

# **Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act**

## **Area #4 – Local Workforce Plan**

### **Lorain County, Ohio**

#### ***Background***

As defined in the Ohio Department of Job & Family Services (ODJFS), Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Policy Letter No. 16-03, this plan serves as an addendum to the Northeast Ohio Workforce (NOW) Plan and is specific to Lorain County – WIOA Area #4.

#### ***Description of Local Workforce Area***

Lorain County is located in northeast Ohio and is bordered by the counties of Erie and Huron to the west, Ashland County to the south, Medina County to the southwest, Cuyahoga County to the east and Lake Erie to the north. Lorain County is included in the Northeast Region as defined by the Ohio Department of Family Services – Office of Workforce Development.

With approximately 316,447 residents, Lorain County is the 9<sup>th</sup> most populated county in the State of Ohio. The county is comprised of two (2) urban centers with the cities of Lorain and Elyria, which also serves as the county seat, and also consists of many rural communities that are located in the southern portion of the county. The county is rich in educational resources which include Lorain County Community College (LCCC), Oberlin University, and the Lorain County JVS. LCCC was the first community college in Ohio to establish a University Partnership program where students can access over 100 different bachelor's and master's degree programs offered by 14 other colleges and universities.

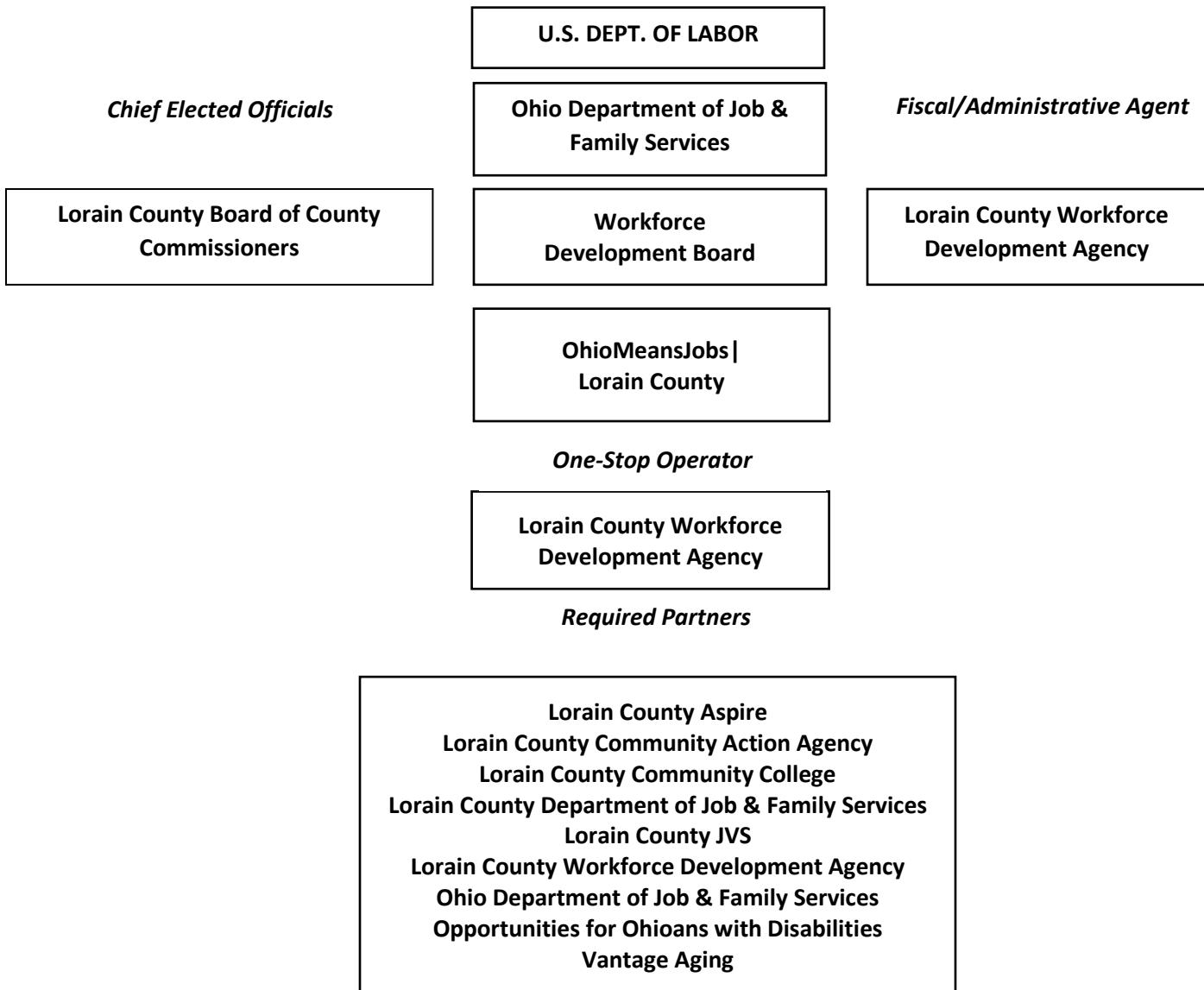
#### ***Lorain County Workforce Development Board***

