

# Eastern Area Workforce Development Board

***A Proud Partner of the American Job Center Network***

## **PROGRAM YEAR (PY) 2022 ANNUAL REPORT**

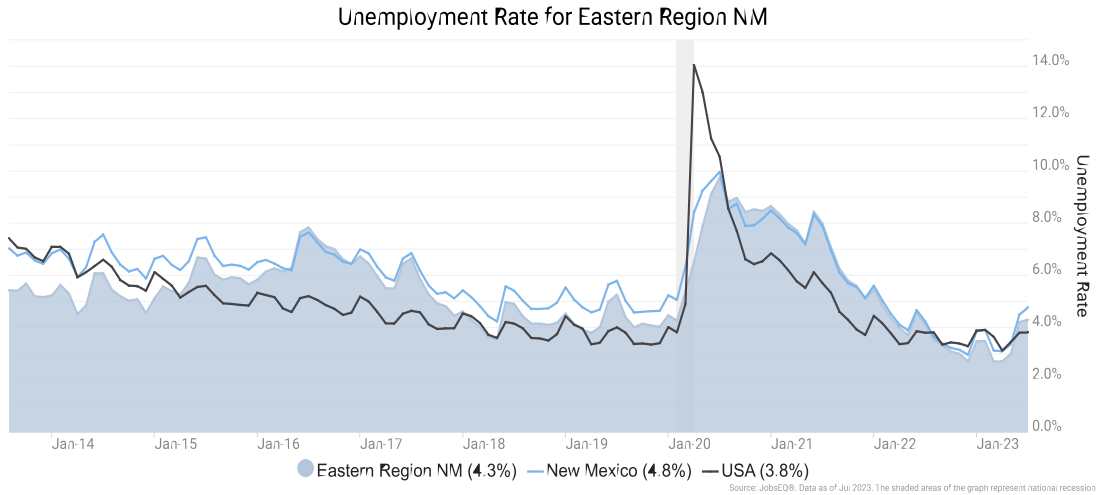
### **General Overview**

Continued implementation of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) in the Eastern Area in PY 2022 has produced many challenges and opportunities throughout the year. During PY 22 the area showed a significant improvement in the unemployment rate. During PY 21 we saw higher unemployment rates whereas in PY 22 we saw that rate decrease. In July 2021 the rate was 7.5% regionally and in July 2022 the rate was 4.3%.

During PY 22 the East continued to work collaboratively to align numerous workforce and education and training partners. The Board, Title I service provider, Title III partner, and the One-Stop Operator (OSO) worked diligently on several ongoing initiatives including, but not limited to: the continued effort to increase entrepreneurial training; the Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) co-enrollment model; co-enrollment efforts between Titles I and III; the partner referral process utilizing the intranet platform MyHub; the “Prison Project” to reach returning citizens; the annual Unearthing Future Opportunities (UFO) Youth Conference, collaborative co-enrollment efforts with Youth Challenge Academy Cadets, Job Corps, and the UFO program.

### **Labor Market**

As previously mentioned, the unemployment rate went from 7.5% regionally in PY 21 to 4.3% regionally in PY 22. The regional unemployment rate remains higher than the national rate of 3.8% but has still decreased significantly.



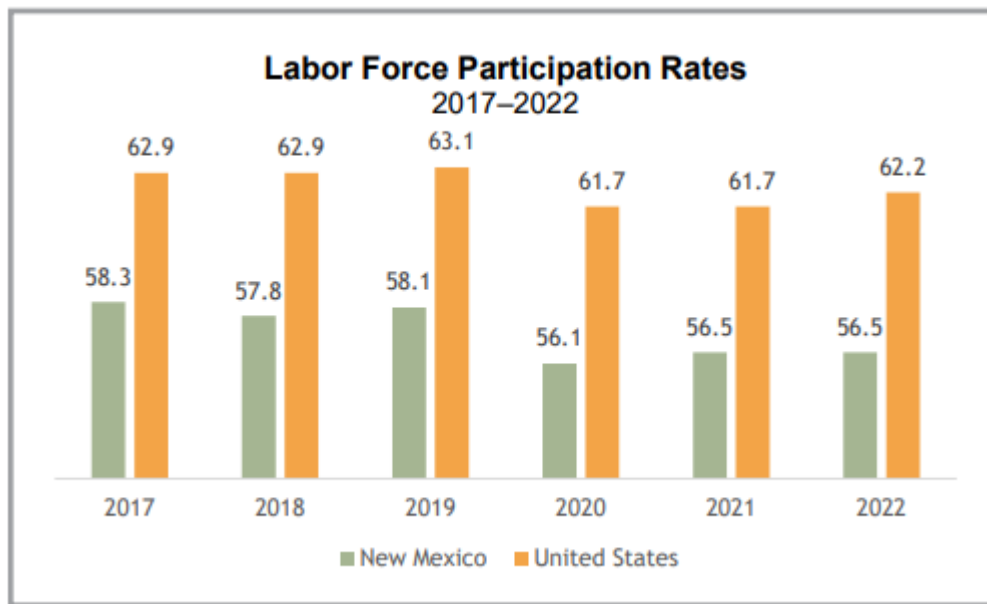
Unemployment rate data are from the Local Area Unemployment Statistics, provided by the Bureau of Labor Statistics and updated through July 2023.

