLICANT’S ORGANIZATION	Enter information in this column
PRINTED NAME AND TITLE OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE	
First Name	Eliezer
Last Name	Ramos Parés
Title	Secretary
Email	_____@de.pr.gov

Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA)

In the text box below, describe the steps the applicant proposes to take to ensure equitable access to, and participation in, its Federally-assisted program for students, teachers, and other program beneficiaries with special needs provide the information to meet the requirements of Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA), consistent with the following instructions posted at <https://www2.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/appforms/gepa427.doc>.

Puerto Rico Adult Education Program (AEP) General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) Section 427 certification for the 2020-2023 WIOA-AEFLA unified plan

All program activities for the Adult Education Program (AEP) at the Puerto Rico Department of Education will comply with Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) that outlines the six types of barriers that can impede equitable access or participation in program activities including gender, race, national origin, color, disability, or age. AEP program activities target adult students of different genders, races, national origins, colors, disabilities, and ages to the fullest extent possible. No participant will be denied participation in program activities based upon their gender, race, national origin, color, age, or any disability. The AEP State Director will monitor program activities to ensure that equitable participation in program activities is not limited due to gender, race, national origin, color, disability, or age. The AEP will implement the following specific measures:

The Department of Education of Puerto Rico has an active Reasonable Accommodation Policy which includes the policies and procedures that provide the necessary accommodations for each person with disabilities in our school community. Additionally, the Adult Education Program has complied with this in requirement in eligibility consideration number 2. This section outlines the requirements put in place by each educational provider to disclose their accommodation policy contemplating the accommodation for

disabled population including those with learning disabilities, as established in Section 231(e)(2) of the WIOA which requires that each application of funds, disclose how they will provide accommodations to the physical, mental, and learning disabilities. These include students, teachers, and all other personnel included in the educational provider school community. This requirement is taken into consideration during the evaluation process of application submission process as established and in compliance with Section 427 of the GEPA Law.

Create a systematic process that uses technology to level the playing field by providing equity and access to all students while offering strategies using technology that impact a broad range of students with diverse learning needs. Students will also have continual access to learning resources, expertise and authoritative sources, online tutoring and guided courses, information management and communication tools. In addition to students will have access to digital learning resources with interactive technologies, and relevant learning experiences from a blended delivery model using digital content and teacher instruction. Blended learning methods will be utilized to meet the diverse learning needs of students. Students will be empowered to take ownership of their learning and develop self-directed goals to continuously document strengths, goals, and progress towards college, career readiness and career pathways.

The AEP recognize that some low-income students and students in rural settings are unable to access ABE instruction because they do not have transportation. The AEP will provide students with the delivery of ABE instruction via technology to eliminate distance and transportation barriers.

The AEP will build capacity for the transformation to a technology driven culture in rural areas that advances access and enables teacher efficacy, and achievement and engagement for all students.

In order to provide highly qualified teachers and rigorous instruction AEP will include a transition to allowing students' access to the most effective teachers via technology. We will ensure that students have access to the most effective teachers while enhancing our capacity of highly qualified teachers.

### **Adult Education and Literacy Program Performance Indicators**

#### **Performance Goals for the Core Programs**

Each state submitting a Unified or Combined State Plan is required to identify expected levels of performance for each of the primary indicators of performance for the first two years covered by the plan. The state is required to reach agreement with the Secretary of Labor, in conjunction with the Secretary of Education, on state-negotiated levels of performance for the indicators for each of the first two years of the plan.

For Program Year (PY) 2016-2019 plans, the Departments used the transition authority under section 503(a) of WIOA to designate certain primary indicators of performance as "baseline" indicators to ensure an orderly transition from the requirements of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 to those under

WIOA. A “baseline” indicator was one for which states did not propose an expected level of performance and did not come to agreement with the Departments on negotiated levels of performance because sufficient data was not available to establish such performance levels. As a result, “baseline” indicators were not used in the end of the year adjustment of performance levels and were not used to determine failure to meet adjusted levels of performance for purposes of sanctions. The Departments designated indicators as “baseline” based on the likelihood of a State having insufficient data with which to make a reasonable determination of an expected level of performance.

For PYs 2020-2023 Plans, Title I programs (Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth) and the Title II program (Adult Education and Family Literacy Act) will have two full years of data available to make reasonable determinations of expected levels of performance for the following indicators for PY 2020 and PY 2021:

- Employment (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit);
- Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Credential Attainment Rate; and
- Measurable Skill Gains

The Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service program, authorized under the Wagner-Peyser Act, as amended by title III of WIOA, will have two full years of data available to make a reasonable determination of expected levels of performance for the following indicators for PY 2020 and PY 2021:

- Employment (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit); and
- Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit)

The Credential Attainment Rate and Measurable Skill Gains indicators do not apply to the Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service program; therefore, this program will not submit expected levels of performance for these indicators.

For the first two years of PYs 2020-2023 Plans, the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program, authorized under title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by title IV of WIOA, will have two full years of data available for the Measurable Skill Gains indicator only. Therefore, the Departments will designate the following indicators as “baseline” for the VR program for PY 2020 and PY 2021:

- Employment (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit);
- Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit); and
- Credential Attainment Rate

VR agencies must continue to collect and report on all indicators, including those that have been designated as “baseline, pursuant to section 116(d) of WIOA.” The actual performance data reported by these programs for indicators designated as “baseline” for PY 2020 and PY 2021 will serve as baseline data in future years. The Departments will require VR agencies to submit expected levels of performance for these indicators for PY 2022 and PY 2023.

The Departments determined that the Effectiveness in Serving Employers indicator will be measured as a shared outcome across all six core programs within each state to ensure a holistic approach to serving employers. The Departments will continue piloting approaches for measuring this indicator for the first two years of PY 2020-2023 plans. Therefore, states are not required to submit an expected level of performance for the Effectiveness in Serving Employers indicator for PY 2020 and PY 2021. However, core programs are expected to collect data and report on this indicator for PY 2020 and PY 2021 as they did for PYs 2016-2019 plans.

Each core program must submit an expected level of performance for all of the other indicators, as applicable, with the exception of the four indicators designated as “baseline” for the VR program in PY 2020 and PY 2021. The Departments will work with states during the negotiation process to establish negotiated levels of performance for each of the primary indicators for the core programs not listed as “baseline.” Each state must update its plan to include the agreed-upon negotiated levels of performance before the Departments approve a state’s plan.

States may identify additional indicators in the plan, including additional approaches to measuring Effectiveness in Serving Employers, and may establish levels of performance for each of the state indicators. Please identify any such state indicators under Additional Indicators of Performance.

Pending discussion

<b>Performance Indicators</b>	<b>PY 2021 Negotiated Level</b>	<b>PY 2022-23 Expected Level</b>	<b>PY 2023-2024 Expected Level</b>
<b>Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)</b>	10.0%	10.0%	10.0%
<b>Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)</b>	16.7%	16.0%	16.0%
<b>Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)</b>	\$3,250	\$3,250	\$3,250
<b>Credential Attainment Rate</b>	13.6%	13.0%	13.0%
<b>Measurable Skill Gains</b>	54.5%	54.5%	54.5%
<b>Effectiveness in Serving Employers</b>	Not Applicable <u>1</u>	Not Applicable <u>1</u>	Not Applicable <u>1</u>

1 “Effectiveness in Serving Employers” is still being piloted and this data will not be entered for 2020 State Plans.

## ADULT EDUCATION AND FAMILY LITERACY ACT PROGRAM CERTIFICATIONS AND ASSURANCES

States must provide written and signed certifications that:

1. The plan is submitted by the Department of Education, agency that is eligible to submit the plan
2. The Department of Education has authority under State law to perform the functions of the State under the program
3. The State legally may carry out each provision of the plan
4. All provisions of the plan are consistent with State law
5. The Secretary of Education has authority under State law to receive, hold, and disburse Federal funds made available under the plan
6. The Secretary of Education specified by the title in the certification, has authority to submit the plan
7. The Department of Education has adopted or otherwise formally approved the plan; and
8. The plan is the basis for State operation and administration of the program.

### **The State Plan must include assurances that:**

The Department of Education will expend funds appropriated to carry out title II of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) only in a manner consistent with fiscal requirements under section 241(a) of WIOA (regarding supplement and not supplement provisions);

The Department of Education will seek that there is at least one eligible provider serving each local area, as defined in section 3(32) of WIOA.

The Department of Education will not use any funds made available under title II of WIOA for the purpose of supporting or providing programs, services, or activities for individuals who are not “eligible individuals” within the meaning of section 203(4) of WIOA, unless it is providing programs, services or activities related to family literacy activities, as defined in section 203(9) of WIOA;

The Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education program under section 243(a) of WIOA will be delivered in combination with integrated education and training activities

The Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education program under section 243(a) of WIOA will be designed to (1) prepare adults who are English language learners for, and place such adults in, unsubsidized employment in in-demand industries and occupations that lead to economic self-sufficiency and (2) integrate with the local workforce development system and its functions to carry out the activities of the program; and

Using funds made available under title II of WIOA to carry out a program for criminal offenders within a correctional institution, the Department of Education will give priority to serving individuals who are likely to leave the correctional institution within five years of participation in the program.

## IX. VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

The Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Services Portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan\* must include the following descriptions and estimates, as required by section 101(a) of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by WIOA:

### (A) INPUT OF STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

All agencies, except for those that are independent consumer-controlled commissions, must describe the following:

- (1) input provided by the State Rehabilitation Council, including input and recommendations on the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, recommendations from the Council's report, the review and analysis of consumer satisfaction, and other Council reports that may have been developed as part of the Council's functions;

The Puerto Rico State Rehabilitation Council presents the following recommendations to the VRA, related to the VRA Portion Goals and Strategies in the 2020 Unified State Plan.

#### Goal 1:

- Establish alliances with existing public and private entities that provide training, advice, and resources for self-employment. For example: Guayacán, Colmena 66, Centro para Puerto Rico, among others.
- Establish alliances with job placement entities to identify available positions and consumers who could be potential candidates.
- As agreed, it is recommended that a written protocol will be established to share communications for the provision of services, so that CER makes the corresponding recommendations.
- Establish a frequently updated electronic database through the Internet to match available job positions and qualified consumers.
- Amend the current regulatory communication related to the services of independent living centers, or publish a new one, to clarify how these can benefit the active consumers of the VRA. In this way, increase referrals of consumers with significant disabilities to independent living centers to strengthen their skills and achieve greater job placement, employability, and possible support in job retention

#### Goal 2:

- Strengthen the effective implementation of the protocols existing between the DE and the VRA, including the coordination of the PEI review at any time of the year, to avoid accumulation during certain months of the year; in this way, the participation of VRA personnel can be increased.

- Guarantee the acquisition of pre-employment knowledge and skills of youth in transition, which are measured through the evaluation sheets at the end of each workshop or activity.
- Continue to identify the island-wide number of students who can benefit from this service compared to people who have not been impacted.

**Goal 3:**

- Establish alliances with the regional employers' committees to identify the available positions and the consumers who could be potential candidates.
- Incentivize employers through public recognition for inclusive practices.
- Develop an online guide for employers that provides information on the benefits of VRA services and having an inclusive work environment, as well as applicable legislation.

**Goal 4:**

- Use the VRA website and social networks to educate parents, school personnel and other interested parties about VRA services.
- Proactively use the mass media for the dissemination of VRA services, for example FM radio stations and television programs at times with the largest audience.
- Establish a procedure for coordinating the participation of the CER in all outreach activities sponsored by the VRA. The purpose of such participation is so that the public knows the role of the Council, the sectors represented and who can participate in the public meetings that the Council leads. Furthermore, the participation of the Council in the activities would allow members to observe how the activities are carried out to make recommendations, as established by federal law.

**Goal 5:**

- Digitalization of documents containing administrative, fiscal, and programmatic procedures in an accessible format so that they can be easily accessed through the web by VRA personnel and the general public.

(2) The Designated State unit's response to the Council's input and recommendations; and

The VRA accepts PRSRC's recommendations on VRA's portion of the State Unified Plan and places forth the following reactions:

**Goal 1:**

During the 2017 and 2018 programs, the staff of the Support Centers and Employment Modalities (CSEM) developed / participated in 80 activities in coordination with the Department of Labor and Human Resources (DTRH), which facilitated knowing the new employment trends and the types of employers. On the other hand, they continued to receive various publications and / or journals from the DTRH Research and Statistics Division, some of these were: Business Employment Dynamics, Industrial Composition by Municipality (published quarterly); Covered Jobs and Wages. These publications and / or magazines allow CSEM staff to continue developing workshops for consumers.

The Office of Support and Employment Modes (OSEM) received approximately 60 job offers from various types of employers by email. Once received, he referred them to the CSEM to be analyzed and identify potential consumers who could benefit from employment alternatives.

The Office of Rehabilitation Counseling Services (OSCRV) referred 182 job offers to OSEM.

- However, the recommendation on stablishing alliances with public and private entities as a Center for Puerto Rico, Guayacán y Colmena 66, will be analyzed to determine the extent of these around the population we serve.
- Similarly, The Office of Support and Employment Modes (OSEM) are developing new strategies to establish alliances with job placement entities to identify available positions.
- In relation to developing a protocol to share those communications for the provision of services that require.
- SRCPR input, it will be developed in common agreement.
- In terms of establishing a database to provide the available jobs for qualified consumers, to VRA is the process of acquiring a new case management system and recommending establishing an area for those purposes.
- The Normative Communication Number 2011-19 Management of referrals and request for services for the Independent Living Program, is in the process of revision to issue new communication regarding the services of independent living centers, according to WIOA.

### **Goal 2:**

The recommendations made by SCRPR on the strategies of goal 2 are accepted, however they are contemplated in the interagency agreements that the VRA has established with the Department of Education. See sections VI.VR(d)(1) and VI.VR(d)(2).

### **Goal 3:**

Regarding the recommendations related to strengthening the relationship with employers to identify integrated competitive employment opportunities and career exploration, the Office of Support and Employment Modes and the Support Centers and Employment Modes are immersed in the development

of strategies, active participation with employers and employer's committees and development of salary incentive contracts to increase employment opportunities for consumers.

**Goal 4:**

Regarding the recommendations made on maintaining the process of disclosure of the agency's services, emphasizing the criteria for eligibility and service provision, the VRAPR has developed strategies to maintain and improve the process of dissemination of services, emphasizing the criteria of severity and the provision of rehabilitation services to people with disabilities, such as guidelines the services that VRA offers to public and private agencies.

- Participation in service fairs in consortiums, boards, and municipalities among others.
- The VRA participated in orientations in the different radio and television stations to promote the services of the agency.
- In terms of establishing a procedure for the participation of SRCPR in the activities of the VRA, the same will be developed in common agreement to determine the scope of this.

**Goal 5:**

The agency has document digitalization process for fiscal and programmatic administrative process, some of these may not be accessible to all staff or the public due to its confidential nature and the guarantee the security of the systems, the VRA has a digitalization are known as ARVI where employees can access manual communications and guides among others.

- (3) The designated State unit's explanations for rejecting any of the Council's input or recommendations.

Explanations are integrated in the previous section of the Designated State unit's response to the SRC's input and recommendations.

**(B) REQUEST FOR WAIVER OF STATEWIDENESS**

When requesting a waiver of the state wideness requirement, the designated State unit must identify the types of services to be provided by the program on a non-statewide basis. The waiver request must also include written assurances that:

- (1) a local public agency will provide the non-Federal share of costs associated with the services to be provided in accordance with the waiver request;

Not applicable.

- (2) the designated State unit will approve each proposed service before it is put into effect; and

Not applicable.

- (3) All State plan requirements will apply requirements of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan will apply to the services approved under the waiver.

Not applicable.

(C) COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS WITH AGENCIES NOT CARRYING OUT ACTIVITIES UNDER THE STATEWIDE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM.

Describe interagency cooperation with and utilization of the services and facilities of agencies and programs that are not carrying out activities through the statewide workforce development system with respect to:

- (1) Federal, State, and local agencies and programs;

The PRVRA has collaborative agreements with the following agencies, corporations and programs not carrying out activities under the Statewide Workforce Development System:

**University of Puerto Rico**

The PRVRA coordinates the placement in its own agency of internship as well as practicum students of the master's degree program in Rehabilitation Counseling. These students are a potential human resource to be recruited once their professional credentials are completed. Also, the Graduate School of Rehabilitation Counseling carried out the *Comprehensive Assessment of Vocational Rehabilitation Needs* during 2016-2017.

The PRVRA has VR counselors placed in the facilities of the Río Piedras and Mayagüez campuses of the UPR for the provision of services to eligible students. The ARV also maintains a collaborative agreement with the Humacao Campus and the Medical Sciences Campus of the UPR so that Occupational Therapy students will carry out practices in the ARV.

**State Insurance Fund Corporation**

The PRVRA maintains a *Contractual Agreement of Comprehensive Action for the Rehabilitation of Injured Workers* under the SIFC. Act 182-1951, as amended, authorizes the SIFC to invest in the vocational rehabilitation of its beneficiaries who have disabilities for work. The PRVRA receives an annual allocation of funds of \$600,000, which is used to match federal funds.

**Institute of Developmental Disabilities**

The PRVRA maintains collaboration with and representation in the IDD in order to meet the service needs of the population with developmental disabilities. It has participated in activities aimed at the population with autism, which were coordinated by the IDD.

**Caribbean Planning and Work Incentive Assistance Program**

The PRVRA contains a public policy that those consumers who receive SSDI will be referred to this program. The purpose of the referral is that these beneficiaries who are interested in getting a job will be oriented as the impact that the salary will have on the disability benefits, they receive, the counseling service needed for benefits planning.

#### **Department of Veterans Affairs**

The PRVRA participates in activities and meetings coordinated by this agency, to offer referred eligible veterans with disabilities access to the various services available to achieve competitive employment.

#### **State Independent Living Council (SILC)**

The PRVRA, SILC and independent living centers promote collaborative actions with other public or private organizations that offer services to the population with significant disabilities. They also join efforts to increase the opportunities for community support services for such population. The Normative Communication No. 2011-19 establishes the referral procedure to the independent living centers of those disabled persons who are not eligible for services under Title I, but who could benefit from services provided in such centers. The PRVRA allocates funds to the SILC for its operations under the Innovation and Expansion Section.

#### **Department of Health - Division of Services for People with Intellectual Disability (DSPID)**

The DSPID is based on a *Community-Based Service Plan*, whose main focus is the deinstitutionalization of people with intellectual disabilities. The PRVRA offers orientation to the staff of the DSPID and provides services to referred individuals who are eligible.

#### **State Council on Developmental Disabilities**

PRVRA supports and participate in activities related to services for people with developmental disabilities. Also attends to assigned work committees.

#### **Private IHE and Non-Profits**

Carlos Albizu University. The PRVRA maintains a collaborative agreement with this university for the practicum of psychology students in our facilities.

Bayamón Central University (UCB, by it's acronym in Spanish), and Catholic University of Puerto Rico. The PRVRA maintains collaborative agreements with these universities for the placement in our facilities of practicum and internship students of Master's Degree in Rehabilitation Counseling, Bachelor's Degree in Rehabilitation, and Vocational Evaluation Certification (UCB).

Interamerican University, Ponce Campus. The PRVRA maintains collaborative agreements with this university for the practicum of occupational therapy students in our facilities.

(2) State programs carried out under section 4 of the Assistive Technology Act of 1998;

The PRVRA has representation in the Advisory Council of the PRATP to exchange professional knowledge and to continue referring consumers who could benefit from services such as building and adaptation of equipment, among others.

The Assistive Technology Advisory Council of Puerto Rico (PRATP, by its acronym in Spanish) is composed by members representing government agencies and people with disabilities representing the public interest. PRVRA's participation in that Council is mandatory. The main function of the Council is to respond and represent people with disabilities for the establishment, implementation, and evaluation of the Program, to facilitate information, availability and access to assistive technology (AT). The Director of the PRVRA's Avaluation and Adjustment Office is the agency's representative at the Council. VRA's participation consists in attending meetings to:

- Provide information to facilitate changes or current processes improvement for AT service delivery to people with disabilities
- Facilitate coordination of VRA consumers in the AT Annual Needs Assessment
- Offer recommendations for plan development to address AT needs, plans implementation and results evaluation
- Share with members of the Council information about training opportunities on AT topics (forums, symposiums, conferences, etc.)
- Share information about local and federal legislation regarding AT services

(3) Programs carried out by the Under Secretary for Rural Development of the United States Department of Agriculture;

At the moment, the PRVRA is not using services, facilities or a program carried out by the Under Secretary for Rural Development of the US Department of Agriculture; nor is utilizing services and facilities of agencies and programs with respect to state use contracting programs.

(4) Non-educational agencies serving out-of-school youth;

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), promotes that vocational rehabilitation agencies reach groups and entities that provide services to young people, including young people with disabilities, and makes direct reference to programs such as Job Corps. For this purpose, the Vocational Rehabilitation Administration (ARV) developed public policy to establish the referral process for the Job Corps Program.

This is a free education and vocational training program administered by the federal Department of Labor, which provides services to at-risk youth between the ages of 16 and 24, with the purpose of preparing them for employment. This is a process that facilitates the exchange of referrals, orientations between programs, and the provision of services for those young people who are eligible to ARV.

- PRVRA will refer to Job Corps out-of-school youth who might benefit from their services (including training), and Job Corps will also refer individuals to PRVRA.
- PRVRA will send to JC reports about eligibility determination on those referrals.
- JC may provide information/training to VRA staff regarding services available at JC and any other topic identified or beneficial to both parties.
- PRVRA and JC will provide services island wide, according to their resources.

(5) State use contracting programs.

Not applicable.

#### (D) COORDINATION WITH EDUCATION OFFICIALS

- (A) The designated State unit's plans, policies, and procedures for coordination with education officials to facilitate the transition of students with disabilities from school to the receipt of VR services, including pre-employment transition services, as well as procedures for the timely development and approval of individualized plans for employment for the students.

VRA has the responsibility to comply with the requirements of Chapter 34 of the Federal Regulations Code (34CFR), Section 361.22, which states that the State Plan must contain plans, policies and procedures for coordination between the Designated State Unit (VRA in Puerto Rico) and the Department of Education (DE) to facilitate the transition of students with disabilities from school to vocational rehabilitation services.

Similarly, the VRA has an interagency agreement as a result of the implementation of Law 51, known as the Law on Integrated Educational Services for Persons with Disabilities, of June 7, 1996. This Law assigns responsibilities to various government agencies for the purpose to provide services in a coordinated manner to people with disabilities.

The responsibilities assigned to the VRA by Law 51 are the following:

1. Evaluate, throughout the vocational rehabilitation counselor, the cases referred, in order to determine their eligibility for services, as established by state and federal guidelines.
2. Implement and provide independent living and vocational rehabilitation services to people with disabilities with the capacity to perform in some type of work, based on state and federal legislation.
3. Design an Individualized Plan for Employment (PIPE), according to the needs of the person with disabilities and in accordance with current regulations. This plan includes:
  - Application of guides and programmatic procedures for the provision of services
  - Beginning and ending date of services

- Employment outcomes (regular employment, supported employment, self-employment or any other innovative option)
  - Projected date for the achievement of the employment outcome
  - Analysis to evidence the functional limitations of the consumer in relation to the employment outcome, outcomes of informed choice and the programmed services
  - Recommended VR services which are necessary to achieve the selected employment outcomes
  - Comparable services and benefits
  - Costs of services
  - Evidence of the financial participation negotiated between the VR counselor with the consumer/family, as applicable
  - Evaluative criteria
  - Specific responsibilities of the PRVRA
  - Responsibilities of the consumer/representative
  - Coordination with educational agencies
  - Signatures of the parties and dates when plan is developed and approved
  - Evidence in the IPE of the participation of the consumer (his own words) regarding the informed choice process, self-management, and other actions taken during his VR process
4. Collaborate and participate in the drafting and implementation of the transition plan to adult life, whenever appropriate.
  5. Provide Pre-Employment Transition services to students with eligible or potentially eligible disabilities.

The PRVRA recognizes the importance of the transition process in the youth with disabilities and will maintain its commitment in that it is carried out in accordance with federal and state regulations.

The PRVRA is developing with the PRDE joint activities to strengthen the provision of transition services in general, and especially the pre-employment services to those youth with the most significant disabilities, as stated in WIOA.

1. Information on the formal interagency agreement with the State educational agency with respect to:

As mentioned in the previous section, in Puerto Rico Law 51 of June 7, 1996, as amended, the VRA through its operational components and the Department of Education through its Associate Secretariat of Special

Education develop and implement a Transition program for young people with disabilities from school to the world of work for students with disabilities.

The VRA and the Department of Education maintain constant communication and collaboration with the purpose of developing new strategies for students with disabilities. Some of the responsibilities of both agencies are the following:

**A. Vocational Rehabilitation Administration:**

1. The Vocational Rehabilitation Administration, in coordination with the Department of Education, will provide Pre-employment Transition Services (PRE-ETS) to students with eligible or potentially eligible disabilities. Pre-employment services for students in the transition process are as follows:
  - a. Career Exploration Counseling;
  - b. Learning experiences based on employment;
  - c. Counseling on opportunities to enter transition programs or post-secondary education;
  - d. Training to develop social and independent living skills necessary to be ready for employment; and
  - e. Instruction on self-intercessory.
2. Vocational Rehabilitation Administration staff (Transition Counseling Services Analysts who work Transition or Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors) may provide technical assistance to Education Department personnel by sharing, in orientations or meetings, information that contributes to such personnel have a better understanding about:
  - a. Medical and other aspects related to impediments.
  - b. Requirements to request services and eligibility criteria of the Vocational Rehabilitation Administration.
  - c. How school personnel can assist the student in preparing to receive the services of the Vocational Rehabilitation Administration.
  - d. Identification of transition needs, such as assistive technology, orientation training and mobility; in other aspects.
  - e. The scope of pre-employment transition services and the requirements to benefit from them under WIOA.
  - f. The analysts of the Vocational Rehabilitation Administration will guide on the responsibilities of the Educational Agency compliance with Section 511 of

WIOA in order to complete the Personnel Orientation Certification form of the Department of Education by the Vocational Rehabilitation Administration.

3. Offer guidance to parents and to students with disabilities, coordinated with the contact person identified in each school, about the Vocational Rehabilitation Administration, application process and scope of services to be provided to people with eligible disabilities, in addition to transition services of pre-employment and the criteria to receive them. These orientations may be offered in general orientation activities coordinated by the school, and in the meetings of the Programming and Location Committee (COMPU), among others.
4. Evaluate through the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, the referred students to determine their eligibility for services, as established by applicable federal and state laws and regulations.
5. Inform in writing, to the official of the agency that refers the case, the criteria used to determine that the student is or are not eligible to receive services from the Vocational Rehabilitation Administration and the basis on which that determination has been made.
6. Collaborate and participate in the drafting and implementation of the transition services established in the Individualized Educational Program (PEI) of the school to adulthood, every time the person is cited or convened for that purpose. Such participation may be face-to-face, by telephone (teleconference), virtual or any other permissible means.
7. Design an Individualized Plan for Employment (PIPE), according to the needs of the person with disabilities eligible for the Vocational Rehabilitation Administration, on or before the student leaves school.
8. Provide vocational rehabilitation services and other transition services necessary, identified, and recommended in the Individualized Plan for Employment, for vocational rehabilitation of the eligible student in the context of their employment goal.
9. Design and implement mechanisms for the collection of statistical data.