The Lorain County Workforce Development Board (LCWDB) currently consists of 19 members and is appointed by the Lorain County Board of Commissioners. The board composition stands at 52.63% of the seats assigned to representatives from the business community, 21.05% of the seats assigned to representative from the workforce category and the remaining 26.32% of the seats for representatives of education/training and government and economic development. Of the 19 members, the LCWDB currently includes optional representation from one (1) community-based organization who contribute to the field of workforce development, and also includes representation from the local human services system. The current LCWDB roster is included as **Attachment A**.

The LCWDB utilizes the Workforce Institute of Lorain County (WFI) to serve as the staff to the board. The WFI was formed in January 1996 through a partnership between the Lorain County

Chamber of Commerce, the Center for Leadership in Education, Lorain County Community College, the Lorain County JVS and Lorain County.

### **Lorain County WDB WIOA Structure**



The Lorain County Workforce Development Board is committed to the following guiding principles:

- To link employers to a world-class labor pool that meets current and future workplace needs.

- To empower individuals to achieve self-sufficiency and embrace life-long learning through career pathways and strategies that support personal development and upward mobility.
- To continually assess the interests, skills and needs of employers, job seekers and workers and integrate those needs with education, training and service providers to deliver responsive, customized services.
- To build strong linkages between economic development, the K-12, adult and higher education systems and workforce development entities.
- To market and deliver high quality, cost-effective services and explore opportunities to generate revenue that supports the delivery of these services to all potential customers.

### **OhioMeansJobs Lorain County (OMJ LC)**

The LCWDB oversees the operation of the OhioMeansJobs Lorain County (OMJ LC) center located at 42495 North Ridge Road, Elyria, OH, and has selected the Lorain County Workforce Development Agency to serve as the One-Stop Operator. The OMJ LC center has representation from all required partners who operate in the area which include:

- Lorain County Aspire
- Lorain County Community Action Agency
- Lorain County Department of Job & Family Services
- Lorain County Workforce Development Agency
- Lorain County Community College
- Lorain County JVS
- Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities
- Vantage Aging

The LCWDB completed Phase 1 of the certification process of the OMJ LC center on June 29, 2016 and submitted documentation of this with all required elements to ODJFS on July 8, 2016. The LCWDB approved for the team to be compiled of representatives from partner agencies who were best suited to perform the review. This certification included satisfying all ADA physical and programmatic accessibility that is required through WIOA and the applicable provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.

The OMJ LC remains focused on providing access to all jobseekers in complying with Section 188 of WIOA, and applicable sections of ADA as it relates to the programmatic and physical accessibility of the facilities and programs. Some of these accommodations that are provided include:

- Computer software and devices for those with visual impairments
- Handicap accessible/powered doors
- Handicap designated parking spaces with compliant signage
- Signs posted in Braille format to identify meeting spaces

- Handicap accessible restrooms

Phase 2 of the certification process of the OMJ LC center was completed by the LCWDB on August 29, 2019 with the review consisting of the same team of partner representatives who assisted with the first phase. This process included completion of a Balanced Scorecard that was provided by the ODJFS – Office of Workforce Development, and covered a review of three key categories, including;

- Customer Service to Job Seekers, Workers & Businesses
- Innovative and Effective Service Design
- Integrated Management Systems and High-Quality Staffing

The outcome of the review showed that the OMJ LC center was compliant with the established levels that were needed in order to maintain certification.

