Stakeholder Engagement Summary Report

Prepared for CareerSource Florida as a part of Phase 2 of the Local Workforce Development Board Alignment Evaluation

January 2023

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Stakeholder Engagement Process

Stakeholder Engagement Summary Report

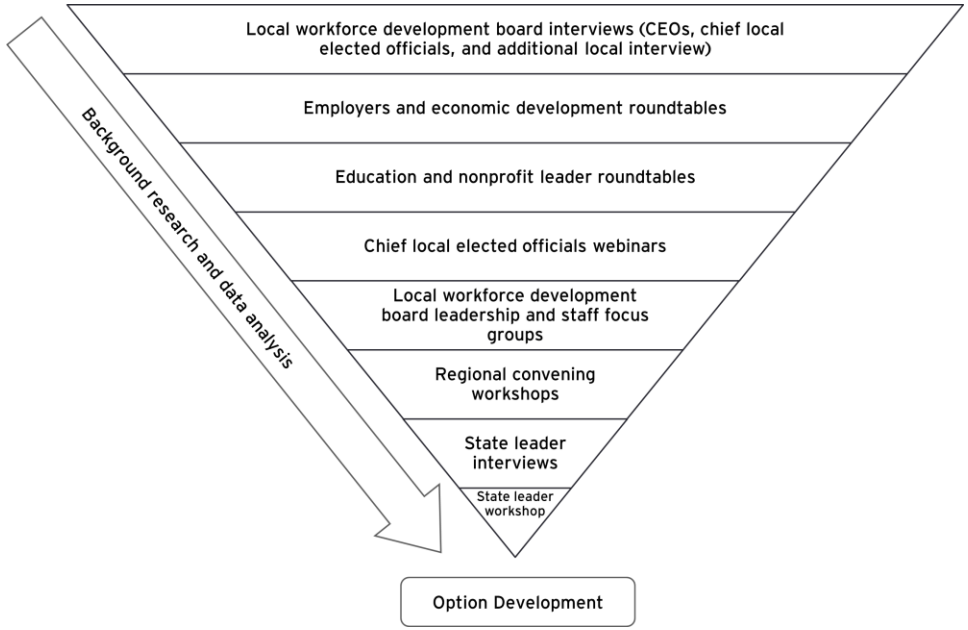
Phase 2 of the Local Workforce Development Board Alignment Evaluation

Process

In 2021, the Florida Legislature unanimously passed the Reimagining Education and Career Help (REACH) Act as a "comprehensive blueprint for enhancing access, alignment, and accountability across the state's workforce development system." The REACH Act charges organizations throughout the workforce development system to create a "no-wrong-door-entry" approach to workforce development services, improve coordination among one-stop center partners, and prepare a federal waiver allowing CareerSource Florida to fulfill the roles and responsibilities of local workforce development boards or reduce the number of local workforce development boards.

Under the REACH Act, Florida's talent pipeline development ecosystem includes: CareerSource Florida (the state workforce development board); Florida's 24 local workforce development boards and their 100 associated career centers; the Department of Economic Opportunity; the Department of Education; the State College System; the State University System; and the Department of Children and Families. CareerSource Florida, in collaboration with the Governor's REACH Act Office, is leading the process to address implementation of the local workforce development board reduction charge in a manner consistent with the law and through an inclusive stakeholder engagement process.

In April 2022, CareerSource Florida launched a research initiative to support the REACH Act's directive of reducing the number of local workforce development boards throughout the state. Phase One of this initiative, completed in July 2022, included initial stakeholder engagement, research on the alignment processes of three other states, a review of the websites of the 24 local workforce development boards, Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) 2020-2024 local plans for each local workforce development board, and other publicly accessible documents. Phase Two of this initiative, started in September 2022, includes an in-depth data analysis, review of organizational information, broad stakeholder engagement, and creation of potential options for realignment and



reduction of boards for consideration by the CareerSource Florida Board of Directors. This report is the second of three that will be produced during Phase Two.

About This Report

As part of Phase Two of the Local Workforce Development Board Alignment Evaluation, partners within the Florida workforce development system were engaged through interviews, focus groups, roundtables, and workshops to provide input and considerations for future options that reduce the current number of local workforce development boards. These sessions were conducted both virtually and in-person and were scheduled in coordination with local workforce development boards. Individuals representing a diverse array of Florida employers, economic development organizations, education providers, workforce development organizations, nonprofit organizations, community development organizations, and chief local elected officials were engaged. This report, prepared in December 2022, summarizes the conversations conducted to date in relation to the REACH Act's directive to reduce the number of local workforce development boards and improve coordination among boards. The engagement discussed in this report was conducted as an open and inclusive process to solicit local feedback early in the alignment process.

REACH Act Alignment Evaluation Guiding Principles

CareerSource Florida developed and prescribed the following guiding principles for the design and rollout of the stakeholder engagement process:

1. Prioritize implementation of the Reimagining Education and Career Help (REACH) Act and legislative directive to enhance alignment and accountability that follows federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) criteria.
2. Identify considerations that are responsive to the needs of job seekers and business customers while prioritizing access to services and maximizing available resources.
3. Commit to an open and transparent process in every phase of work.
4. Engage in holistic listening to drive transformative solutions.
5. Communicate proactively to audiences and stakeholders throughout the journey.

Process

Various stakeholder engagement sessions were held between September 2022 and November 2022. In all, more than 650 unique individuals participated across more than 100 sessions during this time. The themes, comments, and ideas explored during these conversations are reflected within this report. CareerSource Florida and the project team extend a strong expression of thanks and gratitude to those who offered their time and resources to be a part of those conversations. The participation of local workforce development boards, their staff, and partners is critical to the success of the REACH Act Alignment Evaluation.

The different session types used to solicit insights and feedback regarding the REACH Act alignment process are summarized below:

- **Chief executive officers (CEOs) and executive director interviews**: Each CEO or executive director (depending on the organizational title provided) of the 24 local workforce development boards was interviewed for 45 minutes at the Florida Workforce Professional Development Summit, hosted by the Florida Workforce Development Association, from September 12 until September 14, 2022. All but one of these interviews were conducted in person. CEOs and executive directors were asked to share examples of impactful initiatives or services provided within their local workforce development area. The conversation also focused on the REACH Act's directive to reduce the number of local workforce development boards within the state.

- **Local employer and economic development roundtables:** Each local workforce development board invited employers and economic developers from their area to participate in a roundtable discussion. The discussions focused on the current state of the workforce development system and how it meets the needs of businesses. The conversations also covered the topics of regional partnerships, opportunities for system-wide improvement, local area leading practices in workforce development, and challenges and opportunities associated with reducing the number of local workforce development boards. These roundtables were held on October 3 and October 4, 2022, with makeup sessions held on October 13 and October 14, 2022. The sessions were conducted virtually.

- **Local educator and nonprofit leader roundtables:** Each local workforce development board invited education providers and nonprofit leaders from their area to participate in a roundtable discussion. The discussions focused on how the workforce development system meets the needs of students and job seekers. The conversations also covered the topics of regional partnerships, opportunities for system-wide improvement, local area leading practices in workforce development, and challenges and opportunities associated with reducing the number of local workforce development boards. These roundtables were held on October 6 and October 7, 2022, with makeup

sessions held on October 13 and October 14, 2022. The sessions were conducted virtually.

- **Local workforce development board staff and leadership focus groups:** Each local workforce development board invited its key staff members and board members to participate in a discussion on the current state of the local workforce development system. The conversations focused on specific operational improvements that could occur at the state and local levels. Topics included potential system-wide improvements, partnerships and local workforce development board collaborations, and opportunities and challenges related to reducing the number of local workforce development boards. These group discussions were held October 10 through October 12, 2022, with makeup sessions held on October 13 and October 14, 2022. The sessions were conducted virtually.

- **Chief local elected officials webinar (first of two):** CareerSource Florida hosted an interactive webinar with local elected officials throughout the state on October 27, 2022. This webinar provided a project update to local elected officials as well as the opportunity for questions and answers regarding the REACH Act Alignment Evaluation initiative.

- **Regional convening workshops:** CareerSource Florida organized seven regional workshops around the state from November 1 through November 3, 2022. Local workforce development board staff members and leaders participated in these sessions, located in Marianna, Tallahassee, Ocala, Ocoee, Tampa, West Palm Beach, and Sarasota. These three-hour group workshops built upon the previously conducted stakeholder engagement to inform the development of options in pursuit of the REACH Act goal of alignment and reduction in the number of workforce development boards. Topics covered included: statewide inter-local workforce development board collaboration; customers and their barriers to accessing services; administrative, operational, and programmatic supports; statewide demographic, economic, and administrative features; and "must haves" for any future state options.

At the time of writing this report, the following planned stakeholder engagement sessions were not yet held, finalized, or fully incorporated into the summary themes included in the content of this report. However, input received during these conversations will further inform the *Future State Options* and *Final Summary* reports still to be delivered to the CareerSource Florida Board of Directors.

- **Chief local elected officials interviews:** Chief local elected officials from each local workforce development area will be interviewed to elicit their insights and thoughts on local workforce development board alignment. These

interviews are planned for January 2023.

- **Statewide chief local elected officials webinar (second of two)**: A second webinar for chief local elected officials is planned for February 2023 to provide project updates to local elected officials.

- **State leader interviews**: State leaders from across the workforce development system will be interviewed to elicit their insights and thoughts on local workforce development board alignment. These interviews were completed early December 2022.

- **State leaders workshop**: CareerSource Florida convened a state leaders workshop in December 2022 to provide feedback and insights on the development of options in pursuit of REACH Act goals.

- **Additional local interviews:** Additional interviews will be scheduled with key local stakeholders from any directly affected local workforce development boards as options are considered by CareerSource Florida in 2023.

Calendar of Completed Sessions To-Date

Session name	Date
Chief executive officers (CEOs) and executive director interviews	September 12-14, 2022
Local employer and economic development roundtables	October 3-4, 2022*
Local educator and nonprofit leader roundtables	October 6-7, 2022*
Local workforce development board staff and leadership focus group	October 10-12, 2022*
Chief local elected officials webinar (first of two)	October 27, 2022
Regional convening workshops	November 1-3, 2022
State leader interviews**	December 7-8, 2022
State leader workshop**	December 14, 2022

*These sessions did not include CareerSource Southwest Florida due to Hurricane Ian. Their sessions were completed on November 16, 2022.
** The feedback from these two session types is not included in this report and is subsequently included within the Final Summary Report.