**B. Responsibilities of the Department of Education:**

1. Identify the population to be referred for evaluation of the Vocational Rehabilitation Administration, according to the eligibility criteria established by the applicable laws and regulations, through the procedure agreed by the agencies.
2. Any reference to the Vocational Rehabilitation Administration must include the following:
  - a. Student's Social Security Number
  - b. Updated Psychological Medical Evidence
  - c. Academic History and Report Cards

- d. Psychosocial History
- e. Vocational Evaluation based on Law No. 263-2006
- f. Copy of the Certification of Functional and Pre-Employment Academic Skills based on Law 53-2016.
- g. Copy of the Individualized Educational Program (PEI)
- h. Services Plan. Section 504 or others that apply
- i. Any other document that applies

In the case of pre-employment transition services, the Department of Education will offer and certify the following information:

- a. Student's Social Security Number
  - b. Date of birth
  - c. Age
  - d. Race
  - e. Ethnicity
  - f. School of origin and town
  - g. Town of residence of the student
  - h. Grade enlisted
  - i. If the student receives special education or Section 504 services
  - j. Any others that may apply
3. Coordinate and offer the provision of services considering the Transition Services developed in the Individualized Educational Programs to ensure an effective transition of young people with disabilities to post-school life.
  4. Coordinate with the officials of the Vocational Rehabilitation Administration orientations directed to parents, students and school staff related to the services available to students in the process of transition to adult life.
  5. Provide academic and vocational services to the population with disabilities, according to applicable federal and state laws and regulations.
  6. Collaborate with the Vocational Rehabilitation Administration in the objective of providing placement and follow-up services to students with disabilities until they graduate from high school, turn twenty-one (21) years of age or complete education services special.

7. Provide through their schools, the human resources for the development of the necessary basic academic and occupational skills, according to the needs identified in the results of the vocational evaluations and according to what is established in the Individualized Educational Program (PEI).
  8. Provide those related services, support and technological assistance required to achieve the educational objectives of the student in the school environment or context.
  9. Evaluate, together with the staff of the Administration of Vocational Rehabilitation, the achievements in its implementation.
  10. Notify the Vocational Rehabilitation Administration, fifteen (15) calendar days in advance, when the participation of its officials in a COMPU meeting is required, for the development of transition services in the PEI.
  11. Identify alternative means of participation in COMPU meetings, such as teleconferences, virtual and / or any other means that are permissible.
- (B) the provision of consulting and technical assistance to assist educational entities with transition planning for students with disabilities, between school and post-school activities, including the receipt of Vocational Rehabilitation services;
- See section VINR(d)(2), previous.
- (C) transition planning by personnel of the designated State agency and educational agency that facilitates the development and implementation of their individualized education programs;
- Please, refer to previous section.
- (D) roles and responsibilities, including financial responsibilities, of each agency, including provisions for determining State lead agencies and qualified personnel responsible for transition services;
- Please, refer to section d.2.
- (E) procedures for outreach to and identification of students with disabilities who need transition services.
1. Transition process for students with disabilities begins at schools through orientation provided by the Transition Counselor (TC) of the VRA, to teachers, students with disabilities and/or parents. As a result, meetings of the Placement and Programming Committee (PPC) take place, and decisions are made about IPE recommendations. A plan of action is developed, and the TC may accept the referral of the student with disabilities.
  2. The PPC compiles medical information related to the student's disability and functional level at the time of the referral.

3. The TC sends those referrals to the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors (VRC) at the corresponding VRA regional office and coordinates VRC participation in PPC meetings of eligible students with disabilities.
4. When existing information doesn't describe the current functional level of the student, the VRC will perform a preliminary evaluation and consult with the TC as to which evaluations may be available through the Department of Education to complete the evaluation process.
5. The VRC requests medical consultant's opinion under the following situations:
  - a. When advice is needed about functional limitations caused by the student's physical or mental disability; and
  - b. When clarification about medical aspects of disability is needed to facilitate VRC decision making process and service planning. Eligibility determination is made by the VRC.
6. Eligibility criteria will be applied considering physical and mental functional limitations, functional capacity, vocational interests, skills, abilities, life experiences and others, identified through the evaluation stages for eligibility determination.

#### (A) COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS WITH PRIVATE NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

##### Approval of Proposals:

In 2019, the ARV reviewed the guidelines for formalizing contractual agreements with private non-profit organizations. These guides are intended to guide the proponent regarding the principles and procedures for generating a service proposal. They offer an outline of how the proposals will be presented and the order that will govern them. Likewise, they include the documents that must be attached as part of the proposals submitted.

Currently, the ARV has the following guides:

- Proposal to offer services to ARV consumers under the Sustained Employment Modality;
- Guide for the preparation of proposals to offer Pre-Employment Transition services (workshops / training / orientations); and
- Guide for the preparation of proposals to offer Pre-Employment Transition services (fairs).

This contracting process begins with a Public Notice in written press, which establishes the deadlines for the collection of the Proposal Guide in reference and the deadline for the delivery of the proposal. Once both processes have passed, a Proposal Review Committee analyzes them according to the guidelines, and based on the results, they make recommendations to the Administrator, then beginning the hiring process.

In compliance with the established federal regulations, the ARV assigns responsibility to the programmatic areas of the agency to carry out monitoring activities to those organizations contracted for the purpose

of verifying compliance, project development, services offered, difficulties encountered, use of resources, beneficiary participation, among other matters.

The ARV is willing to establish collaborative agreements with other nonprofit organizations that provide services to people with disabilities, with the purpose of receiving referrals and offering training

## (B) ARRANGEMENTS AND COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS FOR THE PROVISION OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

Describe the designated State agency's efforts to identify and make arrangements, including entering into cooperative agreements, with other State agencies and other appropriate entities in order to provide supported employment services and extended employment services, as applicable, to individuals with the most significant disabilities, including youth with the most significant disabilities.

In accordance with the above, the ARV has a process for contracting sustained employment services. These services are offered by Community Rehabilitation Programs (PRC), which must follow the process established by regulation for their hiring.

- The hiring process begins with a Public Notice in written press, which establishes the deadlines for the collection of the Proposal Guide to Offer Sustained Employment Services to the consumers of the Vocational Rehabilitation Administration and the date for delivery of the proposals. Once both processes have passed, a Proposal Review Committee analyzes them and based on the results, makes recommendations to the Administrator, then beginning the hiring process.
- The ARV through the Personnel of the Office of Support and Employment Modalities (OAME) will make two visits of Programmatic Monitoring during the term of the contract. The preliminary monitoring will observe the progress the organization has made, and the final monitoring will determine if the organization met the established goal. In addition, both OAME staff and Support Analysts and Employment Modalities provide technical assistance to PRCs, as necessary, throughout the service delivery process.
- The ARV continues to collaborate with other private nonprofit organizations to ensure the availability of sustained employment services and the development of extended support services to consumers with more significant disabilities.
- The ARV will continue hiring the PRCs for the provision of sustained employment (ES) services. In addition, Normative Communication No. 2018-01 was developed, which establishes the process for the provision of extended support services to be offered by the PRCs.

The ARV will continue hiring the PRCs for the provision of sustained employment (ES) services. In addition, it will establish the process for the provision of extended support services to be offered by the PRCs. Also, continue with the following activities:

- Offering technical assistance to employers, as required, to promote extended support options through orientation activities to employees / coworkers interested in collaborating with the process and identifying resources available in the workplace and community.
- Collaboration with the community rehabilitation programs (PRC), if required, in efforts to prepare and submit proposals for the provision of extended services to other sources of available funds.

### (C) COORDINATION WITH EMPLOYERS

Describe how the Designated State Agency will collaborate with employers to identify opportunities for integrated competitive employment and career exploration so as to facilitate the provision of:

(1) VR services: and

The ARV continues to work with employers to identify opportunities for integrated competitive employment and career exploration. For this purpose, it has Support Centers and Employment Modalities (CAME), whose staff is responsible for working with employers. They contact new potential employers, as well as those who employ people with disabilities for the purpose of promoting employment opportunities and making their facilities available for career evaluation and exploration activities.

CAMEs also organize training activities for employers, through which their knowledge is increased regarding the population with disabilities and the benefits of using them, among other topics. Also, participate in job fairs, where information is provided on the services of the ARV and qualified candidates are marketed.

On the other hand, as part of the Memorandum of Understanding with the Single Management Centers, we will stipulate that they will share their network of employers, so that they can be contacted by CAME staff to facilitate the provision of rehabilitation and transition services that are necessary,

The State Rehabilitation Council also supports the efforts of the ARV in contacting employers through a membership with the human resources organization SHRM.

(2) Transition services, including pre-employment transition services, for students and youth with disabilities.

In compliance with WIOA, the ARV has been carrying out activities aimed at offering pre-employment transition and transition services aimed at helping students with disabilities to a successful transition to post-secondary life, as well as individuals with disabilities that we serve Here are some of the activities carried out:

1. In June 2017, the agency developed a Collaboration Agreement between the Vocational Rehabilitation Administration, Department of Labor and Human Resources and the Department

- of Education of Puerto Rico to provide a Work-Based Learning Experience for students with Disabilities in Process of Transition for post-secondary life.
2. The PR SAM Sample (Puerto Rico Skills Assessment Module) was acquired. Acquired tests will allow to offer career exploration services to students in transition between 14 and 21 years of age who receive or receive special education services or under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended. Students who are in school were impacted like those in post-secondary education.
  3. In June 2017, Cooperative Commitments were made with private employers to obtain real work scenarios to carry out Work-Based Learning Experiences to students who are possible candidates for vocational rehabilitation services and to those who are applicants / consumers with disabilities Served by the agency.
  4. A Learning Experience was offered for 58 students with disabilities with 6 private employers in the month of June 2017. (Duration 20 days).
  5. In July 2017, Cooperative Commitments were made with Government Agencies, Public Corporations and / or Municipalities to obtain real work scenarios to carry out Work-Based Learning Experiences to students who are possible candidates to receive vocational rehabilitation services and students who are applicants / consumers with disabilities served by the agency.
  6. In the month of July 2017, a Learning Experience was offered for 2,100 students with disabilities in corporations and government agencies.
  7. In August 2017, a Service Fair was held for 600 students with disabilities under the category of Career Exploration Counseling.
  8. Transition analysts are offering guidance to schools on pre-employment transition services.
  9. In November 2017, training contracts were made to offer pre-employment services in the schools of the Department of Education (12 contracts).
  10. In December 2017, four service fairs from 30 that were scheduled until September 30, 2018 were given. It is projected to serve over 10,000 students with disabilities from the Department of Education and Section 504.
  11. In January 2018, training for Pre-ETS services in different schools began, covering the six regions of the ARV. 2,400 students with disabilities from the Department of Education are expected to attend until September 30, 2018,
  12. The ARV in Fiscal Year 2018 hired five (5) service providers resulting in the impact of 8,007 students with disabilities who participated in pre-employment transition service fairs in which they had the opportunity to explore the career, obtain information of the most demanded careers, academic offers, and about the qualities and skills that employers look for. For Fiscal Year 2019, it hired eight (8) service providers that have hit 4,342 students with disabilities between the ages of 14 and 21 inclusive. The totality of the students impacted at the moment with these Fairs is: 12,349.
  13. The ARV in Fiscal Year 2018 hired 11 service providers which resulted in the impact of 1,685 students with disabilities who participated in workshops and training to explore the career, learn

technological, social and independent living skills and to know their rights to intercede for themselves. For Fiscal Year 2019, the number of contracted service providers was four (4) so that students with disabilities from 14 to 21 years old even explore the career by administering proof of vocational interests and providing information on the labor market of Puerto Rico and the United States. At the moment 637 students have impacted. The totality of students with disabilities impacted with these workshops so far is: 2,232.

14. Between June to August 2018, 2,992 students with disabilities participated in a Work-Based Learning Experience in a real competitive and integrated work environment for the development of pre-employment skills. These experiences were provided by 106 public and private employers in Maintenance Worker, Office Assistant, Domestic Animal Care, Agricultural Worker and Painter Assistant occupations. For these purposes, collaboration agreements were signed for the provision of this experience with effect until 2020. As for Fiscal Year 2019, 262 students with disabilities have been impacted with the Work Based Learning Experience in Municipalities and agencies of the Government of Puerto Rico. The totality of students with impacted so far is: 3,254,
15. Through the initiative to provide services to explore the career, 491 students with disabilities in Fiscal Year 2018 were impacted by the Vocational Assessors of the ARV by administering tests of vocational interests and by the Rehabilitation Counseling Services Analysts who provided information on the requirements of careers and the labor market. For Fiscal Year 2019, 695 students with disabilities between 14 and 21 years of age have been impacted so far, including those with significant cognitive impairments. The totality of the cases impacted with this project was: 1,186.
16. The ARV named in Fiscal Year 2019: 41 direct service professionals to applicants! consumers with disabilities with salaries paid by federal funds, such as; Counselors in Vocational Rehabilitation, Principal Counselor, Supervisor of Counseling in Rehabilitation and of Assessment and Adjustment Centers fulfilling our ministerial duty to continue maximizing services to the population.
17. In the Centers / Units of assessment and Adjustment attached to the ARV, preemployment services were provided in the social area and independent living, impacting:

**Table 1. ARV Pre-Employment Services Provided**

<b>Fiscal Year</b>	<b>Population Served</b>	<b>Amount of services provided</b>
2018	6,603	26,331
2019	2,561	8,673
<b>Total</b>	9,164	35,004

**(D) INTERAGENCY COOPERATION**

Describe how the designated State unit will collaborate with the State agency responsible for administering each of the following programs to develop opportunities for competitive integrated employment, to the greatest extent practicable:

The PRVRA maintains a relationship of collaboration with the following agencies and organizations for the development of integrated competitive employment opportunities.

1. the State Medicaid plan under title XIX of the Social Security Act;

The PRVRA established contact with the Director of the Policies/Procedures and Operations of the Medicaid Program under the Department of Health, administering the Medicaid under Title XIX of the Social Security Act. The Medicaid staff can provide VRA staff with information about the program and orientations to help them identify individuals with disabilities not receiving services from Medicaid that may be potential beneficiaries. Receiving needed services from Medicaid is a way to provide adequate conditions to benefit from the vocational rehabilitation process to achieve competitive integrated employment. The parties are in the development of a Collaborative Agreement.

2. the State agency responsible for providing services for individuals with developmental disabilities; and

The PRVRA participates actively in the meetings of the State Council on Developmental Disabilities (SCDD), as well in activities that promote employment opportunities for this population. It also shared its employers' list with the SCDD and PRVRA staff is available to support their efforts in order to develop competitive integrated employment opportunities.

3. the State agency responsible for providing mental health services.

This Advisory Council of Substance Abuse and Mental Health of Puerto Rico is composed of government agencies, mental health patients and family members. It is supported by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (ASSMCA, by its Spanish acronym). This is the organization selected by the Health Insurance Administration of Puerto Rico to carry out operational functions of the Health Plan and offer treatment for mental health conditions, alcohol and drug abuse in the San Juan and Western regions. The PRVRA is a mandatory member of this council and participates in the planning for the provision of these services.

PRVRA participates as a member of the Advisory Council of Substance Abuse and Mental Health of Puerto Rico. The Council's mission is to promote compliance with federal public law and the public policy of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, to offer adequate mental health and substance abuse services and promote a better quality of life for people and their families. The Council's objectives are to:

- Participate in the writing and implementation of the Block Grant, in accordance with Section 1915 (a) of the federal law.

- Participate in the development of the State Plan for the Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services Administration.
- Review and evaluate adequacy and distribution of mental health and substance abuse services in PR to identify service needs.
- Advocate for people with mental health and substance abuse disabilities in PR, in order to guarantee establishment of a high-quality integrated service system.

Functions of each member, including PRVRA, are: 1. Attend meetings 2. Active participation in deliberation and vote processes 3. Staying informed and updated about interests' issues for mental health and substance abuse services improvements 4. Participate in activities and perform assigned tasks 5. Participate in the Council's working groups.

Every situation regarding an applicant/consumer is managed with the corresponding member. Annually, the PRVRA submits to the Council a report of mental health impairments attended in the Agency. On the other hand, cases with mental health conditions may request PRVRA services as self-applicants or through "Atención Primaria de Salud" (APS, by its acronym in Spanish), which are companies contracted by the Health Insurance Administration to offer mental health and substance abuse services to beneficiaries of the Government Health Care Insurance.

The VR Counselor maintains contact with the APS social workers or case manager in order to offer integrated services, including public health actions such as: diagnostic, prevention, and occupational services by the VRA.

#### (E) COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM OF PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT; DATA SYSTEM ON PERSONNEL AND PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT

Describe the designated State agency's procedures and activities to establish and maintain a comprehensive system of personnel development designed to ensure an adequate supply of qualified State rehabilitation professional and paraprofessional personnel for the designated State unit, including the following:

The PRVRA institutional mission is the provision of vocational rehabilitation services aimed at the successful integration of the people with disabilities to the country's workforce and the enjoyment of a more dependent life. With this purpose, the PRVRA has professionals committed to the public service duty qualified to attend in an agile and responsive manner, vocational rehabilitation and independent life needs of people with disabilities, with priority to those with more significant disabilities.

In order to ensure that we have the best qualified and warmly trained staff to provide services to people with disabilities, we offer professional development opportunities to our human resources. Also, we take into consideration your needs and recommendations for the best functioning of the agency.

##### (1) Data System on Personnel and Personnel Development

- (a) Qualified Personnel Needs. Describe the development and maintenance of a system for collecting and analyzing on an annual basis data on qualified personnel needs with respect to:
- i. the number of personnel who are employed by the State agency in the provision of VR services in relation to the number of individuals served, broken down by personnel category;

The PRVRA's institutional mission is to provide VR services aimed at the successful integration of people with disabilities into the labor force and towards the enjoyment of a more independent living. With that purpose, the agency has professionals committed with public service, duly qualified to meet, in an agile and responsive way, the VR and independent living needs of people with disabilities, with priority to the needs of those with the most significant disabilities.

In order to ensure that we have the best qualified and fully trained personnel to provide services to people with disabilities, we offer professional development opportunities to our human resources. We also take into consideration their needs and recommendations for the best performance of the agency.

In order to articulate the operation of the agency in response to the needs of the population attended, the PRVRA requires professional staff related to the rehabilitation field occupying different positions, as well as other support and administrative staff. The support professionals also provide direct service to the applicant/consumer; while the administrative ones contribute to the continuity of other processes needed for the operation of the agency and the achievement of its programmatic goals.

**Table 2. Breakdown Counselors and New Work Zones**

<b>Fiscal Year</b>	<b>Total zones in the period</b>	<b>New zones</b>	<b>New VR counselors</b>
2019	154	3	0
2018	151	0	0
2017	151	0	0
2016	151	0	0
2015	152	0	17

Source:PRVRA

It is estimated that in one year the average caseload will be between 400 cases.

**Table 3. Breakdown Average Caseloads for CRV, 2015-2019**

Fiscal year	Number of zones	Active caseload	Cases closed	Population served	Average caseload
2019	154	54,002	6402	60,404	350
2018	151	53,753	6306	60,249	356
2017	151	54,104	7278	61,382	354
2016	151	53,436	8292	61,728	340
2015	152	51,383	7788	59,170	333

Source:PRVRA

The PRVRA is strengthening its work teams to provide agile and responsive services to the needs of people with disabilities. At the moment, the agency has 130 VR counselors managing cases. To provide other services needed in the rehabilitation process (assessment and employment-related services, among others), the agency has 268 support staff.

The following section shows a breakdown of PRVRA staff, by category, vacancies and projected employees who qualify for retirement over the next (5) years:

**Table 4. PRVRA Staff by Category**

Staff category	Total positions	Current vacancies	Projected vacancies
Counseling staff	130	29	10
Support staff	268	115	30
Administrative staff	295	138	9
Other staff	0	0	0
Total	693	283	49

Source:PRVRA

- ii. the number of personnel currently needed by the State agency to provide VR services, broken down by personnel category; and

For reference, see the **Table 65** for the current and projected vacancies.

- iii. projections of the number of personnel, broken down by personnel category, who will be needed by the State agency to provide VR services in 5 years based on projections of the number of individuals to be served, including individuals with significant disabilities, the number of personnel expected to retire or leave the field, and other relevant factors.

Please, refer to section above.

(B) Personnel Development. Describe the development and maintenance of a system for collecting and analyzing on an annual basis data on personnel development with respect to:

- i. a list of the institutions of higher education in the State that are preparing VR professionals, by type of program;

The Agency has a computerized registry of trainings provided to the employees. Their needs are identified through performance evaluations or supervisors recommendations, and trainings are provided to address those needs. Also, some employees require professional licenses to perform their duties, and for that reason the Agency makes sure they comply with the requirement and provides the opportunity to participate on continuing education trainings for their license renewal.

Puerto Rico has various institutions of higher education that are preparing professionals in the rehabilitation field. The PRVRA has agreements with three (3) universities that prepare professionals in the rehabilitation counseling field. The purpose of such agreements is to provide the students the opportunity to carry out their practicum in facilities of our agency. In addition, the PRVRA recruits graduates from these institutions and others:

- University of Puerto Rico (UPR)- is the only public institution of higher education in the country. It has its main campus in Río Piedras with 10 off-campus sites throughout the Island. The Graduate Program in Rehabilitation Counseling is at their Río Piedras Campus
- UPR, Medical Sciences Campus, has the following programs: Occupational Therapy; Physical Therapy; Master's degree in Speech Pathology; and Nursing
- Pontifical Catholic University of Puerto Rico (Ponce) has the Graduate Program in Rehabilitation Counseling
- Bayamón Central University has the following programs: Graduate Program in Rehabilitation Counseling; Bachelor's degrees in Psychology; Bachelor's degree in Social Work; Vocational Rehabilitation Certification; and Visual Impairments Certification

- ii. the number of students enrolled at each of those institutions, broken down by type of program; and

University of Puerto Rico Recinto de Río Piedras: Graduate Program in Rehabilitation Counseling: 111 enrolled students

University of Puerto Rico, Medical Sciences Campus: 430 enrolled students in the following programs: Occupational Therapy (41); Physical Therapy (50); Master's degree in Speech Pathology (29); and Nursing (310)

Pontifical Catholic University of Puerto Rico: 73 enrolled students

Bayamón Central University: 212 enrolled students in the following programs: Graduate Program in Rehabilitation Counseling (29); Bachelor's degrees in Psychology (72); Bachelor's degree in Social Work (98); Vocational Rehabilitation Certification (12); and Visual Impairments Certification (15).

- iii. the number of students who graduated during the prior year from each of those institutions with certification or licensure, or with the credentials for certification or licensure, broken down by the personnel category for which they have received, or have the credentials to receive, certification or licensure.

University of Puerto Rico (UPR) - At the Río Piedras Campus, Graduate Program in Rehabilitation Counseling 21 graduates. *Staff category: Counseling*

UPR, Medical Sciences Campus- 138 graduates in the following programs: Occupational Therapy (13 graduates); Physical Therapy (0 graduates); Master's degree in Speech Pathology (10 graduates); and Nursing (115 graduates). *Staff category: Support*

Pontifical Catholic University of Puerto Rico (Ponce)- 39 graduates in the Graduate Program in Rehabilitation Counseling. *Staff category: Counseling*

Bayamón Central University- 51 graduates in the following programs: Graduate Program in Rehabilitation Counseling (12 graduates); Bachelor's degrees in Psychology (10 graduates); Bachelor's degree in Social Work (35 graduates); Vocational Rehabilitation Certification (13 graduates); and Visual Impairments Certification (3 graduates); *Staff category: Counseling & Support*

- (2) Plan for Recruitment, Preparation and Retention of Qualified Personnel. Describe the development and implementation of a plan to address the current and projected needs for qualified personnel including, the coordination and facilitation of efforts between the designated State unit and institutions of higher education and professional associations to recruit, prepare, and retain personnel who are qualified, including personnel from minority backgrounds and personnel who are individuals with disabilities.

The PRVRA, through the Office of Labor Affairs and Human Resources and its divisions, has the responsibility of developing, updating, and implementing a plan for the recruitment, preparation and

retention of qualified personnel to meet current and projected needs of staff. To comply with such requirement, the agency will continue with the development of the following procedures and activities:

- Identification and communication of needs concerning the recruitment, reclassification, training or any other requirement related to human resources;
- Analysis and development of strategies based on the needs concerning the recruitment, reclassification, training or any other requirement related to human resources;
- Realignment of personnel to fill vacant positions in the centers providing services to consumers (centers offering VR counseling services, assessment and adjustment, support, and employment modes). Although this strategy responds to the current public policy of economic austerity, it also propitiates the development of employees while taking care of the staff needs of the agency;
- Offering of advice and support on issues concerning the best use of human resources, particularly those assigned to the provision of direct services to meet the needs of the consumers;
- Provision of advice and support on issues concerning the management of human resources of the agency, maintaining a close coordination with the programmatic area of the agency;
- Planning and provision of human resources (involves the analysis; design; establishment and elimination of positions; selection and recruitment; and the implementation of a system of personnel evaluation);
- Maintenance of a human resources inventory that involves the classification of positions, existing vacancies, identification of candidates for retirement and succession planning. This information is analyzed on an annual basis to determine employment patterns, positions that are hard to hire and number of employees with 25 or more years of service;
- Forecasting of human resources needs (within a period of 1 to 5 years), by number and type of employee, emphasizing on the personnel that offers direct services to people with disabilities;
- Provision of training and promotion of staff development;
- Establishment of objectives and training activities to be offered to staff in order to comply with programmatic/administrative commitments of the agency;
- Coordination of staff training activities with universities and other institutions preparing professionals related to the rehabilitation field; and
- Maintenance of efforts to continue recruiting qualified staff with disabilities. The PRVRA has VR counselors who have various disabilities. It also continues emphasizing on compliance with Law 81, as amended, known as the Law of Equal Employment Opportunity for Persons with Disabilities. As part of the evaluation of examination requests, five (5) additional points are granted to anyone who shows evidence of having some type of disabling condition.

The PRVRA recruits without distinction of age, race, color, gender, social or national origin, and social condition, political or religious beliefs. Our agency recruits based on qualifications of applicant. The Puerto Rico PRVRA is the only Designated State Unit of the nation where more than 99% of its population is minority (Hispanic and/or Spanish-speaking).

The PRVRA has agreements with three (3) universities that prepare professionals in the rehabilitation counseling field. The purpose of such agreements is to provide the students the opportunity to carry out their practicum in facilities of our agency. In addition, the PRVRA recruits' graduates from these institutions, particularly from the following: University of Puerto Rico (UPR), Pontifical Catholic University of PR (Ponce), and Bayamón Central University, among others. Training is provided to VR staff through: College of RC Professional of PR, National Council of Rehabilitation Education (NCRE), American Deafness and Rehabilitation Association, to name a few.

(3) Personnel Standards. Describe the State agency's policies and procedures for the establishment and maintenance of personnel standards consistent with section 101(a)(7)(B) and 34 CFR 361.18(c) to ensure that designated State unit professional and paraprofessional personnel are adequately trained and prepared, including:

(A) standards that are consistent with any national or State-approved or -recognized certification, licensing, registration, or other comparable requirements that apply to the profession or discipline in which such personnel are providing VR services; and

In Puerto Rico, the rehabilitation counseling profession is regulated by Law 58 of May 7 of 1976, as amended, known as the Regulatory Law of the Rehabilitation Counseling Profession in Puerto Rico. This legislation establishes that to practice as a rehabilitation counselor, the person must have a master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling and a current state license issued by the appropriate Board of Examiners. It is also required that the professional maintains active his credentials and licenses in the Professional Registry of the Office of Regulation and Certification of Health Professionals, be a member of the College of Rehabilitation Counseling Professionals of Puerto Rico and comply with hours of continuing education. The PRVRA recruits' personnel who meet these requirements to ensure the highest standards of the rehabilitation counseling profession.

Similarly, certification or license is required as a condition for employment, benefits and wages for: teachers, physical therapists, occupational therapists, speech/language pathologists, social workers, and psychologists, among others.

(B) the establishment and maintenance of education and experience requirements, in accordance with section 101(a)(7)(B)(ii) of the Rehabilitation Act, to ensure that the personnel have a 21st century understanding of the evolving labor force and the needs of individuals with disabilities.

The PRVRA has developed the following strategies to maintain personnel standards consistent with the highest state requirements applicable to a specific profession or discipline:

- Annual review of certifications, licenses, and continuing education of specific professions or disciplines;
- Continuation with the provision to staff of training necessary for the optimal performance of their duties;
- Maintenance of an updated record on training and workshops, and education activities among others, provided to the agency staff;
- Identification of retraining needs of the agency staff in order to strengthen the performance of duties; and
- Annual performance evaluation of the staff.

