State Workforce Development Board:

Making the Case for Transformation and Redesign of the New Mexico Workforce Development System

Executive Summary

New Mexico's workforce is unique in its diversity, cultural, and geographical needs therefore the impact upon the workforce system requires a delivery arrangement that meets the sense of urgency to win the war for talent. The workforce system has routinely struggled, even during times of economic prosperity, to support workers seeking stable employment, while also creating and sustaining a talent pipeline that encourages an engaged partnership with employers across the state.

"According to national FY19 performance data reported by the U.S. Department of Labor, NM ranked in the bottom one-third of states and territories for employment and earning outcomes for laid-off workers. Given this poor performance, NM is likely not getting the expected return on investment for programs. NM ranked below the national for the percent of individuals entering employment or obtaining a credential after exiting either the adult or youth training programs. NM ranked 45th out of the 55 states and territories for adult credential attainment and 46th for youth" (Legislative Finance Committee (LFC) Spotlight – August 2020).

The competition for business investments, jobs and economic prosperity is intense. Therefore, without innovation, New Mexico's available workforce will not be skilled and ready for the transformation of the economy that lies ahead. There remains a mismatch between the skills that workers possess and the skills employers need. New Mexico also needs to maximize alternative paths to securing careers that increase their earning power. The key to this effort is increasing credential attainment rates for those completing two- and four-year degrees and certificate programs, and offering stacked credentials to enable workers to learn new information and skills in manageable, incremental chunks.

In December 2019, the State Workforce Development Board (SWDB) voted to create a subcommittee dedicated to initiating a process to evaluate the current structure based on reported and observable problems related to governance, fiscal and performance outcomes. After much discussion and collaboration, the following report summarizes their analysis of the system and includes a bold recommendation for consideration in the post-pandemic world.

After careful consideration and review, following the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) guidance, the SWDB recommends a conversion from four local areas to two, consisting of a Metro and a Rural area. The development of two workforce regions provides several benefits for a sparsely populated state like NM, namely, focus and attention to communities facing similar workforce needs and circumstances. Furthermore, coordination, development and implementation of workforce services and supports can be improved by organizing around common purposes and common industry partners and sectors, including the Governor's priority economic development sectors. Communication and collaboration across training providers, workforce partners, chambers of commerce and local governments can be aligned more effectively and efficiently, while keeping the needs of the target recipients and employers at the forefront.

This recommendation comports to the recommendation of the LFC Spotlight Report, Workforce Development Post-COVID 19 Pandemic. *"If New Mexico were to reduce the number of boards to an urban and a rural board, there could be administrative savings in addition to improved communication of urban versus rural needs."*

Once this recommendation is approved, the SWDB will engage in further planning and partnership with county chief elected officials, local workforce development boards, and key workforce partners to develop a comprehensive implementation plan that will be fully operational by July 1, 2022.

"The unprecedented demand for both target audiences of the system, employer and job seeker, undoubtedly requires a pivotal transformation in how New Mexico's workforce system operates."

Background Information:

Under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) sec. 101(d)(6), the State Workforce Development Board (SWDB) must assist the Governor in the "the review of statewide policies, programs and recommendations on action that must be taken by the State to align workforce development programs to support a comprehensive and streamlined workforce development system." Additionally WIOA sec. 101 (d)(3)(f) directs the SWDB to assist the Governor in the "identification of regions, including planning regions for the purposes of WIOA sec 106(a), and the designation of local areas under WIOA sec 106, after consultation with local workforce development boards and chief elected officials."

The requirements for identifying and assigning local regions include (20 CFR 679.210) consideration of the extent to which the local areas in a proposed region:

1. Share a single labor market;
2. Share a common economic development area; and
3. Possess the Federal and non-Federal resources, including appropriate education and training institutions, to administer activities under WIOA Subtitle B.

In addition, the required criteria includes other factors the Governor may also consider, such as:

1. Population centers;
2. Communing patterns;
3. Land ownership
4. Industrial composition;
5. Labor force conditions;
6. Geographic boundaries and
7. Additional factors as determined by the U.S. Secretary of Labor.

