

Sullivan County

Workforce Development Board

Strategic Plan | 2026 – 2029

Center for Workforce Development • Career Center • Community Partners

Mission & Core Values

Mission: Our mission is to support the evolution of employment and sustainable business growth in Sullivan County.

Organizational Core Values

We believe in the following shared principles, beliefs, and priorities:

- **Excellence** — We believe in setting standards of excellence and quality for the delivery of services.
- **Equity** — We believe that access to education, training, and learning are the great equalizers that create opportunities for full participation in society.
- **Community** — We believe that a stronger workforce leads to a healthier community and economy.

Executive Summary

The Sullivan County Workforce Development Board (WDB) serves as the strategic backbone of the county's employment and economic growth ecosystem. Operating under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), the WDB brings together private sector leaders, education and training providers, and community organizations to ensure that Sullivan County residents and businesses have the tools, connections, and support they need to thrive.

This three-year strategic plan — covering program years 2026 through 2029 — was developed through a collaborative process involving WDB members, the Center for Workforce Development (CWD), and community stakeholders. It reflects both the realities of Sullivan County's labor market today and a shared ambition for where we want the local workforce system to be in three years.

Sullivan County presents a distinctive set of opportunities and challenges. As a largely rural county with a growing healthcare and government sector, a strong hospitality sector, a fluctuating seasonal employment cycle, and a population that includes many individuals with barriers to employment, our strategies must be intentional, flexible, and rooted in genuine community partnership.

This plan is organized around three core strategies:

- **Strategy 1:** Services for Sullivan County Adults — Building career pathways, promoting inclusion, removing barriers, addressing underemployment, and expanding system visibility.
- **Strategy 2:** Services for Sullivan County Youth (Ages 14–24) — Increasing engagement, expanding access to work experience, and building the resilience young people need to succeed.
- **Strategy 3:** Services for Sullivan County Businesses — Strengthening communication, improving talent development tools, and connecting employers with underserved populations.

Three-Year Outcomes the Board Is Committed to Achieving:

- Increase the entered employment rate for adults served by the Career Center to 75% or above.
- Achieve a 70% six-month employment retention rate for all adults who enter employment through WDB-funded programs.
- Increase median earnings at placement by 10% over the plan period, with an emphasis on full-time employment in demand sectors.
- Credential attainment for 65% of adults completing training programs.
- Enroll a minimum of 150 in-school and out-of-school youth annually, with 60% achieving a credential, employment, or post-secondary enrollment outcome.
- Engage a minimum of 50 unique employer partners per year across the three strategies.
- Conduct annual data reviews at the board level using WIOA performance metrics and local labor market intelligence to adjust strategy as needed.

Sullivan County Labor Market Context

Effective strategy requires a clear understanding of the environment in which we operate. The following snapshot reflects key labor market conditions that shape the priorities in this plan. The WDB commits to updating this environmental analysis annually as part of its strategic review process.

Key Labor Market Realities

- Sullivan County's economy is anchored in hospitality and tourism, healthcare, government, retail, and construction — sectors with significant variation in wage levels and employment stability. Growth in the Catskills hospitality corridor and ongoing healthcare expansion at Garnet Health represent significant near-term opportunities for workforce placement.
- The county faces a persistent tension between seasonal employment peaks and year-round labor shortages in healthcare, skilled trades, and transportation. Workforce strategies must account for this cycle and proactively support workers during off-peak periods.
- Geographic barriers remain a real constraint. Sullivan County's rural geography limits access to training, transportation, and services for many residents. Remote and hybrid work opportunities — where viable — represent an important avenue for expanding employment access.
- A meaningful portion of the county's adult population lacks a high school diploma or equivalent, and many residents face compounding barriers including housing instability, limited English proficiency, justice involvement, and disability. Effective service delivery must account for the full range of individuals we serve.
- The growing influence of technology and automation — including artificial intelligence — is reshaping entry-level and mid-skill occupations across all of our major industry sectors. Career pathways and training programs must evolve to reflect the skills employers will require in three to five years, not just today.
- Sullivan County's workforce is aging, and younger residents are not entering the labor market at a rate sufficient to meet current and projected employer demand. Youth engagement and retention strategies are a long-term economic imperative, not simply a program requirement.

WIOA Performance Accountability Framework

All strategies and goals in this plan are designed to advance the Sullivan County WDB's performance under the six primary WIOA performance indicators. The Board recognizes that federal and state accountability standards are a floor, not a ceiling — our aim is to consistently perform above negotiated levels while ensuring that metrics never drive us to serve only the easiest-to-place individuals.