The table below reflects the labor force, employment, and unemployment data for the area, by county, from largest to smallest. As reflected in the table below the area’s total labor force as of June 2023 is 163,137 with 6,852 unemployed and a 4.2% overall unemployment rate for the eastern area. As in previous years Eddy County represents the largest labor force with 32,776. Harding County is the smallest at 294.

Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS)				
June 2023				
County	Labor Force	Employed	Unemployed	Unemp. Rate (%)
Eddy County	32,776	31,717	1,059	3.2%
Lea County	29,533	28,155	1,378	4.7%
Chaves County	27,607	26,247	1,360	4.9%
Otero County	26,104	24,897	1,207	4.6%
Curry County	22,288	21,488	800	3.6%
Lincoln County	9,098	8,757	341	3.7%
Roosevelt County	8,665	8,281	384	4.4%
Quay County	2,929	2,779	150	5.1%
Union County	1,580	1,518	62	3.9%
Guadalupe County	1,545	1,474	71	4.6%
De Baca County	718	687	31	4.3%
Harding County	294	285	9	3.1%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>163,137</b>	<b>156,285</b>	<b>6,852</b>	<b>4.2%</b>

Source: NMDWS, Local Area Unemployment Statistics program in conjunction with U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

In 2022, 56.5 percent of New Mexico's population aged 16 and older were participating in the labor force. This rate was 5.7 percentage points lower than the U.S. labor force participation rate, which stood at 62.2 percent. The decline in labor force participation rates for both the U.S. and New Mexico between 2019 and 2022 was partially attributed to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. During this period, the U.S. experienced a 0.9 percentage point decrease in labor force participation, while New Mexico's decrease was more significant at 1.6 percentage points. It's worth noting that as of 2022, neither the U.S. nor New Mexico had fully recovered to their pre-pandemic labor force participation rates, which suggests that the effects of the pandemic continued to influence these rates in the given year. The graph below reflects labor force participation rates from 2017 to 2022.



Source: NMDWS Economic Research and Analysis Bureau and the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Employment Status of the Civilian Noninstitutional Population, Annual Averages, [www.jobs.state.nm.us/laus](http://www.jobs.state.nm.us/laus). Data measures the civilian noninstitutionalized population.

The table below reflects the occupations with the highest projected annual openings in the eastern area for the years 2020 through 2030. The top three occupations in the area with the highest annual openings were Fast Food and Counter Workers (866), Cashiers (615), and Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers (568).

Rank	Occupation	Annual Openings
1	Fast Food and Counter Workers	866
2	Cashiers	615
3	Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	568
4	Retail Salespersons	507
5	Secretaries and Administrative Assistants, Except Legal, Medical, and Executive	464

6	Construction Laborers	456
7	Waiters and Waitresses	418
8	Stockers and Order Fillers	379
9	Janitors and Cleaners, Except Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	335
10	Roustabouts, Oil and Gas	317

Source: NMDWS, Employment Projections program

## Sector Strategies

Sector strategies are an employer-driven workforce development approach designed to align the training and workforce development services with the specific needs of businesses and industries within a particular sector. This approach recognizes that a one-size-fits-all approach to workforce development might not be the best option when serving employers. Because of this it is important to tailor programs and services to meet the unique needs of employers in different sectors.

Like previous program years the EAWDB, One Stop Operator, and sub-recipient continue to work to align skilled workers with employers to meet their needs. Throughout the year the local offices participated in several events that focused on career pathways and sectors such as nursing, windmill technology, education, energy, and corrections. The events were held throughout the region during the program year.

### Healthcare

Allied health professions are vital in the healthcare sector, and events where these careers are represented provide valuable insight into educational requirements, job prospects, and the various specialties within the field. In PY 21 training in this sector drastically improved post-pandemic, and this trend continued into PY 22. There were 309 participants enrolled in training in this sector during the program year. The board has also worked with K-12 programs that are offering dual credit courses in allied health pathways.

### Education

Alternative licenses for those interested in becoming teachers continue to be promoted and is an ongoing initiative after the Board and OSO began working with local colleges to promote this initiative in previous program years. Promoting alternative routes to teacher licensure is an important step in addressing teacher shortages and providing opportunities for career changers to enter the teaching profession. Alternative licenses can also help individuals with non-traditional backgrounds become qualified educators and diversify the pool of qualified educators.

