

# COUNTIES AND THE WORKFORCE INNOVATION AND OPPORTUNITY ACT

*Understanding the Federal-State-Local Workforce System  
and Why It Matters to Counties*

**JULY 2019**

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## **GLOSSARY OF TERMS:**

**American Job Centers (AJCs):** AJCs are a key component of the Workforce Investment and Opportunity Act (WIOA), providing free assistance to jobseekers for a variety of career and employment-related needs. Services may include interview practice, employment workshops, hiring events and resource rooms with phones and internet.

The **U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) Employment and Training Administration (ETA)** collaborates with federal agencies such as the **U.S. Departments of Education (ED)** and **Health and Human Services (HHS)** to oversee the WIOA program.

**Workforce Development Boards (WDBs):** WDBs are a central component of the WIOA program. Operating at the state and local levels, WDBs offer flexibility for localities to set workforce policies and goals.

**Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA):** The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 (WIOA) authorizes federal workforce development programs.

**Workforce Investment Act (WIA):** WIA is the federal workforce legislation that preceded the 2014 passage of WIOA.





## **CHAPTER 1**

# **WIOA 101: UNDERSTANDING THE PROGRAM AND ITS ROLE IN OUR NATION'S WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM**



## COUNTIES' WIOA PRIORITIES

- **Counties urge Congress to enact a long-term reauthorization in FY 2021**
- **Funding for WIOA Title I programs should be increased or maintained at FY 2019 levels**
- **Congress should ensure counties maintain flexibility to tailor WIOA programs to meet the needs of local jobseekers and businesses**

## WIOA 101

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) is the 2014 legislation providing federal funding to states and counties for a wide range of workforce development and job training programs for jobseekers and employers. Administered jointly by the U.S. Departments of Labor (DOL) and Education (ED), WIOA empowers state and local governments to connect individuals with in-demand skills training and education, and businesses to skilled jobseekers.

**WIOA operates as a federal, state and local partnership, with counties delivering workforce services directly to local residents via WIOA's workforce development boards (WDBs) and American Job Centers (AJCs).**

Funding for WIOA's five titles is distributed to states and localities based on a set formula that considers factors including a state's population size and unemployment rate. Of WIOA's five titles, Title I: Workforce Development Activities, contains programs that most directly support counties' workforce services. The five titles include:

**Title I: Workforce Development Activities**

**Title II: Adult Education and Literacy**

**Title III: Amendments to the Wagner-Peyser Act**

**Title IV: Vocational Rehabilitative Services**

**Title V: General Provisions**

# WIOA'S FIVE TITLES CONNECT LOCAL RESIDENTS WITH SKILLS TRAINING

## **TITLE I, WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES:**

Title I establishes WIOA's state and local Workforce Development Boards (WDBs) and the one-stop career centers known as American Job Centers (AJCs). Localities work through AJCs to provide career services to residents. **Title I additionally specifies how federal WIOA funds flow down to states and localities.**

## **TITLE II, ADULT EDUCATION AND LITERACY ACT:**

Administered by the U.S. Department of Education (ED), Title II programs serve individuals with barriers to employment, including immigrants, English language-learners and low-income individuals. Title II funding supports adult literacy and basic skills training for employment and postsecondary education.

## **TITLE III, AMENDMENTS TO THE WAGNER-PEYSER ACT:**

Title III integrates the federal Employment Service (ES) into WIOA's one-stop delivery systems, or American Job Centers (AJCs). Administered by the U.S. Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration (DOLETA), ES offices within AJCs offer resources such as job search assistance, career placement and reemployment support for Unemployment Insurance (UI) claimants.

## **TITLE IV, VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES:**

Title IV defines how U.S. Department of Education (ED) funding is allotted to states. This title also authorizes funding for vocational rehabilitation services, with a special focus on improving economic prospects and independent living opportunities for individuals with disabilities. Services may include career coaching, interpreter assistance and funding for books and tuition.

## **TITLE V, GENERAL PROVISIONS:**

Title V outlines WIOA program administration and federal and state data reporting requirements.