Primary WIOA Performance Indicators (Adults and Dislocated Workers)

- Employment Rate — 2nd Quarter After Exit
- Employment Rate — 4th Quarter After Exit
- Median Earnings — 2nd Quarter After Exit
- Credential Attainment Rate
- Measurable Skills Gains (during program participation)
- Effectiveness in Serving Employers

The Board will receive a quarterly performance dashboard prepared by the Commissioner/Director and CWD staff. The dashboard will present actual performance against negotiated levels, trend lines, and a plain-language narrative explaining significant variances. The Board's Executive Committee will review performance quarterly; the full Board will conduct a formal annual performance review tied to the strategic plan.

WIOA Program Year 2025 Performance Measures (July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2026)

WIOA Performance Measure	Adult	Dislocated Worker	Youth
Employment (2ndQ after exit)	66%	66.5%	60.5%
Employment (4thQ after exit)	66%	65%	60.5%
Median Earnings	\$7,900	\$7850.	\$3,700
Credential Attainment	55.5%	53.5%	54.5%
Measurable Skills Gain	61.5%	55.5%	52.5%

Strategy 1: Services for Sullivan County Adults

Sullivan County adults represent the core of the local workforce. Whether entering the labor market for the first time, navigating a career transition, seeking to advance beyond entry-level work, or returning after a period of unemployment, every adult who comes through the workforce system deserves access to clear pathways, practical support, and connections to real opportunity. The five goals under this strategy address the full continuum of adult workforce needs — from skills and industry alignment to barrier removal, underemployment, and system visibility.

Goal 1.1 — Enhance Workforce Skills and Industry Alignment

Objective: Create career pathways for individuals to develop new or enhance existing skills that are tailored to current and emerging industries in Sullivan County, and strategically partner with training and education providers to ensure alignment with local business needs, emerging industry trends, and the educational aspirations of individuals seeking opportunity.

Rationale

- Career pathways are the foundation upon which workforce partners strategically allocate resources to employment areas that provide the most sustainable opportunities for jobseekers — regardless of where an individual may start.
- Prioritizing services within growth sectors benefits both businesses seeking qualified candidates and individuals seeking stable, advancing careers.
- It is a significant advantage for individuals exploring training and education to understand which industry sectors are currently robust and which are emerging, so they can make informed investment decisions about their time and resources.
- While the focus is first at the local level, we must also look regionally to ensure all options are visible and accessible. This regional awareness positions individuals for the best chance of long-term employment success.
- As automation and artificial intelligence reshape entry-level and mid-skill occupations, career pathway design must anticipate future skill needs — not simply reflect the jobs available today.
- All workers need access to training, education, and work-based learning in order to thrive in the local and regional economy.

Action Steps

1. Analyze current labor market data — including LMI, employer surveys, and NYSDOL occupational projections — to identify resilient and emerging industry sectors to concentrate training resources. Update this analysis annually.
2. Catalogue existing career pathways at both the local and regional level; identify gaps and work with education and training partners to fill them.
3. Work with education and training partners to incorporate work readiness skills and foundational digital competencies into all career programs.
4. Educate jobseekers, partners, and the broader community on local opportunities, available career pathways, and the skills employers are seeking — with particular attention to how technology and AI are changing work in Sullivan County's key sectors.

Success Metrics & Accountability

Success Metric	Year 1 Target	Year 3 Target	Lead
Career pathways documented and published	1 sector pathways mapped	3+ sector pathways mapped	WDB Director / CWD Director
Training completions in demand sectors	Baseline established	10% increase over baseline	CWD Director
Employer partners confirming skill alignment	10 employers surveyed	85% report alignment	WDB / CWD
WIOA credential attainment rate	Meet negotiated level	Exceed by 5+ points	CWD Director

Implementation Phasing

Action Step	Phase	Timeline	Lead
Conduct LMI analysis; identify priority sectors	Near-Term	Months 1–6	WDB Director / CWD Director
Catalogue local and regional career pathways	Near-Term	Months 3–9	WDB Director / CWD Director
Integrate work readiness into all programs	Mid-Term	Year 1–2	CWD / Partners
Launch community career pathway awareness effort	Mid-Term	Year 1–2	CWD / Outreach
Incorporate AI/technology skills into pathways	Mid-Term	Year 2	CWD / Partners
Annual pathway review and update cycle	Ongoing	Annual	WDB Board

Goal 1.2 — Promote Inclusion in the Workplace

Objective: Build a culture — at every level of the workforce system — grounded in policies and actions that reflect the lived experiences of all workers. Offer business leaders access to proven best practices for building, recruiting, and retaining a diverse, respectful, and engaged workforce.

