



May 12, 2023

Carolyn M. Hull
General Manager
Economic & Workforce Development Department
The City of Los Angeles Workforce Development Board
1200 West 7th Street,
Los Angeles, California 90017

Re: Public Comment - City of Los Angeles Year 24 Workforce Development Board Annual Plan

UNITE-LA would like to applaud the City of Los Angeles Workforce Development Board for your leadership and steady commitment to work experiences for young adults, especially for system-involved youth over the past decade. It's imperative that the City of Los Angeles Workforce Development Board (WDB) continues to reaffirm the responsibility of the 2019 operational agreement signed between all Workforce Development Boards in Los Angeles, the Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO), Department of Children's Family Services (DCFS), Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE), and LA County Probation to commit to a regional and collaborative effort to establish and strengthen a seamless service delivery system that will maximize the leverage of resources and increase coordination and integration of services for foster and system-involved youth across two counties. Moreover, the strategies outlined in the Annual Plan should center Opportunity Youth (OY) throughout all forms of programming that the City of LA is overseeing. UNITE-LA praises the shared vision of the WDB, Mayor, City Council, and the Economic & Workforce Development Department (EWDD), and we would like to offer the following recommendations for the Year 24 WDB Annual Plan:

Year 24 Annual Plan Considerations

1) STRATEGIC INITIATIVE NO. 1 – Support Regional Efforts to Reduce Homelessness by Providing Pathways to Sustainable Employment, Training and Education, and Connecting Participants to Supportive Services

In recognition of the precarious situation of reducing homelessness in Los Angeles, we are excited to see the City collaborating with the Los Angeles Housing Services Authority (LAHSA) to bring about a thoughtful action plan around the LA:RISE Youth Academy. However, remembering the goals of the 2019 operational agreement, we would also like to see similar coordinated efforts with DCFS for youth exiting foster care. Collaboration and strategy across all systems are needed to alleviate the cycle of homelessness, which is greater for youth who are system-involved and aging out of the system. The city should have special carve-outs for a number of the academy slots devoted to serving transitioning foster youth.

2) STRATEGIC INITIATIVE NO. 2 – Increase Education and/or Employment Outcomes for Disconnected Youth

We strongly encourage the WDB to work together, alongside community partners and youth, to clearly articulate a vision and measurable goals for our youth workforce development services. Short-term work

experience programs like Youth@Work/Hire-LA's Youth play a significant role in connecting underserved youth to foundational early career exploration opportunities. The City of Los Angeles Workforce Development Board should also work together with the County of Los Angeles Workforce Development Board to establish local goals and metrics for the success of these programs to better understand the true impact on youth participants and to inform continuous improvement strategies.

Additionally, funding to relieve barriers for youth for outreach, enrollment, persistence, and evaluation needs to be identified. Investment in training and upskilling staff on youth development frameworks to effectively engage Opportunity Youth (OY) could help build relationships with OY and center youth assets to boost enrollment. Stipends while training and social safety nets are critical for the sustainability of trainees to persist and complete youth workforce opportunities. Tracking employment outcomes post-program completion is needed to ensure the breadth of services provided meets its intended goal. Transparent accessible data sharing across all stakeholders is needed to measure results. Lastly, ongoing evaluation of programming is needed to ensure that the redesign and coordinated effort are being met.

3) STRATEGIC INITIATIVE NO. 3 – Increase Employment Opportunities for All Angelenos Through Partnerships with Major Economic Drivers in the Region

OY have shared that the program opportunities have not been lucrative enough, and access to high-quality jobs has been an obstacle for many individuals. It's imperative that all programs have goals that clearly outline a specific call-out for OY and should not be seen as just adult-level opportunities. OY deserve equitable access to economic opportunities and thriving jobs in Los Angeles.

4) STRATEGIC INITIATIVE NO. 4 – Facilitate Increased and Equitable Access to Jobs That Provide High Wages/Salaries and Opportunities for Career Advancement/Upward Mob

We admire the undertaking to ensure the workforce system has a pipeline of engaged employers ready to support the training and employment of Angelenos for jobs of today and the future. It would also be helpful if there was an employer partner map/depository from all workforce providers in LA to showcase which providers are working with which employers.

Likewise, we would also like to see the City of Los Angeles Workforce Development Board work together with the LARPU to form an employer engagement committee, where each WDB commits to a seven-WDB strategy on a regional approach to employer engagement. Similarly, there is no coordinated effort to engage with the business community and the needs of businesses are not being met. This employer engagement committee would work closely with businesses to construct a youth workforce program that reflects the growing need for talent development in the LA region.

5) STRATEGIC INITIATIVE NO. 6 – Increase Accessibility to Sustainable Employment Opportunities for High-Barrier Populations Through Targeted Workforce Development Strategies

Foster youth, DACA, and undocumented youth need to be explicitly called out more throughout this plan, as their enrollment numbers for youth workforce programs continue to be remarkably low. Often times their labeling has been embedded into other categories of vulnerable populations, which prevents



identifying direct efforts to strategically address ways to prevent further disconnection. It is critical that the WDB, partners with agencies to provide support for DACA, undocumented, and foster youth, to increase successful enrollment and completion of our programs.

We look forward to continuing to partner with the City of Los Angeles Workforce Development Board to build the capacity of L.A.'s workforce system to effectively engage young people from our region's most vulnerable communities –including foster, homeless, and justice-involved youth—to support their paths to successful careers and economic security. Thank you for your consideration of these recommendations and we look forward to scheduling a time to meet soon to provide an overview of our historic partnership together.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'A Bell'.

Alysia Bell
President
UNITE-LA