## WIOA FUNDING FLOWS FROM THE FEDERAL LEVEL TO STATES AND COUNTIES

### FEDERAL FUNDING

**Competitive grants and emergency funding:** WIOA is a mandated formula grant program that is noncompetitively awarded to state and local agencies, which often operate as Workforce Development Boards (WDBs) or state or local labor departments.

Other federal funds target **disaster recovery efforts and economically-distressed regions.**



### STATES, REGIONS & COUNTIES

From the state level, funding is allocated to **state labor or workforce departments.** These departments then distribute funds to local WDBs.

The **funding formula** is based on factors such as the state's total population, unemployment rate, poverty level and the WIOA program resources required to serve residents.



## **CHAPTER 2**

# **WIOA'S FEDERAL, STATE AND LOCAL PARTNERSHIP**



## **WIOA OPERATES AS A FEDERAL, STATE AND LOCAL PARTNERSHIP**

**Counties are an integral part of the federal, state and local partnership in WIOA. Across the country, counties administer local resources for economic and workforce development in our communities.**

State and county officials collaborate through Workforce Development Boards (WDBs) to set policies for the local workforce system and map out workforce and economic development goals.

Local WDBs implement strategic goals and develop plans to integrate education and workforce activities within our communities. Counties are involved in 90 percent of the nation's 550 local WDBs. Nearly 30 percent of WDBs operate within a county department or as a county agency.

Coordinated by the U.S. Department of Labor and state and local WDBs, American Jobs Centers (AJCs) deliver career resources to local jobseekers and businesses. There are more than 2,400 centers across the country.

**Through the federal, state and local partnership, WIOA serves approximately 20 million residents each year.**

# STATES AND COUNTIES ADMINISTER WIOA'S SIX CORE PROGRAMS

WIOA requires states to administer **six core programs** in partnership with local authorities. States and counties can tailor these programs to meet jobseekers' and employers' needs.



## Adult Services Program:

Provides individualized career training services to job seekers above the age of 18, with priority given to low-income individuals receiving public assistance.



## Adult Education and Literacy Program:

Provides basic skills training to eligible adults (16 years and older) that have barriers to employment, including English language learners, immigrants and low-income individuals.



## Dislocated Workers Program:

Provides training, job search aid and other assistance for workers that are about to be laid off or have been laid off.



## Rehabilitation Services Program:

Provides counseling, medical services and job training to individuals with physical or mental disabilities. State funding is determined based on population size.



## Youth Services Program:

Provides training and education to individuals between the ages of 14 and 24, focusing primarily on youth who are out of school and face barriers to employment.



## Wagner-Peyser/Labor Exchange Program:

Provides services to job seekers and employers free of charge to find jobs and new employees respectively.





## STATES DEVELOP WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PLANS THAT ENGAGE LOCAL AND REGIONAL RESOURCES

WIOA requires states to submit either a **unified** or **combined** state plan to the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) that outlines a four-year strategy for implementation of the state's workforce development system, including any regional or local resources being used.

State plans also detail how WIOA collaborates with federal programs such as the **Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program** and the **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)** to promote the state's workforce goals and residents' economic well-being.

### UNIFIED STATE PLAN

A **unified state plan** must cover the six core formula grant programs:

- Adult Services Program
- Dislocated Worker Program
- Youth Services Program
- Adult Education and Literacy Program
- Rehabilitation Services Program
- Wagner-Peyser/Labor Exchange Program

### COMBINED STATE PLAN

A **combined plan** builds on the unified plan to include eligible partner programs, such as the **Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program** or the **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)**. WIOA collaborates with these separate federal programs to offer wraparound services to low-income individuals.

## STATES HAVE FLEXIBILITY TO LINK WIOA WITH OTHER FEDERAL SAFETY-NET PROGRAMS

Many states use WIOA funds for other activities including child care, early childhood education and transportation. In addition, WIOA funds may be transferred to other programs such as the **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)** and the **Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program (TANF)**.

Funding for **SNAP** and **TANF** are top policy priorities for NACo as both programs provide services to ensure access to critical resources for low-income parents and children.