The following is a list of professional associations related to the rehabilitation field available to provide training to staff:

- College of Rehabilitation Counseling Professionals of Puerto Rico- (VR counselors);
- National Council of Rehabilitation Education (NCRE)- (educators in rehabilitation and staff related to the training of rehabilitation professionals, among others);
- American Deafness and Rehabilitation Association (ADARA)- (staff related to services to the deaf);
- Association of Persons in Supported Employment (APSE)- (staff related to supported employment services, among others);
- National Council on Independent Living (NCIL)- (staff related to independent living services);
- California State University at Northridge (CSUN)- (VR professionals in assistive technology);
- Rehabilitation Engineering and Assistive Technology Society of North America (RESNA)- (VR professionals in assistive technology);
- College of Occupational Therapy Professionals of Puerto Rico- (occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistants);
- College of Social Work Professionals of Puerto Rico- (social workers);
- Association of Employee Assistance Professionals of Puerto Rico- (central level staff of the Employee Assistance Program);
- Administration of Mental Health and Anti-Addiction Services (ASSMCA, in Spanish)- (staff of the Employee Assistance Program);
- Academy of Audiology of Puerto Rico- (audiologists);
- Puerto Rico Assistive Technology Program (PRATP)- (occupational therapists, speech/language pathologists, and audiologists, among others);

- Puerto Rico Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf- (interpreters for the deaf); and
  - Puerto Rican Physiotherapy Association- (physical therapists and physical therapy assistants).
- (4) Staff Development. Describe the State agency's policies, procedures, and activities to ensure that, consistent with section 101(a)(7)(C) of the Rehabilitation Act, all personnel employed by the designated State unit receive appropriate and adequate training in terms of:
- (A) a system of staff development for professionals and paraprofessionals within the designated State unit, particularly with respect to assessment, vocational counseling, job placement, and rehabilitation technology, including training implemented in coordination with entities carrying out State programs under section 4 of the Assistive Technology Act of 1998; and

As established in the Procedures Manual for the Training of All Staff of the Vocational Rehabilitation Administration, the PRVRA promotes and emphasizes on the continuing education of its employees. Therefore, it carries out the following activities to ensure having qualified staff:

- Identification and communication of training needs;
- Analysis and development of strategies based on training needs;
- Design of training activities to address topics concerning administrative/programmatic issues relevant to the VR program; and
- Planning of training activities as a result of the needs identified in the needs assessment study, monitoring reports and performance evaluations

The following is a breakdown of some of the training activities offered to the rehabilitation counseling staff and other related professionals during 2017 (Topic|Participants):

- Training for Transition Analysts on Transition Services Pre-Employment/ 12
- Training on Compliance with Goals for Counseling Personnel/ 24
- Training on the Impact of the WIOA Law (management staff)/ 12
- Workforce Innovation Technical Assistance Center (WINTAC) Training/ 475
- Training of Professionals of the Assessment and Adjustment Centers on: Pre-employment skills for students in the process of transition to adult life and the importance of the occupational match from the perspective of the Counselor in Vocational Rehabilitation in planning occupational goals/ 15
- VALPAR System Work Samples/ 18
- Training on Communication Regulations 2018-02: Procedure for the Use of Test Work Experiences (ETP); and Collaborative Agreement: Referral Form for Transition Services Pre-employment/ 70
- Guidance to professionals in the area of counseling in relation to compliance with the Interagency Agreement of Services Provided Injured Workers between the ARV and the State Insurance Fund Corporation/ 45

- Training for CAA-UAA professionals: Characteristics and Functioning of the Person with Autism, Intervention Strategies for the Evaluation Process and Skills Development/ 51
- Orientation in sign language on natural phenomena to interpreters in signs of the ARV/ 4  
Second Conference: Vocational Evaluation Symposium: Change Strategies/ 21
- Guidance on the Unified State Plan and Strategic Plan for Management Personnel/ 26

The Office of Labor Affairs and Human Resources coordinated 160 training activities for ARV personnel, some of the topics were: Disaster preparedness, New trends and challenges in human resources management, Second symposium of vocational evaluation, Rapid response in situations of suicidal behavior, Inclusion and integration in society, Conflict management social evolution, Assertiveness and resilience in times of change, Technological assistance in communication, The agency's management staff was directed to Memorandum No. 11-2018 of the Office of Administration and Transformation of Human Resources of the Government of Puerto Rico, related to the update of the Employee Duties Sheet 2,039

Trainings to the newly recruited VR counselors was broadened to cover in detail the following aspects: services provision process and federal regulations; assessment and adjustment services; support and employment mode services; productivity indicators; use of the computerized system to provide services; data on the federal RSA-911 Report; fiscal and budgetary aspects of the services provision process; independent living services; and the State Plan. Each topic is presented by the staff of corresponding areas, which allows employees to become familiar with the central office.

Assistive Technology Program (PRATP) established under Act No. 264 of 2000 known as the "Act for the Puerto Rico's Assistive Technology Program" as amended, has the responsibility to promote changes in public and private systems for inclusion, independence, and self-sufficiency of people with disabilities through AT use. According to this mandate the PRATP keeps collaborative agreements with government agencies. The PRVRA has maintained agreements with PRATP to exchange resources, knowledge, and experiences about AT topics.

PRVRA offered AT services at their six regions under the following categories: visual, hearing, mobility, communication, independent living, cognitive, and computer access. Services are offered by Occupational Therapists, Physical Therapists, Audiologists, certified teachers, Speech and Language Pathologists, Blind Services and Visual Rehabilitation Specialists. Those professionals have the required credentials. By providing AT services, professionals keep up to date in knowledge. To that effect, the Agency benefits from collaboration with PRATP because their specialists offer trainings to VR staff about topics such as:

- Low, medium and high technology AT equipment;
- AT legislation;
- AT integration to assessment and adjustment processes;
- AT alternatives for employment and independent living;

- AT for specific populations (blind, learning disabilities, mobility impairments);
- New equipment on the market and free equipment alternatives;
- Low cost or homemade AT equipment alternatives, among others; and
- Those trainings and others provided by the VRA have contributed to keeping VRA staff skills and knowledge updated, having an impact on AT service delivery to applicants/consumers, facilitating employment outcomes and independent living.

(B) procedures for the acquisition and dissemination of significant knowledge from research and other sources to designated State unit professionals and paraprofessionals.

For the purpose of acquiring and disseminating significant knowledge of research and other sources to professional and paraprofessional staff of the agency, the PRVRA has established the following procedure:

1. Presentation to staff of the findings of the Comprehensive Needs Assessment Study of Rehabilitation Needs.
  2. Send, by internal email, links to articles or information resources related to the rehabilitation field.
  3. Agreement with the Graduate School in Rehabilitation Counseling of UPR so that they share with the agency, findings of research studies related to the rehabilitation field.
  4. Permission for staff participation in continuing education courses, many of which contain information and strategies based on evidence.
- (5) Personnel to Address Individual Communication Needs. Describe how the designated State unit has personnel or obtains the services of other individuals who are able to communicate in appropriate modes of communication with or in the native language of applicants or eligible individuals who have limited English speaking ability.

The agency, in its vision to be the lead agency in the provision of services to people with disabilities, provides staff with the necessary training and workshops to meet the communication needs the deaf, blind, and deaf/blind applicants/consumers. For this reason, the agency staff participates in training activities related to such communication needs. At the same time, the agency has six (6) interpreters for the deaf whose services can be used, when necessary, to service applicants or eligible consumers; as well as four (4) interpretations service contracts to meet the communication needs our consumers.

Because Puerto Rico is a Spanish-speaking country (English is used as second language), we can communicate in the native language (Spanish) of our applicants/consumers. However, if an applicant/consumer speaks only English, we can also communicate in that language. In addition, the PRVRA can provide clients with alternative formats of communication such as Braille and large print, among others.

The PRVRA installed a video interpretation system through its facilities, which ensure communication with the deaf population, even if the interpreter is not physically present at the place where the applicant/consumer is requesting service.

- (6) Coordination of Personnel Development Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. As appropriate, describe the procedures and activities to coordinate the designated State unit's comprehensive system of personnel development with personnel development under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

In Puerto Rico, the Assistant Secretariat of Comprehensive Educational Services for Persons with Disabilities and the PRVRA are in two different state departments (PRDE and PRDOLHR). The first one is responsible for the implementation of Public Law 108-446, as amended, known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA); the second one is responsible for the implementation of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, and State Law 97-2000, as amended, known as the Vocational Rehabilitation Law of Puerto Rico. In addition to the legislation, we have State Law 51-1996, as amended, known as the Integral Educational Services for Persons with Disabilities, which provides for the coordination to be achieved between various local agencies to ensure an effective transition of disabled youth coming from the Department of Education. Both agencies maintain cooperative ties related to the development of their respective human resources and as such, have been planning, developing, offering and/or participating in numerous in-service training activities since 1987. Some of the topics covered in such training include transition from school to work; vocational evaluation; supported employment; IDEIA; Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Public Law No. 101-336, as amended; Workforce Investment Act (WIA), Public Law 105-220 of August 7 of 1998, as amended; among others. In addition, both agencies are members of an Advisory Committee, which meets periodically to plan and join efforts in the development and implementation of transition services from school to work.

The efforts and alliances carried out under collaborative agreements with the PRDE, as well as with the PRDOLHR and its components, are conducive to the development of strategies and activities to comply with federal regulations.

The PRVRA has the responsibility to provide follow up to the cooperative link with the PRDE. As part of this commitment, during PY 2017, the agency participated in meetings with the Advisory Committee of Special Education.

## (F) STATEWIDE ASSESSMENT

- (1) Provide an assessment of the rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities residing within the State, particularly the VR services needs of those:
- (A) with the most significant disabilities, including their need for supported employment services;

At present, the VRA hired a new entity to carry out the Comprehensive Study of Rehabilitation Needs of People with Disabilities:

As requested by the VRA and the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC), the Rehabilitation Counseling Graduated School of the University of Puerto Rico (CORE-Spanish acronym), Río Piedras Campus, carried out the Comprehensive Statewide Vocational Rehabilitation Services Needs Assessment between 2016 and 2017. Specific goals and objectives were established by agreement between representatives of VRA, SRC and CORE.

VRA and SRC determined that the rehabilitation service needs, for the purpose of this investigation, were going to be established from the opinions or comments received from vocational rehabilitation professional experts, with a vast experience on the field. These professionals are already working at the VRA and have a vast knowledge and experience that allows them the ability to formulate opinion criteria. The study also involved a sample of professionals currently working at the P.R. Department of Education having direct experiences in attending student needs, especially those with disabilities and receiving Vocational Rehabilitation transition services.

The empirical evidence gathered during the quantitative phase of the investigation, was the result from the administration of Survey-Type Instruments for Specialized Professionals in the service delivery to students and other people with disabilities from the VRA and the Department of Education (DE). Evidence gathered during the qualitative phase was the result of the participation of diverse sectors in Focal Groups. Sectors who participated in the Focal Groups were defined by the VRA and SRC, and included: VRA and DE staff, representatives from other WIOA/AJC programs, Vocational Rehabilitation participants/consumers, parents (of students with disabilities) and a representation from representatives of community organizations that serve as advocates for people with disabilities. The findings obtained as a result of the investigation's qualitative component, let the investigators know about the correspondence between the arguments presented by each sector, and the results of the quantitative phase surveys.

### **Quantitative Phase – VRA Staff Survey**

By consensus of the VRA staff and that from the SRC, three (3) versions of the need survey were developed for the VRA's professional staff. The survey was named "*Encuesta para Profesionales de la Administración de Rehabilitación Vocacional Sobre las Necesidades de los Estudiantes y Jóvenes con Impedimentos en Cuanto a Servicios de Transición Pre-empleo, Servicios de Transición y Otros Servicios de Rehabilitación Vocacional*" [Survey for Professionals at the VRA Regarding Students and Youth with Disabilities Needs of Pre-Employment Transition Services, Transition Services and Other Vocational Rehabilitation Services]. The three (3) versions correspond to the following three professional groups: 1. Survey for VRA Professionals in Transition Analysts Positions - TA Form; 2. Survey for VRA Professionals Working in the Evaluation and Adjustment Center (CAA, by its acronym in Spanish)- CAA Form; and 3. Survey for VRA Professionals (Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors in a variety of functions and roles) - General Form.

### **Survey for VRA Professionals working as Transition Analysts - TA Form**

Form TA of the survey was a specifically developed version, to know the opinion of the VRA's professionals' working as Transition Analysts (TAs). The object of the opinions in Form TA, be it the persons about whom the professionals participating in the study think about the needs of services, were divided into three subgroups, representing the three survey areas. The sections were as follows:

- SECTION A: Survey for the Vocational Rehabilitation Professionals regarding Pre-Employment Transition Services Needs of students with disabilities receiving services from the Department of Education and other Educational Programs.
- SECTION B: Survey for VRA Professionals regarding Other Vocational Rehabilitation Services Needs for students and youth up to 24 years of age, already VRA consumers.
- SECTION C: An instrument for Transition Analysts regarding Related Subject-Matters of Transition Service Coordination.

#### **Survey for VRA Professionals Working at the Evaluation and Adjustment Centers - Form CAA**

Form CAA of the survey was a specifically developed version, to find out the opinion of VRA Specialists' working at the Evaluation and Adjustment Centers (CAA, by its acronym in Spanish). The object of these opinions in form CAA, be it understood to mean persons over which professionals have opinions regarding service needs, were divided into two (2) sub-groups representing 2 sections of the survey. The following are the two sections:

- SECTION A: Survey for VRA Professionals regarding Pre-Employment Transition Services Needs of students with disabilities receiving services from the Department of Education and other Educational Programs.
- SECTION B: Survey of VRA Professionals regarding Other Vocational Rehabilitation Services Needs for students and youth up to 24 years of age, already VRA consumers.

These sections were the same as in the survey given previously to Transition Analysts. The survey included open opinion questions and recommendations, to improve Transition services, and others.

#### **Participant Description in Form CAA:**

A total of 43 professionals ascribed to the CAA answered the survey. The majority of the participants, 57% (22) indicated having between 17 and 24 years working at the VRA, while 21% (8) indicated having 25 years or more working at the VRA. 22% (8) indicated having 16 years or less working at the VRA. With regards to the professional group, they belong to, the sample was set as follows: Occupational Therapists 19% (8); Occupational Therapy Supervisors 2% (1); Vocational Evaluators 28% (12); Vocational Evaluation Supervisors 2% (1); Teacher 19% (8); Evaluation and Adjustment Official 5% (2); Evaluation and Adjustment Technicians 7% (3); Evaluation and Adjustment Assistants 5% (2); Other 7% (3); and Did not answer the question 7% (3).

#### **Survey for VRA Professionals - General Forms**

The survey's General Form was a version specifically developed to gather the opinions of the following VRA specialists working at the VRA: Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors in a variety of functions and roles (Case Managers, Transition Analysts, Support and Employment Mode Analysts; Vocational Rehabilitation Counseling Supervisor, Directors of the Counseling Service Centers and Directors of Support and Employment Modes Centers (CSEM). The object of their opinions in the General Form, be it understood to mean persons over which professionals have opinions regarding service needs, were divided into 4 subgroups representing 4 of the survey's sections. These sections were:

- SECTION A: Survey for VRA Professionals regarding Pre-Employment Transition Services Needs of students with disabilities receiving services from the Department of Education and other Educational Programs.
- SECTION B: Survey for VRA Professionals regarding Other Vocational Rehabilitation Services Needs for students and youth up to 24 years of age, already VRA consumers.
- SECTION C: Survey for VRA counselors (Case Managers) and professionals from the Centers of Support and Employment Modes (CSEM) regarding Supported Employment and other VR services needs for consumers with more significant disabilities.
- SECTION D: Survey for VRA Counselors (Case Managers) and professionals from the CSEM about the need to establish, develop or improve Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRP).

#### **Section A: Part I - Description of the participants who answered the General Form**

To generally describe general characteristics of participants, the following aspects were analyzed: sex, age, years of service at the VRA, title or position occupied, and the VRA region where located. A total of 160 persons answered the General Form. Among participants, a total of years-in-service at the VRA was observed with 39.5% reporting between 1 to 8 years; 23.1% between 9 to 16; 32% between 17 to 24; and 5.4% indicated having 25 or more year in VRA's service. As per the title or position held at the VRA at the time of the survey, 116 (75%) were observed to have been rendering Vocational Rehabilitation Counseling functions as Case Managers; 3 (2%) were Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors rendering functions as Transition Analysts; 10 (6%) were Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors doing Support and Employment Modes Analyst functions; 14 (9%) were Vocational Rehabilitation Supervisors; 5 (3%) were Counseling Services Center's Directors; and 5 (3%) were CSEM Directors. A total of 3 (2%) indicated Other.

#### **Survey for Department of Education (DE) Staff**

From a consensus of VRA and SRC, a version of the survey was developed to uncover the needs the DE staff could identify. The survey was titled "Survey for Puerto Rico's DE Professionals Regarding the Needs of Students with Disabilities for Pre-employment Transition Services" [*Encuesta para Profesionales del Departamento de Educación de Puerto Rico sobre las Necesidades de los Estudiantes con Impedimentos en cuanto a Servicios de Transición para Pre-empleo*]. The people on whom the DE staff gave their opinion were divided into several subgroups, which represent the various sections of the survey. The sections are:

- SECTION A: Data about the participants in the survey and their training needs.
- SECTION B: Survey for DE's Professional regarding Pre-Employment Transition Services Needs of students with disabilities who receive Special Education services in school.
- SECTION C: Survey for DE professionals, regarding Pre-Employment Transition Services Needs of students with disabilities who receive services under Section 504.
- SECTION D: Open for questions

### **Section A: Part I: Description of Department of Education survey participants**

In order to describe the general characteristics of the DE participants, the following were analyzed: sex, age, years-of-service at the DE, title or job held at the DE, and the region where the participant was working. A total of 81 professionals from 20 different schools answered the survey. The DE recommended and authorized the participation of 23 schools covering the Island: from which 20 participated. Five (5) questionnaires were given to each school for a total of 100. Of the 20 schools that agreed to participate, 81 questionnaires were answered for an 81% (81/100) participation index which may be considered a high response.

Among the participants working at the DE, the total number of years on the job was observed, and 30% reported between 1 and 8 years, 45% between 9 and 16 years, 11% between 17 and 24, and 14% indicated 25 or more years of service.

Regarding titles or job-positions held at the DE at the time the survey was administered, it was observed that 42 (52%) were Special Education Teachers, the largest group represented in the sample. Also, 12 (15%) were Professional Counselors, 8 (10%) were Social Workers, 5 (6%) were School Directors and 5 (6%) were Pre-Vocational Teachers. Of the total number of participants from the DE, 9 (11%) did not indicate a job position.

### **Qualitative Phase: Focal Group Analysis / Methodology**

The study's design was a mixed one. This type of investigation combined quantitative and qualitative investigation methods in different parts of the process. The needs assessment was subdivided into 2 parts. The first part constituted the quantitative part, consisted of surveys or questionnaires answered by different professional groups who specialized on rehabilitating people with disabilities. The second part qualitative, consisted of 5 focal groups composed of representatives from different sectors in society offering transition services from school to independent living, employment, or post-secondary education for people with disabilities between the ages of 14 and 24.

The objective of the qualitative phase was not to generalize the results, but to go deeper into the quantitative phase findings, to identify the elements or factors the previous phase did not identify, and to be able to go deeper into the studied elements from the participants' perspective (Hernández y Baptista, 2014). The objectives and the questions are more in general than in the quantitative investigation. For this phase, as previously mentioned, the technique used was focal group.

The sample of this study is not probabilistic. Participants were selected with a purpose - because it was understood that they could submit opinions regarding the study, due to the role assumed, understood or adjudicated within the functions they perform in society. Therefore, we parted from the premise that it was an expert sample due to the functions they had performed, in relation to the transition process. The sample was also chosen by convenience and on a voluntary basis.

This is a heterogeneous among groups sample with a common denominator. The number of participants per focal group fluctuated between 4 to 14 persons, complying with the minimum sample size suggested for this technique (Hernández y Baptista, 2014). The first focal group included staff from the Department of Labor (DOL), municipalities and the DE, operating under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) rules (2014): Title I Programs - Youth, Adults and Dislocated Workers; Title II Programs - Adult Education; Title III Programs - Wagner-Peyser (WP), and Title IV Programs - Vocational Rehabilitation Administration (VRA). The second focal group consisted of advocates and service providers to school youth in transition to post-secondary education. The third focal group was made up of VRA consumers that received transition services from school to post-secondary education. The fourth focal group consisted of fathers, mothers, and tutors of youth who currently, or that for the last three years, had been through the transition process from school to the VRA. The last group consisted of DE and VRA staff currently participating in transition processes.

The focal groups' analyses were made by group writing the manifest content of each response followed by a convergence and divergence analysis of the responses between and within groups, when applicable, because groups' questions could vary. This compiled information, at the same time, was analyzed by using a triangulation technique where the provisions of law contained in the applicable state and federal laws were used as the main source.

### **General Conclusions and Recommendations**

When arriving at general conclusions in a complex and extensive study, as the one at hand, risks that must be controlled become present. The study was a complex one, because it used mixed methodology (where qualitative and quantitative elements were integrated) and required safeguards when synthesizing the gathered information, since the internal and external validity of the study are different. At the same time, this was an extensive study, because it gathered input from four (4) professional sectors in the quantitative phase (heterogeneous among themselves, representing fifteen (15) specialties) for a total of 295 professionals (of which 81 were DE professionals and 214 belonged to the VRA), and five (5) sectors in the qualitative phase represented eight (8) sectors, among them professionals, parents or tutors and consumers for a total participation of 38 persons making up the focal groups.

The diversity created in the aforesaid suggests three (3) principles the reader must keep in mind when reading and analyzing the conclusions.

1. The general conclusions emanate from the analysis presented in this document, regarding each group or surveyed sector. Therefore, the reader will find specific conclusions in each of the document's sections.
2. The general conclusions mean to establish patterns or trends in the congruencies or divergences that result from the specific conclusions. Therefore, the general conclusions look to congruently integrate the study's general findings, and
3. The investigation carried out was specifically designed to identify pre-employment transition services needs and vocational rehabilitation services needs within specific groups, from the perspective of the experiences multiple sectors or professional groups may have had. Therefore, the conclusions constitute the identified needs along the investigation. The conclusions are elaborated in such a way that they simultaneously suggest the recommendations, so as to pay attention to the indicated problems or needs.
4. All the consulted sectors coincided in pointing out the need to improve or maybe develop from the beginning, inter-agency process coordination as a pre-requisite for pre-employment transition services to be offered according to law. The need to provide these services, and that there be more uniformity in their performance per region and include the active participation of consumers and their families, is inferred.
5. The limited interagency coordination negatively affects and dilutes the services and eligibility processes at the VRA, maintaining inequity in services per regions and schools, while at the same time, promotes disinformation for future consumers, for their families and the academic staff.
6. One of the largest limitations in transition services delivery is constituted by an evident staff shortage in professionally specialized personnel/staff not only at the VRA but also at the DE.
  - a. With respect to the VRA, evidence is clear that there are NOT enough Transition Analysts (TAs). Even though this professional is appreciated, valued, and recognized for their professional undertaking in the consulted sectors, it is equally indicated that the VRA faces a major limitation in having so few of them. The need for the TAs to have a larger presence in schools to give service and perform closer and more frequent follow-up tasks for the consumers in their transition process was evidenced. The expectation among consumers, parents, and school professionals with respect to the TAs will not be able to be satisfied with the present number of TAs available. At the VRA, the importance of executing a vocational evaluation was also pointed out, and thus, the need for having more of these specialists in every region, because of a late vocational evaluation, every rehabilitation process becomes diluted.
  - b. Regarding the DE, evidence is equally firm regarding the need for specialized professionals to attend students with disabilities needing transition services. The need for additional professional counselors was evidenced, as well as the need for

more rehabilitation counselors that must work from schools or academic regions, the need for independent living servicing specialists, and in particular, the need for vocational evaluators. Talking about vocational evaluators, the need for their services was evidenced by the absence of testing instruments and other evaluation tools required by law. The need to require and provide close, consequential collaboration between the DE and the VRA, was also identified.

7. Most of the sectors coincided when they stated that there is little participation or hardly any collaboration between parents and tutors during the transition services, as well as the occurrence of negative effects caused by that fact.
8. All sectors coincided in stating the fact that there is a lack of information continuity, regarding transition services; there is a lack of knowledge regarding what services are included; and in general, not many know of the vocational rehabilitation services offered at the VRA. Many sectors recommended the use of handbooks, whether in hard copy or in electronic format. At the same time, they requested continuous participation of TAs during orientation activities.
9. DE staff was emphatic when recognizing they need more formal training on Transition processes and services offered by the VRA. They recommend for training to be a continuous process that must be updated during the entire school year. That would create a more collaborative and effective staff during their transition procedure servicing.
10. VRA and DE staff recognized the need to increase and improve the independent living skills taught in schools, as well as the need to improve the pre-employment skills curriculum.
11. The need for transition services among students with disabilities was analyzed within the functions of the four (4) groups, or professional categories, be it: TAs, CAA, General and DE. The main results of said analysis are presented under section (j)(1)(E)- *Vocational Rehabilitation needs, among youth and students with disabilities including, as applicable, the need for pre-employment transition services, among other transition services.*
12. The needs of services were also analyzed according to the Region of the ARV in which the professional works. In this analysis, DE professionals were not included. The main results are presented in section mentioned above.
13. TAs were consulted about the frequency with which they can perform functions specific to their position. From the questions asked, the TAs pointed out: *Giving orientation to teachers, students, parents, and other staff regarding students with disabilities referrals process, independent living and employment skills, eligibility criteria and vocational rehabilitation services* on an average of 3.91 which suggests that in their opinion, the frequency these services are given is adequate. This result must be analyzed carefully, because the impression in other sectors that were also consulted (DE, fathers - mothers, or tutors, consumers, and the General Group) was that there is not enough staff to cover the services needed. The services: 4 - *To identify other students with*

*disabilities who were not receiving Special Education but could be referred to the VRA; 13 - To prepare a preliminary analysis of the medical, psychiatric, social, vocational-academic and others obtained from the students' academic files, case discussions, COMPU meetings and interviews with parents-tutors, and 15 - To give technical assistance to CRVs the service delivery process for transition students with disabilities* obtained average scores suggesting that the frequency with which the service is offered is moderately adequate (3.0, 3.27, and 3.0 respectively). The services that obtained the lowest average scores were: 7-*To serve as a resource when planning innovative in-schools projects for transitioning students with disabilities* (X=1.82) and 14-*To participate in interdisciplinary teams related to Work-based assessments* (x=1.50), which suggests that the frequency with which the TAs carry out their tasks was described as inadequate or a little inadequate by the majority of the surveyed staff.

14. The General Group participants, VRA employees, were asked about Supported Employment needs for consumers with significant disabilities. The more important results of such analysis appear in section (j)(1)(A)- *Vocational Rehabilitation needs of those with more significant disabilities, including supported employment service needs.*
15. The VRA staff who participated in the survey was asked about sectors or groups not receiving services or who were receiving them below the expected level. The main results of the analysis are presented in section (j)(1)(C)-*Vocational Rehabilitation needs in persons with disabilities that could be, but are not being served or are receiving services below expected levels.*
16. The needs of groups of youth with disabilities:
  - a. DE staff was asked about the transition needs of youth with disabilities under the custody of the Juvenile Institutions Administration [*Administración de Instituciones Juveniles*]. They emphasized on the importance of promoting communication skills, or learning about money management, of showing appropriate conduct, and understanding interpersonal relationships. They pointed out the need to provide them with real job experiences through orientations regarding the world of employment, and to follow-up on their therapies and the evaluations that by law, this group of youths should be receiving.
  - b. Regarding *Home Schooling* and their relationship with transition services, DE participants identified the needs: to provide social interaction and interpersonal communication skills; to work in groups; and to learn about their function in society, in their community coexisting with other youth. They indicated that their parents or their families are usually not aware of what Transition is, the services that are being offered by the VRA, the eligibility criteria, and the individuals' rights. They therefore recommend developing orientation and training strategies for parents. The staff also identified as a limitation the lack of formal diagnoses and the limited therapeutic services for these young people

- c. This professional staff understands that private or public-school youth are being shoved between the importance and the guarantee of the services these students with disabilities are entitled to, are offered, and could be available. In a very particular way, they pointed out that reasonable accommodations as a service are not equally provided as per student needs and rights. They pointed out that schools are currently having a lack of specialized staff with sufficient knowledge about vocational evaluations and related matters. To that effect, they recommend the VRA staff to play a more active role by visiting schools, with the main objective of giving orientation and disseminating information regarding the VRA services offer.