Registration and Logistics

Ernst & Young LLP (EY US) and CareerSource Florida collaborated on the logistics of registering stakeholder engagement attendees. CareerSource Florida distributed meeting links for each of the session types. CareerSource Florida developed a Jotform for local workforce development board partners to select a time slot for each session type. The project team and the CareerSource Florida team worked together to develop a project schedule that met the needs of all stakeholders involved.

For those roundtables and focus groups requiring additional invitations, the local workforce development board representatives selected a time slot and distributed the meeting links accordingly to those stakeholders. The agenda, including questions for each meeting, was distributed with the meeting links. EY worked with CareerSource Florida to schedule the 24 CEO interviews while in-person during the Florida Workforce Development Association's Workforce Professional Development Summit in Orlando the week of September 12, 2022.

Research Themes and Insights

Stakeholder Engagement Summary Report
Phase Two of the Local Workforce Development Board Alignment Evaluation

Research Themes and Insights

This section summarizes common themes emerging from the review and analysis of group and individual discussion sessions conducted from September 2022 through November 2022 and presents insights that could inform option development and system-wide improvements related to the REACH Act goals of the reduction of the number local workforce development boards and greater coordination and collaboration among workforce development partners.

In particular, the REACH Act Alignment Evaluation initiative and related stakeholder engagement conversations reflected in this section pertain to alignment of the local workforce development board system through a reduction in the number of local workforce development boards in pursuit of the following goals:

1. Eliminate multiple layers of administrative entities to improve coordination of the workforce development system.
2. Establish consistent eligibility standards across the state to improve the accountability of workforce-related programs.
3. Provide greater flexibility in allocating resources to maximize the funds directed to training and business services.

To date, Phase Two has included listening sessions across the state of Florida to hear opinions from more than 650 stakeholders on how updates to the state's workforce system can be even more responsive to the needs of Florida job seekers and businesses and meet the goals of the REACH Act. This robust engagement process included CEOs, board members and staff from the local workforce development boards along with employers, educators, community organizations, and local elected officials.

The research below highlights themes the project team consistently heard throughout the process and includes more details on the following topics:

- Opportunities for the future state of the local workforce development board system.
- Challenges to the provision of workforce development services to be considered during option development.
- Potential system-wide improvements that support realignment.

Research Themes

Throughout the stakeholder engagement process, several similar themes emerged from conversations across the various groups. While their vantage points and roles varied, each group identified opportunities for improving the system, voiced concerns related to reducing the number of boards, and highlighted the benefits and challenges of the alignment evaluation process. Participants in the stakeholder engagement sessions were forthcoming about both the barriers they face interacting with the system and opportunities for its continuous improvement. Stakeholders at the local workforce development board level reported responsive local services and hardworking workforce development professionals that strive to provide the best customer service possible. Consistent with the WIOA tenet of continuous improvement, stakeholders provided insightful suggestions to enhance the user experience for job seekers and businesses. **The themes described below reflect stakeholder sentiments and build on an overarching desire for even greater levels of customer access and engagement than those that exist today.**

- **Stakeholders acknowledged an opportunity to standardize policies, procedures, and programmatic operations.** While businesses and others who participated in the stakeholder input process acknowledged the supportive services provided by their local workforce development boards, those operating in multiple local workforce development areas expressed a desire for greater consistency in the approaches taken by boards to implement programs. Some stated there may be cumbersome and duplicative processes when working with multiple local workforce development boards, different levels of service and knowledge, and challenges accessing job seekers or workforce information from a local workforce development board outside of their own local workforce development area. In addition to this input from businesses, internal stakeholders at the local and state level indicated that the REACH Act alignment process could be an opportunity to standardize administrative and programmatic functions. Some stakeholders stated a desire to build upon current levels of Department of Economic Opportunity and CareerSource Florida guidance to clarify policies, provide training, and assist with administrative functions such as reporting, compliance, and procurement.
- **Stakeholders identified an opportunity to improve technology platforms and access to broadband.** The current Employ Florida platform, as well as other technologies utilized both externally and internally, was cited as a deterrent for external engagement. Stakeholders expressed a desire for targeted and unified improvement, modernization, and integration of technology systems and tools across local workforce development boards and among state partners. Participants also shared that broadband access and computer literacy are major challenges

to service delivery for rural communities, indicating an opportunity for the workforce development network to coordinate with broadband expansion initiatives.

- **Stakeholders described an opportunity to continue to broaden and strengthen partnerships.** Many stakeholders described partnerships as a strength of the current workforce development system. In pursuit of continuous improvement, stakeholders expressed a desire to intentionally build and nurture these relationships. They also discussed a need to broaden partnerships among businesses, education providers, nonprofits, and elected officials to accomplish REACH Act goals of greater coordination and collaboration. For example, one of the most consistently mentioned factors was the opportunity to strengthen partnerships to fully support the needs of job seekers with significant barriers to employment. This was seen by many as a chance to expand service offerings for their customers particularly if barriers to crossing local workforce development board boundaries were resolved. Many stakeholders described a future state in which workforce development, economic development, nonprofit, business, and education partners have a more coordinated approach to grow the support network job seekers and businesses seek. Participants cited this as critical to support Florida's future economic growth.
- **Stakeholders identified an opportunity to expand and scale communications and outreach.** Overall, stakeholders spoke highly of the activities and work of the local workforce development boards within their area. This is true for businesses, education partners, economic developers, nonprofits, and community organizations. However, many stakeholders identified a general need to improve the perception and awareness of the services provided by the local workforce development boards to increase the reach to job seekers and businesses. Throughout stakeholder engagement, some external partners reported a level of confusion regarding what services and activities local workforce development boards provide. A sentiment expressed was that local workforce development boards offer much more to their communities than serving unemployed individuals, but that message may not be widely known. Even more, some stakeholders stated the mission of the system may not be clear in the minds of businesses and job seekers. There was an expressed desire to better tell that story as frequently as possible. They described a future state with greater outreach to increase participation from businesses and job seekers and for greater communication across boards.
- **Stakeholders voiced apprehension to the alignment and consolidation process.** Many stakeholders expressed opposition to the reduction of the number of local workforce development boards. They articulated a general unease and opposition to change – with concern that hard work to establish networks and partnerships within local

workforce development areas would be lost with organizational changes. In addition, rural areas were concerned the consolidation process could lead to a reduction of services in their area. When asked to cite opportunities for system-wide improvements in relation to the REACH Act Alignment Evaluation initiative, many responses described state level and system-wide improvements to bring greater consistency to workforce development practices and initiatives. In addition, some local workforce development boards expressed a concern that a reduction in the number of boards will also result in a reduction in local workforce development board staff, funding, and the number of one-stop centers. Despite opposition, stakeholders recognized the call for action required by the REACH Act and are willing to collaborate with CareerSource Florida to pursue REACH Act goals.

- **Stakeholders cited current economic challenges could add to the complexity of system transformation.** Several stakeholders raised concerns as to the timing of the alignment process as it relates to economic challenges such as a fast-growing Florida population, heightened inflation, and tight labor markets. Several employers asked the state to utilize a cautious and careful approach to system change due to unknown economic forecasts. Stakeholders reported REACH Act alignment initiatives should seize the opportunity now to continually improve the workforce development system and reduce internal barriers to coordination to maintain Florida's strong competitive workforce position and talent pipeline.

- **Stakeholders discussed the need for inclusive leadership if they are to deliver effective services within larger geographic areas.** WIOA guidance and requirements for local workforce development board membership aims to achieve a representative and business-driven local workforce development board to govern workforce development activities for a local workforce development area. Stakeholders expressed satisfaction with the current makeup and selection of their local workforce development board members. Some local workforce development boards expressed concern that being part of a larger local workforce development area would mean less board representation for their communities. Both urban and rural areas worried their effectiveness could be strained with a new, larger territory to serve and that they would not have the flexibility to tailor services to meet the specific needs of job seekers and employers in their areas. Participants noted that serving larger areas would require a strong continuation of inclusive and intentional leadership from the local workforce development board and strong partners like educators and social service providers. Currently, there are several multi-county local workforce development areas which include both rural and urban areas that exhibit successful leadership practices to

effectively deliver services.

- **Stakeholders expressed concern that alignment could lead to complications related to funding**. Stakeholders viewed funding larger geographic areas as a challenge for some areas because of a local workforce development board's existing fiduciary duty to their current local workforce development areas. Some of the rural local workforce development boards stated they feel thinly stretched regarding their existing levels of WIOA funding. Some boards have found alternative funding sources to supplement program activity and are concerned funding would be reduced following consolidation. However, many participants noted larger local workforce development areas would bring more WIOA funding due to larger populations and allow for greater economies of scale related to administration of services to a local workforce development area.

The themes described above are important considerations when determining how to reduce the number of boards and envisioning future system enhancements. Additionally, it emphasizes the need for a well-planned implementation phase. Considerations for implementation include minimizing service disruptions, ensuring quality local service delivery, forming governance structures that reinforce equity and fairness in area representation, and optimizing resources.

Overall, stakeholders shared local workforce development boards exhibit a mission-focused agility in responding to local needs. This creativity and ability to develop innovative approaches helps set the stage for any future realignment or consolidation.

Insights to Inform Option Development with Potential System-wide Improvements

Several insights emerged to inform option development from observations gathered from interviews, roundtables, and focus group sessions and the cumulative responses from the exercises conducted at the regional convening workshops. Those insights are summarized in the following pages.

Summary of "Must Haves" for Option Development

During the regional convening workshops, stakeholders were asked to comment on "must haves" for the future state of the system, no matter how geographic areas are consolidated. The list below encapsulates the most frequently heard responses during those sessions. A feature or descriptor on the following list does not suggest that the current system

is lacking in any of these individual features. Rather, it indicates a desire to see these features continue to be preserved in a future state.

- **Stronger community partnerships:** Community partnerships among nonprofits, educators, and other social service providers were commonly cited as strengths of the current system. Stakeholders think any changes to the workforce development system through a realignment of local workforce development areas and local workforce development boards should contribute to changes in practice that strengthen community partnerships. Some job seekers served by the local workforce development boards exhibit barriers to employment and require a strong network of public and private partners to support their success. Stakeholders expressed a desire the updated workforce development system further advance those partnerships. Expanded geographic service areas might attract more partners to the system, thus creating more opportunities.