The Board and OSO seek out opportunities for continuous improvement in this area and by collaborating with local colleges, facilitating referrals, and providing WIOA Title I support, we are

helping individuals achieve their career goals in teaching while contributing to the overall quality of education the eastern region. There were 54 participants enrolled in training in this sector during the program year.

### Information Technology (IT)

At the end of the PY 21 the Board's Executive Director began having conversations with a representative from the National Association of Workforce Boards (NAWB) about an opportunity to obtain scholarships for trainings through Grow with Google and Coursera. Coursera is an online educational platform that brings educational content from reputable universities from across the United States delivered to individuals in a user-friendly online environment. The board recognized that collaboration with NAWB, Google, and Coursera were essential and demonstrates a commitment to working with reputable organizations to provide valuable opportunities for skill development and career growth. We were offered 500 scholarships from NAWB to provide nine training certification opportunities tied to the IT sector but that also provide transferrable skills outside the sector. These nine programs are:

- Data Analytics
- Advanced Data Analytics
- Project Management
- Google UX Design
- IT Support
- Digital Marketing & E-Commerce
- And IT Automation with Python
- Cyber Security
- Business Intelligence

The user-friendly online environment of Coursera is important because it emphasizes the accessibility and convenience of these training opportunities. Online learning allows individuals to access courses from anywhere, making it flexible for those with various schedules and commitments. Customers that obtain these certifications can lead to improved job prospects, career advancement, and the ability to meet the growing demand for digital skills and IT professionals in various industries.

We began offering these trainings in PY 22 and have awarded approximately 130 scholarships to customers throughout the eastern area. This initiative had a positive impact on individuals seeking to enhance their skills. This program is set to conclude in December 2023, and we look forward to analyzing the outcomes of these trainings.

### Energy

The energy sector has been a driving force in the region. Three of the twelve counties are part of the Permian Basin, the plains are ideal for wind energy production, and the entire state has a steady supply of sunshine for solar production. The board's executive director is part of the

Permian basin education alliance whose mission is to advance the skills of individuals both looking for opportunities in the oil and gas industry and those already working in it. The coalition is working to increase the basic as well as technical skills of those working in the Permian basin.

The board is also part of an advisory group to the K-12 system in Eddy County that worked to develop a high school curriculum designed through collaboration with employers both within the region and outside the region. Some of the partners included: employers from the NM Oil and Gas Association, Sandia National Labs, Southeast New Mexico Community College, the Permian Basin Education Alliance, the United States Department of Energy Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) site and local representatives from the environmental department.

The curriculum development process focused on four pathway areas of the energy sector: oil and gas, renewable energy, distribution, and natural resource management to include environmental impact. The curriculum is designed to include internships and employer presentation projects. The first two years (9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grades) are focused on foundational skills that build knowledge and skills about the energy sectors and specific components of the sector such as applications of integrated energy systems. Then years three and four are where students choose a specific pathway within the sector. The curriculum was approved by the public education department and has been picked up by four other districts in the state and one in Texas with interest from additional districts for future implementation. This type of training is vitally important to prepare the emerging workforce for the transition to alternative forms of energy production and provides transferrable skills in high skill, high demand pathways as well as electrical and hydraulics.

The board's executive director has been in conversation with the state's deputy secretary that oversees the apprenticeship bureau to explore the feasibility of development of an apprenticeship model for those already out of high school. The area will continue working with state and local partners to work to develop similar training to support the existing workforce in expanding their skills in preparation for the future of the energy sector.

## **Business Services**

The Board, its One Stop Operator (OSO), Site Manager, and Partners have been working collaboratively to provide services to local businesses to support their needs. These services are designed to help businesses find, hire, retain, and develop talent effectively. Workforce offices assisted in recruiting qualified employees through job order postings, resume and referral screenings and coordinating and partnering at local hiring events. The Workforce offices also continued to create weekly "Hot Jobs" videos promoting jobs from employers hiring workers on our Workforce social media platforms.

The OSO and board staff have been working with the one stop service delivery committee and partners to begin working toward alignment of business services to improve quality and streamline processes for employers and job seekers. The plan is to work to align business services between Titles I & III and then begin pulling in other partners to begin streamlining services, processes, and reporting.

The region received a total of 5,243 job orders and provided 26,690 services to 1,461 employers for the year. As part of those services, 41 resulted in On the Job Training (OJT) contracts with training reimbursement obligations of \$345,857 for the year. As discussed later in more detail in this report, OJT employers are routinely surveyed on their experience with the staff and processes as well as their satisfaction with services. Feedback is used to target continuous improvement. As a result, satisfaction results improved from PY 21 to PY22 as depicted below.