Phase 3 of the certification process was completed by the LCWDB on May 26, 2022 with the review consisting of representatives from partner agencies, including the Lorain County Department of Job & Family Services, the Lorain County Workforce Development Agency, and the Ohio Department of Job & Family Services. This phase included completion of the Balanced Scorecard and covered review of the same key categories that were reviewed in Phase 2.

The outcome of the review showed that that OMJ LC center was compliant with the established levels satisfying 58 of 60 points.

In Program Year 2021, OMJ LC saw an increase in jobseekers accessing services compared to Program Year 2020 with an increased demand for assistance with funding for occupational skills training. Our OMJ approved 175 individuals who accessed career technical training, using over \$1,086,000.00 in workforce funding, which was a record for our area.

The OMJ LC center continues to utilize various forms of technology to assist the jobseekers who access our system, including the County Fiscal & Information System (CFIS) that is used to track the jobseekers visiting the center, utilizing our Resource Room, and accessing other basic career services and workshops. Through our Career Success Workshop, we teach jobseekers how to utilize the OhioMeansJobs.com system to post resumes, search for jobs, perform career research and access the numerous assessments that the system offers. During the COVID-19 crisis, we have also used technology to offer our center orientation through YouTube.

### ***Program/Partnership Highlights***

The Lorain County Workforce Development Board continues to be involved in a number of special initiatives that were launched when the initial plan was drafted. An overview of each of the initiatives follows.

## **Work Ready Lorain County**

The Lorain County Workforce Development Agency continues to serve as the lead for the Work Ready Lorain County (WRLC) initiative that was approved by the Lorain County Board of Commissioners in October 2015, and is supported and being promoted by the partners of the Lorain County Growth Partnership (LCGP).

The LCGP was developed by the Lorain County Board of Commissioners and is a collective vision among partners for the successful future growth of Lorain County. The purpose of the LCGP is to bring together resources of government, education and training and business organizations to better align workforce and economic strategies. The partners of the LCGP currently include:

- Lorain County Aspire
- Lorain County Chamber of Commerce
- Lorain County Community College
- Lorain County Community & Economic Development
- Lorain County JVS
- Lorain County Port Authority
- Lorain County Solid Waste
- Lorain County Workforce Development Agency
- Small Business Development Center

Lorain County was the 3<sup>rd</sup> county in Ohio to become part of the ACT Work Ready Community initiative, and in August 2018 met the initial goals that were established by ACT in becoming a Certified Work Ready Community. In November 2020, Lorain County also successfully achieved meeting the goals to maintain this certification.

Through the WRLC initiative, the partners have implemented the usage of ACT WorkKeys assessments that are being promoted in our community as a means of connecting employers to job seekers through skills-based hiring. The WorkKeys assessments being used focus on three foundational skills that are essential to success in most jobs and include:

- Applied Mathematics
- Workplace Documents
- Graphic Literacy

Successful completion of ACT WorkKeys assessments will lead to the earning of a National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC), a portable evidence-based credential that certifies essential skills needed for workplace success. All job seekers coming through the OMJ LC system are currently completing the WorkKeys assessments as part of the Career Development Workshop our system offers. Job seekers are able to earn the NCRC at the Bronze, Silver, Gold or Platinum level by minimally scoring 3 on each assessment (Bronze), 4 on each assessment (Silver), 5 on each assessment (Gold) or 6 on each assessment (Platinum).

The OMJ LC partners are utilizing the preferred scores that are noted in the OMJ.com system to make a sure that job seekers being considered for referrals to employers in our community possess the established levels. Job seekers who are not able to satisfy the required levels have access to both self-directed tools to help increase their scores and/or classroom led instruction that is offered through Lorain County Aspire.