- **Stronger employer relationships and awareness of services:** Employer relationships are key to sourcing opportunities for job seekers to achieve economic self-sufficiency and to fill open positions to support growth. Local workforce development boards dedicate time, resources, and personnel to build those relationships. However, stakeholders reported a need to create greater awareness of the services local workforce development boards can offer to employers and the business community at large. Many stakeholders think more opportunities to interface and intentional relationship-building activities with employers could improve both awareness and perceptions.

- **Flexibility to adapt to changing local needs:** Diverse stakeholder groups expressed the desire for the updated system to be "future-proofed" and adaptable to challenges, disruptions, and local needs as they arise. There needs to be a balance between standardized processes and local flexibility to tailor programs to the needs of specific customer groups. Issues such as federal legislation or transportation projects could significantly alter some areas or industries of the state's economy, and stakeholders want to be sure any organizational changes to the system allow them to anticipate and respond to new economic opportunities or challenges.

- **Enhanced customer access to career services, training, and training providers:** Local workforce development boards stressed customer access and customer experience are critical factors in achieving the highest quality workforce development services possible. According to stakeholders, the future workforce development system should strive to build upon this foundation to increase accessibility to career services, training services, and training providers. This is a goal of the REACH Act and the Alignment Evaluation initiative. Stakeholders emphasized this goal should remain top of mind throughout the transformation journey. Stakeholders expressed concerns that

reducing the number of local workforce development boards could lead to a reduction in the accessibility of services or one-stop centers throughout the state. It was expressed that the future state of the system should aim to grow and increase access.

- **Adequate funding and resourcing of workforce development programs and one-stop centers:** Stakeholders reported that to increase accessibility, local workforce development boards must continue to maximize resources and maintain adequate funding levels for programs and one-stop centers. There is apprehension that during times of transformation, funding could be compromised or diminished. Many stakeholders indicated the future state of the system should secure adequate levels of funding and resources.

- **Responsive to all customers, including rural and urban considerations:** Stakeholders from both urban and rural areas expressed an apprehension of a transformed workforce development system due to concerns that rural areas would not be adequately served. According to stakeholders, reimagined local workforce development boards with new service areas should build upon the current state of a culture which prioritizes responsiveness to the needs of all customers within the local workforce development area, including the considerations of rural and urban employers and job seekers.

- **Experienced and knowledgeable staff:** Currently, workforce development professionals and front-line staff are the people keeping the system running smoothly. They exhibit the knowledge, expertise, and practical skills to provide and deliver services to job seekers and employers. Stakeholders recognize that their experience within the local area, coaching capability, and intimate knowledge of the programs and services are critical pieces of the success of the workforce development system now and going forward. These individuals are an asset today that should be preserved and supported in a future state.

- **Customer- and human-centered delivery of workforce development services:** Many stakeholders think a human-centered approach to customer experience and service delivery is a needed feature to increase engagement and success within the workforce development system. Many local workforce development boards today already embrace this principle.

- **Strong, intentional leadership:** Stakeholders reported the value and need for strong, intentional, and inclusive leaders at the local workforce development board level to successfully guide the provision of workforce development services. Many stakeholders, both within the local workforce development board staff and external

partners such as educators, nonprofits, community organizations, and employers, noted the current quality level of leadership exhibited by local workforce development boards.

Summary of Perceived Challenges to Consider in Option Development

Stakeholders highlighted current barriers that may limit job seeker and employer engagement in the system. The list below summarizes the most frequently heard responses.

- **Addressing funding use restrictions:** Stakeholders reported a general challenge with funding restrictions placed on federal and state dollars for workforce development functions like training activities. Local workforce development board staff members noted there are populations they would like to better support but are unable to do so due to funding use restrictions. More specifically, in-school youth who are not college or military-bound were cited by stakeholders as a group they would like to reach with greater frequency.

- **Overcoming transportation barriers**: The lack of access to stable, reliable, and affordable transportation, including both access to personal vehicles and public transportation, to and from the one-stop centers, worksites, or training facilities was frequently noted as a significant barrier to self-sufficiency and employment for some job seekers.

- **Increasing awareness of services**: Educators and employers identified a lack of awareness of services offered by their local workforce development boards as a current challenge. Stakeholders think this is the case for both employers and job seekers. There is a desire to further promote services beyond and within business, education, and community partner networks.

- **Improving perceptions and engagement by employers**: Local workforce development board staff and employers expressed a concern regarding employers' perception of local workforce development board services. Many noted stronger outreach is needed to raise awareness of the workforce development system from a mandatory to a voluntary service for job seekers.

- **Increasing community access points**: Many local workforce development boards are collaborating with a variety of organizations such as the public school system, faith-based institutions, and nonprofits. Stakeholders reported a desire to expand those local relationships to increase community access for customer groups that are simultaneously most in need of service and the most difficult to reach.

- **Improving access to quality childcare:** Childcare was regularly noted as a barrier for parents looking to secure employment or training. Some local workforce development boards pursue creative programs and partnerships to subsidize or secure childcare for customers – but many stakeholders expressed a greater desire to overcome this barrier. Many stakeholders see this as a major obstacle to people seeking economic self-sufficiency.

- **Assisting job seekers gain soft skills and computer literacy**: Local workforce development board staff and leadership reported employers from all sectors want stronger soft skills and computer literacy within their talent pools. However, according to stakeholders, not all job seekers arrive at a one-stop center with these requisite skills. Local workforce development boards routinely spend time with customers to assist with training in these areas, and stakeholders thought even more support is needed.

Summary of Suggested Changes to Administrative, Operational and Programmatic Functions to Consider in Option Development

The next page contains three tables that summarize a variety of functions and operational features in the CareerSource Florida network. The project team asked stakeholders if these functions were better led at a state level, a local level, or through hybrid initiatives. Local workforce development boards and their staff reported an ad hoc system of collaboration – with many local workforce development boards responsible for procurement, program creation, and implementation without a formalized, broader network of collaboration or support. Local workforce development boards also cited ways their leaders and staff are collaborating through the Florida Workforce Development Association, such as participation in task forces and informal exchange of ideas.

During the regional convenings, participants first weighed in on a list of potential changes to administrative, operational, and programmatic functions within the system. The list was formed by aggregated input from prior focus groups and interviews. Then, they provided input on potential degree of impact for each change and where the change would most likely take place ("ownership" for the sake of this report) – at the state level, local level, or combined state and local level. The tables below categorize potential changes by ownership level. The functions listed were those stakeholders thought could have the highest level of positive impact.

	Functions that stakeholders suggested should be centralized at the state level	
1.	Income and employment verification services (commonly referenced to as "The Work Number")	Many local workforce development boards procure the same or very similar income and employment verification services for reporting purposes. CEOs, executive directors, and chief operating officers (COOs) reported that a shared contract spearheaded by state workforce development partners could provide cost savings through state purchasing power and save time spent on procurement at the local workforce development board level – freeing them to work on programs and direct service provision.
2.	Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) approval	Eligible Training Providers are those eligible to receive WIOA funds via Individualized Training Accounts for adult workers, dislocated workers, and out-of-school youth ages 18-24. Stakeholders reported each local workforce development board has developed its own application for both Initial Eligibility and Continued Eligibility training providers. The state then maintains a statewide ETPL that comprises the local area ETPs. Training providers wishing to become eligible across multiple boards for training programs currently apply individually through each board, requiring duplicative and potentially cumbersome steps. Local workforce development board staff and training providers expressed a desire for statewide consistency regarding this process.
3.	Contracting and reporting methods/vehicles	Local workforce development boards and their staff maintain and renew a variety of contracts and agreements on a regular basis with third parties including employers, educators, service providers, and community partners. Stakeholders desired greater guidance through standard templates from the state regarding common contracts, such as on-the-job training agreements. Stakeholders think this could reduce compliance violations as well as reduce the administrative burden on local workforce development boards – which distracts from service delivery.
4.	Policy guidance and support regarding general compliance and program management	Stakeholders within the local workforce development boards expressed a desire for greater system-wide guidance and support for compliance and program management. Many program managers at the local level reported they feel isolated to manage complex federal programs without the requisite level of guidance and clarity from the state.

	Functions that stakeholders suggested should be centralized at the state level	
5.	Case management software and Employ Florida	Employ Florida is a statewide system utilized by workforce development professionals, employers, and job seekers. It is simultaneously used to match job seekers to open positions externally and as a case management system for workforce development professionals. Employers utilize Employ Florida to find candidates, post jobs or learn about labor market information. Job seekers utilize Employ Florida to explore jobs, secure reemployment assistance, or find education and training opportunities. Every local workforce development board is required to utilize Employ Florida to match candidates to jobs. However, many stakeholders report Employ Florida is so cumbersome to navigate that staff from the local workforce development board must walk job seekers and employers through the site to successfully complete forms or registration. Stakeholders view the site as a deterrent to business engagement. Internally, it is common for local workforce development boards to procure their own case management software to track customers and utilize third party sites for matching employers to job seekers. That information is then duplicated into Employ Florida for reporting purposes. Stakeholders requested the state develop a seamless process for matching employers and job seekers to improve user experiences and bring a higher level of standardization internally among local workforce development boards.