<b>Survey Category</b>	<b>PY 21 Rating Average</b>	<b>PY 22 Rating Average</b>	<b>Difference</b>
Customer Service (0-5)	4.7	4.9	+.2
OJT Process (0-10)	8	9	+1
Overall Satisfaction (0-5)	4.7	4.9	+.2

During the program year, several offices participated in several large hiring events throughout the region. The Eddy County office partnered with The City of Carlsbad where 30 employers participated with more than 100 job seekers, the Otero County office participated in an event hosted by the Alamogordo Chamber of Commerce where 40 employers participated and approximately 100 attended, and the Lea County office participated in a job fair hosted by the City of Hobbs at New Mexico Junior College where over 40 employer and exhibitors participated and approximately 100 job seekers were in attendance.

Along with these large hiring events in partnership with the local communities there have been many smaller in-office hiring events. Roswell, Hobbs, and Clovis have all had single employer events in those offices. Participating businesses include but are not limited to: Walmart, Guadalupe County Corrections, Curry County, Roswell-Chaves County Economic Development Corp., and Mental Health Resources. Many of these events are held on Wednesday mornings during RESEA meetings so claimants can also meet employers about potential openings.

The Curry County office hosted a new business Texas Roadhouse for their New Employee Orientations in the third quarter of PY 22 after assisting them in hiring over 200 new employees for their grand opening. While the final touches were being put on the new restaurant the new employees came to the Workforce office to receive their food safety instruction and to complete other required new hire paperwork and instruction, so each employee was ready for a highly successful first day on the job.

A highlight of the program year was the “Clovis Hires Youth” event. The event was held at Clovis Community College in partnership with the Workforce office, City of Clovis, local high schools, and many other community partners. 47 exhibitors were there to recruit for open summer positions and promote career pathways. Over 1,100 students registered for the event and participants were bussed in from surrounding communities at staggered times to allow them to not only visit with the exhibitors, but also take part in workshops on topics like resume building,

interview skills, social media awareness, and more. All Workforce partners participated in this event and were there to assist.

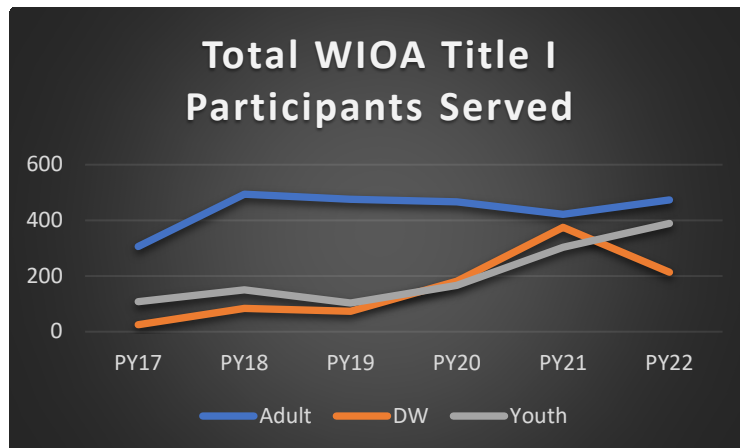
In the upcoming year, a major goal for the board and service provider is to expand services to employers through identifying opportunities for customized and incumbent worker training to help employers in the region to progress or remain competitive.

### Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth Services

The service provider had another busy year with many new initiatives and partnerships that assisted our communities in the eastern area. A focus during PY 22 was to have more of a presence in the northern counties (Guadalupe, Harding, Union, Quay) within the region and to improve service delivery and remote access to those communities. During the program year the team worked to develop new outreach and service delivery methods as this is essential to expand the Title I reach and impact in the East. We understand that successful outreach and service delivery methods should be flexible and adaptable to changing circumstances and area needs. The team will continue to review and update strategies to help increase the number of individuals served and improve the value and quality of services provided in the east.

As shown in the data below, the Adult and Youth program saw an increase in participants served between PY 21 and PY 22. The Dislocated Worker program saw a decrease between PY 21 and PY 22 which is in part due to the decrease in the unemployment rate between the two program years. However, even with the decline in dislocated workers the number of Title I adults and dislocated workers enrolled in training that completed increased from 91.3% in PY 21 to 96% in PY 22.

Program	PY17	PY18	PY19	PY20	PY21	PY22
<b>Adult</b>	306	494	476	466	422	474
<b>DW</b>	25	84	73	181	375	214
<b>Youth</b>	108	150	103	167	303	389





The Title I service provider continues to show significant improvements in participant expenditures and effectively utilizing the budget allocated by the EAWDB. Reviewing program expenditures has provided valuable insights into the service provider’s performance and financial oversight. The table below shows the program expenditures for PY 22.