17. The general conclusions reached by these focal groups were as follows:

- a. Focal Group Number 1 - Consisted of PRDOLHR, municipality and DE staff, all operating under WIOA(2014): Title I Programs - Youth, Adults and Dislocated Workers; Title II Programs - Adult Education; Title III - Wagner-Peyser (WP); and Title IV - Vocational Rehabilitation Administration (VRA). See section (j)(1)(D)-*Vocational Rehabilitation needs for individuals with disabilities, served by other workforce system components*.
- b. Focal Group Number 2 - Advocates and those servicing to a transitioning population, from school to post-secondary life. The expressions of Focal Group 2 help us arrive at the conclusion that according to participant experiences, the DE is not implementing independent living skills because it does not have the resources, and the ones they do have, are damaged. They are also, not implementing pre-employment skills as required by law. PEI includes these services which are scarcely offered, because their institutional priority seems to be on academic skill-development. In the PEI development processes, student participations seem to be minimal. Even though in PEI, the parents are the students' representatives, they sometimes act as facilitators, just as well as barriers in transition procedures, some due to their overprotection and others for lack of interest. The number of TAs at the VRA is not enough; and their participation in COMPU meetings is minimal, all in comparison to what is expected of parents and professionals alike, according to legal mandate.
- c. Focal Group Number 3: VRA consumers who received transition services from school to post-secondary education. This group agreed with those in Groups 1 and 2 when they established that the transition process does not begin at age 16 or at age 14, if necessary, but that it varies from case to case. Pre-employment and independent living skills are not being fully developed. The TAs are not enough to carry out transition work, and in the majority of cases, they arrive at the VRA as self-referrals. Participants agree when saying that there is a definite need to increase TAs and Rehabilitation Counselors (RC) in schools to make the transition process a bit smoother. They also point out that the process of selecting the vocational goal is not uniform. Most participants are satisfied with the

services they receive in the ARV after being eligible, except for delays in vocational evaluations, maintenance and transportation payments, purchase of materials and placement process. Participants recognized that parental over protectiveness, in occasions, can limit participant development.

- d. Focal Group 4 composed of fathers, mothers and tutors: This group achieved consensus regarding the DE, with regards to the fact that they are non-compliant with state and federal statutes, same as with other state agencies under Law 51, signed in 1996. Participants concur in that the DE and the VRA are not starting their transition services on time, and what the PEI goes about doing, does not always materialize. Participants added that interagency coordination is inefficient, and that the DE is inadequately developing skills in independent living and pre-employment. Vocational evaluation procedures were pointed out as also being given inefficiently, because they don't have a specially trained staff, nor do they have an adequate, evaluation system. TA participation at the COMPUs is not enough, and VRA's evaluation procedures delay too much. Transition procedures must be based on functionality and not on limitations. The integration of RC in schools is recommended to help in the identification of necessary skills in the PEI and to put them into practice in a sensitive and accessible way.
- e. Focal Group Number 5: DE and VRA staff participating in current transition processes In Focal Group 5 participants concurred in saying that the transition process varies according to scenario, resources, and student needs. Not always are the services rendered, according to current law. TAs participation in COMPUs is insufficient, so VRA must hire more TAs. DE must recruit RCs to work from the schools themselves. The DE's Vocational Evaluation units do not have the necessary staff, nor the necessary evaluation system. According to participants, independent living (IV) skills and pre-employment are hardly developed by the DE. They concur saying that their priority is in academics, and that the DE does not have an IV nor a pre-employment curriculum. The DE does not contemplate a future for those with more significant disabilities, reason for their remaining at home after reaching 21 years of age. The group comes together when they state that the DE staff should be academically trained to work with people with disabilities. All those involved must have knowledge about the transition process, although at this moment it is not a uniform process, and many agencies are non-compliant or create barriers in the process. This group concurs with the previously stated fact that parents may become facilitators, as well as steppingstones or turn into steep barriers for their own children to overcome in the process.

**Vocational Rehabilitation needs of those with more significant disabilities, including supported employment service needs**

The professionals that made up the General Group, of which 75% came from CRV Case Managers, were asked about supported employment and other VR services needs of people with most significant disabilities. The 10 services were classified as very necessary for the majority of those surveyed, emphasizing on services: 3 - *Evaluation in real job scenarios (ecological evaluation)*, 4 - *Evaluation to determine pre-employment needs*, and 9 - *Supported Employment* as the services with the most support for being most in need (90%, 91% and 84%, respectively). Regarding the frequency of the availability of services at the VRA, it is important to point out service: 3 - *Evaluation in real job scenarios (ecological evaluation)* classified as very necessary by 90% of those surveyed, which was at the same time classified as not available by 43% of them; at the same time, service number 10 - *Extended Support* classified as very much in need by 70% of those surveyed and classified as unavailable by 23% of them.

The following information was not part of the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment conducted by the University of Puerto Rico. However, it should be considered as part of the situations that affected the PRVRA during 2017 and 2018:

Puerto Rico went through difficult times during 2017 due to Hurricane María, which caused damages to PRVRA facilities estimated in \$3,144,475.39, of which \$2, 581,673.50 were damages to structures (facilities) and \$562,801.89 to equipment. The most affected offices were Caguas, Arroyo, Ponce, Jayuya, San Germán, Corozal, Toa Baja, Bayamón, and Rio Piedras Evaluation and Adjustment Center. The Agency received the following assistance to reduce some of that financial burden: \$500,000.00 from Private Insurance, and \$102,230.23 from the US Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA).

The effects of the hurricane caused that from September 18 to 26, 2017, public employees, in our case Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors and other staff, did not report to work, which implied that important operational dates could not be carried out, as were the checks issuance, eligibility determinations, plans development, among others. However, a work plan was developed to prioritize the provision of VR services.

Regarding the effects on the service delivery, as soon as the Government restored its operations, the PRVRA made the necessary coordination to continue offering direct (in person to applicants/consumers) and indirect (data entry and transactions in mechanized system) services provided by the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors. However, the Agency experienced some challenges because many facilities were impacted and due to the instability of the electrical system after the hurricane. The personnel were relocated, so that the services would not be significantly affected or interrupted. This includes the services provided by the VR Counselors, personnel and service providers of the Assessment and Adjustment Centers and Units, and Support and Employment Modes Centers' staff. At this moment all PRVRA Regions are providing the services at the maximum capacity.

(B) who are minorities;

In Puerto Rico, 99.03% of the population is of Latino-Hispanic origin. Therefore, the ARV considers that there is no need to establish a procedure to identify persons with disabilities belonging to minority groups.

(C) who have been unserved or underserved by the VR program;

The VRA staff that participated in the survey was asked with respect to sectors or groups that could be receiving services or are underserved when compared to the expected levels. The three (3) identified groups by all sectors surveyed included persons with include people with hearing impairments (including deaf-blind), Autism Spectrum Disorder and people with most significant disabilities. An additional group was the students with disabilities not eligible for Special Education services (Section 504).

(D) who have been served through other components of the statewide workforce development system; and

For this section, focal group opinions from PRDOLHR, municipalities and DE staff operating under WIOA were used: Title I Programs - Youth, Adults and Dislocated Workers, Title II Programs - Adult Education, Title III Programs - Wagner-Peyser (WP), and Title IV - Vocational Rehabilitation Administration (VRA) Programs. After analyzing Focal Group Number One's remarks, we may conclude that its participants concur regarding Title II and III services under WIOA (2014) as being underutilized by the DE, because hardly any cases are being referred from the agency, and those that do arrive, are mainly self-referred. Their comments come together about the lack of independent living skills and pre-employment skills in youth applying to Title II, III, and IV programs services who were DE students. Besides, independent living and pre-employment skills, it is important that the DE develop skills for placement. Title I, II and III staff require people with disabilities management training and specialized staff in these areas because they depend on VRA's Rehabilitation Counselors.

(E) who are youth with disabilities and students with disabilities, including, as appropriate, their need for pre-employment transition services or other transition services.

The service needs among students with disabilities was analyzed by four (4) groups or professional categories, be it: TA, CAA General and DE. The more important results of such analysis are as follows:

- a. Comparative analysis by Professional Group of the needs of students with disabilities receiving special education services - The service identified as the major need by these professional groups was Career Exploration Counseling. It stands out from services that include practical experience for students (be it work-based learning experiences with on-site visits or *job shadowing*, or direct job experience - *trial work experiences*) constituted their top priority need. This fact becomes more important when observing that according to the opinion of all the professional groups, the identified services are either not offered or offered in limited occasions. Of the four (4) compared groups (TA, CAA, GEN and DE), three (3) presented a trend, moderate coincidence, or strong opinions when aligning their priorities or pre-employment transition services needs for students with disabilities receiving special education from the DE. The groups that significantly correlated between themselves are CAA, GEN and DE, correlating

between moderate-high and high. The TA group presented low and non-significant correlation indexes when compared to the other three groups, a finding that could be expected when considering that the roles of this professional allow a very particular understanding and identification of needs.

- b. Comparative analysis by Professional Group, of pre-employment transition service needs for youth ages between 14 to 21, that could be receiving special education services or under Section 504 (ADA) - Analyzing the opinion of these professionals, when it comes to the needs of pre-employment transition services for these students, one may conclude that every professional group coincided by stating that their principal needs lie in the evaluation of assistive technology services, therapeutic services evaluation, occupational exploration, the timeliness of the service, and the vocational evaluation. These results increase in importance when you observe that according to the opinion of the professional groups, the identified services are not offered or offered in limited occasions. Exception to this is that the DE staff understands that the assistive technology services evaluation and the therapeutic services are being offered regularly at the DE. When comparing groups, one may observe correlating indexes between moderate highs and moderate lows not statistically significant for 5 of the 6 comparisons made. This data suggests that, even though the professionals in the groups coincided in identifying major service needs, they did not show high congruency when priorities were placed in order of need regarding the previously identified transition services.

The service needs were also analyzed according to the Region of the ARV in which the professional works. In this analysis, DE professionals were not included. The main results were as follows:

- a. Comparative analysis, per VRA Region, of the needs of students with disabilities receiving special education services - One observes that services 1, 4, 7, 8, 10 and 17 have the highest average, and were selected by most of the groups, or by the majority of the professionals regarding them as the services mostly in need. Among these are 1(78%), 7 (65%), and 10 (67%) as the highest numbers, suggesting that the professional groups stated that these were the services mostly needed: *1-Career Exploration Counseling in schools including information about on demand careers and industry sectors; 7 - Work-based learning experiences with on-site visits to the job-place in order to find out the required skills per occupation; and 10-Job experiences to explore student-interest areas that will include occupational practice and short-term employment (seasonal, summer).* The same as in analysis by professional groups', the comparison by region allows us to identify that *Career Exploration Counseling* was identified as of the most need by all participating professionals in every regions. Services that include practical experience for students (be it work-based learning experiences with on-site visits or *job shadowing*, or direct job experience for interest exploration - *trial work experiences*) constitute the highest needs. These results must be analyzed taking into consideration that according to the opinion of the professional groups of all regions, the identified services are not offered or offered in limited

occasions. It is observed from the correlational analysis that there was a high congruence and consistency among the professionals of the regions when assign priority or hierarchy to the previously identified needs as more pressing.

- b. Comparative analysis per VRA region, of pre-employment transition-service needs for youth between the ages of 14 to 21, that could be receiving special education services or under Section 504 - Results observed were that services number 1(80%) , 2 (72%), 11 (75%), and 12 (68%) has the high average percentiles selected by all or the majority of professional groups and labeled as the needed services. The aforesaid suggests that most of the professional groups surveyed, per VRA region, selected the following needs as those mostly in need: *1-Assistive Technology Needs Evaluation (AT); 2-Therapeutic Service Needs Evaluation (physical therapy, occupational therapy, and psychological therapy), 11-Receive timely therapeutic services, and 12-Vocational Evaluation.* The evaluation to determine *Assistive Technology* needs received firm endorsement from all regions, suggesting that the service is needed in all of Puerto Rico. Similarly, the previously mentioned services were recognized as of high need for evaluation, and on time delivery of therapeutic services and vocational evaluations. The same as in previous analysis, major needs are not offered or offered in limited occasions. In synthesis, there was congruency in identifying which were the priority needs, but not in a relative order of adjudication in most regions.
- c. Comparative analysis per VRA region, of pre-employment transition services needs that could be observed among students with disabilities receiving services from accredited post-secondary programs (private schools, technological institutes, universities, among others): The professionals in the 6 regions coincided in identifying services 5 (64%), 10 (67%), 12 (56%), and 16 (63%) as those with the highest percentiles, suggesting that in their opinion these are the services most in need. The services are: *1- Academic tutoring; 5-Classroom accommodations or modifications; 10- Student career exploration for those with very low academic achievement; 12- Affective counseling for transition and adjustment process (self-advocacy skills, empowerment); and 16-Academic counseling (studying techniques, academic planning).* *Counseling in career-exploration services for students with low academic achievement, accommodations or modification in the classroom and academic counseling,* received the highest average percentiles. Participant opinions regarding frequency of availability varies according to the service. For example, participants reported academic tutoring as regularly available; but career-exploration counseling and affective counseling were not offered or offered in limited occasions.
- d. VRA's comparative analysis, per VRA region, regarding other vocational rehabilitation services for students and youth up to 24 years of age, and current VRA consumers - The professionals in the six (6) regions coincided in identifying services 2(69%), 4(79%), and 5(74%) as the mostly needed. These services show the highest average results and were selected by all or by the majority of the professionals in the region. The services were: *2- Supported Employment; 4- Job-searching Assistance; and 5- Job-placement Assistance.* All three (3) services are employment focused:

search, placement and supported employment mode. The professionals in all regions also coincided in pointing out that these are regularly offered services. The correlated analysis performed lets you identify the responsive trends among regions, the more frequently endorsed activities from participating professionals. One sees that of the 15 correlations performed, 6 had significant correlated significance: San Juan-Ponce ( $r = .899$ ;  $p < .05$ ); Bayamón-Mayaguez ( $r = .899$ ;  $p > .05$ ); Bayamón-Ponce ( $r = .899$ ;  $p < .05$ ); Caguas-Ponce ( $r = .886$ ;  $p > .05$ ); Caguas-Arecibo ( $r = .943$ ;  $p > .05$ ); y Mayagüez-Ponce ( $r = .886$ ;  $p > .05$ ). The previous correlation indexes are described high, suggesting that the professionals in these regions were consistent in assigning a relative priority or hierarchy to the identified needs. The remaining correlations were not significant, fluctuating between moderate low and moderately- high, which lets us to conclude that in the rest of the comparisons made between regions, there were no high correlations when assigning priorities.>

See also the general conclusions from the focal groups presented in item 13 of the General Conclusions at the beginning of section (j)(1)-*Results from the Statewide Needs Assessment, on Vocational Rehabilitation Services for people with disabilities in Puerto Rico.*

(2) Identify the need to establish, develop, or improve community rehabilitation programs within the State; and

Section D of the General Group survey to professionals from the VRA was developed with the main purpose of finding out the VRA's surveyed opinions regarding the need to establish, develop or improve community rehabilitation programs. The section consisted of four (4) concrete questions aimed at differently related aspects of Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRP) that are or could be under contract by the VRA.

Based on their professional experience in the ARV and the vocational rehabilitation services needs of the ARV consumers, respondents answered the following to the first question:

1. *Do you believe that there are enough CRPs on the Island able to satisfy VRA consumer's needs?*

ANSWER: Most of the participants (68%) answered NO, that there are not enough CRPs in Puerto Rico. The detailed answers given by the participants may be distributed as follows:

Yes - 29 (18%)

No - 109 (68%)

No answer - 22 (14%)

The opinion of the majority of VRA participants is that there are not enough CRPs to keep up with the supported employment services demand. According to the surveyed professionals, the limitation of CRPs negatively affects goal and indicator achievement possibilities, because the consumers have to wait for long periods of time before receiving services. The mostly affected areas seem to be the rural-mountainous regions. Regarding the services offered by the PRCs, there

seemed to be a consensus to demand more specialized trained staff of the CRPs and improve the control of the ARV on the service processes that the CRPs perform. Several participants pointed out that the main challenge is not the CRPs limitations, but the lack of competitive employment on the Island. Hand-in-hand with this observation, the need for the employers to be more sensitive toward people with disabilities rights, as well as the recognition of their potential being a must.

For more information regarding findings and recommendations related to CRPs see section (j)(1)(A).

The following information was not part of the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment conducted by the University of Puerto Rico, but must be consider as part of the situations that affected the CRPs during 2017 and 2018:

Community Rehabilitation Programs that provide supported employment services to PRVRA consumers were affected by Hurricane María in 2017 and experienced some challenges as many facilities were impacted. One of the CRP reported that the first floor of their facility was affected by flood, and they lost everything, while other floors had damaged doors, windows, roof and equipment. Estimated damages caused by flood, wind and rain were \$1,084,000.00, and they received \$409,456.26 in assistance from a flood insurance, but haven't receive assistance from FEMA neither compensation for rain nor wind damages insurance. However, this CRP indicates that their staff did not stop providing services to consumers, after the impact of Hurricane Maria, as consumers and their families needed assistance and support, and that facilities were ready to offer services from October 16, 2017. Another CRP reported \$15,000.00 in estimated damages caused by flood and another \$6,000 in damages to equipment and miscellaneous. They received \$3,000.00 from the flood insurance.

Some employers went out of business and the consumers lost their jobs, while others reduced operation hour. Another issue that impacted CRP's performance goals was the migration of consumers to the US caused by the loss of properties, electric power, water and in some cases, their relatives.

Despite all these things, later new jobs opportunities emerged in other industries like construction, steel, and small business. Some of our consumers with the most significant disabilities were able to do this kind of jobs while others don't, which is something the PRVRA and CRPs will continue to work on.

- (3) Include an assessment of the needs of individuals with disabilities for transition career services and pre-employment transition services, and the extent to which such services are coordinated with transition services provided under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act .

All of the surveyed sectors coincide in pointing out the need to improve, or develop from the beginning, interagency coordination procedures as a pre-requisite for pre-employment transition services to be achieved according to the statutes of law. It is inferred the need for services and procedures to be more uniform throughout the regions, including active participation from consumers and from their family.

The limited interagency coordination negatively affects and dilutes the services and procedures of eligibility for the VRA, maintaining inequality in the services rendered, by region and per school, creating lack of information to be given to future consumers, their families and education staff.

For more details regarding needs see section (j)(1)(E)-*Vocational Rehabilitation needs, among youth and students with disabilities including, as applicable, the need for pre-employment transition services, among other transition services.*

## (G) ANNUAL ESTIMATES

### Describe:

#### (1) The number of individuals in the State who are eligible for services;

The PRVRA has estimated that 57,000 individuals with disabilities will be eligible to receive services, during FYs 2019 and 2020. The purpose is to assist them in achieving an employment outcome and a more independent living. The PRVRA is not under an Order of Selection.

The following section provides a description of the service areas and the breakdown of projected costs for FY 2019:

**Table 5. Service Areas and The Breakdown of Projected Costs**

Service Area	Funds (\$)	Title I or VI-B	Estimated Customers to be served	Average Cost of Services (\$)
Assessment (Purchased services)	0	I	2036	0
Physical and Mental Restoration	241,350.74	I	15,199	15.88
Training	9,819,481.02	I	18,294	536.76
Maintenance	3,973,004.30	I	5,733	57.75
Transportation	3,400,287.83	I	4,501	62.95
Personal assistance (personal aides)	451,265.86	I	642	702.91
Assistive Technology	785,799.27	I	682	1,152.20
Post-employment	5,045.62	I	49	102.97
Small businesses, other	257,207.09	I	264	974.27

Supported Employment services	2,434,096.00	I	867	2,807.49
Community Rehabilitation Programs contracting	300,000	VI-B	0	0
Total	21,367.537.73*	I/VI-B	48,267**	6,413

\* Amounts are based on figures approved in the budget for FY 2017 and RSA-2 Federal Report. \*\* Consumers who receive duplicate variety of services depending on the nature of it. (Ex. A consumer may receive training support services, transportation, personal care, etc., and also be getting assistive technology services among others. Therefore, the estimated number of consumers to be served without duplicating is 50,000.

(2) The number of eligible individuals who will receive services under:

(A) The VR Program;

Please, refer to previous section.

(B) The Supported Employment Program; and

Please, refer to section k.1.A.

(C) each priority category, if under an order of selection;

Not applicable.

(3) The number of individuals who are eligible for VR services, but are not receiving such services due to an order of selection; and

Not applicable.

(4) The cost of services for the number of individuals estimated to be eligible for services. If under an order of selection, identify the cost of services for each priority category.

Please, refer to section K.1.A. above. Order of selection not applicable.

## (L) STATE GOALS AND PRIORITIES

The designated State unit must:

(1) Identify if the goals and priorities were jointly developed. Identify if the goals and priorities were jointly developed and agreed to by the State VR agency and the State Rehabilitation Council, if the State has a Council, and jointly agreed to any revisions.

Please, refer to section L.2., below.

(2) Identify the goals and priorities in carrying out the VR and Supported Employment programs.

The PRVRA, in partnership and collaboration with the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC), has identified the following goals and priorities needed to carry out the vocational rehabilitation and supported employment programs.

### **Goal 1**

Strengthen the services provision process of applicants/consumers of the PRVRA; emphasizing on compliance with performance indicators and productivity measures established by the federal government and the public policy of the agency.

Priorities:

1. Continue to provide services to applicants/consumers, and technical assistance to counseling services staff for the compliance and data collection of the new performance indicators established by WIOA.
2. Collaborate with the “core-programs” in order to develop integrated processes for the service delivery; and forms and processes for collection of common data elements to identify individuals served by more than one “core-program”.

### **Goal 2**

Ensure the provision of services to eligible youth with disabilities, and pre-employment transition services to students with disabilities coming from transition, so that they can achieve an employment outcome.

Priorities:

1. Maintain the level of participation of school staff, parents and students with disabilities on orientations related to VRA services, including Transition and Pre-Employment Transition services.

### **Goal 3**

Strengthen the relationship with employers to identify opportunities for competitive integrated employment, situational assessments and career exploration.

Priorities:

1. Expand competitive integrated employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

### **Goal 4**

Maintain the process of dissemination of the PRVRA services in accordance with the eligibility criteria and provision of rehabilitation services to the persons with disabilities.

Priorities:

1. Continue to disseminate the impact on changes in legislation and how VRA services and the integration of core programs under WIOA can help people with disabilities to achieve an employment outcome.

### **Goal 5**

Strengthen the administrative, fiscal and programmatic procedures to comply with the regulations established and the institutional efficiency required.

Priorities:

1. Continue with the analysis of the operational performance and needs for its improvement.

These goals and priorities were developed taking into account the findings from the *Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment of Rehabilitation Needs* and the Amendments set forth in WIOA, among others.

- (3) Ensure that the goals and priorities are based on an analysis of the following areas:

Please, refer to sections J and L.2. above.

- (A) The most recent comprehensive statewide assessment, including any updates;

Please, refer to sections J and L.2. above.

- (B) the State's performance under the performance accountability measures of section 116 of WIOA; and

Please refer to sections I. 2. Goal 1, above.

- (C) other available information on the operation and effectiveness of the VR program, including any reports received from the State Rehabilitation Council and findings and recommendations from monitoring activities conducted under section 107.

Goals and priorities were developed in collaboration with the SRC. The SRC also collaborated with PRVRA in the Statewide Needs Assessment, which provided information on areas to improve operation and effectiveness. The PRVRA also participates in the SRC's meetings where input is received directly and was considered to develop goals and priorities. SRC recommendations are included at the beginning of this VR Portions of the State Plan.

#### (M) ORDER OF SELECTION

Describe:

- (1) Whether the designated State unit will implement and order of selection. If so, describe:

- (A) The order to be followed in selecting eligible individuals to be provided VR services.

Not applicable.

- (B) The justification for the order.

Not applicable.

- (C) The service and outcome goals.

Not applicable.

(D) The time within which these goals may be achieved for individuals in each priority category within the order.

Not applicable.

(E) How individuals with the most significant disabilities are selected for services before all other individuals with disabilities; and

Not applicable.

(2) If the designated State unit has elected to serve eligible individuals, regardless of any established order of selection, who require specific services or equipment to maintain employment.

Not applicable.

#### (N) GOALS AND PLANS FOR DISTRIBUTION OF TITLE VI FUNDS.

(1) Specify the State's goals and priorities for funds received under section 603 of the Rehabilitation Act for the provision of supported employment services.

The PRVRA has developed the following goals and plans for the distribution of Title VI, Part B funds:

##### **Goal A:**

Serve at least 200 new consumers in the supported employment modality.

##### **Goal B:**

Maintain a level of satisfaction of 85% of those consumers who received supported employment services at the closure of the case.

##### **Plans:**

Use other sources of funding, in addition to the ones from Title VI, Part B, needed to expand the provision of supported employment services.

- Contract and support community rehabilitation programs (CRPs) throughout the Island so that at least 80 consumers, who received supported employment services, are able to achieve an employment outcome.
- Strengthen the provision of supported employment services through training and technical assistance to the staff of the CRPs. The Office of Support and Employment Modes (OSEM) and the centers of support and employment modes (CSEMs) will provide such technical assistance in aspects such as:
  1. Guidance to new proponents about supported employment services, as requested.
  2. Other aspects related to the provision of supported employment services and extended supports services

- Continue administering satisfaction surveys of the consumer in terms of the services received in the CRPs and in the CSEMs, in order to identify areas to be strengthened or improved.
- Continue conducting monitoring interventions to the CRPs in order to validate compliance with the provision of services established in the contracts.
- Explore in the community, in agencies, in the state legislature and in social interest groups; the availability of gathering funds to the PRVRA for the provision of supported employment services.

#### **Distribution of Title VI, Part B funds:**

The estimated total of projected funds for the provision of supported employment services for is \$3,308,900 distributed as follows: \$300,000 from Title VI-B for the contracting of a CRP; and \$3,008,900 from Title I for the contracting of other CRPs and for expenses related to the supported employment services.

(2) Describe the activities to be conducted, with funds reserved pursuant to section 603(d), for youth with the most significant disabilities, including:

(A) the provision of extended services for a period not to exceed 4 years; and

The PRVRA will make available resources for extended services for a period not exceeding 4 years. These services will be provided through contracting of CRPs. CSEM Analysts will receive the request for extended support services from employers and will negotiate with the CRP the service to be provided and the number of interventions needed to stabilize individual in employment. An authorization for services document will be created on the case management system.

(B) how the State will leverage other public and private funds to increase resources for extended services and expanded supported employment opportunities for youth with the most significant disabilities.

The PRVRA will explore in the community, agencies, organizations, legislature and social interest groups, the availability of funds to the PRVRA for the provision of supported employment and extended services for the youth with the most significant disabilities. As part of those efforts, in 2016 the Agency signed a collaborative agreement with the State Council on Developmental Disabilities for the optimization of interagency resources, develop a community support network in favor of individuals with the most significant disabilities, including youth, employment activities to promote inclusion of these population into integrated work settings, activities or projects to provide extended services, among others.

#### **(O) STATE'S STRATEGIES**

Describe the required strategies and how the agency will use these strategies to achieve its goals and priorities, support innovation and expansion activities, and overcome any barriers to accessing the VR and the Supported Employment programs (See sections 101(a)(15)(D) and (18)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act and section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA)):

The ARV has identified several strategies necessary to achieve the goals and priorities established in section (L), above.

**Goal 1:**

Strengthen the process of providing services to ARV applicants / consumers; emphasizing compliance with performance indicators and productivity measures established by the federal government and the public policy of the agency.