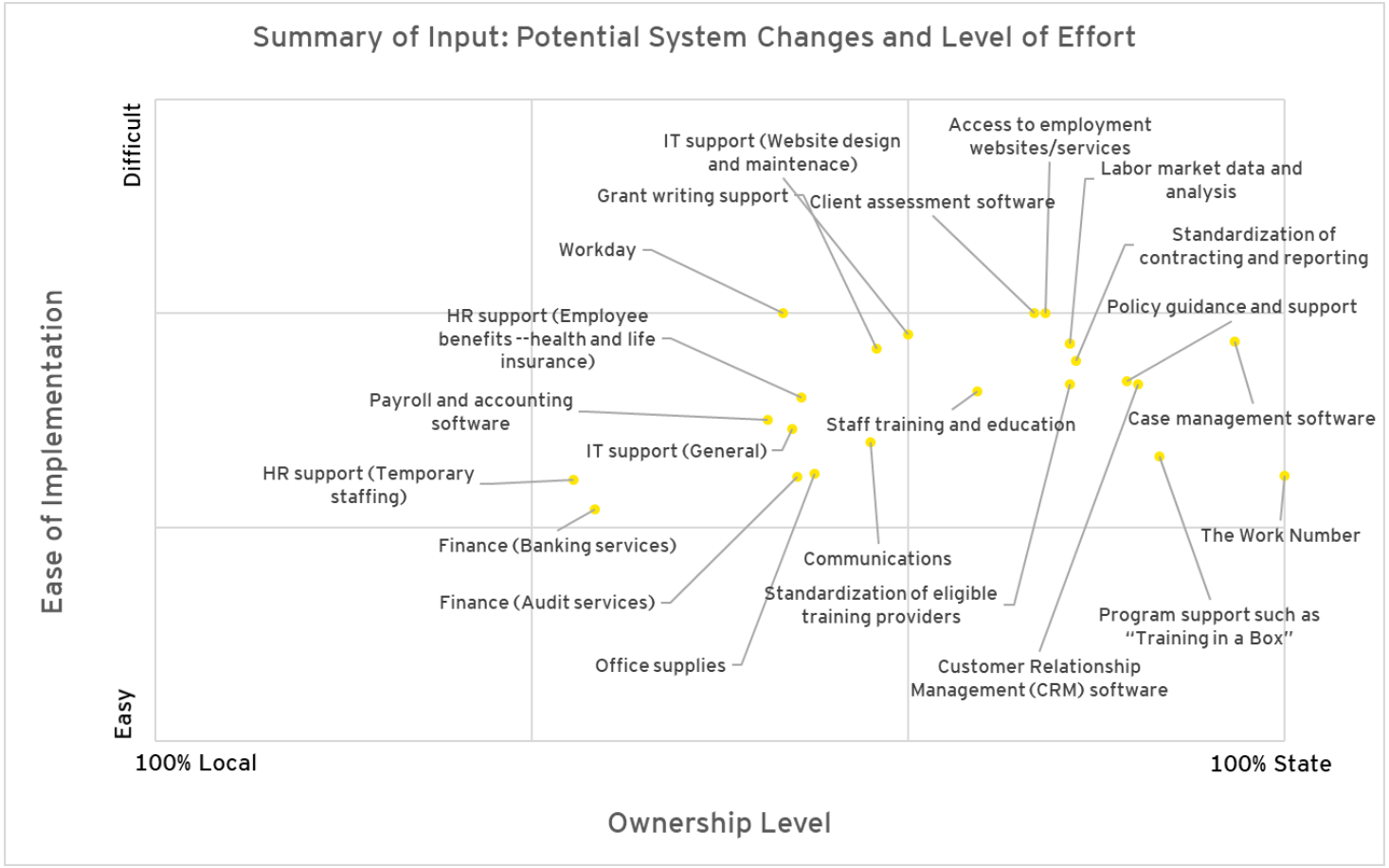
	Functions that stakeholders suggested should take place at a combined state and local level (hybrid)	
1.	Staff training and professional development	Local workforce development board staff and leadership requested a stronger state partnership on staff training and professional development. This could include human-centered program training, compliance support, and program development training. Many workforce development professionals with extensive professional experience think this would serve to empower local workforce development boards to better serve their customers.
2.	Grant writing support	Stakeholders reported a variety of factors influencing a local workforce development board's ability to secure alternative sources of funding outside of traditional WIOA funds. One of those factors includes grant writing support, with

	Functions that stakeholders suggested should take place at a combined state and local level (hybrid)	
		many local workforce development areas that govern smaller population areas, reporting they struggle to source those alternative funds as they already work with limited resources and by extension limited time. A greater level of coordination among local workforce development boards and the state to pursue alternative funding sources, such as through grants, could improve local workforce development boards' abilities to serve their customers.
3.	Communications and outreach	Awareness of CareerSource Florida network services available was noted as a barrier to job seeker and employer engagement. CareerSource Florida supports local workforce development boards with centralized branding and collateral. However, stakeholders expressed a desire for even greater collaboration and coordination across the state for communicating local workforce development boards' services.
4.	Website design and guidance	Currently, each local workforce development board operates, maintains, and designs its websites independently of other local workforce development boards. While there is a shared brand, websites have different layouts and user experiences. Many stakeholders think a more consistent approach across the entire network of local workforce development boards could increase brand strength and ease access for customers.
5.	Labor market information	Each local workforce development board provides timely labor market information to employers and job seekers in its area regarding current economic conditions related to in-demand jobs and labor market conditions. Currently, local workforce development boards procure data and information individually from a variety of vendors. Stakeholders reported a desire for the state to coordinate with local workforce development boards to jointly procure data subscription services while maintaining local insights.

	Functions that stakeholders suggested should take place at the local level	
1.	Banking and finance	Stakeholders think banking and finance functions should remain localized at the local workforce development board level.
2.	Office supplies procurement	While some stakeholders reported the value of a group rate or agreement to obtain office supplies, overall local workforce development boards expressed a

	Functions that stakeholders suggested should take place at the local level	
		desire to maintain control of supplies to meet their needs at the speed of business and support area businesses when possible.
3.	HR and staffing	Stakeholders reported human resources and staffing functions for the local workforce development board should remain localized to meet the needs of the local board at the speed of business.
4.	General Information Technology (IT) support	While some boards do share integrated IT systems, servers, or supports, stakeholders were wary of any state centralization of IT support.
5.	Payroll and accounting	Stakeholders expressed a desire to keep payroll or accounting software localized.

Once stakeholders at the regional convenings shared opinions on potential impact and ownership level of functional changes, they gave input on the level of effort (high, medium, low) that each could require. The graphic below is a composite of stakeholder responses. Those items listed on the far right of the graphic are those for which stakeholders requested greater centralization and support from the state. Items listed higher on the chart are those stakeholders think would be more difficult to modify, change, or implement.



Prioritizing and Considering Population, Demographic, Economic, and Other Data Points for Option Development

The Background Research and Analysis Report (delivered in October 2022 as a part of Phase Two) compiled a variety of economic, demographic, and administrative data. The data sets were selected based upon legislative requirements from both the REACH Act and WIOA, as well as other considerations requested by CareerSource Florida. To view the data and analyses, please consult that report.

During the regional convening workshops, stakeholders helped prioritize which data were most important to developing options for reducing the number of local workforce development boards. In the three tables below, the datasets are categorized based upon prioritization level (high, medium, and low).

	Factors that should be highly prioritized in option development according to stakeholders	
1.	Labor market areas (Metropolitan Statistical Areas)	As defined by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget, Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs) are formed around urban areas with at least 50,000 in population and the surrounding suburban and rural areas with economic and cultural ties.
2.	Florida College System areas	Each of Florida's 28 state colleges has its own geographic boundary.
3.	Industry composition	For the purposes of the REACH Act Alignment Evaluation initiative, industry composition is measured as a share of total employment by industry within a county.
4.	Commuting patterns	Commuter flow data examines where workers in a county live and where employed residents in a county work.
5.	Labor force conditions	Labor force conditions reflect on unemployment and labor force participation rates in a county.

	Factors that should be considered medium priority in option development according to stakeholders	
1.	Poverty rate (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) measures)	As a measure of poverty, the percentage of residents receiving SNAP benefits.
2.	Proximity to eligible training providers	Number of approved and eligible training providers within a county.

3.	Educational attainment	Educational attainment as a measure of percentage of population with high school degrees, associate degrees, and bachelor's degrees or higher.
4.	Population	Population as a measure of current population along with growth and loss within the county.

	Factors that should not be prioritized in option development according to stakeholders	
1.	Age	Median ages in a county.
2.	Race and ethnicity	Demographic makeup of a community based upon race and ethnicity.
3.	Enterprise Florida regions	There are eight Enterprise Florida regions around the state that support economic development through job creation. Stakeholders reported these regions to be too large to be the basis for option development, but they did recognize that general economic development boundaries could be beneficial for consideration.
4.	Existing state area definitions	Existing state area definitions including regional planning councils, Florida Department of Transportation regions, and Adult Education Regional Collaboration Initiative.

In summary, the input above reflects a desire from stakeholders that future local workforce development areas should prioritize considerations related to existing labor market areas (defined for the sake of this project as MSAs), Florida College System boundaries, industry composition and target sectors, commuting patterns, and labor force conditions. The REACH Act asks for local workforce development area boundaries to be modified based upon population and commuting patterns.

Building a better working world

Perspectives

Stakeholder Engagement Summary Report

Phase 2 of the Local Workforce Development Board Alignment Evaluation

Perspectives

As described in the introduction, the project team conducted a robust stakeholder engagement process that included interviews and focus groups with local workforce development board CEOs and board members, staff, employers, economic developers, educators, nonprofits, local elected officials, and others. The stakeholder engagement process was focused on listening and gathering input on the opportunities for alignment, challenges related to alignment and the current system, and ideas for system-wide improvement through alignment. The input collected will be used to inform options for the redesignation of local workforce development areas and the potential consolidation of local workforce development boards consistent with REACH Act and federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) requirements.

This section of the report provides summaries of insights organized by stakeholder type.

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Executive Directors and Chief Executive Officers

The project team conducted in-person interviews with local workforce development board Executive Directors/Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) during the Florida Workforce Development Association's Workforce Professional Development Summit held in Orlando the week of September 12, 2022. These interviews were 45 minutes in duration. In some cases, key staff members and/or board members were present for the interviews.