<b>PY 22 Expenditures</b>			
	<b>Adult</b>	<b>DW/DWG</b>	<b>Youth</b>
<b>Total Allocation</b>	2,807,844.53	1,766,101.74	1,371,268.39
<b>Total Budgeted</b>	2,382,834.41	1,758,390.65	1,178,883.29
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	2,242,883.01	1,176,134.30	1,124,011.69
Total Support Services Expenditures	51,748.46	25,529.18	
Individual training Accounts	1,031,261.69	338,713.66	
Customized Training	0.00	0.00	
Incumbent Worker Training	0.00	0.00	
On The Job Training	224,089.99	56,287.00	
Work Experience			323,435.84
<b>Total Support Services and Training Services</b>	1,307,100.14	420,529.84	323,435.84

### Adult Services

During PY 21 the service provider worked to maintain quality service delivery to participants, partners, and local employers. Co-enrollment across all partners has been an ongoing goal and is something the team has worked to expand on this year. Co-enrollment allows individuals to access services and resources from multiple programs. This can include career counseling, job placement assistance, education and training opportunities, and supportive services.

In PY 22 the service provider implemented a co-enrollment process for all participants enrolled in the UFO and Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) program seeking a High School Equivalency for those over the age of 18 into the Title I Adult Program. Co-enrollment can facilitate a smoother transition for participants who may age out of the UFO program but still require services. It ensures that they don't experience a gap in support. By working together, the Adult and UFO programs can develop customized plans that align with the individual's educational and career goals. This personalized approach increases the likelihood of success and keeps the participant engaged in his or her success.

In the third quarter of the program year the service provider and board staff identified a lack of CDL training options in Curry County. The Title I teams from Alamogordo and Clovis partnered with training provider Mountain View Vocational Institute (MVVI) out of El Paso, Texas to offer CDL training services in Clovis for ten individuals interested in completing their CDL Certification. MVVI was eager to assist with this opportunity and offered to bring their trucks from El Paso to Clovis to facilitate the driving portion of the course.

MVVI’s Director traveled to Clovis with the Title I team to meet with a Manager from the City of Clovis, a contact initiated by Robin Kuykendall, an EAWDB board member to secure a location for the driving portion of the training. All ten participants completed their classroom and driving portion of their training and obtained a Class A CDL License. MVVI expressed eagerness to explore and support similar opportunities in the eastern area, indicating their commitment to providing this valuable vocational training. This collaborative effort was extremely beneficial for the individuals who received CDL training and will likely contribute to their career advancement and job opportunities. It’s a great example of how partnerships can address workforce needs and benefit the community.



Performance

The Adult program exceeded all negotiated goals and increased its impact on the overall state performance for the measures.

	PY 22 Adult Performance			
Measure	Actual	Target	% Achieved	Met/Exceeded/Failed
Employment Q2	86.54%	77%	112.39%	Exceeded
Employment Q4	85.23%	76%	112.14%	Exceeded
Credential	75.00%	66%	113.64%	Exceeded
Skills Gain	73.58%	65%	113.21%	Exceeded
Median Earnings	\$11,765.76	\$8,500	138.42%	Exceeded

## Dislocated Worker (DW) Services

The service provider expanded on the “Prison Project” initiated in PY 21 during PY 22. The service provider partnered with the Curry County Detention Center female unit to deliver four separate training courses through the provider ProTrain. The four trainings were:

- Principles of Time Management
- Professional Communication
- Personal Financial Literacy
- Human Skills/Personal Development

The team anticipated more success with this project; however, we experienced a major challenge during the process. The detention centers internet and internal firewalls impeded the ability for participants to complete some training modules. Communication between detention center and Title I staff also made it difficult to ensure participants were successfully completing each module as some participants were released early with little to no notice. In a whole, much was learned from this process and best practices are being developed for future projects like this. We anticipate partnering with other detention facilities in the area in the future as preliminary conversations have been initiated with Roswell Correctional Center to develop new projects.



The eastern area has continued to implement and improve the RESEA co-enrollment process. The RESEA co-enrollment project aims to provide increased access to services for individuals who are experiencing dislocation or detachment from the workforce. This involves offering resources and support to help them reenter or reattach to the workforce earlier. While we haven’t seen much of an increase in the number of dislocated workers enrolled in training from the RESEA process, we continue to see value in partnering with our Title III staff to ensure customers receive wrap-around services.

## Performance

The Dislocated Worker program met or exceeded all negotiated goals for the year, which represents a significant improvement over the previous program year and increased the impact

on the overall state performance for the measures. Below is a comparison of the PY 21 and PY 22 performance measures.