## **CHAPTER 3**

# **HOW COUNTIES ADMINISTER AND DELIVER WIOA TO LOCAL RESIDENTS**



## **COUNTIES SERVE RESIDENTS THROUGH WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARDS AND AMERICAN JOB CENTERS**

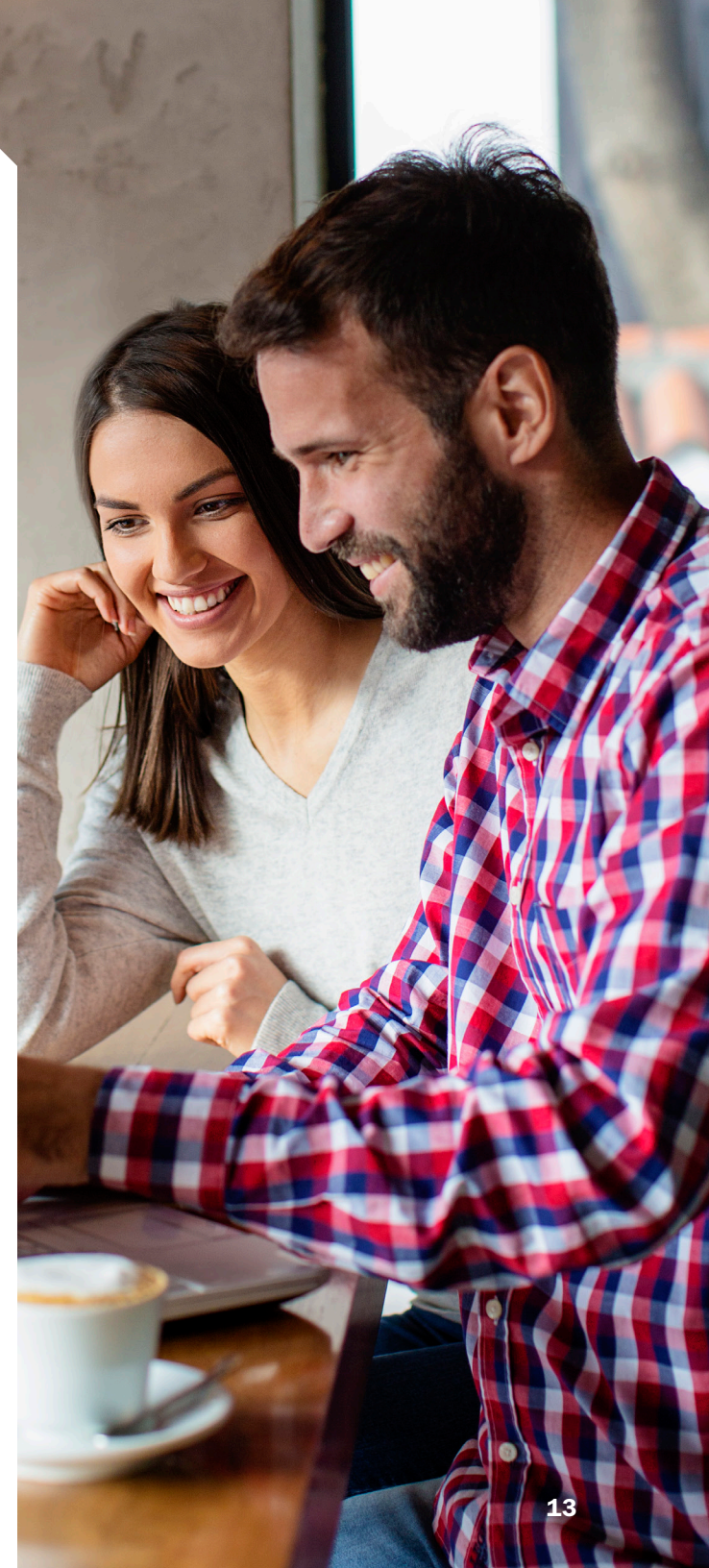
### **WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARDS**

At the county level, Workforce Development Boards (WDBs) set policies for and oversee WIOA programs and services



### **AMERICAN JOB CENTERS**

American Job Centers (AJCs) operate as partnerships between local agencies, social services providers and businesses to provide one-stop career services to local jobseekers and businesses



Local WDBs bring together county and city elected officials, leaders from local agencies and education, labor and community-based organizations to focus on workforce development initiatives. Board members are appointed by local elected officials and must include 19 representatives.