Attendees:

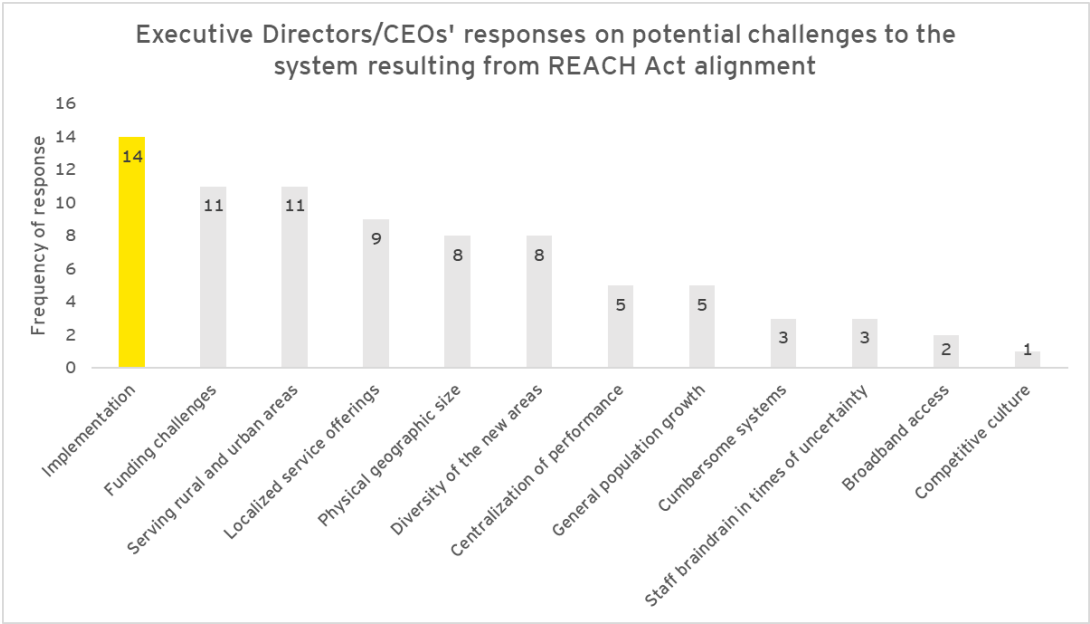
- Executive Directors/CEOs of the local workforce development boards
- Key staff members
- Board members

Content and topics:

- Opportunities for system improvement
- Challenges associated with alignment
- Relationships within the local workforce development area and among local workforce development boards

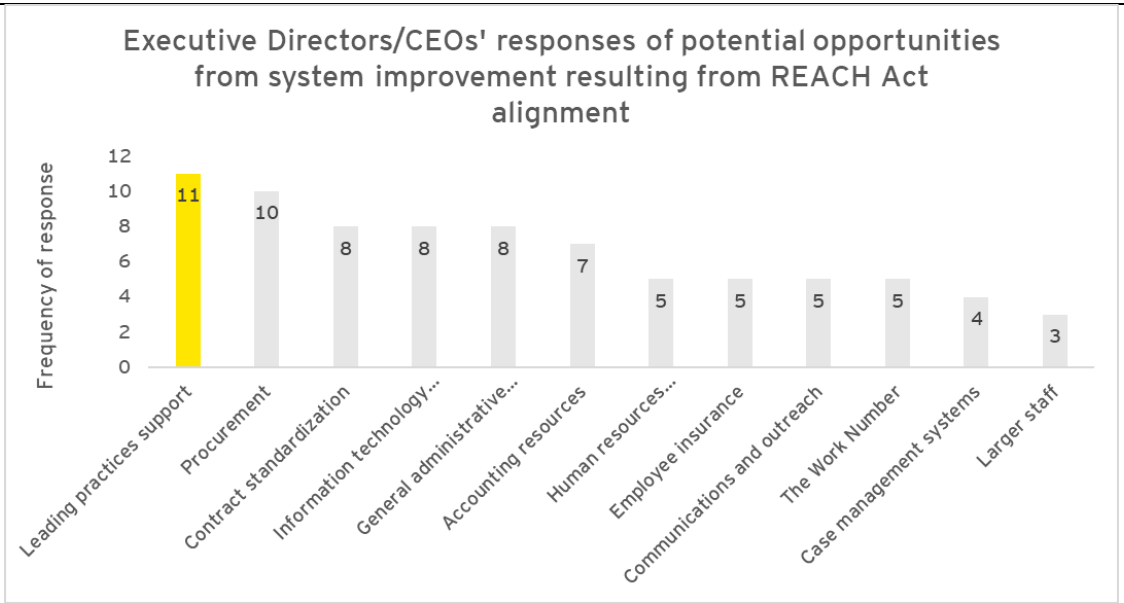
Summary of Input Received

Barriers to system transformation	▸ The following graph represents frequency of Executive Director/CEO responses during the interview when asked to list and explain any challenges related to system-wide alignment.



	▸ Overall, there was concern about change and uncertainty associated with the reduction in the number of local workforce development boards. ▸ Executive Directors/CEOs and staff leaders also expressed concerns about implementing the reduction in boards, especially regarding governance, funding, and retaining an experienced workforce development staff and team to provide services and assist customers in navigating the system. ▸ Stakeholders reported a concern that county governments may be wary of shifting local workforce development board boundary areas in relation to WIOA fiduciary duties, especially considering the prior mismanagement of federal WIOA dollars within two local areas. This is reflected in the "funding challenges" response in the previous graph. ▸ Executive Directors/CEOs hope that system transformation does not disrupt the boards' ability to provide workforce development services. They think realignment will require additional work and staff time that could divert attention away from providing services. There is an associated concern that this will make it more difficult to retain staff and board members.
Communication	▸ Executive Directors/CEOs reported overall internal communications could be improved regarding directives from the state to local workforce development boards. Executive Directors/CEOs mentioned when they or their staff have questions related to compliance, programs, or otherwise, the state can either be difficult to reach or provides unclear guidance. ▸ Local workforce development board Executive Directors/CEOs also mentioned general external communications and outreach to employers, the hardest to reach job seekers, and community organizations could be improved and amplified.
Collaboration and partnerships	▸ Workforce development professionals regularly collaborate through the Florida Workforce Development Association. The group works to promote leading practices, share success stories, and offer a professional network for the Chief Operating Officers (COOs) and other local workforce development board leaders. ▸ Executive Directors/CEOs regularly interface with one another through professional development organizations, like the Florida Workforce Development Association. Some Executive Directors/CEOs have close professional relationships that have been forged over time. However, some Executive Directors/CEOs did note that there can be a competitive

	feeling among local workforce development boards, which can stymie overall system collaboration and coordination. ▸ Executive Directors/CEOs and staff leaders noted operational support that several local workforce development boards provide one another. For example, one local workforce development board houses the data servers for another. In another example, one local workforce development board is the employer of record for another for the purpose of purchasing group insurance plans.
Funding	▸ Executive Directors/CEOs reported a concern that county governments may be wary of shifting local workforce development area boundaries in relation to their WIOA fiduciary duties, considering past compliance failings and mismanagement of federal WIOA dollars by two local workforce development boards that resulted in repayment of federal funds to the federal government. Corrective actions were put into place and final resolutions were reached for this mismanagement. ▸ Executive Directors/CEOs reported that local workforce development boards are strongly encouraged to pursue alternative sources of funding to support their area. These sources of funding can include county governments, philanthropic organizations, or grant opportunities offered by grant making organizations. Local workforce development boards exhibit varying levels of success in securing alternative sources of funding outside of traditional federal WIOA dollars. Some Executive Directors/CEOs, especially those from lower population areas, did request greater levels of coordination and support related to securing alternative sources of funding.
Opportunities to streamline functions and areas of improvement	▸ The following graph represents the frequency of responses given by the Executive Directors/CEOs during the interviews when asked to list potential opportunities to system-wide improvement related to REACH Act alignment.



- Executive Directors/CEOs seek more assistance and partnerships from the state to leverage buying power but also to contribute to greater consistency in processes and expectations. Cost efficiencies exist in administration; one aspect of this is that the utilization of leveraging state opportunities will provide the savings.
- As reflected in the previous graph, nearly half of the Executive Directors/CEOs noted they could benefit if the state shared leading practice examples. This includes for both internal processes and management of the local workforce development board, but also related to external programmatic support.
- Executive Directors/CEOs also mentioned the value of standardized contracts, more centralized procurement of services/tools that all local workforce development boards utilize, and support regarding information technology systems. Executive Directors/CEOs, when asked to take a state-level system point of view, noted that many of them engage in duplicative activities related to managing and operating local workforce development boards.

Current challenges

- Executive Directors/CEOs recognized the current state of service delivery could be improved and build upon the current foundation of success. There is a shared desire to strongly improve customer experience and utilize human-centered design for services and service

	delivery models. Executive Directors/CEOs expressed a need to simplify the system, starting with customer experience. ▸ Customers may have differing experiences depending on which local workforce development board they seek services from. There is a recognition that greater system-wide consistency could improve overall brand recognition and quality of services. To quote one CEO, "We brand as one statewide system. How do we go about working more like one system?" ▸ Employ Florida is seen as a deterrent to engaging employers or job seekers in the system as processes. The user interface is reported to be extremely cumbersome to navigate. ▸ Multiple Executive Directors/CEOs reported their staff are challenged by compliance/administrative requirements, which can lead to limited time for the provision of services. ▸ General resource constraints with reduced WIOA funding and support make it increasingly difficult to provide quality workforce development services.
Strengths and valuable services	▸ When asked about their strongest local programs and initiatives, Executive Directors/CEOs frequently cited youth programs (both in school and out of school youth), employer and job seeker programs focused on specific target sectors, military/veteran support programs, and programs that generally connect job seekers and employers to training resources. ▸ Executive Director/CEOs also noted the important role local workforce development boards play in economic development, particularly as it relates to the provision of labor market information.

Employers and Economic Developers

In each local workforce development area, employers and economic developers participated in focus groups with the project team. These took place in October 2022. Participants included chamber representatives, small business owners, large regional employers, and economic development representatives, as well as board members, staff, and CEOs of the local workforce development boards. These 24, one-hour meetings were conducted virtually with participation ranging from 3 to 20 participants who attended at the invitation of their local workforce development board. Questions were designed to identify the most valuable services, thoughts about the reduction in the number of boards, partnerships, and leading practices. The purpose of these meetings was to gather insights from one of the local workforce development board system's primary customers - employers. Their perspective on both the current and future state of the workforce development system, as well as the economic developers' insights on how these changes could affect their local and regional economies, helped the project team better understand how changes to the system could better serve business customers.