Rationale

- Inclusion is both the right commitment and a practical economic strategy. Sullivan County businesses that build inclusive cultures are better positioned to recruit from the full available labor pool, reduce costly turnover, and remain competitive.
- The rural nature of Sullivan County requires a more intentional approach to inclusion — one that may expand traditional recruitment practices, enhance hybrid and flexible employment opportunities, and thoughtfully address the needs of multiple generations in the workforce.
- Creating and actively leading a workplace environment that fosters innovation, creativity, acceptance, and empathy is necessary for businesses to remain relevant and resilient.
- A workplace culture that is respectful and engaged builds community resiliency and grows the local economy for everyone.

Action Steps

5. Develop practical learning opportunities for business leaders to maximize their recruitment and retention efforts, including accessible formats such as workshops, toolkits, and peer learning cohorts.
6. Identify and build learning partnerships with businesses and organizations that have made inclusion a demonstrated priority, and leverage their experience to accelerate learning across the business community.
7. Identify career expectations and motivations across generational groups in the local workforce and customize employer guidance and programming accordingly.

Success Metrics & Accountability

Success Metric	Year 1 Target	Year 3 Target	Lead
Businesses participating in inclusion-focused learning	10 businesses engaged	30 businesses engaged	WDB / CWD
Employer-reported improvement in retention (survey)	Baseline survey completed	25% report improvement	CWD Director
Multi-generational workforce resources developed	1 toolkit/guide	3 tools/resources	CWD Staff

Implementation Phasing

Action Step	Phase	Timeline	Lead
Develop employer inclusion toolkit	Near-Term	Months 4–10	CWD / WDB
Identify and recruit learning partner businesses	Near-Term	Months 6–12	WDB Chair / CWD
Launch generational workforce learning series	Mid-Term	Year 1–2	CWD / Partners
Annual employer survey on retention/inclusion	Ongoing	Annual	CWD Director

Goal 1.3 — Remove Barriers and Increase Accessibility

Objective: Identify and actively work to remove the structural and cultural barriers that prevent individuals from accessing and succeeding in training and employment. Develop an innovative, responsive training approach that meets people where they are — including programming outside traditional hours — and ensure all programs maximize participation through supportive resources and reasonable accommodations.

Rationale

- New skills and tools must be continuously developed to ensure economic success at every level — for business leaders, workers, and the community as a whole.
- Businesses need support as they evolve and develop new ways to recruit, train, and retain their workforce. The workforce system is a natural partner in this evolution.
- Many of the individuals most in need of workforce services face compounding challenges — transportation gaps, childcare responsibilities, housing instability, legal history, disability, or limited English proficiency. Addressing these barriers is not a secondary concern; it is central to effective service delivery.
- Building strong relationships with partners outside the traditional workforce system — including social service agencies, housing providers, transportation networks, and community health organizations — is essential for addressing the full spectrum of obstacles jobseekers face.

Action Steps

8. Target community outreach to address preconceived perceptions and stigma about individuals coming through the workforce system, and to broaden understanding of the system's purpose and scope among employers.
9. Assist businesses in identifying workforce needs and developing recruitment and retention solutions that lead to success in hiring and retaining individuals from untapped talent pools.
10. Ensure the direct provision of — or clear referral pathways to — supportive services and life skills training that help jobseekers successfully enroll in, participate in, and complete education and training programs.

11. Expand the use of online and hybrid learning platforms, both as standalone resources and aligned with classroom instruction, to reduce geographic and scheduling barriers for participants.

Success Metrics & Accountability

Success Metric	Year 1 Target	Year 3 Target	Lead
Participants referred to or receiving supportive services	Baseline established	20% increase over baseline	CWD Director
Programs offered outside traditional 9–5 hours	Assess current inventory	2+ non-traditional options	CWD Staff
Online/hybrid learning options available	Catalogue existing options	3+ platform options active	CWD Staff

Implementation Phasing

Action Step	Phase	Timeline	Lead
Map current supportive services and gaps	Near-Term	Months 1–6	CWD Director
Develop community outreach messaging re: system	Near-Term	Months 3–9	CWD / Outreach
Launch non-traditional hour programming	Mid-Term	Year 1–2	CWD Staff
Formalize partner agency referral agreements	Mid-Term	Year 1–2	CWD Director
Expand online learning platform offerings	Mid-Term	Year 2	CWD Staff

Goal 1.4 — Address Underemployment and Support Adult Education

Objective: Educate and support adult workers to become self-reliant through meaningful, quality employment — not simply any job. Build a robust and responsive support system that includes alternative modes of learning, upskilling and reskilling opportunities, and meaningful mentoring that helps workers advance.