The purpose of the local area is to serve as a jurisdiction for the administration of workforce development activities and execution of adult, dislocated worker, and youth funds allocated by USDOL to the State. Such areas may be aligned with a region identified in WIOA sec. 106(a) (1) or may be components of a planning region, each with its own local workforce development board (LWDB). Finally, local areas are the areas within which LWDBs oversee their functions, including strategic planning, operational alignment and service delivery design and jurisdiction where partners align resources.

Under the WIOA (20 CFR 679.250 (d) (1)), the Governor, "may review a local area designated at any time to evaluate whether the area continues to meet the requirements for subsequent designation". For purposes of subsequent local area designation, **the local area must have performed successfully; sustained fiscal integrity; and must have met the regional planning requirements described in WIOA** sec.106 (b) (3). In December 2019, the State Workforce Development Board voted to create a subcommittee dedicated to initiating a process to evaluate the current structure based on reported and observable problems related to governance, fiscal and performance outcomes. The SWDB agreed to submit a recommendation for consideration that could dramatically improve the overall efficiency and effectiveness of the workforce system statewide.

Review and Analysis of Current System:

The current four (4) local workforce boards were required to resubmit their redesignation requests for approval in 2019 and were invited by the current SWDB to present their plans. Presentations from all four LWDBs took place October 2020, and although were approved for the purposes of continued funding, the SWDB announced they were continuing efforts to review and analyze the system. New Mexico currently has with four areas that were designated in 2001 under the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) and these four areas were simply "redesignated" under WIOA without engagement of the local chief elected officials. A comprehensive review was not conducted by the previous SWDB and the areas were simply approved in an effort to assure an appropriation from USDOL.

Beginning In 2018, The State Workforce Development Board (SWDB) engaged in a comprehensive review of the current status of the local workforce development board regions, within the state. The first activity began with a convening September 26, 2018 that included a facilitated meeting with all four local workforce development boards, their lead chief elected officials and members from the SWDB. The discussion included a review of current designations, economic development and industry located within each area, commuting patterns for workers, and availability of education institutions and services. The conversation included identification of strengths and challenges with the current designations and recommendations for potential changes to support improvements and efficiency. Following the election of Governor Lujan-Grisham, the current SWDB continued with this discussion. Activities to-date include a literature review of best/influential practices, one-on-one interviews with states that have transformed their workforce systems, thorough reviews of local area designation plans submitted by the local workforce development boards, consultation with the US Department of Labor – Education and Training Assistance team to assure compliance with federal processes and guidance, review of federal/state performance metrics and funding allocation rules and regulations, and an exploration of alternative structural scenarios for maximizing the impact of the system. The SWDB meetings have focused on current practices, including updates of performance outcomes, challenges and barriers faced by each workforce region following onsite reviews by both state and federal monitors. The SWDB members have also attended LWDB board meetings and technical assistance training sessions and conferences designed to promote awareness and understanding of workforce operations, namely Workforce Development Conferences, Sector Strategy Development, career and technical education planning/implementation, and state and local workforce development planning.

In FY19, NM's four (4) local workforce boards received $25 million in WIOA funds. NM's allocation per capita was higher than for the majority of states in FY17. NM is likely still funded above average on a per capita basis, because the funding is based on a formula that includes the state unemployment rate, the rate of economic disadvantage and similar factors. "LFC has suggested, NMDWS work with the local boards to identify and eliminate potential duplication of administration. The federal WIOA legislation aims for state agencies receiving WIOA funds to collaborate." (LFC Spotlight: Workforce Development Post COVID-19 Pandemic, Aug.2020)

Table I: Comparison of similar states for Program Year 2018

State	Funding in Millions	Total Participants Served
Kansas	$13.203	4,338
Iowa	$11.480	17,320
Oklahoma	$24.384	8, 912
Oregon	$28.154	185,906*
New Mexico	$22.906	4,587

*Questionable results that may or may not only include WIOA participants

Table II - Current Workforce Regions and Funding Allotments by category and total amount:
New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions: PY 2019 / FY 2020

Northern Region - *Cibola, Colfax, Los Alamos, McKinley, Mora, Rio Arriba, San Juan, San Miguel, Santa Fe, and Taos Counties (10 counties)*
Central Region - *Bernalillo, Sandoval, Torrance, and Valencia Counties (4 Counties)*
Eastern Region - *Chaves, Curry, De Baca, Eddy, Guadalupe, Harding, Lea, Lincoln, Otero, Quay, Roosevelt, and Union Counties (12 counties)*
Southwestern Region - *Catron, Dona Ana, Grant, Hidalgo, Luna, Sierra, and Socorro Counties (8 counties)*