Attendees:

- Local or regional employers familiar with the services of the CareerSource Florida network
- Local or regional economic development professionals

Content and topics:

- Impactful local area initiatives
- Challenges in receiving workforce development services
- System-wide, structural challenges you have come across as employers and economic developers
- Opportunities for improved regional coordination among local workforce development boards, economic developers, and employers

Summary of Input Received

Barriers to economic development initiatives	▸ Internet connectivity and transportation were mentioned as barriers, especially in rural areas.
Communication	▸ Focus group participants want local workforce development boards to conduct more outreach, so their partners better understand services offered and how to access them. Many stakeholders were complimentary of their board but felt uncertain about whether other employers knew what their local workforce development board offers, and, therefore, would not use their services. It was also noted many employers attending these sessions were board members or otherwise

	personally involved in their local workforce development board. This means the project team may have heard from a subset of employers that are especially involved and aware of services and might not be representative of many other Florida employers.
Collaboration	▸ The project team gathered many positive examples of current collaborations, such as those between economic developers and local workforce development boards to assist with business attraction. ▸ Stakeholders expressed a desire to strengthen partnerships between employers and the local workforce development boards to better prepare and source needed talent for the employer pipeline. ▸ Stakeholders expressed a desire to increase employer engagement and awareness of the system, as general business perceptions and knowledge of the CareerSource Florida network were cited as a barrier to workforce development activities.
Partnerships	▸ Many employers and economic developers attending these roundtables were board members who were well connected to and closely partnered with their board. Their perspectives on local partnerships, such as those among community organizations, educators, nonprofits, local governments, and the local workforce development board, was overall positive. The few employers that attended that were not board members had more concerns and ideas on opportunities for improvement, such as building greater awareness of CareerSource Florida network services and improving business engagement through simplification of processes.
Funding	▸ Funding was not often a topic of discussion among employers and economic developers. Most often they mentioned they thought local workforce development boards were good stewards of the funding resources, and that employers and economic developers would like to see local workforce development boards receive more funding. ▸ Employers also mentioned very different sources of funding across the state. Some mentioned funding from counties, federal or state grants, employer support, and more. It was observed that funding sources vary among local workforce development boards. Stakeholders were rarely critical of funding sources or opportunities. Instead, they spoke in general about the desire for more money to expand programs and services.
Customers and mission	▸ While each local workforce development board receives the same core WIOA funds to provide Title I and Title III services, each local workforce development board develops its own service delivery approaches based upon local priorities and policies. However, each local workforce development board is subject to the same federal and state guidelines for utilizing these funds.

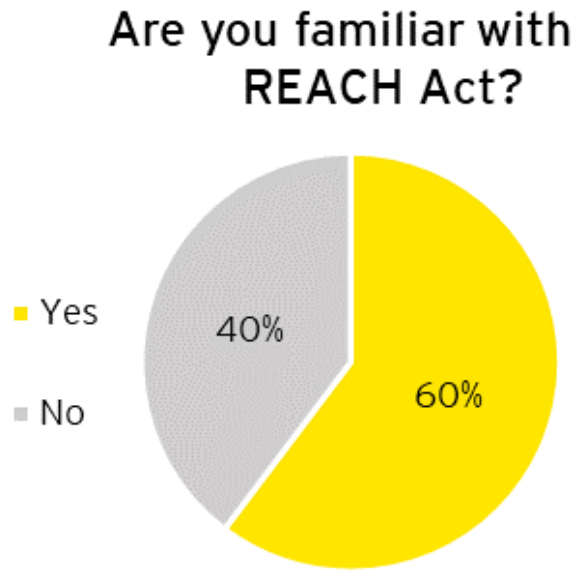
	Some local workforce development boards are more focused on business attraction/economic development and providing market data, such as labor shed and wages. Other local workforce development boards are more focused on the hardest to serve clients, such as at-risk youth, veterans, and the formerly incarcerated. Additionally, some local workforce development boards secure non-WIOA sources of funding to provide additional services in line with their own local goals for workforce development.
Opportunities to streamline and areas of improvement	▸ Employers stated they appreciate tailored approaches and specialized services they receive from their local workforce development board. However, they see opportunities for more statewide consistency in training programs, especially for high-demand jobs that are relevant throughout the state. An example was a training program providing job seekers a commercial driver's license (CDL). The employer who participated in the program was grateful they were able to educate their workforce on these skills locally, but also acknowledged truck drivers are in high demand across the state. They suggested the local program expand statewide. Hospitality was another sector mentioned with a statewide need. ▸ In addition to training for specific jobs or skillsets, employers wanted to see their local workforce development board offer soft skills and basic technology training to develop more well-rounded job candidates. As examples, they want to see candidates comfortable with computers and able to use the internet, effectively complete an application and interview for a job, and demonstrate effective communication skills. ▸ Employers and economic developers mentioned an opportunity for the local workforce development board to focus on strengthening the workforce pipeline in their area. This is in terms of both billing currently open positions and building up a stronger workforce for the future. While employers participating in the roundtables were generally pleased with their local workforce development boards, there was a sense they could be reaching more job seekers and proactively building up their area's workforce pipeline.
Challenges	▸ According to employers, software and technologies utilized in the workforce development system needs modernization. In some areas, employers and job seekers get assistance from their local workforce development board to post and search jobs on Employ Florida because they find the process so cumbersome. Stakeholders observed that issues with software tend to be worse in rural areas where access to broadband and computers is not reliable. Employers felt that if technology was too difficult to use, both employers and job seekers just would not use it.

	Employers in rural areas indicated they call their local workforce development board representative when they need help rather than use online platforms. ▸ Services offered by each local workforce development board varies by area, which can lead to confusion or duplicative processes for partners such as employers and economic developers. Employers mentioned challenges when working with multiple boards. For example, employers reported one area might have more in-depth data about their labor shed and workforce than another, or that the processes for business attraction and how employers are involved might be different between neighboring boards. ▸ Employers said that, overall, Employ Florida needs to be improved.
Strengths and valuable services	▸ Stakeholders in these sessions were very clear any changes to the workforce system need to be responsive to local community needs. They valued the personal relationship they had with their local workforce development board staff and how they were able to tailor services and programs to an employer's specific needs. Without this personal attention and ability to meet local needs, many employers felt the local workforce development board system would lose a lot of its current value. ▸ Training programs and job fairs were often mentioned by employers and economic developers as a valuable service offered by their local workforce development board. Another valuable service often mentioned was making funding available for workforce needs, and typically included things like paying for job seekers to go through training programs they could not otherwise access or contributing funding to start and/or maintain training programs.

Each roundtable group was asked the following three questions and their responses were recorded via Menti, an online polling tool that was used to guide discussion and gather responses in addition to discussion questions.

- Are you familiar with the REACH Act?
- What 1-2 words describe how the current workforce development system meets the needs of job seekers and employers in your area?
- What 1-2 words describe your desired state of Florida's future workforce development system?

Responses from employer and economic developer roundtable groups have been aggregated and a summary of their responses are on the following three pages.



The above graphic represents employers and economic developers' responses when asked if they were familiar with the REACH Act. 40% of employers and economic developers were not familiar with the REACH Act, which suggests a need for further education among stakeholders, especially regarding the REACH Act's potential implications for local businesses and the economy.

What 1-2 words describe how the current workforce development system meets the needs of job seekers and employers in your area?

Beyond strengths like "collaborative" or "effective," respondents also frequently mentioned job posting and career fairs, which suggested these are especially valuable services for employers and economic developers. Many responses also spoke of the local workforce development board system's local focus and tailored services as a benefit of the current system. Responses also included phrases such as "ambiguous," "inconsistent," "cumbersome," and "complex to end user."

What 1-2 words describe your desired state of Florida's future workforce development system?

"Innovative" was used to describe the future state of the system with frequency which suggests that stakeholders want to see the system find creative ways for businesses and job seekers to engage with the CareerSource Florida network and find the information they need to pursue training or fill open positions. There was also an emphasis on allowing the local workforce development boards to remain nimble and flexible so they can continue to meet local needs. Responses to this question indicate many stakeholders are not in favor of consolidation. Some responses included "independent," "no consolidation," "remain the same," "not bureaucratic," and "less state hurdles."

Educators and Nonprofit Organizations

Educators and nonprofit leaders located in each local workforce development area participated in focus groups. The 24 focus groups (one in each area) were facilitated in October 2022. Participants included educators from secondary and post-secondary institutions and local nonprofit organizations that support individuals in need of employment, upskilling, or wraparound services. These one-hour meetings were conducted virtually with 2 to 20 stakeholders in each meeting, at the invitation of their local workforce development board. Questions were designed to identify the most valuable services, ideas regarding the reduction in the number of boards, partnerships, and ideas for replicating leading practices.

Attendees:

- Local or regional eligible training providers for the local workforce development area
- Other nonprofit, government, or education leaders for the local workforce development area

Content and topics:

- Current coordination between local workforce development boards and education providers
- Challenges in delivering education services for job seekers
- Opportunities for improvement in providing education services to job seekers resulting from the reduction in local workforce development boards

Summary of Input Received

Barriers for job seekers	▸ Stakeholders in rural areas stated transportation and internet connectivity challenges present barriers to access services. Specifically, they mentioned there is less internet access and possibly fewer computers (and are needing to apply for jobs from their phones). Stakeholders mentioned employing more mobile services in addition to the already present mobile units utilized by some local workforce development boards could be a solution. ▸ Another major barrier is the lack of affordable childcare preventing many Floridians from accessing services. ▸ Nonprofits especially spoke to the financial issues some job seekers face preventing them from engaging with the CareerSource Florida network and its services. Stakeholders reported many job seekers did not have the financial reserves to take off work to attend school or learn a new skill, so they could only participate in on-the-job training opportunities, sometimes outside of another full-time or part-time job. The "benefits cliff" was also mentioned as a barrier to accessing services; specifically, that some residents who could upskill or find a better job chose not to because they would lose important federal or state benefits for themselves and/or their family.