## **COUNTIES PLAN WORKFORCE STRATEGIES THROUGH ORGANIZATION OF WDBS**

**WIOA Title I requires each state to establish a state WDB to carry out WIOA's program goals and oversee job centers in each state. States oversee the operation of local WDBs.**

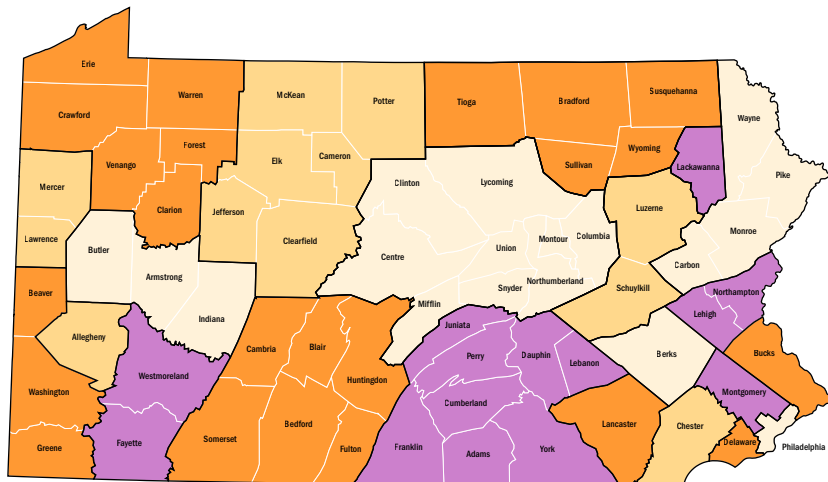
**Local WDBs can be made up of one county or several and develop strategic plans and set funding priorities for their jurisdictions. The chief elected official of the local government is responsible for appointing members to the WDB.**

**Local WDBs oversee American Job Centers (AJCs), which provide education and training services directly to residents.**

# COUNTY ORGANIZATION OF WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARDS VARIES

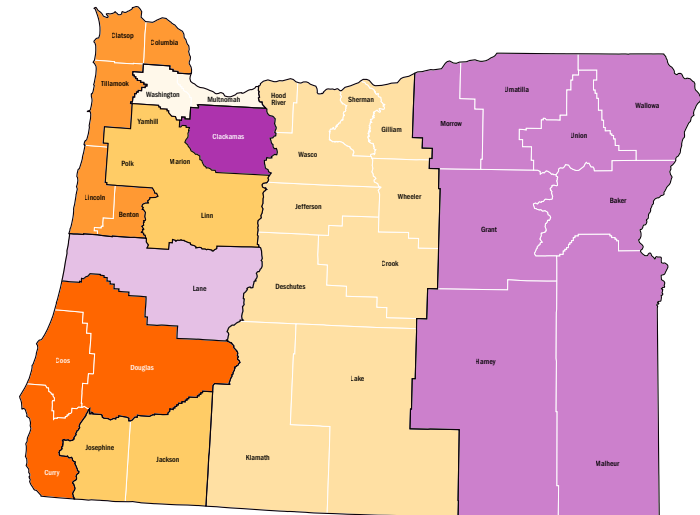
At the local and regional level, WDBs can be made up of one county or several and, based on local need, deliver a variety of tailored education and training services to residents. Local elected officials are responsible for appointing members to the board, which must include representatives from local businesses and education, labor and community-based organizations.

## Pennsylvania's Local Workforce Boards



Pennsylvania is organized into 18 different local WDBs

## Oregon's Local Workforce Boards



Oregon is organized into nine different local WDBs





## **LOCAL WDBS OVERSEE THE OPERATION OF AMERICAN JOB CENTERS, WHICH DIRECTLY SERVE COUNTY RESIDENTS**

In addition to coordinating state and local workforce development activities, WDBs also oversee **American Job Centers (AJCs)**. These centers operate as partnerships between government, education and community-based providers to deliver hands-on resources to local jobseekers and businesses

AJCs offer an array of employment services for local jobseekers, who may be required to enroll with a center if they file for Unemployment Insurance (UI). Resources for jobseekers may include mock interview practice, internet access, veterans services and career development guidance.

AJCs also offer resources for local businesses, such as recruitment events and apprenticeship information.