	PY20/FY21	7,778,323.00
ADULT		
1,651,656.00		21% NORTHERN
3,016,938.00		39% CENTRAL
1,201,291.00		15% EASTERN
1,369,647.00		18% SOUTHWESTERN
538,791.00		7% Navajo Nation
7,778,323.00		100%

	PY20/FY21	10,849,581.00
DISLOCATED WORKER		
2,455,813.00		23% NORTHERN
4,196,034.00		39% CENTRAL
1,559,286.00		14% EASTERN
2,100,895.00		19% SOUTHWESTERN
537,553.00		5% Navajo Nation
10,849,581.00		100%

	PY20/FY21	8,033,885.00
YOUTH		
1,394,076.00		17% NORTHERN
2,623,518.00		33% CENTRAL
1,118,008.00		14% EASTERN
2,043,478.00		25% SOUTHWESTERN
854,805.00		11% Navajo Nation
8,033,885.00		100%

Total Local Board Allocations 24,730,640.00

Program Year P20

5,501,545.00	22% NORTHERN
9,836,490.00	40% CENTRAL
3,878,585.00	16% EASTERN
5,514,020.00	22% SOUTHWESTERN
24,730,640.00	100%

Table III – Participants Served by Workforce Region

Total Participants		PY14	PY15	PY16	PY17	PY18	PY19
Central	Adult	2,112	3,354	730	722	969	1,026
	DW	198	486	242	184	235	277
	Youth	441	1,112	510	433	703	552
Eastern	Adult	345	674	178	306	494	476
	DW	52	72	19	25	84	73
	Youth	50	130	56	108	150	103
Northern	Adult	888	1,544	453	613	814	598
	DW	228	654	252	210	152	135
	Youth	114	182	97	80	154	238
Southwestern	Adult	616	1,140	305	341	451	489
	DW	84	130	45	54	94	146
	Youth	204	304	190	213	305	226
Total Annual		5,332	9,782	3,077	3,289	4,605	4,336

- Numbers dropped significantly after PY15 due to change in eligibility and reporting requirements
- All four boards served fewer numbers of youth, even though NM has one of the highest rates of out-of-school youth experiencing barriers to employment (drop out, homeless, juvenile justice). NMDWS is seeking a waiver to serve more "in-school" youth for PY22 to promote retention.
- Largest Metropolitan Serving Areas – Albuquerque (Central Board) and Las Cruces (Southwestern Board) show dramatically different outcomes. The Southwestern Board continues to lag significantly in number of individuals served, while the Central Board continues to carry the weight of the state in terms of meeting targeted outcomes for the populations served.
- All four boards underperformed in the Dislocated Worker category. This is notable given the high number of unemployed individuals in NM and the dramatic increase in job seekers post-COVID in this category.