Rationale

- The economic health of Sullivan County is measured not only by the number of jobs, but by the quality of those jobs. A workforce system that helps people get any job has succeeded only partially; one that helps people build careers has succeeded in full.
- Underemployment — working in a role that does not reflect a person's skills, credentials, or earning potential — is a quiet drag on household stability and community economic growth. It deserves focused strategic attention.
- The system needs to continuously strengthen services such as career development counseling, upskilling and reskilling, job search assistance, networking, and other supportive services that help workers advance.
- Adult education — including high school equivalency preparation, English language acquisition, and digital literacy — is not a separate system; it is a critical on-ramp to the career pathway network.

Action Steps

12. Develop a structured, easy-to-navigate system for accessing short-term training in high-demand occupations, including clear entry points for individuals currently employed but seeking advancement.

13. Consistently inform jobseekers and businesses about changes in the local and regional economy — including the impact of technology and industry shifts — so Sullivan County operates proactively rather than reactively.
14. Build formal connections between the Career Center and adult education providers (including BOCES and community college) to create seamless transitions between basic skills programs and occupational training.

Success Metrics & Accountability

Success Metric	Year 1 Target	Year 3 Target	Lead
Adults advancing from entry-level to living wage employment	Baseline established	15% of served adults advance	CWD Director
Short-term training completions in demand occupations	Baseline established	10% increase over baseline	CWD Staff
Adults co-enrolled in adult education and workforce	Track co-enrollment	20% increase over baseline	CWD / Partners
WIOA median earnings at 2nd quarter post-exit	Meet negotiated level	10% above negotiated level	CWD Director

Implementation Phasing

Action Step	Phase	Timeline	Lead
Establish underemployment baseline and define target population	Near-Term	Months 1–6	WDB Director / CWD Director
Map adult education referral pathways	Near-Term	Months 3–9	CWD / Partners
Launch upskilling/reskilling program tracks	Mid-Term	Year 1–2	CWD Staff
Quarterly economy/labor market updates to partners	Ongoing	Quarterly	WDB Director / CWD Director

Goal 1.5 — Enhance Visibility and Access to Opportunities

Objective: Raise the profile of the Sullivan County workforce development system by ensuring ease of access to Career Center and partner services for both residents and businesses. Develop and execute a coordinated, multi-channel outreach strategy that embeds visibility into daily operations.

Rationale

- The strength of the local workforce system is its ability to respond to the needs of both jobseekers and businesses — but that strength is only realized when both customer groups know the system exists, understand what it offers, and trust it to deliver.
- The workforce system must expand its current reach through a coordinated, persistent outreach plan that is both persuasive and flexible enough to respond to changing conditions.
- Incorporating all outreach options — active and passive, digital and in-person — is essential. Outreach is not a campaign; it is a daily practice that must be embedded in every staff member's role.
- Partner organizations are force multipliers for system visibility. Aligning partner outreach plans creates a consistent message across many more touchpoints than the Career Center can reach alone.

Action Steps

15. Review customer flow procedures within the Career Center and partner agencies to ensure that intake, referral, and service processes are relevant, efficient, and customer-centered.
16. Develop regular opportunities for Career Center and partner staff to receive current labor market information, so every staff member can serve as a knowledgeable guide for jobseekers and employers alike.
17. Work to align all partner outreach plans to include consistent linkages to the local workforce system, creating a unified community message about available services.
18. Equip staff with clear, compelling key statements about the system's value and their specific role in the community, ensuring every interaction is also an opportunity to build trust and awareness.
19. Leverage digital platforms — including social media, email communications, and the Career Center website — to maintain a consistent, accessible presence for both jobseekers and employers.