	<b>PY 22 Dislocated Worker Performance</b>			
<b>Measure</b>	<b>Actual</b>	<b>Target</b>	<b>% Achieved</b>	<b>Met/Exceeded/Failed</b>
Employment Q2	66.88%	68%	98.35%	Met
Employment Q4	69.78%	60%	116.30%	Exceeded
Credential	59.26%	65%	91.17%	Met
Skills Gain	72.60%	65%	111.70%	Exceeded
Median Earnings	\$7,270.32	\$6,900	105.37%	Exceeded

	<b>PY 21 Dislocated Worker Performance</b>			
<b>Measure</b>	<b>Actual</b>	<b>Target</b>	<b>% Achieved</b>	<b>Met/Exceeded/Failed</b>
Employment Q2	65.25%	72%	90.63%	Met
Employment Q4	59.57%	73%	81.61%	Failed
Credential	54.55%	65%	83.92%	Failed
Skills Gain	70.59%	63%	112.04%	Exceeded
Median Earnings	\$7,034.57	\$5,600	125.62%	Exceeded

### Youth Services

Focus within the youth program has primarily been on improving services to rural areas, increasing staff retention, and increasing training opportunities while increasing youth participation, engagement, and length of participation in the program. Part of that strategy included improving satisfaction of the youth in the program. Survey results indicated room for improvement in effective communication and quality of services which can impact the success of the program. The service provider did an excellent job of improving these areas. Below is the comparison from PY 21 to PY 22 of the results which clearly depicts an increase in program quality.

<b>Survey Category (0-5 Scale)</b>	<b>PY 21 Results Avg</b>	<b>PY 22 Results Avg</b>	<b>Difference</b>
Effective Communication with Participants	3.5	4.1	+.6
Overall Quality of Service	4.0	4.3	+.3

Below is a table that shows the comparison from PY 21 to PY 22 of the length of participation in the UFO. program.

Participation in the UFO. Program	PY21	PY22
Average length of participation	245 Days	251 Days

The service provider developed several projects during PY 22 working toward improvement in those focus areas. As mentioned above, a major goal for the year was to improve presence and services in our very rural northern counties. The Title I team collaborated with the Lake City Youth Center in Santa Rosa, New Mexico to provide computers and remote access points for Santa Rosa youth to access Workforce Center services remotely. Through this partnership the Title I team were connected to Santa Rosa Schools for potential partnership opportunities. Because of this connection there were several Work Experience placements with Santa Rosa Schools and the program looks forward to other opportunities to work with the youth in this community.

Another significant partnership that was fostered this year was between the UFO. program and New Mexico Youth Challenge Academy (NMYCA) in Roswell, New Mexico. The NMYCA is a 17-and-a-half-month quasi-military residential program that aims at instilling healthy life-long skills associated with success. NMYCA and UFO. staff developed a process in which staff go to the NMYCA facility and co-enroll all new cadets into the UFO. program. NMYCA has implemented our Career EDGE platform software into their required curriculum while cadets are in training. Career EDGE users have access to 18 self-paced training content modules which include but are not limited to: time management, on the job success, resume, and cover letter branding, preparing for an interview, goal setting, effective communication and networking, and financial literacy. This partnership has fostered over 100 co-enrolled participants during PY 22.



Another exciting event was the youth conference. The second annual UFO Youth Conference took place in April 2023. The event was held in Mescalero, New Mexico at the Inn of the Mountain Gods Resort. Approximately 150 participants from across Eastern New Mexico, including several from the Mescalero Apache Reservation attended the 2- day event. Much like last year's event, the experience empowered participants and gave them the opportunity to learn about many careers and to network with individuals that shared similar experiences and backgrounds. One of the benefits of the conference is to help the young people visualize their potential careers and expose them to new opportunities and possibilities while preparing them to enter work experiences and eventually employment. Below are a few pictures to highlight the event.





Performance

The Youth program met one and exceeded three of the negotiated levels of performance. The provider did an excellent job of improving most measures this year and has been working with board staff and the youth committee to identify ways to continue to improve performance in the coming year. Much of this focus will be on increasing the number of training opportunities that lead to credentials. Below is a comparison of the PY 21 and PY 22 performance measures.

	<b>PY 22 Youth Performance</b>			
<b>Measure</b>	<b>Actual</b>	<b>Target</b>	<b>% Achieved</b>	<b>Met/Exceeded/Failed</b>
Employment Q2	64.10%	67%	95.68%	Met
Employment Q4	71.26%	66%	107.98%	Exceeded
Credential	34.72%	50.25%	69.10%	Failed
Skills Gain	55.13%	51%	108.10%	Exceeded
Median Earnings	\$4,365.46	\$3,700	117.99%	Exceeded