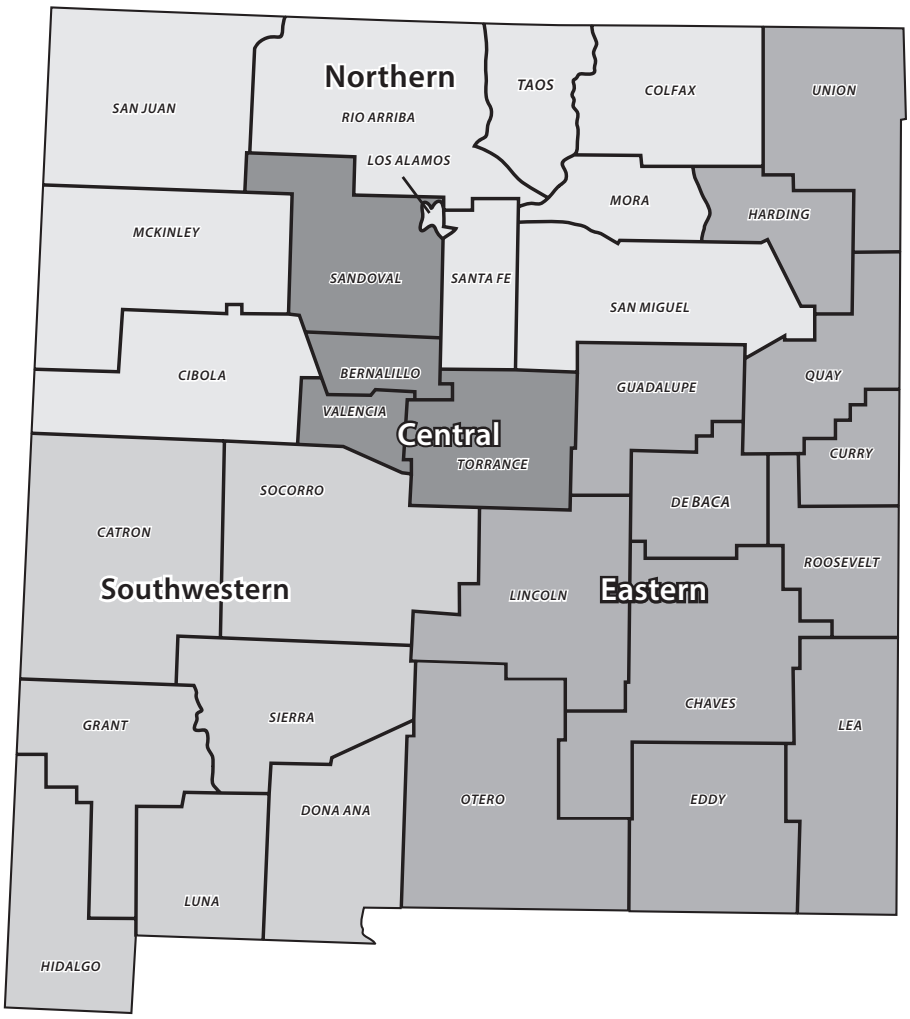


Table IV – Fiscal Performance (Highlighted areas indicate fund transfers)

	Admin	Youth	Adult	DW	DW to Adult	Total
			PY20			
Central	$983,650.00	$2,361,166.00	$2,715,244.00	$3,776,430.00	$0.00	$9,836,490.00
Eastern	$387,859.00	$1,006,207.00	$1,081,162.00	$1,403,357.00	$0.00	$3,878,585.00
Northern	$550,155.00	$1,254,668.00	$1,486,491.00	$2,210,231.00	$0.00	$5,501,545.00
Southwest	$551,401.00	$1,839,130.00	$1,232,683.00	$1,890,806.00	$0.00	$5,514,020.00
Total	**$2,473,065.00**	**$6,461,171.00**	**$6,515,580.00**	**$9,280,824.00**		**$24,730,640.00**
			PY19			
Central	$1,029,591.00	$2,292,125.00	$2,612,080.00	$4,362,116.00	$0.00	$10,295,912.00
Eastern	$402,205.00	$940,073.00	$1,034,097.00	$1,645,679.00	$0.00	$4,022,054.00
Northern	$554,810.00	$1,312,825.00	$1,482,255.00	$1,692,203.00	$506,000.00	$5,548,093.00
Southwest	$546,705.00	$1,727,100.00	$1,188,933.00	$1,004,307.00	$1,150,000.00	$5,617,045.00
Total	**$2,533,311.00**	**$6,272,123.00**	**$6,317,365.00**	**$8,704,305.00**	**$1,656,000.00**	**$25,483,104.00**
			PY18			
Central	$967,858.00	$2,354,415.00	$2,645,649.00	$1,725,633.00	$1,985,022.00	$9,678,577.00
Eastern	$429,289.00	$1,113,290.00	$1,152,146.00	$282,869.00	$1,315,285.00	$4,292,879.00
Northern	$572,525.00	$1,473,130.00	$1,611,062.00	$358,200.00	$1,710,323.00	$5,725,240.00
Southwest	$552,294.00	$1,873,957.00	$1,343,344.00	$655,440.00	$1,097,915.00	$5,522,950.00
Total	**$2,521,966.00**	**$6,814,792.00**	**$6,752,201.00**	**$3,022,142.00**	**$6,108,545.00**	**$25,219,646.00**