**Strategies:**

- Strengthen coordination with the DTRH to know employment trends and types of employers.
- Continue implementing employment projects through the development of self-employment.
- Continue with programmatic monitoring and technical assistance to PRCs to guarantee quality and agility of services to consumers with the most significant impediments.
- Coordinate ARV consumer participation in employment-related activities available at the American Job Centers and other WIOA components.
- Continue with the referral of consumers who are beneficiaries of Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) to the Caribbean Program of Work Incentive Planning and Assistance (CWIPA) for the Service of Planning Counseling of Benefits
- Share with the CER the normative communications that govern the provision of services.
- Continue with the programmatic monitoring of the service delivery process to ensure compliance with public policy.
- Continue to provide technical assistance to supervisory services for counseling services to improve decision-making in case management.
- Refer ARV consumers to the services of other WIOA components (Literacy, Adults and other programs) to expand their employment skills.

**Goal 2:**

Ensure the provision of services to young people with eligible disabilities, and pre-employment transition services to students with disabilities from Transition, to obtain an employment result.

**Strategies:**

- Continue with the monthly monitoring of the eligibility determinations in 60 days or less and the planning and signing of the PIPE in 90 days or less, of the youth referred to transition to the ARV.
- Maintain the participation of the CRV in the COMPU meetings of the transitional youth.
- Offer Pre-Employment Transition services.

- Continue with the identification of the transition consumers referred and served in the CAA.
- Continue with the identification of the transition consumers referred and served in the CAME and the results of these young people in the different employment modalities
- Strengthen the relationships between the DE and the ARV to facilitate the identification of students who can benefit from Transition services.
- Continue to guide school personnel on the services of the ARV.

**Goal 3:**

Strengthen the relationship with employers to identify opportunities for integrated competitive employment and career exploration.

**Strategies:**

- Provide training and technical assistance to employers on ADA requirements, work-based learning experiences, recruitment of people with qualified disabilities, accommodation in employment, among others
- Continue to grant salary incentives to employers to promote employment opportunities for consumers.
- Continue to participate in meetings of the State Board and Local Boards of WIOA
- Maintain the active participation of ARV personnel in activities that bring employers together.
- Refer to programs under Wagner-Peyser to ARV consumers who possess skills and credentials to be marketed with employers.

**Goal 4:**

Maintain the process of dissemination of ARV services, emphasizing the criteria of eligibility and provision of rehabilitation services to persons with disabilities.

**Strategies:**

- Continue the dissemination on the revision of the State Plan to be submitted for public comments in order to guarantee the participation of applicants / consumers, the general public and employees of the agency.
- Continue participation in outreach activities in the community, by the ARV and / or in coordination with CERPR and other basic programs under WIOA.
- Continue with the dissemination of ARV services in the “American Job Centers”.
- Continue with the dissemination of services in radio, television and written press programs, as requested by said media.

**Goal 5:**

Strengthen administrative, fiscal and programmatic procedures so that they comply with the established regulations and required institutional efficiency.

**Strategies:**

- Offer training to staff, to strengthen knowledge and skills necessary in the performance of their duties.
- Continue to carry out periodic evaluations of the performance of the agency's employees to ensure institutional effectiveness.
- Maintain the level of financing of the State Council for Independent Living (CEVI) and the State Council for Rehabilitation (CER), to assist and support its operations; and in coordination with the ARV to develop employment and independent living opportunities for our applicants/consumers.
- Update administrative, fiscal and programmatic procedures in accordance with established state and federal regulations, and the socio-economic situation of the country, as necessary.
- Continue to support all areas of the agency in the use of available computer systems, and develop applications to streamline processes, reports and procedures according to needs presented by the areas and which in turn will be consulted with the services and administration staff.
- Hold participation meetings with agency staff on aspects related to public policy.
- Carry out monitoring to ensure compliance with the procedures.

(1) The methods that will be used to expand and improve services for individuals with disabilities.

See discussion of strategies in previous section, under goals 1, 3 and 4.

(2) How a broad range of assistive technology services and devices will be provided to individuals with disabilities at each stage of the rehabilitation process and on a statewide basis.

The ARV has the purpose of providing technology assistance services to eligible applicants/consumers who require such services. For these purposes, the ARV has the following:

- Procedures, Regulations and Manuals for the provision of technological assistance services;
- Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors who refer applicants / consumers to the CAA for: assessment of technological assistance needs, recommendation and prescription of equipment, delivery and training in the use of the equipment, and technical assistance;
- Parent Technology Assistance Unit at the San Juan Region Assessment and Adjustment Center;
- Technology Assistance Areas in the Arecibo, Ponce, Toa Baja, Caguas and San Germán Assessment and Adjustment Centers;
- Technology assistance team that meets the following needs:
  - Computer access;
  - Communication;

- Alternate help for cognitive deficit;
  - Independent life;
  - Environmental controls;
  - Visual; and
  - Audio logical Clinic (Regions of Arecibo, Caguas and San Juan) with updated equipment of technological assistance for independent living and facilitating the communication of deaf and partially deaf consumers.
- Specialized professionals and certified in technological assistance that provide these services; and
  - Professional development opportunities to keep up to date the knowledge of human resources that provide technological assistance services.

In addition, the ARV established a collaborative agreement with the Technological Assistance Program of Puerto Rico (PRATPR) to offer training to the agency's employees on new technologies and equipment. The ARV may refer consumers for technology assistance services that are not available at the agency.

- (3) The outreach procedures that will be used to identify and serve individuals with disabilities who are minorities, including those with the most significant disabilities, as well as those who have been unserved or underserved by the VR program.

In terms of the outreach procedures to identify and serve people with disabilities who are minority, such procedures do not apply to Puerto Rico. The Island is considered a Hispanic or Latino country, with a population of 3,337,177 (Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census Estimate for 2017). Out of this total, 99.03% is of Hispanic or Latino origin. Therefore, the PRVRA considers that there is no need to implement any type of procedure to identify persons with disabilities who are minority.

The PRVRA has community liaison units, attached to the centers of VR counseling services (CVRCS), operating in the six (6) regions of the agency. These units have a staff that maintains contact with various referral sources such as: schools, hospitals, institutions specialized in the provision of services to the population with disabilities, and public/private agencies. Such staff participates in activities (orientations on VR services, job fairs, among others) for the purpose of expanding the dissemination of information on services and increasing the inclusion of persons with the most significant disabilities.

The Agency also remains active and participates in the bills that are developed in the legislature, related to people with disabilities.

- (4) The methods to be used to improve and expand VR services for students with disabilities, including the coordination of services designed to facilitate the transition of such students from school to postsecondary life (including the receipt of VR services, postsecondary education, employment, and pre-employment transition services).

Please, see strategies under Goal 2 section O.

- (5) If applicable, plans to establish, develop and improve community rehabilitation programs in the jurisdiction.

The ARV annually issues a public notice for the hiring of PRCs that provide services to consumers with the most significant impediments. Currently the ARV maintains contractual agreements with PRC throughout the island. The ARV conducts guidance, technical assistance and monitoring activities at all stages of service provision, and during the contractual period between the ARV and each PRC. Technical assistance will be provided to all PRCs that have areas identified with some type of need for improvement during any stage of the monitoring process.

- (6) Strategies to improve the performance of the jurisdiction under the indicators established by section 116 of WIOA.

The ARV continues to implement the following strategies to improve the functioning of the State with respect to evaluation standards and performance indicators:

- a. to Continue the practice of periodically sharing statistical information with regional staff.
- b. Articulate intervention plans with regional directors, directors of Vocational Rehabilitation Counseling Services Centers; Assessment and Adjustment; Support and Employment Modalities; and the directors of the Office of Rehabilitation Counseling Services and the Office of Quality Control and Program Management, to meet established goals. Priority attention will be given to regions that have faced the most difficulty in achieving goals and indicators. The regions will develop a work plan based on an analysis of each work zone, the employment situation in the geographical area and projections of cases to be served.
- c. The case management system has been modified to record the follow-up of post-program exit cases. The monitoring screens include fields to cover employment and salary indicators under section 116 of WIOA. In addition, a report was developed that allows users to generate a list of consumers who left the program after receiving services and the dates on which the second and fourth quarter follow-up corresponds. The staff has been provided with information on the importance of carrying out such monitoring and compiling the data of the indicators.
- d. Emphasis will be placed on the importance of service to employers, including guidance and training to raise awareness about the benefits of recruiting and retaining people with disabilities, and technical assistance after placement.
- e. The ARV contacted the staff of the Department of Labor and Human Resources to coordinate the receipt of the Unemployment Insurance information to validate the information of the second and fourth quarter employment indicators under WIOA.
- f. The Agency will refer consumers to other mandatory programs under WIOA and will continue to promote post-secondary education among its consumers. Many of the ARV consumers are receiving training.

(7) Strategies to assist other components of the workforce development system that provide services to individuals with disabilities.

The ARV has developed the following strategies to assist other WIOA components in helping people with disabilities:

- a. Coordinate the participation of ARV staff in the American Job Centers (AJC), to properly channel the needs of those with disabilities who request information and/or services in such centers.
- b. Identify possible referrals to the services of the ARV.
- c. Provide the AJC staff with guidance on various topics of interest that are requested related to people with disabilities.
- d. Actively participate in job fairs coordinated by the AJC.
- e. Exchange of employment networks / employers.

The previously established strategies will allow the achievement of the goals in section (L).

(8) How the strategies will be used to:

- (A) achieve the goals and priorities of the jurisdiction, consistent with the comprehensive needs assessment;

All of the PRVRA strategies were developed based on the Comprehensive Needs Assessment Study and WIOA amendments in order to reach the goals and priorities established by the State..

- (B) support innovation and expansion of activities; and

The ARV will continue to identify innovation and expansion needs. Some strategies are:

1. Expansion of the provision of services to people with disabilities due to traffic accidents, through a collaboration agreement with the Automobile Accident Compensation Administration.
2. Expansion of the availability of information resources or training for new recruitment staff through the agency's internal page (intranet).
3. Continued with the use of remote interpretation video technology for deaf people.
4. Continued funding from CERPR and CEVI to assist and support their operations, as well as jointly develop with the ARV, better employment and independent living opportunities for our applicants / consumers.

- (C) overcome identified barriers relating to equiTable access to and participation of individuals with disabilities in the State VR Services Program and the State Supported Employment Services Program.

The PRVRA has available and accessible services to all individuals with disabilities. In order to promote the participation in VR and SE services, the agency staff participates in community orientation activities. There

are no differences in terms of availability of services for particular disabilities, cultural or racial groups. Also, the PRVRA performs the necessary steps to continue to ensure that our facilities are accessible to all individuals with disabilities.

(P) EVALUATION AND PROGRESS REPORTS: VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION AND SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT GOALS.

Describe:

(1) An evaluation of the extent to which the VR program goals described in the approved VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan for the most recently completed program year were achieved. The evaluation must:

(A) Identify the strategies that contributed to the achievement of the goals.

**Goal 1:**

Strengthen the process of providing services to ARV applicants / consumers; emphasizing compliance with performance indicators and productivity measures established by the federal government and the public policy of the agency.

**Strategy:**

Strengthen coordination with the DTRH to know employment trends and types of employers.

**Progress Report:**

During the 2017 and 2018 programs, the staff of the Support Centers and Employment Modalities (CAME) developed / participated in 80 activities in coordination with the Department of Labor and Human Resources (DTRH), which facilitated knowing the new employment trends and the types of employer. On the other hand, they continued to receive various publications and / or journals from the DTRH Research and Statistics Division, some of these were: Business Employment Dynamics, Industrial Composition by Municipality (published quarterly); Covered Jobs and Wages. These publications and / or magazines allow CAME staff to continue developing workshops for consumers.

The Office of Support and Employment Modalities (OAME) received approximately 60 job offers from various types of employers by email. Once received, he referred them to the CAME to be analyzed and identify potential consumers who could benefit from employment alternatives.

The Office of Rehabilitation Counseling Services (OSCRV) referred 182 job offers to OAME.

**Strategy:**

Continue implementing employment projects through the development of self-employment.

Progress Report:

CAME offered 1,148 workshops on job search and summary preparation, among others. They also offered 706 technical guidance and / or assistance to consumers for the development and evaluation of proposals. The Regional Committee for the Evaluation of Self-Employment Proposals conducted 48 evaluations of the Business Plan presented by consumers with the goal of self-employment.

### Strategy:

Continue with programmatic monitoring and technical assistance to Community Rehabilitation Programs (PRC) to guarantee quality and agility of services to consumers with the most significant impediments.

### Progress Report:

OAME conducted 11 monitoring of the PRCs during the 2017 program year, with a compliance result of over 90% in 45% of them.

Similarly, OAME carried out 11 monitoring during the 2019 program year. The results of these are as follows:

**Table 6. OAME Monitoring PY 2019**

PRC	Date Monitoring	Percent Compliance
National Association of the Blind (CRECES)	July 18, 2019	66
Training Center People with Disabilities (CAPI)	July 17, 2019	73
Centro Nuevos Horizontes	July 16, 2019	100
College of Special Education and Integral Rehabilitation (CODERI)	July 15, 2019	100
Prevocational Institute (IPVI)	July 17, 2019	70
Independent Life Reach Movement (MAVI)	July 19, 2019	73
Puerto Rico Down Syndrome	July 17, 2019	63
Empleo Alianza	July 15, 2019	13
The Corporate Source	July 15, 2019	71
Program for Assistance for Educational and Social Rehabilitation (PARES INC.)	July 16, 2019	83

The Office of Quality Control and Program Management (OCCGP) developed the Survey of Training Needs of PRC staff that provides services to ARV consumers, which was sent to the PRCs by the State Rehabilitation Council (CER). Based on the results of the needs survey, the OCCGP collaborated with the

CER in identifying resources that offered training on May 10, 2019 to 57 professionals, among which: PRC employees; CAME's staff and CER councilors.

**Strategy:**

Coordinate ARV consumer participation in employment-related activities available at the American Job Centers and other WIOA components.

Progress Report:

The American Job Centers (AJC) referred approximately 248 cases to the ARV. The CAME's offered 219 orientations in the AJC. The Rehabilitation Counseling Service Centers (CSCRV) offered 288 orientations in the AJCs and 584 participants benefited.

The ARV developed the 2017-04 Normative Communication "Role of the Vocational Rehabilitation Administration (ARV) in the American Job Centers and the ARV Referral Form to the AJCs.

**Strategy:**

Continue with the referral of consumers who are beneficiaries of Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) to the Caribbean Program of Work Incentive Planning and Assistance (CWIPA) for the Service of Planning Counseling of Benefits

Progress Report:

During the 2017 and 2018 program years, 21 Counseling authorizations for Benefit Planning were certified as 'service provided'; and 30 are in process (they have not been certified as a service provided). This, for a total of 51 authorizations generated in the periods.

**Strategy:**

Share with the CER the normative communications that govern the provision of services.

Progress Report:

The ARV shared with CER a total of 13 Normative Communications that had been provided to the counseling staff.

**Strategy:**

Continue with the programmatic monitoring of the service delivery process to ensure compliance with public policy.

Progress Report:

The OSCRV conducted internal monitoring to evaluate the process of providing services, recommendations for self-employment services and occupational equipment; analysis of: cases closed in the applicant stage, eligibility determinations in 60 days or less and development of the service plan in 90 days or less, the amount of expired plans was also evaluated, and purchases of assistive technological equipment to guarantee services offered to the consumers of the ARV; achieving:

- ✓ 107 internal monitoring of the service delivery process with 180 monitored files;
- ✓ 12 internal monitoring of recommendations for self-employment services and occupational equipment with 23 files monitored;
- ✓ 1 internal monitoring of cases closed in the applicant's stage with 21 files monitored;
- ✓ 1 internal monitoring of the service request process (60-day analysis) with 151 files monitored;
- ✓ 1 internal monitoring of the eligibility determination process with 3 monitored files;
- ✓ 1 internal monitoring on the development process and signing of the Individualized Plan for Employment in 90 days with 151 files monitored;
- ✓ 1 internal monitoring for analysis of plans versus expired plans with 151 files monitored;
- ✓ 312 corrective actions with the objective of guaranteeing services offered to ARV consumers; and
- ✓ 1 internal monitoring on the process of buying technological assistive equipment with 4 files monitored.

The CSCRV carried out internal monitoring of service files of the applicants / consumers to evaluate the process of providing services, achieving:

- ✓ 239 internal monitoring of the eligibility determination process with 483 records monitored;
- ✓ 323 internal monitoring of the development of the Individualized Employment Plan with 597 files monitored;
- ✓ 247 internal monitoring of the transition process with 966 files monitored;
- ✓ 3,271 internal monitoring of the budget management process with 6,858 records monitored;
- ✓ 861 internal monitoring of the stabilization process, transition to extended support and closure with 1,079 monitored files;
- ✓ 198 internal monitoring of the process of closing rehabilitated cases with 342 files monitored;
- ✓ 101 internal monitoring of the referral process with 190 monitored files;
- ✓ 26 internal monitoring of cases closed in the applicants stage with 86 files monitored;
- ✓ 335 internal monitoring of the training process with 484 files monitored;
- ✓ 172 internal monitoring of cases with more than 10 years with 174 files monitored; and

- ✓ 584 internal monitoring of the case discussion process with 1,173 files monitored.

The OCCGP carried out 243 monitoring of electronic files. In these, compliance with the following aspects was evaluated: eligibility determinations in 60 days or less, development of the Service Plan in 90 days or less, and registration of Credentials obtained before the closing of the file. The results of the process are shared with the Regional Directors, Counselors Directors and Supervisors

**Strategy:**

Continue to provide technical assistance to supervisory services for counseling services to improve decision-making in case management.

Progress Report:

The OSCRV carried out the following activities:

- ✓ 4,119 technical assistances through the user help desk of the mechanized service delivery system called: Customer Rehabilitation Information System or CRIS;
- ✓ 7, 014 technical assistance to: Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors (CRV), supervisory services supervision staff; CSCRV directors and Regional Directors, to improve decision-making in case management, compliance with evaluation standards and performance indicators and increase the level of compliance of the CRVs that achieve the established goals; and
- ✓ 312 corrective actions with the objective of guaranteeing services offered to the ARV consumers.

Refer ARV consumers to the services of other WIOA components (Literacy, Adults and other programs) to expand their employment skills.

Progress Report:

The ARV referred to the Programs under the WIOA Titles a total of 275 consumers. CAME maintained contact with AJC Ponce to identify new proposals in the WIOA Adult and Youth Program in: January, February, March April, May and June 2019; managing to impact 10 people.

**Goal 2:**

Ensure the provision of services to youth with eligible disabilities, and pre-employment transition services to students with disabilities from Transition, so that they obtain an employment result.

**Strategy:**

Continue with the monthly monitoring of eligibility determinations in 60 days or less and the planning and signing of the PIPE in 90 days or less, of the youth referred to transition to the ARV.

Progress Report:

The OCCGP monitored compliance with these measurement criteria, achieving:

- during the 2017 program year; 93% in the eligibility determinations of the cases referred by the schools were carried out in 60 days or less; and 90% of the plans were developed in 90 days or less.
- during the 2018 program year; 93% in the eligibility determinations of the cases referred by the schools were carried out in 60 days or less; and 95% of the plans were developed in 90 days or less.

Strategy:

Maintain the participation of the CRV in the COMPU meetings of the transitional youth.

Progress Report:

Rehabilitation Counseling Analysts (ACR):

- ✓ They reported 5,799 young people with Transition impediments to the CRV.
- ✓ They achieved a total of 2,094 participations at COMPU meetings.
- ✓ The CRV achieved a total of 277 participations to COMPU meetings

**Strategy:**

Offer Pre-Employment Transition services.

Progress Report:

The ARV coordinated the offering of services and mandatory activities as part of the Pre-Employment Transition (Pre-ETS) services, achieving:

The OAA carried out the following activities:

- ✓ Completed performance evaluation of 56 transition students who participated in the Work Based Learning Experience in August 2017.
- ✓ Revised Collaboration Agreement between the ARV, Department of Labor and Human Resources and the Department of Education (DE) to provide pre-employment services to ED students with disabilities who meet the criteria for receiving Pre-ETS services as established by the WIOA Law.
- ✓ Formalized the Project to Offer Vocational Evaluation Services through a Mobile Unit as an innovative alternative, for which it carried out the following activities:
  - Require approval of the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA).
  - Require approval from the Office of Management and Budget.

- Participated in a meeting at the General Services Administration (ASG) to clarify doubts and require guidance on the pre-auction procedure and formal auction.
- Prepared and submitted to the director of the Purchasing Division of the ARV a detailed and descriptive report of the components of the mobile bus; This responded to a request from the ASG for the pre-auction.
- Participated in the formal auction held on April 30, 2019.
- ✓ 1,200 students benefited from pre-employment transition activities coordinated by the Assessment and Adjustment Centers / Assessment and Adjustment Units.

The ARV planned and coordinated the offer of mandatory activities through service fairs and workshops to students in the process of transition from the ED between the ages of 14 to 21, including those receiving special education services or under section 504 of the Rehabilitation Law achieving:

- ✓ Work Based Learning Experience Activity (July 2017).
  - 2,475 young people with disabilities participated in the experience
  - Services Fair and closing of the work-based learning experience (1 / August / 2017)
  - 69 employers lent their facilities so that transition students had a real work experience.
- ✓ November / 2017 - Hiring of five (5) service providers, achieving:
  - 4,937 students benefited from pre-employment transition activities coordinated by service providers through service fairs.
- ✓ January / 2019 - Hiring of twelve (12) service providers, achieving:
  - That 3, 656 students benefited from pre-employment transition activities coordinated by the entities through service fairs.
- ✓ Evaluation of Proposals of entities interested in providing workshops / trainings / orientations to students in the transition process of public schools and colleges between the ages of 14 and 21, including those receiving special education services or under section 504 of the Law of Rehabilitation. The following activities were carried out:
  - Public Notice in press
  - P Proposal Evaluation Committee was instituted
  - Proposal Evaluation
  - Establishment of contractual conditions for service provision
- ✓ Managed the signing of Executive Order No.: 2019-05 (March 18/2019), which encourages and promotes students with disabilities who receive special education services or under section 504;

receive pre-employment transition services by participating in Work-Based Learning Experiences (WBLE), in the agencies and instrumentalities of the Government of Puerto Rico.

- ✓ 97 contracts formalized with agencies and instrumentalities of the Government of Puerto Rico that participated in the Work-Based Learning Experience (June and July 2019).
- ✓ 2,829 young people with disabilities participated in the work-based learning experience.

**Strategy:**

Continue with the identification of the transition consumers referred and served in the CAA.

Progress Report:

The Centers / Units of Assessment and Adjustment (CAA / UAA) received 2,229 referrals of cases at transition ages and offered a total of 2,074 services.

**Strategy:**

Continue with the identification of the transition consumers referred and served in the CAME and the results of these young people in the different employment modalities.

Progress Report:

388 Transition consumers were referred to the Support Centers and Employment Modalities (CAME). 175 Transition consumers with employment results (St. 26) were served in CAME in the following modalities:

- ✓ Regular Employment: 96
- ✓ Sustained Employment: 75
- ✓ Self-management: 4

**Strategy:**

Strengthen the relationships between the DE and the ARV to facilitate the identification of students who can benefit from Transition services.

Progress Report:

The ARV participated in 20 meetings with the Special Education Advisory Committee.

Strategy:

- Continue to guide school personnel on the services of the ARV.

Progress Report:

19,612 guidance were offered on the transition process to:

- ✓ Parents: 7,746
- ✓ Teachers: 2,744

- ✓ Students: 9,122

### Goal 3

Strengthen the relationship with employers to identify opportunities for integrated competitive employment and career exploration.

#### Strategy:

Provide training and technical assistance to employers on ADA requirements, work-based learning experiences, recruitment of people with qualified disabilities, accommodations in employment, among others.

Progress Report:

OAME carried out the following activities:

- ✓ It offered guidance to the PRC TIPCO on Auto intercessory, this in coordination with Support Analyst and Employment Modalities, in May 2018.
- ✓ Provided technical assistance to the PRC CODERI related to WIOA requirements (new services related to extended services).
- ✓ Established contact with the Industry for the Blind Company in North Carolina for the recruitment of blind people; it also shared the information with the Rehabilitation Counselors. Subsequently, It contacted executives of the company located in Mayagüez, PR in order to explore available employment opportunities and the viability of recruiting people with disabilities.
- ✓ It participated in a monthly “call conference” with the Puerto Rico Federal Buildings-GSA including the New York region to monitor potential stores for commercial facilities.
- ✓ It offered technical assistance to six employers who have recruited ARV consumers in order to guarantee their permanence in employment.
- ✓ Participated in a meeting with the president of the Ponce Employers Committee (May 2019).
- ✓ Participated in a meeting of the Carolina Board of Trustees, in which the president and employers were present (June 2019).
- ✓ It directed the Public Affairs Manager of Walmart Puerto Rico regarding the recruitment of people with disabilities and explored the feasibility of coordinating work-based learning experience opportunities in June 2019.

CAMEs carried out the following activities:

- ✓ They offered approximately 1,393 orientations to potential employers.

- ✓ They offered approximately 540 orientations by telephone communication to potential employers.
- ✓ They sent approximately 315 electronic communications to potential existing employers.
- ✓ They offered approximately 1,684 face-to-face technical assistance, telephone and electronic communication, impacting approximately 999 people.

**Strategy:**

Continue to grant salary incentives to employers to promote employment opportunities for consumers.

Progress Report:

- ✓ The ARV formalized 4 salary incentive contracts, benefiting 7 consumers.

**Strategy:**

Continue to participate in meetings of the State Board and Local Boards of WIOA.

Progress Report:

- ✓ ARV staff participated in 43 meetings of state and local boards.
- ✓ The ARV attends monthly, or as convened at meetings scheduled by the different public and private agencies with a view to joining efforts aimed at providing services to people with disabilities, such as: Employers Committee; Proposal Review Committee; Monitoring Committee; Committee for Persons with Disabilities; American Job Centers, among others.

**Strategy:**

Maintain the active participation of ARV personnel in activities that bring employers together.

Progress Report:

The ARV participated in approximately 57 job fairs and other activities in the community. Some of the activities were the following:

- ✓ Educational and Occupational Fair called: You are the Protagonist of your Success Story, in March 2018 and 154 people were impacted.
- ✓ Job fair called: Meeting, Innovation and Job Opportunities, Passport to Work, in March 2018 and 180 people were impacted.
- ✓ Economic Development Forum: The Cooperative Model, a solution to boost the Economic Development of the Southwest Area (Information Board), in August 2018 and 22 people were impacted.

- ✓ Employment Fair of the Government of Puerto Rico (El Capitolio de PR) in August 2018, approximately 28 employers participated, and 5 consumers benefited.
- ✓ Participation in educational activity with the North Board of Trustees. The theme was: Sexual harassment in the workplace, in August 2018; Approximately 25 employers benefited.
- ✓ Tu Cámara Emprende (Information Board), in September 2018 and 20 people were impacted.
- ✓ Orientation: How should we work with deaf people (Information Board), in September 2018 and 50 people were impacted.
- ✓ Participation in: Self-Employment and Entrepreneurship Event for Young People with Disabilities, in September 2018 and 57 people were impacted.
- ✓ Employers Workshop: “Fit in or Set Out”, in October 2018 and 36 people were impacted.
- ✓ Meeting with President Committee of Employers at the University of Turabo in October 2018, 1 person was impacted.
- ✓ Employers Committee Meeting at the University of Turabo (6 / October / 2018), 3 employers participated, and 2 representatives of the ARV (director of CAME and Analyst).
- ✓ Employment Fair of the Municipal Alliance of Integrated Services, in October 2018; 5 service agencies participated and 4 consumers benefited.
- ✓ Transition to the World of Work fair at the University of Turabo in October 2018, 15 employers participated and 5 consumers benefited.
- ✓ Employment Fair for the Tourism-Hotel Industry at the Puerto Rico Convention Center in October 2018, 4 consumers benefited.
- ✓ Employer Workshop Collaboration: Recent Changes Labor Licenses, in November 2018 and 30 people were impacted.
- ✓ Job fair in the Arecibo Region in December / 2018
- ✓ Conference to employers: The key concepts in sound and hearing loss in December / 2018 and 12 employers benefited.
- ✓ Job fair at Pueblo Supermarket Offices in January 2019, 3 consumers benefited.
- ✓ Participation with the Ponce Employers Committee / WIOA Employment Service during a visit to Hogar San Miguel in January 2019, and 20 people were impacted.
- ✓ Job fair of the Jobs for You agency in Caguas, in January 2019, 5 people were impacted.
- ✓ Job fair produced by Brenda Marrero and Associates in February 2019, 5 consumers benefited.
- ✓ Job fair in Sizzler, Ponce in February 2019, 10 consumers benefited.
- ✓ Job fair at La Esperanza School in February / 2019, and 23 people were impacted.