**AJCs are jointly administered by the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) and state and local Workforce Development Boards (WDBs).**

# ACROSS THE COUNTRY, MORE THAN 2,400 AMERICAN JOB CENTERS DELIVER JOB RESOURCES TO LOCAL RESIDENTS

State and local WDBs are responsible for implementing service delivery at American Job Centers, and have flexibility to tailor WIOA's requirements to the needs of local jobseekers and businesses.

Services offered at American Job Centers (AJCs) vary based on whether the AJC is categorized as **comprehensive** or an **affiliate** center. **Comprehensive AJCs** offer an array of employment and training services for jobseekers, businesses and youth. These services, which can include resource rooms with computer and internet access and on-site support staff, are offered to residents free of charge. **Affiliate AJCs** offer similar resources to local communities, but may be more limited in scope.

## American Job Centers

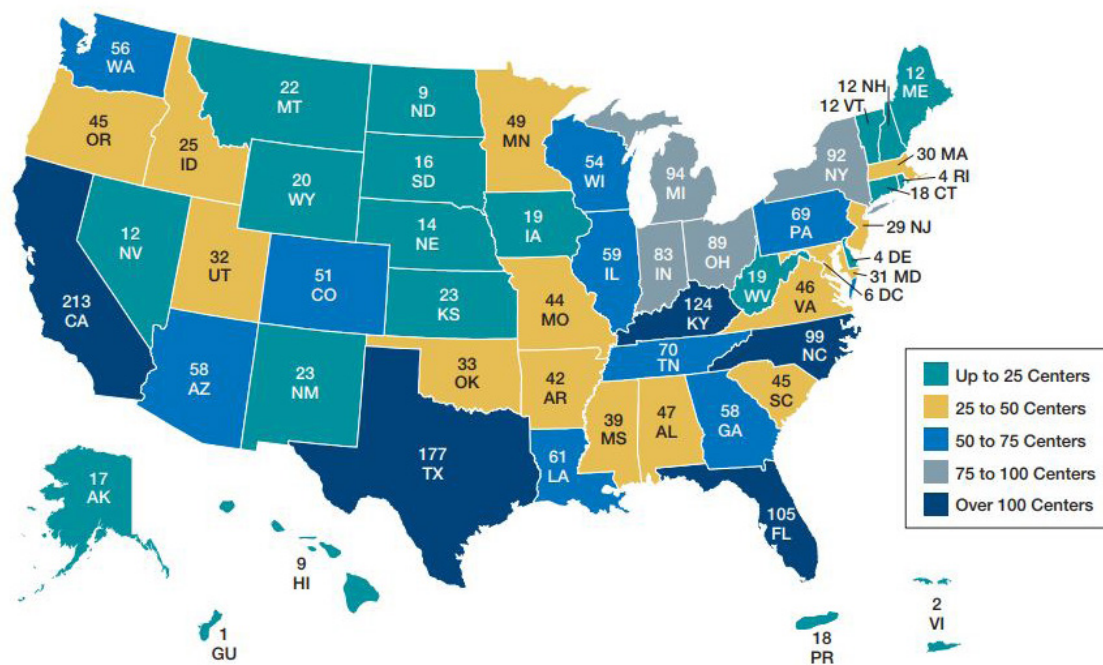
Total: 2,441 (Mapped)

Comprehensive: 1,617

Affiliate: 824



Source: America's Service Locator ([www.ServiceLocator.org](http://www.ServiceLocator.org))



# COUNTIES INNOVATE WITH WIOA TITLE I PROGRAMS TO SERVE LOW-INCOME POPULATIONS



## Career Couture

Suffolk County, N.Y.

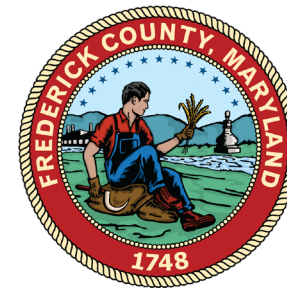
The Suffolk County, N.Y. One-Stop Employment Center partnered with the Suffolk County Executive's Office and the Education and Assistance Corporation (EAC) Network to launch Career Couture, a free clothing boutique for men and women lacking proper business attire when applying for employment. Suffolk County's One-Stop launched the program after learning from employers that although job seekers were qualified, their appearance inhibited their chances of employment.