- All four boards transferred funds from Dislocated Worker to Adult category in PY18 and PY19. NMDWS increased level of justification for transfers beginning PY19 to encourage outreach and service to dislocated worker population following a Federal review and technical assistance from USDOL.
- The Central Board is the only board that has consistently met federal fiscal requirement of 80% obligation of program year funds, including current PY21.
- Eastern, Northern and Southwestern recently received requests from NMDWS – WIOA Team for a fiscal spend down plan for PY19 funds due to expire June 30, 2021. Total of $5,247,616 in jeopardy of reversion.
- Northern Board reverted unspent youth funds PY17 in the amount of $408,089.88
- Northern Board was placed under administrative oversight beginning July 1, 2019, primarily to provide direct governance and shore up fiscal operations following a federal review that identified disallowed and questioned costs.
- Southwestern Board began receiving intensive technical assistance and support from NMDWS - WIOA Team beginning PY18 through the present to address underspending, fiscal controls and budget management. The board has improved spending allocations following a change in providers, however, the region continues to lag in dislocated and youth allocations.

Table V – Negotiated Performance Outcomes

Central Region	PY 2018	PY 2019	PY 2020
Adult Employment Q2	Met	Met/Exceeded	Met/Exceeding
Adult Employment Q4	Met	Met/Exceeded	Met/Exceeding
Adult Credential	Met/Exceeded	Met/Exceeded	Met/Exceeding
Adult Skill Gain	N/A	N/A	Failing
DW Employment Q2	Met	Met/Exceeded	Met
DW Employment Q4	Met/Exceeded	Met/Exceeded	Met/Exceeding
DW Credential	Met/Exceeded	Met/Exceeded	Met/Exceeding
DW Skill Gain	N/A	N/A	Failing
Youth Employment Q2	Met	Met	Met/Exceeding
Youth Employment Q4	Met	Met/Exceeded	Met/Exceeding
Youth Credential	Failed	Failed	Met/Exceeding
Youth Skill Gain	N/A	N/A	Failing

Southwest Region	PY 2018	PY 2019	PY 2020
Adult Employment Q2	Met	Met/Exceeded	Met
Adult Employment Q4	Met	Met	Met/Exceeding
Adult Credential	Failed	Failed	Met/Exceeding
Adult Skill Gain	N/A	N/A	Failing
DW Employment Q2	Met/Exceeded	Met	Met/Exceeding
DW Employment Q4	Met/Exceeded	Met/Exceeded	Met
DW Credential	Failed	Failed	Met/Exceeding
DW Skill Gain	N/A	N/A	Failing
Youth Employment Q2	Met/Exceeded	Failed	Met/Exceeding
Youth Employment Q4	Failed	Failed	Failing
Youth Credential	Met	Failed	Failing
Youth Skill Gain	N/A	N/A	Failing

Northern Region	PY 2018	PY 2019	PY 2020
Adult Employment Q2	Failed	Met	Failing
Adult Employment Q4	Met	Met/Exceeded	Meeting
Adult Credential	Failed	Failed	Failing
Adult Skill Gain	N/A	N/A	Failing
DW Employment Q2	Met	Failed	Met/Exceeding
DW Employment Q4	Met/Exceeded	Met/Exceeded	Failing
DW Credential	Failed	Failed	Failing
DW Skill Gain	N/A	N/A	Failing
Youth Employment Q2	Failed	Met	Met/Exceeding
Youth Employment Q4	Met	Met/Exceeded	Failing
Youth Credential	Failed	Failed	Failing
Youth Skill Gain	N/A	N/A	Failing

Eastern Region	PY 2018	PY 2019	PY 2020
Adult Employment Q2	Met	Met	Met/Exceeding
Adult Employment Q4	Met/Exceeded	Met/Exceeded	Meeting
Adult Credential	Met	Met/Exceeded	Met/Exceeding
Adult Skill Gain	**N/A**	N/A	Failing
DW Employment Q2	Met/Exceeded	Met	Failing
DW Employment Q4	Met/Exceeded	Met	Met/Exceeding
DW Credential	Met/Exceeded	Met/Exceeded	Met/Exceeding
DW Skill Gain	**N/A**	N/A	Failing
Youth Employment Q2	Failed	Failed	Failing
Youth Employment Q4	Failed	Failed	Met
Youth Credential	Failed	Failed	Failing
Youth Skill Gain	**N/A**	N/A	Failing