- ✓ Workshop: Ergonomics and Technological Assistance with Ponce Employers Committee/WIOA Employment Service in February 2019, and 31 people were impacted.
- ✓ Presentation of ARV-CAME Talent Bank to Zimmer in April 2019, and 2 people were impacted.
- ✓ Job fair in Villa Parguera, Lajas in April 2019 and 40 people were impacted.
- ✓ Participation with the Coamo Employers Committee in Educational Seminar in April 2019 and 12 people were impacted.
- ✓ Restaurant Industry Recruitment Fair in May 2019, approximately 20 employers participated, and 145 people were impacted.
- ✓ Camera in your Community at the Aguadilla Mall in May 2019, 6 people were impacted.
- ✓ Orientation: Care of the Golden Age, at the Direidi Nursing Home in May 2019, and 28 people were impacted.

**Strategy:**

Refer to programs under Wagner-Peyser ARV consumers who possess skills and credentials to be marketed with employers.

Progress Report:

- ✓ The ARV referred 146 consumers to the programs under Wagner Peyser.

**Goal 4**

Maintain the process of dissemination of ARV services, emphasizing the criteria of eligibility and provision of rehabilitation services to persons with disabilities.

**Strategy:**

Continue the dissemination on the revision of the State Plan to be submitted for public comments in order to guarantee the participation of applicants / consumers, the general public and employees of the agency.

Progress Report:

The OCCGP carried out the following activities:

- ✓ In March 2018, it directed the members of the State Rehabilitation Council on the official plans of the agency, including the Unified State Plan and the Strategic Plan; and provided them with technical assistance for the development of their recommendations.
- ✓ In April 2018, it held a meeting with the management staff of the ARV program offices to review the Goals, Priorities and Strategies of the State Plan.
- ✓ In June 2018, 26 directors of: Central Level, Regional, Rehabilitation Counseling Service Centers, Assessment and Adjustment Centers, and Employment Support and Modalities Centers were directed to the official plans of the agency, including the State Plan Unified and the Strategic Plan.

- ✓ It Completed the revision of the Portion of Vocational Rehabilitation Services 2018-2020 of the Unified State Plan 2016-2020; complied with submitting this to the Department of Economic Development and Commerce (PRDEDC) for the applicable publication process.
- ✓ In October 2018, it wrote a Public Notice notifying the availability of the draft of the ARV portion of the Unified State Plan for consumer comments and the general public to this document. At the same time, he urged in the Public Notice that any comments to another section of the Unified State Plan be addressed to the PRDEDC (electronic address indicated). The Public Notice was sent to the six regional offices and was placed in each of the waiting rooms; in turn it was placed on the bulletin boards of the offices / divisions / areas of the Central Level. On the other hand, the PRDEDC publishes a Press Notice about the availability of the Unified State Plan and its availability for comments.

Personnel from the administrator's office participated in 2 meetings related to the Unified State Plan in the PRDEDC and in the Department of Labor and Human Resources on July 17, 2018.

**Strategy:**

Continue participation in outreach activities in the community, by the ARV and / or in coordination with CERPR and other basic programs under WIOA.

**Progress Report:**

The OSCRV offered 21 guidelines on the services offered by the ARV benefiting 799 people, which are detailed below:

- ✓ Services Fair on August 1, 2017; 650 people impacted;
- ✓ Deafblind Advisory Committee of Puerto Rico on August 24/2017, with the participation of 10 people;
- ✓ RYAN Program (Ryan White Law of 1990) on October 31, 2017, with the participation of one (1) person;
- ✓ Department of Correction; on November 1, 2017, with the participation of one (1) person;
- ✓ Labor Development Board on December 19, 2017;
- ✓ Labor Development Board on January 29/2018, with the participation of one (1) person;
- ✓ Medical Center Trauma Hospital on February 20, 2018, with the participation of one (1) person;  
Specialized School on 6 / March / 2018, with the participation of one (1) person;
- ✓ Committee for People with Disabilities-Local Area Board Labor Development Guaynabo / Toa Baja on March 8, 2018;
- ✓ Movement for the Reach of Independent Living on April 18/2018, with the participation of one (1) person;

- ✓ Department of Justice on July 13, 2018, with the participation of eight (8) people. The orientation was provided by OSCRV and OAA staff;
- ✓ Goodwill Grays LLC agency dedicated to job search and development of occupational skills on July 26, 2018, with the participation of 14 people;
- ✓ Program of the Blind and People with Mental and Developmental Physical Disabilities Industry (CIRIO) on 6 / September / 2018, with the participation of five (5) people;
- ✓ Mech-Tech College of Caguas on 6 / September / 2018, with the participation of 30 people;
- ✓ Colegio San Ignacio de Loyola on September 24, 2018, with the participation of eight (8) people;
- ✓ Puerto Rico Department of Public Security on October 19, 2018, with the participation of 19 people;
- ✓ State Council for Independent Living on February 14/2019, with the participation of 25 people;
- ✓ Patient Procurator on April 25/2019, with the participation of three (3) people;
- ✓ Associate Secretary of Special Education on May 1, 2019, with the participation of 10 people;
- ✓ Department of Housing on June 4, 2019, with the participation of 10 people;
- ✓ University of the Sacred Heart on May 29, 2019, by telephone. Orientation was offered to one (1) person about the service of scorers and readers.

The OCCGP carried out the following activities:

- ✓ Developed the Survey of Training Needs of the personnel of the PRC Community Rehabilitation Programs that provide services to ARV consumers; which was sent to the PRCs by CER.
- ✓ Collaborated with the CER in the identification of resources that offered training on May 10, 2019 to 57 professionals among which participated: PRC employees; CAME's staff and CER councilors and this based on the results of the needs survey. In this activity, the availability of the satisfaction survey for consumers and employers was reported.
- ✓ It collaborated in the review of the surveys administered to consumers and employers, published on the CER website on March 14, 2019.

The OAA carried out the following activities:

- ✓ It offered guidance to 16 employees of the Municipality of Manatí related to the services offered in the Centers and Units of Assessment and Adjustment.
- ✓ Provided guidance on ARV services to the administrative staff of Mech-Tech College on September 14, 2018, with the participation of 22 people.

- ✓ Provided guidance through one (1) interpreter of the agency's signs, in the Student Services Division of the University of Puerto Rico on March 1, 2019, benefiting 47 teaching and non-teaching professionals.
- ✓ Provided guidance on the provision of services in the CAA / UAA to professionals and students of Occupational Therapy at Huertas College on May 3, 2019, benefiting 13 professionals.

OAME carried out the following activities:

- ✓ Coordinated and participated in a meeting with staff of the Federal Department of Labor (Division of Standards and Wages) discussed aspects established in WIOA for employers and provided guidance on the services of the ARV.
- ✓ Participated in several meetings with the State Council of Developmental Deficiencies (27/February/2019; 27/March/2019; 9, 17 and 25 /April/2019).
- ✓ Provided guidance on ARV services and served as liaison with other agencies on May 15, 2019.

CAME participated / developed in various activities, some of these were the following:

- ✓ Mayaguez / Las Marias Labor Development Area Services Fair (August 2017), nine (9) people were impacted.
- ✓ Chamber Services Fair in your Community (August 2017), 32 people were impacted.
- ✓ Stop & Go Services Fair / Office of the First Lady / Fortaleza (November 2017), 96 people were impacted.
- ✓ Aguada Convention Center Services Fair (December 2017), 95 people were impacted.
- ✓ Service Fair at the Bobby Cruz de Hormigueros Convention Center (April 2018), 280 people were impacted.
- ✓ Services Fair: Government Services Summit (May 2018), 99 people were impacted.
- ✓ Member of the Mentoring Committee of the Libera Incubator of the MATRIA Caguas Project (August 2018), eight (8) people were impacted.
- ✓ It offered guidance on Law 51 and Sustained Employment at Juan Cancio Ortiz School (October 2018), impacting 19 students.
- ✓ Interagency Meeting at the Humacao Judicial Center (October 2018, and April 2019), 13 agencies participated.
- ✓ Consolidated Cigar Corporation Services Fair (October 2018), approximately 100 employees were impacted.

- ✓ Workshop: How much power do I have to be successful, in December 2018, impacting 14 consumers.
- ✓ Participation in Cross Training of Mandatory Partners of the Carolina Labor Development Board, in November 2018, impacting 48 people.
- ✓ Workshop: Preparation for job interview (February / 26/2019) at the Julia de Burgos Protected House, 16 people were impacted.
- ✓ Orientation at Bristol Myers Squibb Factory, in March and April 2019, impacting 22 people.
- ✓ Orientation at Aspen Factory, in April 2019, impacting approximately 15 people.
- ✓ Services Fair on April 9, 2019, 155 people were impacted.
- ✓ Participation in Innovative Conversation towards Northwest Business and Labor Development, on May 1, 2019, 17 people were impacted.
- ✓ Services Fair on May 21, 2019, 114 people were impacted.

**Strategy:**

Continue with the dissemination of ARV services in the "American Job Centers" (AJC).

**Progress Report:**

The CAME offered 219 orientations in the AJC. The CSCRVs offered 288 orientations in the AJC.

CAME offered talks / workshops / orientations to participants and / or employees of the AJC; some of these activities are as follows:

- ✓ Workshop: Preparation of resume and job application (July 2018; January 2019 and February 2019)
- ✓ Workshop: Frustration Management (July 2018) } Workshop: Job interview (July 2018)
- ✓ Workshop: Developing our personal appearance (July and August 2018 / April and May 2019)
- ✓ Workshop: Effective communication and interpersonal relationships in employment (July, August and September 2018 / February, April, May and June 2019)
- ✓ Workshop: Strengthening our self-esteem (July, August and September 2018; March 2019, May and June 2019)
- ✓ Workshop: Fundamental actions in employment / Attitude management (August 2018)
- ✓ Workshop: Decision making in employment (September 2018)
- ✓ Workshop: Work culture incursion (September 2018 / March and April 2019)
- ✓ Workshop: Critical management (September 2018) } Guidance on ARV / CAME services to staff of:

- AJC Ponce (August 2018), impacting 10 people
- AJC Coamo (November 2018), impacting two (2) people
- AJC Mayagüez (December 2018 / June 2019), impacting 37 people
- AJC Arecibo (October to December 2018 / May and June 2019), impacting five (5) people
- AJC Manatí / Dorado (October to December 2018 / May and June 2019), impacting seven (7) people
- ✓ Guidance on ARV/CAME services to AJC participants of:
  - AJC San Juan (October and November 2018), impacting 13 people
  - AJC Mayagüez (November and December 2018), impacting 24 people
  - AJC Ponce (January 2019), impacting 16 people
  - AJC Mayagüez (February 2019), impacting 10 people
  - AJC Mayagüez (March 2019), impacting 10 people
  - AJC Manatí / Dorado (February and June 2019), impacting two (2) people
- ✓ Guidance on the services of the self-management modality (September 2018), impacting 17 people.
- ✓ Presentation of CAME Talent Bank and identification of job offers at AJC Ponce (November 2018 / January, February, March, April, May and June 2019), impacting 19 people.
- ✓ Workshop: What to do to keep our job? (January 2019)
- ✓ Workshop: Important areas in the job interview (January, February, March, April, May and June 2019)
- ✓ Workshop: Strengthen areas of need in a job (February and April 2019)
- ✓ Workshop: Misuse of social networks (April 2019)
- ✓ Workshop: Decision making (June 2019)

**Strategy:**

Continue with the dissemination of services in radio, television and press programs, as requested by said media.

Progress Report:

The ARV participated in the following outreach activities:

Table 7. ARV Outreach Activities

Date	Name of station (radio/TV)	Topic
3/13/2018	WIPR 940 (radio interview)	Conversation about the Week and Day of the Rehabilitation Counseling Professional
4/17/2018	Press release Review by News Forum	Delivery of applications to participate in the Work-Based Learning Experience
5/7/2018	Press release Review by La Fortaleza	Increase in benefit for applicants and consumers of agency benefits
6/11/2018	Press Release Review by: La Fortaleza, and Ponce News	Work Based Learning Experience
8/10/2018	Website review of: Notiuno, and Al Aire Victoria 840	Completion and closure of the Work-Based Learning Experience
9/25/2018	Press Release Review by La Fortaleza	Payment to youth who participated in the Work-Based Learning Experience
12/18/2018	Press Release Review by: First Time, WIPR	Signing of Agreement between the ARV and the Department of Education of PR
12/18/2018	Press Release Review by: First Time, WIPR	Signing of Agreement between the ARV and the Department of Education
1/14/2019	Press Release Review by WIPR	Extension of the application period to participate in the Work-Based Learning experience
2/20/2019	Press release	Start of Services Trade Shows
3/4/2019	Press Release Review by Primera Hora	Signing of Collaborative Agreement between the ARV and the Department of the Family so that students with disabilities who receive services from the ARV participate in the Work-Based Learning Experience program
3/19/2019	Channel 4: WAPA TV	Conversation about the Week and Day of the Professional of the Ministry of Rehabilitation and Promotion of the Services of the ARV
3/19/2019	Channel 6: The WAPA TV	Promotion of the ARV Services

Date	Name of station (radio/TV)	Topic
4/2/2019	Press Release	Young people with Autism Spectrum Disorder work as ARV employees for a day
5/13/2019	Press Release Review by: WIPR	Interagency effort in favor of the deaf population in Puerto Rico
5/30/2019	Press Release Review by: WIPR	Increasing the number of students with disabilities requesting employment opportunities through the ARV
6/27/2019	Press Release Review by: WIPR	They train interpreters for the deaf on meteorological terminology

### Goal 5

Strengthen administrative, fiscal and programmatic procedures so that they comply with the established regulations and required institutional efficiency.

#### Strategy:

Offer training to staff, to strengthen knowledge and skills necessary in the performance of their duties.

#### Progress Report:

The OSCRV carried out the following activities:

- ✓ Guided Transition Analysts in the six regions of the ARV on pre-employment transition services, benefiting 12 professionals (January 15, 2019).
- ✓ Reinforced the process of providing services and meeting goals to the agency's counseling staff, benefiting 24 professionals (January 18, 2019); personnel from the six regions of the agency participated (Regional Directors, directors of the: Counseling Services Centers, Assessment and Adjustment Centers and Support Centers and Employment Modalities).
- ✓ Provided guidance on the Impact of the WIOA Law to central and regional level management staff, benefiting 12 professionals (March 18, 2019).
- ✓ Through the Workforce Innovation Technical Assistance Center (WINTAC), counseling personnel from the six regions of the agency were trained, benefiting 475 professionals (March 19-20, 2019).
- ✓ In collaboration with the OAA, it offered guidance on the implications of WIOA in the process of providing services to Toa Baja CAA staff on June 6, 2019, including: CRV, CAA Analyst, Teachers, Vocational Evaluators and Occupational Therapist.

The CSCRVs represented by the supervisory staff coordinate administrative meetings, offer mentoring,

discuss normative communications and reinforce issues related to the provision of services. OAME carried out the following activities:

- ✓ Held a conversation with CRV of the Caguas Region on January 30, 2019.
- ✓ They directed the directors of the Support Centers and Employment Modalities and Regional Directors related to the Job Club initiative and the results of the first experience on February 11, 2019.

CAME carried out the following activities:

- ✓ 457 CSCRV staff orientations
- ✓ 19 guidance to CAA staff
- ✓ 1,891 technical assistances to CSCRV staff;
- ✓ 47 technical assistances to CAA staff
- ✓ 56 guidance to CRV on labor market trends and occupations with higher demand

The OCCGP carried out the following activities:

- ✓ Provided face-to-face and telephone technical assistance to Rehabilitation Counselors and / or Counseling Supervisors. The theme was: How to correctly complete the fields of information to PIPE and record comparable benefits. Six (6) sessions (one (1) per region).
- ✓ Technical assistance to Regional and Counseling Directors on productivity goals / indicators (via email and telephone).
- ✓ Guidance on State and Strategic Plan to 26 employees (June 27, 2018), among which there were 20 rehabilitation counselors who hold management positions.
- ✓ Training for 211 employees in the counseling area of the six regions of the agency (November and December 2018), among which were: Rehabilitation Counselors (CR), Counseling Supervisors (SC), Directors of Counseling Service Centers (DCSCR), and Counseling Services Technicians (TSC). The training theme was: How to Complete the WIOA Follow Up Screens (post-exit monitoring) and Information on Productivity Indicators.
- ✓ Collaborated with the State Rehabilitation Council in the identification of resources that offered training on May 10, 2019 to 57 professionals among which participated: ARV CAME staff, CER councilors, and employees of the Rehabilitation Programs The Community is based on the results of the needs survey.

The OAA carried out the following activities:

- ✓ 4 trainings and / or workshops and / or orientation to professionals of the Assessment and Adjustment Centers (Occupational Therapists and / or Occupational Therapy Assistants; Vocational Evaluators and Counselors in Vocational Rehabilitation) and others (to professionals in the process of completing Certification in Vocational Evaluation) to 41 employees. They were:
  - Pre-Employment Skills for Students in the Process of Transition to Adult Life and the Importance of Occupational match from the Perspective of the Counselor in Vocational Rehabilitation in the Planning of Occupational Goals to 15 employees (15 / September/2017).
  - Work samples of the VALPAR System for 18 employees and 8 external professionals (August 30 and 31 and September 1, 2017).
- ✓ Guidance on Regulatory Communications: 2018- 02 Procedure for the use of test work experiences (ETP), 2018- 03 and 2018- 05 Collaboration Agreement / Referral Form for Pre-Employment Transition Services (PRE ETS ) to Students with Disabilities Referred by the Puerto Rico Department of Education (DEPR) to the Vocational Rehabilitation Administration (ARV) to 70 employees (December 1, 2017; March 1 and 8, 2018), among which were Directors Regional, Directors of the Assessment and Adjustment Centers, Directors of the Vocational Rehabilitation Counseling Service Centers, Assessment and Adjustment Analysts, Vocational Evaluators, Supervisor of the Assessment and Adjustment Center.
- ✓ Guidance to CRV on the services offered at the Assessment and Adjustment Centers (CAA) in the areas of Occupational Therapy and Speech and Language Pathology to 20 employees (February 20, 2018).
- ✓ Coordinated and offered guidance on the Occupational Demand Occupations in the Labor Market to 23 Vocational Assessors (March 8, 2018) with staff from the Department of Labor and Human Resources.
- ✓ Training Vocational Evaluators on Psychometric Properties in the Vocational Evaluation Tests to 23 employees (6 / April / 2018 and 4 / May / 2018), among which there were Vocational Evaluators and a CAA director.
- ✓ Training for Occupational Therapists about the COMPASS Functional Assessment Software (AM) Technological Assistance Program and Discussion of report formats for occupational therapy services to standardize them (Wheelchair Evaluation, Technology Assistance Evaluation) (PM) to 19 employees (20 / April / 2018).
- ✓ Training for Vocational Evaluators on the Theory, Administration and Interpretation of the Test of Vocational Interests and Computerized Self-Efficiency Cirrena Gerena Computerized to 17 employees. It was held at the Test Innovation Company in San Juan (May 11, 2018).
- ✓ Training on the Importance of Occupational match From the Perspective of Rehabilitation Counselor in the Planning of Occupational Goals. Pre-Employment Skills and Transition Process to

Adult Life to 22 employees (May / 23/2018) among which were Workstation Professionals, Areas of Functional Academic Skills and Pre-Employment.

- ✓ Guidance to 29 professionals in the counseling area of the San Juan Region regarding those referred to the Assessment and Adjustment Centers (CAA), the purpose, the indicators and how to write the question of that referral, according to the services requested to 28 CRV and the Regional Director, on September 21, 2018.
- ✓ 1 training on the vocational evaluation process on October 25, 2018 to one (1) teacher relocated to the CAA of San Juan.
- ✓ Provided guidance to professionals in the area of counseling regarding compliance with the Interagency Agreement for services offered to injured workers between the ARV and the State Insurance Fund Corporation, benefiting 45 professionals (7.13, and December 20, 2018).
- ✓ 1 training for CAA / UAA professionals. The theme was: Characteristics and functioning of the person with autism / Intervention strategies for the process of evaluation and development of skills on 2 / May / 2019, benefiting 51 professionals.
- ✓ 3 training and professional training in the area of vocational evaluation to be located in the CAA of Caguas from 3 to 5 / June / 2019, benefiting 1 professional.
- ✓ 1 training and training related to the APTICOM test to a professional transferred to the Vocational Evaluation area on June 17, 2019.
- ✓ 1 sign language guidance on the terminology used when reporting natural phenomena on June 26, 2019. They joined in this effort, the Bureau of Emergency Management, the ARV and the National Meteorological Service, benefited 4 interpreters to signs of the agency.
- ✓ Collaborated in the coordination of the Second Vocational Evaluation Symposium: Change Strategies, held on 10 / October / 2018 at the Central University of Bayamón, benefiting 21 professionals among whom were CAA / UAA personnel: Vocational Evaluators, Analysts and directors; and director of OAME.
- ✓ Through the Workforce Innovation Technical Assistance Center, CAA / UAA personnel were trained on March 19-20, 2019, benefiting 36 professionals.

#### The Budget Division:

- ✓ Provided individual guidance as required to senior management at the regional level related to Use and Management of Funds. } Trained two (2) employees in the area of budget analysis.
- ✓ Coordinated training with the Department of the Treasury on the PRIFAS System (January 9 and 23/2019)

The Office of Labor Affairs and Human Resources (OALRH):

- ✓ Trained 225 employees in the counseling area, distributed as follows:
  - 151 counselors in Rehabilitation
  - 74 support staff
- ✓ Coordinated 160 training activities for ARV personnel reaching 2,039 participations. Some of the topics were:
  - Disaster preparedness
  - New trends and challenges in human resources management
  - Second symposium of vocational evaluation ☞ Quick response in suicidal behavior situations
  - Inclusion and integration in society
  - Social evolution conflict management
  - Assertiveness and resilience in times of change
  - Technological assistance in communication
- ✓ Directed the agency's management personnel in relation to Memorandum No. 11 - 2018 of the Office of Administration and Transformation of Human Resources of the Government of Puerto Rico, related to the update of the Employee Duties Sheet (May 2018).

**Strategy:**

Continue to carry out periodic evaluations of the performance of the agency's employees to ensure institutional effectiveness.

Progress Report:

Through electronic communication (December / 2017 and February / 2018), OALRH guided all supervisory personnel, directors and senior advisors at the island level, in relation to amendments made to the form called the Performance Evaluation and Development System. 90 ARV management employees benefited from the orientation. In turn, 713 employees were evaluated during the period.

**Strategy:**

Maintain the level of financing of the State Council for Independent Living (CEVI) and the State Council for Rehabilitation (CER), to assist and support its operations; and in coordination with the ARV to develop employment and independent living opportunities for our applicants/consumers.

Progress Report:

- ✓ The ARV provided an allocation of funds to both councils during the 2017 and 2018 program year. In addition, it maintains agency representation and collaboration on both councils.

**Strategy:**

Update administrative, fiscal and programmatic procedures in accordance with established state and federal regulations, and the socio-economic situation of the country, as necessary.

Progress Report:

- ✓ During the 2017 and 2018 programs the agency developed official communications for this purpose. Some of the aspects were: Procedure to refer applicants / consumers of the Vocational Rehabilitation Administration with auditory conditions for the acquisition of the Caption Call telephone; Manual of Vocational Evaluation Procedures; Procedure to provide extended services to young people with more significant disabilities, consumers of the vocational rehabilitation administration, placed in employment under the modality of sustained employment; Procedure for the use of test work experiences; criteria for receiving pre-employment transition services; Integrated Competitive Employment; Procedure to recommend commercial enterprise by means of the Randolph-Sheppard Law; Procedure for coding pre-employment transition services in the Activity Logs by Program, among others.

**Strategy:**

Continue to support all areas of the agency in the use of available computer systems, and develop applications to streamline processes, reports and procedures according to needs presented by the areas and which in turn be consulted with the services and administration staff.

Progress Report:

The Information Systems Office carried out the following activities:

- ✓ According to the electronic registry of Technical Services, a total of 1,370 services were reported and worked during the period.
- ✓ 80 services provided in the Systems Analysis and Development Division.
- ✓ They monitored the “Kronos” system to ensure the correct implementation of the changes made in the past period.
- ✓ Provided support to the OAA with the projects of: the Mobile Unit of Vocational Evaluation and Transition Services, and the Mobile Unit of Guiding Classes; evaluating the adaptability of the networks to the computer systems and operating equipment that will be used, in the unit. On the other hand, he offered support with the Hydroponic project so that the integration of the CAA ARVI system was achieved with the provision of services in the green area station in the Assessment and Adjustment Unit.
- ✓ Evaluated and recommended recruiting company that would work on issues related to the implementation of the project for the agency's New Case Management System.

- ✓ They participated in a meeting with staff of the General Services Division of the agency to elucidate aspects of the platform developed to carry out the inventory of equipment of the agency.
- ✓ They participated in 230 meetings in support of programmatic, services and administrative offices.
- ✓ At the request of the OCCGP, OSI programmers made adjustments to the case management system to comply with federal regulations.

The OCCGP carried out the analysis of the necessary adjustments to the programming of the existing case management system to comply with the federal requirements related to the RSA-911 report, referred them to the OSI, and provided the programmers and counseling staff Related technical assistance.

**Strategy:**

Hold participation meetings with agency staff on aspects related to public policy.

**Progress Report:**

The OSCRV carried out the following activities:

- ✓ 11 meetings with a total of 36 participations, which included directors and supervisors of the Rehabilitation Counseling Services Centers with the objective of analyzing goal compliance.
- ✓ In addition, he guided and served as a mentor for the CRV in the implementation of public policy aimed at complying with the process of providing vocational rehabilitation services according to amendments to legislation, offering 271 interventions and benefiting 329 employees.
- ✓ Coordinated and participated in teleconference with counseling services staff (counselors and supervisors) and CAA personnel (CAA Analyst and Occupational Therapist) on August 6, 2018, related to vehicle modification of the Mobile Vocational Evaluation and Services Unit.
- ✓ Schedule 1 meeting with former director of OAME to elucidate the protocol for contracting the Community Rehabilitation Programs (August 13, 2019)

In the Finance and Budget Divisions, at least once a month, face-to-face meetings were held to discuss particular compliance matters; others were given by telephone daily one or more times a day. In addition, different queries related to public policy procedures were answered daily.

The OAA carried out the following activities:

- ✓ Offered Guidance on the granting of contracts to entities for offering pre-employment transition services according to federal requirements to 20 employees (November 14, 2017).
- ✓ Guidance to directors: Regional, Rehabilitation Counseling Service Centers, Appraisal and Adjustment Centers and Units and the Employment Support and Modalities Center related to the implementation of normative communications on the criteria for receiving extended services and Test work experiences, benefiting 20 employees (December 1, 2017).

- ✓ Training of trainers or “Train the trainer” on 1 / March / 2018 with the CSCRV of the Mayagüez Region in relation to the Normative Communication 2018- 05 Collaboration Agreement / Referral Form for Pre-Employment Transition Services (PRE -ETS) to Students with Disabilities Referred by the Puerto Rico Department of Education (DEPR) to the Vocational Rehabilitation Administration (ARV).
- ✓ Guidance on the Comprehensive Action Contract to offer vocational rehabilitation services to injured workers referred by the CFSE to 148 employees, including CRVs and CSCRV directors / supervisors.
- ✓ 3 meetings with the participation of 15 professionals of the CAA / UAA with the objective of completing works of the Poster Project in Sign Language; whose purpose is to allow better communication with deaf people in the public agencies of the Government of Puerto Rico, (July 13, 18, August 9, 18, and September 13, 18). The posters were divided into three themes: Alphabet and Numbers in sign language, Basic Sign Language and Sign Language for Health Emergencies. 1,000 impressions were made of each of the 3 posters for a total of 3,000. The posters were distributed in 21 government agencies, corporations and with the general public.
- ✓ Started a project for the development of a Modular House in the Center for Assessment (CAA) and Adjustment of Toa Baja, whose purpose is: to develop independent living skills in food preparation, bedroom cleaning, laundry, among others; evaluate the skills of independent living and activities of the daily live of applicants / consumers referred to the CAA and the Units of Assessment and Adjustment (UAA); and provide adjustment services in the category of daily, family and community life to applicants / consumers referred to the CAA / UAA. To carry out this initiative, he carried out:
  - ✓ 2 meetings (April 3, 2019 and May 14, 2019) with the participation of 12 agency professionals
  - ✓ Quotation for the purchase of equipment and materials, development of the plan of the selected place, the distribution of space and work with the furniture.