Communication	▸ Stakeholders identified the need for more consistent communication methods across local workforce development boards. Many educators, training providers, and nonprofits spoke highly of their local boards but were frustrated by the duplication and inconsistencies involved in working with multiple boards. ▸ Nonprofits and educators also spoke to the need for better communication to job seekers. Representatives from nonprofits often pointed out the residents they were serving needed other services, such as job seeker services from CareerSource Florida, but were unaware of these services or how to access them. Better marketing and outreach might create more awareness of opportunities for support among job seekers.
Collaboration	▸ Some examples provided of positive collaboration included co-location of local workforce development board staff members at education institutions, jointly pursued grant opportunities, and job fairs held at locations easily accessed by job seekers.
Partnerships	▸ Depending on the training provider and type of industry, partnerships vary across different local workforce development boards. Several local workforce development boards cross boundaries to work with one another, but there was no consistency in these types of partnerships across the state - not only whether other partnerships like this existed, but also whether the partnerships functioned the same. Examples included aviation, healthcare, manufacturing, and Commercial Driver Licenses training needed across the state.
Funding	▸ Stakeholders in one local workforce development area described how WIOA funding for individualized training accounts had been depleted but there is still demand for funding and programs, meaning there is more demand than there is availability. ▸ There was concern regarding the 10% withholding stipulation in the REACH Act. This made stakeholders think funding, or at least some of it, would be tied to something outside of the organization's control, which was a concern.
Customers	▸ Stakeholders spoke very highly of programs, tools and services that focus on youth, veterans, and persons with disabilities, but they wanted to see more of this programming. ▸ Other positive services mentioned are apprenticeships and on-the-job training programs as these provide economic value.
Opportunities to streamline and areas for improvement	▸ Many educators and nonprofit leaders identified opportunities to streamline and have more consistent policies and procedures. Some of the policies and procedures specifically mentioned included: ○ Standardizing contracts;

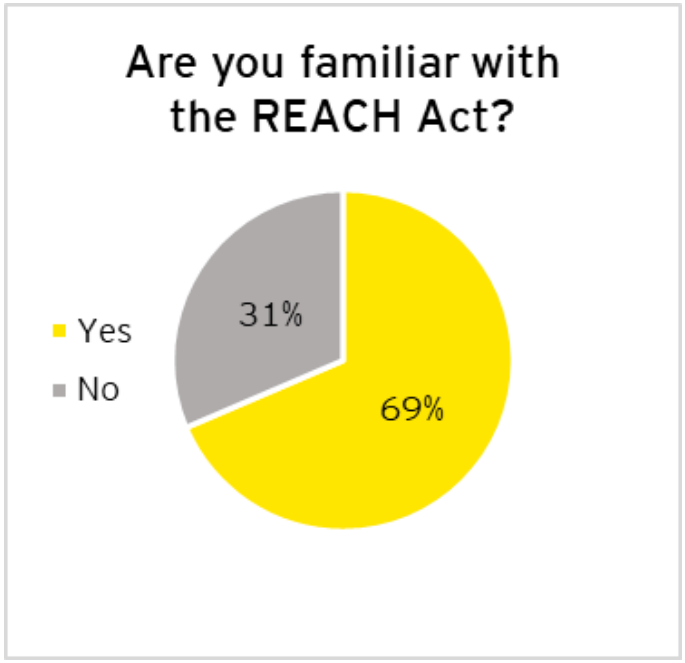
	○ Honoring or acknowledging an existing contract from a different board for training providers; ○ Setting clear deadlines and standardized reporting across boards; ○ Utilizing consistent timelines for approvals for training providers; ○ Utilizing consistent definitions for performance outcomes; and ○ Consistent application of WIOA eligibility standards and formulation of local policies. ▸ Training providers and nonprofits described how they spent a lot of time drafting reports for their local workforce development boards and the challenges in reporting out to multiple local workforce development boards for those crossing multiple board geographies. According to them, this may result in similar but slightly different reports for multiple local workforce development boards. ▸ Stakeholders emphasized the need to incorporate soft skills training into the services of their local workforce development board. Some nonprofits were able to complement services offered by their local workforce development board with soft skills training through their own programs but understood this kind of partnership was not common throughout the state.
Challenges	▸ Many stakeholders specifically cited Employ Florida as a major challenge. They mentioned not all job seekers have access to a computer, which might make filling out forms challenging, the process was long and cumbersome, and many stakeholders mentioned personal experience with employers or job seekers refusing to use Employ Florida because they found it so difficult. ▸ Stakeholders reported data collection is cumbersome and it is a challenge meeting all criteria, such as different wage criteria for different counties. They also reported some employers, even if looking for an employee through their local workforce development board, did not always want to provide the necessary data (like wages) for the job posting. They felt this issue could be solved with more education on the front end with participants on the importance of data. ▸ Stakeholders wanted to see greater streamlining of the application process and suggested one application could be used for multiple programs. ▸ Many stakeholders wanted more consistency among program eligibility. They thought when working with different local workforce development boards sometimes they would have very similar programs with different requirements. This can be confusing for nonprofits, educators, and job seekers working with multiple boards. It can also be frustrating to see other local workforce development areas that are starting new initiatives or programs with fewer restrictions or broader eligibility and not understanding why the same program cannot work the same way in your community. Many stakeholders thought if a program could be started in one part of the

	state with certain requirements, the same program should be replicated with the same requirements, and not change on a board-by-board basis. ▸ Stakeholders, especially in the nonprofit space, also noted these difficult to serve groups in need of additional support and attention. They felt employment programs did not also connect job seekers to necessary services like food or housing assistance, healthcare, or education would ultimately be less effective in filling open positions.
Strengths and valuable services	▸ The one-stop centers were most often mentioned as a valuable service. Stakeholders were clear that any reduction in the number of physical one-stop centers would be a disservice to their community. ▸ Educators especially found apprenticeships and on-the-job training most valuable. Training programs like these often require time and funding to start up, and many educators and nonprofits acknowledged they would not be able to manage these types of programs on their own. ▸ Stakeholders spoke very highly of programs, tools and services that focus on youth, veterans, and persons with disabilities, but they wanted to see more of this programming.

Each roundtable group was asked the following three questions and their responses were recorded via Menti, an online polling tool that was used to guide discussion and gather responses in addition to discussion questions.

- Are you familiar with the REACH Act?
- What 1-2 words describe how the current workforce development system meets the needs of job seekers and employers in your area?
- What 1-2 words describe your desired state of Florida's future workforce development system?

Responses from employer and economic developer roundtable groups have been aggregated and a summary of their responses are on the following three pages.



Education and nonprofit leaders were asked if they were familiar with the REACH Act. More educators and nonprofit leaders were familiar with the REACH Act than employers and economic developers, but there was still about 30% that were unfamiliar. This suggests CareerSource Florida will need to continue to educate key stakeholders about the REACH Act and its implications.

What 1-2 words describe how the current workforce development system meets the needs of students and job seekers in your area?

Responses were generally focused on the strengths of the system including stressing "responsive," "collaborative," and "effective" features. Educators and nonprofits identified room for growth within the current system, with responses like "cumbersome" or "needs improvement." There was also a theme of finding the current system difficult to navigate, with responses like "scattered focus," "works for those who find," and "minimal awareness."

What 1-2 words describe your desired state of Florida's future workforce development system?

Some themes appear throughout responses were accessibility, a desire to maintain local control, and wanting more creative, targeted programs. Accessibility responses included "accessible to all," "easily accessible," and "inclusive," which seems to respond to the issue of difficulty navigating the current system. Responses related to local control included "funded with local control," "autonomous," and "locally managed," so like other stakeholder groups, there are concerns about consolidation. The need to be more creative and sector specific was demonstrated in responses such as "trade focused programs," "focus on actual needs," and "innovative."

Local Workforce Development Board Focus Groups

One-hour workshops were facilitated with the leadership of the local workforce development boards and key staff members. These sessions encouraged candid and thoughtful input from local workforce development board leaders and key staff on current state successes, challenges, and opportunities. The conversations also solicited perspectives regarding the ideal future state of the system, along with the qualities and goals that must be considered when developing considerations for workforce board alignment.

Attendees:

- Local workforce development board staff leadership
- Select leaders who are local workforce development board members

Content and topics:

- Focused questions on opportunities for greater efficiency related to workforce development system administration
- Detailed descriptions of challenges related to local workforce development board number reduction
- Opportunities for local workforce development board number reduction

Summary of Input Received

Barriers	▸ Technology was often mentioned in relation to the user experience of working with a local workforce development board, noting that Florida's system is currently not very user-friendly. They felt the state's technology platforms are difficult to use compared to other online job boards and the challenges of using this technology would drive job seekers away. It was also noted many employment processes, including searching and applying for jobs, is often completed online, even though many Floridians do not have adequate access to internet or technology. Ensuring online services through CareerSource Florida are easy to use and available to complete on mobile phones was a common theme. ▸ A challenge for the CareerSource Florida network was some boards reported trouble recruiting and retaining staff, which makes it difficult for them to serve job seekers. This was not a universal challenge, but some boards with unfilled positions reported struggling to serve job seekers without the personnel and resources necessary to do so.
Communication	▸ Many local workforce development board staff members noted a need for more marketing and outreach support. They felt greater awareness of who CareerSource Florida is and services they provide would result in greater use of their services.

Collaboration	▸ One area of collaboration among multiple local workforce development boards was applying for grants. A single local workforce development board might not have the time, resources, or grant-writing knowledge to pursue a grant individually. However, when local workforce development boards partner, they typically have the resources and stand a better chance of winning the grant than they would alone. ▸ Concern was expressed that current relationships will be altered if there are changes in local workforce development areas.
Partnerships	▸ It was common for local workforce development boards to discuss sharing services, especially administrative services like accounting or legal personnel, with other boards. There was no single model for these kinds of partnerships, and they seemed to happen organically and as needed among local workforce development boards.
Funding	▸ Not all local workforce development boards reported a need for more funding but were frustrated with restrictions attached to certain sources of funding. For example, a common theme was the inability to use WIOA funds to serve as many in-school youth which exhibit need within the local workforce development area, which was a large population they wanted to support but were unable to because of eligibility requirements. ▸ Staff themselves reported a need for more funding. Several examples of programs working but not large enough to accommodate all the job seekers interested, either for financial or legal reasons, were expressed. For example, one community mentioned a program for connecting youth to summer jobs. They said they received approximately 75 applications, with half of those applicants being ineligible to receive funding under WIOA requirements. Furthermore, within those remaining 30-40 applicants, the program could only fund spots for 10-15. Staff said examples like this proved their services are in-demand but that they do not have the funding to serve the full need within their community. ▸ Many of the local workforce development board staff members reported the programs they are most proud of are the ones funded through alternative sources, not those funded with WIOA resources.
Customers	▸ Most local workforce development boards reported their customer base was unique and any sort of consolidation would limit their ability to directly serve their local audiences. A common theme was reducing the number of one-stop centers would negatively impact customers and the local workforce development board's ability to serve them.