Monitoring and Federal On-Site Reviews:

- October 2018 federal onsite review of the Northern LWDB found several governance, performance and fiscal integrity issues. Findings included questioned costs, failure to adequately engage with the CEO's, several fiscal compliance issues specifically a failure to have financial and administrative policies and procedures following WIOA rules and regulations. Following this federal review NMDWS placed the LWDB under administrative oversight and has continued to provide intensive technical assistance to-date. NMDWs currently reviews cash requests, participates in CEO and LWDB meetings to assure compliance and currently reviews and approves all policies and procedures to assure they comport with WIOA.
- February 2019 federal onsite review of the Southwestern LWDB found several programmatic concerns, namely low levels of performance, failure to implement career pathways within its local area, failure to provide in-demand occupational training for adults and dislocated workers, failure to follow up with youth participants resulting in a denial of additional services if needed, and a failure to have written financial/administrative policies and procedures required by Uniform Guidance.
- Monitoring and compliance reviews are conducted annually by an internal NMDWS. Reviews focus on Governance, Program Implementation/Performance and Fiscal integrity.
    - Governance concerns are present across all LWDBs including failure of meaningful engagement with CEOs. CEO input in the development of local plans, budget and certification of LWDB membership is missing.
    - Three of the four LWDBS failed to execute infrastructure funding agreements with partnering agencies and organizations in a timely manner.
    - Programmatic concerns across all four areas includes inadequate implementation of sector strategies and career pathway planning, inconsistencies with eligibility documentation (especially with youth), failure to meet negotiated performance and low enrollment for all categories.
    - Fiscal integrity concerns are primarily found in two areas, Southwestern and Northern, including failure to meet obligation/expenditure rates, inadequate or inconsistent budget planning, unreliable fiscal controls, and insufficient documentation of expenditures. The Central and Eastern LWDBs have more consistent practices, and when concerns arise, are quickly and adequately addressed in a manner that results in sustainable change.

Recommendation

Two Workforce Regional Areas - Urban and Rural

After careful consideration and review following WIOA guidance. The SWDB recommends conversion from four workforce regions to two workforce regions consisting of a Metro and a Rural Area.

- The development of two workforce regions provides several benefits for a sparsely populated state like NM, namely, focus and attention to communities facing similar workforce needs and circumstances.
- Reduction of administrative efforts can also lead to increased funds for job seekers and businesses who utilize the system.
- Increased competition for high-quality service providers prepared and able to meet the needs of each region, as evidenced by meeting or exceeding targets in their work with culturally and economically diverse populations and consistency of service across the state.
- Coordination, development, and implementation of workforce services and supports can be better organized to support regional economies and economic development efforts unique to each area, including the in-demand sectors defined in the Four Year Combined State Workforce Development Plan.
- Communication and collaboration across training providers, workforce partners, chambers of commerce, economic developers, and local governments can be aligned more effectively and efficiently based on the unique regional priorities and economic development plans.

This recommendation comports to the recommendation of the LFC Spotlight Report, Workforce Development Post-COVID 19 Pandemic. “If New Mexico were to reduce the number of boards to an urban and a rural board, there could be administrative savings in addition to improved communication of urban versus rural needs.”

The following table describes the proposed workforce regions, counties and potential funding using USDOL formula for distribution. (Funding allotment subject to change. Allotments are based on PY20 award to NMDWS. Award may be higher).

Metro Area = Four Counties = Bernalillo, Sandoval, Dona Ana, Santa Fe.