Success Metrics & Accountability

Success Metric	Year 1 Target	Year 3 Target	Lead
New adult enrollments per year	Establish baseline	10% increase over baseline	CWD Director
Partner agencies with aligned outreach plans	2 partners aligned	5+ partners aligned	CWD / Partners
Employer contacts per year (new employers)	Establish baseline	20% increase over baseline	CWD Staff
Digital platform engagement (reach/interactions)	Establish baseline	25% increase over baseline	CWD / Outreach

Implementation Phasing

Action Step	Phase	Timeline	Lead
Conduct customer flow audit at Career Center	Near-Term	Months 1–4	CWD Director
Develop staff messaging guide for system visibility	Near-Term	Months 3–6	CWD Director
Launch coordinated partner outreach alignment	Mid-Term	Year 1	CWD / Partners
Establish digital presence and cadence	Mid-Term	Year 1	CWD Staff
Annual outreach plan review	Ongoing	Annual	WDB Board

Strategy 2: Services for Sullivan County Youth (Ages 14–24)

The Sullivan County Workforce Development Board ensures implementation of all 14 mandatory Youth program elements outlined in WIOA Title I, Section 129. These elements are provided directly through the Center for Workforce Development and the Career Center, or through formal agreements with partners and other community agencies.

Youth workforce services are not simply a younger version of adult services. Young people — particularly the out-of-school youth targeted by WIOA — often arrive at the workforce system with a complex combination of unfinished education, limited work experience, and personal challenges that require a different kind of support structure. At the same time, they bring energy, adaptability, and potential that, properly supported, represents Sullivan County's most important long-term workforce investment.

Goal 2.1 — Increase Youth Engagement in Workforce Opportunities

Objective: Equip youth ages 14–24 with the skills, credentials, and work experience necessary to secure meaningful employment and advance in their careers. Develop structured opportunities for youth to build life skills — including confidence, resilience, decision-making, and interpersonal effectiveness — that prepare them not just for a first job, but for a career.

Rationale

- Aligning the current generation of young people entering the workforce with Sullivan County's established and emerging business community is both an economic imperative and a social one. When young people succeed locally, they are more likely to stay, build, and invest in the county.
- Many youth served by the local workforce system are navigating secondary education, credential completion, or transition from school to work simultaneously. Program design must meet them where they are.
- Life skills — the ability to communicate professionally, manage conflict, follow through on commitments, and advocate for oneself — are as important to long-term employment success as technical skills, and must be explicitly included in all youth programming.

Action Steps

20. Convene a standing task force of youth participants, employers, and workforce partners to regularly assess youth program design and identify emerging gaps between young workers and employer expectations. This group should meet at least twice annually and generate actionable recommendations.
21. Develop and implement pre-work experience training modules that prepare youth for the expectations of the workplace — including professionalism, punctuality, communication, and workplace safety — before entering work experience placements.
22. Track youth voice and satisfaction throughout programming; use feedback systematically to improve program design and staff approach.

Success Metrics & Accountability

Success Metric	Year 1 Target	Year 3 Target	Lead
Youth enrolled annually (based on funding)	Establish baseline / 30 target	50+ per year sustained	CWD Youth Staff
Youth completing pre-work training modules	All work experience participants	100% prior to placement	CWD Youth Staff

Success Metric	Year 1 Target	Year 3 Target	Lead
WIOA Youth credential/employment/post-secondary rate	Meet negotiated level	Exceed by 5+ points	CWD Director
Youth satisfaction rating (exit survey)	Establish baseline	80%+ positive rating	CWD Youth Staff

Implementation Phasing

Action Step	Phase	Timeline	Lead
Establish youth task force; hold first meeting	Near-Term	Months 1–4	CWD Youth Staff
Develop pre-work experience training curriculum	Near-Term	Months 3–9	CWD Youth Staff
Launch youth satisfaction survey tool	Near-Term	Months 3–6	CWD Director
Task force meets semi-annually to review and adjust	Ongoing	Semi-Annual	CWD Youth Staff

Goal 2.2 — Increase Visibility and Access to Opportunities

Objective: Expand young people's access to work experience, work readiness training, soft skills development, financial literacy, digital literacy, and entrepreneurial opportunities. Connect youth to apprenticeships and career pathways in current and emerging industries, with particular attention to the populations most disconnected from education and work.

Rationale

- The youth most targeted by WIOA are often disconnected and disengaged from education, training, and the world of work. Reaching them requires proactive, community-based outreach — not passive intake.
- Young people need structured, supported opportunities to develop the foundational skills that are transferable across any industry: communication, problem-solving, reliability, and digital competency.
- A hands-on approach — structured to allow for real learning through experience, including productive failure and reflection — better prepares youth for careers than classroom instruction alone.
- Youth need support not only on the job but in their personal lives. Wraparound supports — including housing assistance, mental health resources, transportation, and childcare — must be built alongside opportunity and actively supported by the employer community.
- Entrepreneurship represents a meaningful pathway for youth who may not thrive in traditional employment structures, and should be treated as a legitimate career pathway, not a secondary option.