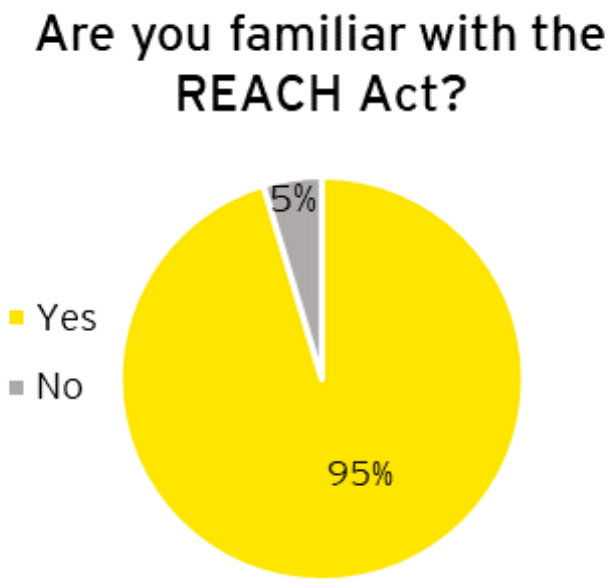
Opportunities to streamline and areas for improvement	▸ Many understood and were excited about opportunities for consolidation at a high, organizational level but thought if consolidation began impacting their local services, it would be negative. ▸ Administrative services were often mentioned as opportunities to streamline. Many local workforce development boards already shared some administrative services with other boards, such as financial or accounting services. Many staff members pointed out they thought their model could be effectively implemented across the state, which could save the staff time and money and allow them to focus more on job seekers and employers. ▸ Individual local workforce development boards also saw an opportunity for state-level procurement services that could save money and time locally. They thought certain services could be procured for a cheaper price per-board if procured by the state and it would save their staff time, especially if they were required to go through a public bidding process. Two specific examples were healthcare options and data subscriptions. ▸ Regarding seeking additional funding, some local workforce development boards mentioned they find themselves in competition with other local workforce development boards for these alternative sources of funds, whether they be grants or otherwise. These situations do not foster the partnerships or collaboration local workforce development boards want with their local partners. ▸ General support from the state on how to properly complete compliance work in a simpler manner is needed. Staff could use greater training in this area. ▸ Overall, local workforce development board staff and board members thought operational consistency across the system was a good thing and would be a benefit statewide.
Challenges	▸ Local workforce development board staff noted their comparative strengths against their competitors, specifically privately-owned, national online job boards. They acknowledged the state workforce development system is lagging regarding technology and current tools are not as easy to use as other online job boards. Again, staff was interested in consolidation when it makes their jobs easier and makes their business more competitive, but not when it will take away vital services or their way of working. ▸ While almost all stakeholder groups expressed that Employ Florida is a challenge, it is specifically challenging for local workforce development board staff because they are often the ones helping job seekers or employers navigate the Employ Florida system. Some local workforce development boards said that they will fully post jobs for employers because

	employers will not otherwise use the system. This takes staff time and effort to navigate a system that is meant to be utilized directly by job seekers and employers. ▸ Youth are a customer base for the local workforce development board system, yet some staff members reported trouble engaging those populations because of legal requirements. Many stakeholders also noted their youth programs focused on out-of-school youth and described a need to focus on in-school youth for an opportunity to discuss career pathways. This was often noted as a major challenge for the local workforce development board system. ▸ When thinking about alignment and consolidation many local workforce development board staff members were skeptical that a larger geographic region would allow them to provide the tailored services, they needed to serve their unique customer base. Many groups felt that way about any consolidation, especially with neighboring counties or boards. ▸ Another repeated concern especially from rural local workforce development boards is their interests and needs would not be prioritized if consolidated into a larger region, especially if that region is home to a major metro area.
Strengths and valuable services	▸ Almost all local workforce development boards praised their local workforce development board's ability to partner and collaborate with businesses, educators, and nonprofits. There were several examples of valuable services but many of them were localized to their area and were not being replicated around the state. While there are strengths and valuable services taking place at all boards, there are some specific services or programs that are only taking place within one region when they could be implemented statewide. ▸ The state college boundaries are already very closely aligned to the local workforce development area boundaries.

Each roundtable group was asked the following three questions and their responses were recorded via Menti, an online polling tool that was used to guide discussion and gather responses in addition to discussion questions.

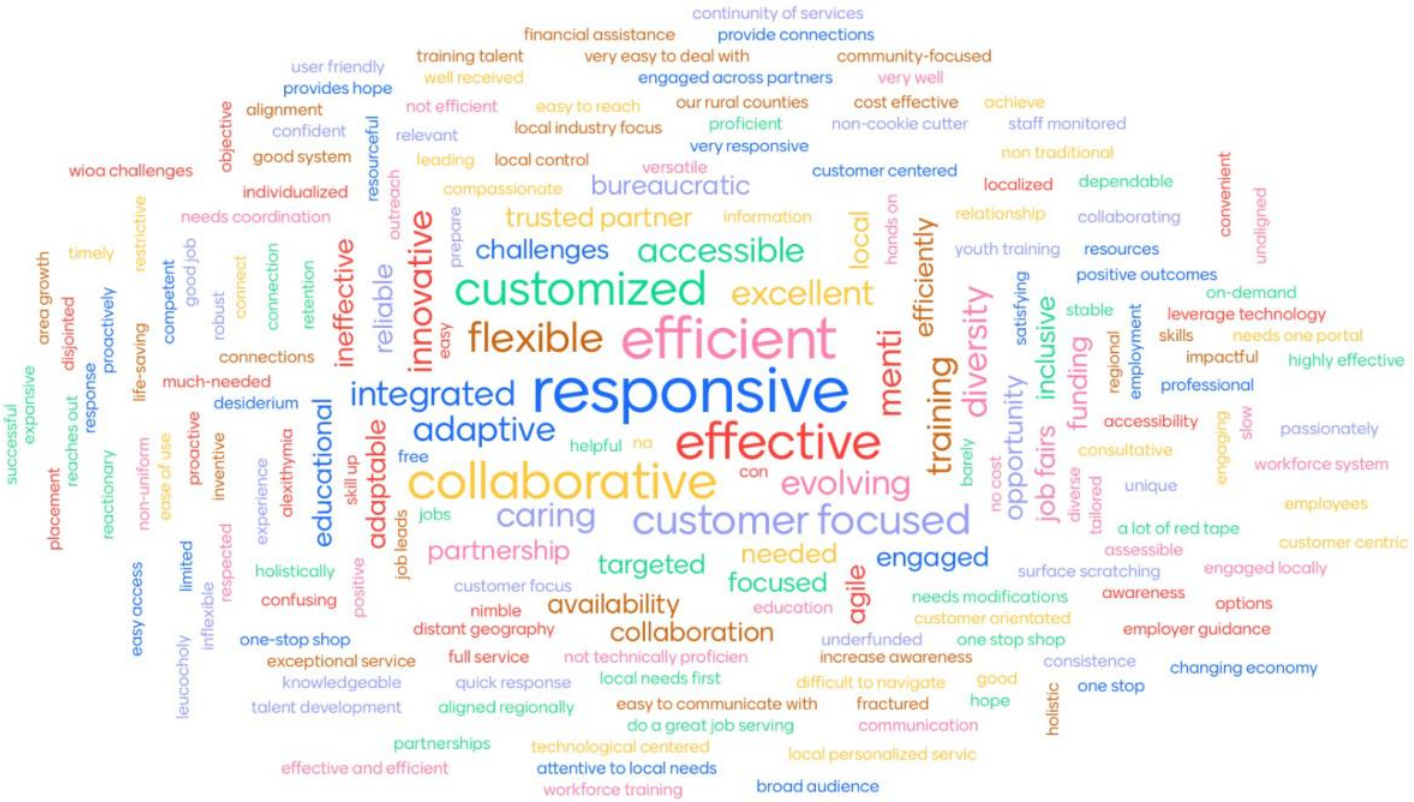
- Are you familiar with the REACH Act?
- What 1-2 words describe how the current workforce development system meets the needs of job seekers and employers in your area?
- What 1-2 words describe your desired state of Florida's future workforce development system?

Responses from employer and economic developer roundtable groups have been aggregated and a summary of their responses are on the following three pages.



Local workforce development board members and staff were asked their familiarity with the REACH Act. Out of 102 responses to this question, five respondents reported that they were not familiar with the REACH Act. While these roundtables primarily included local workforce development board staff and leadership, they did sometimes include board members or other stakeholders, and we suspect that these external stakeholders, not staff, were unfamiliar with the REACH Act.

What 1-2 words describe how the current workforce development system meets the needs of job seekers and employers in your area?



Many responses focused on strengths, such as "Local needs first" and "customer centric," focused on how local workforce development boards serve their community and tailor their services to the specific needs of employers and job seekers. Interestingly, local workforce development board staff disagreed with each other more within a single focus group. One group had the answers "easy to communicate with" and "a lot of red tape" in the same session, while other groups had opposing responses including "flexible" and "inflexible," and "collaborative" and "unaligned." This suggests that even among staff at the local level, there is disagreement about performance and opportunities to enhance the overall system.

What 1-2 words describe your desired state of Florida's future workforce development system?

More than other groups, local workforce development board staff made it clear their desired future state of the system includes maintaining local control, with responses like "locally controlled," "stay local," "local responsiveness," and "leave well-functioning boards." When considering the future state, local workforce development board staff were able to get more specific with responses like "better technology," "well-funded," and "expanded awareness." Responses to this question referenced both the user experience and internal operations of the boards themselves, including a desire for improved technology, better monitoring systems, and more financial resources.

Chief Local Elected Officials Webinar

A 1.5-hour long, virtual, and interactive webinar was conducted with local elected officials from around the state on October 27. This session updated local elected officials on the current project progress in pursuit of the REACH Act goal of alignment with an overview on the stakeholder engagement conducted to date. The goal of the session was to obtain specific input of local elected officials on the Alignment Evaluation initiative.

Attendees:

- Local elected officials throughout the state of Florida

Content and topics:

- About CareerSource Florida and the local workforce development board network
- REACH Act alignment evaluation guiding principles
- Project progress to date
- Program collaborations across the state of Florida in the workforce development area
- Considerations to inform the development of options for the CareerSource Florida Board of Directors

Summary of Input Received

- Local elected officials report successful collaborations between local workforce development boards and Florida State Colleges to support training or education for industry recognized credentials or certificates.
- Local workforce development boards provide a vital forum for collaboration during times of disaster.
- Local elected officials perceive local workforce development boards as playing a key role in economic development initiatives within their local areas by providing labor market information on the current pool of talent and training programs available to future or prospective businesses.
- Local elected officials from rural areas expressed concern that the consolidation process could lead to a reduction of services and focus.
- Local elected officials think there is a challenge with general awareness of the services offered by local workforce development boards around the state, noting many employers and job seekers may not know the breadth of services offerings. They reported an increase in resources dedicated to communications and outreach would be welcome.
- Local elected officials reported there is an opportunity for system-wide improvement by improving Employ Florida to better suit the needs of employers, job seekers, and customers generally.

- Florida State College districts, geographic size, commuting patterns, industry sectors, population, and considering rural needs were all factors local elected officials reported as key considerations for the development of alignment options.

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