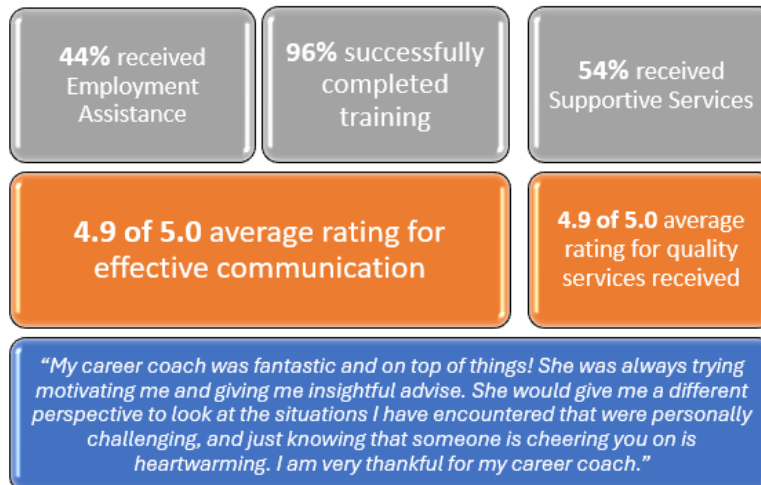
	<b>PY 21 Youth Performance</b>			
<b>Measure</b>	<b>Actual</b>	<b>Target</b>	<b>% Achieved</b>	<b>Met/Exceeded/Failed</b>
Employment Q2	74.24%	67%	110.81%	Exceeded
Employment Q4	66.07%	67%	98.61%	Met
Credential	32.08%	47%	68.25%	Failed
Skills Gain	49.25%	51%	96.58%	Met
Median Earnings	\$3,873.54	\$3,225	120.11%	Exceeded

## Surveys

### OJT Employer Survey Results



### WIOA Adult/DW Programs Exit Survey Results





## WIOA Youth Program Exit Survey Results



## Success Stories

### Adult



Laura Nagle – Carlsbad  
1800112

In the annals of extraordinary stories, few can match the resilience and determination of Laura Nagle, a woman fueled by an unwavering passion for helping others. Her journey towards becoming a registered nurse was fraught with challenges and heartache, but her unyielding spirit and commitment to her dreams ultimately led her to overcome adversity and find success. From navigating traumatic setbacks to making a lasting impact as a nursing leader and mentor, Laura's story is a testament to the power of perseverance and the transformative impact of support and community.

Over a decade ago, Laura's dreams seemed poised to come true as she secured a spot in a prestigious nursing program in Michigan. The prospect of becoming a registered nurse filled her heart with excitement and purpose. However, life had other plans for her. Amidst the excitement of her college years, Laura experienced a traumatic event that profoundly impacted her mental health, forcing her to make the difficult decision of dropping out of the nursing program. Despite the setback, Laura refused to let her dream wither away, displaying the tenacity that would define her journey.

Determined to make the most of her circumstances, Laura redirected her focus and pursued a bachelor's degree in Community Health Education. Her commitment to her education and her passion for helping others shone through as she graduated with honors in 2012. Despite her academic achievements, Laura faced a stark reality—job prospects in her chosen field were limited, leading to financial challenges and job insecurity. Unemployed and receiving

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, she continued to seek a fulfilling career path that aligned with her heart's calling.

2021 marked a turning point for Laura when she was granted a second chance to pursue her lifelong dream of becoming a registered nurse. Accepted into the esteemed NMSU-Carlsbad's Nursing Program for the 2021-2023 cohort, Laura knew this was an opportunity she could not let slip away. However, the financial burden of tuition and other supportive services weighed heavily on her. With determination in her heart and a fierce will to succeed, Laura reached out to her career coach on July 7<sup>th</sup>, 2021, for assistance through the WIOA program.

With assistance from her career coach Laura was able to pay for her tuition, books, uniforms, and the Kaplan program required for her success. As Laura embarked on her journey as a nursing student, she recognized the importance of fostering a sense of community and support among her peers. Channeling her natural leadership abilities, she became the heart and soul of the Nursing Students Association, assuming the role of its president. In this capacity, Laura went above and beyond to mentor and support fellow WIOA participants who were also embarking on their nursing careers. By organizing meetings, coordinating community service initiatives, and fundraising for pinning/graduation ceremonies, she created a nurturing environment that inspired her classmates to excel.

Laura's unwavering spirit and determination were further buoyed by the support she received from the WIOA program and her career coach. Their assistance allowed her to focus wholeheartedly on her academics, resulting in Laura graduating at the top of her class in May 2023. Filled with a sense of gratitude, she sought to give back to the program that had made her dreams possible. She generously donated four of Jimmy Santiago Baca's books to the WIOA Youth participants during the 2nd Annual #UFO Youth Conference, imparting the gift of knowledge and inspiration to the next generation.

Today, Laura Nagle stands tall as a Registered Nurse, a beacon of hope and healing in the Emergency Room at Carlsbad Medical Center making \$31.82 an hour. Her unwavering determination, resilience, and passion for helping others have culminated in a fulfilling career where she is making a tangible difference in people's lives. Her journey serves as an inspiration to all, illustrating that adversity can be conquered, and dreams can be realized through sheer willpower and the unwavering support of the community.