OAME:

- ✓ They directed CAME directors about customized employment services and discussed the draft normative communication.
- ✓ They met with the director of the OSI and analyzed alternatives for the creation of an annotation code in CRIS “Consumer Rehabilitation Information System” related to the customized employment service, it will be included in the communication for these purposes.
- ✓ They met with director of the Purchasing Division for guidance on: the purchase of occupational equipment for small businesses and the Normative Communication Wage Incentive Formulas and Hiring and Payment Process.

- ✓ In coordination with the CAME of Arecibo and its Regional Director, the “Job Club” project was presented to the directors of CAME and Regional Directors (29 / November / 2017).
- ✓ Participated in one (1) guidance in conjunction with the directors of OAA and OSCRV related to the implementation of normative communications on the criteria for receiving extended services and test work experiences, benefiting 20 employees (December 1, 2017), among which there were directors: Regional, Rehabilitation Counseling Service Centers, the Valuation and Adjustment Centers and Units and the Employment Support and Modality Centers.
- ✓ Participated in union with directors of OSCRV and OAA in guidance on the granting of contracts to entities to offer pre-employment transition services according to federal requirement to 20 employees (November 14, 2017).

The OCCGP carried out the following activities:

- ✓ Throughout the period, he continued to analyze the way in which users of the CRIS System record the data used for federal reports and provide them with individual technical assistance. Based on this, it generated emails with group instructions to the counseling staff about the procedures for such data recording. Next, the breakdown of months and number (number) of messages sent: July 2017: 10; August 2017: 1; September 2017: 2; December 2017: 7; January 2018: 5; March 2018: 1; April 2018: 1; May 2018: 3; August 2018: 2; September 2018: 5; October 2018: 2; November 2018: 1; December 2018: 2; January 2019: 2; February 2019: 1; March 2019: 3; April 2019: 1; May 2019: 3; June 2019: 2; for an approximate total of 54.
- ✓ In November 2017 several of the messages were discussed in person or by telephone with the Rehabilitation Counselors, Directors of Counseling Centers and / or Counseling Supervisors. There were Six (6) group sessions (one (1) per region).

**Strategy:**

Carry out monitoring to ensure compliance with the procedures.

Progress Report:

The programmatic offices carried out internal monitoring during the program year (as recorded in the achievements under previous strategies), to evaluate the service delivery process. Some of these are given to both the electronic and physical files; and to non-profit organizations under contract with the ARV; among other.

(B) Describe the factors that impeded the achievement of the goals and priorities.

The economic situation of the Island affected the availability of employers to recruit, which in turn affected the amount of supported employment successful closures.

- (2) The VR program's performance on the performance accountability indicators under section 116 of WIOA.

Since VR Agencies started data collection in July 2017 to measure most of WIOA section 116 performance indicators we have no previous year's performance data on those indicators.

(3) How the funds reserved for innovation and expansion (I&E) activities were utilized.

The PRVRA carried out the following I&E activities:

- a. Expansion of the provision of the services to the blind persons, through referrals for employment to the Puerto Rico for the Blind Company.

- Progress Report: Due to the economic situation, no recruitments were made during the period.

- b. Expansion of the provision of the services to the blind persons, with intellectual deficit and other disabilities, through training and employment in the Corporation for the Blind.

Progress Report:

- During summer 2016, 10 students with most significant disabilities participated on a work-based learning experience at the Corporation for the Blind.

- c. Expansion of the availability of the training resources to the newly recruited staff (e.g. modules), through access to the internal Web page of the agency (Intranet).

Progress Report:

- During PY 2016, 11 new Normative Communications were placed on the internal web page as a reference for new and current counseling staff.
- Also, the agency provided face to face training to 287 counseling staff related to WIOA and RSA-911 changes. Those modules and related manuals were placed on the internal web page at the beginning of the next PY.

- d. Continuation with the use of the video remote interpretation technology for the deaf persons.

Progress Report:

- The PRVRA has such technology in all its regions and is available for the deaf persons, when necessary.

- e. Continuation with the financing of the SRC and the SILC to assist and support their operations as well as to develop, together with the PRVRA, better employment opportunities and independent living for our applicants/consumers.

(Q) QUALITY, SCOPE, AND EXTENT OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES.

Include the following:

- (1) The quality, scope, and extent of supported employment services to be provided to individuals with the most significant disabilities, including youth with the most significant disabilities.

### **Quality**

The *Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act* (WIOA) of July 22 of 2014, emphasizes on the provision of the supported employment services for the consumers with the most significant disabilities. Therefore, the PRVRA in its mission to integrate the people with disabilities into the labor force and towards a more independent living promotes the provision of the supported employment services leading to an employment outcome.

The Office of Support and Employment Modes (OSEM), at the central level of the PRVRA, intends to collaborate, provide assistance and facilitate the applicability of the public policy to the center of support and employment modes (CSEM), at the regional level, on career development services, services to employers and development of support and employment modes for the consumers. The OSEM staff contributes with other operational/administrative offices of the PRVRA, in the coordination and collaboration of efforts regarding the assessment services and the programmatic monitoring and interpretation of data/relevant information to ensure compliance with the VR Portion of the Unified State Plan and the Strategic Plan of the agency.

The PRVRA, through its CSEMs, develops inter/transdisciplinary work teams to ensure that the supported employment services offered by the CRPs are provided uniformly, agile and responsive to the needs of the consumers with the most significant disabilities. OSEM and CSME staff also carries out monitoring activities with the purpose of verify compliance, project development, quality of services, identify limitations, use of resources, and consumer's participation, among others.

### **Scope**

The supported employment services are provided for a period not to exceed twenty-four (24) months, except in special circumstances, pursuant to 34 CFR 363.6(c)(1)(iii)(A).

The VR counselor identifies those consumers with the most significant disabilities who could benefit from supported employment, in accordance with the federal provisions set forth in 34 CFR 361.34. Such identification begins with the initial interview, the analysis of medical evidence, the analysis of pre-employment skills and any other aspect relevant to the evaluation process.

The supported employment modality is provided through the CSEMs of the PRVRA; which offer support to the VR counselor in order to validate the vocational strengths and needs of the applicants/consumers, as well as to promote them towards competitive integrated employment under such supported employment modality. Prior to the consumer's referral to the CSEM, he may receive services in the center of assessment and adjustment (CAA) of the PRVRA in order to be evaluated in the following areas:

- Personal skills, daily/family/community living
- Cognitive-Psychosocial skills

- Perceptual-Psychomotor skills
- Training, Job and Work skills

The referral to the CAA will identify that the consumer will be sent to a community rehabilitation program (CRP) to be serviced under the supported employment modality, whereby the evaluation process must have an ecological approach.

The supported employment process has been framed within the following five (5) stages developed for the provision of these services:

**Stage I. Determination of Needs**

- Revision of documents: assessment of pre-employment skills, needs and support resources
- Comprehensive situational evaluation
- Determination of needs through profile evaluation
- Support: consumer and family
- Drafting of Habilitation Plan

**Stage II. Vocational Preparation/Supplementary Assessment**

- Ecological evaluation
- Possible revision of Habilitation Plan
- Continuous support

**Stage III. Placement Services**

- Marketing Plan
- Promotion
- Occupational analysis
- Job proposal
- Reasonable accommodation
- Recruitment process
- Revision of Habilitation Plan (if it applies)
- Meetings with the employer and the family
- Continuous support

**Stage IV. Training and Job Retention**

- Intensive and moderate training

- Development of natural support networks
- Revision of Habilitation Plan (if it applies)
- Evaluation/monitoring
- Submittal of reports
- Meetings with the employer and the family
- Continuous support

#### Stage V. Stabilization and Closure

- Meetings with the employer and the family
- Beginning of the employment monitoring phase (minimum of 90 days)
- Consumer's performance evaluation carried out by the employer, supervisor and job coach.
- Identification of extended support to be provided by family, employees (co-workers), and community.
- Satisfaction survey about services provided to consumer/family/employer/counselor.

The previous information about quality, scope and extent of services apply to youth. The PRVRA will continue to provide SE services to youth with the most significant disabilities referred from Transition. Through CRIS case management system the CSEM will identify those consumers between ages 14-24.

#### (2) The timing of transition to extended services.

In accordance to WIOA, the PRVRA will make resources available for extended services to youth with more significant disabilities, for a period not to exceed four (4) years. These services will be provided by Community Rehabilitation Programs through service authorization, with the recommendation of the centers' staff.

In order to improve the quality, the scope and the extent of the supported employment services, the PRVRA is committed to meet the goals and the strategies established and described in the Part (n) of this VR Portion of the Unified State Plan.

## VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION CERTIFICATION AND ASSURANCES

### CERTIFICATIONS

1. The **Vocational Rehabilitation Administration** is authorized to submit the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan under title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Rehabilitation Act), as amended by WIOA (Public Law 113-128) and its supplement under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act (Unless otherwise stated, "Rehabilitation Act" means the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by WIOA, signed into law on July 22, 2014);

2. As a condition for the receipt of Federal funds under title I of the Rehabilitation Act for the provision of VR services, the **Department of Labor and Human Resources** (All references in this plan to "designated State agency" or to "the State agency" relate to the agency identified in this paragraph) agrees to operate and administer the State VR Services Program in accordance with the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan (No funds under title I of the Rehabilitation Act may be awarded without an approved VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan in accordance with section 101(a) of the Rehabilitation Act), the Rehabilitation Act, and all applicable regulations (Applicable regulations, in part, include the Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) in 34 CFR parts 76, 77, 79, 81, and 82; 2 CFR part 200 as adopted by 2 CFR part 3474; and the State VR Services program regulations), policies, and procedures established by the Secretary of Education. Funds made available under section 111 of the Rehabilitation Act are used solely for the provision of VR services and the administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan;
3. As a condition for the receipt of Federal funds under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act for supported employment services, the designated State agency agrees to operate and administer the State Supported Employment Services Program in accordance with the supplement to the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan (No funds under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act may be awarded without an approved supported employment supplement to the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan in accordance with section 606(a) of the Rehabilitation Act), the Rehabilitation Act, and all applicable regulations, policies, and procedures established by the Secretary of Education. Funds made available under title VI are used solely for the provision of supported employment services and the administration of the supplement to the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan;
4. The designated State agency and/or the designated State unit has the authority under State law to perform the functions of the State regarding the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement;
5. The State legally may carry out each provision of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement.
6. All provisions of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement are consistent with State law.
7. The **Vocational Rehabilitation Administrator** has the authority under State law to receive, hold, and disburse Federal funds made available under the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement.
8. The **Vocational Rehabilitation Administrator** has the authority to submit the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and the supplement for Supported Employment services.

9. The agency that submits the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement has adopted or otherwise formally approved the plan and its supplement.

## ASSURANCES

The designated State agency or designated State unit, as appropriate and identified in the State certifications included with this VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement, through signature of the authorized individual, assures the Commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), that it will comply with all of the requirements of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement, as set forth in sections 101(a) and 606 of the Rehabilitation Act. The individual authorized to submit the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement makes the following assurances:

1. **Public Comment on Policies and Procedures:** The designated State agency assures it will comply with all statutory and regulatory requirements for public participation in the VR Services Portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, as required by section 101(a)(16)(A) of the Rehabilitation Act.
2. **Submission of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and Its Supplement:** The designated State unit assures it will comply with all requirements pertaining to the submission and revisions of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement for the State Supported Employment Services program, as required by sections 101(a)(1), (22), (23), and 606(a) of the Rehabilitation Act; section 102 of WIOA in the case of the submission of a unified plan; section 103 of WIOA in the case of a submission of a Combined State Plan; 34 CFR 76.140.
3. **Administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan:** The designated State agency or designated State unit, as appropriate, assures it will comply with the requirements related to:
  - (a) the establishment of the designated State agency and designated State unit, as required by section 101(a)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act.
  - (b) the establishment of either a State independent commission or State Rehabilitation Council, as required by section 101(a)(21) of the Rehabilitation Act. The designated State agency or designated State unit, as applicable (Option A or B must be selected):
    - (A) is an independent State commission.
    - (B) has established a State Rehabilitation Council**
  - (c) consultations regarding the administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, in accordance with section 101(a)(16)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act.
  - (d) the financial participation by the State, or if the State so elects, by the State and local agencies, to provide the amount of the non-Federal share of the cost of carrying out the VR program in accordance section 101(a)(3).

- (e) the local administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, in accordance with section 101(a)(2)(A) of the Rehabilitation Act. Select yes or no, as appropriate, to identify if the designated State agency allows for the local administration of VR funds, (Yes/**No**)
  - (f) the shared funding and administration of joint programs, in accordance with section 101(a)(2)(A)(ii) of the Rehabilitation Act. Select yes or no, as appropriate, to identify if the designated State agency allows for the shared funding and administration of joint programs, (Yes/**No**)
  - (g) statewideness and waivers of statewideness requirements, as set forth in section 101(a)(4) of the Rehabilitation Act. Is the designated State agency is requesting or maintaining a waiver of statewideness for one or more services provided under the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan? (Yes/**No**) See Section 2 of this VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan.
  - (h) the descriptions for cooperation, collaboration, and coordination, as required by sections 101(a)(11), (24)(B), and 606(b) of the Rehabilitation Act.
  - (i) all required methods of administration, as required by section 101(a)(6) of the Rehabilitation Act.
  - (j) the requirements for the comprehensive system of personnel development, as set forth in section 101(a)(7) of the Rehabilitation Act.
  - (k) the compilation and submission to the Commissioner of statewide assessments, estimates, State goals and priorities, strategies, and progress reports, as appropriate, and as required by sections 101(a)(15), 105(c)(2), and 606(b)(8) of the Rehabilitation Act.
  - (l) the reservation and use of a portion of the funds allotted to the State under section 110 of the Rehabilitation Act for the development and implementation of innovative approaches to expand and improve the provision of VR services to individuals with disabilities, particularly individuals with the most significant disabilities.
  - (m) the submission of reports as required by section 101(a)(10) of the Rehabilitation Act.
4. **Administration of the provision of VR services:** The designated State agency, or designated State unit, as appropriate, assures that it will:
- (a) comply with all requirements regarding information and referral services in accordance with sections 101(a)(5)(D) and (20) of the Rehabilitation Act.
  - (b) impose no duration of residence requirement as part of determining an individual's eligibility for VR services or that excludes from services under the plan any individual who is present in the State in accordance with section 101(a)(12) of the Rehabilitation Act.
  - (c) provide the full range of services listed in section 103(a) of the Rehabilitation Act as appropriate, to all eligible individuals with disabilities in the State who apply for services in accordance with section 101(a)(5) of the Rehabilitation Act? (**Yes/No**).
  - (d) determine whether comparable services and benefits are available to the individual in accordance with section 101(a)(8) of the Rehabilitation Act.

- (e) comply with the requirements for the development of an individualized plan for employment in accordance with section 102(b) of the Rehabilitation Act.
- (f) comply with requirements regarding the provisions of informed choice for all applicants and eligible individuals in accordance with section 102(d) of the Rehabilitation Act.
- (g) provide vocational rehabilitation services to American Indians who are individuals with disabilities residing in the State, in accordance with section 101(a)(13) of the Rehabilitation Act.
- (h) comply with the requirements for the conduct of semiannual or annual review, as appropriate, for individuals employed either in an extended employment setting in a community rehabilitation program or any other employment under section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act, as required by section 101(a)(14) of the Rehabilitation Act.
- (i) meet the requirements in sections 101(a)(17) and 103(b)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act if the State elects to construct, under special circumstances, facilities for community rehabilitation programs
- (j) with respect to students with disabilities, the State,
  - (i) has developed and will implement,
    - (A) strategies to address the needs identified in the assessments; and
    - (B) strategies to achieve the goals and priorities identified by the State, to improve and expand vocational rehabilitation services for students with disabilities on a statewide basis; and
  - (ii) has developed and will implement strategies to provide pre-employment transition services (sections 101(a)(15) and 101(a)(25)).

5. Program Administration for the Supported Employment Title VI Supplement:

- (a) The designated State unit assures that it will include in the VR services portion of the Unified State Plan all information required by section 606 of the Rehabilitation Act.
- (b) The designated State agency assures that it will submit reports in such form and in accordance with such procedures as the Commissioner may require and collects the information required by section 101(a)(10) of the Rehabilitation Act separately for individuals receiving supported employment services under title I and individuals receiving supported employment services under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act.
- (c) The designated state unit will coordinate activities with any other State agency that is functioning as an employment network under the Ticket to Work and Self-Sufficiency program under Section 1148 of the Social Security Act.

6. **Financial Administration**

- (a) Financial Administration of the Supported Employment Program. The designated State agency assures that it will expend no more than 2.5 percent of the State's allotment under title VI for administrative costs of carrying out this program; and, the designated State agency or agencies will provide, directly or indirectly through public or private entities, non-Federal contributions in

an amount that is not less than 10 percent of the costs of carrying out supported employment services provided to youth with the most significant disabilities with the funds reserved for such purpose under section 603(d) of the Rehabilitation Act, in accordance with section 606(b)(7)(G) and (H) of the Rehabilitation Act.

- (b) The designated State agency assures that it will use funds made available under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act only to provide supported employment services to individuals with the most significant disabilities, including extended services to youth with the most significant disabilities, who are eligible to receive such services; and, that such funds are used only to supplement and not supplant the funds provided under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act, when providing supported employment services specified in the individualized plan for employment, in accordance with section 606(b)(7)(A) and (D), of the Rehabilitation Act.

**7. Provision of Supported Employment Services**

- (a) The designated State agency assures that it will provide supported employment services as defined in section 7(39) of the Rehabilitation Act.
- (b) The designated State agency assures that:
  - (i) the comprehensive assessment of individuals with significant disabilities conducted under section 102(b)(1) of the Rehabilitation Act and funded under title I of the Rehabilitation Act includes consideration of supported employment as an appropriate employment outcome, in accordance with the requirements of section 606(b)(7)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act.
  - (ii) un an individualized plan for employment that meets the requirements of section 102(b) of the Rehabilitation Act , which is developed and updated with title I funds, in accordance with sections 102(b)(3)(F) and 606(b)(6)(C) and (E) of the Rehabilitation Act.

## APPENDIX SECTION

### APPENDIX A

#### **Waiver of WIOA Section 134(c)(3)(H)(i) and 20 CFR 680.720 (b) to increase the On-the-Job Training (OJT) employer reimbursement up to 90 percent**

Puerto Rico is requesting a waiver to the current allowable employer reimbursement rate of up to 50 percent of the wage rate of an On-the-Job-Training (OJT) participant for the extraordinary costs of providing training and additional supervision related to the OJT as described in the WIOA Section 134(c)(3)(H)(ii)(II). The waiver request has been developed following the WIOA guidelines in Section 189(i)(3)(B) and the WIDA Federal regulation at 20 CFR 680.720(6).

Puerto Rico is proposing a sliding scale of reimbursement to the employer based on its size and capability. Under this waiver, the following scale will be implemented: up to 90% reimbursement for employers with 50 or less employees; up to 75% reimbursement for employers with a workforce between 51 and 250 employees. For employers with 251 employees or more, the statutorily defined 50% limit will continue to apply.

The waiver is requested in order to use with all WIOA formula funds: Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth, National Dislocated Worker Grants, as well as other Discretionary grants, as appropriate. DEDC looks forward to the approval of this waiver for Puerto Rico. Effective upon approval.

#### **Statutory and/or regulatory requirements to be waived:**

WIOA Section 134(c) (3)(H)(ii)(II), and the accompanying regulations as promulgated at 20 CFR 680.720 (b), state that employers may be reimbursed up to 50 percent of the wage rate of an OJT

participant for the extraordinary costs of providing the training and additional supervision related to the OJT.

**Actions undertaken to remove state or local barriers:**

There is no state or local statutory or regulatory barrier to implement the proposed waiver.

**Goals and expected programmatic outcomes from the waiver:**

This waiver request is consistent with national policy to develop a workforce system that is responsive to the demands of both individual and employer customers. The Commonwealth anticipates the following goals will be achieved with the waiver's approval:

- Maximize the flexibility needed to impact local economic vitality and direct resources where demand for services is greatest by assisting local areas in marketing the OJT as a vehicle to engage employers, particularly in targeted sectors, to hire and provide training to new workers.
- This flexibility will build the capacity and future viability of both the workforce and the industries themselves. Assist with the transformation of the current workforce system to a demand-driven, sector-based and regionally driven talent development pipeline.
- Increase training and transitional employment for unemployed workers and hard-to-serve youth and adults.
- Equip individuals with relevant job training and transferable skills in high-skill, high-wage, high-demand occupation and industries.
- Increase business usage of the local workforce system by providing added incentives to hire and train new workers.

**Department of Labor's policy priorities:**

- Connect individuals with chronic unemployment or inconsistent work history with opportunities to build workplace skills and job history.
- Inject the economy with skilled individuals that will continue to advance in their specific fields or occupations.

**Individuals impacted by the waiver:**

The need for training is especially acute for those workers most in need: dislocated workers transitioning to new occupations and industries, long-term unemployed individuals in need of advancing outmoded skills in order to catch up with emerging technologies, and low-income and entry-level workers seeking to start their careers in a weak economic climate. Approval of the waiver will increase training option for WIOA-eligible job seekers.

The reduced match requirement for employers, particularly new start-ups and other small to medium-sized businesses, will provide an attractive and cost-effective financial incentive, increasing the opportunity to utilize the OJT model to hire and train new workers. This waiver will allow Puerto Rico's businesses to more rapidly adapt to both technological and general marketplace changes by improving

their capacity to expand and remain competitive with affordable OJT options uniquely designed to achieve their specific development goals.

**Process for monitoring progress in implementation:**

The WDP of PRDEDC will monitor progress under this waiver and work with the fifteen (15) local workforce development boards to implement the appropriate state and local policies. The Monitoring Unit will be adding the monitoring of waivers to its monitoring processes to ensure compliance with waiver guidelines.

**Process for Notice of Local Boards and Opportunity to Comment:**

The unified plan and the waiver request will be published for a period of two (2) weeks on the PRDEDC website, allowing for public comment on its content and potential impact. In addition, copies of workforce system waivers will be provided to the Major's boards, Local Boards and LDWA's.

**Waiver Impact:**

The Workforce Development Program will require the local areas to submit quarterly reports regarding the use of all the approved waivers. The report includes the number of participants, funds allocation and information related to any situation that would affect the waiver implementation. PRDEDC will report on the impact and outcomes of its approved waivers in the WIOA Annual Report.

## APPENDIX B

### **Waiver of WIOA section 134(d) (5) to allow up to 50 percent of Adult and Dislocated Worker funds to be used for the provision of transitional jobs.**

Waiver to the section WIOA§135(d)(5) which allows Local Boards to reserve up to 10% funds allocated to the local area involved, under section 133(b), to provide transitional jobs. Puerto Rico is proposing the DOL-ETA to allow up to 50% of Adult and Dislocated Worker funds to be used for the provision of transitional jobs.

This waiver is requested to be implemented with Adult and Dislocated Worker formula funds. DEDC looks forward to the approval of this waiver for Puerto Rico and, upon the request's approval, for the performance period to be effective immediately.

### **Statutory and/or regulatory requirements to be waived:**

PRDEDC requests a waiver of the requirement under WIOA §134(d)(5), and consistent with 20 CF'R 680.190 and .195, that state that Local Boards may not use more than 10% of their combined Adult and Dislocated Worker funds to provide transitional jobs.

### **Actions undertaken to remove state or local barriers:**

There are no State or local statutory or regulatory barriers for the implementation of the proposed waiver.

### **Goals and expected programmatic outcomes of waiver:**

The waiver is consistent with the national policy to develop a workforce system that is responsive to the demands of both individuals and employer customers. DEDC anticipates the following goals will be achieved with the approval of the waiver request:

- Provide individuals with work experience and an opportunity to develop essential workplace skills within the context of an employee-employer relationship;
- Connect individuals with chronic unemployment or inconsistent work history with opportunities to build workplace skills and job history;
- Maximize the flexibility needed to ensure speedy implementation of work-based learning opportunities that WIOA for formula grants; and
- Increase business usage of the workforce system by providing incentives to hire and train new workers and thereby achieve greater access to employment opportunities for chronically unemployed.

### **Department of Labor's policy priorities:**

- Connect individuals with chronic unemployment or inconsistent work history with opportunities to build workplace skills and job history;
- Inject the economy with skilled individuals that will continue to advance in their specific fields or occupations; and
- Create additional opportunities for new workers, and for unemployed and underemployed workers to speed their return to full-time employment.

**Individuals impacted by the waiver:**

This waiver applies to the fifteen (15) LWDAs that compose Puerto Rico's Workforce Delivery System, and that were significantly affected by the hurricane disasters. The need for training is especially acute for those participants with barriers to employment who are chronically unemployed or who have an inconsistent work history, as determined by the local boards.

**Process for monitoring progress in implementation:**

The WDP of PRDEDC will monitor progress under this waiver and work with the fifteen (15) local workforce development boards to implement the appropriate state and local policies. The Monitoring Unit will be adding the monitoring of waivers to its monitoring processes to ensure compliance with waiver guidelines.

**Process for Notice of Local Boards and Opportunity to Comment:**

The unified plan and the waiver request will be published for a period of two (2) weeks on the PRDEDC website, allowing for public comment on its content and potential impact. In addition, copies of workforce system waivers will be provided to the Major's boards, Local Boards and LDWA's.

**Waiver Impact:**

The Workforce Development Program will require the local areas to submit quarterly reports regarding the use of all the approved waivers. The report includes the number of participants, funds allocation and information related to any situation that would affect the waiver implementation. PRDEDC will report on the impact and outcomes of its approved waivers in the WIOA Annual Report.

**Waiver of the requirement under WIOA 129(a)(4), and consistent with 20 CFR 681.410, that states and local areas must expend a minimum of 75 percent of their Youth formula funds on youth workforce activities for out-of-school youth (OSY).**

**Statutory and/or regulatory requirements to be waived:**

**Indicate which part of the WIOA or the regulations the state would like to waive.**

PRDEDC requests a waiver of the requirement under WIOA §129(a)(4), and consistent with 20 CFR 681.410, that States and local areas must expend a minimum of 75 percent of their youth formula funds on youth workforce activities for out-of-school youth (OSY).

The use of this waiver is limited to emergency, disaster-related needs only. The natural disasters like hurricanes, earthquakes and now pandemic like CORVID -19, are causing the loss of thousands of jobs throughout Puerto Rico. Local economists forecast that Puerto Rico will face an economic contraction that can extend for the next ten years. The island's labor market is currently paralyzed, without any new jobs or the openings of new businesses. On the other hand, Local Areas are facing an increase in the demand for jobs, for job sites that were destroyed or have not been able to restart operations because of the instability of infrastructure, lack of financial resources or the decrease in product consumption.

This situation directly impacts OSY. The OSY is a hard to serve population, given that they require a combination of educational and employment services that are not available every time the island is facing an emergency scenario. It is reasonable to expect that many youth service providers are unable to provide services due to the damages suffered in their infrastructure, loss of employees or permanent closures. OYS are also competing for jobs opportunities with unemployed adults and dislocated workers, during the recovery process. These two factors, makes it difficult for the workforce system to reach the WIOA requirement to meet the 75% OSY during a national emergency like hurricanes, earthquakes or worldwide diseases.