To date, through the Work Ready Lorain County initiative;

- 8,542 individuals have been assessed in WorkKeys and have earned a NCRC as broken down in the following categories:
  - 2,096 - Emerging Workforce - which includes high school students, recent high school graduates, college students and recent college graduates
  - 2,465 – Current Workforce - which includes any individuals who are currently employed that complete the assessments
  - 3,981 - Transitioning Workforce – which includes individuals who are currently unemployed, are participating in adult education programs or have recent or current active military status
- 329 employers have shown their support for the initiative and recognize the value of the NCRC

We have been successful at continuing to meet the new goals that ACT has established to maintain our status of a Work Ready Community, achieving our initial maintaining status in November 2022, followed up with achieving our 2<sup>nd</sup> maintaining status in February 2023. We now have new goals that must be achieved to continue our certification for a 3rd phase, and are currently meeting 40% of these goals.

### ***Lorain County Growth Partnership***

As previously explained, the LCGP was created with the purpose of bringing together resources of government, education and training and business organizations to better align workforce and economic strategies. Through this partnership we have been able to build upon our relationship with Team NEO, who serves as the JobsOhio entity in our region. As representatives of Team NEO, and our local economic development partners engage in business expansion and attraction efforts in our area, the OMJ LC system has been invited to participate in the discussions to help coordinate and provide workforce services that are presented.

### ***Memorandum of Understanding with Local Libraries***

As required under House Bill 49, 132<sup>nd</sup> General Assembly, revised section 6301.06 of the Revised Code, the Lorain County Workforce Development Board has established collaborations with two (2) local libraries that include; the Lorain Public Library and Avon Lake Public Library.

The LCWDB and library systems have come together with the shared belief that communication and coordination of respective services can enhance the quality and quantity of employment and training resources and services to job seekers, unemployed, and under-employed individuals. Working together, the libraries and our OMJ center can make it easier for job seekers to access employment and training services that can lead to better jobs, improved career pathways, and sustainable wages.

Through the MOU's we are focusing on;

- Increasing awareness to library customers of employment and training resource availability within the Lorain County area
- Educating and informing library staff on resources and services available to assist Lorain County residents with employment and training needs available through the OhioMeansJobs center partnership
- Educating and informing OhioMeansJobs staff of the services available through the library system that may assist job seekers
- Informing Youth Development Specialists, assisting young adults, of the importance of early literacy services and the availability of those services through the library system

### ***Lorain County Manufacturing Sector Partnership (LCMSP)***

In November 2019, OMJ LC was approved to participate in the LCMSP as an affiliate partner joining the founding companies and other affiliate partners, including Lorain County Community College and Lorain County JVS in the effort. This employer-led group is committed to promoting manufacturing and growing the available workforce in the region for manufacturing companies. In November 2021, the Executive Director of the LCMSP was added to the membership of the Workforce Development Board to provide a direct linkage to the work being addressed through the employers who are members of the LCMSP.

### ***Description of Services for Adults***

All services that are required under WIOA are available through the OMJ LC center. The list of services is outlined below:

#### **Basic Career Services**

1. **Outreach and Recruitment** - techniques include monthly mailing to new claimants of unemployment benefits identified through the data sharing agreement we have in

place with the ODJFS, and others who are being identified on End of Benefit reports we also receive through our data sharing agreement.

2. **Orientation** - includes information on the full array of services available through our system. Information shared also includes a description of how to access the various services. Orientation is mainly provided through group sessions; however one-on-one appointments are offered on a case-by-case basis if needed.
3. **Intake** – is mainly performed upon completion of an orientation session for all individuals who choose to access staff-assisted services. This intake includes completion of all required forms; Registration Form, EEO Summary of Complaints and other local forms; Commitment to Service and Employment Verification Form.
4. **Pre-Assessment** - upon completion of Orientation OMJ LC center staff conduct a "triage" session where they gather eligibility documentation that may have been brought in by individuals who attended orientation and also to advise individuals who did not bring in the required documentation what they will need to provide in order for eligibility to be established at a future meeting date. The triage session is also used for staff to perform an initial assessment to determine if the individual will be best served through a Workforce Development Specialist, the staff who assist with career counseling and access to training, or an Employment Specialist, the staff who help with job referral and other job readiness services. The applicants are provided with additional one-on-one direction on how to access the services provided through these functions.
5. **Eligibility** – is conducted to determine if individuals are qualified to receive assistance from the adult, dislocated worker, youth or other partner programs. In some instances, eligibility may be determined during the intake process, for others it may be satisfied during a follow up appointment with a Workforce Development Specialist, Employment Specialist or other One-Stop partner staff.
6. **Information and Referral** – individuals that do not meet enrollment requirements of a particular program or are not eligible for WIOA services are offered assistance in accessing organizations that may be able to provide additional assistance.
7. **Labor Exchange Services** – are provided and include:
  - Job Search & Placement Assistance
  - Career Counseling that includes; providing information on in-demand industry sectors and occupations in addition to information on non-traditional employment opportunities
8. **Other Basic Career Services** include providing:
  - Workforce and labor market employment statistics on local, regional and national level