Action Steps

23. Partner with a cohort of committed local businesses to provide high-quality, supported work experience connections — with explicit expectations on both sides — that build real work and life skills.
24. Strengthen the current work experience program by adding outcome metrics for youth participants, businesses, and the CWD. Use results to continuously improve the program.
25. Develop and integrate financial literacy and digital literacy learning modules into all youth programs, recognizing that economic independence requires both.

26. Actively promote registered apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship opportunities to eligible youth, particularly in construction, healthcare, and technology sectors.

Success Metrics & Accountability

Success Metric	Year 1 Target	Year 3 Target	Lead
Youth completing work experience placements	Establish baseline	20% increase over baseline	CWD Youth Staff
Business partners providing WEX opportunities	2 employers	12 employers	CWD / WDB
Youth completing financial/digital literacy modules	Assess current completion	90% completion rate	CWD Youth Staff
Youth registered apprenticeships	Educate staff on apprenticeships	Have a referral system in place.	CWD Youth Staff

Implementation Phasing

Action Step	Phase	Timeline	Lead
Develop work experience program outcome metrics framework	Near-Term	Months 1–6	CWD Youth Staff
Recruit and formalize business work experience program partners	Near-Term	Months 3–9	CWD / WDB
Integrate financial/digital literacy into all programs	Mid-Term	Year 1	CWD Youth Staff
Establish apprenticeship referral pathways	Long-term	Year 2-3	CWD / Partners

Goal 2.3 — Build Resilience

Objective: Develop the tools, relationships, and program structures that move youth from survival to agency — building a future-forward mindset, the capacity to manage setbacks, and the practical skills to navigate workplace and life challenges. Strengthen collaboration between employers, educational institutions, and the workforce system to create a coherent, community-wide support network for young people.

Rationale

- Sullivan County, like many communities, faces a structural imbalance between job openings and available workers. Ensuring that every young person who wants to work can find a pathway to do so is not just a program goal — it is a county economic priority.
- Many of the youth served by the workforce system have demonstrated real resilience simply by navigating their circumstances. The goal of programming is to build on that foundation — adding the forward-looking skills and support structures that transform survival instincts into long-term success.
- This requires the whole community — businesses, schools, social services, and families — to commit to working together and opening genuine opportunities for young people to develop a new relationship with work and their own potential.
- Reflection is a key component of resilience. Programs that build in regular structured opportunities for youth to examine their experiences and learning cultivate deeper growth and sustained behavioral change.

Action Steps

27. Design and implement a structured mentoring program that connects youth participants with working adults in their areas of career interest — prioritizing mentors who reflect the diversity of the youth population served.
28. Leverage internship, job shadowing, and work experience to provide employer-based environments where youth can practice and strengthen positive professional skills in real time, with structured reflection components built in.
29. Embed regular, facilitated reflection opportunities into all program tracks, enabling youth to identify growth, revisit setbacks constructively, and develop a consistent internal narrative of capability and progress.

Success Metrics & Accountability

Success Metric	Year 1 Target	Year 3 Target	Lead
Youth engaged in structured mentoring	Design program	20+ youth with mentors/yr	CWD Youth Staff
Youth reporting increased confidence (survey)	Baseline established	75%+ report growth	CWD Youth Staff
Employers participating in mentoring network	5 employers participating in design	15 employers in network	WDB / CWD
Youth retained in program through completion	Track retention rate	70%+ completion rate	CWD Youth Staff

Implementation Phasing

Action Step	Phase	Timeline	Lead
Design mentoring program structure and recruit mentors	Mid-Term	Year 1	CWD Youth Staff
Launch pilot mentoring cohort	Mid-Term	Year 1.5	CWD Youth Staff
Develop reflection tools and integrate into programs	Mid-Term	Year 1	CWD Youth Staff
Expand mentoring program based on pilot results	Long-Term	Year 2–3	CWD Director

Strategy 3: Services for Sullivan County Businesses

Employers are not simply consumers of the workforce system — they are essential partners in its success. Without active employer engagement, career pathways are theoretical, work experience is unavailable, and the feedback loop that keeps training relevant to market needs breaks down. Strategy 3 treats business engagement not as a service offering but as a strategic relationship that the WDB must actively cultivate, sustain, and deepen.