## FastTRAC Adult Career Pathways

Washington County, Minn.

Following the Great Recession, Washington County, Minn. worked with the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development to establish the FastTRAC Adult Career Pathways program, which trains adults facing barriers to employment for high-demand careers. As part of the FastTRAC program, Washington County partnered with the South Washington County Schools Adult Basic Education (ABE) program and a local community college to offer a combined program of basic skills education and rapid training for locally-available jobs.



## Earn and Learn Program

Frederick County, Md.

Frederick County, Md. piloted the Maryland Youth Apprenticeship "Earn and Learn" Program, which operates as a WIOA-coordinated partnership across the county public school system, Maryland Department of Labor and community business partners. The program emphasizes occupational tracks in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) for participating students to learn technical skills while preparing for their careers.





## **CHAPTER 4**

### **CHALLENGES FOR COUNTY GOVERNMENTS**



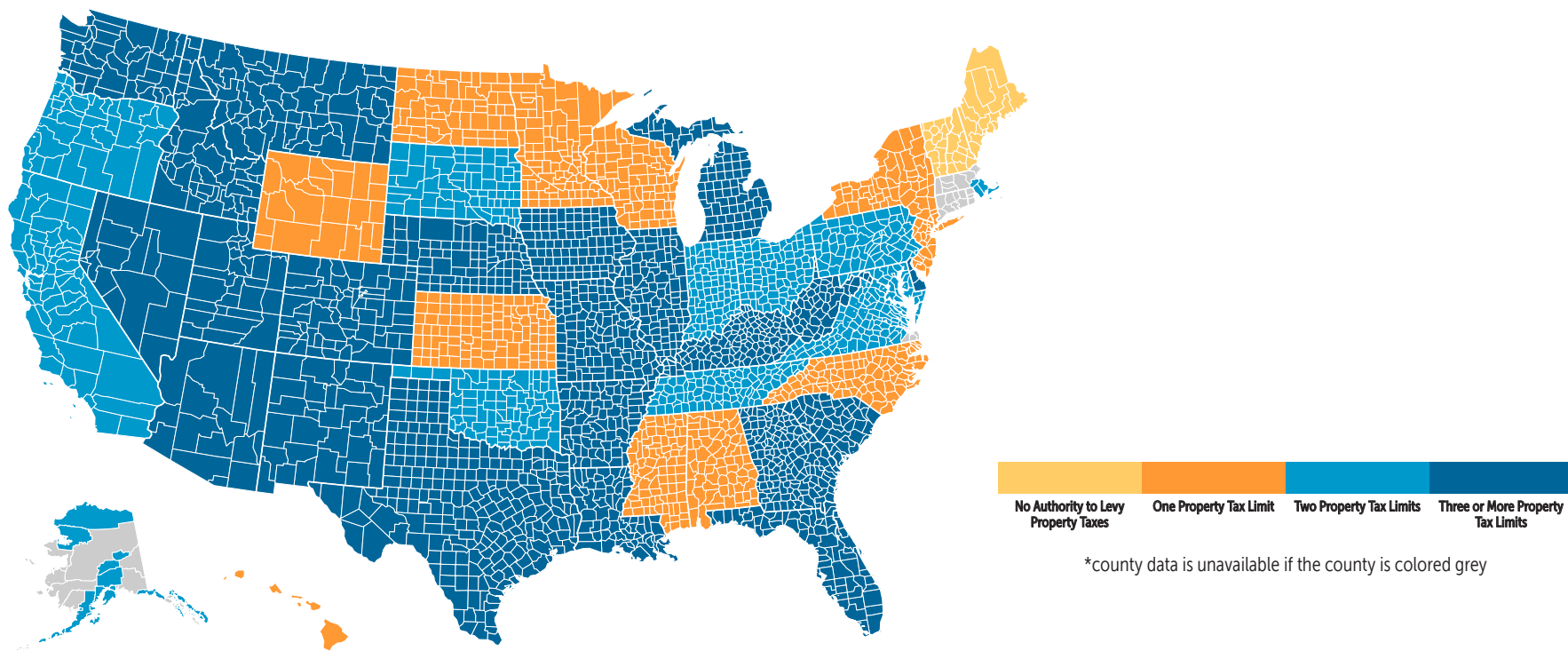
## MAJOR CHALLENGE: MANY STATES LIMIT COUNTIES' ABILITY TO RAISE REVENUE FOR SOCIAL SERVICE NEEDS

Although the need for workforce and education programs is critical for communities across the country, many states place limits on counties' already limited options for raising revenue.