- Job postings
- Performance information and program cost for eligible providers of training services
- Information on filing claims for unemployment
- Information on the performance of the local area and the one-stop delivery system
- Information on the availability of supportive services and follow services
- Assistance in establishing eligibility for other activities and programs of financial aid assistance for training and education
- Workshops on resume development, interviewing skills, on-line employment applications and basic computer skills

### **Individualized Career Services**

Individualized Career Services are provided if determined appropriate in order for an individual to obtain or retain employment. The OMJ LC center provides the following Individualized Career Services:

- Comprehensive and specialized assessments, such as diagnostic testing for skill levels, interests and aptitude, including WorkKeys and MyPlan Career Assessment
- Group counseling and career planning
- Individual counseling and career planning
- Development of an Employment Plan to identify employment goals, appropriate achievement objectives and appropriate services needed to help participants meet established goals
- Delivery of workshops focused on soft skill and other job readiness topics
- Case Management
- Job search assistance, including out-of-area job search and relocation assistance if needed
- Financial literacy services
- Access to internships and work experiences that are linked to careers

### **Follow up Services**

Follow up services are provided, as appropriate, and include: counseling regarding the workplace, for participants in adult or dislocated worker WIOA activities who are placed in unsubsidized employment through with the assistance of OMJ LC staff. These services are available for a minimum of twelve (12) months after the first day of employment.

### **Training Services**

Training Services are considered for eligible individuals who after having an interview, evaluation, or assessment and career planning are unlikely or unable to obtain or retain

employment that leads to economic self-sufficiency or wages comparable to or higher than wages from previous employment through career services, and for individuals who have the skills and qualifications to participate successfully in the training. Customers may access these services by being determined eligible for one of several funding sources.

The OMJ LC center assists eligible clients in completing the procedures that have been established by the Lorain County Workforce Development Board (LCWDB) to access an Individual Training Account (ITA). These procedures will minimally include; ensuring that the requested training is for an approved career or career path as identified in the state demand occupations or other locally defined demand occupations, that the training provider has satisfied the requirements to be on the local Eligible Training Provider List that will be maintained by LCWDA and that the customer satisfies any other requirements that have been approved by the LCWDB.

Current policy in place that was approved by the LCWDB includes having a cap in place that limits ITA's approved for a specific occupation to 20% of total funds approved for training. Exceptions to this policy are available should we be assisting with a business expansion, a customized training or a layoff aversion activity. The board also has an approved policy in place that prioritizes the preference of training providers considering the lowest-cost option locally for the selected training, and according to the hierarchy of pursuing the training at a Lorain County publicly supported institution, a publicly supported institution beyond Lorain County, or a private/proprietary institution from within the County in this order.

Once staff have assisted the customers in completing the outlined process, and have deemed the individuals eligible and appropriate for training, the ITA and all supporting documentation is submitted for review and approval by the LCWDA. Each participant that is determined eligible will have an ITA with an established amount of funds in the account based on an individual needs-based assessment. The funds are allocated to the individual based on total training costs and funding availability.

Training services available through OMJ LC center include:

- Occupational skill training
- On-the-Job training
- Incumbent Worker training
- Workplace training and related instruction
- Skill upgrading and retraining
- Job readiness training
- Entrepreneurial training
- Adult education and literacy activities
- Customized training

The OMJ LC center staff maintain constant contact with the customers assigned to their caseload and are expected to provide case notes for all interactions that take place to support

progress or lack of progress that may be identified through these interactions. Upon completion of training, customers are provided with guidance on how to access the services provided by the Employment Specialist.