Sullivan County businesses face a set of shared challenges: navigating generational differences in the workplace, building recruitment pipelines that reach nontraditional talent pools, retaining employees in a competitive labor market, and adapting to a workforce whose life circumstances — transportation gaps, childcare needs, financial instability — often affect attendance and performance. The workforce system is positioned to be a genuine partner in addressing all of these challenges.

Goal 3.1 — Enhance Communication and Connectivity with Local Businesses

Objective: Build a structured and consistent communications infrastructure that keeps local businesses informed, connected, and engaged with the workforce system. Create meaningful networking opportunities between businesses and diverse customer groups that increase mutual understanding and improve hiring outcomes.

Rationale

- Many Sullivan County businesses do not fully understand what the workforce system offers — or they have had limited or inconsistent contact that has not built a relationship of trust. Building awareness and trust is the foundation of all other employer engagement work.
- Information on hiring practices, job descriptions, interviewing, and onboarding needs to be regularly updated and shared using all available platforms. This is an avenue for genuine partnership between businesses, workforce system partners, and jobseekers.
- Structured opportunities for businesses and representatives of underserved populations to interact — before the point of hire — reduce assumptions and biases on both sides and produce better employment matches.

Action Steps

30. Design a practical employer resource toolkit covering current best practices in hiring, interviewing, job description writing, and onboarding — with particular attention to reaching nontraditional candidate populations.
31. Connect local high schools and businesses through internship frameworks, creating early pipeline relationships that benefit both students and employers while building long-term community investment in workforce development.
32. Create structured networking and learning events that bring together businesses and representatives of underserved customer groups, with facilitated dialogue designed to build mutual understanding and practical referral relationships.

Success Metrics & Accountability

Success Metric	Year 1 Target	Year 3 Target	Lead
Businesses receiving toolkit or attending events	Establish baseline	50+ unique businesses/yr	CWD / WDB
High school–business internship connections made	Track placements	10+ placements Year 1	CWD / Schools
Cross-sector networking events held	1 pilot event	3 events/year	CWD / WDB
Employer satisfaction with WDB engagement (survey)	Establish baseline	80%+ positive rating	WDB / CWD

Implementation Phasing

Action Step	Phase	Timeline	Lead
Develop employer resource toolkit	Near-Term	Months 3–9	CWD Staff
Establish high school internship framework	Near-Term	Months 6–12	CWD / Schools
Pilot first cross-sector networking event	Mid-Term	Year 1	CWD / WDB
Annual employer engagement survey	Ongoing	Annual	WDB Board

Goal 3.2 — Improve Training and Development Support for Businesses

Objective: Provide local businesses with timely, relevant, and accessible learning resources on the workforce topics most important to them — from multi-generational management and financial literacy for employees to evolving hiring practices and technology adoption. Deliver this content through the platforms and formats that work best for busy employers.

Rationale

- Employers are not workforce experts — they are business owners and managers dealing with workforce challenges as one of many operational priorities. The workforce system adds value when it makes their jobs easier by providing practical, actionable guidance.
- Multimedia resources — short videos, podcasts, tip sheets — delivered consistently and through the channels employers actually use are more likely to drive behavior change than periodic in-person events alone.
- Employers who receive regular, useful communications from the workforce system are more likely to engage as partners when opportunities arise — in work experience, hiring, or policy advocacy.

Action Steps

33. Conduct an employer needs assessment to identify the workforce topics most important to the business community — including areas such as financial literacy programming for employees, multi-generational management, inclusive interviewing practices, and leveraging technology in the workplace.
34. Survey businesses to determine preferred communication channels and content formats, and use those findings to guide content development and distribution strategy.
35. Develop targeted responses to the top five employer-identified issues, delivered through multimedia formats (short videos, podcasts, written guides), distributed consistently through preferred channels.

Success Metrics & Accountability

Success Metric	Year 1 Target	Year 3 Target	Lead
Employer needs assessment completed	Complete assessment	Annual refresh conducted	WB Director / CWD Director
Multimedia resources developed and distributed	3 resources Year 1	7+ resources by Year 3	CWD Staff
Employer open/engagement rate on communications	Establish baseline	30%+ engagement rate	CWD Staff
Employers reporting resources useful (survey)	Establish baseline	75%+ find useful	CWD / WDB

Implementation Phasing

Action Step	Phase	Timeline	Lead
Conduct employer needs assessment and channel survey	Near-Term	Months 1–6	CWD Director
Develop first 3 multimedia resources	Near-Term	Months 4–10	CWD Staff
Launch regular employer communication cadence	Mid-Term	Year 1	CWD Staff
Expand resource library based on employer feedback	Ongoing	Annual	CWD / WDB

Goal 3.3 — Better Connect Businesses with Underserved Talent Pools

Objective: Facilitate direct, structured connections between local businesses and service providers representing populations that are often overlooked in traditional recruitment — including individuals with disabilities, justice-involved individuals, older workers, immigrants, and individuals transitioning from public assistance. Focus on demonstrated skills and capabilities, not background assumptions.