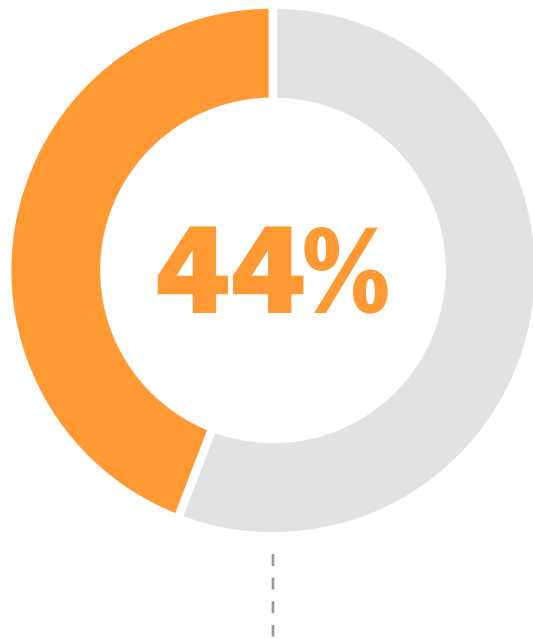
In fact, **45 states** impose some form of county property tax limits, affecting the main revenue source for counties.

At the same time, many states mandate delivery of safety-net services, often forcing counties to choose between critical programs.

### STATE PROPERTY TAX LIMITATIONS FOR COUNTIES, AS OF APRIL 2017



Source: NACo County Explorer [explorer.naco.org](http://explorer.naco.org), NACo interviews with state associations, as well as county and state officials; NACo analysis of state legislation.



of county officials mentioned  
that their county **reduced and/or  
eliminated programs and services  
because of budget constraints** in  
their last fiscal year

## **MAJOR CHALLENGE: COUNTIES' ABILITY TO RAISE REVENUE**

Given the fiscal limitations counties already face from states, the federal government's commitment to programs helping those most in need and to supporting local stakeholders and service providers is increasingly crucial.

Without the support of federal and state funds, many counties would have to reduce service levels for critical programs and cut any non-mandated services, such as workforce and economic development activities.

In a 2016 NACo survey, 44 percent of county officials mentioned that their county reduced and/or eliminated programs and services because of budget constraints in their last fiscal year.

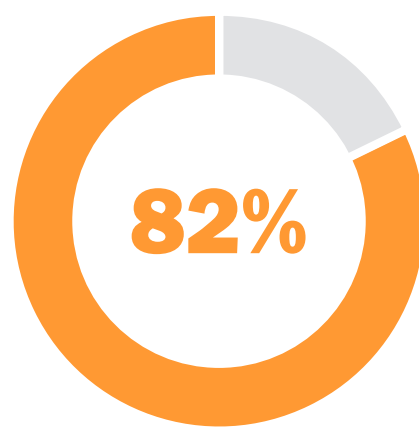


## SNAPSHOT OF COUNTY WORKFORCE ACTIVITIES

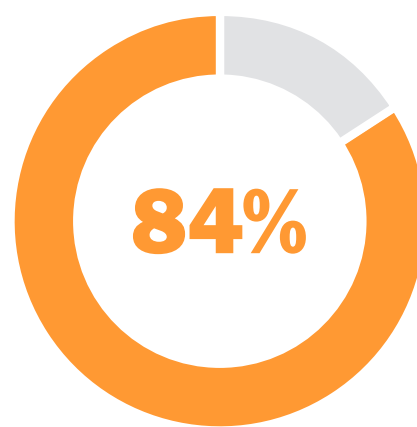
Despite these fiscal limitations, counties invest heavily in workforce development for residents. Operating on the frontlines of local and regional economic trends, counties engage local resources to address complex challenges such as unemployment and underemployment.