On the other hand, demand for services for ISY increases considerably in the face of emergencies, as schools must close during and after hurricanes, others have been destroyed by earthquakes and a large number become obsolete due to damage in its structure. In the case of pandemics, all schools have been forced to a full lockout. ISYs have suddenly experienced an increase in the need for services to meet their needs. The elements of the youth program are an alternative to support ISYs in receiving educational services in an emergency.

**Actions undertaken to remove state or local barriers:**

**Describe the actions undertaken to remove state or local barriers.**

There are no State or local statutory or regulatory barriers for the implementation of the proposed waiver.

**Goals and expected programmatic outcomes of waiver:**

**Describe and specify how the waiver will help the state achieve an identified strategic goal or set of goals that it has outlined in its State Plan. If possible and appropriate the type of waiver requested, provide quantifiable projections for programmatic outcomes that will result from the waiver.**

This waiver will provide Local Boards the necessary flexibility to use Youth formula funds, when appropriate, to meet the individual training and employment needs of all youth affected by an emergency.

The expect outcomes are as follow:

- Improve the ability of LWDA's to develop workforce strategies that align with economic realities within their workforce area;
- Improve the ability for LWDA's to design programs in response to the needs of their customers.
- Provides In-School Youth more choice opportunities to enter into post-secondary education, vocational training or a "learn and earn" opportunity through Pre-Apprenticeship Programs in order for them to increase math, literacy, vocational and pre-vocational skills needed to gain entry into a Registered Apprenticeship Program.

**Department of Labor's policy priorities:**

**Describe how the waiver will align with the Department's policy priorities, such as:**

- Maximize the flexibility needed to ensure speedy implementation of work-based learning opportunities that WIOA encourages for both formula and discretionary grants;
- Increase business usage of the workforce system and thereby achieve greater access to employment opportunities for young people;
- Provide greater incentives for employers to retain and retrain current employees to avoid layoffs and to create new jobs;
- Create additional opportunities for new workers, and for unemployed and underemployed workers to speed up their return to full-time employment; and
- Support Puerto Rico's small and medium-sized businesses and the entrepreneurial start-up economy.

**Individuals impacted by the waiver:**

**Describe which populations the waiver will benefit, including how the waiver will impact services for disadvantaged populations or individuals with multiple barriers to employment.**

This waiver applies to the fifteen (15) LWDA's that compose Puerto Rico's Workforce Delivery System, and that will be significantly impacted by an emergency. All fifteen (15) LWDA's provide services to both out of school, and in-school youth.

**Process for monitoring progress in implementation:**

The WDP of PRDEDC will monitor progress under this waiver through performance reports, and through its monitoring and performance accountability system. The Monitoring Unit will be adding the monitoring of waivers to its monitoring processes in order to ensure compliance with waiver guidelines.

**Process for Notice of Local Boards and Opportunity to Comment:**

The unified plan and the waiver request will be published for a period of two (2) weeks on the PRDEDC website, allowing for public comment on its content and potential impact. In addition, copies of workforce system waivers will be provided to the Major's boards, Local Boards and LDWA's.

**Waiver Impact:**

**Collect and report information about waiver outcomes in the State's WIOA Annual Report. The Secretary may require that States provide the most recent data available about the outcomes of the existing waiver in cases where the State seeks renewal of a previously approved waiver.**

The Workforce Development Program will require the local areas to submit quarterly reports regarding the use of all the approved waivers. The report includes the number of participants, funds allocation and information related to any situation that would affect the waiver implementation. PRDEDC will *report* on the impact and *outcomes* of its approved *waivers* in the *WIOA Annual Report*.

APPENDIX D

**Waiver of statewide required activities described in WIOA Sections 129(b)(1)(A) and 134(a)(2)(vi) to conduct evaluations under section 116(e) of activities authorized under this chapter and chapter 3 in coordination with evaluations carried out by the Secretary under section 169(a).**

**Statutory and/or regulatory requirements to be waived:**

***Indicate which part of the WIOA or the regulations the state would like to waive.***

PRDEDC requests a waiver for statewide required activities described in WIOA Sections 129(b)(1)(A) and 134(a)(2)(vi); to conducting evaluations under section 116(e) of activities authorized under this chapter and chapter 3 in coordination with evaluations carried out by the Secretary under section 169(a). The use of this waiver is limited to emergency, disaster-related period only.

The purpose of the evaluation is to improve the management and effectiveness of workforce system programs and activities. The natural emergencies and pandemics affected and still affecting the delivery

of services throughout the LWDA/AJC system across Puerto Rico. It is estimated that Puerto Rico will start so see some transitional economic changes within 10 years; the recovery process is long and unpredictable.

Gathering statistical data, participants and employer's surveys, developing an adequate methodology, disseminating the information and other necessary steps to conduct evaluations, are difficult to complete during emergency time.

**Actions undertaken to remove state or local barriers:**

*Describe the actions undertaken to remove state or local barriers.*

There are no State or local statutory or regulatory barriers for the implementation of the proposed waiver.

**Goals and expected programmatic outcomes of waiver:**

**Describe and specify how the waiver will help the state achieve an identified strategic goal or set of goals that it has outlined in its State Plan. If possible and appropriate the type of waiver requested, provide quantifiable projections for programmatic outcomes that will result from the waiver.**

- This waiver will help PRDEDC to targeting disaster recovery efforts; establish collaborative partnerships that will commit to a system-wide evaluation of activities throughout this recovery period.
- The waiver will allow Puerto Rico to develop a strategy for evaluation, transparency, to identify innovative changes and transitional steps to improve the island's workforce system.
- This waiver will also broaden opportunities for core partners to collaborate on a strategy to gather information, evaluate program requirements, as well as the state board delimit their evaluation priorities and goals.

**Department of Labor's policy priorities:**

**Describe how the waiver will align with the Department's policy priorities, such as:**

During emergency time, the PRDEDC will focus on providing LWDA's assistance to improve operational capacity, continue capacity building efforts for staff, program participants and employers, understand impact of performance outcome, and improvement and progress of the delivery of services.

**Individuals impacted by the waiver:**

**Describe which populations the waiver will benefit, including how the waiver will impact services for disadvantaged populations or individuals with multiple barriers to employment.**

This impact the WIOA labor development system in Puerto Rico

**Process for monitoring progress in implementation:**

The WDP will continue its efforts to improve the management and effectiveness of workforce system programs and activities. The Monitoring Unit will be adding the monitoring of waivers to its monitoring processes in order to ensure compliance with waiver guidelines.

**Process for Notice of Local Boards and Opportunity to Comment:**

The unified plan and the waiver request will be published for a period of two (2) weeks on the PRDEDC website, allowing for public comment on its content and potential impact. In addition, copies of workforce system waivers will be provided to the Major's boards, Local Boards and LDWA's.

**Waiver Impact:**

Collect and report information about waiver outcomes in the State's WIOA Annual Report. The Secretary may require that States provide the most recent data available about the outcomes of the existing waiver in cases where the State seeks renewal of a previously approved waiver.

APPENDIX E

**On January 2020, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico requested from Employment and Training Administration, or ETA, a waiver of Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, or WIOA. Section 134/(a) Statewide Employment and Training Activities.**

**Statutory and/or regulatory requirements to be waived:**

***Indicate which part of the WIOA or the regulations the state would like to waive.***

The Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, through the Department of Economic Development and Commerce (DEDC), the WIOA Title I-B grantee, seeks a waiver allowance of WIOA section 134(a)(2)(A), (2)(B) and (3) to add flexibility in the use of the funds reserved by the Governor for use to provide statewide rapid response activities (i.e. WIOA section 134(a)(2)(A)), for use to provide statewide employment and training activities (i.e. WIOA section 134(a)(2)(B) and (3)) to provide disaster relief to affected areas.

The set of Governor's reserved statewide funds shall be described in this waiver allowance request as "WIOA statewide funds". Under this waiver allowance the funds described at WIOA section 134(a)(2) and (3) may be used interchangeably.

Under this waiver allowance, permitted WIOA statewide fund use includes, but is not limited to:

- Expedient allocation of funds to a local workforce development board, or local board, so they may respond quickly to a disaster, emergency, or other qualifying event as described at 20 CFR 687.100(b). Only those events, and cascading events caused by a qualifying event, that have been declared as an emergency or disaster by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), by the chief official of a Federal Agency with jurisdiction over the Federal response to a disaster with

potential significant loss of employment, or the Governor of Puerto Rico as a qualifying event, qualify for the use of WIOA statewide funds.

- To alleviate the effects that a qualifying event causes within affected local area(s), and/or planning regions, WIOA statewide funds will allow comprehensive disaster relief employment and employment and training activities, and the provision of needed humanitarian resources and services, including other services or resources deemed necessary as described at 20 CFR 687.180(b)(1).
- An individual's disaster relief employment is limited to 12 months or 2080 hours for work related to recovery from a single emergency or disaster. The Workforce Development Program (WDP) of the DEDC may extend an individual's disaster relief employment for up to an additional 12 months or 2080 hours if requested and sufficiently justified by the local board.
- Employment and training activities as described in WIOA section 134(c) and (d) are supported for WIOA eligible participants.
- Supportive services may be provided to enable individuals to participate in disaster relief employment, including such costs as transportation, childcare, and personal safety equipment and clothing consistent with local policies.
- Individuals shall be eligible to be offered disaster relief employment and employment and training services if such individual is a dislocated worker; is a long-term unemployed individual as defined by the State; is temporarily or permanently laid off as a consequence of the emergency or disaster; or in the case of an individual who is self-employed, becomes unemployed or significantly underemployed as a result of the emergency or disaster as well as appropriate adults and youth ages 18 and over.
- Transitional jobs as described at WIOA section 134(d)(5) will be supported with the WIOA statewide funds. Puerto Rico has a waiver of WIOA section 134(d)(5) to allow local boards up to 50 percent of Adult and Dislocated Worker funds to be used for the provision of transitional jobs effective until June 30, 2020.

**Actions undertaken to remove state or local barriers:**

***Describe the actions undertaken to remove state or local barriers.***

The Commonwealth of Puerto Rico established the **Puerto Rico State Agency for Emergency and Disaster Management** —Spanish: Agencia Estatal para el Manejo de Emergencias y Administración de Desastres (**AEMEAD**)— as the agency that oversees all emergency activities that occur in Puerto Rico. Within all local workforce development areas, or local areas, there are responsible entities marshalled by local government, or its agents, should a qualifying event occur. The AEMEAD works in concert with these entities to provide resources and expertise.

Puerto Rico Unified Plan modification, expected to be submitted before April 1, 2020, will contain the state and local workforce development system strategies and activities to deal with future emergency events as hurricanes, earthquake, flood, among other, including the timing, process and staff authorized

to applying and administering applicable National Dislocated Worker Grants, or NDWG, consistent with WIOA Sec. 170 and its corresponding regulatory requirements. The state plan will include the state board policy as well as the process to Local Areas request NDWG funds, once the grant be approved.

The NDWG grants are helpful once allocated, but in the time between the event and allocation, aid is urgently needed and there is much work to be done. If months pass before the NDWG allocation occurs, damage can be exacerbated, and work is not completed. The Government is mindful of this time gap and strives to apply as soon as the state is eligible for NDWG funding assistance, as appropriate. The efficient use of time right after a qualifying event occurs is a critical variable in how well recovery is measured. This is a serious barrier the state wants to reduce.

**Goals and expected programmatic outcomes of waiver:**

**Describe and specify how the waiver will help the state achieve an identified strategic goal or set of goals that it has outlined in its State Plan. If possible and appropriate the type of waiver requested, provide quantifiable projections for programmatic outcomes that will result from the waiver.**

**Strategic Goals**

In the case of a qualifying event, the State intends to use WIOA statewide funds so that relevant workforce development responses are provided in a timely manner. WIOA statewide funds may be provided to local areas deemed in need of financial resources as a result of being affected by a qualifying event.

The use of WIOA statewide funds associated with this waiver supports the state's goal of local WIOA-based programs and activities that better serve targeted groups of workforce development system customers. The use of WIOA statewide funds offers greater flexibility so that the state and local governing entities can expand their ability to coordinate resources, services and activities for individual, workers and employers affected by the qualifying emergency and/or disaster event. The state will use WIOA statewide funds to ensure that critical, time-sensitive work can be performed, and the potential participant pool is widened. The waiver flexibility permits local areas the latitude to marshal available labor, conduct appropriate training, enable required resources to be requisitioned quickly, and provide immediate and comprehensive disaster recovery assistance, including efforts to minimize further disaster impacts.

**Projected programmatic outcomes resulting from implementation of the waiver**

- Increase statewide and local workforce development board's response time to a qualifying event.
- This waiver will improve the ability of Local Workforce Development Boards to develop strategies to align with workforce and economic realities within their local areas after the emergency and to design programs in direct response to the needs of the affected individuals.
- Increase opportunities for needed participants to gain skills that help them to be more marketable in the labor market.
- Provide opportunity to employers to hire skilled individuals

**Department of Labor’s policy priorities:**

**Describe how the waiver will align with the Department’s policy priorities, such as:**

- *Supporting employer engagement;*
- *Connecting education and training strategies;*
- *Supporting work-based learning;*
- *Improving job and career results; and*
- *Other priorities as articulated in guidance.*

This waiver aligns with not only the Department of Labor’s priorities, but also with those of the State of Puerto Rico. The initiatives will demonstrate the importance of ensuring career and work readiness at all levels. This will allow the state to temporarily expand service capacity at the local level through time limited funding assistance in response to significant disasters.

Expanding the ability for the state to provide disaster related employment opportunities through statewide funding allows participants to develop skills that will better prepare them to obtain permanent employment.

**Individuals impacted by the waiver:**

**Describe which populations the waiver will benefit, including how the waiver will impact services for disadvantaged populations or individuals with multiple barriers to employment.**

This waiver will help business, industries, community base organization, service providers, among other, to restart their operations, reenter employment to dislocated workers that lost their jobs by the disaster and launch the economy recovery needed in the Puerto Rico labor market. Also, will help older youth, adults and dislocated workers with employment skills.

- All eligible participants as identified at WIOA section 170 and 20 CFR 687.170
- Eligible WIOA Title I Adult, Dislocated Workers and Out-of-School Youth participants
- WIOA reportable individuals claiming under-employment or unemployment; to maintain benefit of this waiver a reportable individual must be deemed a WIOA Title I eligible participant within thirty days of accepting disaster relief employment and/or training activities
- Non-WIOA eligible recipients include: affected businesses and employers, residents and other individuals that benefit from the qualifying event clean-up, restoration and humanitarian activities and resources provided.

**State plans for monitoring waiver implementation, including collection of waiver outcome information**

**States must describe how they intend to oversee effective waiver implementation and any protocols that may be used in their waiver requests.**

The state will use the following approach for monitoring progress in implementation:

Workforce Development Program (WDP) leadership will determine if the qualifying event requires the use of WIOA statewide funds and will approve parameters for the project, and be the operational lead. Applicable federal, state and local laws, regulations, policies and procedures will be used to ensure fiscal accountability. Unless otherwise authorized in this waiver, the financial and administrative rules contained in Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act; Final Rule (i.e. 20 CFR 683) will apply.

- Narrative will include, at a minimum, summary of the event, preliminary assessment of the cleanup, humanitarian needs of the affected areas, and will demonstrate whether there is a sufficient population of eligible individuals to conduct the planned work;
- Budget and budget justification; and
- Completed worksite summary.

The WDP will receive monthly project status reports and will host teleconferences with project stakeholders as necessary to monitor project status. At a minimum, funding recipients will provide the WDP with the following information for review:

- Revised narrative and associated attachments when a modification is required;
- Monthly Financial Status Reports;
- Monthly project status report of project activities; and
- Data entry for all participant service in the state system of PIRL system.

Only local boards will be the recipient of WIOA statewide funding for qualifying events. If a qualifying event occurs in a local area, the state requires the respective local board to collaborate with local governments and other recognized entities to determine whether workforce development-oriented services and activities are warranted. Local boards may work with their respective local area fiscal agents to complete and submit the funding request to WDP. Local boards will work with one-stop operator(s) to communicate the funding parameters to workforce development system partners and other service providers. Participant activity is to be recorded in the state system of record.

All funds obligated will be accounted for in the financial management system, the MIP. Case management and related source documentation associated with the emergency and/or disaster must include the qualifying event as a point of reference.

State staff who administer programming will provide ongoing technical assistance and oversight as it relates to the appropriateness and the effectiveness of this waiver.

Annual WIOA on-site programmatic reviews will include an evaluation of the impact the waivers have on programmatic goals and outcomes.

Additionally, the WDP will have the responsibility of ensuring the specific goals and outcomes achieved by the waiver are realized. Furthermore, the information gathered from the waiver will inform new or changes to policy as well as provide best practices.

**Assurance of state posting of the request for public comment and notification to affected local workforce development boards**

***Provide a description of the proactive solicitation of public comments. At a minimum, post the proposed waiver request to the state’s official website for comment. Ideally, develop a targeted outreach strategy to collect input and comment from all affected stakeholders. Submit any comments or concerns collected in this manner and the outcome of the state’s review of the public comments received.***

Puerto Rico’s waiver request was posted on DEDC’s website for comment and review by required parties and the public from January 14, 2020 through January 21, 2020.

LWDBs will received the opportunity to participate in the public comment period. All received comments were evaluated and posted in DEDC’s website and evaluated in case they need to be incorporated in the waiver request and the policy that is in process to be developed related this subject.

The feedback received was supporting the waiver request. In addition, they request that even this request was triggered by the recent, and still occurring, tremors that affected Puerto Rico, especially the southern area, it should be considered to have the same flexibility to serve individuals, affected by the disaster, who come to receive services in other local areas that do not, were directly affected. This requires our particular attention since there are citizens residing in the southwest area and are relocating to other areas of the island.

It should be clarified that the waiver was certainly requested in the wake of the tremors that have been affecting the island since the end of December 2019, but this flexibility should cover any other eventuality that occurs anywhere on the island and that qualify under the emergency criteria, during the extension of the waiver.

In addition, if the local area needs to provide services to people affected by a disaster who live in municipalities that are not part of that area, they should provide the services they need from the array of regular services that can be accessed in any AJC. The disaster relief and humanitarian efforts are concentrated in the local areas that have municipalities covered under the declaration of emergency.

APPENDIX F

**Waiver of the limitation on the use of funds for capitalization of business under WIOA 181(e) to allow funds to be used to capitalize small business, up to \$5,000 per affected business.**

PRDEDC requests DOLETA a waiver of the limitation on the use of funds for capitalization of business under WIOA §181(e) to allow Governor’s Reserve funds to be used to capitalize small business that were affected by emergencies, up to \$5,000 per affected business. This waiver will allow the state to assist

disaster-affected business and create new employment opportunities. Under the waiver, individuals benefiting from the capitalization must complete entrepreneurial or microenterprise training.

Puerto Rico's geographical location exposes the island to atmospheric and natural events that lead to emergencies. We are exposed to threats of floods, tropical storms and hurricanes, because of our geographical position in the Caribbean Sea, that disrupt the functioning of the island's economy after each event. In 2017, we suffered the onslaught of the Category 5 Hurricanes Irma and Maria, which left desolation, deaths, million-dollar losses, infrastructure damage and the dislocation of PR's economy. Under the grant DW-31161-17-60-A-72 assigned by DOLETA to serve both hurricanes, the business capitalization waiver was requested. Only the state of Texas had received approval from this waiver to deal with Hurricane Katrina.

On the other hand, geologically the island of Puerto Rico lies in a dynamic plate-boundary zone between two tectonic plates: the North American plate and the northeast corner of the Caribbean plate. The northern boundary of Puerto Rico is marked by the 800-kilometer-long Puerto Rico Trench, which is the deepest part of the Atlantic Ocean, with a maximum depth of 8,648 meters. Puerto Rico is bounded on the south by the Muertos Trough, on the west by the Mona Canyon, and on the east by the Virgin Islands Basin

Puerto Rico lies in a tectonically active region where earthquakes have occurred for centuries, but because Puerto Rico has not experienced a quake of this level of impact since 1918. The recent quakes occurred since December 28, 2019, their aftershocks, and resulting damage took the southwest region and destroyed it. About 7,500 people have left their homes for other kinds of shelter, including, in some cases, cars and tents.

The geologic settings of Puerto Rico created a new emergency scenario related to human safety, environmental health, and economic development. Because the island lies on an active plate boundary, earthquakes are a constant threat, and the densely populated coastal areas are vulnerable to tsunamis. Erosion is a concern in many coastal areas but is particularly serious to island economies that rely heavily on the tourist industry.

The latest worldwide emergency is the COVID-19 pandemic. Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is a new strain that was discovered in 2019 and has not been previously identified in humans. This new virus and disease were unknown before the outbreak began in Wuhan, China, in December 2019.

In the three emergency scenarios that faced PR in the last years, the small and medium business are the most affected sector in the economy, because there are directly related with people spending trend.

The use of funds that will be allocated under this waiver is limited to emergency, disaster-related needs only. For example, businesses may use the funds to purchase a computer for contacting customers and reestablishing payroll records, lease a building for operations, buy supplies and materials, or for fees and tuition payments for operating licenses or staff certification and training.

Small and medium-sized established businesses represented 81.3% of private sector jobs, according to the Small Business Administration<sup>2</sup>. According to the SBA, the private sector accounted for 681,058 jobs in Puerto Rico. Of these, 555,945 or 81.3% were in businesses of 25 employees or less. It was estimated around 40,000 small and medium-sized business in Puerto Rico well known as PYMEs (the Spanish acronym for *Pequeñas y Medianas Empresas*). According to the SBA, 8 of 10 jobs openings in Puerto Rico came from PYMEs.

On June 12, 2018, DOLETA approved this waiver to Puerto Rico, until June 30, 2020, to allow the use of Irma and Maria Hurricanes NDWG funds up to \$5,000 to capitalize a small business in concert with entrepreneurial training for the individuals benefiting from the capitalization.

PR is proposing two scenarios for the use of funds for capitalization. In the first option, the state would use up to 20% of the Governor's Reserve funds, when a state emergency occurs, as proclaimed by the Governor, through the State Emergency Management Agency. In this case, the State Board will determine the allocation and approve the use of capitalization funds, taking into consideration the impact of the designated emergency. On the second scenario, up to 25% of the emergency funds allocated through an NDWG grant can be used for capitalization of small business. This alternative is in consonance with the waiver approved after Hurricanes Irma and Maria.

The following conditions apply to the use of funds for small business capitalization once approved this new waiver request:

1. The DEDC create an ad-hoc Business Capitalization Committee. The applications must be reviewed by the committee prior to approval to ensure rigor and consistency in the handling of business capitalization requests.
2. Grant assistance must be limited to no more than \$5,000 per individual/business.
3. Use of funds to cover salaries is not permitted.
4. Use of funds for business capitalization revolving loans is not permitted.
5. Is required to submit as minimum three receipt of legitimate estimates for expenses in the application for the Committee evaluation.
6. Also business have to submit receipts after the item/service is provided, to ensure that the actual cost of the good/service is not less than the estimate.
7. The business has to reimbursement the fund doesn't used as approved by the Committee.
8. DEDC financial systems in place to track funds approved under this business capitalization waiver, as well as the responsibility to recapture funds that were not used by eligible businesses in instances where the final receipt is less than the original estimate.
9. The DEDC Monitoring Unit is required to monitor the implementation of this waiver.

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<sup>2</sup> The SBA defines small business those that generate \$5 million in revenue a year or have less than 25 employees.

The waiver for capitalization after hurricanes Irma and Maria was of great help to small and medium-sized business affected by hurricanes to restart their operations. The outcomes of this waiver are as follows:

1. Development of an outreach and dissemination process by providing on-site orientation, related to the eligibility criteria, documentation and application processes. Were completed 1,453 orientations to small business and had been received 669 applications for the grants.
2. A policy and procedure to capitalization of business was approved by de PR Department of State and is in place to continue the implementation of this waiver request once approved.
3. The DEDC create an ad-hoc Business Capitalization Committee, in charge of evaluate and approve the applications, after the pre-screening process performed by case managers.
4. Until December 31, 2019, the Committee evaluated the 669 applications, with 499 approved, 153 rejected and another 17 that did not comply with the eligibility process.
5. From the total approved, 496 business completed the entrepreneurship training as part of the requirement for delegation of funds.
6. Total funds approved until December 31, 2019 were \$2,308,437.57, with a balance of \$191,562.43, related to the \$2,500,000 approved for business capitalization.
7. The Workforce Development Program have developed a follow-up process to verify the use of funds by business and the policy described before, including penalties and sanction for the wrong use of federal funds.

**Statutory and/or regulatory requirements to be waived:**

**Indicate which part of the WIOA or the regulations the state would like to waive.**

PRDEDC requests a waiver to the WIOA Section 181(e), Limitation on Use of Funds. This section establishes that no funds available to carry out an activity under this title shall be used for employment generating activities, investment in revolving loan funds, **capitalization of businesses**, investment in contract bidding resource centers, economic development activities, or similar activities, that are not directly related to training for eligible individuals under this title.

Due to the economic breakdown after emergencies like hurricanes, earthquakes and COVID-19, the small and the medium sized businesses were the most affected by these natural disasters and disease. Many small businesses had to close operations because they were not able to face the loss of revenue and an economy in crisis for years to come.

**Actions undertaken to remove state or local barriers:**

**Describe the actions undertaken to remove state or local barriers.**

There are no State or local statutory or regulatory barriers for the implementation of the proposed waiver.

**Goals and expected programmatic outcomes of waiver:**

**Describe and specify how the waiver will help the state achieve an identified strategic goal or set of goals that it has outlined in its State Plan. If possible and appropriate the type of waiver requested, provide quantifiable projections for programmatic outcomes that will result from the waiver.**

The expected outcomes from this waiver for the PRDEDC are as follow:

- Support Puerto Rico’s small business and entrepreneurial start-up economy.
- Accelerate the economy and the labor market restoration;
- Complete the evaluation of 100% of application submitted under this waiver.
- Approve at least 90% of application evaluated by the committee.
- Achieve the restart or maintain operation in 90% the business impacted by the capitalization funds
- Avoid layoff of employees of small and medium business affected by emergencies
- Rise at least 95% of expenditure in fund allocated under this waiver.

**Department of Labor’s policy priorities:**

**Describe how the waiver will align with the Department’s policy priorities:**

- Maximize the flexibility needed to ensure speedy implementation of work-based learning opportunities that WIOA encourages for both formula and discretionary grants;
- Increase business usage of the workforce system flexibilities and thereby achieving greater access to employment opportunities;
- Provide greater incentives for employers to retain and retrain current employees to avoid layoffs; and to create new jobs;
- Create additional opportunities for new workers, and for unemployed and underemployed workers to speed their return to full-time employment;

**Individuals impacted by the waiver:**

**Describe which populations the waiver will benefit, including how the waiver will impact services for disadvantaged populations or individuals with multiple barriers to employment.**

- Businesses, particularly small and medium-sized businesses needing to retain current workers, and/or hire additional workers to sustain or expand their productivity, and that do not have immediate resources to do so;
- Small business employees who will be able to retain their jobs, and

- Unemployed and underemployed workers.

**Process for monitoring progress in implementation:**

The Workforce Development Program (WDP) of PRDEDC developed waiver guidelines and policies, and will measure the impact of waivers on performance outcomes. The WDP will monitor progress under this waiver by reviewing performance reports, and through its monitoring and performance accountability system. The Monitoring Unit will be adding the monitoring of waivers to its monitoring processes in order to insure compliance with waiver guidelines.

**Process for Notice of Local Boards and Opportunity to Comment:**

The unified plan and the waiver request will be published for a period of two (2) weeks on the PRDEDC website, allowing for public comment on its content and potential impact. In addition, copies of workforce system waivers will be provided to the Major's boards, Local Boards and LDWA's.

**Waiver Impact:**

**Collect and report information about waiver outcomes in the State's WIOA Annual Report. The Secretary may require that States provide the most recent data available about the outcomes of the existing waiver in cases where the State seeks renewal of a previously approved waiver.**

The Workforce Development Program will prepare quarterly reports regarding this waiver. The report must include the number of approved businesses, fund allocation and information related to any situation that would affect the waiver implementation. PRDEDC will report on the impact and outcomes of its approved waivers in the WIOA Annual Report.