Rationale

- Sullivan County's labor shortage means businesses cannot afford to overlook any segment of the available workforce. Connecting employers with underserved talent pools is both a social equity priority and a practical business solution.
- Service providers working with specific populations have deep knowledge of the individuals they serve — their skills, their needs, and what employer conditions allow them to succeed. Connecting these providers directly with businesses creates better, more durable employment matches.
- Skills-focused hiring — evaluating candidates based on demonstrated ability rather than credential or background assumptions — produces better retention outcomes and opens employment to individuals who have historically been screened out before they can demonstrate their value.

Action Steps

36. Pilot a series of at least three structured networking and introduction events connecting local businesses with service providers representing specific underserved populations. Use an intentional, facilitated format designed to move beyond general awareness toward specific referral and hiring outcomes.
37. Follow each event with structured 30-day and 90-day check-ins to track whether connections led to referrals, interviews, or hires, and use that data to refine the event model.
38. Develop a skills-focused hiring guide for businesses — building on the broader employer toolkit — that addresses common concerns about hiring from underserved populations and provides practical, evidence-based guidance.

Success Metrics & Accountability

Success Metric	Year 1 Target	Year 3 Target	Lead
Structured cross-sector events held	3 pilot events	3+ events/year sustained	CWD / WDB
Referrals generated from events to employers	Track all referrals	20+ referrals from events/yr	CWD Staff
Hires resulting from event connections	Track outcomes	5+ hires from events Year 1	CWD Staff
Businesses adopting skills-based hiring practices	Establish baseline	10 businesses engaged	WDB / CWD

Implementation Phasing

Action Step	Phase	Timeline	Lead
Identify service provider partners for events	Near-Term	Months 1–4	CWD Director
Design event format; host first pilot event	Near-Term	Months 4–9	CWD / WDB
Develop skills-based hiring guide	Mid-Term	Year 1	CWD Staff
Evaluate pilot; expand to regular cadence	Mid-Term	Year 1–2	WDB / CWD

Board Governance and Plan Oversight

A strategic plan is only as strong as the oversight process that holds it accountable. The following governance commitments describe how the Sullivan County WDB will monitor implementation, respond to variances, and keep the plan a living document rather than a static one.

Annual Strategic Review

The full Board will conduct a formal annual strategic review each program year. This review will assess performance against the metrics outlined in each goal, review the environmental scan for significant changes in Sullivan County's labor market, identify any strategic adjustments warranted by performance data or changed conditions, and affirm or revise priorities for the coming year. The Commissioner/Director will prepare a written annual report to support this review, submitted to the Board at least two weeks prior to the annual review meeting.

Quarterly Performance Dashboard

The Commissioner/Director will present a quarterly performance dashboard to the Board's Executive Committee. The dashboard will display actual WIOA performance against negotiated levels, enrollment and service volume trends, significant program developments, and any early warning indicators of performance concerns. The Executive Committee is empowered to direct staff to take corrective action when warranted.

Committee Structure

The Board's committee structure should reflect the three strategies of this plan. The Board is encouraged to maintain or establish standing committees or working groups aligned with: Adult Services and Career Pathways; Youth Programs and Employer Partnerships; and Business Services and Employer Engagement. Committees should meet at least quarterly, maintain written notes, and report recommendations to the full Board.

Plan Amendment Process

If significant changes in funding, labor market conditions, or performance outcomes require material changes to this plan, the Commissioner/Director will bring a written amendment recommendation to the Board for formal action. Minor operational adjustments within the spirit of existing goals may be made administratively by the Commissioner/Director with documentation provided to the Board at the next regular meeting.

A Note on This Plan

This strategic plan reflects the collective work of the Sullivan County Workforce Development Board, the Center for Workforce Development, and the many community partners who share a commitment to ensuring that every resident of Sullivan County has access to meaningful work and every business has access to the talent it needs to grow.

It is a working document. We commit to returning to it regularly, measuring ourselves honestly against it, and adjusting when the evidence calls for adjustment. The goals articulated here are ambitious by design — because the people of Sullivan County deserve an ambitious workforce system.