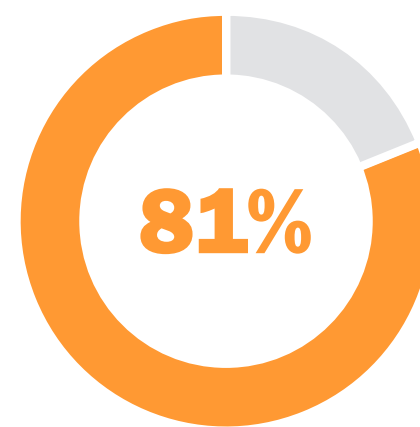
of counties **participate in economic development activities**, including workforce development, business recruitment and retention, regional marketing, small business support and infrastructure investment



of counties report using general revenue funds for economic development, while just **31 percent report using federal grants** (large counties are much more likely to utilize federal grants)



of counties have **formed workforce training partnerships** with local chambers of commerce, cities, state governments or regional economic development organizations



of counties **contribute funding directly** to economic development partnerships, and over half contribute staff; workforce training is the top reported use for these partnerships

Source: Istrate et al, Strong Economies, Resilient Counties, NACo, July 2014





## **CHAPTER 5**

# **KEY MESSAGES FOR ADVOCACY: TELLING YOUR COUNTY'S STORY**





## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CONGRESS

The current WIOA authorization will expire at the end of fiscal year (FY) 2020. As Congress prepares to reauthorize WIOA and enhance our nation's workforce system, counties urge legislators to:

### **Enact a five-year reauthorization of the WIOA program.**

A long-term renewal of WIOA will provide counties with the funding certainty needed to deliver program resources to our residents.

### **Increase or maintain funding for WIOA Title I programs as Congress considers FY 2020 appropriations.**

Title I programs help counties address economic challenges and promote economic growth in our communities.

### **Protect counties' authority over WIOA program administration.**

Counties operate on the frontlines of delivering career resources to local jobseekers and businesses.

### **Provide enhanced flexibility to counties.**

Counties operate on the frontlines of responding to local economic conditions, and require additional flexibility to meet the needs of our local jobseekers and businesses.



## KEY TALKING POINTS

### Counties play a central role in WIOA's federal, state and local partnership.

Local Workforce Development Boards (WDBs) implement workforce goals and coordinate with federal programs to deliver services to residents. Counties are involved in 90 percent of the nation's 550 WDBs, and nearly 30 percent of WDBs operate within a county department or as a county agency. Together with states, counties administer and deliver WIOA's six core programs to residents.

### Counties operate on the frontlines of responding to local and regional economic challenges and require flexibility and resources to address these issues.

Counties are well-positioned to address economic challenges in our communities, such as unemployment or an economic downturn. To respond quickly to these challenges, counties require flexibility and funding resources. Many states limit counties' ability to raise revenue for social services. However, counties invest heavily in workforce development programs and activities.

### Congress should make continued investments in WIOA as program reauthorization approaches.

As Congress considers WIOA reauthorization in FY 2021, NACo urges continued and increased investments in our nation's system of workforce programs to ensure counties have the resources to innovate and serve our residents.



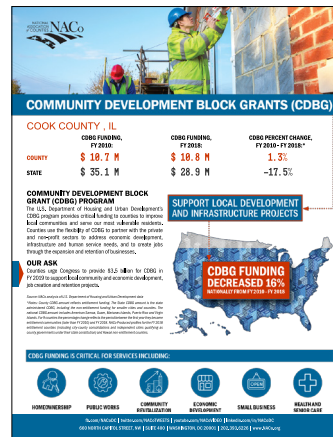


## TAKE ACTION!

**Invite your Member of Congress to attend a local workforce board meeting or community college.** A tour provides an opportunity for legislators to see their contribution to constituents and for local officials to provide feedback on federal programs.

**Amplify personal stories from local jobseekers and businesses who have benefited from WIOA's services.** Sharing personal stories helps federal legislators put a face to policy issues.

**Use data to share your county's story.** Data from NACo's County Explorer can demonstrate how your county delivers job training and education resources and invests in the local workforce. NACo's County Explorer is available at: <http://explorer.naco.org/>



For more information and resources, please visit NACo's website at <http://explorer.naco.org/>



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