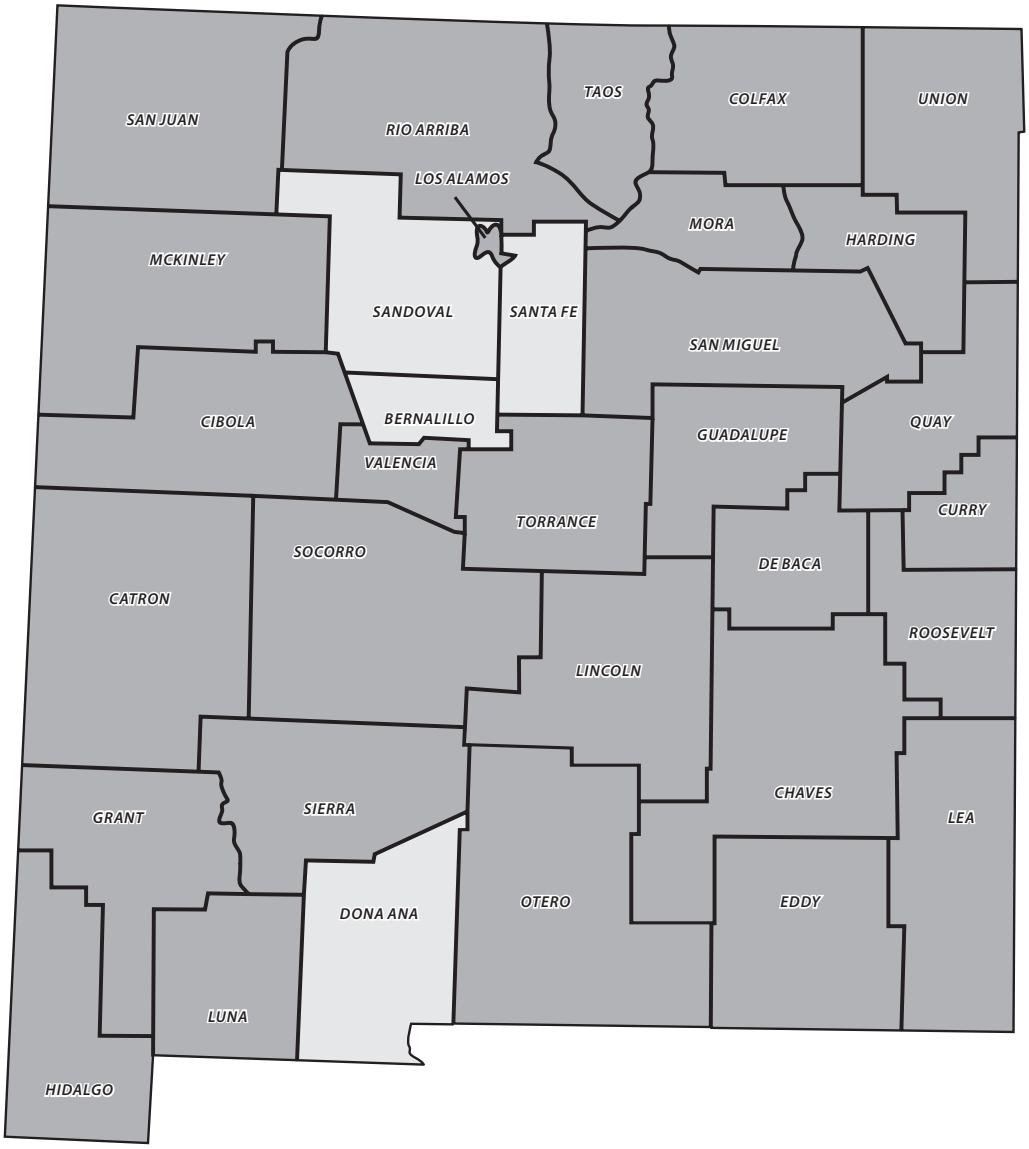
Rural Area = Balance of state, remaining 29 counties

ADULT		
4,172,764.00	53.646%	**1-Metro Area**
3,106,156.00	39.933%	**2-Rural Area**
499,402.00	6.420%	Navajo Nation
7,778,322.00	**100.000%**	

DISLOCATED WORKER		
5,915,799.00	54.53%	**1-Metro Area**
4,422,827.00	40.76%	**2-Rural Area**
510,955.00	4.71%	Navajo Nation
10,849,581.00	**100.000%**	

YOUTH		
3,722,228.00	46.33%	**1-Metro Area**
3,543,002.00	44.10%	**2-Rural Area**
768,655.00	9.57%	Navajo Nation
8,033,885.00	**100.00%**	

Estimated Program Year Allotment Per Region		
13,810,791.00	55.50%	**1-Metro Area**
11,071,985.00	44.50%	**2-Rural Area**
24,882,776.00	**100.00%**	