## Dislocated Worker



James Helton

1819463

In program year 2022 the subrecipient had a goal to concentrate on expanding services to justice-involved individuals. The high number of vacancies in specific industries across eastern New Mexico has opened opportunities to individuals who have struggled to obtain employment. One individual impacted by this is James Helton. Because of his lengthy incarceration James lacked the work history and employability skills to obtain employment on his own. He tirelessly searched for full-time work since being released from prison in the summer of 2021, even working for temporary agencies in hopes of landing a full-time job. Unfortunately, he discovered that once employers found out about his history, he was released or passed over for job opportunities he felt he was qualified for. Despite these hurdles James is striving to keep himself from regressing and only wants to move on from his past mistakes.

He first visited the NMWCC-Alamogordo on October 3, 2022, to discuss training opportunities through WIOA. Mr. Helton stated that he was interested in obtaining his Commercial Driver's License (CDL) to become more marketable to employers and to improve his overall living situation. Prior to his first meeting at the NMWCC James did some labor market research and discovered he could obtain a job in that industry as it was a high demand occupation. James went to Mountain View Vocational Institute, where they suggested he contact a WIOA representative in the Alamogordo WCC office to inquire about their potential to assist him financially with the 5-week CDL program. Through James' initial assessment, the Career Coach discovered that James was a 43-year-old justice-involved individual who was recently released from prison after a 10-year incarceration. Since his release, he has resided in Chaparral, New Mexico, with his ex-wife

and two children. The household income was well below the lower living standard income level guidelines (LLSIL) and James was unemployed when he came to the Alamogordo office after losing his job in July 2022. Mr. Helton was so determined to obtain his CDL that he sold his plasma as often as possible to afford the gas he needed to job search and research CDL training institutions.

James completed the classroom portion of The Mountain View Vocational Institute CDL program and remained at the top of his class, passing his first exams, and receiving his permit just days after classes began. On December 09, 2022, James passed all his tests and obtained his Class A CDL, which opened the door for him to obtain a permanent position. Everyone at Mountain View noticed his hard work to the point that once he completed his CDL training, he was offered a position at Mountain View Vocational Institute as a Safety Officer for the CDL program. He states that no one has ever believed in him or supported him the way his WIOA coaches have, stating “you guys have changed my life!” He no longer stresses about his past and knows he gained the tools he needed to stay on track, and he now looks forward to his future.

### UFO (Youth)



Charisma Syron- Hobbs  
1825110

Charisma Syron's journey towards success is a testament to her determination, and the invaluable support she received from the staff at the Hobbs Job Center. Her story is one of trials and tribulations, but it ultimately leads to newfound passions and opportunities. In March 2022, Charisma faced a challenging situation when she was forced to leave her childhood home and move in with her grandparents. Determined to persevere, she continued her education, completing her junior year while working diligently on her grandparents' food truck during the

summer of the same year. However, staffing issues led Charisma to make a difficult decision: she dropped out of her senior year to support her family by working full-time for the family business.

Amidst these changes, Charisma's grandmother encouraged her to continue to pursue her education. In October 2022, she made the decision to obtain her GED/HiSET and sought assistance from Kathleen Ferrell, the Director of the Adult Education Department at NMJC. This marked the beginning of a significant turning point in Charisma's life. In November 2022, Charisma joined the GED/HiSET program, thanks to the support provided by Workforce Connection and staff at the New Mexico Junior College AEL program. The program proved to be a lifeline for her, as it allowed her to balance her studies with her responsibilities at home, especially during a challenging time when her grandmother was diagnosed with cancer. Workforce Connection staff connected her with Linda Kerby, a supportive and wise mentor, who played a crucial role in guiding Charisma through her journey.

Tragically, on December 30, 2022, Charisma's grandmother lost her battle with cancer and pneumonia. During this heart-wrenching period, Linda's encouragement and belief in her potential were instrumental in keeping Charisma on track with her HiSET program. Despite the grief and challenges she faced, Charisma persevered and commenced the HiSET program on January 17th. Throughout her educational journey, Charisma discovered her passion for travel, customer service, and safety. Fueled by these interests, she decided to apply to the International Air and Hospitality Academy (IAHA). With Linda's guidance and support, Charisma completed the application process in March and, to her delight, received an acceptance letter in April.

Charisma's involvement with Workforce Connections proved to be an enriching experience. During her time with the program, she attended the Youth UFO Conference, where she had the opportunity to meet inspiring individuals and learn about various career paths. One memorable encounter was with Jimmy Santiago Baca, who further inspired Charisma on her journey. On May 5th, Charisma proudly graduated with her GED, having completed the HiSET program successfully. Charisma maintains a lasting bond with Linda, recognizing her as a wonderful mentor whose guidance and support were instrumental in her achievements.