### ***Description of Services for Youth***

#### **Comprehensive Case Management & Employment Program (CCMEP)**

In May 2016, the Lorain County Board of Commissioners designated the Lorain County Workforce Development Agency to serve as the lead agency for CCMEP. The CCMEP Plan for Lorain County was drafted and submitted to ODJFS shortly after on May 31, 2016. In June, 2016 the Lorain County Workforce Development Board submitted a Letter of Intent to authorize the use of WIOA Youth funding to the operation of CCMEP and a resolution was approved by the LCWDB in August 2016 and submitted to ODJFS as required to finalize our areas involvement.

The LCWDB has authorized the Lorain County Workforce Development Agency, who is the Fiscal Agent for the Board, to deliver the services that are being made available through CCMEP. Youth who are required to participate in CCMEP are referred to the OMJ LC center by the LCDJFS. The required participants who are referred are scheduled to attend an orientation that is designed to educate them about the services they will access through CCMEP, in addition to reinforcing of the requirement they have to participate. The WIOA Youth & Young Adult Program Eligibility Application and other required paperwork is completed as part of the orientation session, in addition to the completion of the CCMEP Comprehensive Assessment. OMJ LC center staff meet individually with each participant to make sure the fully completed the forms and to answer any questions that they may have.

Most of the youth who are referred to CCMEP, are scheduled the same week of the orientation to participate in a two-week Career Success Workshop that covers both soft skill and job readiness skills. During the first week of the workshop, participants are provided with employer-driven soft skill training to help them understand what employers are looking for in an employee and also equips the participant with skills to retain employment. Some of the topics that are included in the curriculum include;

- Job Expectations & Work Ethic
- Problem Solving & Priorities
- Elements of Communication
- Good Customer Service

During the second week of the workshop, participants are provided with information and training necessary to be success in today's job market. Some of the topics that are included in the curriculum include;

- Transitional Curve, Stress, Confidence, Recognizing Transferable Skills & the Job Application
- Networking & Social Media
- Salary Negotiations & Job Search Methods

The second week of the workshop also includes an optional Career Assessment that is conducted through the use of a Career Exploration tool, MyPlan, that is offered through Lorain Community College, in addition to the administration of the WorkKeys assessment that is in support of our Work Ready Lorain County initiative. Participants are encouraged to access the practice WorkKeys assessment that is available through the OhioMeansJobs.com site to be prepared for the actual assessment they will complete.

Upon completion of the Career Success Workshop, participants are scheduled to meet with a case manager who will work with them in helping to create the Individual Opportunity Plan (IOP) that is required for their involvement in the CCMEP program. The IOP will be developed based on the individual's hourly requirement and staff will include the results of the MyPlan and WorkKeys assessment in addition to information that was provided in the Comprehensive Assessment in helping to access the 14 elements that are offered through CCMEP.

Individuals who may not be able to participate in the Career Success Workshop, including those who may be actively engaged in training, employed, or just not fit to participate will be scheduled for a one-on-one appointment where the case manager will assist in creating an IOP based on their individual needs.

Additional details on the OMJ LC CCMEP programming can be found in the Local Plan that was submitted as required in rule 5101:14-1-03 of the Administrative Code.

#### ***Roles and Resource Contributions of the OMJ Partners***

The roles and resource contributions of each partner of the OMJ LC system are established by the following:

- The terms and conditions of the WIOA statute and regulations governing each OMJ center partner's program and grant appropriations.
- Ohio's combined state plan which governs and dictates each mandated OMJ center partner's role in workforce development.

- The terms and conditions of each OMJ center partner as negotiated and reduced to writing as part of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).

A determination of the partners adhering to the agreed upon roles and responsibilities shall be the joint responsibility of the Department of Labor, the State of Ohio, as the drafting agent of the combined state plan, ODJFS as the grant issuing authority, and the LCWDB who is responsible for oversight of the OMJ LC center operator.

The current terms and conditions that were agreed to were outlined in the MOU that was created and agreed to in July, 2022 and is effective from July 1, 2022 through June 30, 2023.