Rationale:

- "According to national FY19 performance data reported by the U.S. Department of Labor, NM ranked in the bottom one-third of states and territories for employment and earning outcomes for laid-off workers. Given this poor performance, NM is likely not realizing the expected return on investment for programs." (LFC Spotlight - August 2020)
- "NM ranked below the national for the percent of individuals entering employment or obtaining a credential after exiting either the adult or youth training programs. NM ranked 45th out of the 55 states and territories for adult credential attainment and 46th for youth." (LFC Spotlight – August 2020)
- Like other states, NM primary source of workforce development funding is through USDOL – WIOA. Similar to most states, the bureaucratic and segmented style of the federal workforce act, is difficult to implement and is often characterized as having too many rules and restrictions and not being nimble or flexible. As a result, NMDWS WIOA staff and LWDB staff are hampered by numerous processes resulting in ongoing oversight burdens that slow progress. Reducing the number of onsite monitoring visits and subsequent technical assistance can create opportunities for quality and innovation of best and promising practices, centers of excellence for each workforce region and improved sector partnership development.
- The overall performance to-date within the four-region structure has demonstrated little to no growth in total number of job seekers served or successfully placed or businesses served.

Opportunities

- Proposed areas support regional COVID-19 restarts, sector-based workforce development strategies, and the opportunity to create a skill-based model to improve labor market alignment tailored to the unique, diverse needs of urban or rural settings. The proposed approach simplifies and encourages a focused approach to support communities with unique concerns and similarities. (Urban to Suburban) and (Rural to Frontier).
- Part of the complexity of WIOA is managing the employment and training programs across a region. Navigating the web of programs can create barriers for strategy and program development. The proposed two-region structure opens an opportunity for training providers/programs to create 'centers of workforce excellence' specifically designed to address the needs of urban and rural communities. Additionally, WIOA state set-aside investments can be better directed and aligned to address urban/rural communities and performance measures can follow success and/or challenges for each area. Set-aside funds are often earmarked for special projects and activities to demonstrate best and promising practices, initial investments in centers of excellence for each region would be a priority.
- Aligning and communicating the needs of the business community is often thwarted by competing and unique needs, depending on the size and complexity and geographical location of the employer. The proposed approach provides an opportunity to address these needs and ensures voice and concern of employers operating in rural and frontier areas. Likewise, urban employers, whether small or large, also face unique challenges and their needs can be pinpointed, as well.
- Funds for development of workforce training programs and subsequent support services are undoubtedly unique depending on location, and, again, design and implementation is influenced by location. Rural training programs tend to rely more on distance learning strategies, while urban programming is more face-to-face instruction. Support services for programs vary depending on location, and although both may struggle with transportation or childcare, the solutions are solved differently depending on the community's unique needs.
- Simplification of the statewide structure provides an opportunity for improved coordination and collaboration with chief elected officials and economic development entities, as they strategize and plan to attract businesses and solve talent development and acquisition needs based on location. Again, the needs of urban and rural areas are significantly different, and by aligning with the proposed two region approach, the opportunities to fully align activities even amongst connected urban/rural geographies can be improved and highly focused.

Challenges:

- Change could result in short-term disruption of service delivery for job seekers and businesses, as we convert from four to two local areas. However, the process will be structured to limit or eliminate that challenge.

Next Steps:

- Engage with County Commission Association to facilitate an orientation for county commissioners on the roles and responsibilities of Chief Elected Officials required by WIOA – Scheduled March 29 - April 1, 2021.
- Present work to-date from SWDB and consult with Chief Elected Officials on proposed two region structure. Obtain feedback and challenges and discuss strategy moving forward with LWDBs. Scheduled to be completed by May 2021.
- Consult with four LWDBs, obtain feedback and challenges and discuss strategy moving forward in partnership with Chief Elected Officials and SWDB. Complete by June 2021
- SWDB negotiates with Chief Elected Officials to finalize workforce region recommendations based on feedback and input and publish for public input. Complete by September 1, 2021
- SWDB and Chief Elected Officials work in partnership to develop a comprehensive timeline for transition to present to USDOL for review and approval. Complete by October 2021.
- Transformation process implemented and complete by July 2022.

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