Examples from the Field:  
Local Workforce Programs Continue to Address Business and Jobseeker Needs During the Pandemic

Adjusting to COVID-19

Most AJCCs had to shutter their physical locations in mid-to-late March as the COVID-19 outbreak began. Understanding the economic implications for businesses and job seekers, the local workforce development system adjusted to virtual service models which include a sample of available services below:

Business Services:

• Utilize local workforce boards to convene virtual industry sector meetings to discuss workforce strategies for an economic recovery
  o Example - development of a frontline healthcare worker COVID-19 Virtual Reality training. Combination of state, private, and philanthropic funds (Eugene, OR)
  o Example – working across regional hospitals, postsecondary institutions, labor unions and licensing entities to fast-track credentials for healthcare workers desperately needed on the front-lines (New York City)
• Virtual Career Fairs to support recruitment and placement for essential workers and employers who are starting to hire as the economy reopens
  o Example – utilizing JobGet and other software to assist in facilitating hiring which is 100% virtual.
  o Example – creation and recruitment of a healthcare portal in MA that connects recently laid off workers collecting UI and who have health care backgrounds with open jobs in long term health care facilities, nursing homes, etc. – places with significant staffing shortages due to COVID.
• Rapid Response/Layoff as employers planned to layoff significant portions of their workforce
  o Connecting companies laying off individuals with those companies who continued to hire during the pandemic
  o Example – Create a business hotline to connect them with all Federal, State, and Local business supports (California)
  o Example – In MA, MassHire BizWorks is holding weekly webinars as employers report sizable layoffs, offering information and assistance with workshare, UI rules and regulations, and other grant programs.
• Direct financial support to employers including On-the-Job Training and Customized Training grants, including:
  o Customized Training to:
    ▪ Assist business in training their staff in vital health and safety precautions due to COVID-19
    ▪ Train existing and returning staff on new production and service approaches (including automated processed) as employers have shifted their business models
On-the-Job Training:
- To defray the costs of bringing on new hires for small to mid-sized employers

Subsidized Employment:
- To assist employers recruit and retain workers from non-traditional pipelines, and defray the cost of wages.

Data:
- Analyzing and sharing regional LMI to assist employers, partners, and job seekers understand the local impact of COVID-19, what industries are being hit hardest, and helping local CEOs and other partners assist those most directly impacted using UI and other relevant data sets.
  - The local system’s connection to the UI system is a significant value in terms of helping those who need to get back to work we know who is unemployed. It allows us to scale solutions directly to those that need to get back to work
  - IL and other states are developing real-time, local insights from analyzing UI claims data to aid in reemployment and recovery efforts, as well as planning and policy development. The data are parsed based not only on geography, but also industry and demographics, including education level, age, and race.

Job/Career-Seeker Services:
- Virtual Enrollment, career assessment and advisement
  - Determine eligibility
  - Determine training/education needs and career goals for WIOA enrolled individuals
  - Attached the supportive services necessary to ensure the individual succeed
- Assistance in navigating and connecting to the Unemployment Insurance system, local career center staff are often the first call for distressed customers unable to get through to process Unemployment Insurance claims; while the staff are unable to directly process claims that provide advice, comfort and connection to ensure people get to the right offices.
- Remote workshops, examples include: Remote Interviewing and Working; Digital Literacy; High School Equivalency Preparation; Resume and job preparation, etc.
- Coordination and navigation of supportive services
  - Food, benefits and shelter assistance
  - Example: Several Career Centers have remained open and have also served as a local food pantry, benefits screening and eligibility, and supports to healthcare services, including mental health during the COVID-19 crisis (Sullivan County, NY)
  - Distribution of PPE
- Continued recruitment and enrollment in training programs.
  - Many in-demand industry (mainly manufacturing) training programs have continued (all but the hands on piece). However, employers have indicated they need people trained for when they start hiring again so Boards have worked with vocational schools and community colleges to get training virtual and continue recruitment so they are ready to go with schools open up again. (MA)