The LCWDB will be working with the partners of the OMJ LC system to consider acceptance of a two-year MOU that will be effective from July 1, 2023 through June 30, 2025.

#### ***Identification of Fiscal Agent***

The LCWDB recommended and the Lorain County Board of Commissioners approved for the Lorain County Workforce Development Agency to serve as the Fiscal Agent that is responsible for the disbursal of grant funds described in section 107(d)(12)(B)(i)(iii).

#### ***Description of Competitive Process to be Used to Award Sub-grants and Contracts***

The LCWDB will follow all rules that have been established when going through the competitive procurement process should there be a need to award sub-grants or other contracts. These procedures shall minimally include:

- A pre-competitive solicitation design and planning process that takes into consideration how the services sought should be designed.
- A pre-competitive solicitation cost analysis that sets forth an estimated range of the expected bids for the provision of goods and/or services.
- When required by local policy, the publication within one or more area media outlets, as well as publication on the local website of the opportunity to submit proposals, quotes, and/or bids.
- Outreach to any vendors on the Lorain County bidder's list and/or those known in within the area to be in the market to offer applicable goods and services.
- A published, Request for Proposals, or other document that sets forth all of the terms and conditions relating to the information that must be submitted by an interested entity desiring to provide goods or services, including the basis for which the LCWDB will make the decision to award a contract.
- A decision-making process that includes review of all proposals submitted, including an analysis and where required, a scoring of the proposals submitted.

- A timely notification of the decision of which entities were and were not selected based upon the submission of information, including a period and procedure for those entities to appeal any decisions made.
- A negotiation of the final terms and conditions regarding the provision of goods and/or services, with the same reduced to a written agreement when required, that will govern the performance of the parties to the agreement.

#### ***Description of Local Levels of Performance***

The LCWDB has successfully met the established levels of performance for all measures over the past program year. The following table's support these outcomes for PY 20.

<b><i>WIOA Performance Measure</i></b>	<b><i>PY20</i></b>
<b><i>Adult Employment 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter after Exit</i></b>	Success
<b><i>Adult Median Earnings 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter after Exit</i></b>	Success
<b><i>DW Employment 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter after Exit</i></b>	Success
<b><i>DW Median Earnings 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter after Exit</i></b>	Success
<b><i>CCMEP WIOA Youth Education, Training, or Employment 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter after Exit</i></b>	Success
<b><i>CCMEP WIOA Youth Median Earnings 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter after Exit</i></b>	Success

#### ***Action Board Will Take Towards Becoming or Remaining a High Performing Board***

County Administration is always evaluating the membership of the board to make certain that the representation is comprised of individuals that would continue to efforts in helping the board be high performing. This evaluation includes making sure that members satisfy the following criteria:

- All employers who are represented are deemed to either be in-demand industries, or employed in demand occupations
- All employers who are represented are chosen because the representation of their industry or commitment to the community provides for unique and valued perspectives
- All employer representatives are managerial level, and in most cases will be the most senior of their organization's management, or business owners
- As required, the chair and vice-chair positions on the LCWDB will be reserved for employer representatives in order to make sure that the board is led by those with a perspective for serving the needs of industry
- The LCWDB design includes representatives from community based/interest organizations to ensure that we are providing for the needs of impoverished or other specialized job seeker groups, representatives in these areas
- The LCWDB design includes representatives from other agencies that focus on the needs of impoverished

Through the bylaws that were created by the LCWDB, it is expected that each board member attends all board meetings and that any board member not being able to fulfill their responsibilities will be contacted to ascertain their interest in continuing to serve on the board. Any member missing two consecutive meetings within a year will be forwarded to the Board of Commissioners or their designee the Lorain County Administrator for consideration of removal from the board. This requirement was put into place to make sure that those serving on the board are providing the necessary input and decision making that is needed to continue to be a high performing board.

#### ***Assurances***

The LCWDB agrees to all assurances that have been outlined in the Northeast Ohio Workforce (NOW) Regional Plan.

#### ***Signatures***

The Area #4 required signatures for the Regional NOW Plan and the Lorain Local Area Plan can be found in the Signatures section of the NOW Regional Plan.